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**‘Not to Offer Himself Again and Again’  
An Exegetical and Theological Study of Repetition  
in the Letter to the Hebrews**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology (New Testament)

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## Short Abstract

‘Not to Offer Himself Again and Again’: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Repetition in the Letter to the Hebrews. Nicholas J. Moore, Keble College. Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology (New Testament). Trinity Term 2014.

Repetition has received a bad press in certain streams of theological tradition; this reception has in part been caused by, and has in turn affected, readings of the Letter to the Hebrews, which speaks about repetition in ways unique in the New Testament. The present study addresses the insufficient critical attention paid to repetition in Hebrews, challenging the assumption that it functions uniformly and negatively throughout the letter, and exploring the variety of ways in which Hebrews presents repetition. The plurality of prophetic speech displays God’s manifold kindness in the old covenant; such speech is not opposed to but is fulfilled in Christ’s coming, and its ongoing repetition in the new covenant through citation and exposition serves to promote and explicate that event. Repeated mutual encouragement is essential to persevering in the Christian life and avoiding apostasy. And the regular entry of the Levitical priests into the outer sanctuary of the tabernacle in Heb 9.6 foreshadows the continual access to God achieved through Christ. Where repetition has a negative or contrastive role in the author’s argumentation, it does not *cause* inefficacy but rather *indicates* a weakness whose source is elsewhere – and which, moreover, is revealed fully only in the light of the Christ event. The uniqueness of Christ and of his death construed as a sacrifice, developed from concepts of singularity in Day of Atonement and early Christian crucifixion traditions, forms a unifying strand in the letter’s Christology. Rather than functioning in simple opposition to repetition, this singularity corresponds to continuity and eternity, and is developed at times in contrast to, and at times in correspondence with, repetition. The study thus offers a reappraisal of repetition in Hebrews, laying the foundations for renewed appreciation of the importance of repetition for theological discourse and religious life.



## Long Abstract

The phrase ‘vaine repetitions’ indicts medieval Roman Catholic worship in Cranmer’s preface to the 1549 prayer book, and recurs in the Geneva and King James Bibles to describe the prattling prayers of the Gentiles in Matt 6.7. These examples indicate both the bad press repetition has had in certain streams of theological tradition, and the ambivalence of such a reception: Cranmer’s liturgy was to be repeated daily throughout England, and Matt 6.7 forms part of the introduction to the most repeated petition in Christian history, the Lord’s Prayer. This reception has in part been caused by and has in turn affected readings of the Letter to the Hebrews, which speaks of repetition in ways unique in the NT. This study examines repetition in Hebrews’ first-century context, in its early reception history, and in the letter itself in order to challenge this tradition and demonstrate that repetition functions in a multivalent way in this early Christian text. The study thus rehabilitates our understanding of repetition in Hebrews, and thereby lays foundations for the theological development and deployment of this theme in other contexts.

Part One approaches the question of repetition in Hebrews from three different angles: modern scholarship (on Hebrews and on repetition), Hebrews’ own contemporary settings, and the reception of Hebrews in relation to questions involving repetition in the early church. After introducing the issues and the research question, Chapter One highlights two related deficiencies in recent research: repetition in Hebrews has received insufficient critical examination, and it has been assumed that the association between repetition and lack of effect (or even decreasing effect) is self-evident. Three prior proposals for understanding the repetition–singularity contrast in Hebrews are outlined and assessed: that it functions uniformly throughout the letter; that it corresponds to the Middle Platonic contrast between the singular heavenly and plural earthly realms; and that it corresponds to the eschatological contrast between old covenant and new. Ultimately none of these does full justice to the complexity of the interrelationships between repetition and singularity and between spatial and temporal motifs in Hebrews. Methodological considerations follow, engaging with discussions of repetition from a wide range of other disciplines, in particular using Catherine Bell’s practice-based approach to ritual to substantiate the observation that repetition and ritual

are not essentially connected. The chapter surveys various discussions of the kinds of effects repetition can have, and develops a spectrum which categorizes the relationship between repetition and effect *per se*, in order to clarify the different ways this phenomenon is described in Hebrews.

Chapter Two discusses Hebrews' historical settings, locating the letter tentatively as addressed to a Jewish Christian audience in Rome in the aftermath of the first Jewish war. In recognition of the importance of several different and overlapping streams of thought for illuminating our understanding of Hebrews, the treatment of notions of repetition and singularity is examined in a number of representative texts from the Old Testament, Qumran, Middle Platonism and early Christianity. These demonstrate that Hebrews' discussion of repetition is unique in its first-century world. In particular, the idea that the very repetition of tabernacle/temple sacrifices shows that they did not work is not found elsewhere either in contemporary Judaism or in early Christianity, including in a late first-century Christian text aware of Hebrews (*I Clement*). This makes an account of the meaning and function of Hebrews' argument concerning repeated sacrifices all the more necessary. While Hebrews in some respects bears notable similarities to Middle Platonist conceptions of the one and the many, it also subverts these notions at certain points. It is suggested that a combination and development of themes of singularity from the Old Testament Day of Atonement and from early Christian traditions concerning Jesus' death best accounts for Hebrews' treatment of themes of singularity and repetition.

Chapter Three explores how repetition and uniqueness in Hebrews were received in the early church, in order to understand the beginnings of the theological appropriation and development of the letter's thought on this matter. Pastoral difficulties arising from Hebrews' teaching on repentance are mitigated by creative exegetical approaches in the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Clement of Alexandria. The *Didascalia apostolorum* echoes Hebrews' arguments about repetition of repentance when it addresses Jewish repetition of baptisms or washings. It is suggested that this represents an understanding of repetition which differs from that found in Hebrews, yet which may have developed from a reading of the letter's teaching on repentance and apostasy. Epiphanius' use of parallel lines of argument to those found in Hebrews (though there relating to sacrifices) against the repeated washings of the Hemerobaptists

exhibits a more nuanced reading of the letter; his use of the ‘once-for-all’ theme – *instead of* Hebrews’ discourse on repeated sacrifices – against Ebionite washings reinforces this conclusion. The Emperor Julian’s summary citation of a Christian defence for not sacrificing also demonstrates the importance of the ‘once-for-all’ concept, suggesting its effectiveness in an apologetic context. In a related vein, Chrysostom’s struggle with the possibility that Hebrews’ discussion of repeated sacrifices could be applied to the eucharist foreshadows Reformation debates over the Mass and indicates the importance of Hebrews for the careful articulation of a eucharistic theology. This chapter illustrates the appeal of the theme of uniqueness and some problems which arise when Hebrews’ discussion of repetition is applied to other contexts.

The three chapters which constitute Part Two consider in turn the three areas of Hebrews in which repetition plays a role. These are identified by semantic, syntactic and topical considerations as: 1) the *repetition of divine speech* in the exordium (1.1–2a) and use of the Old Testament throughout the letter; 2) the *repetition of repentance* in the warning passages (primarily 5.11–6.12; additionally 10.26–31; 12.16–17); 3) the *repetition of sacrifices* in contrast to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ in the letter’s central cultic section (especially 7.23–28 and 9.1–10.18).

Chapter Four argues that the author uses the phrase ‘in many ways and various parts’ in a positive light in Heb 1.1, and thus that repetition of divine speech in the old covenant should be understood as a manifestation of God’s graciousness rather than an indication of the imperfection of old covenant revelation. Such plurality exists in continuity with, not in contrast to, God’s word through his Son, and continues into the new covenant in the words brought by the community’s leaders (including the author of the letter) through the Old Testament and the tradition about Jesus. This chapter argues that Hebrews does not regard this plurality as merely a fact which must be accommodated, but instead exploits it in order to bring to light the way in which the scriptures proclaim the temporary nature of the old dispensation and the eschatological realities which have now come. That is to say, plurality is essential to the way in which Hebrews reads and uses scripture.

Chapter Five turns to the vexed question of second repentance. Hebrews states that the foundation of faith ought not to be laid again, and categorically excludes a

repetition of repentance. While these are related, a close reading suggests that for Hebrews 'repentance' is from a state of complete unbelief (and therefore, in the case of someone who has previously believed, a state of apostasy) whereas the need for repetition of basic teachings merely indicates the potential danger of apostasy. Next it is argued that Hebrews 6 utilizes a concept of recrucifixion to express the utter horror of apostasy. The presence of this notion in Hebrews 6 is supported by early evidence for the recrucifixion motif in the *Quo vadis* scene of the *Acts of Peter*, and in Origen. That is to say, the impossibility of repeating the atonement entails the impossibility of repeating repentance following apostasy. The chapter closes by considering those forms of repetition that sustain Christian life, in the exhortations which occur throughout the letter. The presence of this form of repetition in the close context of a categorical exclusion of another kind of repetition indicates once again that this theme does not function in a uniform way in Hebrews, and suggests that the letter holds a particular view of repentance which is not dissimilar from that of certain Greco-Roman philosophers. Such repetition emerges as fundamental for sustaining perseverance.

Chapter Six turns to those parts of Hebrews where repetition has greatest prominence, in the letter's discussion of the Levitical sacrificial system. First, the letter's understanding of the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries is explored, and a threefold model is proposed whereby heavenly cultic reality precedes and is the model for the earthly tabernacle, which in turn foreshadows the perfect ministry of the eschatological heavenly sanctuary. This does justice to both the spatial and temporal aspects of Hebrews' argument, and suggests that cultic language in the letter (particularly as applied to Christ and new covenant believers) is inadequately described by terminology of 'literal'/'metaphorical'. Rather, cultic categories applied to the new covenant indicate a greater reality.

Next the distinct but related portrayals of Christ as priest and sacrifice are treated in turn. The Levitical priesthood is characterized by plurality as a result of the weakness and mortality of its priests; this is a consequence of sin and the power of death and the devil over humanity. Similarly, the sacrifices are inherently incapable of cleansing the conscience because they *represent* heavenly and eschatological realities rather than *effecting* them. Thus in both cases repetition indicates inefficacy, but should not be understood as identical with or causative of it; rather, it reveals a weakness

whose source is elsewhere. This indicative function of repetition relates to the essentially eschatological and christological nature of Hebrews' argument: the weakness of the old covenant and its divinely-intended transitory nature are understood fully only in the light of Christ's coming. Hence repetition takes on a negative connotation only where it is contrasted with the singularity of Christ's priesthood or sacrifice.

Where repetition is not contrasted directly with Christ, such negative connotations do not obtain. Especially notable in this regard is Heb 9.6, where the continual entrance of the priests into the first tent of the tabernacle indicates the desirability of perpetual access in order to contrast with the emphatically restricted access of the high priest's once-yearly entrance into the second tent. The extended comparison with Christ (9.11–14 building on 9.1–10) demonstrates that he unites two things which were represented by different parts of the tabernacle system: the high priest's *access* to the most holy place and the ordinary priests' *continuous* service. This juxtaposition of the once-for-all and the perpetual is combined and fulfilled in Christ's unique sacrifice and the ongoing heavenly access and intercession it inaugurates. Thus the motif of Christ's uniqueness does not operate in simple opposition to repetition; rather, it is related to continuity and eternity, and is therefore developed at times in contrast to and at times in correspondence with repetition. Accordingly, the repeated activity of Christians is properly described as cultic: Hebrews encourages its audience that they have a sanctuary in which God dwells and a high priest through whom they can approach him; they are strengthened by feeding from an altar, the cross, which they may associate with the eucharist, and they offer real sacrifices of praise at the times of the temple sacrifices in continuity with and extension of its worship.

The study concludes by returning to the chart of the relationship between repetition and effect in order to summarize the various roles that repetition plays in the Letter to the Hebrews. This clarifies the variety of ways in which repetition functions in the letter, and demonstrates that many of those functions are positive or neutral. It is suggested that the different kinds of repetition can be grouped into two categories according to whether the repetition of a particular thing conflicts with or serves to appropriate the atoning work of Christ. The study thus provides a reappraisal of the function of repetition in Hebrews, countering a tradition of reading this phenomenon uniformly and negatively.

In the light of this reappraisal of Hebrews' treatment of repetition, and of the many fruitful applications of repetition in modern theology, Hebrews is brought into conversation with Søren Kierkegaard's concept of repetition. This reading of Hebrews suggests the first and second comings of Jesus can be conceived of as 'repetitions' in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term, in which God's people receive back everything they had lost and more, and in a way they could not have imagined. In closing, several implications of the study are drawn out. Suggestions are offered for further work in biblical exegesis, historical investigation, reception history, and modern theology. It is concluded that repetition and singularity in Hebrews owe more to Jewish and Christian traditions than to Platonist ones, and that the function of the heavenly cult in the author's argument suggests a setting after the temple's destruction. Finally, the place of Hebrews with regard to repetition in Christian tradition is revisited: it is suggested that the tension between repetition and singularity is productive and indeed fundamental to the Christian life, and that this tension is epitomised in the two dominical sacraments.

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## CONCLUSION

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## Note

Style and abbreviations follow those found in *The SBL Handbook of Style*. References are given according to a modified Chicago author-date system.

The critical editions of biblical texts used are, for the Masoretic Text, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* 5th edition; for the Septuagint, Rahlfs-Hanhart 2006 edition; for the New Testament, the Nestle-Aland 27th edition. Translations of biblical texts are taken from the NRSV; where they differ from this they are my own. Translations of other classical and patristic works are taken from the Loeb Classical Library, the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and the *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, unless otherwise indicated. Translations of secondary literature are my own. Full details of sources used are to be found in the bibliography.



## **PART ONE**

### **HEBREWS AND REPETITION**



## CHAPTER ONE

# ‘Vaine Repetitions’

## Hebrews and the Problem of Repetition

### 1.1 Introduction

Thomas Cranmer, in his preface to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, criticizes medieval Roman Catholic worship for (among other things) its ‘vaine repetitions’. This phrase was no doubt a rallying cry against Roman Catholicism amongst Reformers and found its way into the Geneva Bible, written by exiled English Protestants. In Matt 6.7, earlier English translations render the injunction  $\mu\eta$  βατταλογήσητε ‘bale not moch as the hethen do’;<sup>1</sup> but in the Geneva Bible of 1560 we find ‘vse no vaine repetitions’, and from here it makes its way not only into the revised Geneva Bible of 1599, but also into the King James translation of 1611.<sup>2</sup> This phrase is evocative of the bad press that repetition has had in certain streams of theological tradition.

The Letter to the Hebrews has often been at the heart of this debate over repetition. In amending the medieval Sarum lectionary Cranmer introduced large parts

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<sup>1</sup> So, with some variation in spelling, the Tyndale Bible (1525), Coverdale Bible (1535), Matthew’s Bible (1537) and Great Bible (1539); a marginal note in the 1560 Geneva Bible offers ‘bale not much’ as an alternative translation. The Wycliffe Bible reads ‘do not ye speak much’.

<sup>2</sup> This translation was not uncontroversial, as witness the exchange between the future archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift (a high churchman) and the Puritan Thomas Cartwright; see Whitgift’s *Defense of the aunswere to the Admonition against the replie of T.C.* (Whitgift 1574: 803–5.)

of Hebrews 9 and 10 into the Passiontide eucharistic readings<sup>3</sup> – precisely those sections of the letter which stress the completed and sufficient nature of Christ’s sacrifice and oppose repeated sacrifices. Anyone who has attended a Book of Common Prayer communion service cannot fail to have been struck by the phrase: ‘[Christ] made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world’. And on the continent, John Calvin dedicated his *Commentary on Hebrews* to King Sigismund II of Poland (23 May 1549), in direct response to Johann Eck’s defence of the Mass, *De sacrificio missae libri tres* (1526), which had been dedicated to Sigismund’s father.

Hebrews was also a significant text in early Christian debates surrounding the repetition of repentance and baptism, and in engagement with baptistic sects (see Chapter Three). It is thus no more than a slight exaggeration to say that controversies over the repetition of baptism, repetition in the eucharist, and repetition in liturgy are at heart debates about the meaning of Hebrews. Even if the tradition which views repetition negatively may have originated from texts such as the Sermon on the Mount, it is Hebrews more than any other early Christian document that has helped create and sustain such a tradition, and this tradition in turn has affected how many interpreters read Hebrews.

Such a tradition is in some respects understandable. It appears at first that repetition is undesirable: the Son is unique, the prophets and angels plural (Heb 1.1–4); Jesus is an everlasting priest, contrasted with the many mortal Levitical priests (7.23–28); Jesus’ death as sacrifice is superior because it is unrepeatable, in contrast to repeated Levitical sacrifices (7.27; 9.23–10.14). And in the Christian life repetition of

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Kenneth Padley for this point.

‘the basics’ (5.12–6.2) or of repentance (6.4–6) is strongly discouraged or even impossible.

Yet to read Hebrews as uniformly opposing repetition is problematic.<sup>4</sup> The apparent intimation that repetition entails inefficacy is *a priori* possible but by no means necessary. This thought receives additional force when we consider Hebrews in its first-century context, where repeated sacrifice is an inherent and basic part of the way that religion operates, for Gentile as much as for Jew. Within Hebrews itself it is through the ‘piecemeal’ prophets that God still speaks, again and again, in the many OT citations in the rest of the letter (cf. e.g. 1.5–13; 12.5–6). Christ, whose salvific work is emphatically finished, continues to speak and pray (2.12; 7.25).<sup>5</sup> Regular meeting, encouragement, and worship is commanded of Christians (3.13; 10.25; 13.15–16). And this repetition which characterises the Christian life is essential to avoid irreversible apostasy – irreversible precisely because a kind of repentance is unrepeatable (6.1–8). That is to say, one form of repetition is necessary in the Christian life because another form of repetition is impossible.

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, to read Cranmer or Matt 6 as uniformly opposed to repetition is equally problematic: Cranmer’s critique comes in the preface to a new liturgy which was to be repeated daily throughout England, he does not criticize repetition *per se*, but ‘vaine’ repetition which, along with a number of other features of the pre-Reformation service, prevents the reading of sufficient scripture. Similarly, the denunciation of Gentile prayers in Matt 6.7 forms part of the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer. ‘It is ironic that the most frequently repeated prayer of all in the Christian tradition should follow an injunction against vain repetition.’ Sykes 1996: 160. This prayer includes a petition for daily bread (σήμερον Matt 6.11; cf. τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν Luke 11.3), suggesting it was intended to be used daily.

<sup>5</sup> ‘[E]ternal intercession is something of a “foreign body” in the epistle’s theology’ Hay 1973: 132, 149–50. Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. Heb.* 13.6; also Daly 1978: 275; Schenck 2007: 21.

## 1.2 Thesis Statement

Clearly, then, certain kinds of repetition are vain and others are valuable – the difficulty lies in telling the one from the other. This is the issue which this study addresses: how does the Letter to the Hebrews understand repetition? My thesis is this: repetition in Hebrews functions in many and various ways, rather than in a uniform (and uniformly negative) manner; the singularity of the Christ event, reinforced and explicated on the model of the Day of Atonement, is central and determinative and the function of repetition is always derivative from this.

God's repeated speech prepares for and reaches its climax in his Son, and in the light of his coming it continues to address the manifold needs of the people of God. Repetition of repentance is excluded because the initial act of faith in Christ involves total identification with his death, including its absolute singularity. Repetition of old covenant sacrifices becomes an indicator of their lack of effect, a weakness which is inherent in their derived nature as shadows of heavenly reality, but which can be understood only after that heavenly reality has been revealed and made accessible in the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ. While Hebrews bears notable points of comparison to both Middle Platonic thinking on the one and the many and Jewish apocalyptic depictions of regularly accessing the heavenly cult, its portrayal of repetition is distinctive in its ancient contexts. It exhibits most direct dependence on the Christian tradition regarding the uniqueness of the crucifixion and the OT tradition of Yom Kippur's singularity, but fuses and develops these in unprecedented ways.

The primary mode of investigation of this thesis is exegetical; that is to say, it is an historical and linguistic study of what the text of Hebrews might actually have meant

in its context in the first century AD. To this end Part One locates the letter historically, and discusses other texts which represent traditions contemporary with the settings of Hebrews. Part Two reads Hebrews closely in each of the domains where repetition is prominent: revelation, repentance, and ritual. To stop there, however, would be to fall short of doing full justice to this question, whose primary interest and application lies in the contested place of repetition in everyday life – particularly, but not only, the life of the church.

The study is therefore theological in two respects: first, in that it takes seriously the ideological and metaphysical claims made by Hebrews and by other ancient texts, and does not seek to explain them on a purely historical level; this approach is latent throughout. This investigation is also theological in a second sense: it brings Hebrews into conversation with later interpreters and controversies, as has already been indicated by introducing the question through the lens of Reformation debates. Chapter Three regards Hebrews through the eyes of some of its ancient interpreters, tracing the beginnings of the misreading and misuse from which I have suggested Hebrews has suffered, and also observing early examples of responsible and potentially fruitful uses of Hebrews' portrayal of repetition. And in the Conclusion Hebrews is read in the light of Søren Kierkegaard's concept of repetition, as an illustration of one of a number of potential theological conversations to which the letter might contribute.

The remainder of this introductory chapter identifies and assesses three proposals for understanding repetition and its relationship to singularity in previous Hebrews scholarship; it then discusses how repetition has been approached in a wide range of disciplines in order to inform the development of a model of the relationship of repetition to effect, before finally indicating the shape of the rest of the thesis.

### 1.3 Repetition in Hebrews Scholarship

It might be thought that the examples given above demonstrate a negative and unnuanced reception of repetition in the Reformation period and its immediate aftermath, but do not represent the state of current research. Clearly modern Hebrews commentators are not, for the most part, embroiled in controversies over liturgy, the eucharist, or baptism<sup>6</sup> – although they are very often aware of the importance and applicability of Hebrews to these areas. Similarly, modern scholars tend to have a more nuanced view of the function of repetition. Nevertheless, I will here show that scholarship on the Letter to the Hebrews continues to be affected by a couple of interrelated problems in its treatment of repetition. I will then assess three proposals which can be discerned in modern scholarship for understanding the repetition–uniqueness contrast in Hebrews: that it forms a ‘basic evaluative category’ which functions uniformly throughout the letter; that it corresponds to a Platonic earthly–heavenly distinction; and that it corresponds to the transition between old and new covenants.

Repetition is often connected with ritual. This association is not in fact absolute in either direction – not all repetition is ritual, nor is all ritual repeated (see §1.4.3 below) – but is not inherently problematic. The difficulty comes when this link fosters the notion that repetition can be identified as negative and indicating inefficacy, and further when this is assumed to be self-evident. Several examples will suffice to demonstrate that these assumptions surface from time to time in modern scholarship.

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<sup>6</sup> Though see, e.g., the extensive appeal to Hebrews in the context of twentieth-century Anglican debates about the eucharist in Stibbs 2008. Cf. also the eucharistic readings of Hebrews by the Jesuit scholar James Swetnam (e.g. Swetnam 1968; 1970; 1989).

John Dunnill asserts rather strongly that ‘the failure of the old system is characterised by pointless repetition’.<sup>7</sup> While one must allow Dunnill a degree of hyperbole in the statement of his point, his language nevertheless betrays the assumption that repetition is aimless; moreover, it fails to recognize – or perhaps deliberately obscures – that even for Hebrews repeated sacrifices serve at least two functions: outward cleansing (9.13) and remembrance of sins (10.3). Similarly, Richard Johnson incorrectly asserts that ‘[r]epetitive performance is part of the essence of ritual’, and then makes the further claim that ‘[i]nnovation is not valued in ritual’,<sup>8</sup> thus implicitly identifying repetition with a lack of innovation. This is perhaps surprising given his use of a methodology developed by Mary Douglas. In her terms, *ritualized* ritual may be antithetical to innovation, but ritual *tout court*, including any repetition that it might incorporate, does not automatically exclude innovation (see §1.4.3).

Alongside the assumption that repetition is inherently negative we find the assumption that this identification is obvious. With regard to the plurality–singularity contrast in the exordium, Donald Guthrie comments: ‘A once-for-all revelation is clearly superior.’<sup>9</sup> Yet this assertion is not so clear: a multiple, manifold revelation might be better suited to the needs and challenges of particular situations, as indeed Second Temple wisdom traditions seem to have recognized (see Chapter Two). Indeed, a major problem with which the Jewish and Christian traditions have always had to contend is the relationship of their inherent particularity (the ‘once-for-all’ historical events on which they are based) to the universal inferences drawn from this (the ‘many and diverse’ cultures and peoples on which they seek to make a claim). Similarly, with

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<sup>7</sup> Dunnill 1992: 233. Michaud 1983: 38 similarly speaks of a ‘système répétitif et inefficace’.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson 2001: 112.

<sup>9</sup> Guthrie 1983: 67.

regard to sacrifice Kenneth Schenck suggests that ‘The new covenant offering is intrinsically superior to the old covenant cleansings [...] because it only needs to take place once’;<sup>10</sup> in fact, however, this study will show that it is *because* Jesus’ sacrifice is intrinsically superior that it happened only once – that is to say, the direction of causality is exactly the inverse. And F. F. Bruce comments: ‘the old order could never bring [...] perfection; *this was plain enough* from the fact that [...] the same sacrifices had to be repeated over and over again’.<sup>11</sup> Yet as we shall see in Chapter Two, nothing could have been less plain to the first-century mind; repetition was simply part of the way the system worked, and greater repetition could produce additional efficacy.

It would be inaccurate to characterize modern scholarship generally as working uniformly with these assumptions; even in the case of the scholars cited above, such statements are somewhat unrepresentative of their usually careful reading of Hebrews. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the fact that these assumptions are present in the contemporary academic discourse, and thus that the tradition identified in the introduction persists, even if in an unconscious and limited fashion. Most importantly, the view that repetition *obviously and straightforwardly* indicates failure or inefficacy almost certainly underlies the lack of attention that has been given to this theme. We turn now to examine three particular proposals for analysing repetition in Hebrews.

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<sup>10</sup> Schenck 2007: 103. Similarly, Lane states that the ‘superiority of Christ’s cultic action *derives from* [...] the uniqueness of the sacrifice he offered.’ Lane 1991: 2.237 (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> Bruce 1990: 235–36 (emphasis added).

### 1.3.1 Repetition–Singularity as a Uniform Contrast

Even a cursory reading of Hebrews will reveal the presence of a contrast between plurality and singularity, particularly in association with the author’s extensive use of the terms *ἐφάπαξ* and *ἅπαξ*, and especially in the cultic section of the letter (primarily Heb 7–10). However, it is a further – and, as I will argue, unwarranted – step to assume that wherever either plurality/repetition or singularity/uniqueness occurs, this signals the presence of the same theme and contrast as is discerned in the cultic section, where a direct rhetorical contrast is made. Harold Attridge is representative of this view which maximizes the extent and uniformity of the repetition–singularity contrast in Hebrews. In his discussion of the exordium, he describes the contrast between plurality and singularity as ‘one of the basic evaluative categories with which the text operates,’ one which ‘will appear later at a critical point in the exposition of the superiority of Christ’s unique sacrifice to the multiple sacrifices under the old covenant.’<sup>12</sup> This connection explains his reading of the exordium: ‘However the multiplicity of God’s speech of old is to be conceived, Hebrews’ basic affirmation is that such diversity contrasts with the singularity and finality of God’s eschatological speech in the Son.’<sup>13</sup> As we will see in Chapter Four, a number of scholars have questioned this reading of the exordium. In particular, it is problematic to assert that contrast is the ‘basic affirmation’ of Heb 1.1–

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<sup>12</sup> Attridge 1989: 37–38. Cf. his comment on 10.11: ‘The alliterative collocation (*πολλάκις προσφέρων*) recalls not only the most recent critique of the multiplicity of sacrifices, but also the negative appraisal of multiplicity (*πολυμερῶς, πολυτρόπως*) suggested in the exordium’ (p. 279). It is surprising that Attridge regards plurality–singularity as a ‘basic evaluative category’, given that in his earlier article on antitheses in Hebrews he observes that polarities such as this one are often subject to reversal or are overcome. Attridge 1986: esp. 5, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Attridge 1989: 37. A ‘new decisive revelation contrasted both with the variety of modes and the necessity in the past for repetition’, Guthrie 1983: 67. ‘Hier [...] wird auch diese doppelte Charakterisierung gottheitlichen Redens negativ, und zwar infolge der Voranstellung betont negativ sein [...]. Auch sonst wertet Hb die Vielzahl als das Mindere gegenüber der Einzahl ab’, Braun 1984: 19–20.

2a when this sentence does not contain any syntactical indication to this effect, or any explicit affirmation of the Son's uniqueness. Furthermore, if old covenant revelation and Christ are contrasted in the same way as old covenant sacrifices and Christ, this would imply that God's speech through the prophets is devalued and, ultimately, ineffective. While this consequence might appeal to a certain kind of Marcionite-inclined interpreter, few scholars are willing to embrace it – not least because it would introduce a major inconsistency into Hebrews' view of the OT, which the letter primarily deploys as God's direct, present, oral address to its audience.

When it comes to Heb 5.11–6.12, which deals with the repetition of repentance, Attridge is more cautious but still willing to entertain the possibility that the presence of ἅπαξ in 6.4 may suggest 'an implicit correlation between the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and the unique reception of the spiritual gifts that his sacrifice made possible.'<sup>14</sup>

Turning to the cultic section, there are difficulties surrounding the terms ἅγια and ἅγια ἁγίων in 9.2–3, which describe the outer and inner parts of the tabernacle respectively. These terms are inconsistent with Hebrews' use of the term ἅγια elsewhere. While there is debate over whether ἅγια refers to the whole tabernacle or the inner sanctuary, it is clear that it is not used elsewhere to designate only the outer sanctuary. Further, several witnesses (P<sup>46</sup> A D\* d e vg<sup>ms</sup>) read ἅγια ἁγίων in 9.2, which as the harder reading deserves some consideration. Attridge comments:

Whether our author found this unusual designation in an exegetical tradition or developed it himself, the resulting contrast between the relatively multiple outer tabernacle and the relatively single or simple inner tabernacle fits nicely into the antithesis that develops in these chapters. (p. 234)

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<sup>14</sup> Attridge 1989: 170.

This conclusion justifies a textual decision on the basis of a contrast between repetition and singularity which is presumed to be consistent. A number of points need to be made. 1) It is clear what is intended by 9.2–3, even if the original reading and the reasons underlying this terminology are unclear: a description of the outer and then inner sanctuary of the desert tabernacle. 2) The terminology does not need to be consistent with that of Hebrews elsewhere, because the designations are introduced with the phrases ἥτις λέγεται (9.2) and ἡ λεγομένη (9.3), which indicate not what *Hebrews* calls these sanctuaries, but what they are called *generally* or *by others* (cf. Heb 3.15; 7.11; 11.24). 3) While numerous manuscripts have the reading ἅγια ἁγίων in 9.2, only P<sup>46</sup> contains the reading ἅγια in 9.3 (or rather ANA, a misreading of ΑΓΙΑ), meaning that only one witness displays the contrast Attridge favours. 4) The underlying Hebrew idiom uses plurality as a backdrop to a singular instance as a circumlocution for the (non-existent) superlative: there are many ‘holies’ (things/places), but only the inner sanctuary is ‘holy of holies’, i.e. most holy. This consideration undermines Attridge’s contention that ἅγια ἁγίων represents greater plurality. 5) Attridge has a detailed excursus on various passages concerning the distinction between Levites and Aaronites in Numbers,<sup>15</sup> especially Num 4.4–20 and 18.1–10, in which he shows that the terms ἅγιον τῶν ἁγίων (4.4), τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων (4.19), ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ τῶν ἁγίων (18.10) – although in the MT most naturally referring to holy things – in the LXX could be construed as references to the tabernacle as a whole or even the outer sanctuary.<sup>16</sup> The problem with these references is that only one of them uses a double plural, like

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<sup>15</sup> Attridge 1989: 236–38.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lev 24.9: Aaron and his sons must eat the showbread ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, presumably meaning in the sanctuary, ‘because it is most holy’ – though the Greek ἔστιν γὰρ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων could be taken as a descriptor of the place they are to eat the bread, i.e. the outer and certainly not the inner sanctuary. Ellingworth 1993: 423.

Hebrews, and all of them use the article once or twice, unlike Hebrews;<sup>17</sup> it is difficult to posit that these few instances underlie the usage to which Hebrews makes reference in 9.2–3. All in all, while the supposed ‘basic evaluative category’ of the repetition–singularity contrast is not the only factor supporting the reading Attridge adopts, it is not insignificant that he is one of the few to advocate this reading *and at the same time* one of the few to articulate expressly the connection with the theme of repetition.

Attridge’s assumption of this basic distinction also underlies his comment on the plural ‘strange teachings’ in 13.9, ‘which, in their multiplicity, contrast with the singular uniformity of Christ’.<sup>18</sup> Again, it is sufficient to note here that no such contrast is to be found in the text.

It has been seen that the assumption that repetition functions in a uniform manner can directly affect the interpretation of certain parts of Hebrews. What is assumed to be a fundamental thematic contrast is in fact extrapolated from certain rhetorically charged parts of the letter, and is then allowed to influence exegetical and textual decisions elsewhere, a process which in a circular manner reinforces the initial assumption. Furthermore, it is not clear what Attridge thinks underlies this distinction. This question of conceptual world is central to the next proposal we will consider.

### 1.3.2 Repetition–Singularity and Platonic Earth–Heaven Dualism

The interrelated themes of repetition and singularity in Hebrews are widely noticed but have received little sustained critical investigation. James Thompson’s article, ‘*EPHAPAX*: The One and the Many in Hebrews’, is a rare exception:

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<sup>17</sup> Note the addition of the article in 9.2 and 3 in a second hand in several mss.

<sup>18</sup> Attridge 1989: 393; so also Lane 1991.

Although the commentators have noted the importance of ἐφάπαξ in this homily, no one has given a comprehensive analysis of the role of this theme within the total argument or indicated why the author expects the contrast between the one and the many to be persuasive to the audience.<sup>19</sup>

Thompson proceeds to highlight the use of ἐφάπαξ in Hebrews, and contrasting language of plurality, concluding that the one corresponds with the divine realm, and the many with the created realm. He notes that the use of this theme in Hebrews is unique in the NT, and he therefore seeks ‘analogous motifs in the literature of the period in order to ascertain the kind of audience that would have shared the author’s basic assumptions about the one and the many’ (p. 568). For these motifs he turns to Middle Platonism, with its distinction between the one transcendent God and the ‘Indefinite Dyad, the principle of duality, which is infinitely divisible’ (p. 572). This contrast is traced in Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch: the intelligible world is the domain of God who is one or monad, whereas the perceptible created world is characterized by multiplicity. The contrast also correlates with the oppositions of being and becoming, and immutability and instability. Returning to Hebrews Thompson concludes: ‘The distinction between the one and the many in Middle Platonism illuminates the argument of Hebrews, indicating the author’s indebtedness to philosophical reflection about the nature of the deity and reality.’ (p. 579). Hebrews is ‘internally coherent in its insistence that the work of the exalted Christ is ἐφάπαξ in contrast to the multiple priests and sacrifices of the physical world’ (p. 581).

Thompson’s article helpfully identifies the feature in Hebrews that is at the heart of this study, and notes that it has not been extensively investigated. He points to the

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<sup>19</sup> Thompson 2007: 567. One other relevant study, not cited by Thompson, is Winter 2002. This focusses on the ἐφάπαξ theme more than the contrast with plurality, and is a largely unrevised publication of Winter 1960. Like Thompson, Winter primarily seeks to explain ἐφάπαξ in Hebrews by appeal to Philo, Winter 2002: 117–29.

uniqueness of the theme within the NT and therefore rightly searches for a conceptual tradition that will help account for Hebrews' use of it, noting the need to ascertain how it is the author can assume this contrast will be persuasive to his audience. Yet when it comes to the origin of the theme Thompson underestimates the fact that ontological dualism is equally at home in Judaism, which affirms God's utter oneness and the radical difference between him and creation.<sup>20</sup> He also overestimates the uniqueness of Hebrews' use of the (ἐφ)άπαξ theme in the NT: he makes no mention of Rom 6.10 and 1 Pet 3.18, which describe Christ's death as ἐφάπαξ and ἅπαξ respectively.<sup>21</sup> The presence of this theme in both Pauline and Petrine texts suggests it was relatively widespread in early Christianity. I will argue in Chapter Two that the identification of the atonement as (ἐφ)άπαξ derives primarily from a Christian tradition combined with the characterization of the Day of Atonement as 'once a year'. Nevertheless, Thompson is correct that in Hebrews plurality characterizes the earthly realm, and eternity the heavenly, and that this corresponds with the distinction found in Middle Platonism – a distinction which commended itself to both Jewish and Christian writers.

However, the contention that the author's use of this theme is consistently Middle Platonic is unsustainable on closer examination of Hebrews. Middle Platonic texts will be examined more closely in §§2.5–2.6, but some brief comments about Hebrews' supposed proximity to Platonism in this theme can be made here. While Thompson focuses on Heb 7.1–10.18, like Attridge and others he believes that this theme functions uniformly throughout the letter. Thompson speaks of the 'consistent use' of the distinction (p. 571 and *passim*), and refers to both the exordium and Hebrews

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<sup>20</sup> He acknowledges that Philo was a Jew 'loyal to the Scriptures', but gives no weight to this in his subsequent discussion. Thompson 2007: 572.

<sup>21</sup> The (ἐφ)άπαξ crucifixion/Christ-event tradition is discussed by Winter 2002: 111–17.

6 (pp. 566–67, 573 and pp. 567, 580 respectively). As noted above, the consistency of this theme in Hebrews has been overstated. Thompson concedes that the author ‘departs from Middle Platonism in his conviction that “God has spoken” (1.1) in a specific event’,<sup>22</sup> yet fails to realize that this concession undermines the heavenly–earthly distinction in Heb 1.1–2a, where not only is it the case that God speaks, but *both* kinds of speech act, multiple and singular, traverse heavenly and earthly domains.<sup>23</sup>

The heavenly–earthly distinction encounters difficulties beyond the exordium as well. Thompson rightly notes that the discussion in Heb 7.1–10.18 relates primarily to Christ’s exaltation; but it is not *only* his exalted, heavenly work that is in view here. Rather, Christ’s entry into the world (10.5), his assumption of a body (10.5, 10), and the resulting sacrifice involving his crucifixion and blood (9.12, 14) are essential for the success of the heavenly atonement, and coincide with the very terminology of (ἐφ)άπαξ (cf. esp. 9.12; 10.10) that the Middle Platonic framework is said to explain. Thompson acknowledges that the narrative of Christ’s condescension and exaltation ‘stands in tension with the ontological dualism that pervades the author’s argument’,<sup>24</sup> but fails to see that the tension exists at the heart of the ontological distinction he seeks to establish. Terminology of ‘once-for-all’ describes not the singularity or eternity of heaven, not even a singular heavenly event, but an inherently border-crossing and category-confounding event with eternal consequences.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Thompson 2007: 581.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson does not believe that the author of Hebrews was a thoroughgoing Platonist, cf. 2007: 580; 2008: 21–26, esp. 25. However, he does think the plurality–singularity theme is consistent with and indebted to Platonism.

<sup>24</sup> Thompson 2007: 580.

<sup>25</sup> ‘What is not usually observed is how at a decisive point there is a reversal in the polarity of the antithetical pattern and how the spiritual, unique and new, is seen to be earthly as well as heavenly.’ Attridge 1986: 5.

This internal inconsistency has been identified and stated perhaps most forcefully by A. J. M. Wedderburn. He contends that:

[T]he author's argument leads him to positions which seemingly call in question the presuppositions on which his previous argument had been based and on which it depended for its force and validity, leaving one wondering whether he should ever have argued in that way in the first place.<sup>26</sup>

Wedderburn addresses in detail two instances of this problem: the Platonic ontological distinction between heaven and earth, and the use of OT sacrificial imagery.<sup>27</sup> With regard to the former he focusses particularly on Heb 10.19–20 and the veil, which he thinks most likely refers to the outermost screen of the (heavenly) sanctuary, and which he takes Hebrews to identify with Jesus' flesh. This would mean that the author, 'under the influence of the logic of the cultic analogies and imagery which he is pursuing, has presented us with an image which is decidedly foreign to Platonic thought' (p. 400). It is not primarily cultic imagery that causes this conflict with a Platonic world-view, however, but the 'confession',<sup>28</sup> 'the Christian myth of the Son of God who enters our world and returns to the heavenly one':

The assumptions of that 'confession' demolish the rigid dichotomy of the world-view which the *auctor ad Hebraeos* seemingly presupposes; in trying to integrate this 'confession' with this world-view he attempts the impossible, and from this impossibility stem many of the tensions and seeming contradictions of this writer's thought. (p. 402)

The difficulties with integrating the (ἐφ)άπαξ theme into a Middle Platonic framework are thus seen to be a subset of a wider problem. In terms of both the source and the elaboration of this contrast, then, Hebrews does not fit a Middle Platonic system as neatly as Thompson contends. While he attempts to dismiss Christ's incarnation and

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<sup>26</sup> Wedderburn 2005: 393.

<sup>27</sup> The second part of Wedderburn's article is relevant in assessing the next proposal; I reserve my assessment of his argument until then.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson describes this as the 'Christian narrative'.

ascension as introducing a ‘tension’ which co-exists with Hebrews’ consistent appeal to Middle Platonism, in fact these events disrupt Platonist notions to such an extent that ‘either this author is not as consistently Platonic as consistency should require or [...] he has failed to grasp what it means to be consistently Platonic.’<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3.3 Repetition–Singularity and the Transition from Old Covenant to New

Thompson’s study raises the important question of conceptual world-view, which will be addressed further in Chapter Two. The next proposal correlates Hebrews’ repetition–singularity contrast with the transition from old covenant to new, and is more closely associated with the other significant potential background for Hebrews’ thought world, Jewish apocalypticism. The relation of Hebrews to an apocalyptic world-view is articulated by Scott Mackie:

[A]lthough Hebrews fails to conform to the genre of apocalypse, its author’s theology is thoroughly impressed by apocalyptic thought, and especially by the apocalyptic belief that this present age/world is slated for imminent cataclysmic replacement, perhaps even removal. We should therefore characterize the author as engaging in ‘apocalyptic discourse.’<sup>30</sup>

It is important to stress that Jewish apocalyptic thought (and all the more Jewish apocalyptic *mysticism*) is not exclusively concerned with temporal or horizontal matters but incorporates spatial and vertical elements.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, insofar as this proposal

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<sup>29</sup> Wedderburn 2005: 400.

<sup>30</sup> Mackie 2007: 36. For treatment of apocalyptic themes in Hebrews see Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009: 167–73. On the difficulties of defining apocalypse, apocalyptic, and apocalypticism see Collins 1979; 1998: 1–42; Rowland 1982: 9–72. I take apocalyptic to be an appropriate adjective to qualify aspects of Hebrews’ thought which incorporate visionary, heavenly ascent, and eschatological motifs.

<sup>31</sup> On Jewish apocalyptic mysticism see Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009: 3–11; on mysticism and Hebrews see Barnard 2012.

highlights the essentially *eschatological* nature of the repetition–singularity contrast, it places Hebrews close to distinctively Jewish and Christian traditions.<sup>32</sup>

In an article dealing with Heb 9.6–10 Felix Cortez argues that the two compartments of the tabernacle and the two kinds of service occurring in them (regular vs once-yearly Day of Atonement) function not typologically but as an illustration (*παραβολή*) of the transition from old to new covenant. I will engage with Cortez’s article at some length in Chapter Six, but for now it is worth noting that two of the four differences he identifies involve the plurality–singularity contrast: ‘the transition from the old to the new covenant implies a transition from *many* to *one* priest. [...] This transition from many to one priest implies a transition from *many* sacrifices to *one*.’<sup>33</sup> While Cortez focusses on one part of the cultic section, his insight applies more broadly: even the Day of Atonement, singular within the sacred time of the yearly cycle, is in fact repeated (cf. 9.25; 10.1; and arguably 7.27). Furthermore, the association of that which is one-off with the eschaton is clear in 9.26 and 28: ‘Christ has appeared *once for all at the end of the age* [...] and will appear a second time for salvation’.

This proposal also has merit when applied to Hebrews 1 and 6: the plural–singular contrast does characterize old and new covenants in 1.1–2a, even if the singular aspect of new covenant revelation has somewhat lower volume than the stressed ‘sonship’ aspect.<sup>34</sup> The eschatological framework is explicit in the temporal phrase ‘in these last days’, which denotes the time of God’s speech through the Son. A

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<sup>32</sup> The overemphasis in scholarship on *eschatology* as the defining element of apocalyptic is widely critiqued, e.g. by Rowland 1982: 23–48; Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009: 13–17. This critique is accepted by Collins 1998: 10–12, though he maintains that eschatology plays an essential role in apocalyptic.

<sup>33</sup> Cortez 2006: 543 (emphasis original); cf. 544. The other antitheses he identifies are unrestricted access vs need for blood, and flesh vs conscience.

<sup>34</sup> The anarthrous noun emphasizes Jesus’ nature as Son: ‘[Gott] sprach zu uns durch einen, der Sohn ist’, Backhaus 2009a: 80, 82.

Septuagintalism, ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων is ‘a literal rendering of the Hebrew phrase which is used in the Old Testament to denote the epoch when the words of the prophets will be fulfilled.’<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in Hebrews 6 the unrepeatability of repentance appears to be at least in part eschatologically based. The evocation of salvation includes the thoroughly eschatological ‘tasting the powers of the coming age’ (6.5), and in line with other parts of Hebrews the transition to the new covenant implies an intensification of both the privileges and perils of relating to God (cf. 2.1–3a; 10.26–31; 12.25).

However, the transition from old to new covenant does not imply the cessation of repetition. God continues to address his people through the words of the OT, as indicated by the frequent use of *πάλιν* to introduce citations. New covenant believers are to exhort one another daily (3.13). Indeed, an eschatological focus is the motivation for more regular meeting: ‘do not neglect your meeting together, but encourage one another, and *all the more as you see the Day approaching*’ (10.25). And although the relationship of Hebrews’ argument to the Jerusalem temple is hard to ascertain – both because of uncertainty regarding Hebrews’ date and because the letter does not explicitly describe or address the temple – the audience is exhorted to praise God in explicitly cultic terms and with great frequency (13.15–16). The new covenant is thus characterized by renewed, perhaps even intensified, repetition.<sup>36</sup>

To maintain that plurality and singularity correspond to old and new covenants respectively, therefore, one has to hold that Hebrews is inconsistent. In highlighting and critiquing the repetition inherent in old covenant revelation and ritual, the author failed

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce 1990: 46; cf. Mackie 2007: 39–40.

<sup>36</sup> In this regard it is interesting that Hebrews makes nothing of Jer 31.34 (despite citing it at 8.11), which envisages an end to ongoing teaching and exhortation because the law is written on the hearts of God’s people; this is perhaps because this part of the new covenant seems not (yet) to have been fulfilled.

to realize that he undercut his own exhortations.<sup>37</sup> At this point we return to the second part of Wedderburn's article, which helpfully exposes the difficulties in the way Hebrews argues for the transition from old to new covenant. He notes that 'the argument of this work seems to presuppose the legitimacy of the rationale undergirding that cult' (p. 404). But if the atonement, when expounded in sacrificial terms, demonstrates that animal blood could not in fact remove sin (10.4) and that God desires obedience not sacrifice (the exposition of Ps 40 in Heb 10.5–10), then OT cultic categories turn out to be invalid. Yet this in turn undermines the explanation of both Christ's death and Christian practice (10.19–25; 13.15–16) in cultic terms. Wedderburn claims the imagery 'comes apart at the seams': 'Hebrews seems to persist resolutely with cultic terminology even after it has, to all intents and purposes, dealt the cultic way of thought a *coup de grâce*.' (p. 409). The same critique applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to repetition.

Wedderburn's comments usefully highlight the apparent contradictions arising from the ways in which Hebrews adopts and adapts conceptual frameworks from Middle Platonism and Judaism. This is an important caution against assimilating Hebrews too quickly to either a Middle Platonic or an apocalyptic Jewish framework. Yet while Wedderburn has incisively laid his finger on genuine tensions within Hebrews, he is too quick to accuse the author of incoherence. This may be explained by the fact that he approaches the letter from a thoroughly rationalistic and modernist point of view which assesses (and largely dismisses) Hebrews in terms of its own value judgments – in particular, a spatial heaven–earth distinction is 'hard for us to take

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<sup>37</sup> In this thesis I use the terms 'exhortation'/'(ex)hortatory' and 'paraenesis'/'paraenetic' broadly synonymously, though note that the latter is technically narrower and distinct from the former. See the essays in Starr and Engberg-Pedersen 2004; especially Übelacker 2004.

seriously', while sacrifices 'strike us as anomalous and alien in our western world, indeed in the eyes of some abhorrent' (p. 410). In other words, Wedderburn *wants* Hebrews to be inconsistent on these points because this makes it more palatable. The gap between Hebrews' world and that of the modern Western interpreter presents a challenge which must not be underestimated or neglected; but this does not legitimize simply dismissing Hebrews as primitive, nor does such a judgment help us understand Hebrews on its own terms.

Instead of assuming Hebrews is self-contradictory, we should entertain the thought that such an evidently accomplished author might *not* have been unaware of these tensions. In this case, he may insist on an ontological dualism between heaven and earth deliberately,<sup>38</sup> because it brings out all the more starkly the radical nature of what the Christ has done in crossing and uniting these realms. On this reading it is not so much that Platonic dualist cosmology co-exists uneasily with a Christian narrative, as that the Christian narrative – while sharing some basic conceptualities with a Platonic cosmology – ultimately overrides and subverts it. The heavenly realm is characterized by eternity and unity, but it is made accessible by the entrance into the earthly realm of a divine being who takes on a human body and returns to the heavenly sphere only after and through his death; he ascends, moreover, *with* his body and blood, and will return to the created world to bring complete salvation.<sup>39</sup> The interpenetration of the earthly and heavenly realms, moreover, does not emerge from nowhere but is anticipated and extended through repeated liturgical and cultic acts in both old and new covenants.

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<sup>38</sup> Platonism and Judaism fundamentally agree on this distinction, even if they differ widely on its implications.

<sup>39</sup> Note in this connection the argument of Moffitt 2011 that Jesus' physical resurrection and ascension render the logic of the cultic language intelligible.

Repetition pertains to the earthly domain but can anticipate the heavenly; and the Christ event enables the penetration into the earthly domain of heavenly eternity.

When it comes to cultic categories, what Wedderburn's argument in fact 'demolishes' is the kind of anti-cultic construal of Hebrews of which it is an exemplification: if Hebrews assumes the validity of sacrificial categories in order to argue that the cult has come to a decisive end, it is indeed self-contradictory. In fact, however, the letter uses cultic categories because it believes they are indicative of the nature of reality (cf. 8.5) – they tell us something about how the world truly is, as I shall argue in Chapter Six. Jesus' obedient death and exaltation not only fulfil the Levitical cult, they are *the true* sacrifice. The new covenant, then, is not so much the antithesis or annulment of the old but rather its vindication. In this case there exists a fundamental conceptual continuity between the covenants, which opens up the possibility for the repetitious activities of believers to continue to have a cultic function.

In summary, then, this survey has sought to demonstrate that repetition does not constitute a uniform 'basic evaluative category' in Hebrews; this leaves us free to appreciate the particular function of repetition in each section of the letter in which we encounter it. It also mandates the careful establishment of grounds on which different forms of repetition within Hebrews can be connected, if at all. I have also shown that attempts to correlate repetition and singularity respectively with either the earthly and heavenly realms or the old and new covenants ultimately fail. This is indicative of the complexity of the relationship of spatial/ontological and temporal/eschatological categories within Hebrews. Moreover, repetition is one feature of the letter that stands at the heart of these tensions. This mandates careful attention as to how and why the

expected or conventional boundaries between such categories are disrupted. In this thesis I will seek to demonstrate that the distinctions between heaven and earth and between the former age and the eschaton are not unintentionally confounded in Hebrews; rather they are deliberately transposed by the governing Christian narrative handed down to the author. The coming of Christ, and with it the fuller revelation of that which is heavenly and eternal, reworks conventional notions of the one and the many. Given the polysemous portrayal of repetition in Hebrews which this survey suggests, it is necessary to establish ways of conceptualizing and categorizing repetition, and it is to this that we now turn.

## 1.4 Approaching Repetition

### 1.4.1 Definition

What is repetition? As a phenomenon or concept repetition has been widely discussed and variously applied in disciplines as diverse as theology, philosophy, linguistics, literary criticism, and psychology. Dictionary definitions of ‘repetition’ tend to distinguish between senses relating to speech and those relating to actions.<sup>40</sup> This distinction is significant and affects the extent to which we can bring previous theoretical analyses of repetition to bear on Hebrews: the most extensive discussion of repetition is found in the domain of *language* (linguistics and literature), whereas the statements in Hebrews primarily describe *acts* of sacrifice. As highlighted above,

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘repeat v.’ senses II and III, and ‘repetition n. 1’ senses I and III, respectively. Our interest is in these two senses, and not the somewhat specialized – and now largely historical – meaning of (seeking/making) restitution or repayment.

however, critique of repetition in ritual over the course of church history has applied not only to ritual gestures and acts, but also – indeed, perhaps primarily – to words or liturgy. And in Hebrews one of the key interpretative issues which this thesis will address is the value attached to repetition *in* the Old Testament prophets (1.1) and to repetition *of* their speech in the form of quotation and exposition. In this regard speech act theory helpfully highlights the fact that instances of speech are in themselves acts, enabling us to treat both actions and speech together.<sup>41</sup>

Repetition can thus be defined as *the action or fact of doing something again*, or, without assuming that every event must have an agent, *the renewal or recurrence of an action or event*. Repetition can refer both to a single instance which repeats a prior instance, and to a series of instances (whether this series is taken to repeat an instance which does not form part of the series, or whether the repetition is purely internal to the series). This definition tends to presuppose a linear progression in time, though it need not be limited to this sphere: for example, a symbol, pattern, or object might be repeated spatially, like notes in a musical score, words in a book, or trees along a road – phenomena which are synchronic yet often experienced in (temporal) succession.

Such a definition immediately raises the question as to whether it is in fact possible for something to occur again. Heraclitus famously challenged the possibility of repetition when he declared that it is impossible for a person to step into the same river twice (Plato, *Cratylus* 402a). Regardless of how close the two occurrences are, in the interim both the individual and the river will have changed. Similarly, two instances of the same word on a page are distinguished by their being constituted physically by

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<sup>41</sup> For the classic studies see Austin 1975; Searle 1969; 1979; for an adaptation to philosophical theology see Wolterstorff 1995; for application to biblical studies generally see Vanhoozer 1998; Briggs 2001; 2005; with application to Hebrews see Treier 2009.

different particles of ink on different areas of paper, and by the spatial distance between them. There is a sense, then, in which exact or identical repetition is impossible.<sup>42</sup> In his book on repetition in film and literature Bruce Kavin acknowledges this and therefore suggests that while it is permissible to speak about repetition, what we are in fact dealing with is ‘near-repetition’.<sup>43</sup>

Theologian John Milbank extends this insight, critiquing not merely the idea that exact repetition is possible, but the notion that it is desirable. He sees this as a potentially stifling or even dangerous idea, and associates it particularly with technological advances such as printing and mass-production, and ideologically with the advent of modernity.<sup>44</sup> In the context of a discussion of gift-exchange theory Milbank notes that any act of reciprocity requires delay (so as not to appear to be the speedy discharge of a debt) and non-identical repetition (so as not to be a simple restitution or even rejection of the same gift). This understanding of gift-exchange is adopted from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, but the use of ‘non-identical repetition’ (in place of Bourdieu’s ‘différence’) has encouraged application beyond the context of reciprocity conventions.<sup>45</sup> For example, Catherine Pickstock and David Ford have applied it in the relatively cognate spheres of liturgy and eucharist to describe the endless reciprocal cycle of blessing between God and people.<sup>46</sup> In a different domain Stephen Fowl employs it to defend the Apostle Paul’s exhortations to ‘imitate me’ from Elizabeth Castelli’s charge that mimesis functions as a Foucauldian power play in his letters: Paul’s appeal to mimesis is neither a power strategy nor intended to eliminate

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<sup>42</sup> It is this point that Deleuze presses home against static concepts of identity; Deleuze 1993.

<sup>43</sup> Kavin 1972: 7.

<sup>44</sup> Milbank 1997: 70; Pickstock 1998: 48, 104–8; Ford 1999: 143, 152.

<sup>45</sup> Milbank 1995: esp. 125; cf. Bourdieu 1977: 1–30, esp. 5–7.

<sup>46</sup> Ford 1999: 152–56; Pickstock 1998. Cf. the discussion of variation in repetition in relation to music and the eucharist in Begbie 2000: 155–75.

difference; rather, it promotes the development of practical reasoning through non-identical repetition of Paul's example.<sup>47</sup> Milbank's term is sometimes redeployed as though it carried a clearly-defined and self-evident content, when in fact it is only rather briefly illustrated and remains open-ended – but this very openness accounts for its versatility and its adoption in various domains. At the very least Milbank highlights the creative potential of repetition, making a virtue out of variation. Repetition of necessity incorporates sameness and difference, identity and variation: a sufficient degree of continuity or sameness must exist between two instances for one to be recognisably a repetition of the other; at the same time, the nature and degree of variation partly determines the effect of the repetition.

#### 1.4.2 Hebrews' Portrayal of Repetition

It is necessary briefly to assess Hebrews' portrayal of repetition in order to determine the shape of any analytical approach. The letter nowhere uses a word for 'repetition'. The closest Greek equivalent would be δευτερώω, to second, double or repeat, with the nominal form δευτέρωσις meaning a reiteration or repetition. This term is found in later Christian texts, applied polemically either to sections of the OT law (as in the *Didascalia apostolorum* and expanded in the *Apostolic Constitutions*) or to Jewish oral traditions, particularly as crystallized in the Mishnah and Talmud (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 15.2.1; 33.9.4; Augustine; Jerome; Justinian, *Novella* 146).<sup>48</sup> In the latter case

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<sup>47</sup> Castelli 1991; Fowl 1998a: 148–49; 1998b: 196, 198. Cf. the distinction made between repetition and vain repetition/ritual and 'ritualized' ritual in Sykes 1996. He goes on to outline ways for liturgies to avoid falling foul of the charge of Foucauldian power play through imposed repetitious structures.

<sup>48</sup> Bietenhard 1957: 843–47. When Justinian forbids reading of δευτέρωσις in synagogues it is unclear what exactly is intended by this. Bietenhard thinks it cannot be the Mishnah or Talmud as these

δευτέρωσις reflects the various meanings associated with מִשְׁנָה (derived from the verb מִשַׁנָּה, to repeat, teach, learn): repetition; teaching/learning, which took place primarily through repetition; the passing on of oral tradition via repetition; and oral tradition's status as 'second' in relation to the Torah.<sup>49</sup> While it is easy to see how the word might have been applied polemically to imply posteriority and inferiority, δευτέρωσις was nevertheless a technical term from relatively early on, as seen from its transliteration in Latin texts, and thus probably derived from the usage of the rabbis themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Although Hebrews uses δεύτερος positively of the covenant inaugurated by Christ (8.7; 10.9; cf. 9.28 of the second coming) it does not develop the notion that the second covenant is a repetition of the first, except perhaps implicitly in the various typologies it uses or implies. Rather, Hebrews employs a number of common techniques to evoke or describe repetition, most notably adverbial expressions (πολυμερῶς, πολυτρόπως, πάλιν, εἰς τὸ διηγεκέες, πολλάκις, διὰ παντός, καθ' ἡμέραν, κατ' ἐνιαυτόν) and the prefix ἀνα-, which can have the sense of 'again'. The question which interests us here, and which has had largest impact in the reception of Hebrews, is what the letter says *about* repetition (of revelation, repentance, and sacrifice), rather than how Hebrews itself uses (verbal, literary) repetition.<sup>51</sup>

Even a brief reading of Hebrews reveals that it is interested primarily in the relationship between repetition and efficacy. In the exordium (Heb 1.1–4) – however the connotations of πολυμερῶς and πολυτρόπως are construed – the key exegetical issue

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were not read out in synagogues. See del Valle Rodríguez 2005: 306 who lists various possibilities; he himself thinks it refers to the Talmud.

<sup>49</sup> Del Valle Rodríguez 2005: 300; Stemberger 1996: 109.

<sup>50</sup> Del Valle Rodríguez 2005: 308; Horbury 2010: 7.

<sup>51</sup> For Hebrews' own use of repetition see the structural studies of Vanhoye 1976; Guthrie 1994; Westfall 2005; and especially Clark 2011, who applies to Hebrews the theoretical model of Hoey 1991 regarding lexical patterning in a text.

is the degree of value attached to this plurality. Elsewhere Hebrews mostly describes or evokes repetition in ways which *assume* an evident connection with lack of efficacy (e.g. 5.12–6.2; 7.23–28; 9.23–28; 10.10–14), although at times it makes this connection more explicit (as in 10.1–2). I argued above that repetition does not constitute a uniform category in Hebrews, and in a similar vein the precise relationship of repetition to efficacy varies through the letter: old covenant sacrifices are categorically ineffective for cleansing the conscience, something shown by their repetition; basic teaching has value at the appropriate time but loses value when repeated; initial repentance is effective but its repetition is impossible. What is needed, therefore, is a taxonomy which will enable us to conceptualize the relationship of repetition and effect.

### 1.4.3 The Relationship of Repetition to Ritual

Before addressing the relationship between repetition and effect at a general level, it is important to clarify the subsidiary issue of how repetition relates to ritual. Definitions of ritual almost always include repetition; for example: ‘conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylised symbolic bodily actions’ (*Encyclopaedia of Religion*); ‘any repetitive behaviour’ (*Collins English Dictionary*).<sup>52</sup> As I noted above in the survey of modern scholarship on Hebrews, this association is problematic when ritual is seen as inherently negative.<sup>53</sup> Against this anti-ritualist tradition the anthropologist Mary

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<sup>52</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ritual thus: ‘A ritual act or ceremonial observance’, adding ‘in later use: an action or series of actions regularly or habitually repeated’ (2a); also: ‘The performance of ritual acts [...] in later use: repeated actions or patterns of behaviour having significance within a particular social group’ (3). A ‘repeated bodily action bearing only a loose connection with logical, conscious thought’, Usher 2010: 11.

<sup>53</sup> For examples of anti-ritualist readings of Hebrews see Wedderburn 2005 (treated in the previous section); Michaud 1983; Chester 1991. René Girard propounded an influential anti-ritualist reading of Hebrews, at least in his earlier work; see Girard 1987: 224–62.

Douglas has noted that the use of ‘ritual’ to describe empty outward acts and symbols which do not correspond to inner states makes it hard to speak of situations in which such outward acts are genuine, and creates a false dichotomy between insincere external religion and sincere internalized religion.<sup>54</sup> In an attempt to clarify discussion she introduces a distinction between ‘ritual’, a neutral term describing outward acts, and “‘ritualized’ ritual’, where this has become externalized and lost internal commitment.<sup>55</sup>

This distinction enables greater clarity in thinking about when and why ritual does or does not work, and warns against construing it as necessarily negative. ‘Ritualized’ ritual is correlated with lack of effect. However, this does not mean there is by contrast an automatic link between ritual and efficacy. The relationship of rite to effect (magic, miracle, answer to prayer) is not a determinative or controlling one, and at the social level ritual’s ‘symbols can only have effect so long as they command confidence’.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, while this distinction can be usefully applied to the OT prophetic ‘critique’ of sacrifice,<sup>57</sup> it does not apply to Hebrews. Although the letter is interested in the distinction between internal and external states, particularly with regard to cleansing, it focusses primarily on the objective rather than subjective internal state of the believer. The conscience is purified by Christ’s one offering (9.14), and while this may mean there is no consciousness of sins (cf. 10.2) this is a subjective awareness that derives from an objective state. Put another way, Hebrews’ understanding of the efficacy of Christ’s atoning act vis-à-vis tabernacle sacrifices gives no role to the attitude of the believer: the atonement simply is effective, and the individual’s choice is

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<sup>54</sup> See esp. Douglas 1996: 1–19; Douglas 2002: 72–90. This false dichotomy is still occasionally found in Hebrews scholarship, e.g.: ‘el culto antiguo era ritual, externo, convencional; Cristo lo sustituye por un culto real, personal, existencial’, Zesati Estrada 2007: 419.

<sup>55</sup> Douglas 1996: 3; one might add, seriously disabling to theology as well.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas 2002: 79.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas 2002: 75; this OT prophetic tradition will be discussed in Chapter Two.

to accept or spurn it. Hebrews neither adopts the prophetic critique nor extends it to designate the whole old covenant cult as insincerely executed.<sup>58</sup>

The recognition that ritual can be ‘good’ or ‘bad’ helps to show that repetition in a ritual context can likewise be ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and is an important corrective to certain traditional readings of Hebrews; however, this tells us little about the relationship *between* repetition and ritual. I mentioned above that the two are not entirely commensurate: not all ritual is repeated, nor does all repetition constitute ritual. This observation suggests that the link between the two is not so close as is often assumed. Substantial support for this impression can be adduced from the work of Catherine Bell.

Bell notes that despite the explosion in ritual studies, there has been little success in actually defining ritual.<sup>59</sup> Too often rituals are seen as ‘special paradigmatic acts’, far removed from general social activity; yet to broaden out the definition in direct reaction against this tendency risks construing *all* activity as ritual.<sup>60</sup> To avoid the horns of this dilemma Bell appeals to practice theory. ‘Practice’ – ‘a nonsynthetic and irreducible term for human activity’ – can be characterized as 1) situational (it can be grasped only in the context in which it occurs); 2) strategic (expedient or manipulative, excluding analysis); 3) deliberately misrecognizing what it is in fact doing; and 4) able to reproduce or change a vision of the order of power in the world.<sup>61</sup> That is to say, practice sees what it intends to accomplish, and is often quite effective in achieving this, but is generally unaware of the strategies it uses to get there.

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Die prophetische Kultkritik bleibt außen vor; Fragen eines veräußerlichten Ritus interessieren ihn nicht.’ Söding 2005: 103.

<sup>59</sup> Bell 1992: 3.

<sup>60</sup> Bell 1992: 7, 70–71.

<sup>61</sup> Bell 1992: 81–88.

Bell's proposal is that ritual is simply another form of practice, thus avoiding the pitfall of identifying ritual as a discrete or privileged activity. At the same time, in paying attention to what she terms 'ritualization', that is, the way in which ritual acts are generated with respect to other activity, she suggests that what is essential to ritual is *the fact that* it is constituted through establishing a privileged contrast between itself and other ways of acting, and not *the particular strategies* it employs to do this.<sup>62</sup> This means that instead of seeking to identify particular features as intrinsic to ritual *per se*, attention should be given to the ways in which a specific ritual constitutes itself over against any other activity. This has significant implications for the relationship of ritual and repetition:

[C]ertain features – formality, fixity, and repetition – have been consistently and repeatedly cited as central to ritual and ritualization [...]. Yet if ritual is interpreted in terms of practice, it becomes clear that formality, fixity, and repetition are not *intrinsic qualities* of ritual so much as they are *a frequent, but not universal strategy* for producing ritualized acts.<sup>63</sup>

Repetition is only one way of constituting ritual as different and sacred, and while it often fulfils this function it is neither sufficient nor necessary for ritualization. This uncoupling of repetition from ritual is highly significant: it must not be assumed that where Hebrews discusses repetition it discusses ritual: repetition should therefore be taken on its own terms, discerned from its context, wherever it occurs. It further problematizes the assumption that in construing repetition negatively in its cultic section, Hebrews is attacking or rejecting ritual. These considerations are hugely important for the reception of Hebrews, and will bear on the discussion of repetition in the letter's sacrificial argumentation in Chapter Six.

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<sup>62</sup> Bell 1992: 88–91.

<sup>63</sup> Bell 1992: 91–92 (emphasis added).

#### 1.4.4 Approaching the Relationship of Repetition to Effect

When repetition is detached from any inherent connection to ritual it becomes both easier and more urgent to assess it from a much broader and more general perspective. As noted at the start of this section, repetition is widely used within, and therefore discussed in relationship to, texts – most notably poetry and narrative – and other media, especially those which can have narrative structure such as film and theatre.<sup>64</sup> Most (linguistic-literary) discussions of repetition focus on form or function, or both; that is, they define forms of repetition found in literature or linguistics, and elucidate the range of possible effects that these can have.<sup>65</sup> Theorists tend to be cautious about developing a rigid taxonomy of either form or function, given the variability and polysemous potential of language and of authors to develop new forms or uses of repetition.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, they are wary of identifying particular effects with particular forms, because effect is partly subjective and is not constrained by form, just as a certain form of repetition (e.g. alliteration or anaphora) can have any number of effects.<sup>67</sup>

In biblical studies the theoretical foundations laid by Robert Alter and Meir Sternberg have been widely applied to lexical and verbal repetition, particularly in OT narrative but also elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> As indicated above, however, the object of this study is

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<sup>64</sup> See the influential and well-executed literary and filmic study of Kawin 1972.

<sup>65</sup> See in particular the interdisciplinary multi-authored volumes Fischer 1994; Johnstone 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Note the caution of Alter 1985: x; Sternberg 1985: 392. Kent 2012 advocates developing a taxonomy, and lists 59 possible effects of narrative repetition (pp. 103–30). This helpfully demonstrates the vast creative potential of repetition, though it is somewhat unwieldy as a tool for analysing texts. Note the hesitation expressed by Steinmann 2013 that Kent's study runs the risk of counting almost anything as repetition.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Sternberg 1985: 387, 393, 437; Johnstone 1994: 10–11.

<sup>68</sup> Alter 1985: 88–113; Sternberg 1985: 365–440. Cf. Long 1991 for a critique of Alter and Sternberg for (implicitly, but perhaps deliberately) excluding all literary critical theories other than their

not Hebrews' use of (verbal) repetition for particular structural or rhetorical effects, but rather its portrayal of repetition's function. The purpose of the present discussion is not to identify a number of possible effects of repetition (as literary studies acknowledge and occasionally demonstrate, such a list is potentially limitless) but to conceptualize the relationship of repetition to efficacy on a more general level. In this regard the widely-noted existence of 'good' and 'bad' repetition<sup>69</sup> forms a suitable starting point, although ultimately a binary formulation is insufficiently nuanced for our purposes.

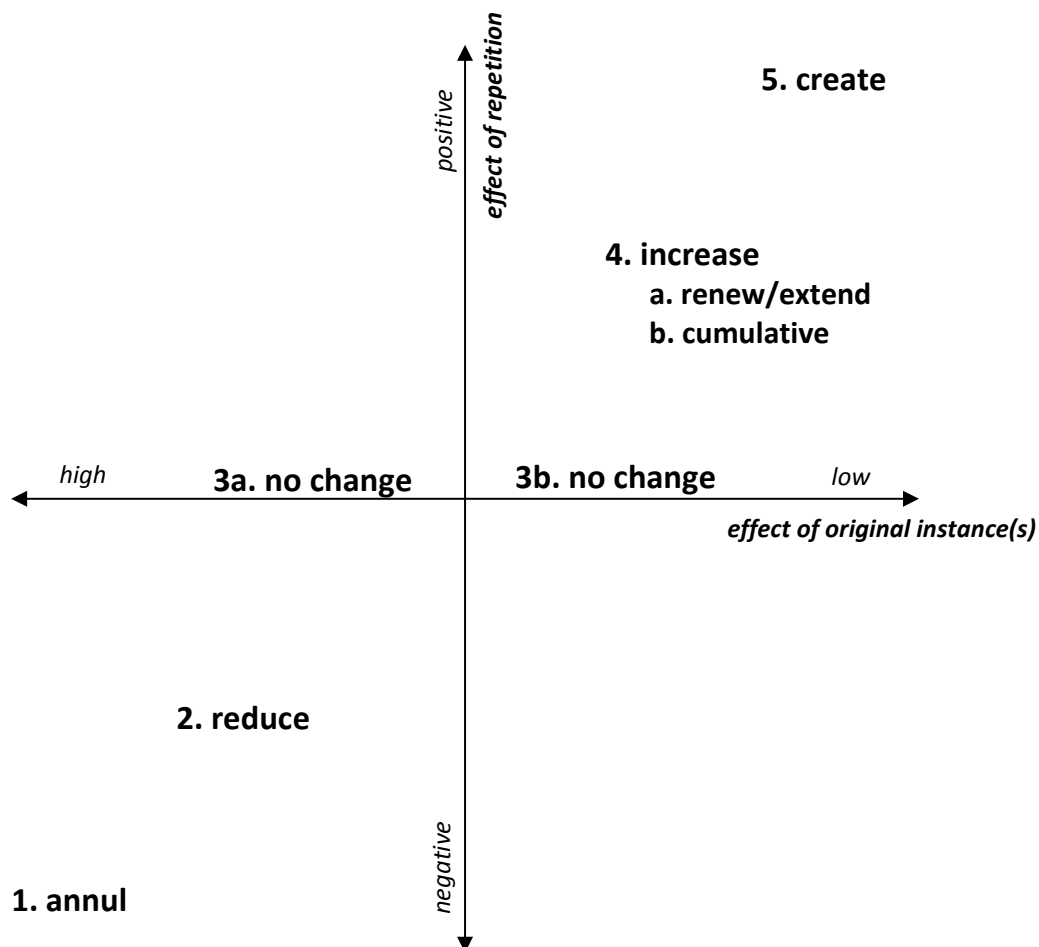
#### 1.4.5 Charting Repetition and Effect

The foregoing discussion contributes a number of insights to the question of repetition's effects. It also reveals that, to the best of my knowledge, no-one has attempted to classify the relationship between repetition and effect *in general*. This relationship can be represented diagrammatically by charting the effect of repetition (from the most negative possible effect to the most positive) against the effect of the original instance.

