CHAPTER 11

Hebrews

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The church's understanding of itself in relation to the Judaism from which it emerged has tended to take one of two routes: either it has gone the way of Marcion and denied its Jewish matrix; or it has affirmed it in such a way as to Judaize Christianity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the interpretation of the Letter to the Hebrews. On the one hand, it has been presented as a polemic against the claims of first-century Judaism; as designed to uphold a Christian message which is radically discontinuous from that of its Jewish parent body. On the other, it has been seen as a presentation of the Christian faith wholly within a Jewish framework; as nothing but true, fulfilled Judaism. The fact that Hebrews can be read from such divergent perspectives should alert us to the need to tread warily between the Scylla and Charybdis of understanding the author's viewpoint and the situation of the community to which he wrote as simply either continuous or discontinuous with Judaism.

Any adequate judgement of Hebrews must take seriously both its continuities and discontinuities with first-century Judaism, bearing in mind the notorious and well-rehearsed difficulties of 'placing' Hebrews within a wide spectrum of possible first-century contexts. Its intellectual milieu has been variously identified as that of hellenistic metaphysics, Qumran sectarianism, Jewish apocalypticism, pre-Christian 'gnosis', and/or *Merkavah* mysticism (see Hurst 1990); its audience as non-Christian Jews, Jewish Christians (in Palestine or the Diaspora), or a wholly Gentile church; its date any time from 60 CE to the late 80s; and its intention polemical, apologetic, corrective, exhortatory or consolatory (see Isaacs 1992, pp. 15–67). In fact, we know virtually nothing about the circumstances which led to its composition, original destination, date or authorship, apart from what we can infer from the letter itself.

From this it is evident that its author is working wholly with Jewish

religious categories, shaping them in the service of his Christian homily (for the classification of Hebrews as a homily see Attridge 1989, pp. 211–26), whose main point is that the death and heavenly session of Jesus may be seen as analogous and yet superior to Judaism's Day of Atonement rites. Chief among these categories are those Jewish traditions which deal with: (1) sacred territory, where the divine and the human may meet; (2) rituals and mediators, appointed to effect such meetings; (3) the Scriptures, which reveal the will of God and legislate for how the divine–human divide may be bridged; and (4) the people of God who, through obedience to this teaching, may gain access to God. In each case, with the notable exception of the last, what begins in Hebrews as an exposition of these traditions as finding their fulfilment in Jesus ends in their subversion.

PLACES OF RENDEZVOUS WITH GOD

One of the striking features of Hebrews is that more often than not its author describes salvation in terms of place rather than time. Thus, the consummation of God's purposes, which in Jewish and New Testament tradition alike is predominantly expressed temporally as the age in which God's kingdom will be established, is depicted here spatially as a place: the promised land (3.7–4.11); the shrine's inner sanctum (6.2–10.18); and Mount Zion (12.18–24) – each location becoming a symbol of that most sacred of all space, heaven.

This should not lead us to the conclusion (*contra* Thompson 1982, p. 71) that Middle-Platonic categories of two spheres (earthly and heavenly) have taken over the more traditional Judaeo-Christian schema of two ages (now and the one to come). Hebrews itself also uses temporal language (see 1.2; 4.9, 11; 6.5; 9.28; 13.14). Just as the Jewish apocalypticists of the late first century CE could couch their future hope in spatial terms of a heavenly Jerusalem (*2 Apoc. Bar.* 4.2–7; 6.9; 32.4; 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) 9.26–10.59; 13.35–36), at once an existing reality and one which is to come, so our author also employs the language of place to express his eschatological convictions. A similar juxtaposition of heaven as existent territory and heaven as future time can be seen in 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) 7.26:

> For behold the days will come, and it shall be when the signs which I have foretold unto thee shall come to pass, then the city that is now invisible shall appear, and the land which is now concealed be seen.

Like *2 Baruch* and 4 Ezra, Hebrews may also have been written as a response to the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE (so Isaacs 1992). Unlike these Jewish apocalypses (and the subsequent *Hekhalot* (divine palaces) literature of the Talmudic age), however, Hebrews does not appeal for an ascent to the heavens. Far from being 'a kind of mystical escapism' (as Gruenwald 1980, p. 48 has categorized these apocalypses), our author uses the spatial language of heaven, combined with the imagery of pilgrimage, to exhort his readers to persevere in and through human history, not to withdraw from it.

