

## FINDING A HOME FOR THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

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**Abstract:** *The Letter to the Hebrews is found in more than one position in ancient canonical lists and manuscripts. Its position in relation to other canonical works is of hermeneutical significance, for this preserves exegetical insights of early Christian readers into its meaning and function within the NT corpus. In printed editions of the NT, Hebrews is placed between the Pauline corpus and the Catholic Epistles. Such a position implies that one function of Hebrews is to link and coordinate the two corpora. Not at all inconsistent with that role, the placement of Hebrews in the Greek manuscript tradition after Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, or Philemon is an assertion that Hebrews belongs to the Pauline corpus, or, at the very least, is closely related to it. Read in relation to that corpus, Hebrews resonates with the covenant theme in Paul's writings and substantially develops that theme, showing the superiority of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ's death.*

**Key Words:** *Hebrews, Pauline corpus, canon, covenant*

It is not known who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews nor to whom it was originally written, but that has not stopped endless discussion of these issues. Indeed, the intriguing nature of the problems has, if anything, only fueled efforts to establish its authorship and addressees, for this data would materially assist a greater understanding of the letter's meaning and significance. The meaning of a literary work is largely dependent on context, but one context that has not received the attention it deserves is that provided for Hebrews by the other canonical books among which it is immediately situated. This phenomenon is an aspect of the biblical "paratext,"<sup>1</sup> which includes such features as book titles, book order, and internal divisions within books (e.g. paragraphs). These paratextual elements provide a frame of reference for the biblical text, and Larry Hurtado has encouraged the examination of biblical manuscripts as Christian artifacts, arguing that they provide clues about ancient use and interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

Some deny that biblical book order is of any hermeneutical significance and view it as a purely mechanical phenomenon (e.g. citing the ordering of the Pauline

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<sup>1</sup> A term coined by Gérard Genette; see "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 261, 262; idem, "The Proustian Paratexte," *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 19 (1988): 63 (defining paratext as "the marginal or supplementary data around the text"); idem, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (trans. Jane E. Lewin; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); idem, "Early Christian Manuscripts as Artifacts," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Daniel Zacharias; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 13; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 66–81.

epistles according to decreasing size).<sup>3</sup> I do not assume or argue that this paratextual feature always has to be purposeful; however, where a book is placed within the canonical collection seldom appears haphazard and often does seem to represent an interpretive evaluation of the book's meaning and function by those responsible for placing the books in order. I would view the ordering of the biblical books by ancient readers as a process of *recognizing* meaning (and placing a book in a particular canonical position on that basis) rather than *giving* meaning. As well, modern readers are not bound to follow the interpretive evaluations of early Christian readers, but nor should their insights be lightly dismissed. One significant clue, therefore, as to how early Christians interpreted the book of Hebrews is the position of that book in relation to other books in early canonical lists and manuscripts. In the case of Hebrews, its assigned title is also significant.

The manuscript evidence for the positioning of Hebrews within the NT canon can be summarised as follows.<sup>4</sup> Greek manuscripts commonly situate Hebrews after Philemon (D L Ψ, other majuscules, most minuscules), and the Vulgate (and hence English Bibles) conforms to the majority of late Byzantine manuscripts and places Hebrews at the end of Paul's letters.<sup>5</sup> According to Hatch, Hebrews only found a settled place after the Pauline corpus in printed editions of the NT. The other main alternative is its placement between 2 Thessalonians and the Pastorals, namely as the last of Paul's letters to churches and before his letters to individuals (Ⲡ A B C H I K P etc).<sup>6</sup> The latter sequence is found in the famous canonical list in the 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter of Athanasius (AD 367).<sup>7</sup> Either canonical placement is an assertion that Hebrews belongs within the *corpus Paulinum*, or, at the very least, is to be viewed as closely related to it.<sup>8</sup> The Chester Beatty papyrus P<sup>46</sup> (c. AD 200) is the oldest manuscript of Paul's letters, but breaks off after 1 Thess 5:28 (folio 97

<sup>3</sup> E.g. John C. Poirier, "Order and Essence of Canon in Brevard Childs' Book on Paul," *BBR* 20 (2010): 503–16. The main target of Poirier's critique is what he sees as Childs's unfounded move from description (the empirical fact of book order) to prescription (mandating that a particular interpretation based on book order is binding on later readers).

<sup>4</sup> For a recent survey, see Edgar Battad Ebojo, *A Scribe and His Manuscript: An Investigation into the Scribal Habits of Papyrus 46 (P. Chester Beatty II – P. Mich. Inv. 6238)* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2014), 19–23.

<sup>5</sup> See William H. P. Hatch, "The Position of Hebrews in the Canon of the NT," *HTR* 29 (1936): 133–51, esp. 149–50; see also J. K. Elliott, "Manuscripts, the Codex and the Canon," *JSTNT* 63 (1996): 108–9.

<sup>6</sup> For details of later manuscripts, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Stuttgart: Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 591–92.

<sup>7</sup> See the Greek text and translation supplied by A. Souter, *The Text and Canon of the NT* (London: Duckworth, 1912), 214–15; cf. Theodor Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons: Eine Ergänzung zu der Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1904), 87, 88. In the Coptic (Sahidic) version of the festal letter, Hebrews is found between 2 Corinthians and Galatians (reflecting the Sahidic canon of Pauline Epistles); see T. Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," *JTS* 50 (1999): 600.