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own expressive realism (e.g. deconstructionist, feminist, Marxist). This does not undermine the applicability of their analyses of repetition and redundancy in narrative texts. See the application of similar methods to NT narrative by Witherup 1992; 1993 (Acts); and Anderson 1994 (Matthew).

<sup>69</sup> Cf., e.g., Fischer 1994: 9–10; Kawin 1972: 4.



The categories on this graph do not represent discrete or mathematical points, but rather indicate the primary concentration of five particular effects of repetition with respect to the effect of the prior or original instance; in reality the chart represents more of a continuum, with separate categories identified for the sake of convenience. Each of these categories is taken in turn.

1) Repetition can *annul* efficacy. In this case, the prior instance was effective but repeating it dispels or undoes this effect. An example would be explaining a joke: where the initial telling of a joke has humorous effect any attempt to repeat this with explanation, even for the benefit of a person who did not get the joke first time round, may not only fail to have the same effect but detract from its original impact.

2) Repetition can *reduce* efficacy, presuming a prior instance to have been effective to some extent. The repetition detracts from what has gone before. This kind of repetition is perhaps most familiar in the form of the ‘law of diminishing returns’, whereby desired effect decreases with each repetition – be that a drug user’s high or a gourmand’s penchant for fine delicacies.

3) It is possible for repetition to introduce *no change*, neither reducing nor increasing the efficacy of previous instances. Two forms can be envisaged: a) where earlier instance(s) were effective but neither gain nor lose efficacy; b) where earlier instance(s) were ineffective and do not gain efficacy. In either case the action or event may be repeated in the hope of increasing efficacy, but fails to make any difference. For example, repeated applications to a funding agency will fail to have any effect if the applicant falls outside that body’s eligibility criteria.

4) Unequivocally on the positive side of the scale, repetition may *increase* efficacy. As with the previous category, two scenarios are possible: a) repeating an action or event may *extend* or *renew* its efficacy, in which case the effect of prior instance(s) is presumed to be of limited scope or duration; b) alternatively, repetition may *cumulatively increase* efficacy. In practice these two options are not discrete. Eating daily both extends/renews the energy the body requires after the energy from the previous meal is expended, and in the case of a particular diet or regime may allow a cumulative increase in health, alertness, etc. The extension or renewal of effect underlies much mundane day-to-day repetition, such as eating and washing. A cumulative increase in effect is sought in language learning, training for a marathon, or the formation of virtue.

5) Finally, repetition may *create* efficacy. In this case a single instance is insufficient, and it is the very fact of repetition which constitutes efficacy. So for example in various forms of verbal repetition the structural or emotive effect of, say, *inclusio* or anaphora simply cannot occur without repetition. Or, returning to the domain of humour, the repetition of an otherwise incidental phrase or anecdote may function to form an in-joke and thus to create humour.

The diagram necessarily and intentionally simplifies what remains a complex relationship, but at the same time it is intended to be comprehensive in covering the relation of any form of repetition to any form of effect; for this reason the illustrative examples above come from a wide range of domains. A number of general remarks can be made. The relationship of repetition to effect is very roughly inversely proportional to the effect of the original instance(s): 1, 2, and 3a presuppose the original instance to have been effective to some degree, whereas 3b through to 5 require it to have been ineffective, or less effective than it might have been. Different criteria for efficacy will also affect the assessment of repetition: one instance of repetition may be assessed in diametrically opposed ways according to its relationship to two different kinds of effect. For example, repeatedly hitting a brick wall with a sledgehammer will destroy the wall (2 and/or 1), but if the *goal* is to remove the wall then this action will be assessed as 4 and/or 5. While the options represent an overlapping continuum, it is possible for continued repetition to jump from one category to another: for example, alliteration may build an emotive effect (4b or 5), yet its overuse can be tiresome or even entirely self-defeating (2 or 1). This raises the issue of intention and reception: repetition may be intended one way but received another, and may be received in two different ways by

different people. Estimation of the effect of repetition is in part dependent on perspective.

The chart makes explicit the different kinds of relationship repetition can have to effect; in the following analysis of the portrayal and understanding of repetition in Hebrews and its contexts this categorization is latent throughout, and it will be revisited in the conclusion as a means of summarizing the study's findings.

## **1.5 Thesis Outline**

The rest of Part One seeks to situate the portrayal of repetition in Hebrews in its historical settings. Chapter Two assesses the historical location of Hebrews; while nothing can be affirmed with certainty beyond a setting in the second half of the first century AD, I suggest that Jewish Christian recipients in Italy in the couple of decades following the destruction of Jerusalem constitute the most plausible hypothesis. The rest of the chapter examines the presentation of repetition and singularity in Hebrews' overlapping contexts: texts from the OT, Qumran, Middle Platonism, and early Christianity. There are points of contact with all of these, but the only clear dependence Hebrews exhibits is on the OT tradition regarding Yom Kippur's singularity and the early Christian tradition regarding the uniqueness of Jesus' death. It is in combining and developing these that the letter's understandings of repetition emerge.

Chapter Three looks at Hebrews' early reception in the first few centuries AD, serving a threefold purpose: the construal of repetition as negative in apparent dependence on Hebrews suggests the uniqueness and strangeness of this line of argumentation in the ancient world, such that it was misunderstood; and the earliest

extant uses of Hebrews' thought in this area shed light on both the beginnings of the negative tradition of reading the letter which has been highlighted in this introductory chapter, and the seeds of a potentially more fruitful manner of reading it.

Part Two proceeds to the exegetical investigation which is central to this study. Chapter Four examines the plurality of prophetic speech in the exordium and then throughout Hebrews in the form of quotation of the OT. Revelation in the old and new covenants is not contrasted, rather the manifold speech of God to his people in former times is fulfilled in the surpassing revelation through his Son. Ongoing repetition of God's speech in the new covenant continues to serve the needs of his people, and plurality is in fact essential to the exegetical procedures of the letter in drawing out the full meaning of the OT in light of the Christ event.

Chapter Five attends to the much-debated question of apostasy and the impossibility of a second repentance. It argues that repentance and faith are so closely identified with the death of Jesus that they assume its characteristics, including its absolute singularity. Hebrews does not use the term 'repentance' to designate the regular returning to God envisaged by Greco-Roman philosophical schools and other Christian groups, reserving it for a total and initial turning to God. Exactly when irreversible apostasy might occur is not specified, but regular meeting, exhortation, and progression in the faith is absolutely essential to avoiding it.

Chapter Six addresses priesthood and sacrifice motifs in Hebrews' central cultic section. Hebrews conceives of an actual heavenly cult on which the earthly was modelled, and which has now been made accessible through Christ; this has important implications for any assessment of cultic language in the letter, and terminology such as 'literal/metaphorical' and 'spiritualization' is critiqued. Next the weakness of old

covenant priests and sacrifices is shown to be both ontologically and epistemologically derivative. That is to say, such weakness is a function of the old covenant cult's status as dependent on heavenly reality but is fully understood as weakness only following Christ's coming, which reveals that heavenly reality. Hebrews associates the singularity of the Christ event with its superiority, and thus by extension the plurality of priests and sacrifices is developed into a sign of their intrinsic inferiority. Repetition thus has an indicative function: it is symptomatic rather than constitutive of the weakness of the old order.

What is more, because repetition is characterized as ineffective only in relation to Christ, where repeated old covenant activity is portrayed without such a direct comparison it does not gain the same connotations. I argue that in Heb 9.1–14 the repeated entry of the priests into the outer sanctuary serves as a positive temporal foil to the high priest's entry once in a year. Christ's entrance into heaven fulfils both aspects of the tabernacle service, providing constant access into the most holy place. This positive function of repetition in the old covenant also prepares for the application of cultic language to the Christian believer, especially in Hebrews 13. On the basis of Christ's completed sacrificial work, the new covenant community is construed in priestly terms and continues to offer non-atoning sacrifices in synchronicity with temple worship, in order to extend the knowledge and praise of God in this present age.

In the concluding Chapter Seven, I suggest that in Hebrews the portrayal of a particular kind of repetition as effective or ineffective is a function of the relation of that which is repeated to Christ. Repeated acts which derive from or tend towards him (e.g. meeting together, the sacrifice of praise) are affirmed, while repetition which detracts from his uniqueness or superiority (e.g. ongoing atoning sacrifices, restoration to

repentance) is excluded. This opens up the potential of various positive applications of Hebrews' thought on repetition; one such possibility is explored briefly in relation to the most influential modern discussion of repetition, by Søren Kierkegaard. Further possibilities for research are suggested, and the study's findings are related to the historical issues raised in Part One, drawing out the implications for Hebrews' own historical setting and for the letter's subsequent ecclesial reception.

## CHAPTER TWO

# **‘This Has No Temporal Limit, It Is Ordained Forever’**

## **Repetition in the Historical Settings of Hebrews**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Comparison of the Letter to the Hebrews with its minor protagonist Melchizedek – both are without father, mother, or genealogy – has become almost compulsory in scholarship. The analogy is usually employed to highlight the difficulty of locating Hebrews in historical terms: its temporal and geographical location, author, and audience are near-impossible to determine with confidence, and its occasion, background of thought, genre, and structure are heavily contested. Yet Melchizedek himself is a particularly apt prompt to treating such questions seriously: just as his historical location is important for Hebrews’ argument, so also the letter’s own location bears on the nature and outcomes of any investigation of it. This chapter briefly discusses Hebrews’ historical settings before considering the treatment of notions of repetition and singularity in the OT, Qumran, Middle Platonism, and early Christianity, domains which may clarify the ways in which Hebrews understands these themes.

## 2.2 Locating Hebrews

The aim here is not to provide a thorough discussion of Hebrews' setting, but to survey what can be known about it and then to address in a little more detail the interrelated questions of date, audience, and occasion.

*Author.* Hebrews was not written by Paul,<sup>1</sup> and likely was not written by any other ancient figure known to us – or rather, in the case of those who have left no literary remains, we cannot know (barring further discoveries) whether or not they wrote Hebrews.<sup>2</sup> The author was a Christian, male (cf. the masculine singular participle used at Heb 11.32), closely familiar with the Greek OT, and well-educated in the Hellenized context of the (eastern) Roman Empire in the first century AD.<sup>3</sup> It is not absolutely certain that he was Jewish, although given the letter's extensive use of the OT and common Second Temple Jewish exegetical techniques, and also the fact that almost all the known first-century leaders of the Jesus movement were Jewish, this seems a reasonable supposition. He is known to his audience (2.3–4; 13.18–19, 23), and has some knowledge of their situation (6.9–10; 10.32–34; 12.4; 13.7).

*Destination.* The author is probably writing *to* the Italian peninsula, given the reference to 'those from Italy' (13.24), which reads most naturally as Italians sending greetings back home. External evidence strengthens this supposition: Hebrews is used by *1 Clement* and has affinities with *1 Peter*, both written from Rome (cf. *1 Clem.*

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<sup>1</sup> Though see Black 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2013. He thinks Luke wrote Hebrews, commissioned by Paul. Note also the thesis that Hebrews was deliberately written as a Pauline pseudepigraphon, Rothschild 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria and Origen recognized that Pauline authorship could be maintained only by positing the involvement of an amanuensis, or a translator from a Hebrew original (see Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.1–4; 6.25.11–14). Other candidates include Luke (Allen 2010), Barnabas (Tertullian *Pud.* 20), Clement of Rome (Origen, Eus. *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.14; Jerome *Vir. ill.* 5), Apollos (cf. Acts 18.24–28, first proposed by Luther).

<sup>3</sup> He had probably received a formal Greek education, deSilva 2013.

greeting; 1 Pet 5.13). By the first century AD Jewish communities were established in Ostia, Campagna, Puteoli, and Pompeii, in addition to Rome, and there is archaeological or literary evidence linking Jews to Naples, Capua, Sicily and Sardinia;<sup>4</sup> we know from Paul's Letter to the Romans that a Christian presence was established there by the early 50s AD.<sup>5</sup>

*Genre.* Hebrews is called a 'letter' on the basis of its epistolary ending (13.1–25), but is usually classified as a homily due to its self-designation as a 'word of exhortation' (Heb 13.22; cf. Acts 13.15).<sup>6</sup> In fact, however, the evidence for synagogue sermons in the first-century is sparse and it is not clear that 'word of exhortation' does designate formal instruction.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the very verse to which commentators point to identify Hebrews as a homily (13.22) also refers explicitly to the *written* nature of the document as received by the original addressees. Hebrews bears the hallmarks of a treatise or discourse, designed to be delivered orally, but whoever originally delivered or read it out, the 'orator' or 'preacher' himself did not – indeed, could not, which is why he wrote in the first place. Like other NT letters, it would have been read out to the gathered community (cf. Col 4.16; 1 Thess 5.27). Thus while it is important to

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<sup>4</sup> Stern 1974: 160–70, esp. 168–69.

<sup>5</sup> Other supporting evidence includes Western hesitancy about Pauline authorship, possibly due to residual awareness that Paul was not the author, and the placement of Hebrews directly after Romans and before the longer 1 Corinthians in P<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Wills 1984 sought to identify a common threefold form; see the response by Black 1988. Attridge 1990 defines Hebrews as *paraclesis*, a sub-genre of Paraenetic Literature. Gelardini 2005; 2007 has done an impressive job of reconstructing synagogue lectionary cycles and thinks Hebrews can be identified as a sermon for Tisha be-Av, commemorating the temple's destruction. Evidence for such cycles is simply too late however. See the extensive critique by Mosser 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See the examination of the relatively scant first-century evidence (deliberately setting aside later rabbinic texts) in Mosser 2013: esp. 532–48. He suggests that synagogue services involved readings from the scriptures, formal instruction, and open discussion. This formal instruction (as given, e.g., by Jesus, Luke 4.21, and among the Therapeutae, Philo *Contempl.* 31) cannot be assumed to bear similarities to the kind of sermon familiar to the modern church or synagogue attender, while the 'word of exhortation' given by Paul in Pisidian Antioch was more likely a kind of prophecy.

acknowledge the lower levels of literacy and corresponding greater importance of orality among Jewish and Christian groups in the first-century, and to be sensitive to the oral and rhetorical devices of this magisterial discourse, the fact remains that Hebrews comes not only to us but also to its first recipients as a written text which needs to be interpreted as it is read (out). In practice, then, the boundaries between ‘oral’ and ‘written’ are not so firm in this instance, and both have a part to play in composition, transmission and subsequent reception of the text. While I engage with Hebrews as a written text, sensitivity to its oral impact and features is given where appropriate.

Turning to the more contested and crucial questions of audience, occasion, and date, certainty is impossible and any position – and all the more any argument based upon it – ought to be held tentatively. Nevertheless, the difficulties do not excuse complete agnosticism and a working hypothesis will lend colour to the subsequent discussion. For the following reasons I suggest that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70–90) to encourage them to persevere in the midst of persecution and waning faith, issues which may have been caused in part by the loss of the temple.

*Audience.* Hebrews’ original addressees were Christian (i.e. they believed Jesus to be the Messiah),<sup>8</sup> and perceived by the author to be threatened by waning commitment to Christ (e.g. 2.1; 3.12–14; 5.11–6.12; 10.23; 12.12–13) to the point that they were in danger of abandoning the faith altogether (6.4–6; 10.26–31) – indeed some already had (10.25). They also faced pressure and persecution (10.32–34; 12.4, 7; 13.3); we may suppose these internal and external issues were linked (cf. their combination in

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<sup>8</sup> I mean this in the sociological sense: the author of the letter clearly assumes his entire audience to have expressed prior commitment to Christ. The case of Thomas 2008 that Hebrews is written to a mixed (Christian and non-Christian) audience is motivated by the need to safeguard a particular systematic position against (a misreading of) Heb 6.4–6. See Chapter Five.

10.19–39). Although the audience's ethnic and religious composition is contested, there is reason to think they were Jewish Christians.<sup>9</sup> 'Jewish' here denotes primarily the observance of various Jewish practices rather than ethnicity: the definition allows for the inclusion of ethnic Gentiles committed to Jewish practices (e.g., proselytes and 'God-fearers'), whether this began before or at the same time as their commitment to Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Of course, such a group is likely to have been predominantly ethnically Jewish.<sup>11</sup>

Various evidence can be adduced. The title 'to the Hebrews', although a later addition, remains the earliest extant commentary on this document and so some weight at least ought to be given to it.<sup>12</sup> Hebrews' extensive appeal to the OT, discussion of Jewish figures and institutions, and use of Jewish exegetical techniques also suggests a Jewish audience.<sup>13</sup> Although in becoming part of a Christian group Gentile converts would have been socialized into it, including into its scriptures, the fact remains that no other early Christian document makes such extensive use of the OT.<sup>14</sup> It is furthermore striking that Hebrews makes no comment on internal unity or Jew–Gentile relations, or on the core Jewish identity markers of food laws, Sabbath observance, and circumcision; this suggests that these things were not an issue for the recipients. This

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<sup>9</sup> For discussion of the terminological difficulties see Skarsaune and Hvalvik 2007: 3–21; Carleton Paget 2010: 25–32.

<sup>10</sup> This diverges from Skarsaune and Hvalvik's definition of 'Jewish believer in Jesus'/'Jewish Christian' (used adjectivally), which focuses on ethnicity rather than ideology/praxis on the basis of ancient usage; they nevertheless retain a narrower definition of the nominal phrase 'Jewish Christian', indicating ethnically Jewish *and* Torah-observant believers in Jesus, Skarsaune and Hvalvik 2007: 3–5.

<sup>11</sup> Though Schenck 2007 suggests the audience was predominantly conservative Gentiles who had converted to Judaism before hearing the gospel.

<sup>12</sup> Witherington 2007: 24–25.

<sup>13</sup> Bateman 1997; Docherty 2009.

<sup>14</sup> DeSilva 2000: 2–7; 1999a: 39–41 argues forcefully against views that Hebrews must have been written to a Jewish audience. For the opposing view that Gentiles would not have had a strong attachment to OT scriptures and institutions when their faith was waning see Bruce 1987: 3502–3.

fact has been taken to imply a Gentile audience and a late date (after such boundary markers were no longer an issue),<sup>15</sup> but this is problematic in view of the fact that Jewish observances among Christians continued well beyond the first and even second centuries AD (cf., e.g., the Pseudo-Clementine literature, Justin *Dial.*), and in view of the increasingly-recognized piecemeal and drawn-out nature of the partings of the ways.<sup>16</sup> Evidence of first-century Jewish settlements in the Italian peninsula, including at least eleven synagogues in Rome,<sup>17</sup> makes a Jewish audience in Italy entirely plausible.

*Date.* As the audience are second-generation believers (2.3) Hebrews was probably written after AD 60. Given that *1 Clement* uses Hebrews (see §2.7.4) and that Timothy (13.23, presuming this denotes Paul's companion) is still alive and can travel, a *terminus ante quem* of AD 90 is probable. Many argue that Hebrews must pre-date AD 70 because 1) it describes sacrifice in the present tense, 2) Christians in Rome were killed in the Neronian persecutions whereas Hebrews' audience have not known bloodshed (12.4),<sup>18</sup> and 3) a reference to the temple's destruction would have clinched Hebrews' argument.<sup>19</sup> In fact, however, other post-70 texts use the present tense for temple sacrifice (*Jos. War; Ant.; 1 Clem.; Mishnah*), and it is entirely possible that Hebrews was written to a community which had not suffered martyrdoms under Nero. The notion that referencing the temple's destruction would seal Hebrews' argument rests on a misconstrual. This event was sufficiently cataclysmic for mention of it to be

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<sup>15</sup> Especially but not only German scholars; see Moffatt 1924; Braun 1984; Weiß 1991; Eisenbaum 2005.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Dunn 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Witherington 2007: 25.

<sup>18</sup> So Lane 1991: 1.lxii–lxvi.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Witherington 2007: 26 n. 21.

unnecessary<sup>20</sup> (for Diaspora Jews as much as for those in Judea),<sup>21</sup> and notably no NT text describes it explicitly.<sup>22</sup> Further, because of widespread expectation that the temple would be rebuilt (e.g. *Barn.* 16.3–4), as it had been after the exile, in the event of a later temple restoration the author would have scored an own goal by founding his audience's allegiance to Christ on the temple's absence. A pre-70 date is therefore no more certain than post-70.

*Occasion.* While a majority of commentators agree that Hebrews' audience were Jewish Christians, this view often coincides with a pre-70 date and a supposition that the letter aimed to prevent its audience from 'relapsing' to Judaism, or (if they had never fully left it in the first place) to encourage them to make a decisive break.<sup>23</sup> Against this theory it is notable that there is no evidence of Jewish Christians refraining from participation in the temple cult, or even of them attacking the temple *per se*.<sup>24</sup> The extension of cultic language to Christ and Christians in other NT documents presupposes the legitimacy of the temple system.<sup>25</sup> There is further no evidence within Hebrews of an appeal to leave 'Judaism' or the synagogue, apart from the highly uncertain and contested 13.9–14 (on which see §6.5.2); harsh statements on the old

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<sup>20</sup> Goodman 2005: 463.

<sup>21</sup> On the importance of Judea, Jerusalem, and the temple for Diaspora Jews see Safrai 1974: esp. 184–86, 190–91, 214.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson 1976 famously based his whole approach to dating the NT on this fact.

<sup>23</sup> This view is better represented among English-language and conservative scholarship. See Cockerill 2012; deSilva 2000; Gäbel 2006; Lane 1991; Mackie 2007; O'Brien 2010; Walker 1994; 2004; Witherington 2007; Young 2002; Haber 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Events such as Jesus' temple-cleansing and views like those found in the Qumran literature are much better understood as debates concerning whose temple it is and how it should be run. On Christian views on the temple see Klawans 2006: 213–45, who proposes convincing explanations of the temple-cleansing and the Last Supper which are not anti-temple; he still sees Acts 7, Hebrews, and Rev 21–22 as anti-temple, but I am not convinced these texts must be read this way. See further below.

<sup>25</sup> So, e.g., Böttrich 1999. Cf. also Zachhuber 2013: 17.

covenant are found in the letter's expository and not its hortatory sections.<sup>26</sup> Hebrews' discussion of core Jewish institutions and figures and its use of common Jewish exegetical techniques places it within an *intra-Jewish* debate, contending for a particular interpretation of the scriptures and defining and legitimating its audience's identity alongside that of other (non-Jesus-believing) Jewish groups.<sup>27</sup>

Peter Walker argues that the theological assumption 'that Hebrews could not have been so negative about the Temple whilst it was still operational'<sup>28</sup> is determinative for those arguing for a post-70 date. In fact, however, it is the *historical* consideration that there is simply no other evidence for Christian attacks on the temple – certainly before its destruction but even up to the turn of the second century – which suggests both that Hebrews postdates the temple's destruction and that the letter is perhaps not so negative about the sacrificial system as is often assumed. To posit that the destruction of the temple was one of the historical prompts for the development of the position expressed in Hebrews in no way undermines the theological value of that position; the theological claims the text makes can and must still be taken on their own terms. Yet this also opens up the possibility of reading Hebrews as one among many responses to the loss of Jerusalem as a cultic centre.<sup>29</sup>

The question of the letter's background of thought was raised in Chapter One in relation to James Thompson's article, which argues for the importance of Middle Platonism. In

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<sup>26</sup> Attridge 1990.

<sup>27</sup> For a critical assessment of the 'relapse theory', yet allowing for competition with other Jewish groups, see Hermann 2012: esp. 216–20.

<sup>28</sup> Walker 1994: 58.

<sup>29</sup> On other responses see the essays in Ego et al. 1999. Scholars favouring a post-70 date in response to the temple's destruction include Gelardini 2007; Isaacs 1992; Aitken 2005; Mitchell 2007; Docherty 2009; Kampling 2005; Schenck 2007. For a date in the 90s based on the Roman imposition of the *fiscus judaicus* in place of the temple tax, see Heemstra 2010.

assessing his article I have already raised some problems with this hypothesis. In the remainder of this chapter we examine relevant texts, current in the Second Temple period, where themes of singularity and repetition are found. These are organized into four sections for the sake of clarity: OT; Jewish literature, in particular texts found at Qumran; Middle Platonism as represented by the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch; and early Christianity. This does not imply that these four streams are on a level or that they are mutually exclusive. Rather, each represents a widely available tradition with which an educated first-century Hellenistic Jew such as our author would have been familiar to some extent, and on which he may have drawn.

## 2.3 Old Testament

### 2.3.1 Repetition in the Old Testament Prophetic 'Critique' of Sacrifice

A so-called prophetic 'critique' of sacrifice is found in various OT psalms and prophetic texts,<sup>30</sup> which are relevant here because a number of them evoke the repetition, continuity, or multitude of sacrifices (Ps 50.5–14; Isa 1.11–17; Amos 5.21–26; Mic 6.6–8);<sup>31</sup> various of these texts are also cited in NT documents which apparently attack cultic or sacrificial practice, including Hebrews.<sup>32</sup> It is sometimes supposed that such critique represents the first step in rejection of a sacrificial mode of thought, which then

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<sup>30</sup> On the problems with the term 'critique' for these passages, see Ullucci 2012: 31–32.

<sup>31</sup> In Amos the temporal qualification 'for forty years' could be simply descriptive rather than hyperbolic. By contrast, many of these cult 'critiques' do not mention the plurality or ceaselessness of the sacrifices; see Pss 40.6–8; 51.16–19; Hos 6.6; Mal 1.6–14; cf. Jer 6.19–20; 7.21–23; 14.11–12.

<sup>32</sup> Matt 9.13; 12.7 (Hos 6.6); Acts 7.42–43 (Amos 5.25–27); Heb 10.5–7 (Ps 40.6–8), on which see §6.4.3.

reaches its culmination in texts such as Acts 7 and Hebrews. In fact, however, almost all of the passages in question prioritize or draw attention to some feature of the law or covenant which is not being fulfilled, by contrast with sacrifices which *on their own* insufficiently meet God's requirements.<sup>33</sup> They frequently utilize the common Semitic idiom of expressing a relative contrast in absolute terms for greater impact (cf. 1 Sam 15.22 for such a contrast in non-absolute terms).<sup>34</sup>

It would be anachronistic to describe the prophetic prioritization of things besides sacrifice as aiming solely at 'interiorization' or (personal) 'heart-commitment', although in places the internal attitude of the worshippers or priests is targeted (e.g. God desires 'a broken and contrite heart', Ps 51.17). More commonly it is the neglect of some 'weightier matter of the law' (Matt 23.23) which is in view: mercy, justice, loving-kindness, obedience, faithfulness (Ps 40.8; Isa 1.17; Jer 7.23; Hos 6.6; Amos 5.24; Mic 6.8; Mal 2.13–14).<sup>35</sup> Such requirements involve attitude, but they also have corporate, active, and ethical dimensions.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, several of these texts (especially psalms) likely have a liturgical or even cultic setting.<sup>37</sup> That is to say, these prophetic texts operate within the assumption that the cultic system is valid, but that it forms only part of the broader covenant with Israel's God which incorporates many other aspects,

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<sup>33</sup> So Ullucci 2012: 42–48. Also Douglas 2002: 75.

<sup>34</sup> Klawans 2006: 81.

<sup>35</sup> Thus e.g. Watts 2005 interprets Isa 1.11–17; 66.1–4 as rejecting physical sacrifice. In fact both passages include the 'weightier matter' which should be attended to (1.17; 66.2). Just as the rejection of Israel's prayers (1.15) is not a rejection of prayer, so rejection of these sacrifices does not entail rejection of sacrifice *per se*.

<sup>36</sup> The ethical aspect of the critique is highlighted by Klawans 2006: 75–100.

<sup>37</sup> See the comments of Craigie 2004 on Pss 40 and 50; also Smith 1984 on Mic 6.6–8 as a Torah liturgy.

all of which are essential to the health of this relationship:<sup>38</sup> the cult does not function in isolation or *ex opere operato*.

Perhaps the most radical of these texts are Jer 7.21–23 and Amos 5.21–26, which appear to state that Israel did not sacrifice at the tabernacle during the wilderness years. This could suggest that they did not sacrifice and that God was pleased with their obedience alone, or that they not only sacrificed but also obeyed God, or (in the case of Amos) that they were idolatrous, sacrificing to other gods. Only the first of these options can be taken as anti-sacrificial, and even then only implicitly.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Hebrews does not cite either of these texts – not surprisingly, as the suggestion that sacrifice did not occur in the wilderness tabernacle runs contrary to the careful location of much of its argument (including the tabernacle sacrifices) in this period. The text it does cite, Psalm 40, does not highlight the plurality of sacrifice.

Psalm 50 affords a slightly different perspective, emphasizing not Israel's wider obligations but God's transcendence and sovereignty over against the misconception that he is physically in need of the sacrifices brought to him. Here it is striking that God explicitly states that he *does not* rebuke Israel for their continual sacrifices (Ps 50.8; on תמיד / διὰ παντός see §6.4.6). For the present study it matters, first, that not all of these passages describe the repetition of sacrifices, so it is not a consistent feature of the prophetic critique; secondly, where plurality is mentioned it throws into relief the inefficacy of such sacrifices but is not itself the basis of that inefficacy.

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<sup>38</sup> Lafferty 2012: 84.

<sup>39</sup> See further Lafferty 2012.

### 2.3.2 Uniqueness in the Old Testament (1): The *Shema*

Deuteronomy contains what came to be considered the classic and central Jewish confession of faith, the *Shema*: ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one [יְהוָה / אֱלֹהִים]’ (Deut 6.4). The following verse, ‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might’ (6.5), closely links the utter uniqueness of God to the total devotion required of his people. God is one to the exclusion of other gods (cf. Deut 4.35, 39; 32.8–9), and as a result he requires Israel’s absolute and exclusive gratitude and worship. This confession was widely employed in early Jewish literature as a statement and defence of Jewish monotheism.<sup>40</sup> Given its later importance it is perhaps surprising that it does not occur more often in the OT itself. An echo is found in Zech 14.9, which states: ‘on that day the Lord will be one [יְהוָה / אֱלֹהִים] and his name one [יְהוָה / אֱלֹהִים]’. The context of Zechariah 14 is eschatological and universal: it envisages a time when Israel’s God will rule over the whole earth and all the nations. The appeal to the *Shema* reinforces this claim to absolute dominion, and perhaps hints at the confession of Israel’s God by the other nations after their defeat (cf. Zech 14.16–19). Christian developments of the *Shema* are considered below.

### 2.3.3 Uniqueness in the Old Testament (2): The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement is a central feature of the Israelite cult, and has particular prominence in the uniqueness associated with it in the OT and subsequent texts. While regular service occurred in the outer tent or room of the tabernacle and temple

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<sup>40</sup> See 2 Macc 7.37; *Let. Aris.* 132, 158–60; *Jos. Ant.* 3.91; 4.212–13; *Sib. Or.* 3.11; and below on Philo.

throughout the year, the holy of holies was not to be entered by anyone except the high priest, and he was not to go in 'at any time' (בכל־עת / *παᾶσαν ὥραν*) lest he die (Lev 16.2). This unique spatial access to the most holy place in order to complete the atonement rite is correlated with the unique temporal nature of the day on which it occurred: only Yom Kippur out of all the festivals is described as 'once a year' (אחת בשנה / *ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ*; Exod 30.10 [x2]; Lev 16.34). This phrase emphasizes both the uniqueness of the festival and its correspondingly unique function within the liturgical cycle of a single year, and also its perpetuity through time. In Exodus the atonement rite is to be performed 'throughout your generations' (30.10); in Leviticus it is similarly stated that the Yom Kippur statute is 'forever' (עולם / *αἰώνιον*, 16.29–34 [x3]), and provision is made for the genealogical succession of high priests (16.32). Leviticus 16 further stresses that Aaron makes atonement for all the sins of the whole people (16.15–17, 21–22, 30, 33–34). The singularity of this rite is threefold – the person bearing the most holy office enters the most holy place on the most holy day (a 'Sabbath of complete rest', שבת שבתון, Lev 16.31) – and its scope and effect is therefore total (atonement for all sins of all the people), at least within the annual cycle. This designation is employed in the Second Temple period, including by Hebrews, and it is also extended to other festivals.<sup>41</sup>

#### 2.3.4 Conclusion: Hebrews and the Old Testament

It is beyond dispute that Hebrews draws heavily on the OT, including explicitly on one of the prophetic cult 'critique' texts (Ps 40), which it interprets through the Christ event

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<sup>41</sup> *Jub.* 5.18; 34.18–19; *3 Macc.* 11.1 (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἅπαξ); Philo *Spec.* 1.72; *Ebr.* 136; *Gig.* 52; *Legat.* 306. For extension to other festivals see below on *Jubilees*, Qumran, and Philo.

to suggest that perfect obedience and perfect sacrifice have now been offered decisively (see §6.4.4). Like many other aspects of this event in its sacrificial construal, its once-for-all nature is drawn from Yom Kippur (see Chapter Six). Indeed, it would seem that the author of Hebrews – if he was aware of the contemporary labelling of other festivals as ‘once-a-year’ – deliberately avoided this in favour of a more direct use of the OT, in order to highlight the correspondences with the Day of Atonement and so promote the uniqueness of Christ’s atoning work.

## 2.4 *Jubilees* and Qumran

The *Book of Jubilees* is an instance of the genre ‘Rewritten Scripture’, renarrating the events of Genesis through to the middle of Exodus; it is set on Mt Sinai, and portrays itself as an authoritative account of the revelation to Moses by an angel of the presence. It was composed in the second century BC in Hebrew, probably before the foundation of the Qumran community for whom it held great importance.<sup>42</sup> The text’s survival in Ethiopic and partly in Latin, along with 15 partial copies in Hebrew discovered at Qumran, indicates the breadth of its reception in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.<sup>43</sup> Its solar calendar and emphasis on the replication of heavenly worship on

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<sup>42</sup> VanderKam 1989: 2.VI suggests a date between 170–150 BC is agreed on by most scholars. The author was either Essene or belonged to ‘a tradition that flowed into the Essene movement’, 2001: 143.

<sup>43</sup> The critical edition, from which citations are taken, is VanderKam 1989. See the introductions to both volumes for *Jubilees*’ textual history. The Qumran mss date from roughly 125 BC–AD 50 (Scott 2005: 9). Source-critical approaches have been adopted by Wiesenberg 1961; Davenport 1971; Segal 2007; Kugel 2012. VanderKam 2008: 411 remains sceptical about these, however, and they do not bear directly on the discussion here.

earth find strong echoes in the liturgical practices which can be discerned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

#### 2.4.1 Repetition in *Jubilees* (1): Calendar

*Jubilees* is of relevance here because of its twofold interest in calendar and chronology. It exhibits a strict 364-day solar calendar,<sup>44</sup> exactly 52 weeks, divided into 12 months of 30 days each, except that each third month has 31 days (cf. *1 En.* 82.4–14). The months are exact and unchangeable, and are not dependent on lunar sightings.<sup>45</sup> Each quarter is identical in length, and the first day of each quarter is designated a memorial day (*Jub.* 6.23); furthermore, as there is an exact number of weeks in the year each date always corresponds to the same day of the week – the first day of the year (and thus also of each 91-day quarter) being a Wednesday, as the sun was created on the fourth day.<sup>46</sup> One feature of this day–date correspondence is that festivals never coincide with the Sabbath,<sup>47</sup> with the result that no work breaks the Sabbath (apart from the *tamid* and Sabbath sacrifices, 50.11).

The treatment of the annual festivals in *Jubilees* exhibits a similar concern for symmetry. These are backdated to the time of the patriarchs, granting them greater legitimacy and authority. The Festival of Weeks is first celebrated by Noah (*Jub.* 6.17), while the Day of Atonement is alluded to in *Jub.* 5.17–18 (which mentions turning

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<sup>44</sup> *Jubilees* 6.32–38 polemicizes against a lunar calendar; cf. 2.8–9. The return to a lunisolar calendar at Qumran despite *Jubilees*' strong insistence on its exclusively solar calendar 'remains a puzzling fact' in understanding the book's relationship to the sectarian community. VanderKam 2005: 166; cf. VanderKam 2008: 426.

<sup>45</sup> The practice of determining new months from sightings of the moon made the calendar dependent on humans, a notion abhorrent to the author. Cf. Kugel 2012: 12, 62–63.

<sup>46</sup> Aspects of this calendar are implicit or reconstructed with the aid of external sources. For a summary see VanderKam 2001: 97–99.

<sup>47</sup> See the chart in Jaubert 1953: 253.

‘from all their errors once each year’) and 6.2 where Noah’s offering on leaving the ark is specified as an atoning sacrifice (unlike the biblical account, in which the purpose of the sacrifice is unclear).<sup>48</sup> It is also associated with the grief over Joseph’s ‘death’ after his betrayal by his brothers (the slaughter of a goat creates a further link; *Jub.* 34.18–19). The Festival of Booths, which closely follows Yom Kippur, is first celebrated by Abraham – with great attention given to the diligence with which he performs the various rites (16.20–31) – as is the Festival of Unleavened Bread (18.18–19) following the Aqedah. Only Passover is not predated to patriarchal times; its ordinances are described in detail in *Jubilees* 49, including the injunction to eat it ‘before the Lord’s sanctuary’ from the present time onwards (49.16). Furthermore, the construal of the Festival of Weeks as a covenant renewal ceremony (6.17; 16.13; cf. *Jubilees*’ setting on the 16th of the third month, i.e. auspiciously straight after the covenant renewal, 1.1) obviates the need for new covenants to be made with Noah and Abraham (as in Genesis), and emphasizes the continuity and identity of God’s relationship with his people.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to this ancient earthly heritage, calendrical observances have a heavenly history too. The angels have celebrated the Festival of Weeks since creation, including through those times when it was corrupted or not observed on earth (*Jub.* 6.18–19); and the upper two classes of angels have kept the Sabbath with God since creation (2.17–32, esp. vv. 18, 30). Lutz Doering comments that ‘*Jubilees* legitimizes and elevates a particularly Jewish practice by grounding it in a corresponding natural-supernatural phenomenon that governs the course of time from the very beginning of

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<sup>48</sup> The date does not correspond to Yom Kippur, but the sacrifice of a goat suggests an allusion, as does a textual variant in 6.2a, which could read ‘he atoned for’ not ‘he appeared’, Dorman 2012: 51–54.

<sup>49</sup> VanderKam 2001: 123.

the world'.<sup>50</sup> In addition to elevating Jewish worship, the existence of a perfectly regular and unbroken heavenly cult safeguards the cultic practices themselves – and thereby the honour of God – from the earthly neglect and corruption that Israel's worship has suffered from time to time.

It is also noteworthy that within the annual cycle all three major one-day festivals are described as 'once-a-year', a term which in the OT and Hebrews is reserved for the Day of Atonement (Day of Atonement: *Jub.* 5.18; 34.18–19; Festival of Weeks: 6.17, 20; Passover: 49.7–8, 15).<sup>51</sup> The same 'once-a-year' designation for Passover is found in Philo (see below), and for all three annual festivals in Qumran literature (11QTS 18.10 [Passover]; 22.17 [Festival of Weeks]; 27.4–5 [Yom Kippur]), suggesting they were perceived to be parallel across several Second Temple Jewish traditions. Similarly the four quarterly 'memorial' days possibly gain their name by extension from the first day of the seventh month in Lev 23.24 (*Jub.* 6.23; cf. Num 29.1).<sup>52</sup> This would seem to reflect a concern for parallelism and symmetry within each year as well as from year to year: each one-day festival is to be characterized with the same language.

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<sup>50</sup> Doering 1997: 188.

<sup>51</sup> In the extant Latin this is translated *semel in anno* in *Jub.* 49.7–8, 15, the same phrase as is found in the Vulgate at Lev 16.34 and Heb 9.7; *semel per annum* is used once in Exod 30.10, replacing the double ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ / אֶחָד בַּשָּׁנָה. Applying this term to all three festivals may also slightly de-emphasize the Day of Atonement in favour of the Festival of Weeks, though the primary motivation would seem to be symmetry.

<sup>52</sup> Beckwith 2005: 82.

### 2.4.2 Repetition in *Jubilees* (2): Chronology

Chronology is of yet greater interest to *Jubilees* than calendar,<sup>53</sup> although of course the two are integrally related.<sup>54</sup> The chronological system from which the work's name derives is one of its most striking features: the history of the world is divided into jubilees (49-year periods), weeks (seven-year periods), and years, and events are dated using this method (indeed, it is referred to as the *Book of the Divisions of the Times into their Jubilees and Weeks* in the Damascus Document, CD 16.4–5). James Scott has further argued that six-year *mishmarot* cycles and 294-year cycles which he terms 'otot' cycles (after the 294-year cycle in 4Q319, also known as 4QOtot) are implicitly significant within Jubilees – one *otot* cycle being six jubilees or 49 *mishmarot*.<sup>55</sup>

The chronology is carefully arranged to ensure that the Sinai revelation takes place in *anno mundi* 2410, forty years before the entry into Canaan which will thus occur in *anno mundi* 2450, that is at the culmination of the fiftieth 49-year jubilee – the jubilee of jubilees (*Jub.* 50.4).<sup>56</sup> Thus both the exodus and the conquest occur within the span of this significant and auspicious jubilee. James VanderKam has noted the correlation between this and the biblical jubilee law in Leviticus 25, which prescribed the return of property to its rightful owner and the release of Israelite slaves; in the jubilee of jubilees these two things also occur, but on a *national* rather than individual scale (note that in *Jubilees* Canaan usurps the land intended for Shem, 10.29–34).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Wiesenberg 1961: 4; cf. VanderKam 2000: 522.

<sup>54</sup> Scott 2005: 19.

<sup>55</sup> Scott 2005: 24–29.

<sup>56</sup> *Contra* Wiesenberg 1961: 17 who places the entry of Canaan in the year after the jubilee of jubilees, i.e. AM 2451; this view has not been widely followed.

<sup>57</sup> VanderKam 2000: 542–43.

Such a wide-ranging chronology relativizes Israel's failures while locating her successes as part of God's overarching plan for the world.

The history narrated by *Jubilees* ends with the jubilee of jubilees; eschatological passages are scant (see *Jub.* 1 and 23). Yet this economy of reference is best understood not as an oversight or a sign of a lack of interest in the future, but as deliberate: 'by detailing the sabbatical structure of history, the author of *Jubilees* has prepared his readers to trust that the future, too, will be organized and arranged by the God who ordained the Sabbath day, the week of years, and the year of jubilee.'<sup>58</sup> Scott goes further, arguing that *Jubilees* presupposes an exact parallel between beginning and end times: '*Endzeit* should completely recapitulate *Urzeit*, that is, restore the world to its original, pristine condition before the fall of Adam.'<sup>59</sup> Certainly human life spans, which have decreased since the antediluvian period (23.9–25) will increase once more until they reach 1000 years, and the righteous will rejoice 'for ever and ever' (23.26–32).

There is similarly little indication of what will follow the eschaton, but it seems that the eternal covenant will endure (1.21, 23, 26–27, 29) and that a rebuilt temple (1.17, 27, 29) will house ongoing cultic observances which are frequently declared to be 'forever' (6.14, 16, 23; 16.29–30; 49.8). *Jubilees* 50.5 indicates 'a long future of unspecified length'<sup>60</sup> beyond the restoration; the Sabbath is declared to be the day of the kingdom for ever (50.9), 'in order that they may atone continuously for Israel with offerings from day to day [...] that he may receive them forever, day by day' (50.11).

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<sup>58</sup> VanderKam 2000: 544.

<sup>59</sup> Scott 2005: 8.

<sup>60</sup> VanderKam 2000: 543.

Fundamentally, what *Jubilees* attests is a vision of dual heavenly and earthly cults which occur *in parallel* and not *in conjunction*.<sup>61</sup> Synchronicity remains precisely that – synchronous but never coterminous; spatial distance is maintained while temporal distance is eliminated.

### 2.4.3 Repetition, Worship, and Liturgy in the Qumran Texts

The solar calendar attested in *Jubilees* and the *Astronomical Book of Enoch* (*1 En.* 72–82) was clearly influential at Qumran, as witness the copies of these texts discovered there and also the sectarians' use of a combined lunisolar calendar.<sup>62</sup> The sectarian literature also reveals a similar preoccupation with the angelic worship of heaven. It is possible that there is a development from the strictly parallel synchronicity of *Jubilees* to worship *conjoined* with that of the angels, although this interpretation is contested.

It is clear from several documents, especially *Daily Prayers* (4Q503), *Words of the Luminaries* (4Q504, 4Q506), and the morning and evening prayers attested in 4Q408, that the Qumran community engaged in corporate twice-daily prayer. This practice, moreover, stems from the custom that people would gather to pray in the temple courts at the times of the daily sacrifice.<sup>63</sup> That is, it did not develop *in response* to the community's alienation from the Jerusalem temple, but rather *predated* it and was never the exclusive preserve of the sectarians, even if the practice underwent modifications following the break between Qumran and the Jerusalem temple.<sup>64</sup> Daily

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Doering 1997: 188.

<sup>62</sup> Beckwith 1996: 105–40; 2005: 67–90.

<sup>63</sup> Beckwith 1984: 71; Falk 1998: 55, 124, 246.

<sup>64</sup> I am assuming that the scrolls relate to the nearby settlement, and that the sectarians were probably initially involved in temple worship (certainly their predecessors were) but that a decisive break occurred at some point early in the community's existence.

prayers were also associated with sunrise and sunset, a practice which is linked to the heavenly cult: these celestial movements signal the beginning of the angelic liturgy, and corporate prayer is the response to this.<sup>65</sup> This suggests a concern to synchronize worship with the Jerusalem temple and, as in *Jubilees*, with the heavenly sanctuary, a practice which gained renewed vitality and necessity once relations with the temple ceased.

Another important Qumran text in this respect is the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which consists of 13 songs for the first quarter of the year.<sup>66</sup> The *Songs* describe the angelic liturgy and service in the heavenly sanctuary. There is progression through the text, although it is disputed whether the climax occurs in Song 7 (yielding a chiasmic structure),<sup>67</sup> Songs 11–12,<sup>68</sup> or Song 13.<sup>69</sup> It is also not certain whether the *Songs* evoke worship conjoined with the angels, or perhaps instead a sense of distance. The latter might be suggested by 4Q400 2 6–7, ‘for what shall we be counted among them? For what shall our priesthood be counted in their dwellings?’, although this may be simply a conventional expression of unworthiness in the angelic/divine presence (cf. Isa 6.5). The concept of a joint, as opposed to merely parallel, cult is supported by a number of other Qumran texts which seem to suggest the presence of the angels among the community, particularly during worship (e.g. 1QS 11.7–8; 1QSa 2.8–9; CD 15.17;

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<sup>65</sup> Falk 1998: 246; Alexander 2006: 65–66.

<sup>66</sup> The critical edition is Newsom 1985. For comparison of *ShirShabb* with Hebrews see Löhr 1991; Calaway 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Newsom 1985: 13–21.

<sup>68</sup> Morray-Jones 2006: 162; Davila 2000: 87–90; Alexander 2006: 49–50.

<sup>69</sup> Most regard Song 13 as a ‘coda’, but see Fletcher-Louis 2002: 356–94. Song 13 envisages a heavenly bloody sacrifice (קָרָבָן, Song 13; cf. possible allusion to blood sacrifice in heaven in *Jub.* 6.18, 22, and clearly in the eschatological – but earthly – temple in *Jub.* 50.11); if Song 13 is the climax then the sacrifice can be regarded as the goal of the earthly worship, Calaway 2013: 172–77. By contrast, Alexander 2006: 58 argues that heavenly worship is clearly bloodless and spiritual, not physical. So also Löhr 1991: 193–95, who notes the absence of the altar of burnt offering.

1QM 7.6).<sup>70</sup> It seems more likely, then, that the *Sabbath Songs* attest worship conjoined with the angels;<sup>71</sup> either way the point holds that earthly worship is closely related to that of heaven.

A further indication of synchronization lies in the co-incidence of the consecration of the angelic priests on the first Sabbath in Song 1 with the consecration of the community's priests during the first seven days of the year.<sup>72</sup> It is also probable that each song would have been used at the time of the Sabbath sacrifice, 'a time when heaven was peculiarly "permeable," [...] a propitious time for cultivating the experience of being present in the heavenly sanctuary'.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Philip Alexander suggests that the angelic liturgy would have been identical and unchanging throughout, unaffected by seasons or human sin, and that the variation and progression in the *Sabbath Songs* reflects the distance between earth and heaven and the need for human worshippers to adjust and indeed ascend to celestial worship.<sup>74</sup> In this light repetition not only keeps in step with heavenly worship, but necessarily involves progression and aims to engender a cumulative benefit.

Whether Qumran's inhabitants regarded their worship as joining with or simply mirroring what occurs in the heavenly sanctuary, the synchronicity – the exact temporal repetition – of cultic practice held supreme importance: it is the way to keep in time (quite literally) with God's purposes and thus prepare for eternity.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Rietz 2005: 118; Ribbens 2013: 93 n. 65.

<sup>71</sup> See esp. Fletcher-Louis 2002: 391–94.

<sup>72</sup> Newsom 1985: 72.

<sup>73</sup> Newsom 1985: 20.

<sup>74</sup> Alexander 2006: 16, 51–52; cf. Morray-Jones 2006: 166–67. Fletcher-Louis suggests that 'a structuring of liturgical *time* is a dramatic device which replaces the structure of sacred *space*', representing a progression to the heart of the sanctuary, 2002: 393.

<sup>75</sup> Rietz 2005: 114, 118; Calaway 2013: 25–28, 92–94; Ribbens 2013: 90, 94.

#### 2.4.4 Conclusion: Hebrews and Qumran

At one level Hebrews differs widely from these apocalyptic texts: for Hebrews, repetition reveals the sacrifices' lack of effect, whereas at Qumran precise repetition in the earthly cult is the goal of worship, the means of remaining connected to the divine purpose and continuing the covenant relationship. Most notably, *Jubilees* and the *Sabbath Songs* envisage a repeated heavenly cult whereas Hebrews is emphatic that Jesus' heavenly offering is finished and utterly singular.

Yet these texts have in common a belief in a heavenly sanctuary and cultic service, and a concern for how God's people relate to that heavenly cult (see Chapter Six). The heavenly cult constitutes a safeguard for those who do not have access to the earthly cult for whatever reason (geographical distance, concern about its purity, and potentially the temple's destruction). Like these Qumran texts, Hebrews understands the tabernacle to have been a representation of the heavenly sanctuary, and seeks in the new covenant to extend celestial worship on earth. The key difference from *Jubilees* is that instead of a parallel earthly cult, Hebrews exhorts its audience to engage directly in the heavenly cult through Jesus (Heb 4.14–16; cf. 10.19–22; 12.22–24). In this respect the *Sabbath Songs* and other Qumran texts potentially hold a mediating position between *Jubilees* and Hebrews: as in Hebrews, heavenly and earthly worship is conjoined; as in *Jubilees*, however, the sacrificial and atoning aspect of such worship is ongoing.

## 2.5 Middle Platonism (1): Philo of Alexandria

In this section and the following, two representatives of Middle Platonic thought in the first century AD are examined: Plutarch of Chaeronea and Philo of Alexandria; Plutarch more straightforwardly represents this philosophical stream, and his background and thought will be spelled out below. The Jewish statesman and philosopher Philo (c. 15 BC–AD 45) is a more complex figure and cannot be understood or used simply as a proponent or example of Middle Platonism. While his overarching philosophical framework is Platonist, he remains very clearly inside the bounds of Second Temple Judaism and seeks to integrate the two traditions within a single coherent system. Elements of Stoic influence can also be traced in his work, and it is not always clear whether a particular idea is original to him or has been drawn from one of his several overlapping traditions.<sup>76</sup>

While direct dependence of Hebrews on Philo has been decisively disproven, there remain a number of points in common (vocabulary, use of *gezerah shawah*, commonplace etymologies, OT *exempla*).<sup>77</sup> It is particularly notable that Hebrews and Philo alone have the exact same wording of a citation of uncertain origin, representing either a text form of Deut 31.6 and/or 8 which is no longer extant or an exegetical tradition which combines this with Josh 1.5 and possibly Gen 28.15 (Heb 13.5; Philo *Conf.* 166). These commonalities, in combination with Philo's status as a representative

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<sup>76</sup> Dillon 1977: 182; Lévy 2009: 157. On Stoic influence see e.g. Nikiprowetzky 1996b.

<sup>77</sup> Williamson 1970 established conclusively (against Spicq 1952) that Hebrews is not directly dependent on Philo; yet direct dependence is only one, rather narrow, form of influence. Schenck 2002 seeks to redress this balance.

of first-century Diaspora Judaism, suggest that his importance for our understanding of Hebrews ought not to be underestimated.<sup>78</sup>

### 2.5.1 Plurality in Philo (1): The Earthly Realm

Lala Kalyan Kumar Dey argues that Philo consistently associates plurality with the imperfection of the earthly, bodily realm, in contrast to the absolute singularity and perfection of the divine realm. This is in keeping with Platonic dualism, although Dey stresses that imperfection ‘does not mean something bad or evil in this tradition.’<sup>79</sup> The earthly and heavenly associations of plurality and singularity respectively are clearly there in Philo, as will be seen, but plurality is not uniformly ‘imperfect but not evil’ as Dey contends.

In Philo such terminology is used in three broad ways: the first is in connection with human evil and wickedness. *On Planting* 44 describes the ‘moulded man’ with his manifold disposition (πολυτρόπος) in contrast to the man stamped with the spirit. *On Dreams* 2.10–15 describes Joseph as the model of the person in a state of flux, which is likened to a never-ending war which revolves around the manifold soul (περὶ τὴν πολύτροπον ψυχὴν), symbolised in the many-headed (πολυκεφάλου) hydra, and indicating the multiformity (πολύμορφος) of wickedness. A further significant reference, not mentioned by Dey, comes a little later in *On Dreams* 2.134, describing the evil person who is opposed to the virtuous and tries all kinds of schemes (πολυτρόποις καὶ πολυμηχάνοις) to overcome them. Finally, *On the Migration of*

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<sup>78</sup> Sterling 2003: 261–63; for Philo as representative of Diaspora Judaism, and his importance for NT studies generally, see Hurtado 2004; Runia 1993; Sterling 2004; Siegert 2009 (who speculates that Philo and the author of Hebrews may have met in Rome, p. 175).

<sup>79</sup> Dey 1975: 129–34.

*Abraham* 152–54 speaks of the soul of the wicked man as ‘myriad in manifoldness’ (μυριάς δὲ τῷ πολυτρόπῳ), and as wandering about because of this many-wayed-ness (ἔνεκα τοῦ πολυτρόπου). Dey also refers to 4 Macc 1.25, which describes pleasure as a malevolent and manifold emotion. The terminology in this category does not, as Dey contends, describe merely ‘a state of imperfection’ which ‘does not mean something bad or evil in this tradition’, but which is ‘an accommodation on the part of God’.<sup>80</sup> Rather, these instances of plurality precisely have to do with evil and human imperfection, and cannot be attributed to God.

The second category is associated with the manifold nature of the world, indicating imperfection but without any connection to or implication of evil. *On Drunkenness* 36 speaks of submitting to the opinions of the multitude like Proteus, in accord with the multiple aspects of life (κατὰ τὰς πολυτρόπους τοῦ βίου; cf. *Ebr.* 170 where the perceptible world is described as πολυτρόποις καὶ πολυμόρφους). While in *On Dreams* Joseph corresponds to wickedness, elsewhere in Philo’s writings he tends to represent the political world, a feature epitomised in his multi-coloured coat (see *Ios.* 32, ποικίλος καὶ πολύτροπος; *Det.* 6, ποικίλος καὶ πολυπλόκος; *Conf.* 71, diverse pride, ποικίλος).

A third use is an extension of the second one, with the difference that earthly plurality takes on a positive connotation. *On the Life of Moses* 1.117, another passage not mentioned by Dey, describes how nature rejoices in variety and diversity (πολυτρόπῳ καὶ πολυσχιδεῖ). *On Drunkenness* 85–87, meanwhile, discusses the high priest and the distinct garments and vessels he uses when he is within and outside the sanctuary. By contrast with the pure white linen garment worn inside the sanctuary,

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<sup>80</sup> Dey 1975: 133–34.

when outside the high priest wears a varied and brightly decorated robe; this, says Philo, corresponds to earthly life which is manifold and thus requires manifold wisdom. Also worth noting is the positive function of repetition among the Therapeutae, who engage in twice-daily prayer and slow, repetitive scriptural instruction at their feasts (*Contempl.* 27–28, 76). While at one level Philo's usage is consistent with the Middle Platonist understanding of God as unassailably One and the created world as inescapably plural, to stop there is to miss the variation on this theme that is introduced by his commitment to the Jewish themes of sin and God's self-revelation. There is similarity between *On Drunkenness* 85–87 and the theme of the political life seen above (especially *Ebr.* 36; *Somn.* 2.10–15), but with the difference that plurality here is connected with God. As the divine interacts with the earthly and corporeal it assumes a diverse form appropriate to that interaction.

Moreover, Philo explicitly says that *wisdom* (σοφία, *Ebr.* 86) is required which is 'most diverse' (ποικιλωτάτος); the tradition of divine Wisdom's manifold nature is well-represented elsewhere, including in the Alexandrian Wisdom of Solomon. The poem to Wisdom in Wis 7.22–8.1 amasses twenty-one attributes, including μονογενές πολυμερές (7.22) in direct apposition which stress both her uniqueness and variety; this terse pairing is later elaborated: 'although she is one she can do all things' (μία δὲ οὐσα πάντα δύναται, 7.27).<sup>81</sup> The same idea is found in Eph 3.10 (see §2.7.1), and Josephus describes God's *nature* as varied (τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ φύσιν [...] ποικίλη τέ ἐστι καὶ πολύτροπος, *Ant.* 10.142).<sup>82</sup> A further Alexandrian instance of this theme is found in the

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<sup>81</sup> Winston 1979: 178–90 identifies a fivefold metaphor following the 21 attributes. The connection with Wisdom is all the more significant given the connections between this very passage and Hebrews' word-of-God theology; cf. Lewicki 2004: 95–96; also, Heiningner 1997: 59–60 notes that Wis 7.26 is the only place in the LXX that ἀπαύγασμα is found, cf. Heb 1.3.

<sup>82</sup> Dey 1975: 130 dismisses these as influenced by Stoicism.

prologue to Sirach which opens with a description of the ‘many and great’ things (πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων, 1–2) which have been given through the Law and the Prophets, including wisdom (3).

In this tradition regarding wisdom we find a divine being, or at least a divine attribute, characterized as manifold. Such thinking is not alien to Middle Platonism, which posited a plural intermediary realm to mediate between the divine singularity and created diversity, but the association with wisdom as the chief such agent is a distinctly Jewish theme. Wisdom’s diversity reinforces the important distinction between the three kinds of plurality we have noted in Philo: multiplicity *per se* is associated with earth in distinction to heaven, but its particular connotation is contextually determined and can be a sign of evil, neutrality, or divinely-originating good.

### 2.5.2 Plurality in Philo (2): Sacrifices

The sacrifices draw comment from Philo, particularly in *On the Special Laws*, but their repetition is less significant for him than their symbolic meaning. In Agrippa’s letter to Gaius, the quantity of sacrifices during festivals and day-to-day is said to demonstrate the piety and loyalty of the Jews *to Caesar*, as well as to God (*Legat.* 280); elsewhere in the *Embassy to Gaius* Augustus’ provision for continual sacrifices to be offered on his behalf indicates his piety (157). The great number of priests and aides required to maintain the temple cult is a function of the many daily sacrifices which are ‘necessarily brought’ on account of the number of the Israelites and their piety (*Mos.* 2.159–73; cf. *Let. Aris.* 89). This perspective links repeated sacrifices to piety: the more the sacrifices, the greater the zeal or effect.

In terms of the function of regular sacrifices, the daily offerings are described as part of the temple's role of repeated thanksgiving for God's ceaseless blessings (*Spec.* 1.169).<sup>83</sup> Philo speaks of them as a memorial or reminder, usually of gratitude, salvation or hope (*Spec.* 1.222; 2.146, 158). In *Moses* 2.106–8 Philo describes the altar as a 'sacrifice-keeper' (θυσιαστήριον) which preserves not the sacrifices themselves – they are consumed by fire – but the intention of the worshipper; even if there were no victim, the soul's gratitude would be preserved forever.<sup>84</sup> Here Philo ascribes to animal sacrifices (rightly offered) perpetual efficacy.

In the same passage in *Moses* Philo describes sacrifices made by a foolish and ignorant person as producing a reminder (ὑπόμνησις), rather than a remission, of sins (*Mos.* 2.107; cf. Heb 10.3 and Chapter Six). A similar thought is found in *On Dreams* 1.214, where Philo speaks of the high priest being sprinkled with water and ashes, 'as a reminder to him of himself' (εἰς ὑπόμνησιν ἑαυτοῦ), presumably a reminder of his mortality and sin. In *On the Special Laws* 1.215 Philo explains that the heart and brain of the animal are not burnt on the altar because it would not be fitting to offer the vessel which once held the sinful, erring mind: 'for it would be foolish to have the sacrifices working remembrance [ὑπόμνησις] instead of oblivion of sin'. This is a counterfactual statement: as the brain and heart are not offered, the sacrifices do not remind of sin. Closer still to *Moses* 2.107, Philo speaks in several places of one who 'may offer hecatombs, and never cease sacrificing bullocks', yet who has a guilty mind (*Det.* 20; cf. *Plant.* 108, 164): he is evil, or not truly pious, because he does not please God. For this person, these sacrifices function only as a remembrance of ignorance and sins

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<sup>83</sup> Leonhardt 2001: 227.

<sup>84</sup> Nikiprowetzky 1996a: 83; cf. Leonhardt 2001: 222–23, 253.

(*Plant.* 108; Philo goes on immediately to cite Num 5.15, which describes the grain offering in the case of suspected adultery as a remembrance of sin). There is a similarity here with Plato's contention that the *do ut des* mentality (i.e., that the gods can be manipulated by prayer and sacrifice) is a form of impiety bordering on atheism (*Laws* 10.885b).<sup>85</sup> As in some instances of the prophetic attack on insincere sacrifice, the multitude of offerings is evoked in a kind of dramatic irony to underscore the utter lack of efficacy of sacrifices offered without the right engagement.

### 2.5.3 Plurality in Philo (3): Recollection and Repentance

At several points Philo distinguishes between God, who never errs, and the wise man, who constantly repents. Among other places, he speaks of this in the section on repentance in *On Virtues* (175–86): memory (μνήμη) is a first-class blessing and recollection (ἀνάμνησις), which occurs after forgetfulness, is a second-class blessing (*Virt.* 176).<sup>86</sup> Philo then comments that the 'brother and close kinsman' of recollection is repentance. This connection, which is not made elsewhere, is apt: both recollection and repentance inherently involve repetition, and although each is less than perfect it also represents the best course available to humans (on repentance in Philo see §5.3.1).

Philo's thought on ἀνάμνησις can be understood only in the context of the Platonic doctrine of Recollection.<sup>87</sup> This doctrine is Plato's theory of knowledge: the

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<sup>85</sup> Nikiprowetzky 1996a: 80.

<sup>86</sup> Philo's terminology is not completely stable: in *Congr.* 39–40 he uses ἀνάμνησις and ὑπόμνησις, and their cognate verbs, interchangeably for 'recollection', just as he apparently uses ὑπόμνησις to mean 'recollection' in *Agric.* 142 (cf. 132). In *Post.* 153, however, he uses ὑπόμνησις as a synonym for μνήμη.

<sup>87</sup> 'Of course what Philo says here has nothing to do with the Platonic theory of anamnesis', W. T. Wilson 2011: 365. Wilson does not elaborate on this comment. Yet Philo's use of ἀνάμνησις here and

soul in its pre-existent state knows the ideal forms, but then at birth it loses access to this knowledge; this means that learning is in fact a process of recollecting something previously known, rather than acquiring entirely new knowledge (*Meno*; *Phaed.* 57a–84b; *Phaedr.* 246a–257b).<sup>88</sup> As already seen in *On Virtues* recollection is inferior to memory (cf. *Leg.* 3.91),<sup>89</sup> but recollection precedes memory and is essential to it: it is through repeated recollection in the face of forgetfulness that memory at last prevails. The temporally prior and yet subordinate status of recollection vis-à-vis memory is reinforced by its connection with Manasseh ('from forgetfulness') who although older is made subordinate to his brother Ephraim ('fruit-bearing', representing memory) by Jacob's blessing (*Leg.* 3.92–93; *Sob.* 28–29; *Migr.* 205; *Congr.* 39–41; *Mut.* 100–1).<sup>90</sup>

Recollection can serve bad ends as well as good: in *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.16 'to keep on recalling' (ὑπόμνησις)<sup>91</sup> a temptation will make an impression on the intellect, and 'bring it to ruin'; recollection must therefore be guided by discernment.<sup>92</sup>

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elsewhere is clearly indebted to the Platonic doctrine (more than the Aristotelian, see following footnote), even if he does not subscribe fully to its metaphysical framework.

<sup>88</sup> Interpreters disagree on whether Plato's Recollection accounts for all learning (so Franklin 2005); or only philosophical learning (so Scott 1995); Bedu-Addo 1991 argues that Plato envisages two kinds of recollection, one ordinary and one exercised instantly by true philosophers. Plato's rationalist and metaphysical theory was vehemently rejected by Aristotle, whose empirical approach placed memory first and saw recollection as the act of remembering something which had been previously forgotten (*Mem. rem.* 449b, 451a–b). On the ambivalent reception of Platonic Recollection in Middle Platonism see Dillon 1977: 93, 99, 291.

<sup>89</sup> On memory see *Leg.* 1.55; it is exemplified by the Therapeutae, *Contempl.* 26. In *QG* 4.136 (on Gen 24.61) memory (represented by camels) is connected with constancy (represented by Rachel, who sits on the camels); notably the fourth of Rachel's ten maids is called 'Unrepentant'; this passage thus offers a further connection between recollection and repentance. On constancy see Nikiprowetzky 1996b: esp. 159.

<sup>90</sup> Boccaccini 1991: 194 suggests Philo follows Aristotle, citing the fact that memory (Ephraim) is the younger and recollection (Manasseh) the older. Yet Philo's point is that although Ephraim-memory is younger (i.e. it follows Manasseh-recollection), Jacob blessed it and made it first (i.e. it is the more excellent quality).

<sup>91</sup> Here the meaning is probably 'remembering', rather than 'recollection' in a technical sense, but the point regarding the long-term effects of repetition still stands – though note that ὑπόμνησις does mean recollection in certain places in Philo, cf. *Congr.* 40.

<sup>92</sup> Boccaccini 1991: 202.

A key scriptural image for recollection is ‘chewing the cud’; together with ‘dividing the hoof’ (i.e., discernment) this is the mark of the clean animal, which represents the rational soul (*Agric.* 132–45).<sup>93</sup> The camel, which chews the cud but does not have cloven hoofs, is a symbol of the mnemonic process (*Agric.* 145; cf. *QG* 4.136). Regular study of Torah is the route to memory and constancy and thus to full virtue, an ideal which the Therapeutae exemplify: they expound scripture slowly and repetitively so its lessons can be learned, and it is by recollection, or at least by ‘a little reminding’ (ἐκ μικρᾶς ὑπομνήσεως),<sup>94</sup> that one can understand the allegories of the scriptures (*Contempl.* 76, 78).

The virtuous life will be a constant dialectic between sin and repentance, just as recollection constantly alternates with forgetfulness as it leads to memory. Repentance and recollection are both features of the non-ideal or fallen world, not bad in themselves, but rather means to attain to an ideal end in a less-than-perfect world.

#### 2.5.4 Singularity in Philo: God and the Jerusalem Cult

The single Jerusalem temple and pious Jews’ insistence on worshipping their God alone set Second Temple Judaism apart from other religious systems of the time; in this regard Philo is typically Jewish. He alludes to the *Shema* at various points: God’s oneness is linked with his possession of all things (*Cher.* 83) and Moses emphasizes it in order to impress piety upon those who are prone to pride (*Spec.* 1.30). It also indicates the superior nature of his being: it is good for God, but not for man, to be

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<sup>93</sup> This understanding is drawn from *Let. Aris.* 150–61 but is more developed in Philo. See Boccaccini 1991: 196, 200–3.

<sup>94</sup> Boccaccini 1991: 193 disagrees that this is recollection. Yet ὑπόμνησις elsewhere can mean recollection, and the link with *Agric.* 132 suggests Colson in the Loeb edition is not wrong to make the connection.

alone (*Leg.* 2.1), and God's oneness is implicit in the divine name (*Plant.* 137). In discussing why God says 'let *us* go down' in Gen 11.7 (cf. 1.26) Philo affirms God's uniqueness and speaks of a plurality of lesser beings who are with God (*Conf.* 168–73). Similarly God's oneness excludes polytheism in *On the Creation of the World* 171 and *On the Decalogue* 65; the latter passage also describes the *Shema* as 'the most holy of commandments' and links it with absolute devotion to God and truth.

The unity and uniqueness of God in Philo thus clearly derives from Jewish tradition, yet in this regard Jewish and Platonic thinking is readily commensurate. Middle Platonists were unanimous on the existence of a supreme active principle, referred to variously as God, the Good, the Monad, or the One. This entity acts on the passive, material realm via an intermediary being and/or realm.<sup>95</sup> Philo differs from other Middle Platonists in holding that the Jewish cult, because it mirrors God's uniqueness, is the only true one: God is honoured by one sacrifice, the whole burnt-offering, whereas people's needs are served by two sacrifices, the sin-offering and thank-offering (*Spec.* 1.196–97). The temple is unique because God is one, and sacrifices are not to be offered elsewhere (*Spec.* 1.67–68; Philo nowhere mentions the temple at Leontopolis).<sup>96</sup>

Philo also mentions the once-yearly entry of the high priest into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. He does this both in his exegetical works (*Spec.* 1.72; *Ebr.* 136; *Gig.* 52) and in the *Embassy to Gaius* (306); here he is underscoring the sanctity of the holy of holies in order to persuade the emperor not to place his statue there. Like *Jubilees* he also speaks of Passover as once-yearly (ἅπαξ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν

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<sup>95</sup> Dillon 1977: 45–48; Thompson 2007: 571–72, 576.

<sup>96</sup> Leonhardt 2001: 220.

ἕκαστον; *Spec.* 2.146); the uniqueness of Passover within each year recalls the unique event of deliverance, while its repetition from year to year ensures ongoing remembrance and thanksgiving. More generally, the uniqueness of the Jewish cult gives it universal significance. The high priest is the ‘close relative’ of the whole nation, uniting them as one body (*Spec.* 3.131); he intercedes for all peoples (1.97). The true temple is the whole universe (1.66; *Somn.* 1.215 identifies two temples [ἱερόν]: the world [κόσμος] and the rational soul [λογικὴ ψυχή], cf. 1 Cor 6.19, the Christian’s body is a sanctuary [ναός]) and the tabernacle is an imitation and copy (μίμημα, ἀπεικόνισμα) of the divine one (*Det.* 160; cf. Heb 8.5; 9.23, and see discussion in Chapter Six).<sup>97</sup>

## 2.6 Middle Platonism (2): Plutarch

### 2.6.1 Plurality in Plutarch

Plutarch (c. AD 45–120) provides a helpful counterpart to Philo: a Greek statesman and historian who served as a priest at the Oracle at Delphi, he represents Middle Platonism in a non-Jewish and therefore more mainstream form.<sup>98</sup> For Plutarch the created world is the image and copy of reality (εἰκόν, μίμημα, *Is. Os.* 372f; cf. Heb 8.5; 9.23; 10.1, though note Hebrews never uses μίμημα, and εἰκόν refers to the ultimate reality, not its copy). The mode of existence of the physical universe is thus becoming rather than being, and as such it is in a constant state of flux and change. Plutarch notes that the

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<sup>97</sup> The universal symbolism of the temple is common to Josephus as well (*Ant.* 3.179–87). It does not, however, entail the redundancy of literal observance, cf. *Migr.* 90–93.

