

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

Speaking from Eternity: Scriptural Interpretation in the Epistle to the Hebrews

TAYLOR A. SLUSSER
SPRING 2021

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Environmental Resource Management
with honors in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Daniel K. Falk
Chaiken Family Chair in Jewish Studies and
Professor and Department Head of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Erin M. Hanes
Lecturer in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
Honors Adviser

* Electronic approvals are on file.

ABSTRACT

The New Testament's Epistle to the Hebrews, an example of extended early Christian reading of the Old Testament, exhibits interpretive methods that few scholars find appealing or reproduceable. However, the theological assumptions underlying the author's hermeneutics have not received the attention they deserve. In particular, how does he conceive of the character of Old Testament Scripture and its relationship to the realities he says it refers to? Based on exegeses of the discussion on "rest" of 4:1–11, the exposition of Melchizedek in 7:2–3, a description of the word of God in 4:12–13, and the Scriptural speech of Jesus in 10:5–10, I argue that our author holds assumptions common to the interpretive phenomenon known as "figural reading" in contemporary and later Jewish and Christian texts. In particular, I hold that the author views his Old Testament Scriptures as first-and-foremost divine in origin and providentially ordered in time so that they can illumine present realities facing the believing community, despite having been written by human authors well before the events they are construed to describe. Moreover, I argue that original human authorial intentions and conceptions of the historical events behind the texts (as opposed to the narrative artifacts themselves) do not govern how the author interprets Scripture. Instead, this role is reserved for the literary and canonical context of the Scriptures as given by one divine speaker, which our author seems to believe is congruent with the retrospectively perceived yet pre-existent reality of the resurrected Christ.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Description of and Justification for the Project	1
Preliminaries	4
Chapter 2 The Problem in Context	9
The Quotations of Hebrews: Statement of the Problem	9
Current Perspectives on the Problem.....	10
Chapter 3 Searching for Analogues in Figural Reading	16
Second Temple Judaism	16
The New Testament and (especially) the Fourth Gospel.....	18
Figural Reading in the Christian Tradition	22
Summary and Conclusion.....	28
Chapter 4 Two Case Studies of Figural Reading in Hebrews	29
Entering the Rest of God (Heb 4:1–11)	29
The Figure of Melchizedek (Heb 7:2–3)	34
Excursus: History and Scripture	43
Conclusion and Relationship to Figural Reading	46
Chapter 5 The Concept of Pre-existence in Hebrews	48
The “Living Word of God” (Heb 4:12–13)	48
The Personal Pre-existence of Christ.....	51
Towards Metaphysics	57
Summary.....	64
Chapter 6 Scriptural Metaphysical Priority in Hebrews	65
Parallels.....	65
Consequences for Scriptural Interpretation	68
Case Study: Scripture as Heavenly Language (Heb 10:5–10).....	70
Our Author’s View of Scripture	75

Situating this in the Conversation	77
Excursus: What about Historical Study?	80
Further Study	82
Chapter 7 Summary and Conclusion	84
Appendix A Abbreviations	88

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Visual summary of approaches 15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No thesis is truly an individual project, and this one is no exception. I would first like to thank Dr. Daniel Falk for agreeing to supervise a project on a work outside his area of research in the first place, even in the midst of his other duties and obligations. His comments throughout the process have strengthened the present work significantly, and our conversations over the best several years have greatly expanded my knowledge and interest in New Testament studies. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Michael Legaspi for encouraging me to pursue research in Hebrews in the first place, and for patiently enduring the growing pains of an undergraduate researcher who often struggled to find language for what he intuited.

My first five semesters of Greek were overseen by Dr. Laura Marshall, and without her rigorous training I would be far less confident with exegeting what is arguably the most well-written piece of Greek in the New Testament. I would also like to thank Dr. Anna Peterson for her help in checking a verb's grammar, as well as Dr. Erin Hanses for reviewing a late draft of this work. Of course, all errors that remain in this work are my own.

My thanks goes to the office of Undergraduate Education at Penn State for providing me with an Erickson Discovery Grant for the summer of 2020, allowing me to focus on research full-time. I have little doubt that without the advisors in both majors—Ben Whitesell in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and both Dr. Rob Shannon and Tammy Shannon in Environmental Resource Management—I would not have been able to complete either major on-time or had the time flexibility I was graced with to work on this thesis without their counsel. I

would especially like to thank the Shannons for encouraging me to do studies in both of my areas of interest and giving me the flexibility to do so.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention several friends from Reformed University Fellowship and Calvary Church who, through enjoyable conversations, allowed me to articulate several of my thoughts in the context of the believing community—I think especially of Noah, Adi, Seyi, and Cam. Finally, I would like to thank my family for supporting me throughout my academic endeavors, not to mention letting my books take over our guestroom!

Chapter 1

Introduction

Description of and Justification for the Project

The text of the Epistle to the Hebrews is riddled with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament, apart from which it stands unintelligible. In recent decades, an increasing amount of attention has been pointed towards how the author interprets and makes use of the Old Testament. Many commentators have focused on what such strategies and hermeneutics may have implied about the author's Christology, a development that tends to follow the contours set by Richard Hays in broader New Testament studies.¹ Others in Hebrews scholarship have explored the interpretive *method* of the author, with emphasis placed either on the rhetorical context of the epistle and its implied reception² or on parallels with other ancient interpreters of Israel's Scriptures, most commonly including the rabbis,³ Qumran sectarians,⁴ and Jewish Hellenists.⁵

¹ See Chapter 3 below.

² David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

³ Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*, WUNT II 260 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁴ Eric F. Mason, "*You Are a Priest Forever*": *Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, STDJ 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁵ Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître Aux Hébreux*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1952); Kenneth L. Schenck, "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years," *SPhiloA* 14 (2002): 112–35. This project, however, will engage in similar questions of metaphysics that these authors address vis-à-vis Philo.

This current project differs from the aforementioned ones in that my focus here is on the author's attitudes and assumptions towards the Old Testament that undergird its presence in the epistle. An illustration may serve well: instead of focusing either on the Christological portrait the author is attempting to paint or on the author's technique by which he uses his interpretive paintbrushes, this project aims to describe the character of the paints of Scripture itself. Some have begun to undertake this task, though most in brief manner.⁶ The majority, commenting obliquely, rarely demarcate differences between modern attitudes towards Scripture and ancient ones. For example, it is quite common to say that "all Scripture is the Word of God for Hebrews," but such a statement doesn't actually explore what it *means* for a text to be such divine speech.⁷ What is the quality of such a Word of God? What importance does the author place on history and historical reference in his exegesis of that Word of God/Scripture? What is its relationship to Christ? Questions such as these are often left unanswered or underdeveloped, despite their pertinence to historical and contemporary theological discussion. Distilling these various thoughts, my overarching question is as follows: How does the author of Hebrews conceive of the character of Old Testament Scripture and its relationship to the realities he says it refers to?

It is my goal to begin such a description in this project, relying on accounts of biblical intertextuality from Hebrews scholarship, New Testament studies, and historical theology, in addition to exploring the logic of the text. In essence, this is a work in historical theology within the New Testament. Constraints of time and knowledge prevent this from being an exhaustive study, but it is my hope that the examples given will be sufficient to demonstrate several things:

⁶ See Chapter 2.

⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson makes a similar note in regard to the Scripture's status for the church. *Hebrews: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 47–48.

1) our author cared little for original human authorial intention, but treated Scripture as divine in origin and able to speak of theological realities beyond its historical horizon; 2) our author similarly was not bound to historical exegesis to find theological meaning, but could interpret Scripture in a way that found in the text a fitting description of theological realities without paying attention to its more obvious historical referents; 3) our author conceived of Scripture as metaphysically prior to creation and standing outside of normally-experienced time; and 4) our author treated Scripture as the speech of God and the language of heaven and heaven's participants, from which all the other points listed here follow.

This study will begin in Chapter 2 with a description of the state of scholarship today, followed by an analysis of potential parallels in the realm of biblical inter- and intratextuality in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will delve into exegesis of two passages in Hebrews that display our author's exegetical methods: the "rest" of 4:1–11 and the description of Melchizedek in 7:2–3. Chapter 5 will explore the description of the Scripture in 4:12–13 and its relation to creation, as well as our author's general attitude towards metaphysics and the possibility of pre-existence. Chapter 6 closes the body of the study with parallels to the notion of pre-existent Scripture that I put forward, a look at Scripture as divine speech in 10:5–8, and a synthesis and situating of my views in the context of current scholarship. Here I also address the limitations of the study, further avenues of research, and give an excursus on historical study. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes and concludes the work.

Preliminaries

First, however, several preliminary notes may be helpful for the reader. Several of these concern topics of perennial debate and it is important that I briefly state my view. Others are definitions of specific words that have many meanings in different contexts.

“Scripture”

How do I define “Scripture” as used in this work? It is the collection of writings held as sacred by whatever author we are discussing. As we are normally discussing the author of Hebrews’ views, then we are talking about a body of texts and traditions that roughly corresponds to the Septuagint (LXX; Greek translation of the Old Testament) as we have it now. What may be helpful to note is that for most readers of sacred writings, meaning is held to be inherent in the text itself as divinely inspired. Thus, when dealing with the concept of Scripture within Hebrews (or Christian or Jewish theology more generally), I typically am focusing on the author’s conception of “the divinely-intended meaning(s)” as part-and-parcel of the text itself. In other words, by “Scripture” I mean the divine speech and knowledge that is thought by our author to be embodied by the sacred texts available to him.

Moreover, it may be helpful to note that I normally use the term “Old Testament” or “OT” as opposed to “Hebrew Bible,” though I treat them as roughly the same body of texts (regardless of whether our author was familiar with them in oral or written forms). One must choose to use one term or the other. Factors influencing me to use “Old Testament” include that our author’s Scripture was not in Hebrew, he described a kind of inaugurated “new covenant,” and the epistle has its historical (and, presently, canonical and literary) context within the then-developing Christian movement. On another note, though our author utilized a Greek text very

similar to our Septuagint, I have retained the versification found in the English versions of the Christian canon for convenience's sake. Thus, for example, when I refer to Ps 110, I am indicating the 110th Psalm in English-translation Christian Bibles, corresponding to Ps 109 in the Septuagint.

Author

The identity of the epistle's author is a classical enigma. Many have suggested one author or another; however, I do not believe that scholarship will ever be able to identify with any certainty the historical author of this work. However, I refer to the author as a "he," as our author uses a masculine self-referential participle at 11:32 (δηγούμενον).⁸ The author seems to be known to his audience; if this had not been the case, then his brief mentions of details related to them and assumedly his own ministry would appear out of place (e.g., 13:22–24).⁹ What we do know about the author is that he was well-educated and well-versed in Greek prose and rhetoric, and that he (probably) had connections to other early Christian writers. Nearly everything we know about the author is internal to the epistle, however, making it impossible to demonstrate the authorship of any single ancient person.

⁸ This is masked by translation to English. The full verse goes as follows: καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω; ἐπιλείπει με γὰρ δηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος περὶ Γεδεών, Βαράκ, Σαμψών, Ἰεφθάε, Δαυὶδ τε καὶ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν προφητῶν. The word δηγούμενον ("tell") agrees with με ("me"), but this circumstantial participle cannot be elegantly said in English without masking the connection. Therefore, "the time will fail *me* to *tell* about" makes use of a pronoun (masculine or feminine) and an infinitive (genderless) to translate "ἐπιλείπει με [masculine or feminine] γὰρ δηγούμενον [masculine] ὁ χρόνος."

⁹ For further discussion, see Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3–21; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 23–27; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 41.

Audience and Date

As with the identity of our author, there is no certitude regarding audience and date. Though called “the epistle to the Hebrews,” the title is not original to the letter and is only present on later manuscripts. It is unknown whether or not the audience was culturally Jewish or Gentile. Though often used to argue for a primarily Jewish audience, our author’s prominent usage of the OT could possibly have been understood by Gentile Christians, who would have been “socialized” to see themselves as heirs to “the titles and promises that belonged to God’s chosen people (historically, the Jewish people)” and to see the Scriptures as belonging to them as much as to those who came to Christ as Jews.¹⁰ This said, the mention of those “from Italy” (13:24) suggests that the audience included either Gentiles from abroad or a diaspora community of Jews. Several scholars have argued for an audience in Rome, based on the usage of ἡγούμενοι (“leaders”) and that mention of “from Italy” again.¹¹ For my purposes, I assume that whoever the audience was or where they were, they saw themselves as brought into the drama of God’s people Israel. The emphasis on the Law and the annulment of the Temple cultus could comport well with an audience that was struggling over adherence to the Levitical cultus (similar to the debate over circumcision in the Pauline letters), but it could also very well deal with an audience wrestling with the loss of that cultus. In sum, there are many plausible scenarios that do not impact the interpretation set forth here.

This brings us to dating the epistle. The early Christian epistle *1 Clement* bears remarkable similarities with Hebrews that suggest it was reliant on our epistle (and not the other

¹⁰ deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 3. This can certainly be seen in the Pauline epistles as well, where Paul assumes that his audience can understand his Scriptural arguments, despite the explicit assumption that at least part of his audience is comprised of Gentiles. This is readily apparent in Galatians, for example.

¹¹ William L. Lane, *Hebrews*, 2 vols., WBC 47A-B (Dallas: Word, 1991), lviii; cf. Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 37–38.

way around). This most likely places it somewhere before 100 CE, although the dating of *I Clement* is controversial.¹² At the other end, the similarity of the epistle's exegesis to other examples of early Christian literature (especially the Pauline letters) suggests an early date somewhere in the late 40s or somewhere in the 50s CE. Beyond this range, everything is conjectural; I am not aware of any other evidence further narrowing the scope external to the epistle. I favor a date after 70 CE, as I think that our author's pattern of retrospective reading fits well with his attempt to abrogate the Levitical cultus.¹³ However, the interpretations I put forward do not require a specific dating.

Other notes

The main sweep of the work I believe to be summed up by the idea of “access” to God; thus, I understand the underlying character of the author's thought to be better described as spatial as opposed to temporal for reasons that are described in Chapters 5 and 6. Distilled to its essence, I believe that the author is saying, “Jesus has gone into the presence of God, and we are to follow.” This said, however, although our author makes use of spatial language (e.g., “approaching,” “entering,” etc.), the fact that our author dislocates the presence of God from the earthly Temple and earthly geography in general suggests that we are using spatial language to describe realities that transcend space.

¹² See the discussion in Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 6–7. The traditional date of 96 CE for *I Clement* can no longer be considered certain.

¹³ I assume that our author retrospectively perceived the reality of Christ, but assumed that the Scriptures, being the Word of God, spoke of him (and were spoken by him!). On analogy to this, I would not be surprised if the arguments for the annulment of the Temple cultus were based on a retrospective perception of the Temple's fall. The logic of our author would then require him to find an explanation in Scripture. Why wouldn't he have mentioned its fall, though? The same question could be asked regarding the resurrection of Christ—he assumes it, but never explicitly states it.

I take this text as homiletical in style, whether it was originally meant to be read by the author or was sent as a letter in the style of a sermon. Quotations from the New Testament are taken from the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA²⁸).¹⁴ Quotations from the Septuagint are from the Rahlfs-Hanhart *Septuaginta*.¹⁵ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

¹⁴ Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

¹⁵ Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

Chapter 2

The Problem in Context

The Quotations of Hebrews: Statement of the Problem

The interpretation of the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most active areas of research surrounding the epistle. Indeed, the entire structure of the sermon is based around OT quotations,¹⁶ prompting George Guthrie to say, “[T]he uses to which Hebrews has put the Old Testament are the book’s bone and marrow.”¹⁷ Nor must such priority be merely implied from the author’s usage; the vaunted language our author uses for the “word of God” (λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ; Heb 4:11–13), divine “promises” (ἐπαγγελίαι; 6:12–17), and divine “oath” (ὄρκος; 6:16–17) bring this out explicitly. However, the Scriptures are interpreted in ways that seem to strike modern interpreters as arbitrary and capricious. One example may be illuminating: while the Psalter (as well as the prophets) seems to have been exalted in the exegesis of the epistle, the Pentateuch is minimized and mitigated, even “annulled” (ἀθέτησις γίνεται; 7:18). The fact that the letter survived to be canonized implies that its various audiences found the author’s rhetoric persuasive, but what are the assumptions required by the epistle’s logic? In the words of Graham Hughes: “[H]ow in one context can the scriptures of the Old Testament function so immediately as a vehicle for the Word of God while in other contexts the covenant which those same scriptures enshrine is unceremoniously dismissed as outmoded?”¹⁸

¹⁶ See, e.g., George B. Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CJT* 5.1 (1959): 44–51.

¹⁷ George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research,” *CurBR* 1.2 (2003): 272.

¹⁸ Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, SNTSMS 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 35.

To separate this question from other questions of theology, especially Christology and eschatology, is to sever things that are presented in the text as parts of an integrated whole. Thus, while the focus in this section is ostensibly that of how Hebrews handles the OT, the emphasis on the ontological character of the “word of God” and divine speech will involve questions of time, history, and eschatology as presented in (or implied by) the epistle.

What follows is a literature review that describes attempts at discerning the general hermeneutic(s) displayed and implied in Hebrews. While not exhaustive, it should serve to acquaint the reader with the general contours of research over the past several decades.

Current Perspectives on the Problem

At many times and in many ways have commentators and interpreters attempted to describe the approach of Hebrews to the OT. These attempts have ranged from the dismissive to the appreciative. One common example of the former is that of Hans-Friedrich Wiess (1991), who claims that “the style of scriptural exposition, as practiced in Hebrews...is fundamentally no longer interested in letting Scripture speak with its own voice.”¹⁹ This kind of perspective has certainly had a wide-influence; George Caird, writing in 1959, could say that his own claim for a remarkable continuity between the OT and Hebrews was being made “in the face of a formidable display of learned discouragement.”²⁰ Though this view has become less common in anglophone

¹⁹ Stephen Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?,” *TynBul* 50.1 (1999): 6; Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KEK 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 181. Translation is Motyer’s.

²⁰ Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 44; who cites, among others, James Moffatt, *Hebrews*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1924), xxxi, xlvi. Perhaps, however, most of these scholars were more accurately explaining how it seemed discontinuous to *modern* interpretive methods, as opposed to discontinuous *per se*. Taken this way, Moffatt’s judgement that our author interpreted the OT with a certain (historical) naivety stand (*Hebrews*, p. xlvi).

scholarship on Hebrews, the suspicion (and even acceptance) of consciously reading *into* a text what is not there (*eisegesis*) has continued—undoubtedly sustained in part by the move towards postmodernism and the collapse of meaning into reception.²¹

Some comments may be made in passing towards this point of view. This approach ignores the fact that ancient hearers and readers had access to the OT and still considered the epistle’s argument to be persuasive enough to preserve and eventually canonize the text.²² Indeed, the very fact that appeals to the OT’s authority are repeatedly made in Hebrews is to imply an expectation that the *OT can judge the author’s message*. However, a simple rejection of the hermeneutics of the author results in ignoring the views of the author and his audience(s), as well as anachronistically applying and privileging modern views of responsible interpretation over and against earlier views. This is a point to which we shall return in the next section.

Most who view Hebrews’ use of the OT positively describe the author’s general hermeneutic as in some sense typological.²³ Broadly speaking, Jesus is viewed to fulfill the OT. One such approach is that deemed *sensus plenior* (“fuller sense”), in which the meaning of the OT is given a deeper, Christian meaning by the Holy Spirit. Though typically associated with Roman Catholic exegetes,²⁴ the “christotelic” approaches of some Protestant scholars can also be grouped under the same category. Of course, such a broad definition of *sensus plenior* can also

²¹ In the New Testament more generally, see Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 47–60, 117–18. See below for further discussion on the relationship between the OT and the NT.

²² Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?,” 5; cf. the argument of Bockmuehl (*Seeing the Word*, 102–3) regarding the canon as a *historical* development that may shed light on the meaning of the text.

²³ Clear delineation beyond this is difficult, as definitions among commentators and various categorizers often conflict and overlap.

²⁴ Especially Raymond E. Brown and Ceslas Spicq; see Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?,” 10–11; Guthrie, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament,” 284–85.

encompass many typological views in general—all of them agree that the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in bearing forth the Christological meaning of the OT. However, those views that are described *specifically* as *sensus plenior* do not require much attention to the literary context and logic of the passage. According to Ceslas Spicq, the chief proponent of viewing Hebrews' exegesis in terms of *sensus plenior*, “Pure logic does not deduce from the texts of the Old Testament the outline of the person and work of Christ: they must be read by the light of the Holy Spirit.”²⁵ Put negatively, the OT does not witness to Christ in and of itself; the “Holy Spirit” must be invoked to explain the jump in meaning between the literal (or original) sense of the text and the theological (Christological or other) sense perceived in the text by its (later) Christian audience.²⁶

It is at this point that other typological approaches depart from those that are consciously *sensus plenior*. Generally speaking, these other approaches variously maintain that the author of Hebrews viewed the OT as having its own, valid witness to Christ. In these views, regardless of present-day evaluations of the author's methods, the author himself viewed his own exegetical practices as *exegetical*.²⁷ An excellent example of this perspective is Caird, who in an influential 1959 essay argued that the main thesis of the epistle was as follows:

[T]he Old Testament is not only an incomplete book but an *avowedly* incomplete book, which taught and teaches men to live by faith in the good things that were to come. It had a doctrine of man which remained unfulfilled until the coming of Jesus, an offer of divine

²⁵ Spicq, *L'Épître Aux Hébreux*, 1:349; quoted and translated in Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?,” 10.

²⁶ For further discussion of *sensus plenior* and other approaches, see Chapter 3 below.

²⁷ Reading *out* of a text what is in it; this is contrasted with *exegetical*, which is understood as reading *into* a text what is *not* in it. It should be noted that many commentators do not always delineate between how the author viewed his exegetical method and their own evaluations of the cogency of those methods.

rest which remained outstanding because there was no way by which God's message of grace could be mixed with faith in those who heard it. It had a priesthood and looked for a better one to draw men near to God. It had sacrificial ordinances and knew them to be ineffective in dealing with sin.²⁸

In other words, the author does not think he is reading Christ *into* the OT; rather, he sees Christ coming *out* of the OT, though not perhaps in ways recognized by earlier readers.

Most typological approaches describe the hermeneutic in Hebrews in terms of “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*). In this view, the main thrust of the epistle is concerned with interpreting the OT salvific events of God as precursors or prefigurations of the climactic salvific act of them all: the death and resurrection of Jesus. For these commentators, typological connections serve to “allow for pastoral application and fresh theological insight, without negating the historical particularity of the prior text.”²⁹ Among these we may count Gareth Lee Cockerill and Daniel J. Treier.³⁰

This being said, however, some argue that the author uses the Old Testament typologically but do not emphasize the linear movement of salvation history. Luke Timothy Johnson is typical of this view. For him, the key “history” of the Hebrews’ Scripturally-constructed world is pre-eminently eschatology.³¹ Caird also appears to fall into this category.³²

²⁸ Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 49, emphasis mine.

²⁹ Daniel J. Treier, “Speech Acts, Hearing Hearts, and Other Senses: The Doctrine of Scripture Practice in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham (presented at the St. Andrews Conference on Scripture and Theology, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 343. On the connections between this and figural reading in general, see below.

³⁰ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 304n33, 312. What Treier means by typology’s usefulness for reading Scripture “with historical integrity” (“Speech Acts, Hearing Hearts, and Other Senses,” 343) is ambiguous, though later writing (idem, “Keeping Time: Human Finitude and Figural Interpretation,” *ProEccl* 27.3 [2018]: 289–99) seems to emphasize the historicity of the events of Scripture.

³¹ Johnson, *Hebrews*, 20–21; cf. idem, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” *Int* 57.3 (2003): 237.

³² Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews.”

Graham Hughes' aptly titled *Hebrews and Hermeneutics* presents a mediating position between the two, emphasizing both the importance of eschatology and *Heilsgeschichte*, but the assumptions he holds regarding the historical facticity of salvation history and the importance of the original intentions of Scripture align him with Cockerill and Treier.³³ However, his recognition that the Word of God does not properly belong to history but rather “to that order of existence which is beyond the mutability of historical existence”³⁴ bears some similarities to Johnson's view.

We may add yet another variation to these typological approaches. Several scholars, of whom Paul Ellingworth is probably the most notable example,³⁵ claim that the pre-existence of Christ is the key towards understanding the use of the OT in Hebrews. “Christ, by whom God has now spoken his final word (1:1f.), was alive and active in creation (1:2) and throughout Israel's history. Any part of the OT may thus in principle be understood as speaking about Christ, or as spoken to or by him.”³⁶ In this case, the temporal distance between the earlier OT text and its subject matter (which, as Ellingworth interprets our author, is Jesus) is collapsed, permitting the author's practice of “searching” the Scriptures to find Christ.³⁷ Most recent interpreters, however, reject this view on the grounds that 1) pre-existence is unnecessary to

³³ In attempting to describe the interpretive procedure of our author, Hughes assumes that the author was not attempting to prove anything about Jesus to his audience using Scripture, but was rather merely exhorting them (*Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 56–63). In this way he attempts to prevent the charge of eisegesis for our author (see esp. pp. 57 and 60).

³⁴ Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 41.

³⁵ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 41–42; A. T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 68–70.

³⁶ Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 41–42.

³⁷ *Idem*, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42.

attribute Scriptures to Jesus, and 2) that such a view does not reserve a privileged place for the historical movement of Hebrews between the Old and the New.³⁸

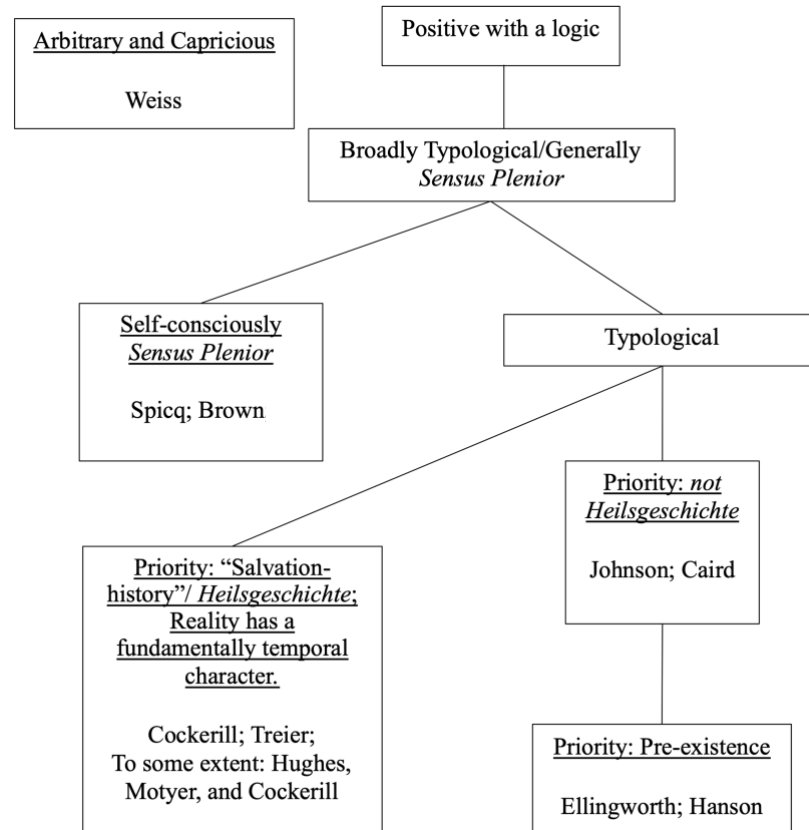


Figure 1: Visual summary of approaches

³⁸ So Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?,” 9–10; Guthrie, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament,” 286; Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 43-44n191. My categorization of Ellingworth’s work as “typological” differs from the categorizations of Motyer and Guthrie, both of whom place his view in its own category.

Chapter 3

Searching for Analogues in Figural Reading

The interest in our author's usage of the OT has not occurred in a vacuum. Intertextuality within the Bible has been a vibrant area of research, in large part thanks to the nature of Jewish and Christian texts' engagement with earlier writings. This is true for three areas of study tangential to the epistle: the broad phenomenon known as Second Temple Judaism (which our author was undoubtedly raised in, even if the epistle is later than the Temple's fall); other works of the New Testament, particularly the gospels; and historical Christian theology and exegesis. In particular, the concept of *figural reading* will prove important to understanding Hebrews.

Second Temple Judaism

The first analogue that we shall focus on is inner-biblical interpretation within the Old Testament and Second Temple Literature, looking through the lens of biblical scholar and classicist Hindy Najman and her book *Seconding Sinai*.³⁹ Najman's work focuses on the so-called pseudepigrapha, a collection of Jewish texts that retell earlier stories through the voice of figures from those stories, though they themselves are written well after the fact (more specifically in the centuries surrounding the turn of the era). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 20th century have shed significant light on these texts. Najman explores the concepts of authority that may have allowed the pseudepigrapha to survive *alongside* the very texts that they retell, despite their supposed contradictions. In particular, she claims that a

³⁹ Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

number of these texts—especially Deuteronomy, the Temple Scroll (11QTemple), *Jubilees*, and even the works of Philo Judaeus⁴⁰—participate in “Mosaic Discourse,” retelling the story of Moses and the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai in order to “authorize” practices and teachings not found in the original accounts. One might wonder if the authors are attempting to deceive their audiences, but Najman argues that this likely is not the case:

Works like *Jubilees* and the Temple Scroll, not unlike the earlier work of Deuteronomy, seek to provide the interpretive context within which scriptural traditions already acknowledged as authoritative can be properly understood. This is neither a fraudulent attempt at replacement, nor an act of impiety. *It is rather, we may charitably assume, a pious effort to convey what is taken to be the essence of earlier traditions, an essence that the rewriters think is in danger of being missed.*⁴¹

Under this construal, the authors are attempting to bring out what they themselves truly believe to have really “been there” in the original events.

Nor is this emphasis on rooting authority in past revelation limited to texts surrounding the figure of Moses and the events surrounding his life. Indeed, this seems to be a common practice in other Jewish literature, whether they be Davidic discourses, Solomonic discourses, or the corpora surrounding figures like Enoch or the various prophets.⁴² In a parallel manner, Hebrews appears to base its message on the Jewish Scriptures, perhaps in an example of Davidic or messianic discourse. Indeed, as seen earlier, some of the modern reactions towards the

⁴⁰ Najman does not limit herself to only the Pseudepigrapha, seeing Deuteronomy as a precursor to second Temple Mosaic Discourse and the work of Philo as Mosaic Discourse modified under a Hellenistic grid.

⁴¹ Idem, *Seconding Sinai*, 45–46, emphasis mine.

⁴² Najman explicitly notes that Mosaic discourse is not the only (or even necessarily the primary) kind of discourse present in the OT and pseudepigrapha. She identifies Davidic and Solomonic discourses as other possible threads, to which one might add Enochic literature and the corpora associated with the various prophets (*Seconding Sinai*, 17–18).

author's manner of interpretation are identical to some reactions towards the way in which re-written bible texts interact with earlier texts.⁴³ However, what differentiates Hebrews from these other texts is that, instead of finding a *teaching* latent in the Scriptures, our author finds *Jesus*.

The New Testament and (especially) the Fourth Gospel

It is without question that the author of Hebrews swam in the same theological/cultural milieu as other writers of the NT, as well as the same subject. This makes proposals for understanding the hermeneutics of other NT writers particularly useful. Probably the most significant proponent of figural reading and intertextuality in the New Testament has been Richard Hays. His work on Paul's hermeneutics (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*)⁴⁴ was widely regarded as the standard resource for understanding Pauline and New Testament intertextuality, as evidenced by its use in areas even outside of Pauline studies.⁴⁵ The primary thrust of that work is to establish the fundamentally *metaleptic* character of Paul's interpretation of the OT. In other words, when Paul quoted the Scriptures, he often "reaches beyond" the specific quotations he reproduces and evokes or "echoes" other unquoted portions and themes of the original sources. This, in turn, allows for the OT to challenge and shape Paul's message.⁴⁶

⁴³ So, for example, Najman notes Bernard Levinson's remarks regarding Deuteronomy: "Deuteronomy's use of precedent subverts it. The old saw of Deuteronomy as a pious fraud may thus profitably be inverted. Is there not something of an impious fraud—of *pecca fortiter!*—in the literary accomplishment of the text's authors?...The authors of Deuteronomy retroject into the past their modernist transformation of the tradition." Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 150; quoted in Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 5. This is uncannily similar to Weiss' critique of the use of the OT in Hebrews (see Chapter 2 above).

⁴⁴ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴⁵ E.g., Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament," 273; for the work's general reception, see David A. Shaw, "Converted Imaginations? The Reception of Richard Hays's Intertextual Method," *CurBR* 11.2 (2013): 234–45.

⁴⁶ This is what prompts Hays to call Paul's interaction with Scripture as "dialectical imitation" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 174–78).

Hays has since expanded and refined his thought in *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.⁴⁷

In it he emphasizes that the gospel writers (and, we might add, the other writers of the New Testament) *read backwards*, reading the OT in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, seeing how the OT illuminates the life of Jesus. These illuminating relationships are given theological weight and are described as *figural*. Thus, the gospel writers metaleptically refer to the OT when describing Jesus, retrospectively identifying figural relationships between OT texts and Christ.⁴⁸ He sees this practice of “figural reading” present in all four canonical gospels, and explicitly advocated in Luke and John.⁴⁹

Of the four evangelists, it is John who seems to inform Hays’ overall “Gospel-shaped hermeneutic” the most.⁵⁰ In Hays’ view, John is expressly attempting to “instruct his readers to read *figurally*,”⁵¹ a phenomenon that can be witnessed particularly in 2:13–22 (with a similar parallel at 12:16). In this passage, where Jesus goes to the Temple and drives out the moneychangers and merchants, the narrator adds that “his disciples remembered that it has been written, ‘Zeal for your house consumes me’” (2:17, quoting Ps 69:9). Not long thereafter, when

⁴⁷ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

⁴⁸ In this he follows Erich Auerbach’s definition: “Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first. The two poles of a figure are separated in time, but both, being real events or persons, are within temporality. They are both contained in the flowing stream which is historical life, and only the comprehension, the *intellectus spiritualis*, of their interdependence is a spiritual act” (Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968], 73; cited in Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 2). It may be added that this includes the concept of typological reading.

⁴⁹ Luke 24:27 (the Emmaus Road encounter): “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures” (NRSV). When I refer to “Luke,” “John,” or one of the other evangelists or apostles as an author, I am drawing on the implied or traditionally-held author as a shorthand for the authors and communities that produced their respective texts. I do not seek to make a judgement regarding authorship here.

⁵⁰ David Ford concurs regarding the importance of John for Hays (“Reading Backwards, Reading Forwards, and Abiding: Reading John in the Spirit Now,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11.1 [2017]: 69–84).

⁵¹ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 312 emphasis original.

questioning religious leaders confront Jesus after he says, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it” (v. 19), the narrator explains:

But this he said regarding the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus spoke” (vv. 21–22).

Here Jesus’ words and actions are linked with the words of Ps 69. However, it is clear that the disciples only perceive this figural link retrospectively—this perception only occurs in light of the resurrection of Jesus.

Taking his cue from John’s prologue, Hays describes the evangelist’s hermeneutic as predicated on the identification of Jesus with the pre-existent *logos* (“word”) by which the world was created. This enables Jesus to be identified as the true significance of Scripture, which is understood “as a huge web of Christological signifiers generated by the pretemporal eternal *logos* as intimations of his truth and glory.”⁵² Thus, the Temple, the festivals, and the Passover lamb can be said to prefigure Jesus⁵³—and, Hays adds, Ps 69 can be said to be spoken by Jesus.

This bleeds into the hermeneutic that Hays advocates for the church:

[The hermeneutical sensibility of the Gospels] locates the deep logic of the intertextual linkage between Israel’s Scripture and the Gospels not in human intentionality but in the mysterious providence of God, who is ultimately the author of the correspondences woven into these texts and events, correspondences that could be perceived only in retrospect. In short, *figural interpretation discerns a divinely crafted pattern of coherence within the events and characters of the biblical narratives.*⁵⁴

⁵² *Ibid.*, 343, emphasis original.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 311–23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

This is all well and good in adumbrating John's manner and theology of interpreting Scripture, but how does it relate to Hebrews? Why a comparison to John, instead of, say, the Synoptics? Hebrews, it might be observed, possesses a number of remarkable similarities to the fourth gospel. For one, both the epistle and the gospel quote heavily from similar sources—the Psalter is emphasized and the Pentateuch relatively muted.⁵⁵ Additionally, in style they focus on a small number of passages, but they explore those passages very heavily.⁵⁶ Moreover, from a historical standpoint, it is plausible that both were among the last works of the New Testament to be written, and as such may have had exposure to the other traditions of Jesus.⁵⁷

There are three more points of similitude between John and Hebrews, however, that shall take more space to explore and establish, and that are shared more generally with the later Christian tradition. These are points that either undergird or are indicative of the expansive sort of *figural reading* as conceived by Hays and writers discussing the later Christian tradition, where the pre-existence of Christ is the key to understanding the figural reading of everything, including Scripture (for which see Chapters 5 and 6). 1) Hebrews exhibits a sort of dualism that lends itself to being expressed using Platonic terminology. Relatedly, 2) Hebrews eschews a linear understanding of time and *Heilsgeschichte*.⁵⁸ Finally, and most importantly, 3) Hebrews describes the personal pre-existence of Jesus and proclaims his divinity, and conceives of Scripture as being in some similar manner pre-existent. These are points that shall be explored more thoroughly in Chapters 5 and 6 of the present study.

⁵⁵ For John, see *ibid.*, 286–87.

⁵⁶ For John, see *ibid.*, 284. For Hebrews, see the remarks of Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 47.

⁵⁷ Most scholars (including Hays) date John to the end of the first century. This is a point upon which Ford places significant weight (“Reading Backwards, Reading Forwards, and Abiding,” 73–74). The date of Hebrews is uncertain (see Preliminaries above), but it may plausibly be ascribed to the end of the first century as well.

⁵⁸ So, on the side of John, Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 289.

Figural Reading in the Christian Tradition

The Christian tradition, arguably taking its cue from John and other NT writers,⁵⁹ has also participated in figural reading throughout its general history.⁶⁰ The historical theologian Ephraim Radner, in his ambitious (if labyrinthine) work *Time and the Word*,⁶¹ picks up on this theme with an exploration of figural readings of exile. He begins by noting that John Calvin, speaking in his own exile, appropriates the words of Genesis: “It is to us, then, equally that these words are addressed, *Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred.*”⁶² Radner adduces several more examples, including William Tyndale, Origen, and John Chrysostom, all of whom interpreted the contours of their own exiles by the exiles of Scripture. By doing so, he demonstrates that the Christian tradition has not limited the referent of “exile” and “captivity”—whether it be in the Scriptural accounts of Abraham, Exodus, Babylon, or otherwise—to only those purported historical events ostensibly described in Scripture.⁶³ Even further, these experiences of “exile”

⁵⁹ Ford, “Reading Backwards, Reading Forwards, and Abiding,” 76.

