

HEBREWS AND THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

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Course Description

This course studies the letter to the Hebrews and four Scriptural writings known as Catholic Epistles: James, 1st and 2nd Peter, and Jude.

Hebrews might have had a rough process of admission into the NT canon, but it is replete with irresistible qualities. Obviously, it sounds peculiar and singular. This letter to the Hebrews reflects the sublime depth and magnificent beauty of God's word both in its lexical and syntactic content, as well as in its semantic and rhetorical manifestations. Furthermore, and finally, we can observe its theological density and priestly Christological tone.

Consequently, with great curiosity and abundance of imagination, we wish to engage in a conscientious study of this canonical document among Sacred Scriptures.

On the Catholic Epistles, we shall examine them also, according to dating, authorship, style and theology.

I wish us wonderful insights and enjoyable studies!

Objectives

We expect the students to acquire some knowledge and deeper understanding of the theological issues addressed by the letter to the Hebrews and each of the Catholic Epistles. They should comprehend the interconnections among the Catholic Epistles. The students would appreciate, in general terms, the arduous journey of Hebrews and the majority of the Catholic Epistles into the canon of the New Testament, as probably the reason why some of them seem to have been neglected in scholarship. But above all, the student should consider them valuable, especially in our contemporary time.

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ASSIGNMENT

INSTRUCTION

The assignment is exclusively on the Letter to the Hebrews. The thirteen students should each take one chapter of the letter and analyze it according to the methodological approach indicated below. This is what we can describe as an Exegetical-Theological analysis of your chapter. The division is according to the alphabetical order of the class members.

Now, here are the contents of the methodological approach:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Contextual analysis**
3. **Structure of the text**
4. **Linguistic analysis of text: semantic and syntactic analysis (exegesis)**
5. **Theological examination of the text**
6. **Contemporary Application/Conclusion**

THE PAPER IS DUE ON OR BEFORE THE FIRST LECTURE AFTER THE EASTER BREAK (19th April, 2023).

INTRODUCTION

The letter to the Hebrews might have had a rough resonance in the process of admission into the NT canon, still it has irresistible qualities. This NT text is peculiar and singular. Its content reflects the sublime depth and magnificent beauty of God's in human words. The Hebrew document manifests this characteristic both in lexis and syntax, as well as in semantics and rhetorics. Furthermore, Hebrews can be observed to be theologically dense and Christologically innovative.

Therefore, it should be with great curiosity and abundance of imagination that we engage in our study of this canonical Scriptural composition.

Now, what is it about the letter to the Hebrews? The text of Hebrews 2:10 read:

[10](#) It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

We can simply interpret this text with the sense that God is bringing many children to glory. But what is glory? And what does it mean to bring to glory? God in himself is glory. Therefore, glory can be seen as God (see Exodus 3:22-23). And so, to say that God is bringing to glory means that he is bringing many to himself.

Now, according to the letter to the Hebrews, there is a personification of glory. In other words, God personifies his glory. He does this in and through his son, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:3).

But how does God lead to glory? The glory manifests through suffering. The reason is that suffering implies the act and process which purifies like gold (see Ps 12:6). And why does he bring to glory? The reason is that these many whom God brings to emanates from glory also (see Acts 17:28). God is the I AM in every human person (see Gen 2:7).

How does this glory feel? It can therefore be imagined that God's purpose, which is to bring many to glory, moves him to speak, especially through his son, in the eschaton. But who is God's son and what does he look like? Does the nature of this son say something about the glory to which God leads the many? To answer these questions, let us examine Hebrews 1:1-4. Now, since no one can give what one does not have, it is therefore insightful that Hebrews describes God's son as the embodiment of God's own radiant glory and stamp of God's own divine nature. Thus, according to this passage, the speech and the speaker both mirror the origin, the source, and the mouth piece of the speech topic - glory, and the leadership to glory. The glory is literally introduced in Heb 1:3. It is the glory as manifest in Jesus, the Son of God. The text says about him: "he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (1:3)." In the OT we can understand that the glory is God Himself (Exodus 3:22-23). And so, God is leading many of his children to himself. In fact, God is marching with many of his children along the path of life, which is the way of holiness. How God brings his children to this glory receives attention in the letter to the Hebrews. It begins right from the opening sentence: God speaks (Heb 1:1f). Thus, the author of Hebrews understands and presents God as speaking to his children. God enjoys communication with his people. Then, historically, God developed a crescendo in the pattern of communicating with his children. At the summit of this progressive pattern of God's speaking, he sends his Son as the last speaker. Consequently, the author of Hebrews sets out to communicate this "word of power" as the word of exhortation, which he enjoins his audience to endure (Heb