<sup>98</sup> Notwithstanding later Neoplatonist rejection of his doctrine of creation. For an introduction to Plutarch’s thought see Dillon 1977: 184–228, on his life esp. 185–91; also Russell 1972; Lamberton 2001: 1–59. On the one and the many in Plutarch see Thompson 2007: 576–79.

Pythagoreans classify duality as bad, in opposition to unity (τὸ ἕν) which is good (*Is. Os.* 370e; *Def. orac.* 428f). While plurality is an inherent and inferior feature of the physical world, it can be positively influenced by Osiris who represents pure being. In the soul Osiris' influence is seen in 'Intelligence and Reason, the Ruler and Lord of all that is good', while on earth 'that which is ordered, established, and healthy, as evidenced by seasons, temperatures, and cycles of revolution, is the efflux of Osiris and his reflected image'. By contrast Typhon, also known as Seth, represents the Indefinite Dyad and underlies disorder: 'that part of the soul which is impressionable, impulsive, irrational and truculent, and of the bodily part the destructible, diseased and disorderly as evidenced by abnormal seasons and temperatures, and by obscurations of the sun and disappearances of the moon' (*Is. Os.* 371a–b; cf. *Def. orac.* 428e–429d).<sup>99</sup> Order and regularity in the necessarily plural phenomena of the earthly world signal the impact of the divine realm.

Middle Platonists commonly posit an intermediary realm which mediates between divine singularity and the changeable physical world; for Plutarch this is represented by Isis, who is the 'image and reflection and reason of Osiris' (εἰκὼν, μίμημα, λόγος, *Is. Os.* 377a). The use of terminology similar to that which describes creation indicates that Isis is derivative from and inferior to Osiris, but at the same time that she is a mediating principle, the source of 'what is orderly and good and beneficial'; she is accordingly revered. The plural nature of Isis and her interaction with the world of becoming is shown by her variegated (ποικίλαι) robes, unlike Osiris whose robe is of a single colour like light (*Is. Os.* 382c–d). The parallels with Philo's exploitation of Joseph's robe and the high priest's vestment inside and outside the

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<sup>99</sup> Dillon 1977: 204.

sanctuary are evident. The robes of Isis are used many times (χρῶνται πολλάκις, *Is. Os.* 382d). Just as Isis in her manifoldness can exercise a positive influence on earth, so also wisdom has many deeds (πολλὰ ἔργα σοφίας, *Is. Os.* 361d); Isis plays a role not dissimilar to that which Sophia fulfils for Philo.<sup>100</sup>

### 2.6.2 Singularity in Plutarch

Plutarch's view of plurality is the direct corollary of his understanding of the divine being as one and pure, and heaven and earth are usually explicated in contrast to one another. Thus just as the Pythagoreans consider unity (τὸ ἓν) to be among what is good (*Is. Os.* 370e), so Osiris is absolutely singular.<sup>101</sup> His robe has no shadow or variety (σκιάν, ποικιλμόν) but is singular like light (ἓν ἀπλοῦν τὸ φωτοειδές, *Is. Os.* 382c). When his robe has once (ἅπαξ) been taken off it is kept unseen and untouched (ἀόρατον, ἄγανυστον, *Is. Os.* 382d). He is 'uncontaminated and unpolluted and pure from all matter' (*Is. Os.* 382e–f), as it is by mixture with something else that contamination arises (*E Delph.* 393c). Deity is not many (οὐ γὰρ πολλὰ τὸ θεῖον ἐστίν, *E Delph.* 393b), and other names attributed to God are appropriate because they indicate his singularity: Apollo means 'denying the Many and abjuring multiplicity', while Ieiús designates him 'as being One and One alone' (ὡς εἷς καὶ μόνος, *E Delph.* 393c).<sup>102</sup>

In discussing the meaning of the inscription 'E' at the Delphic Oracle, Plutarch states that it stands for εἶ, 'you are', and indicates the appropriate human response to God, the counterpart to God's address to each person, γνῶθι σαυτόν, 'know thyself' (*E*

<sup>100</sup> Dillon 1977: 204–6.

<sup>101</sup> On God as the Good and the One see Dillon 1977: 199.

<sup>102</sup> Intriguingly the prophetess at Delphi gave responses 'but *once a year*' (ἅπαξ ... τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, *Quaest. rom.* 292f), though there is no connection with Yom Kippur.

*Delph.* 392a). For God the address ‘you are’ (or ‘you are one’, εἶ ἓν, *E Delph.* 393b) is appropriate – indeed, the only truthful thing one could say – because it is ‘the assertion of Being’ (τοῦ εἶναι, *E Delph.* 392a). Being is eternal, without beginning or end, and one cannot speak of ‘after’ or ‘before’, nor can one say ‘it is here’ (ἐνέστηκε), ‘it is at hand’ (πάρεστι), or ‘now’ (νῦν), for all of these imply change and are therefore a confession of non-being (*E Delph.* 392f). God ‘being One, has with only one “Now” completely filled “For ever”’ (εἶς ὄν ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν τὸ ἀεὶ πεπλήρωκε, *E Delph.* 393a–b). The monad remains once for all one (ἅπαξ τὸ εἶν μένει), and Plutarch derives the term ‘monad’ from μένειν, again connecting being and unity (*De Garrul.* 507a). Plutarch’s God is eternal in the sense of timeless; he is immutable and changeless, utterly different from the created realm and untainted by it.

### 2.6.3 Conclusion: Hebrews and Middle Platonism

Middle Platonism holds to an eternal God who is absolutely singular; this singularity is intrinsic to his status as being itself and to his eternal and changeless nature. It is not difficult to see how Philo was able to integrate certain aspects of Jewish belief into this overarching system; the unity of God even makes possible his defence of the particularity and exclusivity of the Jewish cultus, although only in conjunction with an emphasis on its universal scope and representative function. The divine realm differs starkly from the created realm which is plural and changeable. Such plurality is not inherently evil, however, but can be positively influenced by the deity, in particular through a mediator (Isis for Plutarch, the high priest for Philo) who must be plural in order to interact with the physical world. Plurality and repetition always represent imperfection and inferiority, but can be evil, neutral, or good; in their positive

instantiations they either derive from the divine (wisdom, Isis, the high priest) or tend towards the divine (repentance, recollection, sincere sacrifices).

Hebrews bears notable similarities to this Middle Platonic distinction between the one and the many. The heavenly realm and heavenly beings (God, Jesus, Melchizedek) are changeless and enduring, eternal and indestructible.<sup>103</sup> By contrast, the physical realm is characterized by plurality and repetition in both old and new covenants. As in the Middle Platonist scheme, such plurality can be a good thing insofar as it emanates from or is directed towards God, although Hebrews jars with a Middle Platonist understanding from the outset when it declares that God *has spoken*.<sup>104</sup> On this basis it is reasonable to suppose both a general familiarity with Platonic thought and language, and also a deliberate self-distancing from it on Hebrews' part.

When it comes to the use of the key term (ἐφ)άπαξ, Thompson comments:

Plutarch's ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν corresponds to the (ἐφ)άπαξ in Hebrews. Both concepts describe a type of timelessness insofar as they concentrate linear time in a qualitative transcendent point in time and thus bring to an end the succession of time periods in the unity of one moment.<sup>105</sup>

Yet in fact it is at this very point that the distance between Hebrews and Middle Platonism becomes clear. For Hebrews (ἐφ)άπαξ denotes not a singular point but the completion of a sacrificial process. This process has a clear beginning at the incarnation (cf. Heb 10.5–10, where εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον marks the start and ἐφάπαξ the end of Christ's self-offering) – that beginning, and arguably the whole process, is therefore very much physical. Corporeality is thus not the whole – or even part – of the problem, and it cannot be claimed that Hebrews rejects the tabernacle sacrifices because

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<sup>103</sup> The relevant vocabulary and references are: ἀπαράβατος, Heb 7.24; ὁ αὐτὸς, 13.8; διαμένειν, 1.11; μένειν, 7.3, 24; 10.34; 12.27; 13.14; αἰωνίος, 5.9; 9.12, 14, 15; 13.20; εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, 1.8; 5.6; 6.20; 7.17, 21, 24, 28; cf. 13.8, 21; εἰς τὸ διηνεκές, 7.3; 10.12, 14; ἀκαταλύτος, 7.16; ἀσάλευτος, 12.28.

<sup>104</sup> Thompson 2007: 580–81 concedes Hebrews' distance from Middle Platonism on this point.

<sup>105</sup> Thompson 2007: 577.

they are physical, or indeed that their physicality is inherent to their repetition. When Christ's sacrifice is understood as a process it can also be seen that Hebrews' contention that Christ *remains* utilizes a key Platonic term but in a quite different way: he remains a priest only because at a specific point he *became* a priest (cf. e.g. Heb 5.5–6, 9–10; 7.16, 21). By contrast, the eternal principle in Middle Platonism knows no beginning. The 'now' for Plutarch is not a 'transcendent point *in time*'; it is rather an attempt to describe timelessness and is opposed to the 'now' of ordinary time which cannot be applied to the deity (cf. *E Delph.* 392f with 393a–b). Jesus is closely associated with (ἐφ)άπαξ, but this term describes his *sacrificial act*, not his person or state. These considerations suggest that although Hebrews is certainly aware of Middle Platonist thought and employs its terminology, the contrast between the one and the many cannot be explained by appeal to this framework.

## 2.7 Early Christianity

### 2.7.1 Plurality and Repetition in the New Testament

The somewhat idiosyncratic English translation 'vain repetitions' for βαττολογέω in Matt 6.7 was noted in Chapter One. Various etymologies are suggested for this term, but most important is its onomatopoeic quality suggesting a meaningless heaping up of words and syllables;<sup>106</sup> in this respect it is like the English verb 'babble'. 'Vain repetitions' is thus not an entirely unwarranted translation, but it does lend hostages to fortune by leaving open what kind of repetition is meant. In conjunction with the term

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<sup>106</sup> France 2007: 240–41; Davies and Allison 1988: 1.587–88.

πολυλογία it is clear that what is being criticized here is the notion – exemplified by Gentiles in Matthew’s view – that in prayer one is heard in proportion to the sheer quantity of words used.<sup>107</sup> This would suggest a kind of mechanistic or magical approach to prayer. By contrast the Christian God’s foreknowledge and fatherly disposition (6.8) imply that he needs neither to be informed nor to be coerced into answering prayer.

In a way not dissimilar to those instances of the prophetic ‘critique’ which mention the plurality of sacrifices, then, Matt 6.7 attacks a kind of *ex opere operato* view of prayer – or indeed a *do ut des* view of the nature of the exchange with God which takes place through prayer. Perhaps uniquely, at least in the NT, this verse identifies and rejects a view which equates repetition with effect: many words will ensure the gods both hear and answer. Yet the rejection of such a view does not entail the acceptance of its exact opposite: to suggest that lengthy prayers are always ineffective, or that short ones always work, misses Matthew’s point. He does not prohibit liturgical forms (as witness the introduction of a set prayer in 6.9–13) or persistence in prayer (the assumption in Matt 6.1–18 – ‘when you give/pray/fast’ – is that these disciplines are regularly undertaken; cf. Luke 18.1–8; y. *Ber.* 4.7b); rather, he commends brevity and relevance (cf. Eccl 5.2; Sir 7.14; 2 *Bar* 48.26; b. *Ber.* 61a).<sup>108</sup> Another passage which potentially critiques plurality – in this case, of sacrifices – is Stephen’s citation of Amos 5.25 in Acts 7.42; yet, as mentioned above, it is not the extent of the sacrifices (‘for forty years’) which is criticized, nor even the temple itself,

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<sup>107</sup> Βαττολογέω and πολυλογία are NT *hapaxes*; their occurrence in Luke 11.2 in D is clearly imported from Matthew.

<sup>108</sup> In this regard, we can affirm the opinion of Luz 1989: 366 that it is justifiable to use Matt 6.7 to critique prayer which is over-long or repetitious in order to make God answer. Yet Luz carries this far beyond warrant when he infers that it excludes long or repeated set liturgical prayers.

but the idolatrous attitude of the people: they failed to acknowledge God's heavenly location and transcendence (7.44, 48–49), and worshipped other gods (7.43).<sup>109</sup>

A rather different take on plurality is found in Ephesians. In a description of the eschatological revelation of the mystery of the gospel – the inclusion of Gentiles as heirs among God's people – Eph 3.10 elucidates the purpose of this revelation, 'so that through the church the manifold [πολυποίκιλος] wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies'. Wisdom is not here personified (it is the subject of a passive verb, not active, and previous occurrences suggest it is a quality more than an agent, Eph 1.8, 17; cf. 5.15), nor is it equated with Christ. It is best to see it as expansive of the 'mystery' in the preceding verses: it is an eschatological and heavenly good, only now made known through the church (which itself has a heavenly location, 2.6) to other celestial powers (cf. 1 Cor 2.6–13).<sup>110</sup>

The term πολυποίκιλος is a Greek Bible *hapax*, first attested in Attic tragedy; its less emphatic unaugmented form ποικίλος is found frequently with a whole variety of usages, though notably it describes Joseph's multi-coloured garment (Gen 37.3; cf. Josh 7.21); ποικιλία and various ποικιλ- forms also denote elaborate embroidery in the context of the tabernacle/temple veils and priestly garments (e.g. Exod 26.36; Sir 45.10; Ezek 16.10). The theme of wisdom's manifold nature is echoed in 1 Pet 4.10, which describes God's grace as ποικίλος, and most strikingly in Wis 7.22–8.1 (see above). What is significant here is the association of plurality with a divine attribute; in

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<sup>109</sup> This is an attack on false worship and a low view of God's transcendence, Sylva 1987; Stanton 1980; Ullucci 2012: 85–86. See J. D. G. Dunn 2006: 86–99 for a thorough articulation of the traditional view that Stephen rejects the temple. Beale 2004: 216–29 thinks Christ replaces the temple in Stephen's speech; Marshall 2007: 570–71 concurs but does not entirely dismiss Sylva's argument. Earlier he thought there was no evidence for a new temple in Stephen's speech, Marshall 1989: 209.

<sup>110</sup> These powers probably include 'all created intelligences', Bruce 1984: 321, and are likely won over by this display of wisdom, Best 1998: 325–27.

Ephesians it is also notable that the richly diverse wisdom of God is revealed at the same point in time at which Hebrews locates God's speech through a Son (Heb 1.2a).

### 2.7.2 Uniqueness in the New Testament (1): The *Shema*

Like other Second Temple Jewish writers, the NT authors make use of and develop the *Shema* (e.g. Mark 12.29–30; cf. Matt 22.37//Luke 10.27).<sup>111</sup> The *Shema* is evoked in James as a basic touchstone of orthodoxy, insufficient if merely assented to without corresponding works of faith (Jas 2.19).<sup>112</sup> Paul appeals to it in Rom 3.29–30, adducing the oneness of God against Jewish exclusivist objections to his argument that Gentiles are included by faith; here again we see the link between oneness and totality, though developed in a quantitative (all people) rather than a qualitative (all of the individual person) manner.<sup>113</sup> A similar application is made in 1 Tim 2.3–7, which possibly contains preformed material in 2.5–6a; here a christological statement is added to the confession of God as one, identifying Christ Jesus as the one mediator between God and humanity. As in Romans, this undergirds the universality of salvation: God's desire for all to be saved (1 Tim 2.4), Jesus' ransom for all (2.6), and Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles (2.7).

The unity of God in conjunction with the idea of a mediator is also found in Gal 3.19–20, although here in an antithetical way: the law was instituted through angels by a mediator (cf. *Jub.* 1.27–2.1; Acts 7.38, 53; Heb 2.2), which introduces the difficult statement: ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν. Although the basic point of

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<sup>111</sup> See Gerhardsson 1996.

<sup>112</sup> On the *Shema* and Jewish daily prayer in relation to James see Verseput 1997.

<sup>113</sup> Schreiner 1998: 205–6; Dunn 1988: 193.

the contrast is clear – the mediator is not ‘of one’, i.e. he mediates on behalf of more than one, whereas God is one – interpretations are legion.<sup>114</sup> In contrast to 1 Timothy 2, in Galatians the mediator is clearly not Christ and plurality affects the old dispensation and contrasts with the singularity of the new. This unicity and its relation to Christ is present in the context (Gal 3.16), and becomes the grounds for the radical unity of the church across all conceivable divides (3.25–29).

A christological development of the *Shema* is also found in 1 Cor 8.4–6, bearing similarities to 1 Tim 2.5–6 but consisting of two more equally weighted halves.<sup>115</sup> In the context of a discussion of food sacrificed to idols, Paul refers to the shared knowledge that idols have no real existence and that ‘there is no God but one’ (8.4); after mentioning the many gods of polytheistic religion (8.5) he offers a short creedal statement, probably traditional, which specifies the ‘one God’ as the Father and then strikingly juxtaposes ‘one Lord’, which is glossed ‘Jesus Christ’ (8.6).<sup>116</sup> Their uniqueness is associated with the totality of their claim on creation, which is thus exclusive of any claim of other gods: the Father is the source of all things and the Christians’ goal (ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν), while Christ is implicitly the mediator (δι’ οὗ, δι’ αὐτοῦ) of both creation and Christians.<sup>117</sup> Uniqueness here is constitutive of an absolute

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<sup>114</sup> It is hard to take Gal 3.19 as a neutral statement of angelic mediation given that 3.20 contrasts this with God’s oneness; yet neither are (evil/fallen) angels the source of the law, so it is perhaps best to see this as a distancing of God from the law using plurality, Stanton 1996: 112–13. It is disputed whether the mediator is Moses or an angel, and whether the plurality denotes more than one party (true of any situation involving a mediator) or particularly the multitude of the people of Israel or of the angels. See discussion in Betz 1979: 162–73; Bruce 1982: 174–79; he follows Vanhoye 1978 who argues that the mediator is an angel on behalf of many angels, and that thus there are implicitly two mediators (Moses and angel) on behalf of two plural parties, rather than a singular mediator who shares both divine and human attributes as in 1 Tim 2.5.

<sup>115</sup> On the *Shema* in 1 Corinthians see Waaler 2008.

<sup>116</sup> Fitzmyer 2008: 341–43; Thiselton 2000: 628–29.

<sup>117</sup> Thiselton 2000: 636.

claim and excludes the plurality of other gods and lords; the latter point is a corollary of the former.

The later Pauline text Ephesians, which was noted above for its evocation of plurality in describing divine wisdom, also contains a creedal statement which makes extensive use of singularity. Ernest Best suggests that what we find in Eph 4.4–6 has been modified by the author to fit into his argument, with an underlying form along the lines of ‘one body, one Spirit, one hope; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all’.<sup>118</sup> Whether or not – and to what extent – an original statement has been modified, we find an auspicious numerical pattern: seven ‘ones’ which culminate in God the Father who is further qualified by three ‘alls’. Note again the association of uniqueness with totality. There is no necessary line of development directly back through 1 Cor 8.6 to Deut 6.4,<sup>119</sup> but the comparison is instructive: the classic statement of monotheism expands to include other significant unique symbols of the faith (cf. *1 Clem.* 46.6: one God, one Christ, one Spirit of grace, one calling; notably this reference precedes an appeal to 1 Cor in *1 Clem.* 47).<sup>120</sup> Best rightly notes the ‘constant difficulty in determining the precise significance of the “one” attached to each noun’, yet while it clearly has a rhetorical function in holding the sequence together its significance is greater than this, particularly in connection with the oneness of God: it becomes a theological claim about the uniqueness and unity of Christian faith. Within the argument of Eph 4.1–16, this distinctive section functions to

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<sup>118</sup> Best 1998: 366–72; Best is not particularly disposed to spotting preformed traditional material under every bush (e.g. he is sceptical that 2.14–18 is a preformed hymn, pp. 247–50); it is not important here whether or not 4.4–6 is traditional, but the form is suggestive of this and most commentators take it as such.

<sup>119</sup> As Lincoln 1990: 240 claims.

<sup>120</sup> Bruce is probably right that in 1 Cor spirit-lord-God replaces the ‘logical’ order with that of experience, although this is slightly harder to square with regard to the other elements of the confession. Bruce 1984: 338.

support an appeal to unity (ἑνότης), something which the Ephesian Christians already have (4.3) and consequently must strive towards (4.13). Here, then, uniqueness functions to ground an appeal for internal unity and harmony, rather than a claim about universal inclusion (of Gentiles with Jews; Rom) or exclusion (of any other gods; 1 Cor).

It is the unity theme which predominates in other comparable instances; although here the *Shema* is left behind, some of the other symbols in the passages considered above remain in the picture. First Corinthians 12 is an extensive discourse on unity which grounds its appeal for harmony in the expression of diverse charisms in the source of those gifts, the Spirit who is 'one and the same' (12.4–11), and also in the image of the body (12.12–31; cf. Eph 4.4; 1 Cor 6.16–17, although there 'one flesh', which gives rise to the mention of 'one spirit', is drawn from Gen 2.24). A further example is found in 1 Cor 10.17, where one eucharistic bread or loaf unites many Christians. In context the symbol of the bread is closely linked with the body of Christ (10.16), which as seen in 1 Corinthians 12 has associations with the church as well as the physical body of Jesus. In *Did.* 9.4 this image is developed in a manner slightly more detached from the body of Jesus: just as bread is the gathering of many discrete grains, so also the eucharist gathers and unites many individual Christians.

This material witnesses to the importance of the *Shema* in early Christian tradition, developed christologically and also in connection with other prominent symbols. Such appeals are mostly employed to undergird claims to totality, though not as in the case of the *Shema* itself a complete devotion to God so much as the universality of the church – all (kinds of) people, Gentiles as well as Jews – or its internal unity. In two cases such singularity is opposed to plurality: the polytheism

mentioned in 1 Cor 8.5 and the plurality associated with the mediator of Gal 3.19–20. The latter of these is possibly pertinent to Hebrews given the association of plurality with the old dispensation and God’s uniqueness with the new. Yet the precise referent in Galatians is both unclear and at the same time clearly not, as in Hebrews, either prophets (Heb 1.1) or priests (7.23). As will be seen in Chapter Four, Hebrews does not contrast Christ’s oneness with prophetic or angelic plurality (1.1–4; 2.1–4). Moreover, while in Galatians the problem lies in mediation, Hebrews champions Jesus as mediator *par excellence* (8.6; 9.15; 12.24): Chapter Six will show that the issue with the old covenant is not mediation itself but the less-than-perfect mediators.

### 2.7.3 Uniqueness in the New Testament (2): Jesus’ Death

Appeals for unity in the NT documents are often based on *Shema*-influenced confessional statements; Ephesians, which contains just such a statement and appeal in ch. 4, grounds a similar appeal in ch. 2 in Jesus’ body, or more specifically his flesh and blood. It is Jesus’ death which represents the other minor strand of thought relating to uniqueness which can be found in the NT. Ephesians 2.11–13 recalls how Christ’s death has brought the Gentiles near, serving to introduce a distinctive section in 2.14–18. It is not relevant to the present study whether or not this unit consists of traditional material or to identify the referent of the ‘dividing wall’ in 2.14.<sup>121</sup> The motif of Gentile distance/separation from Israel which is overcome by Christ’s blood (2.13) is primarily horizontal (although their lack of relationship with God is mentioned in 2.12) but its vertical dimension is expressed as well: the dividing wall is broken down and one new

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<sup>121</sup> For discussion see Best 1998: 247–50; Bruce 1984: 296–98.

human being is formed out of those who are far and near (2.14–15, 17); this new humanity is simultaneously reconciled to God, and has access to him through the Spirit (2.16, 18).<sup>122</sup>

Importantly it is the death of Christ which underlies this: both the offensive (destroying the wall, abolishing the law of commandments, killing the enmity) and reconciling aspects are achieved 'by his blood', 'in his flesh', 'through the cross'; the series of aorist participles suggest a decisive, completed event. Despite the ensuing temple imagery the death of Christ is not elaborated sacrificially, nor is it contrasted with plurality: it is disunity and enmity which are opposed.<sup>123</sup> In this light it becomes all the more notable that Hebrews does not apply its extended reflection on the uniqueness of Jesus' death to questions of inner-church unity or indeed Jew–Gentile relations, as noted in §2.2.

The other places where we find reference to the uniqueness of Jesus' death are terser and also more directly comparable to Hebrews. In Romans 6 Paul addresses the potential and erroneous inference that justification permits or even promotes ongoing sin so that God's grace might increase. In response he points to the identification of the believer with Christ in his death and resurrection, and in 6.10 he states: '(the death) which he died, he died to sin once for all (ἐφάπαξ); (the life) which he lives, he lives to God'.<sup>124</sup> Dunn suggests that ἐφάπαξ emphasizes the difference between the Jewish/Christian eschatological perspective and a cyclical view of history as found in

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<sup>122</sup> See Best 1998: 261–65 for the distinction between a new type of humanity in 2.15 and a new corporate body (i.e. the church) in 2.16.

<sup>123</sup> Braun 1984: 301 notes that one finds εἷς used christologically elsewhere in the NT, including for Jesus' death (citing Eph 2.16). He adds, correctly, that outside Hebrews the NT 'setzt aber die Einzigkeit nie gegen die Vielzahl alttestamentlicher Opfer.'

<sup>124</sup> Commentators agree on contextual grounds that the subject of Rom 6.10 is not a general reference to 'the one who has died to sin' but Christ, *contra* Winandy 2000.

the mystery cults.<sup>125</sup> More certainly, it refers to the historical singularity of Jesus' death, which, combined with his resurrection (6.9, he will never die again), has become indicative of the absolute and decisive manner in which he has dealt with sin. Believers are not said to have died once for all because of the tension of their present existence: they have died with Christ (6.3–6, 8) yet must consider themselves dead (6.11), while their resurrection is both future (6.5, 8) and to be realized in daily life (6.4, 11). Yet the ethical implication and force of such identification is clear: *'believers can share in the epochal once-for-all results of Christ's death'*.<sup>126</sup> What is striking here is that the singularity of Jesus' death serves to strengthen an appeal to absolute moral devotion, in much the same way that the *Shema* uses the uniqueness of God to ground a similar appeal. That is to say, just as the oneness of God (and Christ, the Spirit, etc.) is used to promote unity and total devotion, so also the oneness of Jesus' death can promote both of these things.

The same term ἐφάπαξ occurs in 1 Cor 15.6 describing one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances (to five hundred people 'all at once'). Although at first this might be thought to be connected with Jesus' death (cf. 15.3–4), it is in fact not directly related. The term qualifies a resurrection appearance rather than crucifixion or burial; if traditional material is present in this gospel summary it is unlikely to extend to 15.6.<sup>127</sup> Most importantly, the adverb reinforces not so much the uniqueness or singularity of the occurrence but its simultaneity: the point is that Christ appeared to a large number of

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<sup>125</sup> Dunn 1988: 323.

<sup>126</sup> Dunn 1988: 332 (emphasis original).

<sup>127</sup> Fitzmyer 2008: 549–50 considers the traditional material to extend from 15.3b–5a; Thiselton 2000: 1203 (cf. 1186–97) reckons 3b–5.

people *at one and the same time*, rather than in individual, separate visions or delusions.<sup>128</sup>

The final passage outside Hebrews in which we find emphasis on the singularity of Jesus' death is 1 Pet 3.18. Here an appeal to perseverance in the face of suffering is grounded in Christ whose own innocent suffering is – as elsewhere in 1 Peter (e.g. 2.18–25) – both supreme moral example and vicarious atonement. As with Romans 6 the fact that Christ suffered 'once for all' (ἄπαξ) may appear irrelevant or even unhelpful for the audience, whose own suffering/death to sin cannot be once for all; the common presence of this theme across Romans, Hebrews and 1 Peter (in connection with a number of associated motifs: baptism, resurrection, session, and the use of πάσχω rather than ἀποθνήσκω for Jesus' death, cf. Heb 9.26) may suggest a traditional – and perhaps particularly Roman – reflection on the theological implications of the singularity of Christ's death. Indeed, it is possible that Romans itself formed part of the influence on 1 Peter and Hebrews. Even if such material is traditional,<sup>129</sup> however, 1 Pet 3.18 is well integrated into the argument: the pattern and the atoning effect of Christ's death (that is, its replicable and unrepeatable aspects) together motivate to perseverance, and its cosmic scope is indicated in Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison (3.19) and his enthronement and subjugation of authorities (3.22), considerations which offer additional reassurance to the Christian community beset by persecution.

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<sup>128</sup> Thiselton 2000: 1205.

<sup>129</sup> See Elliott 2000: 693–705 on use of tradition in 1 Pet 3.18.

#### 2.7.4 Treatment of Old Covenant Sacrifices in *1 Clement* and *Barnabas*

While *1 Clement* and *Barnabas* are later than Hebrews and demonstrably dependent on it in the case of *1 Clement* (which thus could potentially be treated in the following chapter),<sup>130</sup> it is instructive to adduce their evidence here because they represent two quite markedly opposing tendencies within early Christianity in their treatment of old covenant sacrifices. In this respect they are instructive primarily for what they do not say, rather than what they do say, about repetition.

For the late-first-century *1 Clement*, the Levitical sacrifices are divinely appointed (40.2) and thus serve as an example for the ordering of the church's worship.<sup>131</sup> Clement highlights their regularity and order (40.1–5) and relates this to each person serving in their own appointed role (41.1) and to the place of bishops as successors of the apostles (chapters 42, 44–45). It is in particular the uniqueness of Jerusalem, its altar, and its priests (41.2) – and the corresponding great offense of offering sacrifice in any other place or manner – which grounds the appeal to respect the divinely-appointed order of commissioning (God > Christ > apostles > bishops, 42.1–4).

It is notable that Hebrews' argument regarding the plurality and repetition of sacrifices is simply not used in *1 Clement*. Of course, one cannot infer from this any more than that this argument was not of use to Clement, for whatever reason. Yet it is striking that he exploits the typological (or at least exemplary) potential of the OT for Christian worship (as I will argue Hebrews does, albeit more subtly, in Chapter Six), and further that it is the *order and regularity* of the sacrifices that in part grounds the

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<sup>130</sup> On the dependence of *1 Clement* on Hebrews see Gregory 2005: 152–53; and esp. Hentschel 2008: 38–222; note the dissent of Lona 1998. Dependence of *Barnabas* on Hebrews is highly uncertain, though thematic commonalities probably attest a 'similar milieu', Carleton Paget 2005: 245–48.

<sup>131</sup> On the date of *1 Clement* (likely 90s AD) and other introductory questions see Jaubert 2000: 15–23; Ehrman 2003: 1.18–33; Lona 1998: 66–89.

appeal for order in the Corinthian church.<sup>132</sup> *First Clement* 40.1–2, 4 speaks on three occasions of the sacrifices occurring ‘at appointed times’ (κατὰ καιροῦς τεταγμένους), ‘at set times and hours’ (ὀρισμένοις καιροῖς καὶ ὥραις), and ‘at the arranged times’ (τοῖς προστεταγμένοις καιροῖς). This concern for exactitude in accord with the divine will is reminiscent of *Jubilees*, and suggests that the repetition of sacrifices for Clement is an indication of Israel’s faithfulness to God’s command, rather than of their lack of effect.

The early-second-century *Letter of Barnabas*, by contrast, opposes physical sacrifices in an absolute and categorical manner (2.4–10).<sup>133</sup> Isaiah 1.11–13, Jer 7.22 and Ps 51.17 are cited to indicate that God has no need of sacrifices (*Barn.* 2.4), a point which is uncontroversial so far as it goes (see Ps 50.10–13); yet *Barnabas* argues following the Isaiah quotation that God therefore nullified them (καταργέω, *Barn.* 2.6). In their place Christians should offer God a crushed heart which glorifies him. Notably *Barnabas* cites passages which evoke the multitude of the sacrifices to underline the way in which these have wearied God (Isa 1.11–13), although it does not exploit this repetition. Later we find the criticism that the Jerusalem temple was virtually equivalent to a pagan temple, and that the Jews hoped in the building rather than in God, whose dwelling place is the whole earth (*Barn.* 16.1–2, paraphrasing Isa 40.12 and 66.1). The *Letter to Diognetus* (c. AD 150–200) also identifies Jewish with pagan worship (3.3, cf. 2.1–10) and evinces similar criticisms: God made the world and therefore needs nothing

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<sup>132</sup> For commonalities in *1 Clement* and Hebrews’ use of sacrificial language see Hentschel 2008: 176–78.

<sup>133</sup> For an introduction to questions of date and setting see, e.g., Wilson 1995: 127–42; Ehrman 2003: 2.3–11. Also Carleton Paget 1994; Hvalvik 1996; Prostmeier 1999. *Barnabas* was clearly written between AD 70 and 135 (*Barn.* 16.3–4); scholars tend to favour c. AD 130 though plausible proposals exist for the 110s or even 90s AD. It is usually identified as of either Alexandrian or Syro-Palestinian origin, though certainty is impossible.

from humans (3.3–5) and everything he has made is equally good and therefore Sabbath, food law, and calendar observance is superstitious (4.1–6).

Cultic language is nevertheless used to describe salvation (ἀγνίζω, ῥαντίζω, αἷμα, *Barn.* 5.1); Christian believers are a holy or spiritual sanctuary (ναὸς ἅγιος, 6.15; πνευματικὸς ναός, 16.6–10 – here in direct replacement of the physical temple); and an elaborate typology links various details of Yom Kippur directly to the cross in chapter 7–8. Yet this deployment of sacrificial language is in a sense largely non-sacrificial: the argument in *Barnabas* 7–8 is not, as in Hebrews, that Jesus' death is a sacrifice on the model of Yom Kippur, but rather that the individual details of the latter are fulfilled in details associated with the crucifixion. What is particularly striking is that the repetition of sacrifices is not used as an argument against them in either *Barnabas* or *Diognetus*. This is an observation of silence, yet in texts which are evidently opposed to Jewish observances and later than Hebrews it is surprising that a line of argumentation which is supposedly anti-sacrificial and self-evident is not redeployed. Together with *I Clement*, these texts highlight the distinctiveness of Hebrews' portrayal of repetition, and while they primarily suggest that Hebrews was not useful in this respect for whatever reason, it is possible that Hebrews was part of the prompt for developing typological readings of the OT, and that its overall approach to the sacrificial way of thought was not sufficiently in line with that of *Barnabas* or *Diognetus* to warrant its reuse.

### 2.7.5 Conclusion: Hebrews and Early Christianity

Other NT documents contain very little discussion of repetition. Where critique is found (Matt 6) the purpose is to attack mechanistic views of the correspondence between quantity of prayer and its effect, in favour of brevity and pertinence. Divine attributes

like wisdom were seen to be manifold in their expression and effect (Eph 3). The key monotheistic claim regarding the uniqueness of God, often with Christian accretions, primarily supports notions of universal inclusion or internal unity; by derivation it also excludes polytheism (1 Cor 8) and reveals the lesser status of the somehow plural old covenant (Gal 3). Despite potential similarities with the view of the old covenant in Galatians, Hebrews nowhere alludes to the *Shema*, nor does it address questions of internal unity or Jew–Gentile relations.

The tradition regarding the singularity of Jesus' death clearly bears the greatest relevance for Hebrews, and is applied to unity (Eph 2) as well as to ethical perseverance against sin (Rom 6) and in the face of suffering (1 Pet 3). In none of these cases is Jesus' death described sacrificially, nor is its emphasized singularity developed in contrast to plurality. In other early Christian texts, including one that is familiar with Hebrews, we find nothing comparable to Hebrews' treatment of the old covenant cult: tabernacle/temple sacrifices either serve typologically to undergird the legitimacy of ecclesiastical order (*1 Clem.*), or they are attacked while Yom Kippur is related typologically to Christ's death in a way which passes over the actual Jewish temple and sacrificial system itself (*Barn.*).

In discussing *καταντάω* in Eph 4.13, Otto Michel makes this comment: 'In Eph. and Hb. unity and uniqueness, unity and absoluteness, and unity and perfection are all interwoven into close patterns of thought. Hence the theology of *ένότης* (Eph. 4:4–5) is closely linked with that of *ἐφάπαξ* (Hb. 9:12) in the NT.'<sup>134</sup> Michel is right to note the theological potential of both themes, and the fact that they can serve the same purposes: the *Shema* and Jesus' death promote absolute ethical devotion, and confessional

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<sup>134</sup> Michel, 'καταντάω', *TDNT* 3.623–25, at 624 n. 2.

statements in various places as well as Jesus' flesh and blood in Ephesians 2 promote unity. Yet in Hebrews this theme derives clearly from the death of Jesus alone, and it is elucidated primarily in doctrinal rather than ethical terms with respect to the lasting and objective nature of salvation. Beyond the common exploitation of the connection between singularity and totality, the treatment of this theme in Hebrews is thus distinctive, especially in the contrast it develops with repetition. Jesus' unique death is not applied to ecclesial unity, and only indirectly to ethics; instead it is developed in a more purely theological fashion to elucidate an all-surpassing soteriology.

## 2.8 Conclusion

Hebrews draws on and combines both the OT tradition regarding the uniqueness of Yom Kippur and the early Christian tradition regarding the uniqueness of Jesus' death. While various aspects and rites from the Jewish sacrificial system are alluded to and used to elaborate the significance of the atonement, there is no indication that Hebrews extends the designation 'once a year' to other feasts, as is found in Second Temple Judaism. No trace of either the *Shema* itself, or any of its Jewish or Christian developments or applications, underlies Hebrews' thought on the singularity of the Christ event. Notable with regard to both the *Shema* and Jesus' death is the ease with which connections are drawn between uniqueness/singularity and totality. This association is also evident in Hebrews.

Although numerous parallels can be drawn between Middle Platonism and Hebrews in their portrayal of singularity and plurality, and the correlation of these with the earthly and divine realms, Hebrews nevertheless does not fit a Middle Platonist

schema at several key points. God's historically particular speech, Jesus' bloody death, and his physical entrance into heaven all problematize the attempt to correlate Hebrews' thought on this issue with a Platonic world-view. A better explanatory model, given the undeniable parallels, is one of awareness, engagement, and deliberate subversion.

Jewish texts do not display a contrast between the one and the many like that found in Hebrews. *Jubilees* and the *Sabbath Songs* indicate clearly the desirability of regular worship, and illustrate belief in an ongoing heavenly cult which may inform our understanding of Hebrews. In particular the emphasis on the connection between earthly and heavenly cults, and the safeguarding value of celestial worship when earthly worship is corrupt, hindered, or imperilled, are suggestive in light of the hypothesis adopted here of Hebrews' historical location after the fall of Jerusalem. Hebrews exhibits a similar emphasis on the importance of correlating earthly (new covenant) worship with the heavenly sanctuary, and in this respect certain Jewish apocalyptic texts help clarify why this might be the case.

Ultimately, however, this chapter has shown that Hebrews' thought on repetition is unique within its historical settings. The repetition or multitude of sacrifices is occasionally evoked (in the OT and Philo, for example) to underscore, by way of a kind of dramatic irony, the lack of effect of offerings made incorrectly. Yet Hebrews' discussion of repetition in the sacrificial system never mentions the correct mode of sacrifice or the intention or moral standing of the offerer, being concerned instead with a more absolute defect. Part Two will argue that Hebrews' evident dependence on and fusion of the traditions regarding Yom Kippur and Jesus' (ἐφ)άπαξ death exhibits extensive reflection and development, and that it is from these that the exclusion of repetition (of old covenant sacrifices, Chapter Six, and of repentance, Chapter Five)

develops. Conversely, because neither of these traditions bears any direct relation to God's revelation the plurality of divine speech is not portrayed negatively or contrasted with singularity (Chapter Four). Before that Chapter Three looks at the early reception of Hebrews' portrayal of singularity and repetition. Those texts which misread Hebrews along the lines mentioned in the previous chapter give an indication of how such misreadings might come about, while those texts which exhibit a more careful use of Hebrews suggest a trajectory for more responsible interpretation.

## CHAPTER THREE

# **‘The Former Is Continually Annulled by the Latter’**

## **Repetition in the Early Reception of Hebrews**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Hebrews’ unprecedented and unexplained use of repetition lends certain hostages to fortune, and it is in the letter’s later reception in various ecclesiastical controversies that these begin to play out. As they do so, they shed light on the apparent ambivalence of the text. The present chapter traces the reception of Hebrews’ discussion of repetition and singularity through the second to fourth centuries AD, with a threefold purpose. While there is not space to trace the development of this theme more extensively, certain texts offer relatively early examples of the association of repetition with lack or even destruction of effect. This may indicate, first, that Hebrews’ arguments were not understood, and secondly might shed light on how and why such a tradition developed. Thirdly, certain other texts offer a more nuanced reading of Hebrews, providing insights into the text which will be confirmed by the exegesis in Part Two and which suggest an alternative, more responsible, and ultimately more productive manner of reading the letter. The texts are treated in a thematic order which is also broadly chronological, moving from questions around repeating repentance after baptism, to repetition of baptisms among the baptismal sects, to the (non-)repetition of sacrifices by Christians.

## 3.2 Repeating Repentance

### 3.2.1 The Unrepeatability of Christian Baptism

The notion that baptism cannot be repeated is not explicit in the NT – although it might be inferred from passages such as Ephesians 4 (ἐν βάπτισμα) and Hebrews 6 – yet it was current relatively early on, as indicated by the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Mand.* 4.3) in the first half of the second century AD.<sup>1</sup> In terms of its justification, if not its actual origins, Heb 6.4–6 is a crucial text for this practice.<sup>2</sup> The roots of Christian baptism are disputed; its three potential sources are Jewish purity ablutions and immersions, proselyte baptism, and John’s baptism. The first of these is a rite which is clearly repeatable and repeated; indeed, it is of the essence of such a practice that it renews purity for continued participation in cultic life.<sup>3</sup> As an initiatory rite the second, proselyte baptism, is naturally and perhaps implicitly one-off. Yet the precise dating and origins of proselyte baptism are heavily disputed, and there is little or no evidence for it until well into the second century AD.<sup>4</sup> And while it is perhaps a reasonable assumption

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<sup>1</sup> See also Origen, *On Martyrdom* 30; Chrysostom *Hom. Heb.* 9.7.

<sup>2</sup> See the patristic literature cited in Hughes 1973. He is sympathetic to the notion that Heb 6 evokes the initiatory experience associated with baptism.

<sup>3</sup> Ablutions seem to have developed from the few references to sprinkling and washing associated with purity in the Pentateuch (e.g. Lev 11.24–40; 14.5–8, 50–53; Num 19.17–21). References to ritual washing increase through the Second Temple period (*Jub.* 21.16; *Sib. Or.* 3.591–93; Mark 7.3–4; Matt 15.2; 23.25–26; Luke 11.39; *Jos. War* 2.129, 149–50; see Freyne 2011: 225–37). The large numbers of *mikvaoth* unearthed in Jerusalem, especially near the temple, and also in Qumran, suggest the extent of the practice by the first century AD. E. P. Sanders notes: ‘in all probability immersion before entering the temple was enforced: thus the pools near the entrance. This is an unexpected, almost a fantastic degree of uniformity, once one recognizes that immersion pools are not required by the Bible.’ Sanders 1990: 223–24 (emphasis original). The rabbis required correct intention and total submersion (*t. Hagigah* 2.6; *t. Mikvaoth* 8.5; 9.1–4).

<sup>4</sup> Proselyte baptism is not mentioned in Philo, Josephus, or the NT – texts which all deal extensively with Jew–Gentile relations, Ferguson 2009: 76–82. The soldiers baptized in Luke 3.14 might be Jews, or this could represent a Hellenization of Mark’s account. Sängner suggests that Christian baptism may have influenced the development of Jewish proselyte baptism, Sängner 2011: 321, 327.

that John's baptism – which constitutes the clearest direct antecedent to Christian baptism<sup>5</sup> – was one-off,<sup>6</sup> there is no evidence for this; indeed, it is not implausible that an individual might have gone out to the Jordan on more than one occasion during John's ministry to reaffirm his commitment to the repentance at the heart of this renewal movement.<sup>7</sup>

As an initiatory rite, and perhaps on the model of John's baptism and (more tentatively) proselyte baptism, it is natural that Christian baptism should be a one-off event; yet there is a slight but highly significant step from this to the conception of baptism as strictly non-repeatable. In all probability this development is dependent on the close association of baptism with the death and resurrection of Jesus: the former took on the singular and unrepeatable character of the latter, as I will argue in Chapter Five is the case with repentance in Hebrews. Indeed, in both Romans 6 and 1 Peter 3, examined in Chapter Two, baptism is mentioned in the close context, and Hebrews 6 was from early on interpreted as explicitly describing baptism. In combination with the association of baptism with forgiveness of sins, its construal as absolutely unrepeatable creates a problem for the early church: what is to be done when the faithful fall into significant postbaptismal sin? One lay response was to delay baptism to as late as

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<sup>5</sup> John is clearly important to all four evangelists (including Acts). Both John's and Christian baptism are designated with the term βάπτισμα and not the more common βαπτισμός which denotes (Jewish) ablutions (cf. Heb 6.2 and Chapters Five and Six), and one very firm – and evidently embarrassing – piece of early Christian tradition is that John baptized Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> So, e.g. Sängler 2011: 299; Ferguson 2009: 86.

<sup>7</sup> The Pseudo-Clementine literature refers to John as a 'daily-' or 'day-baptist' (ἡμεροβαπτιστής, *Hom.* 2.23); this could mean he baptized *others* every day, or that he and his followers underwent baptism daily. The historical value of this appellation attached to John is limited, but see the discussion of Hemerobaptist groups below.

possible, even to one's deathbed, a practice whose popularity is indicated by the vehemence of the efforts to oppose it among clergy.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2.2 The *Shepherd of Hermas*

Another important response is the development of other means of forgiveness, a route taken in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. AD 110–40). In *Mandate* 4.3 the angel is asked whether there is only one repentance, the one which occurred 'when we descended into the water and received forgiveness for the sins we formerly committed'. This is described as the view of 'some teachers', a possible allusion to Hebrews.<sup>9</sup> The teaching is affirmed, making it unlikely that Hermas is here directing polemic against Hebrews,<sup>10</sup> but it is qualified with the allowance of a further repentance, though not a second baptism (cf. *Herm. Vis.* 2.2).<sup>11</sup> Patrick Gray makes the intriguing suggestion that in offering one – but only one – second repentance, *Shepherd* is actually interpreting Heb 6.6, which states that it is impossible 'to renew again to repentance' (πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν) the one who has fallen away. By giving maximum force to the prefix ἀνα- this could be read as suggesting that *one* subsequent renewal to repentance (ἀνακαινίζω) is allowed, but that this cannot be done *again* (πάλιν).<sup>12</sup> This is not the natural reading of Heb 6.6, but it would explain why *Shepherd* insists that the second repentance is also one-off and unrepeatable. An alternative explanation appeals to the

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ*; Chrysostom, *On the Baptism of Christ*; *Baptismal Instructions*; *Hom. Heb.* 13; 20.2, Ferguson 1997; 2009: 617–28.

<sup>9</sup> It is not certain Hermas knew Hebrews, but it at least shows strong awareness of a tradition probably based on Hebrews' teaching on repentance, a likelihood reinforced by Hermas' Roman location. See Gray 2008: 328; Ehrman 2003: 2.167; and esp. Hentschel 2008: 262–341.

<sup>10</sup> *Contra* Blomkvist 2011: 854.

<sup>11</sup> The seal which is restored in *Herm. Sim.* 8.6 probably does not refer to baptism; see Blomkvist 2011: 865; Hartman 1997: 184.

<sup>12</sup> Gray 2008: 329.

analogy with baptism – just as there is one baptism, so there is one repentance.<sup>13</sup> As seen in Chapter Two, the extension of unity or uniqueness from one element of a confession to other elements occurred fairly easily within the earliest Christian traditions, without threatening the uniqueness of the element originally designated as such. Yet this is not the case here: the ‘one repentance’ remains identified with baptism (*Mand.* 4.3.6), and a subsequent repentance is a concession for an unspecified length of time and only for those who have already believed (4.3.3–4). Gray’s suggestion of Hermas’ exegetical ingenuity thus gains in plausibility; it might nevertheless be thought most likely that the *Shepherd* simply makes one carefully delimited concession.

### 3.2.3 Clement of Alexandria

The contention that the *Shepherd* forms part of the reception of Hebrews may be reinforced by adducing a passage from another early Christian writer who allows a second repentance. Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–215) is aware of the *Shepherd* and considers it to be scripture, so it is likely that his thinking about a second repentance derives at least partly from this source.<sup>14</sup> He speaks of the ‘first and only repentance’ (πρώτη καὶ μόνη μετανοία, *Strom.* 2.13); while this is not explicitly identified with baptism, in *Miscellanies* 2.3 he speaks of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and baptism in juxtaposition, suggesting it is right to understand 2.13 as a reference to baptism as well. We find a similar emphasis to Hermas: this repentance is one and unrepeatable, yet there is a second repentance (μετάνοια δευτέρα); but there is no hope for the one who sins after that, for it is ‘a repentance not to be repented of’ (μετάνοια

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<sup>13</sup> So Ferguson 2009: 216–17.

<sup>14</sup> Ehrman 2003: 2.166, 169.

ἀμετανόητον). Clement proceeds to cite Heb 10.26, a passage closely connected with Hebrews 6. This indicates that Hebrews' warning passages underlie the strict exclusion of repeating this second repentance, but it may additionally suggest that the letter itself is being read as permitting this further repentance – otherwise the reference to Hebrews would undermine the allowance of a second chance.

Clement and the *Shepherd* interpret Hebrews along similar lines, allowing only one baptism but also reading the text in such a way as to allow one subsequent repentance. In Clement it is notable that further repentance is explicitly called 'second'; as with *Shepherd* this suggests that the one-off nature of this repentance does not derive from an analogy with the one-off nature of baptism. Rather, baptism *is* the first repentance, and a second repentance is permitted, arguably on the grounds of a close reading of Hebrews. In this case, both authors testify to an attempt to reconcile the church's practice and teaching regarding the unrepeatability of baptism and the severity of sin in the Christian life (positions supported by Hebrews) with a pastoral accommodation to the needs of believers – but this accommodation occurs *by implicit appeal to Hebrews itself*, and not against or in ignorance of it.

### **3.3 Repeating Baptisms**

#### **3.3.1 Jewish and Jewish-Christian Baptismal Groups**

While both Hermas and Clement held firmly that baptism was unrepeatably, in common with most early Christians, there were groups (both Jewish and Jewish-Christian) which practised regular immersion or baptism. The ubiquity of regular ablutions in first-

century Judaism was indicated above; here the interest is where regular washing contrasts with one-off baptism. Often our information about these groups comes from heresiarchs who write to oppose their practice.

In a list of seven Jewish sects cited from Hegesippus in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, we find a group called Hemerobaptists (4.22.7). This group may well be the same as or similar to another called simply 'Baptists', also mentioned in a list of seven Jewish sects in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* 80.4; there is also a possible connection with 'morning Baptists' mentioned in rabbinic texts.<sup>15</sup> These references are elusive, though one naturally infers from the name that this group practised (or at least was perceived to practice) daily baptism. It is in Epiphanius' *Panarion* 17 that we have the fullest record of their customs: he likens them to Scribes and Pharisees (they believed in the resurrection of the dead), with the additional characteristic that they are baptized every day, all year round (17.1.1–2). They 'allege that there is no life for a man unless he is baptized daily [καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν] with water' (17.1.3).<sup>16</sup>

This group is clearly unusual among Jewish sects, though its practice essentially extends an already-established purity rite and does not necessarily have any bearing on Christian baptism. Yet there are groups which practised initiatory baptism and regular ablutions. Josephus' account of the Essenes suggests they incorporated both (initiatory baptism: *War* 2.137–38; ritual washings: 2.129, 149–50; note that Josephus' teacher Bannus regularly washed for purity, leading some to suggest Bannus was an Essene, *Life* 11). Josephus offers no comment on the conjunction of these practices, but it seems

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<sup>15</sup> See *t. Yadaim* 2.20; *b. Berakoth* 22a; 52a; *y. Berakoth* 3.6c. Ferguson 2009: 72–73.

<sup>16</sup> Translation from Williams 2009; 2013.

that they were not perceived to be in tension or contradiction. Moreover, some Jewish-Christian groups did the same: the Ebionites, according to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30), had an initiatory baptism (which is specifically mentioned as distinct from regular baptisms: Βάπτισμα δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ λαμβάνουσι χωρὶς ὧν καθ' ἡμέραν βαπτίζονται, 30.16.1) and also washed after intercourse and even if they met someone while returning from purifying themselves (30.2.4–5; the Samaritans also washed after contact with Gentiles, 9.3.6). Epiphanius describes their regular washings as ‘daily’ (οἱ καθ' ἡμέραν βαπτισμοί, 30.32.1; and cf. 30.16.1 above). The term may be hyperbolic given the polemical context, as might the appellation ‘Hemerobaptist’ for the group addressed in *Panarion* 17, although Ebionite washing is said to be ‘daily’ more than once and the name ‘Hemerobaptist’ is found in Hegesippus as well.<sup>17</sup> Even if exaggerated, this language witnesses to frequent ablutions and immersions in both of these groups.

There is some debate over whether the Ebionites are to be identified with the community from which the Pseudo-Clementine literature emerged;<sup>18</sup> it is at least undisputable that the Ebionites read and appealed to the Pseudo-Clementines, including in the matter of regular washing, where they pointed out Peter’s regular washings (see *Hom.* 10.1.1–2; 11.1.1–2; *Recog.* 4.3.1; 8.1.1; note also *Hom.* 11.28; *Recog.* 6.11, which commend ritual washing after and in addition to baptism).<sup>19</sup> In addition we might mention the Elchasites, attacked by Hippolytus in his *Refutation of All Heresies* for promoting a ‘second baptism’ and in another instance 40 immersions in a period of seven days (9.13, 15). With the possible exception of the Elchasites’ second baptism,

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<sup>17</sup> John the Baptist is described as a Hemerobaptist in Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 2.23, though it is unclear what this implies.

<sup>18</sup> Ferguson 2009: 248–65 takes these groups to be identical; Strecker 1981: 208–9 argues that there is not enough evidence to identify them.

<sup>19</sup> For the suggestion that Hebrews refutes Ebionite tendencies in its recipients, see Goulder 2003.

Ferguson's comment on the Pseudo-Clementines applies to all these groups: 'The presence of both daily baths and one-time conversion baptism among the Ebionites [sc. the group reflected in the Pseudo-Clementines] shows these were different rites and not contradictory to each other.'<sup>20</sup> That is to say, however much the heresiarchs may have attacked them for it, these groups understood these rites as distinct such that the regular ablutions were not a repetition of the initiatory washing. However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that initiatory baptism was for forgiveness of sins/'spiritual' cleansing and the regular immersions for purity. Epiphanius generally uses the same terms for both acts (βαπτίζω and βάπτισμα, though he does use βαπτισμός, the more usual term for ritual immersion, e.g. in 30.21.1–2; 30.32.1), as do the Pseudo-Clementines,<sup>21</sup> which suggests the two rites are closely related, and in any case the concepts of inward and outward purity are closely linked.

### 3.3.2 Critiques of Repeated Baptisms

Bearing in mind both the connection and the distinction between immersions for initiation and for ongoing purity, it is particularly instructive to examine instances where these are perceived to conflict with one another. Justin Martyr allows that a Jewish believer in Jesus may continue with ablutions, so long as he does not attempt to convince Gentiles of his views, but he acknowledges that this is not the view of all Christians (*Dial.* 46–47). Justin disagrees strongly with those Christians, but in doing so he testifies to their existence: increasingly, the continued observance of Jewish customs

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<sup>20</sup> Ferguson 2009: 251.

<sup>21</sup> Βάπτισμα can refer both to the repeated purity rite and to 'ein einmaliger Initiationsritus für bussfertige Heiden.' Wehnert 2011: 1108.

by Christians was opposed. We find a later example of this in the *Didascalia apostolorum*, a third-century Syrian text which takes a low view of the so-called ‘Second Legislation’ (δευτέρωσις, i.e. that part of the law which was given after the golden calf episode; cf. comments on δευτέρωσις in §1.4.2), which it maintains was imposed purely as a burden and punishment on Israel.<sup>22</sup> In a discussion of church order (*Did. apost.* 24–25) the one-off and sufficient nature of Christian baptism is asserted,<sup>23</sup> there follows a discourse against the Second Legislation in the lengthy final chapter (*Did. apost.* 26). This includes an indictment of the sacrificial system on the basis of the prophetic statements that God has no need of or desire for sacrifice.<sup>24</sup>

Later in the same chapter repeated washing for purity is attacked.<sup>25</sup> Three arguments are presented: 1) a *reductio ad absurdum* which insists that if impurity and purity were really contracted and obtained the way the Second Legislation decrees, one would need to wash constantly; 2) any subsequent baptism undoes ‘the perfect baptism of God’; 3) no amount of water could purify someone from serious sin.<sup>26</sup> Of particular interest for the reception of Hebrews is the second argument. It is plausible to suppose that the *Didascalia* knows Hebrews, both on the basis of a reference to Jesus as ‘the true high priest’ (*Did. apost.* 9) and also on the basis of the passage under consideration, which elaborates why undoing the baptism of God is such a terrible offence. Such an act *renews* one’s offences and brings woe because it affirms the Second Legislation, whereby one consents to ‘the curse against our Saviour’ and ‘sets at naught Christ the

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<sup>22</sup> For English translation (with Latin fragments) see Connolly 1929.

<sup>23</sup> Connolly 1929: 86–87.

<sup>24</sup> Connolly 1929: 216–23.

<sup>25</sup> Connolly 1929: 248–55.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 17.2.4, who uses the same argument against the Hemerobaptists.

King'.<sup>27</sup> In this language can be heard an echo of the offence offered to Christ by apostasy in Heb 6.4–6; 10.26–29, though with a slight and significant difference: the very fact of repeating baptism is identified with the act of apostasy which makes void the former baptism, whereas in Hebrews 6 the repetition of repentance is not identical with but is rather ruled out by the apostasy which insults Christ.

Significantly this view diverges from Justin, who sees no problem with the continuation of ritual ablutions. We find the same argument in Chrysostom's ninth *Homily on Hebrews*; while this text is roughly a century later than the *Didascalia*, the proximity of their geographical origins suggests that there may be a connection, and therefore reinforces the impression that the *Didascalia* offers evidence of a certain reading of Hebrews. As he expounds Heb 6.1–6 Chrysostom explains that this passage does not exclude further repentance but rather means that there is no second washing (i.e. baptism); he continues 'if there is, there is also a third, and a fourth; for the former one is *continually annulled* by the later [ὕπὸ τοῦ ὑστέρου ἀεὶ τὸ πρῶτον καταλύεται], and this continually by another, and so on without end [εἰς ἄπειρον]' (9.7).<sup>28</sup> The argument is essentially the same as that in the *Didascalia*: a repetition nullifies the previous instance; it will be recalled from the chart in §1.4.5 that this is the most extreme or negative effect that repetition could have. It is particularly striking that the

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<sup>27</sup> Connolly 1929: 250–51.

<sup>28</sup> There were numerous controversies over 're-baptism' spanning the early centuries AD. Eunomius rebaptized those who joined his neo-Arian sect (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 76.54.32–33), while the Elchasites offered a second baptism to those seeking forgiveness of serious sin or converting (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.15.1, 3). Earlier, in the Novatianist controversy Cyprian (bishop of Carthage AD 248–58) insisted on rebaptizing any who joined the church from heretical or schismatic groups. He was opposed by Stephen of Rome. In the fourth–fifth centuries AD the Donatists insisted on rebaptism because of doubts over the validity of the Catholic bishops' orders resulting from the acceptance of *traditores* following the Diocletian persecution (AD 303–11). Augustine of Hippo addressed the issue, famously arguing that Christ (and therefore the office, not the individual) guarantees the effect of the sacraments (*De bapt.* 1.14, 19). See Ferguson 2009: 380–99, 796–98.

reception of Hebrews is here associated with a destructive form of repetition; as I will argue in Chapter Five, it is in fact apostasy and not the attempt to repeat repentance (or baptism) which destroys the effect of the first repentance; and in Chapter Six we will see that the argument against repeated sacrifices is not that each destroys the effect of the previous one, but that they never atoned for sin in the first place, and their repetition now reveals this fact.

### 3.3.3 Epiphanius against Baptistic Sects

Epiphanius of Salamis (c. AD 320–403) identified several baptistic sects among the heresies recorded in his *Panarion*. Rather than arguing that repetition destroys the effect of a previous baptism, however, against the Hemerobaptists he replicates much more closely Hebrews' argument concerning sacrifices. Given this evident and careful use of Hebrews, it is all the more striking that against another baptistic sect, the Ebionites, Epiphanius refrains from using this argument and proceeds in a different manner. The criticism of the Hemerobaptists is worth quoting in full:

If they are baptized every day [καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν βαπτιζομένων] their conscience [ἡ συνείδησις αὐτῶν] is convincing them that the hope they had yesterday is dead, the faith and the purification. For if they were satisfied with one baptism they would have confidence in this as in something living and forever immortal [ὡς ζῶντι καὶ ἀθανάτῳ ὄντι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα]. But they must think it has been nullified since they bathed today, not to cleanse the body or get rid of dirt, but because of sins [ἔνεκεν ἁμαρτημάτων]. Again, by taking another bath the next day, they have made it plain that the previous baptism of yesterday is dead. For unless yesterday's had died they would not need another the next day for purification of sins. (*Pan.* 17.2.1–2)

Lexical and conceptual commonalities with Hebrews suggest that Epiphanius here is applying the same argument that Hebrews applies to the tabernacle sacrifices – in particular, the reference to the conscience (συνείδησις) and sins (ἁμαρτήματα) recalls

Heb 10.2 which asserts that if the sacrifices had perfected the worshippers, they would no longer have consciousness/conscience of sins (συνείδησις ἁμαρτιῶν). This phrase itself refers back to 9.14 which speaks of Christ's blood purifying the conscience from dead works. Similarly we find the contrasting language of repetition (καθ' [ἐκάστην] ἡμέραν) on the one hand and continuity/eternity (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) on the other, the latter associated with that which is 'living'; all of this language is deployed in Hebrews.

While at first the argument may seem to be parallel to that found in Chrysostom and the *Didascalia* – a repetition nullifies the first instance – in fact Epiphanius' language is much more careful. The baptism of the previous day 'is dead', 'has been nullified', 'has died'; and by bathing the following day the Hemerobaptists '*make it plain* that the previous baptism is dead'. That is to say, the subsequent baptism does not itself nullify the previous baptism, but only reveals that it was without effect. This is exactly what Hebrews claims about the repetition of tabernacle sacrifices, as will be seen in Chapter Six.

Crucially, Epiphanius is able to deploy this line of argument against the Hemerobaptists only on the grounds that they undergo baptisms *because of sins* (ἕνεκεν ἁμαρτημάτων; cf. *Pan.* 17.1.3, they held that daily baptism purified a person 'from every fault', ἀπὸ πάσης αἰτίας). If these baptisms had been for external purity (which Epiphanius explicitly denies), then the tension between them and a one-off baptism would have been lessened. Both Hebrews and Epiphanius operate with a part-submerged premise: that forgiveness of sins ought to be valid on a lasting level, enduring beyond the daily effect of the *tamid* sacrifices in the tabernacle system, or of baptisms among the Hemerobaptists. Notably the Pseudo-Clementines share the same premise: for them, initiatory baptism is understood as a replacement of the old covenant

sacrifices – both are for the forgiveness of sins – while ongoing immersions are to do with purity (see esp. *Recog.* 1.39; also 1.48, 54–55).<sup>29</sup>

It is on the basis of the premise that forgiveness of sins is enduring that Epiphanius projects onto the Hemerobaptists a thought similar to that which Hebrews projects onto the participants in the tabernacle cult when it claims ‘in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year’ (10.3). Rhetorically this is cast as a statement regarding the psychology of those involved, but fundamentally the point being made is theological: since the forgiveness of sins is lasting, and these baptisms/sacrifices do not last, it must be the case that they do not in fact forgive sins. The contrast with the *Didascalia* is notable: there no attention is paid to the purpose of the baptisms (in this case, purity), it is simply asserted that a subsequent baptism annuls the earlier one.

The line of argumentation Epiphanius develops is revealed to be all the more careful when we consider that he does not use it against the Ebionites – and that despite the fact that they practise initiatory baptism as well as ongoing immersions, and therefore might be supposed to be equally susceptible to such a line of attack.<sup>30</sup> It might be thought that such differences in Epiphanius’ treatment of different sects are simply incidental or the result of *ad hoc* argumentation. But in fact there is an important difference between the Ebionites and the Hemerobaptists: while the latter are baptized *for sins*, the continuing immersions practised by the former are *for purity*.<sup>31</sup> Epiphanius ridicules the Ebionites and deploys NT texts regarding Jesus’ teaching on not needing to

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<sup>29</sup> Ferguson 2009: 260; Freyne 2011: 246.

<sup>30</sup> On the Ebionites see Skarsaune 2007. He argues that Epiphanius’ apparently ‘new’ information about the Ebionites in fact derives from Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, and a Pseudo-Clementine document Epiphanius terms the *Journeys of Peter* (pp. 450–61, on immersions see 456–57).

<sup>31</sup> *Barnabas* 11.1 claims that Jewish immersions are not for the forgiveness of sins; despite the polemical context this assertion is essentially accurate, and it seems this is also true of Ebionite practice. This makes the Hemerobaptists something of an exception.

be washed again (John 13), the Pharisees' ritual washings (Mark 7//Matt 15), and Peter's vision (Acts 10–11; cf. *Pan.* 30.21.5–7), but he does not make any link between the repetition of immersions and inefficacy.

It is Epiphanius' use of John 13 against the Ebionites that is of greatest interest; the use of this passage might not immediately suggest itself in this context, yet it is amenable to the question of repetition. Jesus tells Peter that washing his whole body is not necessary, only his feet, for:

ὁ λελουμένος οὐκ ἔχει χρείαν εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας νίψασθαι, ἀλλ' ἔστιν καθαρὸς ὅλος (John 13.10)

the one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet; he is completely clean

ὁ λουσάμενος ἅπαξ οὐ χρείαν ἔχει τὴν κεφαλὴν <νίψασθαι>, εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας μόνον· ἔστιν γὰρ καθαρὸς ὅλος (*Pan.* 30.21.4)

the one who has once bathed does not need to wash his head, but only his feet; for he is completely clean

While we do not know exactly what text of John's Gospel was available to Epiphanius, this citation is very close to D (note the inclusion of τὴν κεφαλὴν; εἰ μὴ τοὺς πόδας μόνον, cf. 13.9, P<sup>66</sup>, Θ; and γὰρ instead of ἀλλά). Among the variants common to Epiphanius and D, μόνον stresses the exceptional nature of washing the feet again as opposed to washing the whole body. Making allowances for the fluidity of textual tradition, two changes can be identified with a fair degree of confidence. By placing the participle from the perfect into the aorist, and by adding ἅπαξ, Epiphanius clearly emphasizes the one-off nature of the washing.

The association of one-off baptism with John 13.10 is not original to Epiphanius. It can be found earlier in Tertullian's treatise *On Baptism* (c. AD 200): 'he who has once [*semel*] bathed has no need to wash again [*rursum*]' (*Bapt.* 12). Note that in this paraphrase the focus has shifted from washing the whole body as opposed to just a part,

to washing once as opposed to repeatedly. The term ‘once’ is here deployed in the sense of ‘formerly’, in order to demonstrate that the apostles had been baptized previously.<sup>32</sup> A little later Tertullian evokes a similar thought: paraphrasing Eph 4.4–6 he describes the unity engendered by baptism (and by derivation the absence of unity with heretics); then alluding again to John 13.10 he makes a double application of the once-for-all nature of Christian baptism (*Bapt.* 15). First, it excludes the repetition of sin by the Christian; secondly, it is used against ‘Jewish Israel’, who ‘bathe daily’ (*quotidie lavat*). Unlike Epiphanius, however, Tertullian suggests that the water of Jewish baptisms is ‘infected with the repetition of impurities’, and ‘again defiles those whom it has washed’. That is, the water itself brings defilement and therefore repeated washings bring an ever more detrimental effect, an intimation reminiscent of Chrysostom and the *Didascalia*, and a starker claim than Epiphanius’ notion that the Hemerobaptists’ repeated washings *revealed* but did not *cause* the failure of the previous day’s immersion.

The ‘once-for-all’ theme (*ἅπαξ/semel*) and, in Epiphanius, the use of an aorist participle, together suggest the influence of Hebrews (cf. Heb 6.4–6). Of 19 occurrences of *(ἐφ)ἅπαξ* in the NT, six are irrelevant to this question (occurring in stock phrases such as *καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δίς*); of the 13 remaining, nine occur in Hebrews (the other four are Rom 6.10; 1 Pet 3.18; Jude 3, 5). Statistical analysis can only tell us so much, but in this instance it is indicative of a wider theme which is virtually (albeit not entirely) unique to Hebrews in the NT, signalling the uniqueness of the Christ event, as discussed in §2.7.3.

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<sup>32</sup> Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 32.71–110, also refers John 13.10 to baptism and envisages this as something distinctive; yet he views positively the additional cleansings implied by Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. Cf. Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 1.4.6.

It is highly likely that Hebrews has influenced the tradition of reading John 13.10 in this way.

Epiphanius cannot apply the specific argument that repetition reveals lack of effect, because Ebionite immersions do not claim to bring about something which is lasting in Epiphanius' view, but he can appeal to the other side of the coin. Chapters Five and Six will show that in Hebrews it is the absolute singularity of the Christ event, interpreted as all-surpassing uniqueness and efficacy, which then excludes repetition (of sacrifices for sins, of repentance after apostasy). The uniqueness of the cleansing afforded by the atonement, which from very early on influenced the way that baptism was perceived, enables Epiphanius to appeal to the singularity of baptism in such a way that it excludes all repeated baptismal practice, *whether or not* it is for the forgiveness of sins. But such an argument can proceed only from its centre: whereas against the Hemerobaptists he could deploy an argument against repetition borrowed more or less directly from Hebrews because of the similarities between the claims made for tabernacle sacrifices and Hemerobaptist immersions, against the Ebionites such an argument must in a sense be worked out anew from the singularity of Christ and the washing he offers.

### **3.4 Repeating Sacrifices**

#### **3.4.1 Emperor Julian on the Christians' Failure to Repeat Sacrifices**

As suggested in Chapter Two, Christians before the destruction of the temple were not opposed to sacrifice *per se*, as indicated by their continued involvement in various

aspects of the Jerusalem cult and the ease with which they extended sacrificial language to aspects of their practice which were not in fact cultic. The use of sacrificial language continued after the temple's destruction, but was increasingly taken in an anti-cultic manner, a tradition represented in an early form in *Barnabas*. Following AD 70, Christians and Jews did not engage in the repeated sacrifices which characterised all other ancient religion. For an increasingly Gentile Christianity, the reinterpretation of Jesus' death as sacrificial and the extension of cultic language to Christian practice, including to its ministers and the eucharist, led on the whole to a replacement theology vis-à-vis Judaism. That is to say, a position which originally grew out of necessity (religion without temple) became to some extent dependent on the temple's absence. This made the Christians stand out in the ancient world, particularly vulnerable to the charge of atheism for their absence of sacrificial practice, and it was a weak point which the Emperor Julian exploited.<sup>33</sup>

Unsurprisingly this non-observance of Christians attracted the attention of Greco-Roman governors and critics of Christianity. Already in the second century AD Celsus in his *On the True Doctrine* (170s AD),<sup>34</sup> had stressed the common points between Judaism and traditional religions in order to isolate Christianity. The philosopher Porphyry (c. AD 232–300) also attacked the Christian claim to have inherited the Jewish tradition, focussing his attention particularly on Christian use of the OT. Yet Porphyry was unusual among Greco-Roman philosophers for holding that sacrifices were actively 'contrary to piety' (a view for which Theodoret commends him,

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<sup>33</sup> On the ubiquity of sacrifice in first century religion, cf. Goodman 2005: 459; Stroumsa 2009: 57; on the accusation against Christians of atheism cf. Young 1973: 325; also Wilken 2003: 28 on official exposure of Christians by their refusal to offer libations, though he argues this practice was not as widespread as often assumed.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffmann 1987: 33; Wilken 2003: 94.

*Graec. Affect. Cur.* 36–37).<sup>35</sup> While it was a commonplace among philosophers that the gods do not need sacrifices, they generally rationalized the customary cults on grounds of piety, societal cohesion, and tradition. Porphyry's unusual stance in this matter means he is highly unlikely to have criticized the Christians for their lack of sacrifices.