<sup>8</sup> Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri: Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible. Fasciculus III: Supplement, Pauline Epistles* (London: Emery Walker, 1936), xi, xii; H. J. D. Sparks, "The Order of the Epistles in P<sup>46</sup>," *JTS* 42 (1941): 180, 181. See the survey of complete NT codices by Daryl D. Schmidt, "The Greek New Testament as a Codex," in *The Canon Debate* (ed. L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 469–84.

verso, with seven leaves missing).<sup>9</sup> In it Hebrews is placed between Romans and 1, 2 Corinthians, presumably on account of its relative size, being shorter than 1 Corinthians but longer than 2 Corinthians. David Trobisch is probably correct in suggesting that the stichometric principle was compromised due to a desire to keep the two items of Corinthian correspondence together.<sup>10</sup> There is the possible implication in its propinquity to Romans that Hebrews was addressed to Jewish-Christian house churches in Rome.<sup>11</sup> This has been argued for on other grounds, including the expression in Heb 13:24 (“those from Italy”; cf. the phrase ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας in Acts 18:2 used of Aquila and Priscilla who were émigrés from Rome).<sup>12</sup> The only other datum of note with regard to the positioning of Hebrews is the indication provided by the ancient system of chapters found in Codex Vaticanus that Hebrews once stood between Galatians and Ephesians. There is no manuscript evidence that Hebrews ever circulated independently of a Pauline corpus.<sup>13</sup> I will look in greater detail at the alternative canonical positions assigned to Hebrews in the discussion that follows, with the aim of teasing out their hermeneutical import for contemporary readers, particularly given the paratextual relation of Hebrews to the Pauline corpus.

### I. HEBREWS LOOKING BOTH WAYS

With regard to its canonical positioning after Philemon in modern printed Bibles, Hebrews can be understood as looking both backwards and forwards, possessing as it does discernable links with both the Pauline and non-Pauline corpora (see below).<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that in all Greek textual witnesses Acts prefaces the Catholic Letters and these are treated as a fixed canonical unit (*Praxapostolos*),<sup>15</sup> due

<sup>9</sup> For a description of the codex, see Jack Finegan, “The Original Form of the Pauline Collection,” *HTR* 49 (1956): 92, 93. For the presence of Hebrews in the codex, see G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1946; London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1953), 15–16.

<sup>10</sup> *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEKNT 15.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 76, 118, 119.

<sup>12</sup> See William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconstruction* (2nd ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), 10–24, esp. 22: “In Hebrews and in Romans, ... the argument for the Christian religion is presented consistently and exclusively in terms of its relation to Judaism”; cf. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991), lviii–lxvi; Reidar Hvalvik, “Jewish Believers and Jewish Influence in the Roman Church until the Early Second Century,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 205–9.

<sup>13</sup> A point made by Clare K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews* (WUNT 235; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 145–47.

<sup>14</sup> Robert W. Wall, “The Problem of the Multiple Letter Canon of the NT,” *HBT* 8 (1986): 19 (repr., Robert W. Wall and Eugene E. Lemcio, *The NT as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism* [JSNTSup 76; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992], 161–83); idem, “Reading the NT in Canonical Context,” in *Hearing the NT: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 387–88. David Trobisch deems this placement improper; see *The First Edition of the NT* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25, 103.

<sup>15</sup> See the listing provided in *GNT<sup>3</sup>*, 6\*–18\*; David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the NT Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 283–86.

to the influence of Jerome via the Vulgate, in printed editions of the NT Hebrews has a settled place between the Pauline corpus and the Catholic Epistles.<sup>16</sup> The juxtaposition of the Pauline letters with non-Pauline letters, and with Paul's letters *preceding* the non-Pauline letters in what is now the common ordering of printed Bibles,<sup>17</sup> appears to give theological *primacy* to Paul's teaching and could be read as implying that the letters of James, Peter, and John play a subservient role in the theology of the NT. However, the presence of Hebrews helps to mitigate the worst aspects of such a reading of this canonical arrangement. Sandwiched as it now is between the two collections, Hebrews can be understood to assist in coordinating the two corpora,<sup>18</sup> not least due to the fact that it significantly extends the theology attributed to the Pauline circle (see below),<sup>19</sup> with the result that the conceptual leap between the two letter collections is not as great as it would otherwise be.

With regard to genre, there is a certain appropriateness in placing Hebrews immediately before the Catholic Epistles, for Hebrews is more sermon than letter,<sup>20</sup> as also are James, 1 John, and 1 Peter. In some early English Bible orders (e.g. Tyn-dale [1526], Coverdale [1550] and Matthews [1549]), Hebrews is even positioned *among* the General Epistles (after the epistles of Peter and John, and before the epistles of James and Jude), despite the fact that it is still given the title "The Letter of St. Paul unto the Hebrews."<sup>21</sup> This order places the letters attributed to apostles together (1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John) and letters attributed to the half-brothers of Jesus together (James, Jude). The strongest thematic links between Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles are those between Hebrews and 1 Peter.<sup>22</sup> They congregate around the theme of suffering: the suffering of Christ (Heb 2:14; 4:15; 1 Pet 4:1) and that of the Christian community (Heb 12:2–11; 1 Pet 2:21–25; 3:13–22), and indeed the two matters are closely and essentially linked. It is not my aim, however, to prove or disprove the dependence of either author upon the other. Due to its thematic and/or generic affinities with both collections, Hebrews brings Pauline and non-Pauline collections into a mutually enriching canonical conversation as equal partners.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Berger provides extensive lists of alternative Latin orders, with the first order listed being that found in the Vulgate; see *Histoire de la Vulgate pendant les premiers siècles du moyen âge* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976), 339–42.

