

**THE TABERNACLE AS A HEURISTIC DEVICE IN THE INTERPRETATION
OF THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

BY
ANNANG ASUMANG

The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect those of the South African Theological Seminary.

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I am extremely grateful to the Lord for granting me this opportunity to reflect on His eternal Word and for the direction of His Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth, to Dr Bill Domeris, my supervisor, whose patience and wisdom has guided me through this, to Dr Anthony Akobeng for proof reading the earlier versions and to my wife, Edna and our children; Christine, John and Paul for putting up with me through the early hours of wake and the whole time that I have appeared pre-occupied. To them, I dedicate this meager contribution to understanding God's Word better.

ABSTRACT

The Christological argument of the epistle to the Hebrews is presented as a series of comparisons and contrasts of Jesus the Son of God and our eternal High Priest, with the angels, Moses, Joshua and Aaron. There is no consensus among Biblical scholars regarding the reasons for these comparisons. Suggestions have ranged from the author's polemical or rhetorical strategy to dissuade faltering Jewish Christians from defecting back to Judaism, to a pastoral strategy of expounding the glorious honour of Christ in order to encourage suffering and persecuted believers.

Examination of the expositions of the epistle shows that each of these comparisons is framed in a space or place. Some of these spaces are real physical places; others are metaphorical, utopian or virtual spaces. Jesus is compared to the angels first in heaven, and then in the world. He is compared to Moses and Joshua in the house of God and to Aaron in the Holy of Holies. Using sociological and literary theories in Spatiality to examine the expositions, this thesis will demonstrate, that the author of Hebrews has organized his argument based on these *a priori* spaces, that the comparisons are a reflection of the contested nature of spaces and that they exhibit elements of territoriality and hierarchy of personalities based on power and knowledge.

The pattern of arrangement of the spaces in the epistle, together with the nature of the theological and figurative argument in each space also indicate that the author uses the spatiality of the Pentateuchal wilderness camp and tabernacle as a typological heuristic device in structuring the exposition. By comparing the expositions of Hebrews with its exhortations through this lens, the thesis will also show, that the author uses the typology of the wilderness tabernacle as his primary vehicle to channel his pastoral teaching aimed at addressing the problems of social liminality and spiritual malaise of the congregation. The implications of this approach for understanding the epistle's argument and a modern application of the theology of the wilderness tabernacle are also briefly discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The epistle to the Hebrews has been likened to “a work of art from another time and place – a medieval stained glass window, for example, whose general meaning and beauty are clear enough, but whose style and details are strange and puzzling” (Davies 1967: 1). Ellingworth, in his monumental commentary on this epistle hilariously assesses the difficulty of the modern interpreter of Hebrews as comparable to “a journey through patchy fog. In places, the path is obscure...From time to time, the sun shines through...” (1993: 70).

Among the several features of this epistle which has learnt it dubious accolades such as being “an enigma” (Gager 1983:180), “strange and perplexing” (Scott 1922: 1) “difficult” (Evans Jr 1985:20), “as strange as the figure of Melchizedek” (Matera 1999:185), “bracing and challenging” (Wright 2003: x), with “a reputation for being formidable and remote from the world in which we live” (Lane 1991: xii) and its argument as “nihilatory” (Salevao 2002:343), is its pre-occupation with comparisons. Indeed the epistle’s teaching on Christ are hinged around comparisons. The revelation of God through Jesus is emphasized to be final and replaces the fragmentary revelation through the prophets. Jesus is shown to be “so much better than the angels” (Heb 1:4) and with a “more excellent name”(Heb 1:4). “He has obtained a more excellent ministry...He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was built upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). His mediatorial blood “speaks better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:24). He was made a “little lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7, 9) but is now crowned with glory and honour. He is “counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Heb 3:3) and Joshua, who failed to give the Israelites lasting rest, is by implication compared with Jesus who provides the people of God with everlasting rest. Aaron and the Levitical priesthood are elaborately compared with Christ and shown to be “lesser” (Heb 7:7), belonging to a priesthood of a “fleshy commandment” (Heb 7:16), of a faulty covenant (Heb 8:7) and a

temporary and imperfect ministry. Jesus on the other hand “by one offering... has perfected forever those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:14).

This is clearly a peculiar way of presenting Jesus to the reader, quite unlike the other books of the New Testament. What is the purpose of these comparisons, why did the author find it necessary to compare and contrast Jesus to the angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron and the Levitical priests? By what criteria does he¹ choose these individuals for comparisons and how does this relate to the pastoral purpose of this sermon?

These comparisons are not restricted just to the Christology of the epistle. The word “better” is used thirteen times² to compare different subjects such as the hope of the believer as being better than that which the law provided (Heb 7:19), a better resurrection awaits the people of God (Heb 11:36) and the inheritance of the saints in heaven is much better than their earthly possessions (Heb 10:34, 11:16, 40). The word “more” is also used twenty three times,³ among other things, to compare various subjects such as the attention to be paid to the word spoken by the Son (Heb 2:1) relative to that spoken through the angels, the heavenly tabernacle in which Christ serves is “greater and more perfect” (Heb 9:11) and Abel’s sacrifice as “more excellent” (Heb 11:4) to Cain’s. The heaven that Jesus enters is described as “higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26), the way into it is “new and living” (Heb 10:20) and the salvation He provides is eternal (Heb 5:9, 9:12, 15). Even the standing posture of the priests as they ministered in the tabernacle is compared with Christ’s sitting position at God’s right hand as He intercedes for the saints in the heavenly tabernacle (Heb 10:11-12). The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of heifers are compared with the blood of Christ as being ineffectual in purging away sins (Heb 9:13-14).

These other comparisons are however secondary to the primary comparison of Jesus with the other persons. As Cullmann succinctly puts it, “early Christian theology is

¹ It is assumed, based largely on the masculine singular, λέγω in Heb 11:32, that the writer of Hebrews is male.

² Heb 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6 [twice], 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24

³ Heb 1:4; 2:1; 3:3 [twice]; 6:17; 7:15; 8:6, 12; 9:11, 14; 10:2, 17, 18, 25, 26; 11:4, 32, 36; 12:19, 25, 26, 27; 13:19.

in reality almost exclusively Christology” (1963: 2-3). Christology is at the centre of this epistle’s theology. The author’s foremost concern was to prove that Jesus is higher, better, more superior, and more faithful, and that His work is final. The implications of this superiority are then presented; that the covenant He inaugurates, the ministry He fulfils, and the eternal rest and blessings He provides are therefore better, superior and everlasting. Why does the author do this? Why was proving the superiority of Jesus so important to him?

1.1 THE RELEVANCE OF THE QUESTION

Such a question may be judged to be fundamental to the interpretation of the Christology of Hebrews. If the reasons for the comparisons and criteria for the choices of persons for the contrasts could be identified, then a very important obstacle to interpreting this epistle is removed. And since the Christology of Hebrews is foundational to the whole theology of the epistle (Macleod 1989: 291-300), understanding how the comparisons contribute to the argument would perhaps remove some of the enigma and mystery unfairly attached to this epistle. For the modern interpreter of the epistle, these comparisons may seem rather redundant. Since Jesus is God, and Hebrews emphasizes this perhaps more clearly than any other book of the New Testament, it should be evident that He is more superior and better, indeed incomparable, to any other person. Any comparison is at best straining what is obvious. Without an adequate understanding of the reasons for this, the modern reader, as suggested by Dahms, may be forgiven for describing the argument as “overdone” (1977: 365). It is therefore legitimate to investigate what purpose the author aimed to serve in comparing Jesus with the angels and other persons.

1.2 REVIEW OF SOME SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION

There have been several attempts to deal with this question. The answers may be grouped into those that view the comparisons as polemical, as a liturgical language of worship, as a rhetorical strategy in persuasion and other pastoral responses to a crisis.

These are not mutually exclusive interpretations and several scholars combine a number of them.

1.2.1 A Polemic against Judaism

Based on the belief that the addressees of this epistle were in danger of defecting to Judaism, the comparisons have been interpreted as an attempt by the author to show that Jesus is superior to the mediators of the old covenant and the pillars of Judaism. The author, it is argued, was using these comparisons to point out that his readers would be defecting to an inferior religion if they did. This interpretation dates as far back as the second century during the time of Tertullian⁴ (AD 220) who, perhaps inadvertently, had implied by his Latin rendition of the title of the epistle that it might be read “tract against the Hebrews”. Chrysostom, writing in the fourth century notes that Hebrews “shows that not the Jewish, but ours are the sacred [institutions]” (*Homilies*, Webpage). For the humanist scholastic commentators of the reformation era such as Erasmus (1993), the polemic in Hebrews was against a lower form of religion, represented by the old covenant. Some commentators (See Daryl, 1990:171 for list) have posited that the contrast with angels was an attempt to correct a heretic angelomorphic Christology. Hebrews however, as noted by Koester, has “no explicit polemic against angels or an angelic Christology in the remainder of the speech” (2001:200).

In its extreme form, the polemic interpretation understands the comparisons as being anti-Semitic. Freudmann posits that the argument of Hebrews was a reflection of the “preoccupation of Christian writers in the late first century with demonstrating the superiority of Christianity over Judaism” (1994:150). This, she believes, was due to the writers’ anxiety to avert the real danger of desertion of Christians for the Mosaic faith. Sandmel in a less provocative manner nevertheless concludes that the “supersessionist” message of Hebrews regards Judaism as a “worthy but imperfect preparation” (1978: 122) for Christianity. A recent presentation of this interpretation of Hebrews is by

⁴ In his treatise *On Modesty*, Chapter XX [Ante-Nicene Fathers 4:97b], he uses the Latin title *Ad Hebraeos* (against the Hebrews) instead of the traditional *Pros Hebraeos*.

Salevao (2002) who employs Berger and Luckmann's sociological concept of legitimation to investigate the theology of Hebrews. He argues from the premise that the community behind Hebrews was shaped by socio-historical forces, which influenced the theology of the epistle. They were under external pressures from persecution (out group conflict) and internal disharmony (in group conflict), which required a response to consolidate the "plausibility structures" within the group in order to maintain it. The author of Hebrews tries to maintain the community's "symbolic universe" by the "creation and strengthening of group structures" (2002:151). The author's polemic is aimed at establishing and maintaining the separation from the religious body, i.e. Judaism, from which the group originated. The theology of Hebrews is therefore an "ideology legitimating that separation" (2002:195).

Such polemic interpretation of Hebrews is however difficult to support from the text itself. As pointed out by Williamson, this interpretation incorrectly approaches Hebrews "as though it was written from the Christian side of a wide divide between Judaism and Christianity" (2003:266). The epistle never refers to "church", or "Christian" or "Jews" or "Gentiles". Its "hall of faith" (Heb 11) uses giants of Judaism such as Abraham, Moses, Samson and David as positive examples for the people of God to revere and emulate. Despite the epistle's insistence that the old covenant is about to "vanish away" (Heb 8:13), it teaches more continuity than discontinuity of the people of God. The truth is Judaism is never defamed or belittled in this epistle. To the author, "there is not two but one "household of God", of which both Moses and Jesus are members" (Isaacs 1996:145). The polemic interpretation is therefore inadequate to account for the epistle's contrasts and comparisons.

1.2.2 A Liturgical Catechism

The liturgical interpretation of the whole argument of Hebrews is perhaps one of the oldest of the traditions. Simply put, as by Just, the epistle's message is that "the Lord (Christology) is present (Sacramentology) in his church (Ecclesiology) both now and not yet (Eschatology)" (1996:3). This interpretation regards the comparison as part of the

language of liturgy, exalting the presence of the redeeming Christ among his people. The emphasis of this interpretation therefore is one of worship.