The land

To this end he utilizes major biblical traditions concerning territory, understood in terms of sacred space where the divide between God and humanity may be overcome and a meeting effected. Like the book of Deuteronomy, Hebrews situates his audience in the pre-settlement period of the wilderness, and confronts them with a choice: either go forward to the promised land, or back to Egyptian slavery. Thus the then of the 'Today' of Psalm 95 becomes the now of his contemporary readers, who, like the wilderness generation before them, have yet to inhabit Canaan (Heb. 4.1–10). For both authors, the land is not merely political territory, but a religious symbol of a salvation yet to be attained. 'Rest' denotes not simply a place but a state of existence, a future paradise (von Rad 1966, p. 93).

Chapter 11 picks up this theme, only this time in terms of Jerusalem as the quintessence of the land (as it came to be regarded in Judaism in the Second Temple period). Thus the author argues that Abraham's sojourn in Canaan was but temporary, since what God had promised him and his successors was a heavenly rather than an earthly reality (11.8–12). In 12.18–24 a similar contrast is drawn between the Mount Sinai of Mosaic revelation (Exod. 19.12–19; 20.18–21; Deut. 4.11–12; 5.23–27) and Mount Zion, understood not as the site of the transient earthly city but as the superior, permanent, heavenly Jerusalem. Unlike Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions which looked to the descent of a heavenly Jerusalem to earth (e.g. 4 Ezra (2 Esdras) 13.36; Rev. 21.2,10), however, in Hebrews the movement of salvation is *to* rather than *from* heaven. Hence Jesus is depicted not as a heavenly figure who brings salvation

down to the earth but as the pioneer of a pilgrimage (2.8; 12.2) whose journey to God is subsequently to be emulated by his followers.

Where Hebrews breaks new ground is not in its appeal to the promised land of 'rest' and Jerusalem as heavenly realities to be achieved in the future – in this it is at one with an important strand of Jewish expectation – but by claiming that after his death Jesus entered heaven, and that in this may be seen the unique and definitive realization of God's promises to Israel. Judaism had its own traditions of righteous men who had been translated to heaven at their death, notably Enoch (Gen. 5.24; *1 Enoch* 12.3; 15.1; *2 Enoch* 27.8; 71.14; *Jub.* 4.23; Philo, *Mut. Nom.* 38; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.85), Elijah (2 Kings 2.11; Ecclus. 48.8), and Moses (Philo, *V. Mos.* 2.288–91; *Quaest. in Exod.* 2.29; *contra* Josephus, *Ant.* 4.326). The Fourth Gospel's explicit denial that anyone other than Jesus has ascended to heaven (John 3.13; cf. 1.18) probably reflects a polemical situation between the Johannine community and the Judaism with which it was engaged. In Hebrews there is no such refutation, since the author's homily is primarily addressed as affirmation and encouragement, rather than as polemic against rival ascendents. Hence 11.5 quite naturally alludes to the ascension of Enoch. To say this is not to down-play the exclusive claims Hebrews makes for Jesus, nor their potential for creating a rift between church and synagogue. If anything, the effect of the author's relocation of the holy land/city to a heaven which does not descend to earth is to emphasize their uniqueness. Even more so is the author's assertion that Jesus, alone as yet of all the people of God, has entered into His transcendent presence in that most sacred of all space, heaven itself, where he is seated at God's right hand.

The cult place

The same processes of continuity and change can be seen when Hebrews explores the theme of territory in terms of Israel's cult place. In keeping with the ostensibly pre-settlement setting of his pentateuchal texts, his sacred shrine is the wilderness tabernacle. Since both the plan of 'the tent of meeting' and its cultic rituals were supposedly replicated in the Jerusalem Temple, it may be safely assumed that what he says about the one includes the other, even though the Temple is not overtly discussed. Unlike Stephen's speech in Acts (7.44–50), here we find no idealized presentation of Israel's

nomadic period (cf. Amos 5.25; Jer. 7.22) nor its shrine as superior to the subsequent Temple in Jerusalem. For Hebrews, Israel's place of worship in the wilderness is equally dismissed as 'a sanctuary made with hands' (9.24; cf. Acts 7.48), a mere 'copy of the true one' not made with hands (9.11).