In his attitude to sacrifice Porphyry stands in stark contrast to the pagan Emperor Julian (born AD 331, ruled 361–63), who was brought up a Christian but converted secretly to paganism around the age of 20, throwing off the pretence of Christianity when he became emperor. Julian was fervent in his devotion: he 'loved to sacrifice, and even while on a military campaign he regularly offered sacrifices. "I sacrificed in the evening and again at early dawn as I am in the habit of doing practically every day" (*Ep.* 58).'<sup>36</sup> It is perhaps little surprise then that in his treatise *Against the Galileans* (AD 362/63)<sup>37</sup> he censures Christians for failing to sacrifice (343c). A little earlier Julian anticipates the appeal to the practice of the Jews, who also do not sacrifice, and responds: 'since they have been deprived of their temple [...] they are prevented from offering the firstfruits of the sacrifice to God' (306a). The destruction of the Jerusalem temple exonerates the Jews – if they could sacrifice regularly, they would – but Christians have no such excuse. Indeed, the primary motivation behind Julian's failed attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem temple appears to have been to remove this line of defence from the Christians, thus isolating them by highlighting their lack of sacrificial practice.<sup>38</sup> There follows an obscure reference to 'the new sacrifice [τὴν καινὴν θυσίαν]' which Christians have 'invented/found [εὐρόντες]' and which does not need Jerusalem

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. the passage, of somewhat uncertain meaning, in Augustine *Ep.* 102.16: '[Porphyry] says "censure the rites of sacrifices, the victims, the incense, and other things exercised in the cults of the temples"'.  
<sup>36</sup> Wilken 2003: 172; cf. Ullucci 2012: 141.  
<sup>37</sup> Wright 1913: 3.314.  
<sup>38</sup> Wilken 2003: 189; Ullucci 2012: 145–46.

(306a) – this may be the eucharist, or possibly the death of Christ; Julian thinks that because this ‘new sacrifice’ is not tied to Jerusalem, it should enable Christians to engage in sacrifice anywhere.<sup>39</sup> Whatever it refers to, it is clear that Julian does not in fact consider this ‘new sacrifice’ to be a real (animal) sacrifice.<sup>40</sup>

In discussing the keeping of festivals, Julian’s imagined Christian interlocutor protests: ‘We cannot observe the rule of unleavened bread or keep the Passover; for on our behalf Christ was sacrificed once and for all [ὕπερ ἡμῶν γὰρ ἅπαξ ἐτύθη Χριστός]’ (354a). This last phrase is particularly significant: although it primarily echoes 1 Cor 5.7 (note the conjunction of leaven/unleavened, Passover, and particularly the phrase ἐτύθη Χριστός), it also serves as a very concise summary of the tradition of the singularity of the crucifixion. In the phrase Julian cites, Christ’s death is singular and sacrificial, a coordination of ideas found repeatedly in Hebrews. The idea that his death was ὕπερ ἡμῶν is relatively commonplace, and is found in Heb 6.20; 9.24 (which both speak of Christ’s representative presence with God for us) and in Paul.<sup>41</sup> This, along with the use of ἅπαξ, suggests the assimilation of wider themes into what would otherwise be a straightforward allusion to 1 Cor 5.7. The fact that only Hebrews in the NT deals with the relationship between repeated sacrifices and Christ’s sacrifice supports the conclusion that its influence can be felt strongly here. Together with Epiphanius’ citation of John 13.10, this phrase suggests that the uniqueness and corresponding total efficacy of Christ’s death was an important theme in the patristic era, and could be deployed defensively as well as offensively against heretical groups.

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<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere Julian appeals to Elijah and Abraham, who sacrificed outside Jerusalem and ‘always and continually’ (ἀεὶ καὶ συνεχῶς; 351d, 324c–d).

<sup>40</sup> Wilken 2003: 193 notes the passage but offers no comment on the phrase.

<sup>41</sup> There are a total of 17 occurrences of ὕπερ ἡμῶν in the NT, of which six do not refer to Christ’s death; the nine (besides Hebrews) which do are all Pauline save for 1 John 3.16. (Rom 5.8; 8.32, 34; 2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13; Eph 5.2; 1 Thess 5.10; Tit 2.14.)

We can thus infer that the emphasis on the singularity of Christ's death in Hebrews was a significant component of a Christian *apologia* for non-participation in the regular sacrifices of the Greco-Roman cult. It is noteworthy that the eucharist does not feature in this defence of Christian practice; of course, the polemical context may account for this absence, although it would be relatively simple for Julian to press home his criticism on the grounds that Christians offer no *animal* sacrifice – and it is possible that the opaque reference to Christians' 'new sacrifice' denotes the eucharist. Julian has made clear that he regards this practice as a Christian invention and no excuse for non-participation in animal sacrifices. Still, while the regular offering of bread and wine in one sense brings Christian practice closer to that of Greco-Roman religion, it clearly does not bring them close enough. That is to say, even though the eucharist by this point had acquired strong sacrificial overtones, these were not considered sufficient to make it a plausible analogy to pagan sacrifices. Whether or not appeal was made to the eucharist as an alternative to or defence against offering animal sacrifices, Julian's citation of this catchphrase makes clear that the unrepeatable nature of Christ's sacrifice was regarded as one effective line of defence. Here again the central and versatile theme of the uniqueness of the Christ event, interpreted as an indication of its supreme and lasting effect, is deployed to exclude repeated and ongoing sacrifices of a certain kind. It is not simply that Christ's death has fulfilled the animal sacrifices, but that the uniqueness of his death can be actively deployed against ongoing sacrifice.

#### 3.4.2 Chrysostom: Repetition and Uniqueness in the Eucharist

While Julian is near-silent on the eucharist as a potential ongoing Christian sacrifice – perhaps not least because it undermines his argument that Christians do not offer regular

sacrifice – John Chrysostom (c. AD 347–407) provides a fascinating counterbalance. He directly engages with the question of the kind of repetition that occurs in the eucharist, the sacrificial understanding of which gives him pause in his *Homilies on Hebrews*.<sup>42</sup> In *Homily 17* (on Heb 9.24–10.9) he explains that old covenant sacrifices were repeated because they lacked power, and in order to make a remembrance of sins (17.5). He then stops to consider the following problem:

What then? do not we offer every day? [ἡμεῖς καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν οὐ προσφέρομεν;] We offer indeed, but making a remembrance [ἀνάμνησιν] of His death, and this is one and not many [μία ἐστὶν αὕτη, καὶ οὐ πολλάί]. How is it one, and not many? Inasmuch as that sacrifice was once for all offered [ἅπαξ προσητέχθη], and carried into the Holy of Holies. This is a figure of that, and this a remembrance of that. For we always offer the same, not one sheep now and tomorrow another, but always the same thing: so that the sacrifice is one [ὥστε μία ἐστὶν ἡ θυσία]. And yet by this reasoning, since the offering is made in many places, are there many Christs? but Christ is one everywhere, being complete here and complete there also, one body. As then while offered in many places, he is one body and not many bodies; so also he is one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. That we offer [προσφέρομεν] now also, which was then offered [τὴν τότε προσενεχθεῖσαν], which cannot be exhausted. This is done in remembrance [εἰς ἀνάμνησιν] of what was then done. For he says 'do this in remembrance of me'. It is not another sacrifice, as the High Priest, but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance of a sacrifice [τὴν αὐτὴν ἀεὶ ποιῶμεν· μᾶλλον δὲ ἀνάμνησιν ἐργαζόμεθα θυσίας]. (*Hom. Heb.* 17.6)

Chrysostom realizes the potential inconsistency if Hebrews' argument concerning old covenant sacrifices were to be extended to the eucharist, and seeks to resolve this problem. The issue arises chiefly because of the association of sacrificial language with the eucharistic act (προσφέρω, θυσία). Without overstating the importance of this passage for subsequent eucharistic theology, we might note that it anticipates both the Reformers' critique of the Mass and Roman Catholic defences of it. Chrysostom develops two lines of thought: firstly, that the eucharist is a *remembrance* of Christ's

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<sup>42</sup> On the sacrificial understanding of the eucharist in the early church see, e.g., Mazza 1999: esp. 35–51.

death; secondly, that it is *the same as* Christ's death. There is a degree of tension between these two affirmations, for a remembrance is inherently *distinct from* the thing remembered while simultaneously being a repetition – a *re-membering* – of it. The assertion of identity of the eucharist with Christ's death is then tempered with the notion of remembrance, which encompasses both affinity with and distance from the original instance. Commenting on the relationship between these two ideas, Frances Young concludes:

Chrysostom is clearly trying to express a rather complicated relation which finally leads him to reduce the Eucharist to a memorial in the way that Eusebius has done. But on the way to this conclusion, he has identified the sacrifice of the Eucharist with the one, perfect sacrifice of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

I would suggest rather that these two notions exist in a kind of dialectical relationship in Chrysostom's sermon, as can be seen particularly in the last sentence. The notion of remembrance may partly have been suggested by the passage he was preaching on, Heb 10.3 describing old covenant sacrifices as a remembrance (ἀνάμνησις) of sins; Chrysostom might discern an analogy between the tabernacle sacrifices and the Christian eucharist, with the crucial difference that the latter is the remembrance of a sacrifice which means sins need no longer be remembered. Chrysostom also anticipates the problem of spatial plurality of Christ's body in the eucharist, and the answer he develops is based on the infinite quality of Christ: he is singular, but he is also everywhere, and this accounts for his presence in the eucharist without damaging his unity. This argument is then applied in the temporal domain as well: Christians offer that 'which was then offered, *which cannot be exhausted*'.

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<sup>43</sup> Young 1979: 281.

Chrysostom's brief aside in this homily highlights a couple of important points: first, he realizes that Hebrews' argument vis-à-vis tabernacle sacrifices could be extended to the eucharist, a possibility which arises only because of the application of sacrificial language to the eucharist. Secondly, in seeking to forestall this critique of the eucharist and simultaneously to defend the uniqueness of Christ's salvific action, he develops two lines of response: if the eucharist is a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, then it is not itself actually a sacrifice and sacrificial language is applied to it by association or extension; if on the other hand the eucharist is the same as Christ's sacrifice, then sacrificial language is properly applied to it but the charge of plurality is avoided by instead extending the scope of that unique sacrifice. In both cases Chrysostom develops the kind of association observed frequently in Chapter Two between singularity and totality: that which is singular, if it is absolute, can extend to cover every instance of a series; thus singularity can embrace repetition and continuity.<sup>44</sup> While Julian testifies to the strength and versatility of the tradition regarding the uniqueness of Jesus' death, whose relevance he attempts to dismiss in favour of an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to revivify the practice of animal sacrifice, it is Chrysostom who grasps the problem this tradition might pose internally for Christian understanding and practice of the eucharist. Yet in doing so he begins to grapple with the theological tension between completion and continuation, sameness and difference, the once-for-all and the ongoing, which is fundamental to Christian life.

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<sup>44</sup> Though Chrysostom himself does not make this connection with regard to Christ's ongoing heavenly intercession, which he thinks ought to be once-for-all; he views its continual nature as an element of condescension, *Hom. Heb.* 13.6.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The texts studied in this chapter shed light on the early afterlife of Hebrews' discussion of singularity and repetition. It is notable that repetition is quickly and easily portrayed as having a detrimental effect, especially in polemical contexts. The theological potential of the singularity associated with the crucifixion, repentance, and baptism is attested in the way it colours the reading of other parts of scripture. The most creative engagement with these themes is found when authors grapple with the tension between the absolute singularity of the Christ event and its application to ongoing Christian practice. In certain respects they retrace the thinking found in Hebrews, but often they return to the central datum of Christ's death and work out the relation between this and repetition in a fresh way.

Tertullian, the *Didascalia apostolorum*, and Chrysostom all treat repetition as itself destructive, in discussions which bear the marks of Hebrews' influence.

Epiphanius uses a subtly different argument against the Hemerobaptists. Because their daily baptisms were for *forgiveness of sins*, Epiphanius carefully redeploys Hebrews' argument about repeated sacrifices for sin: each subsequent baptism reveals but does not cause the loss of effect of the previous day's baptism.

Epiphanius and Tertullian also witness to the strength and potential of the (ἐφ)άπαξ tradition, incorporated into John 13.10 to exclude the repeated washings of Jewish(-Christian) groups. This represents a combination of ideas regarding washing and singularity – the latter again heavily dependent on Hebrews – in such a way as to obviate the need for any ongoing ablutions. A similar testimony to the utility of the (ἐφ)άπαξ tradition is the way in which this term was incorporated into 1 Cor 5.7 to form

a concise Christian *apologia* against engaging in Jewish (and presumably also pagan) festivals and sacrifices.

While such uses of singularity are perhaps relatively straightforward when deployed externally, in the internal relation between uniqueness and the ongoing Christian life tensions arise. Hermas, Clement, and Chrysostom all testify to the difficulties raised for the forgiveness of serious post-conversion sin by the one-off nature of Christian repentance, which finds its most striking expression in Hebrews 6. Yet all three seek to enable subsequent repentance via a close reading of Hebrews itself.

The tension, recognized by Chrysostom, between the singular atonement and the ongoing appropriation of this in the eucharist – a tension vastly heightened by the cultic construal of the eucharist – is perhaps the most problematic and simultaneously the most suggestive issue we have examined. As with ongoing turning from sin, ongoing participation in the benefits of Christ's atoning work is an essential part of the Christian life. The eucharist is identified with Christ's death, but it is also distant and different from it. Or perhaps better, in it such distance and difference are overcome; it conveys the utterly unique and absolutely effective atonement into the ongoing life of the Christian with its repeated failings, turnings, forgiveness, and progress. Yet it must do so in such a way as not to undermine the atonement itself, for to damage its utter uniqueness is to destroy its absolute efficacy.

It has been evident throughout this chapter and the preceding one that repetition and singularity are two sides of the same coin. Both in Hebrews' historical settings and more especially in its early reception, however, it has become clear that one of those sides is more heavily weighted than the other. The centrality of the uniqueness of

Christ's death and the potential for a variety of forms of repetition to be developed from or in contrast to it is a core feature of Hebrews; it is to direct study of the letter that we turn in Part Two.



## **PART TWO**

### **REPETITION IN HEBREWS**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ‘And Again God Says...’

## Repetition and Revelation

### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter One we noted not only the centrality of Hebrews’ treatment of repetition to a number of theological problems throughout church history, but also the insufficient attention that has been paid to this theme in modern critical scholarship on Hebrews. In particular, I suggested that this manifests itself either in the assumption that the association between repetition and inefficacy is self-evident, or that the theme of repetition functions uniformly throughout the letter, or both. One of the most prominent places in which this assumption of uniformity has affected interpretation is the exordium (Heb 1.1–4), where numerous commentators understand the ‘many and various ways’ of God’s revelation through the prophets to form a negative foil to the singular revelation through a Son, in line with the later contrast between Christ’s (ἐφ)άπαξ sacrifice and the repetition of tabernacle sacrifices.

Against this interpretation, the present chapter argues that the repeated speech of God through the prophets is valued highly by the author. It is ‘imperfect’ only in the sense that it is incomplete and finds completion in the superior and final word through the Son. Given that the exordium forms a kind of ‘programme statement’ summing up the key themes of the letter, we should expect its portrayal of plural revelation to echo

that found in the rest of Hebrews. This expectation is confirmed: the ongoing repetition of God's speech through OT citations and through those authorized to preach his word is fundamental to the conveyance of the 'greater salvation' that has now been revealed. Furthermore, the plurality of OT speech is not simply a 'given' for Hebrews, but is rather essential to the letter's hermeneutical approach. Hebrews brings different voices within the OT into dialogue with one another, with the Christ event, and with the author and his own situation in order to draw out the relevance of the OT texts in proclaiming the new covenant.

## 4.2 A Plurality of Prophets – the Exordium (Hebrews 1.1–4)

The majestic exordium<sup>1</sup> with which the Epistle to the Hebrews opens explicitly thematizes repetition in the adverbial phrase *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*, highlighted by its emphatic first position. The words are chosen in part for their assonance and alliteration – they introduce a string of five words beginning with π – and they qualify the speech of God through the prophets. Deriving from the adjectives *πολυμερής* and *πολύτροπος*, etymologically the adverbial form *πολυμερῶς* indicates 'in many parts', while *πολυτρόπως* signifies 'in many ways'.<sup>2</sup> Louw-Nida (67.11) indicate that it is possible to understand *πολυμερῶς* as referring to 'many times' (e.g. KJV, NIV, ESV); however, the only reference given for this is Heb 1.1 itself, where this interpretation appears to have developed in order to distinguish the two terms. Such a move is

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'exordium' to refer to the single sentence Heb 1.1–4; for the minority view that the exordium covers 1.1–2.4, cf. Koester 2001: 174–75.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BDAG, 'πολυμερῶς', 847; 'πολυτρόπως', 850.

unnecessary, as the two terms are already distinct, referring to the various *parts* of Israel's scriptures and the various *means* through which they were given, respectively. Grässer's opinion that the phrase constitutes a 'literary doubling of one and the same category'<sup>3</sup> – a suggestion supported by the alliteration, assonance, and identical number of syllables of the two words – is accurate insofar as the two terms together evoke the manifold nature of prior revelation, but their specific nuances can still be distinguished; as a hendiadys, the conjunction of both terms evokes a single complex category that could not be expressed by either word on its own.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, although the temporal aspect is not explicit in the word πολυμερῶς, it is implicit in both terms together inasmuch as the varied revelation that came through the prophets came at different times. These terms therefore indicate the plural nature of God's speech through the prophets,<sup>5</sup> revelation which came through different means, in different parts, and at different times.

#### 4.2.1 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως in the Context of Hebrews

The basic meaning of this phrase, however, does not settle the question of the connotation attached to it in this context; cognate terms in contemporary literature are used with both denigratory and affirmative senses. We will consider its meaning first in the context of Hebrews and then in the light of contemporary texts. The beginning of the exordium (1.1–2a) exhibits a clear parallelism (see the table below) which links the manifold revelation of the past with the eschatological revelation through the Son. The

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<sup>3</sup> 'Eine literarische Verdoppelung eines und desselben Begriffes', Grässer 1990: 1.52.

<sup>4</sup> Although *EDNT* 3.131, 133 gives 'in many ways' for both terms, *BDAG*, 'πολυμερῶς', 847, cautions against this (citing the *NRSV* 'in many and various ways'), 'to avoid a suggestion of banality'.

<sup>5</sup> 'Prophets' here includes all agents of revelation; it does not denote a specific section of the OT.

precise connotation of our phrase can be determined, then, only by considering its relation to the Son.

| Heb 1.1                  | Heb 1.2a                      | Role              |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως |                               | manner            |
| πάλαι                    | ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων | time <sup>6</sup> |
| ὁ θεὸς                   | [ὁ θεὸς]                      | agent             |
| λαλήσας                  | ἐλάλησεν                      | action            |
| τοῖς πατράσιν            | ἡμῖν                          | addressee         |
| ἐν τοῖς προφήταις        | ἐν υἱῷ                        | means             |

Corresponding to the alliteration of π in the first half of the phrase we find a plethora of opening vowel sounds in the second half, serving to reinforce the unity of each half and distinguish them from one another. Furthermore, the time, addressee, and means of the revelation differs in each case. This has led to an interpretation of these verses which reads the plurality of speech through the prophets as a negative foil to the singular and superior speech through the Son. Stated in its strongest form, the prophets are devalued because of their plurality and disunity, and give way to the unique Son.<sup>7</sup> In line with a number of recent interpreters, however, I argue that this plurality of the prophets ought to be understood positively.<sup>8</sup>

To begin with, in the rest of the letter it is inescapable that God still speaks through the prophets. Not only does Hebrews use the OT more extensively than any

<sup>6</sup> Note that *πάλαι* corresponds to *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων* (both phrases indicate *when* the revelation was given), and not *πολυμερῶς*, as Kowalski 2005: 40 contends, which is an indication of manner. Calvin also incorrectly sets *tunc multifariam* in opposition to *nunc ut in fine temporum*.

<sup>7</sup> See the survey in Smillie 2005: 544–49; and cf., e.g. Grässer 1973: 205–12.

<sup>8</sup> See Griffiths 2010: ch. 1; (= Griffiths 2014, forthcoming); Kowalski 2005: 39–43; Lewicki 2004: 13–22; Wider 1997: 12–22; for the strongest statement of this see Smillie 2005.

other NT text, it consistently introduces quotations as directly spoken by God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, in direct continuity with the opening theme of the speaking God, and as an authoritative basis for the message it seeks to expound.<sup>9</sup> The repetition is indicated by the use of *πάλιν*; of 10 occurrences in the letter, seven introduce God's speech.<sup>10</sup> If 1.1 is taken to denigrate the prophets and the revelation they brought, Hebrews would be at best inconsistent, at worst entirely self-defeating.

This point can be reinforced by consideration of the oral nature of Hebrews, which was indicated in Chapter Two. In the liturgical setting of a Jewish Christian synagogue or gathering, it is hard to imagine a discourse opening effectively by denigrating the scriptures that would have been read out at some other point during that meeting. Turning to the exordium itself, it is noteworthy that both halves of the statement have the same subject, God, and the same verb, *λαλέω*, which occurs in the same tense, the aorist. While focus will shift to the Son following the 'pivot point' in the middle of verse 2, it is in the one God and his speech that unity lies in 1.1–2a, and not directly or explicitly in the Son.<sup>11</sup>

In this same vein, there is no explicit indication of contrast within the sentence. As Smillie emphasizes, the rest of Hebrews adeptly uses all manner of syntactical devices for contrast, such that if a contrast were intended here we would expect it to be clearly marked.<sup>12</sup> Taking this point further, it can be seen from the table above that what

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. BDAG, 'πολυμερῶς', 847: 'the rhetorical structure of Hb requires some preparation in the prol. for the numerous reff. to the OT.'

<sup>10</sup> Heb 1.5, 6; 2.13 (2x); 4.5, 7; 10.30. The other three refer to repetition of *τὰ στοιχεῖα* (5.12), of the *θεμέλιος* (6.1), and of repentance (6.6), all in one section and thematically related to a different form of repetition (see Chapter Five). For use of *πάλιν* in relation to divine speech, including in *Barn.* and *I Clem.*, see Taut 1998: 33–40.

<sup>11</sup> Black's discourse analysis confirms that God's agency in 1.1–2 cedes to Christ's in 1.2–4, though he lays the emphasis on the latter; Black 1987: 183–84.

<sup>12</sup> Smillie 2005: 550–52.

is ‘missing’ from this statement is an indication of the *manner* in which God speaks through the Son; moreover, one word would seem to fit the bill perfectly: ἐφάπαξ.<sup>13</sup> The absence of this word is surprising for three reasons: the author makes extensive use of (ἐφ)άπαξ elsewhere in the letter (more than all other NT writers put together); the use of ἄπαξ to describe the final revelation of God has a parallel in Jude 3;<sup>14</sup> and ἐφάπαξ would have reinforced the alliteration of the second half of the sentence. The Son’s uniqueness is certainly implicit here, but it cannot be made the central theme of this sentence in such a way as to derive an unfavourable comparison with the prophets or to import into Hebrews 1 the connotations of the (ἐφ)άπαξ-repetition contrast elsewhere in the letter. ‘The meaning of the *implicitly* comparative figure of the statement concerning “God’s speech” should not be interpreted on the basis of later *explicit* antitheses.’<sup>15</sup> The lack of the term ἐφάπαξ strongly suggests it is illegitimate to read Heb 1.1–2a in the light of the later contrast, because the author had at his disposal this simple but very effective means to make both the contrast here and the link with this theme elsewhere unavoidably explicit, *and yet he chose not to use it.*<sup>16</sup>

Finally, as noted above a combination of alliteration and parallelism indicates that there is some form of comparison intended. But the nature of this comparison does

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<sup>13</sup> This is sometimes supplied by commentators, cf. e.g. Lewicki 2004: 16 and n. 22; Grässer 1973: 201, 209; Guthrie 1983: 67.

<sup>14</sup> The uniqueness of the Christian revelation is also suggested by the fact that the Christian gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) was always single, in contrast with the plural gospels (εὐαγγέλια) of the Imperial cult: ‘the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was God’s “once for all” disclosure of “a glad tidings”.’ Stanton 2003: 173; cf. 177, 182–83.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Die Bedeutung der *implizit* komparativischen Figur des Ansatzes beim “Reden Gottes” sollte nicht auf der Basis späterer *expliziter* Antithesen ausgezogen werden.’ Wider 1997: 21 (emphasis original); so also Ellingworth 1993: 91.

<sup>16</sup> Given this, it is strange that many commentators persist in reading contrast into these verses. For example, Attridge describes contrast as the ‘basic affirmation’ here, 1989: 37. Koester speaks of the ‘mixed connotations’ of these words, 2001: 177. O’Brien affirms contrast even though he acknowledges ‘there is no explicit statement to this effect’, 2010: 49–50.

not require the denigration of earlier prophecy. ‘The author is not disparaging earlier revelation: God doesn’t get any bigger today if you make his dealings of yesterday smaller.’<sup>17</sup> In promoting the excellence of Christ, Hebrews utilizes both Greco-Roman and Jewish forms of comparison, neither of which disparages that with which Christ is compared. *Synkrisis* (σύγκρισις) is an encomiastic topic of Greco-Roman epideictic rhetoric<sup>18</sup> whose importance for Hebrews is increasingly recognised, and which is signalled by the use of technical comparative devices such as κρείττων and μέν... δέ.<sup>19</sup> The essential point is that for a comparison to achieve the effect of gaining recognition for the foregrounded person, that with which a comparison is made must also be of value to the audience; otherwise the comparison would fail to elicit the intended praise. The more praiseworthy the examples, the better it reflects on the subject of the encomium. Similarly, the Jewish device of *qal wahomer* extrapolates from a case in which something is known to hold true to a greater, comparable case, in order to show that the same thing holds true to an even greater extent there as well.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one could characterize the whole of Hebrews as an extended *qal wahomer*, moving from the ‘good’ of foundational Jewish figures, events and institutions, to the ‘best’ of Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> A comparison is in view in Heb 1.1–2a, but it does not function by devaluing the plurality of prophecy; rather, on the assumption that God’s speech through the

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Der Vf. wertet die früheren Offenbarungen nicht ab: Gott wird nicht größer im Heute, wenn man sein Handeln im Gestern kleiner macht’, Backhaus 2009a: 82; cf. Ellingworth 1993: 89.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 10.8–24; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.38–41; Isocrates, *Hel. enc.* (Or. 10) 22; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.16.

<sup>19</sup> That the exordium presents syncritic comparison can be seen from the presence of the technical term κρείττων in Heb 1.4. On the importance of *synkrisis* for understanding Hebrews see Evans 1988; Seid 1999; Martin and Whitlark 2011; 2012; Richardson 2012: esp. 12, 150–60; four of thirteen essays in Mason and McCrudden 2011 reference it explicitly.

<sup>20</sup> *Qal wahomer* is found explicitly in 9.14 (πόσῳ μᾶλλον) and 12.9, 25 (πολὸν μᾶλλον); cf. also the use of πόσῳ χείρονος in 10.29, and ‘such a great salvation’ in 2.3.

<sup>21</sup> For a similar reading of comparison in Paul see Campbell 2011: esp. 49–56.

prophets was good, the superlative excellence of the Son is demonstrated.<sup>22</sup> All of these considerations make it extremely unlikely that the author begins his text with a denigration of OT prophecy.

#### 4.2.2 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως in Wider Context

The arguments above all essentially relate to internal evidence. Other evidence of the use of these and similar terms is a further key to how they would have been understood by Hebrews' original recipients. It is worth noting the widespread classical preference for opening a speech with p-sound alliteration, particularly using *πολύς* and cognates, and often in reference to other speeches which have come before.<sup>23</sup> That Hebrews is thus in certain respects conventional in the way it opens does not determine the exact connotation of these terms, but it does partly account for the evocation of plurality.

On the basis of comparable instances of cognate terms in Philo it has been argued that *πολυμερῶς* and *πολυτρόπως* bear connotations of imperfection, as seen in Chapter Two.<sup>24</sup> With respect to Hebrews Dey concludes that:

The language and the themes, therefore, manifestly belong to a single coherent thought world both here and in Hebrews. 'Polymerōs' and 'polytropōs' are technical terms which describe the inferiority and imperfection of the revelation through prophets/angels in the Old Testament (i.e., its manifold-

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<sup>22</sup> The tension created by seeing the prophets portrayed negatively in the exordium is illustrated by Taut 1998: 130–31, who has to argue that certain parts of the OT are valueless for the author while other parts (those he cites or alludes to) are not.

<sup>23</sup> See Alexander 1993: 76–77 (allusion to other speeches); 92–93 n. 49 (alliteration); 109 (predilection for *πολύς* forms). Of course, Heb 1.1–2 evokes other forms of divine speech which preceded God's speech in a Son, rather than other (human) speeches to which it compares itself. For examples, esp. in relation to Luke's preface, see Bauer 1960; also the texts reproduced in Alexander 1986: 72–74; (= Alexander 1993: 213–16).

<sup>24</sup> Primarily Dey 1975: 129–34; but see also Thompson 2007: 572–76, esp. 573, although he is mostly dependent on Dey for this point.

multiple character) in contrast to the *singular* character of the revelation in the Son.<sup>25</sup>

As signalled in Chapter Two, however, Dey reads the evidence in Philo in an overly uniform manner. In fact, while the created realm is inescapably plural and inherently inferior to the heavenly realm, we saw that in both Philo and Plutarch this plurality can be actively bad, or neutral, or positively influenced by the deity. In Hebrews 1 it is beyond question that this plural speech stems from God, and even against a Platonic background one would expect this to be positively construed – although of course the notion that God speaks directly to people is abhorrent to a thoroughgoing Middle Platonist.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as argued above, such plurality is *not* contrasted with some kind of divine singularity; the speech through the Son, whose singularity is only implicit, is very much an earthly event and forms the culmination of the speech through the prophets. It is the Son's divine origin and unique relationship to God (Heb 1.3) – but importantly not, at this juncture, his heavenly location – which distinguish him from the prophets.

Chapter Two noted a strong Jewish tradition which designated wisdom as manifold, found in Philo, Wisdom, and Ephesians (see §2.5.1). This is arguably a much closer background to the speech of the prophets in Hebrews, which communicates divine wisdom to his people. The Greek prologue to Sirach was also mentioned earlier:

πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν κατ' αὐτοῦς ἠκολουθηκότων δεδομένων (Sirach prologue 1–2)

Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them

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<sup>25</sup> Dey 1975: 134 (emphasis original).

<sup>26</sup> Backhaus neatly expresses the paradox of God (conceived in a Platonic fashion) speaking: 'Der Unaussprechliche spricht sich selber aus.' Backhaus 2009a: 113.

This phrase highlights the manifold nature of the holy writings in such a way as to validate them, in order to form a rhetorically effective opening to a text.<sup>27</sup> It further draws out the specific means by which wisdom from God (denoted in Sir 1.1, ‘all wisdom is from the Lord’) comes to humans – via the scriptures. In conjunction with the striking similarities between Hebrews’ Jesus and the figure of Wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon – she is unique and manifold, and the radiation (ἀπαύγασμα) of eternal light (Wis 7.22, 26–27) – it is not too far-fetched to suggest that the Son and the prophets *together* instantiate the conveyance of divine wisdom in Heb 1.1–4.

These references suggest that if the text evokes Platonic language, it does so in a way which immediately subverts that world-view through its commitment to the Jewish-Christian theme of God’s personal speech directly to and through humans. The aorist verb of speech furthermore suggests the incarnation is in view (cf. Heb 2.3), heightening the earthly presence of the divine agent, the Son. Terminology which evokes associations of imperfection, both because of plurality (πολυμερῶς, πολυτρόπως) and then because of time-boundness (πάλαι), introduces an unexpected subject and action: the plural and past turns out to qualify the singular and timeless God (ὁ θεός) who is engaged in the very temporal and earthly activity of speaking (λαλήσας).

In summary, rather than a schema of contrast in which repetition and uniqueness are starkly opposed to one another, the exordium of Hebrews presents a schema of continuity in which the pluriform prophets prepare for, and are completed by, the singular, climactic speech of God through his Son.

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<sup>27</sup> Note also the connection between the Sirach prologue and the emphasis on teaching others in Heb 5.12. Cf. also the plurality of divine speech in Job 33.14.

### 4.3 Repetition of Divine Speech in ‘These Last Days’

Divine speech in the old covenant was multiple and ongoing because it was incomplete until the arrival of God’s Son. We might therefore expect its plurality to cease, yielding to the singular speech through the Son. In fact, this section will show that the plurality and repetition of God’s speech, including but not only through the words of the prophets, continues into the new covenant.

#### 4.3.1 Repetition of Divine Speech in the New Covenant: Hebrews 2.1–4

Given the continuity between the prophets and the Son, it is striking that after Heb 1.1 the prophets drop almost immediately from view. Their apparent disappearance is not in fact quite so absolute: the prophets cede to ἄγγελοι, angels or, to bring out the similarities more clearly, *messengers*. An extended comparison of the angels with the Son follows in 1.5–14, in continuity with the comparison between Son and prophets in 1.1–4. Moreover, the angels are described as ministers who serve God’s people in 1.14 (picking up language from Ps 104.4 cited in Heb 1.7), and are mentioned again in 2.2, which refers to the message or word spoken ‘through angels’ (ὁ δι’ ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος), a parallel to the speech of God (the verb is the same as in 1.1–2a) ‘in’ or ‘by means of’ the prophets (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις).<sup>28</sup> The angels and prophets are not identical, but together serve as mediators of the covenant, as the medium via which God revealed himself, and as such they anticipate and prepare for the new, eschatological speech

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<sup>28</sup> Both prepositions here indicate instrumentality. Ellingworth 1993: 92, 137–38.

which God offers through his Son (1.2a; 2.3).<sup>29</sup> As mentioned above, the unity, singularity and uniqueness of the Son is certainly implicit in 1.1, and it is again in 2.3. However, this uniqueness is not opposed to repeated speech, but is the climax in which such repeated speech finds its culmination.

Furthermore, in the wake of this unique revelation, it is clear that God continues to speak in manifold ways. At first, to be sure, he spoke ‘such a great salvation’ ‘through the Lord’ (διὰ τοῦ κυρίου, 2.3),<sup>30</sup> apparently referring to Jesus’ earthly preaching ministry, although Hebrews shows little knowledge of Jesus tradition. This might suggest that it identifies Jesus’ whole life and ministry with this announcement.<sup>31</sup> The message was then confirmed to the present generation by those who heard him – *Ohrenzeugen* or ‘earwitnesses’ (οἱ ἀκουσάντες).<sup>32</sup> Not only this, but the message received divine affirmation through a plurality of means: ‘signs and wonders and various powers and impartations of the Holy Spirit’ (2.4). The paratactic concatenation of plurals – including words which are themselves descriptive of plurality, ποικίλαις and μερισμοῖς<sup>33</sup> – embodies as well as evokes the manifold nature of God’s revelation to the author and addressees of Hebrews. The address to the audience has both an earthly (scriptural/traditional) and also a heavenly (pneumatic) confirmation. While the community had experienced charismatic confirmation of the gospel, in the rest of the

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<sup>29</sup> On the connection between 1.1–4 and 2.1–4 see Lewicki 2004: 48–60. He describes 2.1–4 as a small-scale ‘Heilsgeschichte der Adressatengemeinde’, corresponding to the overarching *Heilsgeschichte* of 1.1–4. Wider 1997: 16 also links 1.1 and 2.4; as does Koester 2001: 174–75.

<sup>30</sup> For the view that this should be understood as ‘through YHWH’, i.e. a reference to God’s OT speech, see Bachmann 1990. For a defence of the usual translation ‘through Jesus’, see Lewicki 2004: 53–56.

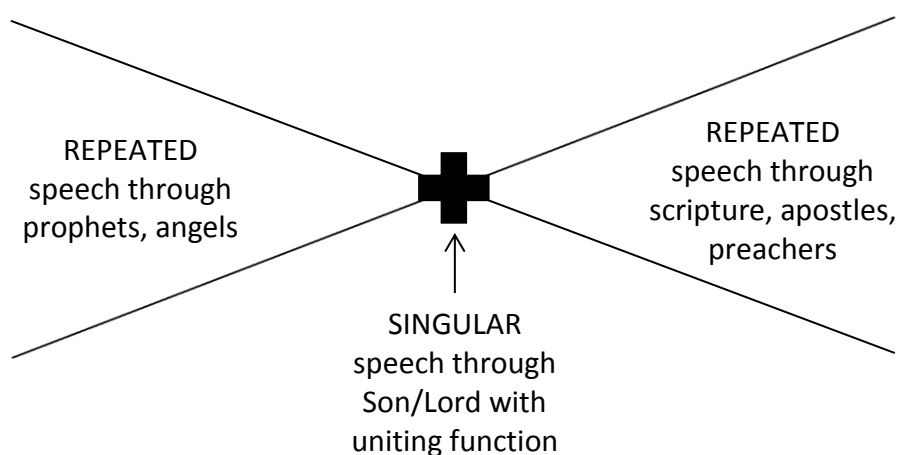
<sup>31</sup> ‘[T]he Son is both the agent of the message and its content.’ Black 1987: 188.

<sup>32</sup> Lewicki 2004: 63; cf. *Einheitsübersetzung*. On p. 89 Lewicki notes the aptness of the term: it coheres with and reinforces Hebrews’ theology of a speaking God.

<sup>33</sup> See the discussion of ποικιλ- vocabulary in §2.7.1.

letter the present and repeated speech of God most often takes the form of OT citations, allusions, patterns, and types.<sup>34</sup>

That is to say, God does not merely continue to speak to his people today, he speaks precisely through what he has already spoken. In this sense the ongoing speech of God in the new covenant is most aptly described as a repetition, repeating the words of the prophets and words about Christ (for Hebrews the former are the latter) in order to present Christ afresh to each generation of believers. Westcott expresses this well: ‘just as all previous discipline led up to [the incarnation] πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως, so all later experience is the appointed method by which its teaching is progressively mastered πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως.’<sup>35</sup>



Hebrews 1.1–4 and 2.1–4 thus present us with an understanding of God’s revelation through (salvation) history which is represented in the diagram above. Repeated revelation simultaneously addresses the multiple needs of God’s people and prepares for the supreme revelation of the Son, without which it is incomplete.<sup>36</sup> This new whole

<sup>34</sup> Though see Barnard 2012: 171–212 on the mystical experience of the community.

<sup>35</sup> Westcott 1920: 4.

<sup>36</sup> Bénétreau 1988: 1.66 offers an excellent description of how plural prophetic speech might be construed positively, before taking it to imply inferiority. ‘[Le divers-pluriel] pourrait souligner la

(OT revelation plus Christ) is then (re)appropriated by new covenant believers through the ongoing repetition of the earlier revelation. God's revelation of his saving purposes is now complete, but it has not been – cannot be – completely appropriated in a 'once-for-all' fashion by his finite people, who must instead progress in it gradually.

Repetition is thus a feature not just of the old covenant, but also of the new. The next task is to examine in greater detail the repeated speech found throughout Hebrews, in order to understand *how* God speaks 'in these last days'.

#### 4.3.2 Repetition of Divine Speech in the Rest of Hebrews

If Heb 1.1–4 validates prophetic speech in the old covenant and Heb 2.1–4 indicates that God continues to speak in a variety of ways in the new covenant, then we would expect this to be evidenced in the rest of the letter, particularly but not only in its use of the OT.<sup>37</sup> This section charts the plurality of divine speech elsewhere in Hebrews, whilst also drawing attention to the ways such plurality retains coherence.

Depending on quite how one counts, there are roughly 38 direct OT citations in Hebrews.<sup>38</sup> A widely-recognised feature of the author's method of citation is his total

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patience et la compétence du divin pédagogue multipliant les révélations, les visions, les oracles et les gestes prophétiques pour éduquer un peuple réticent et démontrant ainsi la qualité de son amour.'

<sup>37</sup> There is an extensive literature on the question of Hebrews' use of the OT, which can be broadly categorized into theological treatments, including Backhaus 2009b: 101–29; Kowalski 2005; Lewicki 2004; Smillie 2000; Theobald 1997; Wider 1997; and more exegetically-focussed studies including Docherty 2009; Bateman 1997; Griffiths 2010; Leschert 1994; Löhr 1994a; Müller 1986; Schröger 1968. Rascher 2007 seeks to bridge this divide.

<sup>38</sup> The main source of difference lies in whether or not a reprise of a previously cited text counts as a separate quotation. Backhaus 2009b: 106 counts 38; Löhr 1994a: 226 counts 59 direct citations; Müller 1986: 223 similarly counts 57 citations and allusions; Schröger 1968 counts 35; while Theobald 1997: 754 counts 33.

eschewal of citation formulae of the kind found in other NT texts<sup>39</sup> in favour of *Redeeinleitungen*, formulae which usually indicate a subject and use a verb of speech (mostly λέγω, but also, e.g., λαλεῖν, μαρτυρέω). That is to say, Hebrews treats OT citations not as textual quotations but as oral phenomena, and thus deploys them as speech-acts.<sup>40</sup> Most often God is the speaker (26 times, including 7.17 and 12.5–6), and as noted with regard to 1.1–2a the primary unity of divine speech rests in his foregrounded role as speaker. Nevertheless, that God is the speaker does not prevent others from being agents of divine speech: the Son speaks six times<sup>41</sup> and the Holy Spirit twice (3.7–11; 10.15–17; arguably the Spirit also speaks the five quotations following the citation of Ps 95 in Heb 3–4, in which case God speaks 21 times). What is more, each citation can be spoken by several speakers: that *God* spoke Psalm 95 *through David* does not hinder *the Spirit* from speaking it now (3.7). This leaves four citations attributed to others: in two cases Moses (9.19–20; 12.21), in one case ‘someone’ (2.6–8), and in the remaining case the community (13.6).

Some of this speech is historically descriptive, recapitulating events from Israel’s history including God’s promises to Abraham (6.14; 11.18), his instructions to Moses (8.5), or Moses’ own speech (9.20; 12.21). In the main, however, these speech-acts are located in the present.<sup>42</sup> Most frequently the speech occurs either between God and Christ, or in a direct address to the letter’s audience. In the former case the audience

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<sup>39</sup> E.g. (καθὼς) γέγραπται (Mark 1.2; Rom 1.17; 1 Cor 1.19); κατὰ τὴν γραφήν (Jas 2.8); ἵνα ὅπως πληρωθῆ (Matt 1.22; 8.17).

<sup>40</sup> So Backhaus 2009b: 101–6. On speech-act theory in relation to biblical study see Briggs 2005; and specifically applied to Hebrews Treier 2009. Cf. also §1.4.1.

<sup>41</sup> Heb 2.12, 13a, 13b; 10.5–7, 8, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Backhaus 2009b: 107.

is presented with a conversation between divine beings.<sup>43</sup> This conversation is no equal exchange, however: God's role is pre-eminent and his speech is performative. He constitutes Jesus as Son and high priest through the divine speech-acts that Hebrews foregrounds, most notably Pss 2.7 and 110.4.<sup>44</sup> God's address to the Son demands and receives an affirmative response in the citation of scripture. In Heb 2.12–13 Jesus accepts his role as Son by accepting the humanity, and thereby the solidarity and suffering, which enable him to lead other children to glory, while in 10.5–7 he confirms his obedience to God's will, which in context means the offering of himself as atoning sacrifice.<sup>45</sup> Notably, then, when Jesus speaks in Hebrews it is only in reply to God: even in calling Christians his brothers and sisters (2.11) he speaks *to* God (2.12). Thus while God speaks 'to us' through a Son, the Son himself never directly addresses the audience. God's speech through Jesus is always mediated by speech *about* or *involving* him.

The Holy Spirit's role is almost the inverse of the Son's: he never speaks to God, only to people. He 'shows' through the arrangement of the tabernacle that the way into the sanctuary had not been unveiled, a 'parable' for the present time (9.8–9; *παραβολή* recurs at 11.19, suggesting that the Aqedah similarly shows forth resurrection). The Spirit's role, then, is primarily if not exclusively to communicate with God's people, a point reinforced by the fact that God speaks the citation from Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 8, but the Holy Spirit '*testifies to us*' when part of this citation is taken up again in Heb 10.15–17. The Spirit's primacy in divine dealings with people is further

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<sup>43</sup> So, e.g., Barth 1962: 62; Ellingworth 1993: 113; Hübner 1990: 3.28; Lewicki 2004: 26; Theobald 1997: 778.

<sup>44</sup> On the performative nature of God's speech see Backhaus 2009b; Schenck 2009: 323. On Heb 1.5–13 as an enthronement scene see Barnard 2012: 235–41; cf. also Theobald 1997: 773.

<sup>45</sup> Lewicki 2004: 40, 46. See Chapter Six.

suggested by the fact that he imparts confirmation of the gospel (2.4) and salvation (6.4), and he is insulted by apostasy (10.29). Each new presentation of a part of the OT is a new speech-act and it would seem that, although mentioned infrequently, the Holy Spirit's involvement makes it a *divine* speech-act.

In addition to the direct citation of OT material, God's plural speech takes a number of other forms.<sup>46</sup> Alongside the testimony of the apostle-eyewitnesses and the confirming co-testimony of God and the Spirit through signs and gifts (2.3–4), the word of God was spoken to the community by its former leaders (13.7). Here their actions as well as their words serve a didactic purpose which the audience is to imitate. The emphasis on the example (ἀναστροφή) of the community's leaders accords with the OT figures adduced as 'heroes of faith' in Hebrews 11 (including the only other mention of prophets in the letter, 11.32). These figures are more than just a list of examples – they demonstrate what faith is, spelling out the definition in 11.1, and they form a 'cloud of witnesses' who spur the audience on with Jesus as the ultimate goal. That is to say, their actions still speak to the community, something made explicit in the case of Abel who 'still speaks' (11.4). Abel is mentioned again in 12.24, a verse often taken to indicate that the sprinkled blood of Jesus brings atonement and thus 'speaks better' than the shed blood of Abel, which is a cry for vengeance. In fact, however, the reference is to Abel, and not his blood.<sup>47</sup> As 11.4 has already made clear, Abel 'speaks' faith, offering an acceptable sacrifice to God from the earth and remaining faithful to the point of death,<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Schenck 2009: 324–34.

<sup>47</sup> Τὸν Ἄβελ; only a few witnesses have the neuter as opposed to masculine article, a clear emendation probably based on Gen 4.10, in order to balance the reference to Jesus' blood with a reference to Abel's blood. Most translations erroneously supply 'blood', Attridge 1989: 372. On early Jewish interpretation of Gen 4.10 as describing an *ongoing* cry and a cry *for vengeance* see Byron 2011: 745–47, 747–52, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> Richardson 2012: 170–74 highlights this typological connection between Abel and Jesus.

but not (yet) receiving the goal of that faith. Corresponding to this hope Jesus speaks a ‘better’ word from heaven, offering guaranteed and permanent access to all God’s people – and doing so, in particular, by being faithful up to and through death, that is, by means of his sprinkled blood.<sup>49</sup>

The juxtaposition of the cloud of old covenant witnesses with Jesus in 12.1–2 echoes 1.1–2 where we find the prophets and the Son together as the dual means of God’s speech; this reinforces the impression that the prophets do not form a negative foil for the Son in the exordium.<sup>50</sup> Here, just as there, a plurality of OT figures serves to point forward to Jesus, who becomes the main focus but not to the exclusion or at the expense of his precursors. Instead, OT figures in their relationship to Jesus further the paraenetic aims of the author: ‘the ancestors have been recapitulated in order to praise and amplify the person, work, and faith of Jesus Christ’.<sup>51</sup> The salvation now present in Jesus *cannot be fully grasped* without the manifold witness of the OT.

Finally, it is worth noting that the community themselves are involved in speech, towards one another for the purpose of encouragement (3.12–13; 10.24–25; 12.14–16), and towards God with confidence (13.6) and in praise (13.15). This suggests that even if Hebrews considers speaking the word of God a special role of leaders (13.7), the whole community has both the right and the obligation to mediate the divine word to one another (cf. the command *παρακαλεῖτε*, 3.13, with Hebrews’ self-designation *λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως*, 13.22). The community’s obligation to speak reinforces the identification

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<sup>49</sup> For this interpretation, against five others, see Backhaus 1996: 219–20; 2009a: 447–48. Smillie’s contention that *κρεῖττον λαλοῦντι* denotes ‘the one who speaks better than Abel’, and should be understood as another object which the audience has approached, separate from ‘sprinkled blood’, does not carry conviction as all other items in 12.22–24 are separated by *καί*; Smillie 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Heb 12.1–3 is the ‘discourse peak’ and ‘epicentre’ of this part of the letter, Richardson 2012: 134–35.

<sup>51</sup> Richardson 2012: 224. He argues this point at length by reading Heb 11 both typologically and in the light of the form of the Greco-Roman encomium.

of Christ with his brothers and sisters in 2.10–18: just as Jesus responds to the divine charge with scriptural words signalling his obedience, so also the Christian community respond with a mix of confidence and awe. They must not ‘refuse the one who is speaking’ (12.25).

Divine speech continues to be mediated to the audience of Hebrews through manifold means, including prophecy, preaching, exemplars, signs, and at formal and informal levels by leaders and by the whole community. Such means of communication not only promote perseverance in Christ, but are the way in which God’s speech through his Son is heard by a community of ‘non-earwitnesses’; indeed, the very plurality of this speech is fundamental to enabling the audience to comprehend the full magnitude of the Son’s character and achievements.

#### **4.4 Plurality and Hebrews’ Interpretation of the Old Testament**

Hebrews values plurality in the domain of revelation, in both old and new covenants, and the ongoing speech of God operates in particular through the repetition of the OT via citation and exposition. This section looks more closely at Hebrews’ use of the OT. Plurality within the OT is not simply a matter of fact for the author of Hebrews, nor even simply useful in addressing the diverse needs of God’s people; rather, it is fundamental to the way in which Hebrews interprets the scriptures and uses them to expound the Christ event. Scriptural texts are read in such a way as to identify, exploit, and even sometimes create plurality and diversity in order to explicate what has occurred in the coming of Christ and to promote the new covenant as the fulfilment of the old.

It will first be useful to examine some ways in which previous discussions of Hebrews' overarching hermeneutical approach to the OT and particular exegetical techniques have highlighted the letter's use of plurality within and between scriptural texts. Then the procedures involved will be examined in two cases: briefly with regard to the exposition of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2, and then at greater length in the exhortation based on Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3–4.

#### 4.4.1 The Uses of Plurality in Hebrews: Previous Scholarship

Many scholars have applied themselves to the question of Hebrews' overarching hermeneutical approach.<sup>52</sup> As is sometimes explicit in these discussions, it is difficult to find terminology to describe Hebrews' method which is neither too cumbersome nor too broad. More important than the label assigned is the understanding of the procedure involved. Markus Barth proposes 'dialogical interpretation', describing Hebrews' exegesis as 'participation in the dialogue of the Bible'. This involves, first, enjoying 'the great variety of the "many ways" in which the Word is being said',<sup>53</sup> and then 'active participation and a bold move forward in and with the dialogues and tensions of type and antitype'.<sup>54</sup>

Stephen Motyer is dismissive of Barth's approach: while it emphasizes the argumentative nature of Hebrews' use of the OT, it fails to address 'the underlying

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<sup>52</sup> Three key summaries of prior proposals, each adding their own, are Barth 1962; Motyer 1999: 7–13; Guthrie 2003: 283–90.

<sup>53</sup> Barth 1962: 64–65. In using the term 'dialogical interpretation' Barth rejects typology, allegory, and *sensus plenior*; these are not in fact necessarily mutually exclusive.

<sup>54</sup> Barth 1962: 69. The similarities with his father Karl Barth's wider view of scripture should be noted, cf. 'Das Wort' in Barth 1970: 23–33.

*hermeneutic* involved'.<sup>55</sup> Yet this is to misunderstand Barth; although the term 'dialogical' does refer to the dialogue *with* the OT in which the author engages, it also – indeed, primarily – indicates the pursuit of dialogue and tensions *within* the OT, and their exploitation and/or resolution in the author's own discussion.<sup>56</sup> Motyer's own proposal for a 'typological approach' is largely based on the observance of a similar dynamic: the author's search for tensions and contradictions within the OT – what Caird described as 'self-confessed inadequacies' – in order to highlight new covenant realities as their fulfilment.<sup>57</sup> George Guthrie affirms the typological model advocated by Motyer but rejects the term 'typology' as too narrow.<sup>58</sup> His alternative, 'new covenant hermeneutics', is however too unspecific.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, although Barth's terminology of 'dialogue' is certainly too broad, it does at least reflect Hebrews' oral framing of OT citations and preference for texts containing first-person speech, and it further evokes the interaction between texts and viewpoints which Hebrews exploits.

While it is possible to critique these proposals for their insufficient detail and nuance, compounded by their desire to supply an all-encompassing term for Hebrews' interpretative approach,<sup>60</sup> importantly they all draw attention to the same feature of Hebrews' OT interpretation. In recognizing Hebrews' widespread appeal to and engagement with the plurality of scriptural texts, these proposals reinforce the

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<sup>55</sup> Motyer 1999: 11 n. 30 (emphasis original).

<sup>56</sup> Barth 1962: 69, 76.

<sup>57</sup> Caird 1959; Motyer 1999: 12–13, 21. Although not directly referring to scriptural interpretation, Attridge recognizes a similar dynamic when he describes Hebrews' 'exegetical rhetoric' as 'a rhetoric which delights in exploiting and resolving antithetical oppositions', Attridge 1986: 9.

<sup>58</sup> Guthrie 2003: 288–90. Barth had earlier rejected this term on the same grounds.

<sup>59</sup> Guthrie 2003: 288, 290. The term 'new covenantalism' heads Richard Hays' discussion of a similar dialogical or even dialectical dynamic in Hebrews, using Stanley Fish's modern literary construct of the 'self-consuming artefact', Hays 2009; for the original model see Fish 1972. I prefer the modification proposed by Skarsaune 2009 which sees the tabernacle, and not Hebrews itself, as a self-consuming artefact.

<sup>60</sup> For an assessment of all three see Docherty 2009: 66–68, 77–81.

contention that the plurality of the OT is valued by the author in part because it is at the heart of his efforts to claim that the OT foreshadows and is fulfilled in Christ. It is additionally important to recognize that the Christ event forms a further point in this dialogue; this should not surprise us, as Hebrews holds that God has spoken in the Son (1.2), both through Jesus' own words and through testimony about his life (2.3). That is to say, because Christ is a means of God's speech he can be brought into the dialogue with other instances of that speech; the relationship is not one of equals, however, but all of God's other speech is orientated towards and culminates in Christ. There is then a hermeneutical circle whereby the OT explains the Christ event, and the Christ event in turn leads to a new understanding of scripture.<sup>61</sup>

To admit this core christological orientation of Hebrews' scriptural interpretation is not, however, to have answered the question as to how Hebrews expounds and interprets individual texts. Indeed, it is a failure of a number of studies that they appeal too quickly and readily to the christological aspect of Hebrews' interpretation, such that they do not fully engage with the exegetical procedures in operation. Susan Docherty has highlighted this problem<sup>62</sup> and sought to address it through an investigation of the Jewish exegetical methods used by Hebrews. These are elucidated using the descriptive-analytical method developed by the Goldbergian School, in particular Alexander Samely and Docherty's doctoral supervisor Philip

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<sup>61</sup> Rascher 2007: 1, 222. Also Koester 2001: 117; Gheorghita 2003: 231; France 1996: 268, 274.

<sup>62</sup> Docherty 2009: 198–99. For example, although Rascher admits that an appeal to Christology is insufficient to account for Hebrews' use of scripture ('Auch wenn das Christuseignis die Lektüre der Schrift prägt, ist damit allein der Schriftgebrauch des Hebr nur unzureichend charakterisiert'), in practice she suggests that the Christ event gives the author 'eine relative Freiheit gegenüber dem vorliegenden Text', and that he cares more about the content than the form of OT citations. Rascher 2007: 16–17, 35–36; cf. 204, 216, 222.

Alexander.<sup>63</sup> Her thorough analysis brings a new degree of precision to the table, and notably identifies a number of exegetical techniques which specify precisely the engagement with or creation of plurality which interests us here.

According to Docherty, the author's 'primary exegetical move' is 'the removal of a scriptural text from its context in order to surround it with new co-text which narrows down its meaning in a particular direction determined by the interpreter'.<sup>64</sup> This enables the author to combine fidelity to the *form* of the text with the generation of potentially limitless new *meanings*.<sup>65</sup> Other techniques include 'segmenting', which involves breaking a text down into smaller units. This segmenting can enable 'heavy stress' to be placed on a single word or phrase at a time, thereby highlighting and isolating it in order to reinterpret it in the light of its (new) co-text. 'Opposition resources' means interpreting a term to exclude its perceived opposite (e.g. Jesus is a Son, and therefore not an angel; Moses is a servant, and therefore not a son). This can be achieved through heavy stressing of the term in question. While provision of a new co-text helps to constrain meaning, the original context of scriptural citations remains significant: both individual words (*gezerah shawah*) and wider context are used to connect passages. Indeed, the wider context of a term can be carried over from one passage to the same occurrence in a different passage. The 'expressive use' of scripture

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<sup>63</sup> For earlier investigations of Hebrews' exegetical methods see Kistemaker 1961; Leschert 1994; Bateman 1997.

<sup>64</sup> Docherty 2009: 177. 'Co-text' is a technical term from linguistics, introduced to the study of midrash by Alexander Samely: 'co-text [means] the purely linguistic environment of a text, as opposed to context, its non-linguistic setting' (p. 107). The following points are drawn primarily from Docherty 2009: 176–81, 194–97.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Goldberg's characterization of the rabbinic view of scripture as 'a set of graphic signs', cited Docherty 2009: 118. The author believed that 'the new meaning he gave them was inherent in the original revelation, which he regarded as having endless depths of meaning and real contemporary relevance' (p. 181).

refers to allusion to scriptural texts by reusing scriptural language, both from passages that have previously been formally cited and from texts that have not.

The foregoing survey indicates that a variety of scholars investigating both the overall hermeneutical approach and the specific exegetical techniques at work in Hebrews have identified the recognition of and interaction with plurality in and between OT texts as a hallmark of the letter's approach. Indeed, Hebrews not only uses several texts in interaction with one another to justify and explicate the claim that the new covenant has arrived in Jesus, but also on occasions creates plurality by citing, isolating, segmenting, and re-interpreting texts. These two moves clearly operate in the two examples of Hebrews' interpretation examined in the following section.

#### 4.4.2 The Creation and Use of Plurality: Psalm 8

Following the extended comparison of Jesus with the angels in Heb 1.5–14, Hebrews 2 argues that the coming world is not subjected to angels but rather to humanity.

However, humans need to be released from death and the devil in order to fulfil this role, something achieved through the suffering and death of Jesus as a man. To argue this, Hebrews cites Psalm 8, which evokes the exalted status of humanity in the context of the creation as a whole. The author first clarifies the maximal scope of 'all things' which are subjected to man and then introduces a complicating factor: 'we do not now see everything subjected to him' (2.8). This dissonance between Psalm and experience problematizes the text in order to open up space for an interpretation which goes beyond its apparently simple surface meaning.

The author introduces an alternative interpretation by repeating the two parallel phrases from Ps 8.6 but with a further phrase inserted between them, yielding the

following result (italics indicate the addition): ‘*but we see the one* made a little lower than the angels, *Jesus, through the suffering of death* crowned with glory and honour’ (Heb 2.9).<sup>66</sup> This turns the two phrases, originally complementary descriptors of humanity’s exalted status, into sequential descriptors of Jesus’ incarnation/abasement and his subsequent exaltation/glorification. This temporal and sequential interpretation of phrases originally meant spatially and statically is already indicated by introducing the Psalm with a statement about the ‘coming world’ (2.5) and subsequent use of the adverb *vōv* (2.8), and it is further aided by the ambivalence of the term *βραχύ τι* which could mean either ‘a little (bit)’ or ‘(for) a little (while)’.<sup>67</sup>

This phrase must have a temporal nuance; otherwise the interpretation would contradict the lengthy exposition of the Son’s exaltation over the angels in Hebrews 1, and also the apparent thrust of the argument of Hebrews 2 that ultimately humans are more significant than angels (cf. 2.5, 16). It is possible, however, that the phrase’s ambivalence allows Hebrews not only to exploit its potential temporal sense but also to retain the spatial nuance: Jesus was made a little lower than angels for a little while. In this humanity he then suffers death, and it is this event which forms the transition from one status to the other, as indicated syntactically by inserting it between the two phrases from Psalm 8.<sup>68</sup>

This reinterpretation of Psalm 8 as applying to Jesus is made possible by the Psalm’s use of the terms ‘man’ and ‘son of man’; as generic singulars they readily apply

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<sup>66</sup> The use of perfect participles rather than the Psalm’s aorist verbs allows Christ’s humiliation to be presented ‘not as mere temporal succession, but as two complementary aspects of a single work’, Ellingworth 1993: 153–54.

<sup>67</sup> Most commentators understand this temporally, e.g. Attridge 1989: 76; Ellingworth 1993: 154. It is taken spatially by Cockerill 2012: 132–33.

<sup>68</sup> The Son’s exalted status ‘is dependent upon what happens to Jesus as a human being, in the pre-eminently human event of his death.’ Attridge 1989: 75.

collectively to the entire human race, yet because they are in the singular Hebrews can apply the Psalm not to ‘man’ in general but to *a* man, Jesus, in particular. The same is true of ‘son of man’, and here there may be an additional messianic reference if Hebrews is aware of Son of Man traditions from the Synoptics or via its own knowledge of Jesus tradition (2.3).<sup>69</sup> Ellingworth reckons that Hebrews interprets Psalm 8 primarily with reference to Jesus and then applies this anthropologically;<sup>70</sup> in fact, however, it is the traditional/original interpretation of the Psalm as referring to humanity in general which forms the starting point and which must first be disturbed via present experience before Jesus can be introduced as the actual subject. This is indicated by an adversative  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  in 2.9: ‘we do not now see all things subjected to him (i.e. humanity), *but* ( $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ ) we see *Jesus*’. The implication would be that in looking at Jesus one can see all things subjected to him, a notion which coheres with his exaltation above the angels in Hebrews 1. It is then via this christological reinterpretation of Psalm 8 that the original anthropological interpretation can be fulfilled and restored. This is indicated in the dual emphasis in Heb 2.10–18 on Jesus’ solidarity with God’s people and on his concomitant victory over death and the devil, the very things which frustrated the apparently simple surface reading of Psalm 8 because they were not subject to humanity (indeed, humanity was subject to them, 2.15).

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<sup>69</sup> Attridge reckons it is ‘quite possible that the author simply did not know the Son of Man tradition’, 1989: 74. See his discussion of alternative possibilities, including speculation regarding Adam’s heavenly prototype, and an anthropological reading which gives rise to an ‘Adamic’ Christology whereby it is Christ’s exaltation as a human being that is significant, on pp. 73–75. In my view a combination of anthropological and christological intentions, leading to an Adamic Christology, is not implausible, and would be consistent with awareness of a Son of Man tradition; see Moffitt 2011: 119–28; Schenck 2007: 54–59; Ellingworth 1993: 150–52. The NRSV obscures this connection by translating ‘human beings’ and ‘mortals’ respectively.

<sup>70</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 150–52.

The interpretation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 demonstrates how the author wrestles with OT texts in order to create a plurality of perspectives. This is in part achieved via an appeal to his and his audience's experience; while such experience is not identified as a means of God's speech, it is clear from 2.4 that certain kinds of personal experience can *confirm* divine speech. In this case, experience instead *disturbs* an apparently straightforward reading, thus permitting the author to create further dissonance in his reading of the Psalm. By dividing and temporalizing two originally equivalent statements Hebrews elucidates the two stages of Jesus' saving work, and thereby ultimately returns the Psalm to its original anthropological meaning. In the process, however, the position and destiny of humanity has been transformed: from a static position below angels and above the rest of creation, human beings now follow their pioneer into and through death and emerge higher than angels, glorified, with everything in submission to them. By creating and exploiting dissonance and diversity within a scriptural text Hebrews is able to expound the superiority of the new covenant. Similar exegetical procedures with regard to a single text can be found in the use of Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10, which will be examined in Chapter Six; there, by contrast with Hebrews 2, two tendencies apparently opposed in the Psalm (sacrifice and obedience) are first temporalized and then united in Christ.

#### 4.4.3 Exploiting Textual and Temporal Plurality: Psalm 95

A striking feature of Hebrews is the text's oscillation between sections of exposition and exhortation; in this light Heb 3.7–4.11 is unusual because it consists of some of the most sustained exhortation in the whole document, yet that exhortation is brought to

bear through an extended and complex exposition of Psalm 95.<sup>71</sup> The passage warns the audience not to disobey God and urges them to persevere and so enter his rest, a purpose facilitated by the use of a psalm itself consisting of direct second-person address and warning. As with Psalm 8, however, an apparently straightforward direct application of the text is complicated by the introduction of multi-layered temporal considerations. Yet once again it is this very plurality, brought to play through implicit and explicit use of other scriptural texts, which turns out to be instrumental in demonstrating and explaining new covenant realities, and in urging the audience to persevere towards these realities.

The passage proceeds by quoting a paraenetic text (3.7–11), followed immediately by direct paraenesis from author to audience (3.12–13); 3.14 mirrors 3.6, framing the citation and immediate exhortation, and it is only after this that the author lays out the grounds for his reasoning (3.15–19). The exhortation to mutual encouragement is recast as a charge to enter rest (4.1), both on the basis of the wilderness generation's failure to enter rest (i.e. the immediately preceding 3.15–19) and on the basis of further reasoning which will become clear in 4.2–10, with a final exhortation echoing 4.1 and rounding off the section in 4.11.<sup>72</sup>

Hebrews initially applies the Psalm directly to the audience: the Holy Spirit *says* it (present tense), the citation opens with 'today', and this is carried through in the author's comments in 3.12–13, emphasizing the present and ongoing response called for by this text. This apparent simplicity is complicated by the re-quotation of Ps 95.7–8a,

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<sup>71</sup> It is designated exhortation, without discussion of its expository nature, by Guthrie 1994: 129, 144. It is 'at the same time the most extensive *exhortation* so far, and the most extensive piece of continuous *exposition* of an OT text in the whole epistle', Ellingworth 1993: 214 (emphasis original).

<sup>72</sup> There is a widely-acknowledged section close at 3.19, and 4.1–11 forms a unit; yet Hebrews' argument continues across these sections, indicated by γάρ (3.14, 16; 4.2, 3, 4, 8, 10) and οὖν (4.1, 6, 11).

which ends with the phrase ‘as in the rebellion’. Presumably the reference to Meribah and Massah (cf. Exod 17.7) was evident to author and audience, despite the LXX translation rather than transliteration of the terms מריבה and מסה, which serve (as so often in the OT) as both place names and descriptors. Hebrews nevertheless capitalizes on the Greek text’s lack of specificity to refer the rebellion first generally to the wilderness wanderings (‘all those who left Egypt’, 3.16), and then specifically to Kadesh Barnea (the identification of Kadesh with Meribah may already be suggested by Num 20.1, 13). This constitutes an implicit appeal to the narrative of Numbers 13–14, which is confirmed by reuse of terminology from that passage (in Docherty’s terms this is an ‘expressive use’ of scripture). This is prepared by the designation of Moses as ‘faithful in all [God’s] house’ in Heb 3.5, citing Num 12.7. Language of (un)faithfulness is not found in Psalm 95 but is present in Numbers (cf. 14.11 with Heb 3.12, 19).<sup>73</sup> A further connection emerges in the language of bodies falling in the wilderness (cf. Heb 3.17 τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ with Num 14.29 ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ [...] πεσεῖται τὰ κῶλα; cf. Num 14.32–33),<sup>74</sup> showing that already in Heb 3.17 the rebellion is linked to Kadesh. Thus we see Hebrews’ author taking advantage of the multivocality of the scriptures: while the exhortatory nature of Psalm 95 better serves his paraenetic designs, terminology of faith is useful for connecting this passage to the overall exhortatory programme of the rest of the letter, and to the person of Christ. In addition, the non-specificity of Psalm 95 in the Greek enables him to refer it to a different Pentateuchal episode, one which sharpens the existential moment of decision for his audience and thereby reinforces the urgency of the Psalm’s appeal.

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<sup>73</sup> So Attridge 1989: 116. Gleason 2000: 288–91 recognizes that Num 13–14 is the primary intertext, yet still emphasizes the faith of the first wilderness generation in Exodus, despite the fact that Hebrews makes little of this.

<sup>74</sup> Löhr 1994a: 233. Note that κῶλον is a NT *hapax*, Attridge 1989: 120.

In introducing the wilderness generation's rebellion in 3.15–16, Hebrews complicates the apparently simple application of Psalm 95 to the audience's present. As Hermut Löhr notes, a direct transfer from text to audience is not possible because the Psalm itself contains two 'tenses': the time of the psalmist (indicated by 'today') and that of the wilderness generation (indicated by the past tense in Ps 95.11).<sup>75</sup> Hebrews' own present constitutes a third tense or time which has to be equated with the psalmist's present (note the expansion of the Psalm's 'today' to 'every day' in 3.13). The focus on the rebellious wilderness generation in 3.16–19 provides a negative example, but also opens the way for the claim that 'the promise of entering his rest remains' (4.1), an inference which Psalm 95 does not make explicit (in Docherty's terms this is a use of 'opposition resources', whereby stressing that some did *not* enter implies that some others will enter).<sup>76</sup>

Up until this point the referent of 'rest' has remained ambiguous; in Psalm 95 it naturally refers to Canaan, and the discussion of the wilderness generation in 3.15–19 does nothing to refute this, although equally the author is careful not to confirm this impression either. As this rest is portrayed as a future good which is available to the audience through faith in 4.1 and 3, the need to define it becomes more pressing.<sup>77</sup> The appellation 'my rest' in Psalm 95, spoken by God, invites the search for another text to

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<sup>75</sup> '[E]in völlig unreflektierter, direkter Transfer nicht möglich ist', Löhr 1994a: 232; see 228–35 for his discussion of Heb 3–4, and in particular pp. 230–32 for the differing tenses at work here.

<sup>76</sup> Docherty 2009: 196.

<sup>77</sup> The continuous aspect of the present tense of εἰσερχόμεθα is foremost in 4.3, allowing an implicit contingency (cf. 3.6, 14). So deSilva 2000: 154–56. *Contra* Lane 1991: 1.99 (who takes εἰσερχόμεθα as a true present); and O'Brien 2010: 165–66 (who takes it as a futuristic present). Mackie's translation with an English perfect ('we have entered that rest') is unjustified; the verse thus does not constitute 'a singular, stunning declaration of eschatological fulfilment', rather another expression of eschatological *tension*. Mackie 2007: 49. His discussion on pp. 50–52 in fact promotes a more modest view of rest as a future good experienced now.

clarify the nature of God's rest.<sup>78</sup> This is found in Gen 2.2, whose connection with Psalm 95 via *gezerah shawah* is made possible by the fact that in the Greek, unlike in the Hebrew, the verb (κατέπαυσεν) is cognate with the noun used in the Psalm (κατάπαυσις).<sup>79</sup> This equation does not simply identify the *present* referent of the 'rest', however; Hebrews remains attentive to the temporal sequencing of the texts it employs.

Genesis 2 gives rest a protological and metaphysical referent which clearly precedes Canaan. Psalm 95 comes later, not merely after Genesis 2 but also after the events of Numbers 13–14 and indeed after the entrance of Israel into Canaan, as evidenced by the fact that it was spoken 'through David' (Heb 4.7).<sup>80</sup> This enables Hebrews to claim that the failure to enter rest refers not only to the disobedient wilderness generation, but also to the subsequent generation (the counterfactual statement in 4.8 implies that Joshua did not give rest).<sup>81</sup> The implication is striking given the repeated insistence in the book of Joshua that he *did* give the Israelites rest (cf. Josh 1.13–15 [promise]; 11.23; 21.44; 22.4; 23.1 [fulfilment]; cf. also 14.15). Yet it has by now become entirely clear that Hebrews does not equate the physical land of Canaan with rest: as with Psalm 8, the end result of Hebrews' exegesis can run counter to a straightforward reading of scripture, yet it does so by close attention to the text or texts

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<sup>78</sup> For thorough discussion of the background of the rest motif and its use in Hebrews see Laansma 1997: esp. 252–358. He argues that κατάπαυσις consistently means 'resting *place*'.

<sup>79</sup> Gen 2.2 and Ps 95.11 might appear contradictory, the former referring to a state enjoyed by God, the latter to the land of Canaan, Löhr 1994a: 234. Yet in addition to the common term, the similarities in patterning (it is *God's* rest, and it *follows his works*) connect the two passages; Laansma 1997: 289 discerns a chiasm in Heb 4.3b–5 which reinforces this connection.

