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**Hermeneutical foundations of the Epistle to the Hebrews: A
study in the validity of its interpretation of some core citations
from the Psalms**

Leschert, Dale Frederick, Ph.D.

Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 1991

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HERMENEUTICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS:
A STUDY IN THE VALIDITY OF ITS INTERPRETATION
OF SOME CORE CITATIONS FROM THE PSALMS

A Dissertation Presented to
the Faculty of
The Center for Advanced Theological Studies
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, California

*In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy*

by
Dale Leschert
May 1991

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testament
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
BAGD	Bauer, W. Greek-English Lexicon. trans. W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich; ed. F. W. Danker.
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB	Brown, F.; Driver, S. R.; and Briggs, C. A. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.
Bib	Biblica
BibArch	Biblical Archaeologist
BibRes	Biblical Research
BibSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
BibThBul	Biblical Theology Bulletin
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CGTSC	Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges
CJ	Concordia Journal
CJT	Canadian Journal of Theology
ConBib	Coniectanea Biblica
CTJ	Calvin Theological Journal
CTH	Concordia Theological Monthly
DicBib S	Dictionnaire de la Bible Supplément
EncJud	Encyclopedia Judaica
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
Exp	The Expositor
ExpTim	Expository Times
G-K	Gesenius, Friedrich Wilhelm. Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar. ed. E. Kautzsch. trans. and rev. by A. E. Cowley
GNC	Good News Commentary
GTJ	Grace Theological Journal
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
HZNT	Handbuch zum neuen Testament
IBS	Irish Biblical Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
Int	Interpretation
IsExpJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBLMS	Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJ	Journal of Judaism
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review

<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTS</i>	<i>Journal of the Society for Old Testament Studies</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JTVI</i>	<i>Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute</i>
<i>KZNT</i>	<i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>MNTC</i>	<i>Moffatt New Testament Commentary</i>
<i>NCB</i>	<i>New Century Bible</i>
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
<i>NICOT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Theologique</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>R&E</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Reformed Review</i>
<i>S-B</i>	<i>Strack, H. L.; and Billerbeck, Paul. Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
<i>SBLMS</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</i>
<i>SBT</i>	<i>Studies in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SNISDS</i>	<i>Society for New Testament Studies Dissertation Series</i>
<i>SNISMS</i>	<i>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</i>
<i>StKr</i>	<i>Studien und Kritiken</i>
<i>SWJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TheoVia</i>	<i>Theologia Viatorum</i>
<i>INIC</i>	<i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>IOIC</i>	<i>Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TrJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TRev</i>	<i>Theological Review</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TSF Bul</i>	<i>Theological Students' Fellowship Bulletin</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
<i>WestCom</i>	<i>Westminster Commentaries</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>UTS</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplement</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

ZNW
ZTK

Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

INTRODUCTION

CRITICAL APPRAISALS OF HEBREWS' HERMENEUTICS

The use of the OT in the Epistle to the Hebrews has proven to be a very troublesome problem, and its writer has drawn critical reviews from a number of scholars for his handling of the OT. Grant, for example, accuses him of employing "a carefully worked out, allusive type of exegesis which takes a passage of Scripture and is not content to rest until the last subtlety of meaning has been processed from it."¹ He also criticizes the writer for the important, historical role that his Epistle played in encouraging "the fancifulness of allegorists and others who sought for hidden meanings in the OT." But he goes on to concede one positive result to the writer: without his somewhat questionable typological method "it would have been almost impossible for the early church to retain its grasp on the OT."²

Hanson's criticism of Hebrews comes from the opposite direction. He would like to approve of the writer's methods of interpretation, but he believes that it is impossible to do so without sacrificing truth:

We are naturally anxious to understand, and adopt if we can, the methods which the NT writers used in

¹ Robert Mc Queen Grant, *The Bible in the Church: a Short History of Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 31.

² Grant, p. 37; cf. p. 42.

interpreting the OT. But if we are honest I think we must confess that we cannot unreservedly do so. The gospel was not set forth in the OT--not, at any rate, in the way that the author of Hebrews thought it was. . . . to imagine that, despite the conclusions of Higher Criticism, we can easily adopt the NT attitude towards the OT without doing violence to the truth is certainly a mistake.³

Scott also concedes that the doctrine of Hebrews is based "on an exegesis which to us may appear frigid and artificial."⁴ Neil dismisses "much of the reasoning of this epistle" as "irrelevant." He flatly asserts that "far-fetched OT exegesis and obscure OT characters, like Melchizedek, have little or no interest for us today."⁵ Moffatt describes Hebrews' use of the OT as "naive," and he asserts that "the exegetical methods which the author took over from the Alexandrian school are not ours."⁶ Although Markus Barth commends the Epistle for the witness it bears to Christ, he notes that "even conservative modern interpreters would hardly permit or encourage their students

³Anthony Hanson, "The Gospel in the Old Testament According to Hebrews," *Theology* 52 (1949): 252.

⁴Ernest Findlay Scott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 38; cf. G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44, which notes this and other criticisms of Hebrews.

⁵William Neil, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Torch Commentaries (London: S.C.M., 1955), p. 22.

⁶James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. xlvi.

to follow the author's methods."⁷

Graham Hughes finds the writer of Hebrews guilty of following the "arbitrary" exegetical methods that were common in his day but "no longer meet the exegetical standards required by the critical method." Among these, he includes such devices as manipulating the text, isolating texts from their contexts, joining unrelated texts with catchwords, and reinterpreting non-messianic texts Christologically.⁸ He believes that the writer has radically reworked, or possibly even rejected, the traditions on which he depends.⁹ He also detects major flaws in the writer's consequent portrait of Jesus. He claims that "the Jesus we meet in this writing has not existed--at any rate certainly not in this particular form--before this Christian thinker brought together in such a creative synthesis all the elements of his conception of

⁷Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews: An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 78.

⁸Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: the Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, no. 36 SNISMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 56, 57. We should note, however, that Hughes still believes that the writer of Hebrews has high regard for historical principles of exegesis and that the greatest part of his epistle is built on the principle of listening to the Scriptures themselves (p. 56).

⁹Hughes, p. 125.

'Jesus as priest.'"¹⁰ Presumably Hughes finds enough historical content in Hebrews to continue believing its essential message, but he admits that if the Epistle's view of Jesus does not rest on historical grounds but only on theological confessions, then "faith itself is in some jeopardy."¹¹

To these general criticisms, we could add many specific charges which various critics have brought against the writer of Hebrews for allegedly distorting the meaning of the OT. If we were to draw up a cumulative list of their accusations, it could be divided roughly into five categories: 1.) those cases which draw Christological proof texts from apparently non-messianic passages;¹² 2.) those which remove passages from their historical context to make them speak directly to the writer's contemporary readers;¹³ 3.) those which employ creative methodologies such as

¹⁰Hughes, p. 98.

¹¹Hughes, p. 94; cf. p. 95.

¹²Cf. Heb. 1:5; Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14; Heb. 1:8, 9; Ps. 45:6, 7; Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 1:13; Ps. 110:1; Heb. 2:6-8; Ps. 8:4-6; Heb. 2:12; Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:13; Isa. 8:17, 18; Heb. 10:5; Ps. 40:6-8. For the sake of simplicity and consistency throughout this dissertation, we will follow the chapter and verse divisions in the English Bible and note the versification of the MT or LXX in parenthesis where necessary for clarity.

¹³Cf. Heb. 3:7--4:11; Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 11:19; Gen. 22:1-10; Heb. 11:26.

midrash,¹⁴ and allegory or speculative typology¹⁵ to find meanings not in the original text; 4.) those which significantly alter the wording of a text;¹⁶ and 5.) those which reveal supposed historical blunders in the writer's understanding of the OT.¹⁷

THE NEED FOR ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

If, indeed, it is true that the writer of Hebrews uses inferior methods of interpretation to distort the meaning of the OT, the credibility of his message must also be called into question to the extent that it rests upon a faulty foundation. In light of the underlying importance of the OT to this epistle, the problem of the writer's hermeneutical integrity seems inescapable.¹⁸ Much more has been written

¹⁴ Cf. Heb. 2:5-9; Ps. 8:4-6; Heb. 3:7--4:11; Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 10:5-14; Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 12:5-11; Prov. 3:11, 12.

¹⁵ Cf. Heb. 7:1-10; Ps. 110:4; Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 8:5; Ex. 25:40.

¹⁶ The following list, which is not exhaustive, includes significant departures from either the LXX or the MT. Heb. 1:6; Deut. 32:43 LXX; Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 2:6-8; Ps. 8:4-6; Heb. 3:7-11, 17; Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 10:5-7; Ps. 40:6, 7; Heb. 10:16, 17; Jer. 31:33, 34; Heb. 10:30; Deut. 32:35, 36; Heb. 10:37, 38; Hab. 2:3, 4; Heb. 11:21; Gen. 47:31; Heb. 12:5, 6; Prov. 3:11, 12.

¹⁷ Cf. Heb. 9:4; (Ex. 30:6); Heb. 9:13; (Num. 19:9, 17f.); Heb. 9:19, 20; (Ex. 24:8).

¹⁸ Cf. R. U. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 130, 131.

concerning the use of the OT in Hebrews than can be mentioned here,¹⁹ but the issue of its hermeneutical validity has still not been adequately addressed.

Part of the reason for this unfortunate state is that research up to the present time has not progressed very far beyond the descriptive stage to normative considerations. Textual research has focused on determining the type of text from which the writer quotes, comparing variant readings, and classifying his citations according to their degree of literalness, frequency of occurrence, distribution within the OT, or some other such scheme.²⁰ Background studies have sought to compare Hebrews' hermeneutics with that of various first century schools of interpretation to which the writer may have subscribed. Of these studies, the older ones often tried to discover a correlation between the writer of Hebrews and Philo, the most prominent Jewish representative of the Alexandrian school of allegorical interpretation and Platonic thought.²¹ More recent trends

¹⁹For some helpful surveys of recent scholarship on Hebrews, see the bibliography below on p. 356.

²⁰Cf. John C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *NTS* 26 (1980): 363-379; Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 (1964-65): 303-325; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968).

²¹Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 1:39-91; Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and of Hebrews: a Comparison of Interpretation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), esp. pp. 66, 137; Moffatt, pp. xxxi-xxxiv; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper &

have frequently sought to draw analogies to the midrashic interpretation which was common amongst the rabbis of the day,²² or the apocalyptic exegesis of the Qumran community.²³

By clarifying how the OT is used in Hebrews, these studies, on the whole, have placed us in a better position to assess the validity of the writer's hermeneutics. But for the most part, they have not addressed that issue in more than a passing way.

Row, 1964), pp. 6-9; Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLMS 25 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975); contra cf. Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), esp. pp. 492-495, 568, 576-579; C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 366, 373, 393; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), pp. 171-174.

²²Cf. Longenecker, pp. 164, 205-207; Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), p. 62.

²³Cf. H. Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959); Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Scripta Hierosolymitana*, vol. 4, ed. C. Robin and Y. Yadin, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1958), pp. 36-55; Caslaus Spicq, "L'Épître Aux Hébreux, Apollos, Jean-Baptist, Les Hellenistes et Qumran," *RQ* 1 (1958): 365-390; Longenecker, p. 161. Some scholars find influences from both Rabbinic interpretation and Qumran; cf. Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), pp. 11, 62-67, 74, 75; Schroger, pp. 269-282. Contra the associations of Hebrews with Qumran, see F. F. Bruce, "'To the Hebrews' or 'to the Essenes'?" *NTS* 9 (1962-63): 217-232.

PREVIOUS METHODS OF LEGITIMIZING HEBREWS' INTERPRETATION

A few scholars, who for the most part have experienced some difficulties in reconciling the interpretation of our writer with historical-grammatical hermeneutics but did not wish to relinquish the Epistle's great spiritual value, have attempted to legitimize his interpretation in some other way. Before embarking upon our own study, we must ask if any of them can provide a satisfactory answer.

CULTURAL CONDITIONING

Some have argued, as does Kistemaker, that although the methods of the writer do not conform to modern hermeneutical standards, they were prevalent and culturally acceptable in his day.²⁴ Furthermore, it is claimed that "if he wanted to be effective in his approach, he had to resort to the use of methods and thoughts with which the recipients of his Epistle were familiar."²⁵ Just as the NT writers were children of their time and bound by its current methodology, so we are children of our time and bound "by profane motifs, by grammatico-historical principles Hence our motifs and principles may never be foisted upon the writers . . . of the first century."²⁶

²⁴Kistemaker, pp. 89, 93, 95, 133, 147; cf. Harvey Eugene Dana, and R. E. Glaze, Jr., *Interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), pp. 42, 43, 56.

²⁵Kistemaker, p. 95; cf., Dana & Glaze, pp. 45, 53, 57.

²⁶Kistemaker, p. 89 n. 3; cf. Dana & Glaze, pp.

Previous Methods of Legitimizing Hebrews' Interpretation

Since the NI was never intended as a textbook on hermeneutics, the argument continues, one should not expect inspiration to correct the faulty methods which our writer borrowed from his own cultura.²⁷ He simply composed his Epistle independently of modern exegetical methods.²⁸ His methodology "is not morally or ethically wrong, but technically inferior."²⁹ Those who have the advantage of scientific methods of interpretation are under obligation to use them, but they should not expect the same of first century interpreters.³⁰

This position lets the writer of Hebrews off easily. But is not the problem that historical-grammatical hermeneutics stubbornly refuses to be locked out of the first century? Certainly one does not expect a first century interpreter to employ modern techniques of higher criticism. But one expects that he will not violate the basic principles of speaking (or writing) and understanding that are essential to the double-sided nature of all communication.³¹

53, 56, 57.

²⁷ Dana & Glaze, pp. 43, 44, 50, 51, 57.

²⁸ Kistemaker, p. 95.

²⁹ Dana & Glaze, p. 55; cf. p. 45.

³⁰ Dana & Glaze, pp. 53, 56, 57.

³¹ Cf. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 68, 69, 93, 133,

In as far as hermeneutics is the science of understanding human communication, it claims universal legitimacy for its fundamental principles that govern the comprehension of human expression. Because these principles are rooted in the essence of humanity and the nature of communication, and not in some specific linguistic or cultural group within history, one might expect that they would apply trans-culturally and trans-temporally. Whether or not a person has heard of and consciously consented to these laws makes no difference because they are not a contractual agreement, but an expression of what it means to be a rational human being who communicates intelligently with other human beings.

One does not need a great deal of exegetical sophistication to function according to historical-grammatical hermeneutics. In essence all that is required is that one attempts to understand a speaker or writer in terms of his linguistic conventions and according to his historical context. An uneducated person may never have heard of Aristotle, but we still presume that he thinks, or at least ought to think, logically. Similarly, such a person may not be able to pronounce "hermeneutics," but we still presume that he ought to understand us and we may understand him according to the normal laws of communication. The sense of moral indignation that we all feel when someone distorts our plain meaning concerning a

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subject that is personally important to us attests to the truthfulness of this statement.³²

Unfortunately, those who would excuse the writer of Hebrews on the grounds that his methods were culturally conditioned often fail to distinguish between those elements of first century interpretation which are legitimate within historical-grammatical bounds and those which are not. But surely there is a qualitative difference between the innocent stylistic quirks that make literature of a bygone era seem peculiar to modern readers and the dubious hermeneutical methods that some ancient interpreters employed to distort the meaning of their texts. The simple fact that some of the techniques employed by first century interpreters seem odd to us says nothing about their legitimacy, but the ambivalence of the cultural approach at this point leaves us without a real answer to the problem of Hebrews' interpretation of the OT.

DIVINE SANCTION

Longenecker, in agreement with the previous position, contends that since the NT writers were culturally conditioned, we should not assume that their exegetical methodology is normative for us.³³ He notes that we distinguish between the descriptive and the normative in

³²Cf. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 91.

³³Cf. Longenecker, pp. 214, 217, 219.

other areas of the NT; and, to his credit, he separates its literal methods of interpretation, which are acceptable by historical-grammatical standards, from its other methods, such as peshar, midrash, and allegory, which he believes are not. He expands the discussion, however, by suggesting a possible method of legitimizing these non-normative interpretations. He posits that Jesus and the apostolic writers had a special revelatory stance which permitted them to interpret in ways that are not permissible for non-inspired interpreters.³⁴

But most modern interpreters, who have no means of verifying the issuance of such a hermeneutical license, will naturally feel a bit uneasy about allowing a privileged few to interpret in ways that are not acceptable for anyone else. It is not surprising that the NT writers used prescientific methods of interpretation; but if they have indeed misrepresented the meaning of the OT, as seems to be implied in the refusal to allow modern interpreters to follow them in some areas, the problem is no longer cultural but ethical. To grant divine sanction for dubious interpretations only shifts the problem from the Biblical writers to God. Perhaps, Longenecker is only suggesting that the methods of the NT writers were faulty, not that their conclusions were sometimes wrong; but his view still

³⁴ Longenecker, pp. 211-214, 217-220. Specifically, he has peshar interpretation in mind, but his argument could be extended to other non-literal types of interpretation.

Previous Methods of Legitimizing Hebrews' Interpretation offers little apologetic support to those who are asked to believe conclusions based on faulty methodology.³⁵

THE NEW HERMENEUTIC

Another method of legitimizing Hebrews' interpretation of the OT is to judge the writer by the standards of the new hermeneutic rather than traditional, historical-grammatical standards. We have already noted the criticism of Hughes concerning the interpretive methods employed in Hebrews, but we must go on to observe how he enlists the new hermeneutic to approve of the writer's use of the OT on a different level.³⁶ It is not our purpose here to give a thorough exposition of the new hermeneutic but only to consider it as it provides a possible model for explaining Hebrews' interpretation of the OT.³⁷

³⁵ For further criticisms of his position see Moses Silva, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1983), pp. 162, 163. We must acknowledge, however, that Longenecker believes for the most part Hebrews' interpretations are straightforward and in continuity with earlier Christian traditions (pp. 164, 185).

³⁶ M. Barth also warmly approves of Hebrews' interpretation of the OT, while at the same time freely admitting problems in the writer's methodology (pp. 78, 273 n. 44). Although he tries to distance himself from existential interpreters (p. 54), his own dialogical approach to Hebrews use of the OT also appears to have been strongly influenced by the new hermeneutic.

³⁷ The most notable exposition of this position is Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. trans. rev. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989); see also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with*

As the thesis of his published dissertation, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, Hughes states that "the writer of Hebrews is the theologian who, more diligently and successfully than any other of the NT writers, has worked at what we now describe as hermeneutics." The current view of hermeneutics to which he is referring defines the discipline in terms of "the interpretive interaction set up by reason of the historical distance which intervenes between ourselves and the originating events on which Christian faith depends."³⁸ This new approach to hermeneutics allows an interpreter great freedom and creativity that are not possible in historical-grammatical hermeneutics. By not regarding the 'meaning' of an original conception as "somehow intrinsically contained within its contextual setting," it permits an interpreter to bring together an OT conception with his present situation in a way that outruns the information contained in the tradition and was not conceivable to the ancient author.³⁹

Hughes is interested in maintaining recognizable continuity with previous traditions of interpreting a text, but within these broad limitations, he gives the interpreter the freedom--in fact the obligation--to use his creativity.⁴⁰

Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980).

³⁸ Hughes, p. 3, cf. p. 30.

³⁹ Hughes, pp. 110, 113, 118, 124, 125.

⁴⁰ Hughes, pp. 124, 126, cf. pp. 119, 123.

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The only criteria that he stipulates for legitimate interpretation are that the author should be hypothetically able to recognize and assent to the inferences drawn from his work and that the text be the starting point for the interpreter's reflections.⁴¹

Having introduced a creative fusion between the horizons of an author's original conception and an interpreter's present situation as a legitimate part of interpretation, Hughes has little trouble in accepting those cases in which the writer of Hebrews seems to reinterpret the OT creatively in the light of his contemporary situation. He postulates that the writer, having become convinced "that Jesus is the final form of God's Word," goes back to the OT from the confessional statement in the Epistle's prologue to work out his theology in terms of "God's former modes of Speaking."⁴² The citations, then, should not be viewed as Scriptural proofs, but as suitable texts for saying what he already believed;⁴³ "the process is reversed: what is to be 'proved' is already assumed."⁴⁴

The very idea that the criticism of a text could establish a proven meaning runs contrary to the new

⁴¹ Hughes, pp. 4, 130.

⁴² Hughes, p. 57.

⁴³ Hughes, pp. 60, 61.

⁴⁴ Hughes, p. 57.

hermeneutic.⁴⁵ For Hughes, faith is a necessary ingredient in interpretation, and the creative synthesis between the past and the present which it produces always transcends the boundaries of the historical information; therefore, it is not subject to logical verification. "Interpretation . . . cannot finally give an account of itself; it can only end in speaking of 'mystery,' 'silence,' an 'alien logic' or some such quantity."⁴⁶ Hughes concludes that although much of Hebrews' interpretation does not exhibit an obvious or necessary relationship to the OT, it is permissible. "The interpretation cannot be 'vindicated,'" but "it is not illegitimate."⁴⁷

We must reply that if the possibility of verification is in any sense a criterion of a meaningful statement, the status of Hughes' intentional double negative is extremely doubtful. But apart from his obfuscation, there are some serious problems in Hughes' approach to excusing the hermeneutical sins that he finds in the writer of Hebrews.

First of all, one must question if the new hermeneutic can grant an interpreter the authority to change the meaning of another's text. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. has made, what we believe to be, a valuable distinction between "meaning," which never changes, and "significance," which may. Hughes

⁴⁵Hughes, p. 120.

⁴⁶Hughes, p. 100.

⁴⁷Hughes, p. 99.

Previous Methods of Legitimizing Hebrews' Interpretation shows that he is aware of this distinction; but by his claim that "meanings of texts can change and not just their significance," he lapses back into the confusion which Hirsch has attempted to avoid.⁴⁸

No doubt Hughes' idea that meaning can change arises from a philosophical skepticism about the exegetical possibility of arriving at the meaning of an author who stands at a historical distance.⁴⁹ We are well aware that it is difficult to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers, but that difficulty must not be allowed to masquerade as an impossibility.⁵⁰ Logically, the claim that an interpreter can fuse an author's original conception with his own present understanding implies that he must be able to understand an alien idea before he can fuse it with his own. Furthermore, the reactions of people with whom we speak confirms that they often do understand our meanings even though they may be separated from us by greatly different outlooks on life and cultural backgrounds. The medium that makes this understanding possible is a shared set of

⁴⁸Hughes, p. 188 n. 68; cf. Hirsch, *Validity*, pp. 8 ff. Hughes is also aware of Stendahl's distinction between what "the author meant" and "what his statement means," but his predilection is clearly for "what it means" (pp. 112, 121, 184 n. 24; cf. Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962], 1:419 ff.).

⁴⁹Cf. Hughes, pp. 110 ff.

⁵⁰Cf. Hirsch, *Aims*, p. 148.

linguistic conventions. If language can cross the significant barriers which are often no less formidable within our own age than they are from one historical era to another, it should be possible to understand the meanings of writers from a previous age if one is willing to take the trouble to learn their linguistic conventions.⁵¹

Regardless of whether or not one is convinced that the historical distance between an interpreter and an ancient text is so great that a re-cognition of meaning is impossible and a fusion of both their horizons is the best that can be attained, one must still ask if the writer of Hebrews went about constructing his interpretation of the OT as a creative interaction along these lines rather than as a serious attempt to expound its meaning. The methodology by which Hughes finds close affinity between Hebrews' interpretation of the OT and the new hermeneutic does little to inspire confidence in his conclusion. He consciously dismisses the task of analyzing the writer's techniques of exegesis as an unfruitful exercise and focuses instead on "the way the Scriptures function as a vehicle of revelation."⁵² But it seems somewhat presumptuous to set forth a theology of revelation without examining the

⁵¹ Cf. Hirsch, *Validity*, pp. 18, 43, 135, 253-258; and his *Aims*, pp. 42, 48, 49; Daniel P. Fuller, "Hermeneutics," (class syllabus, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1983), pp. I-12--I-14.

⁵² Hughes, pp. 35, 47.

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Epistle's exegesis of Scripture. Perhaps the effortlessness with which Hughes can find a resemblance between Hebrews and the new hermeneutic is partially due to his own encouragement of a creative interaction as a fundamental part of the interpretive enterprise.

His claim that the citations in Hebrews are not cited as proof is also far from conclusive. Hughes arrives at this conclusion largely by reasoning that "most people . . . can be assumed to know" that some of the citations which the writer uses of Jesus originally had nothing to do with Him (e.g., Deut. 32:34; Heb. 1:6; Ps. 102:25 ff.; Heb. 1:10 ff.); therefore, either the writer was inept, or he did not intend them as proofs.⁵³ But Hughes assumes the very point that is in question; if the disputed citations can in some way refer to Jesus, perhaps they were intended to furnish Scriptural proof.⁵⁴

We grant that the writer of Hebrews works back from what he knows of Christ to the OT; however, for him it is more than a source book of sermonic illustrations. He turns to the OT because he believes that it provides continuity

⁵³Hughes, p. 60.

⁵⁴Cf. I. F. Glasson, "'Plurality of Divine Persons' and the Quotations in Hebrews 1:6 ff.," *NTS* 12 (1966): 270-272; B. W. Bacon, "Heb. 1:10-12 and the Septuagint Rendering of Ps. 102:23," *ZNW* 3 (1902): 280-285. Although Hughes cites William Manson in support of his position (p. 167 n. 106), Manson clearly believed the citations were intended to function as proof texts (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951], pp. 91, 92).

with the past, points beyond its own aspirations to their fulfillment in Christ, and confirms his faith.⁵⁵ But that is not to say that he merely reads his Christian theology back into it. We must at least consider the possibility that the OT genuinely contained evidence in support of his beliefs long before he discovered it. That evidence, by the very nature of the case, will always fall short of a mathematical demonstration, but without its persuasive apologetic value, his Epistle could neither have encouraged the faith of faltering Christians nor withstood the criticism of hostile Judaism.⁵⁶

Neither Hughes' attempt at legitimizing Hebrews' hermeneutics nor the others we have examined seem very satisfying because they all work from the premise that the writer's interpretation of the OT cannot be reconciled with traditional canons of interpretation, and so must be legitimized in some other way. In effect, they offer excuses for the writer rather than either vindicating or condemning him. But it only seems fair that we reassess his hermeneutical integrity from a careful exegesis of his citations in both their OT and NT contexts before we either

⁵⁵ Cf. Caird, p. 51; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 481.

⁵⁶ Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 14; and his article, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1979), p. 134.

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condemn him or grant him special exemption from the standards of historical-grammatical interpretation.

OUR APPROACH TO RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

To give an adequate answer to every hermeneutical accusation that has been raised against the writer of Hebrews would require a much longer work than the present one. Rather than attempting such a mammoth task, which would of necessity result in much superficiality, we will undertake the lesser task of examining a few important citations in detail. If we are thereby able to restore credibility to the overall message of the Epistle, our task should prove to be very rewarding.

We are encouraged in adopting this narrowly focused approach by the now common observation that the argument of the Epistle does not depend upon a series of minor proof texts; instead, it rests on a limited number of core citations which control the development of the book. In this group we must include the catena in chapter 1; Psalm 8:4-6; Psalm 95:7-11; Psalm 110:4; and Jeremiah 31:31-34. All others citations are ancillary to these and explain, illustrate, or apply points that they make.⁵⁷

From our list of core citations, we will select a

⁵⁷ Caird championed the importance of the core citations (pp. 47-49), but he omits mention of the catena in ch. 1. Kistemaker, whose purpose was to examine the liturgical background of Heb. in the Psalter, naturally omits Jer. 31 from his list (pp. 11, 12). Longenecker's list agrees with our own (pp. 175-185).

sufficient number of passages for detailed study to cover the various types of hermeneutical accusations that have been raised against the writer of Hebrews throughout the scope of the book. We will enquire into his use of the OT both as it relates to the exegetical content of his interpretations and the methodology he employs. And in each of the citations under examination, we will defend the thesis that he interprets in a manner consistent with historical-grammatical hermeneutics without distorting the intended meaning of the OT.

In the first part of our study, we will compare his interpretation of several core citations exegetically with their meaning in their respective OT contexts to determine if he is consistent with the intended meaning of their authors. Where there are problems, we will seek to resolve them by coming to a better understanding of either the OT passages which he quotes or the interpretation he places upon them. In some cases, it may be necessary to understand both meanings better.

Our exegetical investigation will commence with Hebrews' Christological interpretation of some passages that do not seem to have been so intended in their original contexts. The first chapter of Hebrews contains a catena of OT quotations which were intended as a whole to show that Jesus Christ is superior to angels because the Father addresses Him as deity. In this catena, which is drawn primarily from the Psalter, the writer highlights three divine titles for Christ that he believes can be found in

the OT.⁵⁸ From Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14, he concludes that the Father calls Christ His "Son" (Heb. 1:5); in Psalm 45:6, 7, he finds Him addressed as "God" (ὁ θεός, Heb. 1:8, 9); and in Psalm 102:25-27 he discovers the title "Lord" (κύριος, which the LXX commonly uses to translate יהוה; Heb. 1:10-12).⁵⁹

From this catena, we will select Psalm 45:6, 7 as an example of a Christological interpretation of an apparently non-messianic text. Although the writer of Hebrews apparently takes the words ὁ θεός (O God, Heb. אלהים) vocatively as the Father's address to the Son as deity, it is doubtful that the psalmist, who would have shared Israel's monotheistic faith, intended to imply a plurality within God.⁶⁰ Other passages in the catena would also be worthy of study, but the general types of problems that exist there will arise in the passages that we have selected for study.

⁵⁸Cf. James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in Light of the Aqedah*, no. 94 AnBib (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), pp. 142, 143; John P. Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb. 1:5-14," *Bib* 66 (1985): 504-553.

⁵⁹The last citation works only in the Greek OT, which at this point differs from the MT. The writer also argues for Christ's deity from Deut. 32:43 of the LXX (Heb. 1:6) and indirectly from Ps. 110:1 (Heb. 1:13), which he will develop later.

⁶⁰Hanson states that "the author of Hebrews believes . . . that God speaks specifically about the Incarnation in the Psalms, and indeed, in other parts of the OT also. But in order to do so he has to adopt the most extraordinary canons of interpretation" (p. 249).

As a second example of a Christological interpretation from an apparently non-messianic text, we will examine the writer's interpretation of Psalm 8:4-6. This quotation controls the section from Hebrews 2:5 to 18, which also contains supporting quotations from Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17, 18 (Heb. 2:12, 13). The aim of the writer of Hebrews in this section was to show that Christ is superior to angels because He identifies with humanity as the ideal man. This he attempts to do by applying Psalm 8 to Christ, who, in His humiliation, became for a little while lower than the angels so that He might identify with mankind in suffering, and who will again be visibly exalted above them. But in its original context, Psalm 8 exalts mankind to an almost divine status, the highest conceivable position of honor.⁶¹

In addition to studying Hebrews' Christological interpretation of the OT, we must also examine the Epistle's interpretation of the OT for hortatory purposes so that we might determine if there is a just basis for the contention that our writer lifts portions of it out of context in order to apply them directly to his contemporary readers. In this regard, we will consider his interpretation of Psalm 95:7-

⁶¹ Childs notes that the LXX left the distinction between time and degree ambiguous, and so "the writer of Hebrews seizes upon this new avenue as a means of elaborating his understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ." He contends that Hebrews moves the interpretation in "an entirely different direction from that of the the Hebrew Old Testament." The Psalm now becomes a "Christological proof text" for the temporary humiliation of the Son of Man below the angels. Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," *Int* 23 (1969): 25, 26.

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11. Although his direct interpretation is confined to Hebrews 3:7--4:11, the influence of the citation extends in both directions from the beginning of chapter 3 through to 4:13; it also becomes the basis for introducing a related quotation from Genesis 2:2 (Heb. 4:4). Our writer has often been accused of lightly brushing aside the meaning that Psalm 95 held in its original context and treating it as if it had relevance only for his present generation. He assumes that the "today" of opportunity in the psalm is his own day, and he applies its promise of rest directly to his readers although the original context relates the idea of rest to entrance into the land of Canaan.

Along with our exegetical study, we will compare Hebrews' interpretation of the selected citations with other relevant interpretations in early Christian and Jewish literature. This comparative study cannot determine the validity of our writer's interpretation of the OI, which must be judged strictly by its exegetical consistency with the intended meaning of the writers cited; but we, who are far removed in time and culture from the original setting of these texts, should retain a healthy sense of humility about our own ability to discern their intended meaning, which is not always self-evident. The long interpretive tradition that many of these citations carry can at times help to confirm or refute our own exegetical hypotheses concerning their original meaning.

If other ancient writers arrived independently at similar interpretations to those of the writer of Hebrews,

similar interpretations to those of the writer of Hebrews, we must at least consider the possibility that they did not arise from his private innovation but from something within the texts themselves. In the case of similar interpretations in the rest of the NT, we must consider the possibility that they may have arisen from common Christian presuppositions. But these NT parallels are still worth studying because they may contain clues to the meaning of Hebrews' citations in either their NT or OT contexts. In cases where we find Messianic interpretations in Jewish literature, however, it would suggest that our writer was not simply reading his Christian theology back into the OT. Although much of Rabbinic interpretation arose late in the Christian era, it may, nevertheless, be of interest to the extent that it represents an interpretive tradition that was independent of, and sometimes hostile to, Christianity.

We will deal with textual problems as they arise naturally in the passages that are selected for study and will speculate concerning whether the writer of Hebrews deliberately changes the text for interpretive purposes. But our focus will rest upon hermeneutical rather than textual issues. The present state of textual studies, which has been unable to identify with any precision the text from which the writer quotes, makes it difficult at times to determine which changes were his own and which already existed in his text. Needless to say, those cases where he is only following an altered text in front of him, will not

always be an accurate indicator of his own hermeneutics.⁶²

We will leave the question of historical blunders aside inasmuch as none of the supposed cases occur within the core citations or materially affect the argument of the Epistle. Furthermore, if allegations such as the ones that have been put forward could be substantiated, they would point towards a certain ignorance on the part of the writer rather than a lack of hermeneutical integrity.

The second part of our study will examine the writer's methodology to see if he uses creative methods of interpretation that are capable of distorting the OT's meaning. We must consider the validity of the writer's suspected use of midrash since this method of interpretation allowed much room for fanciful speculation. His interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 contains the Epistle's clearest examples of midrashic features so we will look at this passage again, this time from a methodological perspective.

We must also consider the writer's use of typology, which is prevalent throughout the Epistle, and a possible use of allegory. We will need to ask what distinguishes these methods of interpretation from each other and if either of them can be justified hermeneutically.⁶³ The most

⁶²On the question of whether the writer of Hebrews deliberately changes the text for interpretive purposes, see the articles mentioned above in n. 20 by Thomas, who is critical of the writer, and McCullough, who defends him.

⁶³Grant holds that "the author of Hebrews is not an

fruitful place for this discussion will be Hebrews 7, which contains the most notable example of typology in the Epistle as well as its only hint of allegory (cf. Heb. 7:1, 2). The comparison there between Christ and Melchizedek is based on Psalm 110:4, another one of the core citations, which was formally introduced in Hebrews 5:6 and underlies the larger discussion of Christ's superiority to the Aaronic priesthood (Heb. 4:14--7:28). From this Scriptural basis, the writer of Hebrews goes back to the psalm's historical background in Genesis 14:18-20 to explore the typological relationship between Christ and Melchizedek.⁶⁴

The final, remaining core citation is Jeremiah 31:31-34, which is quoted fully in Hebrews 8:8-12 and summarized in 10:16, 17. Its prediction of a new covenant controls the discussion from Hebrews 8:1 to 10:18.⁶⁵ Hebrews' direct interpretation of this undisputed Messianic prophecy does not contain a major hermeneutical problem; the writer allows

allegorist. And yet his incessant search for types of Christ and of his work leads his typology very close to allegorization. Ultimately, the complete reality of the Old Testament is denied in Hebrews . . ." (p. 32).

⁶⁴We will have to deal with Grant's contentions that "the author removes Melchizedek entirely from his historical setting" and that "the correspondences which he finds between the office of Christ and the mysterious figure of Melchizedek do not prove anything" (p. 34).

⁶⁵Although our writer introduces a lengthy quotation from Ps. 40:6-8 in Heb. 10:5-7, his repetition of the new covenant in summary form in vs. 16 and 17 suggests that the same theme continues to dominate the discussion. Kistemaker, however, includes Ps. 40:6-8 with the core citations for an extended discussion (pp. 12, 124-130).

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the quotation to speak fairly well for itself and limits his exegesis *per se* to a few brief and straightforward comments (Heb. 8:6, 7, 13; 10:18).⁶⁶ But significant problems arise in trying to understand the related comments that he draws from other sources (cf. esp. Heb. 9:15-22) and the unspoken implications regarding the new covenant's relationship to both the former covenant and the church. Since the theological ramifications of this passage could quickly lead us far away from our purpose without adding significantly to our understanding of the writer's hermeneutics, we will leave it outside the scope of the present discussion. The citations which follow in the Epistle do not advance the writer's argument beyond the main points that have already been made and generally they are hortatory in nature with a universal application.

⁶⁶ Caird, p. 47; Longenecker, p. 184.

PART I: EXEGESIS

CHAPTER 1:

THE MESSIANIC INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 45:6, 7

IN HEBREWS 1:8, 9

In Hebrews 1:8, 9, the writer of the epistle appears to support his claim that Jesus is superior to the angels (Heb. 1:4) by citing Psalm 45:6, 7¹ as the Father's address to the Son as God. Taking ὁ θεός in verse 8 as a vocative, the quotation would read as follows:²

"Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever,
And the scepter of righteousness is [the] scepter of
Your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
with the oil of gladness above Your companions."

There is some difference of opinion, however, concerning the ability of this quotation to support the writer's affirmation of the Son's deity. Can Psalm 45, which sprang from the rich soil of Jewish monotheism, support an interpretation which implies a plurality within God? Or is the writer of Hebrews simply reading his own Christian theology back into the psalm?

In order to answer these questions, we must make sure that we have correctly understood both Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 45 and the intended meaning of the psalmist. Once we have established the meaning of the

¹MT Ps. 45:7, 8; LXX Ps. 44:7, 8.

²The translation is my own.

quotation in both its NT and OT settings, we will be in a better position to determine if Psalm 45 can legitimately support Hebrews' Christology.

THE MEANING OF PSALM 45:6, 7

IN ITS NEW TESTAMENT SETTING

THE NOMINATIVE INTERPRETATION

OF HEBREWS 1:8, 9

We need, first of all, to consider the contention of Westcott and several other scholars that the writer of Hebrews intended ὁ θεός as a nominative rather than a title addressed to the Son. As a nominative, ὁ θεός could be either the subject ("God is Your throne for ever and ever") or the predicate ("Your throne is God . . .").³ Either translation could relieve the theological tension created by the vocative.

The case for the nominative interpretation in Hebrews rests upon several features in verses 8 and 9 that could be indicative of a nominative and the nature of the meaning one would expect to encounter there. We will begin by examining the exegetical clues that arise directly from our text and then consider how the nominative interpretation fits into the context.

³Alexander Nairne is one of the few who make ὁ θεός the predicate (cf. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CGTSC [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917], pp. 31, 33, 34; and his *The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Edinburgh: I. & T. Clark, 1913], p. 306); Westcott allows it to be either subject or predicate (p. 25).

ὁ θεός is technically nominative in form, but this point cannot be pressed since the same form can readily be used as a vocative. The substitution of the nominative with the article for the vocative has ancient precedents in classical Greek, and it became an established usage in the NT, which contains only one reference where the distinctive vocative form θεέ is used (Matt. 27:46) but a number of examples where ὁ θεός is used as a vocative.⁴ In Hebrews 10:7 there is no doubt that the same form ὁ θεός is a vocative.⁵

The ellipsis of the verb λέγει in the introductory formula of verse 8, πρὸς δέ τὸν υἱόν, provides a stronger argument for the nominative. This ellipsis must be supplied from the formula of verse 7, πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει, which in the context must mean "concerning, or in reference to, the angels He says." Verses 8 is also placed in contrasting parallelism with verse 7 by μέν . . . δέ. The close association here might lead one to expect that πρὸς would carry the same meaning in both verses; if that were the case, the formula of verse 8 should read, "concerning, or in reference to, the Son (He says)." This translation

⁴Cf. Mk. 15:34; Lk. 18:11, 13; Jn. 20:28; Rev. 4:11; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; cf. Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: épître aux hébreux*, no. 58. Lectio Divina (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), pp. 176, 177.

⁵Cf. Vanhoye, p. 177; Leslie C. Allen, "Psalm 45:7-8 (6-7) in Old and New Testament Settings," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 235 n. 84. On the use of ὁ θεός as a vocative in the LXX, cf. below, pp. 40, 41.

would serve the nominative interpretation by allowing the writer of Hebrews to quote Psalm 45 in reference to the Son without directly addressing Him as God.⁶

But there are some problems with the nominative analysis of the introductory formula. Although λέγει . . . πρὸς in verse 7 likely means "He says . . . concerning, or in reference to," it need not have the same meaning in verse 8. The contrast set up by μέν . . . δέ could include the manner of address as well as the content of the speech in the following quotations, thus the meaning of πρὸς could change.⁷

Furthermore, we must also take into account the connection between the introductory formula in verse 8 and the verses that follow. Verses 8 and 9 are joined to the quotation from Psalm 102:25-27 in verses 10-12 by the simple conjunction καί which would indicate that the writer is using both quotations in a similar way. The clue to the meaning of the formula in verse 8, then, should come from its continuity with verse 10 rather than the contrast with verse 7. But verse 10 clearly contains a second person

⁶George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 20, 21; Westcott, pp. 24, 25; Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 (1964-65): 305; Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), p. 148; *contra* cf. Murray J. Harris, "The Translation and Significance of ὁ θεός in Hebrews 1:8-9" *TynBul* 36 (1985): 140.

⁷Harris, "Hebrews," p. 140. Hebrews' parallelism with μέν . . . δέ is not always precise, and the preposition may change (cf. Heb. 7:8, 20, 21; 12:10).

address to the Son, σὺ . . . κύριε (You . . . Lord), which suggests that Hebrews addresses both quotations directly to the Son. The similar introductory formula in verse 13 πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἶρηκέν ποτε must also bear the meaning "say to" rather than "say concerning" because it is followed by a second person imperative which is directed to the angels by way of negative contrast.⁸

The expression λέγειν πρὸς, in fact, rarely means "to say concerning," or "in reference to." In the vast majority of the 152 cases where the phrase occurs in the NT,⁹ the idea follows the root meaning of πρὸς with the accusative, "to," or "towards," only the motion is conceived of as psychological rather than physical. Thus the primary idea behind this expression is to direct the intellectual content of one's speech to someone.¹⁰ The secondary meaning "to say for," or "against someone," which occurs several times in the NT,¹¹ likely developed from the idea that a person's speech may be directed to someone with either positive or

⁸ Harris, "Hebrews," p. 144; cf. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 58 and n. 86.

⁹ Harris counts 35 examples ("Hebrews," p. 143), but it appears that he has not included the occurrences of εἶπον πρὸς which W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, list separately (*A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, 5th ed. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978]).

¹⁰ Cf. Bo Reicke, "πρὸς," *TDNT*, 6:723.

¹¹ Cf. Mk. 12:12; Lk. 12:41; 20:19; Acts 23:30; I Cor. 6:5; 7:35; II Cor. 7:3; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 143 n. 47 and p. 144 n. 48.

negative intentions. The further meaning "to say concerning," or "in reference to," may have arisen from the notion that speech directed to someone has reference to and concerns that person. But apart from Hebrews 1:7, Romans 10:21 is the only instance in the NT where λέγει πρός can lay strong claim to this meaning,¹² and even there it can be contested.¹³

It seems that in his contrast between angels and the Son, the writer of Hebrews had to speak in reference to the angels (v. 7) because he could not find suitable Scripture addressed directly to them. He even uses Psalm 110:1 (v. 13), which he believes is addressed to the Son, to balance the contrast by arguing that angels were never invited to sit at God's right hand as the Son was. But he had no difficulty in finding ample Scripture addressed to the Son.¹⁴

¹²Mk. 12:12; Lk. 12:41; 20:19 are sometimes classified here (cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], 239.6; and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and ed. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, rev. F. W. Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979]), s.v. πρός [hereafter cited as BAGD]; but these references probably fit the category above better. Lk. 18:1, which gives the persons spoken to in the dative followed by πρός with an articular infinitive, does not follow the normal pattern of πρός λέγειν.

¹³Reicke claims that in Heb. 1:8 and Rom. 10:21 "the reference is unquestionably to God's direct address to Israel or Christ" (6:723). Even if πρός should be translated "concerning" in Rom. 10:21, the primary meaning "to" still lies in the background.

¹⁴Perhaps the weight of the Scriptural data addressed to the Son in contrast with the relative scarcity of Scripture concerning angels is a tacit witness to their inferiority to

We may find another argument for the nominative interpretation of ὁ θεός in the variant reading of verse 8b which has τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ (His kingdom) instead of τῆς βασιλείας σου (Your kingdom). The third person pronoun naturally requires an antecedent, and the simplest way to find one is to take ὁ θεός as a nominative.¹⁵ This argument would carry some weight, but its value depends upon the assurance that αὐτοῦ came from the writer's hand rather than that of a later copyist.

There are some reasons to believe that αὐτοῦ was original.¹⁶ It has early and weighty manuscript support in p⁴⁶, X, and B. It is also the more difficult reading in that it differs from both the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint¹⁷ and creates multiple internal tensions with the

the Son.

¹⁵Thomas, p. 305.

¹⁶Cf. Thomas, p. 305; Buchanan, pp. 20, 21; Westcott, pp. 24, 26.

¹⁷Harris notes that the writer of Hebrews may have been influenced by the switch of pronouns which the LXX makes in II Sam. 7:16 from the second person of the MT לְךָ (and your kingdom), לְךָ (your throne), to the third person וְהָ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ (and his kingdom), וְהָ ὁ θρόνος αὐτοῦ (and his throne). This shift, however, was likely caused by the LXX's desire to address the promises consistently to David's seed whereas the MT begins by addressing the promise to the seed but includes David in the promise at verse 16 as well. The change of pronouns in Heb. 1:8, 9 has its own theological ramifications, and it is not likely that the writer of Hebrews, who is generally careful about the accuracy of his quotations, was influenced by the unquoted context of his earlier reference to II Sam. 7:14 (cf. Heb. 1:5). Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 137. Cf. II Sam. 7:13 (LXX v. 12); Kistemaker, p. 78; Allen, p. 235 n.8.

other pronouns in the quotation. Not only does ὁ θεόνοος αὐτοῦ break the parallelism with ὁ θεόνοος σου in verse 8a, but a third person pronoun also seems out of place followed by three more second person pronouns in verse 9. Furthermore, αὐτοῦ forces an awkward transition from the third person to the second person verbs ἠγάπησας and ἐμίσησας (You loved . . . and You hated) in verse 9. The natural scribal tendency would have been to relieve the grammatical tension by making the pronoun conform to the σου of the Septuagint.

The insertion of καί in verse 8b also argues for the reading αὐτοῦ. On the assumption that the writer of Hebrews changed σου to αὐτοῦ, his addition of καί could then be explained as an attempt to ease the grammatical tension between the second person pronoun in verse 8a and the third person in verse 8b by separating the quotation into two distinct points: the eternity of the Son's kingdom, and the righteousness of its administration.¹⁸ One could point to several other cases where he uses καί in this way to separate distinct points within a quotation (cf. Heb. 2:13; 10:30, 37, 38).¹⁹

¹⁸John C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *NTS* 26 (1980): 369, cf. p. 378 n. 103; Westcott, p. 26; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 135; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebraerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968), p. 62. Kistemaker believes that καί may also have been responsible for the other minor differences in the quotation from the LXX (p. 25).

¹⁹Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 135 and n. 22; but in Heb. 10:37, 38 citing Hab. 2:3, 4, the insertion of καί is also made necessary by Hebrews' inversion of phrases from the LXX. There is no suggestion in Heb. 1:8, 9 that the writer

But it is far from conclusive that αὐτοῦ is the proper reading of Hebrews 1:8.²⁰ σου also has weighty support in some ancient manuscripts and is attested by a greater number and variety of witnesses including A, D, the Byzantine tradition, the lectionaries, the Old Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions, the Vulgate, and several Church Fathers. It is difficult to believe that the writer of Hebrews, contrary to his normal practice, departed from the Septuagint, and then such a broad array of witnesses as listed here consistently corrected his text to conform with the Septuagint again. The external evidence seems easier to account for on the alternate hypothesis that a few, albeit important, manuscripts altered Hebrews' use of σου to αὐτοῦ in order to accommodate a nominative interpretation of ὁ θεός.²¹

The internal evidence, however, would normally require that we adopt αὐτοῦ as the more difficult reading. The broken parallelism with ὁ θεόνομος σου in verse 8a, the peculiarity of a solitary third person pronoun surrounded by second person pronouns, and the awkwardness of the shift

is quoting from a testimony book, as F. C. Synge claims he does in Heb. 10:30 without realizing that the citations from Deut. 32:35 and 36 come from the same chapter (*Hebrews and the Scriptures* [London: S.P.C.K., 1959], p. 53).

²⁰ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (n.p.: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 662, 663, and Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 136-138.

²¹ Moffatt, p. 13; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 64 n. 35; Attridge, p. 59.

from a third person pronoun in verse 8b to the second person verbs of verse 9 all make αὐτοῦ more difficult. But the problem is that the combined weight of these points makes it so difficult as to become unlikely. Even the supposition that the writer of Hebrews inserted καί for the purpose of making two distinct quotations does not effectively remove the awkwardness of having verse 8a in the second person and verse 8b in the third.²²

Because of the weight and variety of witnesses supporting σου and the internal difficulties connected with αὐτοῦ, it seems best to regard σου as the original reading. If this reading is correct, there is a strong likelihood that ὁ θεός is a vocative;²³ but if αὐτοῦ were the proper reading, it would not necessarily imply that ὁ θεός is a nominative.²⁴ Although the insertion of καί would still

²² Metzger, p. 663; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 137; and Allen, p. 232; contra Kistemaker, p. 25. Franz Delitzsch adds from a theological perspective that "It is quite impossible that it should have been the author's deliberative intention by means of that καί to take the whole point out of his argument" (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877], 1:76).

²³ Moffatt departs from the general consensus by holding to a nominative interpretation with σου (pp. 11, 13).

²⁴ Kistemaker, p. 25 n. 1; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 10 n. 45, and pp. 19 f.; Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 1:418, 19; NASB; NEB; and JB all read αὐτοῦ with a vocative. Westcott (p. 26), Thomas (p. 305), and Metzger (p. 663), however, believe that αὐτοῦ requires a nominative with ὁ θεός. Schröger notes that grammatically a vocative interpretation would require σου (p. 60 n. 4), but he believes that Hebrews contains a vocative with αὐτοῦ (cf. pp. 60-66, 262, 263).

leave an awkward transition between pronouns, it could allow αὐτοῦ to reach back to τὸν υἱόν in verse 8a for its antecedent, thus leaving ὁ θεός free to be a vocative.²⁵

In addition to the exegetical clues we have surveyed in verses 8 and 9 that might point to a nominative interpretation, proponents of this view argue from the ability of a nominative interpretation to fit into the argument of Hebrews. Generally they claim that the force of the quotation lies in its description of the office and function which are applied to the Son in contrast with that of angels. Westcott clearly lays out this contrast, which he believes makes the Son superior to the angels: "The angels are subject to constant change, He has a dominion for ever and ever; they work through material powers, He--the Incarnate Son--fulfils a moral sovereignty and is crowned with unique joy."²⁶

Those who hold the vocative position would contend, as we will see later, that the writer of Hebrews included the quotation from Psalm 45 precisely because its title ὁ θεός could be taken as an address to the Son. But even if the contrast between angels and the Son should be described in terms of office and function rather than titles, this construction of the writer's argument is not necessarily

²⁵Harris p. 138 n. 27

²⁶Westcott, p. 26; cf. K. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916), pp. 248, 249. The value of such a contrast, however, may be recognized without relinquishing a vocative understanding of the passage; cf. Kistemaker, p. 79.

incompatible with a vocative interpretation. A nominative interpretation must exclude the title ὁ θεός from this contrast, but a vocative position may describe the contrast in various ways and slip in the title as a secondary, or even incidental, point in the writer's argument.²⁷

In the final analysis, Westcott's most basic argument

²⁷ Hugh Montefiore describes the contrast between angels and the Son in terms of office, function, and permanence, but he finds no difficulty in reading a vocative here (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], p. 47). Harris believes that v. 7 and vv. 8, 9 contain a dual contrast involving function (serving vs. ruling) and nature (impermanence vs. eternality) and that the two cannot be entirely separated. Furthermore, he notes that the superior function and nature of the Son point towards His divinity. The Son's membership in the category of deity is the primary distinctive that makes Him superior to angels; thus it is entirely in keeping with the argument of Hebrews that whereas angels are addressed by God, the Son should be addressed as God ("Hebrews," pp. 140, 141, 145, 146 n. 53, and p. 154).

Some scholars who hold to the vocative interpretation believe that the title plays no essential role in Hebrews' argument. They claim that the title was carried over along with the quotation from Ps. 45, which would have been commonly used in worship, but that the writer of Hebrews had no intention of building anything upon it. Cf. Vincent Taylor, "Does the NT call Jesus God?" *ExpTim*, 73 (1961-62): 117; also his *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1963), pp. 95, 96; A. W. Wainwright, "The Confession 'Jesus is God' in the New Testament," *SJT* 10 (1957): 287, 295, and his, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 60; cf. Raymond E. Brown, "Does the NT Call Jesus God?" *TS* 26 (1965): 563; contra cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 156 and n. 84, 85; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, SBT 2nd Series, no. 17 (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970), p. 137; and Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), p. 310. Behind this interpretation lies the supposition that the writer of Hebrews was reluctant "to speak explicitly of Jesus as 'God'" (Taylor, *Person*, p. 96), but Montefiore holds the contrary opinion that the writer does not show the slightest embarrassment in his outright ascription of divinity to the Son (p. 47).

for the nominative is that the king of Psalm 45 could not be addressed as ~~ὁ βασις~~ in the original; therefore, it is not likely that ὁ θεός is a vocative in the Septuagint or in Hebrews which quotes from it.²⁸ But to argue that the quotation in Hebrews should be interpreted in conformity with its meaning in Psalm 45 is somewhat precarious. It assumes first of all that one correctly understands the meaning of the quotation in its original context and secondly that the writer of Hebrews quoted in accordance with that meaning. Either assumption is potentially capable of being proven false upon further investigation. Although theologically one would hope to find a unity between the OT text and the NT quotation, methodologically it is just as inadmissible to determine the meaning of the NT quotation on the basis of one's understanding of the OT as it is to determine the meaning of the OT on the basis of one's understanding of the New.²⁹

Since each of the arguments for the nominative interpretation that we have discovered is capable of an alternate explanation permitting a vocative, we must now consider a couple of objections that have been raised against the nominative. First of all, the nominative interpretation presumes an unnecessary ambiguity in Hebrews'

²⁸Westcott, p. 25.

²⁹Cf. Allen, p. 220; contra Allan M. Harman, "The Syntax and Interpretation of Psalm 45:7," in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies in Honour of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1974), pp. 344-346, 348.

syntax. We have already seen that ὁ θεός has been taken as both a subject nominative, "God is your throne for ever and ever," and as a predicate nominative, "Your throne is God" In fact, the syntax of the disputed line ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος permits either option. The general rule states that where both the subject and predicate have the article, as they would here, they are interchangeable.³⁰ But they are not interchangeable conceptually because we must give θρόνος a figurative meaning as a predicate and a literal meaning as a subject, while the reverse is true for θεός. If the writer of Hebrews had intended to express a nominative, he could have easily clarified his meaning by retaining the article with the subject and omitting it from the predicate.³¹ If he had wished ὁ θεός to be predicate nominative, he could have easily written ὁ θρόνος σου θεός κτλ. or ὁ θρόνος σου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος θεός;³² and if he had wished ὁ θεός to be subject nominative, he could have left θρόνος anarthrous and possibly changed the word order so that we would have ὁ θεός θρόνος σου κτλ.³³ But if he had intended ὁ θεός to be a

³⁰ A. I. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 768.

³¹ Cf. Robertson, p. 767.

³² Harris notes that when θεός is predicative in the NT it is usually anarthrous ("Hebrews," p. 143 n. 45). Some of the exceptions which he notes may be caused by a subject which has the article or is already definite.

³³ In cases where the verb is unexpressed, word order does not seem to be as important as the use of the article.

vocative, the syntax is exactly as we would expect.

Secondly, interpreting ὁ θεός as a nominative produces a strange metaphor that does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Westcott contends that the subjective nominative translation "God is Thy throne" is no more strange than other Biblical expressions such as "Thou art my rock and my fortress" (Ps. 71:3; cf. Is. 26:4; Ps. 91:2; Deut. 33:27).³⁴ But this translation is perhaps more strange than he appreciates. "God is a rock" (cf. Ps. 71:3) means figuratively that God is a secure defense, but "God is your throne" cannot be taken as a straight-forward metaphor because it implies the offensive idea that some one is seated on God.³⁵ If the metaphor is to have any meaning, it must also contain an ellipsis making it "God is the foundation of your throne."³⁶ But one must wonder if such complicated imagery would have been effective in communicating this meaning. The meaning of the even more obscure predicate nominative "Your throne is God" remains unexplained.

θεός would not normally require the article as it is already definite in itself. The use of the article with θεός in Heb. 1:8, 9 can be easily explained, however, on the supposition that it is the common use of the articular nominative for the vocative.

³⁴Westcott, p. 26; cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 139.

³⁵Cf. Vanhoye, p. 180; William Leonard, *Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Critical Problem and Use of the Old Testament* (Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1939), p. 364; Schröger, p. 61 n. 5

³⁶Harris, "Hebrews," p. 139 and n. 33, 34, cf. p. 139.

THE VOCATIVE INTERPRETATION
OF HEBREWS 1:8, 9

It seems very difficult to sustain the nominative interpretation in Hebrews 1:8 so we pass over to a consideration of the vocative. As we have already seen, the dual probabilities that the introductory formula in verse 8 means "but to the Son He says" and that τῆς βασιλείας σου (Your kingdom) is the original reading argue strongly in favor of a vocative; but there are some additional clues in verses 8 and 9 that could strengthen the case for a vocative.

Verse 9 could possibly contain a second vocative use of ὁ θεός which would be translated, "Therefore, O God (the Son), Your God (the Father) has anointed You."³⁷ Many of the same considerations that favor a vocative in verse 8 make one possible in verse 9 as well, and the close association between these two verses makes the idea of twin vocatives tempting.

It is not necessary, however, to have a second vocative here.³⁸ One would be sufficient to carry the writer's

³⁷ Schröger (pp. 63, 64), Cullmann (p. 310), Montefiorie (p. 9), James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah*, no. 94. AnBib [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981], (p. 153), and Attridge (p. 59) take ὁ θεός as a vocative in both verses. Delitzsch (*Hebrews*, 1:76, 79, 80) and Hagner, (*Hebrews*, GNC [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983], p. 14), following the NEB, hold that a second vocative is possible.

