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Abstract

Serving in the Tabernacle in Heaven: Sacred Space, Jesus's High-Priestly Sacrifice, and Hebrews' Analogical Theology

In Hebrews the sacred space of the heavenly tabernacle and the sacrifice Jesus offers there are often interpreted as part of an extended metaphor intended to explain the salvific benefits of the event of Jesus's crucifixion in terms of Jewish blood sacrifice. I argue here that, as in some apocalyptic texts, the author of Hebrews conceives of heaven as a multi-layered space whose highest level contains the true tabernacle structure upon which the earthly temple and priestly ministry are patterned. The heavenly sanctuary, therefore, is to be thought of not as coextensive with heaven, but rather as the most sacred space within "the heavens." In Hebrews, Jesus is thought to have ascended to and entered this most holy heavenly space after his resurrection. There he presented himself before God as the ultimate atoning sacrifice. Yet this kind of cosmological and theological reflection on Jesus's service in the heavenly tabernacle implies that the author is thinking in terms not of sacrificial metaphors, but of analogies between the high priest's entry into the earthly sacred space of the temple and Jesus's entry as the great high priest into the ultimate sacred space within the heavenly tabernacle.

Keywords

Analogy, Heavenly Tabernacle, Metaphor, Sacrifice, Sacred Space

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[\[L1\]](#) Introduction

In her book *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Marie Isaacs argues that Hebrews, in response to the destruction of Jerusalem, seeks to shift its audience's focus away from the physical and external notions of sacred space associated with the promised land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple. These, the author of Hebrews argues, need to be replaced by "the only sacred space worth having—heaven."¹ Through his death, Jesus has gained access to that realm. The crucifixion and, specifically, the corresponding access to God that it acquired are used by the author to reorient the traditional Jewish concept of "sacred territory as located geographically on earth" by redefining this space as "a beatific state in heaven."² Thus, the author's task is fundamentally hermeneutical. Beginning with his belief that Jesus's death can be metaphorically understood as a sacrifice that cleanses one's interior person, he attempts to show further how the concrete physical locales and external rituals that constituted sacred space in the Mosaic economy on earth can serve as metaphors that point to the abstract immaterial realities of being in God's presence. Hebrews, in other words, transforms sacred physical space into a sacred spiritual state.

¹ Marie E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 73; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 67.

² Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 82.

While Isaacs seeks to work these ideas out in Hebrews with respect to the spatial language of the text, she is far from alone in applying to Hebrews the assumption that the author's language about Jesus's entering heaven and ministering there is best understood as part of an extended metaphor that depicts the spiritual significance of Jesus's death in terms of the atoning ministry of the Jewish high priest, particularly, though not exclusively, with respect to his entry into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement.³ Along these lines, one also finds references in the modern secondary literature to the author's "high-priestly metaphor."⁴

I argue here that this approach to Hebrews misconstrues the text in two interrelated ways. First, the view that Hebrews develops metaphors out of the biblical depictions of the earthly cult and its sacred space as a way of reflecting on the abstract spiritual realm of heaven assumes the wrong model for heaven and for how the author conceives of the relationship of earthly sacred space and high-priestly ministry to their corresponding heavenly counterparts. Second, such an interpretation of Jesus's salvific work mistakes Hebrews' analogical reasoning for metaphor. The affirmation and depiction of Jesus's high-priestly status and heavenly work in Hebrews, together with the author's conception of "the heavens" as progressively sacred space that contains a heavenly tabernacle/temple, suggest instead that the author assumes a cosmology that allows him to draw analogies between the atoning offering of blood in the holy

³ So, for example, Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), esp. 260–66; Knut Backhaus, "Per Christum in Deum: Zur theozentrischen Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief," in *Der Sprechende Gott: Gesammelte Studien zum Hebräerbrief* (WUNT 240; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 68–71; Christian A. Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–64; Jerome Smith, *A Priest Forever: A Study of Typology and Eschatology in Hebrews* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969), esp. 112–14.

⁴ For example, Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 45–46; 144–81, esp. 145, 168.

of holies on earth and Jesus's atoning offering of himself in the ultimate sacred space, the holy of holies in heaven.

Given the language of "metaphor" and "analogy" that has just been used, a few caveats are in order before proceeding. First, I am not suggesting that those who argue that Hebrews' high-priestly Christology and conception of sacred space are metaphors necessarily claim that such metaphors do not refer to realities and/or that these metaphors would not have been understood as referring to realities by the author or the intended audience. Second, I am not suggesting that Hebrews contains no metaphors. Hebrews is shot through with metaphor (see, e.g., Heb 2:1; 3:4; 4:12; 5:12–14; 6:7–9; 12:29; 13:20). The central question I address is how the basic model or conception of heaven implicit in the text is related to the notions of sacred space and Jesus's high-priestly sacrifice developed by the author. These, I argue, are neither conceived of nor primarily described in terms of metaphor. Third, I am not attempting to engage the larger philosophical debates around the centrality of metaphor for structuring human language, understanding, and engagement with reality.⁵ The terms "metaphor" and "analogy" are tightly defined below. They are intended to indicate linguistic tropes that would be recognized within a given linguistic system, not to point to larger categories for conceiving of the very possibility of language and thought. To say that Hebrews' high-priestly soteriology and correlated conception of heavenly sacred space are primarily analogical, not primarily metaphorical, is not, therefore, to make a claim about either the nature of theological reasoning in general or the essential structures that underlie language and rationality. Rather, when viewed synchronically, Hebrews' ways of speaking about the relationship between heavenly and earthly cultic realities work by drawing analogies between assumed heavenly realities and biblically depicted earthly ones, not by creating metaphors from biblical descriptions of earthly structures and practices in order to explain spiritual abstractions or name the significance of the author's own experience of salvation.

⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), esp. 15–16.

[L1] Models, Metaphors, and Analogies

The majority of modern interpreters of Hebrews would agree, I think, that Hebrews' reflection on heaven and Jesus's high-priestly work depends upon an appeal to the biblical depictions of the sacred space of the tabernacle (and perhaps also to any knowledge the author had of the sacred space of the temple in Jerusalem) and of the high priest's activity in that space on the Day of Atonement as a model of some kind. The crucial question is, what kind of modeling and corresponding hermeneutic ground the author's project?

In her trenchant and helpful monograph *Metaphor and Religious Language*, Janet Martin Soskice carefully distinguishes homeomorphic models from paramorphic ones and examines the ways that these models, especially the latter, relate to metaphors.⁶ According to Soskice, a homeomorphic model is a model whose subject is also its source. This kind of model represents its subject by imitating its source. A model airplane or a cardboard globe would be an example of a homeomorphic model. The various elements that constitute the model are so arranged as to be related in an "analogy of structure"⁷ to the subject being modeled. That is, the elements of a homeomorphic model are structured to one degree or another such that they are located in relation to one another according to the structural relations among the elements of the source being depicted. Obviously such models are not metaphors, not least because they are not linguistic acts.

Moreover, linguistic descriptions of these sorts of models may well apply terms that belong to the associative network of the source—that is, the set of terms, ideas, and relations that one takes to be fitting/natural for the original object or state of affairs—to the model. Yet even these linguistic acts are not metaphors. An example will illustrate the point. If one tells a child to be a good "pilot," to "fly" his or her model plane over to its display case, and to "land"

⁶ Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), esp. 101–3.

⁷ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 64.

it there, the terms “pilot,” “fly,” and “land” are not being used metaphorically. This is speaking analogically, by noting fitting parallels between aspects from the associative network of a real airplane—the model’s subject and source—and the model itself. The use of the language of “pilot,” “fly,” and “land” with reference to the model is therefore understood by the language user to correspond in a fitting way to the model’s source. These terms are deemed appropriate to juxtapose with the model, even though no one would mistake the child’s moving the plane around for literal flight.

The preceding points are not intended to reduce analogy to use with or to derivations from homeomorphic models, for analogies need not be model based at all.⁸ More central to the trope is the recognition that “analogical relations all refer to the same thing, they all have the same *res significata* but they refer to it in different ways.”⁹ Thus, speaking analogically is speaking in a way that while recognizing differences also recognizes that the application of certain terms is fitting or appropriate to an object or state of affairs.¹⁰ Analogy may stretch the meaning of a term by using it in a new way, but such usage does not generate a fundamentally new perspective or picture relative to the subject, since the new application of the term does not invoke what is understood to be a fundamentally different set of associative networks relative to the object or state of affairs being described.¹¹ Analogy works by noting comparisons that, in a particular linguistic and cultural context, would be understood to identify fitting correspondences between the things being compared.

⁸ Soskice states that her use of the term “analogy” is not model related (*Metaphor*, 66, 74). I suspect that she means here that analogy is not related to paramorphic modeling. Regardless, I can see no reason why analogy would necessarily be inappropriate to linguistic expressions related to homeomorphic models that apply terms from associative network of the model’s source to the model itself.

⁹ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 65.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 64–66.

Here, too, one can helpfully see the distinction between speaking analogically about a model and speaking literally about an exact copy or replica. To speak about an exact replica, which is by definition identical to its source apart for its relative position in space and time, in terms appropriate to the source is to use literal language. To speak of a homeomorphic model, which is not an exact replica, in those same terms is not to speak literally. The small plastic plane mentioned above cannot literally fly and land the way a replica that is a copy of its source in every (or virtually every) respect can and, assuming it has been built to the same standards of quality, does. Analogical speech applied to a model, as here defined, is not, then, to be confused with literal speech applied to an exact copy or replica of a source or prototype.

A metaphor, by way of contrast, speaks of one thing in terms of another thing whose associative network is recognized to be fundamentally different. A metaphor, in other words, construes a unified subject matter by way of “a plurality of associative networks.”¹² Speaking in this way necessarily generates a new picture or perspective on the subject matter.¹³ To say, for example, that the brain is a computer is to construe the brain in terms otherwise foreign to it precisely because “computer” is a term whose associative network is fundamentally different from that of “brain.” The metaphor may eventually become a dead metaphor, at which point the language is taken by the speaker to be fitting or natural. At its origin, however, the metaphor is recognizable as a metaphor precisely because of the obvious juxtaposition of different associative networks inherent in the comparison.

Soskice argues that this sort of metaphor proposes a paramorphic model for understanding the subject being described. Unlike a homeomorphic model, which could be conceived of as a model *of* an object or state of affairs, a paramorphic model is a model *for* an object or state of affairs. Such models often, therefore, correlate with abstract reflection.¹⁴ Additionally, whereas the subject of a homeomorphic model is the same as its source, that of a paramorphic model necessarily differs from its source, and thereby introduces elements from

¹² Soskice, *Metaphor*, 53.

¹³ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 49–53; cf. 64–66.