<sup>80</sup> The perfect προεἶρηται introducing the citation in 4.7 is a kind of textual reference, Löhr 1994a: 230–31. Cf. NRSV: 'in the words already cited'.

<sup>81</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 252.

in question. The divine and eschatological resting place will instead be the location of an unending season of ‘sabbath celebration’ (σαββατισμός, 4.9).<sup>82</sup>

Markus Barth suggests that Hebrews does not show consistency in its ‘dialogical’ wrestling with OT texts: sometimes the older thing is better, and sometimes what comes later is better.<sup>83</sup> Yet in Heb 3.7–4.11 *both* are true, as indeed they are in the discussion of the tabernacle and priesthood later on (see Chapter Six). The apparent inconsistency is defused by the recognition that Hebrews highlights not so much ‘things’ which come later but God’s subsequent revelation and in particular his promise or oath (both Pss 95 and 110 contain a divine oath). The oath in turn points back to something which temporally but also ontologically precedes old covenant realities, and which thus should be given priority (God’s rest, Melchizedek’s priesthood, the heavenly tabernacle).<sup>84</sup> By close attention to the plurality of OT texts *in their temporal sequence* Hebrews is able to uncover the greater eschatological realities it believes now to be present, and a careful sensitivity to these divergent ‘tenses’ undergirds the direct, present application of Psalm 95 to the audience ‘today’. In this respect, although the translation ‘at many *times* and in various ways’ in Heb 1.1 was discredited above, it is in fact rather apt as a description of the temporal as well as simply numerical plurality of outlooks which Hebrews discerns in the scriptures: it is only *because* God spoke at

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<sup>82</sup> Deriving from σαββατίζειν – and thus referring more to the activity of ‘celebrating’ or ‘observing’ than ‘rest’, although links with rest are evident both in Heb 4 and in the etymology of sabbath – σαββατισμός is a Greek Bible *hapax* and the earliest extant occurrence of this term, though its attestation in Plutarch (*Superst.* 166a) suggests it is not a coinage of Hebrews. Attridge 1989: 131 n. 103.

<sup>83</sup> Barth 1962: 66–67.

<sup>84</sup> In this respect it is equally true of Heb 7 as of Heb 3–4 that ‘Der Psalter wird durch die Tora, besonders die Genesis, zum Reden gebracht.’ Löhr 1994a: 240.

different times and in different ways that this speech can be directed to his Son and the new covenant he has inaugurated.<sup>85</sup>

## 4.5 Conclusion

The opening words of Hebrews could be associated both with a low-level Marcionite tendency towards disparagement or neglect of the OT frequently found in Christian thought, and with anti-ritualist polemic against repetition in liturgy. The findings of this chapter suggest that neither of these uses has any basis in the text of Hebrews. First, the exordium foregrounds and validates the repetition of God's old covenant speech; his eschatological speech through the Son is continuous with and completes this revelation. Secondly, this singular, final revelation can be understood and appropriated only progressively. God's present speech in the rest of Hebrews through various means, particularly the citation of scripture, demonstrates not only the value but the necessity of ongoing repetition of divine speech in the new covenant. Thirdly, in its exegesis of the scriptures Hebrews creates dissonance, and navigates and exploits their multivocality in order to read them as culminating in the Son; the author thereby confirms the impression given in Heb 1.1–2a that the OT scriptures *in their very plurality* are not merely continuous with God's speech through his Son, but absolutely fundamental to hearing that speech today.

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<sup>85</sup> Christology occurs sparsely in Heb 3.7–4.13 (with only one elusive mention of 'Christ' in 3.14), but is arguably present in an implicit Joshua typology in 4.8, cf. Ounsworth 2012; Whitfield 2013. Jesus could also be implied as 'the one who entered his rest' in 4.10, cf. Moore 2014. Whatever one makes of these potential christological references, the wider point stands that Heb 3–4 exploits the plurality of the scriptures to indicate the availability of new covenant realities.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# ‘Impossible to Renew Again’

## Repetition and Repentance

### 5.1 Introduction

The core contention of this study is that Hebrews portrays repetition in a variety of different ways, and that the relationship of that which is repeated to Christ’s one-off sacrifice is determinative for the particular construal of repetition in any given case. The importance and appeal of singularity was demonstrated in Chapter Two with regard to a number of traditions, including that of Jesus’ crucifixion, while the significance and versatility of the once-for-all nature of the Christ event was suggested by its later deployment both offensively (Tertullian, Epiphanius) and defensively (Julian), as seen in Chapter Three. The previous chapter, by contrast, suggested that it is in part the fact that God’s speech through his Son is *not* characterized as once-for-all which signals that plural prophetic speech is valuable and effective. The present chapter argues that Hebrews extends the once-for-all character of Jesus’ death to the appropriation of the benefits of this atoning act – Christian conversion or repentance – thus rendering it unrepeatable.

Among Hebrews’ five so-called warning passages, including especially Heb 10.26–32 and 12.16–17, the epicentre of the letter’s presentation of the impossibility of renewal to repentance is 5.11–6.12. This passage describes certain forms of repetition

(training, rain) and certain things which cannot or should not be repeated (the ‘foundation’, repentance). The chapter therefore begins by examining these, suggesting that repeated training is equivalent to responding to frequent rain, and that an unrepeatable foundation of repentance and faith should be distinguished from basic teachings, which can (but should not need to) be repeated. Then Hebrews’ usage of *μετάνοια* is examined against biblical and extra-biblical usage: the letter reserves this term for repentance or conversion at the highest or absolute level. On this basis, I argue that the grounds for the unrepeatability of such repentance lie in its close association with the Christ event: the near-identity of repentance and atonement means that apostasy is equivalent to recrucifixion and therefore bars the way to restoration. Finally, returning to the repeated acts exhorted in Hebrews’ warning passages, I suggest that these are fundamental to sustaining perseverance in the singular provision of atonement which is appropriated through repentance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These passages have engendered controversy throughout church history, and multiple interpretations in modern scholarship. One recent article counts ‘at least eighteen distinct interpretations of Hebrews 6:4–6 alone’ (A. J. Wilson 2011: 248; see Oropeza 2011 for a helpful survey and assessment of most of the proposals in the past few decades). This chapter is not concerned with systematic questions (whether the ‘true believer’ can ‘fall away’; whether divine refusal of a second repentance is ‘fair’) but with the exegetical question of why, for Hebrews, repentance is unrepeatable. Nevertheless, regarding the wider pastoral and systematic issues two related clarifications are helpful. First, rhetorically such passages seek to elicit a response of fear mixed with confidence which will result in the audience’s perseverance (‘une salutaire frayeur’, Spicq 1952: 2.140). Secondly and consequently, it should be clear that Hebrews is not setting out a systematic doctrine of perseverance or apostasy (Emmrich 2003: 88). For the rhetorical function of the passages see deSilva 1996; 1999a; 1999b (chiefly highlighting amplification); Snyman 1999 (hyperbole); Fiore 2013 (frank speech); Schreiner and Caneday 2001 (the prospective, not retrospective, nature of the warnings).

## 5.2 Repeated and Unrepeatable Acts in Heb 5.11–6.12

There are four statements relating to repetition in Heb 5.11–6.12:

- a) the foundation (including repentance) ought not to be re-laid (5.12; 6.1–3)
- b) training the faculties leads to perfection (5.14)
- c) renewal again to repentance is impossible (6.4–6)
- d) responding to frequent rain with good vegetation leads to praise (6.7–8)

Two of these statements exclude or discourage repetition, and two assume it to be necessary. This section inquires whether the kinds of repetition envisaged in (a) and (c) can be equated, and similarly whether (b) and (d) can be equated.

The passage begins with a chastisement of the readers: they need to be taught the basics all over again, a sign of their lack of maturity and sluggishness. This leads the author to exhort his audience with him to leave behind basic teaching and go on to perfection, not re-laying a foundation. The six items mentioned in 6.1–2 are both fascinating for the potential window onto early Jewish-Christian catechesis they provide, and frustratingly brief and perplexing.<sup>2</sup> Commentators agree that they fall into three pairs, both grammatically and conceptually: repentance and faith describe an interior disposition; baptisms<sup>3</sup> and imposition of hands describe external rites; resurrection and judgment evoke the outlines of an eschatology.<sup>4</sup> However, the elements in the list are not entirely equal syntactically. The lack of any conjunction joining

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<sup>2</sup> ‘The list contains nothing distinctively Christian, and of course nothing exclusively Jewish’, Ellingworth 1993: 313.

<sup>3</sup> The word is βαπτισμός, usually used for Jewish ablutions, rather than βάπτισμα which tends to be used of Christian and John’s baptism. The plural suggests that the catechesis involved teaching about both initiatory baptism and ongoing water lustrations. See Chapter Six on the allusion to one-off baptism in 10.22.

<sup>4</sup> Though Bénétreau 1988: 1.235–36 is uncertain about treating baptisms and imposition of hands as a pair.

‘teaching of baptisms’ to what has come before suggests a pause ought to be understood which divides the first two from the last four elements.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of the term διδαχῆς further disrupts the list, shifting attention to *teaching about* these things rather than the things themselves. It is possible to take ‘baptisms’ on its own, or together with imposition of hands, or all four later terms as dependent on διδαχῆς. It is unclear why just baptisms or baptisms and imposition of hands would be singled out as the subject of teaching, and it is even harder to conceive of the author and audience understanding *themselves* to have laid a foundation of resurrection and final judgment. It thus seems better to take all four terms as dependent on διδαχῆς.<sup>6</sup> What is more, there is a textual variant which reads διδαχήν instead of διδαχῆς, found in P<sup>46</sup>, Vaticanus, 0150 and some versions.<sup>7</sup> While διδαχῆς is much better attested (UBS4 rates it ‘A’ or certain), either reading could be original. The change to the accusative could be attributed to *parablepsis* from the final *nu* of νεκρῶν ἔργων, θεόν, βαπτισμῶν, χειρῶν, νεκρῶν, or to a stylistic improvement to avoid an uninterrupted string of genitives; but equally style or distinction of the teaching from the foundation could have influenced the author’s choice, with a change to the genitive influenced by the fact that with the exception of θεόν every item in the list is in the genitive. Indeed, if διδαχῆς is original it remains possible that its case was attracted by the heavy use of the genitive. If we read the accusative, the result is:

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<sup>5</sup> Though καί and τε may be used ‘to add variety rather than to impose any particular pattern on the sentence.’ Ellingworth 1993: 313.

<sup>6</sup> So e.g. Westcott 1920: 147; Spicq 1952: 2.148.

<sup>7</sup> These witnesses are ‘early and weighty’, Lane 1991: 1.132.

not laying again  
*a foundation* of repentance and faith  
*a teaching* (διδασχῆν) of baptisms and imposition of hands,  
 resurrection and judgment.<sup>8</sup>

On this reading διδασχῆν is usually understood as appositional to θεμέλιον, although it could function as a second direct object of καταβάλλω. Independent attestation of such usage is found in the *Letter of Aristeas* 294: at the end of the final day of the banquet, the king of Egypt declares that the wisdom of the Jewish elders in response to his questions has ‘laid down a teaching’ (καταβάλλω plus διδασχῆ, accusative direct object) which will help him to govern. Ultimately, Ellingworth is correct to state that ‘A final decision is impossible’;<sup>9</sup> even reading the genitive, however, the first two elements remain distinct:

not laying again *a foundation*  
 of repentance and faith  
 of teaching (διδασχῆς) of baptisms and imposition of hands,  
 of resurrection and judgment.<sup>10</sup>

Thus repentance and faith either constitute the foundation itself, distinguished from the teaching; or they form part of the foundation – but a part which is still distinct from the teaching.<sup>11</sup> On either reading, this slight but significant syntactic distinction enables us to identify an act of repentance and faith, which relates to the repentance in 6.4–6, and a teaching which refers back to the audience’s need to be taught in 5.12. It would be strange to assert that teaching *cannot* be repeated, because it manifestly can be given again (cf. the emphasis in Col 2.6; 2 Pet 1.12–15 on didactic repetition). Most importantly, Heb 5.12 seems to suggest that elementary teaching can be repeated, whilst

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<sup>8</sup> The accusative is favoured by Attridge 1989: 155 n. 10; Hughes 1977: 196; Lane 1991: 1.132, 140; Montefiore 1964: 105; Bénétreau 1988: 1.232.

<sup>9</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 314.

<sup>10</sup> See Cockerill 2012: 263–64 esp. n. 41.

<sup>11</sup> The difference is slight, Westcott 1920: 147; Löhr 1994b: 176.

at the same time insisting strongly that this situation is less than ideal.<sup>12</sup> 6.4–6, on the other hand, excludes categorically the possibility of repeating repentance. This would suggest that we can connect statements about repetition of repentance in 6.1 and 6.4–6 (that is, (a) and (c) above), but only by distinguishing at the same time between this and the repetition of teaching described in 5.12 and 6.2.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to the relationship of (b) and (d), Heb 5.14 clearly suggests repeated activity through its use of the terms ἔξις and γυμνάζω, which evoke regular athletic training as a figure for progression in knowledge, a common philosophical trope.<sup>14</sup> As for (d), the agricultural image employed evokes repetition through the adverb πολλάκις in 6.7, a term used thrice elsewhere in Hebrews to describe the repetition of sacrifice. The association of agricultural cultivation with education is found in Philo's *On Agriculture*, where Noah exemplifies the husbandry of the soul, and which contains frequent use of the images in Heb 5.11–14.<sup>15</sup> A consideration of the structure of the passage will demonstrate that these two are cognate:

|    |         |   |
|----|---------|---|
| A  | 5.11–12 | we (author) vs you (audience) – chastisement                |
| BC | 5.13–14 | infants contrasted with perfect – illustration              |
| C  | 6.1–3   | we (author and audience) – exhortation                      |
| B  | 6.4–6   | once enlightened who have fallen away – nonspecific example |
| CB | 6.7–8   | good land contrasted with bad – illustration                |

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<sup>12</sup> This tension – basic teaching can be repeated but there should be no need for such repetition – is preferable to the solution of Bénétreau 1988: 1.238–39. He distinguishes between a Christian catechism ('the basic message about Christ', 5.12) which can be repeated, and a Jewish foundation which can be left aside ('let us go on', 6.1). Instead, ἀφέντες should be understood in the sense of 'granting' not 'abandoning' (so Koester 2001: 303; the whole point of a foundation is that one takes it as established in order to build on it). This understanding is reinforced by the similarities with Greco-Roman education, where initial propaedeutic training was not to be abandoned but rather served as the basis for more advanced teaching; see Thompson 1982: 21–26.

<sup>13</sup> *Contra* Spicq 1952: 2.149. He reckons that 'conversion à la foi et assimilation de la catéchèse chrétienne sont inséparables. Toutes deux sont définitives et non réitérables.'

<sup>14</sup> On the athletic and the milk/infant-solid food/adult images and their relation to descriptions of Greco-Roman education, see §5.5 below, Spicq 1952: 2.144; Bénétreau 1988: 1.222–25; and esp. Thompson 1982: 17–40.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson 1982: 38.

A´ 6.9–12 we (author) vs you (audience) – encouragement & exhortation

It would be an overstatement to claim this forms an overt chiasm – not least because this excursus in fact wends its way back to Melchizedek in 6.20 and not before<sup>16</sup> – but the passage does nevertheless exhibit an interesting parallel structure (note also the *inclusio* formed by *ωθρός* in 5.11 and 6.12). Unlike any other warning passage in the letter, the author distinguishes himself from the audience in the opening and closing sections, at first in order to chastise them and then to encourage them.<sup>17</sup> The section immediately following the opening and the section preceding the closing both contrast an example not to be followed with one that is to be followed, and in the opposite order: infant–mature, good land–bad land. The two central sections in a sense embody this same distinction, with an exhortation for author and audience to press on and a contrasting warning about the dangers awaiting an unspecified group who do not. Such a combination of chastisement and exhortation, warning and palliation, is a standard *topos* of contemporaneous rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> The point is clear: alongside exhortation to press on (6.1, 11) Hebrews lays out good and bad examples, and the good examples exhibit progressive repetition portrayed as athletic training and growing good crops.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Note that Guthrie 1994 classifies 6.13–20 as a transitional block from exhortation back to exposition.

<sup>17</sup> Davis 2008 is particularly attentive to the distinction between author and audience in this passage. However, his contention that 6.1–3 refers to the author alone, such that 6.4–6 means ‘it is impossible *for me* to renew to repentance’, is unconvincing. Rather, this is ‘a real plural, “you and I together,” not a plural of authorship’, Ellingworth 1993: 317.

<sup>18</sup> On the similarities to standard Greco-Roman rhetorical practice see deSilva 1996; 1999a; 1999b; 2000; Attridge 1989; Nongbri 2003: 275–78; Perry 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Vanhoye 1984 makes the point with regard to Heb 6.7–8 that both the good and the bad outcome receive emphasis; my analysis demonstrates that this dual emphasis in fact runs throughout the whole section.

### 5.3 Repentance in Hebrews

#### 5.3.1 Μετάνοια in Wider Context

Next Hebrews' use of the term *μετάνοια*, usually translated 'repentance', needs to be addressed. Debate exists over the similarity or dissimilarity in uses of *μετάνοια* and *μετανοέω* in the NT, LXX, and Greek writers from the eighth century BC onwards. These terms are found extensively in the NT, with Luke and Acts accounting for almost half of this usage. They are not uncommon in the LXX, normally translating *נָחַם* (and not *שׁוּב* as often assumed).<sup>20</sup> The terms are relatively frequent in Philo and Josephus, while in Greek writers they are rare with the exception of Plutarch. Based on his examination of the literature, Guy Nave (2002) concludes that repentance has essentially the same meaning wherever it is found. It denotes a change of mind, often but not necessarily accompanied by a feeling of regret or remorse, leading to a change in behaviour.

Nave examines extensive examples from Hellenistic literature which corroborate his point: there is a basic meaning to *μετάνοια* which appears to remain relatively stable throughout the classical and Hellenistic periods.<sup>21</sup> However, this is only part of the story. Considerations beyond simply the semantic value of the lexeme must be taken

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<sup>20</sup> Importantly, both Nave 2002: 117 n. 378, 119 n. 384; and Lambert 2004 point out that contrary to earlier assumptions, *μετάνοια* and cognates in the LXX are not equivalent to the Hebrew Bible's extensive use of *שׁוּב* but normally translate *נָחַם*. In fact *שׁוּב* is never translated with *μετάνοια* in the LXX but rather with *(ἐπι)στρέφω*, and tends to have the sense of turning to God in worship, without any necessary connotation of turning away from sin. The only occurrences of *μετανοέω* + *ἐπιστρέφω* in the NT are Luke 17.3–4 and Acts 3.19; 26.20, where two distinct nuances can be detected, turning away from sin and towards God; cf. Isa 46.8. On the combination of *μετανοέω* + *ἐπιστρέφω* see Lühr 1994b: 143–45, 147–48.

<sup>21</sup> Nave 2002: 40–70 (on classical and Hellenistic Greek literature), 70–118 (on Hellenistic Jewish literature), 119–44 (on the NT and early Christian literature).

into account.<sup>22</sup> These include 1) the relative *frequency* of use of the language and concept, 2) its *perception* – is it a virtue or a vice, commended or to be avoided? – and related to this, 3) the *level* at which repentance operates.

With regard to (1), the relative frequency of occurrence of *μετάνοια* language suggests that there remains a particular Jewish-Christian emphasis on repentance vis-à-vis other classical and Hellenistic authors. With regard to (2), what Greco-Roman authors say about repentance diverges to quite some extent from what Jewish and Christian authors say about it. Although some Hellenistic philosophers saw repentance as a virtue, this is the exception rather than the rule;<sup>23</sup> and while the pedagogical methods of many philosophers are comparable to the role of regular repentance in Judeo-Christian texts, significantly they do not tend to use *terminology* of repentance to articulate this.<sup>24</sup> Democritus allows that ‘remorse for shameful deeds is salvation in life’ (frag. 43), but insists that ‘it is better to deliberate before action than to repent afterwards’ (frag. 66), a sentiment shared by Epicharmus who says ‘the wise man must not repent but think beforehand [οὐ μετανοεῖν ἀλλὰ προνοεῖν]’ (frag. 280); Gorgias (frag. 11a) similarly contrasts *προνοεῖν* with *μετανοεῖν*.<sup>25</sup> These views find echoes in Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics: while regretting errors is important, the wise man is steady and does not commit error in the first place.<sup>26</sup> The philosophers’ admission of repentance in certain circumstances, and the basic semantic stability of the terminology,

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<sup>22</sup> Löhr 1994b: 137.

<sup>23</sup> Sterling 2008: 73.

<sup>24</sup> W. T. Wilson 2011: 361.

<sup>25</sup> Note that these examples partly retain the etymological sense ‘thinking afterwards’.

<sup>26</sup> For more examples of Greco-Roman philosophical views on repentance, see Alexandre 1998: 22; Bailey 1991: 137; Sterling 2008: 71–74; W. T. Wilson 2011: 360–61; Winston 1995: 29–30.

leads Nave to conclude that there is a close affinity between the its usage in secular Greek and in Christian thought.<sup>27</sup>

Despite this basic semantic common ground, it is instructive to contrast the Hellenistic philosophical material with Philo, whose approach is quite different. In *On Flight and Finding* 157 he writes ‘never to do anything wrong is the peculiar attribute of God; and to repent is the part of a wise man. But this is very difficult and very hard to attain to.’ While the manuscript tradition of *On Virtues* is complex and some corruption has clearly occurred, it seems fairly certain that the subsection *On Repentance* originally formed an integral part of this treatise.<sup>28</sup> Repentance is thus a virtue for Philo, and in that treatise he describes it as the younger brother of perfection. Elsewhere he calls it noble, praiseworthy, and the characteristic of the wise (*Somn.* 1.91; 2.108; *Spec. Leg.* 1.102; *All.* 2.60; *Virt.* 177). Philo holds that constancy and perfection pertain to God alone, and that the best course of action available to the wise or virtuous man consists in ongoing repentance. Ancient philosophers, by contrast, tend to emphasise that the wise man does *not* repent, because he has no need to: he chooses the best course of action from the first. However, they do concede that repentance may be the best option in the case of one who has not chosen wisely first time round. It can be seen, then, that whereas for Greco-Roman authors repentance is to be avoided and is an admission that one has not been wise, for Philo and the NT documents repentance is precisely the starting place. This position derives from a sense of God’s perfection and transcendence, and from an acknowledgement of human sin.

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<sup>27</sup> Nave 2002: 70. Cf. Löhr 1994b: 141, 143.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey 1991: 139–40; W. T. Wilson 2011: 15; Sterling 2008: 85–86.

With regard to point (3) above, the level at which repentance operates, a wide range of difference can be discerned even within the NT. While there is a clear similarity between the action envisaged in Jesus' injunction to forgive a brother as often as he repents (Luke 17.3–4), the Corinthians' repentance caused by godly sorrow (2 Cor 7.9–10), Jesus' and John the Baptist's call to 'repent and believe' (Matt 4.17; Mark 1.15), and the repentance enjoined of Gentiles in Paul's speeches in Acts (e.g. Acts 17.30; 20.21), there is nevertheless an important difference of scale or sphere. The repentance of a fellow disciple is from individual personal sins; the Corinthians' repentance is similarly repentance by believers of particular sins; the initial preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus is a call to Jews to realize the nature of the age and act accordingly, while the repentance of Gentiles involves a much greater change of mindset and worldview than for Jews.<sup>29</sup> These examples illustrate what is meant by 'level'; my contention is that when the word *μετάνοια* occurs in Hebrews, it indicates a change of mind at the very highest possible level – that is, an initial and absolute repentance or even conversion experience.

### 5.3.2 *Μετάνοια* in Hebrews

This claim is substantiated by Hebrews' use of *μετάνοια*. In 6.1, as we have seen, repentance forms part of the foundation of the Christian life. The pairing of *μετάνοια ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων* with *πίστις ἐπὶ θεόν* is a combination similar to *μετανοέω + ἐπιστρέφω* elsewhere, and has a near parallel in Heb 9.14 (cleansing *ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι*), suggesting that these actions form two sides of the same

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<sup>29</sup> Sterling describes these increasing levels as 'intensification', 'institutional transition', and 'tradition transition', Sterling 2008: 94–95; following Rambo 1993.

coin and indicate an initial moment of conversion.<sup>30</sup> If πίστις here denotes the positive placing of trust in God, then μετάνοια represents the negative aspect of turning away from all that is opposed to God.<sup>31</sup> Yet turning away from also implies turning towards, as for example in Acts 20.21 where μετάνοια is *towards* God (εἰς θεόν) and is coupled with πίστις in Jesus (εἰς ... Ἰησοῦν). That is to say, the pairs μετάνοια + πίστις and μετανοέω + ἐπιστρέφω often function as a hendiadys, evoking one composite action whose individual parts may – but need not necessarily – be distinguished.

In Heb 6.6 the author presents repentance as an action which people cannot undergo again if they have fallen away from a prior state described using ἅπαξ and a series of four aorist participles (6.4–5). Neither the aorist nor ἅπαξ necessarily implies punctiliar action: rather, the aorist presents the event as a whole and therefore in its full or complete state.<sup>32</sup> The group designated by the participles is not identified with the audience, and is in this sense ‘hypothetical’, but the experience described is quite clearly that of members of the Christian community and the audience would trace their own experience in the four verbs, stopping short only at the shocking καὶ παραπεσόντας (6.6). Mathewson and Emmrich have drawn attention to the OT background of the descriptions, suggesting that the wilderness pilgrimage motif from Hebrews 3–4 continues to underlie the depiction of believers here: ‘enlightened’ recalls the pillar of

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<sup>30</sup> The ‘dead works’ are not cultic regulations or ‘useless rituals’, *contra* NIV margin; Lane 1991: 1.140. They more likely denote sin, ‘the actions of those separated from the “living God”’ Cockerill 2012: 265 n. 47. This phrase has a bearing on the identification of the background of the original audience. Löhr looks at other instances of ‘dead works’ and suggests that the term refers to idolatry, thus indicating a Gentile audience, Löhr 1994b: 149–52. However, the references he gives (4 *Ezra* 7.119; 8.31; *Herm. Sim.* 9.16; Philo *Deus* 12) do not clearly refer to idolatry, and the fact that the call to repentance is issued to Jews in the Gospels and Acts, and that Heb 9.14 implies that Jews also need to be cleansed from ‘dead works’, suggests there is no necessary correlation between this and a Gentile audience.

<sup>31</sup> Löhr 1994b: 152.

<sup>32</sup> Note the much-cited study of Stagg 1972.

fire and cloud; ‘tasting the heavenly gift’ evokes the manna; ‘sharers in holy spirit’ is reminiscent of the manifestation of the divine spirit among the seventy elders (Num 11.24–29); and the word of God and signs of the coming age echo the revelations and miracles given through Moses.<sup>33</sup> The other occurrence of γεύομαι in Hebrews besides 6.4–5 (Jesus ‘tasted’ death, 2.9) suggests full participation rather than mere ‘sampling’; likewise, φωτίζω occurs in 10.32, also in the passive, referring to the audience’s initial conversion (‘the first days’). Similarly, ἅπαξ (along with the emphatic ἐφάπαξ) refers to the complete or contained nature of an event, particularly in the context of Hebrews where it forms something of a *Leitwort* for the completion of Christ’s atoning work (see further §5.4.6 and Chapter Six). These considerations demonstrate that the experience evoked in Heb 6.4–5 is a full initiation into the believing community, which has been described in 6.1 as repentance and faith. Against this evidence, arguments that the group are not ‘true believers’ or consists of the unbelieving half of a mixed audience appear to be motivated by systematic concerns external to Hebrews itself.<sup>34</sup>

Such people, after falling away, cannot be ‘renewed to repentance’. While we might expect to read ἀδύνατον ... αὐτοὺς πάλιν μετανοεῖν (‘it is impossible *for them to repent* again’) we in fact find ἀδύνατον ... πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν. This is often read with the sense of the former phrase, or to mean ‘bring back to repentance’,<sup>35</sup> without necessarily specifying the subject of ἀνακαινίζειν. Löhr suggests an alternative reading, giving much greater weight to ἀνακαινίζειν as a theologically-charged verb

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<sup>33</sup> Mathewson 1999; Emmrich 2003; cf. Gleason 1998; Weeks 1976.

<sup>34</sup> A recent case for mixed audience is made by Thomas 2008; see the summary and comments in Oropeza 2011: 84–85. Nicole 1975 and Grudem 1995 argue that those described in 6.4–6 are not true believers; see the comments and critique in Schreiner and Caneday 2001: 195–98.

<sup>35</sup> Löhr 1994b: 153.

evoking new birth and renewal.<sup>36</sup> This would suggest a two-stage, or at least two-agent, conception of repentance, involving both divine renewal and human action. Other instances of εἰς μετάνοιαν suggest the preposition indicates a resultant action which is caused or at least prompted by a prior act, whether human (cf. Matt 3.11; Luke 5.32; 2 Cor 7.9) or divine (cf. Wis 11.23; Rom 2.4; 2 Pet 3.9).<sup>37</sup> On this reading, giving full force to ἀνακαινίζειν, Heb 6.6 can be paraphrased: ‘*it is impossible to renew such people a second time so that they may repent*’.

The final occurrence of μετάνοια in the letter, Heb 12.16–17, describes Esau as an example of a godless and immoral person for selling his birthright. The case is parallel to that in Hebrews 6: Esau has spurned his birthright, an action which is objectively irreversible. Despite the fact that he changes his mind and experiences regret, and seeks to change his behaviour – all elements associated with the basic meaning of repentance as defined by Nave – it is clear that this cannot effect μετάνοια as Hebrews understands it. This example confirms the emphasis laid on ἀνακαινίζειν in Heb 6.6: although, humanly speaking, Esau did ‘repent’, he nevertheless found no ‘*place for repentance*’. Μετανοίας τόπος most probably means an opportunity or occasion for repentance (Wis 12.10; *1 Clem.* 7.5; Tatian *c. Graec.* 15; cf. BDAG, ‘τόπος’, 1011–12, sense 4; also Herm. *Vis.* 13.5). Esau’s sincerity here ought not to be impugned; in the context of Hebrews the closer and more natural antecedent for αὐτήν (‘even though he sought *it* with tears’) is μετάνοια rather than εὐλογία.<sup>38</sup> That is, 12.17 should not be read to suggest Esau sought the  *blessing*  with tears, and therefore that he

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<sup>36</sup> Löhr 1994b: 154.

<sup>37</sup> One possible exception is Prov 14.15 (LXX) where the prudent man comes to repentance – though here it is arguably his own prior action or disposition that leads him to repentance.

<sup>38</sup> *Contra* Westcott 1920: 411; Cockerill 2012: 640–41. Both suggest we would expect to find αὐτόν, referring to τόπος μετανοίας; yet the point is not that Esau sought an  *opportunity*  to repent, rather he sought repentance  *itself*  but found it was not possible.

did so insincerely, not truly regretting his sin. His immorality (12.16) led to his rejection of his birthright; and it is the spurning of his birthright rather than any ongoing sinful attitude which hinders his search for repentance. That Esau sought repentance sincerely but did not obtain it sharpens the warning Hebrews gives.<sup>39</sup>

As in Heb 6.4–6, the idea that Esau sought a further repentance implies that he was previously in a state of ‘salvation’. This is confirmed by the term *πρωτοτόκια* (12.16), which indicates Esau’s birthright: this is something he possessed but abandoned. The link with the heavenly assembly of the firstborn (*ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων*, 12.23), i.e. those who have been saved, reinforces the impression that Esau possessed salvation in some measure.<sup>40</sup> In parallel to Heb 6.6 there is no explicit indication in 12.16–17 of who provides (or refuses to provide) the renewal/opportunity, but implicitly this leaves space only for the divine agent. Some commentators take *μετάνοια* to refer to Isaac’s refusal to change his mind,<sup>41</sup> but this is problematic, as Spicq’s rendering reveals: ‘He found no way to (make his father) repent’.<sup>42</sup> The speculative nature of the proposal is clear from the parenthetical addition; this makes the verbal action implicit in *μετάνοια* transitive, and supplies a direct object, ‘his father’, which is lacking in the text. Furthermore, the parallel Latin juridical expression *locus poenitentiae* which Spicq adduces in support refers only to the subject changing *his own* mind, not someone else’s.<sup>43</sup> The attempt to read in an implicit reference to Isaac also runs against the grain of Gen 27.33–40, where it is clear that however much Isaac may have desired Esau to have the blessing, the matter is no longer in his hands – the

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<sup>39</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 669.

<sup>40</sup> So Löhr 1994b: 159–60.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Bénétreau 1988: 2.189–90.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Il ne trouva pas moyen de (faire) repentir (son père)’, Spicq 1952: 2.402.

<sup>43</sup> Lane 1991 points out this problem with Spicq’s reading. Westcott 1920: 411 explains the context in which the Latin phrase occurs.

blessing, once given, is divinely sealed and non-transferable. The immovability of the divine decision is explicit elsewhere in Hebrews (cf. the oath and God's refusal to change his mind, 6.13–18; 7.20–22), and is also present in Hebrews 3–4: God swears in Ps 95.11 and twice in Num 14.20–30 that the Israelites will not enter Canaan. These considerations reveal the stark nature of the warning that this passage presents: 'Esau wants to repent, but God does not permit him.'<sup>44</sup>

These observations on the three occurrences of *μετάνοια* in Hebrews can be summarized as follows: this term refers to a decisive turning away from sinful deeds and towards God which results in participation in a state of 'salvation', that is, enjoying the current (and expecting to enjoy the future) benefits of being a believer. In 6.1 repentance denotes the initial act of turning, and as such constitutes a foundation for the Christian life. In 6.6 and 12.17, by contrast, the author considers the notion of repentance *after* having enjoyed the believing state and having subsequently rejected its benefits, and definitively rules it out. Importantly, then, Hebrews restricts the term *μετάνοια* to a 'high-level' usage such that it is precisely not the same thing as the 'repentance' that forms part of a believer's life as in, e.g., Luke 17 or 2 Corinthians 7. Regular turning from sin as part of the Christian life is not designated by the term 'repentance', even if it is something the author envisages happening.

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<sup>44</sup> 'Esau will umkehren, aber Gott läßt es ihm nicht zu.' Löhr 1994b: 162.

## 5.4 Why is Repentance Unrepeatable?

### 5.4.1 ‘Impossible’ or ‘Very Difficult’?

An understanding of how the term *μετάνοια* is used in Hebrews informs the central issue this chapter addresses: the stated unrepeatability of repentance. The first question to be addressed is the meaning of *ἀδύνατος*. While some have suggested this should be read as ‘very hard’,<sup>45</sup> the three other occurrences in Hebrews all refer to a situation in which something is categorically impossible and not just difficult – impossible for God to lie (6.18), for animal blood to take away sin (10.4), and for humans to please God without faith (11.6).<sup>46</sup> It has also been proposed that *ἀδύνατος* should be taken together with an implicit subject of *ἀνακαίνιζεν*. So Davis suggests that the first person plural in 6.1–3 refers to the author only and not to the audience as well, making him the implied subject. ‘The author is telling his audience that it is impossible for someone else (himself) to restore them to repentance. He does not say that they cannot repent.’<sup>47</sup> The referent for *ἀδύνατος* would then be clear and unproblematic: ‘the “impossibility” of 6:4 does not deal with the audience’s returning to repentance, but with the author’s ability to bring them to repentance. If they fall away, they are *on their own* in returning to

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<sup>45</sup> E.g. Nicholas of Lyra and Erasmus; see Koester 2001: 312. Bruce 1990: 144 comes close to this position.

<sup>46</sup> *Ἀδύνατος* ‘is always used in Hebrews in the impersonal neuter’, Ellingworth 1993: 318–19. He suggests the impersonal construction is used to avoid naming God, out of reverence or for stylistic reasons, though he allows that it may imply ‘a quite general subject [...] “It is inherently impossible”’. All other occurrences of *ἀδύνατος* in Hebrews ‘unambiguously refer to objective impossibilities’, Nongbri 2003: 267.

<sup>47</sup> Davis 2008: 764–65. So also Behm, ‘ἀνακαίνιζω’, *TDNT* 3.451–52.

God.<sup>48</sup> Yet there is no suggestion of a contrast between the author's inability to restore them to repentance and God's ability or desire to do so.

Spicq makes a similar suggestion but with a different subject: it is psychologically impossible for *the apostate* to bring himself to repentance, but not impossible for God.<sup>49</sup> Spicq's appeal to biblical parallels reveals a too-ready recourse to a canonical chorus which threatens to drown out Hebrews' own voice. His reading is hard to sustain in the face of the example of Esau who, as discussed above, psychologically epitomises a penitent state yet is not granted repentance.<sup>50</sup> Marshall rightly notes: 'The point at issue is not the question as to who might be able to restore the lapsed, but the fact that the lapsed cannot be restored. [...] the passage gives us no right to assert that there may be a special intervention of God to restore those whom men cannot restore.'<sup>51</sup>

#### 5.4.2 The Nature of 'Falling Away'

The next question concerns the action or sin denoted by the aorist participle of *παραπίπτω* in Heb 6.6. The verb and cognate noun *παράπτωμα* are generally translated 'fall (away)'. In the LXX of Ezekiel verb and noun occur together to describe unfaithfulness, translating מַעַל (Ezek 14.13; 15.8; 18.24; 20.27; cf. Ezek 22.4 and also

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<sup>48</sup> Davis 2008: 765 (emphasis original). 'On their own' presumably refers to *ἑαυτοῖς* in 6.6, which in context describes the effect of the apostasy (crucifying the Son of God *ἑαυτοῖς*) and not the possibility of the apostates' returning themselves to repentance as Davis implies.

<sup>49</sup> Spicq 1952: 2.169; cf. the wider excursus on this question, 2.167–78.

<sup>50</sup> Spicq 1952: 2.177 nevertheless attempts to reconcile Esau in Heb 12 with the psychological view. 'Un autre commettant la même faute aurait pu obtenir son pardon, lui ne le pouvait pas parce que ses dispositions foncières rendaient toute conversion impossible.' Against this I maintain, on the basis of Gen 27, that no-one rejecting the birthright, no matter who or in what state of mind, could have recovered Isaac's blessing.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall 2005: 142; So also Löhr 1994b: 154–55; Koester 2001: 312–13; Ellingworth 1993: 318–19; Cockerill 2012: 275.

Wis 6.9; 12.2 for ‘transgress(ion)’ generally). The noun is much more common throughout the LXX and NT: in Romans, for example, *παράπτωμα* describes Adam’s sin six times (5.15–20; including, once, the sins of his descendants), and Israel’s fall from God twice (11.11–12; cf. also Matt 6.14–15; Eph 1.7; 2.1, 5). Against rigorist patristic interpretations which identified particular sins, modern commentators agree that what is in view ‘is clearly the extreme sin of apostasy.’<sup>52</sup> This point is both supported and sharpened by consideration of all of Hebrews’ warning passages together.

It is generally recognized that the letter contains five warning passages, although opinions differ slightly as to their precise demarcation in the text (especially the last two, in Heb 10 and 12).<sup>53</sup> Where something is unclear in one warning passage, it is ‘both compulsory and eminently helpful’ to consult similar evidence in the other warning passages.<sup>54</sup> Drawing together the various ways in which the sin or fault is described across these passages, the conclusion that apostasy is meant is hard to resist: it involves turning away from the living God (*ἀφίστημι*; 3.12) and refusing the one who speaks (*παραιτέομαι*; 12.25). Its nature is spelled out as crucifying and shaming the Son of God (*ἀνασταυρόω, παραδειγματίζω*; 6.6), trampling him, profaning the blood of the covenant, and insulting the Spirit of grace (*καταπατέω, κοινὸν ἡγέομαι, ἐνυβρίζω*; 10.29). More severe designations of a sin and its effects would be hard to imagine.<sup>55</sup>

Within this overarching indication of apostasy, we find two emphases which stand in tension. On the one hand, such sin is persistent, drawn out, or gradual. It is

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<sup>52</sup> Attridge 1989: 169; cf. 171.

<sup>53</sup> The passages are 2.1–4; 3.7–4.13; 5.11–6.12; in Heb 10: maximally 10.19–39, minimally 10.26–29; in Heb 12: maximally 12.1–29, minimally 12.15–17, 25. See McKnight 1992: 22 who opts for the maximal extent of the passages in Heb 10; 12.

<sup>54</sup> McKnight 1992: 28; cf. Carlston 1959: 296.

<sup>55</sup> For a more complete list, see McKnight 1992: 37–38.

described as drifting away (2.1), ‘being hardened’ (3.13), ‘going on sinning deliberately’ (stressing the imperfective aspect of the present tense, 10.26), and is likened to Esau’s godlessness (12.16). This ongoing nature of the sin is to be distinguished from the ongoing consequences it might have, which some commentators infer from the present tense of ἀνασταυρόω and παραδειγματίζω in 6.6.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the sin involves a moment or single act of irremediable turning away: the fall of the wilderness generation (3.17) was a single moment of decision, as was Esau’s spurning of his birthright (12.16–17). Rather than deciding for one or the other, both of these emphases need to be given weight. Ongoing sin may, if unchecked, result in full apostasy, which is a single point of no return but which does not come out of the blue. While this is less clear in Hebrews 2, it is implicit in the warnings about tiring and flagging in Heb 5.11; 6.12 (cf. 12.12–13) and also in the abandonment of the ἐπισυναγωγή in 10.25.

The combination of ongoing and punctiliar sin is most evident in the OT examples of the wilderness generation and Esau. That the Israelites in the desert exhibited ongoing sin is clear from Psalm 95 as interpreted in Hebrews 3–4 (see §4.4.3): their rebellion was persistent and lasted the whole length of their wilderness sojourn. Yet their disobedience reaches its climax at Kadesh Barnea: at this point, God condemns them to die in the desert (Num 14.28–35). Just like Esau, the people experience regret and a change of heart, and immediately seek to enter the land, yet they are unsuccessful because God has decisively and irrevocably left them (Num 14.39–45). Similarly, Esau’s persistent sin leads to the spurning of his birthright: Hebrews holds

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<sup>56</sup> E.g. Carlston 1959: 297; Hughes 1973: 150 draw a distinction between a single act of falling away (aorist) and present consequences (present). ‘One may legitimately infer an element of *persistence* from the present tenses, but this is by no means the primary concern of the author in choosing the present tenses.’ McKnight 1992: 40 n. 63 (emphasis original).

him up as an example of profanity and sexual immorality, designations which are dependent on Gen 26.34–35 as understood through later traditions.<sup>57</sup> Like the wilderness generation, such immorality does not inherently or necessarily constitute apostasy, but it forms part of a trajectory which culminates in a particular sin, spurning the birthright, which in salvation-historical perspective is akin to rejecting the inheritance of the promised land, and after which there is no return.<sup>58</sup>

This analysis suggests that in Hebrews 6 we ought also to understand that becoming sluggish and returning to basic teachings without progressing do not in themselves equate to apostasy, but constitute sinful attitudes which may lead to apostasy.<sup>59</sup> Παραπεσόντας need not designate a ‘single moment’, but the aorist does indicate the action of falling away in its completeness. Beyond the identification of the sin as rejection of the believer’s inheritance, Hebrews is vague about what might constitute such apostasy, probably deliberately, and does not mention any kind of ecclesial test or authority to determine it; moreover, the author insists his audience has not yet reached that point. Yet he is emphatic that such a point can be reached.

#### 5.4.3 ‘Crucifying’ or ‘Recrucifying’?

The following two participles in Heb 6.6, ἀνασταυροῦντας and παραδειγματίζοντας, stand in an explanatory or causal relationship to what has come before in 6.4–6; that is,

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<sup>57</sup> See Philo *Virt.* 208; *Leg. all.* 3.139–40; *Jub.* 25.1–8; *Gen. Rab.* 63.9, 12; *Exod. Rab.* 116a. Attridge 1989: 369 n. 48; Thompson 2008: 259–60. For the view that Hebrews ‘rarely draws on such tradition’, and that therefore translates πόρνος as ‘immoral’ not ‘sexually immoral’, see Cockerill 2012: 638–39.

<sup>58</sup> The punishment is not the ‘loss of temporal rewards’, but rather damnation. So McKnight 1992; Nongbri 2003: 279; Oropeza 2011: 83. *Contra* Oberholtzer 1988; Gleason 1998.

<sup>59</sup> ‘This neglect is not in itself apostasy. However, persistence in such laxity and neglect can lead to ultimate rejection of Christ and the “great salvation” he provides. Such a rejection would parallel Israel’s sin at Kadesh-Barnea.’ Cockerill 2012: 484.

they give the grounds for the stated impossibility of renewal, spelling out the nature and consequences of the sin described by *παραπεσόντας*.<sup>60</sup> The term *ἀνασταυρόω* presents a particular interpretative difficulty; a Greek Bible *hapax*, this term is translated ‘recrucify’ or ‘crucify again’ by most modern English translations. In other literature, however, the term is attested only with the meaning ‘to crucify’.<sup>61</sup> The prefix *ἀνά-* can serve as an intensifier, or as a marker of repetition, or it can have the sense of ‘up’ or ‘above’; the last sense is most likely in the case of *ἀνασταυρόω*, evoking the fact that criminals were hauled up in the process of crucifixion. However, given that the idea of repetition is present in Hebrews 6, it is likely that the potential of *ἀνά-* to suggest ‘again’ is being exploited. This is not to say that *ἀνασταυρόω* means ‘recrucify’, but that since the notion of repeating is contextually present the verb contributes to the overall impression of a motif of recrucifixion. In a similar way the prefix ‘re-’ in some English verbs (e.g. ‘reveal’) does not indicate repetition, but could take on this connotation in the right context. There is additionally an obvious reason why the sense ‘again’ for *ἀνά-* would be latent or non-existent in the usual usage of *ἀνασταυρόω*. Crucifixion was a cruel and protracted form of execution, but provided there was no interference it was also highly effective as a means of putting a person to death, so we

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<sup>60</sup> The notion that these participles stand in a temporal relationship to the main action (‘impossible to restore *while* they crucify’) results in a truism, and is therefore rightly rejected. See e.g. Hughes 1973: 144–45. Chrysostom’s contention in *Hom. Heb.* 9.6 that *ἀνασταυροῦντας* is a participle of means (‘impossible to restore *by recrucifying*’, i.e., by rebaptizing) is ingenious but implausible: this trivializes the warning, and while Heb 6 describes Christian initiation (possibly including baptism), it is a stretch to identify the passage as ‘about’ baptism.

<sup>61</sup> Philo never uses the verb, only *σταυρός* (*Flacc.* 72, 84). In Josephus *ἀνασταυρόω* occurs 26x, a more literary alternative to *σταυρόω* (4x, all in *Ant.*); both verbs can denote Roman crucifixion, and hanging/impaling (e.g. in OT renarrations). Plutarch uses *ἀνασταυρόω* 8x, never *σταυρόω*. Samuelsson 2011 argues that such terminology attests hanging/impaling and not crucifixion; his criteria for admitting a reference to crucifixion are however far too narrow, see Cook 2014.

would not expect to find a reference to someone being crucified *again* in contemporary literature.<sup>62</sup>

The context of Hebrews 6 clearly evokes recrucifixion: the one described as being crucified is the Son of God, Jesus, who has already been crucified. Combined with the emphasis on the non-repeatable nature of Jesus' sacrificial act (7.27; 9.12, 28; 10.10; cf. 9.26–27; 10.2), and the presence of *πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν* just before, this makes the connotation 'recrucify' highly likely.<sup>63</sup> In support of this, the patristic and early versional evidence unanimously supports this sense,<sup>64</sup> a striking fact when one considers that these authors would have been even more aware than modern commentators of the ubiquitous use of ἀνασταυρόω to mean simply 'crucify' in the world around them. Moreover, commentators opting for the meaning 'crucify' sometimes unwittingly give the lie to their interpretation when they gloss the sense as 'renewing the soldiers' execution' or 'crucifying him *anew*', thus effectively conceding that the sense is in fact recrucifixion.<sup>65</sup>

Such 'recrucifying' is of course figurative (as indeed 'crucifying' is taken to be by commentators who support this sense),<sup>66</sup> as indicated by *ἑαυτοῖς* which is best understood as a dative of disadvantage: they recrucify *to their own loss*, not in fact

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<sup>62</sup> Despite these contextual considerations within and outside Hebrews, many commentators think the standard usage settles the term's connotations in Hebrews: e.g. Kuhn, 'ἀνασταυρόω', *EDNT* 1.92; Attridge 1989: 171; Backhaus 2009a: 235; Grässer 1990: 1.357; Spicq 1952: 2.153; Koester 2001: 315; Bruce 1990: 138 n. 7; Bénétreau 1988: 1.247 n. 1.

<sup>63</sup> So Ellingworth 1993: 324. Also BDAG, 'ἀνασταυρόω', 72; Friedrich, 'ἀνασταυρόω', *TDNT* 7.583–84; Cockerill 2012: 274; Lane 1991; Löhr 1994b: 208–9; O'Brien 2010: 226.

<sup>64</sup> Kuhn, 'ἀνασταυρόω', *EDNT* 1.92 concedes this, citing the earliest evidence as Tertullian *Pud.* 22; Origen *Comm. Jo.* 20.12.89 (see §5.4.4 below).

<sup>65</sup> Thus: 'renouveler leur mise à mort'; 'ils le crucifient à nouveau', Spicq 1952: 2.153; Bénétreau 1988: 1.245, respectively.

<sup>66</sup> Weeks is a rare exception, taking this as a reference to 'the original crucifixion of the Lord', 1976: 79.

causing actual harm to the Son of God.<sup>67</sup> In spite of the division of opinion among modern commentators, the sense ‘recrucify’ ought to be strongly preferred on contextual grounds alone. I further propose to show that an additional line of argumentation for the early presence of the recrucifixion motif in Christian interpretation and its possible dependence on Hebrews can be made from the *Martyrdom of Peter* and Origen.

#### 5.4.4 Early Evidence for the Recrucifixion Motif in the *Acts of Peter*

The *Martyrdom of Peter* (henceforth *MPt*) has come down to us in three liturgical codices dating from the ninth–eleventh centuries, in all of which it is followed immediately by the *Martyrdom of Paul* (*MPl*).<sup>68</sup> It demonstrates considerable overlap with the final twelve chapters of a longer Latin text known only in a single seventh-century manuscript in Vercelli, a witness to a fourth-century translation from a Greek *Vorlage* of a fuller *Acts of Peter* (*APt*). This overlap makes it unquestionable that both texts can be traced back to some kind of common source.<sup>69</sup> Although Michael Baldwin draws attention to the paucity of external evidence for a single written text by the name ‘Acts of Peter’ (Ἡράξεις Πέτρου) before Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3.2; early fourth

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<sup>67</sup> Backhaus 2009a: 235 opts for this interpretation over the alternative, that the apostate destroy the relationship between themselves and Jesus. Either reading clarifies the non-literal nature of the (re)crucifixion.

<sup>68</sup> See the extensive introductory material and new critical edition with parallel German translation in Zwierlein 2009; second edition 2010. This is the first edition to incorporate the evidence of codex Ochridensis (bibl. mun. 44). Cf. also the introduction to and translation of *APt* in Schneemelcher 1991: 2.271–85, 285–321; Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 1041–47, 1049–1114.

<sup>69</sup> The consensus that the Latin consists of a faithful rendering of a Greek text to which the later Greek manuscripts offer a more direct witness (cf. Elliott 1993: 390–91; and esp. Schneemelcher 1991: 2.271–85) has recently been challenged by Baldwin 2005. He makes a strong case for considering the *Actus Vercellenses* as a text (or ‘utterance’) in its own right. Baldwin does not dispute the considerable overlap, though he does suggest that both the Vercelli text and *MPt* may have significantly transformed their source texts (p. 300).

century), most scholars still hold a late second-century date for *MPt*.<sup>70</sup> Our interest is in the well-known *Quo vadis* scene, which portrays Peter's crucifixion as a repetition of Christ's; questions of date will be discussed as we examine the text itself:

As he was going out of the gate, he saw the Lord coming into Rome. And when he saw him, Peter said: 'Lord, what are you doing here?'<sup>71</sup> And the Lord said to him: 'I am going into Rome to be crucified [σταυρωθῆναι].'<sup>72</sup> And Peter said to him: 'Lord, are you being crucified again [πάλιν σταυροῦσαι]?' And the Lord said to him: 'Yes, Peter, I am being crucified again [ναί, Πέτρε, πάλιν σταυροῦμαι].' And Peter came to himself, and when he had seen the Lord ascend into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying the Lord, for he had said he was to be crucified again [ὅτι ἐαυτὸν εἶπεν πάλιν σταυροῦσθαι]<sup>73</sup> – which was about to happen to Peter. (*MPt* 6.4–5)<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately the leaf containing this episode is missing from codex Vercellensis, either accidentally or because it was torn out, potentially testimony to the popularity of this scene.<sup>75</sup> There is nevertheless substantial evidence for the early existence of this tradition; indeed, this scene is itself important for the dating of *MPt*. The close association of *MPt* with *MPI* is suggested by the fact that both texts occur together and in that order in all three extant codices; dependence of either one on the other is hard to

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<sup>70</sup> Baldwin 2005: esp. 131–33. Bockmuehl 2010: 199–200 reckons it remains plausible that the story of Peter's martyrdom was known in Rome no later than the mid-second century. See also Zwierlein 2009: 36–37; Schneemelcher 1991: 2.283; Gérard Poupon is more cautious, suggesting late second to early third century, Bovon and Geoltrain 1997: 1043.

<sup>71</sup> On this reading, as opposed to 'where are you going?' (*quo vadis*), from which the episode derives its customary name, see Zwierlein 2009: 82–92, esp. 82–84.

<sup>72</sup> The readings in Ambrose 'Hegesippus' 3.2 (c. AD 370–72) and pseudo-Linus (late 4th century) have *iterum crucifigi*, Zwierlein 2009: 83, 86–87. This does not fit the narrative flow of the episode, blunting the force of Peter's astonished response. It does however demonstrate the power of the recrucifixion motif, such that 'again' attaches to every occurrence of 'crucify' in at least some mss or versions.

<sup>73</sup> This reading is found in codex Ochridensis; Zwierlein 2009: 408; codex Patmiacus has αὐτὸς εἶπεν σταυροῦμαι, and codex Athous αὐτὸς εἶπεν σταυροῦσθαι, both lacking πάλιν (see previous footnote). Cf. the translation in Elliott 1993: 424. The additional phrase ὡς καὶ πολλάκις, found in Ochridensis and the fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Slavonic version, undermines the archetypal nature of Peter's martyrdom and is thus rightly seen as a later addition by Zwierlein (p. 409 n. 12); it does however testify to the value the recrucifixion motif accords to martyrdom.

<sup>74</sup> My translation from text in Zwierlein 2009: 408–11.

<sup>75</sup> Baldwin 2005: 164 comments on this omission; see also his codicological conclusions in the Appendix, pp. 315–21, esp. p. 320.

establish and there is no consensus.<sup>76</sup> A second-century date for the *Acts of Paul* (*APL*) is beyond question, given Tertullian's reference to it in *On Baptism* 17 (c. AD 200).

What is of note is that a *Quo vadis* scene similar to that found in *MPt* is attested in *APL* in two early witnesses. One is the Hamburg Papyrus (c. AD 300), where the Lord meets Paul outside Rome and says to him Πα[ῦλ]ε, ἄνωθεν μέλλω σταυρ[οῦσθαι], and then despite his protestations commands him: εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην.<sup>77</sup> This scene is out of place in the Pauline text; the location outside Rome and Paul's return into the city demonstrate clear dependence on the scene in *MPt* 6.<sup>78</sup>

The other witness is Origen's *Commentary on John* 20.12.87–95 (c. AD 241–42).<sup>79</sup> Origen is commenting on John 8.40, 'you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.' This last phrase suggests that it was possible for Abraham to kill Christ, something which Origen explains in §89 by citing Heb 6.4–6. If after Christ's coming a believer can, by sinning, figuratively crucify him *again*, then it was also possible for someone before Christ's coming to crucify him beforehand.<sup>80</sup> This contrast is expressed using προσταυρώ –

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<sup>76</sup> '[A]mong the published papers one notes that partisans favouring the priority of the *Acts of Peter* over the *Acts of Paul* tend to be scholars who have worked on the *Acts of Peter*', and vice versa. Baldwin 2005: 6–7 n. 17. Rordorf 1998 concludes that comparison of the two documents cannot yield a definite conclusion.

<sup>77</sup> Hamburg Papyrus 7.30–33; text reproduced in Zwierlein 2009: 84. Bovon and Geoltrain consider the recrucifixion motif to be a dominical saying that predates *APt*, and think the *APL* version represents its more primitive form, 1997: 1108 n. D. See however my following footnote.

<sup>78</sup> So Zwierlein 2009: 37; Schneemelcher 1991: 275. Rordorf argues that this motif alone does not demonstrate dependence on *APt*, but rather has its origins in early experience of martyrdom (Rordorf 1998; following MacDonald 1992).

<sup>79</sup> This is the date suggested for books 19–32 by Heine 1993: 18.

<sup>80</sup> The paraphrase Origen gives is very close to the text of NA<sup>27</sup> with a few mostly stylistic changes, notably using acc. sg. rather than acc. pl. article and participles. Significantly, however, he omits ἀδυνατόν and instead of ἑαυτοῖς he has ἑαυτόν immediately following ἀνακαινίζειν, yielding the sense 'the one who was once enlightened, etc., and again falls away *renews himself to repentance*, whether he previously crucified the Son of God or crucified him again [ἦτοι προσταυροῦντα ἢ ἀνασταυροῦντα τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ]'. Thus in the very act of reading Hebrews Origen does not see it as impossible for a sinner be restored.

which in juxtaposition with ἀνασταυρόω indicates clearly that the latter verb is taken to mean ‘recrucify’ – and is expanded in §90. The concept of recrucifixion is supported by a dominical saying in §91, couched in an opening caveat: ‘if one cares to accept what is written in the *Acts of Paul* [ἐν ταῖς Πιούλου Πράξεσιν] as spoken by the Saviour’. The saying itself consists of just three words, ἄνωθεν μέλλω σταυροῦσθαι. Origen introduces this quotation as support for the possibility of figuratively crucifying Christ again; he makes no mention of the context of *API*, in which such recrucifixion in the death of Paul is in fact a positive act and not associated with sin.

This occurrence of the recrucifixion motif does not prove the priority of *MPt* over *API/MPI* (*contra* Zwierlein) as this tradition could have been incorporated into the account of Paul’s martyrdom at a later stage; nevertheless, the fact that it occurs with identical wording in two witnesses, with such wording not found in any extant text of *MPt* (ἄνωθεν μέλλω in place of πάλιν), suggests the incorporation was early and relatively stable within a certain stream of transmission of *API*. Origen’s use pushes it back to at least the early third century, suggesting that *MPt* is earlier still, thus confirming the general consensus of a late second-century date. Moreover, the tradition concerning Peter’s crucifixion and the conception of this as a recrucifixion of Christ is likely to be earlier still.<sup>81</sup> The main point Origen is making is that the saints before and after the coming of Christ are to be considered alike; but as an aside he adduces evidence from *API* to clarify or reinforce his understanding of Hebrews. While it is possible that Origen connects these arbitrarily on the basis of the recrucifixion motif

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<sup>81</sup> Note that some scholars date *API* to the mid- or even early-second century, e.g. Bremmer 1998: 17 dates it between AD 150–203. And on the basis of similarities (esp. ecclesiological) to the *Didache* and Ignatius, a date of AD 100–17 is maintained by P. W. Dunn 2006: 8–11, 199.

alone, it is equally possible that he is aware of an association between Hebrews and the interpretative tradition represented in the version of *APt* known to him.

Patrick Gray suggests that it is plausible that the author of *MPt* was familiar with Hebrews, noting that both texts have in common a context of persecution and the issues of apostasy and defection (Peter feels guilty about abandoning his flock in Rome, not least because of the similarities with his denial of Christ – although the guilt of the second betrayal is mitigated somewhat in *MPt* by the insistence of his friends in Rome that he must flee the city).<sup>82</sup> The ‘peculiar motif of recrucifixion’ is a theological point of contact between *MPt* and Hebrews, yet it appears to function in diametrically opposite ways in the two texts. In Hebrews the (not actual but figurative) recrucifixion of Christ is the terrible and shameful effect of apostasy, a deed which is to be avoided at all costs; in *MPt*, by contrast, recrucifixion is an act (again, not of Christ himself but of him in the crucifixion of his disciples) which is eminently possible and even highly desirable, one which offers Peter hope of restoration. Gray juxtaposes the two documents, concluding that ‘one sees Heb 6:4–6 informing Christian parlance – if not doctrinal debate – concerning penitential practice’.<sup>83</sup>

There might however be a more direct connection between the two texts, not just a purely incidental parallel motif. Suppose that ἀνασταυροῦντας in Heb 6.6 were taken to mean ‘recrucifying’. Understood most naturally as a participle of cause, this yields a sense as follows: ‘it is impossible to restore [such people] to repentance *because they (would) crucify again* the Son of God’. Rhetorically, the implied but unspoken subtext is that to recrucify Christ is not possible. Yet the statement could also be read as

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<sup>82</sup> Gray 2008: 334–36. Note Peter’s response to the suggestion: ‘shall we act like deserters?’ *APt* 35.6. Cf. Bockmuehl 2012: 160–61.

<sup>83</sup> Gray 2008: 338.

suggesting that *if it were possible* to recrucify Christ, then repentance would be attainable.<sup>84</sup> Arguably this idea is what the *Quo vadis* scene testifies to: if Peter's martyrdom is a recrucifixion of Christ (an identification aided by the tradition that Peter was himself crucified), then he is able to be restored to repentance following his dual betrayal of Christ (on the night of Christ's crucifixion and again in abandoning the church in Rome, Christ's body). Given that the very unusual and distinctive *idea* of recrucifixion finds expression in a number of texts which are potentially linked, the textual variety of expression of this notion (ἀνωθεν, πάλιν, ἀνά-) is less significant: these are all common ways of indicating repetition.

On the second-century dating, *APt/MPt* constitutes the earliest unambiguous reference to recrucifixion; given this, Gray suggests that the *Quo vadis* scene affects interpretation of ἀνασταυροῦντας in Heb 6.6:

Insofar as a number of authors writing after its appearance begin to construe the ambiguous participle in Hebrews as denoting a repeated act, there are grounds for believing that this exegetical trend beginning early in the third century derives in part from the popularity of the apocryphal story in which Peter encounters Jesus on the outskirts of Rome.<sup>85</sup>

To speak of this exegetical trend as '*beginning* early in the third century' is somewhat misleading, given that we do not have any extant interpretation of ἀνασταυροῦντας in Heb 6.6 before this point. That our *evidence* for such an interpretation begins in the early third century, and is found in diverse locations, suggests that the interpretation itself is earlier. It seems unlikely that *MPt* would have influenced the reading of Heb 6.6: it understands Christ's recrucifixion in Peter to be not only possible but desirable,

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<sup>84</sup> This link would be all the stronger if one were to follow Sabourin 1976. He translates 'it is impossible to crucify the Son of God afresh for one's repentance'. In this case, *APt* could be interpreting Heb 6.6 to mean that Jesus can be recrucified in the martyr. However, this reading is grammatically unsustainable: ἀδυνατόν requires the infinitive ('to renew'), not a participle ('recrucifying').

<sup>85</sup> Gray 2008: 335.

and it is implausible that this motif would be read into a passage which would as a result imply that recrucifixion is not possible (or at least that it is a despicable act).<sup>86</sup> Instead, I suggest that a prior understanding of Heb 6.6 as indicating recrucifixion may have influenced the development of this motif as we find it in this account of Peter's martyrdom, along the lines suggested above.<sup>87</sup> The connections between the two texts are strengthened by Hebrews' likely Roman destination. Although the dating of both Hebrews and *MPt* is uncertain, the gap between the two may well be less than 100 years, and the interpretative tradition underlying the latter is likely to be earlier still. The *Quo vadis* scene can therefore be taken as evidence that Heb 6.6 was understood to refer to recrucifixion from very early on.

#### 5.4.5 The Increased Gravity of New Covenant Apostasy

With the presence of the recrucifixion motif in Hebrews 6 further supported by the evidence of *MPt* and Origen, it remains to be seen what the significance of this is for our understanding of the unrepeatability of repentance. I will argue that the grounds for the unrepeatability of repentance are theological, indeed strictly christological; that is, there is a close relationship between repentance and the atonement wrought in Christ, and this alone can account for the categorical nature of Hebrews' warning passages.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Contra* Gray 2008: 335.

<sup>87</sup> Of course, a more certain significance of the episode is its witness to the early identification of martyrs with Christ, such that each suffers in the other's death. We might therefore understand this not so much as a *repetition* of Christ's atoning work, but rather as a participation – and possibly also an application of it. Something along these lines seems to be intended by Paul when he speaks of 'filling up what is lacking' (*ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα*) in Christ's afflictions through his own suffering (Col 1.24).

<sup>88</sup> So Attridge: 'Christ's sacrificial death [...] is the bedrock on which the "foundation" (6:1) of repentance is built. Those who reject this necessary presupposition of repentance simply, and virtually by definition, cannot repent'. Attridge 1989: 169. Cf. Ellingworth, 'The "impossibility" of a second

As noted above, the present participles in 6.6 expand on the *nature* of the sin, and by indicating its magnitude they account for the impossibility of renewal to repentance. Evident in all five warning passages (as, indeed, throughout the letter; see §4.2.1) is a *qal wahomer* argument with regard to old and new covenants which centres on Christ as the key differentiating factor. The salvation on offer in these last days is greater, and the nature and consequences of apostasy from this salvation are correspondingly worse. The ‘greater attention’ required of the audience in 2.1 is grounded in the ‘great salvation’ declared through the Lord. The urgency of the appeal to ‘make every effort to enter that rest’ (4.11) is heightened by the fact that Hebrews’ audience is Christ’s house (3.6) and sharers in Christ (3.14), and potentially also by an implicit Joshua typology in 4.8–10.<sup>89</sup> The *qal wahomer* argument is explicit in Hebrews 10 and 12, where a correspondence is drawn between the sanctions of the Mosaic law and those of the new covenant (10.28–29; 12.24–25).

The greater offence in the new covenant is clearest in Heb 6.6 and 10.29: in the former passage, apostasy is equivalent to recrucifying the Son of God, and exposing him to shame; in the latter, it is to spurn him, profane the blood of the covenant, and outrage the Spirit of grace. Hebrews 10.29 effectively recapitulates the two expansions given in 6.6 in the opposite order, and adds a third. The actions indicated by παραδειγματίζω<sup>90</sup> and καταπατέω<sup>91</sup> are parallel, as indicated not only by their taking the same direct object (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) but also by their connotation of bringing shame

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repentance [...] is in the strict sense theological, related to God’s saving action in Christ.’ Ellingworth 1993: 323. So also Carlston 1959: 301; Grässer 1990: 1.310; Hentschel 2008: 274.

<sup>89</sup> On this see Ounsworth 2012; Whitfield 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Generally ‘expose, make an example of’, in Heb 6.6 ‘hold up to contempt’, BDAG, ‘παραδειγματίζω’, 761.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Treat with disdain’, BDAG, ‘καταπατέω’, 523.

to that object.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Jesus' crucifixion is closely associated with the blood of the (new) covenant throughout Hebrews and early Christian literature. Even if 'blood' in Hebrews does not refer to Jesus' death alone, but to the whole cultic act of atonement performed by means of that blood,<sup>93</sup> it nevertheless includes the crucifixion as part of that atonement. 'Considering defiled' (κοινὸν ἡγησάμενος, 10.29; 'profaning', NRSV) the blood of the covenant thus illuminates the meaning of 'recrucifying' (6.6), with the shame aspect of both phrases heightened by καταπατέω and παραδειγματίζω respectively.<sup>94</sup>

Hebrews exploits here the dual meaning of the crucifixion in early Christian discourse: it is understood as both a despicable and dishonourable human act, and a divine provision of salvation (cf. e.g. Acts 2.23–24, 36; 3.13–18; 1 Cor 2.6–8). The sin of apostasy is equivalent to crucifying again because it exposes Jesus *a second time* to the shame he endured in his earthly suffering and death. This much is relatively uncontroversial among commentators. But there is a further aspect: as the discussion of repetition in §1.4.5 made clear, one possible consequence of repeating an action is to destroy the efficacy of an earlier instance. By rejecting God's provision of atonement, the apostate not only repeats the shame of the original crucifixion but also declares its salvific efficacy to be void. That is to say, he nullifies the soteriological aspect of the crucifixion whilst doubling its other, dishonouring aspect.

It is this point, the relationship to the crucifixion, which clarifies the categorical impossibility of renewing such people to repentance. The greater severity of new covenant apostasy is further supported by adducing parallels from Philo. The

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<sup>92</sup> Esau also dishonours God in despising his birthright. On shame and honour in Hebrews see deSilva 1995.

<sup>93</sup> Moffitt 2011 *passim*.

<sup>94</sup> The association of crucifixion with shame is commonplace; cf. Heb 12.2.

similarities between Hebrews' and Philo's statements on falling away are notable (see *Leg.* 3.213; *Cher.* 2–10; *Fug.* 80, 84; *Det.* 141–49; *Spec.* 1.58; cf. *Opif.* 155, 169).<sup>95</sup> Yet, significantly, while Philo does envisage a final and irreversible 'casting out' in certain cases, he is reluctant to state this as categorically as Hebrews does. *On Rewards and Punishments* 6 mitigates its description of falling away by noting that the apostate, like the athlete who falls during a race, can 'scarcely' (μόλις) be raised up again (cf. also the possibility of restoration in *Fug.* 99; *Det.* 144, 149). This slight difference between Philo and Hebrews in the context of such extensive similarities would suggest that the offence of falling away is heightened, for Hebrews, by its christological connection.

The severity of new covenant apostasy is also insufficiently accounted for by pointing to the great offence caused to the divine benefactor. DeSilva rightly emphasizes this feature, yet he draws the further inference from contemporary Greco-Roman literature that it is still open to the patron to be gracious, even if the client has no right to expect this.<sup>96</sup> This contention, which has no basis in Hebrews, softens the absolute nature of the impossibility, and thus the tenor of the warning passages as a whole.<sup>97</sup> Rather, at one and the same time as it dishonours Jesus, the act of falling away is a nullification of the efficacy of the crucifixion; as this was a unique and unrepeatable act no further basis for atonement can be offered, and thus repentance – in the sense in which Hebrews employs the term – also becomes strictly unrepeatable following apostasy.

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<sup>95</sup> Williamson 1970: 257–58 refutes direct dependence of Hebrews on Philo, but concedes there are notable similarities on apostasy.

<sup>96</sup> DeSilva 1999b: 230–35.

<sup>97</sup> 'Violation of patron-client bonds by clients resulted in shame and dishonor, not in the eternal condemnation and fiery ending that Hebrews envisions.' Nongbri 2003: 269.

#### 5.4.6 Ἄπαξ: Atonement and Repentance as ‘Once-for-All’

The historical singularity of the atonement gives rise to a theological singularity (*Theologie der Einmaligkeit* in Löhr and Winter’s terms); in Hebrews’ thought repentance also takes on a theologically-stamped uniqueness. This characteristic flows naturally *from* atonement *to* repentance, the latter being based on the former; it is not founded on any prior disposition against repetition *per se*. Löhr is tentative about discerning in Hebrews a very close relationship between Christ’s sacrifice and the single possibility of repentance; he gives a number of reasons which it will be helpful to treat here.<sup>98</sup> He notes three possible nuances for the adverb ἄπαξ, a nonspecific temporal sense (‘once’ = ‘formerly’), a strict numerical sense (‘once’ = ‘one time’), and a qualitative sense (‘once for all’ = ‘completely’). For Löhr, the term in Heb 6.4 is used in its nonspecific temporal sense, or possibly its numerical sense.<sup>99</sup> In fact, however, the nonspecific temporal sense is not found in Hebrews (or indeed in the NT), as will be shown shortly. Further, this chapter and the following will show that part of the ingenuity of Hebrews’ theological reflection on the historically-contingent one-time event of Jesus’ crucifixion is the way it exploits the polyvalence of this term.<sup>100</sup>

While BDAG and *EDNT* recognize only two nuances for ἄπαξ (numerical and qualitative),<sup>101</sup> *TDNT* lists the ‘indefinite concept of time’ as a sub-category of the

<sup>98</sup> Löhr 1994b: 242–49.

<sup>99</sup> Löhr 1994b: 242. It is worth clarifying that where ἄπαξ describes an event which is not an actual numerical singularity, it is not to be classified as ‘indefinite temporal’ but is rather still used in a numerical sense of the event conceived as a whole (as for example with Yom Kippur, where the high priest entered the most holy place several times).