³⁸ Cf. J. U. Van der Ploeg, "L' Exégèse de l' Ancien Testament dans l' Épître aux Hébreux," *RB* 54 (1947): 206.

argument; and it is possible to make sense of verse 9 as a nominative followed by an apposition: "Therefore, God (the Father), [even] Your God, has anointed You (the Son)."³⁹ It is not entirely clear whether the Septuagint intended the second ὁ θεός as a nominative or a vocative,⁴⁰ but the parallelism of this verse with Psalm 45:2c (44:3c LXX) suggests that it should be translated as a subject nominative in both cases: διὰ τοῦτο εὐλόγησέν σε ὁ θεός κτλ. ("Therefore, God has blessed You," v. 3c LXX), and διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεός κτλ. ("Therefore, God has anointed You," Heb. 1:9; Ps. 44:8b LXX).⁴¹

The continuation of the quote past verse 8a might also contain a couple of points that could enhance Hebrews' use of ὁ θεός as a title for Christ. Perhaps, the writer of the epistle saw a verbal similarity between the verb ἔχρισέν (anointed) of verse 9 (Ps. 45:7) and the title Χριστός

³⁹Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 150, 162; Kistemaker, p. 26; Westcott, p. 27.

⁴⁰Westcott admits both possibilities in the text (p. 25); Schröger (p. 64) and Van der Ploeg ("L' Ancien Testament," p. 206) believe it was a vocative; but Harris favors a nominative (p. 150).

⁴¹Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 150. Harris' argument that the writer of Hebrews could have removed the ambiguity by altering the word order of the LXX if he had intended a vocative (pp. 150, 151) is not overly compelling because it is a negative criticism. He also cites several parallel constructions in the LXX where ὁ θεός is repeated followed by a pronoun (p. 151). In each of these cases, the first ὁ θεός is nominative; but note Ps. 63:1 (62:2 LXX) ὁ θεός ὁ θεός μου, πρὸς σὲ ὀρίζω where it is vocative ("O God, my God, I seek You early").

(Christ).⁴² Or perhaps, he capitalized on the phrase *παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου* (above Your companions) to highlight the contrast between the Son and angels.⁴³

These explanations for the extension of the quotation, however, should not be pressed too hard in favor of a vocative interpretation. The additional material could also be explained by the suggestion that the writer intended the mention of *βασιλεία* (kingdom) and *δικαιοσύνη* (righteousness) in verses 8b and 9a to point forward to his development of Melchizedek, who, by the translation of his name, was "king of righteousness" and possessed an eternal priesthood which could be compared to the eternal throne of verse 8a (Heb. 7:2, 3; Ps. 110:4).⁴⁴ Or he may have included the additional material simply because he believed these verses were a unit in the psalm.⁴⁵

⁴²Cf. Acts 2:36; 4:26, 27; Allen, p. 237; P. E. Hughes, p. 65.

⁴³Kistemaker, pp. 78, 79. The application of the term *μέτοχοι* to Christians in Heb. 3:14 (Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 21; cf. 2:11) does not necessarily rule out the primary reference to angels here which is set up by *παρὰ* in Heb. 1:4 (Schröger, p. 64; Moffatt, p. 14; J. Hering, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. A. E. Heathcoat and P. J. Alcock [London: Epworth, 1970], p. 10). The term could have broader application to all who are in fellowship with God including angels as well as believers (Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, INTC [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1960], p. 58; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 151 n. 70; Allen, p. 237; Vanhoye, p. 193). Harman believes, however, that Hebrews retains a reference to other kings as in Psalm 45 (p. 347).

⁴⁴Allen, pp. 238, 239, 241.

⁴⁵One does not need to hold Harman's view that these verses are directly Messianic (p. 347) to maintain that they are a unit.

The real strength of the argument for ὁ Θεός being a vocative in verse 8 rests upon the coherence of such a meaning in the context of chapter 1. The likelihood that it is vocative is greatly increased by the presence of a direct address in the majority of the surrounding quotations. The writer of Hebrews governs all of the introductory formulae in the catena of verses 5-14 by verbs of speech that consistently refer back to God in verse 1 for their subject. Thus he portrays God as the speaker of all the quotations,⁴⁶ and in most of them he uses an introductory formula and a second person pronoun or imperative to indicate that God is addressing either the Son, or angels by way of negative contrast (cf. Heb. 1:5, 10-12, 13).

The quotation from Psalm 45 is filled with second person pronouns referring to the Son and is introduced by a formula which, as we have argued previously, should be translated "but to the Son He says."⁴⁷ Under these conditions, it would be perfectly natural for God to

⁴⁶ Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), pp. 164 f., 168; Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 512-514. The only possible exception is v. 7 where λέγει could be translated "Scripture says" (cf. Buchanan, p. 11), but such a translation would lack an antecedent in the text and would be inconsistent with the writer's general representation of Scripture as God speaking in the present (cf. Westcott, pp. 474-476; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 148 n. 60). The quotations in ch. 1 other than our text and those cited in vv. 6 and 7 are also divine addresses in their LXX contexts (cf. Schröger, p. 252).

⁴⁷ Harman, p. 346.

address the Son with a vocative. If there were no vocative here, the quotation would be less direct and less forceful. Instead of God calling the Son directly by name, He would be speaking about Himself in the third person. Instead of the writer arguing from the Son's exalted status as deity, he would have to argue from the Son's administration of the kingdom.

A vocative interpretation is also theologically consistent with the writer's Christology as expressed in the confession of Hebrews 1:1-4 and the other quotations in the catena of chapter 1. There is general agreement that the writer intended this catena to function as support for the Christological confession of verses 1-4.⁴⁸ Manson believes that it was "carefully arranged to provide point-to-point support" for the statements in the Christological confession. If this analysis is correct, Psalm 45 is quoted as evidence for Christ's supreme rank and Lordship.⁴⁹ In verse 3, the writer implies that Christ possesses the same divine nature as God; he declares that the Son is "the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature." Therefore, it should not be surprising to find the writer addressing the Son with a title for deity in

⁴⁸ Cf. James W. Thompson, "The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb. 1:5-13," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 352; John P. Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in the OT Citations of Heb. 1:5-14," *Bib* 66 (1985): 504-533.

⁴⁹ William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), pp. 91, 92; cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 132 n. 13.

verse 8.⁵⁰

Moreover, he bridges the confession to the catena by the claim in verse 4 that the Son has a name superior to that of angels; and he develops the contrast between the Son and angels using a number of OT quotations which contain titles for the Son. In verse 5, he quotes Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14 to apply the title "Son" to Christ. In verses 10-12, he uses Psalm 102:25-27 to address Him as "Lord" (κύριος), and he may be alluding to the same title in the unquoted portion of Psalm 110:1 in verse 13 as well.⁵¹

It is sometimes objected that the attribution of the title ὁ θεός to the Son at verse 8 would climax the writer's argument too early and any subsequent development could only be anti-climactic.⁵² But this objection carries little weight because ὁ θεός is followed in verses 10-12 by the

⁵⁰ Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 148, 149, 155 n. 81.

⁵¹ Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 155, 157. F. I. Glasson is unwilling to press the significance of the title κύριος in the unquoted portion of Ps. 110:1 ("'Plurality of Divine Persons' and the Quotations in Hebrews 1:6 ff.," *NTS* 12 [1966]: 272); but Longenecker believes that this address was responsible for bringing the last three quotations in the catena together and that they may have been joined in an earlier exegetical tradition (*Biblical Exegesis*, p. 179). Harris prefers to grant greater originality to the writer's own "Spirit directed exegesis," but he does not rule out the possibility that all of the psalm citations in this catena could have been previously joined together for liturgical use ("Hebrews," p. 158). Cf. Swetnam (pp. 152, 153) on the other titles throughout the epistle.

⁵² E. C. Wickham, *The Epistle to the Hebrews with Introduction and Notes* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 8; Westcott also believes that a vocative would obscure the writer's thought (p. 26).

title κύριε which is no less dramatic. In the Masoretic Text the passage which is quoted refers to YHWH (MT Ps. 102:26-28).⁵³

In a context where the writer has already implied that Christ is divine, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he included the quotation from Psalm 45 precisely because it contained the title ὁ θεός which could be applied to the Son.⁵⁴ Perhaps, any one of the titles "Son," "God," or "Lord" taken by itself could be understood in a sense that need not imply deity; but when they are placed together in this context, they strongly suggest that the writer of Hebrews believed that Christ was divine and that He could be

⁵³Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 141, 142; Swetnam, p. 143; Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 311.

⁵⁴Schröger states that "Der Verfasser übernimmt gerade diese Form ὁ θεός σου, ὁ θεός, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, weil sie ihm für seinen Zusammenhang nützlich ist. Der dieses Wort . . . sagt, ist für den Verfasser Gott selbst . . . der einen anderen--nämlich den Sohn--als Gott anspricht. Dem Verfasser ist das sehr wichtig: wird der Messias Jesus von höchster Autorität als 'Gott' bezeichnet . . ." (pp. 61, 62). Cullmann agrees that "the psalm is quoted here precisely for the sake of this address, and the author remarks explicitly that it refers to the Son of God" (*Christology*, p. 310). Mulder also states that the writer of Hebrews quotes this psalm "as part of the proof that the Son has 'become . . . superior to the angels as the name He has obtained is more excellent than theirs'" (Johannes Stephanus Maria Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45* [Oslo: Witsiers, 1972], p. 33). Delitzsch also claims that "The very point of the argument for the superiority of the Son above the angels, drawn from Ps. 45:7 and foll., lies surely in the fact that He is here . . . addressed in the vocative as ὁ θεός" (*Hebrews*, 1:76). Cf. Allen, p. 233; B. W. Bacon, "Heb. 1:10-12 and the Septuagint Rendering of Ps. 102:23," *ZNW* 3 (1902): 280; Harris, "Hebrews," pp. 146, 156, 162; Kistemaker, p. 78, and Swetnam, p. 143.

The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 45:6, 7
appropriately called "God."⁵⁵ Furthermore, the fact that he quotes the pertinent Scriptures (i.e., Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 45:6, 7; 102:25-27; and 110:1) without any explanation suggests that he expected the simple quotation would be sufficient to carry the point with his audience.⁵⁶

The weight of the evidence has been sufficient to convince most modern scholars that the writer of Hebrews intended ὁ θεός as a vocative, at least in verse 8a. It is still necessary, however, to determine if the meaning of the quotation in its OT context can support Hebrews' interpretation.

THE MEANING OF PSALM 45:6, 7 IN ITS OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT

If possible, we must now set aside our theological biases and travel back into the thought world of the OT to

⁵⁵Cf. Swetnam, p. 153; Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament," in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1952), p. 85.

We should note that other early Christians did not feel released from the constraint of monotheism in asserting the deity of Christ, and eventually they resolved the tension between their belief in Christ's deity and the OT's emphasis on the unity of God by formulating the doctrine of the trinity. Cf. Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1961-1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 387. But the church's theological solution, which came at a later stage in history, does not remove the more basic exegetical problems that we must face in Hebrews' interpretation of this OT text.

⁵⁶Cf. Vanhoye, p. 181; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 180, 181; Harris, "Hebrews," p. 157; Van der Ploeg, "L' Ancien Testament," p. 206.

try to discover what the author of Psalm 45 intended by his words which are quoted in Hebrews 1:8, 9. Only if we are capable of seeing this passage in its historical context, will we be qualified to judge if the writer of Hebrews is reading his theology back into the OT.

The theological difficulty with the OT addressing someone other than the God of Israel as אֱלֹהִים has led many interpreters to believe that this word cannot be a vocative in Psalm 45:6. We will consider the more important of these non-vocative interpretations that have commended themselves to scholarship before we examine the vocative interpretation of this verse. The non-vocative interpretations may be divided into two broad categories: those that attempt to explain the Masoretic Text as it stands, and those that seek to revocalize or emend it.

NON-VOCATIVE INTERPRETATIONS
OF PSALM 45:6, 7

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MASORETIC TEXT

Taking the text as it stands, אֱלֹהִים must belong to the subject or the predicate if it is not a vocative. With אֱלֹהִים as the subject, Psalm 45:6a would read, "God is your throne" In favor of this translation, one may cite similar cases in the OT where God is called a rock, a fortress, or a dwelling place (Ps. 71:3; 90:1; 91:2; etc.). But there is no danger of identifying God with a physical object in any of these instances because each of them readily admits a metaphorical meaning. The figurative

meaning of God as a throne, however, is far from obvious. The difficulty in construing the meaning of this clause with אֱלֹהִים as the subject has encouraged most OT scholars to look for more attractive ways of understanding the text.⁵⁷

If כִּסֵּאָךָ ("your throne") were the subject, אֱלֹהִים could possibly modify it. This interpretation yields a somewhat better sense: "Your throne of God is for ever and ever" (i.e. "your divine throne" [RSV]), but it creates a minor difficulty in that it forces וְעַד עוֹלָם ("[for] ever and ever") to be the predicate of a nominal sentence. This particular construction does not occur elsewhere in the OT without the preposition לְ (for); but its uniqueness does not pose a fatal threat because, as we will show later, it is at least hypothetically possible for וְעַד עוֹלָם to function in this way.⁵⁸

A more serious difficulty with this interpretation is that it assumes that the phrase כִּסֵּאָךָ אֱלֹהִים ("your throne of God") is a construct state with an intervening pronominal suffix (ךָ "your") and the construct noun אֱלֹהִים functioning as an adjectival genitive. Such a construction with two different genitives governing the same noun runs contrary to principles of Hebrew grammar and is either unique or at

⁵⁷W. Emery Barnes is one of the few advocates of this interpretation of Ps. 45:6 (*The Psalms with Introduction and Notes*, vol. 2 of 2 vols., WestCom [London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1931], 2:224; cf. Mulder, pp. 49-51). The same translation has found some support in connection with the quotation in Heb. 1:8, 9 where there are less options for a non-vocative interpretation (cf. above pp. 31 ff., 44).

⁵⁸Cf. below, pp. 74-78.

least very rare.⁵⁹

The grammatical parallels in the OT that have been alleged in favor of this view are usually best explained as cases of apposition (e.g. Ps. 71:7 *יְעֹזְרֵי-יָ* ["my refuge which is strength"], cf. II Sam. 22:18, 33; Num. 25:12; Hab. 3:8), or as the accusative of material (e.g. Lev. 6:10 [3] *כִּתְּנֵי לִנְיָן* ["his robe made of linen"]). Although most of these examples could be translated in English with an adjective (e.g. "my strong refuge," or "his linen robe"), that does not mean that the Hebrew construction is necessarily genitival. Leviticus 26:42, *בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב* ("My covenant with Jacob;" cf. Jer. 33:20, 25), is more difficult to classify. It may contain an ellipsis for *בְּרִיתִי בְּרִית יַעֲקֹב* ("My covenant, the covenant with Jacob"), or it may be explained in one of several other ways. Even if a couple of true parallels could be found, the proposed construction in Psalm 45:6 would still be an exceptional case.⁶⁰

⁵⁹The existence of such a construction in Syriac encouraged J. A. Emerton to speculate that it might also exist in Aramaic ("The Aramaic Underlying τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκῆς in Mk. XIV.24," *JTS* 61 [1955]: 238-240), but concrete examples are hard to come by.

⁶⁰CF. Murray J. Harris, "The Translation of Elohim in Psalm 45:7-8," *TynBul* 35 (1984): 71, 72; Mulder, pp. 51-53; S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and some other Syntactical Questions*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), p. 260; Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar as edited and enlarged by A. E. Cowley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), [hereafter cited as G-K], 128 d; Mulder, pp. 51-53.

Both Harman and Franz Delitzsch allow that the translation "your divine throne is everlasting" might be possible if there were no alternatives. But Delitzsch fears that it sounds tautological: the eternity of the throne is implicit in its divinity, but the throne's divinity is left

The second major alternative is that אֱלֹהִים could function predicatively in verse 6a. To take אֱלֹהִים as the direct predicate would involve one in the same identification of the transcendent Deity with a physical object that ruled out its functioning as the sole subject. But it might be possible to avoid the theological difficulty involved in that view by taking אֱלֹהִים as part of the predicate.

One way of doing this is to interpret the predicate as a comparison: "Your throne is [like] God's [throne], eternal." This interpretation could be justified on the supposition that the preposition כִּי (like) was omitted by haplography or for the sake of euphony,⁶¹ except that there is no textual evidence to support such an omission.⁶² It is more often explained as the combination of two idioms which are well attested separately. The preposition may be omitted from a comparison, or the second element in the comparison may contain an ellipsis of a word, or words, that can be supplied from the context. This interpretation

without support (*Psalms*, vol. 5 of *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. James Martin, reprint ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982], p. 83); and Harman notes that it still predicates divine dignity to the person who is spoken of (p. 342).

⁶¹Cf. J. A. Emerton, "The Syntactical Problem of Psalm 45:7," *JSS* 13 (1968): 60; Aubrey Rodway Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), p. 30 f. n. 1.

⁶²Cf. Harman, p. 339, and Mulder, p. 57.

supposes that both the preposition "like" and the interpolated word "throne" have been omitted from the text.

Proponents of this view have put forward several possible parallels to support the double omission in this comparison. G. R. Driver cites from the Babylonian "Epic of Creation" 4:4, 6, which says of Marduk, "your word is the heaven-god" (i.e. "your word is like that of the heaven-god").⁶³ C. R. North appeals to a Biblical parallel from the Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1: עֵינַיִךְ כְּדֹבָהּ ("your eyes are doves"), which he understands as "'your eyes are like doves eyes' for softness and innocence" (cf. Song of Sol. 5:12).⁶⁴ Emerton believed that he had found another parallel in Psalm 80. His revised translation of verse 10 (11), which compares Israel to a spreading vine that covered the entire land of Canaan, reads: "The mountains were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the boughs of the cedars of God."⁶⁵

But the value of these supposed parallels in supporting a comparison in Psalm 45:6 is questionable. Driver himself admits that the example from the "Epic of Creation" is "a

⁶³Godfrey, R. Driver, "The Psalms in the Light of Babylonian Research," in *The Psalmists*, ed. D. C. Simpson (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 124; Godfrey, R. Driver, "The Modern Study of the Hebrew Language," in *The People and the Book*, ed. Arthur S. Peake (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 116.

⁶⁴C. R. North, "The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship," *ZAW* 9 (1932): 30.

⁶⁵Cf. Emerton, "Psalm 8:7," pp. 60-63.

rare relic of a primitive syntax."⁶⁶ As he seems to recognize, it is difficult to build a solid case for a Hebrew idiom on a solitary example in a foreign body of literature.

A genuine Biblical example could help the case, but it is doubtful that the Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1 means "your eyes are like doves' eyes." The similar comparison, "your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes" (Song of Sol. 4:2), and the further description of the doves as sitting "beside streams of water, bathed in milk" (Song of Sol. 5:12) suggest that the comparison is not with the softness and innocence of doves' eyes but with the whiteness of the doves themselves.⁶⁷ An alternate interpretation, which is based on the ancient artistic convention of identifying certain objects with a stereotyped form, also suggests that the comparison is not with doves' eyes. The eye was commonly associated with the dove, according to these artistic conventions, because it resembled the contour of a dove's body.⁶⁸ Either interpretation could explain the

⁶⁶ Driver, "Modern Study," p. 116; cf. Emerton, "Psalm 8:7," p. 63. Driver's translation of this text has also been questioned; cf. J. R. Porter, "Psalm 45:7," *JTS* 12 (1961): 52; Mulder, pp. 55, 56.

⁶⁷ Porter, pp. 52, 53; cf. Emerton, pp. 59, 60; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 76; Mulder, p. 56; Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, AB, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1977), p. 356 f.

⁶⁸ Gillis Gerleman, *Ruth. Das Hohelied*, vol. 15 of BKAT (Neukirchen-Uluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1965), pp. 114, 146, 147; cf. Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, ConBib OT Series 1

supposed parallels in the Song of Solomon without hypothesizing an ellipsis of the second element of the comparison as well as the comparative preposition. The existence of such a rare idiom is even less likely in Psalm 45:6 than in the Song of Solomon because, unlike doves which have real eyes, God only has a figurative throne.⁶⁹

One way of avoiding the problems of the comparative translation, while still understanding אֱלֹהִים as part of the predicate, is to supply אֲנִי a second time and take אֱלֹהִים as a genitive modifying it: "Your throne is God's [throne] for ever" ⁷⁰ Mulder argued that a direct identity is needed here rather than a comparison. He notes that verbless clauses normally express a direct relation between the subject and predicate unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. The next line, which is a straightforward identification: "A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom," favors a direct relationship

(Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1967), p. 51 n. 46.

⁶⁹ T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms, or the Praises of Israel* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888), p. 126 f.

⁷⁰ Cf. Mulder, pp. 58-64, 73-80; R. Tournay, "Les Affinities du Ps. 45 avec le Cantique et leur Interpretation Messianique," in "International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Congress Volume," Bonn 1962, *VTS*, vol. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. 186 f.; Tournay, "Le Psaume 110," *RB* 67 (1960): 7 f.; A. Robert and R. Tournay, *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (Paris: Gabalda, 1963), p. 434; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *Kingship and Messiah: Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, ConBib OT Series no. 8 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1976), pp. 256, 265, 273; John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, no. 32 SBT 2nd Series (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1976), p. 143; Kirkpatrick, p. 248.

here. But Mulder believed that a direct identification of the king's throne with God is not theologically permissible, so he accepted an identification of the king's throne with God's throne as the only alternative.⁷¹

An ellipsis of **אִסְדֵּי** (throne) might be possible in verse 6a, but it is strange that the poet would create ambiguity by omitting it here when he unnecessarily repeats **שֵׁבֶט** (scepter) in the next line.⁷² The attempt to fill in the assumed ellipsis of **אִסְדֵּי** (throne) also results in a strange construction; it makes the predicate **אֱלֹהִים** genitive ([is] God's [throne]) rather than nominative ([is] God) as would be usual. Perhaps, it is possible to have a verbless clause with the predicate in the genitive (e.g. Ezek. 41:22 **וְקִירוֹ עֵץ**, lit. "its walls, wood," i.e. "its walls [were walls of] wood," or its walls [were] wood[en]"),⁷³ but each of the examples that have been adduced contain an implicit identity between the subject and the predicate. The predicate may express the material of which the subject is composed or a quality belonging to it, but these categories can hardly apply to the relationship between God and a throne. Mulder admits that there are no good syntactical parallels to this translation of Psalm 45:6, but he accepts

⁷¹Mulder, p. 58. This translation also accords well with the dynastic implications of II Sam. 7 and Ps. 89 (cf. below, pp. 103-106).

⁷²Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 74, 75.

⁷³Cf. Mulder, pp. 59-62; Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 73, 74; Allen, p. 228; *contra* Driver, *Treatise*, p. 260.

it as the a most probable solution of those that have been proposed.⁷⁴ It is necessary then to consider the other possible solutions before we accept this interpretation.

ALTERATIONS TO THE MASORETIC TEXT

The difficulty in finding a satisfactory interpretation for the text has caused some scholars to believe that it must be revocalized or emended. Perhaps, one of their alterations could provide a satisfactory way around the problem created by אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 45:6.

Dahood has proposed an ingenious way of changing the meaning of this verse without materially altering the consonantal text. He revocalizes אֱלֹהִים as a denominative Piel verb with a second person suffix (אֱלֹהִים) and reads אֱלֹהִים-יְעֹד as a genitive modifying the new subject אֱלֹהִים (with an enclitic *mem*). The resultant translation is, "The eternal and everlasting God has enthroned you." In support of this view, he appeals to the Ugaritic-Hebrew practice of coining denominative verbs and to the parallelism of "God has enthroned you" with "God has blessed you" (v. 2c), and "God has anointed you" (v. 7b). He also appeals negatively to the "unsatisfactory nature" of the countless other solutions.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Mulder, pp. 63, 65.

⁷⁵Mitchel Dahood, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 16 AB (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Co., Inc., 1966), 1:272, 273. Peter C. Craigie, follows this translation, but he notes that a vocative is "the most likely interpretation of the vocalization in the MT" (*Psalms 1-50*, WBC [Waco: Word Books, 1983], pp. 336, 337).

But his own translation faces a serious objection which is hard to overcome: there is no evidence that the verb which he proposes existed in Hebrew or any other cognate language.⁷⁶ It is also doubtful that the phrase עולם ועד should modify the subject in verse 6a; the parallelism with verses 2 and 17, where very similar expressions mark the permanence of the king's reign, speaks strongly against the supposition that it should refer to God's eternal nature in verse 6.⁷⁷ The shift in meaning created by referring to an eternal God rather than an eternal throne also weakens the dynastic implications that most likely lie behind this psalm.⁷⁸ Other translations may understand עולם ועד as the predicate of a nominal sentence, or alternatively as an adverbial accusative,⁷⁹ but the revocalization of אָסַף as a verb seems to close both of these options for Dahood. If the verb he has chosen refers to the act of placing on the throne, it is difficult to conceive of this action as going on "for ever and ever."⁸⁰

Furthermore, the parallelism created by this proposal is not perfect. The heavy modifier attached to the subject

⁷⁶ Cf. Harman, p. 341; Mulder, pp. 71, 72.

⁷⁷ Cf. Mulder, p. 70.

⁷⁸ Mulder, p. 80.

⁷⁹ Cf. Harman, p. 341; Oswald T. Allis, "Thy Throne, O God, is for Ever and Ever," *PTR* 21 (1923): pp. 253-258.

⁸⁰ Mulder, p. 80.

in verse 6a makes that line somewhat lopsided in comparison with verses 2c and 7b.⁸¹ Finally, some reason is needed to explain why the final mem of אֱלֹהִים should be enclitic in this particular passage.⁸² It seems that Dahood's translation participates in some of the same unsatisfactory nature that he has attribute to other proposals so we must consider if an emendation to the text could offer a better solution.

The most common emendation is to read יִהְיֶה instead of אֱלֹהִים: "your throne will be [exist] for ever"⁸³ The reasoning behind this emendation is fairly simple. Psalm 45 belongs to a group of psalms known as the "Elohistic Psalter" (Pss. 42-83) because of its preference for the Divine Name אֱלֹהִים. It has been suggested that the redactor mistook the imperfect of the verb to be (יִהְיֶה) for the Divine Name יְהוָה, and changed it to אֱלֹהִים in accordance with his practice. By restoring the verb, one is rid of the

⁸¹ Harman also notes that the verbs in the other parallel lines are not denominatives (p. 341), but precise parallelism should not always be expected in Hebrew poetry.

⁸² Cf. Harman, p. 340; Mulder, p. 70.

⁸³ Cf. Greifswald Geisebrecht, "Zwei cruces interpretum: Ps. 45:7 und Deut. 33:21," ZAW 7 (1887): 290, 291; L. Venard, "L'Utilisation des Psaumes dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Mélanges E. Podechard* (Lyons: la Faculté catholique de théologie de Lyon, 1945), p. 257; D. Bernh. Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1922), p. 187; J. Welhausen, *The Book of Psalms: A New English Translation with Explanatory Notes* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1898), pp. 45, 183; *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley eds. (Hong Kong: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 422.

problems caused by אֱלֹהִים.

Several points may be urged in response to this view.⁸⁴ First of all, there is little reason to suspect that the text is corrupt. No variant reading has been produced from a Hebrew manuscript, and all the versions apparently regard the text as containing a vocative אֱלֹהִים.⁸⁵ Secondly, although אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים are similar orthographically and both occur frequently (about 7,000 and 400 times respectively), there is only one possible instance of their confusion in all of the OT.⁸⁶ Furthermore, such a confusion in Psalm 45 is not the kind of mistake that would happen accidentally. A redactor who was consciously trying to avoid the Tetragrammaton would not be prone to see it where a simple verb could lie. Presumably the theological difficulty created by addressing the king with one of the restricted Divine Names would be serious enough that no astute scribe could blunder into it unawares, and such an obvious mistake would surely have been corrected back to the original verb long ago if the text had permitted that option.⁸⁷ Thirdly, we must call into question the notion that a redactor

⁸⁴Allis has given a full reply (pp. 23-266). We will follow his presentation with some modifications. His final two points will be dealt with under the vocative interpretation (cf. below, pp. 74-78, 88-106).

⁸⁵Allis, p. 240.

⁸⁶II Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:3; cf. Allis, p. 242 f. nn. 15, 16.

⁸⁷Cf. Mulder, pp. 67, 68.

uniformly changed the name יהוה to אלהים in this group of psalms. יהוה still appears forty-three times in Psalms 42-83, in comparison with two hundred occurrences of אלהים.⁸⁸ Finally, the insertion of the verb in verse 6a produces a weakened meaning which does not suit the context well. As a nominal sentence, "your throne is for ever" describes the eternal nature of the throne as a present fact; but as a verbal sentence, "your throne will be for ever" promises something that will be realized in the future. A future promise does not fit well with the present reality asserted in the next verse: "A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom."⁸⁹ At one time this interpretation was popular, but it no longer commands the same respect that it once held.

Several other emendations have been suggested which introduce a different verb into the text. Gaster, for instance, inserts הִכִּין (set firm): "Thy throne hath some god [set firm] to endure for all time."⁹⁰ S. R. Driver, following de Lagarde, reads יָעַד for יָעַד: "Your throne God has established forever."⁹¹ Without stating his reason,

⁸⁸Allis, p. 243. Robert G. Boling believes that the relative infrequency of the divine name in these psalms is largely due to stylistic considerations ("'Synonymous' Parallelism in the Psalms," *JSS* 5 [1960]: 253-255).

⁸⁹Allis, pp. 250-252; Mulder, p. 68.

⁹⁰Gaster, pp. 244, 250.

⁹¹S. R. Driver, *Treatise*, p. 260 194; Paulus de Lagarde, *Prophetae Chaldaice* (Leipzig: Teubneri, 1872), XLVII.

Cheyne reads in the verb ~~וַיִּשָׂא~~ and makes a few other alterations to produce the translation, "Yawhe lifts thee up for ever and ever."⁹²

Other emendations could be cited, but in spite of their multiplicity and ingenuity, none of them has gained lasting acceptance or offered a convincing explanation for how the present form of the text came into existence.⁹³ We have already seen that the various interpretations which have sought to explain the text in a non-vocative fashion have not been much more convincing. Briggs addresses both categories when he declares that "None of the many explanations of scholars satisfy, and so new opinions are constantly emerging, equally unsatisfactory." He proposes to expunge verses 6, 7a from the text altogether believing that "when they are removed they are not missed."⁹⁴ But his advice is surely a counsel of despair. Since it is widely admitted that this proliferation of interpretations and emendations has been created by an attempt to "avoid,"

⁹²T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction*, vol. 1 of 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truber & Co., Ltd., 1904), pp. 199, 203 f. Earlier he recognized a vocative as the only natural reading of the MT but adopted a different emendation (*Psalms*, 1888, pp. 124, 126, 127).

⁹³Cf. Mulder, pp. 67, 68. Furthermore, the trend of recent scholarship has been to treat the MT with greater respect and more reluctance to accept emendations than was common in the past.

⁹⁴Charles Augustus Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 2 vols. ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), 1:387.

"evade," "escape," or "explain away," the theological difficulty presented by the traditional, vocative interpretation in addressing someone other than the God of Israel as אֱלֹהִים,⁹⁵ we must turn to this interpretation now to see if it can stand.

THE VOCATIVE INTERPRETATION

OF PSALM 45:6, 7

HISTORICAL SUPPORT FOR A VOCATIVE INTERPRETATION

Before we examine the exegetical evidence concerning the vocative interpretation of Psalm 45, it may be helpful to listen to the witness of history regarding this interpretation. The belief that אֱלֹהִים is a vocative in Psalm 45:6 is the traditional view, and it boasts an impressive list of adherents.⁹⁶ It is not correct for that reason, but it deserves our respectful consideration. Our historical survey of the interpretation of this text will concentrate on those ancient witnesses that would not likely have been influenced by the canonical interpretation in Hebrews 1:8, 9.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Cf. Albrektson, p. 51 n. 46; Allis, p. 236; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 82; Warfield, p. 88; John Patterson, *The Praises of Israel: Studies Literary and Religious in the Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 26, 27; Driver, "The Psalms," p. 124; Mulder, p. 33.

⁹⁶Cf. the lists given by Mulder, pp. 35, 36, and Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 77-79.

⁹⁷Mulder believes that the authority of the NT influenced many interpreters to regard אֱלֹהִים as a vocative (p. 49).

The witness of the Septuagint is especially important with respect to Hebrews as the writer of the Epistle quotes from it. It is open to some of the same differences of opinion that are found in Hebrews, but it also offers some clues that point more directly towards a vocative.

Although the Septuagint translates אֱלֹהִים with the nominative form ὁ θεός, it most likely understood this term as a vocative. The use of the nominative with the article for the vocative was as common in the Septuagint as it was in NT usage, which we examined previously. The vocative form θεέ never occurs in the Septuagintal Psalter and only two or three times in the entire Septuagint, but ὁ θεός is regularly used as a vocative throughout the OT.⁹⁸

The probability that the Septuagint understood אֱלֹהִים as a vocative is increased by the fact that it addresses the king with the vocative "O Mighty One" (δυνατέ) twice in the immediately preceding context (vv. 3, 5 [4, 6]). In the second case, the Septuagint inserts the title δυνατέ even

⁹⁸ θεέ occurs in Esth. 4:17 (A); Wisd. 9:1; and IV Macc. 6:27; but ὁ θεός is used as a vocative some 63 times in the Psalter alone; e.g. Ps. 42:1 (LXX 41:2); 43 (42):1, 4; 44:1 (43:2); etc. Cf. Harris, "Hebrews," p. 142; and his "Psalm 45," p. 89 n. 89; Vanhoye, p. 176; Allis, p. 259 n. 48; Blass-Debrunner, 147, pp. 81, 82.

The later Greek version of Aquila (c. 185-200 A.D.) clearly translates אֱלֹהִים as a vocative by using the rare form θεέ. We cannot be sure that Aquila referred the vocative to the king, but apparently he did not feel that its presence here was inconsistent with his Jewish theology (cf. Vanhoye, p. 180). The Greek versions of Symmachus (c. 185-200 A.D.) and Theodotian (c. 150-185 A.D.), however, retain the translation ὁ θεός (F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt* . . . [Hildersheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964], 2:162).

though the Masoretic Text lacks the corresponding term רָבִיב .⁹⁹ This insertion creates a parallelism which suggests that the vocative in verse 5 (6), "Your weapons are sharpened, O Mighty One," should be answered by a corresponding vocative in verse 6 (7), "Your throne, O God is for ever and ever."¹⁰⁰ It also leads us to suspect that, unless the text contains a radical shift, $\acute{\omicron} \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ in verse 6 (7) refers to the same person as the one called $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}$ in verses 3, 5 (4, 6).¹⁰¹

Two other early non-Christian sources support a vocative translation of Psalm 45:6 (7). The Midrash on Genesis interprets the promises of the Judah oracle that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shilo comes" (Gen. 49:10) with reference to the "throne of kingship" mentioned in Psalm 45:6 (7) which it quotes: "Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom."¹⁰² It also interprets Shiloh

⁹⁹ Briggs assumes on metrical considerations, however, that the word has dropped from the MT and should be restored (1:383, 386, 391).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 88, 89, and "Hebrews," pp. 142, 143; Brown, p. 562.

¹⁰¹ Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 89.

¹⁰² *Gen. Rabbah* 99. 8; cf. Herman Lebrecht Strack, and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 6 vols. in 7 (München: Beck, 1922-1961), 3:679; (hereafter cited as S-B). Freedman, however, translates Ps. 45:7 as, "The throne given of God is for ever and ever; . . .," (emph. mine, Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon eds. and trans., *Midrash Rabbah*, 13 vols. in 10 [London: Soncino Press, 1939], 2:982).

Messianically as "he to whom kingship belongs" and identifies this person as the root of Jesse (Isa. 11:10).

Chapter 24 of the *Testament of Judah* in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* incorporates Psalm 45 into a mosaic of Messianic allusions drawn from the OT. It speaks in expectation of the Star of Jacob (v. 1; Num. 24:17) and the Sun of Righteousness who will arise (v. 1; Mal. 4:2). This one will walk in gentleness and righteousness (v. 1; Ps. 45:4), and in him no sin will be found (v. 1; Isa. 53:9). He is the one who will pour out the spirit (vv. 2, 3; Joel 2:28, 29) and who is identified as the Shoot (of God) (vv. 4, 6; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). He is also the one who will exercise the scepter of the kingdom and the rod of righteousness (vv. 5, 6; Ps. 45:6; cf. Ps. 2:9, and *Pss. Sol.* 17:24).¹⁰³

The Targum reveals its messianic understanding of Psalm 45 by inserting a vocative into verse 2 (MT v. 3): "Your beauty, O King Messiah, surpasses that of ordinary men. The spirit of prophecy has been bestowed upon your lips; therefore, the Lord has blessed you forever."¹⁰⁴ It also

¹⁰³Cf. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1983, 1985), 1:801. Against the claim of James M. de Jonge that the book is a Christian production dating from 190-225 A.D. (*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of their Text, Composition and Origin* [Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Co., 1953], pp. 117-131, esp. pp. 121-125), cf. H. C. Kee (in Charlesworth, 1:775, 777, 778, 781), who dates it to the second century B.C.

¹⁰⁴The translation is that of S. H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974), p. 110; cf. S-B, 3:679; Vanhoye, p. 177; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 19 n. 84.

The Meaning of Psalm 45:6, 7 in its OT Context

translates verse 6 (7) as a vocative but relates it to God rather than the king, "Thy throne of glory, O Lord [YHWH], endures forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom."¹⁰⁵ The use of the Tetragrammaton indicates that the Targum referred the vocative to God rather than the king, but it is highly unlikely that the psalmist intended to address God in the midst of a wedding song which is specifically addressed to the king.¹⁰⁶ Strack and Billerbeck, however, cite an interesting variant which addresses the vocative to the king and is interpreted Messianically: "Your throne from God in heaven endures for ever and ever, . . . , O King, Messiah."¹⁰⁷

There may also be some clues within the OT itself that Psalm 45 was understood Messianically at a very early date. Isaiah 61:3 uses the phrase "oil of gladness" (שֶׁמֶן שִׂמְחָה), which is otherwise peculiar to Psalm 45:7 (8), in a Messianic context. Isaiah 9:5 contains the composite Messianic title *El Gibbor* (אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר)¹⁰⁸ which may be found separately in Psalm 45:3, 6 (4, 7) if אֱלֹהִים is a vocative there. Zechariah 12:8 may echo the close relationship that

¹⁰⁵Levey, p. 110.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Mulder, pp. 39, 48; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 78; Kirkpatrick, p. 248.

¹⁰⁷S-B, 1:979; cf. Mulder, p. 39 n. 36.

¹⁰⁸On the meaning of the title אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר in Isa. 9:5 cf. below, pp. 98-100.

Psalm 45 establishes between God and the king in its prophecy that "the house of David will be like God."¹⁰⁹ These clues suggest an early Messianic understanding of Psalm 45, but they are not direct enough to be conclusive.

Another historical witness to a vocative interpretation may be found in the process of canonizing the Psalms. There is broad agreement that the inclusion of this psalm in the canon, at a time when the original couple for whom it had been written had faded into a dim memory, can only be explained on the supposition that it was viewed Messianically. Its place in the Psalter cannot be satisfactorily accounted for as a historical reminder of the past but only as an eschatological hope for the future. None of the former kings of David's dynasty realized the transcendent ideals portrayed in this psalm's imagery of perfection and splendor, but apparently the collectors of the Psalms still retained the hope that some future son of David would fulfill them.¹¹⁰

The heading in the Septuagint may also reflect a Messianic understanding of the psalm. In the Masoretic Text, the heading reads, "a song of love" (שִׁיר לְאַהֲבָה), but the Septuagint changes it to "a song for the beloved" (ὠδὴν

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:78.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), pp. 118, 119; Allen, p. 233; Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning*, 2 vols. (New York: Alba House, 1969), 2:231; Allis, pp. 260 n. 51, 263 n. 61; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:74, 77, 78; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 19 n. 84.

ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπήτοῦ).¹¹¹

AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VOCATIVE INTERPRETATION

The ancient witness of history regarding this text certainly supports a vocative interpretation, but exegetical evidence is also needed to form a basis for such a conclusion. There are four lines of evidence that may help to determine if the author of Psalm 45 intended אֱלֹהִים in verse 6 to be a vocative: grammatical, structural, contextual, and theological. We will examine each of them in turn beginning with the grammatical evidence.

GRAMMATICAL EVIDENCE

Grammatically, the vocative interpretation of Psalm 45:6 is the simplest way of construing the text, but there are a number of objections against it which must be answered if it is to stand. The first grammatical objection against the vocative interpretation concerns the omission of the article with the word in the vocative. In Hebrew, a person who is addressed is definite and should therefore have the article,¹¹² but אֱלֹהִים in verse 6a lacks the article.

This objection is weakened, however, by the general admission that the rule is not absolute and the article is

¹¹¹Cf. Allen, p. 233.

¹¹²Cf. Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Institute biblique pontificale, 1965), 137 g; G-K, 126 d, e; Mulder, p. 39; M. E. Podechard, "Notes sur Les Psaumes, Ps. 45," *RB* 32 (1923): 33; Tournay, "Ps. 45," p. 186 n. 1.

often omitted, especially in poetry.¹¹³ Furthermore, the omission of the article before אֱלֹהִים could be justified on the grounds that it could be considered as a proper noun and therefore determinate in itself. In fact, אֱלֹהִים as a vocative occurs with the article only once in the OT (Judges 16:28), but it is anarthrous about fifty times.¹¹⁴ If it is argued that אֱלֹהִים should have the article in Psalm 45:6 because it is a title addressed to the king rather than the proper name of the Supreme Deity, one may counter that this psalm contains two other titular vocatives, "O Mighty One" (גִּבּוֹר, v. 3) and "O Daughter" (בִּתּוֹ, v. 10), which are both anarthrous.¹¹⁵ Thus the omission of the article with אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 45:6 is not a serious obstacle to the vocative interpretation.

A second grammatical objection to the vocative interpretation concerns the ability of עוֹלָם וָעֶד ("[for] ever and ever") to function as the predicate of verse 6a. If אֱלֹהִים is a vocative, כִּסֵּאֶךָ ("your throne") must be the subject, leaving עוֹלָם וָעֶד to be the predicate of a nominal sentence. The difficulty is that the phrase עוֹלָם וָעֶד is not used this way elsewhere in the OT. Whenever עוֹלָם functions as the sole predicate of a nominal sentence, it is

¹¹³Cf. Joüon, *ibid.*; G-K, 126 h; Mulder, pp. 39, 40, 46; Couroyer, p. 235; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 80; Allen, p. 227.

¹¹⁴Cf. B. Couroyer, "Dieu ou Roi? Le vocatif dans le Psaume 45 (vv. 1-9)," *RB* 78 (1971): 235, 236.

¹¹⁵Cf. Mulder, pp. 39, 40.

accompanied by the preposition לְ (for).¹¹⁶

The lack of a close parallel, however, is not a decisive argument against the use of עֲלֵם וְעָרַב as the predicate here because this phrase occurs in a rather limited number of cases.¹¹⁷ The phrase only occurs five other times in the OT without the preposition (Ps. 10:16; 21:4 [5]; 48:14 [15]; 52:8 [10]; 104:5) and another nine times with the preposition (Ex. 15:18; Mic. 4:5; Ps. 9:5 [6]; 45:17 [18]; 119:44; 145:1, 2, 21; Dan. 12:3). Given this limited number of occurrences, it is still possible that this predicate usage could fall within the established conventions of Hebrew syntax. If עֲלֵם וְעָרַב is the predicate of verse 6a, it could be functioning syntactically in one of two possible ways. We will look at these possibilities separately as each requires its own justification.

First of all, although both words in this phrase are nouns, they might be used as predicate adjectives. Hebrew often uses a noun as a predicate adjective when it possesses no corresponding adjective formed from the same root and there are no other suitable adjectives.¹¹⁸ Sometimes, especially in poetry, it even prefers to use the noun rather

¹¹⁶ Cf. Mulder, pp. 40, 42; Driver, *Treatise*, p. 260; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 80; Allen, p. 227; also below, p. 78 n. 128.

¹¹⁷ Mulder grants the weakness of the argument (pp. 42, 43).

¹¹⁸ E.g., Ps. 19:9 (10) "the judgments of the LORD are truth (true)," cf. Ps. 119:160.

than the corresponding adjective in order to emphasize the unconditional relationship between the subject and the predicate.¹¹⁹ As a direct predicate our text would read literally, "Your throne, O God, is eternity and everlastingness (i.e. is eternal and everlasting)." Although עולם is not used elsewhere as a predicate adjective,¹²⁰ it could be justified grammatically as the predicate of this verse in this way.

The second way that עולם וְעַד could function predicatively in verse 6 is as an adverbial accusative of time in place of the prepositional phrase for ever and ever. A number of similar syntactical constructions suggest that such a usage is possible.¹²¹

The phrase עולם וְעַד can clearly be used adverbially under other circumstances. Of the five times that it occurs without the preposition, not including our text, three times it is used adverbially in a verbal sentence¹²² and twice as an

¹¹⁹ E.g., Ezra 8:28 "You (are) holiness . . . the vessels also (are) holiness . . . (holy)," (שְׁקִיב being used for שְׁקִיבִי); Ps. 119:172 "All Your commandments (are) righteousness (righteous)," (קִדְּוָה being used for קִדְּוִי); Prov. 3:17 "All her paths (are) peace (peaceable), (שְׁלוֹמִי being used for שְׁלוֹמִי); cf. Allis, pp. 253-255; G-K, 141 b-d; cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 81.

¹²⁰ Cf. Mulder, p. 41 f., and n. 50.

¹²¹ Cf. Allis, p. 257.

¹²² Cf. Ps. 52:8 (10) "I will trust in the mercy of the LORD for ever and ever"; also Ps. 21:4 (5); 104:5.

adverbial modifier of the predicate in nominal sentences.¹²³

In each of the nine occurrences of this phrase with the preposition (לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד), it is used adverbially in a verbal sentence.¹²⁴

עוֹלָם by itself, without וָעֶד, may also be used adverbially, but whenever it occurs in constructions parallel to Psalm 45:6 where it functions as the sole predicate of a nominal sentence, it is always accompanied by the preposition.¹²⁵ There is reason to believe, however, that עוֹלָם could function in this way without the preposition. In verbal sentences עוֹלָם may substitute for לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.¹²⁶ If the same substitution applies to nominal sentences, it seems that עוֹלָם וָעֶד could be the predicate of Psalm 45:6a.

The ability of other adverbial expressions of time to

¹²³Cf. Ps. 10:16 "The LORD is king for ever," and Ps. 48:14 (15) "For this is God, our God for ever and ever." Cf. also Allis, p. 255 n. 42; Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 80, 81.

¹²⁴Cf. Ex. 15:18; Mic. 4:5; Ps. 9:5 (6); 45:17 (18); 119:44; 145:1, 2, 21; Dan. 12:3); cf. also Allis, p. 255 n. 43.

¹²⁵Cf. Ps. 117:2 ("The truth of the LORD is for ever"); 119:160 ("Every one of Your righteous judgments is for ever"); 135:13 ("Your name, O LORD, is for ever"); and the often repeated phrase "His mercy is for ever," which appears twenty-six times in Psalm 136. Allis includes II Chron. 2:4 (3) in his list (p. 257); and Mulder adds Ps. 119:89 (p. 43 and n. 54); but עוֹלָם is not the sole predicate in either case.

¹²⁶Cf. Ps. 61:8 ("I will sing praise to Your name [for] ever"); 66:7; 89:1 (2), 2 (3), 37 (38); the same is true of its use in the plural (cf. I Kings 8:13; [= II Chron. 6:2]; Ps. 61:5); cf. also Allis, p. 255 n. 44; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 81.

function predicatively also strengthens this conclusion. לְעוֹלָם (perpetuity), which is a synonym of עוֹלָם , may function without its regular preposition (לְ) as an adverbial predicate in the equivalent of a nominal sentence where the verb is הָיָה (to be) as well as in other verbal sentences. On occasion, a temporal adverb may function as the sole predicate of a true nominal sentence;¹²⁷ and a noun functioning as an adverbial predicate may clearly take the place of a prepositional phrase.¹²⁸ There is a strong case then that עוֹלָם וָעֶד may be the predicate of Psalm 45:6a.

A third grammatical objection to the vocative interpretation of Psalm 45:6a concerns word order. Andersen's research on the verbless clause suggests that the word order here should be predicate - subject,¹²⁹ but if אֱלֹהִים is vocative, the predicate must be עוֹלָם וָעֶד (for ever and

¹²⁷ Cf. II Chron. 12:15, "the wars of Rehoboam and Jeroboam (were) all the (their) days"; Job 8:9, "we (are) yesterday and do not know"; Ps. 52:3 is disputed. Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 81; Allis, p. 257; Mulder, pp. 42, 43; Driver, *Treatise*, p. 260.

¹²⁸ Cf. II Sam. 2:32, "They . . . buried him in his father's tomb which (is in) Bethlehem." Some of the examples above may also be regarded as prepositional phrases. It is interesting that the LXX translates all three occurrences of עוֹלָם in Ps. 45 with a prepositional phrase ($\text{εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [τοῦ αἰῶνος]}$). Perhaps, the expansion of these phrases in Hebrew לְעוֹלָם (v. 3 [2]); עוֹלָם וָעֶד (v. 6 [7]); and עוֹלָם וָעֶד (v. 17 [18]) offers a stylistic reason for why the writer omitted the preposition in v. 6 [7] (cf. Mulder, p. 14).

¹²⁹ Francis I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, JBLMS no. 14, Robert Kraft ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), pp. 42-45; cf. Mulder, pp. 47, 48.

ever) which follows the subject.

The weakness with this objection is that Andersen only dealt with the Pentateuch in his research. It is not at all certain that his rules apply to other literature and especially to poetry.¹³⁰

Every grammatical objection to taking אֱלֹהִים as a vocative in verse 6a is answerable, and it still remains the simplest construction of the text. On the basis of grammatical evidence by itself, a vocative seems to be the best interpretation, but there are other lines of evidence which we must also consider.

CONTEXTUAL EVIDENCE

The case for a vocative in verse 6 could be strengthened by the presence of a vocative in verse 7 ("Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you . . ."), but word order makes it unlikely that אֱלֹהִים is vocative there.¹³¹ The word order על-כֵּן קָטַף אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךָ would make a vocative

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Hoftijzer, "The Nominal Clause Reconsidered," VT 23 (1973): 446-510; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 81 n. 62. Mulder also recognizes the weakness of this objection (p. 47).

¹³¹ Couroyer has argued in favor of a vocative in verse 7 that אֱלֹהִים can be omitted and the meaning remain clear (pp. 236-238); but as Mulder points out, the argument is circular (p. 46). Couroyer's argument has limited value as a negative proof, however, for אֱלֹהִים could not be vocative if its omission would render the sentence unintelligible. The case is somewhat different in the LXX (cf. above, pp. 45, 46, 67-69), but it is difficult to find other modern supporters of a second vocative in the Hebrew text (v. 7 [8], cf. Mulder, p. 44 n. 56).

come between the verb and the subject, but this construction is very unusual. If אֱלֹהִים were vocative, we would expect the word order על-כֵּן אֱלֹהִים מְשַׁח אֱלֹהֶיךָ.¹³² It is much more likely that in verse 8 אֱלֹהִים is the subject followed by an apposition: "Therefore God, (even) your God, has anointed you . . ." (cf. Ps. 43:4b).

In the absence of a vocative in verse 7, the context cannot directly determine if אֱלֹהִים is a vocative in verse 6. But it might help indirectly by identifying who is being addressed as אֱלֹהִים there in the event that it is a vocative. The preface to the psalm declares that it is addressed to the king (v. 1). It was evidently composed by a court poet in honor of the king's wedding,¹³³ but the identity of the royal couple has been lost to us so we are left to speculate as to who they might have been.

One suggestion is that the king was Solomon.¹³⁴ He would be a fitting type of Christ, and his wealth more than equaled the luxury of the court mentioned in verses 8 and 9 (cf. I Kings 9:26--10:29; II Chron. 8:17--9:28). But, as

¹³²Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 86 and n. 80; cf. also p. 88.

¹³³Gaster's suggestion that the psalm was composed for an ordinary couple who were customarily treated as royalty on their wedding day lacks the ancient Hebrew cultural parallels necessary to make it convincing (Theodor H. Gaster, "Psalm 45," *JBL* 74 [1955]: 239). It also does not explain how such a mundane poem became incorporated into the Psalter as an expression of Israel's deepest hopes.

¹³⁴Cf. Kirkpatrick, pp. 243, 244; J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1962), p. 262.

Delitzsch has shown, the militaristic imagery of verses 3-5 does not accord well with Solomon's reign which was characterized by peace (cf. II Chron. 22:9; I Kings 4:25). The reference to sons taking the place of the king's fathers (v. 16) is also peculiar for Solomon who was preceded by only his father, David, in his dynasty.¹³⁵

Delitzsch prefers a reference to the marriage of Jehoram of Judah (also called Joram) and Athaliah (II Kings 8:16-18; II Chron. 21:5, 6).¹³⁶ Athaliah was a granddaughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians (I Kings 16:31; II Kings 8:26; II Chron. 22:2) which could explain the exhortation for the bride to forget her father's house (v. 10) and also the mention of a gift coming from the daughter of Tyre (v. 12). Her father, Ahab, had built a house of ivory (I Kings 22:39) which would correspond to the ivory palaces referred to in verse 8 better than Solomon's throne of ivory (I Kings 10:18; II Chron. 9:17) or the tower of ivory alluded to in the Song of Solomon 7:4.

Jehoram came to power at a peak in Judah's prosperity after the reign of his godly father Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:43; II Chron. 17:1--18:1; 20:30-33). Although Jehoshaphat's attempt to establish a merchant fleet for the purpose of importing gold from Ophir was quickly overturned by a storm which destroyed the ships (I Kings 22:48 f.; cf.

¹³⁵ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, pp. 74, 75.

¹³⁶ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, pp. 74-76; cf. Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:77.

II Chron. 20:35-37), his limited success at foreign trade could adequately explain the psalm's reference to imported perfumes and gold from Ophir (cf. vv. 8, 9) notwithstanding Solomon's greater success at the same enterprise (I Kings 9:28; 10:11; II Chron. 8:18; 9:10). When Jehoram ascended to the throne, there must have been high hopes that he would carry on the prosperity and godly reign of his father. It is understandable how a court poet living early in Jehoram's reign could attribute the glorious language of this psalm to him. But, alas, he failed miserably to attain the high expectations that the psalm evidently holds out (II Chron. 21:12-20; cf. II Kings 8:18, 19).

Whoever the king may have been, the dedication to him in verse 1, leads us to expect that he would be in view in verse 6 as well.¹³⁷ Looking back from verse 6, a trail of second person pronouns leads us back to the king in verse 1; he is evidently referred to in the phrases "your kingdom" (v. 6), "your throne" (v. 6), "your arrows" (v. 5), "your right hand" (v. 4), "your majesty" (vv. 4, 3), "your sword" (v. 3), and "your lips" (v. 2). These second person pronouns make it very unlikely that a vocative in verse 6 would refer to God especially when verse 7 refers to God in the third person. The notion that verses 6 and 7 contain a direct Messianic prediction embedded in the midst of a hymn otherwise addressed to the king¹³⁸ abruptly separates these

¹³⁷Cf. Vanhoye, p. 177.

¹³⁸Cf. Harman, p. 344; Payne, p. 262.

verses from their immediate context.¹³⁹ If verse 6 contains a vocative, the context requires that it be addressed to the king. The interpretation of this psalm in light of the historical setting for which it was composed, however, does not necessarily rule out a Messianic interpretation.¹⁴⁰ The king whose wedding was celebrated was God's anointed (v. 7; cf. Ps. 2:2; 89:20) and could appropriately prefigure the Messianic King to come.¹⁴¹

STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE

The structure of Psalm 45 may also have a bearing on the meaning of דָּוִדִּי in verse 6a. Mulder's extensive structural analysis of the psalm is especially pertinent in this regard.¹⁴²

Mulder concluded that the poem is divided into two main units composed of verses 3-7a, which refer to the king's justice, and verses 10-15, which refer to the king's

¹³⁹ Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 78; Allen, p. 220 n. 2; Driver, "Modern Study of the Hebrew Language," p. 115; Porter, p. 51; Mulder rejects the translation of the Targum on the grounds that it refers the vocative to God (p. 39).

¹⁴⁰ Robert Randall, "The Method of the Writer to the Hebrews in Using the Old Testament Quotations," *EQ* 27 (1955): 215; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 65 n. 4; Allen, p. 220 n. 2.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Courayer, p. 241; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, pp. 109, 118, 119.

¹⁴² Mulder, pp. 9-29, 43, 44, 46; cf. Allen, pp. 221-226; and also the structural studies of Heinrich von Schildenberger, "Zum Textkritik von Ps. 45 (44)," *BZ* 3 (1959): 18-43; and Claus Schedl, "Neue Vorlage zu Text und Deutung des Psalmes 45," *VT* 14 (1964): 310-318.

wedding. Each main unit begins with a vocative addressing the primary character in that section. Verse 3 introduces the king with the vocative 7133 (O Mighty One), and verse 10 introduces the bride with the vocative 72 (O Daughter).¹⁴³ These main units are linked by a transitional section in verses 7b-9; and they are surrounded by a preface and introduction in verses 1 and 2, and a conclusion and epilogue in verses 16 and 17.¹⁴⁴

Mulder believes that the main theme of the psalm is that "God's everlasting blessing brings about the everlastingness of the king's reign."¹⁴⁵ He sees this theme expounded in verses 2b, 7b, and 17b which are closely parallel and form the framework of the poem.¹⁴⁶ He grants that the line in verse 6a containing the *crux interpretum* must be an important link in the poem by virtue of its parallelism with the other key lines; but from its position in the poem, he denies that it forms part of the frame.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³Mulder, p. 23; cf. pp. 13, 25, 46; Allen, p. 225; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 82.

¹⁴⁴Mulder, pp. 28, 29.

¹⁴⁵Mulder, p. 27; cf. p. 43.

¹⁴⁶Mulder, pp. 12, 43, 44.

¹⁴⁷Mulder, pp. 24, 28, 33, 44.

v. 3b		לְעוֹלָם	אֱלֹהִים	בִּרְבָּה	עַל-כֵּן
v. 7a		וְעַד	עוֹלָם	כִּסְאָה	
v. 8b			אֱלֹהִים	טָשְׁתָּהּ	עַל-כֵּן
v. 18b		וְעַד	לְעוֹלָם	יְהוֹדָה	עַל-כֵּן עַמִּים
v. 2b	Therefore	God	has blessed you		for ever.
v. 6a		?			
v. 7b	Therefore	God	has anointed you.		
v. 17b	Therefore	the	will thank you	for ever and ever.	peoples

These conclusions produce two significant arguments against the vocative interpretation of verse 6a (7a). Mulder argues, first of all, that the extreme parallelism between the first three key lines (MT vv. 3b, 7a, 8b) requires that אֱלֹהִים have the same meaning in each case. He strongly denies that the same word could refer to both God and the king in this psalm; therefore, verse 6a cannot address the king as אֱלֹהִים.¹⁴⁸

He also argues that the vocatives are placed exactly where one would have expected them, at the beginning of each main unit (vv. 3, 10).¹⁴⁹ A vocative referring to the king in verse 6a would break the structural symmetry between the two main halves because the second section does not contain a parallel vocative referring to the bride.

In response to Mulder's contention that the parallelism

¹⁴⁸Mulder, p. 44.

¹⁴⁹Mulder, p. 46; cf. pp. 13, 23, 25.

demands that אֱלֹהִים be understood uniformly throughout the psalm, one might note that the four key parallel lines contain a number of departures from a strict parallelism. Three of the words ending in second person suffixes are verbs (בָּרַכְךָ, v. 2b [He has blessed you]; מָשַׁחְךָ, v. 7b [He has anointed you]; and יִתְּנֶנּוּ, v. 17b [they will thank you]); but מְסֻדָּךְ in verse 6a is a noun (your throne).¹⁵⁰ Verse 6a also lacks the characteristic עַל-כֵּן (therefore) that is found in the other lines. Verse 8b lacks עוֹלָם (for ever), which occurs in the other lines, and it makes the parallelism rather awkward by adding a second reference to אֱלֹהִים ("Therefore God, your God has anointed you"). Verse 17b lacks a reference to אֱלֹהִים; instead, it makes עַמִּים (the peoples) the subject and alters the word order.