<sup>17</sup> This is the reversal of what is found in the Greek manuscript tradition, where the order of books is almost always: Acts/Catholic Epistles/Pauline Epistles.

<sup>18</sup> Wall, "The Problem of the Multiple Letter Canon," 17–19; cf. idem, *The NT as Canon*, 239, where Wall states that Hebrews functions as a "linking book." For the contribution of the Acts of the Apostles in a mediating role, see Gregory Goswell, "The Place of the Book of Acts in Reading the NT," *JETS* 59 (2016): 67–82.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion of Childs as to how the inclusion of Hebrews may affect the subsequent reading of the Pauline corpus, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 250–52.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, lxix–lxxi.

<sup>21</sup> This ordering of the books is probably due to the influence of Luther's *Das Neue Testament* (1522).

<sup>22</sup> These are carefully evaluated by Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 125–30.

## II. THE UNIQUE POSITION OF HEBREWS IN CODEX VATICANUS

In Codex Vaticanus (B 03), there is an ancient system of capitulation. Rather than restarting the numbering of chapters at the beginning of each letter by the apostle, the chapters of the Pauline Epistles are continuously numbered as if one book (1–93). Vaticanus only preserves Romans through to Heb 9:14, with Hebrews coming after 2 Thessalonians.<sup>23</sup> In Vaticanus, there are 21 chapters in Romans (numbered 1–21), 21 in 1 Corinthians (22–42), 11 in 2 Corinthians (43–53), 5 in Galatians (54–58), 6 in Ephesians (70–75), 4 in Philippians (76–79), 6 in Colossians (80–85), 4 in 1 Thessalonians (86–89), 4 in 2 Thessalonians (90–93), and 5 in the extant portion of Hebrews (59–64) (which breaks off at 9:14 in the middle of the word *καθαριεῖ*), with the implication that Hebrews had five more divisions (65–69).<sup>24</sup> The remaining portion of Hebrews and the book of Revelation are appended in a cursive script of the fifteenth century (pages 1519–1536).<sup>25</sup> We cannot be absolutely certain whether the codex originally contained the Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, and Revelation, but the presumption is that it did, given that these writings are present in codices Sinaiticus (Ⲙ 01) and Alexandrinus (A 02).<sup>26</sup>

In that codex, though Hebrews is physically placed after 2 Thessalonians, the six chapter numbers assigned to Hebrews (59–64) suggest that in the manuscript exemplar from which the chapter divisions and their numbering in Vaticanus were copied, Hebrews followed Galatians. The apparent cause of this numerical deformation is that the model from which the numbering for Vaticanus was taken had Hebrews between Galatians and Ephesians.<sup>27</sup> This is odd, for it disrupts the otherwise regular arrangement of the letters according to their respective lengths, from longest to shortest. The assigned title in Vaticanus: “[Paul’s letter] to the Hebrews” implies Pauline authorship (as indicated by the additional words supplied by me in brackets),<sup>28</sup> or at the very least reflects its inclusion in the Pauline corpus, for its title is modelled on those of other letters to churches in the same corpus. Accord-

<sup>23</sup> For an extended discussion and analysis, see Greg Goswell, “An Early Commentary on the Pauline Corpus: The Capitulation of Codex Vaticanus,” *JGRChJ* 8 (2011–12): 51–82.

<sup>24</sup> David Trobisch, *Paul’s Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 21–22; Jean Duplacy, “Les divisions du texte de l’épître de Jacques dans B (03) du nouveau testament (Vatic. Gr. 1209),” in *Studies in NT Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. J. K. Elliott; NovTSup 64; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 129.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Pisano, “III. The Text of the NT,” in the Prolegomena volume to *Bibliorum sacrorum graecorum Codex Vaticanus B: Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999), 27–41.

<sup>26</sup> According to Christian-B. Amphoux (“Codex Vaticanus B: Les points diacritiques des marges de Marc,” *JTS* 58 [2007]: 441 n. 8), the absence of the Pastorals and Philemon is probably accidental. See also Skeat, “The Codex Sinaiticus, The Codex Vaticanus and Constantine,” 600.

<sup>27</sup> See C. Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece: ad antiquissimos testes denuo recensuit, apparatus criticum apposuit; Volumen III: Prolegomena* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1884), 159, 160.

<sup>28</sup> Trobisch, *The First Edition of the NT*, 39, 40; Pamela M. Eisenbaum, “Locating Hebrews within the Literary Landscape of Christian Origins,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BibInt 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 223, 224. For the view that Hebrews was written by unnamed followers of Paul (substantially by Barnabas?), with a Pauline postscript of three verses, see F. J. Badcock, *The Pauline Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews in Their Historical Setting* (London: SPCK, 1937), 183–201.

ing to Hatch, no other manuscript, canonical list, or ecclesiastical writer shows an awareness of what is the unique positioning of Hebrews alluded to by the numbering of the chapters in Vaticanus.<sup>29</sup> The implied placement of Hebrews after Galatians and before Ephesians could possibly be explained by thematic considerations: namely the theme of faith in Galatians or its discussion of the law and covenant, both of which are given extensive treatment in Hebrews. In the other direction, one thematic link between Hebrews and Ephesians is their common teaching concerning the heavenly session of Christ (Heb 1:3; 8:1; Eph 2:6).