Which is not to say that Hebrews stands in those circles of prophetic and wisdom tradition which castigated the cult for failing to unite right ritual with righteous actions (see Schmidt 1983, pp. 130–32). Nor do we find here anything approaching the Qumran Covenanters' allegation that the sanctuary has been defiled by a high priesthood which, although Levitical, was not of true Zadokite descent (1QpHab 12.7–8; 10.10; CD 12.2). Fundamentally, our author's criticism of the cult place is founded on wholly different principles. This is evident in his interpretation (8.1–6) of Exodus 25.40, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.' Unlike Philo, who uses this self-same text to prove that the revelation granted to Moses was of the Platonic first-order world of the Ideal (*Leg. Alleg.* 3.95–105), Hebrews uses it to demonstrate that the wilderness tabernacle itself was part of the material world, and therefore an inferior copy (see Isaacs 1992, pp. 52–6). This Platonic language of 'pattern', 'shadow' and 'copy' conveys a claim both to a correspondence between the Ideal plan and its material expression, and a discontinuity, in that the latter inevitably falls short of its superior archetype.

This encapsulates Hebrews' approach to sacred territory. Whether as the promised land, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, or the inner sanctum of the shrine, all are inferior to the territory which Jesus now occupies. Judaism's holy places, promised and legislated for in *Torah*, he argues, were always intended by God as but way-stations to the ultimate place of rendezvous, heaven. They may be seen as pointers to heaven, but they are not to be identified with it.

Given Hebrews' starting point – that Jesus is now in heaven (1.1–3) – and the analogies its author chooses to explain the route by which he came to arrive at this destination – as the pioneer who gains entry into the promised land and the High Priest who enters the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement – it follows that all earthly sacred space is relativized. Thus, unlike the Covenanters of Qumran, Hebrews' author looks neither to the Temple's reformation nor its replacement (11QTS, see Maier 1985, pp. 5–59) on earth. True to this paradigm, neither the church (*contra* 1 Cor. 3.16; 6.15–20; 2 Cor.

6.14–7.1; Eph. 2.18–22; 1 Pet. 2.3–6; for the Qumran Covenanters' self-designation as 'the Temple' see Gärtner 1965), nor Jesus (*contra* John 4.21,23) become the new Temple.

MEDIATORS OF THE SACRED

Hebrews compares and contrasts the status and work of Jesus with those figures, established in Scripture and tradition as divinely appointed mediators of the sacred, associated with 'holy ground': (1) angels (with heaven); (2) Moses (with Mount Sinai and the promised land); and (3) the Aaronic high priesthood (with the shrine's inner sanctum).

Angels

The discussion of angels (1.5–2.18) arises from the opening affirmation (1.3), 'He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high' (Ps. 109 LXX (MT 110) v. 1; cf. 1.13; 8.1; 10.12–13; 12.2). Although aware of the tradition which had grown up (perhaps on the basis of Deut. 33.2) which made angels responsible for the mediation of Mosaic *Torah* (2.2; cf. Gal. 3.19; Acts 7.35), he is concerned more with their heavenly location than their earthly function. The main point he is making is that Jesus and the angels may inhabit the same sacred space, but they are not thereby accorded equal status. Hebrews' purpose, therefore, is not to repudiate or correct any suggestion that Jesus was an angelic rather than a human being (unlike the later Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 6). He merely clears up any misunderstanding which might arise from his chosen texts (Psalms 110 and 8). Thus he discusses angels in their capacity as heaven's occupants rather than as earthly mediators.

Moses

It is Judaism's mediatorial figures on earth which are our author's principal concern, namely, Moses and the High Priest. By the first century CE Moses had come to be extolled, not only as Law-giver, but also as High Priest (Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.66–186; *Praem. Poen.* 52–5; *Gig.* 52–4), and ideal philosopher-king in the Stoic–Cynic mould (see Isaacs 1992, pp. 137–9). Hebrews, however, portrays Moses as neither. Nor is Christ depicted as the eschatological 'prophet like Moses' (Deut. 18.15, 18, cited in 4QTest; cf. John 6.14) hoped for by the Qumran Covenanters (cf. 1QS 9.10).

Far from being Christ's model or predecessor, in Hebrews Moses is but his servant; the recipient of the vision of better things to come. In company with the men and women of faith in previous generations whose endurance was motivated by faith in God's future (11.1–40), Moses was similarly impelled by faith (rather than fear) to flee Egypt, keep the Passover, and to identify, not only with the ill-treatment of his fellow Israelites in bondage, but with the abuse which was to be the lot of the coming Messiah (11.23–7; see P. Hughes 1977, pp. 496–7).