The influence of the language of Hebrews on the liturgy of the early church is demonstrated by the use of it by Clement⁵ and the second Vatican Council⁶. Its use in worship may have been influenced also by the profuse reference the epistle makes to Psalm 95, a Jewish psalm of call and guide to worship (See Kidner 1975:343, Ellingworth 1993:10). Thus the comparisons have been interpreted as a replacement liturgy for Jewish Christians. Bruce, for example, refers to Guilding who suggested that the selection of the Old Testament passages in the early chapters of Hebrews appears to be “based on the readings for Pentecost in the three successive years of the triennial lectionary” (1990:26). Pfitzner similarly believes the comparisons had something to do with worship. The “cultic language is taken from Old Testament texts that must have played a role in the community’s worship. Hebrews asserts the certainty of faith in the context of the Christian cultus” (1997: 20). Indeed to him, “every climactic point in the Letter is a statement about worship” (1997: 28). According to Lindars, “what the readers need is renewed confidence in the value of the Christian liturgy...[and their]...participation in the liturgy more than anything else provides the practical program which the readers need” (1991:105).

This liturgical interpretation of the comparisons and contrasts in Hebrews is illustrated by the treatment in Dunnill’s published monograph (1992). He begins in his foreword by noting that Hebrews for centuries has been used far more for devotional purposes than for its theology because of its liturgical language. The epistle is not actually an argument but a “liturgy, a symbolic action in the sacred sphere: more particularly, a covenant-renewal rite” (1992:261). Using Wilson’s sociological categorization of sects to apply to Hebrews, Dunnill suggests that the recipient community may be regarded as an “Adventist sect” who had broken off from the

⁵ 1 Clement 40:2, 5 uses parallels between the Christology of Hebrews and the Levitical priesthood to set out the orders of ministry in the church

⁶ Heb 5:1 is used to support the appointment of priests (Abbott W M, *Documents of Vatican II*, 1966, p. 536)

mainstream Jewish community because of their faith in Christ. Their separation had created much chaos and liminality, similar to the people of Israel at the edge of the Promised Land, as depicted in the book of Deuteronomy. The epistle enacts a covenant renewal rite which helps expose the presence of God in their midst. Applying Levi-Strauss' structuralist methodology informed by insights from social anthropology, Dunnill argues that the author of Hebrews attempts to re-organize the Jewish cultic liturgy by "reference and allusion to a network of ritual and narrative symbols" (1992:149) drawn together to portray the ideal image of life before God. This liturgical interpretation therefore sees the comparisons as a replacement language of worship among Jewish Christians in the first century.

Dunnill's is generally a more positive appraisal of the theology of Hebrews than the polemic interpretation and his assessment that the presence of God among His people is central to the argument of Hebrews is probably correct. His argument is however based on a number of assumptions, which are difficult to sustain. His major premise that ritual religion was very important in mainstream second temple Judaism and that this break away group desperately needed a replacement ritual theology is not born out by the evidence (See Isaacs 1992: 15-67). In any case it is the rituals described in the Old Testament scriptures which engaged our author rather than what pertained at the time of writing. The author was more interested in re-interpreting the Old Testament rituals than replacing them with new ones. The liturgical, like the polemic interpretation does not give adequate weight to the way the comparisons were designed by the author to contribute to addressing the pastoral situation that the writer of Hebrews attempts to deal with. The next two groups of interpretations attempt to bridge this "pastoral gap".

1.2.3 A Rhetorical Strategy of Persuasion

The rhetorical interpretation posits that these comparisons are part of the author's rhetorical strategy at persuading his hearers to embark on a specific action. Though the

rhetorical flourish and eloquence of Hebrews had been well noted for centuries⁷, it is only in “the last two hundred years” (Koester, 2001:80) that its genre as a homily or sermon has been more fully appreciated. This period has also coincided with increasing application of rhetorical criticism to biblical studies and several authors⁸ have investigated aspects of the epistle using classical Greek rhetoric guidebooks. Rhetoric, as defined by Koester “is the art of persuasion” (2001:82), which, based on Aristotle’s rhetorical handbook (*The Art of Rhetoric*), may be classified into three types: judicial, deliberative and epideictic. The initial application of rhetorical criticism to Hebrews focused on what may be called “stylistics” i.e. investigation and classification of what type of rhetorical style is employed by the homily. According to DeSilva, identifying the rhetorical style of the epistle would enable the reader “to discern the fundamental issue in the situation addressed by the text and the principal goal of the author for the people in that situation” (2000:47).

The very first classification by von Soden, (See Lane 1991: lxxvii), suggested that Hebrews, in eliciting judgment from its hearers on what Christ has done for them, was a judicial speech with a five part structure: a prologue, statement of the case, argument on the plausibility of the case, demonstration of the proof in favour of the argument and a peroration. This forensic classification was soon abandoned and a debate has, in the last three decades, ensued whether Hebrews is an epideictic or a deliberative rhetoric (see DeSilva 2000:47). Lindars (1989: 382), for example, classified Hebrews as a deliberative speech because its rhetoric consists of the twofold characteristics of advising and dissuading the hearers. Attridge on the other hand believes Hebrews is an epideictic speech because it celebrates the “significance of Christ and inculcates values” which are commonly shared with the hearers (1989: 14).

The comparisons and contrast of Jesus with the other persons, in epideictic rhetorical terms, are called *synkrisis* and were commonly used in eulogies and funeral orations (See Olbricht 1993: 375-87) to praise the dead person, based on the nobility of

⁷ Augustine called the opening an *exordium* (Augustine, *Patrologia Latina*; 44. 137), Origen noted that as compared to Pauline letters “the epistle is better Greek in the framing of its diction” (Eusebius, 1989:202)

their ancestry, their physical excellence, achievements, wealth etc. Thus DeSilva observes, “The comparisons of Jesus and the angels, Moses, and levitical priests – all of which serve to underscore the greater status or accomplishment of Jesus – belong to an epideictic mode of discourse” (2000:54). Hebrews, he suggests, is following the Aristotelian recommendation to heighten praise through comparisons. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle teaches:

Again, if you cannot find enough to say of a man himself, you may pit him against others ...[T]he comparison should be with famous men; that will strengthen your case; it is a noble thing to surpass men who are themselves great. It is only natural that methods of “heightening the effect” should be attached particularly to speeches of praise; they aim at proving superiority over others, and any such superiority is a form of nobleness. Hence if you cannot compare your hero with famous men, you should at least compare him with other people generally, since any superiority is held to reveal excellence.

(Aristotle, tr. Roberts 1954, Book 1, Chapter 9, Webpage)

DeSilva however admits that Hebrews “cannot be reduced to a eulogy” (2000:54). The author of Hebrews is not merely attempting to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus but is involved in “an extended development of a topic of amplification, magnifying the value of access to God made possible by Jesus” (2000:55). The attempt to classify the rhetorical style of Hebrews, though of some benefit results in a near impasse, which limits its contribution to resolving the question as to why the comparisons and contrasts are made in the first place. Thus as affirmed by Watson, “making Hebrews conform to the typical elements of arrangement now seems forced” (1997: 187). Indeed some of the most recent commentaries (Koester 2001:82, De Silva 2000:57 & Isaacs 2002:16), have accepted the presence of both deliberative and epideictic elements in the epistle and one would have to agree with Black II that “In both theory and practice, the identification of the species of rhetoric affords a relative, not an absolute, indication of the primary intentions of a speech” (1988: 5).

⁸ For example Buck (2002), DeSilva (2000); Worley (1994: 223-36), Evans (1988).

Koester (2002:103-123) approaches the rhetorical analysis of the comparisons in Hebrews differently. Since, according to Aristotle (*Rhetorics*, Bk. 1, Ch. 2), persuasion results from the interplay of three factors - the character of the speaker, the content of the speech and the disposition of the hearers, a combination of good logic and stimulation of the emotions of the hearers is fundamental to achieving this persuasion. One can therefore analyze a speech by investigating how the speaker intended to influence and persuade the hearer at various stages of the oration. In Hebrews, “the arguments appeal primarily to logic, but digressions and perorations often appeal to the emotion” (2002: 103). Koester divides Hebrews into five sections, each section serving a different rhetorical function. The exordium, (Heb 1:1-2:4), is not part of the main argument, but is preparatory to it” (2002: 104). The main thesis of Hebrews is that “Jesus was crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, opening the way for others to follow (2:9a)” (2002: 112). The thesis is followed by a series of arguments in support of it, punctuated by “digressions in which the author interrupts the flow of thought in order to appeal for attention and to warn about the dangers of spurning God's word” (2002:105-106). The comparisons in the first two chapters of Hebrews, are not meant to address the situation of the hearers directly, but have “an important preparatory function” (2002:107), i.e. to sharpen the argument. The comparison with Moses for example is to prove the greater glory of Jesus after his voluntary suffering. Similarly, comparing Jesus to Aaron results in the reader’s appreciation of the greater honour of Jesus who “did not glorify himself by seeking the priesthood, for he was exalted to that position by God” (2002: 112).

Koester’s analysis of the rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews is very useful. Rather than categorizing the whole epistle into one form or another of a rhetorical style, the emphasis on identifying the strategy in the different sections of the epistle is a very insightful one. His identification of the theme of suffering and glory as central to the theology of Hebrews, though not universally agreed upon, is likely to enhance the debate on the theological center of the epistle. Though his approach underlines the role of the comparisons and contrasts in the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews, it seems to relegate their function to one of an “effect” in sharpening the argument rather than being actually part of the argument. In categorizing the comparison of Jesus with the angels as part of an

exordium designed to prepare the hearer for the main argument, Koester also de-emphasizes an important component of the author's teaching i.e. the role of angels in this world and the world to come. Angels occupy a very important role in the section that Koester identifies as the epistle's thesis (Heb 2:5-9); the comparison with Jesus in the exordium may therefore not just be "preparatory".

1.2.4 Other Pastoral Responses to a crisis

The group of answers that may be regarded as "other pastoral responses" analyze the exhortations and warnings in Hebrews to identify what the pastoral situation of the original addressees may have been. Based on this composite picture, an attempt is made to fit it with the doctrinal expositions, which contain the bulk of the Christological argument⁹. It is argued that Hebrews is intended by the author to be a short "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22) and thus one should start from examining the exhortations to find out the reasons for the comparisons. This in itself is not a very easy undertaking since, as noted by Attridge the epistle contains "numerous hortatory elements.... [I]t urges the addressees to take the word of God seriously ...to hold fast to a traditional confession ...to strive to enter the promised rest...to approach boldly God's gracious throne...to follow in Christ's footsteps...to live a life of faith, hope and love...to endure...to imitate Jesus...to pursue peace and sanctity..." etc (1990: 211). There was clearly a problem of spiritual lethargy in the community that the author aimed to address. Lane therefore suggests, "the failure of nerve on the part of the community addressed, evidenced by the paranaetic warning sections, occurred because of an inadequate Christology, an inadequacy the writer is endeavoring to address in the expositional sections of the discourse" (1991: cxxxviii). Jesus is compared to angels, Moses and the Levitical priests to show his superiority so that the readers would "grasp the full significance of Christ" (1991: cxxxviii). Whereas this may serve to explain the

⁹ All the above responses have been aimed at reconciling these two genres in Hebrews to varying degrees, including those such as Koester (2002) who regard the exhortations as "digressions". The present group of pastoral approaches however views the exhortations as the primary purpose of the author in his homily and the expositions lay the ground for these exhortations.

comparison with angels and Moses, it is difficult to see how showing that Jesus is a more superior priest would have served to invigorate a lethargic congregation¹⁰. As suggested by Dahms the repeated comparisons are “quite overdone if the only concern is for the steadfastness and maturation of the readers” (1977: 365).

Another possible source of the crisis facing the community was external pressure of varying forms. As summarized by Lehne “The text furnishes hints of suffering and abuse, impounding of property and imprisonment, which point to official (state) persecutions (Heb 10:32-34). This recurring “external” threat is matched by the “internal” problem of unclear allegiance to Christ” (1990: 121). If that is the problem, how do the comparisons and contrasts help the first readers? Cockerill suggests that Heb 13: 9-16 holds the key. He believes that the main external pressure was that the people “were tempted to participate in certain ceremonial meals that were celebrated by Jews throughout the Roman world and were associated with the sacrificial rites in the Jerusalem Temple” (1999:17). The author of Hebrews was exalting Christ and the new and living way He has made for them in order to dissuade them not to participate in these rituals. This however does not seem to paint the full picture since it does not account for all the other emphases in the epistle. Gordon on the other hand suggests that the problem with the community was one of inadequate understanding of the theology of mediation in the new covenant. He asserts that the author “sets out to demonstrate the uniqueness of Christ as divine Son and as heavenly priest, and the sufficiency of his self-offering to deal with the problem of human sinfulness” (2000:19). But this fails to adequately explain the comparisons.