¹⁴ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 103.

different associative networks as constitutive of the model.¹⁵ Because of these dynamics, the original “theory constitutive metaphor”—that is, the central metaphor that proposes the paramorphic model (e.g., the brain is a computer)—can fruitfully generate additional metaphors by comparing elements of the plurality of associative networks latent within the model (e.g., the “brain is a computer” model might also suggest metaphors like the brain receives “input” and “processes” it).¹⁶ Such construal can be of immense use for theorizing about objects and states of affairs that are not directly accessible or understood.

But how does this discussion relate to the topic at hand? Many modern interpreters of Hebrews have, I think, tended to assume that the depiction found in Hebrews of Jesus serving in the heavenly tabernacle in high-priestly terms is, to use Soskice’s categories, part of a theory constitutive metaphor that proposes a paramorphic model for understanding an abstract state of affairs—namely, the salvation one feels or believes oneself to have as a result of Jesus’s crucifixion. The central metaphor—Jesus’s death is the ultimate atoning sacrifice—is understood to propose a model whereby an abstract subject—the salvific benefits one receives as the result of Jesus’s crucifixion—is construed in terms of an associative network that is fundamentally different from the historical reality of Jesus’s crucifixion by the Romans. The different associative network at the heart of the metaphor is that of Jewish rituals of blood sacrifice, especially those performed on the Day of Atonement.

G. B. Caird illustrates the preceding point well when he writes, “The language of sacrifice is metaphorical when used of the death of Christ. Literally the death of Christ was no sacrifice, but a criminal execution, regarded by the one side as a political necessity and by the other as a miscarriage of justice.”¹⁷ To depict the historical event of Jesus’s crucifixion in terms of Jewish

¹⁵ Soskice, *Metaphor*, 102.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 157.

Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann highlight the fundamentally modern assessment of reality that underlies such a distinction between the brute fact and our interpretation of the meaning of the fact (“Does the Cultic Language in Hebrews Represent

blood sacrifice is to speak metaphorically, because such an account brings together two different associative networks (crucifixion and Jewish sacrifice) and thereby enables the historical subject—Jesus’s death as a criminal—to be understood in terms of something else entirely—the atoning sacrifices performed in the Jewish temple. The central metaphor proposes a model that helps one conceive of how Jesus’s death could have resulted in salvation for humanity.¹⁸

This model is thought to be especially powerful for the author of Hebrews precisely because he presses the associative networks it brings together (Jesus’s suffering and death, on the one hand, and Jewish sacrificial practice and theology, on the other) to generate so many other illuminating metaphors. These additional metaphors further contribute to reflection on the abstract existential or spiritual aspects of the historical subject. Thus, when viewed as a sacrifice, Jesus’s crucifixion can be construed in terms of the act of blood ablution that effects purification and redemption like the sprinkling of blood in the holy of holies on the Day of

Sacrificial Metaphors? Reflections on Some Basic Problems,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* [ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 13–23). They argue that on its own terms Hebrews does not use cultic language as substitute or metaphor for the real meaning of the death of Jesus. As will be clear, I agree with them that Hebrews is not using cultic language metaphorically, but for the very different reason that I do not think Hebrews equates Jesus’ death with the atoning event of offering his sacrifice to God in heaven.

¹⁸ While the category of “metaphor” has become somewhat fashionable in the last forty or so years, something like the understanding of Hebrews just described seems to be in play in much modern interpretation of Hebrews as a way of relating Jesus’ death to his exaltation and high-priestly work even though the language of “metaphor” is not used to describe such interpretations. So, e.g., Joseph F. McFadyen, *Through Eternal Spirit: A Study of Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter* (New York: Doran, 1925), 129, 136, 147–48; Shinya Nomoto, “Herkunft und Struktur der Hohenpriestervorstellung im Hebräerbrief,” *NovT* 10 (1968): 1–25, esp. 17–18, 23–25; James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (CBQMS 13; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982), esp. 107–8.

Atonement. Jesus himself can further be construed as the great high priest whose work is to offer himself to God by dying as a sacrifice. Jesus's death, particularly when understood as the moment of the release of his spirit from his body, can further be conceived in terms of his high-priestly approach to God. The separation of his spirit from his body and his passing into heaven upon his death can even be construed as the high priest's annual act of passing through the inner veil of the temple and into the holy of holies. The author no doubt thinks that from the perspective of the central metaphor the biblical depiction of the tabernacle offered fertile ground from which many other secondary metaphors could be generated (cf. Heb 9:5). If the writer's real subject is "the death of Jesus is the ultimate atoning event," then this sort of metaphorical understanding of Hebrews' theological project is almost certainly correct.

The picture shifts dramatically, however, if the author's soteriological center of gravity does not revolve around the supposed "crucifixion as ultimate atoning event" metaphor. I have argued elsewhere that Hebrews attempts to correlate the basic, proto-creedal narrative of early Christian proclamation—the heavenly Son of God became the incarnate Jesus, suffered and died, rose again, ascended into heaven, has taken his place at God's right hand, and will return to bring salvation to those who wait for him—with the irreducible process of Jewish blood sacrifice.¹⁹ This account suggests that the central event that effects atonement, that is, the ultimate purification and redemption of humanity, cannot be reduced or collapsed into the death of Jesus anymore than the atoning effects of the Levitical sacrifices can be reduced to the act of slaughtering the victim. Rather, the focal point is, for the author, centered upon the return of the resurrected, and therefore still incarnate, Son back into the heavenly presence of the Father and the angels.

¹⁹ David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NovTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011), esp. 43, 292–96, 300–303. See also my essay, "Blood, Life, and Atonement: Reassessing Hebrews' Christological Appropriation of Yom Kippur" in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas; TBN 15; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 211–24.