Thus, our author subverts any claim made for the supremacy of Moses as revealer by making Christ the subject of his revelation. This is evident in his treatment (3.1–6) of Numbers 12.1–8. Moses, alone of the wilderness generation, remained faithful to the vision of the promised land of the age to come. Nonetheless, he remains a servant, subordinate to Jesus, the son. Mosaic revelation is not denied, but, by making Christ its subject, it ceases to be definitive. Its authority as the word of God has been superseded by that spoken through Jesus, the son (1.1–2).

This becomes clear in 8.7–13, where Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant (Jer. 31(38 LXX), 31–34) is cited. For our author it is not simply that this was required as a result of Israel's failure to obey the first covenant (8.8); the Mosaic covenant itself was faulty from the outset (8.7). Therefore, by virtue of a new covenant inaugurated by Jesus, that made at Sinai has now become obsolete (8.13), together with its Law, which was but 'a shadow of the good things to come' (10.1). It is Jesus, not Moses, who is allowed to set foot on the holy mountain and thereby to make access to God possible for those who would follow him (12.18–24; cf. Exod. 19.12–21; Deut. 4.11–12; 5.23–7).

Hebrews' major model for the death of Jesus is the Day of Atonement offering. However, it is also compared with the sacrifice which ratified the making of the Mosaic covenant (9.15–22). Unlike the biblical account (Exod. 24.4–8), our author, true to his predominant model, makes this also expiatory in character, by introducing elements (i.e. a goat, water, scarlet wool, and hyssop) drawn from the ceremony of the red heifer (Num. 19.2–20; see Childs 1974, pp. 509–11).

Hebrews' association of Moses with the high priesthood follows naturally from the biblical account (Exod. 19–28) where the themes

of covenant, Law, priesthood and sacrifice are interwoven. In fact, for what our author wishes to assert, they cannot be separated. This accords with the sacerdotal emphasis of the Second Temple period, in which not only the covenant with Moses but a covenant with Levi comes to the fore. Thus Moses' blessing of Levi (Deut. 33.8–11) becomes a covenant (Mal. 2.4–8), eternal (Num. 25.12–13; Ecclus. 45.6–21), like that made with David (Jer. 33.14–20; cf. 2 Sam. 7.12–16). The priesthood also came to have a teaching (Deut. 33.10; Lev. 10–11; Ezek. 44.23; Hag. 2.11–13) as well as a cultic role. For Hebrews, with the inauguration of a new covenant, this function also is now defunct (8.11).

Therefore, although Hebrews only overtly discusses laws which relate to cultic ritual, it would be wrong to conclude that they alone are obsolete, leaving the rest of Mosaic *Torah* in place (*contra* Anderson 1989). Our author is well aware that 'when there is a change in the priesthood there is necessarily a change in the Law as well' (7.12). Whilst acknowledging these wider implications, for his specific homiletic purposes, he is content to concentrate upon the cultic implications of the Law's displacement.

The Aaronic high priesthood

This leads us to Hebrews' treatment of the Aaronic High Priest, and especially his part in the Day of Atonement rituals. Uniquely in NT tradition, here the death of Christ is not only likened to a sin offering (cf. Rom. 8.3; 2 Cor. 5.21) but to ancient Judaism's expiatory sacrifice *par excellence* – that of the Day of Atonement. On this day only (9.1–10), the High Priest, having purified himself and the whole priesthood by the sacrifice of a bull, entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the victim. Having sacrificed another sin offering (a goat) for the sins of both people and cult place (see Milgrom 1976), he entered the Holy of Holies a second time with the blood of an expiatory offering, before finally symbolically laying the sins of the people upon the head of a second goat, which was this time not sacrificed but driven out ('for Azazel') into the wilderness (Lev. 16).

In keeping with this tradition, Hebrews works within a system which assumes that sacrifice is the *sine qua non* of entry into the presence of God (9.22), since it removes the barrier of sin which divides the sacred from the profane. It also reflects that strand of Jewish thought, found from 2 Maccabees onwards (see Horbury 1983), which emphasized the human solidarity and compassion which the priest shared with the people whom he represented (Heb. 4.14–5.10).