One of the most detailed and sustained attempts to address the reasons for the comparisons is by DeSilva, in four of his published contributions (1995, 1996, 1999, 2000). He employs ancient Mediterranean social anthropological insights such as honour and shame and patron-client paradigm to investigate the question. He assesses that the root of the problem with the community behind Hebrews was one of loss of honour. This was particularly acute for such a minority (predominantly) Jewish Christian group. They

¹⁰ Except perhaps they were former priests, as suggested by Karl Bornhauser (See Bruce 1990: 7)

had suffered a significant loss of dignity and honour as a result of becoming Christians. Using part of Heb 12:2 as his “catchphrase”, DeSilva suggests that the author saw “shame” as a major obstacle to the spiritual growth of the congregation. The Christians had “adopted a lifestyle that, in the eyes of their pagan neighbors would have been considered antisocial and even subversive” (2000:12). This, together with their loss of property and status in the society had provoked contempt; they were “stripped of their reputation...on account of their commitment to an alternate system of values, religious practices and social relationship” (2000:16). To the first century Mediterranean personality, the “shaming techniques” (2000:66) and loss of honour in “the public court of opinion” (1995: 81) was very debilitating. Since “honour and shame are the primary tools of social control” (2000: 64), the social and psychological effects of the loss of reputation by this community cannot be underestimated. The minority groups in the Mediterranean region set up their own “counter-definitions” of honour and “alternative courts of opinion” but the pressure on believers to defect was immense.

According to DeSilva, the writer of Hebrews responds to the situation in several ways. Firstly, he emphasizes the principle of reciprocity in the context of patron-client relationship. Jesus is portrayed as the superior broker and patron to this minority group who gives them access to God, the ultimate Benefactor. The “language expressing the greatness or superiority of Christ joins the assertion of experiencing God as Benefactor through Christ and the dire warnings against acting so as not to dishonour or affront the One presently known as Patron” (1995: 210). A second strategy was to warn them, with the severest of language characteristic of the breach of patronal relationships, that “the result of God’s wrath is the people’s loss of access to the promised benefit” (1995: 252). Thirdly, the author points to an alternative court of opinion, the “court of God” where the values are different from the world. The comparisons illustrate how this court operates.

The contribution of DeSilva to the unlocking of what has remained a challenging issue in Hebrews is helpful. The language of honour and shame, he is right, pervades the whole epistle and the attempt to interpret Hebrews using these values is a very laudable one. The application of patron-client relationship to the Christology of Hebrews have been criticized however as “strained” (Nongbri 2003: 269) because it does not account

for the severity of the language in the epistle when compared with that of ancient Greco-Roman patronal relationships.

In a summary then, these four groups of answers have all exposed several dimensions to the answer to the question; but none on their own has been adequate. It may therefore be useful to re-examine the question from another angle, from the perspective of spatiality.

1.3 THIS STUDY

The question remains: why does the author of Hebrews compare Jesus to angels and other persons? Examination of the text shows that the comparisons in Heb 1 – 7 are framed in different places, locations or spaces¹¹. When in Heb 1, the author compares Jesus to the angels; he describes a scene of the heavenly assembly, with God the Father, Jesus the Son and the angels. In Heb 2 where he, again compares the angels with Jesus, the space is the inhabited world with human beings, the devil, the angels and the Son. In Heb 3 – 4 where he compares Jesus to Moses and Joshua, in relation to the wilderness community, the place is the “house of God”. When after his extended exhortations in Heb 5, he returns to the doctrinal expositions in Heb 7, Jesus is compared with the Aaronic high priests, and the space is the Holy of holies. Remaining in the Holy of Holies, the author in Heb 8 – 10, examines the various Day of Atonement rituals associated with this space and compares them with the ministry of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle, before proceeding to make his applications in Heb 11-13. Each of the comparisons is therefore framed in the context of these spaces and the question should hence be put in a fuller sense: i.e. why does the author compare these persons in these places? A number of scholars (Isaacs (1992 & 2002), Koester (2001), & Dunnill (1992)), have noted the changes in the spaces that follow the evolution of the epistle’s argument but its

¹¹ Geographers make very nuanced differences between these terms, even though they are often used interchangeably in ordinary conversations. A full definition will be dealt with in the next chapter, but it will suffice to say that “space” is used as the general term, which when discussed in terms of how individuals relate to it or to different parts of it may be termed “place” and when discussed in relation to other places may be termed “location”. Spatiality is the paradigmatic framework that studies the conditions and practices of persons and their social life in relation to their spaces and linked to the relative and hierarchical positions of individuals and groups in regard to one another.

significance, especially when viewed in relation to the comparisons and contrasts, as far as I am aware, has not been fully explored.

It is one's contention that the author is not merely choosing and comparing persons, perhaps arbitrarily for the rhetorical effects, but is, at least, mindful of the locations and places in which these persons are situated. It is even possible that the places and spaces are his primary choices and that the comparisons of the persons are secondary to the locations he has chosen. Space, together with time, constitutes every society's fundamental cultural presuppositions and subtexts. They are the "intellectual scaffolding" (Toulmin 1990:116-117) on which societies frame their understanding of the world. As Kant described it in his *Critique of human Reason* (1929, Webpage), space is an *a priori* concept that allows us (together with other *a priori* concepts such as time) to structure, systematize and understand our experiences. There is commonly, a "givenness" about the way we think about space but it often serves as the background framework for authors of various texts in the expressions of arguments and narratives. Indeed the story of Adam and Eve is heavily influenced by spatiality. When the Bible says in Gen 2:8, "And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And there He put the man whom He had formed", a clear pointer as to the spatial importance of this narrative is being given. When they violated God's holy law and they heard the voice of Jehovah walking in that garden, another expression of spatiality is being made. God's pronouncement; "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9) is filled with spatial significance and His punishment for man's sin is heavy with spatial language when "God sent him out from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken" (Gen 3:23). We shall return to the Garden of Eden later but the point here is that the Bible takes spatiality very seriously. We do well to explore God's word not only from the historical and social aspects but also from the spatial perspective.

I shall attempt therefore to use spatial theories as applied to biblical studies to investigate the reasons for Hebrews' comparisons of the persons in the places. The main tenets of critical spatiality is that spaces, both perceived and conceived, especially when represented in texts, are permeated with ideologies of territoriality, of knowledge, power and of hierarchical relationships. Ideological arguments or narratives are sometimes

structured according to spatiality and that in these spaces; human relations are presented as one of hierarchy, power and knowledge. David Harvey aptly puts it this way:

Places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artifacts and intricate networks of social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings, and desires (most particularly with respect to the psychological pull and push of the idea of “home”). They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutionalized social and political-economic power”

(Harvey 1996:316)

Thus one believes that the application of critical spatiality to the question could illuminate the argument of Hebrews further. If one can identify a pattern in the way the author of Hebrews organizes his spatiality, one may be able to better understand the rationale for these comparisons and hopefully the purpose of the Christology of Hebrews.

1.3.1 THE HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses for this study will therefore be:

- a. That the writer of Hebrews organizes his Christological argument according to a series of spatial representations, which suggests that he, uses the tabernacle as a heuristic device.
- b. That the wilderness tabernacle, the events surrounding its construction and its cultic practices provided the heuristic background for the author’s Christology.
- c. That the Christology of Hebrews, viewed from this angle, would “fit” with the exhortational parts of the epistle and so serve the author’s pastoral intentions.

1.3.2 THE PLAN OF STUDY

This study has three more chapters and a conclusion. In the next chapter titled “Critical Spatiality, Territoriality and Biblical Studies”, I shall set out a detailed

methodology¹² by which critical spatiality may be applied to Biblical studies. Because the application of spatiality to biblical studies is relatively new and the spatial theories themselves are many, the chapter will be elaborate and present some applications to illustrate the methodology's usefulness to biblical studies in general. The following chapter, titled "Spatiality, Territoriality and the Christology of Hebrews" will provide an analysis of Hebrews 1-7¹³ using the methodology. In the next chapter, "The Tabernacle and the Christology of Hebrews", one will set out four series of arguments: textual, theological, sociological and pastoral, to explain why it is postulated that the series of spaces which frame these comparisons is a typology of the wilderness camp and the tabernacle. It will be demonstrated that the author draws important theological and spiritual lessons from this typology, which addresses the socio-cultural problems facing this congregation. The conclusion follows in the final chapter and will enumerate the advantages of the approach and the implications and questions, which remain to be answered.

1.3.3 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It remains for one to highlight some of the limitations inherent in this study. The application of a methodology that is relatively new to biblical studies to answer an age-old and difficult question in a rather challenging book of the New Testament is certainly bound to have some problems. It is for this reason that I shall explain some of the possible pitfalls that one has identified and tried to limit as potential sources of error in this study. Hopefully by setting them out at this stage and explaining how I have attempted to deal with these issues, I shall, not only gain the reader's sympathy, but more importantly point to the limitations that need to be kept in mind in examining this study.

¹² It may be appropriate for the methodology of this study to be classified as sociological study (See Domeris, 1991:215-234). Though critical spatiality will be used initially to explore the epistle, the detailed analysis of the text will involve both sociological and structural methodology.

¹³ The analysis is focused on Heb 1-7 because of the concentration of the doctrinal Christological exposition in these chapters. The rest of Hebrews, especially Heb 8-10, will be examined in the later parts of the study.

The first group of limitations is related to the text of Hebrews itself. Hebrews has, since the second century, remained challenging to biblical scholars for, among other reasons, its lack of adequate historical background to contextualize it, and also for its heavy use of vivid symbolic and metaphorical language. In relation to the first problem, I have limited myself in this study to what is generally agreed among the major and recent commentaries as “the predominant scholarly” position on the historical background of the epistle. Thankfully, the argument of this study does not depend very much on what one believes is the ethnicity of the original recipients of the epistle (whether Jewish, Gentile or mixed), or the date of writing (whether before or after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem), or the geographical location of this congregation (whether Rome, Corinth, somewhere in Asia Minor such as the Lycus Valley or even Palestine). Hebrews is assumed to be a non-Pauline epistle, but it would not matter much for this study if it were Pauline. The socio-cultural factors necessitating the content of the homily will largely be derived from the exhortations of Hebrews, and assumed to be a combination of various factors, ranging from socio-political, religious and intra-group social dynamics rather than one single issue.

As for the vivid use of figures of speech by Hebrews (See Koester, 2001: 92-96), one can only agree with Davies, “Hebrews is a work of art. It may well attract us with its magnificent language, its vivid images, and the sweep and subtlety of its argument” (1967:1). It seems that there are two possible extremes in approaching the interpretation of a book such as Hebrews, which “takes you along...and...turns hearing into sight” (Longinus as quoted by Koester 2001:92). The one extreme is to literalize the author’s metaphoric language to the point of anachronism. As aptly demonstrated, by Domeris in relation to the use of metaphors by Jeremiah, some “scholars have been tempted to go beyond the metaphorical level and have, in the process, created a myth” (1999: 261). This potential source of error is very real in regard to Hebrews. The nearly Gnostic or mystical interpretation of Hebrews, as illustrated in its use by the Latter Day Saints and sections of the Seventh Day Adventists, is one signpost to be avoided.

The opposite extreme is the reticence in investigating what these symbolic and metaphorical language mean. For “an unusually important document because of its distinctiveness and clarity of its witness to Jesus Christ” (Lane 1991: cxxxviii), our

inadequate understanding of what is conveyed by the symbolic language clearly impoverishes our knowledge of Christ. As Ellingworth observes, “the letter’s use of Christological language is often tantalizing in its allusiveness” (1993:71), and any negation or reduction of the force of the meaning of the symbolic language, I believe, will affect our understanding of the Christology therein.

I have used some guidelines to try and stay the “straight and narrow” path. The epistle’s typological use of the Old Testament should serve as guide in the interpretation of these symbols. A good grounding and understanding of semiotics, especially the socio-linguistic aspect of it, and as related to biblical studies is also necessary (See Halliday 1978, Durranti 1997 & Calloud 1995). The role of semiotics in the methodology of this study will be set out in detail in chapter two.