⁶⁰ Helpful works not explored in-depth here include Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); and John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁶¹ Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016). For responses and critiques to this work, see Don Collett, “The Christomorphic Shaping of Time in Radner’s *Time and the Word*,” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 276–88; Collin Robinson Cornell, “The Figures and Names of Our God,” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 263–68; Paul J. Griffiths, “On Radner’s *Time and the Word*,” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 300–306; R. David Nelson, “Thinking About Christ and Scripture with and Beyond *Time and the Word*,” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 269–75; Treier, “Keeping Time”; as well as a response by Ephraim Radner, “Scripture on the Edge of God,” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 307–21.

⁶² John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. David Constable (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1855), 1:374; quoted in Radner, *Time and the Word*, 19.

⁶³ This is a point he develops *pace* N.T. Wright, who limits the referent of “exile” to a historical “mood” in second Temple Judaism. As Radner rightly wonders, why must “continuing exile” end with the historical life of Jesus? Radner, *Time and the Word*, 17–43; For an exchange on the subject, see *idem*, “Exile and Figural History,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 273–301; and an abbreviated response from N. T. Wright, “Responding to Exile,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 305–32.

are, in the Christian view, underlain by the figure of Jesus's life and exile.⁶⁴ Moving from there, he observes that figural reading itself evinces temporal disjuncts, implying a rejection of simple “serial chronology” that questions the usefulness of such a temporal model.⁶⁵

Following Augustine and paralleling Hays' reading of John, he argues that by figural reading, the Christian tradition assumes the logical priority of the Scriptures to all of creation (much in a similar way as the “heavenly Torah” of Judaism).⁶⁶ In order to better visualize this, Radner proposes viewing reality (as it exists before God) as essentially *tenseless*,⁶⁷ and echoes the bishop of Hippo:

Reality is a kind of single tapestry, all woven together in one piece by God in an instant, each element placed in its relation to other threads and designs; yet it is “unrolled” as it were, within (and along with) the cognizance of creaturely existence. This unrolling of what is a single network of created reality's aspects provides the character of temporal experience, as well as defining what is meant by God's “providence.”⁶⁸

In this schema, Scripture is the means by which God orders everything, and time is the creaturely perception of that ordering.⁶⁹ The relationship between any given “artifact” (thing, event, memory, etc.—i.e., creatures) and the Scripture that orders them is figural, and it is the goal of interpretation to reveal those hitherto hidden figural relationships.

⁶⁴ “Overarching all of these is the dual figure of Adam and Christ, each exiled in their own way, yet with the latter carrying through the former's restoration precisely through his own subjection to captivity's fundamental grasp in sin and death” (Radner, *Time and the Word*, 28).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 39, cf. 34–39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39–43, 51–56, 89. For the parallels to Judaism, see pp. 67–71. See also Chapter 6 in the present study.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 87–106.

In this, Radner recognizes, as does the Christian tradition, the importance of *creatio ex nihilo* for such a view of figural reading—without the dependence upon God as the Creator of *all* things, the question arises whether all things can be ordered by God. If it is not true that everything is ordered by God, then there are missing figural relationships. More positively, though, this enables him to emphasize figural reading as common Christian reading of the Bible wherever God’s “creative omnipotence” is assumed.⁷⁰

Thus Radner makes connections between figural reading and the metaphysical priority of Scripture to all creation. Remarkably, our author assumes or mentions points that Radner stresses in the Christian tradition. In particular, our author specifically a) notes the power of God as creator, b) describes Jesus, once again, as pre-existent,⁷¹ and c) emphasizes the power of the “living word of God.”

Old Testament scholar Don Collet draws on the work of Radner in his *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*.⁷² One of Collet’s earlier claims is crucial: first, the “sense” or “reading” of Scripture that describes God (the subject matter or *res* of Scripture) is what might be called its theological sense. This reading of Scripture is inherently figural, pulling together many texts from the OT that nevertheless are taken to refer to the same realities and in particular the same

⁷⁰ This is a key claim of his ch. 4, “Creative Omnipotence and the Figures of Scripture” (ibid., 111–62). Though he is sympathetic to those who emphasize the importance of Christian Platonism and participationist metaphysics for reading Scripture, Radner argues that the shift towards “nominalism” in the 14th century did not particularly impact figural reading. It may be helpful to note that *creatio ex nihilo* in Radner’s usage is amenable to a creation in which all things are dependent on and metaphysically posterior to God; for this reason it doesn’t appear he would disagree with Old Testament scholar Gary Anderson’s view that the creation accounts in the Scriptures emphasize not the *material origins* of the universe but rather the universe’s *contingency* upon the providence of God; see Gary A. Anderson, *Christian Doctrine and the Old Testament: Theology in the Service of Biblical Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 42–48. This would also agree with Aquinas.

⁷¹ See Chapter 5 in this study.

⁷² Don C. Collet, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

Person.⁷³ This figural or theological sense is governed by the “literal” sense (or the “way words run”) of Scripture.⁷⁴ There is little distance between the text itself and its meaning—indeed, as Collett argues, the early Protestant reformers even identified the literal sense as the true theological sense (over and against the figural/allegorical sense).⁷⁵ Meaning is not derived from historical reconstructions of the past that Scripture bears witness to, but rather from the “way words run,” from what might be seen as the literary context both of the individual works themselves and of the broader canon as a whole.⁷⁶

Much of Collett’s work is dedicated to diagnosing how this earlier mode of reading differs from modern assumptions regarding authorship and interpretation. As these are also involved in biblical study and Hebrews, it will be useful to explain his work further.

Collett’s main thesis is that modern hermeneutics fail to account for divine providence. This, he claims, comes from Romantic anthropologies that make textual meaning an “affair of consciousness” and root it *not* in the text but rather in what is *behind* the text—namely, the ideas

⁷³ In Collett’s construal, the theological/figural sense—which he calls the allegorical sense, in line with Patristic studies—encompasses the medieval *Quadrige* (literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical senses). Collett subsumes the *Quadrige*’s tropological and anagogical senses into the allegorical sense more broadly (*Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, pp. 31–33).

⁷⁴ Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 28, following Aquinas.

⁷⁵ Collett argues that though the Reformers took aim at the allegorical/figural sense because it had often been unchained from the literal meaning of Scripture, their approach to the “literal sense” included attitudes and activities that had formerly been grouped under the category of the allegorical sense. See *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, pp. 35–41.

⁷⁶ It may be noted that in this essay I am not distinguishing between allegory and figural reading, and I often use typology synonymously with both. In this regard I am in agreement with Collett (*Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 39–40, 47–48) and Frances Young (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 152–57). Most who distinguish typology from allegory view allegory in a negative light, with *Heilsgeschichte* serving as the control for proper (typological) biblical interpretation; see, for example, the concerns and approach of Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock: Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, and Transfigured,” in *Heaven on Earth? Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 208–29. However, I do not believe that temporal modes of thought, including *Heilsgeschichte*, are particularly useful for understanding our author’s exegesis regarding Melchizedek in 7:2–3 (see Chapter 4 below).

that the author consciously held.⁷⁷ If meaning is limited to the conscious author, then divine inspiration comes to be regarded as something *congruent* with authorial intent of the human authors. Collett argues that this underlies the German theologian Freiderich Schleiermacher's interpretive program, which has exerted an extreme influence over the fields of biblical study and theology. For Schleiermacher, one must first make use of as much historical information as is possible to understand the possible historical, cultural, and grammatical dimensions of the text. This knowledge then forms the basis for "psychological" exegesis, whereby the interpreter attempts to penetrate the text to ascertain the *thoughts* of the author (presumably unencumbered by the limitations of language)—and to assert that these *thoughts* are the product of divine inspiration, not the texts themselves.⁷⁸ Instead of the divine inspiration of Scripture, one has the divine inspiration of authorial consciousness. The language of Scripture is an obstacle as much as a help in ascertaining the divine meaning held within Scripture.

In contrast, he avers (as mentioned earlier) that earlier Christianity generally did not separate between the literal sense and the theological sense—to borrow words from John O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, "the text is the *res*" or "subject matter."⁷⁹ The words of Scripture are integrated with the theological meaning they refer to. Moreover, it is God who works in time, inspiring authors to write inspired things, while also working outside of time to align events and happenings with those inspired words. Therefore, authors could speak more than they knew.⁸⁰ As

⁷⁷ Instead of placing the blame on the early Protestant reformers, Collett argues that this shift in understandings of human nature and meaning is exemplified by René Descartes and John Locke, with its impact taking full force in the 17th–19th centuries. For Descartes, people are "thinking things"; for Locke, they are "conscious thinking things," or "ideas with feet" (ibid., 118–25).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 124–27.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 39n41; quoting John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision*, 13, 27–28, 30, 116.

⁸⁰ "The Old Testament's christological sense is not grounded in the conscious intentions of biblical authors but in the inspired words they penned. The Old Testament authors speak more than they know because in their literal and

with Radner, the relationships that are established between Scripture and these providentially-ordered events and objects are described as figural.

Collett goes on to argue that various construals of the how NT writers interpret the OT fail to maintain this understanding. He critiques *sensus plenior* for shifting christological meaning wholly away from the text and onto the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ Christotelism, he argues, suffers the same issue, assuming that Christological meaning is not present in the OT and therefore must be read into it based on the New Testament or the life of Jesus.⁸² Many forms of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (“history of effects”), which describes how the text has caused or changed later events, likewise assume that meaning is a function of authorial consciousness and self-perception;⁸³ when this is missing, then the text’s reception becomes the source of meaning. The difficulty with all of these is that the OT loses its unique voice to divine (and christological) realities. As a result, one must read *eisegetically* as opposed to *exegetically*, and in the end the OT is rendered superfluous for understanding divine realities and may be discarded.⁸⁴

figural senses those words are integral to a Christ-shaped providential economy that includes, but is not limited to, what the authors were consciously aware of. Old Testament saints who trusted in the inspired words of Moses and the prophets enjoyed the benefits of Christ’s redemption, not because of the ‘fit’ between what was in their heads and the Old Testament’s christological sense but because of the objectively real link between Christ and the text’s words—a link that is providentially constructed and not simply a function of authorial subjectivity or the conscious authorial intentions of those who wrote Scripture’s words” (Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 130).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 139–45.

⁸² In particular, he critiques Peter Enns’ view that “we are not to imitate the interpretive methods of the apostles but rather to imitate their christological goals, taking captive Israel’s scriptures by seizing them in the service of their Christological convictions” (Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 145–52; cf. Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 152–63).

⁸³ Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 152–60. It should be noted that not all forms of *Wirkungsgeschichte* do this; indeed, later audiences and texts can help shed light on what earlier texts are saying.

⁸⁴ Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 152–60.

Summary and Conclusion

Summarizing several of the resources from the Christian tradition, then, there are several potentially fruitful avenues that shall be explored further. Radner traces the importance of the metaphysical priority of Scripture to all of creation, noting that the relationships between Scriptural texts and their many referents are ordered providentially in time (following Augustine *inter alia*). The relationship between “Old” and “New” is in the first instance determined by how God relates them outside of time (“divine usage”), and only secondly to how humans experience them temporally. Collett, drawing on this articulation of divine providence, argues that the proper way of understanding God’s authorship in Scripture is the process by which he 1) inspires human writers to produce texts and 2) orders those texts and world events in the flow of experienced time. This collapses the distance between the text and its meaning, which is in direct contrast to modern views of authorship and the resultant construals of the relationship between the OT and Christian theology (not to mention the NT). Though these authors are primarily concerned with theology as opposed to historical study, they appear to provide a very helpful parallel to how the author of Hebrews views the Scriptures before him.

We may also adduce the historical parallels contemporaneous to our author. Hindy Najman’s work helps us see that other Jewish writers in the same era viewed the meanings that they supposedly “read into” older texts as actually present in the original meaning of the texts themselves. The equivalence of present meaning with past meaning collapses the distance between the text being interpreted and the meaning the interpreter pulls away from it, a hermeneutical move shared with Christian figural reading. This correlation is strengthened with the evidence provided by Richard Hays, who argues that in the Gospel of John we have an interpretive framework that is figural in nature and founded upon the pre-existence of Christ.

Chapter 4

Two Case Studies of Figural Reading in Hebrews

How does the author of Hebrews approach his Scriptures? In order to answer this question, one must dive into the author's exegesis and method. It is clear to every commentator that the Scriptures are central to the structure and argumentation of the epistle. Several passages—in particular, Pss 8, 95, 110, and Jer 31—are of particular note.⁸⁵ Here, the author reproduces significant portions of the Scriptural text, then comments on features of the text and weaves those comments into a complex web of argumentation that reveals further characteristics of Jesus. Two of these texts are of particular interest, as both shed light on our author's interpretive methodology: the reflection on Ps 95 about “rest” in chs. 3–4, and the complex discussion of Melchizedek in ch. 7.

Entering the Rest of God (Heb 4:1–11)

Ps 95 serves as the foundation for Heb 3:7–4:13. The text as preserved in Hebrews differs slightly from extant versions of the LXX, but those differences are rather minimal.⁸⁶ Our author's citation of the psalm is included here, though our focus shall be on how it is interpreted in 4:1–11.

Heb 3:7–11 (Ps 95:7–11, 13)

⁷σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε,

⁸μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ

⁸⁵ Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews.”

⁸⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 113–16.

κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,
⁹οὗ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ
καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου ¹⁰τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη·
διὸ προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ
καὶ εἶπον· ἀεὶ πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ,
αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰς ὁδοὺς μου,
¹¹ὥς ὄμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου·
εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.

⁷Today if the voice of him you hear,
⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
in the day of testing in the wilderness,
⁹in which your fathers tested [me] by examination
and saw my works ¹⁰for forty years.
Therefore, I was angered with that generation
and said: ‘They always go astray in heart,
and they did not know my ways.
¹¹As I swore in my anger:
They shall not enter into my rest.

Ch. 4 begins with a warning in which what has been implicit is made explicit: “a promise remains for us to enter into his rest.” Leading up to this point, the author has merely treated Ps 95

as a piece of godly exhortation and interpretation of the story of the wilderness generation.⁸⁷ He has observed that the audience should not follow the example of that generation, essentially re-emphasizing what is already said in the psalm, although noting that Christ is the one to whom the audience should hold fast. Beginning with ch. 4, though, the author begins making the exegetical observations necessary to figurally link the “promised land” of the Old Testament to both the “rest” of God and the access provided to it by Jesus.

Heb 4:3–8

³Εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες, καθὼς εἶρηκεν· ὡς ὤμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων. ⁴εἶρηκεν γὰρ πού περὶ τῆς ἐβδόμης οὕτως· καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ⁵καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου. ⁶ἐπεὶ οὖν ἀπολείπεται τινὰς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς αὐτήν, καὶ οἱ πρότερον εὐαγγελισθέντες οὐκ εἰσῆλθον δι’ ἀπειθειαν, ⁷πάλιν τινὰ ὀρίζει ἡμέραν, σήμερον, ἐν Δαυὶδ λέγων μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον, καθὼς προεῖρηται· σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν. ⁸εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς Ἰησοῦς κατέπαυσεν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας.

For we the faithful are entering into the rest, just as he has said: “as I swore in my anger, ‘They shall not enter into my rest,’” although the works had been completed since the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh [day] thusly: “And God rested on the seventh day from the of his works,” ⁵and in this [place] again: “They shall not enter into my rest.” ⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter into this

⁸⁷ See especially Num 14.

rest, and the first ones to whom the promise of rest was proclaimed did not enter into it because of disobedience, ⁷again he appoints a day, Today, speaking by David after so much time, just as it has been said: “Today if the voice of him you hear, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸Now if Joshua had given them rest, then [the holy spirit] would not have spoken about another rest after those days.

The argument of the author may be sketched as follows (though somewhat reversed from its order of appearance): If the psalm was given to an audience long after the well-known events of the earlier Scriptures, then it appears that the same promises are available to the new audience.

A key interpretive decision that the author makes is to identify the promised “rest” as the Sabbath rest of God, as opposed to the more historically obvious “promised land” that the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua describe. The author does this on the basis of what can be called verbal analogy (rather similar to the rabbinic practice of *gezerah shawah*),⁸⁸ wherein the words and phrasing of one passage can link it to other passages with similar words and phrasings. The author’s use of a Greek text is key here, for it is only in Greek that the “they shall enter into my rest [κατάπαυσιν]” of Ps 95:11 (= 94:11 LXX) can be linked to the first Sabbath of Genesis 2:2, when “God rested [κατέπαυσεν]...from all his works.” (The Hebrew text of Ps 95 does not contain any such verbal allusion to the Sabbath.) The effect of this is to transform the “rest” in question from a physical land (the promised land of Canaan) to the presence of God. This, in turn, fits very nicely with the idea that Jesus is the great high priest who gives access to the heavenly presence of God that comes into play later in the epistle.⁸⁹ Indeed, the play on the

⁸⁸ So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 165.

⁸⁹ This is the motif that appears to link all the metaphors and images of Hebrews together. Cf. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 63–70, 197–200.

name Ἰησοῦς, which is the Greek name for both Jesus and Joshua,⁹⁰ appears to emphasize the point even further, although it is unknown whether our author intended it.⁹¹ One might say that while the old Joshua led the people of God into the promised land, the people failed to enter into the promised rest; but now the new Joshua shall lead them in.

Regardless, we have here a focus on Scripture itself, as opposed to what the historical authors of the respective Old Testament passages think. This devaluation of authorial intention can be seen throughout the epistle; the speaker of Old Testament texts is nearly always either God, the holy spirit, or Jesus.⁹² The lone exception is in 4:7, where the holy spirit is said to speak Ps 95:7 through David (“Today...do not harden your hearts”). However, even here David’s authorship of the psalm can be explained by its use for establishing a chronology for the promises of God. In the LXX, Ps 95 is attributed to David;⁹³ meanwhile, as described by the Old Testament narrative, the time of David is long after the days of Joshua. Therefore, God speaks of a possibility for divine rest long *after* the “rest” of Joshua, paving the way for the argument of vv. 8–11.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ This is not unique to Greek, unlike the “rest” above. Jesus’ name in Hebrew is Jeshua, a late form of Joshua. The correspondence between the two is kept in Greek as well, where Ἰησοῦς is used of both of Moses’ successor and of the Christ. See “Ἰησοῦς,” BDAG, 471–72.

⁹¹ Later Christian interpreters certainly made the connection between Jesus and Joshua explicit, but this is not necessary for the author’s chronological argument. See Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 76–77; Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 209.

⁹² Pamela Eisenbaum concurs, saying that Hebrews is alone among the NT for its “unrelenting consistency in the use of saying verbs (while totally avoiding any reference to scripture being written) and the lack of acknowledgment of human speakers or authors” (Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBLDS 156 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 98; cited by Amy L. B. Peeler, *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, LNTS 486 [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014], 31–37).

⁹³ I agree with Attridge (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 130) and Cockerill (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 208) that David is mentioned here as a prophet, as opposed to the equation of the Psalter as a kind of “book of David” (pace Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 75).

⁹⁴ Cf. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 128–29.

This chronological argument requires that the psalm is principally God's speech. David may be the writer (or the speaker), but God is the composer or arranger (regardless of whether David was aware of it). The same can be said for the verbal analogy of "rest": the divine origins of both Ps 95:11 and Gen 2:2 grant ontological weight to the intertextual allusion of "rest" between the two, tying them together and allowing that tie to describe a theological reality. This is the essence of figural reading.