These departures from a strict parallelism suggest that the poet exercised some freedom in composing his lines. Mulder's difficulty in fitting verse 6a into the framework of the psalm, although its wording is similar to the key lines, also suggests that it may be free to break away from the rigid structure imposed on it by them.¹⁵¹ Perhaps, the poet did employ אֱלֹהִים in a unique sense in verse 6a. If this were the case, the introduction of the awkward phrase

¹⁵⁰ Dahood's revocalization of the text to read "God has enthroned you forever" (p. 273) makes for much neater parallelism, but Mulder rejects it on the grounds that there is no clear evidence of such a denominative verb (pp. 70-72, 80; cf. Allen, p. 224 n. 19 and the discussion above, pp. 61-63).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Allen, p. 224.

in verse 7b, "God, your God," could be explained on the supposition that he was attempting to distinguish between אֱלֹהֶיךָ as referring to the king in verse 6a and אֱלֹהִים as referring to YHWH here and in verse 2b.¹⁵²

Furthermore, the parallel line in verse 17b, "The peoples will thank you forever," applies language to the king that is used elsewhere with special reference to God (cf. Ps. 67:3, 4 [4, 6]). If this line or the preceding one, "I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations," carries divine connotations,¹⁵³ it would not be surprising to find divine terminology applied to the king in verse 6a as well.¹⁵⁴

To the contention that a vocative referring to the king in verse 6a would break the symmetry between the two halves,

¹⁵² Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 82, 83, 85 f.; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 83; Mulder, p. 46; Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königs-Ideologie im Alten Testament: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Psalmenexegese dargestellt und Kritisch Gewürdigt*, UTS vol. 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. 255 n. 6; p. 263; F. Büchsel, *Die Christologie des Hebräerbriefs*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 27, 2 (Gutersloh: Der Ruf der Evangelischer, 1922), p. 22; Allen, p. 230; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, p. 179; Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: a Commentary*, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 363; Harman, p. 345.

¹⁵³ On the phrase אֱלֹהִים יִתְּנֶנּוּ ("the peoples will thank you," v. 17b), cf. also Ps. 30:9, 12 (10, 13); 35:18; 43:4; 52:9 (11); 71:22; 76:10 (11); 88:10 (11); 118:21, 28; 119:7; 138:1; 139:14; Isa. 38:18, 19; and on אֲנִי אֶשְׂמְרָה אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה ("I will cause your name to be remembered," v. 17a), cf. Ex. 20:24; 23:13; Ps. 20:7 (8); Isa. 26:13; 48:1; Amos 6:10. Cf. also Mulder, pp. 139, 140; Allen, p. 226; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 82.

¹⁵⁴ Allen, pp. 226, 227; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 82.

Allen responds that although the second section does not contain a corresponding vocative referring to the bride, verse 13a refers to her as the "King's daughter" (בַּת-מֶלֶךְ). Each section, then, would have a double reference to its principal character: a vocative to introduce the section (O Mighty One in v. 3a, and O Daughter in v. 10a), and a second reference to mark the second half of the section (Elohim in v. 6a, and the King's daughter in v. 13a).¹⁵⁵ We conclude that while the poetic structure of the psalm is incapable of proving that אֱלֹהִים is a vocative in verse 6a, it is not adverse to such an interpretation.

THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Much of the evidence examined so far favors a vocative אֱלֹהִים in verse 6a, and none of it clearly rules out this interpretation. By itself, the exegetical evidence points towards a vocative, but the most serious argument against this interpretation is theological.¹⁵⁶ The context demands that a vocative in verse 6a be addressed to the king, but the exclusiveness of Israel's monotheistic faith makes it unlikely that the king would be called אֱלֹהִים.¹⁵⁷ There is, in

¹⁵⁵ Allen, p. 225; cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 82.

¹⁵⁶ Allis, pp. 236, 262, 263; Giesbrecht, p. 290.

¹⁵⁷ For this reason, some scholars have found it difficult or almost impossible to accept a vocative interpretation (cf. Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, p. 248; M. Noth, "Gott, König, Volk im Alten Testament," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, vol. 1 [München: Chr. Kaiser, 1957], p. 225; Mulder, p. 33; Westcott, p. 25; Emerton, "Psalm 45," p. 58. Others who accept a vocative are well aware of the problem (cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 83; Allen, p. 220).

fact, no other reference in all of the OT where the king is directly addressed in this way.¹⁵⁸ If the vocative interpretation is to stand, we must explain how the king could be called by a title that is normally reserved for God.

A number of explanations have been offered to resolve this difficulty. The first means of explaining the vocative attacks the notion that it was inappropriate to call the king God. Gunkel and other proponents of the sacral kingship theory hold that ancient Israel was influenced by the Egyptian and Babylonian practice of worshipping the king. Gunkel argues that although the true religion of YHWH as championed by the prophets strongly opposed the deification of the king, all of Israel did not always make such a strong distinction between the human and the divine as is the case here. He believes that the meaning of the text is clear, and we must not reinterpret or emend it.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vols. in 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:74, 75; Emerton, "Psalm 45," p. 58; Allis, p. 263 n. 57; Vanhoye, pp. 180, 181; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988), p. 451, cf. pp. 453, 455; Schröger, pp. 60, 61; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 87 n. 84; Mulder, pp. 38, 45. The uniqueness of such an address to the king in Ps. 45:6 does not rule it out *a priori*, but it requires some justification.

¹⁵⁹ Hermann Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911), pp. 103-104; cf. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), p. 190; W. O. E. Oesterly, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes*, vol. 1 of 2 vols. (London: SPCK, 1939), pp. 252, 253; and Warfield's reply, pp. 90, 91.

But the sacral kingship explanation of Psalm 45:6 has some serious weaknesses. No doubt, the prophets would have denounced any pretension that the king was divine, but there is no record that they ever encountered such an incursion on the unique claims of YHWH.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps, our text is the sole surviving vestige of an earlier period in Israel's history when it was more common to address the king as God;¹⁶¹ but it is strange that such a bold identification of the king with God should be the only expression of this way of regarding the king to escape theological censorship and enter into the authorized Psalter undetected.¹⁶² The introduction of the monarchy late in the history of Israel and the distinctive belief that YHWH was its true King (cf. II Sam. 8:5-8) makes it difficult to believe that the nation would have adopted pagan views of kingship and lost them again without a trace apart from this debatable reference in the Psalms.¹⁶³ From the introduction of the phrase, "God, your God," in verse 7, it seems rather that the poet attempted to avoid the

¹⁶⁰ Cf. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1966), p. 106 n. 76; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), p. 113.

¹⁶¹ Hugo Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1905), pp. 255, 256, as cited by Warfield, p. 94; cf. Allis, p. 262.

¹⁶² Cf. Emerton, pp. 58, 63; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 455.

¹⁶³ Cf. Warfield, p. 94.

impression of divine kingship by distinguishing the anointed king from God who anointed him.¹⁶⁴

Sometimes the vocative is explained as a pious exaggeration. Although the poet called the king אֱלֹהִים, it is claimed that he did not actually believe the king was divine. He was merely employing the hyperbolic style of the court (*Hofstil*),¹⁶⁵ or perhaps, he got carried away in his exuberance (cf. v. 1), and took some poetic license.¹⁶⁶

The suggestion that אֱלֹהִים is an address to the king derived from the exalted speech of the royal court may lessen the theological tension somewhat, but it is bound up with objectionable assumptions concerning sacral kingship. The other suggestion that the poet spontaneously introduced this lofty address in a momentary flight from reality is more difficult to counter because there are no firm laws governing poetic license. But we should note that his other compliments to the king are much more reserved; only here does he break away from what might be justified as legitimate royal flattery.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, as a figure of speech, hyperbole speaks in superlatives; it exaggerates a

¹⁶⁴ Cf. above, n. 152.

¹⁶⁵ Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, p. 194.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Paterson, pp. 26, 27; Mulder, p. 39; Driver, "The Psalms," p. 124; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 85.

¹⁶⁷ Derek Kidner, *Psalm 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*, IQIC (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 170; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 85.

fact beyond what is really meant.¹⁶⁸ But if אֱלֹהִים is used hyperbolically here, it is unclear in what lower sense the king is justly compared with God, for deity is not a category that readily admits degrees of comparison.

Another means of explaining how our text could call the king אֱלֹהִים is to regard the psalm as Messianic in some way or another. Each of them has its own strengths and weaknesses so we must consider them individually.

Allis reduces the difficulty in calling the king אֱלֹהִים by regarding the entire psalm as a direct prophecy referring to the King Messiah.¹⁶⁹ For those who can accept the implicit supernaturalism of this view, the suggestion that the poet could prophesy concerning a Messiah in the distant future will not create a forceful objection. But a serious exegetical difficulty remains; this view seems to overlook the original setting of the poem.¹⁷⁰ The poet's detailed description and specific geographical references, which must have been relevant for his own day, do not accord well with a wholly futuristic interpretation.¹⁷¹

If only verses 6 and 7 were directly Messianic, it would satisfy the historical setting of the psalm better and

¹⁶⁸ Ethelbert William Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 423.

¹⁶⁹ Allis, pp. 260-262; cf. Manson, p. 92.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 83 n. 69.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Rendall, p. 215; Allen, p. 220 n. 2.

explain the vocative אֱלֹהִים in verse 6a. But, as we have already seen, the context rules out the possibility of separating these verses from the rest of the psalm. The person addressed in verse 6a must be the king referred to in verse 1.¹⁷²

Some interpreters who have sought to retain a Messianic application and at the same time do justice to the historical setting of the psalm claim that it is Messianic in a secondary or typical sense.¹⁷³ The difficulty facing this interpretation is that it still needs to explain the meaning of אֱלֹהִים with reference to the king in its original setting, and it must justify the application of this term to the Messiah if the poet did not intend it in a Messianic sense.¹⁷⁴

The view that the psalm has a secondary meaning is sometimes modified to state that it was not originally Messianic, even in a secondary way, but it became Messianic by its incorporation into the Psalter.¹⁷⁵ It is generally agreed that this psalm earned its place in the canon because

¹⁷²Cf. above, pp. 82, 83.

¹⁷³Cf. Schröger, pp. 65, 66, 254 f. n. 4; Couroyer, p. 241; Kistemaker, p. 78; Hagner, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴Cf. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 457.

¹⁷⁵Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 74; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:77-79; Craigie, pp. 340, 341; Claus Westermann, "Zur Sammlung des Psalters," in *Forschung am Alten Testament*, *Gesammelte Studien*, vol. 1 (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), p. 342; Allen, pp. 221, 233 n. 68, p. 240; Schedl, p. 318; Sabourin, 2:231.

the collectors of the Psalms understood it Messianically.¹⁷⁶ Its inclusion in the canon at a time when the monarchy had disappeared from view cannot be adequately explained as a reminder of the wedding of a past king. This canonical endorsement gives a semblance of authority to a Messianic interpretation, but, in fact, it only shifts the problem from the poet to the collectors of the Psalms. If the poet did not intend a Messianic meaning, his later interpreters cannot change his meaning by their understanding of it; and conversely, if the collectors of the Psalms created a new Messianic meaning, their interpretation does not explain the poet's original intention. Supporters of this view need to delineate the difference between the intention of the poet and the interpretation of his collectors. Then they must explain how this shift in meaning occurred.¹⁷⁷

Tournay believes that the poem was composed in the third or fourth century B.C., and that the poet originally intended it as a Messianic allegory on the marriage of YHWH and Israel.¹⁷⁸ This view brings together the poet's original intention and the Messianic interpretation, but it is unlikely that this poem which seems to be so closely tied to the monarchy should be composed at a time when it no longer

¹⁷⁶In addition to those mentioned in the previous note, cf. Allis, pp. 260 n. 51, 263 n. 61; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, pp. 118, 119; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 19 n. 84.

¹⁷⁷Cf. Allis, pp. 260 n. 51, 263 n. 61.

¹⁷⁸Tournay, "Psalm 45," pp. 172, 173.

functioned. It seems that none of the Messianic interpretations are adequate, unless a secondary Messianic interpretation is still compatible with the historical setting of the psalm.

The next means of explaining how the king could be called אֱלֹהִים seeks to show that this term is not used exclusively to designate the one, true God of Israel. Giving אֱלֹהִים a broader application could help to link a typological, Messianic interpretation with the historical setting of the Psalm, but this approach has also been used apart from any Messianic significance.¹⁷⁹ The use of אֱלֹהִים for humans is still debated, but it is clearly used for heavenly beings that are not strictly divine. We cannot examine each of the pertinent references in detail, but we will look briefly at some of the more important ones.¹⁸⁰

The term אֱלֹהִים is used of Moses in a comparative sense (Ex. 4:16; 7:1), and it is also used of Samuel's apparition (I Sam. 28:13). There are also a number of texts where אֱלֹהִים has sometimes been understood as referring to human judges who stand in *loco Dei* (cf. Ex. 21:6; 22:8, 9 [7, 8];

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, p. 104; Desterly, p. 253.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. John L. McKenzie, "The Appellative Use of El and Elohim," *CBQ* 10 (1948): 171-181, esp. pp. 170, 175, 177; Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 86, 87; Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l'homme*, 3 vols. (Belgium: Duculot, 1975-1979), 2:53, 54; Tournay, "Psalm 45," p. 186, cf. p. 171; Allen, pp. 228, 229; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 112; Mulder, pp. 36-38; Porter, p. 51; Schildenberger, pp. 36, 37; Schedl, p. 316; Couroyer, p. 241; cf. p. 234; Emerton, p. 58.

Ps. 58:1 [2]; 82:1, 5 [7]).¹⁸¹

In the case of a slave who wished to be bound permanently to his master, Exodus 21:6 commands to bring him "to God." But here אֱלֹהִים may be taken as a metonymy for "the judgement seat of God," as in the Septuagint, or for the judges who act in place of God. The legal proceedings mentioned in Exodus 22:8, 9 (7, 8) are to take place either before the judges of Israel, or before God, who is there by virtue of His omnipresence and symbolically observes the administration of justice.

If Psalm 58:1 (2) reads, "do you speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? (taking אֱלֹהִים [gods] as the correct pointing instead of אֵלִים [silence] as the parallelism suggests),¹⁸² it probably refers to human judges in the vocative. Opinion is divided over the meaning of אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 82:1, 6 (7):

God stands in the congregation of God,
He judges in the midst of the gods.

. . .
I have said, "You are gods,
And all of you are sons of the Most High.

It could possibly refer to human judges or to heavenly beings who are appointed over the nations.¹⁸³ The choice

¹⁸¹ *Contra* cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, " אֱלֹהִים in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers and Judges," *JBL* 54 (1935): 139-144; Allen, p. 228.

¹⁸² Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 180; Mulder, p. 37 n. 29; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 534 n. 1b, and p. 535.

¹⁸³ Schedl believes that v. 6 contains the spiritual milieu which best corresponds to Ps. 45:6 (p. 316 f.). Mulder holds that the reference to judges is probable (p. 37). Allen (p. 228 f. n. 39), following J. W. Rogerson and

between these options will be determined in part by the answer to two questions. Does the congregation in verse 1 refer to the heavenly court (I Kings 22:19; Ps. 95:3) or the congregation of Israel (Ps. 74:2)? And does the condemnation in verse 6, "Nevertheless you will die like men," imply that they were not men?

A very interesting interpretation of Psalm 82:1 is given in 11Q Melchizedek 2:9, 10. Referring to Melchizedek, it says, ". . . it is written concerning him in the hymns of David . . . , 'The heavenly one [אֱלֹהִים] standeth in the congregation of God [אֱלֹהִים]; among the heavenly ones [אֱלֹהִים] he judgeth.'"¹⁸⁴ The role of Melchizedek in the theology of the Qumran community is still a matter of debate, but the possibility that a being other than the God of Israel could be called אֱלֹהִים is increased by this reference.¹⁸⁵ It is also worth noting that John 10:34-36 interprets Psalm 82:6 of human beings.¹⁸⁶

J. W. McKay (*Psalms 51-100* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977], pp. 164, 165), holds that the reference is to heavenly beings.

¹⁸⁴The translation is that of M. de Jonge and A. S. Van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 (1965): 302, 303.

¹⁸⁵Fred L. Horton, Jr., *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNISMS 30 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 168; F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, 3 vols., ed. R. I. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), pp. 93, 94. Cf. ch. 5 below, pp. 278-281.

¹⁸⁶Jerome H. Neyrey, however, interprets it of the nation Israel at Sinai rather than human judges ("I Said

The Meaning of Psalm 45:6, 7 in its NT Setting

A number of phrases containing the word אַלְהִים that suggest a close association with God are also used of lesser beings than the God of Israel. The angel of God seems to have been indistinguishable from God (cf. Judges 13, esp. v. 22),¹⁸⁷ but on several occasions David is compared to him (I Sam. 29:9; II Sam. 14:17, 20; 19:27 [28]). In Zechariah 12:8, David's house, which is probably to be understood in the sense of his dynasty, is likened to God as well as the angel of the LORD. These examples do not necessarily mean, however, that the king was regarded as divine, for, as has been pointed out, a comparison does not necessarily imply an identity.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, David was not yet king at the time when he was first compared to the angel of God (cf. I Sam. 29:9).¹⁸⁹

The title "sons of God" (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) is given to heavenly beings in Job 1:6 and 2:1 and possibly also in the much debated reference in Genesis 6:2. The similar title "sons of the mighty" (בְּנֵי אַלְהִים) probably also refers to heavenly beings in Psalm 29:1; 89:6 (7). Both of these titles always use "sons" in the plural, but Psalm 2:7 is unique in that it calls the king God's son (בֶּן) in the

'You are Gods': Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108 [1989]: 647-663).

¹⁸⁷Cf. Porter, p. 51.

¹⁸⁸Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, p. 30 n. 1; Emerton, "Psalm 45," p. 58; Allen, p. 228.

¹⁸⁹Cf. Emerton, "Psalm 45," p. 58; Allen, p. 228.

singular (cf. also גִּבּוֹר in v. 12).

The closest parallel to the use of אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 45:6 is probably found in Isaiah 9:6 (5). The composite title אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר (Mighty God), which it uses of the Messiah, may be drawn from אֱלֹהִים and גִּבּוֹר which are used separately in Psalm 45:3, 6.¹⁹⁰ It has sometimes been argued that this title may be translated as "a god of a hero" (i.e. "a godlike hero") and that it does not imply deity.¹⁹¹ But there are some compelling reasons for retaining the reading, "Mighty God." Isaiah 10:21 uses the same title of YHWH where it must mean "Mighty God" (cf. Deut. 10:17; Neh. 9:32; Jer. 32:18).¹⁹² גִּבּוֹר may mean "hero" when it is used substantively (i.e. a mighty one), but it must retain its adjectival function here because it has a noun to modify.¹⁹³ Although אֱלֹהִים may be

¹⁹⁰ Allen, p. 229; Delitzsch, *Psalms* pp. 73, 74; Schildenberger, pp. 36, 37; Harman, p. 343; Hans Wilderberger, "Die Thronnamen des Messias, Jes. 9:5b," TZ 16 (1960): 322-325; Wilderberger, *Jesaja 1-12*, BKAT (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1972), 1:382, 383.

¹⁹¹ Mulder, p. 38; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 30 f. n. 1.

¹⁹² Warfield, pp. 104-114; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 20 n. 89; Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, trans. Theod. Meyer and James Martin, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1956), 2:88; Payne, p. 263; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:79. Johnson's suggestion that Isa. 10:21 means that YHWH is the "warrior par excellence" does not satisfy the context which relates YHWH's power to His bringing back the remnant of Israel rather than His waging war (*Sacral Kingship*, pp. 30 f. n. 1).

¹⁹³ Warfield, p. 111. Wilderberger, citing I Sam. 14:52, argues for an adjectival meaning (*Jesaja*, p. 382); Mulder believes that either word in the title could be either an adjective or a substantive (p. 38).

used of humans, אֱלֹהִים, which is used here, seems to be a more absolute term that is reserved for God.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, a Messiah whose reign continues on without end is no ordinary human being.¹⁹⁵ It appears, then, that Isaiah 9:6 applies a divine title to the Messianic king.¹⁹⁶

Other divine names may also be used of beings other than the God of Israel. Psalm 89:27 (28) may echo the divine name "the Most High" in its use of the word עֶלְיוֹן with reference to the king. This psalm describes YHWH's highly exalted position in relation to the heavenly council, but verse 27 (28) confers a similar status on the king in comparison with other kings.¹⁹⁷

The possibility that Psalm 45:6 could address the king as אֱלֹהִים is greatly increased by the use of the divine name in a compound title for the Messianic king in Jeremiah 23:5, 6, where he is called יְהוָה צְדִיקֵנוּ (the LORD our righteousness).¹⁹⁸ Apparently the Rabbis sensed no

¹⁹⁴ Warfield, p. 107; H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Brampton Lectures, 16th ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), p. 89 n. w. Rare exceptions to this rule may be found in Ezek. 31:11 where אֱלֹהִים is used of Nebuchadnezzar in an appellative sense and Ezek. 32:21 where it is used in the plural.

¹⁹⁵ Warfield, p. 109.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. McKenzie, p. 176 f. Mettinger also believes that a divine epithet is being applied to the king in Isa. 9:6 but not in Ps. 45:6 (p. 273).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Allen, p. 229.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Warfield, p. 102; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:79; P.E. Hughes, p. 64.

impropriety here; the Midrash on Psalm 21. 2 quotes Jeremiah and even applies the divine name to the city of Jerusalem as well as to the Messiah:¹⁹⁹

God will call the Messiah after His own name, for it is said of the king Messiah "this is the name whereby he shall be called: The Lord (יהוה) our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). Jerusalem also shall be called after the Lord's name, for it is said of Jerusalem "The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord (יהוה). That shall be her name" (Ezek. 48:35).

In answer to the question, "What is the name of King Messiah?" the Midrash on Lamentations 1:16 again responds unhesitatingly from Jeremiah 23:6: "His name is 'the Lord [יהוה].'" It also goes on to justify the use of this appellation on the grounds that "it is good for a province when . . . the name of its king [is] identical with its God."²⁰⁰

It appears that ancient Israel was not averse to calling lesser beings than God אֱלֹהִים and that sensitivity to the theological appropriateness of this mode of expression developed at a later time. The tension created by the seeming conflict between Israel's faith in the uniqueness of God and the flexibility of the Hebrew Scriptures in their use of אֱלֹהִים is evident in the Septuagint's tendency to tone down some of the troublesome references.

¹⁹⁹ William G. Braude, trans., *The Midrash on the Psalms*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 1:294.

²⁰⁰ Freedman, 7:135, 136.

The Septuagint expunges a couple of phrases where אֱלֹהִים could be associated with human beings (cf. I Sam. 29:9; Ps. 58:1 [57:2]), and it deletes all the names of the Messiah in Isaiah 9:5 (6) except for the first. It reinterprets some references so that humans will not be confused with God (cf. Ex. 4:16; 21:6), and it translates אֱלֹהִים as ἄγγελοι (angels ?) in others (cf. Ps. 8:5 [6]); 97 [96]:7; 138 [137]:1).²⁰¹ The freedom with which the Hebrew text seems to use אֱלֹהִים in contexts that caused the Septuagint some difficulty suggests that the theological objection against calling the king אֱלֹהִים may not have troubled the poet who wrote Psalm 45 as much as it has his later interpreters.²⁰²

CONCLUSION

Although the OT does not address the king as אֱלֹהִים outside of Psalm 45:6, it clearly uses the term of heavenly beings and probably also of humans. Each of the texts where אֱלֹהִים could refer to human judges who function as God's representatives may be capable of an alternate interpretation individually, but their cumulative weight makes a narrow definition of the term unlikely. It seems possible, then, that the king could be called by this title which was not used exclusively of deity. Such an address would not need to threaten Israel's faith in the one true

²⁰¹ Cf. Vanhoye, p. 181.

²⁰² McKenzie notes that "poetic language shows a happy indifference to the severe canons of logic and metaphysics" (p. 177, cf. p. 170).

God because אֱלֹהִים could be understood in a lower sense that does not necessarily imply deity.²⁰³

Nevertheless, we should not minimize the exceptional nature of this address. אֱלֹהִים is not an ordinary title given to ordinary people, but the Davidic king was not an ordinary person. He was associated with God in some ways that make the use of this title especially appropriate to him.²⁰⁴

From the inception of the monarchy, the king in Israel ruled as YHWH's viceregent on earth; his authority was delegated from YHWH who was the real king (cf. I Sam. 8:7, 22). Thus, there was a certain interplay between the king's localized reign and God's universal government, but the king was always distinct from God.²⁰⁵ The Psalms present the Davidic king as a person who bore a unique relationship to God. He was YHWH's adopted son (Ps. 2:7; 89:26, 27)²⁰⁶ who

²⁰³Cf. Vanhoye, p. 181; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 83. אֱלֹהִים as referring to the king in v. 6 has been translated in various ways to distinguish him from the God of Israel in v. 7: "O Göttlicher" or "O Divine one" (Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, pp. 451, 455; cf. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 110; Schröger, p. 60; Allen, p. 229); "divine King" (Weiser, *Psalms*, pp. 360, 363); "O Divin" (Jacquet, 1:38, cf. 1:53, 54). Delitzsch leaves it untranslated as "Elohim" (*Psalms*, 1:72, 83). Warfield (pp. 89-93), Harman (p. 342), and Allis (p. 263 n. 57), however, are opposed to lessening the meaning of אֱלֹהִים.

²⁰⁴Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 84, 87.

²⁰⁵Cf. Albrektson, p. 51; Harris, "Psalm 45," pp. 84, 87; Mettinger, pp. 104, 263, 265.

²⁰⁶Cf. Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 455; *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 113; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 84.

The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 45:6, 7
was anointed by God (Ps. 2:2; 45:7)²⁰⁷ and possessed an
eternal throne (Ps. 21:4; 45:6; 89:28, 29; 132:12). He is
also portrayed as the perfection of majesty and splendor
whose beauty surpasses that of men (Ps. 45:2-4).²⁰⁸

Much of the king's exalted status was derived from his
membership in a dynasty with which God had made an eternal
covenant.²⁰⁹ This covenant, as delivered through the prophet
Nathan in II Samuel 7:11-16, promised David an eternal
kingdom and a seed who would be YHWH's son to sit upon his
throne forever. Psalm 45:6 emphasizes some of the same
ideas that occur in II Samuel 7: a kingdom, a throne, and an
everlasting reign.²¹⁰ The conceptual similarity between these
two passages suggests that the poet hoped that the king
whose wedding he was celebrating might be the one to fulfill
the Davidic promises.²¹¹

The king for whom this psalm was composed failed to
realize the high hopes that were set out for him.²¹² But as a
potential candidate to be the promised seed, he is a fitting

²⁰⁷ Cf. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 109.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, pp. 110, 118.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 19, 20; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 85; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 109.

²¹⁰ Kistemaker, p. 78. Also note the close connection
between II Sam. 7:14 and Ps. 45:6, 7 in Heb. 1:5, 8, 9.

²¹¹ Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 74; Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 85; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, pp. 454, 455, 457.

²¹² Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:77, 78.

type to foreshadow the one who was yet to come.²¹³ In a typological sense, this psalm was likely Messianic in its original intention.

The post-exilic collectors of the Psalms included it in the Psalter, at a time when the monarchy was in abeyance, as an expression of their hope that there would yet be an eschatological king who would fulfill the Davidic promises.²¹⁴ But it is not necessary to suppose that they transformed this psalm into a Messianic hymn contrary to the poet's original intention.²¹⁵

The writer of Hebrews believed that this psalm is fulfilled in Christ, who is both the heir to David's throne and God (cf. Heb. 1:8, 9). There is good reason to believe that he was correct in this judgment. The unsatisfying nature of all the other interpretations and emendations points us back towards a vocative interpretation of Psalm 45:6, which is grammatically possible in its OT context.²¹⁶

²¹³Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 85; Couroyer, p. 241; P. E. Hughes, p. 64; Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:77.

²¹⁴Cf. above, p. 72 n. 110, p. 93 nn. 175, 176.

²¹⁵Cf. above p. 93 f. Indeed, hopes of a coming eschatological king may have originated very early in Israel's history. The Judah oracle promises that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Gen. 49:10), and the Balaam oracle predicts the rise of a star from Jacob and a scepter from Israel that will have dominion (Num. 24:17-19). These oracles are both tied to Psalm 45 in *Gen. Rabbah* 99. 8 and the *Test. of Judah* 24:1-6; cf. *Midrash Lam.* 1.16. See also Warfield, pp. 94, 124; E. Sellin, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, pt. 1 *Israelitische-judische Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 65, 66; pt. 2 *Theologie des AT*, pp. 133, 134.

²¹⁶The weakness of the other explanations is commonly admitted even by those who do not feel able to accept a

Furthermore, a Messianic interpretation in a typological sense can overcome the theological objection to the king being called *דָּוִד* without removing the psalm from its historical setting.²¹⁷ A human king who foreshadows the coming divine Messiah satisfies both the historical setting and the exalted language of the psalm.

vocative interpretation (cf. Briggs, 1:387; Dahood, 1:273; Mulder, p. 65).

²¹⁷ Cf. Harris, "Psalm 45," p. 87. Mulder admits that he could accept a vocative if a plausible meaning could be given to it (p. 48). This chapter is offered as a possible solution.

CHAPTER 2:
THE MESSIANIC APPLICATION OF PSALM 8:4-6
TO JESUS IN HEBREWS 2:5-9

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we compared the meaning of Psalm 45:6, 7 in its OT context with the Messianic interpretation that the writer of Hebrews gives to it in Hebrews 1:8, 9. There we concentrated more heavily upon the OT context of the quotation than its NT context because determining the intended meaning of ~~אֱלֹהִים~~ (Elohim) in the OT was more difficult than understanding Hebrews' interpretation of it as a title addressed to the Son. We concluded that even though the OT writer may have had a specific member of the Davidic dynasty other than Christ in mind, his intended meaning was broad enough to include Hebrews' Christological interpretation in a typological sense. In fact, we saw that the hopes expressed in this psalm can ultimately be fulfilled only in Christ.

In the present chapter we will compare the meaning of Psalm 8:4-6 (5-7) in the OT with its interpretation in Hebrews 2:5-9. We will need to consider the surrounding OT context sufficiently to place the quotation in its original setting, but we will focus primarily on those verses which are quoted in Hebrews. The general meaning of the quotation seems fairly clear in the OT; there we find the psalmist marvelling at God's exaltation of mankind to the highest

conceivable status.¹ But Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 8 with reference to Christ's humiliation and exaltation is not entirely straightforward. Some exegetes hold that by reading his Christian theology back into the psalm our writer places the quotation in "an entirely different" context from that in which it originally stood.² After confirming that we have correctly understood the psalm, we will need to concentrate upon Hebrews' interpretation of it in order to determine if indeed our writer adapts it to fit his own Christological purposes in a manner that is inconsistent with its original meaning.

THE MEANING OF PSALM 8:4-6 IN ITS OLD TESTAMENT SETTING

First of all, we must establish the meaning of the quotation in its OT setting. Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise for God's work in creation³ containing two major themes

¹In keeping with the language of the psalmist and traditional English usage, the words "man" and "mankind" will be used here as inclusive of all humanity.

²Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon," *Int* 23 (1969): 25, 26. A. Seeberg declares that "der Verfasser habe das Unmissverständliche missverstanden" ("Zur Auslegung von Hebräer 2:5-18," *Neue Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie* 3 [1894] 436, cf. p. 437). James Moffatt states that "the application to the Messiah . . . is forced" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924], p. 23. Cf. Friedrich Schroger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968), p. 87; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 24, 72.

³But Peter C. Craigie notes that it contains a mixture

which are placed in contrast with each other. In verses 1 to 3, the psalmist focuses on the majestic transcendence of God; but when he compares God with man, he quickly realizes the insignificance yet remarkable dignity of man (vv. 4-8).⁴ The final verse of the hymn returns to a refrain concerning God's majesty drawn from verse 1.

The psalmist introduces his primary theme, the majestic transcendence of God, with words similar to Psalm 148:13, by pronouncing the sacred name of God, YHWH (v. 1).⁵

of literary forms, which points to the poet's genius and creativity but makes a more precise classification impossible (*Psalms 1-50*, WBC [Waco: Word Books, 1983], p. 106); cf. Donald R. Glenn, "Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2: A Case Study in Biblical Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 40. Although Ps. 8 contains some similar ideas to those expressed in Ps. 19:2-7, it is speculative to say that the two passages were originally joined together, as does H. H. Spoer ("The Reconstruction of Psalm 8," *JBL* 22 [1903]: 75; cf. the analysis of Julian Morgenstern, "Psalms 8 and 19A," *HUCA* 19 [1945-46]: 491-523).

⁴Morgenstern, pp. 499, 500, 522; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1988), p. 185; Conrad John Louis, *The Theology of Psalm 8: A Study of the Traditions of the Text and the Theological Import* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, Inc. 1946), pp. 179-181; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 84; cf. Werner H. Schmidt, "Gott und Mensch in Ps. 8: Form und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Erwägungen," *TZ* 25 (1969): 12, 13. P. A. H. de Boer maintains, however, that the principle idea of the psalm is YHWH's "ordination of heaven and earth"; "Jahu's Ordination of Heaven and Earth: An Essay on Psalm 8," *OTS* vol. 2. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943), p. 187.

⁵The almost superstitious avoidance of the divine name which characterized later Judaism had not yet developed at this point in Israel's history. But R. Tournay exaggerates slightly by making the entire psalm a celebration of the name of YHWH ("Le Psaume 8 et la doctrine biblique du nom," *RB* 78 [1971]: 19). He holds that each time the divine name

The Messianic Application of Psalm 8:4-6

O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!
You who have set Your glory over all the earth.⁶

In Hebrew thought, a name was a manifestation of a person's character. By revealing His name to the people of Israel, God manifested something of His divine essence and His transcendent glory that could not otherwise be known.⁷

is pronounced, it repeats God's glory (p. 24). See also Boer, p. 190, and Craigie, p. 107.

⁶This line contains a very difficult textual problem. The MT reads וְיִשְׂרָאֵל , but such a construction, which places the relative pronoun before an imperative form of the verb, is completely unknown in Hebrew; and it is difficult to make sense of the text as it stands. Although many solutions have been proposed, the simplest and most satisfying explanation is to read וְיִשְׂרָאֵל (a Kal Perf. 2nd Masc. sng. of יָרָא , give, or set) which could have been confused with וְיִשְׂרָאֵל by means of its shortened form וְיִשְׂרָאֵל (II Sam. 22:41).

For this and various other proposed solutions see Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 178; Vinzenz Hamp, "Kleinere Beiträge Ps. 8:2b, 3," *BZ* 16 (1972): 115, 116; Howell Merriman Haydn, "Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings: A Suggestion for Psalm 8:2, 3," *Exp* 13 (1917): 232, 233; Tournay, pp. 20-26; Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfillment of Redemption through the Messiah*, reprint ed. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), p. 147 n. 1; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1-50*, vol. 16 of AB (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 49; Craigie, p. 105; Herbert Donner, "Ugaritismen in der Psalmenforschung," *ZAW* 79 (1967): 324-327; Schmidt, pp. 4, 5; F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. James Martin, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), pp. 149-151; Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), p. 29; Morgenstern, pp. 491-496. None of the proposed solutions, however, have a significant bearing upon the meaning of the verses quoted in Hebrews.

⁷See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), p. 148; *Psalms 1-59*, pp. 182, 185; Tournay, pp. 19, 25, 26; Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: épître aux hébreux*, no. 58, *Lectio Divina* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), pp. 300,

The imagery that is used here points to God's divine kingship over all of creation. The title "our Lord" (v. 1) can be used elsewhere to address the king (I Kings 1:11, 43, 47); and the majesty and power that are attributed to God (vv. 1, 2) are the special prerogative of kings. They are characteristic of God's kingship elsewhere in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 93:1; 97:1, 5, 6); and similar majesty and power are granted by God to the earthly king (Ps. 21:1, 5).⁸

This use of royal imagery has suggested the ideal of sacral kingship to some scholars.⁹ Admittedly, anyone described in such language would indeed be a king. But the psalm shows no indication that he rules over a political realm; rather he is king over creation. The poet looks back to Adam, the archetypal and representative man, who in his dominion over all of creation is a prototype of the later kings.¹⁰ In Psalm 8, man is king over the whole earth.¹¹ God

301; Craigie, pp. 107, 108.

⁸Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 180.

⁹Walter Beyerlin, "Psalm 8: Chancen der Überlieferungskritik," *ZTK* 73 (1976): 11-14; Aage Bentzen, *Messias--Moses redivivus--Menschensohn*, *AIANT* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1948), pp. 12, 39; Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, no. 18 *SBT* (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 20.

¹⁰Henry Leopold Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea for the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), p. 14. Kraus accepts the role of Adam as primal man (*Psalms 1-59*, pp. 183, 184); but he rejects the notion of him as a primal king upon whom Israel's royal ideology was founded (*Theology of the Psalms*, p. 110).

¹¹Gunkel, p. 28.

has transferred some of His glory and power to him; He has crowned "him with glory and majesty!" and made "him rule over the works" of His hands (vv. 5, 6).

In spite of the translational problems in verse 2,¹² the essential point being made is clear. YHWH's great power is established from the weakest and most unlikely source: the mouths of little children.¹³ The psalmist sets the infants and sucklings who produce strength by praising the Name, in contrast with the foes and avengers who do not recognize God, and will cease.¹⁴

¹²It is simplest to take the opening line *סָפְרֵי עוֹלָלִים* (out of the mouths of infants and sucklings) with what follows (cf. Craigie, p. 105 n. 3a). Dahood (pp. 48-50) and Boer (pp. 190, 192), however, take it with what precedes. Spoer (pp. 83, 84) and H. Kruse ("Two Hidden Comparatives: Observations on Hebrew Style," *JSS* 5 [1960]: 344-345) let v. 3 stand alone without a connection to either what precedes or follows. Morgenstern omits the verse altogether (pp. 494, 495).

On the ability of infants and sucklings to speak, see below on the quotation in Matt. 21:16, p. 126 n. 51.

It is debatable whether *יָצַח* should be translated in the general sense as strength (Craigie, p. 105 n. 3b; Tournay, pp. 26, 27) or more particularly as a fortress or stronghold (BDB, p. 739; Dahood, pp. 48, 50, 51; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 152; Kamp, pp. 116-119). The LXX's translation, "praise" (*αἶνον*), is somewhat interpretive. It would be easier to justify in certain other clear contexts of worship where *יָצַח* is accompanied by a verb of giving (cf. Ps. 29:1; 68:34; 96:7), but in each of these cases the LXX chooses another word.

¹³John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), 1:95, 96; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 181; Beyerlin, p. 17; Tournay, p. 28.

¹⁴Craigie, p. 107; *contra* Haydn, pp. 235-240.

The Meaning of Psalm 8:4-6 in Its OT Setting

In verse 3, the poet steps back from extolling God's majesty to introduce the occasion which gave birth to the psalm.¹⁵ He looks up into the starry heavens; and as he contemplates their vastness, his mind turns towards his second great theme, the insignificance yet remarkable dignity of man.

The specific content about man that flows from his meditation, and is quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8, is contained in verses 4 ff.

What is man, that You take thought of him?
Or the son of man, that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than *Elohim*,
And have crowned him with glory and majesty!
(vv. 4, 5)

The words "man" (אָדָם) and "son of man" (בְּרֵאשִׁית אָדָם) are in poetic parallelism and mean essentially the same thing.¹⁶ But we must pay close attention to them as they will come in for scrutiny in the NI quotation. In the Hebrew language, both אָדָם and בְּרֵאשִׁית אָדָם are collective terms for man(kind), similar to the German word *Mensch(en)*.¹⁷ "Son of" (בְּרֵאשִׁית with the construct state) is a Hebrew idiom designating the classification to which one belongs. For example, in

¹⁵The first person singular of this verse could be understood of the singer rather than the poet, but these lines would still harken back to the words of the composer, or perhaps even further back to the archetypal man he had in mind (Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 180; Schmidt, p. 9).

¹⁶Craigie, p. 108.

¹⁷Ludwig Koehler, "Alttestamentliche Wortforschung: Psalm 8:5," *TZ* 1 (1945): 78.

Genesis 5:32 "Noah was 500 years old" is literally "the son of 500 years;" and in Genesis 18:7 "Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf" is literally "a son of the herd." "Son of man" (אֲדָמָה-בֶּן), then, refers to a member of the human genus (cf. Num. 23:19; Ps. 80:17; Ezek. 2:1).¹⁸

The difference between "man" and "son of man" is that in Hebrew the former term (אֲדָמָה or אֲנָשִׁים) would normally refer to the human race collectively; and the latter term (אֲדָמָה-בֶּן)¹⁹ would point to a single individual who is a member of the human race. The same distinction can be observed in German with (*die*) *Menschen* and *Menschenkind*, or *Erdensohn*. If we were to translate this verse very literally, we could render it "What is mankind, that you think about it? Or the individual human being that you care for him?"²⁰ But we should not make too much of this distinction because both terms are used in parallelism.²¹

¹⁸ Otto Michel, "Son of Man," *NIDNTT*, 3:613; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirely C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 138 and n. 2.

¹⁹ The expression can also be used in the plural, אֲדָמָה-בָּנִים (sons of men), or with the article, אֲדָמָה-בְּנֵי (the sons of men).

²⁰ Koehler, p. 78; cf. Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), s.v. אֲדָמָה, pp. 12 f.

²¹ Perhaps the particularization of the general term for man could hint at an idealization of the human race, but it would be precarious to identify the son of man as Christ on this basis. The meaning of אֲנָשִׁים and אֲדָמָה-בֶּן must be determined ultimately by usage rather than derivation

The Meaning of Psalm 8:4-6 in Its OT Setting

It is probable that verse 4 should be read with a question mark, "What is man?" but it could also be read with an exclamation point, "What is man!"²² If it is a question, the initial answer must be that in contrast with the starry heavens man is nothing; and that nothingness would naturally lead to a feeling of despair if it were not for the revelation of man's greatness.²³ If it is an exclamation, we immediately rush past the despair into awe at the great gulf between man's seeming insignificance and his great majesty. But in either case, the final conclusion is the same: although man seems insignificant, God has exalted him over all of creation. He is somebody of great importance.

The poet in Psalm 8 exults in the glory of man, but his response sharply contrasts with the pessimistic reply that a couple other OT passages give to the question "What is man?" In Job 7:17-19, the patriarch Job asks this question from the perspective of his suffering:

"What is man that You magnify him,
And that You are concerned about him,
That You examine him every morning,
And try him every moment?
"Will You never look away from me,

(Koehler, p. 77).

²²A parallel grammatical construction containing a question can be found in I Chron. 17:16; II Sam. 7:18 (cf. Louis, p. 18). An exclamation point would do a better job of expressing the psalmist's astonishment (Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 148), but it could be hidden in a question just as well.

²³Craigie, p. 108; cf. Luther's *Commentary on the Psalms*, WA 5:270, 17 ff., as cited by Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 182 n. 3.

The Messianic Application of Psalm 8:4-6

Nor leave me alone until I swallow my spittle?"

If we may paraphrase, he asks, "God, Why do You make so much of man when he is so insignificant?" And essentially he tells God, "Go away and leave me alone in my misery!"²⁴

The person who penned Psalm 144,²⁵ at a point in his life when he was facing opposition, also gave a pessimistic answer to the same question. In verses 3 and 4 he cries out,

O LORD what is man, that You take knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that You think of him?
Man is like a mere breath;
His days are like a passing shadow.

But in the rest of the psalm, he cries to God for deliverance and he believes that God will answer (cf. vv. 5-15).

These texts illustrate the point that the exalted role of mankind is not discernible from one's circumstances or natural revelation; it must come from special and specific revelation.²⁶ Even from a Biblical perspective, it hardly seems possible after the fall in Genesis 3 to say that everything is subject to man. But the concept of guilt and

²⁴The speech of his friend Bildad in Job 25:5, 6 is even more cynical:

"If even the moon has no brightness,
And the stars are not pure in His sight,
How much less man, that maggot,
And the son of man, that worm!"

²⁵The issue is debated, but the titles of Ps. 8 and 144 claim that David wrote both of them.

²⁶Craigie, p. 109; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, pp. 148, 149.

The Meaning of Psalm 8:4-6 in Its OT Setting

depravity seems conspicuously absent from the anthropology of Psalm 8.²⁷ Ignoring Genesis 3, the poet works back from mankind in general to the creation mandate given to the first man, Adam, in Genesis 1:26-30.²⁸

There he finds that God made man in His own image, male and female, and delegated authority to them to rule over all of animate creation. He paraphrases Genesis 1 by saying that God has made man into a king who is almost equal to *Elohim* and has granted him dominion over the entire world. The tremendous power and majesty which belong to God are manifested through man in this world.

After the flood, God reiterated the creation mandate to Noah in words similar to those of Genesis 1 (Gen. 9:1-3).²⁹ This time He added the provision of civil government as an agency to help facilitate man's dominion (Gen. 9:5, 6), and He ensured the possibility of man's fulfilling the mandate by the promise of the ongoing of the human race (Gen. 8:21, 22; 9:11, 15).

In contrast with the insignificance of man in relation

²⁷ Cf. Kraus (*Psalms 1-59*, p. 185); Delitzsch (*Psalms*, pp. 156, 157).

²⁸ Boer believes that it is not possible to say which passage is older, Gen. 1 or Ps. 8 (p. 192); but Kraus holds that Ps. 8 is later textually (*Psalms 1-59*, p. 180; cf. Schmidt, p. 12 n. 25).

²⁹ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), p. 27; Rodolphe Morissette, "La citation du Psaume 8:7b dans I Corinthiens 15:27a," *Science et esprit* [Bruges] 24 (1972): p. 335.

to the universe, God's decree of man's value has exalted him to such an incredibly high position that the psalmist is filled with astonishment and wonder. Verse 5 gives mankind a position of dominion and kingship a little lower than *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים). Although the Hebrew word *עַלְיוֹן* could possibly have reference to time in other settings,³⁰ here the context demands that it refer to degree; and the emphasis must be not on the humiliation of man (as in Heb. 2:7, 9), but on his high station. Man is nearly equal to *Elohim*.³¹

The word *אֱלֹהִים* was clearly understood as "angels" by the Septuagint and the writer of Hebrews, but it is somewhat ambiguous in Hebrew. It could refer to God, angels, heavenly beings, or deity in an abstract sense.

The translation "God" is favored by the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotian, and the "Hebrew" version of the Vulgate. It is also favored by the contrast in Psalm 8 between God as the supreme Ruler of all creation and man as His viceregent on earth, as well the allusion to Genesis 1:26-28, which links the image of God in man with his mandate over creation.³²

³⁰ *עַלְיוֹן* has a temporal meaning by itself in Ex. 17:4; Job 24:24; 32:22; Ps. 37:10; 81:14 (15); Jer. 51:33; Hos. 1:4; and Hag. 2:6; there are also many other examples where it modifies a noun containing a temporal idea.

³¹ Cf. Louis, pp. 59-61.

³² Cf. Craigie, p. 108; Louis, pp. 56-59; Spoer, p. 82 n. 12; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 56; Donald Hagner, *Hebrews*, GNC (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 28; Simon

The translation of מַלְאָכִים as "angels" is supported by the Septuagint, the Syriac, the "Gallican" version of the Vulgate, the Targum, and some modern Hebrew translations and Jewish commentators.³³ The apparent interchangeability of the terms "gods" (מַלְאָכִים), "sons of God" (מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה or υἱοὶ θεοῦ), and "angels of God" (ἄγγελοι θεοῦ) in the variant readings of the Septuagint, Masoretic, and Qumran texts of Deuteronomy 32:8, 43 certainly makes such a translation possible.³⁴ In Psalm 97 (96):7 and 138 (137):1, the Septuagint also renders מַלְאָכִים as "angels," and such a translation is conceivable in Psalm 82 (81):1, 6 as well. Some commentators have argued that the plural "our image" in Genesis 1:26 associates God with angels.³⁵ But that argument should not be pressed because there is nothing about angels in the context. It is easier to see the plural as a plural of majesty, or much less likely as a veiled reference to a

Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), p. 30.

³³The modern trans. of Psalms by the Jewish Publication Society of America in *The Psalms*, ed. A. Cohen (London: Soncio Books, 1945) uses the translation "angels." See also Hughes, pp. 85, 86; Childs, p. 25.

³⁴Cf. Rudolph Kittel, et. al., eds.;, *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977); Alfred Rahlfs, ed. *Septuaginta*, 2 vols. in 1. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979); P. W. Skehan, "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. 32) from Qumran," *BASOR* 136 (1954): 12-15; George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 28; George Howard, "Hebrews and the OT Quotations," *NT* 10 (1968):215.

³⁵Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 183; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 154.

plurality of persons within God. For the writer of Hebrews, the simple translation in his particular version of the Greek OT was decisive, without an appeal to other considerations.³⁶

Another possible translation of אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 8:5 could be "divine beings" or "heavenly beings." The translation "angels" would exclude God Himself, and the translation "God" would exclude angels; but by translating אֱלֹהִים as either "divine beings" or "heavenly beings," we can include them both.³⁷ Elsewhere we have argued against such

³⁶The studies of Skehan and others on the differences between the Masoretic Text, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Septuagint suggest that the particular version of the Septuagint from which the writer of Hebrews quoted may be closer to the original at points than our modern critical editions of the Hebrew text. Cf. Skehan, pp. 14, 15; Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews: An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon E. Snyder (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 55 and n. 12; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), p. 169 n. 31.

At present, all attempts to identify the Vorlage of our writer with a known text remain speculative. His disagreement with Theodotian on the translation of אֱלֹהִים in Ps. 8:5 makes that source a doubtful candidate, *contra* Leonard J. Greenspoon ("Was it all Greek to Him? The Source of the OT Citations in the NT Epistle to the Hebrews," Unpublished paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Meeting, Anaheim, CA, Nov. 20, 1989, pp. 20, 21). Furthermore, the suggestion that our writer agrees with a proto-Masoretic tradition does not necessarily imply that he was working from a Hebrew text, *contra* Howard (pp. 208, 215).

³⁷Briggs, p. 147 n. 3; Gunkel, p. 28; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 154; J. Alberto Soggin, "Textkritische Untersuchung von Ps. 8:2-3 und 6," *VT* 21 (1971): 570; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 183; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 149; Dahood, p. 51; NIU.

an interpretation in Psalms 82:1, 6 and 58:1,³⁸ but it is theoretically possible for מַלְאָכִים to include the heavenly beings, the godlike ones, or the members of the heavenly court who reflect God's majesty.

By changing the above option from the concrete "divine beings" to the abstract "divinity" or "deity," we can open a fourth possibility. It might be thought too presumptuous to compare man with God, Himself, but perhaps he could be compared with the divine nature which angels have in reflection of God.³⁹ It is easier to accept that man, being in the image of God, is only slightly inferior to divinity in this lesser sense; and such a understanding would legitimize the translation of the Septuagint and Hebrews 2:7 as an interpretation of a broader term.

In light of the ambiguity of the Hebrew word מַלְאָכִים, we should accept that "angels" is a possible translation. But we must note that it is an interpretation which plays no essential role in the argument of Psalm 8, and it would be precarious to build an angelology on this text.⁴⁰ The best solution, theoretically, would be to preserve the ambiguity of the Hebrew מַלְאָכִים, but since neither Greek nor English has

³⁸See ch. 1 above, pp. 96, 97.

³⁹Cf. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 44; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 154.

⁴⁰Louis, pp. 57, 181.

a term that corresponds exactly, it seems best to include both God and angels by some phrase such as "heavenly beings." The Hebrew tendency to think in concrete rather than abstract terms also makes this designation preferable to "divinity."

In verse 6, the focus shifts from the exaltation of man almost as high as heavenly beings⁴¹ to the subjection of all things to him, a truth which harkens back to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 (cf. Sirach 17:2-4; Wisd. of Sol. 9:2).

You have made him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things in subjection under his feet,
(v. 6).

We should note that although the "all" (כֹּל) of verse 6 is unlimited, the psalmist draws his examples of things subject to man in verses 7 and 8 from things in this world.⁴²

All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
All that passes through the paths of the seas.

The poet's enthusiasm comes through in this enumeration of animals that are subject to mankind.⁴³ Those mentioned

⁴¹On the phrase "And have crowned him with glory and majesty" (Ps. 8:5), see the discussion above on v. 1 as it relates to kingship, pp. 111, 112.

⁴²Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 155. The quotation in Hebrews includes the subjection of the age to come and omits the list of things subject to man in vv. 7 and 8.

⁴³Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 155. Kraus notes "YHWH assigns the world to the human being as to a king . . . (cf. Ps. 2:8)." But he makes the distinction that "the king has peoples and enemies . . . subject to him (Ps. 110:1); man has animals subordinated to him (Gen. 1:28 ff.)" (*Psalms*

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are not in any way exhaustive, but they were chosen representatively to show the all encompassing breadth of man's dominion. Both small and large cattle, domesticated and undomesticated animals, those creatures that fly in the heavens, and those that swim in the sea, are all subject to mankind.

The hymn draws to a close in verse 9 with a refrain which repeats the first part of verse 1:

O LORD, Our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

This reiteration of God's majestic transcendence forms a contrasting framework around the psalmist's meditations on the theme of man's seeming insignificance yet remarkable dignity.

As the hymn concludes, it may be helpful for us to recap the the leading points in the development of this secondary theme. The psalmist was contemplating the vastness of God's starry heavens, when he became overwhelmed by the apparent insignificance of man. But he was filled with even greater wonder and astonishment as his mind went back to Genesis 1 to reflect upon the dominion that God had given Adam to rule as king over all of animate creation. He marvelled that God had bestowed great glory and majesty on man and exalted him to a position just lower than Himself and the heavenly beings who reflect His divine nature.

1-59, p. 183).

THE INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 8 OUTSIDE OF HEBREWS 2

Before we move from our understanding of Psalm 8:4-6 in its OT setting to its interpretation in Hebrews 2, we should consider how it was interpreted in other early Jewish and Christian traditions. These traditions must not be allowed to determine the meaning of the psalm, but they may help us to understand it better.

Psalm 8 was not generally thought to be Messianic in either Jewish apocalyptic or in Rabbinic writings, at least not in a direct sense.⁴⁴ The question of Psalm 8:4, "What is man?" is placed on the lips of angels, in the Midrash on Psalm 8. 2, 7;⁴⁵ 3 Enoch 5:10; and *Pesiqta* 34a. But these references treat man somewhat contemptuously,⁴⁶ and it is difficult to find a Messianic meaning in them.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Cf. Herman Leberrecht Strack, and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 6 vols. in 7 (München: Beck, 1922-1961), 3:681-682 (hereafter cited as S-B); Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 29; Westcott, p. 42; Franz Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung: Die paranetische Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1980), p. 62; William R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), p. 30 n. 1.

⁴⁵Cf. William G. Braude, trans. *The Midrash on the Psalms*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 1:120 ff., 127 f.

⁴⁶Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 29; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 12th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), p. 138; cf. S-B, 3:681.

⁴⁷Herbert Braun notes that God's lending of honor and majesty to the King Messiah can be found in Ps. 21:4, 6, but not in Ps. 8. *An die Hebräer*, HZNT no. 14 (Tübingen:

The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 8 Outside of Hebrews 2

It may be possible to detect the hint of a Messianic interpretation in the tradition which ascribes Psalm 8 to David. Although there have been those who have rejected Davidic authorship or felt that it was impossible to specify who the author was, the title of the psalm and the lack of any other clear choices leaves David as a primary candidate.⁴⁸ The kingship imagery of this psalm would be especially appropriate to a psalm of David because he was regarded as a representative figure whose authority to rule over nations could exemplify mankind's dominion over creation.⁴⁹ David's name, along with those of Adam and

J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1984), p. 54; cf. *Ps. Midr.*, 104. 5; Braude, 2:169. Ernst Kasemann, however, sees a Messianic reference to the Urmensch in 3 Enoch 5:10. *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), pp. 126, 127; cf. Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 138 and n. 3.

⁴⁸ Davidic authorship is rejected by Kraus, who speculates the psalm is postexilic (*Psalms 1-59*, p. 180); Morgenstern believes it was composed in the fourth century B.C. (p. 506). See also the discussion in Louis, pp. 18 ff. Craigie holds that "it is not possible to specify date and authorship of the psalm with any certainty" (p. 106). But Davidic authorship is held by Delitzsch (*Psalms*, p. 148) and Louis (pp. 14, 24).

⁴⁹ One can trace the OT theme of the authority to rule through several representative persons beginning with Adam, and extending from Noah and Abraham to David. God originally gave Adam authority to rule the earth in the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-30; and He reiterated that mandate to Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:1-3). He indirectly offered Abraham authority over the nations in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17-18; *et passim*); and later on He specifically promised that one of Abraham's descendants would have the authority to rule (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17). Finally, the Davidic covenant explicitly gave one of David's descendants the right to rule for ever (II Sam. 7:11-16). Cf. Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the*

Moses, was considered to be part of an acrostic on Adam, who is featured so prominently in Psalm 8; and these three leaders taken cumulatively were thought to prefigure the dignity of the Messiah.⁵⁰ Admittedly these speculations are far from conclusive, but they are as close as one comes to a Messianic interpretation in Jewish thinking.

In other parts of the NT outside of Hebrews, however, Psalm 8 receives considerable attention. Both verses 2 and 6 are treated in Christological contexts.

Matthew 21:16 quotes verse 2 with reference to the "hosanna's" of the children at Christ's triumphal entry. In so doing Matthew nicely brings out the contrast inherent in the psalm that the children praise⁵¹ the name of God while the authorities, who are equated with the foes and avengers,

Hebrews, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 64.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 2:32.

⁵¹ Note the LXX, from which Matthew quotes, reads "praise" (αἶνον) rather than "strength" (ἰσχύς). Although the quotation designates the children as "infants and sucklings," their praise need not be unintelligible sounds. The first of these terms in the Hebrew text of Ps. 8:2, ^{לְיָלֵד}, refers to a child that is more mature and capable of spontaneous action; and the second one, ^{פִּיטָם}, literally means a suckling. But in Hebrew culture, a suckling could be up to three years old (II Macc. 7:27). Both terms usually occur together in parallelism (cf. I Sam. 22:19; 15:3), and members of both groups are capable of speaking (Lam. 2:11, 12; 4:4). See Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 181; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 151, 152; Tournay, p. 25; D. Eberhard Baumann, "Struktur-Untersuchungen in Psalter I," *ZAW*, New Series 20 (1945-48): 122; Louis, pp. 122, 123.

become indignant and complain.⁵²

Psalm 8:6, which speaks of the subjection of all things to man, is quoted or alluded to with reference to Christ in a similar manner to Hebrews in I Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:22; perhaps Philippians 3:21; and I Peter 3:22.⁵³ Of these texts, I Corinthians 15:25-28 most closely parallels Hebrews 2:5-9 in its use of Psalm 8. Both passages understand the dominion which it gives to man to be fulfilled in Christ. They both focus on subjection as the central idea and make God its agent by employing the passive voice; and both envision a time delay before the final completion of the prophecy.⁵⁴

The context of Ephesians 1:22, which also alludes to Psalm 8:6, interprets the subjection of all things as the subjection of angelic powers under the feet of Christ.⁵⁵ Philippians 3:21 is not as clear an allusion, but its mention of the power that Christ will exercise at the time of our glorification "to subject all things to Himself" was

⁵²Craigie, pp. 109, 110; cf. above on Ps. 8.

