

Moore, Nicholas J.: Repetition in Hebrews. Plurality and Singularity in the Letter to the Hebrews, Its Ancient Context, and the Early Church. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2015. XV, 276 S. = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe, 388. Kart. EUR 84,00. ISBN 978-3-16-153852-0.

Nicholas J. Moore's book, *Repetition in Hebrews: Plurality and Singularity in the Letter to the Hebrews, Its Ancient Context, and the Early Church*, offers a compelling study of the ways Hebrews does and does not employ the motif of repetition. M. demonstrates that Hebrews does not, as many assume, view repetition as universally undesirable, showing instead that Hebrews uses repetition in a variety of ways. The key for assessing the value of repetition in Hebrews lies not in singularity per se but in how repetition relates to »the singularity of the Christ event, reinforced and explicated on the model of the Day of Atonement« (5). That is to say, the »direction of causality« runs not from the presumption of repetition as inherently imperfect to the conclusion that Jesus' singular sacrifice is therefore superior, but »exactly the inverse« (8). Repetition is viewed in a positive or negative light depending on how it promotes and contributes to, or diminishes and detracts from aspects of Jesus' saving death. Thus, Hebrews does not, as one might expect from a more thoroughly Platonic point of view, assume that repetition/plurality is in and of itself somehow bad or a sign of imperfection. The volume contains seven well-structured chapters grouped into two parts. Chapter one offers an overview of the problem. Here M. examines a variety of ways that repetition has been evaluated in Hebrews and lays out the basic claims of his study (detailed above). Chapter two presents a brief discussion of the debates over authorship, dating and provenance of Hebrews. M. judiciously suggests a Jewish-Christian audience sometime after AD 70 located somewhere in Italy, probably Rome. The rest of chapters two and three survey relevant historical contexts in which repetition is a salient theme (the Old Testament, Second Temple Jewish literature, Middle Platonic texts, other early Christian writings and evidence from the early Church). M. demonstrates that, while Hebrews contains points of contact with the motif of repetition as this occurs in the corpora that form Hebrews' social and cultural context, the author's own engagement with the theme is in many respects unique. He develops these comparisons and contrasts further in chapters four through seven, the second part of the monograph. Chapters four, five and six form the core of M.'s exegetical engagement with Hebrews. Chapter four shows that repetition in

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divine revelation/speech is not presented in negative terms in Hebrews. M.'s careful exegesis demonstrates that »the OT scriptures in their very plurality are not merely continuous with God's speech through his Son, but absolutely fundamental to hearing that speech today« (115, emphasis his). Hebrews draws truths about the Christ event out of the many and various ways the prophets spoke in the past. Repetition of basic teachings is, however, more negative precisely because this slows one's progress towards being able to understand advanced matters about Jesus and salvation. In chapter five, M. examines the unrepeatability of repentance after apostasy in Hebrews. This unrepeatability follows not from a predetermined view that repetition itself is inherently negative but

from the unrepeatability of Jesus' death. Repetition in the realm of repentance, were it possible, would amount to a denial of the salvific/ atoning effect of the crucifixion. The sixth chapter engages with the issue of repetition in ritual and sacrifice. M. argues that Hebrews' hallmark critique of the law and its sacrifices, which were repeated on a daily and annual basis, does not derive from a rejection of ritual in the new covenant but rather emerges from a comparison of the old covenant sacrifices to Jesus' superior sacrifice. Moreover, the warning not to forsake meeting together (Heb 10:25) and the likely allusions to Eucharist (e. g., Heb 13:9–10) suggest the importance of certain kinds of ritual repetition in new covenant worship. Chapter seven offers a concise overview of the study's major conclusions and engages some wider philosophical and theological concerns in light of the volume's findings.

This is a well-argued and largely compelling monograph. One can pick at this or that point or decision; I remain, for example, unashamedly agnostic on the letter's dating and provenance (33). On a more substantive note, however, M.'s discussion of ritual is hobbled by some problematic assumptions. He rightly adduces that Hebrews is not anti-ritual or anti-sacrificial. His analysis goes wrong, however, with respect to certain assumptions about the meaning of the verb sacrifice and the role of the tabernacle's outer altar. M. states that the new covenant altar where Jesus offers his sacrifice cannot be heavenly because the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle was outside the sancta. He writes, »The altar's location outside the sanctuary and its function as the place of the death of the sacrificial animal point strongly towards identifying this altar with the cross« (198, emphasis his). Christians, therefore, eat »of the altar of Jesus' death« (199). In point of fact, no animals were slaughtered on any of the tabernacle's altars. The outer altar was for burning the animal so that smoke ascended to God, not for slaughtering. In Leviticus, the animal was commonly slaughtered at the entrance to the tabernacle on the north side of the outer altar. The victim's blood was then taken into the tabernacle by the priests and/or applied to the different altars, depending on the sacrifice (e. g., Lev 1:3–5; 4:4–7). To say that Jesus suffered outside the gate in Heb 13:12 does not, therefore, link him with any of the altars. The more likely implication is that Jesus' death outside Jerusalem is coordinated with the act of slaughter that preceded bringing the blood to the altars by the priests (cf. Heb 13:11). The denotation of the verb sacrifice, in other words, is not reducible to the moment of slaughter but names a process that continues up until the blood and sometimes parts of the body of the victim are presented to God on the altars by smearing, pouring out, and burning. This point affects M.'s thesis, for it suggests that the »once-for-all-ness« of Jesus' sacrifice has more to do with his perpetual intercession before God at the heavenly altar than with his past and unrepeatable death, as significant as that was for inaugurating the new covenant. Jesus' perpetual intercession is not repetition (he does not go in and out of God's presence annually), but it does explain why the repeated acts of Christian worship and approach to the throne to cry out for mercy make sense. Because Jesus is now the high priest present with the Father in heaven, he always intercedes for his people. Regardless, M.'s book has shown definitively that simple assessments of repetition as something bad or imperfect in Hebrews are no longer acceptable.