The Figure of Melchizedek (Heb 7:2–3)

The next passage requires a longer discussion. The appearance of Melchizedek in Hebrews has long puzzled interpreters.⁹⁵ In the OT, he is only found in two passages: his encounter with Abraham after the latter's victory over the allied Mesopotamian kings, when the patriarch gives the Canaanite priest-king a portion of his war spoils (Gen 14);⁹⁶ and an unusual reference in Ps 110, where YHWH swears to a Davidic king that he is a "priest in the order of Melchizedek."⁹⁷ Both passages are problematic in their extant Hebrew forms, but as our author appears to follow a rather unequivocal Greek translation, we need not delve into discussion of

⁹⁵ For a survey of post-Reformation views, see Bruce A. Demarest, "Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum* Historically Considered," *EvQ* 49 (1977): 141–62.

⁹⁶ It may be noted that the Old Testament itself is ambiguous as to who gave the tithe to whom. However, later interpreters overwhelmingly assumed that Abraham gave the tenth to Melchizedek, perhaps because they assumed that Melchizedek's priestly office would automatically include the right to collect tithes. Our author is no exception, as is made clear in 7:2. See Mason, "You Are a Priest Forever," 142.

⁹⁷ The Hebrew construction in this passage is difficult, leading several scholars to question who exactly is being addressed. For an overview of the passage and its difficulties, see Mason, "You Are a Priest Forever," 143–46.

those difficulties. Similar to the passages about “rest” discussed above, these two passages are linked together figurally in Hebrews, with that link being the name Melchizedek.⁹⁸

Though Melchizedek is mentioned throughout the epistle, 7:2b–3 will be the focus of this discussion of scriptural interpretation:

Heb 7:2b–3

^{2b}πρῶτον μὲν ἐρμηνευόμενος βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ὃ ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης, ³ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

^{2b}First he is interpreted to be king of righteousness and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace, ³without father, without mother, without descent, neither having a beginning of days nor an end of life; but having been made like the son of God, he remains a priest continually.

The passage opens with an etymological interpretation of the name “Melchizedek,” which has been discussed elsewhere.⁹⁹ The section that holds our primary interest starts with ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος (“without father, without mother, without descent”) and continues through the end. This is widely regarded as an argument from silence, or *quod non in*

⁹⁸ Attridge, (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 187) and Craig R. Koester (*Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36 [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 347) concur that this is another example of a *gezerah shawah* argument, similar to 4:3ff. However, deSilva demurs because there are only two texts involved in the comparison (*Perseverance in Gratitude*, 256n5).

⁹⁹ This is very similar to how Philo and Josephus interpret the priest’s name. See Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 188–89; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 176–77.

Tora non in mundo (“what is not in Torah is not in the world”).¹⁰⁰ In such an argument, the silence of Scripture on one subject or another bears theological weight, and at least in the case of later Rabbinic practice, it implies the non-existence of that entity (e.g., old age is said not to exist until it is mentioned in connection with the aged Abraham [Gen 18:11; 24:1]).¹⁰¹ Because Scripture does not record Melchizedek’s mother, father, or even genealogy, he accordingly has none; the same may be said for his beginning or end. The sense in which he does not have these things, however, has been heavily disputed. A number of interpreters have taken this passage to mean that the author viewed the historical Melchizedek as a heavenly figure, which is the position preferred by Harold Attridge, Paul Ellingworth, and Eric Mason.¹⁰² Also holding to a form of this view is A. T. Hanson, though he is alone among modern interpreters who think that the author viewed Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate form of Christ.¹⁰³ Others contend that Melchizedek only served as a literary or “scriptural symbol”¹⁰⁴ for the author, and that while Scripture itself was silent on Melchizedek’s origins, this did not imply that the author of Hebrews thought the historical Melchizedek lacked them. This view is preferred by F. F. Bruce, Gareth Lee Cockerill, Kenneth Schenck, and Barnabas Lindars, although it was anticipated by Epiphanius in the 4th century and John Calvin in the 16th.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ So Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 187, 190; Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 303n32; Koester, *Hebrews*, 348; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 177; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 351.

¹⁰¹ Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud Und Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1922), 3:694–95; cited in Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 190; and Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 303–4n32.

¹⁰² Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 189–95; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 350–58; Eric F. Mason, “Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship Between Melchizedek and Jesus,” *BR* 50 (2005): 41–62; Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 199–203.

¹⁰³ Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 67–70.

¹⁰⁴ This term is Attridge’s, though he does not hold to this view (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191).

¹⁰⁵ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 136–38; Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 301–6; Schenck, “Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 123–26; Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament

Heavenly Melchizedek?

Perhaps the most significant support for a “heavenly Melchizedek” comes from parallels to literature from Qumran. Here we find a figure named Melchizedek given a heavenly priesthood with juridical functions. This occurs most notably in 11QMelchizedek (11Q13), but also perhaps in a portion of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q401) and the admittedly fragmentary *Visions of Amram* (4Q Visions of Amram^b ar/4Q544).¹⁰⁶ Though Melchizedek does appear in other Second Temple Jewish authors and works (e.g., *Genesis Apocryphon* [1QapGen ar], Josephus, Philo, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and arguably *Jubilees*),¹⁰⁷ he is never accorded a heavenly status.

In 11QMelchizedek, one finds the mysterious priest giving atonement for the people of God and engaging in eschatological warfare against a figure named Belial who holds the “sons of light” captive.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Melchizedek is identified clearly as *Elohim*, allowing him to be placed in Ps 82 (“Elohim shall stand in the assembly of God; in the midst of the gods he shall judge”), though Mason argues that the Qumranic commentator makes a clear distinction between *Elohim* as Melchizedek and *El* as God in his interpretive comments.¹⁰⁹

Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 74. For Epiphanius, see his *Panarion* 55.1.8, cited in Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191n71. For Calvin, see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 157–58; cf. Demarest, “Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum* Historically Considered,” 143–44.

¹⁰⁶ See Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 164–90. He follows Carol Newsom (“Shirot ’Olat Hashabbat,” in *Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 1*, DJD XI [Oxford: Clarendon, 1998], 205) and James R. Davila (*Liturgical Works*, Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 162) for *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. For *Visions of Amram*, he primarily follows Józef Milik, “4Q Visions de ’Amram et Une Citation d’Origene,” *RB* 79 (1972): 77–97.

¹⁰⁷ See Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 146–64. He follows James C. VanderKam in placing Melchizedek in a lacuna where the events of Gen 14 and the practice of tithing to priests are described in *Jubilees* (pp. 150–151; VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2 vols., CSCO 510–11 [Louvain: Peeters, 1989], 1:82, 2:81–82).

¹⁰⁸ I am following Mason’s transcription and translation here (“*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 173–76), which is modified from that in the DJD volume.

¹⁰⁹ Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 177–83. Translation of Ps 82 is Mason’s.

All this being said, in 11QMelchizedek we have a portrait of a heavenly priest-judge reminiscent of the collective mosaic that early Christianity gives Jesus. In Hebrews, Jesus is certainly presented as heavenly or divine (1:1–14; cf. 10:5–8) and as giving atonement (9:12–14, 26–28; 10:10–14), and although he does not appear as a judge in this work, other portions of the New Testament are replete with such references (e.g., Matt 25:31–32; Acts 10:42; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 19:11). The parallels between 11QMelchizedek’s priest and both the Melchizedek and Jesus of Hebrews grounded early claims that the epistle was influenced by the literature of Qumran; however, this thesis has been rejected by most scholars given both the differences between the respective works as well as the paucity of evidence for such a thesis.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, this does not mean that Melchizedek speculation wasn’t “in the air,” so to speak. In the Dead Sea Scrolls we have the closest extant image of Melchizedek to what we see in Hebrews, suggesting that perhaps the same modes of thought that led the Qumran sect to speculate about a heavenly Melchizedek led the author of Hebrews to do the same. This is the sweep of Attridge’s argument,¹¹¹ while Mason concludes in a similar vein that our author viewed Melchizedek in the biblical narrative as some sort of angelic appearance.¹¹²

Despite the strength of this approach, there are two significant difficulties. First, as Cockerill has pointed out, making Melchizedek a heavenly being makes room for him to rival Jesus.¹¹³ This is even more striking in light of J. H. Neyrey’s work. He points out that the picture of Melchizedek in 7:3 makes him fit the eternal qualities necessary for a true god in the Greek sense: he is “ungenerated,” “eternal in the past” and “imperishable in the future,” and retains

¹¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, “‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes’?,” *NTS* 9 (1962–63): 217–32; Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 74–75; Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 66–70.

¹¹¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 192–95.

¹¹² Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 200–3; cf. Bruce, “‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes’?”

¹¹³ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 302.

continuous existence.¹¹⁴ In an epistle dedicated to the superiority of Jesus to practically all other things, it is surprising that our author does not temper his vaunted language for Melchizedek with an acknowledgement of Jesus' superiority. Moreover, it is not clear that the phrase "without father, without mother, and without genealogy" obviously applies to Jesus: Jesus is called the Son of God in the epistle (e.g., 1:5) and is descended from the tribe of Judah (7:14).¹¹⁵ This could limit the respects in which Melchizedek is "made like" the Son of God. Mason counters that searching for such a clear subordination of Melchizedek to Jesus is akin to scholars who saw a polemic against angel worship in the first two chapters (a position now largely abandoned),¹¹⁶ but this requires the assumption that our author views Melchizedek as an angel. Angels are clearly subordinated to Jesus (as Moses is later) through a comparative *synkrisis* in chs. 1–2; Melchizedek is not. However, Mason does helpfully argue that *if* Melchizedek is viewed as one of the ἀγγέλοι of chs. 1–2, then there would be no need to later make explicit the relationship between Jesus and Melchizedek. Ch. 1's clear subordination of the angels to Jesus would serve as an "inoculation against any potential misreadings" of ch. 7.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, however, this

¹¹⁴ Jerome H Neyrey, "'Without Beginning of Days or End of Life' (Hebrews 7:3): Topos for a True Deity," *CBO* 53.3 (1991): 448. He sees our author match Melchizedek to these criteria in 7:3 with 1) Melchizedek's lack of parentage and genealogy, 2) his "having neither beginning of days nor end of life, and 3) "he remains a priest forever." Johnson concurs (*Hebrews*, 177), as does Cockerill (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 300–1). This is *pace* William L. Lane, (*Hebrews*, 2 vols., WBC 47A-B [Dallas: Word, 1991], 163–67) and Fred L. Horton, Jr. ("Melchizedek Tradition Through the First Five Centuries of the Christian Era and in the Epistle to the Hebrews" [PhD diss., Duke University, 1971], 266–73), both of whom discount the importance of a Hellenistic backdrop for our author's thought or his audience (for which see Gregory E. Sterling, "Ontology Versus Eschatology: Tensions Between Author and Community in Hebrews," *SPhiloA* 13 [2001]: 190–211).

¹¹⁵ This is despite Koester's attempt (*Hebrews*, 348–49) to say that our author is speaking only of Jesus' human parentage. It is by no means clear that our author was aware of the virgin birth of Jesus, and if one splits the natures in Jesus into human and divine, both must be kept in mind; if his humanity is in view here for "without father," the same cannot be said for "without mother" or "without genealogy."

¹¹⁶ Mason, "Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship Between Melchizedek and Jesus," 61–62; Mason, "*You Are a Priest Forever*," 201–2.

¹¹⁷ Mason, "Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship Between Melchizedek and Jesus," 62.

seems to falter in view that Melchizedek is in no way implied to be similar to the angels of the epistle's opening. They are associated with the giving of the Law in ch. 2, and thus (as seems to be apparent in chs. 7–10) belong to the old order of things, which includes the now-obsolete Temple cult and the Levitical priesthood.¹¹⁸ Melchizedek, meanwhile, is the one whom the Son is like, *over-and-against* the old cultus and priesthood. Moreover, even if Melchizedek is thought to be an archangel (as is thought to be the case at Qumran), he could still be in a distinct class from the other angels. In this case, the ἀγγέλοι subordinated to Jesus do not necessarily include the ἀρχάγγελος above them.

The second difficulty is related: if Melchizedek is a heavenly priest, then how is he not a rival to Jesus' heavenly priesthood? One might ask something like, "If Melchizedek remains a priest forever, then what need is there for a new priest in his order?" Of course, perhaps the priesthood of an angel differs from that of the Son of God, but the text does not bear witness to Melchizedek being an angel. Indeed, nothing in the text states that Melchizedek's priesthood is any different from that of Jesus, unlike the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' priesthood is said to be greater than that of the Levites because it is founded upon the "power of an indestructible life" (κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου; 7:16) "according to the likeness of Melchizedek" (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ; 7:15). Melchizedek remains a priest "continually" (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές; 7:3) while Jesus remains a priest "forever" (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα; 7:24 et al.). The attributes of Melchizedek are assumed by Jesus.

¹¹⁸ I agree with those scholars who contend that our author mentions the angels in chs. 1–2 in order to foreshadow the inferiority of the Law. I identify the "word spoken by angels" (2:2) as the Law, which is contrasted via a "from the lesser to the greater" argument with the "salvation...spoken through the Lord (i.e., Son)" (v. 3), much as Paul does in Gal 3:19. So, e.g., deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 105n40; Koester, *Hebrews*, 205; Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 118–19.

Considering these difficulties, two options appear plausible to me.¹¹⁹ The first is to assume that our author expected his audience to know several things beforehand, specifically that Melchizedek was an angel *and* that his priesthood did not rival that of Jesus. The problem with this, however, is that there is no trace of at least the former assumption in the text itself, as should be clear from the litany of competing views on Melchizedek in our text's reception.¹²⁰ Moreover, it is only in Qumranic literature that similar assumptions are found; other Second Temple works do not treat Melchizedek as a heavenly figure, nor is it clear to what extent this speculation was known or even if there was a divergence of views on the ancient priest even at Qumran.¹²¹

Melchizedek as Scriptural Symbol

The second option, which I think preferable, is that the figure of Melchizedek was viewed as a sort of Scriptural symbol. This construal relies on the fact that, as Scripture, the text can operate at multiple levels of reference. Here, the narrative portrait of Melchizedek as described by Genesis and the Psalms can refer to what the author likely assumes is a historical portrait of an ancient Canaanite priest-king. However, the text *itself* can also refer to the theological reality of Jesus without making use of its assumed historical referent, which is what I suggest our author focuses on in 7:3. In other words, the OT paints a portrait of Christ's priesthood and calls it

¹¹⁹ Of course, there could be other options that I am not aware of or that someone else has not articulated. Hanson's view (*Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 68–70) avoids the issue of rivalry by identifying Melchizedek as Jesus, but this fails to address the clear references to Jesus and Melchizedek as distinct figures in 7:3 and 7:15, not to mention that Ps 110:4 says that the addressee is a priest *in the order of* Melchizedek, not Melchizedek himself (as, say, John the Baptist is identified as Elijah in the gospels).

¹²⁰ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 194–95; cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 55. Once again, for the much-later reception of Heb 7:3, see Demarest, “Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum* Historically Considered.”

¹²¹ Mason, “*You Are a Priest Forever*,” 146–47; cf. 164.

“Melchizedek.” This is strengthened even more so when one considers the phrase “having been made like the Son of God”: the word ἀφομοιωμένος (“having been made like”) can refer to the portrait that an artist paints of an object.¹²²

In the text of Genesis and Psalms, then, Melchizedek is considered to have an eternal priesthood and to be an eternal figure. However, though Scripture forms a world and a narrative that illumines the Jesus of reality, the world it paints is not the same as that reality. Thus, Melchizedek can be a divine figure in Scripture without being divine in reality. Attridge conveniently gives the merits of this view:

In support of [this view] is the fact that the comparison proceeds primarily on a literary level. Melchizedek is ‘likened’ to Christ, and it is ‘testified’ that he lives. The author appears to be deliberately noncommittal about the figure of Melchizedek himself.

Furthermore, he does not advance any explicit speculation about Melchizedek. He neither explains how his ‘eternal priesthood’ relates to that of Christ, nor does he polemicize against him as a rival to Christ. He would appear, like Philo, to be uninterested in the person of Melchizedek himself and only concerned with what he represents.¹²³

Attridge leans away from this position by noting that the argument of Melchizedek having “unlimited life”¹²⁴ is the key to his superiority to Abraham; however, it appears to me that having an “indestructible life” can still occur at the literary level. It is the literary silence of Scripture that says Melchizedek “has neither beginning of days nor end of life” (7:3). Speculation in the vein of Qumran may even have encouraged our author to interpret Melchizedek as a divine figure; however, this would not necessarily preclude the author from limiting this figure to the

¹²² “Ἀφομοιῶ,” LSJ, 292; cf. Plato’s *Cratylus*, §424δ.

¹²³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

realm of Scriptural interpretation (as opposed to extending into a historical referent), seeing it as a divinely inspired portrait that shed light on the Jesus of reality.¹²⁵

Though the account of Melchizedek is taken as a literary feature, its status as divine literature allows it to bear witness to theological realities. The collective merits of this view are that it avoids the issue of rivalry between Jesus and Melchizedek, while still enabling Melchizedek's priesthood and divinity to be linked to that of Jesus. Moreover, unlike the alternative views, it does not require significant assumptions on the part of the audience that are never mentioned even obliquely by the author, nor does it make the historical Melchizedek simply an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Excursus: History and Scripture

If the figure of Melchizedek is best taken as a Scriptural symbol, then perhaps this may foster discussion of the nature of history and the text. If our author does not conceive of the historical Melchizedek to have been divine (only the literary or symbolic Melchizedek, as argued above), then a distinction is introduced between the text and historical reality. This is also a distinction made by several proponents of the "Scriptural symbol" view:

¹²⁵ Hanson counters this view, stating that one ought not to assume our author made a "distinction between the historical figure and the figure in the Bible" (*Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, 68–70). However, he does not marshal any evidence against it save that our author thinks that Melchizedek was a historical figure. I for one believe our author holds Melchizedek to be a historical figure, but I also think that our author did not limit himself to using only *historical* referents for interpreting the figure of Jesus.

In other notes, by saying the "Jesus of reality," I am not bringing up the distinction between the "Jesus of history" and the "Jesus of faith"; I am rather still working from the author's view, who would likely not have separated those two sides of Jesus.

Epiphanius: “[Melchizedek] is said to be ‘fatherless’ and ‘motherless’ not because he does not have a father or mother, but because they are not obviously named in the divine Scripture.”¹²⁶

John Calvin: “He then exempts Melchisedec from what is common to others, a descent by birth; by which he means that he is eternal, so that his beginning from men was not to be sought after. It is indeed certain that he descended from parents; but the Apostle does not speak of him here in his private capacity; on the contrary, he sets him forth as a type of Christ. He therefore allows himself to see nothing in him but what Scripture contains. For in treating of things respecting Christ, such reference ought to be observed as not to know anything but what is written in the Word of the Lord.... And what was shadowed forth in Melchisedec is really exhibited in Christ.”¹²⁷

F. F. Bruce: “When Melchizedek is described as being ‘without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life,’ it is not suggested that he was a biological anomaly, or an angel in human guise. Historically Melchizedek appears to have belonged to a dynasty of priest-kings in which he had both predecessors and successors. If this point had been put to our author, he would have agreed at once, no doubt; but this consideration was foreign to his purpose. The important consideration was the account given of Melchizedek in holy writ; to him the silences of Scripture were as

¹²⁶ *Panarion*. 55.1.8, translation from Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191n71. Original is also taken from Attridge: ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ οὐ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν αὐτὸν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα λέγεται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐν τῇ θεῖα γραφῇ κατὰ τὸ φανερώτατον ἐπωνομάσθαι.

¹²⁷ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, 157–58; Demarest, “Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum* Historically Considered,” 143–44.

much due to divine inspiration as were its statements.... In all this—in the silences as well as in the statements—he is a fitting type of Christ.”¹²⁸

In this case, does it even matter if the events purported in the Old Testament passages happened in regular space-time (which we would call “history”)? This is certainly a modern question, but it is thrust upon the church in modernity. Assuming that Melchizedek functions as a symbol pointing to the reality of Christ, it does not seem that historical information has really any say in our author’s interpretation of the figure. What seems important is that the events occurred *in the Scriptural narrative*; their correspondence to our space-time continuum is less so.¹²⁹ Though our author almost certainly viewed Melchizedek as a historical figure, the lack of importance of historical matters suggests that our author’s interpretation of Melchizedek stands even if the priest did not exist as a historical person. This may temper the significance of historical-critical study in arbitrating our author’s theological interpretation.