The other source of limitations to the study emanate from the methodology of critical spatiality as applied to biblical studies, in particular the nature of the spatial theories employed in critical spatiality. Humanity’s fascination with what exactly constitutes space and the philosophical speculations as to how it may be manipulated dates far beyond antiquity to the time of Anaximander of Mellitus (611 – 547 BC) (See Dictionary of History of Ideas, Webpage) who postulated a spatially unbounded entity. Yet even a simply agreed definition of what space is has continued to be elusive. The academic interest in spatiality has invited theories across disciplines spanning philosophy, physics, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, sociology, political science, geography, linguistics, literary criticism, mathematics, critical theory, film and theatre studies, theology and biblical studies, to name just a few. Each discipline has its own internal disputes among experts over definitions and theories. The theories themselves seem to change over time. Even Einstein’s theory of the relativity of space, time, matter and energy, which for decades, was the bedrock of spatiality in physics, is now being challenged and new quantum spatial theories are being proposed. Added to this are the different nomenclatures, terminologies and classifications in spatiality by the different authorities within the same disciplines. This is clearly a major impediment to the application of the theories in biblical studies. I shall, while trying to stay clear of disputes that I am incompetent to even fathom, let alone resolve; select several relevant theories

for discussion before they are applied to biblical studies. These, I suggest, illustrate a pattern of reflection on space, human relations and the way they are represented in texts.

There is also the question of how applicable a twentieth century theory could be to a first century Mediterranean historical situation. Can we confidently recover ancient biblical conception and perception of space? Is it methodologically correct to “retroject” these theories unto biblical times? These are not easy questions and detailed analysis of all these issues and challenges is beyond the scope of this thesis. The problems however are real and must be confronted. I shall address some of these questions in relation to the methodology in the next chapter. Validation of the methodology will be made by illustrations, application and references to their use in the literature. Thankfully, I have benefited tremendously from the resources available from the website¹⁴ of the Constructions of Ancient Space Seminar.

One area of concern regarding application of some recent spatial theories to biblical studies needs discussion. The discipline of postmodern geography has produced tremendous insights into human-place relationships through several spatial theories e.g. by Foucault, Lefebvre and Soja. Typical of its “difficulty to pin down”, the term, “postmodernism” itself is not clearly defined, but it juxtaposes itself against “modernism” and is associated with elements of subjectivity, pluralism, relativism, deconstruction and often imprecise language. It disavows grand overarching theories and values different and diverse perspectives of the same reality (See Kynes 1997, Middleton & Walsh 1995). Soja’s definition of spatiality as “a substantiated and recognizable social product, part of a “second nature” which incorporates as it socializes and transforms both physical and psychological spaces” (1989: 118) is one example of sometimes vague, impenetrable and imprecise language.

Postmodernism has brought along with it several challenges to Christian theology, which for centuries had been more aligned with modernity’s way of thinking. There are significant dangers inherent in a non-critical application of postmodernism to biblical studies. The Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God, and is authoritative and

¹⁴ <http://www.cwru.edu/afil/GAIR/Constructions/Constructions.html> accessed in November 2004 to February 2005.

“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). We study it in order “to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb 2:1). We go to the Bible not to listen to our own or others’ voices but rather allow it to be the “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Certainly not all interpretations of God’s word are equally valid. Malina has described postmodernist approach to biblical texts as a return to the romanticism of the nineteenth century. His evaluation of “postmodern literary criticism” for example is that:

In this perspective “a text has a life of its own”, and whatever meanings a reader derives from a “text” is as valid as the meanings any other readers might propose. While this may work for the so-called New Criticism and Post-Modernism, it is totally silly in social life. Even such critics do not believe that “texts” such as a restaurant bill or a summons to court or a contract to buy a house has a life of its own.

(2000: 6-7)

On the other hand we must avoid the extreme of blanket rejection of all that postmodernism has to offer evangelical hermeneutics. As Anderson has noted, “the postmodern vision of reality approaches more closely the biblical view than the vision of the so-called modern period” (2001: 21). A complete analysis of the relationship between postmodernism and biblical studies is beyond the scope of this study. It suffices however to say that I share Vanhoozer’s (1996) analysis and principles for biblical hermeneutics in the postmodern world: that “readers can legitimately and responsibly attain literary knowledge of the bible...[but that]...reading is never straightforward... that the kind of literary knowledge that emerges at the end of this study...will be one that is chastened, not absolute” (1996: 25). The ultimate goal of all biblical studies, in my opinion, is to discover what God is saying through His word to His people. If the application of a methodology, though infused with postmodern presuppositions, leads us to hear the One who has, “in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb 1:2), let us not “refuse Him who speaks” (Heb 12:25). It is therefore to this methodology that we now turn.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL SPATIALITY, TERRITORIALITY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

Because the Christological argument of the epistle to the Hebrews are presented as comparisons and contrasts that are framed in various spaces, an adequate methodology for its exploration will require one to follow two important steps. One should initially foreground the spatiality of the exposition for investigation. This investigation should then be followed by an assessment of how the spatial pattern is related to and influences the overall presentation of the argument of the epistle. A satisfactory methodology should therefore be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of a space and how do persons interact with it?
2. How are spaces represented in literature?
3. How did the Bible making communities understand and relate to their spaces?
4. What procedures should one employ to analyze the spatiality of a Bible passage?
5. How does the epistle to the Hebrews use spatiality in its argument?
6. If there is a pattern in the spatiality of Hebrews, what is its significance?

This chapter will attempt to answer the first four questions. Question five will be the subject of the next chapter, and question six will engage us in chapter four of this study.

2.1 THE NATURE OF SPACES AND PLACES

2.1.1 Definition of Space and Place – The Ideas

A discussion of the nature of “spaces” immediately runs into major difficulties due to problems regarding its definition. Aristotle’s statement in *Physica* (BC 384-322) remains true even today, that: “The question, “what is place?” presents many difficulties. An examination of all the relevant facts seems to lead to divergent conclusions” (*Physica*, Webpage). We must nevertheless attempt to understand “space”, even if we have to abstract our discussion for sometime, so that we will be able to adequately study how it

impacts and is impacted by persons. A simple definition from a dictionary is insufficient for such an endeavor. The *Webster's Handy Dictionary* (1992:759) defines a space as “the continuous expanse in which things exist and move; a portion of this...2. The interval between points or objects; an empty area. 3. An interval of time...” This definition conceptualizes space as “emptiness”, or a “container” and excludes the “spaces” occupied by the things, points and objects that exist in it. Such a mathematical concept of the nature of space is incomplete, static and not suited for analysis. It does not reflect how the “objects” in the “space” interact with it. It also ignores the cognitive aspect of space, i.e. the spaces, which occupy the architect or cartographer’s plans on paper or the computer, and the spaces of one’s imaginations and dreams. To fully understand the nature of space, we need to start from an examination of ideas about it, and consider the several theories, models and constructs concerning it. We start then with the etymology of “space”.

2.1.1.1 Etymology of “Space”

An etymological study (See Dictionary of History of Idea, Webpage) of “space” exposes its multiple dimensions. The English word “space” is derived from the Latin, “*spatium*” meaning; room, area, distance and a stretch of time. Though this indicates the utility of space, it does not expound what space is, except that it gives its sense as a container. The commonest Hebrew word for space, “*makom*” also has many different meanings ranging from undefined places to actual meaningful places like the synagogue, the homeland, divinity and even the female body. The Greek language also suffers from similar difficulties so that the term “*topos*” could mean chaos, cosmos, infinity or void.

2.1.1.2 A Brief History of Spatiality

Space then has multi-dimensional features and a historical review of the evolution of western thought about space (See Casey 1997 & Hugget 1999) may help in elucidating its nature further. This of necessity has to be brief, selective and perhaps appropriately begin with the pre-modern era of the Greek philosophers. Anaximander of Miletus (610 – 546 BC), the author of the first extant works of western philosophy, speculated that the

primary essence of all things is not a particular substance, but is the “boundless” or the infinite. To him therefore space eventually becomes time without boundaries which continues in succession to be swallowed up into infinity, called the “boundless”¹⁵. He is also credited with drawing the first map of the world; a cylindrical disc of land surrounded by the ocean (See Dilke 1985: 22-23). Parmenides (515 -? BC) after Anaximander taught that reality is a single, whole and unchanging entity. Anything that is said to change did not exist and it is impossible to think or talk about what does not exist. Nothing exists which did not exist and nothing changes which did exist. Motion, which together with space and time engaged the Greek philosophers at this time, was, according to Parmenides, therefore an illusion. Though clearly wrong in his conclusions, the critical question Parmenides raises regarding spatiality is its epistemology; i.e. how may we know the nature of space? Zeno (495? – 435 BC), who was a disciple of Parmenides and regarded by many as the father of Stoicism, attempting to counter his former teacher’s argument, postulated the concept of the paradox of spaces, noting that if everything was somewhere, then every place is in place which must also be in a place; resulting in an infinite regression of spaces. This rather absurd conception of space again raises the question as to how spaces or places relate to each other. Plato (427-347BC) on the other hand understood space to be the totality of geometric relations. Space to Plato is an entity that is an extension of the object. Matter and the space it occupies are therefore the same. Aristotle (384-34BC), in *Physica* interacts extensively with previous Greek philosophers and begins to investigate what the boundaries of objects and their spaces were. He concludes that a place is “the innermost motionless boundary of what contains” (*Physica*, Bk. 4 Chp. 4 G3r, Webpage).

From these Greek philosophers, we learn that one cannot talk about space intelligently without talking about the places of objects in it; that places are defined in some way by their boundaries; that spatiality necessarily involves evaluation of the way objects relate to each other, i.e. their locations, and in the case of humans, their social relationships; and that time has a close relationship with space.

¹⁵ This concept of the interchangeability of space and time does always lie in the background of Greek thought and as we shall observe later in this study is also present in Hebrews. Hebrews for example regards the “world” as an “age” which is passing away.

Following the Greek philosophers, interest in space begun to diverge into the different disciplines, mainly geography, cosmology and mathematics. Euclid (300BC), who was a Greek mathematician, developed what is now called Euclidean or Cartesian principles of geometry; that is the mathematics of spatial relationships. The spatial focus of the first millennium and a half was dominated by cosmological disputes, with Ptolemy (127-151 A.D), Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564–1642) and Kepler (1571-1630) postulating different theories about the universe. In the modern era, Descartes (1596-1650) applied Euclidean geometry to algebra and philosophy and rejected the concept of the existence of a vacuum. Though he emphasized the subjective nature of human senses, he re-asserted the difference between a body and the space it occupies. Perhaps Descartes’ main contribution for our purposes was his succinct distinction between space and place. “The terms place and space, however, differ in signification, because place more expressly designates situation than magnitude or figure, while, on the other hand, we think of the latter when we speak of space”(Descartes Webpage).

Isaac Newton’s (1642-1727) contribution¹⁶ to our study is from the discipline of physics and mechanics. By this time, ideas about spaces were hardening into theories and he postulated that space and time are absolutes, and that space is something separate from the body or object that occupies it. Time is equally an absolute reality which passes uniformly without regard to whatever happens in the world. He distinguished “absolute space” from the measurements we make of it which he called “relative space”. Similarly, our measurement of time is relative to actual and absolute time. In Newton we see an important distinction being made between how humans perceive or form a notion of space and the space itself. The two are related but the perception and conception of it may differ from the space itself. Newton’s views were challenged, notably by his contemporary and German mathematician, Leibniz (1646 – 1716) who attempted to “relativise” Newton’s “absoluteness” of space. Leibniz defined space as “the order of coexisting things, or the order of existence for all things which are contemporaneous” (Leibniz, fifth letter paragraph 29: Webpage). In other words, space is the relationship

¹⁶ Among his major contributions are the laws of gravity, calculus, discovery of the composite nature of white light and the three standard laws of motion.

between things in time. To Leibniz, space is not really substantive but, like time, are orders that the mind applies to human phenomena.