These observations alone are not enough to substantiate the claim being advanced here, that Hebrews is not driven by a paramorphic model whose core is theory constituting metaphor, for one could simply move the center of the model to something like the ascension or exaltation of Jesus.²⁰ The crucial piece that would significantly alter the assessment of the author's basic hermeneutic concerns the cosmology that underlies his argumentation. Once this issue is raised, one comes face to face with the long and much debated question of whether Hebrews is at its core driven more by something like a Platonic or Philonic cosmology or by some permutation of a Jewish apocalyptic understanding of the structure and stuff of the universe. I will not rehearse the variety of views regarding this longstanding scholarly divide.²¹ Instead, as I also argue elsewhere,²² I assume here that the dualities one finds in Hebrews are more heavily dependent upon and influenced by some form of Jewish apocalypticism than by some kind of Platonic idealism.

The contribution I seek to make here has to do with the assessment of the underlying model the author assumes when reflecting on the heavenly tabernacle and Jesus's high-priestly service there. If Hebrews imagines reality to consist of the earth and multiple heavens—the

²⁰ See Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. 33–40.

²¹ While now dated, see L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). See, more recently, Eric F. Mason, "'Sit at My Right Hand': Enthronement and the Heavenly Sanctuary in Hebrews," in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam* (2 vols.; ed. Eric F. Mason et al.; SJSJ 153; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 2:901–16.

²² Moffitt, *Atonement*, esp. 145–81, 300–303. See also my recent essay, "Perseverance, Purity, and Identity: Exploring Hebrews' Eschatological Worldview, Ethics, and In-Group Bias," in *Sensitivity to Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship between Mission and Ethics in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (ed. Jacobus Kok et al.; WUNT 2/364; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 357–81.

highest of which contains the heavenly tabernacle and holy of holies, where God sits enthroned—populated by angelic priests who minister there, and if those heavenly realities legitimate and structure the earthly cult, then the possibility of a thoroughly different model for understanding Hebrews’ application of cultic language to Jesus emerges. Such an understanding of heavenly space would suggest that the author of Hebrews, as is the case with some other apocalyptic Jews, understands the relationship between the heavenly and earthly cults in terms of a homeomorphic model that allowed for numerous analogies to be drawn, not in terms of a paramorphic model that enables metaphorical reflection. I turn, then, to a brief examination of Hebrews’ conception of heaven and the heavenly tabernacle.

[\[L1\]](#) Hebrews’ Cosmology, the Heavens, and the Heavenly Tabernacle

Edward Adams has recently argued that Hebrews’ worldview assumes a cosmology not easily squared with the kind of Platonic cosmology that scholars such as James Thompson²³ have sought to link with the text.²⁴ Adams points out, rightly in my view, that Hebrews does not embrace an anti-materialist dualism, nor does the author ever judge creation to be inherently negative.²⁵ Additional critiques of interpretations of Hebrews that rely too heavily on Platonic

²³ Thompson, *Beginnings*, esp. 152–62; and, more recently, “What has Middle Platonism to Do with Hebrews?,” in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* (ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCrudden; SBLRBS 66; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 31–52. Similarly, see, e.g., Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 116; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), and Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (New Testament Library; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

²⁴ Edward Adams, “The Cosmology of Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 122–39.

²⁵ I have also argued that the duality in Hebrews between heaven and earth does not track out in terms of a material versus spiritual or intelligible realm (see Moffitt, *Atonement*, esp. 301–2).

or Philonic cosmological commitments have recently been made by, among others, Eric F. Mason²⁶ and Scott D. Mackie.²⁷ Both Mason and Mackie highlight the similarities between Hebrews and Jewish apocalyptic texts, especially the important motif of Jesus's enthronement in the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews' emphasis on Jesus's heavenly enthronement raises the question as to how the author conceives of the heavenly tabernacle where he says Jesus has entered and now ministers (cf. Heb 7:25–26; 8:1–2; 9:11–12, 23–24).

In a 1978 article in *Semeia*, George MacRae argues for the importance of recognizing two different conceptions of the relationship between heaven and the heavenly temple at play in Hebrews.²⁸ MacRae draws attention to the important point that the conception of heaven as temple is different from that of a temple in heaven. The former, he claims, is more associated with a Philonic or Platonic cosmology and the latter with more apocalyptic cosmologies. For reasons I discuss below, I do not find his claim that Hebrews combines these two notions compelling. The importance of highlighting the distinction between these two concepts of the heavenly temple, however, is hard to overstate.

More recently, Jonathan Klawans has focused attention on this same distinction.²⁹ Klawans notes that scholars sometimes conflate the notion of a temple in heaven (upon which the temple in Jerusalem is modeled) with that of heaven as a temple (where the Jerusalem

²⁶ He makes the point in several publications, but see especially, 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). In a more recent study Mason highlights the fact that Hebrews makes a connection, common in apocalyptic texts, between the heavenly sanctuary and the divine throne ("Sit at My Right Hand," esp. 907–16).

²⁷ See esp. Scott D. Mackie, "Ancient Jewish Mystical Motifs in Hebrews' Theology of Access and Entry Exhortations," *NTS* 58 (2011): 88–104.

²⁸ George W. MacRae, "Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 179–99.

²⁹ Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111–44.

temple complex—that is, the forecourt and temple sancta together—serves as a microcosm of the universe), even though Second Temple and early Common Era texts that speak of a heavenly sanctuary typically attest either one conception or the other.