The actual order of the Pauline Epistles in Vaticanus, as far as the corpus is extant, parallels that in codices Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, with Hebrews following 2 Thessalonians, so that Hebrews is treated as one of Paul's letters to congregations,<sup>30</sup> though when placed after *other* Pauline letters written to congregations, it breaks the sequence of letters in decreasing length, for on that basis it would come between 1 and 2 Corinthians. So far as early texts are concerned,<sup>31</sup> apart from the Chester Beatty Papyrus II (P<sup>46</sup>; c. AD 200), wherein Hebrews comes after Romans,<sup>32</sup> and the position implied by the chapter numeration in Vaticanus, Hebrews is only ever placed between letters to churches and letters to individuals, or at the end of the Pauline corpus as a whole.

### III. THE TITLE OF HEBREWS

The title supplied to the anonymous book is "To the Hebrews" (Πρὸς Ἑβραίους), and whether originally it was written for a mixed audience or not, the assigned title serves to situate its addressees within Jewish Christianity, and therefore, can be understood to approach the issue of Jew-Gentile relations from the opposite direction than does Romans (Rom 11:13–24 in which Gentile believers are addressed; note especially v. 13: "Now I am speaking to you Gentiles").<sup>33</sup> According to that criterion, Hebrews is connected with the Catholic Letters rather than with the Pauline Letters, seeing that Paul was entrusted with the gospel "to the uncircumcised" rather than "to the circumcised" (Gal 2:7–9; Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17), and indeed its position in modern printed editions (following the Vulgate order) is in front of the Catholic Epistles, which have a Diaspora Jewish-Christian audience.

<sup>29</sup> "Position of Hebrews," 135.

<sup>30</sup> Parker, *Introduction*, 254; Trobisch, *First Edition of the NT*, 24, 25.

<sup>31</sup> For a more comprehensive summary and evaluation, see Hatch, "Position of Hebrews," 133–51.

<sup>32</sup> Kenyon, *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri*, xi, xii. As noted by Charles P. Anderson ("The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Letter Collection," *HTR* 59 [1966], 432 n. 3), in the Sahidic version of Athanasius's 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter (AD 367), an alternate solution is followed, and Hebrews is placed after 2 Corinthians. The pagination of P<sup>13</sup> (pp. 47–69), which consists entirely of fragmented sections of Hebrews, means that there is space for a book the size of Romans to precede it in this mid-second-century manuscript as well; see Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest NT Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 73–75.

<sup>33</sup> John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13–39.

On the other hand, the title “To the Hebrews” is a connection to Pauline letters that name the letters according to addressee, and this feature separates it from the Catholic Epistles that are named by their authors (e.g. “The Letter of James”). The letter does have specific referents (see Heb 10:32–34) but the details of their identity and location remain vague. The addressees are not named “the Hebrews” within the book itself, so that the title appears to have been coined on analogy with the titles of the Pauline letters (Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους, etc.). Therefore, according to Trobisch, the title of the anonymous Letter to the Hebrews manipulates the reaction of potential readers and implies the name of Paul.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, as noted by Trobisch,<sup>35</sup> the title of 2 Corinthians represents a narrowing, in conformity to other Pauline titles, for it is addressed not only to the Corinthians but also to “all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia” (2 Cor 1:1). So too the letter to the “Galatians” is destined for more than one church (on the South Galatian theory, churches in the cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe), for this is not a *city* name. What this shows is that the titles have been deliberately crafted to gather and organize the Pauline corpus into the categories of letters to churches and letters of individuals,<sup>36</sup> with every letter having to fit one or either category, and the title “To the Hebrews” in effect labels it another (Pauline?) letter to a church.

Hebrews was, according to Eusebius, viewed as a letter and known under this title by Clement of Alexandria (τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους δὲ ἐπιστολὴν),<sup>37</sup> and the title appears in the roughly contemporaneous codex  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  at its head (Πρὸς Ἑβραίους).<sup>38</sup> The “letter” of James is categorized in this way by the assigned title, but is generically more homily than letter.<sup>39</sup> There is, however, a salutation (“Greeting”) to diaspora Jewish-Christians in Jas 1:1,<sup>40</sup> so that it certainly purports to be a letter. 1 John is a written homily.<sup>41</sup> The same applies to the “epistle” to the Hebrews, noting Heb 13:22 (“my word of exhortation”), with which we may compare the reference to the diaspora synagogue sermon of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:15 (“Brethren, if you have any *word of exhortation* [λόγος παρακλήσεως] for the people, say it”).<sup>42</sup> In defense of its epistolary designation, Hebrews is not totally devoid of epistolary

<sup>34</sup> *First Edition of the NT*, 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>36</sup> The allocated titles need to come into consideration in the formulation of any theory as how and when the Pauline corpus was produced.

<sup>37</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.3–4 (PG 20.549).

<sup>38</sup> Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri Descriptions*, 21 (fol. 21R) (so also in  $\mathfrak{N}$  A B).

<sup>39</sup> This genre identification is preferable to that of paraenesis (that was popularized by the influential commentary by Martin Dibelius); see the discussion of Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 8.

<sup>40</sup> For the genre of James, see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Der Jakobusbrief im Licht frühjüdischer Diasporabriefe,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 420–43. Niebuhr interprets James within the diaspora letter tradition of Jeremiah 29, the Epistle of Jeremiah, 2 Maccabees 1–2, and 2 Baruch 78–86; so also Donald J. Versput, “Wisdom, 4Q185, and the Epistle of James,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 691–707; Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginning of Christian Epistolography* (WUNT 298; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 452–63.