⁵³Cf. James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in Light of the Aqedah*, no. 94 AnBib (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), pp. 146-149; Louis, pp. 123, 124, 126, 134-138; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 32-34; Morissette, pp. 325 ff.; Pauline Giles, "The Son of Man in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *ExpTim* 86 (1975): 331; Buchanan, p. 28; Braun, p. 52.

⁵⁴Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 107, 108.

⁵⁵Cf. Louis, pp. 136, 137.

likely drawn, directly or indirectly, from Psalm 8:6. The allusion to Psalm 8:6 in I Peter 3:22 clearly specifies that "angels and authorities and powers" were subject to Christ at the time of His ascension.

There are a number of ways, however, in which Hebrews' use of Psalm 8 differs from those passages listed above. In Hebrews Christ is made temporarily lower than angels; whereas, in Ephesians 1:22 and I Peter 3:22 angels were subject to Christ at the time of His ascension.⁵⁶ But there is no need to see a contradiction here. The inauguration of Christ's reign in the past is perfectly consistent with the hope expressed in Hebrews, as well as I Corinthians 15:25-28 and Philippians 3:21, that the full realization of the subjection of all things to Christ will yet take place in the future.

Hebrews' use of Psalm 8 also differs from that of I Corinthians 15 in that it does not mention the exclusion of God from the "all things" that are subjected to Christ (I Cor. 15:27, 28). I Corinthians avoids the hint of a Messianic title by not mentioning "the Son of Man" (Ps. 8:4; Heb. 2:6),⁵⁷ but it suggests the underlying reason for the

⁵⁶David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 127; Montefiore, p. 56.

⁵⁷Cf. Gerhard Delling, "τέσσω," *TDNT*, 8:41, 42. This omission supports the position that the Messianic interpretation of Psalm 8 is not dependent on the identification of this phrase as a title for Christ. One should note, however, that I Corinthians 15:28 does refer to Jesus simply as the Son; but if that title was intended as an allusion to the Son of Man, the connection is rather

The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 8 Outside of Hebrews 2
Messianic interpretation of Psalm 8 by linking it with the
discussion of the two Adams (vv. 21, 22, 45, 47).⁵⁸ The hope
that was not fulfilled in the first Adam will be fulfilled
in the second Adam, Christ.

Not only is Psalm 8:6 used Messianically elsewhere in
the NT, but it is frequently paired with Psalm 110:1, which
was widely recognized as a fundamental Christological text.⁵⁹
We find this combination of texts in a number of references
outside of Hebrews. Mark 12:36 and Matthew 22:44 suggest a
non-Pauline association of these texts by their alteration
of the quotation of Psalm 110:1 from "a footstool for your
feet" to "under your feet," which is more in keeping with
Psalm 8:6.⁶⁰ I Corinthians 15:25, 27 places the enemies of
Psalm 110:1 in subjection under Christ's feet (cf. Ps. 8:6).
Both Ephesians 1:20, 22 and I Peter 3:22 link the session of
Christ at the right hand temporally with the subjection of
all things under His feet.

The same association of Psalm 8 and 110 can be found in

weak (*contra* Swetnam, pp. 147, 161).

⁵⁸Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 106.

⁵⁹Concerning Ps. 110:1, Dodd notes that in Acts
2:34-35; Mk. 12:36; and Heb. 1:13 we have "three direct
witnesses to the primitive use of this passage as a
testimonium." He also finds allusions in Mk. 14:62; Acts
7:55; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12;
12:2; I Pet. 3:22 and concludes that it is "one of the
fundamental texts of the kerygma" (p. 35). On the antiquity
of the Messianic interpretation of Ps. 110, cf. Kay, pp. 30,
33, 158, 159.

⁶⁰Morissette, p. 329 n. 6.

Hebrews.⁶¹ The declaration in Hebrews 1:2 that the Son has been "appointed heir of all things" likely contains an allusion to the statement in Psalm 8:6 that God has "put all things" under man's feet.⁶² The next verse in Hebrews follows with an allusion to Christ's session "at the right hand" as mentioned in Psalm 110:1. The writer of Hebrews then goes on to quote Psalm 110:1 formally in Hebrews 1:13;⁶³ and by its association with Psalm 8, he prepares the way for his extended quotation from verses 4 to 6 in Hebrews 2:6-8, which places all things in subjection to Christ.⁶⁴

One must admit that the subjection of all things under man's feet in Psalm 8:6 naturally lends itself to a verbal association with the promise in Psalm 110:1 that the One who is asked to sit at YHWH's right hand will have His enemies made into a footstool for His feet.⁶⁵ From this point, it is

⁶¹ Cf. Hay, pp. 42, 85 ff. Ps. 110:1 is also quoted or alluded to in Heb. 8:1; 10:12, 13; and 12:2; but Ps. 8 is not mentioned in these contexts. Montefiore sees a reference to Ps. 8 in Heb. 10:13 (p. 56), but that seems most unlikely (cf. Giles, p. 331).

⁶² Swetnam, p. 158 n. 134; cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 34.

⁶³ Giles, p. 331; Hagner, p. 25; Wilber B. Wallis, "The Use of Psalm 8 and 110 in I Corinthians 15:25-27 and Hebrews 1 and 2," *JETS* 15 (1972): 27.

⁶⁴ Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 66.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 36; Wallis, p. 26; Don Hugh McGaughey, "The Hermeneutic Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," (Th. D. thesis, Boston University, 1963), p. 24; Delling, "τάσσω," *TDNT* 8:41, 42; Hay, pp. 36, 37.

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a short step to conclude that the person who is promised dominion is the same in both texts.⁶⁶ In this way Psalm 8 quickly shares in the Messianic status of Psalm 110.

The justification for identifying Christ as the One to whom all things are subject may also come indirectly from Psalm 2, another established Christological passage. Psalm 2:7 is quoted in a different Christological context in Hebrews 1:5; but verses 8, 9 and 12 of the same psalm promise the subjugation of all the nations to God's Son.⁶⁷ Verse 8 is particularly interesting because Hebrews 1:2, which declares that the Son has been "appointed heir of all things," likely contains a double allusion to its promise to give the nations to the Son as His inheritance and to the statement in Psalm 8:6 that God has "put all things" under man's feet.⁶⁸ Hebrews 5:5, 6 makes this association of Psalms 2 and 8 even more probable by quoting Psalm 2:7 side by side with the fourth verse of Psalm 110,⁶⁹ which we already saw linked with Psalm 8. The writer of Hebrews may well have reasoned that the only One who could have all things placed under His feet, as promised in Psalm 8:6, or

⁶⁶The difference between the two texts is that in Ps. 110:1 the enemies are awaiting subjection; whereas, in Ps. 8:6 all things are already subject (cf. Giles, p. 331).

⁶⁷Buchanan, p. 28; cf. Wallis, p. 27.

⁶⁸Spicq, 2:31.

⁶⁹It seems natural for the writer to lead from Ps. 110:1, his "favorite exaltation text" (Hagner, p. 25), into verse 4 of the same psalm (cf. Hay, pp. 37, 143 ff.).

have all His enemies made into a footstool for His feet, as promised in Psalm 110:1, is the Divine Son of Psalm 2.

We may conclude that by its association with Psalms 110, and 2, Psalm 8 was granted quasi Messianic status at an early date in the Christian community.⁷⁰ This association also suggests that the writer of Hebrews was following an established interpretive tradition in his employment of it for which he did not need to depend on I Corinthians 15.⁷¹

THE MEANING OF PSALM 8:4-6 IN HEBREWS 2:5-9

Having seen the meaning of Psalm 8 in its OT context and the Messianic associations that other NT texts have given to it, we must now examine how it is used in Hebrews 2:5-9. We need, first of all, to determine the meaning that the writer of Hebrews gives to it in this new context.

⁷⁰ It is doubtful that the psalm was ever considered to be directly Messianic, but the early church believed that the aspirations it holds for man could only be fulfilled in Christ. Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, pp. 156 f.; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 66; Westcott, p. 42.

⁷¹ Dodd claims there is a high degree of probability that Paul, the author of Heb., and the author of I Pet. all went back to Ps. 8:6 "in different contexts, because it was already accepted as a *testimonium* to Christ before any of them wrote" (p. 34). Laub also claims that "the substance of Heb. 2:5-18 is nothing other than primitive kerygma," and that "the author argues completely from the ground of a traditional humiliation-glorification schema" (pp. 61, 62). See also Morissette, pp. 328, 329 n. 27; Hay, p. 129; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 29, 81; Delling, *TDNT*, 8:41, 42; Swetnam, p. 146; Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), pp. 754 f. n. 43; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 138; Giles, p. 331; Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 274; Louis, p. 138.

Later on we will have to discuss whether any shift in meaning that he makes to adapt the quotation to his own Christological purposes is consistent with the psalm's original meaning.

The introductory *ὅτι γὰρ* ("for [He did] not") of Hebrews 2:5 indicates that our writer is moving on to a new aspect of his subject.⁷² In chapter 1 he had dealt with the Son in His role as deity; now he begins his discussion of the Son's identification with humanity. He argues that the Son is superior to angels because God did not subject the world to come to them as He did to His Son,⁷³ who fulfills the ideal for mankind as set forth in Psalm 8.

One must wonder why the writer of Hebrews needed to show that the Son is superior to angels in His association with humanity. One reason that has been suggested is that he was trying to counter a gnostic form of angel worship.⁷⁴ But Hebrews lacks evidence of that kind of a problem,⁷⁵

⁷²Moffatt, p. 21; Attridge, p. 69.

⁷³Swetnam notes that the writer's negative phrasing allows the subjection of the world to come to be understood of both man in general and the Son in particular (pp. 141, 157).

⁷⁴"Käsemann, pp. 124-127; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, pp. 201, 202; Loader, pp. 35 f.

⁷⁵Cf. Michel, *Hebräer*, pp. 131-133, 135, 136; Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, HZNI (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), p. 17; F. F. Bruce, "'To the Hebrews' or 'to the Essenes'?" *NTS* 9 (1962-63): pp. 218, 219; nor do we find evidence of a gnostic Urmensch-Mythos in Hebrews (cf. Laub, pp. 62, 63).

although it can be found elsewhere in the NT (e.g. Col. 2:18). Although the writer subordinates angels to the Son in chapters 1 and 2, elsewhere he speaks of them in a favorable light (cf. Heb. 12:22; 13:2).⁷⁶ Furthermore, it is difficult to find in Hebrews a trace of the Hellenistic form of metaphysics from which gnosticism sprang; the epistle's roots are solidly Biblical, historical, Messianic, and eschatological.⁷⁷

Another possible reason for Hebrews' contrast with angels is that the writer may have been trying to oppose a Qumran belief in the elevation of Melchizedek to the status of an archangel (cf. 11Q Melchizedek). But we argue against the likelihood of that theory later on.⁷⁸

Perhaps he was trying to offset the Jewish belief that angels rule over the present world.⁷⁹ It was commonly held that angels played a key role in governing the nations. The Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 32:8 teaches that "When the Most High divided the nations, . . . He set their boundaries according to the angels of God." The readers of Hebrews would have surely known this text as it is a part of

⁷⁶Swetnam, p. 149.

⁷⁷Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 136.

⁷⁸See ch. 5 below, pp. 277-284.

⁷⁹Cf. Spicq, 2:30; Hagner, p. 27; Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 136; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 32, 33; and Westcott, p. 41.

the Song of Moses.⁸⁰ Their angelology may also have been influenced by a number of passages in Daniel which seem to teach the same point (cf. Dan. 10:13, 20, 21; 12:1).⁸¹ The appointment of the Son over the world to come provides a fitting contrast, then, with the rule of angels over the present world.⁸²

Another reason why Hebrews needed to show the superiority of the Son to angels may have been that angels played an important role as mediators of the Law, especially in the Septuagint and later Judaism (cf. Deut. 33:2 LXX; Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19). Hebrews 2:1-3 encourages that association by contrasting the severe sanctions imposed on those who disobeyed "the word spoken through angels" with the much severer penalty for those who would disregard God's new and final communication in the Son.⁸³

But neither the role of angels in mediating the Law nor in governing the world relates directly to the Son's humanity, which seems so central to the thrust of chapter 2. There is a reason for the contrast with angels, however, that relates directly to the Son's humanity. The humiliation of the Son by associating with humanity in

⁸⁰Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 63.

⁸¹Cf. Sirach 17:17; Jubilees 15:31; 35:17; Attridge, p. 70 and n. 9.

⁸²Schröger, p. 84.

⁸³Bruce, "To the Essences?" p. 218.

suffering and death may have made Him appear inferior to angels; and so the writer of Hebrews used Psalm 8 to explain that although angels may seem superior now, they are not in the age to come.⁸⁴

Our writer introduces the quotation from Psalm 8 in verse 6 with the nebulous formula, "But someone has testified somewhere, saying" The vagueness of this introductory formula, however, should not be taken as a sign of the writer's ignorance of its source.⁸⁵ That the quotation is contained in Scripture is more important for him than the identification of its human author. For him all of Scripture is a divinely inspired oracle in which God speaks, and a particular passage does not need to have the name of the human author attached to be authoritative. For him God is the primary author of Scripture, and the human author is relatively unimportant.⁸⁶ Normally he attributes his quotations to God, but here he had good reason to be vague. The speaker addresses God with the second person pronoun, so to attribute the quotation to God would be to force Him to be talking to Himself.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Hagner, p. 23; Schröger, p. 84. Swetnam remarks that angels serve "as a foil for the truly divine" (p. 149).

⁸⁵Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 63; Swetnam, p. 158; Buchanan, p. 27; Attridge, p. 71.

⁸⁶Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 34; Hughes, p. 83; Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 137; Spicq, 2:31; Westcott, pp. 474, 475.

⁸⁷Swetnam, p. 159; Westcott, p. 474.

Moreover, there is no need to see a Philonism in the writer's introductory formula *ποῦ τις* (somewhere someone).⁸⁸ Philo uses this formula only once, in *On Drunkenness* 61 where it introduces a word of Abraham from Genesis 20:12. The more general formula *που* (Heb. 4:4) or *ἔπου* (somewhere) without *τις* occurs only four times in all of Philo.⁸⁹

The writer of Hebrews uses Scripture to formulate his argument that the world to come will be subject to the Son. Regardless of one's impression of the effectiveness of his argument, he evidently desired to base it on the authority of Scripture and was convinced that the OT is fulfilled in Christ. He had already prepared the way for the entrance of the quotation by alluding to Psalm 8 in the claim of Hebrews 1:2 that the Son is "heir of all things" and in the quotation from Psalm 110:1 in verse 13, which promises that the Son's enemies will be made "a footstool for [His] feet."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Spicq says that the formula *ποῦ τις* "est fréquente chez Philo" (2:31); and Moffatt also claims that it is "a literary mannerism familiar in Philo" (p. 22). Cf. Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 137, and n. 3; and Montefiore, p. 56; Attridge, p. 70 n. 19.

⁸⁹ Hughes, p. 83 n. 60; Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. 509; and Windisch, p. 20. The fact that the phrase occurs in some of the Greek writers such as Homer, Hesiod, Heraclitus, and Menander (cf. Spicq, 1:42) indicates that it is not unique to Philo.

⁹⁰ The writer's build-up to Psalm 8 is intertwined with his escalating use of Ps. 110:1 early on in Heb. 1:2, 3, 13 and his use of Ps. 2:7, 8 in Heb. 1:2, 5. With the help of Ps. 2:7 in Heb. 5:5, he continues on past Ps. 8 to Ps. 110:4, which serves to introduce Melchizedek gradually in

The first line of the quotation contains a variant reading which has raised a suspicion that the writer of Hebrews tampered with the OT text. Zuntz claims that the writer deliberately altered the quotation from Psalm 8 by inserting a sigma so that he could read in his own Christology. Instead of τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος (what is man?), the addition of one letter would make verse 6 read, τίς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος (Who is the man?). The answer of course would be Jesus Christ!⁹¹

Although this variant is supported by the important manuscript p⁴⁶, it has little other textual support. It also creates a serious problem in the second line of the quotation because the parallelism would require us to read it, "Or who is the Son of Man?" But both the writer and his readers already know that Jesus is the Son of Man; the net effect is that this reading smuggles the answer into the question itself.⁹² The attempt to escape this problem by reading the first line as a question, "Who is the man?" and the second line as its answer, "Truly the Son

Heb. 5:6, 10 and 6:20. After referring to Melchizedek a number of times via Ps. 110:4 in Heb. 7:3, 11, 15, 17, 21, the writer returns to Ps. 110:1 in Heb. 8:1; 10:12, 13 and 12:2.

⁹¹ Günther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 48 f.; Braun, p. 53; Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Use of the Septuagint in the Epistle to the Hebrews," (Ph. D. thesis University of Manchester, 1959), pp. 217, esp. 219; cf. Schroger, p. 80 n. 1.

⁹² Loader, p. 34; cf. Attridge, p. 71.

of Man . . . ,” fails because the little conjunction η (or) forces us to read both lines in parallel.

It is also hard to believe that the writer of Hebrews would arbitrarily twist the parallelism of a psalm that was well known to his readers.⁹³ Although he may quote freely in places where it does not materially affect the meaning, such an abuse of the text is out of keeping with his generally careful handling of it.⁹⁴ Even apart from the writer's reputation, the evidence strongly favors the rejection of the variant $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, along with the accusation implicitly contained in it.⁹⁵

Another suspicion that the writer of Hebrews might be reading his Christology back into the OT arises with the identification of "the son of man" in verse 6.⁹⁶ By the

⁹³R. V. G. Tasker remarks that although the writer makes deliberate changes in the text, "that he should have played havoc with the parallelism of the psalmist in this way . . . seems to me unlikely." "The Text of the 'Corpus Paulinum,'" *NTS* 1 (1954-55): 185.

⁹⁴CF. John C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *NTS* 26 (1980): 378, 379; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1954), p. 160. *Contra*, cf. Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 (1964-65): 320.

⁹⁵Tasker, p. 185; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 31 n. 12; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 29; cf. Giles, p. 329.

⁹⁶Childs, p. 25. The literature on the Son of Man is much more extensive than can be covered here. We can only address the topic as it has bearing on the meaning of these words in Hebrews; cf. the extended discussions of Buchanan, pp. 27, 38-51; Giles, pp. 328-332; E. Gräßer, in "Beobachtung zum Menschensohn in Hebr. 2:6," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: für Anton Vögtle*, ed. Rudolph Pesch and Rudolph Schnackenberg with Odilio Kaiser (Freiberg: Herder,

question, "What is man?" the Psalmist was evidently referring to mankind in general (Ps. 8:4); and the next line of the quotation, "or the son of man?" which is in synonymous parallelism, naturally asks the same question.⁹⁷ But to the writer of Hebrews and other early Christians, who were well aware of Jesus' frequent designation of Himself as "the Son of Man," these words must have struck with a force that extended beyond the limits of their original setting.⁹⁸

The view that "the son of man" was understood as a Messianic title in Hebrews 2:6 has some contextual support. Chapter 1 uses a series of similar titles for Christ that are also based on quotations from the OT, and the chief of these titles is "Son" (Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; cf. Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14). It would be natural for the writer of Hebrews to develop the title "Son of Man" in chapter 2.⁹⁹ His emphasis

1975), pp. 404-414; Julius Kögel, *Der Sohn und die Söhne*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1904).

⁹⁷ Montefiore, p. 57; Swetnam p. 138; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 35; Hughes, p. 85 and n. 61.

⁹⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 35; Hagner, pp. 24, 25, cf. p. 27. The following sources also see a Messianic title here: Buchanan, p. 27; Giles, pp. 328, 329, 331; Carsten Cople, "ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου," *TDNT*, 8:464; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 81, 82; A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), p. 146; Michel, "Son of Man," *NIDNTT*, 3:632, 633; Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 138; Swetnam, pp. 141 n. 40, 155-157; Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 188; J. Hering, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. A. E. Heathcoat and P. J. Allock (London: Epworth, 1970), p. 15, cited by Giles, p. 329.

⁹⁹ Swetnam, pp. 141 n. 40, 155-157; Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 136.

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in verses 9 to 18 on Christ's solidarity with humanity as a qualification for being an effective high priest could possibly have been derived from that title.¹⁰⁰ But while chapter 1 focuses on Messianic titles, it is not clear that chapter 2 does. Furthermore, the title "Son," which speaks of deity, is not equivalent to "the Son of Man," which speaks of humanity.

This understanding of the phrase "son of man" as a title for Christ in Hebrews 2:6 may have been encouraged by its use in Daniel 7:13, which was a better established Messianic passage.¹⁰¹ Mark 14:62 uses the phrase "the Son of Man" as a Messianic title, in a context where it evidently comes from Daniel 7:13, together with an allusion to the session at God's right hand in Psalm 110:1 (cf. par. Matt. 26:64; Lk. 22:69).¹⁰² Since we have already seen that Psalms 110 and 8 were frequently tied together, we may have a theological link here between Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 8:4. It is possible then that "the Son of Man" was seen as a Messianic title at an early date in both OT passages.

Jesus, Himself, may have had His role as the representative man in mind in His own use of the title "the

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Giles, pp. 328, 331.

¹⁰¹ Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 66; the rabbis identified the son of man in Dan. 7:13 with the Messiah (*Son.* 98a); cf. Buchanan, p. 39 n. 35.

¹⁰² Matt. 24:30 and Mk. 13:26 also tie the title to Dan. 7:13 without alluding to Ps. 110.

Son of Man."¹⁰³ He normally used it to emphasize His own humanity, a characteristic which is more easily derived from Psalm 8:4, where He could be seen as the second Adam, than from Daniel 7:13, which views Him as the One coming in power and glory.¹⁰⁴

One problem with viewing "the son of man" as a title for Christ in Hebrews 2:6, however, is that both the Greek and the Hebrew of the quotation lack the article which is normally used when it is a Messianic title. But there are, nevertheless, a few exceptions; it is also anarthrous in John 5:27; Revelation 1:13; 14:14; and Daniel 7:13.¹⁰⁵

The biggest obstacle against seeing "the son of man" as a Messianic title in Hebrews is the simple fact that the writer never makes use of it as such.¹⁰⁶ He only uses the first part of the quotation, which contains the reference to "the son of man," to call attention to man, but he interprets the second half of the citation phrase by phrase.

¹⁰³ Briggs, p. 148 n. 2; Montefiore, p. 57; cf. L. Vernard, "L'Utilization des Psaumes dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," in *Mélanges E. Podechard* (Lyons: la Faculté Catholique de théologie de Lyon, 1945), p. 263; Westcott, p. 43; Ragner, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, p. 156; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1953), p. 241.

¹⁰⁵ Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 30 and n. 2; *Hebrews*, p. 69; Giles, p. 329; Michel, *NIDNTT*, 3:617, 618.

¹⁰⁶ Hughes, p. 85 n. 61; Hay, p. 109; Windisch, p. 20, Laub, p. 63 n. 47; cf. Giles, p. 330; Swetnam, p. 140; Attridge, p. 74.

We have already seen that the parallel Christological interpretation of Psalm 8 in I Corinthians 15:25-28 does not even mention "the son of man." Although these words likely triggered Christological associations in the writer's mind, we must conclude that Hebrews' exegesis of Psalm 8 does not depend on them. Here we should probably find a sign of restraint in Hebrews' interpretation of the OT. The writer seems to recognize that the association could be coincidental, and he avoids building his case on it.¹⁰⁷ The real argument lies elsewhere.

Having concluded that "the son of man" was probably not used as a Messianic title in Hebrews, we are left with an unresolved query concerning where the writer made the transition in his mind from referring to mankind in general, to Jesus in particular. The question, "What is man?" in the opening line of the quotation in verse 6 evidently refers to mankind in general, but in verse 9 the writer specifically identifies the One made lower than the angels as Jesus. Somewhere in between, either within the quotation itself, or in the interpretation of verses 8b-9, he shifts from mankind to Jesus. But for the moment, it is not essential that we

¹⁰⁷ Montefiore, p. 57; Loader, pp. 35, 36; Moffatt, p. 23; Gräßer, pp. 410, 414; Schröger, pp. 81, 82; Conzelmann, p. 274 n. 107; Hughes, p. 85 n. 61; Windisch, p. 20.

As other examples of restraint, consider the fact that he doesn't capitalize on the obvious title *χριστός* (the Anointed) in his use of Psalm 2 (Heb. 1:5; Ps. 2:2, 7); nor does he allegorize Melchizedek's bringing out bread and wine to Abraham (Heb. 7:1-10; Gen. 14:18); nor does he draw the incarnation out of the Septuagint's translation of Ps. 40:6, "a body you have prepared for me" (Heb. 10:5).

determine where the shift in reference takes place; and it is safer to deal with the writer's explicit interpretation than to try to read too much into the citation itself. If we can view the entire quotation in verses 6-8a as referring to man and restrict any reference to Jesus until the interpretation beginning in verse 8b, or possibly even until verse 9, we can avoid the danger of the text becoming hopelessly intertwined with its interpretation.¹⁰⁸

The one referred to here, either man or Jesus, has been made "a little lower than the angels" (v. 7). The phrase βραχύ τι (a little) in itself could refer to either time or degree.¹⁰⁹ If the being made lower of verse 7 refers to man, it would not necessarily involve a condescension as it would for Christ, who originally held a higher position.¹¹⁰ But as our writer interprets this phrase with reference to Christ's humiliation in verse 9, it must be understood temporally, at least there.¹¹¹ The equivalent phrase which is used in Psalm 8:5 could likewise have either aspect in view when

¹⁰⁸Cf. Loader, p. 35. Even though Midrash may mix interpretation in with a quotation, it still seems possible to keep them separate here.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 105, 106; Vanhoye, p. 287; Hughes, p. 85; Childs, p. 25.

¹¹⁰Cf. the *locus classicus* on the humiliation of Christ in Phil. 2:6-8. But note that it emphasizes the incarnation; whereas, Hebrews is primarily concerned with Christ's suffering and death (cf. Buchanan, p. 29).

¹¹¹Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, pp. 64, 65; Loader, p. 33; Buchanan, p. 27; *contra* Westcott, p. 44; and Glenn, p. 48.

considered by itself; but in its context, it refers to degree. Man has been made just short of heavenly beings.

Hebrews' conviction that man is made lower than the angels only for a little while provides hope that one day he will rise above them, that he will be crowned "with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:7).¹¹² Psalm 8 views man's coronation as a fact extending back to creation; but Hebrews looks ahead to a future coronation in a sequel parallel to Christ's glorification (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; 3:21).

The translation of אֲנֹכְחִי in Psalm 8:5 as ἀγγέλους (angels) definitely helped the writer of Hebrews to set up his contrast between Christ and the angels.¹¹³ But we should not accuse him of distorting the text of Scripture to suit his own ends. The Septuagint had justifiably made this interpretation long before him, without any Christological bias;¹¹⁴ and in keeping with his normal practice, our writer uses whatever form of the Septuagintal text he had before him, without reference to the Hebrew text.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Hebrews' Messianic interpretation of Psalm 8 is not

¹¹²If βραχύ τι were not understood temporally, then man would always remain lower than the angels (Loader, p. 33).

¹¹³Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 64; Gräßer, p. 408.

¹¹⁴Childs, p. 25; Moffatt, p. 22; Schröger, p. 83; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 34 n. 23; *contra* Glenn, pp. 41, 42, 48, 49.

¹¹⁵Spicq, 1:334-336; Westcott, p. 479; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 30; cf. pp. 26, 40, 52; Longenecker, p. 169; McCullough, "OT Quotations," p. 379.

dependent upon the translation of this one word.¹¹⁶

Verse 7 contains a variant reading concerning the inclusion or omission of the line from Psalm 8:6 which reads, καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου (You made him ruler over the works of Your hands). The external evidence seems to favor the longer reading (X, A, C, D*, etc.), but a few important manuscripts (p⁴⁶, B, Dc, K, L, etc.) can also be cited in favor of the shorter one.¹¹⁷

The context, however, is probably opposed to the inclusion of the line. In Hebrews 1:10, quoting Psalm 102:26, the writer had declared that "the heavens are the works of Your [i.e., Christ's] hands; it would seem inconsistent now to say that Christ had been placed "over the works of Your [God's] hands" when they already were Christ's by virtue of creation.¹¹⁸ The inclusion of the line, which views the subjection of creation to Christ as an accomplished event, would also seem inconsistent with Hebrews 2:8, which states that "we do not yet see all things subject to Him."¹¹⁹ But both of these contextual arguments can be countered by the fact that Hebrews includes the next

¹¹⁶Glenn, p. 49.

¹¹⁷Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (n.p.: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 663, 664.

¹¹⁸Schröger, p. 82; Moffatt, p. 22; Thomas, "Use of the Septuagint," p. 37; Thomas, "OT Citations," p. 306; cf. Giles, p. 329; cf. Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 30 n. 1.

¹¹⁹Zuntz, p. 172.

line which is in synonymous parallelism with the omitted one.¹²⁰

The final consideration, which is probably the deciding one, is that a scribe would more likely have extended the quotation to make it conform to the Septuagint than shorten it.¹²¹ But in either case, this textual problem does not materially affect the Messianic content of Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 8.

Verse 8a contains the key line of the quotation: "You have put all things in subjection under His feet."¹²² At this point the writer terminates his formal quotation of Psalm 8:4-6 and proceeds to interpret it in Midrashic fashion.

Before we examine the substance of his interpretation in verses 8b and 9, we need to say a few words about Midrash. We will discuss this topic in greater detail later on in connection with the interpretation of Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7--4:11, which offers a better illustration of its peculiar features.¹²³ For the moment, we will simply say that the essence of Midrash as a literary genre is to quote a

¹²⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 32 n. 13; Giles, p. 329.

¹²¹ Metzger, pp. 663, 664; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 65; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 31 n. 13; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 138 and n. 1; Swetnam, p. 162.

¹²² Michel, *Hebraer*, pp. 133, 134; cf. Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 104. We have already seen the Christological associations of this line with Ps. 110:1.

¹²³ Other examples of Midrash can be found in Hebrews' use of Ps. 40:6-8 in Heb. 10:5-14; and of Prov. 3:11, 12 in Heb. 12:5-11 (cf. Hagner, p. 25).

passage of Scripture and then follow through with an exposition of individual phrases or key words adapting them to the contemporary setting in such a way as to form a sort of little commentary on the text.

Notice how the writer of Hebrews employs Midrashic features in his interpretation of Psalm 8. He seems to have no interest in explicating the first part of the citation in verse 6 (Ps. 8:4), which serves to introduce man as his subject;¹²⁴ but he carefully focuses on the second part in verses 7 and 8, picking out individual phrases for explanation and applying them to Christ. In verse 8b he explains the extent of "all things" that were "placed in subjection under his [either man's or Christ's] feet" (Heb. 2:8a; Ps. 8:6); in verse 9a he identifies Jesus as the One who was made "for a little while lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7a; Ps. 8:5a); and in verse 9b he shows that being "crowned with glory and honor" follows suffering (Heb. 2:7b; Ps. 8:5b). Note also how he repeats some form of the key word "subject" three times in verse 8b and the pronoun "him" two or three times in the same verse.¹²⁵

With these stylistic considerations in mind, we may now return to Hebrews' interpretation of the text. The conjunction γάρ (for) in verse 8b resumes the thought of

¹²⁴Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 102; Windisch, p. 20.

¹²⁵Cf. Schröger, pp. 85, 86; Hagner, p. 28; Laub, p. 64; Buchanan, p. 27; Swetnam, p. 137 ff.

verse 5 concerning the subjection of the world to come.¹²⁶ Its subjection is implicitly included in the subjection of "all things,"¹²⁷ but it is not clear to whom they are all subject. The pronoun αὐτῷ (him) in verse 8b could refer to either mankind or Jesus. One could argue that it refers to mankind because Jesus is not mentioned until verse 9,¹²⁸ which is placed in contrast with verse 8b.¹²⁹ Also, it is true that we do not presently "see all things subject to" mankind (v. 8b).

But someone else could counter that the contrast between verses 8 and 9, which is marked by the mild adversative δέ (but), does not necessitate a change in referent. The contrast need not be drawn directly between mankind, to whom not all things are subject, and Jesus, to whom they are; there could well be a weaker contrast here between the present lack of total subjection and the One to whom all things eventually will be subject.¹³⁰ Thus both

¹²⁶Spicq, 2:32; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 102.

¹²⁷The idea of angels being subject to man in the future is consistent with I Cor. 6:3. They already are appointed for the service of mankind (Heb. 1:14). Cf. Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 65.

¹²⁸Montefiore, pp. 55, 57, 58. That αὐτῷ refers to man is also held by Kistemaker (*Citations*, p. 103; and *Hebrews*, p. 65); Moffatt (pp. 21, 23); Westcott (p. 45); and Swetnam (pp. 138-140, 162, 163).

¹²⁹Kistemaker claims that τὸν δέ (v. 9) always denotes a change of subject (*Citations*, p. 105).

¹³⁰Cf. Swetnam, p. 163.

verses could refer to Jesus.¹³¹

Furthermore, the apparent insubordination of creation to mankind cannot be a decisive objection against finding a reference to Jesus here because presently it does not appear completely subject to Him either. In fact, the context mentions the most significant thing not yet subject to Him, death (vv. 9, 14, 15).¹³² But we should be cautious that we do not identify death as one of the things not yet seen to be in subjection in Hebrews 2:8b on the basis of the statement in I Corinthians 15:25-27 that it is the last enemy to be conquered.

Finally, the all inclusive nature of the decree, which ultimately places "all things" in subjection, favors a reference to Jesus. By using the article twice with "all things" (τὰ πάντα) and by denying the possibility that there might be any exception (v. 8b),¹³³ the writer seems to be pointing beyond the subjection of all of creation to Adam, which was in view in Psalm 8:6 and the creation mandate earlier in Genesis 1:28,¹³⁴ to the subjection of the entire

¹³¹This view is represented by Schröger (p. 86); Hughes (p. 87); and Spicq (2:32).

¹³²Swetnam, pp. 141, 163; Louis, p. 131.

¹³³CF. Swetnam, p. 162; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 102. Moffatt comments that the writer of Hebrews almost seems to be repudiating Philo's remark on Gen. 1:26 that God put man over all things except the heavenly beings (*On the Creation* 28; Moffatt, p. 25).

¹³⁴Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 36 f.

universe to Jesus.

But it is not essential that we finally determine the referent in verse 8b because, as the representative man, Jesus fulfills all that was promised to mankind in general.¹³⁵ Perhaps the writer of Hebrews even purposely allowed a bit of ambiguity here.¹³⁶

Although all things are subject to man, or here more likely to Jesus, in either case, verse 8b states that "now we do not yet see all things subjected to him."¹³⁷ Notice how the writer of Hebrews moves Psalm 8 in an eschatological direction. The psalmist stood amazed at the great gulf between man's insignificance and his lofty position as ruler over creation. But the writer of Hebrews ponders the disparity between man's position of rulership and his apparent, present lack of control over creation. He looks forward to the time when the decree of subordination, which has already been given, will be fully realized. The fact that it has been promised but has not yet happened is the guarantee that it will. But there is a time delay, which he already hinted at in the quotation from Psalm 110:1 in Hebrews 1:13; we must wait "until" God places all enemies

¹³⁵ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 37 n. 35.

¹³⁶ Thomas, "OT Citations in Hebrews," p. 306.

¹³⁷ Kistemaker notes that $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ (now) should be taken temporally rather than logically (*Citations*, p. 104). $\alpha\tilde{\nu}\nu\omega$ (not yet) also helps to build tension between the decree of subordination and its actual realization (Swetnam, p. 138).

underfoot.¹³⁸

The writer of Hebrews sets us between two ages:¹³⁹ the present age and the age to come; and he allows us to feel the tension between the "now" and the "not yet."¹⁴⁰ The world to come has been placed in subjection to mankind, or to its representative, Jesus; and in an inaugurated sense, it has already come.¹⁴¹ His reign has begun. But the world to come is not now actually present, and His reign has not yet been fully realized.¹⁴²

At verse 9, the writer of Hebrews clearly begins to interpret Psalm 8 in the light of what he knows about the life of Christ. While there may be some ambiguity about the one to whom all things are subjected in verse 8b, verse 9 is perfectly clear about who was "made for a little while lower

¹³⁸Hay, pp. 36, 124; Hagner, p. 25.

¹³⁹Cf. Buchanan, pp. 26 f.

¹⁴⁰Michel remarks that "The early Christian stretching between the present time and the future day conceals itself in this 'not yet.' The present lies between the not yet fulfilled dominion of the world and the already past humiliation and exaltation. The Christian witness of the Psalm informs about an event whose final act is still expected" (*Hebraer*, p. 139).

Elsewhere the writer of Hebrews speaks of an "age to come" (Heb. 6:5; cf. 2:5) and a "city to come" (Heb. 13:14), but his readers have already tasted its power (Heb. 6:5). They are living in the "last days" (Heb. 1:2), and the consummation of the age has already come (Heb. 9:26). Cf. Montefiore, p. 55; Hagner, p. 24.

¹⁴¹Cf. Moffatt, p. 23; Hughes, p. 82; Attridge, p. 70 n. 14.

¹⁴²Cf. Wallis, p. 28.

than the angels, namely Jesus." The writer has been saving that name until now for emphasis. In chapter 1, he referred to Jesus as the Son; but now he uses the name that points towards His humanity, His suffering and death, which made Him seem for a time inferior to the angels.¹⁴³

It is a bit difficult to explain the significance of the change in tense of the verb "to make lower," from the aorist in verse 7 (ἠλάττωσας) to the perfect in verse 9 (ἠλαττωμένον), because the durative force of the perfect runs contrary to the meaning of the words, which say that Jesus' humiliation was for a little while. Perhaps the writer is employing a subtle use of tense to imply that while Jesus did not always remain lower than the angels, He still retains His human nature which He took on to become one of us.¹⁴⁴

The διὰ of verse 9 raises the question of how the second clause should be construed with the rest of this verse. Verse 9 contains four clauses as follows: "We see Jesus, (1) who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, (2) because of the suffering of death, (3) crowned with glory and honor, (4) that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one." The second clause probably points to the reason for Jesus' exaltation (i.e.,

¹⁴³ Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 106; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 67; Hagner, pp. 23, 26; Montefiore, p. 58.

¹⁴⁴ Westcott, p. 45; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 106; Hughes, p. 88 n. 65; Loader, p. 31 n. 7.

[2] because of the suffering of death, [3] He was crowned with glory and honor),¹⁴⁵ rather than the purpose of His incarnation (i.e., [1] He was made lower than the angels [2] for the sake of the suffering of death).¹⁴⁶ The joining together of the two middle clauses in this verse leaves the two outer ones to be joined together in chiasitic fashion: "We see Jesus, (1) who was made for a little while lower than the angels, (4) that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one." The point of this arrangement is that the humiliation of Jesus in suffering death was a necessary prelude to His glorification;¹⁴⁷ and we might add that it also provides the means for man to realize the glory which had been hoped for him.

In verse 9, the writer of Hebrews returns to the words of Psalm 8:5 concerning mankind's glory over creation to describe Jesus' glorification: He is "crowned with glory and honor" (cf. Heb. 2:7). Here the perfect tense (*ἐστεφανωμένον*) refers to an event that had already taken

¹⁴⁵ Hughes, pp. 87, 90, 91; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 38, 39; J. C. O'Neill, "Hebrews 2:9," *JTS* 17 (1966): 80-81; cf. Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 105; Westcott, p. 45; Windisch, p. 20; Moffatt, p. 24; Hagner, p. 26.

¹⁴⁶ Spicq, 2:33, 34. Hughes contends against this view that if clauses 1 and 2 are joined, then the 4th clause, which speaks of death, seems to repeat the idea of no. 2. Also no. 4 seems to break chronological order by placing Christ's death after His glorification, which is mentioned in no. 3 (pp. 90, 91).

¹⁴⁷ For a helpful chart of parallels on suffering, exaltation, and perfection in Hebrews, see Moses Silva, "Perfection and Eschatology in Hebrews," *WTJ* 39 (1976-77): 66.

place and had ongoing results that were in effect during the writer's day.¹⁴⁸ It is not clear, however, whether the writer of Hebrews' identified the crowning "with glory and honor" with the transfiguration, the resurrection, or Christ's ascension to the Father's right hand.¹⁴⁹ The prominence of Psalm 110 in Hebrews suggests that it was the latter, but the important point is that suffering is followed by glory (cf. Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:9). The same pattern that was true for Jesus will also be true for mankind. Man is destined to arrive at a state similar to the one which Jesus as his representative leader has already attained.¹⁵⁰

Verse 9 contains another textual variant, which concerns whether Christ "tasted death for every one" $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (by the grace of God),¹⁵¹ or $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (apart from God).¹⁵² This question does not directly affect Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 8 since by this point the writer has

¹⁴⁸ This verb was aorist in the quotation (v. 7), as was $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\alpha\tau\tau\acute{\omega}$, which we noted above (cf. vs. 7, 9); but here the permanence of Jesus' crowning makes the change in tense easier to explain. Cf. Swetnam, p. 139.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Swetnam, p. 163; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 38, 39.

¹⁵⁰ Swetnam, pp. 141, 163, 164.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Hughes, pp. 94-97; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 32 n. 15, 37, 40; Metzger, p. 664; Spicq, 1:419; 2:35 f.; Tasker p. 184; Michel, *Hebraer*, pp. 133, 139-142; Westcott, p. 46; Moffatt, pp. 26, 27; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, pp. 67, 68; Hagner, p. 28; Schröger, p. 85 n. 1; Windisch, p. 21.

¹⁵² Cf. O'Neill, pp. 79-82; J. K. Elliott, "Jesus Apart from God (Heb. 2:9)," *ExpTim* 83 (1972): 339-341; Zuntz, pp. 34-35; Montefiore, pp. 55, 58, 59; Braun, pp. 56, 57.

passed on to his own observations drawn from the earthly life of Christ. Therefore, it is best to leave the lengthy debate which it has generated outside the scope of our study. Let it suffice to say that the explanation which seems most commendable is that $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ crept into the text as a marginal gloss on I Corinthians 15:27, which excepts God from all things that are subject to Christ.¹⁵³ Reading $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, the writer seems to be saying that the vicarious death of Christ arose out of God's free benevolence.¹⁵⁴

The idiom to "taste death" in verse 9 does not mean to sip lightly, but "to experience the painful reality of death" (cf. Mk. 9:1).¹⁵⁵ This Jesus did for $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$, which could be taken as either masculine, "for every one," or neuter, "for everything." Although the Greek fathers understood it as a neuter, meaning that Christ died to redeem all of creation, we would normally expect a neuter plural if that were the case. Furthermore, the context focuses redemption upon human beings, and it specifically denies that Christ has the same interest in angels (cf. vv.

¹⁵³Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 32 n. 15, and p. 37; Metzger, p. 664; Tasker p. 184; Moffatt, p. 27; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 68; Attridge, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴Kistemaker emphasizes God's love (*Hebrews*, p. 68), and Hughes emphasizes His initiative (p. 92).

¹⁵⁵Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 67; Hughes, pp. 91, 92; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 40.

10, 15, 16).¹⁵⁶

Psalm 8 provides the foundation for Hebrews' ongoing discussion of Jesus' identification with humanity in the rest of chapter 2.¹⁵⁷ But we may conclude our study at the end of verse 9 since at this point the writer begins to draw his arguments from other sources.

THE SHIFT IN MEANING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now that we have examined the use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9 and have observed that the meaning shifts somewhat as the writer of Hebrews adapts the quotation to fit its new Christological context, we are in a better position to determine if Hebrews' interpretation of the psalm is consistent with its original meaning. The shift in meaning that occurs has aroused suspicion that the writer of Hebrews is reading his own Christian theology back into the psalm rather than exegeting it. But we should not be hasty in either condemning the writer for faulty exegesis¹⁵⁸ or in condoning a theological interpretation that lacks exegetical support.¹⁵⁹ If possible, we should seek to resolve the tension that exists between the writer of Hebrews and the OT

¹⁵⁶Cf. Hughes, pp. 92-94; Westcott, p. 46; Moffatt, pp. 25, 26; Montefiore, p. 58.

¹⁵⁷Swetnam, p. 167.

¹⁵⁸Cf. Moffatt, p. 23; Colpe, *TDNT*, 8:464; Giles, p. 328.

¹⁵⁹Cf. Childs, pp. 26-28, 31; Schröger, p. 87; Louis, pp. 134, 181; Spicq, 2:31; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 105; Craigie, p. 110; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 134.

psalmist by listening more carefully to the meaning of each writer, by trying to define more precisely the nature of the interpretive changes from one to the other, and by searching for an exegetical bridge across the gap between them.

In our study so far, we have absolved the writer of Hebrews from shifting the meaning of the psalm to read in his own Christology at two points where he might be suspected of doing so. The first one concerns the reference in the quotation to "the son of man" (Heb. 2:6; Ps. 8:4). Although these words likely triggered Christological associations in his mind, it is hard to charge the writer with distortion since he never interprets them.¹⁶⁰ The second point concerns the Septuagint's translation of אַלְהִים as "angels." This translation likely facilitated Hebrews' contrast between Christ and the angels. But, as we have observed, it has a reasonably strong claim to legitimacy, and our writer likely accepted it at face value.¹⁶¹ In neither of these two cases does Hebrews' Messianic interpretation of the psalm depend on a shift in meaning.

The most basic starting point where the shift in meaning occurs, as the quotation moves from its OT setting in Psalm 8 to its NT context in Hebrews, is our writer's observation that the psalm expresses an aspiration for mankind's glory that has not yet been fully realized (Heb.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. above, pp. 142 f.

¹⁶¹ Cf. above, pp. 119, 145.

2:9). The unfulfilled nature of the promise coupled with the conviction that one day it will be fulfilled moves the writer of Hebrews away from the psalm's qualitative emphasis on man's great dignity, which is only a little less than that of heavenly beings, to a temporal idea emphasizing the limited duration of man's status on a plane lower than the angels. Whereas the psalmist was amazed that man, who seems so insignificant in comparison with the vastness of the universe, could be elevated to such a high position; the writer of Hebrews is troubled that man does not presently exercise all the dominion or have all the glory that was granted to him at creation,¹⁶² and he anticipates the age to come when, through Christ, man will realize what was promised (cf. Heb. 2:5).

That the psalmist was thinking qualitatively of the highest possible praise for man, not temporally of his relegation to an inferior status for a limited time, is fairly clear. As we have already seen, the Hebrew word for "a little" (*QYD*) can occasionally refer to time,¹⁶³ but the context most likely determines that in Psalm 8:5 it refers to degree. Throughout the psalm, the poet deals with qualitative categories as he ponders the disparity between the insignificance of finite man in God's vast universe, on the one hand, and the greatness of man's dominion over

¹⁶² Cf. Childs, p. 25.

¹⁶³ Cf. above, p. 118. n. 30.

creation, on the other. In keeping with this emphasis, he probably intended the next line, "You have crowned him with glory and honor," to be taken in synonymous parallelism with the line in question, "You made him a little lower than אֱלֹהִים" (v. 5). Both are high expressions of praise. For the psalmist, man is just a little lower than a heavenly being!

The Septuagint contributes towards Hebrews' shift to a temporal meaning by translating מַיְמֵי as βραχὺ τι. Both expressions can refer to either time or degree.¹⁶⁴ But the temporal sense is found more often in Greek than in Hebrew, and the frequency of this usage encourages one to look for a temporal idea in the Septuagint. It is not fair, however, to make the Septuagint responsible for creating a temporal meaning.¹⁶⁵ It gives a translation that is legitimate and at the same time semantically vague enough to allow the lexical possibility of either time or degree.¹⁶⁶ But the context probably still rules in favor of a reference to degree in

¹⁶⁴ See Isa. 57:17, where βραχὺ τι means "a little while" and II Sam. 16:1, where it means "a little distance."

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Childs, pp. 25, 26; Gräßer, p. 408; Schröger, pp. 82, 83; Laub, p. 63 n. 48.

¹⁶⁶ Childs notes that the issue is not one of misunderstanding or mistranslation. "Rather, the very nature of translation from one language into another has effected a change. This alteration results more from the fact that words which had a wide semantic range in Hebrew are often rendered in Greek with words of a more limited range. Or the reverse--words which in Hebrew have a narrow scope are rendered in Greek with words which are more inclusive in meaning" (p. 24).

the Septuagint, as it did in the Hebrew OT. The writer of Hebrews, however, almost certainly, takes βραχύ τι in a temporal sense to mean that man is made "for a little while lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7).¹⁶⁷ By limiting the duration of man's inferior status, he avoids the impression that man will always remain just a little lower than angels and raises the hope that in the age to come he will be elevated above them (Heb. 2:5). In this way our writer quickly moves Psalm 8 in an eschatological direction.¹⁶⁸

But in light of the fall, he can think of only one Person who could possibly fulfill the psalm's high ideal for mankind, especially in this heightened eschatological sense. In His incarnation, Jesus, the God-man,¹⁶⁹ became the true embodiment of humanity (Heb. 2:14, 17), a perfect man (Heb. 2:10; 4:15; 5:8), and thus the only hope to fulfill all the psalmist's aspirations to which no human being before ever fully attained.¹⁷⁰ For Psalm 8 to be fulfilled, then, the

¹⁶⁷ Swetnam, p. 139; Schröger, pp. 82, 83, 85 n. 5; Childs, pp. 25, 26; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 139; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Delitzsch, *Psalms*, pp. 156, 157; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 102; Vanhoye, *Situation*, p. 282; Loader, p. 33; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, p. 186.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Louis, p. 133.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 49; Childs, p. 30; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, pp. 156, 157; Hughes, pp. 84-86; Longenecker, p. 181; Vanhoye, p. 284; Russell Philip Shedd, *Man in Community: A Study of St. Paul's Application of Old Testament and Early Jewish Conceptions of Human Solidarity* (London: Epworth, 1958), p. 156.

writer of Hebrews had to shift from anthropology to Christology; and so he moves away from the psalmist's praise for the greatness of mankind in general to focus on a particular man, Jesus Christ.¹⁷¹

As the writer of Hebrews particularizes the notion of temporal inferiority, working from mankind to Jesus, a couple of distinctively Christian doctrines emerge. Since Jesus was originally higher than angels, He must have, at some point in time, become lower than the angels; and He must be, or already has been, raised higher than them again. By this simple logic, the writer of Hebrews draws both the humiliation and the exaltation of Jesus out of Psalm 8.¹⁷²

But his application of the temporal idea to Christ does not move the quotation in an entirely different direction from that of the OT, as has sometimes been charged.¹⁷³ He focuses more on exaltation (vv. 5, 8-10) than on humiliation (vv. 7a, 9), even though being made "for a little while lower than the angels" would naturally point to humiliation. In so doing, he is in keeping with Psalm 8's emphasis on the exalted dignity of mankind. The difference is that he shifts the focus from the greatness of mankind in general to

¹⁷¹ Cf. Childs, pp. 26, 27; Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, p. 202.

¹⁷² Westcott, p. 43; Swetnam, p. 139; cf. Käsemann, p. 125. The writer of Hebrews could have also derived these doctrines from Ps. 40:6-8 (cf. Heb. 10:5-10, although he does not emphasize the incarnation here) and Ps. 110:1 (cf. Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2).

¹⁷³ Childs, p. 26.

the exaltation of one Man in particular.¹⁷⁴

But the writer of Hebrews does not remove mankind from the picture, by applying the psalm to Christ.¹⁷⁵ He views Jesus, not as an isolated individual, but as the representative of mankind, through whom humanity will also be exalted (cf. v. 10).¹⁷⁶ Rather than detracting from the glory of man in Psalm 8 by his Christological interpretation, the writer of Hebrews elevates man to an even higher plane.

Both the psalmist and the writer of Hebrews deal with mankind, but each one looks in a different direction. Whereas the psalmist derived his ideal for all of mankind by looking back to the first man, Adam; the writer of Hebrews anticipates the realization of that ideal through a representative man, Jesus.

That Psalm 8:6-8 looks back to Adam, the archetypal man, is clear. Although the allusion to Adam's name in the common Hebrew phrase בן אדם (son of man) could be coincidental (Ps. 8:4), the psalmist's allusion to the creation mandate given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30 is unmistakable (Ps 8:6-8).

It is also clear that the early church saw Jesus as the head of a new humanity in contrast with Adam as the head of

¹⁷⁴Swetnam, p. 139; Glenn, p. 44.

¹⁷⁵Uanhoye, pp. 284, 285.

¹⁷⁶Louis, pp. 131-133; Ellison, p. 14; Hughes, pp. 84, 85, 87.

the old. I Corinthians 15 surrounds its interpretation of Psalm 8 with a correlation between the first man, Adam, in whom all die, and the last man, Christ, in whom all will be made alive (cf. vv. 21, 22, 25-28, 45-47). Romans 5:12-21, which also draws an analogy between the effects of Adam's fall and Christ's redemption upon all humanity, specifically declares that Adam is a type of Christ (v. 14).¹⁷⁷

This NT relationship between the two Adams proceeds upon the basis of the Semitic idea of corporate solidarity.¹⁷⁸ In the same way that a modern corporation is legally constituted to act as if it were a single individual, so in the Hebrew concept of corporate solidarity, the ethnic unit, which is tied together by blood, is viewed as a whole which transcends the physical limitations of its individual members. What was true of a representative figure such as Adam, one of the Patriarchs, the King, or the Messiah could be said of the group as a whole; and conversely, the entire nation could be viewed as if it were functioning as a single individual.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 35; Morissette, pp. 330-334; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 134; I. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of its Form and Content* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1951), p. 233. Bruce suggests that the conception of the two Adams may have a pre-Pauline origin if Phil. 2:6-11 is based on an older hymn contrasting the faithfulness of the second man with the fallenness of first (*ibid.*).

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Vanhoye, p. 284; Giles, p. 33; *contra* cf. John William Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-examination," *JTS* 21 (1970): 6.

¹⁷⁹ On the general concept of corporate solidarity see H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*

In this relationship between what was promised Adam and what is fulfilled in Christ as representatives of the human race, lies the real key to Hebrews' Messianic interpretation of Psalm 8.¹⁸⁰ Jesus is the only man who could ever realize the high ideal of Psalm 8 for Himself, and it is only through Him, as the perfect representative of the race, that what Adam lost in the fall can be redeemed and the dominion and glory that was originally granted at creation can be restored to all of mankind.

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 1, 19; R. P. Shedd, p. 4; Longenecker, pp. 93, 94; Willis Judson Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), pp. 380, 381 n. 1. Although Rogerson has criticized the ambiguity of the term "corporate personality" (p. 14) and questioned certain aspects of this ideal such as the uniqueness of the concept of a "primitive mindset" versus a modern one (p. 16), the essential notion has ample Biblical support. In the OT we can think especially of the example of Achan (Josh. 7:1-26) or of the application of the title "the Servant of the Lord" to the Messiah (Isa. 52:13 ff.), the righteous remnant (Isa. 41:8, 9; 44:21 f.; 48:20), or the nation as a whole (Isa. 42:19); cf. F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on Isaiah*, trans. James Martin, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 2:174. In the NT, the early church, working from the perspective of corporate solidarity, viewed Jesus as representative of the Jewish nation (cf. Matt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1; John 11:51, 52), as the embodiment of the new people of God (Eph. 1:22, 23; Gal. 3:16, 29, etc.), and as the head of the entire human race (cf. Rom. 5:15; I Cor. 15:22, 45). The writer of Hebrews also seems to be proceeding on the notion of corporate solidarity in his claim that Levi paid tithes through Abraham (Heb. 7:9, 10).

¹⁸⁰ Ellison remarks that "The real prototype of the king was Adam, God's viceregent, with his dominion over the world. . . . Though Ps. 8 speaks of mankind in general, it is really looking back to Adam and then forward to the new Adam. The New Testament use of the Psalm in Heb. 2 is in accordance with its basic idea" (p. 14); cf. Bruce (*Hebrews*, pp. 35, 36).

The Messianic Application of Psalm 8:4-6

We conclude that although Hebrews' application of Psalm 8 to Christ extends beyond the contextual meaning of the quotation in the OT, it flows out of ideas implicit in the psalm and develops them along natural lines. The focus of the two texts is somewhat different, but the shift in meaning that occurs as the writer of Hebrews adapts the quotation to fit its new Christological context is consistent with the original meaning of Psalm 8. Since Jesus Christ is the only One who could fulfill the ideals for mankind set forth in the psalm, it must be at least indirectly Messianic as it finds its fulfillment in Him.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Cf. the similar conclusions, *mutatis mutandis* of Hagner (p. 24); Kistemaker (*Hebrews*, p. 66); Hughes (pp. 84, 85, 87); Briggs (p. 148); and Glenn (pp. 46 f.).

CHAPTER 3:
THE APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF REST IN PSALM 95
TO THE CONTEMPORARY GENERATION
IN HEBREWS 3:7--4:11

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3:7--4:11, the writer of Hebrews uses Psalm 95:7-11 as a basis for warning his readers of the danger of missing God's promised rest by falling into the same error of disobedience and unbelief as the Israelites in the wilderness. We might expect that since he is applying the psalm to a new situation for hortatory purposes, rather than exegeting it to establish doctrine,¹ he would expand and develop its ideas to address that new situation. But to the extent that his concept of rest is ostensibly derived from the psalm, it should still correspond to the psalmist's intended meaning.

In Psalm 95:11, rest is closely associated with the Israelites' entrance into the land of Canaan, but it has sometimes been thought that the writer of Hebrews transforms rest into an abstract state of heavenly bliss so that he might apply it to his own readers (cf. Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:1,

¹Unlike the previous chapters, we are not dealing with a Christological issue here, except insofar as the fulfillment of the promised rest is ultimately tied to Christ (Heb. 3:14). Cf. Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968), p. 105.

3, 5, 6, 8-11).² His interpretation of rest has been labelled as "tortuous and involved,"³ "strange,"⁴ and seemingly "superficial" at points.⁵ Such allegations about the propriety of his hermeneutics naturally raise a couple questions in the mind of a modern reader.⁶ Does the writer of Hebrews mean the same thing by "rest" as the author of Psalm 95 intended?⁷ Is he correct in applying the OT promise of rest to the readers of his generation when they seem so far removed from the original situation?

²Cf. Andrew I. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 205, 214, 215; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 105; Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), p. 113; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 128.

³R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), 80.

⁴Schröger, p. 114.

⁵Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 85.

⁶Cf. Walter C., Kaiser, Jr. "Experiencing the Old Testament 'Rest' of God: Hebrews 3:1--4," in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 169.

⁷In the following chapter, we will also inquire about the validity of his hermeneutical technique, which has often been described as Midrashic.

THE CONCEPT OF REST IN HEBREWS

THE WRITER'S BASIS FOR APPLYING THE
PROMISE OF REST TO HIS OWN GENERATION

Let us begin to answer these questions by examining the writer's basis for applying the promise of rest to his own generation. He needed to demonstrate that the promise remained long after the settlement of the land in order to apply it to his own generation (cf. Heb. 4:1, 6, 9). He knew from Biblical history that the wilderness generation failed to enter God's promised rest (cf. Heb. 3:19; 4:6), but he could not find a clear statement in Scripture that it still remained open. Accordingly he sought to establish the present availability of the promise using two separate lines of reasoning.⁸

His first line of reasoning takes us back before the wilderness wanderings to creation. Hebrews 4:3, 4 alludes to the statement in Genesis 2:2 that "by the seventh day God completed all His work." By combining this statement with the lack of any indication in Scripture that God ever resumed working, our writer was able to conclude that God is presently at rest.⁹ Next he identifies God's rest with the

⁸Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 124; cf. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 92.