13:22). And so, in the letter to the Hebrews, we reflect on God's divine self-expression, self-communication, his leadership to holiness and the procedural and deepening manner of this speech act and speech making by God, and how the author of Hebrews proposes it as the word of exhortation calling for endurance. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, makes a sketch concerning how God leads and brings his many sons and daughters to glory (Rom 8:28-30). It is such a beautiful pattern of Divine process and path to holiness, turning God's children into God, which is actually the meaning of making holy. As it is said, God speaks and says: "you must be holy for I am holy." Holiness is not an option. It is not a choice. It is inbuilt in the structure of human exitus et reditus. Holiness is a process, which God initiates, directs, and accomplishes according to his purpose, the gift of his Christ, and in line with his plan (see Eph 1:4-6). No one would escape God's holiness. It is simply love in action!

Now, if the letter to the Hebrews can be described as God's speech in the process of leading many of his children to holiness, then we can talk about how holiness, which means life in God and which God commanded Israel has become the Word of God spoken directly and personally to human beings by the Son of God in person. This is the ultimate advancement and the summit of God's manner and patterns of speaking in history. The word of God that Jesus speaks in person to God's children is the word of holiness, which is also the word of instruction that the author of Hebrews enjoins his audience to endure. This endurance follows a process. Or it can be said to unfold according to a procedure. The author of Hebrews underscores this procedure by highlighting the qualities of the main protagonist of this letter - Jesus, the Son of God and Lord of glory. The author demonstrates Jesus greatness, unsurpassed and never will be surpassed glory through the literary device of comparisons.

The speech by the Son of God requires even closer attention than the previous ones. The Son's speech calls for absolute obedience. But can this be possible?

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS

Rhetorical Structure (according to K. Backhaus)

Exordium	1:1-1
Narratio	1:5-4:13
Argumentatio	4:14-10:18
Propositio	4:14-16 to 14:14-5:10
Paraenetic Excursus	5:11-6:20
Rhetorical Center	7:1-28; 8:1-10:18
Peroratio	10:19-13:21
Postscript	13:22-25

Five-divisional structure (according to A. Vanhoye): Didactic and Paraenetic

1:1-4 Exordium

I	1:5-2:18	Didactic
II	3:1-5:10	
	3:1-4:14	Paraenetic
	4:15-5:10	Didactic
III	5:11-10:39	
	5:11-6:20	Paraenetic
	7:1-28	Didactic
	8:1-9:28	Didactic
	10:1-18	Didactic
	10:19-39	Paraenetic
IV	11:1-12:13	
	11:1-40	Didactic
	12:1-13	Paraenetic
V	12:14-13:19	Paraenetic
	13:20-21	

13:22-25 Controversial Letter Conclusion

Hebrews Chapter One

Exordium

[1](#) Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,
[2](#) but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.
[3](#) He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
[4](#) having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Narratio: 1:5-4:13

[5](#) For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?
[6](#) And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."
[7](#) Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire."
[8](#) But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom."
[9](#) You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."
[10](#) And, "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands;
[11](#) they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing;
[12](#) like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end."
[13](#) But to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?
[14](#) Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Hebrews Chapter Two

[1](#) Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.
[2](#) For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty,
[3](#) how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him,
[4](#) while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.
[5](#) Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels.
[6](#) But someone has testified somewhere, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?"
[7](#) You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor,
[8](#) subjecting all things under their feet." Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,

[9](#) but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

[10](#) It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

[11](#) For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,

[12](#) saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

[13](#) And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me."

[14](#) Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

[15](#) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.

[16](#) For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham.

[17](#) Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

[18](#) Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Hebrews Chapter Three

[1](#) Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling, consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,

[2](#) was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also "was faithful in all God's house."

[3](#) Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.

[4](#) (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)

[5](#) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken later.

[6](#) Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope.

[7](#) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice,

[8](#) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness,

[9](#) where your ancestors put me to the test, though they had seen my works

[10](#) for forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and I said, "They always go astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways."

[11](#) As in my anger I swore, "They will not enter my rest."

[12](#) Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

[13](#) But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

[14](#) For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end.

[15](#) As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

[16](#) Now who were they who heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

[17](#) But with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

[18](#) And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who were disobedient?

[19](#) So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Hebrews Chapter Four

[1](#) Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

[2](#) For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

[3](#) For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "As in my anger I swore, 'They shall not enter my rest,' " though his works were finished at the foundation of the world.

[4](#) For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."

[5](#) And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest."