<sup>41</sup> However, see Fred O. Francis, “The Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and 1 John,” *ZNW* 61 (1970): 110–26.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin B. McCrudden, *Solidarity Perfected: Beneficent Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BZNW 159; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 132–39.

characteristics, for example the giving of news (13:23) and final greetings (13:24).<sup>43</sup> On the whole, its homiletical character predominates and is another feature that aligns it closely with the Catholic Epistles.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV. READING HEBREWS WITH THE PAULINE CORPUS

It was not without cause that ancient readers detected contacts between Hebrews and the Pauline corpus, and they signaled this discovery by placing Hebrews where they did in various ancient manuscripts and canonical lists. This is an example of how canonical book order is, in effect, an indicator of how biblical books were read and interpreted in antiquity. Hebrews has connections to Paul, the most obvious being the closing verses of the book (13:22–24).<sup>45</sup> There is no reason to doubt that this postscript is original and comes from the author of the rest of the epistle.<sup>46</sup> Though the final verses do not claim a direct relation with Paul by attributing authorship to him, they make an indirect connection to him by their reference to “our brother Timothy,” whom the anonymous author acknowledges as coworker and companion, for his expressed hope is that he will visit his addressees with Timothy.<sup>47</sup> This comment by the author of Hebrews, therefore, effectively puts him within the Pauline circle,<sup>48</sup> for Timothy is a particularly important member of that circle.<sup>49</sup> Any possible connection to Paul is minimized by James W. Thompson.<sup>50</sup> At the other extreme, David Trobisch argues that the verses are an autobiographical subscription provided by Paul himself to support its inclusion in his corpus of letters (cf. Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17).<sup>51</sup> The truth would seem to lie somewhere between these two poles.

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<sup>43</sup> See James Swetnam, “On the Literary Genre of the ‘Epistle’ to the Hebrews,” *NorT* 11 (1969): 261–69.

<sup>44</sup> Wall, *NT as Canon*, 178.

<sup>45</sup> On connections with Paul, see Dieter Georgi, “Hebrews and the Heritage of Paul,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, 241–44.

<sup>46</sup> See Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 404–10.

<sup>47</sup> A point made by Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 721. Timothy is acknowledged by Paul as a “brother” (ἀδελφός) in 2 Cor 1:1, Col 1:1, 1 Thess 3:2 and Phlm 1.

<sup>48</sup> As recognised by Origen (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.13 [PG 20.584–85]).

<sup>49</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, *Timothy: Paul’s Closest Associate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008); Anthony J. Blasi, *Making Charisma: The Social Construction of Paul’s Public Image* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1991), 101–2. Likewise, Mark is a significant connector between Paul and Peter (1 Pet 5:13; 2 Tim 4:11).

<sup>50</sup> “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Legacy,” *ResQ* 47 (2005): 199, 205, 206.

<sup>51</sup> “Das Rätsel um die Verfasserschaft des Hebräerbriefes und die Entdeckung eines echten Paulus-textes,” in idem, ed., *In Dubio Pro Deo: Heidelberger Resonanzen auf den 50. Geburtstag von Gerd Theissen am 24. April 1993* (Heidelberg: Wiss.-Theol. Seminar, 1993), 320–23. Rothschild argues that the postscript makes a pseudonymous attribution of the letter to Paul, with the aim of promoting the author’s views as Pauline. For her discussion of what she views as a deliberate imitation of Paul in the postscript, see *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon*, 67–81.



To the fraternal link to Paul via Timothy can be added the evidence of similarities of theme between Hebrews and the Pauline corpus.<sup>52</sup> The author of Hebrews and Paul use Psalm 8 in compatible ways, both authors making anthropological and Christological points of doctrine on the basis of that OT portion (Hebrews 2; cf. 1 Cor 15:22–28; Rom 8:20; Phil 2:10; 3:21).<sup>53</sup> The letter's stress upon faith (e.g. the roll call of the faithful in Hebrews 11) fits such a setting, though its definition of faith as enduring hope (Heb 10:39; 11:1–2) is a concept of faith which is less prominent in Paul (yet see Acts 14:22).<sup>54</sup> It should be noted, however, that the author of Hebrews, like Paul, finds a basis for his teaching about faith in Hab 2:4 (Heb 10:38; cf. Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11),<sup>55</sup> and both authors speak of Abraham's unwavering faith (Rom 4:20; Heb 10:39; 11:8–19), so that in regard to their view of faith, "Hebrews and Paul are closer at this point than has been generally acknowledged."<sup>56</sup> The affirmation of the heavenly session of Christ (Heb 1:3) is in accord with the high Christology of Ephesians (Eph 2:6) and Colossians (Col 3:1), as is Hebrews' proclamation of Christ as pre-existent Creator of all things (Heb 1:2; cf. Col 1:16; Eph 1:9–10).<sup>57</sup> Let me make clear what I am doing and what I am not doing by drawing up this catalogue of similarities. Out of respect for the anonymity of the canonical book, I am not arguing that the author of Hebrews is Paul. An added reason for such restraint is the fact that it was not the apostle's practice to send letters without attribution. On the other hand, the noted personal and thematic links mark the teaching of Hebrews as contemporary with Paul (or close to it) and imply that it is compatible with and complementary to the Pauline corpus. There were exegetical grounds, therefore, for the action of placing Hebrews in, or at least in close proximity to, the Pauline corpus.