<sup>100</sup> The author ‘interpretiert die Singularität des geschichtlichen Ereignisses theologisch als soteriologisch Überlegenheit’, Löhr 1994b: 244 n. 565.

<sup>101</sup> BDAG, ‘ἄπαξ’, 97; ‘ἐφάπαξ’, 417; Balz, ‘ἄπαξ’, *EDNT* 1.115–16. ‘Quantitatively, “once” [...] means that something occurs a single time. [...] Qualitatively, “once” also points to completeness.’ Koester 2001: 313.

‘strictly numerical concept’.<sup>102</sup> The indefinite temporal sense of ἅπαξ overlaps in meaning with the term ποτέ, which is used frequently in the NT to mean ‘at one time’ or ‘formerly’ (cf., e.g., John 9.13; Rom 11.30; Gal 1.13, 23; Eph 2.2–3; all referring to a former state which is now no longer the case). Where the indefinite temporal sense of ἅπαξ does occur *TDNT* notes that this is usually indicated by ἐάν, ἐπεί, or ὅτε, and only three places where this sense might obtain in the NT are suggested. A handful of late minuscules have ἅπαξ ἐδέχετο in place of ἀπεξεδέχετο in 1 Pet 3.20;<sup>103</sup> the former phrase is almost certainly a misreading of the latter and is probably influenced by the presence of ἅπαξ in v. 18. Furthermore, both ποτέ and the temporal marker ὅτε occur in the immediately preceding context, factors which may have disposed a scribe to read ἀπεξ- as ἅπαξ, and which render the latter term effectively redundant. The other two places where *TDNT* allows that this sense may ‘perhaps’ occur are Heb 6.4 and 10.2, though it in fact (correctly) treats both under the second, qualitative sense. In neither 6.4 nor 10.2 is the meaning ‘formerly’; rather, as indicated above, ἅπαξ in combination with the aorist participles in 6.4–6 indicates the completeness of the experience of these people, something which makes their falling away all the more heinous.

If any temporal nuance is to be discerned in Hebrews 6, it arises from the aorist participle παραπεσόντας (‘and *then* have fallen away’, so NRSV) and not from ἅπαξ. The case is closely linked to Heb 10.2, where ἅπαξ κεκαθαρισμένους refers to the (hypothetical) cleansing of the conscience by animal sacrifice, which would have been both qualitatively complete and lasting, and provided by a quantitatively singular event. The point being made here is not just that this cleansing was not provided by the old

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<sup>102</sup> Stählin, ‘ἅπαξ, ἐφάπαξ’, *TDNT* 1.381–84. For the term’s etymology and its connotations in Hebrews see Winter 2002: 5–9.

<sup>103</sup> Minuscules 69, 1319, 1751, 1874, dating from the 10th–15th centuries; this reading is also found in the Textus Receptus.

covenant's cultic system, but also that this is exactly what *has been* provided by Christ's sacrifice, as is made clear using the cognate but more emphatic ἐφάπαξ in 10.10 (ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμὲν ... ἐφάπαξ; note the perfect participles of καθαρίζω and ἀγιάζω in vv. 2 and 10 respectively, indicating very similar ideas). This definitive cleansing or sanctification is precisely what Heb 6.4–5 evokes.<sup>104</sup>

The experience of salvation obtained through repentance which is described in Hebrews 6 – *including* its 'once-for-all' or definitive quality, *contra* Löhr – thus corresponds to and is dependent on the sacrifice of Christ. With this in mind, we turn to the further points Löhr makes against associating repentance too closely with the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. He first notes that Christ's offering is definitively valid, and points out that this is not so for μετάνοια. Yet the letter as a whole suggests that μετάνοια and the Christian life it initiates *are* definitively valid, provided that they are persevered in (e.g. 3.6, 14). The application of Christ's sacrifice necessitates a subjective reception of its effects by the believer, and this can be rejected because of human changeability, but this simply means that *for the apostate* neither repentance nor Christ's offering have any efficacy whatsoever, whereas for the believer both repentance and Christ's offering retain their eternal validity.

Next, Löhr rejects Norman Young's suggestion of a tradition-historical connection between atonement and repentance in the context of Yom Kippur.<sup>105</sup> Löhr notes that where Hebrews describes the one-off sacrifice it is silent about repentance, and that where repentance is characterized as one-off, Christ's offering and its salvific

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<sup>104</sup> While the descriptors in Heb 6 focus primarily on the subjective experience of 'salvation', they nevertheless presuppose objective divine actions: enlightening, heavenly gift, holy spirit, etc.

<sup>105</sup> Young 1982: 54–55.

relevance are not emphasized.<sup>106</sup> Yet as I have already noted, the cross is multivalent in Hebrews, as in early Christian thought generally: in 12.2 it bears soteriological, honour/shame, and exemplary connotations simultaneously, and in 6.6 ‘recrucifying’ indicates both the renewal of the cross’s shame and the annulment of its salvific significance. Further, while repentance is not explicitly in view in those cultic passages which describe Christ’s offering as once-for-all, all of these passages have in view the effects of that offering for God’s people, who benefit from it only through and in the context of a prior repentance.

Löhr’s third point, which he admits is an argument from silence, is that we would expect 10.26 (‘there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins’) to be worded differently if it had to do with the numerical singularity of Christ’s sacrifice. He notes that ἀπολείπω occurs in Heb 4.6, 9, describing a situation where what ‘remains’ is not a second thing after a first thing has been used up, forfeited, or invalidated, but rather one and the same thing, namely the rest or σαββατισμός. A couple of considerations are important here: first, the case in Hebrews 4 is not exactly parallel, because the statement in chapter 10 is negated. The point in chapter 4 is that the same rest is available to a different audience, whereas in chapter 10 a sacrifice (be it the same or different) is *not* available to the *same* audience; it could equally be said of the rebellious wilderness generation that ‘there no longer remains a rest’. This brings us, secondly, to the polyvalence already noted in Hebrews’ treatment of Christ’s death. This is both an historically-contingent singular occurrence and a for-all-time definitive event. Both nuances can be discerned in 10.26: the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is no longer open

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<sup>106</sup> ‘[W]o er die μετάνοια als ἄπαξ geschehene zeichnet (6,4ff.), wird die Opfertat Christi, auch ihre soteriologische Relevanz, nicht hervorgehoben.’ Löhr 1994b: 245.

to the one who deliberately persists in sin, and nor is any other sacrifice (whether a repetition of Christ's, or any other) available; in a similar way, neither the rest of Canaan, nor a second opportunity to enter that rest, nor any other rest, remained open to the wilderness generation.

There are three further points made by Löhr which can be treated more briefly. He notes that Hebrews does not contrast the one-off and the repeated in relation to repentance, whereas it does contrast Christ's one offering and the repeated Levitical sacrifices. It is not easy to envisage what such a contrast might look like in the case of repentance, but presumably it would be between a one-off new covenant repentance and multiple acts of repentance under the old covenant. Yet the problem with such a contrast is that it would impeach OT believers for their insincerity; this move is seen in the prophetic critique of sacrifice, but Hebrews – as argued in Chapters One and Two – does not utilize this critique against the old covenant cult. Rather, its target is in one sense larger, relativizing the (objective) efficacy of the cult as a whole, and in another sense smaller, not offering any comment on the internal attitude or sincerity of the worshippers.

Löhr next concedes that it does seem that Hebrews raises an argument against the repeatability of repentance: 'it would be a renewed crucifixion of the Son of God. But this is an independent, new thought.'<sup>107</sup> It is strange to qualify re-crucifixion as a 'new thought', given that the participle ἀνασταυροῦντας follows on immediately from the phrase πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν in 6.6. Löhr allows that Christ's crucifixion, eschatologically conceived, corresponds to the eschatological participation

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<sup>107</sup> 'Sie wäre ein erneutes Kreuzigen des Gottessohnes. Aber es handelt sich dabei um einen eigenen, neuen Gedanken.' Löhr 1994b: 248.

in salvation entailed by *μετάνοια*,<sup>108</sup> but insists that the direction of influence (he uses the term *Begründungsgefälle*) is non-reversible. This much is uncontroversial. I am arguing for precisely such an influence which spreads *to* the author's conception of repentance *from* his understanding of the Christ event. Finally, Löhr indicates that the factual starting points for discussion of that which is 'one-off' are twofold, the crucifixion and Christian initiation (baptism), and that the latter is not characterized as *ἄπαξ* in Hebrews. Leaving aside the question of whether baptism is part of the wider experience of Christian initiation described as *ἄπαξ* in 6.4, the historical origins of Hebrews' distinctive *Theologie der Einmaligkeit* are in one sense irrelevant. What matters is how the author develops the notion of singularity in its numerical sense into a much more theologically versatile concept of lasting validity. This has clearly occurred in the case of Jesus' crucifixion, reinterpreted as a sacrifice; the contention of this chapter is that this primary reflection on not just the *Einmaligkeit* but what we might term the 'Immergültigkeit' of the atonement – its eternal validity – has influenced the understanding and portrayal of the repentance which depends on that atonement.<sup>109</sup>

Repentance, for Hebrews, functions at the highest possible level as initial human acceptance of the 'great salvation' obtained by Christ's unique and unrepeatable sacrifice. Apostasy represents a total rejection of this salvation, and its nature is accordingly elucidated as crucifying Christ again: doubling the shame of the crucifixion and nullifying its salvific efficacy. It is on this basis, the tight link between atonement

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<sup>108</sup> 'In diesem Sinne entspricht dem eschatologischen Opfergang Christi ins Heiligtum auf der individuellen Ebene die eschatologische Kehre ins Heil.' Löhr 1994b: 248.

<sup>109</sup> Winter suggests the paraphrase 'einmal endgültig' for *(ἐφ)ἄπαξ* as used in Hebrews, and refers to its 'Endgültigkeit', Winter 2002: 8–9.

and repentance, that the latter is strictly non-repeatable: to go back on the one is to go back on the other.

## 5.5 The Relationship Between Repeated and Unrepeatable Acts

At this point we turn our attention to the other statements about repetition identified in 5.11–6.12, which were introduced in §5.2 above: training the faculties and responding well to frequent rain. Most of this chapter has been devoted to exploring a course of action that Hebrews desperately hopes its audience will not take: this final section considers the alternative. I begin with the two statements in 5.11–6.12 before moving on to consider the wider context of Hebrews' paraenetic material.

Hebrews 5.12b–14 employs a commonplace philosophical metaphor. Attridge points out that this imagery retains its primary contemporary reference to education, and applies secondarily to Christian learning and maturity.<sup>110</sup> The image is further complicated by the introduction of athletic terms to describe the mature adult who is able to digest solid food. Yet the two motifs are sufficiently interrelated to make good sense together: both are employed to describe education in contemporary literature, and Philo lists careful preparation and consumption of food as one element of the athlete's training (*Leg.* 1.98).<sup>111</sup> The physical development represented by an adult, and all the more by an athlete, requires both a good diet and regular exercise. Furthermore, neither

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<sup>110</sup> Attridge 1989: 161–62.

<sup>111</sup> Thompson 1982: 29. For the infant/milk–perfect/adult/solid food motif, see 1 Cor 3.1–2 (cf. 13.11–12); Eph 4.13–14; Philo *Abr.* 29; *Agr.* 9; on the athletic/perfection motif see 1 Tim 4.7–8; Philo *Det.* 41; *Agr.* 159–60.

of these things can be achieved instantaneously or done once; they are rather the result of a lengthy and ongoing process.<sup>112</sup>

In 6.7 the plurality pertains primarily to the rain which is sent upon the land. While the background to this agricultural metaphor has been sought in various places, most notably Isa 5.1–7 and *4 Ezra* 9.29–36,<sup>113</sup> the deployment of the image is sufficiently different from any of these to suggest that it represents a new variation on the common theme which these and other passages attest.<sup>114</sup> The rain which falls frequently is reminiscent of Matt 5.45, which illustrates God’s love to all through his causing the sun to shine and rain to fall on righteous and unrighteous alike. In the context of Hebrews 6, however, the two groups represented by the two kinds of land are not the righteous as opposed to the unrighteous generally, but persevering believers as opposed to apostates. The ‘rain’ which they have both received has been spelled out in 6.4–5; a common heavenly origin reinforces this link.<sup>115</sup> As with human growth in 5.12–14, so the growth of good crops – or thorns and thistles – represents a gradual response to the frequent rain; the dual emphases on the persistent nature of apostasy and its culmination in a single moment are thus found in Heb 5.11–6.12 as well. Just as gradual and ongoing rejection or abuse of God’s gifts leads to judgment, so gradual and ongoing acceptance of and response to them leads to blessing.

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<sup>112</sup> Koester 2001: 303.

<sup>113</sup> For Isa 5.1–7 see Verbrugge 1980: 63–65. For *4 Ezra* see Nongbri 2003: 272–73. Most commentators (including these two) also draw attention to the blessing/curse motif in Deut 11.26–28; 28–30; on Hebrews’ use of Deuteronomy see Allen 2008.

<sup>114</sup> So Vanhoye 1984: 531–32. In Isa 5.1–7 thorns represent the judgment, not the cause of judgment as in Hebrews; in *4 Ezra* 9.29–36 the ground receives seed which represents the law, not rain as in Hebrews. *4 Ezra* 9 is particularly pertinent because of a reference shortly before the agricultural metaphor to those who rejected God during their lifetime when they had a τόπος μετανοίας (9.10–12; cf. Heb 12.17).

<sup>115</sup> Koester 2001: 323.

Turning to the other warning passages once more, this emphasis on the necessity of regular action for perseverance can also be found. In 3.12–13, immediately following the citation of Psalm 95, the author urges his audience to ‘exhort one another daily, as long as it is called “Today”’, rather than be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. Here again, two alternative and mutually exclusive progressions are in view which unfold over a period of time: growing hardness of heart (as with the wilderness generation), or ongoing exhortation to hearing and faith. A similar notion is found in 10.25, part of the second ‘overlapping constituent’ of 10.19–25 (cf. 4.14–16),<sup>116</sup> which concludes the expository section on cult and simultaneously opens the following paraenetic section, leading straight on to the fourth warning passage (10.26–32).<sup>117</sup> Here the author encourages his audience to consider how to stir one another up to love and good deeds, ‘not abandoning your meeting together [ἐπισυναγωγή] but exhorting [παρακαλέω, cf. 3.13]’.<sup>118</sup> The necessity of congregating for mutual encouragement is implicit in 3.13 but explicit here, perhaps suggesting a more formal context. Alongside these direct indications of regular meeting in the Christian community, various associated ideas are found which reinforce its importance. These include the reference to diligence (σπουδή) in 6.11, the emphasis on endurance in 10.32–39 (ὑπομονή, reinforced by contrast with the antonym ὑποστολή), and the passage on discipline in 12.5–13, which develops the educational and athletic imagery found in 5.12–14.

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<sup>116</sup> Guthrie 1994: 79–82, 102–4; cf. the diagram on 144.

<sup>117</sup> In this regard it is important to treat the warning passages not in isolation but as part of the wider hortatory sections of Hebrews. So Guthrie 1994: 144 defines the warning passages very narrowly (2.1–4; 4.12–13; 6.4–8; 10.26–32; 12.25–29) yet understands them as set in the context of Hebrews’ paraenetic material. Thus Heb 10.19–25 is of a piece with, and flows naturally into, the explicit warning/threat of 10.26–32.

<sup>118</sup> On the connotations of ἐπισυναγωγή (local, eschatological, and social) see Koester 2001: 446.

One final and very significant point can be noted with regard to the regular activity which Hebrews enjoins of its audience: it primarily involves the reception of God's word. In Heb 2.1 the audience is to pay greater attention to 'the things they have heard' (τὰ ἀκουσθέντα). This emphasis on hearing pervades Hebrews 3–4, drawn especially from the use of ἀκούω in Ps 95.7//Heb 3.7. In Heb 5.12 the hearers are castigated because they need to be retaught the 'basic elements' (τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς) of the oracles of God. Further advance into understanding those oracles is required (cf. 5.10–11 with 6.20–7.1: Melchizedek's priesthood is the subject concerning which Hebrews has an extensive and difficult message [λόγος], which is taken up in Hebrews 7). The phrase τὰ λογία τοῦ θεοῦ is 'a common designation for the Old Testament scriptures'.<sup>119</sup> Also in the third warning passage, the heavenly gifts represented by the rain in Heb 6.7 include the 'good word of God' (καλὸν ῥῆμα θεοῦ; 6.5). Exhortation (3.13; 10.25) is inherently a verbal act, and – especially if ἐπισυναγωγή suggests a more formal context – incorporates encouragement by the community's leaders who 'spoke the word of God to you' (ἐλάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ; 13.7). Finally, the possibility of joining the heavenly congregation in Hebrews 12 can be sustained only by not refusing the one who is speaking (12.25).

Significantly, this correlation between regular meeting and the word brings us full circle, as it were, to where we began Chapter Four. The means to perseverance, and thus to avoid apostasy and its terrible consequences, is the plural word evoked at the opening of Hebrews. This reinforces the conclusion that Heb 1.1 is no rhetorical, pejorative foil to the Son, nor an opening incidental to the main themes of the letter. Rather, the overarching goal of the author – his audience's 'perseverance in gratitude' –

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<sup>119</sup> Attridge 1989: 159. Cf. Koester 2001: 309.

is achieved by means of a word of exhortation (13.22) which opens and continues by using God's words for the sake of exhortation, and which enjoins its audience to do the same amongst themselves. Using 5.11–6.12 as a gateway into the broader paraenetic material in Hebrews has demonstrated that both repetition and unrepeatability co-exist side-by-side. The juxtaposition is not, however, awkward or accidental. Instead, the singularity of the atonement interpreted theologically as uniqueness and ultimate efficacy both *excludes* the possibility of a return to repentance after it has been rejected, and necessitates and thus *includes* ongoing exhortation using the scriptures as the only means to perseverance. Seen in another light, then, our discussion of Heb 5.11–6.12 has not so much brought us full circle but has proved to be the middle term between the objects of investigation of Chapters Four and Six. The plural word of God enables the believing community to apply and persevere in the salvation achieved by Christ.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Hebrews distinguishes between basic elements of the Christian confession and repentance: the latter is unrepeatable, while the former can be repeated. Such repetition of the basics, however, constitutes a warning sign that apostasy may be a danger. The letter bears a superficial similarity to Greco-Roman philosophy in that it sees the noble or virtuous life as one of constant progression rather than frequent repentance.

However, in common with other NT texts it takes repentance to be essential as the very first step, the premise on which Christian life is founded and without which it cannot even begin. Unlike other early Christian texts, however, Hebrews reserves the term *μετάνοια* for this initial turning and nothing else. Only two options are envisaged:

perseverance in keeping with one's initial confession, or apostasy and perdition. While such perseverance may involve what other early Christian authors were prepared to describe as repentance, Hebrews refuses to give the term this scope – although it does acknowledge human weakness and ongoing recourse to God for help (cf. 4.14–16).

The letter further identifies the Christian life, and the repentance which initiates it, very closely with the atonement, and in particular with the crucifixion. The author envisages total apostasy from this way of life as a real possibility – it is the culmination of ongoing disobedience in the pattern of the wilderness generation and Esau, both of whom rejected God's promised inheritance – although he is nonspecific about the point at which this might be said to have occurred, and confident of better things in his audience's case. Such apostasy is described as repeating the crucifixion, the implications of which are repeating its shame whilst voiding it of any salvific efficacy for the apostate. The audience is urged instead to share Christ's shame (12.2; 13.13) and persevere in the single and total effectiveness of that sacrifice (10.19–25). Because apostasy represents recrucifixion, no further repentance is possible. Importantly, this exclusion of repetition does not emerge from a prior disposition against repetition or plurality, but rather derives from the nature of the Christ event. Hebrews' understanding of repentance and conversion is thus fundamentally eschatological and christological and represents developed reflection on the difference made by Christ's death and heavenly offering; it is to a consideration of this that we turn in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER SIX

# ‘Not to Offer Himself Again and Again’

## Repetition and Ritual

### 6.1 Introduction

Repetition has strong associations with ritual and liturgy, and it is often brought to the fore as a focus for criticism when either of these is attacked. It is then perhaps unsurprising to the modern reader to note that the most extensive and striking deployment of Hebrews’ distinctive understanding of repetition is found in the letter’s cultic section, predominantly in Hebrews 7 and 9–10. Yet in Chapter One it was noted that although repetition and ritual are often associated, neither necessarily entails the other. This observation was reinforced with the practice-based approach to ritual advocated by Catherine Bell: repetition is one frequently-employed strategy for differentiating ritual from other practice, but on its own it is neither necessary nor sufficient to constitute ritual. This point is highly relevant to this chapter, as it enables us to set aside modern preconceptions about the identification of repetition and ritual which have influenced the reading of Hebrews, and to inquire instead as to how the text itself portrays this association. In using repetition to highlight the inefficacy of the old covenant system, Hebrews does not reject ritual *per se* but rather argues that a superior ritual has now occurred.

A necessary first step is to consider the nature of the heavenly cult in Hebrews and its relationship to the earthly; this will enable observations to be made about the nature of cultic language in the letter. The following two sections treat the themes of priesthood and sacrifice respectively, in each case tracing the relationship between the unique priesthood or offering of Christ and the many priests or repeated sacrifices of the old covenant, as well as examining closely exactly what is said regarding repetition; the concern here is to observe the nature of the interrelations of that which is repeated and that which is unrepeatable. As with repentance in the previous chapter, it is the connection with the Christ event which proves determinative for how Hebrews conceives of repetition. Finally, we turn to the practice exhorted of Hebrews' addressees, showing that they are encouraged to regular and repeated cultic activity. This reinforces what has been seen extensively in the last two chapters, that Hebrews evinces no predisposition against repetition *per se*. Furthermore, the combination of disparagement of and exhortation to cultic repetition does not mean that Hebrews collapses in contradiction; rather, between the cultic service of the old and new covenant peoples (and not just between the old covenant and Christ) a subtle typological relationship can be discerned.

## **6.2 The Cultus in Hebrews**

### **6.2.1 The Relationship between the Heavenly and the Earthly Cult**

The ascension or exaltation of Christ to heaven is clearly portrayed in Hebrews in terms of his high priestly entrance into the heart of a sanctuary, primarily though not

exclusively on the model of Yom Kippur: the one day each year on which a human being entered the temple's most holy place, in which the very presence of God dwelled.<sup>1</sup> Widespread though these references are, it is possible that such language is no more than a figurative way of giving significance to Christ's exaltation. There are however several indications that Hebrews describes the exaltation of Christ in this way because it holds that there actually is a heavenly sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

The most important of these indications is found in Heb 8.1–5, which is explicitly marked as the 'chief point' of what is being said (κεφάλαιον ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις, 8.1) – perhaps referring only to the immediately surrounding section, or to the entire cultic section,<sup>3</sup> but arguably the chief point of the document as a whole. In terms of content, 8.1–2 provide a concise summary of Hebrews' main themes: Jesus' high priesthood, his heavenly enthronement (which entails the completion of his cultic work, cf. 1.3; 10.12–13, and is linked to his status as Son in Heb 1–2), and his ongoing ministry (cf. 7.25; 12.2–3; 13.8). In structural terms these verses stand at the centre of the text, and at the mid-point between the *inclusio* formed by the paraenetic sections in 4.14–16 and 10.19–25; there are moreover strong lexical links between these two

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<sup>1</sup> The portrayal of heaven as the sanctuary which Christ the high priest has entered is explicit or implied in Heb 4.14–16; 6.19–20; 7.26; 8.1–2; 9.11–12, 24; 10.12, 19–21. On the reception of Yom Kippur see Stökl Ben Ezra 2003: esp. 180–97 on Hebrews.

<sup>2</sup> Klawans distinguishes two currents in Second Temple Judaism: *temple as cosmos* (e.g. Jos. War 5.212–19; Ant. 3.123, 181–87) and *heaven as temple*. He notes that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive options (for example, some features most naturally associated with a heavenly temple, including a developed angelology and a strong sense of divine emanation, are found in Philo who predominantly views the temple as a representation of the cosmos). However, they tend not to be found together, Klawans 2006: 111–44. Hebrews does not see the temple as a representation of the cosmos, pace Schenck 2007: 151–54. Within the 'heavenly sanctuary' model it is important to note that there are further distinctions, both spatial (heaven as a sanctuary vs heaven contains a sanctuary) and temporal (pre-existent or eschatological sanctuary), or indeed both, as in Rev 21–22 where an eschatological temple descends to earth. These distinctions do not bear directly on the discussion here, but see the interaction with Hurst below.

<sup>3</sup> Guthrie designates 8.1–2 an 'intermediary transition' and 'the center point for the great central exposition on the high priestly ministry of Christ', Guthrie 1994: 146.

sections and 8.1–2 with its surrounding verses.<sup>4</sup> These heavily emphasized verses describe Jesus as a high priest seated by God’s throne (cf. 4.16) *in the heavens*, and then explicate his location further as the *sanctuary* (τὰ ἅγια) and the *true tabernacle* (ἡ σκηνή ἡ ἀληθινή). Hebrews 8.4 clarifies the necessary link between Jesus’ priesthood and his heavenly location on the basis of the existence of a different priesthood on earth (to which Jesus manifestly does not belong, 7.13–14). Verse 5 then expands on the relationship between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries: the tabernacle is a sketch and shadow (ὑπόδειγμα, σκιά) of the heavenly one, and it was constructed according to the pattern (τύπος) shown to Moses on Mt Sinai.

These terms are the subject of much contention, and have been used in support of both Platonic-idealist and apocalyptic-eschatological interpretations of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews. Ὑπόδειγμα can mean an ethical example,<sup>5</sup> or a sketch of something which appears at a later time. Pointing to the usage of σκιά at 10.1 to describe what the law possesses – the shadow of the good things to come, not the things themselves – Hurst has argued forcefully against the translation ‘copy’, which could suggest a Platonic, vertical model of the idea and its earthly shadow.<sup>6</sup> He favours instead a horizontal model whereby the tabernacle is the *foreshadow* and sketch or blueprint of an eschatological heavenly temple.<sup>7</sup> Hurst notes the rarity of ὑπόδειγμα in the Philonic corpus and classical Greek usage more generally, which tend to favour παράδειγμα, and is right to reject an exclusively Platonic model. However, while he

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<sup>4</sup> Clark identifies the ‘link cluster’ as extending from 7.28–8.3, and points out strong links with 4.14–16 and 10.19–25, Clark 2011: 216–17.

<sup>5</sup> BDAG, ‘ὑπόδειγμα’, 1037. Whether a good example, as in 2 Macc 6.28, 31; Sir 44.16; John 13.15; Jas 5.10; or a bad one, as in Heb 4.11; 2 Pet 2.6.

<sup>6</sup> Hurst 1990: 13–17.

<sup>7</sup> See his extensive discussion, Hurst 1990: 24–42; Beale 2004: 293–312 assumes without argument that Hebrews refers to an eschatological heavenly temple.

notes the oversimplification inherent in a vertical–horizontal dichotomy, he bases his case against a Platonist interpretation primarily on the rejection of a vertical setting for the term ὑπόδειγμα in 8.5 and 9.23.<sup>8</sup>

Two points bear on this discussion: first, one finds cosmic dualism and vertical earth–heaven relations just as readily in Jewish apocalyptic thought as in Platonism (see §1.3.3). Secondly, however much one might read 8.5 and 9.23 within Hebrews as a whole as expressing a horizontal or temporal distinction, their immediate context is primarily vertical and spatial, comparing heavenly and earthly phenomena. This suggests that while σκιά is rightly understood as a *foreshadow* in 10.1, it should be understood simply as a shadow in 8.5.<sup>9</sup> Similarly ὑπόδειγμα in both 8.5 and 9.23 indicates that the earthly tabernacle corresponds to the heavenly, without necessarily determining whether the former precedes or follows the latter.<sup>10</sup> In support of this underdetermined use of ὑπόδειγμα it can be noted that the term is near-synonymous with the usual term for ‘copy’, παράδειγμα, and that the latter word occurs twice in the LXX of Exod 25.9 to translate תבנית. Παράδειγμα is thus the functional equivalent of τύπος (which translates תבנית in Exod 25.40, cited in Heb 8.5), designating the *heavenly* pattern, and therefore it cannot be used in this context to characterize that which is

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<sup>8</sup> See also the assessment of Hurst by Barnard 2012: 13–14, and by Schenck 2007: 117–22 in relation to assessing Hebrews’ Platonism.

<sup>9</sup> I agree with Schenck that Hebrews is reminiscent of Platonic language but not thought, but like Hurst he overemphasizes the eschatological nature of the contrast in 8.1–5 and 9.23–24 on the slender and subsequent basis of 10.1, Schenck 2007: 117–22, 165–68. For discussion of Platonic terminology in 10.1, concluding that Hebrews ‘reflects a deliberate hybridization of Middle Platonism and Jewish eschatology’, see Mackie 2007: 106–15; also Ribbens 2013: 249–56.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ezek 42.15 (LXX) for use of ὑπόδειγμα to describe the heavenly temple; the term does not translate anything in the Hebrew and its function is difficult to elucidate, though it probably indicates that Ezekiel’s vision is a plan of what will come.

*earthly*.<sup>11</sup> All this demonstrates that Hurst's case for an eschatological rather than a pre-existent heavenly temple is not as strong as he makes out.

The blending of temporal and spatial elements in Hebrews suggests that the correspondence in question – although many commentators treat it as involving one relation between two objects – is better understood as involving two relations in a tripartite scheme. A celestial original gives rise to a derivation (earthly tabernacle) which itself becomes the model for a third thing (heavenly sanctuary now entered and revealed by Jesus). This suggestion is reinforced by the third key term found in Heb 8.5: a *τύπος* can be the mark made by striking something, and hence also more generally a copy, or indeed a statue or image; in all of these instances it is derivative from something else (cf. BDAG, 'τύπος', 1019–20, senses 1, 2, 3).<sup>12</sup> It can also be that which gives rise to a later object, hence a form, pattern, or model, and in Exod 25.40 and Heb 8.5 it is clearly used in this latter sense (cf. BDAG senses 4 and 6). Yet these two broad options are not unrelated; that which is formed by or on the pattern of one thing can itself go on to form the pattern for another, and can thus be a '*mediating mould*'.<sup>13</sup>

As is often the case, German can express these relations concisely: rather than a purely spatial *Urbild–Abbild* opposition<sup>14</sup> or a purely temporal *Vorbild–Nachbild* one, what we are dealing with here is a threefold scheme: *Urbild–Ab/Vorbild–Nachbild*.<sup>15</sup> Only such a tripartite model can do justice to the interrelation of temporal/horizontal and spatial/vertical aspects within Hebrews. It is notable that, while not exactly

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<sup>11</sup> Barnard 2012: 96–98.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the interpretation of *τύπος* in Rom 6.17 by Gagnon 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Ounsworth 2012: 37 (emphasis original). See his extensive discussion of typology based on NT occurrences of the *τύπος* word-group in ch. 2, esp. pp. 32–40, 51–54. Cf. D'Angelo 1979: 219.

<sup>14</sup> This is the terminology used by Gäbel 2006.

<sup>15</sup> '[T]he power of the *Vorbild* to shape its *Nachbild* stems from the existence of a heavenly *Urbild*'. Ounsworth 2012: 53.

identical, this scheme is closely similar to the one in Hebrews 3–4 (see §4.4.3): there, the eschatological rest for which the audience hopes is identified with the protological rest which God has enjoyed from the completion of creation; yet the equivalence of these and their significance for the audience cannot be established directly but rather requires the mediating pattern of Joshua’s rest in Canaan.

The occurrence of ἀντίτυπος in 9.24 corresponds to that of τύπος in 8.5 and further clarifies the fact that the earthly tabernacle is the counterpart of the true heavenly one. At one level it is important not to press the terms too hard, especially as ἀντίτυπος in normal usage simply means ‘corresponding (thing)’. So Ounsworth notes: ‘The exemplar and the mould are *mutually* ἀντίτυποι, and the mould and the moulded object are similarly mutually ἀντίτυποι, so that the first and the final term are in a perfect mimetic relationship.’<sup>16</sup> Yet the usage within Hebrews *is* internally consistent: what Moses saw on Mt Sinai was a τύπος, the tabernacle was its ἀντίτυπος, and it in turn corresponds to the heavenly sanctuary as now entered by Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

The question remains as to what the τύπος actually denotes: Moses may have seen a fully-functioning heavenly sanctuary, a pre-existent sanctuary awaiting inauguration at the eschaton, or just a blueprint of a yet-to-be-created sanctuary; all of these options would equally well fit the *Urbild–Ab/Vorbild–Nachbild* relation.<sup>18</sup> While Exod 25.40 itself probably does not reflect belief in a heavenly sanctuary, it was widely

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<sup>16</sup> Ounsworth 2012: 39 (emphasis original).

<sup>17</sup> Across NT texts τύπος terminology is not deployed in a uniform or technical manner. However, in 1 Pet 3.21 (where baptism is the ἀντίτυπος, corresponding to Noah’s salvation through the flood which is thus implicitly the τύπος) and subsequent Christian usage the type ‘maintains its chronological priority, but loses its ontological priority’ vis-à-vis the antitype, Calaway 2013: 106 n. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Hurst 1990: 37–38 lays out four possible options for when the heavenly tabernacle is built: 1) before creation; 2) at creation; 3) simultaneously with the earthly sanctuary; 4) at the end of the age. While he argues that this occurs at the eschaton and is seen beforehand by Moses, he concedes that one cannot be absolutely sure as to when Hebrews assumes this happens (p. 42). In (1)–(3) the heavenly sanctuary precedes the earthly one ontologically, and in (1)–(2) also temporally.

interpreted along those lines in the Second Temple period.<sup>19</sup> The addition of πάντα – probably from the cognate verse Exod 25.9 – in Heb 8.5 gives the τύπος maximal scope.<sup>20</sup> Also, while the heavenly sanctuary is *inaugurated* by Christ’s sacrifice (9.18, 23; 10.20) there is no indication that it is *created* at this time. It seems, then, that Hebrews envisages a pre-existent heavenly sanctuary, a not uncommon notion in early Jewish literature.<sup>21</sup> Further, where eschatological heavenly sanctuaries are pre-existent they tend not to be occupied, instead awaiting a descent to earth for their inauguration;<sup>22</sup> in Hebrews, by contrast, the heavenly sanctuary is currently occupied (certainly by Christ and probably already by angels, see below on Heb 1) and does not descend to earth – indeed, earth will be incorporated into heaven or possibly entirely destroyed (12.27).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For texts illustrating widespread reflection on Exod 25.40 in the early Jewish context see Wilcox 1988. The elliptical way in which Exod 25.40 is cited in Acts and Hebrews presupposes familiarity with both the passage and particular interpretative traditions associated with it. Regarding Hebrews he notes: ‘The Tent which served as a pattern or model for Moses is now, in the Christ-event, disclosed as the place where Jesus acts as true High Priest’ (p. 651). Exod 25.40 ‘may have been an impetus to speculation about a heavenly temple in later tradition (cf. Heb 8:5), but it does not in itself necessarily reflect a belief in a heavenly temple corresponding to an earthly one’. Newsom 1985: 60. On this term in Qumran literature see also Bockmuehl 1997: 15–17.

<sup>20</sup> On contemporary tendencies to limit or extend the scope of Moses’ vision in Philo and rabbinic literature, see D’Angelo 1979: 208–22.

<sup>21</sup> A heavenly temple mirroring the earthly one is attested in *Enuma Elish* 6.112 and other ANE literature, Beale 2004: 31–32, 51–52. In the OT see Exod 25.40; 1 Kgs 22.19–23; Ps 78.69; Isa 6; Jer 17.12; Ezek 1; Dan 7.9–27. A heavenly sanctuary is present, even if only implicitly, in *1 En.* 14–15; *T. Levi* 3.1–8; *3 Bar.* 11; 14; *Jubilees*; *ShirShabb* (which offer the earliest evidence for reinterpreting the חבניית in Exod 25.40 as a heavenly structure, Calaway 2013: 126–37). For a heavenly sanctuary without explicit cultic activity see Sir 24.1–11; *Liv. Pro.* 3.13–15; *2 Bar.* 4.2–7; Wis 9.8 (which uses μίμημα, ‘a vox Platonica’, to describe the earthly temple as a copy of the heavenly, Winston 1979: 203–5). Davila suggests that if ‘visions of God’ was understood to refer to an extant heavenly reality in Ezek 1.1, its recurrence in 40.2 might have been taken to imply that Ezek 40–48 also describes a present celestial sanctuary; this helps explain why *ShirShabb* draw so heavily on Ezek 40–48, Davila 2002: 6. On the heavenly temple in the Second Temple period see also Calaway 2013: 120–26; Klawans 2006: 129–42; Morray-Jones 2006: 145–70; Ribbens 2013: 68–109.

<sup>22</sup> It is often hard to determine in visionary texts whether an eschatological sanctuary is presently extant or a blueprint. Texts such as Ezek 40–48; *1 En.* 90; the so-called New Jerusalem texts of Qumran; Rev 21–22; *Sib. Or.* 5.414–33 attest expectation of a utopic future heavenly sanctuary which does not currently exist, Gäbel 2006: 107–9.

<sup>23</sup> Ribbens 2013: 119–32.

Further support for the notion of a heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews can be found in Hebrews 1: if the οἰκουμένη into which the Son is brought in 1.6 is understood as ‘the (inhabited) *heavenly* realm’ – in contrast to its usual meaning, but in line with the usage in 2.5 and in accord with 10.5 where Christ’s incarnation is described as his entrance into the κόσμος – then Heb 1.5–13 describes a celestial enthronement ceremony.<sup>24</sup> The Son’s heavenly session has already been evoked in 1.3 and, moreover, linked with the accomplishment of cultic purification. In this light, the angels are present not merely as spectators but as heavenly cultic servants, and in confirmation of this supposition they are described as λειτουργοί in 1.7 (citing Ps 104.4) and 14. From start to finish, then, Hebrews operates with an understanding of a real heavenly sanctuary which predates the earthly tabernacle.<sup>25</sup>

### 6.2.2 The Nature of Cultic Language in Hebrews

Why does all this matter? In a footnote, Moffitt points out ‘an important hermeneutical correlate’ of the earthly tabernacle’s construction according to the pattern of the heavenly:

[B]ecause the heavenly structure is *ontologically prior*, the earthly tabernacle and sacrifices are instructive for understanding what happens in heaven. [...] The earthly structures and practices therefore inform the writer’s Christology and are not mere ciphers to be filled with predetermined christological content.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> So, e.g., Barnard 2012: 239; Caneday 2008; Mackie 2007: 40–43; Moffitt 2011: 53–118; Schenck 2001; Vanhoye 1964. The other interpretative options are Christ’s incarnation and his *parousia*; see Schenck 2007: 87–89 and the literature cited there.

<sup>25</sup> Barnard 2012: 109. So also Moffitt 2011: 220–25; Gelardini 2012: 225–26; Hofius 1972: 18–19, 55–58.

<sup>26</sup> Moffitt 2011: 225 n. 18 (emphasis added).

To this can be added that the tabernacle system also, via the writer's Christology, informs his ecclesiology. This insight in relation to repetition will be shown in §6.5 below, but for now this observation serves to introduce a consideration of the nature of cultic language as it is employed in Hebrews.

It is first important to be clear that 'cult' is not being used in a generic sense to refer to various aspects of worship such as prayer and meetings, liturgy and song. In this wider sense any religious or philosophical grouping has some kind of cult. What is meant here by 'cult(ic)' is specifically that which has to do with ritual purity and in particular with a sanctuary and its dedicated ministers, which serve the purpose of enabling access to the divine.<sup>27</sup>

The argument of Hebrews presupposes the legitimacy of the cultic mode of thought which underlies the old covenant's sacrificial system. The letter does not argue along cultic lines arbitrarily (and thereby unwittingly entangle itself in contradiction); rather it does so because it holds to the enduring reality of an actual cult in the heavenly and eternal sphere. In this light it should be stressed that cultic language used of Christ, and derivatively of Christians, is not properly understood from Hebrews' point of view as figurative – a kind of cultic varnish on the fundamentally non-cultic furniture of the Christian confession.<sup>28</sup> Historically, old covenant sacrifices are literal and prior, and Jesus' death is non-sacrificial and only described in these terms subsequently and by extension. But from Hebrews' theological perspective Jesus' priesthood, the heavenly sanctuary, and the cleansing effected by his sacrifice are all *more real* than their earthly

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gäbel 2006: 20–21.

<sup>28</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza is therefore wrong, at least with regard to Hebrews, when she states that: 'Christian worship [...] is no longer dependent upon cultic institutions and persons, but is actualized in everyday life.' Schüssler Fiorenza 1976: 177. For Hebrews, it is only *because* Christian worship is dependent upon Christ as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary that it can be actualized in everyday life.

counterparts.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, if one is to use the term ‘metaphor’ at all, it is perhaps better to follow Vanhoye in applying this to the old covenant cult – after all, it ‘transfers’ or translates heavenly reality into an earthly form to aid understanding, thus preparing the arrival of Christ as the full disclosure of that heavenly reality.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, as suggested by Barnard, it is probably best to avoid such charged terms altogether:

[A]lthough all language is ultimately metaphorical, and this is especially so when discussing another dimension of existence, it is important to resist the urge to label the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews as either ‘literal’ or ‘metaphorical’ since the nature of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews could reasonably be described as both [...]. Perhaps we would do well to abandon such heavy-laden, baggage-bearing labels when discussing something as unfathomable as the mystical heavenly temple. Both labels capture something of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, but they also lack the comprehensive explanatory power that is often given to them.<sup>31</sup>

In this connection language of ‘spiritualization’ ought also to be avoided.<sup>32</sup> Stephen Finlan has recently defended this term, carefully distinguishing between six ‘levels’ of spiritualization: 1) transformation of sacrifice through substitution (e.g. animal for human, money for animal); 2) moralizing, where new values are given to cultic practices; 3) interiorization, where all emphasis is placed on spiritual motive; 4) metaphorical application; 5) outright rejection of sacrifice; 6) affirmation of spiritual

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<sup>29</sup> So Stegemann and Stegemann 2005; Willi-Plein 2005: 29, 34; Söding 2005: 104–7; Calaway 2013: 139; Beale 2004: 295–98. *Contra* Eberhart 2005.

<sup>30</sup> ‘[O]n doit se garder de dire que l’auteur de l’épître use de “métaphores” lorsqu’il applique au Christ le titre de “grand prêtre” et à la passion glorifiante du Christ le nom de “sacrifice”. Sa perspective est exactement l’inverse : c’est dans l’Ancien Testament que sacerdoce et sacrifice étaient pris en un sens métaphorique, car ils s’y appliquaient à une figuration symbolique impuissante, tandis que, dans le mystère du Christ, *ces termes ont enfin obtenu leur sens réel, avec plénitude insurpassable.*’ Vanhoye 1980: 235 (emphasis added). Similarly Radcliffe 1987: 496, 501. He notes that cultic language has always been metaphorical, and ‘awaiting its proper application’ which has now come in Christ.

<sup>31</sup> Barnard 2012: 109. Cf. Beale 2004: 373–75.

<sup>32</sup> For an early advocate of this term see Wenschkewitz 1932; cf. the critique in Taubes 2004: 46.

transformation.<sup>33</sup> Hebrews does not engage in any of (1)–(3); depending on how one assesses its use of cultic language of Christ and Christians and its treatment of the Levitical cult it might be viewed as doing (4) or (5); and there is little doubt that it engages in (6). This taxonomy is helpful in distinguishing between the different ways in which the term has been used in scholarship. However, far from serving to defend the term the taxonomy reveals the way in which it lies open to a number of criticisms.

First, ‘spiritualization’ is often used within an implicit evolutionist framework, as can be discerned in the word ‘levels’; the intention or hope seems to be that a society should move from (1) and (2) through (3) and (4) towards (5) and (6).<sup>34</sup> Secondly, in connection with the previous point, such language also tends to assume an inner–outer dualism along the lines of the misreading of the OT prophetic critique identified in Chapter Two; this dualism is rightly criticized for leaving no means of articulating an outward ritualized expression of genuine inward devotion (see §1.4.3). Thirdly, Finlan’s six levels reveal just how wide and at variance the different potential uses of ‘spiritualization’ are (note in particular the direct opposition between (2) and (5)), a fact which suggests that the term holds little if any explanatory or clarificatory power and should instead be discarded. Finlan’s taxonomy is highly useful for the greater precision in each of the categories proposed, but the attempt to hold these together under a single overarching term needs to be abandoned.

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<sup>33</sup> Finlan 2004: 47–61. He rearticulates these in the light of the critique of ‘spiritualization’ by Klawans 2006 in Finlan 2011: 83–86.

<sup>34</sup> This post-Enlightenment value judgment of sacrifice is explicit in Finlan 2011: 96. ‘Once sacrificial thinking has really been left behind, the noncoercive nature of God will emerge as the only rational alternative.’ The evolutionist tendency is also criticized by Klawans 2006: e.g. 247.

A move away from ‘spiritualization’ was advocated by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in the 1970s, who instead proposed the term ‘transference’.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, noting the unhelpful contrast between empty sacrificial rituals and spiritualization, Jonathan Klawans suggests: ‘In their place, we could put rituals pregnant with symbolism on the one hand and *metaphoric expansions* of such symbolisms on the other.’<sup>36</sup> While both of these perspectives are helpful, a single term such as that suggested by Schüssler Fiorenza does not do justice to all of the usages and extensions of cultic language noted by Finlan; nor is the use of ‘metaphoric’ by Klawans ultimately enlightening, as discussed above. Moreover, Schüssler Fiorenza treats such language in the NT as indicating the direct and simple opposition and replacement of the Jerusalem cult by the Christian faith and Klawans – while he proposes a compelling case against the anti-temple readings of the Gospel Last Supper and temple-cleansing accounts – nevertheless still regards Acts 7, Hebrews, and Revelation 21–22 as anti-temple.<sup>37</sup> Yet the discussion above demonstrates that even if Hebrews does engage in ‘antitemple’ or ‘antipriestly polemics’,<sup>38</sup> it does so only because and on the basis of its strong commitment to cultic and sacrificial modes of thought. In this regard it is noteworthy that in Second Temple literature the existence of a heavenly sanctuary generally serves to legitimize the earthly cult – albeit the cult envisaged from the particular perspective of the group behind that literature.<sup>39</sup> We should therefore *a priori* expect Hebrews’ appeal to a heavenly cult to legitimize an earthly cult: the question is not so much what

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Since the category “spiritualization” has so many different shades of meaning and entails certain dogmatic presuppositions, its use tends not to clarify but to confuse.’ By contrast, transference ‘indicates that Jewish and Hellenistic cultic concepts were shifted to designate a reality which was not cultic.’ Schüssler Fiorenza 1976: 161.

<sup>36</sup> Klawans 2006: 244 (emphasis added).

<sup>37</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza 1976: 168–76; Klawans 2006: 213–45.

<sup>38</sup> Klawans 2006: 243.

<sup>39</sup> So Gäbel 2006: 108; Klawans 2006: 143; Ribbens 2013: esp. 33, 66–67, 108–9, 323–34.

Hebrews is attacking, but what kind of cult it seeks to promote and affirm and how it goes about this.

In this chapter the concern is not to elucidate new terminology or a detailed taxonomy to describe these phenomena across a variety of texts, but rather to deal with Hebrews' treatment of cultic repetition. Given the existence of a heavenly sanctuary and its implications for the cultic status of the believer, repeated practice exhorted of the letter's audience cannot simply be dismissed as irrelevant to or entirely different from the prominent deployment of repetition in discussion of the tabernacle system. Rather, such language in relation to both old and new covenants must be taken seriously as invested with and expressive of the powerful symbolic significance that the cultus had for all in the first-century world, and especially the importance which the Jerusalem temple – and the inscripturated record of its predecessors – held for Jews and Jewish proselytes. Only in this way will the differences between repeated practice in old and new covenants come to light.

### **6.3 Priesthood**

We turn now to the task of examining how repetition is portrayed in relation to the Levitical cult. Cultic themes, and with them the deployment of repetition, are concentrated in the central section stretching from Heb 4.14–10.25, particularly 7.1–10.25. Yet like the airs of a symphony they are announced earlier in the letter, creating a kind of self-referentiality such that no examination of priesthood or sacrifice can be complete without taking into account these earlier sections. These two themes are thoroughly interwoven in Hebrews and strictly speaking inseparable; yet broadly

speaking the discussion of priesthood occurs earlier and cedes to that of sacrifice, and they are therefore treated in that order. This section and the following thus proceed through the relevant passages in Hebrews in sequence. The one passage treated out of order is 9.1–14, which is reserved for §§6.4.6–7; this is because the regular sacrifices in 9.6 are not directly contrasted with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ but instead stand in a more complex relationship to it, forming part of the type which is fulfilled in both Christ's sacrifice and the worship of Christians (the latter is argued in §6.5). The principal theme that emerges is that the plurality of old covenant (high) priests and the repetition of their sacrifices are relativized by the uniqueness and lasting validity of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice; only in the light of his coming do they become a sign of the imperfection of the old system.

### 6.3.1 Hebrews 2.10–3.6 and 4.14–5.10: A Perfect Priest

The priesthood of Christ is implicit in the attribution to him of the work of purification in Heb 1.3; it would be surprising if such a prominent theme were absent from the exordium which, as noted in Chapter Four, introduces the main thoughts of the work as a whole. Jesus' priesthood nevertheless does not receive any expansion until 2.10–18. Even here the title of high priest does not occur until 2.17, yet it is prepared by a number of themes. First, the solidarity of Jesus with humans emerges as a core qualification for his suitability for the priesthood (2.11–14; cf. 4.15; 5.2). Additionally, Jesus is designated 'the sanctifier' (ὁ ἁγιάζων 2.11, a verb with clear cultic associations

which recurs in Hebrews only in such contexts: 9.13; 10.10, 14, 29; 13.12). He is also described as having been perfected by God (τελειῶσαι 2.10).<sup>40</sup>

Language of perfection is prominent in Hebrews: it is something which is done to or happens to Jesus (2.10; 5.9; 7.28; cf. the possibly related ‘more perfect tent’ in 9.11), something which happens to his followers or is done to them by him (10.14; 11.40; 12.2; 12.23; possibly also 5.14 and 6.1),<sup>41</sup> and also something which the law could not do (7.11, 19; 9.9; 10.1). Various proposals have been made as to how such language should be understood.

1) On the basis of Pentateuchal usage,<sup>42</sup> some have proposed that perfection denotes *priestly consecration or ordination*.<sup>43</sup> Yet the occurrences in question in the OT form part of a technical term, τελειοῦν τὰς χεῖρας (translating טׁ[־תא] מלא), which is not found in Hebrews; moreover, the context is determinative and therefore – while such language does occur in cultic contexts in several places, and thus the sense ‘consecrate’ may be latent in these instances – this sense is not immediately apparent for the references in 11.40 and 12.2.<sup>44</sup>

2) Perfection is also related to *glorification*; this has a good degree of textual support in the case of Christ (note occurrences of δοξ- terminology in 2.10 and 5.5 [cf.

<sup>40</sup> Söding 2005: 66–72 notes that 2.10 is the thesis for which the following verses give grounds.

<sup>41</sup> Scholer 1991: 186 disregards τελειοτέρως (9.11), as a synonym for κρείττων; he also disregards τελειοί (5.14) and τελειότης (6.1). Note the associations of this language with standard Greco-Roman tropes regarding physical and ethical maturity, cf. §5.5; Thompson 1982: 17–40. Functionally these terms do not fit the main thrust of Hebrews’ use of the τελει- root, but they are not completely foreign to it: the heavenly tent is more perfect because the perfected high priest has entered it, and the audience is in 5.11–6.12 urged on to perfection, which is precisely what is available to believers through Christ. Peterson 1982: 176–86 includes 5.14 and 6.1 in his study.

<sup>42</sup> Exod 29.9, 29, 33, 35; Lev 8.33; 16.32.

<sup>43</sup> So Cody 1960: 100–1. A key proponent for this sense is Vanhoye 1980: 188–91, 210, 237, 244; in Vanhoye 1996 he reiterates this, but is more sensitive to the experiential and personal aspects of Jesus’ offering.

<sup>44</sup> Notably even Scholer, for whose thesis the sense ‘consecration’ could be conducive, rejects it. Scholer 1991: 189–90. So also Peterson 1982: 23–30.

5.9]; in 7.28 the context of Christ's exaltation is clear from 7.26), and Jesus' glorification at his heavenly session is closely bound up with the completion of his priestly work in Hebrews. Yet it is hard to relate perfection language used of Christians to their glorification in a consistent fashion. Furthermore, glorification on its own does not account for the close connection of perfection with suffering.<sup>45</sup>

3) Another possibility, particularly in light of the references in, is that τελειοῦν denotes *moral or ethical perfection*. However, the depiction of Jesus suggests little need for development of his character, and McCrudden notes that character was often regarded as fixed in the ancient world.<sup>46</sup>

4) The best proposal is that perfection in Hebrews refers to progressive *vocational preparation and qualification* – in Jesus' case, for the work of salvation, in the believer's case, for the receipt of salvation.<sup>47</sup> This does justice to the process that is implicit in Jesus' suffering (2.9–10; 5.7–9) and also to the association of perfection with Jesus' appointment; it is also compatible with a nuance of priestly consecration, at least in cultic contexts.<sup>48</sup> In the light of papyri evidence that the verb τελειοῦν is used when 'something is now displayed for all to see in a definitive and public sense',<sup>49</sup> McCrudden argues that Jesus' perfection is the attestation of his benevolent character as seen particularly in his solidarity with the faithful in suffering. In Jesus, then, perfection comprises both a process (faithfulness through suffering) and the culmination of that process in its ultimate goal, which is also its public declaration.

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<sup>45</sup> McCrudden 2008: 6–11.

<sup>46</sup> McCrudden 2008: 18–20; Scholer 1991: 187–88 also rejects this proposal.

<sup>47</sup> Peterson 1982: 49–125 (Christ's perfection); 126–67 (perfection of believers). This position is commended and modified by McCrudden 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Leithart concurs with Peterson's vocational reading of τελειώσις 'so long as the priestly resonance is heard', 2000: 59 n. 23.

<sup>49</sup> McCrudden 2008: 37.

The research that has been done on perfection in Hebrews sheds light on the essential questions of *what* is perfected, *how*, and *why*. At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the most basic element of perfection terminology, the etymological or formal sense of completion or finishing; this is common to all occurrences in Hebrews and must remain paramount.<sup>50</sup> Perfection, then, incorporates both *a process* leading up to completion and *a point* at which that goal is decisively reached. In this respect, as will become clearer below (§6.4.5), τελειόω is for Christ's priesthood what (ἐφ)άπαξ is for his self-offering: both evoke the completion of a process. In this light, the old covenant's failure to bring perfection is partly a function of its incomplete nature: in Christ, by contrast, God's purposes are brought to completion.<sup>51</sup>

The situation of the believer in the new covenant is at one and the same time utterly different from and yet comparable to that of the old covenant believer. Unlike the participant in the Levitical cult, the Christian has been perfected and is now perfect (10.14). Yet just like the old covenant faithful, Christians must strive towards perfection (6.1; cf. 5.14) and await its full coming only after death (11.40; 12.23). In line with the eschatological tension which runs throughout Hebrews, believers *are* perfect, but they must continue to strive towards perfection, and they look forward to full and final perfection on their entrance to heaven.<sup>52</sup> Returning to Heb 2.10–18, the relevance of Jesus' perfection to believers' salvation encompasses both nuances: the perfected one

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<sup>50</sup> So Schenck 2007: 64–73: 'a "formal" or "general" sense of "completion" or of "bringing to a goal" seems the best way to approach the term in Hebrews' (p. 68). Cf. BDAG, 'τελειόω', 996, senses 1 and 2; Scholer 1991: 190–91.

<sup>51</sup> '[P]erfection in Hebrews is primarily a matter of the completion of God's plan of salvation', Lindars 1991: 90.

<sup>52</sup> 'τελειοῦν in Heb. encompasses the distinctive significance we found for προσέρχεσθαι and εἰσέρχεσθαι and relies on the context in order to determine whether it is access during life or after death.' Scholer 1991: 200. This is an astute observation, though it depends upon ignoring 5.14 and 6.1.

provides definitive salvation and atonement (2.10, 17), and also ongoing empathetic help (2.11–12, 17–18).

The following section, Heb 3.1–6, is clearly linked to what has come before by the recurrence of the term ‘high priest’ in 3.1. The comparison of Jesus’ and Moses’ respective relationships to the ‘house of God’ is multivalent, and deliberately so. Alongside the explicit referents ‘people of God’ (3.6) and ‘creation’ (3.4), the term quite possibly alludes to the sanctuary as well.<sup>53</sup> Not only does the same phrase occur in 10.21 referring to the heavenly sanctuary,<sup>54</sup> but the relationship of Christ to that house is identical to that in 3.6: he is ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ/τοῦ θεοῦ in both cases. What is more, Jesus’ superiority to Moses is indicated in terms of his Sonship, which bears connotations of his pre-existence (cf. 1.1–4), and his role in creation is subtly indicated in 3.3–4.<sup>55</sup> Here Jesus’ superiority over Moses is spelled out by comparison of the glory of the builder (i.e. Jesus) to that of the house (i.e. Moses, who forms part of the house); this statement is then expanded (γάρ) in 3.4 which declares that *God* is the builder of everything. This does not amount to a simple identification of God and Jesus, but it does echo their close association in creation in 1.2. That is to say, the superior status of Jesus’ priesthood with regard to the sanctuary is linked to his ontological priority and superiority.

Hebrews 4.14–5.10 continues in a similar vein to 2.10–3.6;<sup>56</sup> the emphasis in these earlier two passages is on Jesus’ similarity to the Aaronic high priests, which in turn entails his similarity to other humans and his ability to sympathise with and help

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<sup>53</sup> So Perrin 2010: 57–58.

<sup>54</sup> ‘House of God’ in Heb 10.21 probably also alludes to the people of God, Attridge 1989: 287.

<sup>55</sup> Söding 2005: 64–66 notes that Jesus’ Sonship is the starting point for Hebrews’ high priestly Christology: his relationship to God and humans is foundational for the nature of his priesthood.

<sup>56</sup> Note that the similarity of Jesus’ priesthood to that of Aaron is emphasized in Heb 2 and 5, while their differences are spelled out in Heb 7. Vanhoye 1980: 192.

them.<sup>57</sup> Like Aaron himself, Jesus received divine calling and appointment. Yet these verses also begin to indicate the ways in which Jesus is superior to, and thus implicitly different from, the earthly priests. In 4.15 it is noted that Jesus was ‘without sin’ in his temptation; and in 5.5–6 Jesus’ appointment as priest is no ordinary one: Ps 2.7 links it to his Sonship, and Ps 110.4 specifies that it is in the order of Melchizedek, and everlasting. Again, the surpassing nature of Jesus’ priesthood is rooted in his being and his relation to the divine.

### 6.3.2 Hebrews 7.1–22: Melchizedek Made Like the Son

The allusive and elusive references to Melchizedek’s priesthood in Heb 5.6, 10 are picked up after the excursus warning against falling away. Discussion of God’s oath in 6.13–18 reassures the audience of the basis of their hope, which is spelled out in 6.19–20 in cultic terms as rooted in Jesus’ entrance ‘within the veil’ as a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. In 7.1–2 the Genesis 14 context is evoked, and commonplace etymologies of both ‘Melchizedek’ and ‘Salem’ are offered. Hebrews 7.3 then expounds Ps 110.4 using Genesis 14: the Psalm declares the eternal priesthood of the Messiah, something which can be envisaged in two ways: a priesthood could be eternal if it were passed down the generations unceasingly, as with the Levitical priesthood, or if it involved a single priest who is himself everlasting. Not only does the OT not speak elsewhere of a Melchizedekian priesthood, but Genesis 14 does not speak of Melchizedek’s own genealogy, his origins or his death and successors. This enables

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<sup>57</sup> Horbury 1983: 59–66 examines various OT and Second Temple instances of (high) priests’ (com)passion. He concludes: ‘Sacerdotal “mercy” cannot be regarded as new and distinctive [in Hebrews]’ (p. 65).

Hebrews to state that Melchizedek himself remains a priest eternally, and thus to draw a comparison with Jesus. Broadly speaking scholars divide as to whether this is a case of direct scriptural reflection – perhaps akin to the rabbinic principle *quod non in thora non in mundo*<sup>58</sup> – which regards Melchizedek as human,<sup>59</sup> or whether it attests a view of Melchizedek as a heavenly angelic priest, in line with traditions found, for example, at Qumran.<sup>60</sup>

It is significant that the whole of 7.1–3 is a single sentence and that its subject is Melchizedek. This means that he, and not Jesus, is described as ‘without father, mother, or genealogy’ in 7.3: rather than seeking to explain in what respect Jesus is fatherless or motherless (a position which is problematized by his description as ‘Son of God’ in the very same verse),<sup>61</sup> the point is that Melchizedek has no genealogy which qualifies him as priest. In the same way Jesus, although he clearly has human (7.14) and arguably divine (1.5; 5.5) ancestry, has no *priestly* genealogy.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as Melchizedek is the subject it is of him, and not of Jesus, that 7.3 affirms he ‘remains a priest forever’ (cf. 7.8, where it is testified that he lives, with 11.4 where Abel, though he still speaks, is himself said to have died). This language – and particularly the verb μένειν (see

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<sup>58</sup> The interpretative principle that if something is not stated explicitly in the Torah, it can be supposed not to hold for argument’s sake. Cf. Philo *Det.* 47–48.

<sup>59</sup> This view is argued forcefully by Cockerill 2008; 2012: 295–306, esp. 298–99 n. 14. He disputes the certainty of references to the Gen 14/Ps 110 figure in 11QMelch, noting that it is written as two words and arguing that it should be understood simply as ‘king of righteousness’. Horton is an earlier proponent of Melchizedek as a mortal priest; notably he rejects the rabbinic principle, which is thus not intrinsic to this position. Horton 1976: 156–60.

<sup>60</sup> A prominent recent contribution supporting this view, with full examination of Qumran and associated texts, is Mason 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Vanhoye 1980: 178–79 suggests implausibly that Christ’s resurrection grants him new parentless birth.

<sup>62</sup> Mason 2008: 30.

§6.3.3 on 7.24) – suggests that Hebrews does regard Melchizedek as more than just a human figure.<sup>63</sup>

For the purposes of the present discussion a definitive decision on this question is not ultimately important; what is most significant is that Hebrews declares Melchizedek to have *been made like* the Son of God (emphasizing the action implicit in the passive participle ἀφωμοιωμένος, over the adjectival sense ‘resembling’). Use of the title ‘Son (of God)’ in Hebrews suggests that Christ’s transcendent – and often specifically his pre-incarnate – existence is in view; Backhaus astutely notes that Jesus’ sonship relates to his *esse* and his priesthood to his *agere*.<sup>64</sup> Hebrews 7.3 thus reverses the order of Psalm 110: there, the messianic figure’s priesthood is modelled after that of Melchizedek; here, by contrast, it is Melchizedek who has been made like the Son of God. Indeed, the direction of Psalm 110 is not so much reversed but extended *backwards* as well as forwards: Melchizedek is made like the Son of God, and Jesus later through his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension becomes a priest in the order and likeness of Melchizedek. The pattern is similar to that noted with regard to the sanctuary (§6.2.1):

The eternal, divine Son was the model, and the angelic Melchizedek was the copy who encountered Abraham and established a non-Levitical priestly precedent in ancient Israel. This in turn prepared the way for the incarnate Son—both the model for Melchizedek yet now also resembling him—to be comprehended as priest.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mason 2008: 32. Neyrey 1991 points out the similarities with Greco-Roman descriptions of gods. Such a position is hardly alien to either Genesis or Hebrews (cf. 13.2), and does not threaten the uniqueness of Christ’s status because his superiority to angels has already been conclusively demonstrated in Heb 1–2. Tellingly, Cockerill is silent on how ‘he remains a priest forever’ could apply to a mortal Melchizedek.

<sup>64</sup> Backhaus 2009b: 121. See the use of ‘Son [of God]’ in 1.2; 3.6 (linked with creation); 1.5; 5.5 (relationship to the Father, citing Ps 2.7); 4.14 (exalted status); 5.8 (sonship precedes suffering); 6.6; 10.29 (offense given to the Son). *Contra* Isaacs 1992: 143–44.

<sup>65</sup> Mason 2008: 202.

What is more, as with ‘rest’ in Hebrews 3–4 this argument is pursued through exploitation of the tensions between a psalm and a Pentateuchal text (§4.4.3).<sup>66</sup> Hebrews 7.4–10 goes on to establish the superiority of Melchizedek over Levi, and 7.11 then suggests that the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood is indicated by the fact that a Melchizedekian priesthood is mentioned *after* the Levitical one has been instituted, in Psalm 110.<sup>67</sup> Levi’s priesthood is not ultimate because Psalm 110 speaks later about another priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, and Melchizedek also preceded Levi. The realities Hebrews describes thus both *precede* and *succeed* OT institutions.

The main thrust of Heb 7.11–28 is the inability of the Levitical dispensation to provide perfection, and the contrasting availability of lasting perfection through Jesus (note the thematic *inclusio* formed by τελείωσις, 7.11, and τετελειωμένον, 7.28).<sup>68</sup> It is to this main theme that the opening phrase of 7.15 refers: it becomes ‘even more clear’ when another priest arises in Melchizedek’s likeness.<sup>69</sup> The point is that this imperfection is more evident *only when* a Melchizedekian priest comes on the scene. That is to say, the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood is fully grasped only derivatively, only when the Melchizedekian priest has arrived. Furthermore, the enduring nature of Melchizedek’s priesthood is founded on the nature of God himself. It is his oath which grounds the superiority and endurance of Christ’s priesthood (7.20–22; cf. 6.16–18; 7.28): 7.21 is the only place in Hebrews where the first half of Ps 110.4 is

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<sup>66</sup> ‘Gn. 14:17–20 is introduced and explained after the fashion of a rabbinic “enriching text” subordinate to Ps. 110:4 – just as, on a smaller scale, Gn. 2:2 was introduced in Heb. 4:4 to support the author’s interpretation of Ps. 95:11.’ Ellingworth 1993: 350.

<sup>67</sup> Hebrews’ author probably associates Ps 110 with David, as he does Ps 95; cf. Matt 22.43–44//Mark 12.36//Luke 20.42; Acts 2.34.

<sup>68</sup> Terminology of priesthood and law strengthens this *inclusio*, Guthrie 1994: 84.

<sup>69</sup> This could be an allusion to Jesus’ resurrection, ‘a brilliant double entendre’. Moffitt 2011: 203. This suggestion is plausible given the use of ἀνίστημι and its coherence with the timing of Jesus’ appointment as high priest between his death and entrance into heaven.

cited: ‘the Lord has sworn and *will not change his mind* [οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται]’. The verb denotes regret or repentance (see §5.3). The unchangeability of the divine will contrasts with the changeability of the Levitical system (cf. 6.17, ἀμετάθετος, with 7.12, μεταπιθεμένης). The singular and eternal oath of God establishes a correspondingly unique and lasting priesthood.

### 6.3.3 Hebrews 7.23–24: Mortals and the Immortal One

Jesus’ Melchizedekian priesthood sets the scene for 7.23–24, where the plurality of the priests is explicitly mentioned in comparison with Jesus:

Καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονες εἰσιν γεγονότες ἱερεῖς  
διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν·  
ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα  
ἀπαραβάτον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην

The chiasm makes clear that the plurality of the Levitical priests is a result of their mortality; by contrast Jesus holds his priesthood unchangeably because he remains forever. What is in view is primarily the succession of priests, particularly as it is Jesus’ high priesthood which is of central importance for Hebrews and high priests served only one at a time.<sup>70</sup> Yet in the context of 7.1–25 it is priesthood generally and not Jesus’

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<sup>70</sup> In the Pentateuch the appointment as high priest is apparently for life (cf. Num 35.25–32; also Lev 16.32; Josh 20.6). In the political turmoil of the second century BC some obtained the post by bribery and were in turn corruptly deposed or killed (2 Macc 4.7–10, 23–26, 34); the Hasmoneans, though not of priestly lineage, were appointed high priests despite the lack of precedent, and many of them were killed in office (1 Macc 10.15–21; 14.35–47; 16.23–24; Jos. *Ant.* 13.43–46, 83–84). Under Herod the Great the high priesthood underwent far-reaching changes – he appointed and dismissed high priests as he pleased (see e.g. Jos. *Ant.* 15.11–41 who lists Herod third after Antiochus Epiphanes and Aristobulus as rulers who unlawfully deposed and appointed high priests). From then onwards high priests seem to have served a term of office before stepping down, which explains the description of Annas and Caiaphas together as high priests in Luke 3.2 (cf. Matt 26.3, 57; John 11.47–53; 18.12–14, 24, 28; Acts 4.6; Jos. *Ant.* 18.2.1–2), despite the fact that Annas served before and not simultaneously with Caiaphas (and was indeed his father-in-law). The other frequent references to ἀρχιερεῖς in the Gospels (e.g. Luke 19.47; cf. Jos. *War* 2.16.2) refer not to a plurality of currently serving high priests but to some kind of college of ‘chief

high priesthood which is in view, partly because simply ‘priest’ (and never ‘high priest’) is applied to Melchizedek in Psalm 110 and throughout Hebrews,<sup>71</sup> and partly because a comparison with the Levitical priesthood as a whole is in view. This suggests that alongside diachronic plurality (death necessitated a succession of priests) there is also an overtone of synchronic plurality (performance of the tabernacle service required many priests simultaneously). In confirmation of this broader reference for ‘the many priests’, the corresponding ‘inviolability’ or ‘permanence’ (ἀπαράβατος) of Jesus’ priesthood refers to its singular enduring quality and does not mean ‘without successor’ – although of course the latter can legitimately be inferred from the former.<sup>72</sup>

Language of ‘remaining’ is used of both parties, but in the case of the human priests παραμένειν could suggest remaining ‘in office’ (so BDAG, ‘παραμένω’, 769, sense 2), whereas μένειν echoes the LXX usage of this verb of things pertaining to God.<sup>73</sup> This enduring nature of his priesthood has the important consequence in the following verse that Jesus can save ‘completely’ those who approach God through him, because of his ongoing intercession. The phrase used, εἰς τὸ παντελές, can mean ‘completely’ or ‘forever’, and it is probable that both temporal-quantitative and qualitative nuances are in view. The inability of Levitical priests to ‘remain in office’ stems from their mortality. Earlier Hebrews has referred to the fact that the devil holds the power of death, and that humans are consequently held in slavery all their lives by fear of death (2.14–15). The Levitical system ultimately offers no help in this regard

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priests’, probably including former high priests and some members of the Sanhedrin, with significant power and authority in cultic and legal matters. Cf. the excursus in Attridge 1989: 97–103.

<sup>71</sup> In this respect it can be suggested that a heavenly angelic Melchizedek poses no threat to the exalted Christ because although both hold the same order of priesthood the former is merely a priest while the latter is the unique high priest.

<sup>72</sup> The sense ‘without successor’ does not obtain in any other occurrences of the term. See BDAG, ‘ἀπαράβατος’, 97; Bénétreau 1988: 2.43–44.

<sup>73</sup> Cockerill 2012: 333; Attridge 1989: 209; cf. Heb 10.34; 12.27; 13.14.

because its priests are subject to the same weakness.<sup>74</sup> Jesus, in contrast, is not subject to this weakness; this claim is astonishing in the light of Hebrews' clear familiarity with traditions regarding Jesus' crucifixion (2.9–10, 14, 18; 5.7–8; 6.6; 13.12), which are notable by their absence from Hebrews 7. The only way in which it can be sustained is through the prominent references to the persistence of Jesus' life: in addition to his remaining forever and his inviolable priesthood, he *arises* as a priest (ἀνίστημι 7.15) and becomes a priest by the power of an indestructible life (κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου 7.16). These phrases all clearly characterize the enduring nature of Jesus' exalted state, yet the contrast with the priests is insufficiently accounted for unless a reference to the resurrection is also understood:<sup>75</sup> since he himself underwent death, Jesus' exaltation alone does not explain how he is sufficiently different from the Levitical priests. It is in part the problem of *mortality* which must be overcome, and this is achieved only through resurrection.<sup>76</sup>

The permanence and surpassing uniqueness of the Son of God and his priesthood precede both *ontologically* and *epistemologically* the weakness of the Levitical system. The Son of God existed before Melchizedek and was the model to which he was conformed, and he is therefore superior to Levi; yet it is only now that he has lived, died, and been raised and exalted that his likeness to Melchizedek – and therefore also the Levitical system's inability to perfect – becomes evident. Plurality is not problematic in and of itself, but is demonstrative of weakness. The appointment of each

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<sup>74</sup> To paraphrase the proverbial *quis custodiet ipsos custodiet*: who will mediate for the mediators?