⁹Jesus' claim in John 5:17 that the "Father is working until now" likely presupposes the same view that God's creation rest began on the seventh day and continues to the present. But, Jesus argues, the Father's continued works of providence are not a violation of creation rest, which is

The Application of the Concept of Rest in Psalm 95

rest mentioned in Psalm 95:11 by noting that God calls it "My rest" (Heb. 3:11; 4:4, 5). The identification of God's rest at creation with the promise means that there must be a possibility for some people to experience God's rest (Heb. 4:1, 6). But the people of God, from all indications, have never rested from their works as God did from His. Since God's people have never experienced the rest that was promised to them, the possibility of entering it must remain open in order for the promise to be valid (Heb. 4:9, 10).¹⁰

In Hebrews 4:8, the writer takes up a second line of reasoning to show that the promise of rest remained open after the settlement of the land.¹¹ Working from the theological conviction that no purpose of God can fall to the ground,¹² he builds an argument on the unfulfilled nature of the promise: "If Joshua had given them rest, [God] would

characterized by freedom from exertion rather than a complete cessation of activity; therefore, His own healings are not a violation of Sabbath rest. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 74; Montefiore, p. 84; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 108. Philo expresses a similar view of God's rest in, *On the Cherubim* 87; see below p. 190 n. 71.

¹⁰Cf. C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the NT and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), pp. 367, 368; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 84.

¹¹Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 130.

¹²He uses the introductory formula *καθὼς προεῖρηται* ("just as has been said before") in v. 7 to reinforce the permanent validity of the Scriptural statement. Cf. Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 111; Westcott, p. 92.

not have spoken of another day after that" (Heb. 4:8; cf. v. 1).¹³ The historical record that, long after Joshua, God spoke "in David"¹⁴ of another day of rest implies that the

¹³The common use of the name Ἰησοῦς in Greek for both Joshua and Jesus allows the writer of Hebrews to introduce a subtle typological contrast between Joshua's failure to lead the Israelites into true rest and Jesus' accomplishment of it for His people. Cf. Jean Daniélou, *From Shadow to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Don Wulstan Hibberd (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), pp. 229-231; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 76, 77; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 12th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), p. 195; Donald Hagner, *Hebrews*, GNC (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 51.

Elsewhere he uses the same kind of argument from an unfulfilled condition in the OT to deduce the necessity of a new priesthood (Heb. 7:11), and a new covenant (Heb. 8:7). But in each case, his reasoning arises from an attempt to understand the meaning of the OT; cf. G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 48, 49.

¹⁴Hebrews' association of David's name with Psalm 95 (LXX 94), which is untitled in the Hebrew OT, likely arises from its title in the LXX, ἄνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυίδ (the praise of a song by David). In a pre-critical age, which spoke figuratively of the entire Psalter as belonging to David, the writer of Hebrews could have intended the phrase "in David" to mean "in the book of David" (cf. Rom. 9:25; 11:2; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 75; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924], p. 52), or "in the person of David" (Westcott, p. 97; K. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* [Cambridge: At the University Press, 1916], p. 575) without necessarily endorsing Davidic authorship of this particular psalm (cf. Matt. 27:9; Mk. 1:2). Our writer's regard for the LXX as Scripture, however, implies that he thought of David as the author (Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 110 n. 12;Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 130 n. 95); but the question of authorship is not crucial to the main point of Heb. 4:7 that the promise of rest was still available a long time after Joshua's age (Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 75).

The position of J. Rendel Harris that we should understand Heb. 4:8 in terms of Jesus' not giving rest to unbelieving Jews (*Testimonies*, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916, 1920], pp. 52-54) misses the temporal argument. See also the criticism of Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 77 n. 28.

promise still remains open (Heb. 4:7-9).¹⁵

This argument, however, must deal with a number of OT passages that state or imply that Joshua did give the Israelites rest (Josh. 1:13, 15; 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1).¹⁶ The writer of Hebrews, assuming that Scripture does not contradict itself (Heb. 4:8), reasons that the difficulty arises from his own misunderstanding of the text, which can be corrected by a more careful exegesis.¹⁷ He resolves the discrepancy by observing that the rest which Psalm 95:11 holds out is different from the rest which Joshua achieved.¹⁸ Thus he is able to conclude that the true rest which was promised is still available for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).¹⁹

¹⁵George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 73, 74.

¹⁶Cf. Kaiser, p. 165.

¹⁷Richard Reid, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Th. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1964), pp. 74, 75.

¹⁸Cf. Caird, p. 48; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 123.

¹⁹Although some modern readers may object to this kind of reasoning, the nature of the disagreement lies in the acceptability of the writer's underlying premise concerning the authority of Scripture rather than the validity of the logic. Cf. Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), p. 550. Whether or not one agrees with him, the writer of Hebrews regarded Scripture as a divine and authoritative revelation; cf. Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 113; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 24; Reid, pp. 74, 75.

THE MEANING OF REST IN HEBREWS

Having seen the logic by which our writer applies the promise of rest to his own generation, we must determine if the rest that he holds out is the same as the rest referred to in Psalm 95. But it is not easy to define precisely what he means by rest in our pericope, and the complexity of the problem is witnessed by the wide difference of opinion that exists on this issue.

The concept of rest in Hebrews has been variously identified, in somewhat of a material sense, as the promised land of Canaan,²⁰ the eschatological promise of a new land,²¹ the millennial kingdom,²² or "the world" and "city to come" (Heb. 2:5; 13:14).²³ Alternatively it has been given more of a spiritual sense by those who view it as the rest into which God entered upon completion of creation,²⁴ and into which His people may also enter,²⁵ whether it is conceived in

²⁰ Buchanan, pp. 64, 65, 71-73.

²¹ Ottfried Hofius, *Katapausis. Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1970), p. 28.

²² Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," *GTJ* 3 (1982): 72-74.

²³ Michel, p. 185.

²⁴ Moffatt, p. 49; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 123, 126, 129; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: the Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), p. 100.

²⁵ Hofius, p. 28; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 74; Westcott, pp. 82, 96, 97; Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 2:82, 103; Attridge,

an ideal²⁶ or a local sense.²⁷ This spiritual rest has sometimes been equated with the eternal Sabbath,²⁸ eternal bliss,²⁹ or the Christian experience of inward peace.³⁰ A number of those who have tried to define rest in Hebrews have concluded either that the writer uses his terminology for rest in different ways³¹ or that he had a broad concept in mind including both physical and spiritual aspects.³²

In addition to the real possibility that the writer of

Hebrews, p. 131; Thompson, pp. 99, 101.

²⁶Hagner, pp. 51, 52, 56.

²⁷Ernst Käsemann identifies it as the heavenly homeland or the heavenly cosmos (*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], pp. 33, 36, 68); Hofius, as the heavenly Holy of Holies (pp. 51-54, 58). Cf. Lincoln, pp. 210, 211; Thompson, p. 99.

²⁸Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), pp. 161, 162; Montefiore, p. 85; Hofius, p. 28.

²⁹Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 78, 79; Spicq, 2:82; Gerhard von Rad, "There Still Remains a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. E. W. Truman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), p. 99; cf. Toussaint, p. 71 n. 10.

³⁰Hagner, p. 52; Roy Graham, "A Note on Hebrews 4:4-9," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. K. Strand (Washington: D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), p. 344; cf. Toussaint, p. 71 n. 11.

³¹Graham, p. 344; Toussaint, p. 74; Hughes, pp. 143, 144; Hofius, p. 28; Hagner, pp. 42, 47, 49, 54.

³²Kaiser, pp. 169-172.

The Concept of Rest in Hebrews

Hebrews may be using the same word in different ways, the attempt to define his meaning precisely is complicated by the fact that his vocabulary for rest includes two distinct roots. He uses the noun *κατάπαυσις* eight times (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3 [2X], 5, 10, 11), and he employs the related verb *καταπάυω* three times. Twice he gives the verb an intransitive meaning (to rest, Heb. 4:4, 10), and once he uses it transitively (to give, or cause rest, Heb. 4:8).³³ In Hebrews 4:9, he introduces a second word for rest, *σαββατισμός*, which is usually translated as "Sabbath rest." For the most part, the definition of rest in Hebrews depends upon the meaning of *κατάπαυσις*, but we will need to determine if the writer used it synonymously with *σαββατισμός*, or if his change in terminology signals a change in the meaning of rest.

Now that we have a better appreciation for the complexity of the task, let us try to determine the precise meaning that our writer gives to rest by examining the concept in Hebrews itself. In Hebrews 3:7-11, he places the subject before us by quoting Psalm 95:7-11; then, in the remaining verses of chapter 3, he begins to draw out the application for his own generation from the historical narrative behind the psalm.³⁴ He alludes so frequently to

³³Cf. Toussaint, pp. 70, 71; Hofius, p. 29. The noun also occurs in Acts 7:49 and the verb in Acts 14:18.

³⁴Cf. Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 90; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 110.

The Application of the Concept of Rest in Psalm 95

the Septuagintal account of the Israelites' failure to enter Canaan as recorded in Numbers 14, or its parallels in Deuteronomy 1:19-46 and Numbers 32:7-15, that one gains the distinct impression that he had the text open in front of him.³⁵ If we distinguish the allusions that our writer contributes from those already contained in the quotation, we should learn something about his idea of rest.

His opening warning for his readers to be careful lest any one of them should have "an evil heart . . . in falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12) echoes the earlier warning of Joshua and Caleb to the "evil congregation" (Num. 14:27, 35) of the Israelites at the entrance to Canaan not to "fall away from the the Lord" (Num. 14:9; cf. Num 32:9b; Deut. 1:28). The appeal in verse 15 for his generation to hear God's voice, which he repeats in words of the psalmist (Ps. 95 [LXX 94]:7), derives its urgency from the former generation's failure to listen to God's voice (Num. 14:22; cf. Deut. 9:23; Ps. 106 [LXX 105]:25). His accusation that "all those who came out of Egypt" provoked God (Heb. 3:16; cf. Num. 14:13) borrows the term "provoked" (*παρεπίκραναν*) from Psalm 95 (94):8 rather than from the Pentateuch, which prefers *παροξύνω* (Num. 14:11, 23; Deut. 1:34; cf. Num. 20:24; Deut. 9:7, 22), but the terms in both sources carry

³⁵ Hofius, pp. 136, 137; Albert Vanhoye, "Longue Marche ou accès tout proche? Le contexte biblique de Hébreux 3:7--4:11," *Bib* 49 (1968): 18-21, esp. p. 19; cf. pp. 10-17; Buchanan, pp. 67, 68.

very similar meanings.³⁶ The question in Hebrews 3:17, "with whom was He angry for forty years?" (cf. Ps. 95:10) corresponds to the judgment of Numbers 14:33, 34 that for forty years the wilderness generation would experience God's "fierce anger" (cf. Num. 32:10, 13). The writer of Hebrews, following the Biblical narrative, finds the Israelites guilty of sin (Heb. 3:13, 17; Num. 14:19, 34, 40; cf. Deut. 1:41; Ps. 78 [LXX 77]:32), which he specifically identifies as disobedience (Heb. 3:18; Num. 14:43; cf. Deut. 1:26; 9:23, 24) and unbelief (Heb. 3:19; Num. 14:11; cf. Deut. 1:32; 9:23; Ps. 106 [LXX 105]:24); and he notes that as a consequence their "corpses fell in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:17; cf. I Cor. 10:5; Num. 14:29, 32, 33).

In contrast with his strong orientation in chapter 3 around the refusal to enter the promised land, our writer omits any reference to two other important provocations or testings in the history of Israel's wilderness journeys which are suggested by the Hebrew words *קִרְיָה* (provocation) and *מִסָּה* (testing) in Psalm 95:8.³⁷ These words together remind us of the rebellion at Rephidim, which Moses renamed Meribah (*קִרְיָה*) and Massah (*מִסָּה*) because there the Israelites provoked God concerning the lack of water and tested the reality of His presence among them (Ex. 17:1-7).

³⁶ Related forms of both the paired terms in Ps. 95:8, 9 *παρομπρασμός* (provocation) and *πειρασμός* (testing) can be found in Ps. 78 (LXX 77):40, 41, 56.

³⁷ Cf. Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 18, 21.

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The word מְרִיבָה also brings to mind a very similar event at Kadesh, which became known as "the waters of Meribah" because there the Israelites again provoked God concerning a lack of water (Num. 20:2-13).

But the writer of Hebrews follows the Septuagint in obscuring the apparent allusion in the Hebrew Bible to these events by interpreting מְרִיבָה and מִצְפָּה as abstract concepts, παραπικρασμός (provocation) and πειρασμός (testing), rather than transliterating them as place names (Heb. 3:8). He gives further evidence that he is not alluding to events associated with these places by identifying the people's sin as unbelief and disobedience (Heb. 3:18, 19); whereas, the only mention we find of these sins in connection with Massah or Meribah is attributed to Moses, who was excluded from the promised land for his unbelief and failure to treat God as holy at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20:12; 27:14; Deut. 32:51; Ps. 106 [LXX 105]:32).³⁸ Any implied censure of Moses would not fit well with the immediately preceding context in Hebrews, which prepares the way for the discussion of rest by elevating Moses along side of Christ as a paradigm of faithfulness (Heb. 3:2, 5; cf. Num. 12:7) in contrast with the unfaithfulness of those whom he led out of Egypt (Heb. 4:16).³⁹

³⁸ Cf. Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 18, 19.

³⁹ Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 18, 19, 21; E. Gräßer, "Moses und Jesus. Zur Auslegung von Heb. 3:1-6," *ZNW* 75 (1984): 3, 4; Buchanan, p. 68; Montefiore, p. 75; Westcott, p. 79.

We will need to ask later on if the perspective of the writer of Hebrews corresponds with that of the psalmist, but his multiple references to the Israelites' refusal to enter the promised land combined with the absence of any allusion to the events at either Meribah or Massah leave little doubt that he equated the oath of Psalm 95:11 prohibiting entrance into rest (cf. Heb. 3:11, 18) with God's pronouncement of judgment on the wilderness generation: "As I live . . . surely all the men who have seen My . . . signs, . . . yet have put Me to the test . . . and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers" (Num. 14:21-23; cf. Num. 14:28-30; 32:11; Deut. 1:34, 35). The equation of Psalm 95:11 with Numbers 14:21-23 can only mean that the writer of Hebrews understood that rest in the psalm originally included the promised land of Canaan.⁴⁰ But we would be mistaken to assume that he limits the concept of rest to the land, for, as we soon shall note, he denies that physical occupation of the land exhausted the promise of rest (cf. Heb. 4:8). The rest that he offers to his generation certainly includes spiritual elements.

As the writer of Hebrews continues the discussion of rest in chapter 4, he keeps the wilderness generation's failure to enter the land in the background, but he begins to focus more upon the present applicability of the promise

⁴⁰ Cf. Buchanan, pp. 64, 65.

and the need for his own generation to enter into rest.⁴¹ His frequent association of the verb εἰσέρχομαι (to enter) with the term rest (κατάπαυσις) in this chapter (cf. Heb. 4:1, 3, 5 f., 10, 11) has led some scholars to believe that the rest offered to his generation must have a spatial orientation, just as the rest which the wilderness generation failed to attain did (cf. Heb. 3:11, 18).⁴² But contrary to their supposition that εἰσέρχομαι must denote entrance into a location rather than a state of being, the NT uses the verb elsewhere figuratively of entrance into various abstract states such as life (Matt. 19:17), temptation (Matt. 26:41), glory (Lk. 24:26), and labor (John 4:38).⁴³ We should note, however, that the major proponents of this argument for a spatial concept locate the rest of Hebrews 4 in the heavenly realm rather than Canaan.⁴⁴

Indeed, the application of the promise to the contemporary generation seems to necessitate a shift away

⁴¹ We should not allow the chapter break to interrupt the flow of the argument; cf. Michel, p. 191; Wilson, p. 80; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, pp. 103, 104.

⁴² Hofius, pp. 13, 25-28, 53, 58; Käsemann, p. 68; Thompson, p. 99. Hofius supports this argument from the allusion to Ps. 95 (94 LXX):11 in *Joseph and Asenath* 8:9 where rest denotes a place in heaven (cf. J & A 22:13); Hofius, pp. 30, 50; *contra* Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 126, 127, and nn. 55, 57.

⁴³ BAGD classifies the occurrences of εἰσέρχομαι with κατάπαυσις in Hebrews together with these figurative meanings.

⁴⁴ Cf. above, p. 174 n. 27.

from a geographic idea. It is difficult to conceive of the writer's claim that "we who have believed enter that rest" (Heb. 4:3) in terms of the literal land of Canaan. If the recipients of the letter lived in the physical land of Palestine, they would still have had no more legal right to it than their unbelieving neighbors; and if they lived outside of its borders, the statement would simply be false.

Any attempt to define the concept of rest in Hebrews must harmonize with the writer's inclusion of both present and futuristic aspects of rest in chapter 4.⁴⁵ The present tense of εἰσερχομαι (enter) in verse 3 indicates that rest is something into which believers may enter now (Heb. 4:3);⁴⁶

⁴⁵Most commentators emphasize the present experience of entering into rest; cf. Westcott, p. 95; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 107; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 109; Spicq, 2:81, 82; Lincoln, pp. 212, 213; Montefiore, p. 83. A few focus on the future realization of the promise; cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 73 n. 17; Moffatt, p. 51. But Hebrews spares us from choosing between two alternatives, for, as we soon shall see, it is genuinely concerned with both the present and the future; cf. Hagner, pp. 54, 56; Barrett, p. 372; Williamson, p. 554; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 126.

⁴⁶There is no compelling reason in the context to abandon the regular use of the present for a futuristic present: ("we do [are sure to] enter"); cf. Montefiore, p. 83; Westcott, p. 95; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 126; *contra* the Vulgate; Moffatt, p. 51; and Michel, p. 194.

Hebrews' emphasis on the "today" of the psalm suggests the possibility of entering into rest is close at hand (Heb. 4:7; cf. 3:13, 15; Lincoln, p. 213; Vanhoye, "Marche," p. 24). But v. 10 is a weak support for a present interpretation, for it does not actually claim that any one has already entered into rest. Rather it supports the conclusion of v. 9 that a Sabbath rest remains, for (γάρα), the writer implies, no one has rested from all his works as God did from His. Cf. Barrett, p. 372; Williamson, p. 554; Hagner, p. 54.

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and this initial experience guarantees the reality of more to come.⁴⁷ But rest in its fullest sense still remains as a promise to be realized in the future (Heb. 4:1, 6, 9). Thus the writer of Hebrews leaves us in the same kind of tension between the present and the future as we felt earlier in his eschatology of the present age and the age to come (Heb. 2:5, 8, 9).⁴⁸

In verses 3b and 4, he gives a clue to the meaning of the rest (κατάπαυσις) promised to his generation by juxtaposing the quotation from Psalm 95:11 with Genesis 2:2, which he quotes from the Septuagint: "And God rested (κατέπαυσεν) on the seventh day from all His works." We should note that the Hebrew text employs a different word for rest in Genesis (נָח) than it does in Psalm 95 (נָחָם).⁴⁹ Although the writer of Hebrews, following the Septuagint, uses the same root in both quotations, his contextual association of the rest promised to his generation with God's rest after the work of creation gives it Sabbatical connotations that distinguish it from rest in Canaan.⁵⁰ In verse 5, he solidifies this new association by

⁴⁷ Westcott, p. 95.

⁴⁸ Cf. Barrett, p. 372; Hagner, pp. 54, 56; Williamson, p. 554; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 126; Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 24, 25; Montefiore, p. 83; Lincoln, pp. 212, 213.

⁴⁹ Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Montefiore, p. 84.

binding the idea of God's creation rest together with a repeated quotation from Psalm 95:11.⁵¹

He further distinguishes the rest of which he speaks from Canaan by specifically claiming that Joshua, who led the people of Israel into the promised land, did not attain it (Heb. 4:8). Whatever rest Joshua provided for the Israelites (cf. Josh. 1:13, 15; 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1), it evidently did not exhaust the promise, for the author of Psalm 95 repeated it to those living in the land many generations later (Heb. 4:7). We should note that although our writer treats physical possession of the land as a token of a greater spiritual reality,⁵² he does not deny its legitimacy as a part of the promise.⁵³ Rather, he simply claims that Joshua never fulfilled the original intent of the promise, which evidently included more than merely material blessings. From the unfulfilled nature of the promise, the writer of Hebrews infers that there must still remain a rest for the people of God and that it must possess some distinctive feature that was missing from the rest that Joshua attained.

Building on his earlier analogy in verses 3 to 5, he identifies the Sabbatical character of God's rest after the work of creation as the distinctive feature of the promised

⁵¹ Buchanan, p. 71.

⁵² Hughes, p. 143.

⁵³ *Contra* Käsemann, p. 68.

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rest; and he uses a new term for rest to incorporate this characteristic into his conclusion in verse 9: "There remains therefore a σαββατισμός (Sabbath rest) for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). σαββατισμός is a hapax in the NT and does not occur earlier in extant Greek literature, but its etymology and its use in a few post canonical writings connect its meaning with Sabbath observance.

Hebrews' association of σαββατισμός with God's Sabbath rest in the preceding context (Heb. 4:3b, 4) distinguishes the term from those uses of κατάπαυσις which refer directly to rest in the land (cf. Heb. 3:11, 18). But our writer at times suggests that he is using κατάπαυσις almost synonymously with σαββατισμός. He employs the verbal form κατέπαυσεν with reference to God's Sabbath rest in verse 4. In verse 9, which uses σαββατισμός, he repeats the essential idea of verse 6a, where κατάπαυσιν is the antecedent.⁵⁴ In verse 10, he replaces the σαββατισμός of v. 9 with the equivalent expression κατέπαυσιν αὐτοῦ (His [God's] rest). Whether or not κατάπαυσις is synonymous with σαββατισμός depends entirely upon context. "That rest" (ἐκεῖνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν) which the readers are to enter in verse 11 refers to both God's rest (κατέπαυσιν) and the Sabbath rest (σαββατισμός) of verses 9 and 10, in contrast with the kind of rest that Joshua gave (κατέπαυσεν) in verse 8. In verse 10 κατάπαυσις is synonymous with σαββατισμός; but in verse

⁵⁴Hofius, pp. 106, 107.

8 the verbal form of the same root is distinct from it.

Verse 10 further helps to define the nature of the rest available to the people of God by explicitly modeling it after the pattern of God's rest from His works at the completion of creation.⁵⁵ As we have already seen, God's creation rest is not a complete cessation from activity altogether. Rather, it could be compared to the peaceful satisfaction of a great craftsman or artist who knows that the masterpiece having been completed needs nothing more to be added to it, and along with his sense of accomplishment comes a relaxation from the expenditure of energy that was involved in the process. In verse 11 the writer concludes his formal discussion of rest by exhorting his readers to "be diligent to enter into" it and warning them of the seriousness of the matter.

We may possibly gain further understanding of rest from outside of our immediate context by noting other related images that the writer uses to describe the goal of God's people.⁵⁶ Rest is his primary image for that goal, but elsewhere in the epistle he also describes it as a "city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10), "the city of the living God" (Heb. 12:22), "the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:14), or as a city which God has prepared (Heb. 11:16). He tells us that the

⁵⁵ Michel, p. 196; Hofius, p. 24; cf. above, pp. 169, 170.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hofius, pp. 52, 53, 92; Michel, p. 185.

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patriarchs sought "a better [fatherland], that is a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:14, 16), but they died without having received the promises (Heb. 11:13, 39, 40). The readers of his epistle, however, are privileged to stand in front of Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). These images seem to be united by the common thread that they relate the goal of God's people to a location in the heavenly realm that will be entered eschatologically.⁵⁷ They help to illustrate one aspect of rest, but we should not limit Hebrews' concept of rest to these futuristic and local ideals.

We conclude that the writer of Hebrews allowed the concept of rest very broad boundaries,⁵⁸ and context alone can determine what type of rest he had in mind. In Hebrews 3:7-19, which focuses on the wilderness generation's failure to enter rest, he uses the term *κατάπαυσις* primarily with reference to the promised land of Canaan; but his observation that Joshua failed to provide rest, although he possessed the land (Heb. 4:8), implies that the original promise included more than physical occupation of Canaan. He describes that promised rest, which still remains for the

⁵⁷ Hofius identifies that location as the true heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb. 8:2; 9:11; etc.), but it seems we are dealing with a different image here. While the heavenly sanctuary may have been the goal of Jesus' high priestly ministry, it is not set forth as the goal of God's people, except perhaps in Heb. 4:16. Hofius, pp. 53, 54, 58, cf. p. 110.

⁵⁸ Hagner, p. 54.

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people of God, according to the analogy of God's Sabbath rest after the work of creation (Heb. 4:3-5, 9, 10); and he introduces the new term σαββατισμός (Heb. 4:9), to distinguish the Sabbatical characteristics of κατάπαυσις from its geographic association with Canaan. As he applies the promise to his own generation, he notes that believers are presently entering into rest (Heb. 4:3), but he expected the fullest sense of the promise to be realized in the future (Heb. 4:6, 9, 10).

THE CONCEPT OF REST IN EXTRA BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Before we compare the meaning of rest in Hebrews with its meaning in Psalm 95, we need to examine the concept of rest in a number of extra Biblical sources that might possibly lie behind Hebrews' development of this theme, or might, at least, help us to understand it. This study is particularly important in light of Käsemann's claim that the κατάπαυσις motif in Hebrews does "not derive from the OT or from an allegorical exegesis of it." He asserts that by referring to the OT quotations the writer "merely intends to anchor in Scripture a speculation already in existence."⁵⁹ But scholarship is not at all agreed on what extra Biblical sources, if any, molded Hebrews' conception of rest.

PHILO

⁵⁹ Käsemann, p. 74; cf. p. 68; Thompson, p. 81; Gerd Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969), pp. 125 ff.; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 128.

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The writings of Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews contain a number of similarities which might suggest that the writer of Hebrews derived his doctrine of rest from that source.⁶⁰ God's people are portrayed in Philo as sojourners on earth who are travelling along the high road of wisdom towards their goal in the heavenly region.⁶¹ Philo links the idea of rest with both the number "seven" and the seventh day, the Sabbath.⁶² He also refers to Genesis 2:2, which is quoted in Hebrews 4:4.⁶³

But Philo's concept of rest differs from that of Hebrews in a number of significant ways. Philo allegorizes the wilderness wanderings, after the pattern of Greek philosophy, into an ethereal journey of the virtuous mind returning from its temporary sojourn in an earthly body to its heavenly home.⁶⁴ But the writer of Hebrews, in accordance with the Septuagint, knows nothing of a long

⁶⁰Cf. Thompson, pp. 100, 102; Theissen, pp. 125-128.

⁶¹*On the Confusion of Tongues* 77-82; cf. *On the Change of Names* 179 ff.; *On the Unchangeableness of God* 143; cf. Kasemann, pp. 75, 76, 79, 80; William G. Johnsson, "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews," *JBL* 97 (1978): 239-251; Hofius, pp. 116 ff.; Vanhoye, "Marche," esp. p. 17; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 114 n. 15; Thompson, p. 98).

⁶²*On the Unchangeableness of God* 12, 13, *On Abraham* 28 ff.; Kasemann, pp. 70 ff.; Thompson, pp. 84-87; Barrett, pp. 368, 369.

⁶³*On the Posterity of Cain* 64; *Allegorical Interpretation* 1. 16; Williamson, pp. 541, 542.

⁶⁴For references in Philo see n. 61 above; see also Barrett, pp. 377, 378; Williamson, p. 557.

journey through an ethereal wilderness; rather he places the Israelites on the physical border of the promised land at the crucial point in history where they are poised to step in. Their wandering in the wilderness until the last one died is not a type of the Christian life but of condemnation for their lack of faith and stubborn refusal to enter into rest.⁶⁵ The only mention of wandering in Hebrews 11 does not deal with the Israelites in the wilderness, but with the patriarchs wandering in the promised land long before it became their possession (Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16). But the readers of Hebrews, who are in the same position as the Israelites in Numbers 14, have come near to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). For them the day is drawing near, and its arrival will be just a little while longer (Heb. 10:25, 37).⁶⁶

Philo's proclivity for reinterpreting the OT in terms of Greek philosophy also manifests itself in his numerical speculation, which is explicitly bound up with Pythagorean metaphysics.⁶⁷ But Philo lacks Hebrews' hope of an eschatological rest that implicitly lies in the claim that the promise still remains open (Heb. 4:1, 6, 9).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26.

⁶⁶ Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 24, 25.

⁶⁷ *On the Creation of the World* 99, 100; *On Abraham* 28-30; cf. Käsemann, pp. 70-72; Williamson, pp. 542, 544, 545; Barrett, p. 369; Thompson, p. 86; Theissen, pp. 126, 127.

⁶⁸ Barrett, pp. 368, 369, 372, 373, 391, 393; cf.

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As far as common OT roots are concerned, Philo never refers to Psalm 95, which Hebrews quotes repeatedly.⁶⁹ Although he does make mention of Genesis 2:2, he employs it very differently from Hebrews. In the *Posterity and Exile of Cain* 64, Philo uses Genesis 2:2, 3 to develop his numerical speculation on the number seven quite apart from the idea of rest. In *Allegorical Interpretation* 1. 6 and 16, he reads the ambiguous verb *κατέπαυσεν* in Genesis 2:2 transitively, ("God caused to rest"), rather than intransitively ("God rested").⁷⁰ From the transitive meaning of the verb, he wanders into metaphysical speculation on the immutability of God, concluding that God did not rest at the end of creation because He had been at rest since the foundation of the universe.⁷¹

Williamson, p. 554; H. A. Lombard, "Katapausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Ad Hebraeos: Essays on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. 5 of *Neotestamentica* (Pretoria, South Africa: New Testament Society of South Africa, 1971), pp. 67, 69.

⁶⁹ Williamson, p. 556; Thompson, p. 91.

⁷⁰ Philo's observation that a middle form (*ἐπαύσατο*) would have been more appropriate for an intransitive meaning (cf. Williamson, p. 541; Barrett, p. 367 n.1) overlooks the fact that a middle is rarely used with *καταπαύω*; cf. below, pp. 207, 208.

⁷¹ Philo's somewhat paradoxical claim that God is the "one thing in the universe which rests" but that He "never ceases to work" is to be explained by the qualification that God works "with absolute ease, without toil, and without suffering" (*On the Cherubim* 87 ff.; cf. Williamson, pp. 541, 542, 547; Thompson, pp. 84-86; Moffatt, p. 53; Theissen, p. 127). Theissen presumes to find this paradox between rest and work in Heb. 4:10, but Kenneth J. Thomas sees in this verse and in Heb. 4:3 a denial of any notion that God labored on the Sabbath ("The Old Testament Citations in

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Käsemann freely admits that Hebrews and Philo have different orientations: Philo is philosophical and individualistic, but Hebrews is eschatological and collective.⁷² He concludes that Hebrews is not directly dependent on Philo but that both have drawn their concept of rest from a basic common tradition.⁷³

GNOSTICISM

Käsemann seeks traces of that common tradition in Gnosticism.⁷⁴ The breadth and diversity of Gnostic sources in which speculation on rest can be found naturally lead one to expect marked differences within the system as well as conceptual similarities,⁷⁵ but we will concentrate on those texts that most clearly resemble the concept of rest in Hebrews.

Gnosticism commonly identified rest (ἀνάπαυσις) with

Hebrews," *NTS* 11 [1964-65]: 308).

⁷² Käsemann, pp. 67, 78.

⁷³ Käsemann, pp. 68, 75, 78. Elsewhere he concedes that "The boundaries separating Philo from Hebrews are vast" (p. 86). Barrett, is more bold: "Between Philo and Hebrews there is no resemblance at all" (p. 371; cf. Williamson, pp. 556, 557; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 127, 128 n. 76).

⁷⁴ Käsemann, pp. 73-75, 87-96; Theissen, pp. 124-129; for various critiques of this position see Hofius, esp. pp. 5-21; Thompson, pp. 88-91; Lombard, pp. 60-63; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 25 n. 201; Harold W. Attridge, "'Let us Strive to Enter that Rest,' The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *HTR* 73 (1980): p. 279 n. 2.

⁷⁵ Cf. Thompson, p. 88.

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either the seventh day, the Sabbath, or the eighth day, which was Christianized as the Lord's day.⁷⁶ The *Acts of Thomas* 10, which portrays Christ as the personification of rest, clearly witnesses to a conceptual relationship between Christianity and at least one particular form of Gnosticism.⁷⁷ Further points of similarity in the concept of rest have emerged with the publication of the Nag Hammadi texts. Saying 51 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, for example, reveals an eschatological understanding of rest which associates it with the new world.⁷⁸

Other similar texts could easily be cited; but mere parallelism alone would form an inadequate basis for establishing a firm claim to Hebrews' dependence on a Gnostic idea of rest. To make a strong case, it would be necessary to show both that the Gnostic ideas existed prior to Hebrews and that they influenced Hebrews' development of the subject.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Cf. *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 17:10; *Extracts of Theodotus* 63; as cited by Käsemann, p. 74.

⁷⁷ Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. and ed. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963, 1965), 2:255 f.; Käsemann, pp. 73, 74; Thompson, p. 89.

⁷⁸ Hennecke and Schneemelcher, 2:516; Ernst Haenchen, *Die Botschaft des Thomas-Evangeliums* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töplemann, 1961), pp. 72-74; Thompson, p. 88 and n. 19; Hofius, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Käsemann acknowledges the limitations of merely sketching out the parallelism of ideas (p. 88), but his conclusion on p. 95 is bolder than what his methodology seems to warrant. See also the critique of Lombard (p. 63) versus Käsemann (p. 67).

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The Gnostic idea of rest, however, differs from that of Hebrews in a couple significant ways which suggest that the writer of Hebrews did not develop his concept from that source. First of all, the terminology for rest is different. Gnosticism consistently uses the word ἀνάπαυσις, which is never used in Hebrews; conversely, Hebrews uses κατάπαυσις, a word that is never found in Gnostic literature. It is true that ἀνάπαυσις and κατάπαυσις are roughly synonymous in meaning, but the difference in terminology does not favor the theory of dependence.⁸⁰ The writer of Hebrews, at least, wished to leave the impression that he derived his concept of rest from the OT. He quotes at length from the Septuagint version of Psalm 95 (94), which uses the word κατάπαυσις, and he repeats short segments of the psalm as he attempts to explain it and apply its warning.⁸¹

The development of the concept of rest in Gnosticism is also different from that of Hebrews. Many isolated Gnostic texts speak separately of a journey, and others speak of rest; but they do not expressly combine these separate images together; and they place the emphasis on the wandering rather than on the point of approach into rest.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hofius, pp. 15, 100; *contra* Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 126, 127 and n. 55; Thompson, 91, 101, 102 and n. 66.

⁸¹ R. McL. Wilson, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament," in *Le Origini Dello Gnostiticismo*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), p. 521; Hofius, p. 15.

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Furthermore, they do not develop the rest motif in relation to the Biblical texts dealing with the wilderness wanderings.

Moreover, the philosophical presuppositions that underlie the Gnostic concept come from an entirely different thought world than that of Hebrews. Gnosticism requires detachment from the material world and a forsaking of the body as indispensable conditions of the soul's journey to heaven.⁸² Such a dualistic idea, which is fundamental to the nature of Gnosticism, is completely foreign to the book of Hebrews (cf. Heb. 2:14; 10:5).

The theory of Hebrews' dependence on a Gnostic idea of rest is also suspect because it is built largely on texts that are later than Hebrews. Advocates of this position usually compensate for the lack of pre-Christian Gnostic texts by using the antiquity of Philo to postulate the existence of a prior Gnostic tradition.⁸³ But having concluded, as Käsemann does, that the differences between Hebrews and Philo are so great that Hebrews could not be dependent on Philo,⁸⁴ it seems somewhat dubious to argue from

⁸² Käsemann, pp. 87, 90; cf. *Ginza*, lines 17-20: "Upon this road, path and ascent which I ascend, true, believing, glorious and perfect men shall ascend and come when they leave the body;" in *Ginza: Der Schatz: oder Das Große Buch der Mandäer*, trans. Mark Lidzbarski (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925), p. 429.

⁸³ Käsemann, p. 75; Theissen pp. 125-129; cf. Harold W. Attridge, "Let us Strive," p. 279 n. 2 and p. 280 n. 5.

⁸⁴ Käsemann, pp. 67, 78, 86.

the similarities between Philo and Gnosticism that Hebrews is dependent on an earlier form of Gnosticism for which we possess no textual evidence.⁸⁵ We have already seen that the philosophical differences between Hebrews and Gnosticism are just as great as those between Hebrews and Philo.

One must reckon with the possibility that some parts of the Gnostic concept of rest might depend on Biblical sources, rather than vice versa. Jesus' invitation to rest recorded in the *Gospel of Thomas* 90, for example, depends on Matthew 11:28-30.⁸⁶ It seems more likely that Gnosticism infused Biblical terminology with its own philosophical presuppositions,⁸⁷ than that the writer of Hebrews derived his concept of rest from proto-Gnostic sources which are no longer extant, while he ignored the theology of rest contained in the Biblical texts to which he repeatedly refers.

RABBINIC LITERATURE

Having ruled out Philo and Gnosticism as probable sources of Hebrews' idea of rest, we pass now to Rabbinic literature and other bodies of extra Biblical literature that are not generally thought to have shaped Hebrews' thinking directly, but which provide us with useful

⁸⁵Cf. Thompson, p, 90.

⁸⁶Thompson, pp. 88, 89, 90.

⁸⁷Thompson, pp. 90, 91.

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parallels for understanding it. The late date of most Rabbinic literature rules out any question of Hebrews' dependence upon it, but it still is valuable for our study insofar as it contains common ideas of rest that might have been prevalent in first century Judaism.

The Rabbinic concept of rest resembles that of Hebrews in its linking the idea of rest with the Sabbath, which it often projects into an eschatological realization. The *Aboth of Rabbi Nathan* 1, describes the Sabbath day mentioned in the title of Psalm 92 (MI v. 1) as a "day, which is completely Sabbath (rest), in which there is no eating and drinking, no buying and selling, but the righteous will sit with crowns on their heads and delight themselves in the brightness of the Shekinah."⁸⁸ Rabbi Hanina ben Isaac also taught that the Sabbath is the likeness of the future world.⁸⁹

This eschatological perspective was often combined with an identification of the future Sabbath with the millennium. Working from Psalm 90:4, which likens a thousand years in God's sight to yesterday (cf. Jub. 4:30; II Pet. 3:8), Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose the Galilean concluded that the day of the

⁸⁸ Herman Leberecht Strack, and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 6 vols. in 7 (München: Beck, 1922-1961), 3:687; hereafter cited as S-B; cf. Judah Goldin, trans. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 12.

⁸⁹ *Gen. Rab.* 17. 5; Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. and trans., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 1:136; S-B, 3:672.

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Messiah would last a thousand years.⁹⁰ The same conclusion was also reached by identifying the six days of creation with the age of the world and the creation Sabbath with a millennium of rest which would pass into the eternal age. In *Pirke 18* Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus taught that, "God has created seven ages, but of them all He chose only the seventh. There are six for the coming and going of men, but one, the seventh, is completely Sabbath and rest in everlasting life."⁹¹ Whether or not the writer of Hebrews shared this millennial interpretation, he does not explicitly mention it in the text.

The Rabbinic concept of rest is especially significant for our comparative study because much of it is derived from Psalm 95, which was frequently interpreted eschatologically and Messianically. Rabbi Aha, referring to Psalm 95:7, taught that if Israel repented, the Son of David would come.⁹² Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus also found Messianic significance in this psalm. He held that the day of the

⁹⁰*Pesikta Rabbati* 1. 7, trans. William G. Braude, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 1:47 f.; cf. S-B, 3:774.

⁹¹S-B, 3:687; cf. Käsemann, pp. 69 ff.; Hofius, p. 113; Michel, pp. 183-185; Lincoln, p. 199.

⁹²*Palestinian Taanit* 1:1; *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 18, *Besah and Taanit*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 149; S-B, 1:164; Michel, p. 184. Alternatively, Rabbi Levi stated that the condition was properly keeping one Sabbath. Cf. *The Midrash on the Psalms* 95. 2; trans. William G. Braude, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 2:137.

The Application of the Concept of Rest in Psalm 95

Messiah would last 40 years in accordance with the forty years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness (Ps. 95:10).⁹³ Rabbi Aqiba interpreted God's oath in Psalm 95:11 eschatologically to mean that the wilderness generation would not enter the world to come.⁹⁴

Although the eschatological Sabbath predominates the Rabbinic concept of rest, it also knows of a literal expectation of rest in this world.⁹⁵ The Midrash on Psalm 95. 3 identifies the exclusion from rest in verse 11 as exclusion from the land of Canaan. Here the spatial concept of rest is prominent, but it includes a spiritual aspect for it goes on to identify this rest with God's rest in Zion.⁹⁶

We see, then, that while the Rabbinic idea of rest is not completely uniform, it develops along lines similar to

⁹³ *Sanhedrin* 99a, in Isidore Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*, 6 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1935-1948), vol. 4, pt. 6, p. 669; cf. Hofius, pp. 44 f.; Westcott, p. 81. There is, in fact, no consensus in Rabbis as to how long the day of the Messiah would last; cf. *Sanhedrin* 99a, Epstein vol. 4, pt. 6, pp. 669, 690; *Pesikta Rabbati* 1. 7; Braude, 1:46-48. On the 40 year interval in Qumran literature, see Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 65 n. 57, and his "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, ed. R. I. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 80.

⁹⁴ *Sanhedrin* 110b, Epstein, vol. 4, pt. 6, p. 758; Num. 14:35; Hofius, p. 44; Thomas G. Smothers, "A Superior Model: Hebrews 1:1--4:13," *R&E* 82 / 3 (1985): p. 341; Moffatt, p. 46.

⁹⁵ Hofius, pp. 44-47.

⁹⁶ Braude, 2:138; Hofius, pp. 42, 43; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 56. 2; Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1:492; Hofius, p. 47.

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those in Hebrews. It does not forget the geographic aspect of the promise, but it draws in the analogy of Sabbath rest which it projects into a greater, eschatological fulfillment.

4 EZRA

We can also find an eschatological concept of rest in the Jewish apocalyptic work 4 Ezra, which gives rest a local sense. But it describes rest in various ways.⁹⁷ 4 Ezra 7:36-38 locates the "place of rest" in the heavenly realm by contrasting its delights with the fire and torments of hell. Verse 75 associates it with a place for the souls of the dead to await the judgment;⁹⁸ and 4 Ezra 8:52 identifies the place of rest as an eschatological, heavenly city:

It is for you that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed⁹⁹

These local and eschatological interpretations are significant for our understanding of rest, but, unlike Hebrews, they are not related to the wilderness experience in Psalm 95. Also the acceptance of a late date for 4 Ezra (c. A.D. 100) would preclude any question of Hebrews' direct

⁹⁷ Hofius regards this as the most important source for the idea of an eschatological place of rest (pp. 60-63, 91-96). For various critiques of Hofius, see Theissen, pp. 128, 129; Lombard, p. 62; Thompson, pp. 81, 82; Hofius replies to Theissen on pp. 248-259.

⁹⁸ Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 126 f. n. 53.

⁹⁹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 126, n. 52; see also *Test. of Dan.* 5:12; Hofius, p. 64.

dependence on it.

EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

The *Epistle of Barnabas* 15:3-9 shares a common Christian orientation with Hebrews and also resembles its concept of rest in a number of ways.¹⁰⁰ Like Hebrews, it refers to Genesis 2:2 (*Epist. Barn.* 15:3; Heb. 4:4), and it uses the Sabbath as a symbol of the true rest that was promised and will be realized eschatologically (vv. 7, 8).¹⁰¹

But the differences should not be overlooked. In contrast with Hebrews' fairly literal quotation of Genesis 2:2, with only a few minor additions (cf. Heb. 4:4), the *Epistle of Barnabas* paraphrases freely while conflating the quotation with Exodus 20:11. It also makes questionable interpretive changes; twice it switches from the aorist tense of the quotation to a future tense, leaving the impression, contrary to Genesis, that even for God true rest still lies in the future (vv. 4, 5).¹⁰²

The *Epistle of Barnabas* emphasizes the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy but denies the possibility of our doing so until we enter true rest (vv. 6-8). Hebrews ignores Sabbath observance but stipulates faith and obedience as indispensable conditions for entering into rest

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Käsemann, p. 69.

¹⁰¹ Hofius, p. 113.

¹⁰² Cf. Barrett, p. 369; p. 371.

(Heb. 3:18, 19; 4:2, 3, 6, 11).¹⁰³

For Hebrews God's own rest becomes the prototype for our rest (Heb. 4:4, 9, 10), but the *Epistle of Barnabas* shifts the focus away from God's rest at the end of creation to God's giving of rest to the righteous at the beginning of the new world (vv. 3, 4, 8).¹⁰⁴ It calculates the dawn of the new world by equating the completion of creation in six days with the duration of this world which will last for six thousand years (v. 4; cf. Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8). After God judges the wicked, He will truly rest on the seventh day (v. 5); and on the eighth day, which is the day of Jesus' resurrection, He will begin a new world (vv. 8, 9).¹⁰⁵ Although the writer of Hebrews shares the hope of an eschatological rest, he does not specifically equate it with the new world, and he avoids any temptation to set up a speculative time-line.¹⁰⁶

We conclude that Hebrews' development of the rest motif was not directly influenced by any of the extra Biblical writings we have examined, although they may contain some

¹⁰³Theissen, p. 124.

¹⁰⁴Theissen, p. 124.

¹⁰⁵Barrett believes Barnabas obscures his main point that the Christian Sunday takes precedence over the Sabbath by implying that the eighth day is the millennium of rest (pp. 370, 372).

¹⁰⁶Barrett, pp. 369-372; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 74 f. n. 20; Theissen, p. 125; Hughes, p. 161; Hofius, pp. 113-115; Lombard, p. 61; Moffatt, p. 52.

external resemblances to it. Hebrews' solid rootage in Biblical history and eschatology precludes the likelihood of the writer's dependence on Greek dualistic ideas in either Philo or earlier proto-Gnostic writings; and the other works we studied were written too late to have molded Hebrews' thought.

Furthermore, Hebrews presents a picture of rest that is broader than and distinct from any of these writings. Our discovery of individual parallels to various aspects of that picture, however, probably places Hebrews' development of it within the bounds of contemporary speculation on the subject. Scattered across extra Biblical literature, we have found interpretations that relate rest to the Sabbath and expect its fulfillment eschatologically. Sometimes it is interpreted locally, other times spiritually. The parts of the theme that are lacking in one work can generally be found in another, but none of them draws it all together into a comprehensive picture related to the OT in the same way that Hebrews does. Whatever ideas may have been current in the writer's day, they never became the source of inspiration for our author. His concept of rest ostensibly comes from the OT, to which we must now turn in order to determine if his idea of rest agrees with it.

THE CONCEPT OF REST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE VOCABULARY FOR REST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew OT has a rich vocabulary for rest which we must understand before we can determine the precise meaning

of the term in Psalm 95, from which our writer quotes. The word used in verse 11 of the psalm is a feminine form of the noun מנוחה, which means rest, or a resting-place.¹⁰⁷ This word can be used in a local sense of any place where one might rest (Gen. 49:15; Num. 10:33), but it can also be used figuratively of the peace and calmness associated with such places of rest (Isa. 22:18; 32:18). To a sheep, rest might be the tranquility and refreshment offered by quiet waters (Ps. 23:2); to a woman, it might be the security provided by marriage (Ruth 1:9).

In the OT, מנוחה (rest) is frequently associated with a few recurring ideals. The term describes the promised land which the Israelites were about to enter in a physical sense (Deut. 12:9). But Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple makes it evident that the promised rest included not only a physical presence in the land, but also the unhindered enjoyment of its blessings (I Kings 8:56). The conditions of rest are best exemplified in the reign of Solomon who is known as "a man of rest" (I Chron. 22:9).¹⁰⁸ The OT, however, leaves the ultimate fulfillment of rest until the future reign of a Messianic king (Isa. 32:18).¹⁰⁹

As well as the resting place of the Israelites, the word is used of God's resting place in the temple (Ps.

¹⁰⁷ BDB, s.v.

¹⁰⁸ Lombard, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Williamson, p. 554.

132:8; Isa. 66:1), which housed the ark of the covenant (I Chron. 28:2). The idea can also include the city of Zion, which contained the temple and is described as God's permanent resting place (Ps. 132:14).¹¹⁰

The masculine form of the word for "rest" (נָחַ), like its feminine counterpart, can refer to a literal resting place (Gen. 8:9; Isa. 34:14); and it can also be used figuratively with reference to a socioeconomic or spiritual state of rest (Ruth 3:1; Ps. 116:7). The term is used with a variety of subjects such as the ark coming to rest (I Chron. 6:31 [MT v. 16]), or the exile, which is described as a lack of rest in antithesis to the blessings of the promised land (Deut. 28:65; Lam. 1:3).

The cognate verb נָחַ, which means "rest" in the Kal stem, is also used in the Hiphil with the causative meaning "cause to rest," or "give rest to."¹¹¹ The verb occurs more

¹¹⁰ Cf. I Chron. 6:41; II Chron. 23:15. Kaiser, draws attention to the possessive pronouns which distinguish God's permanent rest from the temporary periods of respite that Israel had previously experienced (pp. 157, 158). Von Rad holds that God's rest among His people is a new and completely distinct concept from the Deuteronomistic idea of Israel's rest in the land ("Rest," p. 98; see also his article "The Promised land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. E. W. Truman Dicken [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966], p. 85); but Kaiser links both ideas by noting that the land belonged to YHWH and was granted to Israel as an inheritance (pp. 158, 159). See also Georg Braulik, "Gottes Ruhe--Das Land order der Tempel: zu Psalm 95:11," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn*, ed. E. Haag & F. L. Hogsfeld (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH., 1986), pp. 34, 42.

¹¹¹ BDB, s.v.

frequently than the most common noun *מנוחה*, thus opening up a few distinct uses in addition to those cited above. We will concentrate on those theological uses of *נוח* which are most directly related to the meaning of rest in Psalm 95:11 and in Hebrews.

נוח is used theologically with reference to Sabbath rest, even though Hebrew possesses the more technical term *שבת*. It builds a simple theology of rest, which originates with God's rest on the seventh day of creation week (Ex. 20:11) and expands to the analogous Sabbath rest provided for mankind and domestic beasts (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 5:14).

Rest constantly recurs as an important theological motif in God's promises to Israel, particularly during the early stages of the nation's development. The promise of rest was to be secured by God's presence going with the Israelites through the wilderness (Ex. 33:14; cf. Isa. 63:14).¹¹² It included rest from enemies in the land that they were about to possess (Deut. 12:10; 25:19); and this objective was to be realized for all the tribes across the Jordan before those that chose to settle on the East side returned to their inheritance (Deut. 3:20; Josh. 1:15).¹¹³ Joshua was regarded as having fulfilled the promise in the settlement of the land and in the securing of freedom

¹¹² Cf. Kaiser, p. 158.

¹¹³ As von Rad notes, in Deut. the promise is a tangible possession of the land of Canaan here and now with no thought of an eschatological fulfillment ("Rest," pp. 94, 95).

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from enemies on all sides (Josh. 21:43-45 [MT vv. 41-43]; 22:4; 23:1).

But the rest that Joshua achieved was not permanent; and none of the kings that followed attained lasting rest from their enemies. Although David had gained "rest on every side" (II Sam. 7:1), the record of his achievement is qualified by the apparent necessity of God's promise to give rest in the future (II Sam. 7:11). David claimed before his death that God had given him rest (I Chron. 22:18; 23:25); yet he realized that the promise was tied to his son Solomon (I Chron. 22:9), who claimed that it was not fulfilled until his own day (I Kings 5:4 [MT v. 18]). Later on it is said of both Asa (II Chron. 14:6, 7 [MT vv. 5, 6]; 15:15) and Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:30) that God gave them rest from their enemies.¹¹⁴ But all these periods of rest that Israel enjoyed lasted for only a limited time (cf. Neh. 9:28), and the nation never experienced rest from its enemies in an absolute sense. The rest that was expected late in the monarchy was probably not of a different kind from what had been experienced previously, but of a greater degree and an endless duration.¹¹⁵

Hebrew employs a number of synonyms that can help us to understand the meaning of rest. נָחַם, which denotes a cessation from activity is frequently used in the Kal stem

¹¹⁴ Von Rad notes that there is no single starting point for rest ("Rest," pp. 96, 97).

¹¹⁵ Buchanan, p. 74.

with reference to the Sabbath. It is used in Genesis 2:2, 3 of God's rest after creation, but the parallel passage in Exodus 20:11 uses נָחַ, the same root as in Psalm 95:11. The parallelism here holds special interest for us because the Genesis passage forms the basis for Hebrews' identification of the rest in Psalm 95 as a Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:4, 9).

שָׁלוֹם, carries the idea of an absence of disturbance from war, strife, trouble, or anxiety.¹¹⁶ Those cases where it refers to freedom from war (cf. Josh. 11:23; 14:15; Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; II Chron. 14:1 [MT 13:23]; 14:5, 6 [MT vv. 4, 5]; 20:30) closely parallel the idea of rest from enemies that we saw under נָחַ. But it lacks the sense of permanence normally implied in נָחַ, even though it may refer to a period of peace lasting for many years.¹¹⁷

We may also gain a better understanding of the meaning of rest by examining the terminology which the Septuagint employs for this concept. It normally uses either ἀνάπαυσις or κατάπαυσις to translate the noun מְנוּחָה. κατάπαυσις, which is the term for rest in Psalm 95:11, can refer to various kinds of rest such as Sabbath rest (Ex. 34:21 [תַּבְּרָחַ]; Ex. 35:2 [תַּבְּרָחַ]); the promised land (Deut. 12:9); landed property (Lev. 25:28 [מְנוּחָה]); the temple (II Chron. 6:41 [MT v. 16 מְנוּחָה]; Isa. 66:1); Zion (Ps. 132 [LXX 131]:14); or a

¹¹⁶Ralph H. Alexander, "שָׁלוֹם," in *TWOT*, s.v.

¹¹⁷Kaiser, p. 157.

figurative state of rest (I Kings 8:56).¹¹⁸ The distinction between the two terms is that *κατάπαυσις* may carry a greater sense of finality than *ἀνάπαυσις*, and it also has a stronger local orientation, especially where it translates *הַנְּחִיָּה* (cf. Deut. 12:9; Judges 20:43; Ps. 132 [131]:14; Isa. 66:1).¹¹⁹

The corresponding verbs *ἀναπαύω* and *καταπαύω* are used almost interchangeably for *נָח* (rest).¹²⁰ The simple and causative forces of the respective Kal and Hiphil stems of the Hebrew verb are both preserved in the active voice of *καταπαύω*, which carries the distinct intransitive and transitive meanings "rest" and "give" or "cause rest" (e.g. Ex. 20:11; and Ex. 33:14); but with *ἀναπαύω* the intransitive meaning has yielded to a separate middle form.

At this juncture it may be helpful to summarize the variety of possible meanings we have discovered for rest in the OI before we attempt to determine its meaning more precisely in Psalm 95:7-11. We have seen that the *הַנְּחִיָּה* word-group can occasionally refer to Sabbath rest, but that

¹¹⁸ *κατάπαυσις* is used as a translation of *הַנְּחִיָּה* in all of the references above where the Hebrew equivalent has been omitted, as well as in Judges 20:43 A. *ἀνάπαυσις* is used in Gen. 49:15; Num. 10:33; Ruth 1:9; I Chron. 22:9; 28:2; Ps. 23:2 (LXX 22:1); 132 (131):8; Isa. 11:10; Jer. 45:3 (LXX 51:33); and Micah 2:10. Cf. Lombard, p. 64; Thompson, p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Hofius, pp. 27, 28, 48-50; cf. Lincoln, p. 208. Williamson also notes that in classical Greek *κατάπαυσις* refers to a state of rest "particularly after a period of struggle and strife" (p. 554).

¹²⁰ R. Hensel and Colin Brown, "Rest," in *NIDNTT*, 3:254-256.

The Concept of Rest in the OT

concept normally falls under the domain of a different set of vocabulary. Our set of words for rest often bears a local sense in reference to Israel's physical occupation of the promised land of Canaan, or to the resting place where God's presence dwelt in the ark of the covenant, the temple, or the holy city, Jerusalem. But the local usage does not rule out an abstract concept of rest as a state of being; instead, the abstract sense is normally derived from the local idea. A spiritual concept of rest emerges from the blessings associated with YHWH's presence, and the figurative sense of rest from enemies flows out of the enjoyment naturally associated with possession of the land. The OT claims that Israel attained rest from its enemies at several points in its history, but these temporary periods never satisfied its expectation of lasting rest.

THE MEANING OF REST IN PSALM 95:7-11

When we try to identify the meaning of rest in Psalm 95, we need to note that, although he is addressing his own age, the psalmist mentions the term within a quotation pronouncing judgment upon an earlier generation that was excluded from rest because it failed to listen to God's voice. We need to distinguish, therefore, between the "rest" from which the earlier generation was excluded and the "rest" which the psalmist implies his own generation was in danger of missing before we can properly compare its meaning in the psalm with its meaning in Hebrews.

REST FOR THE FORMER GENERATION

We have already seen that the writer of Hebrews identifies rest for the Israelites in the wilderness with the promised land of Canaan by his frequent allusions to their failure to enter into it (cf. Heb. 3:12-19). In order to determine if the psalmist also understood rest for the former generation in this way, we need to examine his own allusions in verses 7b to 11 to the situation which provoked God's oath prohibiting entrance into rest (v. 11).

At first sight, verse 8 seems to identify the oath with a definite, geographical setting. Most English versions, with the notable exception of the Authorized Version, and most modern commentaries regard the words מְרִיבָה and מַסָּה in this verse as proper names designating either two separate places in the wilderness, which were so named after the events that occurred there, or alternatively, one location with a compound name. מְרִיבָה comes from the root מריב, which means to strive, contend, quarrel, or complain; and מַסָּה is derived from the verb נסָה, meaning to try or test.¹²¹

Both מַסָּה (Massah) and מְרִיבָה (Meribah) occur together in Exodus 17:1-7 of the Hebrew Bible. The appearance that two separate names have been combined together here into one has led source critics to speculate that Massah was inserted by a later redactor, but their self-confessed lack of objective criteria for dividing this narrative into the various

¹²¹ BDB, s.v.

documentary sources does little to inspire confidence in the great variety of textual arrangements which they postulate.¹²²

Noth suggests that Massah crept into the Exodus account from a misreading of Ps. 95:8 and Deut. 33:8,¹²³ but he leaves us at a loss as to where to find the original Massah narrative. We would be well-advised to attempt to understand the text in its present form before we adopt a hypothetical reconstruction.

The narrative recounts how Moses quelled the Israelites' rebellion at Rephidim by bringing forth water from the rock when he struck it. The psalmist could possibly have been reflecting on Moses' reply to the people in Exodus 17:2: "Why do you quarrel (לָמַדְתֶּם) with me? Why do you test (בָּחַנְתֶּם) the Lord?" He places a similar complaint against the Israelites on God's lips: ". . . your fathers tested Me (בָּחַנְתֶּם); they tried Me (בָּחַנְתֶּם)" (Ps. 95:9). But we should note that the psalmist does not even mention Moses, and he describes the people's actions by the verb בָּחַן (try, or examine), which does not occur in the Exodus account.¹²⁴ Possibly the psalmist was thinking of the

¹²²Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 138, 139; George W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 55, 62-64; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Westminster: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 306.

¹²³Noth, p. 139.

¹²⁴It can be found, however, in Ps. 81:7 (8).