What is more, there is a close association of Hebrews with Romans, whether Hebrews is juxtaposed to Romans, placed after Galatians (the Pauline letter most similar to Romans in theme), or together with Romans bookends the Pauline letters to churches (or the Pauline corpus as a whole). As well, its extensive interaction with OT texts suggests a relation to Romans with its many citations of the OT (especially in Romans 9–11).<sup>58</sup> If Hebrews is placed within the *corpus Paulinum*, what effect might that positioning of the book have on the reading of Hebrews itself and on the interpretation of the Pauline letter collection as a whole? Hebrews deals *in*

<sup>52</sup> Summarized by L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 108.

<sup>53</sup> Argues Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 110–119.

<sup>54</sup> This, of course, presents Paul through a Lucan lens; see Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the NT*, vol. 2: *The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ* (ed. Jürgen Roloff; trans. John E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 265–66.

<sup>55</sup> Dennis R. Lindsay, "Pistis and 'Emunah: The Nature of Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; LNTS 387; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 158–69; Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion* (BHT 58; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 236.

<sup>56</sup> Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 124.

<sup>57</sup> Childs, *Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, 251–52.

<sup>58</sup> These are points made by Childs, *Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, 251–52, 258.

*extenso* with the continuity-discontinuity between the old and new covenants,<sup>59</sup> for chapters 8–10 are an argument based on the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31–34, with this section of the epistle demarcated by means of *inclusio* with a full citation of the prophecy in Heb 8:8–12 and a second, abbreviated citation in 10:16–17 (= Jer 31:33–34).<sup>60</sup> This is a theme explicitly touched on by Paul only in Romans 11, 1 Corinthians 11, 2 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 4, but it can be said to undergird his teaching as a significant subtext (as shown by recent Pauline scholarship).<sup>61</sup> However, only in Hebrews is the relation of the two covenants given a sustained and systematic treatment, such that, if Hebrews is read in conjunction with Paul's letters, it serves to highlight this muted theme in the apostle's teaching. This way of construing the relation between Hebrews and the Pauline corpus is supported by noting the manuscript evidence that Hebrews was placed at times next to one or other of the four Pauline letters that broach the theme of the two covenants. As well, the fuller exposition of the covenant theme in Hebrews can be understood to assist the appropriation of the Pauline corpus by Jewish believers (more on this below).

Apocalyptic and covenantal readings of Paul's theology do not need to be set in opposition, for the first approach stresses the radical impact of the Christ event (e.g. Gal 1:4: "[our Lord Jesus Christ] gave himself to deliver us from the present evil age"; 6:15: "a new creation" [= the new age]),<sup>62</sup> whereas the other approach provides a framework for understanding significant features of the new age (e.g. Gal 4:21–31), and, as just indicated, both perspectives can even be found in the same apostolic letter (Galatians).<sup>63</sup> As well, it is not sufficient (*pave* Dunn) to count

<sup>59</sup> Unpublished paper by Billy Marsh, "A Canonical Approach to the Position of Hebrews in the NT Canon" (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 26–28 (online: <https://abettercountry.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/a-canonical-approach-to-hebrews.pdf>). Marsh is dependent on Childs, *Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, 254, 255; also 251: "The title [of Hebrews] correctly construed the epistle as addressing the theological problem of the two dispensations." According to Marsh (p. 26), "The primary canonical functionality of Hebrews then would appear to pertain to its ability to serve as a hermeneutical framework for addressing the problem of the relationship between the old and new covenants which was not an issue that Paul didactically exhausted in his writings."

<sup>60</sup> See David G. Peterson, "The Prophecy of the New Covenant in the Argument of Hebrews," *RTR* 38 (1979): 74–81; idem, *Transformed by God: New Covenant Life and Ministry* (Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2012), 77–103.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard de Witt; London: SPCK, 1977), 333–41, esp. 335; Sarah Whittle, *Covenant Renewal and the Consecration of the Gentiles in Romans* (SNTSMS 161; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); T. J. Deidun, *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (AnBib 89; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2006); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), xi: "The overall title [of Wright's book] reflects my growing conviction that covenant theology is one of the main clues, usually neglected, for understanding Paul"; Petrus J. Gräbe, *New Covenant, New Community: The Significance of Biblical and Patristic Covenant Theology for Current Thinking* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 108–24.

<sup>62</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 97–105.

<sup>63</sup> As noted by James D. G. Dunn, a major deficiency of Martyn's reading of Galatians is his excision of the category of salvation history that includes a series of covenants. Dunn writes, "[Martyn] sets his apocalyptic schema in too sharp antithesis to the whole idea of redemptive history—that is, of a

up the relatively few lexical uses of the word “covenant” (διαθήκη) by Paul and conclude that it was a term picked up by the apostle only because his opponents used it and does not play a major part in his own thinking.<sup>64</sup> To properly gauge this theme, we need to look more widely in the apostle’s writings, for the *concept* of covenant cannot simply be equated with use of the word “covenant” (διαθήκη).<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, every instance of this Greek word is not necessarily an example of the theological use of the idea of covenant (e.g. Gal 3:15 and 17 may refer to a last will and testament; cf. Heb 9:16–17).<sup>66</sup>

## V. THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS IN HEBREWS AND PAUL

At the heart of the book of Hebrews, the extensive quotation from Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 8 culminates in the hope of definitive forgiveness (8:12b: “and I will remember their sins no more”) and this focus on the reality of forgiveness under the new covenant is reinforced in the reprise of Jeremiah 31 in 10:17 (“then he adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more’”).<sup>67</sup> According to David M. Allen, Hebrews is a reworking of the book of Deuteronomy and, as such, covenant themes are central to its theology and ethic (e.g. the warning not to make the same fatal mistake as the wilderness generation).<sup>68</sup> Deuteronomy and Jeremiah anticipate divine action on Israel’s heart (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33) as well as the hope of lasting forgiveness (after the sorry history of national unfaithfulness), both of which move beyond the experience of God’s people in the old dispensation, and this looking for something better, Allen argues, is what is taken up and developed in Hebrews.