The debate as to whether space is substantive (Newton) or relative (Leibniz) was very important and engaged philosophers and natural scientists alike. Kant (1724-1804) would epitomise this dual aspects of spatiality in the modern era. In his earlier inaugural essay (1797) he had supported the notion of the absoluteness of space. Later on in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), he tried to reconcile the two positions and postulated that space was a human invention; “forms of intuition”, as he called it, or subtexts which influences our behaviour and interpretation of our sensations. Space and time were not just properties of the objects we perceive but also “projections”, an *a priori* conception by the observer himself which allows us to systematize and understand our experience with it. Einstein (1879-1955), moved the debate further in postulating the inter-relatedness of space, time, matter and energy. All of these become variables in a relationship, none of them being fixed. Space is therefore relative to the speed and motion of the observer. The contraction of space results in, according to Einstein, the dilatation of time. Also of note is the gradual merger of the original dichotomy between what space really is and how we perceive it. The two, one ontological and the other, epistemological become fused together in the postmodern era and results in new theories of spatiality spread across all the academic disciplines.

2.1.1.3 Summary of History of Evolution of thought about Space.

A summary of the history that one has set out will be helpful before we proceed. The Greek philosophers, in trying to grapple with the nature of space, oscillated between it being a reality and being an illusion. They appreciated a relationship of space with time, some philosophers such as Anaximander dared even to suggest that space is swallowed up in infinite time. They emphasized that space has boundaries which serve as medium of interaction with other spaces. They disputed whether an object was the same as the space it occupies, but they clearly understood that a space has meaning which is related to, if not imposed, by the object which occupies it. The distinction between places and spaces were therefore set. When the investigation of spatiality is picked up by the post-reformation natural scientists and philosophers, the debate about the absoluteness or

relativity of space is also resumed. The contribution of human experience and perception of space was pitted against what space in reality is. They agreed though that a meaningful analysis of space can only be done in the context of the relationship of the places and the objects within it, and of its relationship with time. In a summary then, it becomes clear that the analysis of space should consider that it has multiple dimensions, that our conception and perception of space influences and is influenced by space itself; that these conceptions and perceptions are reflected in how humans relate in and with space.

2.1.2 A Working Definition of Space and Place

Based on the above, our working definition of space will be, that *it is an aspect of reality which incorporates ideas of distances, directions, time and orientation and which is intimately affected by and reflected in human perceptions and conceptions of it, and their relationship with each other.* The working definition of “place” is perhaps easier, and here one borrows Walter Brueggemann’s: A place is

a space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued.

(Brueggemann 1977: 5)

2.2 HUMAN INTERACTION WITH SPACES AND PLACES – THE THEORIES

If spatiality involves the exploration of the nature of the interaction of persons within and with spaces, is there a predictable pattern to this triangular relationship? The answer may be found in the disciplines of anthropology, postmodern philosophy, human geography and critical theory. In anthropology we shall discuss the contributions of Eliade and Bollnow. Eliade’s contribution provides the opportunity to discuss Isaac’s *Sacred Space Approach to the Theology of Hebrews*, (1992) which is of relevance to our study of the spatiality of the Christology of Hebrews. In relation to postmodern

philosophy we shall review Foucault's contribution before we discuss the principles of territoriality in human geography.

2.2.1 Mircea Eliade - Sacred and Profane Spaces

Eliade's concept of Sacred and Profane spaces has influenced the anthropological analysis of religious behaviour in varying environment for the last forty years. Eliade categorizes "religious man" as "man of all pre-modern societies" (1987:12) and postulated that pre-modern humans basically related to their environment based on their religious beliefs. "For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others"(1987:20). The modern human is basically different in that unlike the pre-modern person, space is experienced as homogenous, with no distinction between the sacred and the profane. A sacred space is first identified by a hierophany, i.e. a divine miracle associated with "the manifestation of something of a wholly different order...the revelation of an absolute reality" (1959:11, 21). Sacred Space is also characterized by order, which Eliade calls, the Cosmos, to differentiate it from the surrounding Chaos.

To indicate his or her meeting place with the gods following the hierophany, religious persons would build a special monument, usually a vertical structure such as a pole or pillar, a tree or a temple whose top is nearest to the sky, which is the home of the gods. This point, Eliade describes as the *axis mundi*, "the meeting point of heaven, earth and hell" (1987:12). Sometimes, the top of a mountain becomes the *axis mundi*, and in places where there are no mountains, the religious person builds sacred pyramids such as those of Egypt or the Babylonian ziggurats. This point becomes the centre of the world for the religious person, i.e. the *imago mundi*. The rest of his or her settlement is built outwards centripetally from this centre (On sacred space as a microcosm of the universe, see Turner, 1979).

Eliade's binaric typology of spaces as either sacred or profane has found wide application in the theology of worship and biblical studies and provides an avenue for studying the spatial dimensions of religion and human religious behaviour. Of particular interest has been the role of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in the theology of the Old Testament. As noted by Lindquist, temples in the ancient near east "manifest two

modes of symbolism; cosmic symbolism and paradise symbolism” (1984:71). Kunin (1998) also examined sacred space in Judaism from an anthropological structuralist perspective and categorized them into two types: the static (e.g. the temple or synagogue) and dynamic (e.g. the tabernacle) that is dissociated from location and is based more on objects, people and activities. Levenson (1985) has also investigated the parallels between the Jewish temple and the Garden of Eden; suggesting that “it is reasonable to assume that some in Israel saw in Zion the cosmic mountain which is also the primal paradise called the Garden of Eden” (1985:131). In the New Testament, Luke’s generally positive attitude towards the temple of Jerusalem reflects a similar theology. Malina (1986) on the other hand has argued that in the New Testament church, sacred spaces were no longer fixed impersonal spaces. “Sacred space is located in the group, not in some impersonal space like a temple. The group is the central location of importance, whether the Body of Christ, the church...the story of Jesus ...becomes the portable exportable focus of sacred space.” (1985:38). That the New Testament Christian community were characterized as house, household and temple illustrates how the Old Testament notion of sacred space had been replaced.

2.2.1.1 Isaac’s Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews

Isaacs’ (1992) monograph points to the extensive interest of Hebrews in spatial imagery, especially the temple of Jerusalem, noting that Jerusalem was “the quintessence of the land, and the temple, the quintessence of Jerusalem” (1992:84). She argues that the epistle’s pre-occupation with the wilderness tabernacle and the nature of the author’s use of the Old Testament suggest that the addressees were Jewish Christians. The epistle was written sometime after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and was meant to address problems resulting from the sense of loss of this important sacred space; “to move the Christians away from the hope for a restoration of the old order” (1992:67), and to redirect their vision to an alternative sacred place, i.e. the heavenly temple. To Isaacs, the theological emphases of Hebrews were an attempt to find a way to continue the faith without the sacred temple of Jerusalem. Unlike the Jerusalem temple, this heavenly sacred place was secure and indestructible. There, Christ has already arrived having

persevered during His own pilgrimage into the heavenly holy of holies. Thus to Isaacs, the organizing theology of Hebrews is one of “pilgrimage to the heavenly celestial city, the place of eternal rest” (1992:87). Isaacs emphasizes that Hebrews’ spatial language was not influenced by Greek metaphysics or Gnosticism but is a reflection of the Old Testament’s tradition of pilgrimage to the sacred temple of Jerusalem. She however warns that the spatial imagery was more of a vehicle for the author’s eschatology rather than his cosmology. Regarding the central question of why the author compares Jesus with angels, Moses, Joshua and Aaron, Isaacs posits that this was not to show the inferiority of Judaism but rather to demonstrate that Christians now had something even better. She does not directly relate the comparisons to the spatiality of the epistle.

We shall revisit Isaacs’ suggestion regarding the significance of the spatial pattern in Hebrews at the end of the next chapter. For now it is important to note how she successfully uses the typology of sacred and profane spaces to explore the deeper structure of the epistle and its organizing theology. Her conclusion regarding the theme of pilgrimage to heaven also coincides with that of other scholars such as Käsemann, and we shall indeed find in the next chapter that this theme is pervasive in the epistle, though as I shall suggest, it is not the primary vehicle for the spatiality of the epistle. Perhaps the hitch with Isaacs’ methodology is her fundamental assumption that the epistle was written sometime after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. As she admits in her subsequent commentary (2002:13-14), her late dating of the epistle remains a minority scholarly view.

2.2.1.2 A Critique of Eliade’s Sacred and Profane Spaces

Despite the widespread popularity and utility of Eliade’s typology of places as sacred or profane, there are several criticisms that may be leveled against it. Its characterization of pre-modern human and his or her relationship to space as wholly religious is clearly anachronistic and does not consider the socio-political and ecological factors which shapes humanity’s behaviour. “Sacred spaces”, even for the pre-modern person, served other non-religious functions such as social, agricultural, economic and political purposes. Eliade’s emphasis on the hierophany as the major feature of a sacred space; has also been questioned by Smith who believes that, frequently, sacred spaces are

chosen by humans (rather than by the gods), who through rituals consecrate them for religious use. “Within the temple, the ordinary (which to any outside eye or ear remains wholly ordinary) becomes significant, becomes sacred, simply by being there...there is nothing that is inherently sacred or profane” (1987:104). One other criticism that may be leveled against Eliade’s typology is its binarism; that a space is either sacred or profane. This becomes of little use in the New Testament context. Jesus’ statement to the Samaritan woman in John 4:21-24 for example throws Eliade’s distinctions into confusion.

2.2.2 O F Bollnow - The Anthropology of Spaces

Bollnow’s anthropological theories of space address some of the weaknesses in Eliade’s typology of spaces. The German philosopher and phenomenologist is credited by some as responsible for the first comprehensive evaluation and practical application of the inseparability of man and his places, which he describes as the “phenomenology of space”. His voluminous *Mensch und Raum* (“*Man and Space*”, 1963) is unfortunately not yet translated into English¹⁷; but its influence in modern architecture has been described as phenomenal. Bollnow defines space as an ambivalent “medium” which is dialectically constructed between subject and environment, between human (physical and psychological) dispositions and environmental conditions. Space to all persons, is not homogenous but a pluralistic ecological implant bound to the cultural perspective of humankind. In contrast to Eliade, Bollnow asserts that the cosmic and metaphysical dimension of places is only secondary to humanity’s simple relationship with it as a dwelling, where usual mundane activities occur¹⁸. Based on his central belief that it is from our experience of space as “dwelling” that our cosmological conception of space

¹⁷ I rely here on Nold Egenter’s online translation and commentary on the book in the Internet Journal of Architecture entry of 12/8/2002, at the following website: http://www.cetarchis.org/archi-journal/view_index.asp?id=26&flag=7 accessed on 4th March, 2005

¹⁸ This point is demonstrated by the way the “ordinary” threshing floor in the Old Testament; is transformed eventually into the site for the construction of the temple of Jerusalem, and becomes a metaphor for the apocalyptic judgment by Jesus as prophesied by John the Baptist in the New Testament. For a thorough exploration of the theology of the Threshing floor and its spatiality, see Matthews (2003: Webpage).

develops, Bollnow asserts: “The anthropological significance of the house has to be rediscovered today” (1963:137).

Bollnow also discusses the question of humanity’s orientation in a space. Humans would initially set up a central point in a given place for orientation, which Bollnow calls the “zero or fixed point”, from where they would depart and return. There may be more than one zero points in a community; perhaps a church building, post office and a market, but these points are hierarchically conceived in the community, so that one zero point is more important than the other. Bollnow suggests that human psychological conception of space moves through four developmental stages: there is an initial primary spatial confidence, followed by fear of homelessness which gives the feeling of being lost, then there is the institution of the house to provide the needed security and protection and is followed by a higher organizational type of security in the wider environment. Thus security is at the heart of humankind’s psychosocial relationship with places. Bollnow’s theories are mirrored in the work of other human geographers such as Tuan (See Johnson and others (2000) & Carter and others, (1993)).

Some of these concepts are being applied in the archaeology of rock art and the study of the spatial arrangement of remains of buildings in the cities of ancient Mediterranean regions. These could help explicate the socio-cultural nature of domestic, family life and house churches in early Christianity. Balch, for example, has investigated the archaeology of the Roman *domus and insulae* (apartment houses) in the ancient city of Pompey and concluded among other things that his findings do “not sustain the current consensus that early Pauline house churches were necessarily small or that they were private” (2004: 41) (See also Santiago 2004:69-81 & Richardson 2004:47-68).