Nonetheless, Hebrews claims for Jesus, as both expiatory victim and High Priest, an effectiveness which far surpasses anything achieved by the cult. His principal argument is not with Israel's sacrificial system *per se*, but with its failure to fulfil its intended end (= 'make perfect' (10.1)). Various criticisms are levelled against the cult: (1) The Day of Atonement sacrifices needed to be repeated (10.11–18), whereas the definitive death of Jesus needs no recurrence (10.1–3; cf. 'once' (9.26,27,28), 'once for all time' (7.27; 9.12; 10.10)) since it is effective (10.11–18); (2) Other sacrifices do not expunge an on-going consciousness of sin (9.9–14; 10.2–3); (3) The offering of animals is morally inferior to Jesus' self-offering (9.11–14); (4) Jesus' sinlessness not only parallels the ritual purity demanded by the cult for both sacrificial victim (9.14) and High Priest (7.26); it exceeds it. Here claims are made for Jesus which go beyond any sinlessness attributed to the Jewish high priesthood in first-century Judaism (for the latter see Stewart 1967/8). As 7.27 makes clear, 'He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people.' Not least, the author's depiction of the death and ascension of Jesus in terms of the Day of Atonement ritual only works if, in Jesus' case, unlike that of the High Priest, *one*, and not two entries are made into the Holy of Holies; (5) By virtue of his resurrection (7.16, 'the power of an indestructible life'), Jesus is 'a priest forever' (Ps. 110.4) who requires no successor (7.23–25).

It is in his choice of a Melchizedekian (7.1–28) rather than an Aaronic model for Jesus' priesthood that Hebrews' subversion of Judaism's cult is most evident. The shadowy Canaanite priest-king of Genesis 14.17–20 became the subject of much speculation among both Jews and (from the second century CE onwards) Christians (see Horton 1976). For the Qumran community Melchizedek functioned as an eschatological figure of judgement to come (11QMelch) rather than as a priest. This is quite unlike Hebrews, where we meet him exclusively as a priestly figure. At the eschaton, unlike Qumran's Melchizedek, Jesus will return to gather the elect (9.28) rather than to act as judge. Thus Hebrews and Qumran use Melchizedek for wholly different ends.

In Hebrews Melchizedek serves two main purposes: (1) As a type of non-Aaronic priesthood, which enables the author to predicate a

priestly function of one who, since he was of the tribe of Judah (7.14), by definition could not be included among the priestly caste. Standing as he does within that strand of Christian tradition which claimed Davidic descent for Jesus (*contra* Buchanan 1972, p. 15), the author, via Psalm 110.4 which addressed a Davidic king as Melchizedekian priest, is able to hold together both an understanding of Jesus as Messianic 'son' of God (1.5–13) and his chosen analogy of the work of Christ as priestly. (2) According to the Genesis account Melchizedek antedated Levi and received tithes from Abraham. From this Hebrews is able to demonstrate that Jesus' 'order' of priesthood is superior to that of Aaron.

This argument is far more subversive than Qumran's allegation that the Temple's present high-priestly incumbents, by disregarding the rule of primogeniture, had forfeited their claim to be true heirs of Zadok, or, for that matter, any Pharisaic criticisms of their performance of the prescribed rituals. Ultimately, for Hebrews it is not only the Levitical priesthood which is inadequate; even Melchizedek does not provide the definitive model for Jesus, since he resembles Jesus, the son of God (7.3) rather than vice versa. The logic of our author's argument is that there is no longer any role for an on-going priesthood, Aaronic or otherwise!

THE SCRIPTURES

Hebrews' dependence upon the Jewish Scriptures is evident in every chapter. So much so that G. W. Buchanan (1972, pp. xii–xxii) categorizes the whole work as a homiletic midrash on Psalm 110. Important as this psalm is, however, it would be misleading to see its explication as Hebrews' sole, or even primary, purpose. At least three other passages (Ps. 8.4–6; Ps. 95.7–11; Jer. 31.31–4) are treated at length and could lay claim to being the homily's 'text' (see Caird 1959, pp. 44–51). Richard Longenecker (1975, pp. 164–7) identifies no less than 38 citations and 55 allusions to Scripture. Most of these are taken from the psalter (33), the Pentateuch (26), and the prophetic canon (20). It is therefore impossible to claim *one* 'text' for this particular homily.