Klawans also notes that in cases where the Jerusalem temple is taken to be a microcosm of the cosmos, the entire universe is spoken of as God’s temple. The earth is likened to the forecourt of the temple complex, while heaven is the temple itself—God’s sanctuary. In the other model, the temple complex on earth is in some way conceived of as a representation of an actual structure in heaven. In this latter case the earth is not viewed as the forecourt of the cosmic temple complex, and heaven is not identified with the temple or the inner sanctuary. Rather, just as there is an especially sacred space on earth that is divided into various spaces and sancta that grow progressively more sacred until one comes to the inner sanctuary where God’s presence dwells on earth most fully, so also in heaven there is an especially sacred space divided into various spaces and sancta that grow progressively more holy until one reaches that most holy place where God’s presence dwells in heaven most fully (see, e.g., *1 En.* 14; *2 En.* esp. 20:1–21:6). Unsurprisingly, this latter idea correlates with a highly developed understanding of angels as God’s heavenly priests and human priests as their corresponding ministers on earth. There is also here a common conception of the heavenly realm consisting of multiple tiers or “heavens” (e.g., *2 En.* 3–22; *T. Levi* 3:1–10). One of the key biblical grounds for this conception of reality is a particular interpretation of God’s repeated admonishments to Moses in Exod 25:9, 40 (see also 26:30 and 27:8) to make the earthly tabernacle and its accoutrements in accordance with what he had seen on the mountain.

Indeed, how one interprets these passages in Exodus and the revelation given to Moses on the mountain becomes critical at precisely this point. Philo provides a particularly clear example of a Platonic interpretation of Exod 25:9 in his *Quaestiones et solutions in Exodum* II. When speaking of Moses being “shown” the pattern for the tabernacle on the mountain, Philo says that Moses did not literally “see” anything, since human eyes cannot see the intelligible, immaterial forms. The language of “seeing” is only a symbol to indicate that his mind or soul had a clear perception of the intelligible realities (*QE* 2.52, 82; cf. *Mos.* 2.74–76).

Because Moses had this “vision” of the forms imprinted in his mind, he was able to build the tabernacle complex as a microcosm of the universe. Philo, therefore, shows how elements of the earthly tabernacle represent aspects of the cosmos (*Mos.* 2.80–107). He emphasizes, for example, that certain numbers of pillars represent respectively the source from which the stuff of earth was formed and the senses that humans use to interact with the material world (*Mos.* 2.80–81). The four kinds and colors of material used for the woven coverings correlate to the four elements out of which the world was made (*Mos.* 2.88; *Congr.* 116–117). The altar of incense is in the middle of the first sanctum and therefore stands between earth and water (*Mos.* 2.101) and is itself a symbol of the earth (*Mos.* 2.104), while the seven-branched candelabra is a symbol of heaven with its seven planets (*Mos.* 2.102–103).

Hebrews also appeals to this section of Exodus. The author cites Exod 25:40 in 8:5, just after saying that Jesus has entered the true tabernacle where God is enthroned in heaven (8:1–2), and shortly before he lists some of the details of the earthly tabernacle and draws comparisons between them and Jesus’s ministry (9:1–10:22). Notably, however, nothing like Philo’s cosmological explanations of the construction of and items in the tabernacle occurs in Hebrews. Rather than show how elements from the outer part of the earthly structure represent, for example, the elements from which the earth is fashioned, Hebrews sets out to demonstrate that just as the earthly tabernacle had certain implements, necessary rituals, and sancta in which the priests and high priests performed their ministries (9:1–10, 19–22), so also must Jesus perform certain rituals in the sancta in heaven where he engages in his high-priestly ministry (9:11–14; 23–26; cf. 5:1; 7:27; 8:1–5).

In Heb 8:4–5 this point is made with some clarity. The author states in 8:1–2 that Jesus is the great high priest in heaven. In 8:4 he notes that if Jesus were on earth, he would be disqualified by the Law from serving as even a priest. Jesus, he appears to say, cannot minister as one of the regular priests on earth, let alone as a high priest. Given that the author refers in 8:4 to the regular priests who ministered only in the forecourt and the first sanctum of the tabernacle, his comment in 8:5a that those priests serve in a copy and shadow of the heavenly things implies that the forecourt and initial tent correspond in some way to heavenly realities. The forecourt and initial sanctum, in other words, are not conceived of as representing the

lower, earthly or material elements of the cosmos, but as copies of things in heaven. The earthly priests are not said to serve in that part of the tabernacle that primarily represented the lower parts of the cosmos while the high priest alone enters that space that represents the realities that cannot be seen (cf. Philo, *Spec.* 1.72). Instead, the author of Hebrews speaks of the whole tabernacle complex as being related to the structure Moses saw in the heavenly realm. Philo's view that the earthly temple complex symbolizes the entire cosmos, which is the true temple (so, e.g., *Spec.* 1.66; *Somn.* 1.215; *Mos.* 2.194), therefore differs markedly from that of the author of Hebrews who looks to the whole structure of the earthly tabernacle as reflecting realities located in heaven. This is an important contrast between these two authors.

This last observation suggests that Hebrews works with a more straightforward, non-metaphorical interpretation of Exod 25:40 in Heb 8:5 than the one given by Philo regarding Exod 25:9 (see also his interpretation of Exod 25:40 in *QE* 2.82). If the author of Hebrews assumed, as at least some apocalyptic Jews did, that Moses looked into heaven (or even ascended into heaven³⁰) and saw the heavenly tabernacle/temple structure there, then the language of Exod 25:40 of the pattern of the heavenly realities being "shown" (τὸν δειχθέντα) to Moses is not a metaphor for mental apprehension of intelligible and immaterial forms, as is clearly the case in Philo.