Having surveyed some aspects of how humans relate to places in the religious, physical, cognitive and psychological aspects, the next question to ask is how do persons relate to other persons with regard to spaces and places. It is to the post-modern French Philosopher, Foucault, and the American human geographer, Robert Sacks that we turn for our answers.

2.2.3 Spatiality, Power, Knowledge and Heterotopias in Michel Foucault

Foucault (1926-1984) was a French philosopher whose influential works are applied across several disciplines from philosophy, cultural studies, history, education, architecture, sociological studies to urban design, theology, literary studies and management studies. His work is of interest to this study for two reasons: his interesting classification of spaces, and his development of the social theory that links spaces with knowledge, hierarchy and power relations among humans.

In his *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault (1986) postulates that spaces have a dialectical relationship with each other. He describes all spaces as “heterogeneous” and classifies them generally into three groups:

1. Real Places – the physical ecological and social environment of humans, which he qualifies as “simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (1986:24).
2. Utopias: Which Foucault defines as “sites with no real places. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down...” (1986:24)
3. Heterotopias: Foucault is quite interested in this group of spaces which he defines as “counter sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopias in which the real sites, all the real sites can be found within the culture...” (1986:24). Places like cemeteries, libraries, museums, brothels, monasteries, military camps, theatres etc are heterotopias which act as mirrors exposing the nature of real places.

Of much interest to our study is the relationship Foucault saw between spaces and the hierarchy of human social relationships. Foucault regarded space as “fundamental in any exercise of power” (Rainbow 1984:252) and in his major work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), he discussed the way in which spatial positioning and arrangement leads to empowerment of certain individuals and groups to the disadvantage of others. It is important to note that Foucault’s understanding of power is sociological, and one that may largely be defined as “the dynamics of influence between humans”, rather than the usual connotations of power as means of control or coercion of other persons. In this respect he understands power as one of the most pervasive factors in human relationship and this is particularly reflected in human spatial arrangement. The power, which

operates within spatial dimensions, according to Foucault, is embedded in a hierarchical system, which involves proximity, distance, inclusion and exclusion and is often expressed in terms of contests between persons in the space. This contest is not necessarily open confrontations but is observed sometimes, subliminally, in human behaviour and attitude. It is also expressed by the manner in which discourses are made between individuals¹⁹.

Many of Foucault's ideas on spatiality and power are developed through close observations of persons in institutions such as prisons, military camps, hospitals and asylums and hence have drawn criticisms regarding its applicability. In *Panopticon* (1979), he observes that the inmates of a prison are arranged in a certain spatial relationship "to induce in the inmates a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1979: 201). Spatial configuration or arrangements in space is to "ensure a certain allocation of people in space, a canalization, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations" (Rainbow 1984: 253). With regard to the military camp, Foucault observes that equally, the arrangements in space of the tents and houses for the various activities in the camp are according to a hierarchical system to "produce through architecture a pyramid of power" (Rainbow 1984:255).

Foucault also links the power relations in spaces to knowledge by coining the hybrid word, "power-knowledge", to distinguish it from the coercive power of sovereigns, kings and rulers. As Hetherington notes, "...space and place are seen to be situated within relations of power and in some cases within relations of power-knowledge" (1997:20). By knowledge, Foucault refers to the knowledge of the techniques of transforming people's behaviour, the effects of ideological, and in our case, theological, information, which works through people in a place to influence their behaviour. Thus ideology (or theology) affects knowledge, this knowledge is reflected in hierarchical and power relationships between people, and is related to the spatiality of the persons. It is here that the ideological tone of Foucault's work becomes very obvious and draws criticisms²⁰. For

¹⁹ As we shall see in chapter three, I suggest that, if my understanding is correct, this is at the root of the comparisons in the epistle to the Hebrews.

²⁰ For criticisms of Foucault's work, which includes his exclusion of human determinism and agency, and his nihilistic interpretation of power dynamics in human relationships, see Janicaud (1992).

our purposes, it is the effects of spatiality on the dynamics of power relations that are of much more interest to us. One other medium through which the power relations between humans is played out with respect to spatiality is through the concept of territoriality and it is to Sack that we turn for further insights.

2.2.4 The Concept of Territoriality

Sack is a human geographer whose work on how humans relate to places in respect to power relations, termed territoriality, has found wide application not only in international relations, conflict management and geo-politics but also in biblical studies²¹. Sack defines territoriality as “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area . . . [T]erritories require constant effort to establish and maintain” (1986:19). Territoriality involves a system of social classification and ordering, with the use of cultural rules, boundary setting and social organization. The phenomenon has been studied in relation to animal behaviour and is evident in the way parents exercise control of their children by delimiting areas in the house that are made out of bounds. Robert Sack’s model has three foci: firstly the way space is classified has territorial undertones. Binary classifications such as private against public, mine against yours, sacred against profane, male against female are all systems that enable humans to claim control of the power dynamics in places. Secondly the way these classifications are communicated, mostly by discourses, signals, symbolic gestures, and other such behaviour and attitude. These are, thirdly, meant to control access to the places and maintain the delimitation of the space as expression of the power and territorial claims of the persons.

2.2.5 Putting it all together, a framework for Spatiality

We have come far in trying to identify the nature of spaces. It has been observed that space is real and substantive, but it is more than a container for people and objects. It

²¹ See Jerome Neyrey’s application of territoriality to biblical studies in the following publications: 2003:69-102; 2002: 60-74; 1994:77-91 & Webpage.

interacts with people, objects and time, and in ways, which introduce elements of relativity to the relationship. This relationship with humans, which turns a space into a place, is made up of an intertwining network combination of physical, mental, human experience, psycho-social, cultural and religious dimensions. It has been noted that virtual spaces, spaces in one's imaginations, dreams, visions, utopian descriptions and even that of the architect's conception of a spatial plan for a building or construction of a whole city have important characteristics which interact with one's behaviour and are worth studying. We have explored how humans relate to each other in respect of places; that it is characterized by the behaviour termed territoriality. A study of spatiality should take all these into consideration. As Cresswell describes it, "by acting in space in a particular way the actor is inserted into a particular relation with his/her society's ideology" (1996:17). In Foucault, we have found a very important description of the nature of human relationships when places are concerned. This behaviour is governed by a hierarchical power relation, which is influenced by knowledge and expressed in different ways. As he puts it, spaces are "simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (1986:24) (For more on postmodern spatiality, see Lefebvre (1990) and Soja (1996)). Hetherington's summary of spatiality is apt for our purposes:

First, space and place are not treated as sets of relations outside of society but implicated in the production of those social relations and are themselves, in turn, socially produced. Second, space and place are seen to be situated within relations of power and in some cases within relations of power-knowledge. Power is said to be performed through spatial relations and encoded in the representation of space or as "place myths". Third, spatial relations and places associated with those spatial relations are seen to be multiple and contested. A place does not mean the same thing for one group of social agents as it does for another

(1997:20)

What has not yet been explored is how space is represented. For, in biblical studies, what we are dealing with is textual representation of spaces. A place in reality can be different, sometimes significantly so, when it is represented in a textual form. As Flanagan observes, "something is lost when space is translated into words or texts"

(2001: 1). We will therefore need to examine some of the ways in which space is represented in texts.

2.3 THE REPRESENTATION OF SPACES IN LITERATURE.

2.3.1 Biblical cartography

A place may be represented in literature in visual or textual form. Visual representation includes, pictures, artistic images, architectural designs and maps. There are several theoretical approaches to visual representations of space, but for our purposes we shall make a few comments about biblical cartography. Maps, which are representations of the cartographer's perception and conception of the spatial arrangement of the features of a landscape, are influenced by the same factors in spatiality, as previously discussed. Maps are not necessarily the exact replica of what is on the land, they reflect the perception, conceptions and prejudices of the mapmaker. Thus Flanagan observes: "Contrary to the belief that maps are neutral, mimetic representations of real physical and social worlds ...social theory is demonstrating that maps, like other texts, disguise social contexts and impose their own hegemonies of power and privilege" (1999:21).

In biblical narratives, maps are presented as series of villages, cities, towns, rivers, mountains, deserts and other locations. As pointed out by Cornelius, the series of locations are "'scriptural maps" because of the specific ideology behind them and the ecclesiastical function of such maps" (1998:218). When one reads a series of towns in the Bible; the order in which they are presented, the actual selection of towns and cities to the exclusion of others, the comments on some of them, the emphasis made on some while others are de-emphasized and the historical background of the locations are all very important in interpreting the passage. (For more on Biblical Cartography, see Dozeman 2003: 449-466). These representations of spaces "encompass all of the signs and significations, codes and knowledge, that allow [corresponding] material practices to be talked about and understood..." (Harvey 1989:218).

2.3.2 Textual Representation of Space

Literary theories on the textual representation of space abound. There are two categories that we are interested in; those that deal with the narrative plot of the “story”; whether historical, rhetorical argument or even a poetic presentation; and those which deal with the semiotics of space.

2.3.2.1 Space in the Narrative – Hayden White, Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman

The spatial emphasis of a narrative could be a very important key to unlocking the message or plot of the story. It is however more common for writers and readers alike to use temporal sequencing of the component events (as opposed to the spatial sequence) as their framework for presenting a historical narrative. Hayden White is an American professor of Comparative Literature whose application of literary criticism to the reading of history has revolutionized the way history is read and understood. In his *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (1973), White questions the prevailing philosophy of History, which accepts that the narrative presentation of events by a historian is exactly the time sequence of the events as they happened. He posits that all historians approach the writing of history by arranging the events in the temporal sequence that will provide a meaningful plotline. The story is arranged in a certain order, stressing some, ignoring or de-emphasizing others; so that questions of why, what, when, where, how etc. are answered. The events themselves would not necessarily have happened in exactly that same order. Unfortunately, White’s theory has been interpreted by some in an overly skeptical manner to imply that no historical presentation is reliable. This Nietzschean interpretation of White, represented by the maxim “no facts, only interpretations”, is a reflection of some of the deconstructionist tendencies of post-modernism.

Even though White’s primary concern and emphasis is on the chronological representation of events, the same applies to spatial representation in the narrative. The factual representation of a narrative or argument may follow, when convenient for the writer, a spatial progression rather than a temporal one. This may be termed “Spatial Historiography” i.e. the presentation of historical events by a spatial rather than a

temporal sequence. It may serve the purposes of a historian, journalist or a writer of fiction, for example, to ignore the actual temporal sequence of an event and rather narrate it in a spatial sequence. Instead of presenting the actual and often haphazard movement of the actors and characters between sites, scenes, rooms, territories or different places in the story; something which can destroy the structure and plot of the story, the writer may choose to narrate all the events which occurred in one place, then move to the next place etc. The narrative then acquires a smooth progression, which is readable and understandable. The real events however may not have been that smooth and may not have been seen that way by the participants or actors.

A typical example of this is the presentation of the gospel by Luke. Luke is described as the consummate historian, and so he is. The eminent archaeologist, William Ramsay described him as “a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy ...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (1915: 222). What is not emphasized by many, however, is that Luke is also very interested in spatial, and geographical matters. He organizes the presentation of the life and ministry of Jesus in Lk 9-19, according to a series of geographical territories, which ends in a climatic “Journey to Jerusalem”, particularly to the temple in Jerusalem (See Filson 1970). According to Luke, Jesus travels from the region of Galilee, through Caesarea Philippi and Samaria into Judea, to Bethany, in and around the region of Perea and then, in his final weeks, He rides triumphantly into Jerusalem, and heads towards the temple to cleanse it before his death and resurrection. It is clear from John’s gospel, however, that Jesus made several trips to Jerusalem; Luke on the other hand, organizes the story line according to a “Journey to Jerusalem” motif. Clearly, spatiality was as important to Luke as temporality. We need to always remember that space has a very close relationship with time, and one must not be ignored in favour of the other.