It is clear that our author is using Greek version(s) of the Scriptures. Of his 93 citations and allusions, only 6 do not agree with LXX^A or LXX^B. 'Let all the *angels* of God worship him' (1.6) is a phrase which is only found in the LXX (Deut. 32.43), and then in one manuscript alone. The other LXX manuscripts read '*sons*'. (For angels as sons of God see Gen. 6.2,4; Job 1.6; 38.7; etc.) It is not found in the MT at all (although 4QDeut 'and prostrate yourselves before him all you gods', suggests that a Hebrew original may well lie behind the Greek. See Skehan 1954, pp. 12–15). Sometimes the argument relies upon the septuagintal translation. So LXX Psalm 103.4, 'Who makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire', supports Hebrews' contention (1.7–8) that, unlike the permanence of the reign of God's Messiah, angels are unstable, as MT Psalm 104.4 would not. Similarly, the point in Hebrews 9.16 relies upon the dual meaning 'covenant/will' of the Greek *diathēkē* rather than the Hebrew *berīth* which only means 'covenant'.

In many respects Hebrews' exegetical methods are at one with those current in first-century CE Jewish exegesis. Thus he (1) lists religious exemplars taken from the past (11.1–40; cf. Ecclus. 44.1–50.21; Wis. 10; 1 Macc. 2; Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 11–56; etc.); (2) adopts established allegorizations for the names of Melchizedek and the city of Jerusalem (7.2; cf. Philo, *Leg. Alleg.* 3.79,82); (3) explicates words or phrases in a text which may be misunderstood (e.g. his treatment (2.7–9) of 'everything' and 'a little while' in Psalm 8.4–6); (4) highlights a particular word in the text ('new' in Jer. 31.31–34 at 8.8–13); and (5) strings together texts related by a common word or theme (e.g. 'son' in 1.5–13). We also find some of the hermeneutical norms (*middot*) codified by subsequent rabbinic exegetes (see Cohn-Sherbok 1982, pp. 117–32), notably the principle of inference from the lesser to the greater (*Qal va-homer*; see 2.2–4; 9.13–4; 10.28–9; 12.25) and the interpretation of one word/cognate in the light of its occurrence elsewhere (*gezerah shavah*; see 4.1–11 for the 'rest' of Ps. 95 being understood in terms of the 'sabbath rest' in Gen. 2.2).

Like the *pesher* interpretation employed at Qumran (see Brooke 1990, pp. 531–2), Hebrews reads the Scriptures principally as prophecy addressed to his contemporary audience and its situation. In keeping with the *persharim* of Qumran and the *midrashim* (see Alexander 1990, pp. 452–9) of the Talmudic period, our author appeals to Scripture to confirm and reinforce his paraenesis. Unlike these, however, Hebrews' starting point is not Scripture but his Christian faith. It is here, rather than in any divergence of exegetical method, that he parts company with his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries. It leads him to an approach to the biblical text which is fundamentally different from theirs.

What they have in common is a belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture. Hence citations are introduced by, 'He [God] said' (1.5; 4.3,4; 5.5; 6.16; 8.5; 10.30; 12.26; 13.5), or 'says' (1.6,7; 5.6; 8.8; cf. 3.7, 'The Holy Spirit says'). The present tense brings home the fact that Scripture is not a dead letter, but on-going revelation in the present (cf. 9.8; 10.15). Wherever possible, therefore, our author finds Jesus as its true referent, and castigates his readers for not having the insight to recognize this (5.11). Far from thinking that he is introducing something new into the text, he is convinced that such a Christological interpretation has always been true for those, who, like Moses and the patriarchs, have eyes to see.

This goes far beyond the application of Oral *Torah* to the biblical text which we find in first-century Jewish exegesis. Non-Christian Jewish interpreters, for all their concern with contemporary application, did not accept that any part of the written *Torah* was redundant, whereas for Hebrews parts of Scripture contain the seeds of other parts' obsolescence. Thus the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 spells the end of the Aaronic high priesthood (7.11–28), and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 the end of the Mosaic covenant (8.13; 10.9). The oath which accompanied the acclamation of a Davidic king as Melchizedekian priest (7.20–28; cf. Ps. 110,4), like that which backed up God's promise of progeny to Abraham (6.13–20; cf. Gen. 22.16–18), affirms its definitive, 'second edition' character, over against the 'first edition' Aaronic priesthood (cf. Exod. 29.9; 40.14) of Mosaic *Torah*.