The author of Hebrews recalls how God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel at Sinai, instituting a system of sacrifices to deal with the problem of

purpose of God unfolding in and through history. His emphasis ... does not do sufficient justice to the extent to which Paul sees God’s saving purpose as a historical process: Abraham as progenitor of seed; the giving of the law as having a role prior to Christ; Christ coming in ‘the fullness of time’; the growing up of heirs from minority (= slavery) to majority (the gift of the Spirit). In Jewish (and Paul’s!) perspective, apocalypse is the climax of God’s saving purpose for his people, not a whole new start” (*Beginning from Jerusalem* [Christianity in the Making 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 744–45 n. 402). A similar criticism is made by John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 148 and N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (London: SPCK, 2015), 169, 178, 182, 186.

<sup>64</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9:4 and 11:27,” in *The Concept of Covenant in the Second Temple Period* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. de Roo; JSJSup 71; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 287–307, esp. 289.

<sup>65</sup> As rightly pointed out by Stanley E. Porter, “The Concept of Covenant in Paul,” in *Concept of Covenant*, 273.

<sup>66</sup> Porter, “Concept of Covenant in Paul,” 275–79; Jörg Frey, “Die alte und die neue διαθήκη nach dem Hebräerbrief,” in *Bund und Tora: Zur theologischen Begriffsgeschichte in alttestamentlicher, frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition* (ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger; WUNT 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 263 n. 4; but see Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* (JSNTSup 44; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 64.

<sup>67</sup> As noted by Frey, “Die alte und die neue διαθήκη nach dem Hebräerbrief,” 279.

<sup>68</sup> *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: A Study in Re-presentation* (WUNT 2/238; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

impurity.<sup>69</sup> His focus is on cult and sacrifice, for he is concerned with its fulfilment and replacement by the sacrifice of Christ. Under this arrangement, after first offering sacrifice for his own purification, the high priest entered the holy of holies in the tabernacle once a year in order to make sacrifice for the people. This covenant involved obedience on Israel's part, expressed by a willingness to endure hardships (= faith/faithfulness) while waiting for the fulfilment of God's promised rest. This covenant and its requisite means of sanctification, however, were never intended to be final.<sup>70</sup> The repeated sacrifices, carried out by weak priests in an earthly tabernacle, provided temporary, external cleansing, and, therefore, imperfect access to God. As well, God spoke of another priesthood and covenant that was to come. Such a future priesthood would offer a perfect sacrifice for sin, once for all. This new covenant promised internal purification and forgiveness of sin. As a remedy for impurity, therefore, "the first covenant" (9:1, 15), the Mosaic, was provisional and anticipatory. The Mosaic Covenant did not effectively deal with sin. The author argues for the obsolescence of the old covenant (7:18; 8:7–8, 13; 10:9). In these last days, God has spoken once again, inaugurating "a better covenant" (7:22; cf. 8:6). This covenant is far superior to the old one in every way. It offers an atoning sacrifice, once for all, in the heavenly tabernacle by a sinless, perfect, sympathetic, and eternal high priest (God's own Son), who now sits enthroned at God's right hand, guaranteeing the access of believers to God's presence. The promise of the new covenant is fulfilled through Jesus's sacrifice that leads to a cleansed conscience (9:9, 14; 10:2, 22; 13:18).

Both Paul and the author of Hebrews posit a sharp break between the covenants. In Hebrews the old covenant is declared faulty (8:7) and "obsolete" (*πεπαλαίωκεν*; 8:13).<sup>71</sup> Paul links the Mosaic covenant with the glory of Moses's face that was "abrogated" (*καταργέω*) by the greater glory of the new covenant in Christ (2 Cor 3:7, 11, 13, 14).<sup>72</sup> As in Hebrews, though not with the same emphasis, Paul speaks of "the new covenant" (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6). Though discontinuity prevails over continuity, both writers trace God's people back to Abraham (Heb 2:16; 6:13; Gal 3:7–29) and view the old and new covenants as stages in the one history of salvation, since the people in both ages have "the gospel announced" (*εὐαγγελίζω*) to them (Heb 4:2, 6), and the prophetic Scriptures point forward to the gospel (Rom 1:2; 3:21; cf. Gal 3:8).<sup>73</sup> Hebrews provides the kind of detailed

<sup>69</sup> For this paragraph I acknowledge my dependence on James C. Miller, "Paul and Hebrews: A Comparison of Narrative Worlds," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, 251–52, 262–63.

<sup>70</sup> This is a key point made by G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44–51, esp. 47: "It is not the purpose of the author to prove the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old, nor to establish the inadequacy of the old order. His interest is in the confessed inadequacy of the old order."

<sup>71</sup> As noted by Lehne, these indictments of the old covenant surround the long citation from Jeremiah 31 (*New Covenant in Hebrews*, 31).

<sup>72</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 133–36. There is no reference either in Exodus 34 or 2 Corinthians 3 to the glory *fading* (despite the common English rendering of *καταργέω* [e.g. RSV, NIV]).