One scholar whose work in literary theory attempts to analyze texts using the close relationship between space and time as a tool was the Russian scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin. The literature on Bakhtin is extensive and his influence on literary criticism and Biblical studies are increasing (See Polzin 1993), but for our purposes, we are interested in Bakhtin’s theory of the Chronotopes. A Chronotope or “time-space” is a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial

categories. They are semantic and cognitive strategies which writers and readers alike apply to texts, in order to structure historical and textually divergent elements. Bakhtin clarifies their functions this way: “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought out concrete whole. Time thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time plot and history” (1981:184). Bakhtin even links his theory to Einstein’s theory of relativity, claiming that the Chronotope “expresses the inseparability of space and time...” (1981:84). He classifies chronotopes into different types, each one characteristic of a particular genre of literature. Thus by identifying what type of chronotope is being used in a particular piece of text, we may be able to answer the all important question of what genre it is and so understand aspects of the authorial intention. The word “road” is for example a different chronotope from the word “threshold” though both are combinations of space and time. The first carries with it the connotation of an evolving situation, whereas “threshold” carries a sense of crisis or suddenness with it. Their use in describing space in a narrative could reflect an authorial purpose.

Another literary theory, which describes the relationship between space and time in literature, is Yuri Lotman’s Spatial Form devices. These devices, according to the Estonian Professor, are spatial techniques used by the author to delay or even disrupt the chronological sequence of the narrative, in order to enable the writer develop the characters more fully. They temporarily suspend the forward movement of the narrative and help develop its setting or spatial aspects. Sometimes the spatial form device may be used to interrupt the chronological progression. When the narrative is resumed, a summarative repetition of the chronology becomes necessary and may appear to contradict the chronology of the narrative. This phenomenon, called Resumptive Repetition, is very common in the “wilderness narratives” of Exodus-Deuteronomy. Dozeman (1989), for example, has employed the literary theory of spatial forms to explain the way the narrative at Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exodus 19-34, is “disrupted” by repetitions and interpolations of various laws and spatial descriptions, a phenomenon, which the unappreciative Wellhausen had described as “intolerable...because the course of history is interrupted” (1957: 342). Ironically, this sense of frustration caused by the

“interruptions” is indeed the desired effect of the spatial form device used in the narrative. The reader is forced to notice the spatial setting of the story and not its forward chronological movement. Moses’ repeated movement up and down the mountain of God, draws one’s attention to the spatial relationships between God, Moses and Israel, “where Yahweh and Israel are separated by Mount Sinai, and communicate through Moses” (Dozeman 1989:94). Dozeman describes the effects of spatial form devices in a narrative as comparable to an orange; “like an orange, such a narrative is structured into individual pieces – similar segments of equal value – in which the movement is circular, focused on the single subject, the core” (1989: 88) (See also Smitten & Daghistany 1981).

Lotman asserts that spatial form devices can have semantic and semiotic significance; “these language of spatial relations (within narrative) turns out to be one of the basic means of comprehending reality...the structure of the space of a text becomes a model of the structure of the space of the universe of possible meanings of signs in the narrative” (1977: 217-218). Lotman calls this spatial framework, a Semiosphere. Thus the spatiality of the story could be a model or typology of the deeper message being conveyed by the writer. In Exodus 19 for example, the focus, which the spatial form makes on Mount Sinai demonstrates the centrality of this cosmic mountain in the theology of Exodus, and its relationship to the repeated laws. Similarly, the prolonged and often rather dry and “intentional mystery” (Sailhamer 1992: 299) in the details of the tabernacle and its construction in the wilderness narratives of Exodus is for such a purpose. When spatial emphases are being presented in a “disruptive” manner in a narrative, attention is probably being drawn to the deeper message of that narrative. One will suggest in the next chapter that this is what is happening in the series of spatial representations interspersed with digressions of exhortation in the argument of Hebrews.

If spatial form devices influence the narrative in such ways as to have semantic significations, it will be beneficial to examine more closely the Semiotics of Space.

2.3.2.2 The Semiotics of Space

In the introduction, we briefly referred to the story of Adam in the Garden of Eden and noted that it was heavily influenced by spatiality. There is clearly something about that story, which immediately suggests that, a deeper message is being conveyed

by it. It contains symbols and signs that point us to a deeper message. Or let us take Heb1: 13 as another example. Here, God tells Jesus: “Sit on My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool”. We immediately recognize that sitting on the right hand of God and footstool, are not literal but figures of speech; signs, or metaphors needing interpretation of semantic, cultural, theological and biblical significance. Semiotics is the discipline, which provides a system for interpreting and understanding the dynamics of signs in a text.

Calloud (1995) has demonstrated how biblical texts sometimes redirect the reader’s attention, not so much to the text itself but something more, perhaps elsewhere in scripture or even of some other significance to the original readers, which it seem to be pointing to. He sites for example the linkage that Ex 17:8-16 makes between Moses lifting up his arm on the mountain “as Joshua and his men do battle on the plain” (1995:64) or the story of Cain and Abel, whose presentation in Genesis does not seem to be conclusive as examples of what he calls Semiotic figuration. The figures here are “articulating two scenes in a single mechanism, with an eye toward revealing in the present and a fulfillment yet to come”(1995:64). This type of semiotic figuration is frequently expressed in spatial terms. The indication of spatial relationships of objects and persons, their function in the narrative of which are not quite readily explained, may be pointing to a semiotic element in the narrative. The enormously detailed description of the wilderness tabernacle is one such example of spatial semiotic figuration, the meanings of some of the signs of which the author of Hebrews explores.

As a discipline, semiotics is spread across the specialties and has several different theories, discussion of which is outside the scope of this study. For our purposes, there are three approaches to spatial semiotics that we need to bear in mind in the analysis of the spatiality of the text. The first approach, which has been alluded to in reference to Lotman’s semiosphere, regards signs and codes as pervading in the spatial structure of the narrative. This approach posits that the text is actually of a “highly organized integrity”, that within it are formal spatial configurations, which are signs pointing to its meaning. This structuralist approach to spatial semiotics regards the spatial elements as relating to each other in a hierarchical manner to point to the connotations of the text.

A second approach is through the concept of Intertextuality. Introduced into biblical studies from literary criticism in 1989 by Vorster, intertextuality deals with the complex and dialogical relationships between various different texts in the same body of text. Intertextuality asserts that no text is an island of itself, but should be understood as a complex web and network of various texts put together and operating to produce meaning. The writer uses these texts sometimes consciously, either because his or her readers are very familiar with them and “they ring bells”, or as a shorthand way of making a statement. Sometimes, the writer may not be conscious of these other texts that he or she is using because they have already become embedded in his/her and the readers’ vocabulary and thought. Vorster describes intertextuality this way:

First of all it is clear that the phenomenon text has been redefined. It has become a network of references to other texts (intertexts). Secondly it appears that more attention is to be given to text as a process of production and not to the sources and their influences. And thirdly it is apparent that the role of the reader is not to be neglected in this approach to the phenomenon of text.

(1989: 21)

Thus with reference to Heb 1:13, our understanding of this text, will depend on other texts which deal with sitting on God’s right hand, God’s footstool, God’s enemies etc. All these are spatial signs, and codes that together produce a rich text for the meaning of Heb 1:13. Intertextuality may present as textual echoes, allusions or direct quotations. Moyise has, for example asserted “under the right conditions, allusions and echoes might be just as important as explicit quotations for an understanding of a text” (2002:428). He warns that there are speculative elements involved in this approach to semiotics, which cannot be avoided and hence very close attention to what the text actually says is an important foundation. The whole context of the narrative is also important in producing a meaning, which is as close to the original text as is possible. The spatial elements of the text, which are frequently visual in effect, do play a crucial intertextual role and needs to be borne in mind.

A third approach to spatial semiotics has to do with metaphors. Spatial metaphors are pervasive in texts and are sometimes used in ways, which can easily escape the reader. Lakoff and Johnson have argued that human cognition is “fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (1980:3). They posit that because the conceptual system which structure our perception of space; and so influence the way we relate to reality “is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (1980:3). It is therefore of little wonder that spatial metaphors abound in literature. Metaphors are frequently, not just replacing one group of words with another, or being merely analogical constructs but do serve as guide to the rhetorical intentions of the writer. Thus “up” in some cultures may be associated with positive sentiments such as goodness, virtue, happiness, consciousness, health, life, the future, high status and having control or power, whilst “down” is associated with badness, depravity, sickness, death, low status, being subject to control or power, and with emotion. Metaphors are not the only figures of speech that are used for the spatiality of texts. In Hebrews, the author uses metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole and antonomasia for “reinforcing theological points” (Koester 2001:95). We do well to take these seriously since the choices of the types of analogies, as Lakoff and Johnson have noted, are a reflections of the author’s “everyday realities”.

Having now identified the nature of space and place, and noted the various important ways in which space is represented in literature, we are now in the position to formulate a systematic methodology to explicate the spatiality of a Biblical text. Before we are able to do that however, we have one obstacle to clear; i.e. Can we confidently apply these theories, some of which are postmodern, to the scriptures that were written thousands of years ago? Is it a valid methodology to apply Foucault to the epistle to the Hebrews? In other words, we are asking; what perceptions did the believing communities, the people of ancient near east and the Greco-Roman world, have of spaces and how did it reflect in their socio-cultural and human relations?

2.4 THE PERCEPTION OF SPACE BY THE BIBLE MAKING COMMUNITIES

Space or place is one of the most important and central features of the Bible. As Brueggemann observes, “land is a central, if not the central theme of biblical faith” (1977: 4). The Old Testament is, at its core, about the promise of land to the patriarchs, the journey of the Israelites towards this “Promised Land”, their struggle to keep it, the loss of it, their exile to another land, and their return to it. Theology, of the Old Testament at least, is therefore by and large the Spatiality of the Old Testament. Having the valid methodology to explicate the spatiality of the Bible is therefore important. We need to establish if the people of these times had the same or similar perceptions and conceptions of space as we have set out here. However, if the concept of place is a multi dimensional cultural subtext influenced by one’s perceptions, will we be able to construct, even a sketch, of ancient spatiality from all the information we have available? Some believe that we can. As Leveau suggests regarding this sort of regressive analysis of historic territorial issues, “the memory of societies ensures the transmission of the inherited data, making it possible as far back as the first settlements” (2002: 9).

2.4.1 Critique of Johan Brinkman’s “Perception of Space from Ex 25-31”

Brinkman’s excellent study on the Perception of Space in the Old Testament (1992) is one such example of attempts to identify the spatiality of the Old Testament communities. Brinkman investigates the relationship between the linguistic structures of the Hebrew language and the cognitive spatial ideas in Ex 25-31 (where the construction of the wilderness tabernacle is described), using the X-bar theory of linguistic analysis as his methodology. The result of these data was then statistically analyzed for linkages between the language and the cognitive ideas in the chapters. He concluded that the Hebrew language in Ex 25-31 used similar spatial categories as modern European languages. Thus the use of distances were limited to straight lines, dimensions of objects refer to their physical aspects, even though the concept of spatial relations expressed by “left” and “right” are absent from these chapters; “People in the ancient near east perceived space in a way similar to that of modern Western people...” (1992:252). He also concluded that there was a small difference in spatiality between the people in the

ancient near east and modern western cultures; “unlike most modern, western people, the author did not perceive space as an entity which can be quantified in general and under all circumstances” (1992:255). Their conception of space, were “influenced by factors which originated from their cultural background and usually are alien to modern western culture” (1992:252).

The major achievement of Brinkman’s study is that it dismantled Boman’s work (1960), which had suggested that the Hebrews did not have an abstract concept of space as compared with the Greeks. Its main limitation, which Brinkman himself admits is that the study focused mainly on linguistic structures; which as we have demonstrated, constitute only a portion of a society’s spatiality. Mathematical and geometrical concepts introduce us, at best, to physical space, but they ignore the larger socio-cultural and political aspects of the spaces and places under consideration. The variations in the perception of space across different cultures require that critical attention be paid to the cross-cultural application of these studies. Moreover, and as we shall later see in this study, the particular narrative in Ex 25-31 has very potent social, ideological and theological significations, that surface linguistic analysis will not adequately uncover. Brinkman’s efforts, do not therefore lead us far enough to understand Israel’s perception of space.