<sup>75</sup> See also Moffitt 2011: 194–207.

<sup>76</sup> Enoch's translation is insufficient to save others, as he did not experience death (cf. 11.5 with 2.9–10, 14); elsewhere Hebrews clearly attests belief in specific resurrections (11.35a; 13.20; cf. 11.19) and a general resurrection (11.35b).

new priest, each repetition, apparently extended efficacy following the death or retirement of the previous one, but as a whole this plurality or repetition indicates that none of these priests was ultimately effective.

## 6.4 Sacrifice

### 6.4.1 Hebrews 7.26–28: Sinners and the Sinless One

Sacrifice and priesthood are intimately linked, and in the context of a discussion of priesthood Heb 7.27 makes a comment on sacrifices which will be expanded later in 9.1–10.18. The verse contrasts Jesus with other high priests: unlike them he has no need to offer sacrifices daily (καθ' ἡμέραν), having done this once for all (ἐφάπαξ). This is partly an *a posteriori* observation – Jesus was crucified only once, whereas high priestly service was ongoing – but it is grounded theologically in terms of sin, just as the contrast in 7.23–25 was grounded in the related issue of mortality. It is explicit in 7.26 that Jesus is sinless: the concatenation of ὁσιος ἄκακος ἀμίαντος is impactful, the individual nuances of these terms combined with their juxtaposition suggesting the total nature of Jesus' purity in every respect, ethical and cultic. They moreover suggest that he held this purity on earth.<sup>77</sup> The following phrase, 'separated from sinners' (κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν; cf. 4.15, χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας), suggests both Jesus' distinction from sinners in his blameless earthly life, and in conjunction with the

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<sup>77</sup> Cockerill translates these terms 'covenant keeping [to distinguish ὁσιος from ἅγιος, which is normally translated 'holy'], without evil, without blemish', and notes that their LXX usage predominantly describes human obedience. Cockerill 2012: 338–41.

balancing phrase ‘having become higher than the heavens’ also evokes his exaltation.<sup>78</sup>

By contrast, the mortal high priests are sinful and thus need to sacrifice for their own sins first (πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν, 7.27) in order to be able to sacrifice for those of the people.

The rite in view in 7.27 is the Day of Atonement, given the reference to high priests sacrificing for their own sins and then for those of the people (see Lev 16.11, 15–16). The term ἐφάπαξ confirms this: although it describes Christ’s offering and not that of the high priest, Christ has (for the first time in this chapter) been designated ‘high priest’ in the previous verse, 7.26. There is, however, a detail which problematizes this reference to the Day of Atonement: the statement that these high priests needed to make such offerings on a daily basis (καθ’ ἡμέραν).

This difficulty cannot be resolved by referring 7.27 to the priests’ sin-offering (Lev 4.3–12), as this was made on an *ad hoc* basis and not daily. Neither can καθ’ ἡμέραν be regarded as simply ‘an emphatic expression for “regularly” or “repeatedly”’.<sup>79</sup> Hebrews elsewhere uses other terms which more clearly draw out this stressed or hyperbolic sense, notably εἰς τὸ διηνεκές (10.1, with κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν, making the reference clearly the Day of Atonement alone) and πολλάκις (6.7; 9.25–26; 10.11, here in conjunction with καθ’ ἡμέραν, suggesting that the latter phrase alone is descriptive more than it is emphatic). It is clear from Heb 9.6–7 that the author is well

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<sup>78</sup> ‘Because of its transitional point in the sentence, neither the qualitative nor the spatial connotations can be excluded’. Koester 2001: 367. Attridge 1989: 213; and Cockerill 2012: 341 emphasize the aspect of exaltation.

<sup>79</sup> As Cockerill 2012: 343 suggests.

aware of the distinction between the *tamid* and the Yom Kippur sacrifices, so it is unlikely that he has simply confused the two.<sup>80</sup>

I suggest that the best solution is to regard 7.27 as a deliberate incorporation of the *tamid* and the Day of Atonement. To refer the verse simply to the *tamid* offerings is awkward, as these are usually characterized with the term *διὰ παντός* (see §6.4.6), and in the Pentateuch they do not include offerings for the priests' own sins. Nevertheless, in later literature the grain offering (*תננת*, which forms part of the *tamid*; Exod 29.40–41; Lev 6.14–23; Num 28.5–8) does have slight links to atonement (*Lev. Rab.* 3.3; Philo *Her.* 174) and in Philo's account is offered before the animal sacrifices.<sup>81</sup> Not only this, but in Leviticus it appears that *the high priest* is instructed to offer the daily grain offering (6.20–23).<sup>82</sup> Moreover, *καθ' ἡμέραν* does occur in both Num 4.16 and Sir 45.14 to describe the grain offering, in the latter case explicitly as offered by the high priest.<sup>83</sup> In combination with the exclusion of other options, these references suggest that Hebrews intentionally combines the Day of Atonement and the *tamid* offerings: the latter take on the characteristics of the former by association (cf. 10.11).

One feature which emerges from the contrast between the sinful high priests and Jesus' sinlessness is that he had no need to sacrifice for his own sins: *τοῦτο* in Heb 7.27 has as its antecedent 'sacrifices on behalf of the people' alone, and not 'sacrifices on his own behalf'. That is to say, while at least two entrances into the most holy place by the high priest were an essential part of the Day of Atonement rite – first with the blood of a

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<sup>80</sup> Philo *Spec.* 3.131 also describes the high priest sacrificing daily (*καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν*, though not for his own sins first), and the high priest had the right to perform the sacrifices at any time, but this does not remove the difficulty here.

<sup>81</sup> Attridge 1989: 214.

<sup>82</sup> Schürer et al. 1973: 2.301–2.

<sup>83</sup> In Num 4.16 *καθ' ἡμέραν* uncharacteristically translates *תננת*, usually rendered *διὰ παντός*; cf. its use in Lev 23.37 to describe the offering of the appointed festival sacrifices on their proper days.

bull for himself, then with the blood of a goat for the people (Lev 16.11–16)<sup>84</sup> – Jesus went in only once. The term ἐφάπαξ is thus not merely emphatic, nor does it simply contrast with the yearly nature of Yom Kippur, but is also evocative of the absolute singularity of Jesus’ offering in contradistinction to that of mortal high priests.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the qualitative difference between Christ’s offering of himself (ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας) and animal sacrifice is hinted at, though it will not be explained until 10.4. The temporal pattern of argumentation in which the OT institution is both preceded and succeeded by the greater reality in Christ is evoked once again in 7.28: the oath (i.e. Ps 110.4; cf. Heb 5.5–6; 6.13–20; 7.21) comes *after the law*, and appoints a (pre-existent) Son who has now been perfected.

As with the plurality of priests (7.23–25), so also the plurality of sacrifices (7.26–28) is indicative of a weakness whose source lies elsewhere, in sin and mortality.<sup>86</sup> This plurality reveals the insufficiency of the Levitical dispensation, but it is itself revealed only by the appointment of the perfected Son-Priest.

#### 6.4.2 Hebrews 9.23–28: Dying Once

The next statement to evoke repetition comes in Heb 9.6: the priests go ‘continually’ (διὰ παντός) into the first tent. As this verse does not directly contrast repeated

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<sup>84</sup> Philo allows strictly two entrances and no more (*Legat.* 306–7), others at least three, first with incense (Lev 16.12–13), while *m. Yoma* 1.1–4; 7.4 counts four entries.

<sup>85</sup> One might also infer that Jesus had no need for a separate entrance with incense: this either represents prayer (cf. Rev 5.8; 8.3–4), in which case it is fulfilled by Jesus’ intercession (Heb 7.25); or, given that incense on Yom Kippur is associated not with the high priest’s intercession but with his protection from seeing the mercy seat (Lev 16.13), it can be supposed that it too is connected to the sinfulness of mortal high priests and is thus unnecessary in Jesus’ case.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Vielheit und Wiederholung sind also *Kennzeichen* der Todverfallenheit und irdischen Unvollkommenheit (9.1–10; 10.1–2, 11), während Einzigkeit und Einmaligkeit den Charakter des Jenseitig-Ewigen haben’. Grässer 1990: 2.58 (emphasis added).

sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ, discussion of it is deferred until after we have considered those verses which do.

Hebrews 9.23 raises several problems, most notably the issue of why ‘the heavenly things themselves’ need to be cleansed, and why this occurs ‘by better sacrifices’. Structurally it is not entirely clear how the verse relates to its surroundings; it is certainly closely linked with the following verse, 9.24, by the contrast between earthly and heavenly. While some argue that this pair of verses should be taken with the preceding section treating covenant,<sup>87</sup> most commentators and Bible versions take them as coming with what follows.<sup>88</sup> 9.23 is nevertheless carefully connected to 9.22 by the particle οὖν and by the occurrence in both verses of the present middle/passive καθαρίζεσθαι.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that the envisaged purification of heavenly things carries over connotations of inauguration from the preceding discussion (cf. 9.18): while 9.24 reintroduces Day of Atonement imagery as an expansion of the cleansing which occurs in 9.23, this festival also incorporates an element of inauguration or renewal into its rites for the cleansing of the tabernacle (Lev 16.16, 18–20).<sup>90</sup> What is particularly of note is the plurals ‘heavenly things’ (τὰ ἐπουράνια) and ‘sacrifices’ (θυσίαίς). The first

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<sup>87</sup> Ounsworth 2012: 152–57; the problem with his suggestion that one could skip directly from 9.14 to 9.25 is that the latter verse requires the main verb εἰσηλθεῖν to be carried across from 9.24.

<sup>88</sup> So Attridge 1989; Backhaus 2009a; Ellingworth 1993; deSilva 2000; Thompson 2008; Bénétreau 1988. Cockerill 2012 takes the section to extend from 9.23–10.18. Guthrie 1994: 86–87 sees the section as extending from 9.11–28; he does not supply adequate analysis or subdivisions for this part of Hebrews, instead treating 8.3–10.18 or 9.1–10.18 as a single section (cf. pp. 142, 144).

<sup>89</sup> Thus Koester 2001 takes the section to be 9.15–28.

<sup>90</sup> While Lev 16 specifies that the cleansing of the sanctuary is ‘because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel’, it is hard to envisage how the heavenly tabernacle could be defiled. Ellingworth 1993: 477 lists eight interpretations, opting for inauguration. Lane 1991 is a rare advocate for the view that human sin defiles the heavenly sanctuary. Attridge 1989 suggests that τὰ ἐπουράνια ultimately represent the mind, as in Philo, but while the conscience, the eternal and the heavenly are closely interrelated in Hebrews this does little justice to the real and distinct existence of heavenly things which are in view throughout, including in the very next verse. *1 Enoch* 14 is a potential parallel for the notion of the heavenly sanctuary’s defilement, Moffitt 2011: 225–26. Yet there the angels’ sexual immorality causes defilement, whereas Hebrews does not mention the fallen angels at all, and Christ its heavenly priest is absolutely undefiled (7.26).

of these is less problematic given the frequent use of plurals to refer to heavenly things (even within Hebrews οὐρανός is used interchangeably in the singular and plural though with a preference for the latter, including in 9.23); τὰ ἐπουράνια probably suggests the heavenly sanctuary and its furnishings (cf. 9.2–5), although it could be elliptical for τὰ ἐπουράνια [ἄγια], i.e. the heavenly sanctuary (or most holy place) on its own.<sup>91</sup>

With regard to the sacrifices, however, one would expect a singular: the heavenlies must be purified with ‘a better sacrifice’, i.e. Christ’s. This unexpected plural is usually accounted for as ‘stating a general principle’<sup>92</sup> and also as due to the intended parallelism with the old covenant sacrifices.<sup>93</sup> In noting this second point commentators often miss its significance: while it is plainly incorrect to suggest there is a plurality of heavenly sacrifices in Hebrews, it is nevertheless instructive that plurality *per se* is not negated or excluded from discussion of the heavenly realm.<sup>94</sup> This once again tells against the supposition that a basic plurality–singularity contrast runs throughout Hebrews, or that this correlates with the distinction between earth and heaven.

The following verses, Heb 9.24–26, expand on the greater nature of the heavenly sanctuary and the correspondingly greater quality of sacrifice that was offered there. With their focus on sacrifice these verses develop the contrast of 7.27, highlighting again the once-for-all (ἅπαξ 9.26) nature of Christ’s self-offering and contrasting this with the earthly high priest’s annual offering (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν 9.25). This makes clear that Yom Kippur is now decisively in view, while at the same time separating the phrase

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<sup>91</sup> So Schenck 2007: 170–73.

<sup>92</sup> Attridge 1989: 260–63; so also Ellingworth 1993: 478; Cockerill 2012: 416.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Der Plural hier meint, in Anlehnung an die atlichen Opfer, die Kategorie, nicht eine tatsächlich erfolgende Wiederholung durch ein höhere Art von Opfern’. Braun 1984: 281. ‘[C]ette formule désigne le sacrifice du Christ; le pluriel s’explique par le parallélisme voulu avec les anciens sacrifices’. Bénétreau 1988: 2.91.

<sup>94</sup> The absence of textual variants for θυσίαις suggests that, unlike modern commentators, both Hebrews and its earlier readers had no problem with the notion of plurality in the heavenly realm.

used at 9.7, ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, into two parts such that ἅπαξ relates only to Christ and the annual repetition only to the high priests. As with 7.27, the argument is based partly on *a posteriori* observation: Christ has not suffered (παθεῖν in Hebrews refers to Jesus' physical, earthly – and thus observable – death) many times since the foundation of the earth, unlike the high priest's yearly entrance into the most holy place, but rather only once at the consummation of the ages (cf. 1.2). This counterfactual thought is phrased hypothetically as part of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, and its force arises not only from its empirical verifiability but also from the fact that repeated suffering culminating in death is assumed to be both undesirable and unnatural for a human (9.27).<sup>95</sup> That is to say, it is the observable singularity of Christ's death (cohering with the expectation that any person's death should be a singular and non-repeated event) together with the undesirability of repeated suffering which excludes repetition.

Thus the repeated atonement offerings of the high priests are not central to the argument but form part of a parenthetical comment introduced by ὡςπερ in 9.25b, and serve to provide a contrast to what is known about Christ's offering. This is in part a clarification, lest it be thought that for Christ's death and heavenly exaltation to fit the model of Yom Kippur it is necessary for them to be repeated on an annual basis; but it primarily functions as a contrast which shows up the uniqueness and therefore the surpassing efficacy of new covenant atonement. As the discussion of ὑποδείγματα and ἀντίτυπα (9.23–24) in §6.2.1 suggested, both the dependent nature and the foreshadowing function of the earthly tabernacle and its ministry is in view in these verses. The high priests' annual sacrifices are therefore both *derivative* and also

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. the aphorism cited by Plutarch, which makes the same point although focussing on the uniqueness of birth rather than death: 'we men are born once [ἅπαξ]; there is no second time; we must forever [τὸν αἰῶνα] be no more' (*Suav. viv.* 1104e).

*revelatory*; but in this context they reveal not so much their own inefficacy or weakness (as is stressed in 7.23–28 and 10.1–4, 11), but rather highlight the surpassing excellence of Christ’s sacrifice.

### 6.4.3 Hebrews 10.1–4: The Inadequacy of Animal Sacrifices

Hebrews 10.1–18 is something of a *tour de force*, a powerful continuation and development of the themes of the preceding two chapters (note the *inclusio* formed by quoting Jeremiah 31 again at Heb 10.16–17, cf. 8.8–12) and a conclusion to them and to the entire cultic section which will reach its climactic exhortatory close in 10.19–25. Within this section, 10.1–4 contains the most explicit association of repetition with inefficacy. This short section predominantly describes sacrifices in preparation for the discussion of Christ’s offering and its relation to old covenant sacrifices in 10.5–10, but it is important to note that the subject of 10.1 is in fact the law and the following verses serve to support the claim made there:

Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν  
οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων  
– κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ὡς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηνεκῆς –  
οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι

The central claim here is that ‘the law can never perfect those who approach’. There is a well-attested textual variant δύνανται for δύναται whose weight is difficult to assess: the plural would parallel 9.9 (sacrifices which are offered cannot perfect; θυσίαι προσφέρονται μὴ δυνάμεναι [...] τελειῶσαι) and 10.11 (offering sacrifices which can never take away sins; προσφέρων θυσίας, αἵτινες οὐδέποτε δύνανται περιελεῖν ἁμαρτίας). Grammatically, this plural would either refer to the priests (the implied

subject of προσφέρουσιν),<sup>96</sup> or it must be taken impersonally,<sup>97</sup> and thus in neither case is the parallel with 9.9 and 10.11 as close as it first appears; indeed these verses in conjunction with the closely preceding plural προσφέρουσιν could well have influenced a scribe to write δύνανται. Such a reading also leaves the participial phrase ἔχων ὁ νόμος hanging; this is not impossible but the quality of Hebrews' Greek suggests we should prefer a grammatical reading. A change of subject would also interfere with the parenthetical nature of the carefully balanced remark (indicated between dashes above). Further, 7.19 offers a precedent for the notion of the law's inability to perfect. Certainty is impossible but for these reasons the singular ought to be preferred: the *law* is unable to perfect; in any case in these chapters the law, its priests and its sacrifices are all closely associated as part of the first dispensation.<sup>98</sup>

Three important observations can be made about these verses. First, the law's inability to perfect is doubly founded: in 10.1, the participle ἔχων functions causally to indicate that it is because the law has a shadow of the good things to come and not their 'true form' that it cannot perfect.<sup>99</sup> There is no need here to reiterate the earlier discussion of 8.5 and the term σκιά (§6.2.1); it is sufficient to note that this indicates the relative nature of the law vis-à-vis heavenly things. The temporal nuance is stronger here than in 8.5 or 9.23 – though it does not exclude the spatial element – so the emphasis falls on the fact that the law reflects and thus also heralds eschatological

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<sup>96</sup> Koester 2001: 431.

<sup>97</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 492.

<sup>98</sup> On the cultic framework of covenant and Law, cf. Lehne 1990; Lohmeyer 1961; Perrin 2010: 185–86. Lehne notes that 'the author subsumes the Law under the rubric of cult' (p. 26).

<sup>99</sup> The use εἰκόν might seem to suggest that the thought here is Platonic, but this is problematized by the fact that εἰκόν refers in Platonic thought to the same thing as σκιά: the derived earthly copies. Philo uses the term in this way, though he does occasionally contrast it as the greater thing with σκιά (*Somn.* 1.7; *Leg. All.* 3.96). P<sup>46</sup> alone allows a Platonist interpretation of this verse, reading καὶ for οὐκ ἀντήν, thus juxtaposing rather than opposing σκιά and εἰκόν.

realities, rather than effecting them. 10.4 supplies the second grounds for the law's inability to perfect: the impossibility for animal blood to remove sins. As in 6.4, 18 and 11.6 such impossibility should be taken as categorical, and here it forms a kind of *inclusio* with 10.1 (cf. οὐδέποτε δύναται with ἀδύνατον). The particle γάρ indicates that this statement supplies the reason for 10.3, which forms the positive complement (ἀλλά) of 10.2 with regard to the sacrifices' role, and 10.2 in turn offers further support (ἐπεὶ) for 10.1; thus 10.4 undergirds the claim made in the main clause. The overarching status of the law, and the dependent status of the cultus as a subpart of it, is assumed in the preceding chapters (see esp. 7.12; 9.1),<sup>100</sup> and so it is unsurprising that Hebrews should found a claim about the law's inability to perfect partly in its own shadowy nature and partly in the nature of the sacrifices offered under its cultic regulations. The reason why animal sacrifices cannot remove sin will become clearer in 10.5–10, but for now it is noteworthy that it is their nature and not their repetition which is the source of this defect.

The second important observation is made clear by the way in which 10.1 is set out above: the statement concerning the repetition of sacrifices<sup>101</sup> is parenthetical. It functions rhetorically to reinforce the main point being made, deferring the main verb and thus building in advance a contrast which renders οὐδέποτε δύναται all the more striking. To reinforce this function the phrase εἰς τὸ διηνεκέες is added at the end of this clause, balancing and simultaneously exaggerating the opening κατ' ἐνιαυτόν. Despite

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<sup>100</sup> On the function of the law in Heb 7.1–10.18 see Joslin 2008a. He argues that μετάθεσις in 7.12 means 'transformation' not 'removal', and distinguishes between νομός (the whole law) and ἐντολή (a specific commandment); it is the latter – and particularly the genealogical requirement – which has been removed (ἀθέτησις) in 7.16–18. Joslin 2008b: 101–5.

<sup>101</sup> In this case certainly the Day of Atonement sacrifices, given the continuation from the argument of 9.23–28 (esp. v. 25), the phrase 'yearly', and the reference to the blood of bulls and goats in 10.4.

positive uses of εἰς τὸ διηνεκές elsewhere (7.3; 10.12, 14), here it clearly amplifies the repetition of the sacrifices. Attempts to refer εἰς τὸ διηνεκές to τελειῶσαι (cf. its other occurrences, esp. 10.14 in conjunction with τετελείωκεν) are unpersuasive given the distance between the two and the way this phrase balances κατ' ἐνιαυτόν, thus bracketing the statement about sacrifices.<sup>102</sup> The hyperbolic and parenthetical nature of this remark demonstrates that it functions primarily rhetorically and not theologically.

A third significant point is that Heb 10.2 is the only place in the letter which actually makes explicit the reasoning behind the association of repetition with lack of effect – and that somewhat tersely. This verse is a counterfactual rhetorical question, whose logic can be spelled out as follows: if a sacrifice under the law had removed consciousness of sins (essentially equivalent to removing sins from the conscience),<sup>103</sup> then no further sacrifice would have been needed; but further sacrifices *were* offered and continued to be offered; therefore none of these sacrifices removed sins. The presupposition here is that it is possible for a single offering to remove once for all the consciousness of sins; yet such a notion is found nowhere in the OT or Second Temple Judaism before Hebrews and is far from self-evident. The recurrence of the key term ἄπαξ – by this point strongly associated with Christ's offering – is the clue that here again the reasoning proceeds from the Christ event to the assessment of the old covenant cultus. Because his death, understood sacrificially, has provided a conscience-cleansing deed which is not just singular but also (due to his exaltation) non-repeatable, this possibility of an eternally-valid atonement has become available to the author of Hebrews as a means of assessing the tabernacle service. In this light, we can see that

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<sup>102</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 492.

<sup>103</sup> Koester 2001: 437. Cf. the excursus on συνείδησις in Paul in Thiselton 2000: 640–44. Following Horsley he suggests it is best conveyed '(self-)awareness'.

10.3 is not an empirical claim about the psychological experience of participation in the Day of Atonement; rather, it is a theological statement regarding what in fact was happening: sin was being remembered.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, as the Day of Atonement is the shadow whose true form comes in Christ's death and heavenly exaltation, an annual reminder serves in a sense as a placeholder. Here once again the repetition of sacrifices serves to indicate a weakness inherent in those sacrifices whose grounds lies elsewhere (10.4), but this revelatory function is itself revealed only by the appearance of Christ.

#### 6.4.4 Hebrews 10.5–10: Christ's Obedient Sacrifice

Christ's appearance is the subject of the following verse, 10.5, which evokes Jesus' incarnation (κόσμος refers to the created realm and/or its inhabitants, cf. 4.3; 9.26; 11.7, 38; and contrast οἰκουμένη in 1.6; 2.6). This serves to introduce a citation of Ps 40.7–9 (LXX 39.6–8). In the Greek of Psalm 40 'you prepared a body for me' is widely attested in place of the Hebrew 'you dug ears for me', either a misreading of an earlier Greek text or more likely an interpretative paraphrase;<sup>105</sup> in combination with 'behold, I have come' the Psalm lends itself to an association with the incarnation. Changes made by the author are very limited: he has possibly moved ὁ θεός (omitting μου) to before τὸ θέλημά σου, and has cut short the quotation before ἐβουλήθην.<sup>106</sup> This links 'to do your will' directly with 'I have come', removing any sense that Christ desired but did not

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<sup>104</sup> This was an acknowledged part of the Day of Atonement, but Hebrews labels it the entire immediate effect of this annual ceremony. On the remembrance of sins see Philo *Mos.* 2.106–8; *Somm.* 1.214; *Plant.* 108, 164; *Det.* 20; cf. also Ezek 29.16 (ἀναμνησκουσάν ἀνομίαν). On the memorial concept in middle Judaism see Boccaccini 1991: 230–40.

<sup>105</sup> Reading ΗΘΕΛΕΣΑΣΩΤΙΑ as ΗΘΕΛΕΣΑΣ(Σ)ΩΜΑ; however the near-ubiquity of 'body' in Greek mss suggests that 'ears' was interpreted as a part standing for the whole; 'ears' in some Greek mss would be by conformity to the Hebrew. Koester 2001: 432–33.

<sup>106</sup> On the assumption that Hebrews has not changed its source text see Docherty 2009: 177–80, 194–96, 203–4.

succeed in doing God's will; it also parallels 'your will' with 'you did not desire' and 'you were not pleased' at the end of the first two phrases of the citation (οὐκ ἠθέλησας / οὐκ εὐδόκησας / τὸ θέλημά σου).<sup>107</sup>

The Psalm is then brought to bear in 10.8–10 on the issue at hand: the terms 'sacrifice' and 'offering' are reproduced in the plural and combined with 'burnt-offerings and sin-offerings'; this rhetorical concatenation evokes the plurality of the sacrifices, and once again their dependence on the law is mentioned. 10.9 contrasts these with Christ's coming, stressing the term 'then' so as to give a temporal interpretation to the Psalm. The procedure is very similar to the exposition of Psalm 8 in Heb 2.9 (see §4.4.2): both psalms describe a synchronous state of affairs – humanity is lower than angels and crowned with glory and honour (Ps 8); God does not desire sacrifice so much as obedience (Ps 40) – but are interpreted diachronically such that Jesus is humbled and then exalted, and sacrifices give way to obedience. This temporal sense is reinforced by the stark statement which follows: 'he abolishes (or takes away) the first so that the second might stand'.<sup>108</sup> The cultic regulations relating to the first covenant are removed; in one sense this is a very abrupt and extreme claim, yet it has been prepared by statements regarding the change in the law and priesthood and the disappearing of the old covenant in Hebrews 7–8.

While the old covenant has passed or is passing away (cf. 8.13), this does not mean that cult has been rejected. The apparently simple schema whereby sacrifices cede to obedience is immediately complicated by 10.10: 'by which will we are sanctified

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<sup>107</sup> See Ellingworth 1993: 500–3.

<sup>108</sup> Ἀναίρει is the strongest negative statement the author has made or will make about the OT cultus'. Ellingworth 1993: 504. Although 'take away' or 'remove' is a legitimate translation, the force of the verb is 'abolish' or even 'destroy'; the cognate noun can be used for murder; BDAG, 'ἀναίρεσις', 'ἀναίρεω', 64.

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all'. The will of God is fulfilled in the obedience of his Son, yet 'that will is *embodied*';<sup>109</sup> obedience is not an end or complete in itself but instead results in the offering of Jesus' body, προσφορά being exactly the term used in Psalm 40. Christ's obedience is not opposed to sacrifice,<sup>110</sup> rather in his perfect obedience he becomes the perfect sacrifice.<sup>111</sup> Sacrifice and obedience – and thus, ultimately, all of the requirements of the law – are fully met in him. It is in this respect that the first dispensation is now abolished. 10.5–10 thus implicitly further clarifies the grounds for 10.4: the blood of goats and bulls cannot remove sin because there is no sense in which animals can incorporate willingness or obedience into their own death. The opposition in these verses is not between sacrifice and obedience, nor is it ultimately between repeated sacrifices and a single sacrifice, despite Finlan's contention: 'Evidently it was the *plurality* of sacrifices that God and Christ were rejecting in Ps 40, not sacrifice itself.'<sup>112</sup> It is the qualitative and not the quantitative difference which is central here: the law's inability to perfect lies in its shadowy nature and part of that shadow was the use of animals, which are inherently incapable of conscious and willing self-offering. The quantitative difference serves very effectively to highlight the qualitative, but is not the primary focus.

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<sup>109</sup> Attridge 1986: 9 (emphasis original).

<sup>110</sup> Though many read Heb 10.5–10 this way, e.g. Attridge 1989: 275; Koester 2001: 438.

<sup>111</sup> So, rightly, Finlan 2011: 92. Cf. Ribbens 2013: 196–98.

<sup>112</sup> Finlan 2011: 93 (emphasis original). So also Vanhoye 1976: 165, who suggests that the author changes sacrifice and offering (Ps 40.6//Heb 10.5) to plurals in Heb 10.8 in order to condemn not sacrifice but only the plurality of the OT sacrifices. Notably both the MT and LXX use the singular for all four categories of sacrifice mentioned, whereas the citation in Heb 10.6 has ὀλοκαυτώματα (and therefore presumably also περι ἁμαρτίας) as a plural. We cannot infer from this, however, that Hebrews changed its source text.

#### 6.4.5 Hebrews 10.11–18: Singular, Seated, and Perfect

The final part of this section, 10.11–18, recapitulates and sums up all of 4.14–10.10.

The emphatic ἐφάπαξ which closes 10.10 prepares a renewed portrayal of repetition in the service of ‘every priest’ in 10.11. The term ἱερεύς rather than ἀρχιερεύς and the use of καθ’ ἡμέραν evokes the discussion of priesthood in Hebrews 7 (cf. 7.27 and also 5.1) and extends the reference to priesthood and sacrifice generally; the Day of Atonement has largely fallen out of the picture here and Psalm 110 (which uses the term ἱερεύς) is about to re-emerge, prepared by the description of the priests as ‘standing’. The adverb πολλάκις functions hyperbolically in a similar way to εἰς τὸ διηνεκές in 10.1. The continual work of ‘every priest’ is contrasted with Christ’s cultic service in 10.12: after offering a single sacrifice on behalf of sins he sat down at the right hand of God (aorist participle preceding main verb indicating prior completed action). The term εἰς τὸ διηνεκές could be taken either with the preceding sacrifice, or with the following action of sitting down. The thought of Ps 110.4 (‘a priest *forever*’ – there the term is εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, but cf. 7.3 where it is paraphrased using εἰς τὸ διηνεκές) and the chiasmic reflection of 10.11–12 (the priest stands daily and offers repeatedly / Christ offers once and sits forever) suggest that it is better taken with Christ’s session,<sup>113</sup> although its position between the two perhaps hints at the fact that they cannot be separated: the one forms the essential basis for the perpetuity of effects of the other. 10.13 continues the paraphrase of Ps 110.1 to indicate Christ’s present position, awaiting the final vindication and public display of his victory. 10.14 then reiterates the point,

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<sup>113</sup> So Attridge 1989: 280; Cockerill 2012: 449; Ellingworth 1993: 509–10, who sets out the evidence for each reading; commentators are roughly evenly split on this question. Most modern English translations opt for ‘one sacrifice for all time’ (cf. NRSV, NIV, ESV).

reintroducing the concept of perfection; it is better to read the dative ('by one offering *he* has perfected'), rather than the nominative ('one offering has perfected', found in a few minuscules).<sup>114</sup> Here again εἰς τὸ διηνεκές occurs, referring (as probably in 10.12) to the perpetual effects of the completed action (perfect of τελειόω) of Christ's single sacrifice.

This reinforces the point made briefly in §6.3.1, that singularity is to Christ's sacrifice what perfection is to his priesthood: both terms are evocative of a process (preparation of obedient suffering for his vocation; sacrifice involving death, probably resurrection, and exaltation/heavenly entrance),<sup>115</sup> yet most importantly both stress the aspect of completion. Not only this, but enthronement re-enters the picture as well. In the space of a few verses we find combined the messianic-priestly session of Ps 110.1 with priestly-vocational perfection and historical-traditional singularity, together providing the supreme expression of the theological finality and all-sufficiency of the atonement, and the perpetuity of its effects.<sup>116</sup> These three images were juxtaposed already in 7.27–8.2 (ἐφάπαξ 7.27, τετελειωμένον 7.28, ἐκάθισεν 8.1), but here they are intertwined and heavily emphasized; moreover, whereas there the accent lay on Christ's suitability for his ministry, here it lies on the benefits for the believer: removal of sins (10.11) and sanctification (10.10, 14).

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<sup>114</sup> Ellingworth 1993: 510–11.

<sup>115</sup> On the importance of sequence in the atonement see Nelson 2003; Moffitt 2011. Brooks 1970 had earlier made a similar point, though his thesis suffers from a rather imprecise assertion that Jesus' sacrifice takes on an eternal quality upon his heavenly entrance. Moffitt by contrast is clear that once atonement has been made Christ sits down; there is sequence, but it is a finished sequence. Cody 1960: 170–202 also perceived this quite acutely, although he receives little credit or attention from Moffitt. He had already made the observation – central to Moffitt's thesis – that 'Resurrection is obviously supposed if the Epistle is to make sense at all' (p. 172).

<sup>116</sup> These three images correspond to Schenck's description of Christ as a definitive and superior priest (= perfection), offering a definitive and superior sacrifice (= once-for-all), in a definitive and superior sanctuary (= session). Schenck 2007: 110. On the importance of Ps 110 for Hebrews see Moore 2014: 393–95 and the literature cited there; also Compton 2013.

The resounding point made in these few verses is reinforced by the witness of the Holy Spirit, citing again part of the Jeremiah quotation from Hebrews 8: there it introduced discussion of covenant, here it concludes it: ‘*this* is the covenant I will make with them’. Although in Hebrews 8 the citation appears to be employed simply for the term ‘new’ (8.13), the reiteration of the promise that in the new covenant God will no longer remember the people’s sins and lawlessness (Jer 31.34//Heb 8.12//10.17) reveals that Hebrews 9–10 has explicated how this can be the case. This is made clearer by 10.18: ‘where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer a sacrifice for sins’; forgiveness which perfects and sanctifies the worshipper is provided in Christ. It is from Christ’s sacrifice that the exclusion of any further sacrifice proceeds. Notably, however, 10.18 does not say simply *προσφορά* but adds *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, clearly designating the sin-offering. This suggests that while the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice excludes further *atonement sin-offerings*, the possibility that other forms of sacrifice might continue is left open. Indeed, while Frances Young notes that the distinction between Christ’s sacrifice as a sin-offering and Christians’ sacrifices as offerings of thanks and praise is too simplistic and does not reflect the complexity of sacrificial thought in early Greek Christian writers, she concedes that this distinction does obtain in the case of Hebrews.<sup>117</sup>

The examination of the deployment of repetition in relation to priesthood and sacrifice in this section and the previous one brings to light a number of important points.

Repetition and plurality hold predominantly negative associations in these parts of Hebrews; yet such repetition is an indication rather than a cause of the imperfection of

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<sup>117</sup> Young 1979: 217, 291.

the old covenant system. That imperfection has its root elsewhere, in the sinful and mortal nature of the priests and in the absolute impossibility for animals to die obediently and willingly; these problems are furthermore part of the derivative and foreshadowing nature of the entire Mosaic dispensation. These institutions, and the plurality they enshrine, are thus ontologically posterior to heavenly realities, and seen as such only in the light of Christ's coming. His earthly ministry has a revelatory function, such that the old covenant is understood to be passing away only after he has come. Repetition gains negative connotations and is used rhetorically to great effect only in contrast to Christ – the uniqueness of his priesthood and the singularity of his sacrifice.

#### 6.4.6 Hebrews 9.6: The *Tamid*

It is often assumed that the treatment of the tabernacle cult and Levitical priesthood in Hebrews 7–10 is uniform – indeed, perhaps uniformly negative – including in the description of the tabernacle in 9.1–10. Thus Heb 9.6, ‘the priests continually go into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties’, is treated as simply another instance of cultic repetition which bears the same connotations as those examined extensively above.<sup>118</sup> Yet one of the findings of the foregoing material is that repetition bears negative connotations where it is contrasted with Christ, and not otherwise. Noting that the continual entrance of the priests in 9.6 is not directly contrasted with Christ's singular entrance, the contention of this section is that this regular service needs to be understood in a positive light for the complex comparison between the tabernacle system and Christ's work in 9.1–14 to function successfully.

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<sup>118</sup> E.g. Guthrie 1983: 184; O'Brien 2010: 313; Young 1981: 200; Cockerill 2012: 379. Braun takes the intensity of cultic activity to contrast drastically with its ‘Effektlosigkeit’, 1984: 254.

Hebrews 9.1 states that the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary, and proceeds to describe first the sanctuary in 9.2–5 and then the worship in 9.6–10. In 9.2–5 the author briefly evokes the tabernacle and its furniture, breaking off in 9.5 with the statement that ‘we cannot speak about these things in detail now’. Some commentators take this to be a derogatory gesture, disparaging the tabernacle,<sup>119</sup> but there is no explicit indication to this effect.<sup>120</sup> Scholars generally classify this rhetorical figure as *paraleipsis*, ‘passing by something without detailed comment.’<sup>121</sup> Its originating use would seem to be in legal contexts where a matter is usefully evoked but best not gone into in detail because it cannot be proved or even can be easily refuted (cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.75), although it can be used to avoid tedium, indecorum, or confusion, or simply ‘because there is advantage in making only an indirect reference’ (*Rhet. Her.* 4.27.37) – which indicates that it could in effect serve any number of purposes. A clearer instance of *paraleipsis* is Heb 11.32, where the author states that ‘time would fail me (ἐπιλείψει με ὁ χρόνος) to tell of...’ and then lists further OT exemplars of faith.<sup>122</sup> Listing (*epitrochasmus* or enumeration)<sup>123</sup> is also found in Heb 9.2–5, although here occurring before the phrase in 9.5b.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> E.g. Weiß 1991: 452.

<sup>120</sup> Braun 1984: 251, 254 suggests an implied contrast between the grandeur of the tabernacle and the inefficacy of its worship; so also Grässer 1990: 2.127; Bénétreau 1988: 2.67. Bénétreau also interprets Heb 9.5b as the author’s invitation to moderation (2.70).

<sup>121</sup> Koester 2001: 404; cf. Backhaus 2009a: 307. ‘We say that we are passing by, or do not know, or refuse to say that which precisely now we are saying’ (*Rhet. Her.* 4.27.37).

<sup>122</sup> So Lane 1991: 2.383. Cf. Philo *Sacr.* 27 for the very close ἐπιλείψει με ἡ ἡμέρα; *Spec.* 4.238 for a similar expression with καταλείπω.

<sup>123</sup> *Percursio* and *praeteritio* (the Latin for *epitrochasmus* and *paraleipsis*, respectively) often occur together. Backhaus 2009a: 307.

<sup>124</sup> A related figure is *aposiopesis*, ‘when something is said and then the rest of what the speaker had begun to say is left unfinished [...]. Here a suspicion, unexpressed, becomes more telling than a detailed explanation would have been.’ (*Rhet. Her.* 4.30.41).

Attention to classical rhetoric in this case suggests both the relevance and relativization of the subject in hand; yet even where a rhetorical figure is precisely identified, *how* it is used in a particular text remains paramount.<sup>125</sup> Hebrews 9.5b certainly means the author could speak at greater length about the cultic furniture and vessels (*vñv* implies that while it is not necessary/appropriate to speak about them *now*, he could speak about them later – though in fact he does not in the rest of the letter); it is also certain that the thing of greater importance to which he proceeds is the ministry within the two compartments, which foreshadows the work of Christ (9.6–14). Yet, given that there was no need to mention the cultic vessels at all (9.2 from ἐν ἧ̃ to ἄρτων, and 9.4–5a), or indeed to include 9.5b, it also seems likely that this phrase should be taken as an indication of their importance. As it stands, the phrase suggests there are occasions when it is appropriate to go into detail about cultic furniture; if it were an attempt to disparage the tabernacle or to dismiss allegorical speculation, or an invitation to moderation, it would require more explicit indication and in the opposite direction.<sup>126</sup>

The immediately preceding context to 9.6 is therefore a brief but positive evocation of the tabernacle. The valuable nature of the priests' regular service becomes particularly apparent when 9.6 is considered as part of the wider contrast that is made in 9.6–7, and the interpretation of this given in 9.8–10. With a μέν... δέ construction, the continual entrance of the priests is contrasted with the annual entrance of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. When we come to 9.8, this arrangement is said to show that 'the way in to the sanctuary' (τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδόν) has not yet been revealed. This is

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<sup>125</sup> Deploying *paraleipsis* himself, Quintilian indicates that a lengthy search for a precise categorization is ultimately perhaps best abandoned: 'I will pass by those authors who set no limit to their craze for inventing technical terms' (*Inst.* 9.3.99).

<sup>126</sup> The author 'describes with affectionate reverence the ordered arrangements of the Old Sanctuary and its furniture'. Westcott 1920: 244.

best understood as a reference to the most holy place, given the contrast with the ‘first tent’ later in 9.8, and the usage of the neuter plural τὰ ἅγια elsewhere in Hebrews.<sup>127</sup> That is to say, the arrangement of the tabernacle shows the *inaccessibility* of the holy of holies, and in preparation for this point the author stresses the *accessibility* of the first tent or outer sanctuary in 9.6.<sup>128</sup> This emphasis on continual access is reinforced by the description of the cultic service that occurs in each place: the present tense of εἶσεμι emphasizes the continuous aspect, which is reinforced by the phrase διὰ παντός, and the priests are said to ‘perform their services’, without hindrance. The description of the most holy place, by contrast, is carefully constructed to emphasize the barriers to access: entrance is once a year, it is only the high priest (not just any priest), and that not without blood, and this blood must be offered for himself before it can be offered for the people. The desired access or atoning act occurs only at the end of a long sequence of barriers and conditions.

What is more, this interpretation of the tabernacle so as to stress the inaccessibility of the most holy place is not some innovation on Hebrews’ part; rather, it is a commonplace of first-century Judaism. We noted in Chapter One the Pentateuchal tradition that the high priest’s entry is to be *once a year* (ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, Lev 16.34 LXX; cf. Exod 30.10 [2x]; Heb 9.7), a tradition echoed in a variety of Second Temple texts (§§2.4–5). In *3 Macc.* 1–2 Ptolemy IV Philopator tries to enter the most holy

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<sup>127</sup> [O]ur author consistently uses the neuter plural with the article to mean the sanctuary, that is the inner and not [...] the outer Tent’. Montefiore 1964: 144; So also Schenck 2007: 145–47; Koester 2001: 397; Weiß 1991: 457; Bénétreau 1988: 2.72; Young 1981: 198–99. Ounsworth 2012: 160 argues that the six occurrences of τὰ ἅγια (with the article) in Hebrews occur only when the distinction between the two parts of the tabernacle is not in view, and thus the term refers to the sanctuary as a whole. However, in all of these cases the entrance of the high priest (9:25; 13:11) or of Christ as high priest (8:2; 9:12; 10:19) is in view, and it matters that he enters not the sanctuary in general but the most holy place in particular.

<sup>128</sup> This point escapes most commentators, though Bénétreau correctly notes: ‘L’intérêt se concentre sur l’accès permanent [...], avec toutefois limitation à la première tente.’ Bénétreau 1988: 2.71.

place. The protestations of the Jews bear a resemblance to Hebrews: ‘not even members of their own nation were allowed to enter, not even all of the priests, but only the high priest who was pre-eminent over all – and he only once a year’ (κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν ἅπαξ 1.11). A similar objection is raised by Philo (*Legat.* 306–7) to persuade the Emperor not to place a statue within the holy of holies: no-one else may enter, not even Jews, not even priests, not even the first rank of priest; even the high priest may not enter on two separate days of the year, or indeed even three or more times on the Day of Atonement. Pompey entered the most holy place in 63 BC, an act Josephus decries as an excess and unlawful (*War* 1.152–53; *Ant.* 14.71–73; cf. Tacitus *Hist.* 5.9).

However, it is not simply the restricted access to the most holy place which Hebrews stresses, but its *invisibility*. Heb 9.8 claims that the arrangement of the tabernacle demonstrates that ‘the way into the most holy place has not yet been revealed while the first tent is still standing’. Commentators often object that the literal understanding of this verse is nonsensical – it makes no sense to think of the outer tent of the tabernacle being knocked down or somehow not existing so that the second, inner tent can be accessed.<sup>129</sup> They therefore conclude that ἡ πρώτη σκηνή can only be a reference to the first tabernacle taken as a whole. Yet ἡ πρώτη σκηνή refers to the outer tent when it occurs earlier in 9.2 and 6, so we should presume it has the same referent here unless and until we have reason to think otherwise.<sup>130</sup> Attridge takes this view: ‘The point then is that as long as the cultic system connected with the outer portion of the earthly tabernacle “has standing,” the way to both the earthly and heavenly ἄγια is

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<sup>129</sup> This sense is ‘peculiar’ and an ‘incongruity’, Koester 2001: 405.

<sup>130</sup> So Young 1981: 200. Ellingworth takes it to refer to the tabernacle as a whole, pointing out that those taking other views ‘tend to underestimate the facility with which the author can glide from one meaning of an expression to another’. Ellingworth 1993: 438. I do allow for the author’s transition from one sense to another, but in a less abrupt way; see below.

blocked.<sup>131</sup> But this contradicts what has just been said: the high priest *does* have access to the most holy place, however heavily restricted this may be; Attridge is forced to qualify: ‘The access that the high priest has to that sacred realm does not signify its openness, but is only, as it were, the exception that proves the rule.’<sup>132</sup> Rather than labelling the high priest’s entrance ‘the exception that proves the rule,’ however, the difficulty can be resolved by taking seriously the term *πεφανερῶσθαι*:<sup>133</sup> it is not simply that the way into the most holy place had not yet been ‘revealed’, in a figurative sense, but that it quite literally was not *visible* – and it is not visible as long as the first tent is standing.

The assertion that the most holy place, or even the entrance to it, is unseen while the outer tent can be seen is found widely in contemporary texts.<sup>134</sup> In his description of the tabernacle, Josephus points out that there was a plain linen veil over the curtain at the entrance to the outer tent, which protected the actual curtain from snow and other inclement weather, yet which could be drawn back so that the sanctuary could be seen (*πρὸς τὸ κατοπτέυσθαι*, *Ant.* 3.128–29). Inside the tabernacle, however, there was a veil which concealed the most holy place, so that no-one could see it (*μηδενὶ κάτοπτον*, 3.125). In describing Herod’s temple, Josephus notes that one gate in the wall surrounding the temple itself has no doors, representing the invisible and uncontainable nature of heaven. Through this gate, the ‘first house’ in all its grandeur is visible (*καταφαίνω*), but he immediately qualifies that only the outer part of the temple can be

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<sup>131</sup> Attridge 1989: 240.

<sup>132</sup> Attridge 1989: 240; cf. O’Brien 2010: 313 who follows Attridge on this point.

<sup>133</sup> I owe this point to Ounsworth 2012: 160–62. Although he does not appeal to the contemporary literature which supports this point, he expresses it well: ‘the way in, *though it exists*, is not only of extremely limited availability but is, more importantly, hidden from the view of the People of God’ (emphasis original). Cf. Ellingworth 1993: 438; Stegemann and Stegemann 2005: 22.

<sup>134</sup> See also Beale 2004: 33–38.

seen, because it is divided into two inside: the most holy place is veiled by a curtain, and he later describes it as invisible, ἀθέατος (*War* 5.208–12, 219).<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Philo describes the innermost part of the temple as beautiful beyond description, and *invisible* (ἀόρατος) to everyone except the high priest (*Spec.* 1.72), who sees what is invisible to others (τὰ ἀθέατα ἄλλοις, *Ebr.* 136). On Yom Kippur the high priest makes a cloud of smoke with incense, preventing others from seeing into the most holy place (*Spec.* 1.72). In the same context Philo stresses the visibility (τὴν ... ἀκριβῆ θεάν) of the temple due to the wide open spaces that surround it (1.74–75). The Mishnah reinforces this same point by describing a double veil in front of the inner sanctuary, with a space of one cubit between the two drops (*m. Yoma* 5.1; *m. Mid.* 4.7; cf. *b. Yoma* 54a).<sup>136</sup>

These examples demonstrate that it is not impossible or incomprehensible to take Heb 9.8 in its literal, spatial sense: no-one can see the entrance to the most holy place because the holy place shields it from view. However, this is not to say that 9.8 must have a uniquely spatial sense; the reference to the Holy Spirit indicates that the author is beginning to interpret the significance of the tabernacle, and the adverbs μήπω and ἔτι suggest that a temporal sense is being introduced.<sup>137</sup> The author of Hebrews shows himself to be adept at subtly shifting meanings through the recurrence of a particular term.<sup>138</sup> Understood in this sense, 9.8 indicates that just as the most holy place cannot be seen because of the outer tent, so also the *true* or *heavenly* most holy place could not be seen while the first tent (i.e. the whole tabernacle system) existed. That the author has begun to move on to symbolic interpretation of the tabernacle is made clear

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<sup>135</sup> Josephus also says the altar in Solomon's temple was positioned so as to be visible when the doors were open, such that when fire descended and consumed the sacrifices, all could see it; *Ant.* 8.105, 118.

<sup>136</sup> McKelvey 2013: 191.

<sup>137</sup> So Young 1981: 200; Bénétreau 1988: 2.72; Stanley 1995: 394.

<sup>138</sup> The referent of πρῶτος has already shifted between Heb 8 and 9.1–2. Stanley 1995: 386.

by the next verse, 9.9: it is only here that he explicitly states that this is a παραβολή for the present time.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, whereas the most holy place was not visible, Heb 2.9 states that ‘we see Jesus’. More pertinent to this context, the only other occurrence of φανερώω in the letter comes in 9:26: whereas the high priest entered the most holy place unseen once a year, this verse describes Jesus as the one who has *appeared once for all* to put away sin by his sacrifice.

Before venturing too far into the comparison with Jesus, however, it is worth pausing to take stock: Heb 9.8, understood literally and spatially, is a statement that would not be surprising to a Hellenistic Jewish audience. Taken together with earlier comments, it can be affirmed that there is *nothing* in the description of the tabernacle’s arrangement, furnishings, service, and significance in Heb 9.1–8 which is out of place in the context of first-century Jewish understandings of the tabernacle.<sup>140</sup>

With this context established, we can return to Heb 9.6 itself. The adverbial phrase διὰ παντός which describes the ongoing entrance of the priests is neutral in and of itself, with its particular connotation determined by its immediate context (cf. 2.15, continual fear of death; 13.15, continual praise). However, when we look at occurrences of the term in the LXX, particularly in the Pentateuch, διὰ παντός clusters in cultic sections and almost always translates דָּמִית, referring to the regular tabernacle service,<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Stanley 1995: 395 wonders which reading is correct (two parts of the earthly tabernacle, or earthly vs heavenly tabernacle). He concludes: ‘They both are, since the full significance of the παραβολή is understood by substituting corresponding referents for the two ambiguous terms.’

<sup>140</sup> The placement of the incense altar (the most likely meaning of θυμιατήριον here) inside the most holy place (Heb 9.4) is somewhat unusual; it is however a possible reading of Exod 30.1–10.

<sup>141</sup> Within the Pentateuch, the phrase διὰ παντός qualifies the lamp, the showbread, the fire on the altar, priestly garments, and especially regular offerings, 25x in: Exod 25.30; 27.20; 28.30, 38; 30.8; Lev 6.6, 13; 24.2, 8; Num 4.7; 28.10, 15, 23–24, 31; 29.6, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38; Deut 33.10. Other occurrences of the term (6x) which are not related to the cult are found in Lev 11.42; 25.31–32; Num 9.16; Deut 11.12. Hamm 2004: 51 n. 5 counts 118 occurrences within the LXX as a whole, of which 72 translate דָּמִית, of these, 35 are in a cultic context. Outside the Pentateuch the phrase does occasionally

the usage of the Hebrew word is so ubiquitous that the term *tamid* on its own comes to refer to the regular, daily sacrifices. Awareness of this fact makes clear that Hebrews' use of διὰ παντός is not hyperbole. Rather, in a cultic context διὰ παντός is a technical term for the *tamid*.<sup>142</sup> This entire passage is therefore descriptive rather than polemical, and the mere mention of the regular Levitical service cannot be taken to denigrate the sacrifices' repetitious nature.

#### 6.4.7 Hebrews 9.1–14: Typology and the Tabernacle

In the previous section it has been argued that 9.6 should be understood to value the regular *tamid* service fulfilled by the priests, in order to form a contrast with the restricted access that is represented by the high priest's once-yearly entrance into the most holy place. Next we must consider the way in which the whole tabernacle is compared with Christ (cf. Εἶχε μὲν, 9.1, with Χριστὸς δέ, 9.11, indicating comparison). This comparison is prepared in 9.9–10, which relativizes the efficacy of the Levitical cult; the basis for this becomes clear in 9.11–14. Verses 11–12 demonstrate how the Christ event corresponds to and fulfils the tabernacle, while 9.13–14 make clear using an explicit *qal wahomer* the greater significance or effect of Christ's sacrificial offering.<sup>143</sup> The relationship between the tabernacle and Christ is typological, but the typology does not exist simply between the high priest's entrance ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ and Christ's entrance ἐφάπαξ, once-and-for-all. This is the focal point for the

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denote regular sacrifices, as in 1 Chron 23.30–31; Isa 30.29. In the Psalms it tends to be used in a more general sense; cf. e.g. Pss (LXX) 18.15; 33.2; 34.27; 39.17; 69.5; 70.6; 118.117.

<sup>142</sup> For an account of the *tamid* service see Schürer et al. 1973: 2.292–308. Cf. Philo, *Legat.* 157, 280; Jos., *Ant.* 3.224–57. Attacks on the temple cult in the Qumran documents (e.g. 1QpHab; 4Q174) focus on its impurity, and many of the texts look forward to the restoration of a pure cult, showing the value placed on the correct practice of the *tamid*.

<sup>143</sup> So, e.g., Weiß 1991: 463.

correspondence, but it is not the whole of it. Indeed, taken on its own this correspondence is somewhat problematic: if an entrance once a year represents restricted access, then an entrance once-for-all surely means *even less* access.

Furthermore, Yom Kippur alone does not explain why Hebrews describes *both parts* of the tabernacle in 9.2–5, in preparation for its description in 9.6–7 of the cultic service which takes place in *both tents*.

Felix Cortez notes this problem with the traditional understanding of the Day of Atonement in Hebrews as a type of Christ's crucifixion and entrance into heaven, which he describes as 'an incomplete typology'.<sup>144</sup> He notes both that various aspects of the Day of Atonement are missing in Hebrews, and that in certain regards Hebrews' description is inconsistent with the rite as described in the OT. Six inconsistencies are listed: 1) in Hebrews the blood is 'offered' not 'sprinkled' (9.7); 2) sprinkling of blood, when mentioned, is associated with covenant inauguration and not the day of atonement (9.15–23); 3) sacrifices of 'male goats' described by Hebrews were not in fact offered on the Day of Atonement; 4) purification of sins is effected *before* Christ's entrance into the most holy place; 5) the purification offering (9.11–23) conflates images from the Day of Atonement, the red heifer ceremony, covenant institution, and the ordination of priests; 6) the ratification of the covenant plays a dominant role in Hebrews, as seen in Christ's description as mediator of a new covenant.<sup>145</sup> In place of the traditional understanding he proposes that the tabernacle and its cult function as an illustration (this

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<sup>144</sup> Cortez 2006: 528.

<sup>145</sup> Cortez 2006: 528–29.

is a possible sense for παραβολή, 9.8) of the transition from the old to the new age, and that only the one-off covenant inauguration ceremony functions typologically.<sup>146</sup>

Cortez's study correctly recognizes that the identification of the Day of Atonement *on its own* as a type does not adequately account for Hebrews' use of other features of the tabernacle cult, both spatial (inner as well as outer sanctuary) and temporal (festivals and ceremonies such as covenant inauguration, red heifer, ordination). The solution he proposes is that interpreters should not regard the Day of Atonement as a type; by contrast, I suggest that a better solution is to regard the *entire* tabernacle cult as typological. That is to say, Cortez resolves the difficulty by reducing the scope of typology in Hebrews, whereas here I argue that we should instead extend it.

To begin with, let us examine the inconsistencies Cortez identifies. Number (4) states that Hebrews envisages purification occurring *before* the high priest's entrance into the most holy place. Yet the verses cited do not support this claim.<sup>147</sup> Hebrews 1.3 states that after Christ had effected purification for sins (ποησάμενος, aorist participle preceding main verb, most likely indicating temporal precedence) he sat down (ἐκάθισεν). This verse reflects Hebrews' deliberate unification of images of a messianic enthronement based on Ps 110.1 with cultic elements from the Day of Atonement. Significantly, the verse does not imply that Christ entered the heavenly most holy place/throne room *after* providing purification; rather, it does not mention entrance at all

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<sup>146</sup> This part of Cortez's thesis is hard to sustain given the extensive usage of (ἐφ)άπαξ in Hebrews to describe Christ's atoning action (7.27; 9.12, 26, 28; 10.10), which is clearly derived from the Day of Atonement, described as ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ (Exod 30.10; Lev 16.34; cf. the references given in §2.3.3). In *Jubilees* and at Qumran the Festival of Weeks gains the designation 'once a year' (§2.4.1); yet this is *renewal* not *inauguration* of the covenant, and is therefore equally singular within each year and equally repetitious from year to year as the Day of Atonement.

<sup>147</sup> Cortez cites Heb 1.3 and 9.7, though the second of these says nothing about the sequencing of Christ's atoning work. One other verse which could support this view is 9.12, which I therefore examine below.

and is thus entirely consistent with Hebrews' view of Christ's entrance into heaven occurring *before* purification and session, something which in turn coheres with the OT understanding of the Day of Atonement.<sup>148</sup> As for 9.12, εὐράμενος could imply that Jesus entered the (heavenly) sanctuary *after he had obtained* redemption; in fact, however, the aorist participle can indicate subsequent action, especially when it follows the main verb.<sup>149</sup> All of the other inconsistencies Cortez identifies are cases where Hebrews integrates aspects of other cultic festivals or ceremonies into its account of Jesus' atoning action. That is to say, these should be considered not as inconsistent with the Day of Atonement, nor as based exclusively on covenant inauguration, but as deliberately combining various images. This brings us to a discussion of typology.

Typology serves as a heuristic device for understanding the way in which biblical authors drew correspondences between a (scripturally) recorded event, figure, or institution and a more recent one, in order to explicate the significance certainly of the latter, and also (possibly) of the former.<sup>150</sup> Although it is a modern term, it draws on ancient usage of the τύπος word-group to describe such relationships (see discussion of τύπος in §6.2.1). While typology requires the identification of analogies or correspondences between two entities, it does not require similarity in every respect; in fact, absolute identity would entail not so much a typological relationship as one of simple iteration. Indeed, George Caird noted that the exegetical procedure of Hebrews involves expounding OT texts so as to reveal a 'self-confessed inadequacy' out of

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<sup>148</sup> On understanding Hebrews in line with the sacrificial logic of the OT, see Cody 1960: 170–202; Brooks 1970; Nelson 2003; Mackie 2007: 95–98; Moffitt 2011. For an outline of the wider context and implications of a sequential understanding of the atonement see Kibbe 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Porter 1989: 385–387, esp. 387; so NIV, NRSV, ESV.

<sup>150</sup> Richardson 2012: 7–8.

which typology emerges, an insight affirmed by more recent scholars, as noted in §4.4.1.<sup>151</sup>

The antitype therefore need not correspond in a complete or systematic way to its type; if this is so, then we can continue to understand the Day of Atonement as a type, in line with most commentators. The importance of analogy but not absolute correspondence allows other ceremonies to be seen as typological, including aspects of covenant inauguration as noted by Cortez. Most significantly for the current discussion, Caird's observation can be applied to Heb 9.1–10: if the whole of the tabernacle in its arrangement and service functions as a type for the atonement achieved by Christ, we should expect to see analogies and 'self-confessed inadequacies' in *both its parts*. This is precisely what we do see: the priests' service is unlimited temporally, but spatially restricted to the first tent; the high priest's service is unlimited spatially – he can access the most holy place – but temporally it is restricted to just one day in the year. Similarly, the outer tent is visible, but does not provide access to the very presence of God, while the inner part is accessed once a year, but it cannot be seen. Put another way, tabernacle service is neither sufficiently continuous, nor sufficiently once-for-all; it effects neither the full visibility nor the full accessibility of God's presence. In these ways its inadequacy is revealed, and thus it points beyond itself; but it points to something *analogous to, yet greater than* itself.

Continuity and singularity cohere perfectly in Christ: 9.12 states that he entered *once for all* into the most holy place, thus obtaining an *eternal* redemption.<sup>152</sup> A further

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<sup>151</sup> Caird 1959. Typology involves 'contrast, superiority, and finality', Richardson 2012: 8; cf. Ounsworth 2012: 78–89, 96.

<sup>152</sup> John Owen's extensive *Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* contains this comment on Heb 9.6: 'Now all this daily service was typical. And that which it did represent was the

connection between the *tamid* and the sacrifice of Christ in the extended comparison of 9.1–14 is suggested by the statement ‘he offered himself to God through eternal spirit’ (9.14). Highlighting a traditional interpretation of this verse, Vanhoye has argued that the unusual phrase ‘eternal spirit’ deliberately parallels the ‘perpetual fire’ of the tabernacle/temple altar. Although the bodies of the bull and goat on Yom Kippur, like that of the red heifer (cf. 9.13), were burned outside the camp, the fat of the sin-offering and the rams for the burnt-offering were incinerated on the altar. The description of Christ ‘offering his body’ (10.10) evokes the burnt-offering (the only sacrifice in which the whole body was offered), suggesting that a link to fire in Christ’s sacrifice is not implausible. Further, strikingly similar wording to Heb 9.14 describes the perpetual fire in 1 Esd 6.23 (cf. ὅπου ἐπιθύουσιν διὰ πυρὸς ἐνδεδεχοῦς with ὅς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἐαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν).<sup>153</sup> This suggests that the results of Christ’s sacrifice – eternal redemption (9.12) and eternal inheritance (9.15) – are due to the work of the eternal Spirit *as foreshadowed by* the perpetual fire of the tabernacle altar.

Because Christ’s sacrifice is perfect, its effects are permanent; this is an association we have seen extensively in the preceding sections. Furthermore, this helps explain why the heavenly sanctuary appears, in Hebrews’ conception, to have only one and not two compartments: this arrangement in the earthly tabernacle was necessary to separate the singular and the continual; these are united in the new covenant, giving full and permanent access to the very presence of God, and thus there is no need to suppose that heaven has an outer sanctuary.<sup>154</sup> With regard to 9.6, the point is that the regular service of the priests does not function in simple or negative opposition to the singular

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*continual application* of the benefits of the *sacrifice and whole mediation* of Christ unto the church here in this world.’ Owen 1980: 6.228 (emphasis added).

<sup>153</sup> Vanhoye 1983: esp. 267–71.

<sup>154</sup> So, e.g., Lindars 1991: 91.

service of Christ. It is rather part of a complex comparison in which it highlights both the uniqueness and the restriction of the high priest's entrance on the Day of Atonement – which in turn grounds the uniqueness of and spatial access provided by Christ's entrance – and also indicates the temporal perpetuity of access found through Christ. The people of God must avail themselves of this access, and it is to a consideration of this that we turn in the following section.

## **6.5 A Repeated New Covenant Cultus**

### **6.5.1 Regular Meetings and their Cultic Context**

The discussion of repetition in relationship to cult would be incomplete without consideration of the implied – or indeed, sometimes overtly exhorted – repetition in the practice of Hebrews' new covenant addressees. We have already considered briefly the climactic paraenetic section 10.19–25 in Chapter Five alongside the warning passages and their exhortation to intensive and regular community activity as the root of perseverance and thus the alternative to apostasy. The concern of the present section is to revisit this passage and its 'partner' 4.14–16, which together form an *inclusio* demarcating Hebrews' sacrificial section, with an eye to the cultic language employed.

It is clear that what Christians have abundantly meets the requirements of any cult, strictly defined: a sanctuary (10.19; cf. 4.16, the 'throne of grace' is God's heavenly throne, whose earthly counterpart was the 'mercy seat' [ἰλαστήριον] in the

holy of holies)<sup>155</sup> in which God is present and which is a source of help; a ‘great (high) priest’ (4.14; 10.21) who not only has entered that sanctuary himself but also enables the participation – not just the representation – of his followers (4.14; 10.19–20); and a ritual purification which prepares that entry (10.22). As discussed in §6.2.2, such language is not adequately described as metaphor or ‘spiritualization’; rather, it derives its status and reality from its connection to the heavenly sanctuary. In this sense, then, Christians have a cult and that cult is more substantial than any other; the confessional refrain ‘we have’ or ‘since we have’ (ἔχομεν and ἔχοντες) recurs throughout Hebrews, always referring to a cultic reality (4.14, 15; 6.19; 8.1; 10.19; 13.10). On the basis of the possession of (the right to access) such heavenly realities the audience is urged to draw near: Scholer has shown that the use of προσέρχομαι in Hebrews is thoroughly cultic (in addition to 4.16 and 10.22, cf. 7.25; 10.1; 11.6; 12.18, 22).<sup>156</sup> Similarly, believers are said to have been perfected; as discussed above, such language does not automatically bear connotations of sacerdotal consecration, yet it is used of Christians in cultic contexts (10.14; 12.23). Hebrews nowhere says that Christians are priests, and all sorts of speculations as to why this is so could be (and have been) made; but it does intimate heavily that their existence is priestly.

The focus of the final section of this chapter is the kind and extent of regularity or repetition with which Christians access this cult. In 4.14–16 this is left open: the command is to draw near with confidence without any indication as to when or how often; the present subjunctive does at least suggest repeated approach.<sup>157</sup> The fact that such action will result in ‘timely help’ (εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν) might suggest that the

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<sup>155</sup> Attridge 1989: 142.

<sup>156</sup> Scholer 1991: 91–149. Cf. Calaway 2013: 159–62.

<sup>157</sup> Scholer 1991: 127.

appeal is primarily to draw near in times of need (so most English translations), although the exhortation is more general and it is possible that the present tense connotes regular approach to the throne of grace such that when a time of need comes, the believer is already accessing the source of mercy and grace which will sustain him through it. Admittedly this is a matter of inference; two significant additional pieces of information are given in 10.19–25.

The first of these is the mention of the cleansing of heart and conscience in 10.22, and the parallel balancing reference to pure water. This is usually thought to refer to baptism; the language in both clauses has a primary cultic reference so this is properly understood as an allusion. The juxtaposition of sprinkling with blood and washing with water recalls the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests (Exod 29.4, 21; Lev 8.6, 10);<sup>158</sup> sprinkling with blood and washing with water each also feature separately in various rites (blood for covenant inauguration, Exod 24.6–8; cf. Heb 9.18–22; water frequently for purification: *Jub.* 21.16; Num 5.17; Ezek 36.25; note also that a technical phrase involving λούω, καθάρως, σῶμα, and ὕδωρ is found frequently in the LXX, e.g. Lev 14.9; 15.11; Num 19.7–8; Deut 23.12). Cockerill objects to seeing an allusion to baptism here, countering that the perfect participles (ῥεραντισμένοι, λελουσμένοι) indicate that ‘not only having been, but continuing to be, cleansed is a prerequisite for entrance into the divine presence’.<sup>159</sup> Barnard understands the perfect in a similar way to Cockerill, although he interprets the washing literally, referring it to the ongoing practice of ritual immersion as a preparation for mystical experience by the

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<sup>158</sup> On this basis Leithart 2000 argues that baptism fulfills the old covenant priestly ordination rite, rendering all new covenant believers priests. Scholer 1991: 129–31 sees the Day of Atonement rite as uppermost; perhaps rather surprisingly, given the possible connection of baptism with priestly ordination, he rejects any notion of baptism here (p. 130 n. 4).

<sup>159</sup> Cockerill 2012: 475; Bénétreau 1988: 2.113–16 also doubts an allusion to baptism.

community, much like the regular immersions in the *mikvaoth* at Qumran.<sup>160</sup> Yet the use of the perfect suggests that what is ongoing is the *effect* of a past action, not the action itself.<sup>161</sup> Barnard counters that the perfect does not indicate whether the antecedent action ‘was something that happened regularly or only once’.<sup>162</sup> The context nevertheless tells against Barnard’s interpretation: in 10.19–25 exhortation to present and ongoing approach to God is grounded in the definitive possession of access provided by Christ.

Within Hebrews, the language of 10.22 closely echoes 9.14 (Christ’s blood cleansing the conscience), and also terminology of ritual sanctification in 10.10, 14, where the once-for-all and definitive nature of the cleansing enjoyed by the new covenant believer is in view. While 6.2 refers to βαπτισμοί in the plural, it is plausible that this reference covers both an initiatory baptism and ongoing ablutions (cf. §5.2, and Heb 9.10 where the term is used only of ritual washings); the former need not exclude the latter if the reasons for which they were undergone differ sufficiently, as is clear from the baptismal sects examined in §3.3.1. The point, then, is not that Barnard is necessarily incorrect to suppose that Hebrews’ audience may have undergone regular water purity rites, but that these are not in view in Heb 10.22 which speaks of a singular rite connected to definitive cleansing.

A further significant parallel to Heb 10.22 is found in 1 Pet 3.21, which describes baptism as ‘the appeal of a good conscience’, and contrasts this with the removal of dirt from the flesh. Barnard, following Bénétreau, suggests that this verse

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<sup>160</sup> Barnard 2012: 196–208.

<sup>161</sup> So Gäbel 2006: 387–88.

<sup>162</sup> Barnard 2012: 200.

*denies* that Christian baptism is a washing of the body.<sup>163</sup> Yet 1 Pet 3.21 in fact assumes physical washing with water: this is what βάπτισμα (and all the more the cognate verb βαπτίζειν) denotes. To deny that Christian baptism involves physical washing on the basis of 1 Pet 3.21 is to misunderstand the Semitic idiom whereby a relative contrast is stated in absolute terms (cf. Hos 6.6; Jer 7.22–23; Matt 15.11). Common to both texts are mention of the internal and external aspects of baptism, the designation of the former as the ‘conscience’ (συνειδήσις), and its privileging as ‘of first importance’ (if such an inference may be drawn from the fact that the sprinkling of the heart is mentioned first in Heb 10.22). These similarities show the two verses to be closely parallel, and in the context of wider affinities between the two texts<sup>164</sup> this strengthens the suggestion that an allusion to baptism is to be discerned here.

The significance of this baptismal allusion is that Hebrews, although at pains to stress the importance of the internal and everlasting cleansing of the conscience – and thus also to relativize that which is external, physical, and temporary – nevertheless does not take the internal, spiritual and eternal nature of Christian salvation to be exclusive of physical acts or rites (cf. Heb 9.13).<sup>165</sup> Moreover, the act of baptism does not replace any Jewish rites but is rather modelled on them,<sup>166</sup> continuing in the same vein of providing cultic purity. Such purity is however definitive, and thus baptism is

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<sup>163</sup> Barnard 2012: 197. 1 Pet 3.21 ‘à propos du baptême, exclut une action sur le corps’, Bénétreau 1988: 2.114.

<sup>164</sup> On which see Attridge 1989: 30–31; Spicq 1952: 1.139–44; Hurst 1990: 125–30.

<sup>165</sup> Attridge sees this reference to external washing as ‘somewhat surprising’, but nevertheless admits the allusion to baptism. Attridge 1989: 288–89. On the co-existence of an emphasis on the internal alongside allowing a role for the external, I am in complete agreement with Barnard: ‘For the author of Hebrews, bodily and spiritual purity were probably closely connected.’ Barnard 2012: 200; cf. 198–202. Cf. Leithart 2000: 52.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Hebrews does envision an *ecclesiological* fulfilment of Old Testament rites and institutions’ Leithart 2000: 51 (emphasis added). The Pseudo-Clementines are comparable yet also quite different: there baptism replaces expiatory sacrifice

also one-off. The regular worship of the community is grounded on a singular cultic event which is represented in the life of each believer by a purificatory rite.<sup>167</sup>

Hebrews 10.22 suggests that the uniqueness of Christ's atoning act imprints Christian worship with a similarly singular character, at least in the matter of this particular rite. Alongside this, however, we find an indication of the regularity of Christian practice in the term ἐπισυναγωγή in 10.25. In §5.5 the urgency of Christian meeting was noted. Only in 10.25, however, is a term found which might imply something more formal than simply meeting together. In both 2 Macc 2.7 and 1 Thess 2.1 it has an eschatological connotation, the gathering together of all God's people by God and Jesus respectively (the verb ἐπισυνάγω also denotes eschatological gathering in 2 Macc 1.27; Ps 105.47 [LXX]; Matt 23.37; 24.31; Mark 13.27; Luke 13.34). The eschatological tone of Heb 10.25 is also marked, although it is clear here that ἐπισυναγωγή denotes a regular meeting of the community rather than the final gathering.<sup>168</sup> A link between the two is of course not hard to imagine: one anticipates the other. The unaugmented form συναγωγή refers to a Christian gathering in Jas 2.2; Herm. *Man.* 11.9, 13–14; Ign. *Pol.* 4.2 (appealing for more frequent meetings); in none of these instances is there an indication of how often such meetings occurred. The term συναγωγή also occurs frequently in polemical references to other Jewish groups, whether generic or specific (e.g. Matt 10.17; Mark 13.9; Rev 2.9; 3.9; *Barn.* 5.13; 6.6; cf. John 9.22; 12.42 for the adjective ἀποσυνάγωγος). Given this, the use of ἐπισυναγωγή may suggest continuity with the synagogue but also emphasise the

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<sup>167</sup> '[B]aptism is the ritual enactment of the gospel of Hebrews', Leithart 2000: 64.