In sum, then, as we saw with chs. 3 and 4, our author seems to think Scripture describes reality; ch. 7 reminds us that such correspondence between Scripture and reality is not always straightforward. There may be history in the OT, but it is a cryptic history that points to something other than itself.¹³⁰ For our author, Scripture and the history it contains point most directly to Christ.

¹²⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 136–38.

¹²⁹ Kenneth Schenck is worth quoting here: “Typological exegesis is not truly oriented around past *history* but around the past of the *narrative* from which it draws” (“Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 124, emphasis original). In this he follows Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.

¹³⁰ James Kugel makes a similar point: “The first assumption that all ancient interpreters seem to share is that the Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document. That is, all interpreters are fond of maintaining that although Scripture may appear to be saying X, what it really means is Y, or that while Y is not openly said by Scripture, it is somehow implied or hinted at in X” (*The Bible as It Was* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2000], 18). Perhaps more germane to the thought of our author is Don C. Collett, who argues that figural (or typological) readings of Scripture are *allegorical*, for which see below.

Here, then, we find what may be deemed an allegorical mode of reading. Scripture does not speak primarily about itself; it speaks about realities “other” (ἄλλω) than itself, and may thus be considered *allegorical*.¹³¹ Our author does not read the Old Testament just like any other book, unlike the modern sentiment underlying the historical-critical project.¹³² If Christ cannot be found in what seems to us to be a straightforward “historical” reading of the text, then it may be interpreted differently. In the case of Melchizedek, our author interprets his Scripture with little care for what he would think would be its original historical meanings.

Conclusion and Relationship to Figural Reading

What can be observed from this discussion? First, the author’s extended commentary on Ps 95 on rest shows that Scripture can describe realities beyond its own temporal horizon—in this case, texts from long ago describe theological realities for our author’s own generation. In other words, while the perception of how Scripture describes reality may be retrospective (i.e., one only corresponds events to Scripture *after* those events have occurred), our author nevertheless views the relationship between Scriptural passages and those events as ordained long before the occurrence of those events.¹³³ This is undergirded by an assumption that Scripture is divinely-authored, the basic premise of figural reading.

¹³¹ See Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 41–45.

¹³² This view may be epitomized by the 19th-century English New Testament scholar Benjamin Jowett, for which see Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 31–34; and Markus Bockmuehl, “Bible versus Theology: Is ‘Theological Interpretation’ the Answer?,” *Nova et Vetera* 9.1 (2011): 33–35.

¹³³ For an argument for the idea of “retrospective reading” in the context of the Gospels, see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.

Secondly, Scripture describes not just future events but also Jesus, as can be seen with the example of Melchizedek in Heb 7:3. While our author may have assumed there was a historical priest-king by the name of Melchizedek, the principal meaning he draws out of the passage refers to theological as opposed to historical realities. Specifically, he takes the passage to primarily refer *not* to a historical Caananite priest-king but rather to the theological reality of Jesus. In this way our author's manner of interpreting the Old Testament is fundamentally *allegorical*. The Bible is not to be read just like any other text; rather, it is to be read and interpreted with Christ and the theological realities before the believer as the main goal of the interpretive process.

In sum, Scripture for our author is something with present meaning. To use the distinction suggested by New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl, our author cares about what the Old Testament *means* as opposed to what it *meant*.¹³⁴ In this regard, our author's approach to Scripture is fundamentally different from that of critical historians today.¹³⁵ For them, the meaning of a text is rooted in a matrix provided by a particular socio-cultural moment in the past, permitting historical study to arbitrate Scripture's meaning. For our author, meanwhile, it seems appropriate to say that the meaning of the Old Testament is rooted in God who abides throughout all times and socio-cultural moments. This shall be explored in the following section.

¹³⁴ See Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 419–20.

¹³⁵ So, e.g., *ibid.*; cf. the larger discussion in Michael C. Legaspi, "What Ever Happened to Historical Criticism?" *Journal of Religion and Society* 9 (2007): 1–11.

Chapter 5

The Concept of Pre-existence in Hebrews

Once again, we ask, “What is our author’s view of Scripture?” We have made several observations in the previous chapter about what may be implied by our author’s exegetical practices and assumed hermeneutics. However, what *is* Scripture in our author’s thought? What is its place in reality? That is the subject of the present chapter, which seeks to establish both the tight relationship between Scripture and Christ as well the personal pre-existence of Jesus, culminating in establishing the likelihood that our author views Scripture as pre-existent in relation to the creation.

The “Living Word of God” (Heb 4:12–13)

We return to Heb 4 for discussion on the divine origin of Scripture. The commentary on Ps 95, discussed earlier, transitions from exegesis to a stretch of what could be construed as praise (an encomium) for the “living Word of God”:

Heb 4:12–13

¹²Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διϊκνούμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἄρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας· ¹³καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ γυμνὰ καὶ τετραηλισμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος.

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than every double-edged sword and dividing until the division between soul and spirit, both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of hearts. ¹³And creation is not invisible before him/it, but all things are naked and lay open to his eyes, to whom our account is [directed].¹³⁶

The first question that one asks is, *what is this word of God?* One could be tempted to follow the Gospel of John and identify this with Jesus. However, although the author of Hebrews understands Jesus through a matrix indebted to the Jewish Wisdom traditions as John certainly was, the causal conjunction γὰρ (“for”) ties this encomium to the immediately preceding discussion. The *logos* includes Ps 95. The logic of vv. 11–13 goes as follows: We should enter into that rest and *not* fall into the pattern/exemplar of disobedience, which we have just heard of,¹³⁷ because the word of God (which contains these warnings and the pattern/exemplar of disobedience) will judge us. Thus, vv. 12–13 serve as the grounding for the author’s exhortation to listen to Scripture.

What is particularly curious is the blurred distinction between the “word of God” and God himself. There are two points at which this can be seen. The first is purely grammatical: the “he” or “it” of v. 13 (αὐτοῦ) is ambiguous, and could refer to either “God” or to “the word” (both of which are masculine in Greek, and thus agree with αὐτοῦ). If we assume that the subject is the same between the two verses, then grammatically it is “the word.” However, one could also

¹³⁶ For “to whom our account is [directed],” I generally follow the translations of Attridge (*Hebrews*, 133, 136) and Johnson (*Hebrews*, 123–24).

¹³⁷ On taking ὑπόδειγμα as “exemplar,” see David T. Runia, “Ancient Philosophy and the New Testament: ‘Exemplar’ as Example,” in *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 347–61.

argue that the audience would imply the judgement is God's, taking αὐτοῦ as referring to τοῦ θεοῦ ("of God"). However, this is strained; between τοῦ θεοῦ and αὐτοῦ is a long list of attributes of *the word* (e.g., sharper than a double-edged sword, a common metaphor for Scripture).¹³⁸ Moreover, going back to the OT, the distinction between the word of God and God himself is amorphous, as the word of God is *God working in the world*.¹³⁹ The word of God is part of the activity of God, and in the OT it is certainly true that this word shall judge its hearers.

The second point is that the description of the *logos* in v. 12 is strikingly similar to the description of wisdom (*sophia*) in the Wisdom of Solomon, a Jewish work that falls within the broader category of intertestamental Wisdom literature. In Wis 7:24, *sophia* is said to "pervade and penetrate [διήκει...καὶ χωρεῖ] all things on account of purity," much as the word of God "penetrates [διϊκνούμενος] even to the division of soul and spirit..." (Heb 4:12). Meanwhile, in Wis 7:23, *sophia* is said to be the one who watches over all things (πανεπίσκοπον) and, once again, the one who "penetrates [χωροῦν] all spirits." Hebrews parallels this by saying that "all creation...is naked and laid bare before his eyes" (4:13). Are the correspondences exact? No, especially when compared with how closely Heb 1:2–4 follows Wis 7 (see below). However, there are still *conceptual* parallels between Hebrews' "word of God" and Wisdom's *sophia*.

This correspondence between Scripture and *sophia* is particularly curious in light of the fact that, in Hebrews, Jesus is said to be divine with language that is remarkably similar to Wis 7. Thus, it appears that Hebrews echoes the same passage about *sophia* when referring to both the

¹³⁸ E.g., Wis 18:14–16; Isa 49:2; and Eph 6:17. Cf. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 133–34.

¹³⁹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 136; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 132, 136; cf. Radner, "Scripture on the Edge of God," 312–13.

word of God and to Jesus, *despite not equating them here*.¹⁴⁰ Hence, it would not be surprising for the author to conceive of the “word of God” as possessing a similar (though not necessarily equal) status with respect to the creation that Jesus has. What exactly is this status, though? For this, we must explore how Jesus is portrayed in the epistle. Is Jesus personally pre-existent? If so, we may say that Scripture is also pre-existent and outside of time. But if Jesus was *not* personally pre-existent, then it does not appear that Scripture may have pre-existed the creation.

The Personal Pre-existence of Christ

The question of Christ’s pre-existence (or lack thereof) in the epistle is one in which a rough consensus has emerged, but with dissent in the particulars. Scholars widely concur that Christ is present at the creation, as indeed our author himself states:

Heb 1:2–4

²ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων [ὁ θεὸς] ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας· ³ὅς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, ⁴τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

¹⁴⁰ It is improbable that a christological interpretation of the “living word of God” is intended in Heb 4:12–13, though the common language of *sophia* seems to leave the door open for this identification to occur, as it does in John’s Gospel. So rightly, Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 136; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 136.

²In these last days [God] spoke to us by a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he even made the ages; ³who, being the radiance of glory and the impress of his essence, and bearing all things by the word of his power, having been made a cleansing for sins, he sat down at the throne of the divine majesty in the heights, ⁴having become greater than the angels by so much, inasmuch as he has inherited a greater name than them.

The *nature* of Christ's pre-existence, however, is contested. The majority of commentators believe that our author conceived of Jesus as *personally* pre-existent, including Attridge, Ellingworth, Koester, and Cockerill, as well as scholars including Amy Peeler and John Meier.¹⁴¹ However, a minority led by James D. G. Dunn argues that our author does not view God's son as having had a "real personal pre-existence," but that our author's understanding of Jesus' pre-existence is "more of an idea and purpose in the mind of God than of a personal divine being."¹⁴² In other words, Jesus is the eschatological embodiment of the pre-existent power, activity, and wisdom of God.¹⁴³ This latter view has influenced subsequent discussions on our author's use of the OT in general.¹⁴⁴

The arguments of Dunn and his student Kenneth Schenck rest on the view that our author is thoroughly indebted to Jewish Wisdom traditions. In this manner they are correct. Wisdom, for

¹⁴¹ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 41–47; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 40–41; Koester, *Hebrews*, 104–5; Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 23–29; John P Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1:1-14," *Biblica* 66.2 (1985): 168–89.

¹⁴² James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 55–56.

¹⁴³ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 209–12.

¹⁴⁴ Motyer, "The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?," 9–10; cf. Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament," 286.

example, is said to be the one through whom God created the world in Proverbs 8:22 and in the Wisdom of Solomon; other examples could be made with Philo of Alexandria. Moreover, the language used by our author to describe Jesus is eerily similar to that used in Wis 7 to describe *sophia*:

Wis 7:21b–26

For she that is the fashioner of all things [πάντων τεχνίτις] taught me, namely *sophia*. For there is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique [μονογενές]...firm [βέβαιον], unfailing [ἀσφαλές]...all-powerful [παντοδύναμον], watching over all [πανεπίσκοπον]... For she is a breath of the power of God, and an emanation [ἀπόρροια] of the pure glory of the Almighty.... For she is a reflection [ἀπαύγασμα] of eternal light and a spotless mirror of the activity [ἐνεργείας] of God, and an image [εἰκὼν] of his goodness.¹⁴⁵

Jesus for our author is similarly the ἀπαύγασμα of glory,¹⁴⁶ the creator of all things, and the imprint of his very being (Heb 1:3). Elsewhere in Wis, *sophia* is said to be the one who makes holy souls both friends of God and prophets (7:27), which parallels the reconciling work of Christ (e.g., Heb 10:19). She “orders all things well” (Wis 8:1) and “sits beside [God’s] throne” (9:4, 10), as Christ “bears all things” and “sat at the right hand of the majesty in the heights”

¹⁴⁵ Translation taken from NETS.

¹⁴⁶ Whether ἀπαύγασμα in Heb 1:3 is taken to be active or passive in sense matters little for the connection to Wis 7 to be established. If our author intends it to be taken actively (as opposed to the more likely passive meaning of its usage in Wis 7:26), it overlaps in meaning with Wisdom’s “emanation [ἀπόρροια] of the pure glory of the Almighty” (Wis 7:25). If he intends it to be passive, it is paralleled by the description of *sophia* as “a spotless mirror of the activity of God” (Wis 7:26). The similarity between these several texts may have caused Attridge to inadvertently conflate two references in Wis 7:25–26; none of our extant textual witnesses for Wisdom of Solomon say that *sophia* is an “ἀπαύγασμα of the glory of the Almighty” (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42).

(Heb 1:3). Moreover, the hope that our author's audience has is likewise both "firm" (ἀσφαλῆ) and "unfailing" (βεβαίαν) (Heb 6:19) as is the spirit of *sophia* (Wis 7:23).¹⁴⁷

Dunn and Schenck thus correctly note that our author is indebted to Wisdom traditions in describing Jesus. Though we do not find in Hebrews an explicit acknowledgement that "Christ is the wisdom of God" (as in 1 Cor 1:24), our author obviously understands Christ in a similar fashion. However, both scholars make two dubious assumptions regarding our author: for one, he inherited a very strict monotheism from earlier authors; secondly, he did not innovate on their conceptions of *sophia*, or understand Jesus in terms beyond what earlier writers thought of wisdom. As a result, they believe that our author does not see Jesus in terms of possessing any personal pre-existence; Jesus himself was not present at the creation, but rather what he *embodies* was.

This position proves difficult for several reasons. One overarching difficulty is that though our author obviously articulates an understanding of Jesus using Wisdom language, Wisdom is not the only lens through which he views Christ. Peeler is emphatic on this point: Jesus is not only the pre-existent Wisdom of God in some way, shape, or form, but he is also the *Son* of God, for whom God himself is Father. Though Dunn mitigates this filial relationship, suggesting that our author "did not think of the relation between God and the (pre-existent) Son as a personal relationship,"¹⁴⁸ Peeler argues that this does not do justice to the text. She avers that 1:5, which opens the catena of quotations in ch. 1, chiastically enumerates the father-son relationship between Jesus and God as the foundation for what follows. Moreover, v. 5 emphasizes that the sonship of Jesus does not exist in isolation from the fatherhood of God:

¹⁴⁷ This is even more poignant if, as Attridge argues, our author is establishing an analogy between the "anchor of hope" and Jesus himself in Heb 6:18–19 (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 183–84).

¹⁴⁸ *Christology in the Making*, 54–55.

“You are my son; today I have begotten you...I will be to him a father, and he will be my son”

(v. 5). Finally, this declaration of the filial relationship between the Father and Son serves as an interpretive grounding for 1:1–4, where we found Christ described similar to Wisdom.¹⁴⁹ As Peeler notes,

Hebrews uses the language of Word and Wisdom, but he does so to describe God’s Son and heir.... His emphasis on God’s Fatherhood in Heb. 1.5 suggests that the *υιός* of Hebrews 1 is not an aspect or a function, but a person. God could not have a dialogic and truly paternal relationship with an aspect of himself. In some other texts, *Sophia* and *Logos* may be designated as the firstborn of God, but God never speaks to them directly to declare his paternal relationship with them. Hence, the Son is a person who reflects God’s being, who participated with God in creation, and who reigns alongside God bearing all things.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, even Craig Koester, who is generally sympathetic with Dunn’s thesis, demurs in light of Heb 10:5. Here, Christ is said to speak the words of Ps 40 to God upon “entering into the world,” which is widely agreed to be his incarnation.¹⁵¹ Koester accordingly notes that “the assumption that the preexistent Son entered the world for the purpose of doing God’s will suggests that Hebrews did understand preexistence in personal terms.”¹⁵²

Another major issue may be brought forth. Both Dunn and Schenck limit the understanding of Jesus in Hebrews to the meanings accorded to Wisdom in second temple Judaism. In particular, Dunn argues that understanding the pre-existence of Jesus or of Wisdom

¹⁴⁹ Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 37–42.

¹⁵⁰ *You Are My Son*, 42. She also notes that this position is held by Origen in *De principiis*. 1.2.2.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Chapter 6 below.

¹⁵² *Hebrews*, 105n219.

as anything more than a poetic personification would violate the monotheistic tendencies held by other authors.¹⁵³ Three things may be noted here. For one, there is considerable disagreement over whether or not the monotheism of the Jewish rabbis was representative of second Temple thought; Alan Segal and Daniel Boyarin suggest that the *logos* of Philo, John, and early Christianity, as well as the *memra* of the Targumim, function themselves as semi-independent beings (“hypostatizations”) of the Word and Wisdom of God.¹⁵⁴ Hebrews parallels these, although the link is never made explicit (see above). Secondly, if, as Dunn notes, the act of “hypostatizing” the *sophia* and the *logos* was something done by the church in the later Trinitarian controversies, but that the original (and much earlier) Wisdom texts they read were not intended in such a way,¹⁵⁵ at what point in time did this interpretive practice of “hypostatization” arise? Should we assume that the Trinitarian debates were the first time that *sophia* in Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon was interpreted as a being simultaneously at one with and yet independent of God? Could not Hebrews be one of the first examples of later Christian interpretive practice?

Relatedly, the evidence that Dunn produces in support of mere “personifications” of Wisdom and the *logos* is based on appeals to the original intentions of the authors of the respective works (e.g., Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, Proverbs, etc.). However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, our author appears to care far less about original intention than the *present meaning* those texts contain. If our author likely didn’t care about the original intentions of the author(s) behind Genesis’ Melchizedek, but rather utilized the words of Scripture to paint a

¹⁵³ *Christology in the Making*, 168–76.

¹⁵⁴ Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, SJLA (Leiden: Brill, 1977); Daniel Boyarin, “The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John,” *HTR* 94.3 (2001): 243–84.

¹⁵⁵ *Christology in the Making*, 174.

portrait of Christ, what is to say that a similar process does not underly his depiction of Christ with the language of Wisdom?¹⁵⁶ Dunn also argues that if “wisdom” is hypostatized into a semi-independent being, then consistency requires that the “righteousness” or “faithfulness” of God, or even his “right arm” must be similarly hypostatized.¹⁵⁷ However, our author’s consistency does not reside in how he approaches the original intentions of the writers of the text; rather, he is consistent in seeing Christological meaning in whatever texts “fit.” Dunn similarly asks, “Does anyone seriously wish to maintain that the writers of these passages thought of YHWH’s ‘arm’ and his ‘right hand’ as independent entities?”¹⁵⁸ But a similar appeal could be made regarding Melchizedek: does anyone seriously wish to maintain that the writers of these passages thought of Melchizedek as a divine figure without beginning or end, without mother, father, or genealogy? To the latter, I have argued that our author might say “no, but God does.” Thus, an appeal to original authorial intention of cited Scriptural passages is not conclusive when evaluating the interpretation of our author.