This tension between continuity and change vis-à-vis the Scriptures is evident in Hebrews' typological approach to exegesis. Here biblical characters and events of the past are viewed as an anticipation of the present; a genuine foreshadowing or 'trailer' of what was to come in Christ. Thus the pilgrimage of Israel in the wilderness presaged the testing experience of the author's present community of faith (3.1–4.13), the Aaronic high priesthood anticipated the expiatory role of Jesus, and Melchizedek, his priestly order. As an interpretative tool, typology only works on the assumption that there is a genuine correspondence between type and antitype. Thus, Jesus is depicted as a pilgrimage-leader and covenant-maker like Moses, and a High Priest like Aaron.

Yet Hebrews goes beyond these comparisons to claim that all these biblical figures/events are inferior to Jesus. He is 'much better' than angels (1.4), the Mosaic covenant (7.22; 8.6), possessions (10.34),

country (11.16), and the cult's sacrificial offerings (9.23; cf. 12.24), and 'greater' than its tabernacle (9.11). Hebrews thus adopts a typology of contrast rather than one of fulfilment. The one possible exception is Melchizedek. Yet even here Jesus emerges as the norm (cf. 7.3). Thus, however much Hebrews may be concerned to relate the past revelation of God in Scripture to that in Christ (so G. Hughes 1979), its author operates on the principle that Jesus is the norm of all biblical understanding. Where Scripture is amenable to a Christological interpretation, it stands; where not, it becomes obsolete. It is the word of God (1.1); but not God's last Word (1.2).

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

By including Hebrews in the Pauline corpus, tradition guaranteed its place in the Christian canon. The down side, however, is that it has been read as if the same situation which led to Paul's writings and the stance he took towards Judaism lies behind Hebrews. This is wholly misleading. Whatever evoked our epistle, there is nothing to suggest that it was the problems of the emergence of a Gentile Christianity within a still predominantly Jewish-Christian church. Hence nowhere do we find the designations 'Jew' or 'Gentile'.

Charles Anderson (1989, pp. 258–68) is surely right in seeing here a Christianity which is primarily orientated towards Judaism rather than a Gentile mission. Hence, unlike in Paul, Abraham is depicted (2.16; 6.13–15; 7.1–10; 11.8–10; 11.17–19) not as a figure of faith in general (including that of the Gentiles), but as father of the Jewish people and exemplar of the obedience and fidelity of Israel. In this he is but one of a 'great cloud of witnesses' (12.1), which stretches from Abel and culminates in Jesus himself (11.4–12.2).

The contrast Hebrews draws is not between Christianity and Judaism, but between the faithful and the faithless of the people of God, past and present. As 3.2–6 makes clear, there is not two but *one* 'house(hold) of God', of which both Moses and Jesus are members. The difference between them is one of status, that of son as opposed to servant. By appealing to the LXX of Numbers 12.7, 'Who is faithful in all my house' rather than the MT, 'Who is trusted with all my house', our author divests Moses of supreme leadership of the people of God. Nonetheless, he is an honoured exemplar, whose fidelity is contrasted with the wilderness generation's lack of trust.

Just as faithfulness is not a virtue exclusive to the Christian

community of the present, so faithlessness is not a vice confined to Israel of old. The wilderness generation is thus presented by way of warning to Hebrews' Christian audience (3.7–4.11). 'There remains a sabbath rest for the people of God' (4.9), which has yet to be finally achieved, even by the followers of Jesus. They too need to persevere (see 10.19–12.29), until the final eschaton (9.28), lest they fail to attain it. The eschatology of Hebrews, therefore, is imminentist rather than realized. The people of God stand on the brink of entry to the promised land (cf. Deut. 12.9), but they have yet to cross its borders. The vision of the faithful of all ages, gathered in the heavenly Jerusalem (12.22–23), is as yet but proleptic.

For all its message of a new covenant, therefore, Hebrews looks not to a discontinuous 'new' people, but to a renewed people of God. Its climactic call to renunciation (13.7–16; see Isaacs 1992, pp. 212–18) is not for Christians to abandon Israel as the people of God, but to relinquish Judaism's cult place, sacrificial system, and territory. Radical as this was, with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and the loss of the land after the defeat of the Bar Kochba uprising in 135 CE, it was a challenge which both Judaism and emergent Christianity had to face. Thereafter both had to reinterpret these institutions to allow for their displacement.

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