<sup>73</sup> For a studied comparison of the new covenant concept in Paul and Hebrews, see Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 73–80.

argument about the relation between the covenants that Jewish believers would need to embrace the message of Paul that forgiveness of sins is available through Christ in a way that was not possible under the old covenant (cf. Acts 13:38–39; Gal 2:15–16).

Turning now to the writings of Paul, we see that new covenant promises stand behind the circumcision of the heart in Rom 2:28–29 (cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ezek 36:26).<sup>74</sup> There is likely an allusion to a key feature of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 in Rom 11:27 (“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins”), though this citation of the OT conflates and modifies Isa 59:20–21 and 27:9 (in that order). In Paul’s teaching, the hope of a substantial turning of Israelites to Christ is seen as part of the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant (11:26: “and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, ...”).<sup>75</sup> Indeed, at the present time, through Paul’s gospel mission, a remnant of believing Jews as well as believing Gentiles are experiencing the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of the covenant spoken of in these Isaianic verses (and in Jeremiah 31).<sup>76</sup>

Gorman stresses the connection between the new covenant and Christ’s death, and in 1 Cor 11:25 Paul recalls the dominical tradition of the Lord’s Supper (“This cup is the new covenant in my blood”), such that the apostle claims that Jesus himself interpreted his death as the inauguration of “the new covenant.”<sup>77</sup> The term reappears in 2 Cor 3:6, this being its only other occurrence in the Pauline Corpus, in a passage where he explains ministry under the new covenant in striking contrast to that under the old. The expression “tablets of stone” recalls the Ten Words of the Mosaic covenant (3:3), and the contrast drawn by the Paul in the same verse (“not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts”) picks up the promise of Ezek 36:26 (“I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh”). The old covenant is characterised by Paul as the written code that kills, so that it is “the dispensation (*διακονία*) of condemnation/death.” By contrast, the new covenant is characterised by the indwelling Spirit who gives life, and so it is “the dispensation of the Spirit/righteousness.”<sup>78</sup> It is not the old covenant itself, however, that is at fault; the problem is the veiled and hardened minds of those under that covenant (2 Cor 3:14–16). This means that Paul’s new covenant theology is directly linked to his teaching about the Spirit as an eschatological phenomenon in fulfilment of what was promised by the prophets.

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<sup>74</sup> Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 335; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 512–13, 814, 924.

<sup>75</sup> Peterson, *Transformed by God*, 132.

<sup>76</sup> Whittle, *Covenant Renewal*, 58–75.

<sup>77</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant: A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 53. The writer to the Hebrews was also influenced by the saying of Jesus at the Last Supper, suggests Peterson (*Transformed by God*, 78 n. 3), with the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus’s death and exaltation.

<sup>78</sup> As noted by Wright, there is no need to postulate that Paul’s opponents used Moses as a model of true ministry (with this shaping Paul’s response), if we discern the importance of the covenant theme in this passage (*Climax of the Covenant*, 177).

The contrast between the “two covenants” in Galatians 4 is that of law versus promise and that of slavery versus freedom (4:21–31), with the passage framed by warnings of the danger of becoming subject to the law (4:21; 5:1).<sup>79</sup> The contrast is typified as “Mount Sinai” versus “Jerusalem above,” and the theme of “Jerusalem above” in Paul’s allegory in 4:26 is a link to the motif of the heavenly city in Heb 11:13–16 and 12:18–24.<sup>80</sup> Behind the contrast drawn is again the typical Pauline polarity of flesh and Spirit (Gal 4:29). The “similar set of antinomies” in Paul’s discussion of the two covenants in 2 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 4 is evidence against the commonly-stated view that his use of covenant categories is no more than an *ad hoc* argument,<sup>81</sup> in which he picks up the terms and ideas of his opponents and re-uses them with polemic intent. The opponents and their false teaching combatted in these two letters are quite different in complexion, and this implies that the distinction of old and new covenants is part of Paul’s own mental furniture that he makes use of when addressing the needs of disparate church situations.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

One indicator of how early Christians read and understood Hebrews is the position of that book in relation to other books in canonical lists and manuscripts. That being the case, what implications for interpretation can be drawn from the canonical positions assigned to Hebrews by ancient readers? In other words, what exegetical insights are preserved in the various sequences of NT books that have Hebrews in different canonical positions? In printed editions of the NT Hebrews is placed between the Pauline corpus and the Catholic Epistles. Such a position implies that one function of Hebrews is to link and coordinate the two corpora, and it must be said that both in terms of content and genre Hebrews is ideally suited to play such a mediating role. Not at all inconsistent with that role, the placement of Hebrews after Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, or Philemon is an assertion that Hebrews belongs to the Pauline corpus, or, at the very least, is to be viewed as closely related to it. Read in relation to that corpus, Hebrews resonates with the covenant theme in Paul’s writings and substantially develops that theme, showing the superiority of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ’s death. This fuller explication assists Jewish believers to see that Paul is not slighting their OT heritage by his mode of teaching Christian faith and practice. In other words, Hebrews plays a significant role in helping to hold the writings of the NT together as a unified testimony that calls Jews and Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>79</sup> As noted by Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 66.

<sup>80</sup> Michael B. Cover, “‘Now and Above; Then and Now’ (Gal. 4:21–31): Platonizing and Apocalyptic Polarities in Paul’s Eschatology,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter* (ed. Mark W. Elliott et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 226–27.

<sup>81</sup> The expression is that of Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 68.