Towards Metaphysics

This finally leads us back to a final issue: our author never distinguishes between the “pre-existent Son” and Jesus. There is no mention of a Philonic *logos* or even middle-Platonic

¹⁵⁶ Of course, the Wisdom traditions that most closely parallel our author’s description of Christ in ch. 1 are never quoted as Scripture in the manner that portions of the psalms, prophets, and even Law are in Hebrews. However, this does not mean that similar interpretative methods do not underly it. Prov 3:11, cited in Heb 12:5–6, does not speak of *sophia*, and thus is not an exception.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., Pss 57:3; 85:10ff.; Isa 51:9.

¹⁵⁸ *Christology in the Making*, 175.

sophia in Hebrews that could be separate from Jesus.¹⁵⁹ The one who is the Son whom God speaks through in “these last days” is the very one “through whom all things were created” (1:2). Moreover, the one who is anointed by God in 1:9 is the very same one who (in a quotation of Ps 102:26–28) is said to have established the earth in the following verse. Schenck believes that this is an exception; by-and-large, he perceives that our author calls God the creator far more often than Jesus, suggesting that the main point of 1:10–12 is the permanence of Christ as opposed to his role in creation.¹⁶⁰ However, as Amy Peeler and Richard Bauckham concur, if our author did not intend to ascribe creation to the exalted Son, then his quotation of Ps 102:26 with regard to the Son (“You in the beginning, Lord, established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands”) in Heb 1:10 is uncharacteristically sloppy.¹⁶¹

One of the major issues involved in this discussion is the nature of time in the epistle. Dunn in particular seems to assume that our author has a more-or-less linear view of time; there was a time in which there was Wisdom who was not personal, and there was a time in which Wisdom was embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. Of course, Dunn is not alone; C. K. Barrett sparked a well-known debate regarding whether or not the primary substructure of our author’s thought is eschatological or spatial that continues to this day, and many scholars (Barrett included) stress the temporal aspect of the work over any sort of “Platonic” framework he may be

¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Ellingworth suggests that our author may have used *ῥῆμα* instead of *λόγος* for the sustaining “word of his power” (Heb 1:3) in order to avoid the complex web of connotations accompanying *logos* (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 101).

¹⁶⁰ Kenneth Schenck, “Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews,” *JSNT* 19.66 (1997): 113; idem, “A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1,” *JBL* 120.3 (2001): 475–76.

¹⁶¹ Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 27; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 240.

appropriating.¹⁶² Indeed, the superiority of the “new” to the “old” recurs throughout the epistle, and in particular the “new” and “old” covenants. However, while standard early Christian eschatology and *Heilsgeschichte* (“salvation-history”) may be very helpful in illuminating our author’s view on the future realities awaiting the believer, it does not fully exhaust the complexities of time shown in the epistle.

This is perhaps most obvious in the introduction to the epistle, particularly in 1:2–4, reproduced here once more.

Heb 1:2–4

²ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων [ὁ θεὸς] ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας· ³ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, ⁴τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

²in these last days he spoke to us by a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he even made the ages; ³who, being the radiance of glory and the impress of his essence, and bearing all things by the word of his power, having been made a cleansing for sins, he sat down at the throne of the divine majesty in the heights, ⁴having become

¹⁶² C. K. Barrett, “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 363–93; cf. Sterling, “Ontology Versus Eschatology,” 192–93; Scott D. Mackie, ed., *The Letter to the Hebrews: Critical Readings*, T&T Clark Critical Readings in Biblical Studies (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 141–45, 206–7.

greater than the angels by so much, inasmuch as he has inherited a greater name than them.

Here we find a number of statements with aorist verbs, indicating a specific moment in time at which the events described took place. God has spoken by a son “in these last days”; that son was “appointed” heir of all things, assumedly at the resurrection; that son was God’s agent in the fashioning of the world; he has made atonement for sinners; and has sat down at the right hand of the divine. All of these statements (with the possible exception of “through whom he also made the world”) are rather straightforward narrative events quite typical to other early Christian works. Strikingly, however, in the midst of all these aorist verbs are the present participles ὄν (“being”) and φέρων (“bearing”), suggesting that these are statements regarding Christ irrespective of narrative events. John P. Meier puts it poignantly: “Amid this string of discrete past actions, the present stative participle *ōn* stands out like a metaphysical diamond against the black crepe of narrative.”¹⁶³ The arrangement of these statements also appears rather artful and intentional. Meier argues that vv. 2–4 exhibit a consistent movement “backwards” from exaltation (v. 2b, “whom he appointed heir of all”) to creation (v. 2c, “through whom he also created the world”) to “behind” creation (v. 3a, “who, being the radiance of glory and the imprint of his nature”), and then finally “forward” again to death and exaltation (v. 3c, “having made a cleansing” and “he sat at the right hand”).¹⁶⁴

Should the exalted person of Jesus be separated from the one who is the pre-existent radiance or reflection of God’s glory (as Dunn seems to imply), this dramatic literary movement

¹⁶³ “Structure and Theology in Heb 1,” 180.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 178–89.

loses much of its force. The integration of both historical and more “timeless” statements in the beginning of Hebrews leads Meier to contend that

It is high time that we recognize that in a few startling passages in the NT like Heb 1,2–3 and John 1,1–3, the thought of some first century Christians began, ever so tentatively, to move beyond purely historical modes of conception and narration and to probe the speculative, philosophical implications of their tremendous affirmations about God, Christ, and humanity.¹⁶⁵

Of course, this ontological or philosophical mindset is also suggested by the importance of spatial categories and Platonic language in the epistle, where Jesus entered into the “true” (ἀληθινή) and “heavenly” (ἐπουράνιος) tabernacle, where Moses based the earthly tabernacle on a heavenly “pattern” (τύπος), and where the Levitical cult serves as a “shadowy sketch” (ὕπόδειγμα καὶ σκιά) of heavenly realities. Gregory Sterling has demonstrated in chs. 8–10 that our author’s argument relies on Platonizing exegetic traditions, arguing based on his usage of Platonic terminology, an emphasis on the superiority of the heavenly over the earthly, and the congruence between his interpretations of the heavenly “pattern” of Ex 25:40 and the furnishings of the tabernacle with the interpretations of other Middle Platonists.¹⁶⁶ This is corroborated by the usage elsewhere of other words common in Hellenistic philosophy—e.g., ὑποστάσις (“essence” or “foundation”; 1:3; 3:14),¹⁶⁷ μέτοχοι and related terms (“partakers”; 3:14),¹⁶⁸ and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 180.

¹⁶⁶ Sterling, “Ontology Versus Eschatology”; cf. Runia, “Ancient Philosophy and the New Testament,” in specific regard to ὑπόδειγμα.

¹⁶⁷ See Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 44, 117–19.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 117–19.

μένω (“remain”; 7:24; 10:34; 12:27; 13:14)¹⁶⁹—to describe Jesus and the heavenly realities. This is not to imply or require that our author was dependent on, say, Philo, but it does suggest that our author (and his implied audience) were heavily indebted to a tradition of which Philo was perhaps the most articulate proponent.¹⁷⁰ When one considers that the *Wisdom of Solomon* is widely agreed to be a Middle Platonic work, the correspondences mentioned earlier between it and Hebrews lead to a similar conclusion.¹⁷¹ Our author is tentatively going beyond salvation history into the realm of metaphysics and ontology.

To briefly state my point here: our author weds temporal eschatology to a spatial cosmology. History has a purpose, an end, so that the “new” is better than the “old”. However, this is *because* the “new” belongs to what is more *true* or *heavenly*, to what is permanent or *remains*. The old shadows are being replaced with the realities they pointed towards (cf. 10:1). It is no surprise, then, that our author uses Platonic and philosophical vocabulary.

If this is so, then, other authors that make note of Christ’s *being* can be brought into conversation with our author. In particular, we may observe similar assumptions behind the works of the Johannine circle, as well as even the pre-Nicene Fathers. As Meier concurs, “There is no magical dividing line at A.D. 100, cordoning off the pristine NT from the scruffy Fathers. For better or for worse, Hebrews 1 and John 1 share the same philosophical bed as Justin Martyr and Origen.”¹⁷² We may recall Richard Hays’ note regarding that the key to figural interpretation

¹⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 209–10, 380–82. The concept of what is “shaken” passing away and what is “unshakeable” remaining is echoed in the OT as well, e.g., in Ps 102. Cf. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai & Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, New Voices in Biblical Studies (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 152, 172–73.

¹⁷⁰ So Sterling, “Ontology Versus Eschatology,” 210.

¹⁷¹ For a rather balanced view on the spatial characteristics of our author’s thought, see Schenck, “Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 120–21.

¹⁷² “Structure and Theology in Heb 1,” 181.

in John is the “pre-existent *logos*”;¹⁷³ in Hebrews, we may observe, we have a pre-existent son and, it seems as well, his *logos*.

One might argue against this, appealing to the sense that Jesus has “become” (γενόμενος) greater than the angels (1:4) or that there is a specific “today” when Jesus has been “begotten” (γεγέννηκα; 1:5), implying that there was a time where he was not in existence in some form. Beginning with 1:4, the “having become greater than the angels”—which, in context, appears to refer to the resurrection or ascension—may be balanced by the later phrase that Jesus “had been made lesser than the angels for a short time”¹⁷⁴ (2:9). If 1:4 implies that there was a time that Jesus was not greater than the angels, then 2:9 replies specifically that it was the time when he had been made lesser than the angels, presumably during (and not necessarily before) the time when he was “tested like us in all regards except without sin” (4:15). The “today” of 1:5 presents a more substantial challenge, but I think that it may be illumined by the “today” in 3:7, which appears to be a kind of “timeless” today—the time of the audience’s obedience transcends earthly temporal confines.¹⁷⁵ In this construal, the “today” of 1:5 is likewise eternal. (Of course, this may not have been intended by the author of Ps 2 originally, but as I have argued earlier, our author appears to discount original historical context and human authorial intentions.) This said, however, perhaps “timeless” is not exactly accurate; perhaps it is more accurate to say that the begetting happens in heavenly or eternal time (if one can speak of such a thing) which interacts

¹⁷³ *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 343; cf. Chapter 3 of this study.

¹⁷⁴ Original: τὸν δὲ βραχὺ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον.

¹⁷⁵ Attridge notes that Philo similarly calls “today” a “limitless age” (*De fuga et invention* 57); see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 54n54. However, this is not the only way that one can take “today,” though Attridge is content with not identifying the exact moment. Rather, he sees the “becoming” vocabulary as standing in some tension with the Wisdom traditions our author is using, a tension that our author does not seek to reconcile. For further discussion, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 54–55.

with yet transcends earthly time.¹⁷⁶ Regardless, it does not seem that one can indicate a point in an earthly timescale when the son had *not* been begotten. Thus, I do not believe that the language of “becoming” is a difficulty for us here.

Summary

In summary, our author describes the Word or *logos* of God in 4:12–13 in terms that stress its divine status. Of particular note is that our author’s language overlaps with the Wisdom language he uses to describe Jesus. This fact, combined with the grammar of the pericope and the blurred distinction between God and his *logos*, suggests that our author viewed the status of Scripture and of Jesus to be similar with respect to creation (or more accurately, that which is not divine). The status that Jesus possesses, meanwhile, appears to be that of metaphysical and temporal priority. Our author seems to describe the personal and real pre-existence of Jesus, making him temporally prior, while his agency in both the creation and conservation of the world (1:3) appear to imply his metaphysical priority. If Scripture has a similar role to creation as Jesus, then what does its metaphysical priority look like? This is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁷⁶ In this regard, perhaps the language of *metaphysical priority* may be more useful than *pre-existence*, as the latter has connotations of correspondence with earthly timescales.

Chapter 6

Scriptural Metaphysical Priority in Hebrews

We now circle back to Scripture. If, as I have argued earlier, the word of God (which for our author is Scripture) is accorded a status similar to that of Jesus in our epistle, then it stands to reason that we may speak of Scripture as being *metaphysically prior* to the created order. Does this have parallel? What does metaphysical priority entail? How does this fit into the scholarly conversation? These are the questions that we now turn to.

Parallels

The metaphysical priority of Scripture provides a useful paradigm in which to understand our author's use of the OT. Pre-existence expresses this priority. Something that is metaphysically prior to another object is assumed to be temporally prior as well; the creation of a creature cannot precede the existence of its Creator. This is obvious in the Gospel of John. John portrays Jesus as the pre-existent *logos* through which God created the world. Similarly, the relationships between OT Scripture and the realities and objects they refer to (e.g., Ps. 69's "house" referring to Jesus' "body" in John 2) are considered to pre-exist the perception of the hearers, giving rise to Richard Hays' term "reading backwards." This retrospective perception in no way is seen to do violence to the text; it is rather considered to be *latent* within the fabric of the text itself. Nor is this attitude unique to John; Hindy Najman argues persuasively that this was the case with numerous Jewish writers in the Second Temple period. I argue that the author of Hebrews falls within this milieu, holding requisite ideas of pre-existence and metaphysical

speculation similar to those of John (as, for example, John Meier argues), as well as placing Scripture rather explicitly in the “divine” metaphysical category.

Two later traditions also parallel this view. The first is the concept of the pre-existent or heavenly Torah in Judaism.¹⁷⁷ This is present in Genesis Rabbah, where the creative “master workman” or “helper” of Prov 8 is interpreted to be Torah (Gen. Rab. 1.1–5). Similarly, the pseudepigraphal *Jubilees* considers its origin to be “heavenly tablets” (Jub. 1.29).¹⁷⁸ Early Jewish writers establish the metaphysical priority of Torah to creation and the community by claiming that it pre-existed both. I claim that this is the same impulse that our author exhibits when he uses the language of Wisdom in Heb 4:12–13 to describe Scripture.

The second tradition is the one that has inherited our author’s ideology. John Meier claims that the pre-Nicene church and the authors of Hebrews and John shared the same philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions; I believe it reasonable to extend this to their hermeneutical presuppositions as well. We observed earlier (Chapter 3) that Augustine, in the words of Ephraim Radner, views reality as a kind of “tapestry” that is ordered and unfolded in time; yet he claims that God views all things *simul*, and that Scripture serves to order creaturely existence as perceived in time. This leads Radner to argue for the metaphysical priority of Scripture outside the reaches of normally-experienced time. Graham Hughes conveniently states something very similar when commenting on Hebrews: “[t]he essential location of the Word of God is not in history but beyond it, and its function is to summon men from within history towards the meta-historical ‘Rest’ of God (4.1ff).”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ For a longer discussion of this, including a discussion on the nature of Jewish liturgical time, see *Time and the Word*, 67–71.

¹⁷⁸ See Hindy Najman, “Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies,” *JSJ* 30.4 (1999): 379–410; idem, *Seconding Sinai*, 62–65.

¹⁷⁹ Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 41.

Indeed, this idea of the Scripture being placed outside of time may be understood in a parallel to the Hebrew Bible that we have not yet mentioned. It is often acknowledged that the divine *logos* is eschatologically realized in Jesus (Heb 1:1);¹⁸⁰ what then of the protological? Jon Levenson, building off of the work of Brevard Childs, argues that certain events in the Hebrew Bible are viewed as protological and order reality, such as the building of the Temple on Zion and the Davidic covenant. These protological events occur in some sort of “mythic time,” or *illo tempore*,¹⁸¹ even *before time itself* (if such can be said).¹⁸² Thus, as Levenson argues, Ps 78 presents the building of the sanctuary as predating the selection even of David, even though the historical narrative presents his son Solomon as its builder.¹⁸³ Interestingly, Levenson argues that this conception of time is closely related to conceptions of space in the Hebrew Bible. In his construal, there are two tiers to reality: an “upper tier” in which God resides and mythic time pervades, and a “lower tier” where humans live that is subject to the vicissitudes of history. The Temple and Zion are the confluence between these two worlds, and it is through the Temple liturgy and rituals that the worshipper can “ascend” towards the heavenly realm.¹⁸⁴ In a similar way, if Scripture is principally divine in origin, then perhaps our author may be excused for placing it in a heavenly realm where time does not correspond neatly to earthly categories.

Perhaps one may go even further with this parallel, focusing on the example of the Temple. Levenson notes that the heavenly Temple predates the earthly one and, it seems, creation itself, while at the same time it is *identified* with the earthly copy. Perhaps this is an

¹⁸⁰ This is not to say that they are the same; however, God spoke the word “in these last days...through a son.”

¹⁸¹ The nominative of this is *illud tempus*, and derives from Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History*, Bollingen Series 46 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 20.

¹⁸² Levenson, *Sinai & Zion*, 103; we might observe that ancient Christians also had a similar preoccupation. Cf. Brevard Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 1/27 (London: SCM, 1960).

¹⁸³ Levenson, *Sinai & Zion*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 140–42.

instructive example for the relation between things present in both heavenly and earthly realms: for our author, the divine archetype of Scripture predates its earthly copies (oral or written), yet is identified with them nevertheless.

Consequences for Scriptural Interpretation

Yet how does this have any bearing on Scriptural interpretation? The connection rests in typology and figural reading, which we are treating as functionally synonymous. It was noted in the first chapter that most commentators view our author's approach to the OT as *typological* in some way, so that the events and figures of the OT are seen to shed light on or foreshadow Christ and his saving work. Exactly what these authors mean, though, is complex, as are their differing assumptions, leading to quite a bit of confusion and occasionally uncharitable reading. It is not my goal here to sort all of these disputes here; rather, I intend to describe what the metaphysical priority of Scripture means and how it impacts the pattern of figural reading.

One distinction that I make among the various commentators is in identifying what exactly serve as the *types* for our author which point to the *archetype*¹⁸⁵ of Christ—i.e., what are the things or items that serve to foreshadow or illuminate Christ? A number of commentators emphasize that the historical events that the Scriptures bear witness to are the *types*; they often emphasize the temporal character of our author's thought, and wed *Heilsgeschichte* to history. There is certainly some truth to this—our author does assume that there is a movement and goal to history, which will receive its consummation when Jesus “at a second time will be seen for the

¹⁸⁵ I use this term instead of *antitype* simply to mitigate confusion on the part of those unfamiliar with the technical Platonic vocabulary. In this I follow Levenson, *Sinai & Zion*, 140.

salvation of those waiting for him” (9:28). However, they misunderstand our author when they assume that it is the *events* that the Scripture seems to bear witness to that are inspired, as opposed to (implicitly) the Scriptures themselves. It is this attitude that gives rise to the importance of authorial intention in interpretation, as Don Collett has argued (see Chapter 3), and permits the admittedly amorphous complex called “historical criticism” to exercise authority in determining the meaning of Scripture, as the theologian Hans Frei and historian Michael Legaspi have described.¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, commentators are left with two options: either defend or assume that our author positively gauged the historicity of the events described in Scripture in early antiquity;¹⁸⁷ or reject the author’s interpretive practices as in any way worthy of imitation.¹⁸⁸

This construal misses the importance of Scripture *per se* for our author. I have argued above (Chapter 4) that our author cared little about human authorial intention and indeed ignored the historical elements of the figure of Melchizedek in aspects of his interpretation. He does not appeal to what the text *meant*; rather, he appeals to what the text *means*, assuming that the synchronic pressures of an inspired (pre-existent) canon and present divine realities provide a sufficient context for Scriptural interpretation.

Something else may be added here. If Scripture is metaphysically prior to all creation, then all of reality may be understood through its lens. It is certainly true that Scripture points most directly to Christ, as I have argued above. However, I have also noted that, for our author, Scripture can refer to the theological realities facing believers. Now if God is the ground of all

¹⁸⁶ Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*; Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁷ Most Hebrews scholars do not argue that our author viewed events as historical, with the exception of Cockerill (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 304n33, 312); however, several of them (particularly evangelical scholars) assume it. E.g., Lane, *Hebrews*, 167; Treier, “Speech Acts, Hearing Hearts, and Other Senses,” 343.