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name Massah and Meribah which Moses gave to that place "because of the quarrel (רִיב) of the sons of Israel and because they tested (נִסְּוּ) the LORD" (Ex. 17:7); but if that is the case, it is strange that he uses the reverse word order מִרִיבָה and נִסְּוּ.

The most serious objection against trying to find the source of the psalmist's thinking in Exodus 17 is that it contains no suggestion of an oath excluding the Israelites from rest. In fact, a case can be made that their request for water had a certain amount of legitimacy (vv. 2, 3). Their covenant relationship with YHWH granted them certain rights, and a רִיב was an acceptable way of presenting a legal dispute (cf. Ex. 23:2, 3, 6; Deut. 17:8; 25:1). Neither it nor a test (נִסְּוּ) carries negative connotations in itself. The sinfulness of testing or contending with God depends largely upon the issue involved and the attitude with which one addresses Him.¹²⁵ Here we must view the Israelites' testing of YHWH's presence among them as unjustified and sinful (v. 7; cf. Deut. 6:16), but God tolerated their contention and graciously responded by miraculously supplying water (v. 6).

We find the word מִרִיבָה, without נִסְּוּ, in Numbers 20:1-13

¹²⁵M. Margaliot, "The Transgression of Moses and Aaron, Num. 20:1-13," *JQR* 74 (1983): 203 n. 21 and p. 217 n. 66; Coats, p. 58 n. 26 and pp. 62, 64, 74, 75; B. Gesmer, "The Rib - or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," in *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas, *UI Supplement*, vol. 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 122, 134.

in reference to another incident concerning a lack of water.¹²⁶ Some scholars have thought that the Meribah tradition contained in Exodus 17 is repeated here,¹²⁷ but there are as many differences as there are similarities.

The incident in Exodus 17 is set at Rephidim in the wilderness of Sin shortly after the Israelites left Egypt (v. 1); the incident in Numbers 20 is placed at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin before the final approach to the promised land (v. 1). In Exodus the people made Moses' ability to produce water for them and their cattle (מִקְנֵהוּ, v. 3) a test (מִסָּוָה) of YHWH's presence among them (v. 7); in Numbers they contended with Moses that they and their cattle (בְּעִירָה, vv. 3, 4) were about to die for lack of water, but their contention (מְרִיבָה) stopped short of directly testing God (vv. 3, 13).¹²⁸ In Exodus Moses was commanded to strike the rock (וַהֲכִיֵּץ בַּצֹּרֶךְ, v. 6); here he and Aaron are clearly told to speak to (or about)¹²⁹ the rock (וַיְדַבְּרוּם אֶל-הַסֶּלֶעַ, Num. 20:8). Instead, he struck it twice (v. 11). In Exodus no one was punished; in Numbers Moses and Aaron forfeited the

¹²⁶ Cf. Num. 27:14; Deut. 32:51; Ps. 81:7 (8); Ps. 106:32; Ezek. 47:19; 48:28. מִסָּוָה occurs by itself as a place name in Deut. 6:16 and 9:22; but the setting is vague in both of these texts.

¹²⁷ Noth, p. 140; Coats, pp. 71, 72; cf. Childs, pp. 306, 307.

¹²⁸ Cf. Margaliot, p. 215.

¹²⁹ Margaliot, p. 205 and n. 28.

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right to lead the people into the promised land (Num. 20:12, 24). In Exodus, as in Psalm 95, מַסָּה and מֵרִיבָה are joined together; in Numbers and all of the other references where מֵרִיבָה is a proper name, it occurs in the distinctive phrase "the waters of Meribah."¹³⁰

These many differences have led a number of recent scholars to conclude that it is simpler to accept the two narratives as accounts of different events than it is to become bogged down in the immense complexity of attempting to dissect them into literary sources and then recasting them into a single, Meribah tradition. Moreover, the text in principle deserves a hearing as it stands before it is forced into a hypothetical reconstruction.¹³¹

By itself the Meribah tradition in Numbers 20:1-13 could not adequately explain the formulation of the psalmist's ideas concerning rest because it lacks any reference to מַסָּה, which is closely connected with מֵרִיבָה in Psalm 95:8, 9. The possibility that the psalmist might have been referring jointly to both the Massah of Exodus 17 and Meribah in Numbers 20, is problematic because it leaves an imbalance with the Meribah of Exodus 17 which must be

¹³⁰ Coats, p. 59.

¹³¹ Cf. Margaliot, pp. 197, 198 and nn. 5, 6; p. 200 and n. 14; Eugene Arden, "How Moses Failed God," *JBL* 76 (1957): 51, 52; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Theological and Redactional Problems in Numbers 20:2-13," in *Understanding the Word*, ed. James I. Butler, Edgar Conrad, Ben C. Ollenburger, JSOT Supplement Series 37 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), p. 134.

resolved by difficult source theories. Furthermore, his avoidance of the full title, "the waters of Meribah," which is always used elsewhere to designate the site of the events in Numbers 20, makes his derivation of מַרְיָבָה from that source questionable. This discrepancy alone would not rule out the possibility that his reference to מַרְיָבָה could have come from Exodus 17:7 and the oath prohibiting entrance into rest from Numbers 20:12, but there is a more important difference between Psalm 95 and Numbers 20 that makes such an association difficult.

The psalm is concerned with the sin of the people as a whole; whereas, Numbers 20 recounts the sin of its two most prominent leaders, Moses and Aaron. There has been much discussion concerning the exact nature of their sin; but for our purposes it will be sufficient to note that the offense must lie in the words which Moses spoke, and Aaron most likely conveyed to the people,¹³² rather than in the act of striking the rock, for Moses was commanded to perform a similar action on a previous occasion (cf. Ex. 17:6). The nature of their speech must have betrayed such a serious distrust of God that it implicitly brought His holiness into disrepute (cf. vv. 12).¹³³ For their sin, Moses and Aaron were excluded from the promised land (Num. 20:12, 24), but

¹³²Note the plural verbs מְדַבְּרִים and אָמְרָא in vv. 8, 10; cf. Ps. 106:33b.

¹³³Cf. Margalio, pp. 196-228; Arden, pp. 50-52; Sakenfeld, pp. 147-151; Coats, pp. 79-81.

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their exclusion cannot be equated with the oath mentioned in Psalm 95:11 because its prohibition is against the people.

The only other likely source of the reference in Psalm 95 to מַרִיבָה and מַסָּה which views these words as place names is found in Deuteronomy 33:8-11. Verse 8 of this passage, which records Moses' blessing on the sons of Levi, contains a historical note to the effect that God tested Levi at Massah (מַסָּה בְּמַסָּה) and contended with him at the waters of Meribah (מַרִיבָה עַל-מַי מַרִיבָה). Probably it refers to the earlier Massah and Meribah episodes of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20, in which Moses and Aaron presumably acted as representatives of the tribe.

But verse 9, which praises the Levites for disregarding their family ties, is very difficult to connect with either of these passages. It finds its closest Biblical parallel in the Levites' slaying of their relatives who had sinned in connection with the golden calf (Ex. 32:26-29). There has been some speculation that the incident with the golden calf originally formed part of a now lost Massah and Meribah tradition which served to legitimize the Levites' right to the priesthood for their loyalty to YHWH in this time of testing (cf. Deut. 33:10).¹³⁴ But it is just as easy to argue that verse 9 contains an

¹³⁴ Cf. Coats, pp. 65-67; Joshua Finkel, "Some Problems Relating to Psalm 95," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 50 (1933): 37-40; S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 400.

allusion to God's testing of the Levites at the golden calf which functions independently of the references to Massah and Meribah in verse 8. In any case, the positive tenor of this passage, in which God approves the Levities, makes it an unlikely backdrop for the exclusion of the people from rest in Psalm 95 for their testing of God.¹³⁵

The difficulty we have experienced in connecting the mention of מַרִּיבָה and מַסָּה in Psalm 95 with Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 should make us wonder if the psalmist intended these words as places names. The alternative possibility is that he intended them as abstract concepts. They certainly can be used abstractly elsewhere in the OT. In Genesis 13:8, מַרִּיבָה refers to the strife or contention between the servants of Abram and Lot; and Numbers 27:14 employs it both as a concept and a proper noun. The plural form of מַסָּה is found in Deuteronomy 4:34; 7:19 and 29:3 (MT v. 2) with reference to the great trials or testings by which God delivered His people from Egypt; and its construct form מַסָּהוֹת is used in Job 9:23 of the testing of the innocent.¹³⁶

Most of the ancient versions, including the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, treat the words מַרִּיבָה and מַסָּה in Psalm 95:8

¹³⁵ Contra Finkel, p. 40.

¹³⁶ Cf. s.v. in BDB; Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, trans. Samuel P. Tregelles, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971); Ludwig Hugo Koehler, and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953).

as abstract concepts. The Septuagint, from which the writer of Hebrews quotes, translates מֵרִיב here as τῷ παραπικρασμῷ (the provocation), which is an ΟΙ *haraax* even though the cognate verb παραπικραίνω (provokes) occurs frequently. But the other occurrences where מֵרִיב is commonly regarded as a proper name receive a distinctive set of vocabulary. The Septuagint reserves another *haraax*, Λοιδόρησις (Reviling), for the name מֵרִיב in Exodus 17:7, but it uses the related word λαιδορία as an abstract noun to explain the name's meaning. It consistently translates the name מֵרִיב מַי (the waters of Meribah) as [τὸ] ὕδωρ Ἀντιλογίας even though it uses the unrelated verb λαιδορέω to explain its meaning (Num. 20:13; Deut. 33:8).¹³⁷ We can only conclude that the Septuagint purposely distinguished מֵרִיב in Psalm 95 from its use as a proper name in both Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.¹³⁸

It translates מִצְוָה in Psalm 95 as πειρασμός (test, trial, or temptation), which by itself could be either a proper name or an abstract concept; but by its use of the article in the larger phrase κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ (as in the day of the testing), the Septuagint implies that it had the abstract idea in mind. If πειρασμός would have been a proper name, it would not have needed the article because it would have been definite in itself. This point

¹³⁷ Cf. Num. 27:14; Deut. 32:51; Ps. 80 (81):7; 105 (106):32. τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς λαιδορίας in Num. 20:24 should not be regarded as a proper name.

¹³⁸ Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 14-16.

is confirmed by the anarthrous use of *πειρασμός* as a proper name in Exodus 17:7 and its articular use as an abstract concept in Deuteronomy 6:16 and 9:22.¹³⁹

But it is not enough to note that the Septuagint regarded *מְרִיבָה* and *מִסָּה* as abstract nouns, we must show that the psalmist intended them in this way. Here the evidence is not as strong, but there are a few positive indications that even in the Hebrew text *מְרִיבָה* and *מִסָּה* were regarded as abstract nouns.

In Psalm 95:8, both *מְרִיבָה* and *מִסָּה* are governed by the single, introductory phrase *אַל-תְּקַשׁוּ לְבַבְכֶם* (do not harden your hearts); and they are followed in verse 9 by an *אֲשֶׁר* clause containing two parallel verbs: *וַיִּסְיֵנִי* (they tempted Me), *וַיִּקְטֹּנֵנִי* (they tried Me). This grammatical construction means that the psalmist thought of *מְרִיבָה* and *מִסָּה* either as parallel examples of the overarching sin of hardening the heart, or as two aspects of the same incident of hardening of the heart, and that he related the testing and trying of verse 9 to both words.¹⁴⁰

The psalmist implies that *מִסָּה* refers to an important event that took place in the wilderness rather than a place by his use of it in the temporal phrase, *בְּיֹם* (in the day of) *מִסָּה*. He does not provide us with such a clue for *מְרִיבָה*, but the grammatical structure we have noted implies that it

¹³⁹ Vanhoye, "Marche," pp. 14-16.

¹⁴⁰ Coats, notes this construction, but assumes that we are dealing with place names, pp. 68, 69.

ought to be taken in the same way.

From the chronological sequence of Psalm 95, we can determine that the event which the psalmist most likely had in mind was the Israelites' refusal to enter the promised land in Numbers 14. There must be a causal connection between the people's sin in Psalm 95:8 and 9 and the oath forbidding entrance into rest in verse 11. As we have already noted, that oath must be the one in Numbers 14:21-23 and 28-30, which excluded the Israelites from the promised land (cf. Num. 32:10, 12; Deut. 1:34, 35), because there is no oath in Exodus 17:1-7, and the only other possibility is in Numbers 20:12, 24 which excludes Moses and Aaron rather than the people. The sin referred to in the psalm must also be the one in Numbers 14 because the sin in Exodus 17 was left unpunished, and to identify the sin with Numbers 20 would be to place the punishment, which is recorded in Numbers 14, before the offense.¹⁴¹

The contention and testing which characterized the Israelites' refusal to enter the promised land in Numbers 14 makes it quite appropriate that the psalmist should use the words *מריבה* and *מסה* with reference to that event, even though they were never associated with it as a proper name. The grumbling of the people in Numbers 14:2 and 3 that God

¹⁴¹Wilson notes the chronological inconsistency in placing Num. 20 before Num. 14, but he allows this "telescoping together of events" on the grounds that the important thing, at least in the case of the writer of Hebrews, was the character of the events and not the details of when they occurred (*Hebrews*, p. 75)

was bringing them into the land to die takes the form of a dispute and sounds very similar to their contentions in Numbers 20:3-5 and Exodus 17:2, 3. Although Numbers 14 does not use the term מְרִיבָה (contention), it repeatedly uses the verb לָבַח (grumble, cf. vv. 2, 27, 36), which is a synonym for נָאָח (contend) in Exodus 17:2, 3. It also uses the verb נִסָּה (test, from which נִסּוּם [testing] is derived), in God's claim that the people had "tested (נִסּוּ) Him these ten times" (v. 22). Whether the reference to ten times should be viewed as a round number summarizing the history of Israel's testings in the wilderness¹⁴² or as a precise enumeration of them,¹⁴³ the point seems to be that the Israelites' refusal to enter into the land was the final test that God could endure.

We conclude that the Hebrew words מְרִיבָה and נִסָּה in Psalm 95 most likely refer abstractly to the contention and testing that took place in Numbers 14 in connection with the Israelites' refusal to enter the promised land of Canaan. The prohibition against entering into rest mentioned in the

¹⁴²Cf. Gen. 31:7, 41; Coats, pp. 149, 150.

¹⁴³The LXX reads "this tenth time." The Midrash on Ps. 95. 3 equates the testings with 1.) and 2.) Ps. 106:7; (Ex. 14:11); 3.) Ex. 16:2, 3; 4.) Num. 11:4-6; 5.) Ex. 16:20; 6.) Ex. 32; 7.) Num. 14:22 (Ps. 95:8-9); 8.), 9.), and 10.) Deut. 9:22 (Braude, 2:137, 138). But its method of counting seems a bit contrived. A more plausible enumeration can be found in the margin of the NASB: 1.) Ex. 5:21; 2.) Ex. 14:11; (cf. Ps. 106:7); 3.) Ex. 15:24; 4.) Ex. 16:2; 5.) Ex. 17:2, 3; (Deut. 9:22); 6.) Ex. 32:1; 7.) Num. 11:1, (Deut. 9:22); 8.) Num. 11:4; (Deut. 9:22); 9.) Num. 12:1; 10.) Num. 14:2.

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oath of verse 11 should also be understood in terms of Numbers 14, which records God's exclusion of the wilderness generation from the promised land.

But we must go on to note that the psalmist's mention of rest is not derived from the oath in Numbers 14:21-23 and 28-30; most likely it is an allusion to Deuteronomy 12:9,¹⁴⁴ which forms part of a larger section from verses 5 to 14 anticipating the Israelites' entrance into the rest that the former generation had lost. A closer study of this passage indicates that rest included not only possession of the promised land (Deut. 12:9; cf. Deut. 1:8; 9:23a; Num. 13:2), but also freedom from enemies (Deut. 12:10; cf. Deut. 25:19). Furthermore, it was closely associated with worship at the place that God would choose for His name to dwell (Deut. 12:5, 6, 11, 13, 14; cf. I Kings 8:56; Ps. 132:8, 14; Isa. 66:1) and with the rejoicing of His people in His presence (Deut. 12:7, 12; cf. Ex. 33:14).¹⁴⁵ By working an allusion to Deuteronomy 12 into the oath of Numbers 14:21-23 and 28-30, which only refers to the land, the psalmist suggests that his idea of rest, even for the Israelites in the wilderness, included not only the temporal aspect of peaceful possession of the land, but also spiritual

¹⁴⁴Arnold Albert Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, pt. 1 of 2 pts., NCB (n.p.: Oliphants, 1972), p. 680; Charles Augustus Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 2:296.

¹⁴⁵Samir Massouh, "Psalm 95," *TrJ* 4 n.s. (1983): 87.

blessings associated with YHWH's presence.¹⁴⁶

REST THE FOR PSALMIST'S GENERATION

But the issue does not end here. The psalmist's appeal to his own generation to listen to God's voice and not to follow the example of the Israelites in the wilderness (vv. 7 ff.) implies that it also was in danger of failing to enter into rest, although what it would forfeit is not specified more clearly.¹⁴⁷ Strictly speaking, the psalm does not contain a promise of rest, only a condemnation of the wilderness generation,¹⁴⁸ but that condemnation, which fell only upon the adults, was accompanied by a promise that the children would possess the the land (Num. 14:31; Deut. 1:39). Because the psalmist was addressing their descendants and heirs, he could also hold out a hope of rest to them.¹⁴⁹ That rest could not have been the land of Canaan, for they were already in possession of it,¹⁵⁰ but we must ask if in other respects it was the same as the rest that was

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), p. 248; Buchanan, pp. 71-73.

¹⁴⁷ Massouh, p. 87; cf. G. Henton Davies, "Psalm 95," *ZAW* 85 (1973): 195.

¹⁴⁸ Michel, p. 192; Vanhoye, "Marche," p. 23.

¹⁴⁹ Vanhoye, "Marche," p. 23.

¹⁵⁰ F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. James Martin, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), p. 88.

set before the Israelites in the wilderness.

If we could place the psalm in its proper setting, we might gain a better idea of the type of rest the psalmist had in mind. We must begin by noting that structurally the psalm is composed of two parts: a hymn inviting the people to worship in verses 1 to 7b, and a prophetic warning concerning their need to hear God's voice and the danger of hardening their hearts in verses 7c to 11.¹⁵¹ The hymn can be further divided into two stanzas which show remarkable parallelism to each other (vv. 1-5, and 6-7b).¹⁵² Although the unity of the psalm has been questioned in the past,¹⁵³ more recent studies have shown that the whole psalm is a carefully constructed work with both parts closely tied together.¹⁵⁴ This conclusion is important because it means that clues to the setting of the first part of the psalm also apply to the latter half, which contains little hint of its setting.

¹⁵¹ Psalm 81 also begins with an invitation to worship followed by a reflection on the Israelites' disobedience in the wilderness along with an exhortation to listen to God's voice and walk in His ways (cf. esp. vv. 1, 7, 8, 11-13). Kraus, pp. 245, 248; Davies, p. 183.

¹⁵² Marc Girard, "The Literary Structure of Psalm 95," *TD* 30 / 1 (1982): 55-58; Davies, pp. 183-187; Massouh, p. 84; Anderson, pp. 676, 678; Kirkpatrick, p. 571; Kraus, 2:828, 829.

¹⁵³ Cf. W. Emery Barnes, "Two Psalm Notes," *JTS* 37 (1936): 387.

¹⁵⁴ Girard, pp. 55-58, esp. 58; Massouh, pp. 84, 86, 87; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1-50*, AB (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 355; Davies, pp. 192, 193.

The hymnic portion of Psalm 95 shows many internal signs of being designed for public worship at the temple.¹⁵⁵ The first stanza (vv. 1-5) begins with an invitation, which was likely spoken by the leader enjoining the people to participate in worship: "O come, let us sing for joy to YHWH."¹⁵⁶ Verse 2 continues with another invitation: "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving." From a comparison with the similar phrase in Psalm 100:2, we derive the picture of a procession approaching the outer gates of the temple (cf. Ps. 100:4; Ps. 132:7, 8, 13, 14).¹⁵⁷ This first stanza reverberates with the loud sounds of human voices and musical instruments in praise of YHWH for His sovereignty over all the universe by right of creation.¹⁵⁸

The second stanza (vv. 6-7b) is introduced by another invitation to worship, but the opening verb אָבֹא (come in) shows a marked progression over בָּרֵךְ (come in front of) in verse 2 and even more over the simple verb בָּרֵךְ (come) in the parallel utterance of verse 1. This change in verbs suggests that the processional is now standing right outside the temple doors and ready to enter.¹⁵⁹ As the worshipers

¹⁵⁵ It also falls within a series of liturgical psalms from 95 to 100 (Kirkpatrick, p. 571).

¹⁵⁶ Davies, p. 189.

¹⁵⁷ Davies, p. 190; Dahood, p. 353; Hofius, pp. 33, 38.

¹⁵⁸ Girard, p. 57; Massouh, pp. 84-86.

¹⁵⁹ BDB, s.v.; Hofius, pp. 40, 41; Davies, p. 191; Jörg Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen: Israels*

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enter the temple, the mood also changes. The noisy jubilation outside yields to the silent posture of God's people prostrating themselves, bowing down, and kneeling in expression of reverence while they meditate on God's work in forming and caring for the nation from the inception of its history.¹⁶⁰ The supposed anti-climatic order of the worshipers' actions is no reason to emend the text;¹⁶¹ kneeling places them in a position where they can see and hear the prophetic warning that follows in verses 7b-11.¹⁶²

The emphatic position of the word "today," which introduces the new section, connects the warning with the hymn and gives it a sense of urgency.¹⁶³ Although that "today" may be applied to each subsequent reading of the psalm, we should not allow its generic applicability to detract from the significance of that original occasion.¹⁶⁴

Begegnung mit dem Kanaanäischen Mythos in den Jahwe-König-Psalmen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), pp. 108, 109; Anderson, p. 678; Massouh, p. 87; Dahood, p. 352; Kraus, pp. 244, 246.

¹⁶⁰ Girard, p. 57; Massouh, pp. 84-86.

¹⁶¹ *Contra* Barnes, p. 378.

¹⁶² Davies, p. 191; cf. Dahood, pp. 353, 354.

¹⁶³ The common theme of rejoicing over YHWH's future rule which is found in the other psalms from 93-100 may hint at an eschatological application here as well (cf. Kaiser, pp. 163, 164), but that possibility should not overrule the psalm's emphasis on the present prospect of entering into rest "today" (Von Rad, "Rest," pp. 98, 99).

¹⁶⁴ Kirkpatrick, p. 574; *contra* Davies, p. 193. For more probable generic uses of "today," cf. Deut. 29:13; *et passim* Deut. 4:40--11:32. Heb. 3:13 certainly gives the "today" of

The strong wish that follows, "Oh that you would hear His voice" (v. 7b),¹⁶⁵ and the accompanying warnings concerning the failure of their fathers (vv. 8-11) imply that the people of the psalmist's generation had a special opportunity to enter God's rest on that day. Perhaps the psalmist's use of the same verb (נָחַם) both for entering the temple in verse 6 and for entering rest in verse 11 also hints that rest should be defined by the liturgical setting of that day.

Any attempt to identify more specifically the particular occasion on which the worshipers of Psalm 95 entered the temple remains somewhat speculative, but it is worthwhile reviewing the most likely possibilities. Perhaps they could have approached the temple on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for one of its annual feasts, such as the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁶⁶ But this suggestion misplaces the emphasis on a lengthy journey rather than the present possibility of entrance and does not explain the psalm's omission from the canonical grouping of songs of ascents in Psalms 120-134.

Psalm 95 was used in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, but the evidence for this tradition is late and more likely points to a liturgical adaptation of the psalm than to its

the psalm a generic application; cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 67; Westcott, p. 84.

¹⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick, p. 574; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 60 n. 24; Davies, p. 193.

¹⁶⁶ Massouh, p. 87; Anderson, pp. 676, 677.

original occasion.¹⁶⁷ Although this connection between rest and the Sabbath is understandable, it is not developed in the psalm itself.

Another possibility is that the psalm was composed for the dedication of the second temple.¹⁶⁸ Its allusions to the wilderness wanderings could have been drawn from the psalmist's experience of captivity. Its position immediately before Psalm 96, which in the Septuagint bears the title, "When the house was built after the captivity," and the appropriateness of its invitation to enter the temple on such an occasion also favor this position.

But most of the points favoring this setting of Psalm 95 can be turned into arguments for its composition at the dedication of the first temple.¹⁶⁹ It is difficult to reconcile the psalm's references to the wilderness wanderings with the reflective stance of a postexilic poet; rather, the psalm has an anticipatory outlook similar to Numbers 14, where the prospect of entering the land and the

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1959), pp. 145, 157; Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), pp. 108, 113; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 35 and n. 2; p. 36; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 90 and n. 9; Schröger, p. 112; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 129 n. 83; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 63; William L. Lane, "Hebrews: A Sermon in Search of a Setting," *SWJT* 28 / 1 (1985): 15; Hofius, p. 177 n. 323.

¹⁶⁸ Elmer Archibald Leslie, *The Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1949), pp. 212-214; Kirkpatrick, p. 572.

¹⁶⁹ Davies, p. 185.

punishment of wandering in the wilderness lie ahead of the people.

Although the Septuagint associates Psalm 96 with the second temple, it attributes both Psalms 95 and 96 (LXX 94, 95) to David. We must recognize these titles as products of a later tradition, but it is possible that David composed Psalm 95 in advance for the dedication of the temple,¹⁷⁰ and Psalm 96 might have been put to a similar use long after his death.

Apart from Davidic authorship, Psalm 95 could still have been composed for the dedication of the first temple, which forms an even more appropriate setting for the psalm's invitation to enter than the dedication of the second temple. Solomon specifically declared the dedication of his temple to be a fulfillment of the promised rest (I Kings 8:56; cf. Isa. 66:1; I Kings 8:27); and this event, in fact, marked the point in Israel's history when the immaterial aspects of the promise, such as freedom from enemies, worship at God's chosen dwelling place, and rejoicing in God's presence, reached their highest fulfillment (cf. Deut. 12:5-14).¹⁷¹ Such an occasion forms a fitting comparison by placing both the psalmist's generation and the wilderness generation in analogous situations where each is on the verge of entering a place that is particularly identified

¹⁷⁰ On Hebrews' attribution of this psalm to David, see above, p. 171 n. 14.

¹⁷¹ Massouh, p. 87.

with rest.

So then, regardless of the specific occasion for which Psalm 95 was composed, entrance into rest for the psalmist's generation was related to entrance into the temple, which, as we have seen previously, was thought of as God's resting place (Ps. 132:8). But more important than physical entrance into the temple precincts was entrance into the spiritual blessings of rest, which were associated with YHWH's presence in the temple and originally very much a part of the psalmist's thinking (cf. Deut. 12:5-14).¹⁷² The spiritual dimensions of rest, which for the psalmist's generation were connected with the temple, need not conflict with its physical association for the Israelites in the wilderness with the promised land, however, for the psalmist's understanding of the term was broad enough to comprehend them both.¹⁷³

CONCLUSION

Now that we have examined the concept of rest in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 and Psalm 95, we may compare their meanings together. Both of these passages and Numbers 14, which they allude to, all arose from critical moments when God's people stood on the verge of entering into rest. The readers of Hebrews had reached the consummation of history

¹⁷² Von Rad, "Rest," p. 99; Massouh, p. 87; Kraus, p. 248.

¹⁷³ Kaiser pp. 155, 156, 158; Massouh, p. 87.

in Christ and were standing at the door of the age to come.¹⁷⁴
The psalmist's generation was approaching the gates of the temple and about to enter into the spiritual blessings associated with God's dwelling place. The Israelites in the wilderness had reached the borders of Canaan and were about to enter into the promised land.

Both the writer of Hebrews and the psalmist thought of rest in more than one sense. Although they recognized its physical association with the promised land for the Israelites in the wilderness, each understood the concept in a spiritual sense for his own generation. In giving rest a spiritual interpretation, the writer of Hebrews was following the lead of the psalmist,¹⁷⁵ and the psalmist, in turn, found spiritual ideas of rest present in the OT before him. At the base their views of rest are essentially similar, but their need to apply it to different situations has caused it to take on different forms.

For both writers, rest is a personal experience that may be entered into in the present, but the writer of Hebrews adds an eschatological dimension to it which is not found in the psalm,¹⁷⁶ unless it is there seminally. By juxtaposing Psalm 95 with Genesis 2:2, the writer of Hebrews

¹⁷⁴Hofius, pp. 142, 143; cf. Heb. 1:2; 2:5; 4:3; 6:5; 9:26; 10:25, 37; 12:22 ff.

¹⁷⁵Hagner, p. 51; Vanhoye, "Marche," p. 23; Girard, p. 58.

¹⁷⁶Von Rad, "Rest," pp. 99, 102.

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also draws out a Sabbatical aspect of rest, which is not present in the psalm. But the synagogue's use of both these texts on the Sabbath shows that others made the same connection. These differences, however, can be comprehended within the breadth of the OT terminology for rest which from the beginning functioned on multiple levels. We conclude that Hebrews' interpretation of rest is consistent with that of Psalm 95 and that it shows great sensitivity to the broader teaching of the OT on the subject.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷Uanhoye, "Marche," p. 26; Buchanan also finds a consistency, but he places greater emphasis than we have on the physical aspect of rest in Hebrews, (pp. 64, 65, 71-74).

PART II: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4:

THE VALIDITY OF THE MIDRASHIC FEATURES

IN HEBREWS 3:7--4:11

INTRODUCTION

Now that we have compared the meaning of rest in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 with its meaning in the OT, we may return to the same passage in Hebrews to inquire more specifically concerning our writer's interpretive methodology. Hebrews 3:7--4:11 has often been described as a midrash on Psalm 95:7-11.¹ Any admission that the epistle contains midrash, however, inevitably raises suspicions about the validity of the writer's methodology, for we know that midrashic methods of interpretation in the hands of the rabbis were quite capable of distorting the OT's meaning.

¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, GNC (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. xxiv, xxv, 25, 42; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: the Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), p. 81; Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 114, 130; Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebraerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968), pp. 108, 113, 114.

Heb. 2:5-9; 10:5-14 and 12:5-11 are also commonly recognized as examples of midrash. Some scholars would go so far as to claim that midrash pervades the entire epistle; cf. George W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. xix-xxii; Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), pp. 11, 74, 75; René Bloch, "Midrash," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, Brown Judaic Studies vol. 1, William Scott Green, ed., trans. Mary Howard Callaway (Montana: Scholars Press, 1978), p. 48.

We have already seen that the writer of Hebrews does not impose a foreign idea on the OT concept of rest by applying it spiritually to his own generation, but we must go on to investigate the suspicion that he employed objectionable midrashic methods of interpretation. We must first of all come to an understanding of what midrash is and then identify those features in Hebrews that are midrashic so that we may distinguish any innocent hermeneutical and literary devices from the midrashic methods that are hermeneutically objectionable.

VARIOUS APPROACHES TO DEFINING MIDRASH

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find any agreement on the meaning of midrash beyond the fundamental and rather vague notion that it refers to the interpretation of Scripture. Part of the reason for this unhappy state is the breadth of meaning which this term has had etymologically. The only two Biblical occurrences of the noun *מִדְרָשׁ* are both non-technical uses referring to written sources behind the canonical text (II Chron. 13:22; 24:27). The verb *דָּרַשׁ*, which is more common in the OT, means to search, inquire, or investigate. It was originally used in such a variety of contexts as searching for a lost animal (Deut. 22:2), for mighty warriors (I Chron. 26:31), or for the answer to a legal dispute (Deut. 19:18). Most often *דָּרַשׁ* has God as its object, whether one seeks Him for assistance in a crisis (Ps. 34:4 [MT v. 5]), spiritual blessings (Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6; Hos. 10:12), or divine guidance (Ps.

119:10; Isa. 8:19). In pre-exilic times, one usually sought God's guidance through the agency of a prophet or seer (I Sam. 9:9; I Kings 22:5-7); but with the rise of the scribal tradition, the Torah began to replace that prophetic role (Ezra 7:10; cf. Ps. 119:45, 95, 155). It was not until the second century A.D., however, that *שְׂרָשְׁרָשׁ* and *שְׂרָשׁ* attained the status of technical terms related to the interpretation of Scripture. In later Rabbinic writings, the general sense of the root *שְׂרָשׁ* yielded almost exclusively to the more specific idea of searching a written text.² But within this interpretive context, the Jews still used their terminology quite loosely.

The state of affairs in current usage is no better. There is a growing consensus that the label "midrash" has become so all-inclusive as to be virtually meaningless without some kind of qualifier.³ Neusner observes that "'Midrash' presently stands for pretty much anything any Jew in antiquity did in reading and interpreting Scripture."⁴

²Cf. Gary G. Porton, "Defining Midrash," in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 1 of 2 vols. ed. Jacob Neusner (n.p.: Ktav Publishing House, 1981), pp. 56-58; Bloch, pp. 29-31; Daniel Patta, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, SBLDS 22 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 118, 119; Hermann Lebrecht Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1931), p. 7; Addison G. Wright, "The Literary Genre Midrash," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 120.

³Wright, p. 108; Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 9; Porton, pp. 58-61.

⁴Neusner, p. xii. Neusner's attempt to distinguish different types of midrash has some value (cf. pp. 8, 9,

How one defines the word depends greatly upon whether one views midrash from the perspective of the presuppositions underlying midrashic interpretation, the hermeneutical methods used in interpreting Scripture, or the external form in which the interpretation is expressed. In accordance with these differing perspectives, three distinct approaches to defining midrash have arisen; one may define it as an interpretive stance, a hermeneutical methodology, or a literary genre.⁵

Advocates for defining midrash on each one of these levels have argued that their definition represents the true essence of midrash, but long established traditions of using the word in several senses make it unlikely that any one position will gain ascendancy. It is not necessary, however, to restrict our study of midrash exclusively to one level of definition. Provided that we clarify the terminology, we may profitably explore the nature of midrash

13), but his own definition of midrash as "biblical exegesis by ancient Judaic authorities" (p. xi) adds to the confusion by including the creative elements of midrash in the term "exegesis," which has traditionally been restricted to the idea of drawing an author's intended meaning out of a text (cf. Strack, p. 93.)

⁵Patte, pp. 315, 316, 318-320, 324; Douglas J. Moo, "Tradition and Old Testament in Matt. 27:3-10," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, 3 vols., ed. R. I. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 166; Barry Ray Sang, "The New Testament Hermeneutical Milieu: The Inheritance and the Heir," (Ph. D. dissertation, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 1983), pp. 3, 4, 20, 24; Wright, p. 118; Strack, p. 6.

on all three levels.⁶ Once we determine in what respects Hebrews 3:7--4:11 is midrashic, we will be in a better position to discuss its validity.

MIDRASH AS AN INTERPRETIVE STANCE

Let us begin by considering midrash as an interpretive stance, or an attitude towards Scripture, since this is the most fundamental sense of the term.⁷ The hermeneutical methodology commonly associated with midrash and the literary forms in which that methodology is expressed both rest upon a particular interpretive stance which, at the risk of oversimplification, we shall try to explain very briefly.

At the foundation of midrash lies a particular, Jewish view of the nature and inspiration of Scripture which held that all knowledge can be found directly or indirectly in the Scriptures.⁸ This theological conviction guarantees

⁶Cf. Patte, p. 324.

⁷For proponents of this approach to defining midrash see Patte, p. 117 n. 1; Roger Le Déaut, "Apropos a Definition of Midrash," *Int* 25 (1971): 273; Merrill P. Miller, "Targum, Midrash and the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *JSJ* 2 (1971): 43; James L. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 91.

⁸Gary G. Porton, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash: Texts and Commentary* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1985), pp. 9, 10; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), p. 19; Neusner, pp. 10, 11, 98; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*, vol. 1 of 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 1:235; J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the*

that Scripture will be relevant to all the practical and ethical concerns of the religious community.⁹ Where Scripture did not speak to contemporary issues as directly as might have been wished, midrash sought to make it relevant, and herein lies the primary characteristic of midrash as an interpretive stance.¹⁰

The second important point to note about midrash as an interpretive stance, is that it seeks to explain inconsistencies. Midrashic interpretation often grew out of a conflict between Jewish confidence in the wisdom of Scripture and some apparently inconsistent data, whether the conflict was a minor discrepancy within the text or a large scale confrontation between the perceived meaning of Scripture and the external world.¹¹

Rather than illustrating the origin of midrashic interpretation from seemingly trivial problems,¹² we will look briefly at the process by which inconsistency produced midrash on a grander scale. The rise of Rabbinic midrash in the fourth century A.D. coincides with a major challenge to

Synoptic Gospels and Acts (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1954), p. 89.

⁹Wright, pp. 128, 134; Patte, p. 319.

¹⁰Wright, p. 456; Bloch, pp. 29, 31-34; Doeve, pp. 54, 55; Longenecker, pp. 20, 21.

¹¹Porton, *Understanding Midrash*, p. 13.

¹²Cf. Kugel, pp. 92 f.; Bloch, p. 32.

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Judaism from Christianity. During the Mishnaic period (c. 200 A.D.), Judaism was largely able to ignore Christianity; but when the conversion of the emperor Constantine elevated it to the status of the state religion, the Rabbis were forced to counter the Christian reading of Scripture which claimed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and the church the true people of God.

At a point in history when it seemed that Christianity was triumphing, Jews took comfort in the belief that reality is not always what it seems to be from the present perspective. The Babylonian exile and later persecutions had driven them to believe that Israel's humble position in the world was not a true indication of the nation's destined glory. Believing that the seeming triumph of Christianity was only another occasion to test their faith, the Rabbis developed counter-interpretations of Scripture to defend their own religion. Where the evidence ran contrary to their predetermined conclusions, their stubborn will to believe sometimes led them to creative solutions.¹³

Thirdly, midrash seeks to find hidden meanings in Scripture. The necessity to make Scripture relevant and explain inconsistencies in it greatly encouraged the search for hidden meanings wherever the plain meaning seemed inadequate; and the Rabbinic view of inspiration helped to legitimize the entire enterprise. It held that God speaks

¹³Neusner, pp. 44-48, 85.

in the Torah with such a richness of language that He can say hundreds of things at the same time. On the basis of Jeremiah 23:29, which likens Scripture to a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces, the Talmud concluded that "a verse is capable of as many interpretations as splinters of a rock crushed by a hammer" (*San.* 34a).¹⁴ This combination of practical necessity and theological laxity gave rise to much of the creative methodology commonly associated with midrash.

The fourth point concerning midrash as an interpretive stance is that it focuses upon isolated units of Scripture rather than Biblical books. Every verse, word, or letter could be interpreted as an isolated unit in itself, and it could be as easily connected to the remotest verse in the canon as to the one right beside it.¹⁵ Again the Rabbinic view of inspiration, which extended to the minutest detail of Scripture, gave rise to this atomistic approach to interpretation;¹⁶ and it, in turn, contributed to the development of a creative methodology capable of discovering

¹⁴Wright, p. 134, 135; Edward Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), p. 75.

¹⁵Kugel, pp. 93, 94.

¹⁶David Stern, "Midrash and the Language of Exegesis: A Study of *Vayikra Rabbah*, Chapter 1," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 110; Wright, p. 130; Neusner, p. 10.

hidden meanings in the minutiae of Scripture,¹⁷ as well as to the emergence of a new literary genre in which the separate interpretations of many Rabbis were gathered into midrashic compilations.

MIDRASH AS A HERMENEUTICAL METHODOLOGY

The hermeneutical methods which flowed out of the midrashic stance towards Scripture have become so closely associated with the subject that it is difficult to speak of midrash apart from hermeneutics. Our purpose here is not to debate whether or not midrash so fundamentally consists of a particular hermeneutical methodology that it may exist apart from the conventional literary form in which it is normally expressed;¹⁸ nevertheless, for the purpose of analysis, we must try to set forth midrashic methodology independently of literary genre so that we might determine if Hebrews 3:7--4:11 is midrashic in that respect.

Many of the methods used in midrashic interpretation were formally stated in the seven *middot* (מִדּוֹת) which were ascribed to Rabbi Hillel, probably because he used at least

¹⁷ Doeve, p. 89.

¹⁸ Le Déaut holds that methodology is a more fundamental criterion for defining midrash than literary genre (pp. 272, 273); see also William H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation Among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BibArch* 14 (1951): 76; *contra* Wright, pp. 134, 135. But, be that as it may, we need to be careful about classifying an individual piece of interpretation solely by its methodology. Not all methods common to midrash are uniquely midrashic, and only a limited number of them are likely to be found in any given piece of literature.

two of them in his classic debate with the Bene Bathyra.¹⁹ These rules of interpretation were later expanded to seventeen rules, supposedly by Rabbi Ishmael, and then thirty-two by Rabbi Eliezer.²⁰ Beyond these rules, midrash also employs many other non-codified methods of interpretation which seem to be limited only by the genius of the interpreter.²¹ We can mention here only a few of the most common methods which by repeated use have distinguished

¹⁹The Bene Bathyra were unidentified religious leaders of that day; cf. Bowker, p. 316 n. a. The debate is recorded in *Pesahim* 66a; Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud*, 6 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1935-52), vol. 2, pt. 4, pp. 333-336.

²⁰For various listings of the *middoth*, see *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 7. 11; *The Tosefta*, Jacob Neusner, ed., 6 vols. (New York: KJAU Pub. House, 1981), 4:222; *Intro. to Sifra; Sifra an Analytical Translation*, Jacob Neusner, ed., 2 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1:57-63; *Aboth of R. Nathan* 37; *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, Judah Goldin, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 154. Cf. Strack, pp. 93-98; John Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretation of Scripture* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 315-318; Doeve, pp. 66-75; Joseph Bonsirven, *Exegese Rabbinique et Exegese Pauline* (Paris: Beauschesne et ses fils, 1939), pp. 77-115; Longenecker, pp. 33-35; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 62, 63.

We know that by the fourth century the use of these *middoth* in Rabbinic midrash was well established, but it is difficult historically to confirm their influence on NT hermeneutics in the first century. The generally held position that Hillel (died c. A.D. 20) did not invent these rules, but made use of earlier traditions, would suggest that they were in common use by the NT era (Bowker, pp. 315, 316; Bonsirven, pp. 78, 80; Strack, pp. 93, 94; Doeve, pp. 60, 61; Patte, p. 109 n. 91); but Sang, who notes the late date of all the traditions ascribing these rules to either Hillel or Ishmael, doubts that they were codified until after the latter's death c. A.D. 130 (pp. 202-204).

²¹Doeve, p. 64.

themselves as characteristic devices of the midrashic trade. We will try to draw them together from all sources into a simple, thematic arrangement rather than trying to follow the order in any of the traditional enumerations, which could be confusing due to omissions in some lists and duplications in others.

Let us begin with several simple modes of inference that are based on "common-sense" intuition. *Qal Wahomer* (קל וחומר), which is one of the most popular *middot*, reasons *a fortiori*: it infers that what is true in a less important case (קל, light) will also be true in a more important one (חומר, heavy). The *middah kelal uferat* (כלל ופרט), the general and the particular) restricts a general principle by a particularization of it elsewhere in Scripture; or, conversely, it may allow a particular statement to expand into a general rule. A slightly different *middah*, *binyan av* (בנין אב), building a family), which is sometimes divided in two,²² generalizes that a specific statement found in one (מכתוב אחד) or two passages (משני כתובים) will apply to a family of related texts.

We should note that although these *middot* may claim some validity, none of them can provide us with certain conclusions because, unlike Aristotelian logic which deduces certain inferences given the truthfulness of the premises, they effectively reason by induction, which at the best can

²²Cf. Doeve, pp. 68, 69 n. 1.

only produce probability. The limitations inherent in this Rabbinic form of logic are recognized by the principle that conclusions reached by it must not contradict explicit statements in the Torah, but unfortunately the Rabbis sometimes overstepped their legitimate bounds.²³

The hermeneutical methods in our second group operate on the principle of analogy. *Heqesh* (הִקְשִׁי), the simplest form of Rabbinic analogy, assimilates two ideas together by placing them in juxtaposition. Although this rule could be used in its simple form,²⁴ it was probably omitted from the standard listings of *middoth* in favor of more refined versions of it.

The most common expansion of this principle of analogy is *Gezerah Shawah* (גְּזֵרָה שְׂוָה), which literally means an equal decree. It reasons by verbal analogy that where the same words occur in separate verses, the same considerations apply to both cases.

Midrash generally searched for analogies within Scripture, but it also extended beyond canonical bounds to adapt Scripture to the present readers by means of allegory. All allegory operates on the principle of analogy to interpret one thing in terms of something else. In valid cases of allegory, the correlation can be strikingly

²³Cf. Bonsirven, p. 79.

²⁴Hillel used it effectively in the debate mentioned above in n. 19.

forceful, but the midrashic assumption that Scripture contains hidden meanings encouraged many interpretations of Scripture in terms of things that were not genuinely related.²⁵

Hillel's seventh *middah*, *dabar halamed me'inyano* (דָּבָר הַלָּמֵד מֵעֲנָוָנוֹ), which we will set off by itself, establishes a meaning from its context. This rule could be used independently or in conjunction with other *middot*, but unfortunately its positive regard for context was often negated by atomistic tendencies in Rabbinic interpretation.

The hermeneutical methods in our final group alter the text of Scripture, usually by means of atomistic devices. The obscurity of the Hebrew language itself created possibilities for alternate readings that would not have arisen in an unequivocal language like Greek.²⁶ At times an interpreter could legitimately point words in different ways or chose from variant readings; but too often midrash succumbed to determining the text by the interpretation.²⁷

We should give particular attention here to two

²⁵Cf. Neusner, pp. 2, 8; F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, 3 vols., ed. R. I. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 81. For a fuller discussion of the allegorical method see ch. 5 below, pp. 298, 308, 309.

²⁶Joseph Dan, "Midrash and the Dawn of the Kabbalah," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 128, 129.

²⁷Cf. Bonsirven, pp. 116-128.

atomistic methods of altering the text contained in Rabbi Eliezer's *middoth* (c. A.D. 130-160), both of which show a marked increase in the potential for abuse over the earlier *middoth* of Hillel and Ishmael. Eliezer's twenty-ninth rule, *gematria* (גמטריא), is divided into two parts: one may determine the meaning of a word either by computing the numeric value of its letters, or by substituting some letters for other ones. His thirtieth rule, *notarikon* (נוטריקון), uses the individual letters of a word to form the initial letters of new words in an acrostic.²⁸

Although midrash recognized a simple or literal sense (פשוט), we must say, in summary, that most midrashic methods of interpretation left ample room for the interpreter's creativity. In fact, if we were to characterize midrashic hermeneutics, we would have to say that its single, most outstanding characteristic is its great creativity.²⁹

MIDRASH AS A LITERARY GENRE

Because the particular interpretive stance of midrash towards Scripture and its hermeneutical methodology found historical expression exclusively in Jewish, and perhaps some early Christian, literature, the term "midrash" has become closely identified with a literary genre. Our purpose here is not to debate the claim of some scholars

²⁸ Longenecker, pp. 35-37; Moore, 1:248; Bonsirven, pp. 137-139; Doeve, p. 84; Bowker, p. 318.

²⁹ Wright, p. 134, 135; Bloch, p. 31.

that midrash ought to be defined solely in terms of genre;³⁰ but we will attempt to isolate the genre from its hermeneutics, conversely as we did with methodology, so that we might determine if Hebrews 3:7--4:11 is midrashic in literary respects. Here we are faced with the additional problem, however, that there is much difference of opinion over where the literary boundaries of the genre should be drawn. Any attempt to define midrash as a literary genre would inevitably be somewhat arbitrary and too restrictive for some critics or too inclusive for others; therefore, we will be content to describe the general characteristics that apply to most midrash, and then note the particular features of what could be considered to be a number of sub-genres.³¹

The most fundamental characteristic common to the midrashic genre as a whole is that it is a secondary type of literature which is concerned with Scripture, or a tradition derived from it, that is accepted as authoritative by both the interpreter and his audience.³² In this regard, midrash

³⁰Wright is one of the most notable proponents of this position (pp. 119-121; 456). Bloch also defines midrash as a genre (p. 29), but she has been accused of treating it as a method of interpretation (Sang, pp. 2-4, 24; Wright, p. 138), or as an attitude toward Scripture (Patte, p. 117 n. 1). Porton maintains a literary definition but seeks to broaden its scope beyond rabbinic literature ("Defining Midrash," pp. 59, 61-63).

³¹For various listings of these sub-genres, see Neusner, p. xi; Patte, 320-323; Wright, p. 456; Porton, "Defining Midrash," p. 70.

³²Wright, p. 456; Porton, "Defining Midrash," pp. 62, 63; Bloch, p. 31.

could be either Jewish or Christian,³³ and relate to either the written or oral Torah.

Midrash is always practically oriented; it begins with Scripture, at least ostensibly, and terminates upon the needs of the worshiping community. The midrashists evidently felt that they were mediating God's word to mankind; but sometimes it appears that the needs of the community came first and the text was adapted to fit them.³⁴ This driving concern of midrash to adapt Scripture to the present removes it from the world of academic exegesis and gives to it a homiletical and popular flavor.³⁵

Midrash may be expressed in several different types of literature that might be considered to be species of the broader genre, each having its own particular features. The most common type of midrash, which has sometimes been considered to be inclusive of the entire genre, is Rabbinic midrash.³⁶

³³Wright, pp. 136, 137.

³⁴Patte, p. 319; Bloch, pp. 31-34; Neusner, p. 12; Sang, p. 21; Longenecker, p. 35.

³⁵Bloch, p. 31.

³⁶Moshe David Herr, "Midrash," in *EncJud*, ed. Cecil Roth; Geoffrey Wigoder; et. al. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1972), 11:1507. Bruce Chilton, restricts the genre to Rabbinic Midrash, while allowing for the existence of midrash in other types of literature, by reserving an upper case "M" for Rabbinic Midrash and the lower case for the midrashic process ("Varieties and Tendencies of Midrash: Rabbinic Interpretations of Isaiah 24:23," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, 3 vols., ed. R. I. France and David Wenham [Sheffield: JSOT

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Beginning around the fourth century A.D., compilers began gathering the scattered midrashim of the Jewish sages into collections organized by Biblical books. Although their midrashic compilations may resemble a commentary, in reality they are still collections of many separate interpretations of individual verses. Each midrashic comment is usually attributed to a named Rabbi, and often more than one comment is given per verse. The compilers were not so much interested in consistency as they were in offering a number of proposed solutions to problems in Scripture, especially in relation to the growing debate with Christianity; it should not be surprising, therefore, that some of these solutions may be contradictory.³⁷

Rabbinic midrash normally begins by citing or alluding to an authoritative text,³⁸ and it may then proceed to explain or expand upon it in several characteristic ways. After quoting a lengthy Biblical passage, it will often return to comment on individual aspects of the passage, repeating key words, phrases, or sentences of the quotation followed immediately by an interpretation with a contemporary application.³⁹ In the process, it may introduce

Press, 1983], pp. 9, 10.)

³⁷ Porton, *Understanding Midrash*, pp. 8, 9; and his "Defining Midrash," p. 79; Neusner, pp. 46-48; Kugel, p. 94.

³⁸ Porton, "Defining Midrash," p. 61; *contra* Doeve, pp. 56, 57.

³⁹ Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 74, 75; Hagner, pp. xxiv, 25.

other connected texts and draw inferences from them. Often it explicates the text by raising rhetorical questions, which it may go on to answer.⁴⁰

This species of midrash has traditionally been divided according to its content into two sub-categories: halakah and haggadah, both of which employ the same methodology. Halakah (from הלך , to walk) is the legalistic variety of midrash which explains and applies Biblical laws to particular situations. These laws form the path on which one should walk through life. Haggadah (from גידה , to tell) is the more popular, homiletical form of edification, instruction, and exhortation which lacks the authority of the halakah. It covers all non-legal midrash including many commentaries on the narrative portions of Scripture.⁴¹

If midrash could be restricted to Rabbinic literature, it would have some readily definable boundaries; but common use of the term with reference to other types of literature forces us to consider it in a broader scope. As a second type of literature which might constitute a species of

⁴⁰ Miller, p. 48; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 65; Porton, *Understanding Midrash*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Bloch, pp. 33, 34; Doeve, pp. 55, 56, 63, 64; Sang, pp. 22, 23; Wright, pp. 118, 119, 134; Joseph Heinman, "The Nature of the Aggadah," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 42; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 62. This traditional two-fold division still seems to be helpful in spite of much overlap *contra* Porton ("Defining Midrash," p. 77).

midrash, we must include the paraphrases of the OT into Aramaic known as the Targums.⁴²

They differ from other forms of midrash in that they weave the interpretation into the text itself; whereas, other forms of midrash keep the text and interpretation distinct.⁴³ All translations and paraphrases of a text from one language to another of necessity require some interpretive judgments where a dynamic equivalent is the only way to preserve the meaning. The linguistic similarity of Hebrew and Aramaic naturally permits a higher degree of literal equivalence than would be possible with dissimilar languages; but the Targums produced a highly interpretive paraphrase of a midrashic character by adding creative embellishments to the text and taking unwarranted liberties.

We must also consider pesher interpretation as a species of midrashic literature because a number of scholars have classified it here,⁴⁴ and some have explicitly called our passage in Hebrews a "midrash pesher."⁴⁵ But before we

⁴²The overall intent of the LXX to translate the OT faithfully, unlike that of the Targums which consciously seek to read in new meanings, seems to exclude it from the midrashic category *contra* Neusner (p. 23-26).

⁴³Cf. Neusner, pp. 7, 23, 26, 27; Wright, p. 456; Porton, "Defining Midrash," p. 70.

⁴⁴See Porton, "Defining Midrash," pp. 70, 75; Wright, p. 421; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, (Uppsala: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954), p. 184; Neusner, p. 1.

⁴⁵Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 11, 74, 75; Schröger, pp. 113, 114.

describe the literary features of *peshet*, we should note its distinctive interpretive stance and hermeneutical methodology which have, with some justification, caused others to believe that *peshet* is an entity in itself.⁴⁶

To understand *peshet* interpretation, we need to examine the model from which the sectarians of the Qumran community developed it. The word פֶּשֶׁט occurs only once in Biblical Hebrew (Eccl. 8:1), but its Aramaic equivalent פֶּשֶׁט is used thirty times in the book of Daniel with reference to the interpretation of dreams or visions (Dan. 2:4 ff.; 4:6 [3] ff.; 5:7 ff.; 7:16). In the typical scenario, God would reveal a message to the king by a dream or vision, but its meaning remained a mystery (רִזְז ; Dan. 2:18, 19, 27-30, 47; 4:6 [9]) until He revealed its interpretation to Daniel.

The Qumran community developed this concept of interpreting dreams into a two-stage theory of Scriptural revelation. It held that God revealed the future to the prophets in the form of a mystery (רִזְז) which no one could understand until He also revealed its interpretation (פֶּשֶׁט) to His chosen interpreter; thus revelation unfolds in the interchange between prophecy and its divinely revealed

⁴⁶See Longenecker, pp. 41-43; Sang, p. 32; Patte, p. 308. Brownlee, however, sees sufficient hermeneutical similarity to classify *peshet* as a form of midrash, although he believes it is distinct on the literary level (William H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshet of Habakkuk*, SBLMS 24 [Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979], pp. 23-25; Brownlee, *BibArch* 14 [1951]: 76). One quickly gains the impression that there is no scholarly agreement on how *peshet* should be classified, and it is not our purpose to settle that issue here.

interpretation. Since the members of the community believed that all the words of the prophets had meaning only for the eschaton, and they were living on the brink of it, they did not hesitate to set forth direct identifications between the prophetic text and contemporary events in a "this is that" fashion. They were further encouraged in their dogmatic assertions by the belief that God had entrusted the interpretive key to the Scriptures into the hands of the founder of their community, the Teacher of Righteousness, and his disciples.⁴⁷

Pesher proceeds by many of the same methods of interpretation we noted above, but compared to other forms of midrash it makes much greater use of atomistic devices such as employing variant readings, changing the spelling of words, and using the letters of words to form acrostics. The liberty it takes with Scripture is a direct outworking of the belief of the Qumran sectarians that every detail of Scripture was filled with cryptic meaning concerning their own times.⁴⁸

Regardless of whether pesher is a separate genre or a

⁴⁷ Patte, pp. 300-304; Bruce "Biblical Exposition," pp. 77-80; F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959), pp. 8, 9; Longenecker, pp. 38, 39, 42-45; Brownlee, *Midrash Pesher*, pp. 25 ff. See also the commentary on Hab. 2:1-2 in I Qp Hab. 7:1-5.

⁴⁸ Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation," pp. 60-62; Patte, pp. 303-306; Bruce "Biblical Exposition," pp. 81, 82; Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 12, 16; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 66, 74.

species of midrash, it is marked by a number of distinctive literary features. The pesharim found among the Dead Sea Scrolls were each written by a single hand as running commentaries on complete Biblical texts, in contrast with Rabbinic midrashim which were collections of fragmented sayings by various Rabbis.⁴⁹ The Biblical quotations in the peshar commentaries are generally longer than those in Rabbinic midrash, although the length may vary in both sources; and they are distinctively set off from the following interpretation by the introductory formula *על פסוק* (its interpretation concerns). Peshar interprets the text *en masse*, rather than piecemeal as Rabbinic midrash does, and it lacks the Rabbinic question and answer method.⁵⁰

Midrash, then, may exist in different forms and mean different things to different people. It may be a literary genre found in the peshar interpretation of the Qumran sect, the Aramaic paraphrases of the OT, or the collected sayings of the Rabbis. It may be a hermeneutical methodology that employs Rabbinic rules of interpretation, or an interpretive stance towards Scripture based upon a particular view of inspiration.

⁴⁹Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation," p. 75, Brownlee, *Midrash Peshar*, p. 23; Porton, "Defining Midrash," pp. 76, 77; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 65, 74; Patte, pp. 300, 301; Longenecker, pp. 38, 39; Neusner, p. 7.

⁵⁰Patte, p. 300; Porton, "Defining Midrash," p. 76.

AN ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS 3:7--4:11

With this variety of approaches to defining midrash in front of us, we are now in a position to identify any midrashic features in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 and to determine on what level they function. Inasmuch as the meaning of a word is determined by usage, and there is no consensus regarding midrash, it would be somewhat arbitrary for us to choose any one approach to defining it; therefore, we will examine Hebrews in light of all three perspectives.

MIDRASHIC PRESUPPOSITIONS

On the presuppositional level, first of all, we can certainly note some similarities between the writer of Hebrews and the creators of midrash in their interpretive stances towards Scripture. The interpretation of the writer of Hebrews, like that of the midrashists, was molded by a conviction that the OT was a divine revelation and an authoritative source of knowledge. He characteristically attributes his quotations to the Divine Author of Scripture and suppresses their human source.⁵¹ In Hebrews 3:7 ff., he treats the exhortation of Psalm 95 as a direct utterance of the Holy Spirit and expects his readers to pay serious attention to it.⁵² In Hebrews 4:4, a simple reminder that

⁵¹ Westcott denies that the mention of David in Heb. 4:7 is an exception to the rule (Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, reprint ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980], p. 474); but Moses does speak in Heb. 9:20 and 12:21.

⁵² He also presents the Holy Spirit as the speaker in

his quotation comes from Scripture was sufficient grounds to establish its authority without any mention of its location or human author.⁵³ Throughout the epistle, he constantly appeals to Scripture as proof, although he never cites the words of an apostle or even those of Jesus.⁵⁴

The writer of Hebrews clearly believed that the OT was relevant to the needs of his contemporary audience. In accordance with his customary practice, he uses a present tense verb of speech in the introductory formula of Hebrews 3:7 to portray Scripture as a living oracle in which God is still speaking today, rather than merely a dead record of the past.⁵⁵ He rejuvenates the "today" of Psalm 95 into a

Heb. 10:15. Elsewhere in the epistle, he attributes the words of Scripture to both God the Father (1:5 ff.; 5:5) and the Son (2:12, 13; 10:5-7). Cf. Westcott, pp. 80, 474; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 90 and n. 8; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), p. 141.