Moreover, this more literal interpretation of Exod 25:40 would further imply that the spaces of and practices carried out in the earthly tabernacle would be properly organized and composed along the lines described above as "an analogy of structure." Rather than conceiving of the totality of the universe itself as the true temple complex, this kind of cosmology would assume that two legitimate temples, as well as two legitimate priesthoods,³¹ existed in the

³⁰ For evidence for this view see Moffitt, *Atonement*, 150–62.

³¹ The argument for the legitimacy of Jesus' high-priestly status in Heb 7 presupposes, I have argued, the legitimacy of both the earthly, Levitical priesthood and the heavenly priesthood. See David M. Moffitt, "Jesus the High Priest and the Mosaic Law: Reassessing the Appeal to the Heavenly Realm in the letter 'To the Hebrews,'" in *Problems in Translating Texts about Jesus: Proceedings from the International Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting 2008* (ed.

universe. One of these, the one in heaven, is the source. The other one, on earth, is a (homeomorphic) model that reflects the heavenly source.

As the contrast between Hebrews and Philo already implies, Hebrews attests to the temple/tabernacle in heaven concept. Other evidence also points toward this conclusion. I will not here repeat the arguments I have outlined elsewhere for the significance of Hebrews' angelology and contrasting anthropology with respect to the idea of a temple complex in heaven or for the idea that the tabernacle structure Jesus entered is laid out in a way similar to the earthly one.³² Instead, I focus on another aspect of the language in Hebrews that contrasts with Philonic language and cosmology but correlates well with the concept of a tabernacle in heaven—namely, the fact that the author believes in the existence of multiple heavens.

In Heb 4:14 the writer describes Jesus passing through “the heavens” (τοὺς οὐρανοὺς). Jesus is said to be higher “than the heavens” (τῶν οὐρανῶν) in 7:26. In 8:1 the author claims that Jesus is seated on the throne at the right hand of the Most High “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). The sacred heavenly things that Jesus's sacrifice purifies are identified in 9:23 as being “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). The congregation of the firstborn mentioned in 12:23 is enrolled “in the heavens” (ἐν οὐρανοῖς). According to 12:25, in language evocative of Jewish apocalyptic texts, Jesus is presumably (cf. 1:2) the one who admonishes the readers “from the heavens” (ἀπ' οὐρανῶν).³³

Were these the only references to heaven in Hebrews, there would likely be less argument over the points being addressed here. The *crux interpretum*, however, lies in Heb 9:24, where the author not only refers to Jesus entering the singular “heaven itself” (αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν) but also puts this language in apposition to the idea that Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary. This break from the author's usual pattern is sometimes taken as evidence that he thinks of the cosmos as the true temple complex—the earth is the cosmic forecourt and heaven

Mishael Caspi and John T. Greene; Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 2011) 195–232.

³² See Moffitt, *Atonement*, esp. 118–44 and 220–25 respectively.

³³ The plural form of οὐρανός also occurs in Heb 1:10, though this is obviously due to the author's biblical *Vorlage*.

itself is coextensive with the cosmic temple, as in the Philonic model. Indeed, MacRae appeals to this verse as evidence that the author thought of heaven as cosmic sanctuary, like Philo.³⁴ But does this singular reference to “heaven itself” demand a Platonic or Philonic interpretation?

In addition to 9:24, two other uses of οὐρανός in the singular form occur in Hebrews (11:12 and 12:26). Both of these latter instances of the term occur, however, in the context of biblical allusions. The singular form of the word at these points most likely reflects the direct influence of the versions of the biblical passages as the author knows them. This recognition is nevertheless important because it highlights the fact that the dependence of someone, like this author, on a Greek version of Jewish scriptures might allow them to use the word “heaven” in both plural and singular forms without necessarily implying that the change in number entails any change in the reality to which they assume the term refers.³⁵

In fact, one commonly finds precisely this switching between the plural and singular forms of the word in apocalyptically oriented early Jewish and Christian texts written in Greek. Thus Paul, who clearly believes in at least three heavens (2 Cor 12:2), often refers to heaven in

³⁴ MacRae argues that both concepts are found in Hebrews because the author, who believed in the cosmos as temple model, accommodated his language at points to his audience who embraced the more apocalyptic concept of a temple in heaven (“Heavenly Temple,” 186–88).

³⁵ I have asserted elsewhere (*Atonement*, 231 n. 36) that the author distinguishes between created heavens and the uncreated heavens. I am no longer confident that this view is correct. The evidence presented here (and particularly the fact that the author speaks of the “heavens” being changed, Heb 1:10–11, and of the “heaven” being shaken, Heb 12:26) seems to suggest instead that he is merely adopting biblical language and assuming that the plural and singular forms are interchangeable ways of referring to the same reality. There are things that are “unshakeable” and “remain” after the final shaking (Heb 12:27), but such distinctions do not correlate neatly in Hebrews with a “heaven” and “earth” dualism. It seems to be that just as some of the heavenly things, like the earthly things, require purification (Heb 9:23), so also at least some of the heavenly things, like the earthly things, will be subject to the final, eschatological transformation (Heb 1:10–11; 12:26).