[6](#) Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

[7](#) again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

[8](#) For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day.

[9](#) So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God;

[10](#) for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.

[11](#) Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

[12](#) Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[13](#) And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Argumentatio 4:14-10:18

[14](#) Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

[15](#) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

[16](#) Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews Chapter Five

[1](#) Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

[2](#) He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness;

[3](#) and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

[4](#) And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

[5](#) So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

[6](#) as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

[7](#) In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

[8](#) Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;

[9](#) and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

[10](#) having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

[11](#) About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding.

[12](#) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food;

[13](#) for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness.

[14](#) But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Propositio 4:14-16

[14](#) Ἐχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας·

[15](#) οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πεπειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας.

[16](#) προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος, ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν εὐρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν.

[14](#) Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

[15](#) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

[16](#) Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Propositio 4:14-5:10

14 Ἐχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας·

15 οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πεπειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας.

16 προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος, ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν εὐρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν.

1 Πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἵνα προσφέρῃ δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν,

2 μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι καὶ πλανωμένοις ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς περὶκειται ἀσθένειαν,

3 καὶ δι' αὐτὴν ἡ ὀφείλει, καθὼς περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ, οὕτως καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ προσφέρειν περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν.

4 καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ τις λαμβάνει τὴν τιμὴν, ἀλλὰ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς περ καὶ Ἀαρὼν.

5 Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν γεννηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα, ἀλλ' ὁ λαλήσας πρὸς αὐτόν· Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε·

6 καθὼς καὶ ἐν ἑτέρῳ λέγει· Σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ,

7 ὃς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ δεήσεις τε καὶ ἱκετηρίας πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον σώζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων προσενέγκας καὶ εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας,

8 καίπερ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν,

9 καὶ τελειωθείς ἐγένετο πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ ἡ αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου,

10 προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ.

English

14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness;

3 and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

4 And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

[8](#) Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;
[9](#) and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,
[10](#) having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 10:19-25 in link with Hebrews 4:14-16

[19](#) Ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ,
[20](#) ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,
[21](#) καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ,
[22](#) προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως, ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ·
[23](#) κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῇ, πιστὸς γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος·
[24](#) καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων,
[25](#) μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν, καθὼς ἔθος τισίν, ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες, καὶ τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν.

English

[19](#) Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,
[20](#) by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh),
[21](#) and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
[22](#) let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
[23](#) Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.
[24](#) And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,
[25](#) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

[11](#) About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding.
[12](#) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food;
[13](#) for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness.
[14](#) But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 6:1-20

[1](#) Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God,
[2](#) instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.
[3](#) And we will do this, if God permits.

[4](#) For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit,
[5](#) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,
[6](#) and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt.
[7](#) Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.
[8](#) But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and on the verge of being cursed; its end is to be burned over.
[9](#) Even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation.
[10](#) For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.
[11](#) And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end,
[12](#) so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
[13](#) When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,
[14](#) saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you."
[15](#) And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise.
[16](#) Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute.
[17](#) In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath,
[18](#) so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us.
[19](#) We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain,
[20](#) where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-28

[1](#) This "King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him";
[2](#) and to him Abraham apportioned "one-tenth of everything." His name, in the first place, means "king of righteousness"; next he is also king of Salem, that is, "king of peace."
[3](#) Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.
[4](#) See how great he is! Even Abraham the patriarch gave him a tenth of the spoils.
[5](#) And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to collect tithes from the people, that is, from their kindred, though these also are descended from Abraham.
[6](#) But this man, who does not belong to their ancestry, collected tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had received the promises.

[7](#) It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

[8](#) In the one case, tithes are received by those who are mortal; in the other, by one of whom it is testified that he lives.

[9](#) One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham,

[10](#) for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

[11](#) Now if perfection had been attainable through the levitical priesthood—for the people received the law under this priesthood—what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron?

[12](#) For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

[13](#) Now the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

[14](#) For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

[15](#) It is even more obvious when another priest arises, resembling Melchizedek,

[16](#) one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the power of an indestructible life.

[17](#) For it is attested of him, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

[18](#) There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual

[19](#) (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

[20](#) This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath,

[21](#) but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever'"—

[22](#) accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant.

[23](#) Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office;

[24](#) but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.

[25](#) Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

[26](#) For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

[27](#) Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself.