¹⁸⁸ E.g. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 181.

being and existence, then that makes *all things* theological in some sense. Here, then, we have the logic for viewing everything through the lens of Holy Writ. Scripture interprets the world around us; Scripture interprets the reality of God (as his self-revelation); Scripture interprets the believers. As our author says, “creation is not invisible before him/it, but all things are naked and lay open to his eyes” (4:13).

Case Study: Scripture as Heavenly Language (Heb 10:5–10)

This leads us to our final consideration: What is the relationship between pre-existent Scripture and a pre-existent God and Son? I suggest that Scripture is, at its core, viewed as heavenly language and liturgy. I have noted above (Chapter 4) that our author often presents Scripture as divine speech, whether it be of the “holy spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, e.g., 3:7), God (e.g., 1:5–13), or Jesus (e.g., 2:12–13), and almost never as human speech (with the aforementioned exception of David in 4:7). This is extremely striking with the quotation of Ps 40 in Heb 10:5–10, to which we turn our attention.

Heb 10:5–10

⁵Διὸ εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον λέγει·

θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας,

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι·

⁶ὄλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας.

⁷τότε εἶπον· ἰδοὺ ἤκω,

ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ,

τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς τὸ θέλημά σου.

⁸ἀνώτερον λέγων ὅτι θυσίας καὶ προσφορὰς καὶ ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἠθέλησας οὐδὲ εὐδόκησας, αἵτινες κατὰ νόμον προσφέρονται, ⁹τότε εἶρηκεν· ἰδοὺ ἤκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου. ἀναιρεῖ τὸ πρῶτον ἵνα τὸ δεύτερον στήσῃ, ¹⁰ἐν ᾧ θελήματι ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμὲν διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐφάπαξ.

⁵Therefore, coming into the world, he says:

“Sacrifices and offerings you did not desire,

but a body you prepared for me;

⁶in whole burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not delight.

⁷Then I said, behold, I come,

in the head of the scroll it has been written about me,

to do, O God, your will.”

⁸At the same time that he said that “in sacrifices and offering and whole burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased” (which are offered up according to the law), ⁹then he also has said, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus the Anointed once-and-for-all.

Several questions may be raised by this quotation. For one, the psalm’s original reference to obedience to the Law (νόμος) as an expression of doing God’s will has been removed—such a reference would have been rather confusing (though not necessarily contradictory)¹⁸⁹ given the

¹⁸⁹ There are several possibilities, one including that Jesus did (or, more accurately for our author, fulfilled) the Law, but also by his greater sacrifice annulled it (as in 8:13). Also serving to complicate the matter is whether or not

relegation of the law in chs. 7–10 generally and even in 10:8–9. Secondly, it does not appear that the entire psalm can be said to apply to Christ; our author maintains that Jesus did not sin (4:15), despite Ps 40's "my acts of lawlessness have overtaken me" (Ps 40:12).¹⁹⁰

Though these are interesting questions, they are less important for our study than "when does this occur?" Most scholars are in agreement that the κόσμον ("world") refers to the earthly world, in contrast to the heavenly οἰκουμένη ("world") to which Jesus is exalted in 1:6.¹⁹¹ As a result, it is generally assumed that εἰσερχόμενος ("entering") refers to Jesus's incarnation. Beyond this, however, there is uncertainty. Cockerill and Ellingworth assume that this is said on the eve of the incarnation, while Koester places this after the Incarnation; meanwhile, Attridge, Bruce, and Lane leave the exact "moment" unspecified.¹⁹² I think that Attridge in particular is correct when he consciously avoids trying to find a "particular moment," as this appears to be mythic language (i.e., eschatological or protological). This being said, I agree with Ellingworth when he notes that the main verb of v. 5a, λέγει, is best taken as "timeless present referring to the permanent record of Scripture,"¹⁹³ but I would extend this further to even the statements in ch. 1 where God speaks to Jesus. This question, of course, may be approached grammatically: if

νόμος is referring specifically to the Torah or to the specific commands underlying the Levitical/Temple cult. I favor the latter, especially given that our author gives ethical commands that still align with several of those in the Torah (13:1–7).

¹⁹⁰ This being said, perhaps our author is taking the "iniquities" of Ps 40 as referring not to the sins that Jesus has committed, but rather to the sins he is bearing for others. Translation from NETS; Ps 39:13 LXX.

¹⁹¹ So Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 434; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 499–500; Koester, *Hebrews*, 432; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 273; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 432; Lane, *Hebrews*, 262.

¹⁹² Johnson (*Hebrews*, 250) also seems to keep it unspecified, although he may place it *after* the incarnation itself. If this is so, he is in agreement with David Peterson (*Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the "Epistle to the Hebrews,"* SNTSMS 47 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 147; cf. Koester, *Hebrews*, 432). If this were so, however, it would have made more sense for our highly articulate author to have utilized an aorist participle instead of a present one.

¹⁹³ *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 500.

εἰσερχόμενος is taken to be a circumstantial participle and is translated temporally, it may be taken to occur at the same time as the main verb because it is in the present tense.¹⁹⁴ Thus, by translating “διὸ εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον λέγει” as “therefore, coming into the world, he says,” I suggest that this statement is a statement from eternity. The speaker is the “eternal Son,”¹⁹⁵ but pinpointing an exact “moment” corresponding to our time scale does little justice to the discord between earthly and heavenly timetables that its protological location suggests.

Of course, this is not the only example of what Amy Peeler calls “quasi-prosopographic speech.”¹⁹⁶ In fact, nearly all citations of Scripture are placed on the lips of someone divine. And even more startlingly, the flip is also true: every example of divine speech in Hebrews always takes the form of some citation of Scripture. Peeler notes that this differentiates our author from other Greco-Roman writers, who often invent speeches for ancient characters in the spirit of, “What would so-and-so say if he or she were here?” Our author, however, does not make up “fitting language.” Instead, he simply repeats Scripture, seeming to assume that it is divine speech. Nor is this usage merely artistic; our author places theological weight on the “promises” of God to Abraham in 6:13–18 both to stress the importance of Melchizedek later in ch. 7 as well as to underline the reliability of the promises and oaths of God—especially that contained in Ps 110 regarding a “priest in the order of Melchizedek.”

How could these written passages be assumed to be divine speech? One explanation is that many of these passages actually do describe God as the speaker. This is the case with the

¹⁹⁴ Cf. BDF, 174–75. There is disagreement as to whether this is an attributive participle serving as a substantial adjective (i.e., “the one coming into the world”) or if it is to be taken circumstantially. Though I have translated it circumstantially, my argument does not rest on if it is attributive or circumstantial; rather, what is important is that the tense of the participle is present and not aorist or future.

¹⁹⁵ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 273.

¹⁹⁶ *You Are My Son*, 31–37.

oath “you are a priest in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:17, 21, etc.). Of course, this is not so straightforward with, for example, Ps 102 as quoted in Heb 1:10–12, where the original literary context makes it appear that this is an address from man to God as opposed to from God to the Christ. Perhaps the psalm’s inclusion of κύριε (“Lord”), a title often used for Jesus, permitted our author to construe the recipient as Jesus.

On another note, perhaps the cultic usage of Scripture had a historical role in corroborating this development of Scripture as divine speech. Assuming, as noted above by Levenson, that the Temple (or Tabernacle) was thought to be the confluence of the divine and earthly realities, and that the heavenly throne room was actually present in the inner sanctuary of the structure (a construal that Hebrews modifies but is nevertheless indebted to), then it is not inconceivable that the liturgy used within was considered to be part of a divine conversation. If the Scriptures were utilized in the liturgy of the Temple (esp. as seems apparent with the Psalms), then perhaps this would suggest that Scripture is the language of the sanctuary and the language used in the presence of God. This is an investigation in-and-of itself, but is an opportunity for further study.¹⁹⁷

Regardless, here Scripture is said to be divine speech. This does not mean that it is *only* placed on the lips of God or the Son. Indeed, it appears that *all* believers, who themselves are said to have come to the heavenly Jerusalem in 12:22–24, are likewise called to participate in heavenly discourse. This seems apparent in 13:5b–7: “For he has said, ‘I will not abandon you

¹⁹⁷ The intriguing work on prosopographical exegesis and theology by Matthew Bates came to my attention too late to interact with in this study, but he appears to have taken a similar approach to the idea of divine speech in Hebrews as I have. See Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

nor forsake you,’ so that we, taking courage, say, ‘the Lord is my help; I will not fear; what will man do to me?’”¹⁹⁸

Ps 118:6 is placed on the lips of the believing community. That community belongs in Zion, the place where God rests, and thus (we may say) heaven. Therefore, the psalter gives language to heavenly realities and heavenly participants.

Our Author’s View of Scripture

So what exactly is the role our author accords Scripture? I believe that for our author Scripture functions principally as pre-existent divine speech that all partakers of divine realities likewise participate in. Moreover, this divine speech keeps its character as such beyond the original historical (and occasionally narrational) contexts it was written in. It is the language of heaven and of heaven’s participants, and is not limited by earthly time *per se*.

Additionally, because Scripture is seen to have a divine origin, it is thought to describe divine (not to mention all) realities accurately. For our author, the hermeneutical goal of Scriptural interpretation is to illumine the realities that spoke it in the first place. One may see a parallel to the Pauline phrase “the goal of the Law is Christ” (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστός, Rom 10:4). This can be done with or without minding “original authorial intent,” as evidenced by our author’s interpretation of Melchizedek and the allegorical interpretations of other ancient writers. To those who believe that divine authorship should be conceived similarly to human authorship and that meaning is determined by human authorial intention, this interpretive strategy will

¹⁹⁸ Original: αὐτὸς γὰρ εἶρηκεν· οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῶ οὐδ’ οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω, ὥστε θαρροῦντας ἡμᾶς λέγειν· κύριος ἐμοὶ βοηθός, οὐ φοβηθήσομαι, τί ποιήσει μοι ἄνθρωπος;

appear eisegetical. Scripture is certainly being interpreted in light of Christ, and it is almost certainly true that the original human author(s) of the Melchizedek passage in Genesis did not envision Melchizedek as the divine son of God (and I have argued that our author was aware of this as well). However, to those who believe that all Scripture is breathed out by God (to use another Pauline phrase, 1 Tim 3:16) and that God can allow Scripture to refer to present and future realities not perceived by the past writers, this is *exegetical* inasmuch as the *divine* authorial intent is sought.

This kind of exegesis, however, takes place not in the context of a reconstructed historical past, but rather in the spiritual context of (newly-perceived) divine realities and the literary context of all divine speech and literature, otherwise called Scripture. Both pressures are operative. The spiritual context of our author's interpretation undergirds the application of many Scriptural passages to the figure of Jesus, even though this has led to charges of anachronism. Meanwhile, the literary context of divine speech is behind our author's ability to string citations from disparate Scriptural sources together, unified by only a single word or concept (e.g., *καταπαύσις* or "rest"). I would suggest that this same impulse is behind the quotation style of Athanasius in his exegesis in Proverbs 8:22 regarding the Trinity¹⁹⁹ as well as the interpretive principle "Scripture interprets Scripture."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Radner says the following of Athanasius' exegetical assumptions: "[T]he words of Scripture refer to God, as being directly given by God, and hence are divinely significant in an unmediated fashion. Since "all" of Scripture is God's, the simple juxtaposition of Scripture to Scripture as each divinely referring, will provide, of itself, knowledge of God" (*Time and the Word*, 213–14).

²⁰⁰ See, among others, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.9 for an example of this principle from the English Reformation.

Situating this in the Conversation

Looking back, then, how does my perspective fit in the current conversation on the use of the OT in Hebrews? Most scholars have either focused on *describing* the author's usage, or they have remarked upon some theological assumption in passing. Few have attempted to flesh out the connection between theology and scriptural citation in Hebrews. I think that scholars who focus on typology as our author's fundamental interpretive category are correct in some respect. However, I must disagree with G. B. Caird and others who make a hard-and-fast distinction between allegory and typology; as I believe our author worked on both sides of this "divide," I prefer the term figural reading as utilized by Richard Hays, Ephraim Radner, and Don Collett. Moreover, I think that our author was far more concerned with what was contained in Scripture than the historical events Scripture assumedly bore witness to. Typology is done with Scripture, not with the historical events behind Scripture; this is an assumption shared with many practitioners of Christian allegory, as Collett has pointed out. This point leads me to disagree with Gareth Lee Cockerill and Daniel Treier in particular.

Stephen Motyer and Donald Guthrie have perhaps some of the most helpful contributions to this discussion in the form of their literature reviews; however, while I think they correctly point out the importance of typology and Christological exegesis, I think they are fundamentally incorrect when interacting with the importance of pre-existence. Motyer relies on James D. G. Dunn's work in Christology (with which I disagree; see Chapter 5 above), while Guthrie relies on Motyer and adds some of his own analysis. Both argue against Paul Ellingworth, who assumes that Jesus's pre-existence is the "key" to interpreting our author's use of Scripture by nature of him being present at the writing of the Scriptures. Motyer's argument is essentially that our author did not present Christ as pre-existent, and that even if so, taking it as the

hermeneutical key would undermine the contrast between the “word spoken by angels” (2:2)—which he takes as Scripture—and the word “spoken by the son” (1:2). Motyer, however, fails to note that it is not Scripture *per se* that is associated with the angels, but rather very specifically the Law (νόμος), and for our author it seems to strictly regard the regulations concerning the Temple cult and the Levitical priesthood (so chs. 7–10). Indeed, though “God spoke through the prophets to our fathers” (1:1) as opposed to “through a son” in “these last days” (1:2), the content of the Son’s speeches in this epistle is taken verbatim from the prophets themselves.

Guthrie falters on these two points as well, but a third point is worth addressing. Summarizing Motyer, he says, “The straightforward application of texts such as Ps. 22 to the person of Christ neither claims nor depends upon a belief in Christ’s pre-existence (I would add, anymore than the application of Ps. 95 or Prov. 3 to us requires our pre-existence).”²⁰¹ There are several issues with this. For one, as noted above, Christ is presented as personally pre-existent in the Epistle. Secondly, although they are applied to the audience, neither Ps 95 nor Prov 3 are considered to be the audience’s speech. This is in marked contrast to Pss 22 or 40, both of which are applied to Christ *and* considered to be his speech. Thirdly, hidden in this statement is the assumption that Scripture’s reference to Christ and its reference to the audience (not to mention the creation) function similarly. This, however, is not defended, and I would argue that eternal speech refers to its eternal Speaker in a way that is not quite the same as how it refers to its temporally-bound audience. Jesus is not merely an object that is, to use a phrase of Radner’s, “ordered” by Scripture like the rest of creation, including the audience; Jesus is also its Speaker.

Regarding other views: I believe that there is some confusion on categories. It is clear that our author is reading retrospectively in light of the revelation of Christ and his resurrection.

²⁰¹ “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament,” 286.

In this regard, Hays and Luke Timothy Johnson are both accurate. But from where does this knowledge come? Here the waters are muddied. Collett argues that Ceslas Spicq and Hays fall into a sort of *sensus plenior* approach, ascribing to the Holy Spirit the Christological meaning that the church sees in the OT, as opposed to the OT itself. I for one do not see why the meaning(s) of a text cannot be said to have been brought forth by the Holy Spirit, *even if meaning is considered to be inherent within the text of the OT*. Rather, to me it seems that much of the issue at hand is expectations within disciplines. *Sensus plenior* is a useful model for historians who read the New Testament to peer into the lives of the people who had a hand in writing it. One can agree with *sensus plenior* and its approach to things “behind the text” (as well as the historical-critical process more generally) while noting that this way of understanding meaning is not justified by the church’s history as a way for theologically interpreting the same text. This appears to me to be the case of Hays. Collett argues that he shows forth a *sensus plenior* approach, but Hays’ construal of Scriptural interpretation in the Gospel of John is essentially the same as that of Collett, and it is this that Hays urges the church to adopt.²⁰²

In sum, when wading into this debate I think it is key to note the twin pressures exerting an influence on our author’s Scriptural interpretation. The first is the “way the words run”—the literary context mentioned above, both within a specific passage as well as within the canon as a whole. The second is the death and resurrection of Christ, providing a “check” and the initial impulse for our author’s interpretations. I think that our author would see both pressures tending towards the same point and the same interpretations, as opposed to competing with one another.

²⁰² Collett in particular argues that *sensus plenior* approaches do not give any room for divine providence, failing to allow for “second-order” or “natural signification” (as noted in Aquinine scholarship; see excursus below), whereby God establishes meaning chiefly through his ordering of time and of various things within time. However, this construal of providence, shared also by Radner, is exactly what Hays argues regarding the Gospel of John in *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (see Chapter 3 above).

Finally, I agree with those who have stressed the importance of Scripture, seeing it as having some sort of priority to earthly realities. Johnson has made several statements in this regard, and I must agree with Kenneth Schenck when he says that our author “seems to have a theology of word in which the word of God is the means by which God orders the world.”²⁰³ And this word is Scripture, as is apparent in Heb 4:12.

Excursus: What about Historical Study?

One final overarching question remains: what do we do about historical criticism? I have argued that our author cared far more about what the text *means* as opposed to what it *meant*, and in the cases of “rest” and Melchizedek, rejected the importance of original human authorial intention in establishing theological meaning. As a result, I noted that historical criticism was unable to arbitrate in theological matters in our author’s case. One may then ask, “Did our author care about history?” Further sharpening the point, I note that the present study itself is an exercise in historical criticism of a sort. I have very explicitly been concerned with “our author” and his assumptions that the text of this epistle bears witness to. Am I arguing that our author would find this exercise pointless?

The answer to this question, I believe, is founded in the reality of God first and foremost. Our author believes in his pre-existence and metaphysical priority to all things. All things are founded and rooted in him, as an Augustinian (and more fundamentally, a Christian) would say. Figural reading is not limited to Scripture; indeed, “figural reading” is an extremely expansive category that includes analogies, allegories, metaphors, types, parables, and even simple

²⁰³ “Keeping His Appointment,” 112.

examples. Thus, the way that creation can be made to refer to God is a figural relationship. For example, the analogy that is made in the Epistle of James regarding springs and freshwater is *figurally connected* to its referent, namely, the language that ought to accompany Christians (Jas 3:10–12). The figure of a spring illuminates how Christians ought to live. Similar examples abound both in Scripture and outside of it.

All things, then, can serve to illuminate both seen and unseen realities. This is rooted in the abiding presence of God outside of time. Taking a leaf from scholarship on Thomas Aquinas, this is *second-order* or *natural signification*, and according to Aquinas, it undergirds the ability for human authors to use words and speech in general to refer to something else (*first-order* or *verbal signification*).²⁰⁴ Thus, a snake can refer to a theological reality; a memory to a theological reality; a testament/covenant/will (διαθήκη) to a theological reality; an allegorical (from our standpoint) interpretation of a Scripture to a theological reality.²⁰⁵ One might also add that a historical-critical interpretation of Scripture can refer to a theological reality. Thus, it is not my point to say that historical study is worthless. Following our author's assumptions, however, it is not the norm by which Scriptural interpretation can be judged.

But if this is so, what is the norm of interpretation? For without a norm, it would seem that anything could be argued, and our author was no relativist. He makes positive statements about *who* God is and *who* Christ and *who* the believer is that have conceivable counterfactuals. What then is that norm if it is not historical intentions? As above, I argue that for our author the norming quality of Scripture and Scriptural interpretation are bound in the assumption that Scripture is divine speech. I have already mentioned that two assumptions seem to be implicit in

²⁰⁴ Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament*, 143.