⁵³In fact, the vague formula εἶρηκεν γάρ μου (He said somewhere) introduces a citation from Genesis 2:2 that would have been well known to his audience. See Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 84; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 108; Hughes, p. 159; Westcott, p. 96. On the even more vague formula in Heb. 2:6 διαμαρτύρατο δέ ποῦ τις λέγων (someone has testified somewhere, saying) see ch. 3 above, pp. 136, 137.

⁵⁴Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 107.

⁵⁵Methods of enumeration may vary, but we count 19 uses of a present tense verb of speech to introduce a citation in Heb., as compared to 5 aorists and 6 perfects. Cf. Westcott, p. 475; Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon E. Snyder (New York: Harper, 1962); pp. 265, 266 n. 15.

fresh day of opportunity for entering into rest; while that day lasts, he exhorts his readers to hear and obey God's voice (Heb. 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).⁵⁶ In his urge to adapt Scripture to the present, we find great similarity to one of the driving forces of midrash.⁵⁷

His interpretive stance also resembles that of midrash in that he held a view of inspiration which compelled him to explain apparent inconsistencies in Scripture. As we have seen previously, the tension between the unfulfilled promise of rest in Psalm 95 and earlier Biblical statements to the effect that Joshua already had provided rest led him to conclude that the psalmist must have been speaking of a different type of rest (Heb. 4:7-9).⁵⁸

But these similarities do not necessarily mean that Hebrews is midrashic. If midrash included all interpretation which operates on the assumption that Scripture is a divinely inspired, consistent, and authoritative revelation that is relevant to the needs of mankind, then much contemporary preaching would also have to be classified as midrash. In that case, midrash becomes an exceedingly broad category.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Thompson, p. 101; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 67; Westcott, p. 84.

⁵⁷Cf. Thomas G. Smothers, "A Superior Model: Hebrews 1:1--4:13," *R&E* 82 / 3 (1985): p. 341.

⁵⁸See ch. 3 above, pp. 170-172.

⁵⁹Bloch willingly allows midrash such broad boundaries,

Furthermore, the approach of our writer to Scripture differs from that of midrash in some important respects. He shows no sign of believing that Scripture contains hidden or multiple meanings, and he does not treat small units of it atomistically in isolation from their context. Rather, he is quite sensitive to the historical background of Psalm 95 in Numbers 14 and draws in related OT teaching on rest from Genesis 2:2 and Deuteronomy 12:5-14.⁶⁰ Although the writer's interpretive stance may be similar to that of midrash in some respects, the balance of differences over against similarities makes it difficult to conclude that Hebrews 3:7--4:11 is truly midrashic on the presuppositional level.

MIDRASHIC HERMENEUTICS

On the hermeneutical level, we can find some similarities between the writer's methods of interpretation and those of midrash. Hebrews 4:4 uses the Rabbinic *middah Gezerah Shawah* to join the rest spoken of in Psalm 95:11 to God's creation rest in Genesis 2:2.⁶¹ The verbal analogy

but she does so at the expense of obscuring meaningful distinctions. She confesses that "So long as there is a people of God who regard the Bible as the living Word of God, there will be midrash; only the name might change" (p. 33).

⁶⁰See ch. 3 above, pp. 176, 177; 182, 183, 219-222.

⁶¹Longenecker, pp. 181, 182; Richard Reid, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Th. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 81; Schröger, pp. 114, 258, 266; Attridge, *Hebrews*, pp. 128-131; Thompson, pp. 81, 100; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 12th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), p. 194.

that links these two texts is based upon the Septuagint, which uses the noun *κατάπαυσις* in Psalm 95:11 and the related verb *κατέπαυσεν* in Genesis 2:2. Although the Hebrew Bible uses a different word in Genesis (קָנַח) than it does in Psalm 95 (קָנַח), we shouldn't be overly concerned about the lack of verbal agreement because Exodus 20:11, which closely parallels Genesis 2:2, 3, uses the same root as the psalm (קָנַח).⁶²

Perhaps the use of Psalm 95 in the synagogue for the Sabbath also helped to link it to the Genesis passage,⁶³ but an exegesis of Hebrews gives the impression that neither a liturgical nor a verbal connection was as important to its writer as was the chronological relation between the unfulfilled offer of rest in Psalm 95 and the earlier experience of rest under Joshua (Heb. 4:7-9). It is possible then that the more fundamental *middah* operating here is *dabar halamed me'inycno* (a meaning established by its context).⁶⁴

It has been suggested that the writer of Hebrews also uses *Gezerah Shawah* to link the "today" of opportunity in Psalm 95:7 (Heb. 3:7) to the "today" of the begetting of the

⁶²Cf. ch. 3 above, pp. 182, 207; Attridge seems too literalistic at this point (*Hebrews*, p. 130 and n. 90).

⁶³Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 35 n. 2 and p. 36 n. 3; cf. ch. 3 above, p. 228 n. 167.

⁶⁴Longenecker, p. 182.

Son in Psalm 2:7 (Heb. 1:5; 5:6),⁶⁵ but the remoteness of these two references in Hebrews leaves some doubt that he consciously made that connection. Other clear examples in the epistle confirm that he used *Gezerah Shawah*,⁶⁶ but we should remember that it can be used in a perfectly legitimate manner where the meaning warrants a verbal connection. Moreover, it was an ancient and wide-spread method of interpretation which was not the exclusive property of midrash.⁶⁷

The writer of Hebrews has also been suspected of using the midrashic device of deliberately altering a text or selecting from variant readings in order to support a preconceived interpretation. This device was particularly common in *peshar* interpretation, and a couple possible cases of deliberate textual manipulation have been suggested in Hebrews 3:7--4:11.

The change in Hebrews 3:9 from the Septuagint's ἐδοκίμασαν (they tested) to ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ (by testing) was probably introduced for stylistic considerations to avoid a harsh repetition of verbs. We cannot say, however, if the writer made this change himself or if it already existed in his Vorlage.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Reid, pp. 81, 82.

⁶⁶ E.g. Heb. 1:5 links Ps. 2:7 to II Sam. 7:14 by the common word "Son."

⁶⁷Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 129 n. 77.

⁶⁸J. C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in

The insertion of $\delta\iota\acute{o}$ (therefore) in v. 10 realigns the forty years mentioned in that verse with the period over which the Israelites tested God, rather than with the duration of God's anger as it is in both the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint. The writer of Hebrews has often been accused of deliberately altering the text at this point;⁶⁹ but if that were the case, it is strange that his own words in verse 17 depart from the quotation to connect the forty years with the extent of God's anger.⁷⁰ His normal practice is to cite a lengthy quotation accurately at the outset and then treat it somewhat freely when he explains portions of it later.⁷¹ His ambivalence here suggests that he viewed the entire wilderness wanderings as a "day of testing" (Heb. 3:8) in which God's anger ran concurrently with Israel's

Hebrews," *NTS* 26 (1980): 371, 372; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 35. Kenneth J. Thomas, argues that the ambiguous phrase $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\delta\omicron\kappa\upsilon\mu\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$, which can be read passively (during their testing [by Me]), was deliberately introduced to change the sense into a testing of man by God ("The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 [1964-65]: 307). But such a view runs contrary to the active force of the preceding verb $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\alpha\sigma\alpha\nu$ (they tested).

⁶⁹Thomas, p. 307; R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), p. 74; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), p. 45; Montefiore, p. 76.

⁷⁰Hughes, p. 143 n. 42; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 115.

⁷¹Cf. his citation of Jer. 31:31-34 in Heb. 8:8-12, to which he returns in 10:16, 17; and his citation of Ps. 40:6-8 in Heb. 10:5-7 with an exposition in vs. 8, 9. Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 57.

provocation.⁷²

He may possibly have changed the object of God's anger in verse 10 from γενεᾷ ἐκεῖνῃ (that generation), as it is in the Septuagint, to γενεᾷ ταύτῃ (this generation) so that he might bring the threat closer to home.⁷³ But more likely, either he or an earlier copyist changed the text for stylistic reasons. γενεᾷ never occurs elsewhere in the NT with ἐκεῖνῃ but it is common with ταύτῃ or some other form of αὐτῇ.⁷⁴

Although the writer of Hebrews likely altered the text at points for stylistic reasons, it is difficult to prove from the cases above that he did so for interpretive reasons. It appears that some of the epistle's departures from extant Septuagintal texts already existed in our writer's Vorlage, but the present state of textual studies makes it difficult to distinguish between his own changes and those of the text or liturgical source that he was following.⁷⁵ Even where substantive changes can be attributed to the writer of Hebrews, one should be cautious about accusing him of willfully distorting Scripture before

⁷²McCullough, p. 371; Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de L'Épître aux Hébreux*, *Studia Neotestamentica*, no. 1 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), pp. 92-94.

⁷³Montefiore, p. 76.

⁷⁴McCullough, p. 371; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 36.

⁷⁵McCullough, p. 378; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 35, 36, 74; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 115.

considering the alternative possibility that he introduced these changes in the text because he felt that they represented its meaning more accurately or expressed it more clearly.⁷⁶

The methodology of our writer in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 has also been thought to resemble midrash in his use of analogy to adapt the OT to his present readers.⁷⁷ In a complex analogy revolving around events of the exodus, he compares the rest offered to the Israelites at the entrance to the promised land (Heb. 3:11; 4:2) with the rest into which God entered at the end of creation (Heb. 4:4). Then in turn, he compares it with the true, Sabbath rest offered to believers (Heb. 4:9, 11).⁷⁸ He also sets forth Moses alongside of Jesus as a positive model of spiritual leadership (Heb. 3:1-6).⁷⁹ But Moses was unable to lead the Israelites into Canaan rest (vv. 16, 17), and his successor Joshua, who led them into the land, was unable to lead them into true rest. By a play on Joshua's name, which in Greek equals Jesus (Ἰησοῦς), he is able to hint at the One who leads into true

⁷⁶I. W. Manson, "The Argument from Prophecy," *JTS* 46 (1945): 135; Mc Cullough, p. 379.

⁷⁷Schröger, p. 260.

⁷⁸Harold W. Attridge, "'Let us Strive to Enter that Rest': The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *HTR* 73 (1980): 284. We have argued previously that the wilderness wanderings should not be equated with the Christian life, but with judgment; see ch. 3 above, pp. 188, 189.

⁷⁹Erich Gräßer, "Moses und Jesus. Zur Auslegung von Heb. 3:1-6," *ZNW* 75 (1984): 3.

rest (Heb. 4:8).⁸⁰

But our writer's analogy does not negate the historical background of the text for the sake of adaptation to the present, as is the case in invalid allegory. Rather he builds a genuine correlation between the events of the exodus and the experiences of his readers;⁸¹ and he was not alone in drawing this kind of connection. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was such a memorable event in the nation's history that it became a common paradigm for interpreting other miraculous deliverances, such as the return from Babylon (cf. Isa. 43:16-20; 52:12) and the redemptive work of Christ (cf. I Cor. 5:7; 10:1-12; Heb. 12:18-29).⁸² This rootage in a genuine historical correspondence separates our writer's analogy from the fanciful speculations of midrashic allegory and aligns it

⁸⁰ Cf. ch. 3 above, p. 171 n. 13.

⁸¹ Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), pp. 171, 172; H. A. Lombard, "Katapausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Ad Hebraeos: Essays on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. 5 of *Neot* (Pretoria, South Africa: New Testament Society of South Africa, 1971), p. 66; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Experiencing the Old Testament 'Rest' of God: Hebrews 3:1-4," in *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 169.

⁸² Harald Sahlin, "The New Exodus of Salvation According to St. Paul," in *The Root of the Vine*, ed. Anton Fridrichsen, et. al. (London: Dacre Press, 1953), pp. 81-83; Hagner, pp. 41, 43; Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. 62, 63; Attridge, *Hebrews*, p. 114 and n. 13; Attridge, "Let Us Strive," p. 284.

with Biblical typology.⁸³

We conclude that the hermeneutical similarities between Hebrews and midrash do not reach to the heart of the matter. Furthermore, we do not find the writer using midrashic methods of interpretation to distort the meaning of the OT.

MIDRASHIC LITERARY FEATURES

On a formal level, Hebrews does not strictly match any of the three possible sub-categories of the midrashic genre. Rather than being an interpretive paraphrase, the quotation from Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7-11 runs the risk of missing the sense by translating over-literally at a couple points. The Hebrew וְאִם (if), which expresses a strong wish in Psalm 95:7 (Oh that you would listen to His voice!), is woodenly translated by the Greek conditional $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ (if you hear His voice Heb. 3:7, 15; 4:7). The same Hebrew particle וְאִם occurs in an oath formula in Psalm 95:11 which could best be translated by an emphatic negative such as, "They shall never enter into My rest!" But again the Greek translation uses a wooden conditional clause (if [$\epsilon\acute{\iota}$] they enter into My rest, Heb. 3:11; 4:3, 5) which needs some kind of curse attached in order for it to make sense.⁸⁴

Our passage in Hebrews superficially resembles the

⁸³We will discuss the hermeneutical validity of typology at greater length in the following chapter in connection with Melchizedek (pp. 309-327.)

⁸⁴Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 60 n. 24, and p. 61 n. 29.

peshet style in its lengthy quotation immediately followed by an interpretation. But it lacks the characteristic formula *לְיָ יִתְּנָה* (its interpretation concerns) which introduces peshet's "this is that" identification of text and interpretation.⁸⁵

It is possible to find some stylistic similarities between Hebrews 3:7--4:11 and Rabbinic midrashim. After citing his text in full, the writer of Hebrews repeats portions of the quotation, skillfully using key words or phraseology drawn from it to explain specific points and apply its meaning.⁸⁶

The repetition of the word "today" in verse 13 links the writer's interpretation to the quotation (Ps. 95:7c) and emphasizes the present availability of the promise; the reference to hardening later in the same verse also draws upon the vocabulary of the psalm (v. 8).⁸⁷ Verse 15 reinforces the need to respond to God and recalls to mind the entire citation by repeating its two opening lines: "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me" (Ps. 95:7c, 8).⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Cf. Longenecker, p. 43.

⁸⁶ Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 74, 75, 86; Hagner, pp. 42, 43; Andrew I. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 206; Smothers, p. 341.

⁸⁷ Wilson, p. 77; Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, p. 95.

⁸⁸ Hughes, p. 153; Kistemaker, *Citations*, pp. 108, 109.

Verses 16 to 18 refer to various phrases in the psalm without directly quoting them. Verse 16 picks up the theme of provoking God from the last line that was quoted from the psalm in the previous verse (Ps. 95:8d), and verse 17 in Hebrews derives its mention of forty years from the tenth verse of the psalm. In verse 18, our writer refers to the oath of Psalm 95:11 prohibiting entrance into God's rest.

After elaborating on the possibility of entering into this rest (Heb. 3:19; 4:1), he contrasts the certainty of the promise for believers with the finality of the oath, which he quotes in Hebrews 4:3: "As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter My rest." Verse 5 repeats the last half of this quotation to emphasize God's characterization of this rest as "My rest."

In Hebrews 4:6, 7, the writer uses the opportunity which still remains for entering into rest to reintroduce the psalm's "today," which he had already contemporized in verse 13 of the previous chapter. Along with this renewed opportunity, he repeats the exhortation of Psalm 95:7, 8, which we have already seen in Hebrews 3:15: "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:11 concludes with an exhortation to "be diligent to enter that rest."

The writer also explicates the text by utilizing rhetorical questions, as was common practice in Rabbinic midrashim. Verses 16-18 contain a series of five rhetorical questions; the first, third, and fifth explicate various parts of the psalm: "who provoked Him . . . ? . . . with

whom was He angry for forty years?" and "to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, . . . ?" (Ps. 95:8, 10, 11). The second and fourth questions answer the first and third ones by weaving in bits of the psalm's historical background, and the fifth question has the answer contained in itself. "All those who came out of Egypt" provoked God (Heb. 3:16; Num. 14:2, 11, 13); He was angry with "those who sinned" (Heb. 3:17; Num. 14:19, 34, 40), and He swore to those who were disobedient (Heb. 3:18; Num. 14:43).⁸⁹ We must be careful, however, in identifying Hebrews as midrashic on the basis of its use of rhetorical questions because this literary device is used in other types of literature as well.

Although the interpretation in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 bears some literary similarities to Rabbinic midrash, it still remains distinct. It is not a compilation of many separate interpretations by various sages as are the Rabbinic midrashim.⁹⁰ And it would be anachronistic to classify it as a midrash of that variety because, despite claims that midrash has historical antecedents in the OT,⁹¹ the rabbis did not begin producing their midrashic works until at least

⁸⁹ Schröger, p. 113; Kistemaker, *Citations*, p. 109; Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, HZNI (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), p. 32; Smothers, p. 341; Miller, p. 78; Moffatt, p. 48.

⁹⁰ Cf. Chilton, p. 10; Porton, *Understanding Midrash*, p. 8.

⁹¹ Bloch, p. 37.

the second century A.D.⁹²

Also, we should be careful not to slip into the fallacy that because Hebrews' interpretation matches some stylistic characteristics of midrash, it must follow the objectionable methodology which we found in Rabbinic midrash.⁹³ Because definitions of midrash too often fail to distinguish adequately between the objectionable hermeneutical practices that accompany much Rabbinic midrash and the innocent stylistic features that characterize the broad literary genre, the same label, "midrash," is often applied equally to both the restrained interpretation of Hebrews and the fanciful speculations of the rabbis. Thus the credibility of Hebrews falls in danger of becoming tarnished by the hermeneutical reputation of the rabbis. But there is nothing intrinsically illegitimate about the stylistic characteristics of midrash, and we have not detected any use of midrashic methodology or presuppositions in this section of Hebrews which distorts the meaning of the OT.

⁹²Porton, "Defining Midrash," pp. 58, 63-65, 67; Sang, p. 202, cf. pp. 32, 33; Chilton, p. 9.

⁹³CF. Franklin Johnston, *The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old Considered in the Light of General Literature* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895), p. 378; R. I. France, "Postscript--Where have we Got to, and Where do we Go from Here?" in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, 3 vols., ed. R. I. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 299.

CHAPTER 5:
THE VALIDITY OF THE
TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF MELCHIZEDEK
IN HEBREWS 7

In the preceding chapters, we have considered some of the most difficult hermeneutical problems in the Epistle to the Hebrews and have argued both exegetically and methodologically that the writer treats the OT in a fair and reasonable manner. We turn now to Hebrews 7 to consider his interpretation of Melchizedek, that controversial OT character who plays such an important role in the Epistle.¹ On him, the weight of the argument for the superiority of Christ's high priesthood to the Levitical priesthood rests.²

Our primary purpose here is not to analyze the logical

¹Ceslaus Spicq believes that the discussion of Melchizedek in chapter seven is the culminating point of the Epistle, (*L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. [Paris: Gabalda, 1952-53], 2:179, 203; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek," *CBQ* 25 [1963]: 305). Richard N. Longenecker calls it "the focal point of and the watershed for the exposition of chapters 1-10 . . ." ("The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews: A Study in the Development and Circumstantial Expression of New Testament Thought," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology*, Festschrift for G. E. Ladd, ed. Robert A. Guelich [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978], p. 172 f.)

²The essence of the argument can be summarized in syllogistic form:

Christ is a priest of Melchizedek's order.

Priests of Melchizedek's order are superior to priests
of Levi's order.

Therefore, Christ is superior to priests of Levi's order.

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structure of that argument, nor to exegete the detailed points of the exposition, but to test the hermeneutical validity of the writer's method of interpretation. As was the case in the previous chapter on the use of midrash in Hebrews 3:7--4:11, our task is complicated by a lack of agreement on what that method is. Therefore, we will need both to clarify the methodology which the writer employs and determine if it is valid.

The central hermeneutical difficulty in Hebrews 7 revolves around the correlation which the writer draws between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Jesus. This correlation has perplexed many readers, and the writer, himself, confesses that his subject is "hard to explain" (Heb. 5:11). We may, however, break down the problem into two methodological issues. On what basis does the writer of Hebrews lift Melchizedek out of seeming obscurity to play a leading role in the Epistle as the precursor of Christ's eternal order of high priesthood? And does the writer of Hebrews use hermeneutically acceptable methods in working out his correlation between Melchizedek and Christ?

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First we must offer some justification for the exalted position that Melchizedek occupies in this epistle. Hebrews says much about him, but the OT says very little. His only personal appearance in the OT is his brief encounter with Abraham after the rescue of Lot (Gen. 14:18-20); and the only other reference to him is the psalmist's isolated

comment, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). Several views have been suggested to explain Hebrews' rationale for selecting this little known personage as a suitable model for Christ's priesthood, and we will consider each of them in turn.

THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURE

The sudden appearance and disappearance³ of Melchizedek in the Biblical account without any mention of his ancestry or posterity has commonly been cited as the reason for our author's special interest in him.⁴ This rationale for his selection is usually identified with the Rabbinic principle *quod non in tora, non in mundo*.⁵ The logic of the argument

³M. Delcor states that "He crosses the sky like a meteor, nobody knowing where he comes from or where he is going to" ("Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JSJ* 2 [1971]: 115).

⁴Cf. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:183; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) p. 119. Westcott notes that "the silence of Scripture . . . is treated as having a prophetic force" (Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, reprint ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980], p. 174, cf. pp. 194 ff.); cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), p. 134.

⁵Herman Lebrecht Strack, and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 6 vols. in 7 (München, Beck, 1922-61), 3:694 (hereafter cited as S-B); cf. John C. McCullough, "Melchizedek's Varied Role in Early Exegetical Tradition," *TRev* 1 (1978): 57; Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek," p. 316; Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 136 n. 18; John C. McCullough, "Hebrews and the Old Testament" (doctoral dissertation, Queen's University, Belfast, 1971), p. 478, cf. p. 465; Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:208, cf. n. 4 and p. 209. Spicq also refers to the reasoning as an argument *a silentio*, which he believes had demonstrable force for the writer (2:183).

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operates as follows: "Because in the Genesis account no mention is made of Melchizedek's mother, father, or genealogy, and because the beginning of his life and his death are not recorded, none of these actually exists. They do not exist because they are not mentioned in the Torah."⁶

In defense of this view, we should note that the silence of Scripture is striking here because it was important for prominent figures in the OT, and especially priests, to be rooted in a genealogy.⁷ Furthermore, an argument from silence does not necessarily involve the writer of Hebrews in the kind of fallacious reasoning which concludes that Melchizedek actually was never born and never died.⁸ He could have reasoned that such vital genealogical

⁶Paul J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresa*, CBQMS 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1980), p. 115 n. 2.

⁷Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:183. Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey, following Philonic thought patterns, argues that in Hebrews Melchizedek's lack of a genealogy would highly qualify him as "an immortal exemplar of perfect priesthood" because his list of virtues are his own and not those of his ancestors. His office does not rest on his relation to this fleshly creation, but on his participation in God's immortal and perfect nature (*The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLDS 25 [Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975], p. 191; cf. pp. 130, 189 ff.; and Kobelski, pp. 122, 123).

⁸Heb. 7:6, which stresses the important point that Melchizedek's genealogy is not traced from the Levitical line, leaves open the possibility that Melchizedek might have had a genealogy that was not recorded. The writer certainly recognizes that Jesus, whom Melchizedek typifies, had a genealogy (Heb. 7:14). He may even have been aware of the lineages which are traced by Matthew and Luke (cf. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:209). Bruce states that "it is not suggested that he was a biological anomaly, Historically Melchizedek appears to have belonged to a dynasty of priest-kings in which he had both predecessors

information for a person of Melchizedek's office was conspicuously and providentially omitted from the record so that he could become a suitable type of Christ's eternal priesthood.⁹ This explanation could help to lessen suspicions about the arbitrariness of the writer's use of an argument from silence; but by itself, it lacks the positive reasoning that a rational justification of Melchizedek's presence in the Epistle would require.¹⁰

THE ORIGINALITY OF MELCHIZEDEK'S PRIESTHOOD

Horton reasons that Hebrews' criteria for selecting a typical priest must be more than a lack of genealogy because Reuel/Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and advisor, is not considered as a candidate for the office although he was a priest of greater prominence in the OT than Melchizedek and also appears without a genealogy (cf. Ex. 2:18; 3:1; 4:18; 18:1-12; Num. 10:29).¹¹ He argues at length that the writer

and successors. If this point had been put to our author, he would have agreed at once, no doubt" (*Hebrews*, p. 137).

⁹Cf. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:209. Fitzmyer notes that the "rootless character" of Gen. 14:18-20 provided the writer of Hebrews with the starting point for making Melchizedek a type of Christ, but he believes that the all important priestly genealogy is lacking because these verses are an insertion in the Genesis narrative ("Now this Melchizedek," pp. 316, 317).

¹⁰Cf. M. J. Paul, "The Order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4 and Heb. 7:3)," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 204-206.

¹¹Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: a Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, *SNISMS* 30 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 153, 154.

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of Hebrews chose Melchizedek because he was the first priest mentioned in the Torah.¹² Using the principle *quod non in tora non in mundo*, the writer of Hebrews could conclude that Melchizedek was the first priest in the world because if there had been a priest before him, he would have been mentioned in the Torah.¹³

Both Josephus and Philo support the belief that Melchizedek was the first priest.¹⁴ Josephus states that Melchizedek was the founder of Jerusalem and "the first to officiate as priest of God;"¹⁵ and Philo tells us that Melchizedek possessed a "self taught and instinctive (αὐτομαθῆ καὶ αὐτοδιδάκτων) priesthood."¹⁶

Horton believes that the status of Melchizedek's priesthood as the first mentioned in Scripture is "immensely clarifying" for our understanding of its importance.¹⁷ For ordinary persons, like Jethro, the omission of genealogical details would have been unimportant, but the silence regarding the genealogy of Melchizedek takes on significance

¹²Horton, pp. 153-160; cf. p. 170

¹³Horton, p. 157.

¹⁴Horton, pp. 156, 157; cf. pp. 85, 55, and 55 n. 2.

¹⁵*Jewish Wars* 6 # 438 (6. 10.1); cf. *Antiquities* 1 # 181 (1. 10.2); also Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek," p. 316.

¹⁶*Preliminary Studies* 99; cf. *Allegorical Interpretation* 3. 79.

¹⁷Horton, p. 158.

because of his special status as the first priest.¹⁸ Horton concludes that the silence of Scripture is not the basis for Hebrews' selection of Melchizedek; instead the writer used Scripture's silence to amplify the originality of his priesthood.¹⁹

This view has a certain plausibility to it, but it also contains some difficulties which need to be considered. As Horton himself acknowledges, Josephus' meaning may include the implied restriction that Melchizedek was the first to act as priest in Jerusalem, not in the whole world.²⁰ The reference to Melchizedek's self-taught and instinctive priesthood is also problematic because elsewhere Philo uses this phrase as a qualitative description of virtue rather than as an indication of temporal priority.²¹ Even if Jewish tradition had recognized Melchizedek as the first priest, there is no indication in Hebrews that our writer followed

¹⁸ Horton, p. 160.

¹⁹ Horton claims that "now we can go beyond the silence of scripture and show why Melchizedek was chosen in the first place. The silence of scripture about the life and parentage of Melchizedek is brought out by the author of Hebrews as an amplification of the concept of the originality of Melchizedek's priesthood and not as a proof of that originality" (p. 159).

²⁰ Horton, p. 83; cf. Kobelski, pp. 116 ff.

²¹ Philo also applies the same words (αὐτομαθῆς and αὐτοδιδάκτων) to Isaac's virtuous nature, but there is no thought that he was the first to possess such virtue (*On the Migration of Abraham* 29; Kobelski, pp. 116, 117; cf. p. 117 n. 4 for further examples).

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the same reasoning.²² Although he argues from Melchizedek's temporal priority to Levi (Heb. 7:4-10), he does not claim that Melchizedek was prior to all other priests. Instead he emphasizes the perpetuity of his office, his lack of a genealogy, his reception of tithes from Abraham, and the significance of his name and office. The notion that Melchizedek was the first priest does not appear to be a significant factor in the reasoning of Hebrews.²³

THE THEOLOGY OF QUMRAN

The importance of Melchizedek in the theology of Qumran has also been suggested as a reason for Hebrews selection of him as a support for Christ's high priesthood. Prior to the publication of 11Q Melchizedek in 1965,²⁴ some scholars were speculating that a connection existed between Hebrews and Qumran.²⁵ With this new document in hand they could now

²²Kobelski, pp. 116, 117.

²³McCullough believes that the tradition about Melchizedek being the first priest "plays no part in the argument of the epistle" ("Melchizedek," p. 57). Cf. Kobelski, pp. 116, 117.

²⁴The *editio princeps* was published along with a German translation by A. S. Van der Woude, in "Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midrashim aus Qumran Höhle XI," *OTS* vol. 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 354-373. Unfortunately numerous lacunae in the text leave the translation of some spots in doubt as Van der Woude notes (p. 367). Note the later translation of M. De Jonge and A. S. Van der Woude ("11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *NTS* 12 [1965-66]: 302, 303) and the revisions of Yigael Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," *IsExpJ* 15 (1965): 152-154.

²⁵Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, vol. 4, ed. Chaim

suggest that the writer of Hebrews introduced Melchizedek for apologetic reasons because he was writing to an Essene community that shared Qumran's beliefs about Melchizedek.²⁶

The exalted position that Melchizedek held in the eyes of the Qumran sect may explain his appropriateness in Hebrews for the role of explicating Christ's priestly office, but his precise identification in Qumran is not entirely clear. 11Q Melch 2:13 assigns to Melchizedek the role of the eschatological judge who "will avenge with the

Rabin and Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1958), pp. 38 ff.; Ceslaus Spicq, "L'Épître aux Hébreux, Apollon, Jean-Baptiste, Les Hellenistes et Qumran," *RQ* 1 (1958): 365-390; Jean Danielou, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, the New American Library, 1958), pp. 111-113; H. Kosmala, "Hebräer-Essener-Christen: Studien zur Vorgeschichte der frühchristlichen Verkündigung (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), pp. 1-43; J. Coppens, "Les Affinités Qumranienes de l'Épître aux Hébreux," *NRT* 84 (1961-62): 128-141; 257-282.

²⁶Yadin admits that he was previously troubled by Hebrews' emphasis on Melchizedek, but he now believes that 11Q Melch provides the answer. Because Melchizedek played an important role in Qumran theology the writer of Hebrews "chose him deliberately in order to convey more intimately and decisively his perception of Jesus' unique position" ("Note on Melchizedek," pp. 153, 154). Delcor asserts that "it was proof of apologetic skill to take his starting-point . . . in the very beliefs shared by those with whom he was discussing the question of Melchizedek" (pp. 126, 127). Longenecker considers Delcor's explanation to be plausible, but he also believes that the writer was attempting to direct his readers' attention to Melchizedek's true OT significance ("Melchizedek," pp. 171, 173).

For further bibliography see Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), pp. 161, 162 n. 13; Jean Carmignac, "Le Document de Qumran sur Melkisedeq," *RQ* 7 (1970): 373, 374; and F. F. Bruce, "Recent Contributions to the Understanding of Hebrews," *ExpTim* 80 (1968-69): 261-263.

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vengeance of the judgements of God." His command of the heavenly forces in opposition to Belial (11Q Melch 2:13-15) led Van der Woude to believe that he should be identified with the archangel Michael²⁷ (cf. Dan. 10:13, 21; Rev. 12:7). Others have simply regarded him as an angel without identifying his rank.²⁸ Carmignac objects that Melchizedek was not an eschatological heavenly being but a historic person of flesh and blood who may have been a member of the community at Qumran, but his view generally has not been well received.²⁹ Regardless of whether the community at Qumran considered Melchizedek as the archangel Michael, some unidentified heavenly being, or a human being, he commanded sufficient respect that it would be possible to compare him with Christ.

A number of similarities between Melchizedek in 11Q Melch and Jesus in Hebrews suggest that a connection exists

²⁷ Van der Woude was the first to refer to Melchizedek as a "Heavenly Redeemer Figure" ("eine himmlische Erlösergestalt," pp. 367-369, 372; cf. De Jonge and Van der Woude, pp. 321 ff.; Kobelski, p. 126, and Attridge, pp. 191-193).

²⁸ Fitzmyer says that it is impossible to answer if the writer of 11Q Melch regarded Melchizedek as an archangel ("Further Light," p. 32). Cf. F. Du Toit Laubscher, "God's Angel of Truth and Melchizedek" *JSJ*, 3 (1972): 51; Delcor, pp. 125, 134; Yadin, "Note on Melchizedek," pp. 152-154.

²⁹ Carmignac believes that for the author of 11Q Melch, Melchizedek "est bien un personnage en chair et en os" (p. 372). Cf. also Delcor's refutation of Carmignac, pp. 133, 134, and the discussion in Longenecker, "Melchizedek," p. 168 f.

between the two documents.³⁰ Both Melchizedek and Jesus appear to be called "God." 11Q Melch 2:9, 10 seems to designate Melchizedek as $\text{D}^{\text{m}}\text{L}^{\text{m}}$ when it states that ". . . it is written concerning him [Melchizedek?] in the hymns of David who says: 'The heavenly one ($\text{D}^{\text{m}}\text{L}^{\text{m}}$) standeth in the congregation of God (L^{m})'" (cf. 11Q Melch 2:16, 24, 25).³¹ As we have argued previously, Hebrews 1:8 in all likelihood addresses Jesus as God: "but to the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God ($\acute{\omicron}$ θεός), is forever and ever.'"

Melchizedek in 11Q Melch and Jesus in Hebrews are both exalted heavenly figures (11Q Melch 2:10, 11; Heb. 1:3, 4; 7:26; 8:1); both make atonement for sin (11Q Melch 2:6-8; Heb. 2:17); both defeat the enemies of God (11Q Melch 2:9-15; Heb. 2:14, 15); both free captives from bondage (11 Q Melch 2:2-6; Heb. 2:14, 15); and both perform an

³⁰ Cf. the lists of similarities in Kobelski, p. 128, and Horton, p. 167.

³¹ The translation is that of De Jonge and Van der Woude. The question in Qumran centers on whether the quotation from Ps. 82:1, 2 was intended to be applied to Melchizedek or to God. Melchizedek seems to be the more natural antecedent, but the subject could have been lost in the lacuna of 11Q Melch 2:9. The alternation between L^{m} and $\text{D}^{\text{m}}\text{L}^{\text{m}}$ in the text appears to be intentionally designed to reserve L^{m} for God and to use $\text{D}^{\text{m}}\text{L}^{\text{m}}$ for Melchizedek or other lower heavenly beings (11Q Melch 2:9-11, 16, 24, 25; Van der Woude, p. 367). For those in favor of designating Melchizedek as a heavenly being, see Van der Woude, pp. 354-373; De Jonge and Van der Woude, pp. 301-326; Yadin, "Note on Melchizedek," pp. 152, 154; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *JBL* 86 (1967): 25-41; Laubscher, pp. 46-51. Carmignac argues against this position (pp. 343-378). Cf. Longenecker's summary of these views, "Melchizedek," pp. 167-169.

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eschatological role (11Q Melch 2:7; Heb. 1:2).

Hebrews' understanding of Melchizedek, however, differs from that of Qumran at some crucial points. Hebrews chapter 7 is developed almost exclusively in terms of Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4, but 11Q Melch does not appear to be linked to these OT texts.³² In Qumran Melchizedek appears as God's warrior who leads the heavenly host against the forces of Belial in a great eschatological battle, judges the wicked, and makes atonement for sin (11Q Melch 2:4-15). But the writer of Hebrews disagrees with Qumran as to Melchizedek's place in history and his ministry. In Hebrews Melchizedek's eschatological appearance is ignored; instead his eternity is emphasized.³³ The military and judicial images are also lacking; instead Melchizedek is portrayed as a priest like Jesus.³⁴ In Hebrews Melchizedek is not a future redeemer of the world but a past prototype of Christ.³⁵

The sectaries at Qumran may have regarded Melchizedek

³²Fitzmyer, "Further Light," pp. 31, 32, 41; F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in *Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3 of *Gospel Perspectives*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), pp. 93, 94; Kobelski, p. 127; and David M. Kay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (New York: Abingdon, 1973), p. 152 n. 99.

³³Delcor, p. 127.

³⁴Cf. Kobelski, p. 127. In fact he claims that there are no verbal or ideological parallels in 11Q Melch (p. 123).

³⁵Longenecker, "Melchizedek," p. 178.

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as some sort of heavenly being, but it does not appear that the writer of Hebrews understood him in this way. Those who accept Melchizedek as a heavenly being in Qumran have sometimes been accused of assuming that the writer of the Hebrews deliberately selected him and granted the same exalted status to him so that he would be relevant to the readers of the Epistle.³⁶

The claim in Hebrews that Melchizedek was without genealogy (Heb. 7:3) and that he lives (Heb. 7:8) might seem to correspond with the view which identifies Melchizedek as a heavenly being,³⁷ but we should note that the writer of Hebrews does not actually say that Melchizedek had no earthly beginning or end. He seems to imply that Melchizedek was without the proper genealogy, which was so necessary for a Levitical priest, only in so far as the Biblical record is concerned.

Furthermore, if the writer of Hebrews had granted the same status to Melchizedek that he held at Qumran, he would have introduced a rival to Christ.³⁸ Longenecker tries to lessen the force of this objection by arguing that although

³⁶ McCullough ("Melchizedek," p. 56) and Carmignac (p. 371) believe that the logic operates this way, but note that Carmignac overstates the case somewhat with regards to De Jonge and Van der Woude who believe that there are definite similarities but didn't argue for a direct relationship (cf. De Jonge and Van der Woude, p. 318).

³⁷ A. J. Bandstra, "Heilsgeschichte and Melchizedek in Hebrews," *CTJ* 3 (1968): 40, 41; cf. Kobelski, p. 123.

³⁸ Kobelski, p. 129.

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the writer of Hebrews acknowledged Melchizedek as a Heavenly figure of the the order described in 11Q Melch, he set forth the superiority of Jesus the high-priestly Messiah over against the prominence that his addressees were giving to this "Archangel Warrior-Redeemer."³⁹ The difficulty with Longenecker's view, however, is that instead of arguing for the superiority of Christ to Melchizedek, the writer points to similarities between them (Heb. 6:20; 7:3, 15); and in the discussion of Christ's superiority to the angels in chapters 1 and 2, he omits any notion of Melchizedek as a rival to Christ.⁴⁰ Conversely, the writer of Hebrews finds it necessary to prove that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, which he would not have had to do if his readers understood that he was an angel.⁴¹ Melchizedek may have been regarded as a heavenly being in Qumran, but it seems that he was regarded as a human being in Hebrews.⁴²

The differences between Hebrews and 11Q Melch appear to be as great as the similarities. Where there are similarities between Hebrews and Qumran, they do not concern their respective understandings of Melchizedek but are found between Qumran's view of Melchizedek and Hebrews' view of

³⁹ Longenecker, "Melchizedek," pp. 176 f.

⁴⁰ Horton, p.155; Kobelski, pp. 126, 127.

⁴¹ McCullough, "Melchizedek," p. 56.

⁴² Bruce, "Recent Contributions," p. 263; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*. GNC (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 85.

Jesus. The similarities show that similar ideas about salvation were present at that time, but they do not necessitate Hebrews' dependency on Qumran.

In spite of the volume of material that has been produced on the relationship between Hebrews 7 and Qumran, it seems that we cannot safely say that Hebrews was addressed to Essenes or a community at Qumran or that the inspiration for Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 came from 11Q Melch.⁴³ It seems that if the writer of Hebrews was aware of the Qumran tradition, he "corrected" it.⁴⁴

THE TRADITION IN EARLY HYMNODY

Another reason that has been suggested for the writer's introduction of Melchizedek is found in Hebrews 7:3. Some scholars regard this verse, which is composed of four rhythmic lines, as a hymn that our author borrowed from an earlier tradition about Melchizedek.⁴⁵ In poetic form, verse

⁴³ McCullough, ("Melchizedek," p. 65 n. 31) follows F. F. Bruce's judgment that "it is outstripping the evidence to assume that the recipients of the letter are Essenes or spiritual brethren of the men at Qumran" ("To the Hebrews' or 'to the Essenes,'" *NTS* 9 [1963]: 217-232), but in his later *NICNT* commentary, Bruce seems to be more open to such a connection (*Hebrews*, pp. xxviii-xxx). Horton notes that there is no positive evidence which necessarily posits a connection to Qumran, and good reason to deny it (p. 168, cf. p. 164).

⁴⁴ Kobelski, p. 128. He concludes that it is impossible to determine if the writer of Hebrews knew of 11 Q Melch, but he believes that the writer was familiar with a tradition about a heavenly redeemer and that he made use of it (p. 129).

⁴⁵ Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 12th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966), pp. 259, 263;

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3 would read as follows:

ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος,
μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων,
ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ,
μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

Support for the hymnic theory has been found in "the well-balanced, sonorous phrases the careful choice of words and the failure of the rest of Hebrews 7 to develop the ideas" contained in these lines.⁴⁶

But there are a couple difficulties with the hymnic theory. The integrity of the hymn is brought into question by the suggestion that the final two lines may have been adapted by the writer of Hebrews.⁴⁷ Line 3, which states that Melchizedek was made like the Son of God, corresponds so well with the writer's Christology that the words may be his own (cf. Heb. 6:20; 7:15). Line 4, which declares that Melchizedek remains a priest perpetually, sounds so

Longenecker, "Melchizedek," p. 177; De Jonge and Van der Woude, p. 319. Kay believes that this tradition may possibly be of a gnostic or proto-gnostic character (p. 142). Cf. Gottfried Wuttke, *Melchisedech der Priesterkönig von Salem: eine Studie zur Geschichte der Exegese*, vol. 5 BZNW (Giessen: A. Topelmann, 1927), pp. 6 ff.; cf. also 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), p. 209.

⁴⁶Kay, p. 142. Gerd Theissen finds a hymnic style in the organization, the anarthrous constructions, the alliteration and accumulation of adjectives, and in the chiasmus ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν -- ζωῆς τέλος (*Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* [Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969], p. 21).

⁴⁷Kobelski, pp. 120, 121, and Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek," p. 316 n. 48, Attridge, pp. 189, 190.

reminiscent of Psalm 110:4, which the writer referred to earlier (Heb. 5:6, 11; 6:20), that it seems more likely to have originated from the psalm than from an independent hymn. Only lines 1 and 2 bear a hymnic structure which is better attributed to the worshipping community than to the writer.

Because verse 3 seems somewhat short for a complete hymn,⁴⁸ some scholars have attempted to recover missing lines from hymnic intimations in verses scattered throughout the rest of Hebrews 7.⁴⁹ But these efforts to reconstruct the original hymn are so heavily dependent on speculation that the results remain unconvincing.⁵⁰ If an early hymn lies behind verse 3, the original appears to be irrecoverable. We are still left with only two lines which bear a hymnic structure that could be more naturally attributed to the worshipping community than to the writer of Hebrews.

The brevity of this excerpt from an unknown hymn seems to be slim evidence to explain Hebrews' introduction of

⁴⁸Theissen, p. 21.

⁴⁹Michel finds a hymn in Heb. 7:26 (*Hebräer*, p. 278). Gottfried Schille adds lines from vv. 1 and 2; cf. his reconstruction in "Erwägungen zur Hohepriesterlehre des Hebräerbriefes," *ZNW* 46 (1955): 87. Theissen finds the hymn scattered throughout Heb. 7:1a, 3, 16b, 25, 26 (cf. pp. 24, 25).

⁵⁰Theissen faults Schille's reconstruction because he believes the reference to Salem is more academic than poetic (p. 21 f). He is also well aware of the hypothetical nature of his own reconstruction (p. 24). Kobelski finds Theissen's reconstruction unconvincing, as do I, because it requires too much cutting and pasting (p. 121).

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Melchizedek especially in the light of the writer's failure to develop Melchizedek's lack of parentage, which is thematic in the first half of the proposed hymn. Rather the theme which he develops is derived from Psalm 110:4: "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 7:3 may introduce Melchizedek after he has entered center stage, but allusions to Psalm 110:4 repeatedly announce his arrival in Hebrews 5:6, 10 and 6:20, and they confirm the greatness of his priesthood in Hebrews 7:11, 15, 17, and 24. Apparently the writer of Hebrews had a reason for discussing Melchizedek that was not derived from the proposed hymn. To it we must pay more careful attention.

THE REFERENCE IN PSALM 110

The structure of the Epistle itself suggests that the writer selected Melchizedek as a model for Christ's high priesthood on the basis of the reference to him in Psalm 110:4. Whenever he introduces this OT character, he mentions this text. We first meet Melchizedek in the declaration of Psalm 110:4 which is addressed to the Son in Hebrews 5:6, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." On the second encounter, in Hebrews 5:10, the writer again alludes to the same verse. At this point he would have liked to expound upon Melchizedek, but he felt constrained to arouse his readers from their sluggishness and to urge them on to spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11--6:12). When he returns to Melchizedek in Hebrews 6:20, he again alludes to Psalm 110:4. During the

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exposition of Melchizedek in chapter 7, he formally quotes this verse twice (Heb. 7:17, 21) and alludes to it several more times (Heb. 7:3, 11, 15, 24, 28).

Melchizedek is not dropped into Hebrews unsuspectingly, as he is in Genesis where he seems to enter center stage from nowhere, and then vanish just as suddenly and mysteriously as he arrived, without leaving a trace of his mother, father, or genealogy (Gen. 14:18-20; cf. Heb. 7:3).⁵¹ The writer of Hebrews repeatedly introduces Melchizedek by way of Psalm 110:4 and carefully molds him into the structure of the epistle.⁵² The fact that our acquaintance with Melchizedek in Hebrews comes by way of this psalm suggests that likely the writer also meet him there and found his Christological significance in the words of that verse.⁵³

The great popularity of Psalm 110 in the early church also suggests that its mention of Melchizedek directed the writer's attention towards his priestly significance. The Psalter was the early church's hymn book, and there is some evidence that the writer of Hebrews quoted heavily from it because his readers were familiar with the psalms that occurred in their liturgy.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Cf. Delcor, p. 115.

⁵² Hay, pp. 144-146; cf. McCullough, "Melchizedek," p. 55.

⁵³ McCullough, "Melchizedek," p. 57; cf. Hay, p. 146.

⁵⁴ Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle*

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The first verse of Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to in the NT more frequently than any other passage.⁵⁵ Our Lord interprets it Christologically on two separate occasions (Mk. 12:36 par; Mk. 14:62 par), and Peter uses it as a Christological proof text in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:34, 35). It is also alluded to several times in the Pauline epistles, and in the long ending of Mark (Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Mk. 16:19). Our writer also refers to Psalm 110:1 repeatedly (Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2), but only he quotes the fourth verse of this psalm.

It appears that he became interested in exploring the Christological significance of Psalm 110:4 on the authority of our Lord and His apostles that verse 1 of this psalm speaks of Christ and on the sound hermeneutical principle that the Person addressed in verse 1 is the same One addressed in verse 4.⁵⁶ Elsewhere the writer of Hebrews

to the Hebrews (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), p. 14; cf. Westcott, p. 473.

⁵⁵On the apologetic significance of this psalm cf. Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), pp. 5-51; also Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 446, 447.

⁵⁶Cf. G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 48; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, p. 182. Longenecker believes that the addition of verse 4 was the writer's own contribution ("Melchizedek," p. 177; also McCullough, "Hebrews and the Old Testament," p. 465). Kobelski believes that the difficulty of the phrase in Ps. 110:4, "according to the order of," is the key for understanding the attribution of life to Melchizedek (p. 124).

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links verse 4 of Psalm 110 with verse 1 via Psalm 2:7. In Hebrews 5:5, 6, he argues that the One who in Psalm 110:4 appointed Christ as a "priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" is the same One who declared in Psalm 2:7, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." And in the catena of quotations in Hebrews 1:4-14, he links the declaration of Christ's sonship from Psalm 2:7 (Heb. 1:5) with the proclamation of His enthronement in Psalm 110:1: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet" (Heb. 1:13). In this way, he ties Christ's appointment to Melchizedek's priestly order in Psalm 110:4 to His enthronement in Psalm 110:1 and to His reception of divine sonship in Psalm 2:7.⁵⁷

The writer of Hebrews evidently had a good reason for introducing Melchizedek. We concur with Caird that he wished "to answer the very modern question: 'What did the words "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" mean to the psalmist who wrote them?'"⁵⁸ He did not arbitrarily

Hans-Joachim Kraus, following Calvin, rightly notes that, even apart from the NT witness and in spite of the practice of priestly kingship in the nations surrounding Israel, it is not exegetically permissible to deny the futuristic elements in this psalm (*Psalms 60-150*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989], pp. 353, 354, and n. 1). Cf. Paul, pp. 195-202.

⁵⁷Cf. Heb. 7:28--8:1 where these psalms are linked by implication. Kobelski associates Ps. 2:7 with the resurrection (pp. 118, 119); whereas, May identifies it with the ascension (pp. 145, 146).

⁵⁸Caird, p. 48.

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lift Melchizedek out of obscurity or thrust upon him a leading role in the Epistle which he was unsuited to play. The connection that he saw between Melchizedek and Christ in His priestly office was not the product of his own fertile imagination; rather, it was the natural result of reading Psalm 110:4 through the eyes of Jesus and His apostles.

THE WRITER'S METHOD OF INTERPRETING MELCHIZEDEK

Having justified Melchizedek's presence in Hebrews 7, we now need to inquire about the validity of the writer's method of interpretation. The question is complicated by a lack of agreement on what that method is,⁵⁹ but we will examine each of the methods that have been commonly attributed to the writer in this passage. We will decide which of them best describes the writer's hermeneutic and will also give some consideration to the question of its hermeneutical validity.

AN EXEGESIS OF PSALM 110:4

Caird affirms that "throughout his treatment of Melchizedek, our author is concerned solely with the exegesis of Psalm 110." He contends that the writer takes us back to Genesis 14:18-20 not to fabricate an allegorical midrash, but rather to understand the statement about

⁵⁹Cf. Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*, no. 19, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1976).

Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4.⁶⁰

Few hermeneutical critics would complain if Hebrews 7 were a strict exegetical attempt to discover the meaning of Psalm 110:4, but we must ask if the writer's treatment of Melchizedek can best be described as an exegesis of this verse. We have already agreed that because the writer of Hebrews understood Psalm 110 Christologically, he turned back to Genesis to explore the significance of Melchizedek there.⁶¹ But Caird seems to overstate the case when he says that the writer's interpretation of Melchizedek is solely an exegesis of Psalm 110.⁶² Certainly Hebrews' interpretation is heavily dependent on Psalm 110, but our writer does not give a strict exegesis of it. He has more to say than is recorded there, and he draws on the silence of the Genesis narrative to explain the Psalm citation. Taking Psalm 110:4 as his starting point, the writer goes back to the historical context in Genesis not only to explore what the psalmist understood of Melchizedek but also to draw out further inferences that were not previously evident in either OT passage.

⁶⁰Caird, p. 48. Spicq declares, "Tout le chapitre 7 n'est pas autre chose qu'une exegèse du Ps. 110:4" (*Hebreux*, 2:205).

⁶¹Cf. McCullough, "Hebrews," p. 465; McCullough, "Melchizedek," p. 58. Robert Rendall notes that the writer typically "reaches Genesis through the Psalms" ("The Method of the Writer to the Hebrews in Using OT Quotations," *EQ* 27 [1955]: 214; cf. pp. 215, 216, 218).

⁶²Longenecker also agrees with this assessment ("Melchizedek," p. 175).

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Psalm 110 does not say that Melchizedek's order of priesthood is superior to Levi's. But having learned of Melchizedek's priesthood from this Psalm, our writer turns to the Genesis account to discover the superiority of the Melchizedekian order in the seemingly trivial detail that Levi, through Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:4-10).⁶³ Psalm 110 does not explicitly say that Melchizedek is eternal. But having discovered in this psalm that Christ is a priest forever according to Melchizedek's order, our writer turns to the Genesis narrative to discover the eternality of Melchizedek in the silence of Scripture regarding his parentage and genealogy (Heb. 7:3).⁶⁴ The writer does not launch into his own imaginative amplifications on Genesis, nor does he limit himself to the words of Psalm 110:4, but using the authority of the psalmist, and indirectly of Christ and the apostles, he explores the Christological significance of this enigmatic priest in the Genesis account and adds his own inferences. Because the writer of Hebrews does not restrict

⁶³ Although grammatically Gen. is ambiguous about who paid tithes to whom, Hebrews leaves no doubt that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek; and several non-canonical sources confirm this view (Josephus, *Antiquities* 1. 10.2; Philo, *Preliminary Studies* 99; *Genesis Apochryphon* 22:17). If Gen. 14:18-20 occurs in its proper historical setting, Abraham's refusal to take any of the spoils (Gen. 14:23, 24) also indicates that he likely would not have accepted tithes from Melchizedek. The Rabbinic tendency to transfer Melchizedek's priesthood to Abraham can be explained by the embarrassment which the Jews felt at Melchizedek's seeming superiority to him (cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 25. 6; *Nedarim* 32b; Longenecker, "Melchizedek," pp. 165-167; Hay, pp. 28-30).

⁶⁴ Cf. Horton, p. 162.

his interpretation to a strict exegesis of Psalm 110:4, we cannot evaluate his interpretation on these grounds.

A MIDRASH ON GENESIS 14:18-20 OR PSALM 110:4

If Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek cannot properly be described as exegesis, perhaps the term "midrash" can better express the writer's hermeneutical methodology.⁶⁵ Sometimes the comparison between Christ and Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 has been described as a midrash on Genesis 14:18-20.⁶⁶ We have seen that Hebrews' interpretation extends beyond the explicit statements of Psalm 110:4 to inferences which are drawn from the silence of Genesis 14; but the writer does not take this Scripture passage as his point of departure, as would normally be the case in midrash. In fact, he never formally quotes it; rather, he introduces allusions to the Genesis account in an attempt to understand Psalm 110:4.⁶⁷ Hay notes that "despite the use of the Genesis narrative, only selected elements in it are picked up or even mentioned; while virtually every syllable in the psalm verse is probed for significance."⁶⁸

⁶⁵Cf. Renée Bloch, "Midrash," trans. Mary Howard Callaway, in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, William Scott Green, ed., Brown Judaic Studies (Montana: Scholars Press, 1978), p. 48; Kistemaker, pp. 74, 75.

⁶⁶Fitzmyer, "Now This Melchizedek," pp. 305-306; Kobelski, pp. 117, 122; Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 256;

⁶⁷Fitzmyer is satisfied, however, that it is implicitly quoted ("Now this Melchizedek," p. 305).

⁶⁸Hay, p. 146.

Many of those who identify Hebrews' 7 as a midrash recognize the prominent role that Psalm 110 plays in the interpretation.⁶⁹ And it is easier to argue that, in accordance with conventional midrashic style, the writer takes Psalm 110:4 as his point of departure and expands upon it by introducing another remotely connected text and drawing inferences from it.⁷⁰ But even here, one might question whether he actually begins with the psalm or with the thesis that Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood and then searches for Scripture to support his thesis. Perhaps there is a correlation between the way he repeatedly quotes or alludes to Psalm 110:4 (Heb. 6:20; 7:3, 11, 15, 17, 21, 24, 28) and the midrashic pattern of repeating short segments of a text that are immediately followed by an interpretation,⁷¹ but he does not follow the midrashic practice of formally quoting the full text and

⁶⁹ Kobelski calls Heb. 7 a midrash on Gen. 14:18-20, but he believes that there are two separate strands to the midrash: Gen. 14:18-20 is outlined in Hebrews 7:1-2 and interpreted in 7:4-10; Ps. 110:4 supports the identity of Jesus as a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" in Heb. 7:3 which is developed in 7:11-28, but there is some overlap in 7:8-10 (pp. 117, 122). Cf. Michel, *Hebräer*, p. 256. Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1968), pp. 156-159. James W. Thompson, "The Conceptual Background and Purpose of the Midrash in Hebrews 7," *NT* 19 (1977): 209, 210; Attridge, pp. 186, 187.

⁷⁰ Gary G. Porton, "Defining Midrash," in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 1 of 2 vols., ed. Jacob Neusner (n.p.: KTAU Pub. House, 1981), p. 61; Bloch, p. 31; Kistemaker, p. 65.

⁷¹ Cf. Kistemaker, pp. 74, 75.

then dividing it into smaller sections.

The stylistic similarities that may exist between Hebrews' interpretation and midrash as a literary genre are quite harmless. As we have seen previously, it is necessary to distinguish between them and the creative methods of Rabbinic interpretation which were sometimes capable of distorting the meaning of Scripture.⁷² It may be possible to detect some characteristically midrashic methods of interpretation in Hebrews 7, but the writer is quite reserved in his use of them. We saw that although he uses an argument from the silence of Scripture concerning Melchizedek's genealogy (Heb. 7:3), the lack of a genealogy would have been significant for a priest who did not belong to the Levitical order.⁷³ It is possible that the writer could have employed the Rabbinic *middah* known as *Gezerah Shawah* (verbal analogy) to link Psalm 110:4 and Genesis 14:18-20 because both passages contain Melchizedek's name. But whereas the rabbis often employed this rule of interpretation artificially, here Genesis 14 is the true historical background of Psalm 110:4.⁷⁴

A casual reading of the Rabbinic midrash on Genesis 14

⁷² Cf. ch. 4 above, p. 236.

⁷³ Cf. above pp. 273, 274 and n. 17.

⁷⁴ Cf. Williamson, p. 440; Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews: a Comparison of Interpretation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), pp. 124, 125; Schroger, pp. 157-159. For better attested examples of *Gezerah Shawah*, cf. Heb. 1:5; 4:4.

will quickly reveal how different its fanciful speculations are from the restrained interpretation of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews is content to point out the etymological significance of Melchizedek's title, king of Salem, which means king of peace (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:2). The rabbis, however, concluded that because *שָׁלֵם* (*shalem*) can also be translated as "whole," or "complete," Melchizedek was born circumcised (Gen. Rab. 43. 6).⁷⁵ From the statement in Genesis 14:15 that Abraham smote the four kings who had captured Lot, one rabbi concluded that Abraham "threw dust at them which turned to swords; stubble, and it turned to arrows." Another rabbi reversed the procedure: the four kings threw swords at Abraham "which turned to dust; and arrows, which became stubble." The justification for such imaginative interpretations is said to be found in Isaiah 41:2, "He giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings; his sword maketh them as the dust, his bow as the driven stubble" (Gen. Rab. 43. 3).⁷⁶

We conclude that while there may be some similarities between Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek and midrash, it appears that Hebrews 7 does not entirely follow the usual midrashic pattern. Furthermore, it is far removed from the fanciful speculations of the rabbis.

⁷⁵ Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 1:356. Cf. Michel, *Hebraer*, p. 256; nevertheless, Fitzmyer says that Heb. 7:1-2 "bears resemblance to a classic midrash in *Genesis Rabbah* 43. 6" ("Now this Melchizedek," p. 305).

⁷⁶ Freedman, 1:354.

A PHILONIC ALLEGORY ON MELCHIZEDEK

We have seen that it is not proper to call Hebrews' method of interpreting Melchizedek either strict exegesis or midrash in the fanciful Rabbinic sense. Perhaps, then, the correspondences which the writer draws between Melchizedek and Christ can be described as allegory.