the singular (e.g., Rom 1:18; 10:6; 1 Cor 15:47; Gal 1:8). He can even use οὐρανός in the singular and plural forms back to back in 2 Cor 5:1–2 with apparent reference to the same reality (cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16).³⁶ This variation between forms stands in marked contrast to non-apocalyptic Jewish authors such as Philo and Josephus. The latter hold the view that the cosmos is God’s temple complex—with heaven itself being the cosmic sanctuary/temple. In keeping with this cosmology, both of these authors use the singular οὐρανός consistently throughout their writings. This usage agrees with Greek philosophical speculation about the nature of the cosmos, where the singular form is by far the norm.³⁷

Given that Hebrews’ use of the plural and singular forms of οὐρανός fits with the practice of others of the same time period who believed in multiple heavens and often also attest the idea of a temple in the heavens, the use of the singular in 9:24 cannot bear the weight that MacRae tries to place upon it. More plausible is the interpretation advanced by

³⁶ I do not here provide an exhaustive list of references, but only some of the clearer examples. In the New Testament see Mark 1:10–11; 11:25; 12:25; 13:25, 32; Col 1:5, 16, 20; 4:11; 1 Pet 1:4, 12, 3:22; 2 Pet 1:18; 3:5. The phenomenon occurs in the Greek translation of *Jub.* 2:2, 16; 11:8; as well as of *1 En.* 18:3–10. See also throughout the *T. 12 Patr.* (e.g., *T. Levi* 2:6, 9; 5:1); *Apocr. Ezek.* 2:1; 5:1; *Apoc. Ezra* 1:7, 14; *Apoc. Sedr.* esp. 2:3–5; 3 *Bar.* 2:5; 11:2 (along with clear references to a first heaven, second heaven, etc., throughout); *T. Ab.* 4:5; 7:4.

³⁷ As is well known, the plural form of οὐρανός is extremely rare in Greek literature before the Septuagint (see, e.g., F. Torm, “Der Pluralis Οὐρανοί,” *ZNW* 33 [1934]: 48–50; Peter Katz, *Philo’s Bible: The Aberrant Text of Bible Quotations in Some Philonic Writings and Its Place in the Textual History of the Greek Bible* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950], 141–46). A search of the *TLG* turns up the following evidence. The pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander is attributed with having conceived of multiple heavens in the cosmos. Idaeus may have thought along similar lines. Aesop’s fable about the Peacock and the Crane uses the plural form once. Aristotle, in a handful of passages, entertains the possibility that more than one οὐρανός exists in the cosmos, only to dismiss the idea (so also Theophrastus). The plural form occurs one time in the *Catasterismi* attributed to Eratosthenes.

Otfried Hofius that “heaven itself” in 9:24 refers to the highest of the heavens, the place where the heavenly holy of holies of the tabernacle/temple was thought to be located (see, e.g., *T. Levi* 5:1).³⁸ That Jesus has entered the highest heaven coheres well with the language of Jesus passing “through the heavens” (4:14) and being now higher “than the heavens” (7:26) while still also being “in the heavens” (8:1). Jesus, that is, has not left the heavens, as one might imagine someone in Philo’s or Plato’s universe having to do were that person able to be absorbed into the ultimate realm of the divine that exists outside the cosmos. Instead, Jesus has been invited to ascend to the highest place in the heavens, the place above all the other heavens where the heavenly holy of holies and the heavenly throne of God are.

The preceding points suggest that the author of Hebrews held to a cosmology along the lines attested in Jewish apocalyptic texts that imagine multiple heavens with a tabernacle or temple structure located in the highest heaven. As his interpretation of Exod 25:40 in Heb 8:5 indicates, the heavenly tabernacle served as the source for the earthly structure. These points support the conclusion that the author of Hebrews works with something like what was identified above as a homeomorphic model when he reflects on the relationship between the earthly and heavenly sacred spaces. In the author’s view, the real subject of the earthly sacred space is also its source—the heavenly tabernacle. Thus the earthly space neither is an exact replica of the heavenly tabernacle nor represents the entirety of the cosmos. Rather, because Moses saw the pattern of the heavenly edifice, he built the earthly one in such a way as to have an analogous structure, even if the earthly structure is only a shadowy sketch. This analogy of structure further implies, however, a fitting set of correspondences or analogies between, on one hand, the earthly tabernacle and the activities that take place within it and, on the other hand, the heavenly tabernacle and the activities that occur there.

³⁸ Otfried Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19f. und 10,19f.* (WUNT 14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1972), 70–71. A number of commentators follow his lead to one degree or another (e.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 263; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* [WBC 47b; Dallas: Word Books, 1991], 248).

The preceding discussion suggests that the author of Hebrews has a more concrete conception of heavenly space than is sometimes thought. Some have argued that, while Hebrews does speak in terms of a heavenly sanctuary and multiple heavens, there is nevertheless a strong Hellenizing bent to this language similar to what one finds in Philo, in that the author ultimately conceptualizes these spaces in terms of the interior realm of the human being.³⁹ If, however, the author thinks of the resurrected Jesus ascending bodily through the multiplicity of heavens and appearing before God in the holy of holies in the highest heaven, this reduction of heavenly space to the interiority of the human being is no longer tenable.

A better solution likely lies in the arguments of some recent work, such as that of Loren Stuckenbruck, that takes seriously the fact that in some of the apocalyptic material at Qumran, the cosmological dualism between the heavenly and earthly realms—together with the spiritual battles being fought between the good and evil angels—is viewed as being directly related to the interior realm of human existence.⁴⁰ Hebrews may well think in more concrete terms about atonement as occurring when Jesus ascended bodily into the sacred space of the heavenly holy of holies *and* recognize that this has direct implications for the interior purification of the human being (e.g., Heb 9:14) without having to reduce the former to the latter.