[28](#) For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 8:1-10:18 – the rhetorical center

- [1](#) Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
- [2](#) a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.
- [3](#) For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.
- [4](#) Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.
- [5](#) They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."
- [6](#) But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises.
- [7](#) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.
- [8](#) God finds fault with them when he says: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;
- [9](#) not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord.
- [10](#) This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- [11](#) And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.
- [12](#) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
- [13](#) In speaking of "a new covenant," he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

Hebrews 9:1-28

- [1](#) Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary.
- [2](#) For a tent was constructed, the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the Presence; this is called the Holy Place.
- [3](#) Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of Holies.
- [4](#) In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;
- [5](#) above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail.
- [6](#) Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent to carry out their ritual duties;
- [7](#) but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people.

[8](#) By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing.

[9](#) This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,

[10](#) but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right.

[11](#) But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation),

[12](#) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

[13](#) For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified,

[14](#) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

[15](#) For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

[16](#) Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.

[17](#) For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

[18](#) Hence not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.

[19](#) For when every commandment had been told to all the people by Moses in accordance with the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people,

[20](#) saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you."

[21](#) And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.

[22](#) Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

[23](#) Thus it was necessary for the sketches of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these.

[24](#) For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

[25](#) Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own;

[26](#) for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.

[27](#) And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment,

[28](#) so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 10:1-18

1 Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin?

3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year.

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me;

6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

7 Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

8 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law),

9 then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.

10 And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins.

12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God,"

13 and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet."

14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds,"

17 he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Hebrews 10:19-13:21

19 Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,

20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh),

21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

[27](#) but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

[28](#) Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy "on the testimony of two or three witnesses."

[29](#) How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?

[30](#) For we know the one who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

[31](#) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[32](#) But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,

[33](#) sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

[34](#) For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting.

[35](#) Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward.

[36](#) For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

[37](#) For yet "in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay;

[38](#) but my righteous one will live by faith. My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back."

[39](#) But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

Hebrews 11:1-40

[1](#) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

[2](#) Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

[3](#) By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

[4](#) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks.

[5](#) By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God."

[6](#) And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

[7](#) By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

[8](#) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

[9](#) By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

[10](#) For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

[11](#) By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised.

[12](#) Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

[13](#) All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth,

[14](#) for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

[15](#) If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return.

[16](#) But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

[17](#) By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son,

[18](#) of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you."

[19](#) He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

[20](#) By faith Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau.

[21](#) By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, "bowing in worship over the top of his staff."

[22](#) By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial.

[23](#) By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

[24](#) By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter,

[25](#) choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[26](#) He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward.

[27](#) By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible.

[28](#) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

[29](#) By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.

[30](#) By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days.

[31](#) By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

[32](#) And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—

[33](#) who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

[34](#) quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

[35](#) Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection.

[36](#) Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.
[37](#) They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—
[38](#) of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.
[39](#) Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised,
[40](#) since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

Hebrews 12:1-29

[1](#) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
[2](#) looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
[3](#) Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.
[4](#) In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.
[5](#) And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children— "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him;
[6](#) for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts."
[7](#) Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?
[8](#) If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children.
[9](#) Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live?
[10](#) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness.
[11](#) Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
[12](#) Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,
[13](#) and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.
[14](#) Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
[15](#) See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.
[16](#) See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal.
[17](#) You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.
[18](#) You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest,

[19](#) and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them.

[20](#) (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.")

[21](#) Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.")

[22](#) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

[23](#) and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

[24](#) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

[25](#) See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven!

[26](#) At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven."

[27](#) This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

[28](#) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe;

[29](#) for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 13:1-21

[1](#) Let mutual love continue.

[2](#) Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

[3](#) Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

[4](#) Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

[5](#) Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

[6](#) So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

[7](#) Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

[8](#) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

[9](#) Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them.

[10](#) We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat.

[11](#) For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

[12](#) Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.

[13](#) Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.

[14](#) For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

[15](#) Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.

[16](#) Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[17](#) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you.

[18](#) Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

[19](#) I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon.

[20](#) Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

[21](#) make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:22-25 - Postscript

[22](#) I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

[23](#) I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you.

[24](#) Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings.

[25](#) Grace be with all of you.

Notes

On the schema of a three-divisional structure

- All three large parts are each a mini-speech of its own, composed of an opening, central argumentation, and intensification at the end. Thematic enclosure (inclusions) does not only care for the rounding off of materials, but they also signal the leading themes: In I, there is the theology of God's word (1:1f.; 4:12f.), in II, the High priesthood of Jesus (4:14-16; 10:19-23), in III the faith, which is supported by God's word and priesthood of Jesus (the result of I and II) – heavenly life, which is guaranteed and orientates itself on models (10:22, as well as 10:38f.; 13:7).