Allegory, which has been defined as "the search for secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative,"⁷⁷ was the prevalent method of interpretation with Philo, who is often believed to have strongly influenced the writer of Hebrews. Spicq championed the view that the writer of Hebrews was a student of Philo who converted to Christianity.⁷⁸ Sowers also maintained the thesis that "the writer of Hebrews has come from the same school of Alexandrian Judaism as Philo, and that Philo's writings still offer us the best single body of *religionsgeschichtlich* material we have for this document."⁷⁹

If the writer of Hebrews were a disciple of Philo, one would expect his interpretation to bear substantial similarities to that of his master. In order to determine

⁷⁷K. J. Woolcombe, "Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology," in *Essays on Typology*, by G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe (Napierville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1957), p. 40.

⁷⁸Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:91.

⁷⁹Sowers, p. 66.

if he follows Philo's allegorical method, we may compare his interpretation of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 with the relevant passages in Philo which appear in *Allegorical Interpretation* 3. 79-82 and the *Preliminary Studies* 99.⁸⁰

Both Philo and the writer of Hebrews find significance in the etymology of Melchizedek's name, king of righteousness, and his title, king of Salem, which is king of peace (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3. 79; Heb. 7:2). At this point, the writer of Hebrews could be suspected of following Philo's proclivity for discovering hidden meaning in incidental details.⁸¹

Several explanations have been suggested, however, which minimize the hermeneutical similarity between Philo and Hebrews. Longenecker cautions that we should not make too much of it because the allegorical-etymological interpretation of Melchizedek's name was widespread as is indicated by the similar treatment in Josephus (*Jewish Wars* 6 # 438 [6. 10.1], *Antiquities* 1 # 181 [1. 10.2]).⁸² Longenecker's counsel of restraint is well advised, but we should not suppose that the popularity of this

⁸⁰We need not concern ourselves with the reference to Melchizedek in *On Abraham* 235 or the Rendel Harris fragment on Melchizedek because neither text adds significantly to our understanding of him. Cf. J. Rendel Harris ed., *Fragments of Philo*, p. 72. James Moffatt gives the full text *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 91.

⁸¹Cf. Montefiore, p. 118.

⁸²Longenecker, "Melchizedek," p. 176.

interpretation is a sufficient reason to justify its hermeneutical integrity.

Hanson rightly notes that the interpretation of Melchizedek's name is the solitary example of allegory in Hebrews.⁸³ And he minimizes the supposed connection between Hebrews and Philo by pointing out that this allegorical etymology is "so simple and obvious that though Philo reproduces it also, we cannot call it characteristically Alexandrian, much less characteristically Philonic."⁸⁴ If we accept that the play on Melchizedek's name is so natural that anyone could have thought of it, Philo's influence here rapidly disappears; however, we must still deal with the existence of this single instance of allegory in Hebrews, even if it is trivial.

Spicq defends the writer from charges of employing arbitrary philological and historical exegesis by arguing that the OT itself, attaches deep significance to names.⁸⁵ People in Scripture were often given names to match their character, and sometimes their names were changed to fit

⁸³ He claims that "there is virtually no allegory of any sort in the book, and absolutely no Alexandrian allegory." Moreover, he contends that "otherwise the Epistle contains no sign of allegory, not even of the Pauline, not even of the Rabbinic type." R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: a Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 83, 86. Sowers also concedes that the similarity between the respective pictures of Melchizedek in Hebrews and Philo ends with the etymology on his name (p. 123).

⁸⁴ Hanson, p. 86; cf. Williamson, pp. 443, 532.

⁸⁵ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:179.

their character. It is not so much a case of the writer of Hebrews arbitrarily imposing Christological significance on Melchizedek's name, as it is of OT Scripture designating him by a name which was appropriate to his character and office, and which providentially allowed the writer of Hebrews to suggest an analogy to Christ. In fact, the writer only sets up the comparison and allows the reader to draw the appropriate conclusion.

A second hermeneutical similarity to Philo's interpretation has sometimes been found in Hebrews' reasoning from the silence of Scripture concerning the ancestry of Melchizedek to the permanence of his priesthood (Heb. 7:3). This argument has evoked Moffatt's criticism that here the writer employs an Alexandrian principle of interpretation which had been popularized by Philo.⁸⁶

It is true that Philo uses an argument from silence on other occasions; for example, he declares that Cain did not die because his death is not recorded in Scripture (*The Worse Attacks the Better*, 178). But Philo does not use the argument from silence with reference to Melchizedek unless, perhaps, he reasons that Melchizedek taught himself the priesthood because Scripture contains no reference to a priest before him (*The Preliminary Studies* 99).

If the writer of Hebrews borrowed this method of interpretation from Philo, he adapted it to suit his own

⁸⁶Moffatt, p. 92.

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purposes.⁸⁷ But, as we have already seen, the argument from silence was common in Rabbinic interpretation,⁸⁸ and our writer could have just as well learned it from that source as from Philo. Moreover, the silence, of Scripture regarding the ancestry of Melchizedek is truly significant when it is contrasted with the indispensable requirement of the proper genealogy for admission to the Levitical priesthood.⁸⁹ Perhaps the omission of Melchizedek's genealogy could pass by unnoticed in the Genesis narrative since the legitimacy of his priesthood is not in question there; but it is scarcely possible that the author of Psalm 110 could have unwittingly attributed an eternal order of priesthood to someone outside of the established lineage.

In addition to the fact that the few similarities between the interpretations of Melchizedek in Hebrews and Philo are somewhat superficial, there are also a number of differences. Unlike Philo, the writer of Hebrews does not allegorize the bread and wine that Melchizedek brought out to Abraham (Gen. 14:18). Philo invests Melchizedek's bread with nourishment that is full of joy and gladness. He transforms the wine into the divine intoxication of sublime thoughts; and then he offers them to the soul to eat and drink (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3. 81, 82). The writer of

⁸⁷Williamson, pp. 444, 445.

⁸⁸Cf. above, p. 272 n. 5.

⁸⁹Cf. Sowers, p. 126.

Hebrews could have easily exploited the bread and the wine for their eucharistic significance, and he could have portrayed Melchizedek functioning in his eternal office as a priest of the new covenant.⁹⁰ He had all the necessary ingredients in Genesis 14 for a Christian allegory; but if he had been a student of Philo, it is amazing that his imagination is restrained and his pen remains silent.

Another difference between Philo and the writer of Hebrews is found in the significance which they draw from Melchizedek. For Philo, Melchizedek becomes the Logos, or Right Reason (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3. 79, 80), and the tithe which Abraham offered to him becomes the abstract virtues of thought, speech, and the proper use of the senses (*Preliminary Studies* 99). Williamson justly accuses Philo of quickly leaving the historical figure of Melchizedek behind and turning him into a mere symbol.⁹¹ He charges that Philo "was not really interested in the details of the story except in so far as they provided material for his allegorical exegesis or reinforced its conclusions."⁹²

Grant contends that the writer of Hebrews also "removes Melchizedek entirely from his historical setting,"⁹³ but

⁹⁰ Cf. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:208; Williamson, pp. 445, 446.

⁹¹ Williamson, p. 435.

⁹² Williamson, p. 436.

⁹³ Robert Mc Queen Grant, *The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 34.

surely he is wrong. Although the writer of Hebrews goes beyond the explicit statements of the OT narrative, Melchizedek remains the historic priest who met Abraham after the slaughter of the kings and received a tithe from him (Heb. 7:1, 2, 6). As Caird affirms, for the writer of Hebrews Melchizedek "is an historical figure who foreshadows the equally historical Christ as high priest."⁹⁴

We conclude that the writer of Hebrews did not borrow Philo's allegorical interpretation of Melchizedek. The superficial etymology of Melchizedek's name may appear similar, but there are many differences. The writer of Hebrews does not employ the argument from silence in the same way as Philo, nor does he exploit the reference in Genesis to bread and wine. His analogy begins with a historic person, Melchizedek, and terminates on a historic person, Christ. But Philo begins with a mere symbol which dissolves into the abstract realm of Platonic ideas.

Even the strongest advocates of Philo's influence on Hebrews agree that the writer did not employ Philonic allegory. Spicq, who held that the writer of Hebrews was a student of Philo,⁹⁵ also admitted that he repudiated Philo's allegorical method.⁹⁶ But this repudiation of Philonic

⁹⁴Caird, p. 45.

⁹⁵Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:91.

⁹⁶"On voit combien l'exégèse de Hébr. est loin de celle de Philon, S'il a emprunté . . . tel ou tel thème biblique ou procédé herméneutique, il a résolument répudié sa méthode allégorique, subjective, et superficielle, au bénéfice d'une lecture profondément religieuse et

influences was not total. Spicq maintains that the writer broke far enough away from Philo to become Christian in his theology, but not far enough to erase his Philonic background.⁹⁷ Exactly how much of Philo's exegetical method remained intact is not clear, but Spicq still finds a methodological similarity to Philo's treatment of Melchizedek.⁹⁸ He explicitly refers to the writer's allegorical exegesis of the Biblical text,⁹⁹ which seems to contradict his earlier statement about the repudiation of Philo's allegorical method;¹⁰⁰ but later on he adds the qualification that Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek is not allegory in the sense of a work of imagination as in Philo.¹⁰¹ Elsewhere he makes it clear that the writer's hermeneutical method was derived from Pauline typology rather than Philonic allegory,¹⁰² but he refers to this method

singulièrement plus pénétrante que toutes celles qui avaient été proposées jus-qu'alors" (Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:63, 64).

⁹⁷ "Certes, la doctrine de Hébr. est avant tout et totalement évangélique; mais l'homme demeure sous le chrétien; la structure de l'esprit, les démarches propres de la pensée ne sont pas modifiées par la lumière de foi. Or les caractéristiques de la mentalité intellectuelle, littéraire, morale, religieuse de Hébr. sont celles mêmes de l'alexandrin [Philo]" (Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:91).

⁹⁸ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:207.

⁹⁹ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:183.

¹⁰⁰ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:63, 64.

¹⁰¹ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:212.

¹⁰² Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:166.

by various terms such as *typologie*,¹⁰³ *parabolisme christologique*,¹⁰⁴ *exégèses spirituelle*,¹⁰⁵ *l'analogie des realities*,¹⁰⁶ or even *l'exégèse allegorique*.¹⁰⁷ Part of the confusion in knowing how Spicq, classifies the writer's methodology¹⁰⁸ may lie in the fact that he does not clearly distinguish between allegory and typology,¹⁰⁹ but he clearly believes that the writer's interpretation of Melchizedek is not a Philonic allegory.

Sowers also believed that Philo had strongly influenced the writer of Hebrews, but he concludes his dissertation on *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews* by clearly denying the existence of allegory in Hebrews:

This study has underscored the lack of allegory in

¹⁰³ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:166; 2:212.

¹⁰⁴ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:347.

¹⁰⁵ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:349.

¹⁰⁶ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:208.

¹⁰⁷ Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:183.

¹⁰⁸ Hanson claims that Spicq agrees that there is no allegory in Hebrews (p. 86 n. 3), but Williamson cites Spicq's statement, "Cette interprétation arbitraire est un modèle d'exégèse allegorique" (p. 444, citing Spicq, *Hébreux*, 2:207). This quotation appears to be referring to Philo rather than Hebrews; however, Spicq clearly calls Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek allegorical (2:183), but not necessarily Philonic (2:212).

¹⁰⁹ Carmignac also fails to distinguish between typology and allegory. In the same sentence he can say that "les rapports que degage l'épître aux Hébreux sont clairement d'ordre allegorique" and "entre Melchizedeq et Christ existe la meme ressemblance qu' entre le symbole et la realité, le type et l'antitype" (p. 373).

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Heb. as it was defined and used by the allegorists. The absence of this hermeneutical tool is particularly conspicuous because of the Alexandrian background of the epistle. Because allegory was the outstanding exegetical principle practiced in Alexandrian circles, its omission in Heb. also means that the writer has excluded Alexandrian hermeneutics *par excellence*. . . . Nevertheless the exegetical conclusions reached by the Alexandrian school of Jewish allegorists are firmly in the writer's mind, and the result of¹¹⁰ their work can frequently be seen behind his argument.

The inclusion of the strongest defenders of Philo's influence on Hebrews in the virtually unanimous consensus that its writer repudiated Philonic allegory is a strong argument against his having been a disciple of Philo. Williamson contends against Sowers that "the almost complete absence from Hebrews of that method of scriptural exegesis which was all-important to Philo must mean that the writer of the Epistle can hardly have once been a Philonist."¹¹¹ We concur that "neither in his basic judgment about the essential character of the OT nor in his chief method of scriptural exegesis does the writer of Hebrews appear to owe anything to Philo."¹¹²

But we must still ask what would make an allegory hermeneutically valid in contradistinction to Philo's allegory. If allegory can be accepted as a valid method of interpretation, as it seems it can from the nearly universal acclaim of John Bunyan's allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, there

¹¹⁰Sowers, p. 137.

¹¹¹Williamson, p. 533. Longenecker also thinks that at this point "Sowers almost gives his thesis away" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 171, n. 36; cf. above, p. 298 n. 79).

¹¹²Williamson, p. 538.

must be some characteristic which distinguishes valid allegory from invalid allegory.

Jewett helps to answer the question by locating the rational basis for allegory in analogy.¹¹³ He defines all allegory as "the interpretation of a text in terms of something else, irrespective of what that something else is."¹¹⁴ A valid allegorical interpretation of the OT rests on "a genuine analogy between its original meaning and that in terms of which one is interpreting it."¹¹⁵

Philo's allegory on Melchizedek contains no such genuine analogy; the Platonic philosophy in terms of which he interprets Melchizedek bears no relation to the world-view of the OT whatsoever. He is justly accused of composing fanciful allegories by first subtracting the historical element from a narrative and then introducing alien speculation.¹¹⁶ In contrast, the writer of Hebrews sees an intrinsic connection between OT history and NT events; and without ever denying the historicity of the former events in God's redemptive plan, he argues from them to more

¹¹³ Paul King Jewett, "Concerning the Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture," *WTJ* 17 (1954): 10.

¹¹⁴ Jewett, p. 4, citing H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, (Cambridge, 1947), 1:134.

¹¹⁵ Jewett, p. 13; cf. p. 17.

¹¹⁶ Alexander Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), p. 37; cf. Jewett, p. 11.

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recent ones.¹¹⁷ Our writer indicates that he is interpreting analogically when he declares that Melchizedek was "made like the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3),¹¹⁸ but we must examine more closely the particular form of analogy that he uses.

A TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF MELCHIZEDEK

Typology and allegory both belong to the broader classification of interpretive methods called analogy. But the generally recognized distinction is that typology is rooted in a genuine historical correspondence, whereas allegory may rest on an incidental or even fanciful similarity.¹¹⁹ The contrast which we have previously observed between Philo's fanciful speculations and Hebrews' serious consideration of history suggests that our writer's analogy between Christ and Melchizedek can be best described as

¹¹⁷Nairne, p. 37. Using allegory in the negative sense, Nairne declares that "Philo deals with allegories, the Epistle with symbols" (p. 37).

¹¹⁸Fitzmyer regards ἀφωμοιμένους as equivalent to the designation τύπος ("Now This Melchizedek," p. 317). Elsewhere in the Epistle the writer employs the terms σκιά, παραβολή, or εἰκόν.

¹¹⁹Westcott, p. 200; Woolcombe, p. 40; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), p. 18; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), p. 40; Francis Foulkes, *The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1958), p. 36; David L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 259, *contra* Jewett, pp. 6 ff. We would admit, however, that allegory may be a valid method of interpretation. Baker's section on typology has been reprinted from his earlier article "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," *SJT* 29 (1976): 137-157.

typology.¹²⁰

Not all scholars are satisfied, however, that our writer's typological interpretation of Melchizedek is legitimate. Grant contends that "the typological 'method' does not have much rational justification."¹²¹ He charges that the writer of Hebrews "removes Melchizedek entirely from his historical setting"¹²² and that he employs an "allusive type of exegesis which . . . is not content to rest until the last subtlety of meaning has been processed."¹²³ Scott accuses the writer of utilizing "a highly artificial" method of interpretation and of "pouring new wine into old bottles, which are burst under the strain."¹²⁴ Moffatt believes that this "fantastic interpretation of the Melchizedek episode" is a product of the writer's own creativity.¹²⁵ Even Lampe, in his essay on

¹²⁰This classification of the writer's hermeneutical methodology is also accepted by the majority of scholarly opinion. Westcott, p. 200; Goppelt, pp. 162, 176; Sowers, p. 123; G. W. H. Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," in *Essays on Typology*, by G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe (Napierville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1957), p. 34; O. Michel, "Μελχισέδεκ," *TDNT*, 4:570 n. 9; R. U. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in New*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1954), pp. 106, 107; Caird, p. 44; etc.

¹²¹Grant, p. 42, emphasis his. He doubts, however, that the early church could have retained its grasp on the OT without typology (p. 37).

¹²²Grant, p. 34; cf. p. 32.

¹²³Grant, p. 31.

¹²⁴Scott, pp. 123, 124.

¹²⁵Moffatt, p. 91.

"The Reasonableness of Typology," doubts that he can defend the legitimacy of Hebrews' treatment of Melchizedek:

Except as an apologetic argument directed to a particular class of readers in a particular situation it lacks force. There is no clear correspondence between the type and the fulfillment, and no genuine historical recapitulation of a single pattern of the divine activity. The point that Melchizedek is a figure of Christ as the eternal priest rests upon a piece of sheer allegorizing about his lack of genealogy, and the idea that in Abraham the ancestor of the Aaronic priesthood, Levi, paid tithes to this type of the eternal priest depends upon fantasy. The correspondence here is unreal, useful¹²⁶ as the point may have been in anti-Jewish controversy.

Lampe finally relegates this interpretation to an inferior class of typology which, like allegory, disregards the original significance of the text in its historical setting.¹²⁷

Are these serious charges justly raised against our writer's typological interpretation of Melchizedek? Some scholars have sought to vindicate the Biblical writer by defining typology in such a way that it functions not as exegesis, but merely as a form of illustration.¹²⁸ France, for example, reasons that "while strict exegesis is a prerequisite of typology, it is not correct to describe typology itself as a method of exegesis" because it does not

¹²⁶ Lampe, p. 34.

¹²⁷ Lampe, pp. 33, 34.

¹²⁸ Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 106; Baker, *Two Testaments*, pp. 251-253; Lampe, p. 35.

seek to establish "the true meaning and intention of the original text."¹²⁹ If typology were exegesis, France claims that it would be illegitimate, but he allows typology to read extrinsic meanings into Scripture on the grounds that it "is not exegesis, but application."¹³⁰

Defining typology as illustration releases it from the strict limitations of the author's intended meaning and grants it acceptability according to universal standards of literary interpretation. But the problem with this method of justifying typology is that it restricts its employment to nothing more than illustration;¹³¹ our writer, however, does not appear to limit his typological interpretation of Melchizedek to mere illustration.¹³² A mere illustration would not have convinced unbelieving Jews that Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical order, but the

¹²⁹ France, p. 41.

¹³⁰ France, p. 42; Foulkes, pp. 38, 39; cf. Baker, *Two Testaments*, p. 258.

¹³¹ Kaiser, *Uses of the Old Testament*, p. 106; Lampe, p. 35.

¹³² The other NT writers also understood types as being more than mere illustrations. Edward Earle Ellis contends that they viewed Israel's history as *Heilsgeschichte*, and that for them the significance of an OT type lay "in its particular locus in the Divine plan of redemption." He argues that when Paul says that the events associated with the Exodus happened τυπικῶς (as an example) and were "written for our instruction" (I Cor. 10:11; cf. Rom. 15:4), there is no doubt that the apostle thought that both "their occurrence and their inscripturation" were divinely intended (*Paul's Use of the Old Testament* [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957], p. 127).

writer of Hebrews rests the full weight of his polemic for the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical order on the typical relation between Christ and Melchizedek.¹³³ If his interpretation is to be justified, it will require an explanation which accounts for more than mere illustration.

The classical definition of typology places restrictions upon types which do not normally apply to illustrations. This definition usually includes three essential characteristics: 1) there must be a genuine point of similarity, as well as points of dissimilarity, between the type and the antitype; 2) the type must have been divinely intended to teach some redemptive truth; and 3) the type must prefigure the antitype.¹³⁴ We need to determine if Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek fits the classical understanding of typology. If it does, we will then need to ask if it can be justified along these lines.

All analogies contain some point of similarity, but the writer of Hebrews approaches his points of similarity very differently than Philo. Unlike Philo who constructs fanciful correlations to Platonic idealism from the Pentateuch, he finds a genuine historical correspondence

¹³³Cf. Williamson, p. 438.

¹³⁴Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1974), pp. 336-338; cf. Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n.d.), 1:46.

between Melchizedek and Christ which is based not on his own speculation, but on the authority of the OT itself.¹³⁵ Psalm 110 very strongly influenced our writer's thinking in this regard.¹³⁶ He was convinced that Psalm 110:4 prophesied that Jesus was a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and the Genesis narrative implied that Melchizedek's priesthood was superior to the Levitical order. On this Biblical basis, he rests his analogy.¹³⁷

For the writer of Hebrews, Melchizedek is a historical person; and he restricts his analogy to points of similarity with Christ. His typology does not trail off into alien metaphysical speculation because for him salvation history reaches its climax in the unique, historical cross-event.¹³⁸ His concrete understanding of *Heilsgeschichte* allowed him to place "the old and new covenants in typological parallel without blurring their distinctions."¹³⁹ Both sides of the

¹³⁵ Westcott, p. 200.

¹³⁶ Hay, p. 153.

¹³⁷ Cf. Williamson, p. 438; Goppelt, p. 164. Kobelski recognizes the importance of Ps. 110 but also gives some weight to a tradition about Melchizedek (pp. 118 ff.).

¹³⁸ Goppelt, p. 168.

¹³⁹ Sowers, p. 138. After listing the similarities and the differences between Philo and Hebrews, Schröger also concluded that Jewish interpretation of Scripture developed in two directions: Philo went in an allegorical direction, and the writer of Hebrews followed Jewish apocalyptic literature and the people of Qumran in a *heilsgeschichtliche* direction (p. 307, cf. pp. 301-306).

analogy, the far side which he discovered in the Biblical record, and the near side which he understood in terms of Christ, remain rooted in history.

Hebrews' analogy between Melchizedek and Christ also contains some elements of dissimilarity as well as similarity. Melchizedek is not Jesus. He is not the Son of God, but he was "made like the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3). He was not actually eternal, but he appears that way from the record.

It seems as if the writer's procedure is reversed, as if he is working backwards from Christ to Melchizedek. Bruce observes that, "it is not the type that determines the antitype, but the antitype that determines the type; Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is 'made like unto the Son of God.'"¹⁴⁰ This procedure, which Horton calls "antitypology" because "the author thinks of Christ as the type and Melchizedek as the antitype,"¹⁴¹ is most evident in the writer's reasoning concerning Melchizedek's eternal priesthood.

The OT does not posit eternal priesthood for Melchizedek.¹⁴² It does not deny it either, but Psalm 110:4

¹⁴⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 138, cf. n. 22; cf. also Michel's claim that "Melchizedek is only a shadow and reflection of the Son of God He has no independent significance to salvation; he is simply a divine intimation of the Son" ("Μελχισέδεκ," *TDNT*, 4:570).

¹⁴¹ Horton, p. 161; cf. pp. 164, 171.

¹⁴² Kobelski feels that the tradition of Melchizedek's eternal life could have been derived from Ps. 110:4 (pp.

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explicitly grants this status only to the king who is made a priest forever according to Melchizedek's order. Having identified Christ as that eternal priest, our writer was encouraged by the psalm to go back in Scripture to find something corresponding in Melchizedek, namely the conspicuous absence of any record concerning his entrance into, or exit from this life.¹⁴³ Although his Christian theology read through the lens of Psalm 110 led him to expect to find a correspondence in the Genesis narrative, he does not force an incompatible analogy upon the OT text. We should not be concerned that the correspondence between Christ and Melchizedek is less than perfect because some dissimilarity necessarily belongs to the very nature of typology and all other forms of analogy.

In accordance with the second characteristic of the classical definition of typology, there is evidence to suggest that the writer of Hebrews believed that Melchizedek was a divinely intended type. Psalm 110:4 prophesied the coming of a person who would not belong to Aaron's order but who would be a royal priest forever. Jesus' eternity would have qualified Him for this priesthood, but that reason alone would not have been enough to say that He was the one spoken of in this psalm. Our writer believed that Jesus is that eternal priest according to Melchizedek's order because

123, 124).

¹⁴³Horton, p. 162.

this psalm was intended for Him. He is "the one concerning whom these things are spoken" (Heb. 7:13).¹⁴⁴ Having established that Jesus is the one spoken of in Psalm 110, our writer assumes that Genesis 14:18-20, which is the only other place where Melchizedek is mentioned in the OT, must also contain divinely intended Christological implications.

The final characteristic of classical typology is fulfilled in our writer's belief that his type was predictive. He takes Psalm 110:4 as a prophecy of Christ's priesthood (Heb. 7:13), and the tithe which Abraham gave to Melchizedek becomes "an anticipatory sign of the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood" to Christ's coming priesthood which would be modelled according to Melchizedek's order.¹⁴⁵ He does not draw analogies to timeless metaphysical categories but to a specific Christological event which, although it had happened within history, was still future from the OT's perspective. Hanson justly contends that "Hebrews is full of Messianic expectation, whereas Philo has none;"¹⁴⁶ and Barrett also affirms that, in contrast with Philo, "eschatology is the determining element" throughout the thought of Hebrews.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Hay, p. 147.

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, p. 441.

¹⁴⁶ Hanson, p. 86; cf. Williamson, p. 531.

¹⁴⁷ C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp.

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It seems that Hebrews' interpretation of Melchizedek accords quite well with the classical definition of typology. It contains genuine similarity and dissimilarity, and the quotation in Psalm 110:4 suggests that it was divinely intended and carried predictive force. The question which we must now address is whether or not this particular method of typological interpretation can be justified. The complexity of this form of typology will require a more elaborate justification than a mere illustration would, but we will consider each point of the definition and try to understand the rationale behind it.

Typology is founded upon the principle of analogy which is common to classical hermeneutics and all branches of literature, but typology is unique to Scripture in that it is based on a particular theological view of history. Biblical typology cannot be understood apart from an understanding of the Judeo-Christian *Weltanschauung* from which it sprang.¹⁴⁸

Unlike other religions which may be called historical because they have a recorded history, Judaism and Christianity are historical in the unique sense that they

366, 373, 386, 388, 391, 393; cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 54, 55.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. David E. Aune, "Early Christian Biblical Interpretation," *EQ* 41 (1961): 89, 96; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 128.

believe God is revealed through history. Drawing upon their Jewish heritage, the early Christians regarded the events of history, and especially those that happened to the people of Israel in the OT, not as mere chronicles but as the embodiment of divine revelation.¹⁴⁹ Because they held that God was working redemptively with His people throughout history, *Heilsgeschichte* had great revelatory value for them.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, they believed that the history of Israel as recorded in the OT described all the basic elements of God's redemptive purpose for mankind.¹⁵¹ Thus, the OT could function as a comprehensive and divinely revealed lesson book for understanding God's program of redemption.

The relevance of the OT for the early church was guaranteed by its confidence in the organic unity of Scripture and its conviction that God's former ways of dealing were in accord with His later ways.¹⁵² The former revelation had lasting value for the church because it contained the record of the people of God who experienced God's salvation in a similar way to what the church was

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Aune, pp. 89, 90, 95.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. McCullough, "Hebrews," p. 171.

¹⁵¹ Henry M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 49.

¹⁵² Lampe, p. 29; Foulkes, pp. 35, 36.

experiencing.¹⁵³ The consistency of God's dealing with mankind throughout history guaranteed that there would be a genuine historical correspondence between God's present *modus operandi* and the pattern contained in the persons, events, and institutions of the former revelation.¹⁵⁴ Typology arises not from a disregard for the historical context of the OT, but rather from a deep conviction that the former events hold significance for the present age and are not isolated occurrences. Therefore, the former events could be used not only as stories of how God dealt with His people in the past but as evidence of how He would continue to deal with them.¹⁵⁵ Typology was simply the early church's method of discovering the implications of the unity of Scripture and working them out particularly as they applied to Christ.¹⁵⁶

For both Jews and Christians, history is not a meaningless repetition of endless cycles, but a forward progression which God is directing towards a definite goal. Since God's plan is constantly moving forward, there must be

¹⁵³ Cf. Richard Reid, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1950), p. 108.

¹⁵⁴ Dodd, p. 128; cf. McCullough, "Hebrews," p. 171.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Daniel P. Fuller, "The Unity of the Bible," rev., xeroxed class syllabus, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, 1983, I-13; Reid, p. 108.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Aune, pp. 89, 90, 94, 96; Shires, p. 49.

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contrasts as well as correspondences.¹⁵⁷ If there were a one-to-one correspondence between type and antitype, we would have an identity and not typology. The progress of revelation from its inception in the OT to its fulfillment in Christ insures that there will always be an escalation or heightening (*Steigerung*) from the type to the antitype.¹⁵⁸ But NT typology is kept from straying into wild speculation because it is always related to Christ. Both the OT type and its corresponding antitype remain rooted in history.¹⁵⁹ If we can accept that the writer of Hebrews recognized the differences but used real similarities to construct his typological interpretation, many of our most difficult problems with accepting the validity of this kind of interpretation will disappear.

We have noted that the traditional definition of typology also maintains that divine design is an essential characteristic of a type.¹⁶⁰ It is a short theological step from the belief that Scripture is a unity which contains genuine correspondences between the testaments, to the assertion that God sovereignly ordered both the occurrence

¹⁵⁷ McCullough, "Hebrews," p. 171.

¹⁵⁸ Goppelt, pp. 18, 199; *contra* Baker, *Two Testaments*, p. 262.

¹⁵⁹ Sowers, p. 138; Schröger, p. 307, cf. pp. 301-306.

¹⁶⁰ Herbert Marsh, *A Course of Lectures Containing a Description and Systematic Arrangement of the Several Branches of Divinity* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1815), Pt. III. B., Lect. XIX, pp. 1, 2.

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and the recording of events in redemptive history in such a way that they could become suitable teaching tools for the present age.¹⁶¹ Because these correspondences between God's activity in the past and the present were divinely intended, the early church took them as more than simple illustrations or analogies. Their incorporation into divinely directed history insured their status as types and sanctioned their employment for apologetic purposes.¹⁶²

Those who define typology as illustration object that the concept of a divine design is a mere truism. They argue that the concept of a divine design cannot be used as a criterion for identifying types because the entire OT economy was designed by God as a school master to lead us to Christ.¹⁶³

To this argument, we would reply that one cannot use the fact that everything in the OT can be used to teach some general NT truth to deny the logical possibility that some specific things in the OT might be divinely intended to teach special NT truths. Although God sovereignly orders all events, and almost anything imaginable can be made into an illustration of something or other, it seems possible that God especially designed certain events to illustrate

¹⁶¹ Cf. Aune, p. 91; Johnson, p. 56.

¹⁶² Cf. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 94, 95.

¹⁶³ Cf. Andrew Bruce Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 236; Baker, *Two Testaments*, p. 260.

special truths in His redemptive program.

One might argue that the OT saints would not have recognized that something was typical unless they had been given special revelation.¹⁶⁴ But one must not suppose that the standard for determining a type is an OT saint's recognition of its significance for later generations. The OT events and institutions which later proved to be typical had a comprehensible purpose in their own age independent of their typical design.¹⁶⁵

The purpose of the divine design was not to take away any intelligible meaning originally inherent in the type and implant a divine meaning which could not be comprehended by those who stood in the historical context. The purpose of the divine design was to insure that certain OT persons, events, and institutions, which served an intelligible purpose in themselves, would occur in such a way that they would be particularly appropriate as vehicles for communicating NT truth and would be recorded so that later generations might benefit from them. Typology goes beyond an exegesis of the text, but unlike allegory, it is squarely based upon exegesis. A genuine correspondence between the OT and the New can only be drawn once the meaning of the OT has been properly determined.¹⁶⁶ If one can accept the

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Davidson, p. 236.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Fairbairn, p. 150.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. France, p. 41.

theological presupposition that God divinely designs history, it will be much easier to accept Hebrews' typology as hermeneutical valid.

If the OT models were divinely designed to correspond to some redemptive aspect in the new covenant, it appears that types possess predictive power. The common objection is that typology is not predictive because it represents the NT writers' reflection on the past rather than the OT readers' anticipation of the future.¹⁶⁷ We would reply, however, that the predictive nature of typology ought not to be confused with the literal prediction and fulfillment of prophecy. The predictive force of typology rests upon a broad understanding of the scope of redemptive history.

Typology is founded on the conviction that God's activity in history is both progressive and unified. The former revelation could point forwards because it was believed to be manifestly incomplete, but, yet, consistent with the greater revelation to come.¹⁶⁸ The arrival of something greater was anticipated by the belief in God's progressive revelation of the plan of history, and the correspondence of the future with the past was insured by the unity of God's redemptive purpose in history.

The Judeo-Christian understanding of history revolves

¹⁶⁷Baker, *Two Testaments*, p. 258; France, pp. 40, 41.

¹⁶⁸Cf. Foulkes, pp. 34, 40; Goppelt, p. 177.

around two ages, the present age, and the age to come.¹⁶⁹ Especially during the trying periods of the Babylonian captivity and the Maccabean revolt, the Jews developed the conviction that history could not be understood from within the present perspective of suffering and injustice. History could only be understood from the vantage point of the final consummation when God would cataclysmically break in to judge evil and to establish His kingdom.¹⁷⁰

The difference between Judaism and Christianity as far as the understanding of the two ages is concerned is that for a Jew the decisive mid-point of history always lay in the future coming of the Messiah, whereas for the Christian "the mid-point of time no longer lies in the future but in the past."¹⁷¹ The early church believed that the consummation had already begun in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. I Cor. 10:11; Heb. 1:2; 2:5, 8, 9; 6:5; 9:26; I Pet. 1:20).

Because Jesus stands at the climax of history for Christianity, history can only be understood in light of

¹⁶⁹Cullmann, p. 83.

¹⁷⁰Wolfgang Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth," in *New Frontiers of Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, vol. 3, *Theology as History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 121-123; D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 21 ff., 30; George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), pp. 52 ff.

¹⁷¹Cullmann, pp. 81, 83.

Him.¹⁷² From this Christological and eschatological perspective, it is easy to see how the early church viewed the entire course of OT events as fulfilled in Christ. The writer of Hebrews and his inspired colleagues never deny the historicity of these events, but they believed that their significance in redemptive history can only be fully realized when they are viewed in relation to the culmination of history in Jesus Christ. Thus, Christ could be found in "all the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:27), not in the sense that they are all direct prophecies of Him, but in the sense that they all were a preparation for Him.¹⁷³ As the preparation of redemptive history for its culmination in the Messiah and the anticipation of partial revelation for its completion, typology is predictive.

The early church believed that God divinely superintended history in such a way that His former revelation would contain genuine correspondences to His later revelation and that the former would point forwards to Christ. If this view of history is theologically sound, it appears that the typological method of interpretation which is built upon it also has a strong claim to validity.

Hebrews' method of interpreting Melchizedek can best be described as typology. Our writer follows the methodology

¹⁷²Cullmann, pp. 19, 22, 23; Pannenberg, p. 125; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 95, 208; Aune, p. 92; France, p. 79.

¹⁷³Cf. Cullmann, pp. 134, 135; France, pp. 79, 80.

The Writer's Method of Interpreting Melchizedek

of the other NT writers instead of the speculative allegorization of Philo or the fanciful midrash of the rabbis. He believed that his interpretation was more than a mere illustration and that Melchizedek was intended to have typical significance which prefigures Christ.

Using this method he reasons to a sound conclusion. He introduces Melchizedek into the Epistle by way of Psalm 110:4 which was widely recognized in the early church as referring to Christ. From this Psalm, he goes back to its historical context in Genesis 14:18-20, which is the only other place in the OT where Melchizedek is mentioned. He believed that this passage implies that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to Melchizedek's priesthood. Drawing a genuine historical analogy to Christ, he argues forcefully that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to Christ's priesthood. If our justification of the writer's typological interpretation of Melchizedek will stand, it seems that other cases of typology in the Epistle could also be justified along the same lines.

CONCLUSION

THE EXEGETICAL CONTINUITY OF THE WRITER OF HEBREWS WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now that we have examined Hebrews' use of the OT in some detail from both an exegetical and a methodological perspective, we must step back to summarize the salient points that we have discovered and draw some conclusions concerning the hermeneutical integrity of the writer. We may begin by noting that his interpretations maintain exegetical continuity with the OT.

HIS CONSISTENCY WITH THE INTENDED MEANING OF THE OT WRITERS

The highest standard by which we may demonstrate his continuity with the OT is his consistency with the intended meaning of its writers. We cannot claim that his interpretation is always identical with their intended meaning; but, as far as we have observed, he is not guilty of distorting it, and he always builds in continuity with it. Our comments at this point will focus on the exegetical content of his interpretation; later on we will need to give some justification for the expository methods he uses to build upon the meaning of an OT writer.

We saw that he does not violate the intended meaning of Psalm 45 by taking \acute{o} $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ (Heb., אֱלֹהִים) in verse 6, and perhaps verse 7, as an address to Jesus Christ as God (Heb.

1:8, 9). Grammatically, a vocative is the most natural construction of both the Masoretic and Septuagint texts; and notwithstanding Israel's strong belief in monotheism, the title אֱלֹהִים can be used of lesser beings than the one, true God. Although the context demands that this title must refer to the earthly king in whose honor the psalm was composed, the psalm's exalted language implies that the poet hoped that this king might be the one to fulfill the Davidic covenant. The inclusion of this psalm in the Psalter, at a time when the royal wedding that it celebrates was long forgotten, can only be explained in terms of lingering Messianic expectations. Thus it is perfectly fitting that, without ever denying its historical setting, the writer of Hebrews should apply this psalm typologically to Christ, whom he believed was both heir to David's throne and God.

Although there is a significant difference between the meaning of the citation from Psalm 8:4-6 in its OT context and the application that our writer gives it in relation to Christ, his application follows naturally from the unfulfilled aspirations inherent in the psalm (Heb. 2:5-9). In its OT context, Psalm 8 glories in the exaltation of man, who was made just a little lower than *Elohim* and given dominion over all of creation. But the writer of Hebrews correctly observes that the psalmist's remarkable confidence in the majesty of mankind, which could only have been learned by revelation, is derived from the creation mandate that was given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30 but never fully

realized. Our writer's hope that the glory and dominion promised to the first head of the human race will one day be realized moves him beyond the psalm's qualitative emphasis on the elevation of mankind to a status almost as high as the angels (following the Septuagint's legitimate translation ἀγγέλους) to the transcendence of this temporal limitation.

The writer of Hebrews reasons that a fallen humanity can only realize the promise which came through its first representative, Adam, by its solidarity with a new head, namely Jesus, who personally fulfills the ideals of the psalm and redeems what was lost in the fall. He observes that by His temporary humiliation below the angels, Jesus is able to identify with mankind redemptively in suffering and death; and he concludes that by His subsequent exaltation, Jesus will be able to raise the redeemed above the angels in the age to come. Certainly our writer adds new ideas to the psalm, but he aims to bring out its proper fulfillment without transgressing its intended meaning.

He also applies the OT promise of rest to his own generation in continuity with its intended meaning in Psalm 95:7-11 (Heb. 3:7--4:11). He reasons from the fact that God's people have never completely rested from their works, as God did from His work of creation (Gen. 2:2), to the conclusion that there still must be a possibility of entering into that kind of rest. As a second line of reasoning, he observes that in David's day, long after the

settlement of the land under Joshua, the promise of rest had not yet been exhausted; therefore, it must still be available for his readers to claim.

Although the "rest" mentioned in Psalm 95 primarily referred to the promised land of Canaan, which the Israelites failed to enter in Numbers 14, the writer of Hebrews is justified in applying the promised rest spiritually to the readers of his day because the OT concept originally included spiritual as well as physical blessings (Deut. 12:5-9). Furthermore, the psalmist at a much earlier point in history had already interpreted rest spiritually in terms of the blessings associated with God's presence in the temple, into which his original listeners were about to enter. It is quite appropriate, then, that the writer of Hebrews should use Psalm 95 to encourage and warn his readers, who stood on the point of personal entrance into the blessings of rest that Christ had made available to them in the present and which would carry on into the eschaton.

HIS FAITHFULNESS TO A SEPTUAGINTAL VERSION OF THE OT

The writer of Hebrews also demonstrates his continuity with the OT in his faithfulness to a version of the Septuagint that he treated as authoritative. Our study of the textual aspects of his interpretation focused narrowly on the hermeneutical significance of variations from either the Septuagint or the Masoretic Text of the core citations. Although our observations have been *ad hoc* and limited in

scope, they support the generally held belief that the writer of the Epistle used a Septuagintal type of text without reference to a Hebrew version.¹ The precise identity of that text remains unknown, but a comparison of the citations in Hebrews with the Dead Sea Scrolls has suggested that it may be closer to the original at points than our modern critical editions of the Hebrew text.²

The writer of Hebrews treated his *Vorlage* as authoritative and generally attempted to follow it faithfully, even where it departs from the MT.³ At times a

¹For example, he follows the LXX's translation of מריבה and נִסָּה as abstract concepts, παραπικρασμός and πειρασμός (contention and testing), rather than transliterating these words as place names (Heb. 3:8; Ps. 95:8). He also draws together Ps. 95:11 and Gen. 2:2 by the common root καταπαύω (Heb. 4:4, 5), although the Hebrew text employs different words (מָנוּחַ and נִסָּה); and he likely associates David's name with Ps. 95 on the basis of the psalm's title in the LXX. None of these points are conclusive in themselves, but we could cite many minor textual similarities to the LXX against the MT.

Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952, 1953), 1:334-336; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), p. 479; Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), p. 58; John C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews." *NTS* 26 (1980): p. 379; *contra* George Howard, "Hebrews and the Old Testament Quotations," *NT* 10 (1968): 208, 215.

²Compare Heb. 2:5 with 4Q Deut. 32:43 and the variant readings of Ps. 8:5 and Deut. 32:8, 43 in the Masoretic Text and Septuagint. Cf. ch. 2 above, p. 119.

³Cf. McCullough, pp. 378, 379; Krister Stendahl, *The*

distinctive reading in it clearly helped his interpretation, but each such case we have observed arises from an ambiguity in the Hebrew text where his *Vorlage* legitimately offers a linguistically narrower translation.

As a case in point, the Septuagint's translation of אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 8:5 as ἀγγέλους (angels) clearly facilitated our writer's contrast between Christ and the angels (cf. Heb. 2:5-9). But although the Septuagint chose a narrower term, it certainly is a justifiable translation in its own right. The Septuagint also contributes towards our writer's interpretation of this same verse in terms of a temporal, rather than qualitative, inferiority to the angels by translating עַל־כֵּן (a little) as βραχύ τι, which bears a temporal sense (a little [while]) more frequently than its Hebrew equivalent. The real responsibility for the temporal interpretation must remain with the writer of Hebrews, who derived it from a logical inference rather than a linguistic probability, but it is still true that to be lower for a little while is to be lower in degree for that time.

Although modern critics might feel uneasy at the dependence of our writer upon a translation, the citations we have studied do not find him guilty of building an interpretation on a faulty text. Furthermore, his purpose

School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1954), p. 160; contra Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 (1964-65): 320.

in addressing a popular audience, which presumably possessed the same version that he used, would have made it unnecessary, and even unwise, for him to fill his pages with textual emendations and scholarly notes, or to revert to the Hebrew text every time that a problem arose.⁴

At points he may have altered his *Vorlage* to improve its literary style,⁵ or to emphasize important points,⁶ but it is sometimes difficult to determine which departures from extant Septuagintal texts were his own creation and which already existed in his *Vorlage*. In no case have we found him guilty of manipulating the text so that he might base a questionable interpretation upon it.⁷

HIS CONTINUITY WITH TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE OT

As one might have expected, our study of early Christian and Jewish literature has not always furnished exact parallels to Hebrews' interpretation of the OT; but this less than perfect agreement poses no cause for real

⁴Cf. Franklin Johnson, *The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old Considered in the Light of General Literature* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895), p. 20.

⁵Cf. the change from ἐδοκίμασαν to ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ in Heb. 3:9 and the change from γενεᾷ ἐκείνῃ to γενεᾷ ταύτῃ in Heb. 3:10.

⁶Cf. the insertion of καί in Heb. 1:8 and the insertion of διό in Heb. 3:10.

⁷Cf. McCullough, p. 37B; Kistemaker, p. 74.

concern. With respect to canonical literature, we did not find disagreements in interpretation but rather a certain freedom on the part of the writer of Hebrews to explore citations that are not mentioned elsewhere in the NT;⁸ and as far as extra Biblical literature is concerned, it is only natural that some diversity of interpretation should exist in such a vast body of literature. In spite of our writer's freedom to select and develop his citations in ways that transcend earlier traditions, we discovered similar interpretations to his for each of the citations that we studied exegetically (viz., Ps. 45:6, 7; Ps. 8:4-6; Ps. 95:7-11).

We found support for Hebrews' Christological interpretation of Psalm 45:6, 7 (Heb. 1:8, 9) in several Jewish sources. *Genesis Rabbah* 99. 8 reveals a Messianic understanding of this psalm by connecting it with the promise of rulership given to Judah in Genesis 49:10, which it clearly interprets Messianically. The *Testament of Judah* 24:1-6 incorporates allusions to Psalm 45 into a mosaic of Messianic expectations drawn from various parts of the OT; and the Targum interpolates its Messianic understanding into

⁸ Only 9 of the approximately 30 OT citations in Hebrews are referred to elsewhere in the NT; viz. Gen. 21:12; Ex. 25:40; Deut. 32:35; II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 8:6; 110:1; Jer. 31:31; Hab. 2:4. Slightly different enumerations may be found in Henry Barclay Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, rev. by Richard Ridsen Oftley (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1968), pp. 391, 392, and Westcott, p. 473.

verse 2 of the psalm: "Your beauty, O King Messiah, surpasses that of ordinary men."

We saw that although Psalm 8 was not considered to be Messianic in either Jewish apocalyptic or Rabbinic writings, the NT used it in other Christological contexts besides Hebrews 2:5-9. Matthew 21:16 quotes verse 2 with reference to the children's cries of "hosanna" at Christ's triumphal entry. Moreover, various NT writers, from both the Gospels and the Epistles, either quote or allude to verse 6 with reference to the subjection of all things under Christ's feet; and most of them, in agreement with the writer of Hebrews, link this subjection imagery with the promise of Psalm 110:1 to make the enemies of the One seated at YHWH's right hand into a footstool for His feet.⁹ The writer of Hebrews also links Psalm 8:6 to the second psalm through its promise that all nations will be subject to God's Son (cf. Ps. 2:7-9, 12; Heb. 1:2, 5).

By this association with Psalms 110 and 2, both of which were well established Christological texts in the NT,¹⁰ the writer of Hebrews was able to confirm his belief that

⁹ Cf. Matt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; I Cor. 15:25-28; Eph. 1:20, 22; possibly Phil. 3:21; Heb. 1:2, 3; and I Pet. 3:22.

¹⁰ On Ps. 110:1, see Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mk. 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 20:42, 43; 22:69; Acts 2:34, 35; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2. On Ps. 2 (vs. 1, 2), see Acts 4:25-27; (v. 7) Mk. 9:7 par; Lk. 3:22 par; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; (v. 8) Heb. 1:2; (vs. 8, 9) Rev. 2:26, 27; 12:5; 19:15.

the dominion promised mankind in Psalm 8 would be fulfilled in Christ. Furthermore, this established NT tradition enabled him to move from the first verse of Psalm 110 to its fourth verse, which he alone quotes, as the basis for his interpretation of Melchizedek in chapter 7 (cf. Heb. 1:5, 13; 5:5, 6; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21).

Although Psalm 95 is not quoted in the NT outside of Hebrews, we found a number of Rabbinic sources that develop the OT concept of rest from this psalm and other related texts along similar lines to those in Hebrews 3:7--4:11. They generally link the idea of rest with the Sabbath, which they project into an eschatological realization; but they often disagree amongst themselves on other points and go beyond the explicit statements in Hebrews. We also found an eschatological concept of rest in the apocalyptic work 4 Ezra, although it is not derived from Psalm 95. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, which shares Hebrews' Christian orientation, also uses the Sabbath as a symbol of the true rest that will be realized eschatologically, but it too contains its own differences.

The points of continuity with Hebrews' interpretation of the OT that we have discovered in early Christian and Jewish literature show that our writer's exegesis falls within traditional bounds at these points. But there are enough interpretive differences in these sources to make it unlikely that the writer of Hebrews merely copied them. If it is true that diverse sources could arrive independently

at similar exegetical conclusions, as this combination of continuity and independence seems to suggest, then we might surmise that there really was something in these OT texts to point in that direction and that our writer did not simply invent interpretations out of his own ingenuity.

THE METHODOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY OF THE WRITER OF HEBREWS
WITH HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL HERMENEUTICS

Our investigation of Hebrews' interpretive methodology focused on the midrashic features in the development of the rest motif from Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7--4:11 and the typological comparison between Christ and Melchizedek in Hebrews 7. But some of the observations that we will make here about methodology pertain to the exegetical part of our study as well.

HIS AVOIDANCE OF CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

MIDRASH

In support of our thesis that the writer of Hebrews interprets in a manner consistent with historical-grammatical hermeneutics, we attempted to demonstrate that he avoids using creative methodologies capable of distorting the meaning of the OT. One such creative method of interpretation which he has been suspected of employing is midrash.

Midrash as practiced by the Rabbis certainly was capable of producing distorted interpretations, but we

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contended that the writer of Hebrews limited his use of midrash to innocent stylistic and hermeneutical devices. We discovered a few similarities when we examined his interpretation of Psalm 95 from all three approaches to defining midrash: as an interpretive stance, a hermeneutical methodology, and a literary genre.

Like the midrashists he operated from the theological presupposition that Scripture is a divine and authoritative revelation that had to be adapted to the needs of his contemporary audience. He used *Gezerah Shawah*, which was a common midrashic device, to join Genesis 2:2 with Psalm 95:11 by means of the key word "rest" (Heb. 4:4). He also set forth his entire citation and then, in midrashic fashion, returned to repeat portions of it using rhetorical questions, key words, and phraseology drawn from it to expound and apply its meaning. But these similarities are somewhat extrinsic, and nowhere did we find the writer of Hebrews employing creative midrashic methods which distort the meaning of the OT.

ALLEGORY

Another creative methodology which the writer of Hebrews has sometimes been suspected of using is allegory. But closer examination of the Epistle revealed that the only possible case of allegory to be found is in the etymological significance which he derives from Melchizedek's name (Heb.

7:2).¹¹ Furthermore, allegory may be a legitimate form of analogy where it builds upon a genuine correspondence without denying the historicity of the thing being interpreted, as the writer of Hebrews appears to do. His prevailing methodology is better described as typology, which we will discuss momentarily.

HIS USE OF STANDARD EXPOSITORY METHODS

We have not found the writer of Hebrews guilty of using creative methods of interpretation to distort the intended meaning of the OT, but he was determined not to stop with merely exegesis of its meaning. He was very much concerned about the relevance of ancient Scripture for the contemporary situation of his readers, especially as it related to Christ; and he develops its meaning using all of the standard expository methods: explanation, illustration, and application.¹²

EXPLANATION

Often his exposition of Scripture consists of

¹¹ Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: a Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 83, 86; Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 443, 532.

¹² The distinction we will make between "exegesis" and "exposition" is that an exegesis is primarily or exclusively concerned with recovering a writer's intended meaning, whereas an exposition normally goes on to show its significance in relation to something else.

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explanations. In the relatively few cases where an explanation does no more than to recast the meaning of an author in other synonymous words or to explicate a necessary implication, it does not extend beyond the author's intended meaning.¹³ As an example of a necessary implication in Hebrews' exposition, we could cite the reasoning in Hebrews 4:7-9 to the effect that the author of Psalm 95 implied that the meaning of rest should not be restricted to entrance into the physical land of Canaan because he himself held out this promise to his audience long after the conquest under Joshua.

But, as a few examples will show, the writer of Hebrews often transcends the intended meaning of an OT writer by explaining its relation to some other truth in the larger universe of knowledge. From his observation of the world around him, he explains that the subjection of all things to mankind mentioned in Psalm 8:6-8 has not yet been fully realized (Heb. 2:8). By referring to the historical background of Psalm 95 in the Pentateuch, he explains that the specific nature of the sin for which the Israelites were excluded from God's rest was disobedience and unbelief (Heb. 3:17-19; cf. Num. 14:11, 40, 43; Deut. 1:26, 32, 41). Moreover, he explains the nature of the rest spoken of in

¹³ Cf. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 124 f., 126, 136; and his *Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 50, 63, 72, 73.

Psalm 95:11 as a Sabbath rest by comparing it with Genesis 2:2 (Heb. 4:4, 9).

Although the explanations in this second category go beyond the meaning of their respective OT writers, we should not find fault with them for that reason. Where the purpose of an explanation is to clarify the subject matter of a writer, it often needs to extend beyond his intended meaning. If the writer of Hebrews has achieved this aim without distorting the intended meaning of the OT writers, he should be praised.

ILLUSTRATION - TYPOLOGY

The writer of Hebrews also expounds Scripture by way of illustration. The fact that illustrations transcend a writer's intended meaning should occasion little concern because the nature of an illustration is to illumine one thing by analogy to something else. But typology, which is the most prevalent form of illustration in the Epistle, requires special discussion, as we have seen, because the writer of Hebrews, in concord with other NT writers, uses types argumentatively as divinely intended illustrations which may carry predictive force to the extent that they prefigure a similar but greater antitype.

We gave special attention to Hebrews' exposition of Melchizedek's priesthood as a type of Christ's eternal priesthood in chapter 7, but we also discovered types in each of the other citations that we studied. The writer of Hebrews treats the hopeful heir to the promises of the

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Davidic covenant in Psalm 45:6, 7 as a type of the divine Messiah (Heb. 1:8, 9). He understands Adam, the head of the human race who lies behind Psalm 8, as a type of Christ, the second head of the race, who will fully realize the dominion that was granted mankind over creation (Heb. 2:5-9). His exposition of Psalm 95 uses the events associated with Israel's deliverance from Egypt as types of the spiritual condition of his own generation (Heb. 3:7--4:11).

As we have seen, the writer's search for types in the OT arises out of a deep regard for its historicity. Furthermore, their development does not wander off into alien speculation because the writer of Hebrews, unlike Philo, was always controlled by the remembered life and ministry of Jesus. The existence of a genuine analogy at this point would have qualified Hebrews' types as valid generic illustrations, but their peculiar nature as divinely intended illustrations that point beyond themselves to greater spiritual realities demands a justification of the underlying historical and theological presuppositions that gave rise to the distinctive character of typology. Herein lies the real hermeneutical difficulty with typology: in understanding the presuppositions upon which the NT writers constructed this method of interpretation and the function which they intended it to serve.

The typological notion of divine design arises from a decidedly theological view of redemptive history which the early Christians took over from ancient Judaism. They held

that God divinely superintended history and worked in such a consistent manner that His former ways of dealing with mankind in the OT would correspond to His latter ways. Therefore, events in the OT could be used not only as illustrations of how God worked in the past but as evidence of how He would continue to operate. We saw in particular that Melchizedek, the Davidic king, Adam, and the exodus, were of sufficient prominence in the OT that, given God's sovereign involvement in history and the inspiration of Scripture, the writer of Hebrews could properly regard them as divinely intended illustrations of spiritual realities.

The predictive element in typology is also derived from the same theological understanding of history. From the conviction, which Christianity shared with ancient Judaism, that God is progressively directing history from creation towards a definite goal, it was natural to conclude that the future would be superior to the past. Moreover, the suffering and injustice which the Jews experienced, particularly during the exile and the inter-testamental period, made it impossible for them to understand history from the present perspective; they could only hope that it would make sense eschatologically from the vantage point of the final consummation when God's direct intervention would set things straight. For Christians, however, the consummation of history had already come in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; therefore, history could only be understood in light of Him. Given the validity of this

theological understanding of history, Hebrews' typology is justifiable as a particular form of historical analogy that is rooted in the intended meaning of the OT but is understood as divinely intended to point beyond itself to the greater reality which it typifies.

APPLICATION

The writer of Hebrews also expounds the OT by applying its intended meaning to Christ or his readers. For example, he discovers in Psalm 45 that the Davidic king is called $\acute{\omicron}$ θεός (אֱלֹהִים), and he applies this exalted title to Christ, who he believes to be God and the rightful heir to David's throne (Heb. 1:8, 9). He also observes the lofty ideals that Psalm 8 expresses for mankind, and he applies this psalm as well to Jesus, who he believes will fully realize its promise of dominion over all creation (Heb. 2:5-9). Like the author of Psalm 95 did before him, he also applies the rest which the Israelites in the wilderness were promised to his readers who were descendants and heirs of the former generation which failed to enter into it (cf. Num. 14:31; Deut. 1:39).

These applications all relate the meaning of the OT to something outside of it that had significance for the writer of Hebrews or his readers. They do not bear a one to one correspondence to the intended meaning of his OT citations, but we should not expect to find an exact equivalence unless our writer purports to give a literal exegesis. Although good application always begins in good exegesis, application

serves a valuable purpose beyond exegeting an author's meaning. It may show how a general principle given by a writer would operate in some specific situation of contemporary relevance, or it may show how a particular occurrence of a general phenomenon that the writer describes is similar to another instance of it in the reader's experience.

Logically application is always a distinct function from exegesis and subsequent to it, but sometimes the writer of Hebrews so closely intertwines exegesis and application in his exposition that it is difficult to distinguish them from each other (e.g. Heb. 2:5-9). At times he only gives the application in his text, and the unwritten exegesis remains in his head (e.g. Heb. 1:8, 9). It would have saved his later critics much trouble if he would have always clearly indicated when he was exegeting the OI and when he was applying it; but as long as he does not distort its meaning or masquerade his own application as its meaning, we cannot charge him with ethical wrongdoing. We might prefer that he would have given more exegesis and less application, or vice versa. Both will occur in good exposition, but the proper balance between them should be judged by the appropriateness of the mixture to the writer's purpose rather than our personal preferences.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cf. Hirsch, *Validity*, pp. 138, 139.

Consistency with Historical-Grammatical Hermeneutics

Whether or not an interpreter chooses to go beyond the meaning of an author to apply it depends upon his reason for citing that author. In arguing with those who shared his belief in the authority of OT Scripture, the writer of Hebrews needed to stay close to its intended meaning in order to be convincing. But he also needed to go beyond its intended meaning in order to make it relevant to the readers of his day, who lived in different circumstances than those under which Scripture was originally written. If he has succeeded in making the message of the OT relevant to his readers in a way that is cogent and does not distort its original intention, he should be commended.

In all of the above cases where the writer of Hebrews transcends the intended meaning of the OT, whether he uses explanation, illustration, or application, to expound its significance for his readers, historical-grammatical hermeneutics is unable to guarantee their legitimacy since its principles directly govern only the exegesis of an author's intended meaning, and correspondence with that meaning is its only final standard for validating an interpretation.¹⁵ We have never found the writer of Hebrews interpreting in a manner that is incompatible with historical-grammatical hermeneutics. But insofar as the significances which he derives from the OT extend beyond its

¹⁵Cf. Hirsch, pp. 26, 27.

Conclusion

intended meaning to deal with its subject matter, their validity must be judged against some other standard. The only standard we know of that is comprehensive enough to legitimize such a potentially limitless array of diverse significances is their correspondence to truth as it may be found any where in the universe.

Whether or not the writer of Hebrews has succeeded on this higher level, we will leave our readers to decide for themselves. If this dissertation encourages further exploration of his interpretation of the OT and helps to point the way towards a satisfactory solution to some of the Epistle's hermeneutical problems, it will have accomplished its purpose.

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