Be that as it may, the cosmology of Hebrews and the correlated conception of the tabernacle in heaven suggest that if a human being were to ascend into that heavenly space, then the application of language from the realm of earthly priestly service to that figure would not be a matter of metaphorical reflection. Rather, it would be fitting to appeal to the

³⁹ See esp. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 222–24.

⁴⁰ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “The Interiorization of Dualism within the Human Being in Second Temple Judaism: The Treatise of the Two Spirits (1QS III:13–IV:26) in its Tradition-Historical Context,” in *Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (ed. Armin Lange et al.; JAJ 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 145–68, see esp. 166–68.

associative network of the earthly tabernacle/temple as a way to describe an ascent to the uppermost heavenly things because that ascending person would be entering the inner sanctum of the heavenly tabernacle, the very source that determines the structure of the earthly model. In other words, one would be speaking by analogy, not metaphor.

The author of Hebrews goes even a step further when in Heb 7 he presents an extended argument to demonstrate the legitimacy of Jesus's high-priestly status in spite of the fact that Jesus comes from the tribe of Judah, not that of Levi. Such an argument not only indicates that the author is aware that he is not working in metaphor (why would it be necessary to go to these lengths to demonstrate the legitimacy of a metaphor?), but also goes even beyond analogy. Jesus is literally a high priest for the author of Hebrews.

The author's analogical reasoning is evident, however, when he speaks about Jesus presenting himself to God in the heavenly tabernacle in sacrificial terms. As was noted above (pp. XX-XX), the general trend in the modern period has been to read Hebrews in terms of a paramorphic model driven by the constitutive metaphor "Jesus's death is the ultimate atoning sacrifice." If instead the author thinks in terms of the ascension and appearance of the resurrected Jesus as the great high priest in the presence of God in the highest heaven—in the heavenly holy of holies of the heavenly tabernacle—then the author is working not metaphorically, but analogically. Just as (1) the high priest in the earthly tabernacle brought the blood of the sacrificial victim into the earthly holy of holies and offered it to God once a year, and just as (2) it was the power of the life of the victim contained within that blood that effected atonement (see Lev 17:11; cf. Lev 16:15–16), so also, by analogy, (1) Jesus, the heavenly high priest, entered the heavenly holy of holies once and offered himself alive to God, and (2) it is his resurrection life, his now indestructible human life, that has the power to do what the life of animals could not—provide ultimate atonement.

To apply these terms and categories to the resurrected and ascended Jesus is not metaphor, because the associative field of Jewish blood sacrifice is fitting for the context of Jesus' high-priestly ministry in the heavenly tabernacle, the source and subject of the earthly model. Yet this language is also not literal. That is to say, Jesus does not literally sprinkle, smear, or pour out his blood at God's throne in heaven. The fact that Hebrews describes Jesus's

offering in terms of himself (Heb 7:27; 9:25–26), his body (10:10), and his blood (9:12, 14; 12:24) shows that the author is not at these points thinking literally of Jesus manipulating his blood in heaven. Rather, he is thinking in terms of analogy to the blood rituals. Just as blood, as the substance that contained life, was brought by the earthly high priest into God’s presence in the holy of holies on Yom Kippur and was sprinkled there to effect a limited atonement, so Jesus, the heavenly high priest, took himself into God’s heavenly presence and offered himself to God to effect ultimate atonement. Hebrews’ sacrificial language of Jesus offering his body, blood, and self to God is often thought to be part of a metaphor in which these terms are all ways of describing Jesus’s death. This language is instead, I am arguing, analogy that highlights the central importance of Jesus’s resurrection life as that sacrifice that Jesus presents and God accepts. Jesus’s life, by analogy to sacrifice of animal blood in the earthly tabernacle, has been offered to the Father in the heavenly holy of holies to make atonement for sins.

[L1] Conclusion

The larger point of this study has been to explore the possibility that sacred space and sacrificial language in Hebrews are not driven by a metaphorical theology (see pp. XX–XX above) that attempts to unpack the spiritual, heavenly, or existential significance of Jesus’s crucifixion. The ideas that there is a tabernacle/temple in heaven, that this tabernacle is the source for the earthly structure, and that Jesus rose, ascended bodily and entered that heavenly tabernacle allow for a theological model that has analogy at its core, not metaphor. Indeed, the relationship between the earthly and heavenly tabernacles the author assumes, described here in terms of a homeomorphic model, appears to ground an analogical hermeneutic that allows him to explore the biblical depictions of the earthly sacred space and the priestly service done there in order to better understand what Jesus is doing in the heavenly space and how his heavenly service effects atonement.

In Hebrews Jesus’s death is one element of a larger ritual process that culminates in his entry into the heavenly tabernacle. There he presents himself before God as the offering that makes full atonement for God’s people. The Epistle to the Hebrews is not, therefore, structured

around an extended metaphor that focuses exclusively on Jesus's death, something that is in any case hard to square with the actual ritual process of sacrifice as described in Leviticus. Rather, the author takes sacrificial practice in the earthly sacred space of the tabernacle/temple to offer analogies for the way things must be in the heavenly tabernacle precisely because the earthly space is a model of the heavenly space. In this way the author correlates the larger early Christian story of Jesus with the biblical pattern of sacrifice and shows, by analogy, how Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension into God's presence in the heavenly holy of holies effect ultimate atonement.

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