<sup>168</sup> For the broader NT context of 'the Day' in relation to the *parousia* see Eisele 2003: 86–90.

distinctness of Hebrews' addressees from other (non-Jesus believing) Jewish communities.<sup>169</sup>

If Hebrews was sent to a Jewish Christian community which understood itself to exist in continuity with the synagogue, they likely would have held corporate prayer on the Sabbath (cf. Acts 13.14; 15.21; 18.4; Acts 17.17 may imply a distinction between weekly discussions in the synagogue and daily ones in the agora). Lane suggests on the basis of 3.13 that the meeting may have been daily; however, ἐπισυναγωγή suggests a more formal gathering of the whole community, which was likely to occur once a week, whereas 3.13 requires mutual exhortation but with no intimation of this larger corporate dimension. Like the synagogues which stemmed back to the exile and which were a key element in sustaining Jewish identity in the Diaspora, Hebrews' audience holds a regular meeting which is necessitated by their distance from the temple and serves as a means of participating in it. In Hebrews, however, the connection is at once more remote and more direct: the temple is heaven itself, not in Jerusalem, yet participation in its cult requires no half-shekel tax or proxy sacrifices, but is rather instantaneous.

### 6.5.2 The (Anti-?)Cultic Argument of Hebrews 13

In addition to the prominent paraenesis of Hebrews 4 and 10, cultic language is used to exhort the addressees in 13.9–16. This section forms part of the 'epistolary ending' of the letter, which extends from 13.1–25 (with closing benediction and greetings in 13.20–25), and consists of a series of short ethical instructions.<sup>170</sup> Not dissimilar from

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<sup>169</sup> So Koester 2001: 446. He also suggests that ἐπι- may have local connotations.

<sup>170</sup> The connection of Heb 13 to the rest of the document has been challenged by Buchanan 1972; Wedderburn 2004. For a defence of the letter's integrity see Thurén 1973: 246–47. Despite Buchanan's view that ch. 13 is something of a scissors and paste job, Thurén demonstrates compellingly the parallels

those found in the latter part of many of Paul's letters, this chapter is nevertheless much briefer and more elliptical than a typical Pauline ethical section, and all the more so in proportion to the length of the rest of Hebrews: Backhaus comments that the theological mountain brings forth a moral mouse.<sup>171</sup>

The section of Hebrews 13 which concerns us here has been described as 'among the most difficult passages of the entire New Testament.'<sup>172</sup> In contrast to the paratactic injunctions of 13.1–6, verses 9–16 contain a connected series of indicatives, imperatives and hortatory subjunctives, forming a sustained argument which appeals extensively to cultic categories; the external referents of the section are not elaborated in the text and are at best opaque. These verses are crucial to the view that Hebrews polemicizes against Judaism, or at least appeals to its audience to leave Judaism and its practices.<sup>173</sup> As the central concern here is to examine indications of repeated Christian practice and its relationship to repetition in the old covenant, some assessment of this interpretation must be made before we can focus on a couple of salient features, the altar and the sacrifice of praise (13.10, 15–16). Two problems with such a reading can be noted immediately: first, the tendency to study 13.9–14 in an isolated fashion without consideration of what lies around it, particularly 13.15–16, but also 13.7–8 and indeed the whole chapter.<sup>174</sup> Commentators largely agree that the dual reference to leaders in

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between this section and 1 Thess 4.9–5.28 (pp. 57–59). See also Filson 1967; Backhaus 2009a: 37–38; Lane 1991: 2.495–98; Attridge 1989: 384–85. Vanhoye 1977 and Koester 2001 argue that the section division falls at 12.14 and 12.28 respectively, instead of 13.1.

<sup>171</sup> 'Es kreißt der theologische Berg, und er gebiert eine moralische Maus!' Backhaus 2009b: 215. In his commentary he describes Heb 13 as 'ein Stiefkind der Exegese, und zwar kein geliebtes', Backhaus 2009a: 459.

<sup>172</sup> Koester 1962: 299.

<sup>173</sup> See esp. Walker 1994; 2004; Young 2002.

<sup>174</sup> See the titles of Walker 1994; Young 2002. This is also true of some who do not take these verses in a polemical or anti-Judaic sense, e.g. Thompson 1978. Note by contrast Isaacs 1997 who goes as far as 13.16.

13.7, 17 forms an *inclusio* marking this section as extending from 13.7–17.<sup>175</sup> Most importantly, the cultic imagery continues into 13.15–16, and is linked to what comes before by οὐ̃ν in a majority of manuscripts.<sup>176</sup> It is furthermore noteworthy that the citation of Hag 2.6 in Heb 12.26–27 is taken from a context which describes the greater glory of the temple at the eschaton, to which all nations will come, and precedes a reference to the ‘acceptable worship’ of Christians.<sup>177</sup> By ignoring positive applications of cultic categories to the Christian recipients in the near context, it becomes much easier to read 13.9–14 as polemical. The second problem is the assumption that there must be an historical referent behind these verses which is both specific and identifiable.

We enter here the difficult territory of ‘mirror reading’ which John Barclay identified and sought to delimit in his seminal study of Galatians.<sup>178</sup> On his criteria Hebrews 13 does not constitute a very good mirror.<sup>179</sup> To begin with, the assumption that these verses mount a polemic against Judaism is difficult to sustain in the light of the largely unpolemical tone of the rest of the letter.<sup>180</sup> Young disputes the suggestion

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<sup>175</sup> E.g. Backhaus 2009a: 461; Attridge 1989: 390–91 includes the prayer for the author in 13.18–19.

<sup>176</sup> Omitted by P<sup>46</sup>, P, Ψ, κ and D both originally omitted οὐ̃ν but this was added by a later hand, probably from other mss but also potentially a recognition of the logical cohesion of these verses with what comes before.

<sup>177</sup> Beale 2004: 303–6.

<sup>178</sup> Barclay 1987: esp. 84–86.

<sup>179</sup> Barclay gives five criteria from which to build a hypothesis: the *type of utterance* delimits the inferences one can draw from assertions, denials, commands, and prohibitions; this brings the important warning that ‘each type of statement is open to a range of mirror-images’ (p. 84). The *tone* of Heb 13 is firm but not heavy, and is less urgent than that of the warning passages. In terms of *frequency* the reference to ‘strange teachings’ and ‘foods’ and the appeal to ‘go outside the camp’ occur only here; as for *clarity* the terminology remains ambiguous and unclear. The cultic motifs are not *unfamiliar* to Hebrews’ thought world and are therefore less likely to indicate ‘a particular feature in the situation he is responding to’ (p. 85). It is thus difficult to construct a hypothesis which could then be tested by the remaining two criteria, *consistency* (single group in view) and *historical plausibility* (evidence for similar groups/movements).

<sup>180</sup> Thompson 1978: 54; Isaacs 1997: 280; Backhaus 2009a: 469.

that Hebrews is unpolemical, pointing to the negative language used of the Levitical era (e.g. Heb 7.8, 12, 16, 23; 8.5, 13; 9.23; 10.1).<sup>181</sup> However, such language occurs in the expository and not the hortatory sections of the letter, and – while it certainly demonstrates a relativization of the Levitical cult and its regulations – it does not necessarily constitute an attack on this system, which in salvation-historical perspective served a crucial intermediary role between protological and eschatological heavenly realities. It is a further step still to suppose that such statements amount to a polemic against some kind of group which held these things dear. When it comes specifically to ‘the contrast between the repetitiveness of the old order and the finality of the new’,<sup>182</sup> I have argued above that such a contrast is in part rhetorical, and that its substance derives from the nature of Christ’s priesthood and sacrifice rather than indicating a predisposal against the Levitical order. Instead of seeking to identify a specific referent behind every detail of 13.9–14, it is important to focus on what these verses (and not the reconstructed ‘other half of the telephone conversation’) actually say. The primary social concern throughout the document is the formation, maintenance, and extension of community identity in relation to Christ, in the face of various threats which are indicated but not clearly identified.<sup>183</sup>

Two points in particular are identified as polemic against Judaism in 13.9–14. First, in v. 9 the ‘strange and diverse teachings’, which seem to be linked with the ‘foods’ which did not benefit those who ‘live in them’, might refer to Jewish teachings and dietary observances. There is little clue as to what else, if anything, the teachings

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<sup>181</sup> Young 2002: 258–59.

<sup>182</sup> Young 2002: 259.

<sup>183</sup> ‘[Der Verfasser] bemüht sich, die Gemeinde als soziale Wirklichkeit zu etablieren.’ Backhaus 2009a: 459. ‘Primär gilt es ihm nicht, den falschen Gottesdienst zu bekämpfen, sondern die Möglichkeit zu einem überlegenen Gottesdienst zu zeigen’, Thurén 1973: 90. Even Young concedes that this chapter defines the Christian group more than it attacks the parent religion, Young 2002: 260.

might concern.<sup>184</sup> The use of the plural would seem to suggest that no one heresy is in view. The ‘foods’ (βρώματα; NRSV ‘regulations about food’ is an unjustified extrapolation) are unlikely to refer to ascetic practices (cf. e.g. Col 2.16, 20–23), as it seems they are eaten rather than avoided. Beyond this, however, a wide variety of suggestions have been made, including gnostic syncretistic meals, Christian sacramentalist understandings of the eucharist, and pagan, Jewish or Jewish-Christian cultic meals.<sup>185</sup> The fundamental point is that it is grace, not foods, which strengthens the heart; there is no clear indication that the audience already is or is not involved with such foods, nor that they should start or stop any practice in relation to them.<sup>186</sup>

The second supposedly polemical aspect to which attention is drawn is the call to go to Jesus ‘outside the camp’ (13.13), which is held to be a clear reference to Jerusalem (cf. 4QMMT 2.29–33). The implication is that not only the city but all that it stands for must be abandoned. In 13.11–12 a clear parallel is drawn between Jesus’ death at Calvary outside Jerusalem and the burning of the remains of the Yom Kippur sacrificial animals outside the Israelite camp in the wilderness (Lev 16.27–28).<sup>187</sup> This motif is sustained into the exhortation in the following verse, which calls the audience to bear his reproach (ὀνειδισμός). Some of them have already borne such reproach (Heb

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<sup>184</sup> ‘Es ist nicht gestattet, in dieser Formel bei Hb eine Kritik der jüdischen Lehre zu sehen.’ Thurén 1973: 175.

<sup>185</sup> See the excursus in Attridge 1989: 394–96. Barnard 2012: 198–99 n. 112 suggests Greco-Roman sacrificial foods might be in view, as frequently elsewhere in the NT. In this case Hebrews ‘is not a hardliner [... but] merely states that they do not benefit the consumer, which could be taken as a soft steer in the direction of a traditional Jewish diet.’

<sup>186</sup> ‘The teachings and practices seem in fact to serve more as a foil, drawn from traditional apologetic, for Hebrew’s own theology than as a response to a substantial threat.’ Attridge 1989: 396. ‘Foods’ is ‘far too indefinite’ to identify a specific heresy, Thompson 1978: 56 n. 12.

<sup>187</sup> The red heifer ritual (Num 19.1–10) may also be in view here, especially given the combination of aspects of this ritual with Yom Kippur in Heb 9.13. A further allusion to Exod 33.7–8, where Moses meets with God outside the camp on account of the people’s faithlessness, is possible but not fundamental to the image here; the point is not so much meeting with God but identifying with his Son in all that this entails.

10.33) and Moses is a model of one who bore ‘the reproach of the Christ’ (11.26), associated with the cross whose shame Christ despised (αἰσχύνη, 12.2). Hebrews’ knowledge of tradition regarding the location of Jesus’ crucifixion quite probably extends to an awareness of the call to ‘bear one’s cross’ (while the Synoptics use αἴρω or occasionally βαστάζω to describe carrying a cross, φέρω – used in Heb 13.13 – is found in Luke 23.26 of Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus’ cross). This context suggests that the call to identify with Jesus in his shameful death is already generalized beyond a specific referent. Even if Jerusalem is identified as the sole referent of ‘the camp’, it is a further step to broaden this to ‘Judaism’ as a whole (even allowing the questionable assumption that ‘Judaism’ referred to a recognizable religious identity or system in the first century).<sup>188</sup>

Jason Whitlark has made a strong case for understanding Heb 13.13–14 as ‘figured speech’ which alludes to Rome: such a critique of imperial hegemony would need to be ‘intentionally allusive, covert, and figured’, and while Jerusalem was not described as ‘remaining’ or ‘eternal’ in the period, Rome certainly was.<sup>189</sup> It is plausible that the recipients – especially if, as is likely, they were located in Rome or Italy – may have drawn this inference.<sup>190</sup> Other interpretations of Heb 13.13 include Helmut Koester’s suggestion that this constitutes a fundamentally anti-cultic call to leave the realm of the sacred altogether in favour of ‘the acceptance of the secular reality’.<sup>191</sup> This

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<sup>188</sup> Walker 1994: 44, 49 thinks the association of the two is straightforward; so also Young 2002: 253–56. Attridge, by contrast, sees any allusion here as ‘evocative rather than definitive’, Attridge 1989: 399.

<sup>189</sup> Whitlark 2012: 163. Against Jerusalem as the referent, cf. p. 172 n. 42. Cf. also the *imperium sine fine* and the *mansura urbs* (Virgil, *Aen.* 1.278f.; 3.85f.), Backhaus 2009a: 473.

<sup>190</sup> The contention of Young 2002: 256 that pagan society would have an appeal only for Gentiles seems hard to sustain given widespread examples of intra-Jewish controversies over syncretization, e.g. in 1–2 Macc. Mackie 2007: 135–50 sees a polemic against both Judaism and Rome.

<sup>191</sup> Koester 1962: 302; cf. 310–13.

has rightly been criticized for imposing on Hebrews categories which are alien to it.<sup>192</sup>

An alternative dichotomy is promoted by Thompson, who regards these verses as a call to leave the material for the spiritual world.<sup>193</sup> Yet the aim of Hebrews is not so much the abandonment of the physical for the ethereal, but rather access to the sacred (whose location is indeed heavenly) in the everyday lives of the community.<sup>194</sup>

The above discussion has problematized attempts to discern a specific historical background behind Heb 13.9–16, and in particular the notion that these verses polemicize against Judaism or cult specifically. This prepares the discussion of two features of these verses relevant to the question of repetition: the ‘altar’ of 13.10 and Christian ‘sacrifices’ in 13.15–16.

### 6.5.3 The New Covenant Altar

Hebrews 13.10, ‘we have an altar from which those who serve at the tabernacle have no right to eat’, echoes the letter’s other ‘confession statements’ (4.14; 6.19; 8.1; 10.19; cf. the periphrastic ‘since we have [ἔχοντες] surrounding us’ in 12.1), all of which refer to a cultic possession the Christian enjoys. This verse has engendered much controversy, and has been enlisted in the cause of sacramental and anti-sacramental readings of Hebrews alike.<sup>195</sup> Williamson lists four potential referents for the ‘altar’: 1) the

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<sup>192</sup> The secular theory ‘arbeitet zweifellos mit neuzeitlichen Unterscheidungen, die dem Hebr völlig fremd sind.’ Backhaus 2009a: 472.

<sup>193</sup> Thompson 1978: 60–63.

<sup>194</sup> Isaacs 1997: 276.

<sup>195</sup> The language of ‘sacrament(al)’ and ‘sacramentalism’ is anachronistic and adds more heat than light to the discussion; it is therefore avoided in what follows in favour of ‘cult(ic)’, used as described in §6.2.2. Cf. the comments on such language with regard to 1 Cor 10 in Fitzmyer 2008: 379.

eucharist; 2) the cross; 3) the heavenly sanctuary; 4) Christ himself.<sup>196</sup> The eucharist is unlikely to be the direct referent,<sup>197</sup> as there is no internal indication of this identification, nor is there any evidence that θυσιαστήριον is used to refer to the eucharistic table before at least Ignatius – and even here such language is most likely symbolic.<sup>198</sup> While a number of commentators see the referent as a heavenly altar, this fails to recognise that the altar of sacrifice was located outside the holy place in both tabernacle and temple.<sup>199</sup> Hebrews' cosmology is complex and we ought not to expect precise correspondence with every detail of the tabernacle; nevertheless, the altar's location *outside* the sanctuary and its function as the place of the *death* of the sacrificial animal point strongly towards identifying this altar with the cross.<sup>200</sup> This interpretation, which ought not to be sharply distinguished from the fourth option, 'Christ himself', is reinforced by the indication in 13.12 that the author knows the tradition of Jesus' crucifixion outside Jerusalem.

This altar is the Christian's possession, but it is also something to which 'those who serve in the tent' have no claim: this phrase clearly denotes the priests and Levites who served in the tabernacle. Young contends that there is a wider connotation of all

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<sup>196</sup> Williamson 1975: 308; citing Schierse 1955: 191. Isaacs 1997: 274–84 identifies the options as 1) heaven; 2) eucharist; 3) death of Jesus.

<sup>197</sup> *Contra* Swetnam 1989: 74.

<sup>198</sup> The most plausible occurrence is in *Phld.* 4; even here Schoedel suggests that as elsewhere (*Eph.* 5.2; *Trall.* 7.2; *Magn.* 7.2) θυσιαστήριον functions as a metonym for 'sanctuary', referring to the church insofar as it is in communion with its ordained ministers. Schoedel 1985: 198–99; cf. 55, 117, 148. '[T]he image of the altar [...] is not used to indicate the sacrificial character of the meal but to symbolize solidarity' (p. 21). In *Rom.* 2.2 the altar describes Ignatius' martyrdom; Schoedel argues that the allusion here is primarily to pagan sacrifice (p. 171).

<sup>199</sup> Filson 1967: 48–49, 53; Thompson 1978: 58; Williamson 1975: 308 all think the altar is in heaven. Williamson misleadingly cross-references Heb 9.4: the θυμιατήριον in the most holy place is the altar *of incense*.

<sup>200</sup> So most commentators, e.g. Attridge 1989; Lane 1991; Isaacs 1997; Young 2002; Backhaus 2009a.

those involved in Judaism, pointing to occurrences of λατρεύω in 9.9 and 10.2.<sup>201</sup> Yet this verb refers to priestly service in 8.5 and, more significantly, to Christian worship in 9.14 and 12.28.<sup>202</sup> The fact that Hebrews applies this verb indiscriminately to priests and, by extension, to the whole of the people of God under both old and new covenants, suggests that the emphasis in 13.10 falls not so much on ‘those who serve’ but on the location of their service, *in the tabernacle* (note the dative τῆ σκηνῆ, *contra* simply ‘serve the tent’ as in e.g. ESV, NASB). If the altar is Jesus’ death then the sacrifice in view is that of Yom Kippur.<sup>203</sup> While priests had the right to eat the meat of some sacrifices (thank-offering, sin-offering), this was not true of all – the holocaust, for example, was burnt on the altar – and the Yom Kippur sacrifices were not eaten but instead taken outside the camp/city to be burnt. Thus the statement that the priests have no right to eat from the Christian altar – Jesus’ Yom Kippur sacrifice – is descriptive and not proscriptive. No priest had the right to eat this sacrifice.<sup>204</sup>

Whatever one makes of a potential wider reference to the contemporary Jewish community or the old covenant community as a whole behind the priests in 13.10, a question remains as to how the new covenant is superior to the old. In this respect ‘possession’ of this altar leaves the Christian little better off than the Levitical priest if the implied balancing statement is that Christ’s death is an altar from which Christians also have no right to eat. Rather, the implication is that the new covenant faithful *do*

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<sup>201</sup> ‘Accordingly, although the language in 13.10 is specific to priests, it refers to anyone whose worship is still conditioned by the system of the Levitical law.’ Young 2002: 247.

<sup>202</sup> Leithart 2000: 63 notes that the LXX distinction between λειτουργία (priestly ministry) and λατρεία (worship by priests and people) is effaced in Hebrews, with the λατρ- word group used to describe priestly service in old and new covenants.

<sup>203</sup> However much Hebrews may draw on a whole range of sacrificial and covenantal ceremonies, the Day of Atonement is indisputably the preeminent and controlling motif for explicating the atonement.

<sup>204</sup> Isaacs 1997: 280–81; Young 2002: 246–47 concurs.

*have a right to eat* from this altar.<sup>205</sup> This image denotes participation in Christ and the benefits of his death by feeding on him. Such a notion is not alien to Hebrews, which describes the full experience of conversion as tasting (γεύομαι) the heavenly gifts (6.4–5), and describes believers as participants (μέτοχοι) in Christ (3.1, 14), in the Holy Spirit (6.4), and in God’s discipline (12.8); the cognate verb μετέχω describes full participation by Christ in human flesh and blood (2.14), feeding on milk (5.13) and membership of a tribe of Israel (7.13). While many scholars object that any notion of eating in 13.10 is ruled out by the preceding verse, which contrasts strengthening the heart by ‘foods’ and by grace, as suggested above this verse – while it certainly emphasizes grace – does not prescribe any course of action with regard to eating. It is plausible that obtaining such grace is equivalent to eating or partaking in heavenly gifts. There is furthermore an interesting parallel in Heb 2.9, which states that Jesus ‘tasted death by the grace of God’;<sup>206</sup> here as in 13.9–10 we find the three ideas of tasting/eating, Jesus’ death, and grace not just juxtaposed but connected in similar fashion: by God’s grace the Christian also eats of the altar of Jesus’ death, sharing its shame but also benefitting by having the heart strengthened – and it is precisely the benefit of Jesus’ death for his brethren that is in view in the context of Heb 2.9.

A significant point of comparison is found in 1 Corinthians 9–10, the only other place in the NT where μετέχω is used and (besides Matt 5.23–24; 23.18–20 and Rev) the only place to use the altar to explicate a point of relevance for Christians. This

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<sup>205</sup> So Vanhoye 1980: 280. ‘[Hébreux 13.10] implique de toute évidence que les chrétiens ont, eux, le droit de “manger de leur autel”’. So also Calaway 2013: 117, though he reckons a reference to the eucharist is unclear. Attridge recognizes that one could draw this inference, but rules it out because Hebrews does not make this explicit, Attridge 1989: 397. Yet this inference is required to explain how ‘having an altar’ benefits Christians.

<sup>206</sup> The alternative reading χωρίς θεοῦ is less well attested than χάριτι θεοῦ, though not necessarily harder as is often assumed.

passage speaks extensively of participation in the eucharist, pagan sacrifices, and the Jerusalem temple altar in terms which assume a great degree of commonality in what all of these entail.<sup>207</sup> The point of adducing this passage is not to suggest that in using the term ‘altar’ Hebrews is speaking about the eucharist, but to demonstrate that the notion of eating from and thereby participating in an altar – whether pagan or Jewish – was current in the first century and was moreover associated with eucharistic practice by (at least Pauline) Christians. In his study of those places in Hebrews which have been read as allusions to the eucharist Williamson rightly rejects any direct reference to this rite; but he takes a further and unjustified step when he supposes that Hebrews represents a non- or possibly even anti-eucharistic community:

Is it not possible that [the author of Hebrews] belonged to an early Christian community which, prompted perhaps by his own exposition of the nature of the redemptive work of Christ, did not share in what appears to have been the common eucharistic faith and practice of the Early Church?<sup>208</sup>

Williamson’s last phrase gives the lie to his own suggestion. It is highly implausible that Hebrews represents or was written to an early Christian community that did not practise some form of commemorative meal associated with the Last Supper and/or Jesus’ crucifixion, given the ubiquity of this practice in early Christianity (in addition to the Synoptics, Acts, and 1 Cor 10, cf. Ign. *Eph.* 20.2; *Did.* 9–10).<sup>209</sup> Hebrews’ knowledge of Synoptic traditions regarding Jesus’ death outside Jerusalem suggests the author would likely also have known the Last Supper traditions.

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<sup>207</sup> The verb *μετέχω* in 1 Cor 10.17, 21, 30 describes the eucharist and pagan sacrifices, and also the apostles’ right to eat from their labour, equated with the Levites’ right to eat from the *θυσιαστήριον*, 1 Cor 9.10, 13. The tabernacle/temple *θυσιαστήριον* is also mentioned in 1 Cor 10.18; here those who eat the sacrifices are *κοινωνοί* of the altar, a term used with regard to the eucharist in 10.16 and pagan sacrifices in 10.20; this indicates that *μετεχ-* and *κοινων-* terminology is broadly synonymous.

<sup>208</sup> Williamson 1975: 306.

<sup>209</sup> Even those who concur with Williamson that Hebrews disdains the physical (a point which does not cohere with the presence of baptism[s] in 6.2; 10.22, or with the allowance for external purity in 9.13) are circumspect with regard to his anti-eucharistic claim. E.g. Cockerill 2012: 696 n. 36.

Furthermore, a Roman destination for Hebrews would confirm the likelihood that its audience practised the eucharist: alongside Paul's letter to and time in Rome there is evidence the eucharist was known there by the end of the first century (*I Clem.* 44.4), and it was clearly an established custom there by the mid-second century (Justin, *I Apol.* 65, 67). It is then a reasonable assumption that Hebrews' audience did share a eucharistic meal, whatever precise form this took; and therefore while we can concur that the letter nowhere directly mentions or describes this practice, nevertheless the associations evoked by 13.10 would be reminiscent of it. In a similar way to John 6 one can allow for an inference which the original audience would probably have drawn, and perhaps was intended to draw, whilst maintaining that the primary referent is the sustaining connection to Jesus' life-giving death.<sup>210</sup> In this regard one can speak only in terms of probabilities, but if Hebrews' audience did break bread together in imitation of the Last Supper – a supposition which is *prima facie* more likely than not – then they engaged in a repeated ceremony which was understood as a means of appropriating the grace available to them through the cultic work of Christ.<sup>211</sup>

#### 6.5.4 New Covenant Sacrifices

We turn finally to Heb 13.15–16; the connector οὖν suggests that these verses form an integral part of the coherent argument which begins in 13.9. These verses form a chiasm

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<sup>210</sup> So e.g. Beasley-Murray 1987: 95 on John 6.53: 'it is not necessary to interpret the statement exclusively in terms of the body and blood of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless it is evident that neither the Evangelist nor the Christian readers could have written or read the saying without conscious reference to the Eucharist'.

<sup>211</sup> Attridge 1989: 400 reckons that 13.10–16 offered the ideal opportunity for an allusion to the eucharist; so also Williamson 1975: 309–12. Since the author does not mention it, Attridge concludes that he had no interest 'in making allusions to a sacramental Lord's Supper'. Yet this remains an argument from silence; it is entirely conceivable that the author simply felt no need to mention the eucharist – just as, indeed, most NT letters do not mention it.

in which the first and last phrases refer to ‘sacrifice’ and end with ‘God’, and the middle two phrases explicate the nature of these sacrifices (lips confessing God’s name, and good deeds and sharing):<sup>212</sup>

Δι’ αὐτοῦ οὖν ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ,  
 τοῦτ’ ἔστιν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.  
 τῆς δὲ εὐποιίας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε·  
 τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός.

The discussion of 13.9–14 above has made all the more clear the fact that Hebrews’ audience participates in a real, heavenly cult, and 13.15–16 specify the nature of the new covenant believer’s earthly participation in that cult.<sup>213</sup> The continuity of the language used here with both the OT cult and Christ’s sacrifice is evident. Θυσία occurs occasionally in the NT and frequently in Hebrews to describe (high) priestly sacrifices and Christ’s death, but the term θυσία αἰνέσεως (or the two words in close proximity) does not occur elsewhere in the NT; in the OT it can refer to a physical sacrifice of thanksgiving (Lev 7.12–15; 2 Chron 29.31; 33.16; 1 Macc 4.56; Jer 17.26) and by extension to the praise associated with that sacrifice. In the Psalms it is not always clear whether it indicates a material sacrifice or praise alone.<sup>214</sup> Καρπὸς χειλέων occurs in the context of sacrifice in Hos 14.3 (LXX), and also in *Pss. Sol.* 15.2–3 in conjunction with the phrase ἐξομολογήσασθαι τῷ ὀνόματί σου, a close parallel to Heb 13.15b. Hebrews exhorts its audience to *offer* these sacrifices, ἀναφέρω being used elsewhere only of Jesus (Heb 7.27; 9.28); the near-synonymous προσφέρω is used much more widely of

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<sup>212</sup> Thurén 1973: 105; Lane 1991.

<sup>213</sup> The point made in §6.2.2 about ‘spiritualization’ and metaphorical language need not be repeated here. ‘Statt von Spiritualisierung ist von einer personalen Aneignung der im Kreuzestod radikal verleblichten Kultanschauung in der Lebenswelt der Glaubenden zu sprechen.’ Backhaus 2009a: 474.

<sup>214</sup> LXX Pss 49.14, 23 (in v. 14 in conjunction with τῷ θεῷ); 106.22; 115.8. Praise is contrasted with sacrifice in Ps 50.17–18 (LXX). *T. Levi* 3.8 speaks of angels continuously offering songs of praise to God (ὑμνοὶ ἀεὶ τῷ θεῷ προσφέρονται).

Jesus and Levitical priests alike, while  $\thetaύω$  never occurs.<sup>215</sup> The language used in these verses thus consciously evokes the OT sacrificial system, the extension of this (especially in the Psalms) to describe praise, and most significantly the way in which Jesus' atoning work has been characterized earlier in Hebrews.

Just as praise had always been a natural companion and extension of material sacrifices, so also the good deeds and sharing in Heb 13.16 are not arbitrarily described as sacrifices. Sharing with those in need was an integral part of the sacrificial system, with meat and grain offerings sustaining not only the Levitical sanctuary servants but also the poor.<sup>216</sup> Just like Christ in 10.5–10, the new covenant believer in 13.15–16 can offer to God faithful obedience and sacrifice in a manner that will please him.<sup>217</sup> The connection with Jesus' work is made explicit from the beginning of these verses: it is only *through him* that such sacrifices can be offered.<sup>218</sup>

A highly significant feature of these verses is the use of  $διὰ \text{παντός}$  in 13.15. Like its usual English translation 'continually' this term can have the nuance of 'unceasingly', 'without a break', or it can be used in the sense 'regularly'.<sup>219</sup> Both senses are found in Hebrews: 2.15 describes the human fear of death which lasts throughout life ( $διὰ \text{παντός τοῦ ζῆν}$ ); and 9.6 describes the regular offering of the Levitical priests in the first tent of the tabernacle. As noted in §6.4.6, here the term comes directly from the LXX translation of the term  $\text{תמיד}$ , which often describes the regular morning and evening sacrifices and from which their name *tamid* derives. In a

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<sup>215</sup> In the NT  $\thetaύω$  describes the death of Christ only in 1 Cor 5.7, and here in the passive. Thurén suggests that  $\text{ἀναφέρω}$  is used 'um die Zusammengehörigkeit des Sühne- und Lobopfers zu unterstreichen'. Thurén 1973: 105–6.

<sup>216</sup> Moffatt 1924: 237–38; Thurén 1973: 177–78.

<sup>217</sup> God is also pleased by faith (11.5–6), obedience (10.5–8), and worship (12.28).

<sup>218</sup> Thus Christian sacrifices 'liegen im Echoraum des Kreuzes', Backhaus 2009a: 476.

<sup>219</sup> Thurén 1973: 172.

cultic context διὰ παντός is thus simply descriptive of the *tamid*, and this means that in 13.15 – with its clear language of offering a sacrifice to God – we should also read the term in this sense.<sup>220</sup> It is moreover striking that διὰ παντός is not found in any other NT exhortation to pray or praise continually or without ceasing.<sup>221</sup> Taken together, these observations suggest that the exhortation ‘to offer a sacrifice of praise διὰ παντός to God’ would have been heard as an injunction to pray *at the times of the regular daily sacrifice*.<sup>222</sup>

This contention is made more likely by widespread evidence that Jews in the Second Temple period, including when separated from Jerusalem, prayed at these times.<sup>223</sup> The angel Gabriel appears to Daniel when he is praying ‘at the time of the evening sacrifice’ (כעת מנחת-ערב / ἐν ὄρα θυσίας ἑσπερινῆς, Dan 9.21), just as Judith also prays at the exact same time as the incense is being offered in the temple (Jdt 9.1; cf. Ps 141.2). In Acts the followers of the Way align their times of prayer with those of the sacrifice: in Acts 3.1 Peter and John go up to the temple ‘at the hour of prayer, the ninth [hour]’; most strikingly, in Acts 10.2–3 Cornelius is introduced as a pious man who prays διὰ παντός, and in the very next phrase an angel appears to him *at the ninth hour* (cf. 10.30).<sup>224</sup> In 1 Thess 3.10 Paul says he prays νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας to see the Thessalonians; note the Jewish order (rather than ‘day and night’)<sup>225</sup> and also the

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<sup>220</sup> “‘Immerdar’ könnte Hinweis auf eine bestimmte liturgische Ordnung sein”, Michel 1975.

<sup>221</sup> Eph 6.18 (διὰ πάσης); 1 Thess 5.17 (ἀδιαλείπτως); 2 Thess 1.11 (πάντοτε); cf. Rom 1.9–10; Thurén 1973: 172.

<sup>222</sup> So also Hamm 2004: 52. ‘[T]he author of Hebrews urges his readers to let praise be their sacrifice – regularly, like the *Tamid* service of the former temple.’ In Acts 10.2 διὰ παντός also has a cultic connotation.

<sup>223</sup> Beckwith 1984: esp. 70–74.

<sup>224</sup> ‘The picture of a Roman army officer praying without interruption is scarcely plausible.’ Hamm 2004: 51.

<sup>225</sup> Though both orders are attested in the period, Beckwith 1996: 1–9.

genitive of time, *at night* and *in the day* (rather than ‘throughout the night and the day’; cf. Luke 18.7; 1 Tim 5.5; 2 Tim 1.3).<sup>226</sup>

In addition to these examples of private and individual prayer synchronized with temple worship, *corporate* prayer at these times also developed in the period. While synagogue services tended not to be held on weekdays, there were gatherings in the temple courts at the times of sacrifice. Away from Jerusalem, lay congregations met in certain synagogues when the corresponding priestly course was serving in the temple.<sup>227</sup> The meals and morning and evening prayers of the Therapeutae are aligned with temple worship, as indicated by their eastward-facing position (*Contempl.* 66, 89; cf. *Jos. Ant.* 4.212–13),<sup>228</sup> and morning and evening prayer took place daily at Qumran, as we saw in §2.4.3. There is also evidence for morning and evening corporate daily Christian worship in Rome at the turn of the third century (Hippolytus *Trad. ap.* 35, 39, 41; cf. *Const. ap.* 2.59; 8.32, 34–39). If we read the injunction in Heb 3.13 to ‘encourage one another daily’ in combination with that in 13.15 to ‘offer regularly a sacrifice of praise’, it seems likely that Hebrews expects its audience to hold twice-daily corporate prayer.

It thus becomes clear that Hebrews envisages its audience as participating in a heavenly cult with a new kind of repeated sacrifice. This regular praise is enabled by and is the appropriate response to the perpetual effects of the one sacrifice of Christ. It is founded however not simply on the atoning work of Christ, but on this work *in fulfilment and continuation of* the old covenant cultus which prepared it.<sup>229</sup> ‘The whole

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<sup>226</sup> This tendency, already established in Second Temple Judaism, is developed in the morning prayer of the synagogue liturgy, *Siddur beit Yaakov*, which speaks of the fulfilment of the *Tamid* in the speech of lips. Backhaus 2009a: 475.

<sup>227</sup> Beckwith 1984: 71, 155.

<sup>228</sup> Mazza 1999: 37–38.

<sup>229</sup> *Contra* Marshall, ‘the actual ritual of the temple had little or no influence on the practices of the early Christians’, 1989: 222.

continual liturgy of the old covenant is fulfilled in Christians' continual sacrifice of praise.<sup>230</sup> I argued above that the priestly *tamid* service in the outer sanctuary (9.6) is an integral part of the typology which Hebrews develops, and not merely a foil for the high priestly once-a-year entrance into the most holy place (9.7). This typological potential of the regular tabernacle cult finds a secondary confirmation in the ongoing praise and deeds of Christians in 13.15–16: in Hebrews itself, and in its understanding of salvation history, the former prepares and finds its fruition in the latter.<sup>231</sup> Whether Hebrews pre- or postdates Jerusalem's destruction, its probable Diaspora destination suggests that even in the former case its original readers were separated to some degree from the regular worship that took place in the temple. The letter consoles its addressees that this distance is in fact not a problem, and exhorts them to perpetuate and extend the regular worship of God in synchrony with the temple and on the basis of the reality and accessibility of the heavenly cult.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the polyvalent portrayal and deployment of repetition which we have observed elsewhere in Hebrews is found even in the letter's cultic section. Here repetition does occur with primarily negative connotations, but this is not the focus of the argument; rather, such repetition is rhetorically *indicative* but not

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<sup>230</sup> 'Die ganze ständige Liturgie des alten Bundes wird im ständigen Lobopfer der Christen erfüllt.' Thurén 1973: 174. Cf. Beale 2004: 398.

<sup>231</sup> 'Die Formel wird also in 9:6 nicht ohne Bezug auf "unsere Liturgie" gebraucht. Der Verfasser hat schon unseren vollkommenen Gottesdienst in den Gedanken, wenn er den unvollkommenen täglichen Gottesdienst des alten Bundes beschreibt.' Thurén 1973: 174 n. 605.

fundamentally *constitutive* of the imperfection of the old order. That imperfection lies in the mortality and sinfulness of the old order's mediators, and also in the inadequate nature of the sacrifices themselves (animals being unable to incorporate willing obedience), a feature which is part of the tabernacle system's derivative status and foreshadowing function. That is to say, both the people and the system were at fault (Heb 8.7–8), but this fault is a divinely intended part of a temporary dispensation. The old system's inability to cleanse the conscience, to which its repetition and plurality point, is grounded in and demonstrated by its *ontologically* relative and reflective status, just as Christ's superior priesthood and the heavenly sanctuary in which he ministers precede (and therefore also succeed) their earthly shadows. Yet the earthly system's inferiority is revealed fully only in the light of the coming of Christ: its imperfection and the function of repetition in revealing this is therefore *epistemologically* derived from the Christ event. Theologically, the point Hebrews reinforces time and again with regard to the atonement is not that Jesus has done it once but that he has done it right; yet, in doing it right the first and only time the historical singularity of his death can ripen into theological all-sufficiency.

This development weaves three strands into one strong cord: the messianic enthronement tradition of Psalm 110, the priestly-vocational concept of perfection, and the Christian tradition regarding the uniqueness of Jesus' death. It is only in contrast to this that repetition and plurality become revelatory of imperfection and incompleteness. With regard to ritual Hebrews posits no necessary or automatic connection with repetition; indeed, the ritual act *par excellence* is singular and non-repeatable. On the basis of this supreme ritual act, and in step with the tabernacle system which foreshadowed it, believers in Christ gain priestly privileges with respect to the true

sanctuary; these are to be exercised with urgent frequency to enable lives of obedient sacrifice in the service of the great high priest.

## **CONCLUSION**



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ‘Yet Once More’

## Repetition, Redemption, and Eternity

### 7.1 Introduction

In a sense the thrust of this study has been negative: I have shown that repetition does not constitute a uniform theme in Hebrews, and further that the repetition–singularity contrast cannot be correlated straightforwardly with either a Middle Platonic earth–heaven dualism or an eschatological distinction between old and new covenants. Yet this destructive work enables us to see more clearly, and thus to appreciate better, the complexity of Hebrews’ thought regarding repetition; in particular it has highlighted the determinative centrality of the singularity of the Christ event, interpreted theologically as all-surpassing efficacy.

This Conclusion proceeds in three parts. First, I summarize the findings of Part Two regarding the different roles repetition plays in Hebrews, using the conceptual model of the relationship between repetition and effect which was proposed in Chapter One. This enables a concise overview and comparison of the ways in which Hebrews understands and portrays different kinds of repetition. Secondly, in line with the subordinate but integral theological approach of this study, and in light of the overwhelmingly positive use of the concept of repetition in modern thought, Hebrews’ portrayal of repetition is brought into conversation with the most influential modern

approach to repetition, that of Søren Kierkegaard. This reading suggests that cues in Hebrews itself might promote further theological development of notions of uniqueness and repetition in ways that a solely historical-critical approach might not bring to light. Finally, in addition to a number of possibilities for further research, some synthetic closing reflections are offered on the implications of Hebrews' use of repetition and singularity, both for its own historical context and for its subsequent ecclesial reception.

## 7.2 Repetition, Singularity, and Effect in Hebrews

In Chapter One I noted that Hebrews primarily raises the question of the relationship of repetition to effect, and in order to explore this further the effect of repetition was charted against the effect of (an) original instance(s). This clarified a range from 1) *annulling* to 5) *creating* a particular effect, with several options in between: 2) *reducing*, 3) introducing *no change* (whether the original instance did, 3a, or did not, 3b, have any effect to start with), and 4) *increasing* the effect (either by *extension/renewal*, 4a, or by *cumulative* increase, 4b). Here we revisit the conclusions of the three chapters which constitute the exegetical second part of this study according to this classification, thereby summarizing and comparing them.

God's speech through the prophets was cumulatively better for its plurality (4b), while the ongoing present repetition of that speech through citation extends and renews its effect for each generation (4a); indeed, a plurality of divine speech is fundamental to the presentation and comprehension of the multifaceted nature of Jesus Christ, in and about whom such speech finds its culmination (5). Repetition of basic teachings blunts their effect (2), largely because it constitutes repetition without sufficient variation and

progression to that which is ‘hard to understand’ (Heb 5.11); the alternative is persevering growth in the faith (4a/b). Repetition of repentance is impossible; the efficacy of the first repentance is destroyed not by a subsequent repentance but by the act of apostasy, which is equivalent to recrucifixion: this repeats the shame of the cross whilst voiding its redemptive power (1). Although old covenant sacrifices were repeated with the intention of renewing their effect (4a), or indeed their very repetition was understood to constitute an effective ongoing relationship with God (5), Hebrews states that they in fact did not achieve purification of the conscience or forgiveness of sins; yet it does not assess their repetition as detrimental (1 or 2), but rather places it in the neutral category 3b. Because the first instance did not work, a repetition was undertaken. That is, repetition did not alter the effect of the sacrifice. Instead, repetition draws attention to an inefficacy whose cause lies elsewhere. Furthermore, in a different domain of efficacy, external ceremonial purity, Hebrews clearly assesses Levitical sacrifices as renewing or extending this purity (4a). The cultic repetition that Hebrews enjoins of the Christian believer, meanwhile, is clearly intended to extend the effect of the atonement throughout life for the sake of perseverance (4a/b), and all the more so in light of expectancy of the Day. In the case of those who have persevered to the point of death, among them the old covenant faithful and the community’s own former leaders, such repetition has achieved a full and perfect effect (5).

Charting the different kinds of repetition evidenced in Hebrews in this way demonstrates one of the core contentions of this study, the multivalence of the letter’s deployment of repetition. This summary also brings to light a number of further findings. Notably, Hebrews’ understanding of repetition can largely be plotted on the right-hand side of the chart: that is to say, repeated phenomena in Hebrews’ eyes

primarily figure as something positive or at least neutral. It is only with regard to repeating basic teachings that Hebrews sees a cumulative *decrease* in effect; this is unsurprising given the letter's strong emphasis on perseverance, i.e. on progression in the faith. Only one kind of repetition is portrayed as destructive: the repeating of Christ's crucifixion through apostasy. The utter and lasting effect of the atonement excludes any possibility of repetition, for repeating Christ's work could only be detrimental. Hebrews is not out to denigrate repetition but to promote the excellency of Christ; the singularity of the atonement becomes the supreme symbol of its surpassing efficacy, and it is only in relation to this centre that plurality takes on different associations.

We observed this point above all in the repetition of sacrifices and plurality of Levitical priests. In and of itself such plurality was not a bad thing. Instead, in Christ one of the cult's core functions – the forgiveness of sins and cleansing of the conscience – has been fulfilled, and a corollary of this is that it never actually effected but only ever foreshadowed forgiveness. Notably, Hebrews never states that Christ's death and ascension provide external purity, a different kind of effect, and it is thus not implausible to suggest that the author thought the Levitical cultic regulations still provided these (as seems to be assumed in Heb 9.13). Just as the supposedly antinomian Paul in Acts gladly and willingly took a vow and participated in purification rites in the temple (Acts 18.18; 21.20–27), one might imagine the author of Hebrews doing the same if he were visiting Jerusalem in the years before AD 70.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Contra* Schenck 2007: 193. On Paul's law-observance see, e.g., Campbell 2011: esp. 52. On which vow and purification was undertaken, and the episode's likely historicity, see Hvalvik 2007: 139–43.

Given that forgiveness is provided perfectly in the Christ event, and therefore not in the old covenant system, it is not the case that the repetition of sacrifices impedes or damages their function. Rather, their very nature rules out their ever having fulfilled this function in the first place. In this light the fact of their repetition becomes a supreme indicator of their lack of effect. Much as a particular symptom can indicate several different medical conditions, or indeed none, so repetition can be suggestive of a range of diagnoses; only in the light of the ‘cure’, Christ, is it confidently identified as a sign of the imperfection of the old system. Moreover, where such repetition is not explicitly identified as indicating imperfection the possibility of a foreshadowing or typological role arises. I argued that this is precisely what we find in Heb 9.6–7, where the continual service of the Levitical priests foreshadows both the perpetual access offered by Christ and the ongoing praise of the new covenant community. This dual potential of cultic repetition in Hebrews further suggests that the perpetual intercession of Christ in Heb 7.25 is no outlier or anomaly in the face of the author’s pervasive *Theologie der Einmaligkeit*, but rather fulfils the *tamid* and corresponds to the singular and eternally valid sacrifice of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Hebrews elucidates the sufficiency of this atonement in a threefold manner: the perfection of the high priest who in turn perfects the faithful; the session of the priest-king at the right hand of the throne of God; and the once-for-all completion of the ultimate ritual act of sacrifice. All three of these ideas have in common the concept of finishing or completion, and by contrast the repetition in the old covenant signals imperfection in the sense of incompleteness: God’s saving work was not yet finished. The repeated action of God’s people in the new covenant partly shares this connotation: they

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<sup>2</sup> So also Stökl Ben Ezra 2003: 190.

are entering rest but have not yet entered; they have been made perfect, yet look forward to full perfection; many of their number have entered God's presence, but await something better which is 'not without us'.

The centrality of the Christ event represents the organizing principle for the whole of Hebrews, both thematically and structurally (cf. Heb 1.1–4 with 8.1–2 and 12.22–29, and see also 13.20–21). Repetition is accordingly best classified as to whether it promotes, tends towards, or derives from this event, or instead opposes, moves away, or detracts from it. Prophetic speech prepared for and continues to expound and promote Christ; ongoing meeting and progression in the faith, regularly responding to God's grace and his word, cultivates the perseverance in the confession which Hebrews desperately enjoins of its audience. By contrast, the repetition of repentance would detract from the singularity and therefore perfection of Christ's crucifixion, which is why it is categorically impossible. The repetition of basic teachings implies that they have not been diligently understood and applied, and thus constitutes a warning sign that the believer might not persevere in his or her salvation in Christ. Repetition of sacrifices similarly indicates lack of effect, again in contrast to and derivation from the uniqueness of Christ's atoning work. Because full and lasting forgiveness of sins has been achieved in this singular event, nothing else can supply such forgiveness; if it could, the sufficiency of the atonement would be undermined. The Christ event has thus introduced an epoch-shifting change into the equation. This consideration will be explored in relation to Kierkegaard's category of repetition, before a final section draws together the implications of this study.

### 7.3 Hebrews and Kierkegaardian Repetition

If allusions to the Reformation period in Chapter One illustrated the negative reception of repetition in church history, it is striking that a whole host of uses of various concepts of repetition have blossomed on the philosophical-theological tree in the modern era. If Hebrews is to make a contribution to contemporary conversations about repetition such developments cannot be ignored. The purpose of this section is to offer one brief exploration of how such a conversation might develop and the results it might yield. The chosen interlocutor is the highly influential father of many discussions of repetition over the past 150 years, Søren Kierkegaard.<sup>3</sup>

Kierkegaard develops his category primarily in the novella *Repetition* (1843) under the pseudonym Constantin Constantius, though comments in other works and unpublished papers highlight and elucidate its significance.<sup>4</sup> The mostly narrative frame of *Repetition* is a vehicle for a playful discussion of the theme.<sup>5</sup> The category deserves to be treated with seriousness, however, for Kierkegaard makes a number of grand

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<sup>3</sup> For Kierkegaard's influence on Heidegger see Caputo 1993; Carlisle 2013. The category has also influenced Deleuze 1993; Caputo 1987, among many others.

<sup>4</sup> Kierkegaard develops his category of repetition in the unfinished *Johannes Climacus* (1842), *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1846), as well as in a number of personal papers including unpublished responses to Johan L. Heiberg. For authoritative translations of Kierkegaard's writings see the series by Howard and Edna Hong, Kierkegaard 1978–2000. See also the recent new translation and edition of *Repetition*, Kierkegaard 2009.

<sup>5</sup> McCarthy 1993: 263.

claims for it,<sup>6</sup> and interpreters largely agree; one recently termed it ‘Kierkegaard’s single thought’.<sup>7</sup>

The novella presents repetition as a question more than a theory: its subtitle is ‘a venture in experimenting psychology’, and it opens with Constantius’ quest to discover ‘whether or not [repetition] is possible’.<sup>8</sup> An attempt to repeat a visit to Berlin disappoints, as everything has changed, and even on returning home Constantius finds things different; he concludes that ‘there is no repetition’.<sup>9</sup> Before this visit, an acquaintance known simply as the Young Man has become involved with a girl;<sup>10</sup> his love for her, however, exemplifies the Platonic idea of recollection (ἀνάμνησις) – that is, he is focussed on the original moment of infatuation and cannot move beyond it, but is instead condemned to repeat it. Constantius defines repetition in opposition to recollection:<sup>11</sup>

*repetition* is a crucial expression for what ‘recollection’ was to the Greeks. Just as they taught that all knowing is a recollecting, modern philosophy will teach that all life is a repetition. [...] Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward.<sup>12</sup>

The Young Man has no interest in the girl herself, but only in his own initial experience of falling in love; once he realizes this he is caught in a dilemma, not wanting to lead

<sup>6</sup> ‘[Repetition] signifies freedom itself, consciousness raised to the second power, [...] the *interest* of metaphysics and also the interest upon which metaphysics comes to grief, the watchword in every ethical view, *conditio sine qua non* for every issue of dogmatics, [...] the true repetition is eternity; [...] repetition] will come to mean atonement’ *Pap.* IV B 108, Kierkegaard 1983: 324 (emphasis original).

<sup>7</sup> Carlisle 2013: 422. Cf. the three monographs devoted to this subject: Guarda 1980; Glöckner 1998; Eriksen 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 131. On the use of ‘experimenting’ see the ‘Historical Introduction’ by Hong and Hong, pp. xxiii–xxv.

<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 171.

<sup>10</sup> On the parallels with Kierkegaard’s own broken engagement with Regine Olsen, and the difficulties with reading Kierkegaard’s work autobiographically, see Hong and Hong, ‘Historical Introduction’, Kierkegaard 1983: ix–xx.

<sup>11</sup> The opposition of recollection to repetition is fundamental to the understanding of the latter in the interpretations of Eriksen 2000: 11–15, 164–67; Guarda 1980: 31–35; Glöckner 1998: 100–32.

<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 131.

her on but also unable to break off the engagement lest she be harmed. He flees Copenhagen and writes a series of letters to Constantius in which he compares his predicament to that of Job, in a tone of increasing despair. Then a final letter arrives: the girl has married someone else, and the Young Man is free. ‘I am myself again. [...] Is there not, then, a repetition? Did I not get everything double? Did I not get myself again and precisely in such a way that I might have a double sense of its meaning?’<sup>13</sup> The Young Man, like Job with whom he has more and more closely identified himself, receives an unexpected resolution which changes not only his circumstances but his very self.

Despite the posture of narratorial and scientific authority, Constantius does not truly understand repetition; it is the Young Man who, though at first an exemplar of recollection, experiences repetition. The narrative presents a series of dead-ends or false answers to the question ‘what is repetition?’ but eventually works its way to a conclusion. Even then Constantius claims to write ‘in such a way that the heretics are unable to understand it’, like Clement of Alexandria – the category remains elusive, and deliberately so.<sup>14</sup> Repetition is a paradigm of thought rather than a doctrine; it is an experience rather than a theory.<sup>15</sup> It cannot be engineered or controlled (as in Constantius’ experiment), but must simply be received as a gift (as when the Young Man reads in the newspaper that the girl is married). The individual’s task is to sustain

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<sup>13</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 220–21. The opposition of recollection and repetition does not mean that Kierkegaard entirely disdained the former; on the possibility of a positive account of (Socratic as opposed to Platonic) recollection see Possen 2010; also Melberg 1990: 77; Nordentoft 1980: 77.

<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 225. Cf. *Pap.* IV B 109, pp. 282–83.

<sup>15</sup> So Eriksen 2000: 2; Mooney 1998: 301–2.

receptivity in the hope that a repetition will occur; he cannot obtain it by his own effort.<sup>16</sup>

Kierkegaard's interaction with his contemporary, the polymath Professor J. L. Heiberg, serves as a guide to how he intended *Repetition* to be read. In an 1844 yearbook, dealing in part with astrology and the phenomenon of natural repetition, Heiberg gives some attention to *Repetition*. He approves of what is said about repetition but claims that this pertains only to the natural sphere, and that Hegelian mediation remains necessary to an understanding of repetition in the domain of spirit (*Geist*). Two replies and a letter to the reader were drafted in Constantius' name, though never published.<sup>17</sup> Here it becomes clear that spiritual repetition *is* Kierkegaard's interest, and that his comments about natural repetition are merely in jest, in order to highlight further what he considers to be true repetition.

Constantius criticizes Heiberg for failing to read – or at least to cite from and thus to recognise the cardinal importance of – the second half of the book (itself titled 'Repetition', with an identical number of pages to the first half). It is only here that the Young Man experiences his repetition, whereas the first half is filled with Constantius' failed experiment and pseudo-scientific discussion of repetition. Indeed, in the draft response entitled 'A Little Contribution by Constantin Constantius, Author of *Repetition*' Constantius claims that he did not even mention the observation of repetition in nature: 'I have spoken only of the significance of repetition for the individual free spirit'.<sup>18</sup> He later states that if he had wanted to make it obvious, he

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<sup>16</sup> Mooney 1998: 294.

<sup>17</sup> The drafts from Kierkegaard's papers, along with other relevant excerpts, are reproduced in translation in Kierkegaard 1983: 274–330.

<sup>18</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 306; thus Guarda 1980 explores Kierkegaardian repetition from the point of view of human existence, while Glöckner 1998 explores it from the point of view of freedom.

would have demonstrated ‘how repetition progresses [...] until it signifies atonement, which is the most profound expression of repetition.’<sup>19</sup> Atonement or redemption implies the recurrence of a prior state, but with difference and intensification: Abraham receives Isaac back, but has also proved and experienced his absolute love for him and his absolute obedience to God (the Aqedah is the subject of *Fear and Trembling*, published the same year as *Repetition*); Job receives back his wealth and status, and as many children as before – and these are not simply a repetition of the children he lost, but are fundamentally new.

Given that Kierkegaard’s category of repetition is fundamentally *spiritual* it might seem questionable to what extent it could be brought into conversation with repetition in Hebrews, which predominantly concerns *natural, observable phenomena* of repetition. In this regard a comment by Northrop Frye is enlightening:

Kierkegaard’s very brief but extraordinarily suggestive book *Repetition* is the only study I know of the psychological contrast between a past-directed causality and a future-directed typology. [... Repetition] is the Christian antithesis (or complement) or Platonic recollection, [... it] is certainly derived from, and to my mind is identifiable with, the forward-moving typological thinking of the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

Job’s former state of prosperity is the type of what he receives, unexpectedly, at the end of the book bearing his name, just as the birth of Isaac is a type of Abraham’s receipt of him in the Aqedah. The antitype is continuous with yet radically superior to the type; it is unexpected and must be received as a gift.

In Chapter One I remarked that Hebrews does not use δευτέρωσις, the Greek term for ‘repetition’, but that it does use δεύτερος to describe the new or second

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<sup>19</sup> Kierkegaard 1983: 313.

<sup>20</sup> Frye 1982: 82.

covenant in contrast to the first (Heb 8.7; 10.9).<sup>21</sup> Hebrews' deployment of this adjective is not particularly cognate with the discussion of (ongoing) repetition and plurality, and is not explicitly developed in terms of the new covenant repeating what occurs in the old covenant; it was therefore not a focus of attention in the exegesis undertaken in Part Two. Yet in a sense the whole approach of Hebrews lies in identifying the ways in which Jesus all-surpassingly corresponds to and fulfils the old covenant, a theme seen especially in Chapter Six. That is to say, because Jesus both conforms to the characteristics of old covenant priest and sacrifice and at the same time achieves perfectly what they did imperfectly, his coming inaugurates a second covenant, a repeat of the first. Moreover, in Kierkegaard's terms such a spiritual repetition cannot be anticipated or controlled but is rather the prerogative of God. The Son's incarnation, his communication of divine speech in his own person, and his appointment as priest takes place at God's sole initiative. It constitutes an event whose exact timing and form could not have been anticipated or predicted in any precisely-delimited manner. He does correspond in many respects to the old covenant system which preceded him, as Hebrews is at pains to show, but the old covenant worshipper could never have imagined what was to come.

One other occurrence of δεύτερος is suggestive of a further development of this line of thought. Hebrews 9.28 states that Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time (ἐκ δευτέρου) to bring salvation. The strongly eschatological tenor of Hebrews embraces a tension, as noted in discussion of Hebrews 3–4 in Chapter Four: although these are the last days (1.1), the Last Day is still to come

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<sup>21</sup> For a chart of occurrences of δεύτερος in Hebrews and its relation to πρώτος see deSilva 2000: 297.

(10.25). Hebrews might be thought to struggle to reconcile its commitment to the dual comings of Christ taught in the Christian message with its strong theology of the singularity of the Christ event. Yet this occurrence of δεύτερος suggests that the second coming can be understood as a repetition of the first. Just as the first coming was keenly anticipated but with details and character largely unknown, so also the second coming is a firm event on the horizon – one which should greatly impact the day-to-day life of believers – and yet an undefined one.

The audience of Hebrews knows that Christ is coming without sins to bring salvation, and that they can expect full perfection and communion with the other righteous spirits in an eternal rest and city, but the actual character of this remains unknown and indeed unknowable until it actually occurs. The seismic nature of that event is indicated in Heb 12.26–27, citing Hag 2.6: ‘yet once more [ἔτι ἄπαξ] I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven’. The phrase ‘yet once more’ is isolated and reiterated in 12.27; while the adverb ἄπαξ here has its temporal sense (‘one further time’), its double occurrence is evocative of the use of ἄπαξ throughout the letter, particularly thrice in 9.26–28, and is therefore suggestive of the totality associated with Jesus’ death. The incarnation was a repetition of the first covenant in which Israel received everything back more than double, beyond their imaginations. And the *parousia* will be a further repetition, bringing salvation in a yet-further-unimagined sense. This second repetition will be characterized by the same uniqueness as the first, carrying the same associations of absolute effect and scope.<sup>22</sup> The people of God whom Hebrews addresses have experienced, and must also await, a repetition.

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<sup>22</sup> Cockerill 2012: 666–68; Attridge 1989: 381.

There is one coda to this, which draws back in the ‘natural repetition’ that is most directly the concern of Hebrews and of this thesis. Kierkegaardian repetition is a gift which cannot be controlled, manipulated, or anticipated; the individual’s task in relation to that repetition is to sustain expectancy and openness, hoping for but never seeking to engineer or compel it. Repetition does not occur *ex opere operato*. Human action does not and cannot lay any automatic claim on effect, but it can open a door through which such an effect may come. In this case, the task of the individual – or from Hebrews’ point of view, the task of the whole people of God – is to sustain an ongoing attitude, and under the old covenant repeated engagement in the sacrificial system was one way to do just this. Thus in the new covenant, the repeated, ongoing, and increasingly frequent (Heb 10.25) meeting of believers for mutual exhortation creates and sustains the perseverance, the openness to God and eternity, into which Christ will come a second time.

## **7.4 ‘Let Us Go On’: The Implications of this Study**

### **7.4.1 Further Research**

It remains in this final section to draw out the implications of this study’s findings for Hebrews’ own location and subsequent reception. I begin with a number of suggestions for further research. In the field of biblical studies, further research into traditions of singularity associated with the Christ event (Rom 6.10; 1 Pet 3.18) could usefully be undertaken. Investigation could perhaps especially focus on the Letter of Jude, which does not lie so obviously or directly in the line of the tradition of the uniqueness of

Jesus' death, yet for which the 'once-for-all-ness' of saving events and the 'deposit of faith' holds great importance (Jude 3, 5).<sup>23</sup> Historical research into the origins of baptism's strict unrepeatability – a slight but significant development of its one-off initiatory character – would also be of value; this is already established by the time of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, yet is at best implicit in the NT. My contention has been that it acquires this feature from the unrepeatability of Jesus' death, but much more could be done to confirm or refute this case.

In terms of reception history, there is vast scope for tracing the use and influence of Hebrews in controversies over rebaptism, possibly in relation to the continuation of animal sacrifice in the Armenian churches,<sup>24</sup> and certainly in the eucharistic controversies of the Reformation period and beyond. Additionally, productive dialogue could be opened up between Hebrews and other more recent philosophical approaches to repetition; as seen with Kierkegaard, such approaches can provide alternative ways into reading features of the text which do not necessarily suggest themselves directly to an historical and exegetical approach.

#### 7.4.2 Repetition and Hebrews' Historical Context

In terms of Hebrews' proximity to the various relevant first-century traditions of thought, this study has in one sense largely confirmed a mediating position: at least in its use of (ἐφ)άπαξ and the corresponding approach to plurality, Hebrews shows numerous points of similarity with both Middle Platonism and Jewish apocalyptic

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<sup>23</sup> See Torrance 1983. He identifies 'the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3) not with any particular doctrinal expression but with 'the whole living Fact of Christ and his saving Acts'.

<sup>24</sup> On which see Conybeare 1903.

literature. Yet while a Platonist contrast between the one, indivisible divine realm and the plural, changeable earthly realm in a certain sense fits Hebrews, the letter disrupts this in a number of ways: it holds that God directly communicates with created beings, and it describes with (ἐφ)άπαξ a *process* which begins on earth and brings corporeality into heaven itself. This last consideration especially disturbs more than it confirms a Platonic world-view.

The other explanatory proposal for Hebrews' repetition–uniqueness contrast – that this corresponds to the transition between old and new covenants – again fits in certain respects but fails to do full justice to the letter's complex eschatology. A traditional two-age eschatology is complicated by the dual comings of Christ, which demarcate three eras: in the first, the era of the old covenant, repetition corresponds to both the earthly realm and the first covenant; in the third, eternal era, singularity corresponds to both the heavenly realm and the new covenant. But in the middle era, in which Hebrews situates itself, a singular event has inaugurated a lasting heavenly reality, repetition is ongoing in the light of that event, and anticipates a further singular event which will complete the introduction of eternity and new covenant into the present age.

Ultimately, Hebrews' portrayal of uniqueness derives from a combination of the traditions regarding the singularity of Jesus' death and of Yom Kippur. With regard to the latter, Hebrews notably resists the trend seen in certain Second Temple texts to describe other annual festivals as 'once-a-year'. While it is rather uncontroversial to suggest that Hebrews draws on the OT and the Christian gospel known to the author, this finding is not unimportant: in the crucial search for explanatory conceptualities it is well to be reminded of the extent and depth of the letter's dependence on these two

traditions above and beyond anything else. Most fundamentally Hebrews is an early Christian exposition of the OT. What is more, the letter exhibits a strong streak of originality and creativity in the way it fuses these traditions and thereby expands the death of Jesus into an all-surpassing, totally effective sacrifice whose supremacy is indicated in part through its contrast with repetition. Hebrews' own theological innovation is a witness and response to the fact that something importantly new and different has occurred in Christ.

Finally, this study can be brought to bear, tentatively, on the date and purpose of Hebrews. The letter reflects belief in a heavenly sanctuary; in Second Temple Jewish texts, generally speaking, such a belief serves to legitimate the earthly cult. For Hebrews, too, the heavenly temple is the foundation and legitimation of the Christian cult: in line with widespread practice, Hebrews expects that prayer will keep time with temple service. Before AD 70 the temple was in a sense unavailable to Diaspora Jews, though they maintained links with it via the half-shekel tax and occasional pilgrimage, and thus the practice of praying at the times of sacrifice held great importance. Furthermore, while the letter emphasizes that Jesus' sacrifice cleanses *from sin*, it also recognizes the validity of external purity. This suggests that, if written pre-AD 70, while Hebrews encourages its audience not to look to the temple for forgiveness, they might nevertheless continue to engage with it on the understanding that the forgiveness it promised and foreshadowed is supplied by Christ.

However, the emphasis on a celestial sanctuary can also serve to safeguard worship when the earthly temple is inaccessible, defiled, or destroyed. Hebrews does not view the tabernacle as defiled, but presents it instead as a temporary element of the divine plan. This point, in combination with the lack of Christian critique of the temple

pre-AD 70, suggests that Hebrews postdates the fall of Jerusalem. Hebrews uses the celestial cult not only to console its Jewish Christian audience that the atonement remains available through Christ, but further to exhort them not to abandon the practice of meeting together. Despite the temple's destruction they still have a sanctuary, with whose worship they must still keep time.

Here the points of contact with *Jubilees* and Qumran texts are pertinent. The desire for exact repetition of sacrifice as a means of extending the worship of the heavenly sanctuary into the earthly realm in one sense runs directly counter to Hebrews, where the heavenly sanctuary hosts one completed sacrifice and the repetition of the earthly tabernacle indicates imperfection. However, in its application of tabernacle worship to Christian worship via Christ, Hebrews is much closer to the outlook of *Jubilees* and the *Sabbath Songs*. Such worship occurs in synchrony with the perpetual intercession in the heavenly sanctuary, serving to extend the praise of God in this present age.

### 7.4.3 Hebrews and Repetition in Christian Tradition

This study opened by evoking Reformation controversies over repetition in liturgy and the eucharist. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that such debates are not going to be resolved here. Generally speaking the controverted points revolve around divergent assessments of what constitutes good or bad repetition, which are based on differing criteria. For example, some might fear that the repetition of a fixed number of formalized prayers fosters an *ex opere operato* view of the function of prayer or the disengagement of personal commitment. By contrast, others might hold that repetition of the same prayers (on one occasion or through a cycle of repeated services) enables

the individual to become undistracted by the words and forms and focus fully on God. Besides such legitimate though perhaps ultimately irreconcilable concerns, the fact remains that some rejection of or preference for repetition, be that in an age-old liturgy or a contemporary worship song, remains a matter of individual taste and judgment. Yet this study of Hebrews suggests that there are contributions this text might make to the church's thinking about these issues.

It cannot be assumed that repetition is a uniformly negative phenomenon, or that it always has a destructive effect. Tertullian, the *Didascalia apostolorum*, and Chrysostom seem to have drawn this line of thinking from Hebrews. By contrast, Epiphanius offers a more careful reading of the letter; he grasps the importance of the domain of effect and redeploys Hebrews' arguments concerning repetition only where forgiveness of sins was said to be conveyed repeatedly.

We must also move away from the identification of repetition with ritual. This point was substantiated by Catherine Bell's ritual theory, but it needs to be reinforced at a more popular level by reclaiming Hebrews from the status of 'anti-ritualist' or 'anti-religious' text *par excellence* that it still largely holds. In making negative use of repetition in relation to the old covenant sacrifices, Hebrews is not rejecting ritual. Indeed, the harshest things the letter has to say do not concern the old covenant or its cult, but rather the unfaithful believer under the new as much as the old covenant. The letter relativizes one form of ritual in the wake of its fulfilment on a cosmic scale. In this connection, the discussion in Chapter Six of language of 'literal' and 'metaphorical' is relevant: at the historical level, Hebrews takes sacrificial language from the 'literal' domain of the tabernacle cult and applies it to Jesus who is not 'literally' either a priest or a sacrifice. But at the theological level, this move demonstrates that Jesus *really is* a

priest and a sacrifice, and in a more full and enduring sense than any earthly priest or sacrifice. Whatever one makes of such language, the fundamental point that celestial reality is cultic, that cult and ritual tell us something of the utmost importance about access to God, must not be swept aside.

Throughout this study, the tension between the singular Christ event and the ongoing life of the Christian has been highlighted. This relates to the tensions between the now and the not yet, between time and eternity. Of course, such a tension is not unique to Hebrews;<sup>25</sup> but this letter's particular emphasis on the absolute singularity and sufficiency of Christ's atoning work and its development of this theme in contrast to repetition makes it especially problematic. This tension creates difficulties, as seen in the crises over postbaptismal sin and repentance in the early church. As well as being unavoidable, however, it can also be productive.

Chrysostom's reflections on the relationship of Hebrews' argument concerning repeated sacrifices to Christian practice of the eucharist illustrate the particular tensions which arise in trying to connect the eucharist closely and specifically to the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death whilst avoiding any implication that that atoning sacrifice is itself being repeated. The uniqueness of Jesus' death is not merely a symbol of its perfect effect, but is integrally bound up with that efficacy such that to repeat it is to detract from – possibly to destroy – its perfection. Thus any eucharistic theology or liturgy must reckon seriously with the utter uniqueness and difference of the atonement.<sup>26</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Gorman 2001 on the need for both one-off and ongoing cruciformity; Chester 2003 on the need for ongoing conversion at Corinth.

<sup>26</sup> In this regard Grässer, in a brief discussion of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, speaks of a contemporary 'Konsens, wonach in der Eucharistiefeier nicht eine Wiederholung des Kreuzesopfers geschieht, sondern die Anamnese des einmaligen Kreuzestodes.' Grässer 1990: 2.130. On this ecumenical rapprochement see McCosker 2013: 132–36. See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2.2.1.3.IV (§1353): 'In the institution narrative, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit,

this respect there remains, to my mind, a question over how, if one is to speak of the Mass as a sacrifice *in an atoning or expiatory sense*, this does not conflict with the atoning effect of Jesus' death.<sup>27</sup> Hebrews' statement that there no longer remains a sin-offering would seem to suggest that it does, and this is what Chrysostom appears to realize in his homily. At the same time, any eucharistic theology or liturgy must engage seriously with the way in which the benefits and effects of an atonement which is *historically particular* are communicated to the believer in an ongoing manner via the reality of the heavenly cult.<sup>28</sup>

While Hebrews itself does not explicitly mention the dominical sacraments, this study suggests that the intuition of later interpreters in turning to Hebrews to elaborate the character of both baptism and the eucharist ought to be affirmed. The two sacraments encapsulate both the absolutely singular and definitive nature of Christian salvation, and also the need for ongoing sustenance and perseverance in that salvation – a combination of themes which lies at the heart of Hebrews' own concerns. It is these two aspects of the themes of singularity and repetition which the letter impresses most urgently and consistently on its readers: in responding to Christ's singular and finished

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make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ's body and blood, *his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all.*' (Emphasis added.) Cf. also 2.2.1.3.V §§1362, 1364, 1366. Cf. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1982) II.5 ('once for all'); II.8 ('unique sacrifice').

<sup>27</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2.2.1.3.IV (§1354) 'the Church [...] presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him.' Cf. 2.2.1.3.V §§1362 ('the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice'); 1364 ('As often as the sacrifice [...] is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out'); 1366. McCosker 2013 charts the polyvalence of understandings of sacrifice in modern Roman Catholic eucharistic thought, which largely downplays any transactional view.

<sup>28</sup> In this respect it is noteworthy that *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* II.8 emphasizes Christ's intercession (Heb 7.25): 'These events are unique and can neither be repeated nor prolonged. In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the Church offers its intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest.'

work with regular and repeated worship and praise, believers will gain full and complete entry into the continuous and eternal presence of God.

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