²⁰⁵ These are all “artifacts” as defined by Radner. See *Time and the Word*, 94.

how our author puts this norm into practice: all things must be interpreted in the *spiritual* context of Jesus Christ who died and rose again, and the *literary* context of all of Scripture. Once again, however, these are not viewed to be competing as our author perceives it.

Further Study

This study is limited by both space as well as how engrained these questions are in a number of fields. For one, I have only described the approach of a single author in depth. It appears to me that our author shares a number of assumptions with those behind the Pauline corpus and the Gospel of John; however, I have not attempted to describe how they may differ in the particulars. This is inextricably related to the perennial question of the “unity and diversity” of the New Testament: to what extent do the assumptions I have described above regarding a) the divine, eternal nature of scripture and b) the privileging of theological interests over historical ones in interpretation hold true throughout the early Christian movement? To what extent are they modified or nuanced? The same might be said for the New Testament’s later audiences as well. Radner’s work has been to establish figural reading as a common Christian practice throughout history, and I have aimed to extend his project into the New Testament itself as a helpful paradigm. However, my work similarly focuses on the common denominator held amongst the pre-Nicene church, several later interpreters, and the Johannine writer(s). It will take another study to go more systematically throughout the New Testament and the early church to see if there are divergences or not.

Something else may be said of the limitations of this work. I have, as mentioned in the “Preliminaries” section, used *Scripture* in a rather ambiguous sense. For our author, Scripture

included the OT passages that he utilized. As such, my conclusions are limited in scope to how early Christians approached *their* Scripture, or rather, the OT. Later interpreters, such as the pre-Nicene church and possibly even the writer(s) of John (if David Ford is correct),²⁰⁶ possessed a broader “canon,” and as a result their interpretive methods and assumptions may differ slightly. I have not sought to discuss the theological relationship between the Old and New Testaments, as for our author there was as of yet no “New” Testament so far as can be discerned. Some account of this relationship should be made by would-be practitioners of our author’s exegetical method, and it is not found in this study.

In a related fashion, one could expand upon this present study by determining if there were variegated ways in which our author utilized different Scriptures. Do his various usages follow the different genres of his Scriptures, or, say, differences between narrative descriptions and reported speech? My description of *all* of our author’s Scripture as “divine speech” can almost certainly be nuanced. So far, however, I believe it provides the most helpful general category for approaching our author’s understanding of the OT.

²⁰⁶ That is, regarding John as a reader and interpreter of the Synoptics. See “Reading Backwards, Reading Forwards, and Abiding,” 73–74.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

A review is in order. After describing the problem of our author's use of the OT, we then observed the various scholarly solutions to the problem. In particular, typology was viewed as the most common way of understanding our author's interpretive method, which understands him to see past events told by the Old Testament to foreshadow the person and work of Jesus. From there we delved into parallels, with particular emphasis on the New Testament and Christian practices of figural reading. This figural reading (including typology but also extending beyond it) finds correspondences between various textual artifacts—people, events, and even words and phrases—separated by time and authors. The figural connections and relationships between events and persons across time, moreover, are not necessarily established by human authorial intent, but principally by divine providence. In this way, the human author(s) of Old Testament passages can be said to “say more than they know.” Moreover, because they are established by divine providence, figural relationships (and the Scriptures that establish them) are thought to be temporally and metaphysically prior to the creation that they describe.

This led us into exegesis of two passages in the Epistle. We observed that the discussion of “rest” (καταπαύσις) in Heb 4 evinces a lack of concern for human authorial intent, as well as a presumption that various Scriptures can be used to interpret each other—implying a unified view of authorship (i.e., divine authorship). Our author's commentary on Melchizedek (7:2–3) was similarly enlightening. Here, I argued that our author interpreted the character as if he were divine, particularly when considering the ancient priest-king's literary presence among some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and that it was this “deified” portrait of Melchizedek that served to illumine the figure of Jesus. However, I also argued that our author made a distinction between

the presumably *historical* and the *narrative* Melchizedek. He did not think the historical Melchizedek was divine; rather, he thought that the *Scripture* could be interpreted in a manner that presented him as divine and thus was truly a Scriptural portrait of Jesus. In such a way, I argued that our author would likely not have regarded “original human authorial intention” and historical criticism as being capable of arbitrating various interpretations of Scripture. We also noted that these assumptions were also assumptions shared by figural reading.

This led us to a more theoretical attempt at describing our author’s approach towards Scripture. I argued that in Heb 4:12–13, the “living and active word of God”—which is Scripture—is described both in a way that blurs its distinction with God and also uses language shared by the Wisdom of Solomon. Surprisingly, our author seems to describe Jesus as the *sophia* from Wisdom of Solomon as well. I then argued that Jesus is described as personally pre-existent in the Epistle (i.e., he is essentially the same in his pre-existence as he is after his incarnation). This allowed me to suggest that, on analogy with Jesus’ pre-existence, our author also viewed Scripture (or perhaps more accurately, the eternal divine speech and wisdom embodied by those written sacred texts) as pre-existent and thus metaphysically prior to creation. This was yet another shared assumption with Christian figural reading.

Finally, we sketched some of the details of metaphysical priority. First, we noted that Scriptural metaphysical priority is historically paralleled by several sources roughly contemporary to Hebrews, as well as the later Rabbinic and Christian traditions. Moreover, viewing Scripture as possessing a kind of “time of their own” that doesn’t align perfectly with lived history parallels portions of the OT as well. Secondly, I argued that figural reading doesn’t only utilize *historical events* per se but rather *textual* and *narrative artifacts* as the basis for interpretation. In this way I disagreed with most who advocate that our author used a typological

approach towards the *events* described in Scripture. However, this also allows for practically everything to point towards Christ in a figural manner, whether they be Scriptural narratives, historical reconstructions, natural objects, etc. I introduced a final case study as well—Heb 10:5–10—where Scripture is presented as timeless and divine speech, though a quick look at 13:5–7 showed that *all* heavenly participants likewise participate in the language of heaven, i.e., Scripture.

In the opening of this study, I asked the following question: How does the author of Hebrews conceive of the character of Old Testament Scripture and its relationship to the realities he says it refers to? I propose that Scripture is a work of divine speech and divine origin, metaphysically and temporally prior to the creation it describes and orders. It describes relationships between various characters and figures in both text and lived history that our author holds to have been ordained outside of time as humanly experienced. As such, neither original human authorial intent nor historical-critical methods are able to govern the interpretation of scripture. Neither, however, is *Heilsgeschichte* and its rather linear understanding of time. Instead, it is the deceptively simple “way words run” or literal sense of the entire canon that holds this role, with the newly-perceived (though ontologically-pre-existent) reality of the Son of God functioning as an additional check on our author’s exegesis.

Of course, this presents difficulties to the modern interpreter and to the modern church. On the one hand, this construal of divine authorship of Scripture severely curtails the ability for historical research to correct what some view as “misinterpretation.” If our author is a model, it is more important what Scripture *means* than what it *meant*, because the theological realities that produced it are enduring and “remain” (Heb 12:27). To take a modern example, it means that one cannot argue that, say, the “prophecies” of Daniel or Revelation do not refer to current day

events on the basis of “the original author meant XYZ.”²⁰⁷ On the flip side, our author certainly would not have agreed that one can make Scripture mean whatever one wishes; he would have vehemently disagreed with any attempts to show Jesus as merely human, for example, as well as efforts to neutralize at least several commands in Scripture (see Heb 13:1–17).

For our author, Scripture has a multitude of inherent meanings that are established by God in eternity and revealed to humanity through time. For those that follow him, true theological creativity is, at its best, a *discovery* of what has always been there; to look in the Scriptures from where we started and to know them for the first time.

²⁰⁷ Of course, this referential plasticity can be seen even within the Christian canon with Daniel: the “abomination of desolation” (Dan 9:27 *inter alia*) most likely immediately referred to the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168/7 BCE), but we find this phrase on Jesus’ lips in Mark and Matthew regarding the destruction of Jerusalem (assumedly) in 70 CE (Mark 13:14, Matt 24:15–16).

Appendix A

Abbreviations

Biblical Works

Gen	Ps/Pss	Nah	Phil
Exod	Prov	Hab	Col
Lev	Eccl	Zeph	1–2 Thess
Num	Song	Hag	1–2 Tim
Deut	Isa	Zech	Titus
Josh	Jer	Mal	Phlm
Judg	Lam	Matt	Heb
Ruth	Ezek	Mark	Jas
1–2 Sam	Dan	Luke	1–2 Pet
1–2 Kgs	Hos	John	1–2–3 John
1–2 Chr	Joel	Acts	Jude
Ezra	Amos	Rom	Rev
Neh	Obad	1–2 Cor	
Esth	Jonah	Gal	
Job	Mic	Eph	

Deuterocanonical and Other Ancient Literature

Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
Jub.	<i>Jubilees</i>
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Reference Works and Bible Translations

- BDAG Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- BDF Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- LSJ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- NETS *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- NRSV New Revised Standard Version

Commentaries and Journals

- AB Anchor Bible
- BR *Biblical Research*
- CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
- CJT *Canadian Journal of Theology*
- CSCO Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Edited by I. B. Chabot et al.
Leuven: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO
- CurBR *Currents in Biblical Research*
- DJD Discoveries in the Judean Desert
- EvQ *Evangelical Quarterly*
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- ICC International Critical Commentary
- Int *Interpretation*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*

<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SPhiloA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Gary A. *Christian Doctrine and the Old Testament: Theology in the Service of Biblical Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
- Barrett, C. K. “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews.” Pages 363–93 in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*. Edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- Bates, Matthew W. *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. “Bible versus Theology: Is ‘Theological Interpretation’ the Answer?” *Nova et Vetera* 9.1 (2011): 27–47.
- . *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*. Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Boyarin, Daniel. “The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John.” *HTR* 94.3 (2001): 243–84.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

- . “‘To the Hebrews’ or ‘To the Essenes’?” *NTS* 9 (1962): 217–32.
- Caird, George B. “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews.” *CJT* 5.1 (1959): 44–51.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*. Translated by John Owen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- . *Letters of John Calvin*. Edited by Jules Bonnet. Translated by David Constable. Vol. 1. Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1855.
- Childs, Brevard. *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. SBT 1/27. London: SCM, 1960.
- Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Collett, Don C. *Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.
- . “The Christomorphic Shaping of Time in Radner’s Time and the Word.” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 276–88.
- Cornell, Collin Robinson. “The Figures and Names of Our God.” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 263–68.
- Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Davila, James R. *Liturgical Works*. Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Demarest, Bruce A. “Hebrews 7:3: A *Crux Interpretum* Historically Considered.” *EvQ* 49 (1977): 141–62.
- deSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews.”* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

- Docherty, Susan E. *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*. WUNT II 260. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Eisenbaum, Pamela M. *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*. SBLDS 156. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History*. Bollingen Series 46. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Enns, Peter. *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Ford, David. "Reading Backwards, Reading Forwards, and Abiding: Reading John in the Spirit Now." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 11.1 (2017): 69–84.
- Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Griffiths, Paul J. "On Radner's Time and the Word." *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 300–306.
- Guthrie, George H. "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research." *CurBR* 1.2 (2003): 271–94.
- Hanson, A. T. *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*. London: SPCK, 1965.
- Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016.
- . *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Horton, Jr., Fred L. "Melchizedek Tradition Through the First Five Centuries of the Christian Era and in the Epistle to the Hebrews." PhD diss., Duke University, 1971.

- Hughes, Graham. *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*. SNTSMS 36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
- . “The Scriptural World of Hebrews.” *Int* 57.3 (2003): 237–50.
- Koester, Craig R. *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 36. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Kugel, James L. *The Bible as It Was*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2000.
- Lane, William L. *Hebrews*. 2 vols. WBC 47A-B. Dallas: Word, 1991.
- Legaspi, Michael C. *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- . “What Ever Happened to Historical Criticism?” *Journal of Religion and Society* 9 (2007): 1–11.
- Levenson, Jon D. *Sinai & Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. New Voices in Biblical Studies. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985.
- Levinson, Bernard M. *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. “Ἀφομοιόω.” *A Greek-English Lexicon*.
- Lindars, Barnabas. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

- Mackie, Scott D., ed. *The Letter to the Hebrews: Critical Readings*. T&T Clark Critical Readings in Biblical Studies. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Mason, Eric F. "Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship Between Melchizedek and Jesus." *BR* 50 (2005): 41–62.
- . "*You Are a Priest Forever*": *Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. STDJ 74. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Meier, John P. "Structure and Theology in Heb 1:1-14." *Biblica* 66.2 (1985): 168–89.
- Milik, Józef. "4Q Visions de 'Amram et Une Citation d'Origene." *RB* 79 (1972): 77–97.
- Moffatt, James. *Hebrews*. ICC. London: T&T Clark, 1924.
- Motyer, Stephen. "The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?" *TynBul* 50.1 (1999): 3–22.
- Najman, Hindy. "Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies." *JSJ* 30.4 (1999): 379–410.
- . *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*. JSJSup 77. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Neill, Stephen, and Tom Wright. *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Nelson, R. David. "Thinking About Christ and Scripture with and Beyond Time and the Word." *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 269–75.
- Nestle, Eberhard, and Erwin Nestle. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo Maria Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Holger Strutwolf. 28th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.

Newsom, Carol. “Shirot ’Olat Hashabbat.” Pages 172–401 in *Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part*

I. DJD XI. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.

Neyrey, Jerome H. “‘Without Beginning of Days or End of Life’ (Hebrews 7:3): Topos for a

True Deity.” *CBQ* 53.3 (1991): 439–55.

O’Keefe, John J., and R. R. Reno. *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian*

Interpretation of the Bible. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Peeler, Amy L. B. *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. LNTS

486. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014.

Peterson, David. *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the*

‘Epistle to the Hebrews.’ SNTSMS 47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Radner, Ephraim. “Exile and Figural History.” Pages 273–301 in *Exile: A Conversation with N.*

T. Wright. Edited by James M. Scott. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.

———. “Scripture on the Edge of God.” *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 307–21.

———. *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures*. Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 2016.

Rahlfs, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart, eds. *Septuaginta*. Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche

Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

Runia, David T. “Ancient Philosophy and the New Testament: ‘Exemplar’ as Example.” Pages

347–61 in *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of*

Harold W. Attridge. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011.

- Schenck, Kenneth L. "A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1." *JBL* 120.3 (2001): 469–85.
- . "Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews." *JSNT* 19.66 (1997): 91–117.
- . "Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson's Study after Thirty Years." *SPhiloA* 14 (2002): 112–35.
- Segal, Alan F. *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*. SJLA. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
- Shaw, David A. "Converted Imaginations? The Reception of Richard Hays's Intertextual Method." *CurBR* 11.2 (2013): 234–45.
- Spicq, Ceslas. *L'Épître Aux Hébreux*. 2 vols. Paris: Gabalda, 1952.
- Stendahl, Krister. "Biblical Theology, Contemporary." *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 418–32.
- Sterling, Gregory E. "Ontology Versus Eschatology: Tensions Between Author and Community in Hebrews." *SPhiloA* 13 (2001): 190–211.
- Strack, Hermann L., and Paul Billerbeck. *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud Und Midrasch*. 6 vols. Munich: Beck, 1922.
- Treier, Daniel J. "Keeping Time: Human Finitude and Figural Interpretation." *ProEccl* 27.3 (2018): 289–99.
- . "Speech Acts, Hearing Hearts, and Other Senses: The Doctrine of Scripture Practice in Hebrews." Pages 337–50 in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*. Edited by Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- VanderKam, James C. *The Book of Jubilees*. 2 vols. CSCO 510–11. Louvain: Peeters, 1989.

- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. “Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock: Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, and Transfigured.” Pages 208–29 in *Heaven on Earth? Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue*. Edited by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013.
- Weiss, Hans-Friedrich. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. KEK 13. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991.
- Wright, N. T. “Responding to Exile.” Pages 305–32 in *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*. Edited by James M. Scott. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Young, Frances M. *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

ACADEMIC VITA

Taylor A. Slusser
Email: tjs6236@psu.edu

EDUCATION

Schreyer Honors College, The Pennsylvania State University *University Park, PA*
Class of 2021

- Bachelor of Arts in **Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies**
- Bachelor of Science in **Environmental Resource Management**
- Minor in **Greek**
- Minor in **Spanish**
- Certificate in the **Presidential Leadership Academy**
- **Paterno Fellow Program**
- Study Abroad in **Ronda, Spain** (Summer 2018)

WORK EXPERIENCE

Chesapeake Bay Office, PA Department of Environmental Protection *Harrisburg, PA*
Engineering Scientific and Technical Intern Summer 2019; Winter 2019–20

- Collaborated with the Water Program Specialist, my fellow intern, and personnel both within and outside of DEP in order to organize and digitize Agricultural Erosion & Sediment control plans.
 - Gained experience with the PracticeKeeper database utilized to digitally account for AgE&S plans.
 - Utilized Microsoft Excel to reconcile budget records and keep track of septic permits.
 - Gained familiarity with the Pennsylvania Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).
-

Undergraduate Researcher *University Park, PA*
Erickson Discovery Grant Project, Supervised by Professor Daniel K. Falk Summer 2020–present

- Recipient of the competitively-awarded Erickson Discovery Grant, worth \$3500.
 - Researching the theological assumptions underlying an early Christian's approach towards Scripture.
-

Research Assistant, Classics & Ancient Mediterranean Studies *University Park, PA*
Research Assistant for Professor Daniel K. Falk Fall 2019–present

- Responsible for collecting and compiling bibliography related to prayer in the ancient world.
-

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Reformed University Fellowship *University Park, PA*
President, former Treasurer, Ministry Team member, Small Group co-leader Fall 2017–present

- Cooperating with other members of Ministry Team and the Campus Minister to set the organization's direction, as well as to plan and execute the group's activities.
-

- Integrating faith and life in discussions and conversations with a diverse group of fellow students as co-leader of a small group Bible study.
- Was responsible for navigating the University organization funding regulations and tentatively secured funding (COVID stopped the process unfortunately).
- Meet regularly with other students one-on-one to discuss matters of living life as a Christian.

Presidential Leadership Academy

University Park, PA

Member, Entry-Class of 2018

Fall 2018–present

- Member of a select group of 30 students from my graduating class that engages in discussion with the President of the University, as well as school, community, and political leaders on topics facing higher education.
 - Participated in trips to Baltimore and Nashville that included local and regional leaders as speakers, as well as a group discussion with PSU’s president on the developing situation with COVID.
 - Blogging regularly, with select posts available at <http://sites.psu.edu/academy/author/tjs6236/>.
-

AWARDS AND HONORS

Harshbarger Prize for Best Paper in Religious Studies	2021
Evan Pugh Scholar Senior Award	2020, 2021
Phi Beta Kappa	2020 induction
N. C. Harris Scholarship (Agriculture)	2020
Eta Sigma Phi (Classics)	2020 induction
Harshbarger Award in Religious Studies	2020
Rev. Thomas Bermingham, S.J. Scholarship in the Classics	2019, 2020
John N. Adam, Jr. Scholarship for Excellence in Agriculture	2018, 2019, 2020
Phi Kappa Phi	2019 induction
Evan Pugh Scholar Junior Award	2019
Rosemarie C. And Howard R. Peiffer Scholarship in the College of Ag. Sciences	2018
Richard and Barbara Grubb Agricultural Excellence Award	2018
Academic Excellence Scholarship (Schreyer)	2018, 2019, 2020
President's Freshman Award	2018
Spanish Italian Portuguese Department Study Abroad Award	2018
GO! Global Opportunity Travel Fund Award (College of Ag. Sciences)	2018
L&R Baird Travel Fund Award (Schreyer)	2018
Eva B. and G. Weidman Groff Memorial Scholarship (College of Ag. Sciences)	2017
William Smith, Jr. Academic Excellence Scholarship (Schreyer)	2017