The fact is any exploration of the spatiality of the ancient biblical world, with all its major difficulties, if it does not adequately account for all the multiple dimensions of space, is likely to yield inadequate answers. The historical-grammatical-lexical analysis of scripture, though foundational to the hermeneutics of the Bible, is insufficient to explore spatiality. The sociological approach to the investigation of ancient communities, need to be brought to bear on the interpretation of the scriptural data because of its ability to explore the other dimensions of spatiality through the use of comparative models. In addition, some understanding of the cognitive aspects of the spatiality of these cultures is necessary. As forcefully asserted by Cook and Simkins, “the comparativist strategy is now rooted in an epistemology that recognizes the comparative nature of most knowledge...The social scientific critic’s use of models and theories aims at defining and thereby controlling the general assumptions by which we interpret the biblical texts” (1999: 6).

Sociological investigations are however not without their pitfalls. The criticism that they do tend to impose generalizing theories and models on ancient biblical texts, whose authors had in mind meanings far removed from what these models portend to find, is hard to shake off. This criticism is however overly harsh when we consider that the identification of the “the intentions” of the initial human authors of the books of the bible can be very elusive, regardless of which methodology we use.

2.4.2 James Flanagan and Ancient Perception of Space - a Summary.

Flanagan (1999), in a programmatic article on the perception of space in the ancient world, has noted that there are major differences between modern and postmodern spatiality. This is important because there is a sense in which the “disorganized” nature of postmodern spatiality mimics more the pre-modern ancient spatiality of the Old Testament than the “organized” spatiality of the “modern era”. He draws out the implications of the changes that are occurring in postmodern cartography as one example of how postmodern spatiality, may be closer to those of ancient times than the spatiality of Descartes and Newton. He also posits that several “lenses” which are available for spatiality e.g. ““Landscape”, “land”, “place”, “home”, “geographical imagination”...” (1999:26) should be employed in examining the spatiality in the data from ancient societies. A thorough examination of the nature of human relationships is also important.

One major sociological feature of the ancient world was that they were Segmentary societies. These are by definition, societies that are made up of nested units of kinship or tribal affiliations, without one group being the dominating force. In a segmentary society, spatiality is less bound to territories and is based more on human relations (For discussion of pre-monarchic Israel as a segmentary society, See Rogerson, 1986). It is not so much where one was that mattered as much as who he or she was: his/her kinship, clan and tribal allegiances and alliances defined his/her spatiality. In Sack’s words, “family, kin and ritualized friendships provide the complex channel of reciprocity through which labour, resources, and products flow to equalize discrepancies and to share in times of emergencies” (1986:57). Simply put in Malina’s maxim, in

segmentary societies, “people moved through other people, not through space.” (1993: 370). It was the “intricate networks of social relations” (Harvey 1996:316) that defined spatiality in these communities. This accounts for the generous genealogical emphasis in the Old and parts of the New Testament, for “genealogies convey substantial spatial information...[and] can be used to gain perspectives on space in multiple ancient social circumstances” (Flanagan 1999:36). In addition when kinship and place names are provided in a text, a strong indication of segmented spatiality is being portrayed. The “settlement stories” of the Old Testament is another area where the segmentary nature of these societies becomes obvious.

2.4.3 Spatiality of the Greco-Roman World

The Greco-Roman world was less segmentary than the ancient near eastern world of the Old Testament. The Greek and Roman empires had some centralizing influence, but they did not obliterate the tribal and kinship structure of many of the societies they governed. There remained a relatively high degree of autonomy of the various nation states and communities. Philo categorized ancient societies into two: “Organized communities are of two sorts, the greater which we call cities and the smaller which we call households” (Philo: *Special Laws* 3.171). Organized religion, such as that based on the temple of Jerusalem, the influence of its priests and the cult also had some centralizing effects. Thus some of the implications of the spatiality of segmentary societies would also apply to the Greco-Roman world. Quintilian’s comment that “races have their own character and the same action is not probable in the case of a barbarian, a Roman and a Greek; country is another, for there is a like diversity in laws, institutions, and opinions of different states” (Quintilian: *Inst. Orat.* V.x.23-25) epitomizes the segmentary nature of these societies. The kinship oriented system coexisted with centralization to produce a complex network where territories remained not as important as the people who lived in them.

The implications of all these to our study, are that the segmentary nature of these societies are more “mimicked” in the postmodern society than the centralized modern European societies. With the emergence of the universal “global village” and the proliferation of technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, Global Positioning

Systems and the cyberspace, territorial boundaries have become less important than networks of communities and allegiances along many different socio-cultural lines. The postmodern society, characterized by diversity, networking and its stress on “the importance of communities in perceiving reality” (Anderson 2001:20), do reflect more the nature of pre-modern relations. The spatial theories, fashioned in the postmodern milieu, may, after all, not be too far removed from what may have pertained in the biblical times.

But this is not the main justification for the application of postmodern spatial theories in this study. Sociological models are basically theories. Since these theories take into consideration cognitive, cultural and psychoanalytic elements of people, in addition to other dimensions of spatiality, we may never be confident enough at identifying the absolute spatiality of the bible making communities who are several millennia removed from us. The reductionistic faults of these theories will remain, so long as they can only focus “on the forest rather than the trees”. The benefit to understanding the word of God, better, I believe, however far outweighs these inherent faults, which in any case, are present, in varying degrees in all methodologies. The fault is certainly reduced in sociological studies, if we adhere to Domeris’ advice, that:

The sociological study of the Bible necessitates a variety of choices, which ultimately affects the findings of one’s research. By stating in advance one’s choices, from paradigm through perspective to model, one opens one’s work up to critical analysis. Only in this way can social science make its proper contribution to the study of the Bible.

(1991: 225)

We will now move on to set out the methodology for the analysis of the spatiality of a biblical passage.

2.5 A METHODOLOGY FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF THE SPATIALITY OF A BIBLE PASSAGE

2.5.1 Structural Analysis

The method one proposes for the study of the spatiality of a bible passage is a modified structural analysis. Structuralism as a methodology is particularly suited for spatial analysis since, as pointed out by Malbon, “Conceptually, structuralism is centred in concerns for relations or networks of relations rather than isolated elements” (1983: 208). I adopt Michael Lane’s definition of structuralism as “any set of rules or regulations which describe and prescribe the operations to be performed upon any matter...with the purpose of ordering it and understanding its working” (1970:13). The object of this type of analysis, according to Patte, “is not primarily the surface structure of the text...[but]...wants to articulate the larger implicit structure which in some way generates the text under consideration” (1976: iv).

Structural analysis regards the text as having three structural levels of meaning: the narrative level, the cultural or mythical level and the semantic or semiological level. The narrative level is the surface structure of the text. The word “narrative” is used in its broadest sense, not just to denote a story, but any meaningful sequencing of a discourse. Thus a carefully thought out speech or text, such as the epistle to the Hebrews, with its sequential presentation of its argument, is regarded as a narrative. As Schenck points out, “Similar to early Christian thought in general, Hebrews’ thought is fundamentally *narrative* in orientation” (2003: 2). Contrary to the ordinary use of the word “myth” as a demonstrably false fable involving gods and imaginary people, myths in linguistic and structuralist terms are, extended metaphors, which “help[s] us to make sense of our experiences” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:185-6). The mythical or cultural level of structural analysis of the bible therefore examines the connotative elements of the passage. This involves, the theological, ideological, political, cultural, socio-anthropological etc, significance of words and actions, which a plain narrative exploration of the text would not unveil. The semiological level is interpretative, as it attempts to determine the reasons for the choices of signs (and the exclusion of others) in the text. It attempts to answer the question: what meaning is the text trying to convey in choosing these sets of connotative

signs? It explores the typological aspects of the expressions, actions and persons, which the relationships of the signs connote. There is an element of subjectivity at this level that depends on the theological presuppositions of the interpreter. Yet it is at this level, that a meaningful basis for the understanding and implications of the passage may be made.

2.5.2 Spatial Analysis as a Modified Structural Analysis

The spatial analysis of text foregrounds its spatiality for study, and by using a structural analysis, attempts to unveil its relationship with the larger picture being portrayed by the narrative. There is however one aspect of classical structural analysis that is not suited to spatial analysis. Structural analysis assumes that the most basic form of the narrative structure is one of binary oppositions, which when critically examined will unveil the deeper cultural and mythical structures of the narrative. For example, it may be assumed, in classical structuralist terms from the beginning, that the spatiality in a text is either Sacred or Profane. This method of analyzing spatiality, as we have already noted is inadequate. In contrast, the spatial analysis we adopt for our study will not presuppose binaries except where they are clearly in the surface narrative structure. In our methodology for the spatial analysis of a text, all the elements of spatiality; perception, conception, imagined, visionary, human spatial relationships etc. will need to be “teased out” of the passage first and critically examined for their inter-relatedness and the semantic and theological significance. Assumption of binaries is not a necessary precondition to spatial analysis (See Lefebvre 1991: 39). Table 2.1 summarizes the various elements of the spatial analysis of the text that we have discussed.

Table 2.1 Methodology for Investigating Spatiality of Biblical Text

The Narrative Level	<p>a. Indicators of Spatiality in the Surface Narrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Places: Physical, Social, Perceptions, Conceptions, Imaginary and Visionary ii. Spatial Topography including Boundaries iii. Persons and Peoples in the Spaces iv. The Historical and Literary context of the narrative v. Plot or purpose of the narrative <p>b. The Representation of Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cartographical Elements ii. Spatial Historiography iii. Chronotopic elements iv. Spatial Form devices <p>c. Socio-Political aspects of spatiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Social Relationship Between Persons ii. Hierarchical relationship, Power and Knowledge iii. Elements of Contest iv. Elements of Territoriality
The Mythical Level	<p>a. Cultural aspects</p> <p>b. Ideological elements</p> <p>c. Socio-anthropological elements</p> <p>d. Cognitive Elements</p> <p>e. Religious Elements</p>
The Semiotic Level	<p>a. Spatial Signs and codes and their meaning</p> <p>b. Typological Elements</p> <p>c. Theological implications</p> <p>d. Spiritual Significance and Applications</p>

This systematic approach to spatiality can yield very useful results when applied to Biblical passages as our validation now illustrates.

2.5.3 Numbers 13: Validation of Methodology

The incident recorded in Num 13 -14 is one of the most important in the history of the people of Israel. The liberated and covenanted people have now arrived at the borders of the Promised Land, in the Wilderness of Paran. God at this point instructs Moses to send out spies to search the land of Canaan “which I give to the sons of Israel” (Num 13:2). Moses selects twelve, possibly military captains, each representing a tribe (excluding Levi), to scout the geography, population distribution, settlement lay out, hydrology, climate and ethnography of the land. After forty days of search, the spies return with two reports. The majority ten, conclude that though the land “surely it flows with milk and honey...the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are walled, very great. And also we saw the children of Anak there” (Num 13:27-28). The minority, made up of Joshua and Caleb thought otherwise. The congregation believes the majority spies, “lifted up their voice and cried. And the people wept that night” (Num 14:1) and bitterly complained against Moses and Jehovah. In response, God became angry with them and disinherited them, saying, “I will strike them with the pestilence and will disinherit them... surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it” (Num 14:12, 23). So resulted forty years of wandering in the wilderness, until every one of those who had been liberated from Egypt, except the two minority spies died in the wilderness.

When Moses later comments on this momentous event in Deut 1:21- 46, he describes the behaviour of the people as amounting to unbelief and rebellion: “but you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of Jehovah your God...in this thing you did not believe Jehovah your God” (Deut 1:26, 32). Clearly, God regarded this incident as a watershed defining behaviour, which was equivalent to apostasy. Commentary on the incident became part of the subsequent liturgical language of Israel and in the key Psalm 95, the bible admonishes later generations of Israel: “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the day of strife, as in the day of testing in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted Me, tested Me, and saw My work...I swore

in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest.” (Ps 95:7-11). Though some scholars (e.g. Davies 1973:183-195) connect this part of the Psalm to the incidents at Meribah and Massah (Ex 17:7, Num 20:13), rather than that in the Wilderness of Paran, there is no reason for this restriction. Meribah and Massah, in the history of Israel became more than geographical names but metaphors for the two evils of “striving” with and “testing” Yahweh. Since it was in relation to the incident at the Wilderness of Paran, that God finally “swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest”, Psalm 95 has a strong link, to the narrative in Num 13.

The link between Num 13-14 and Ps 95 is important for our main study, because the epistle to the Hebrews discusses Ps 95:7-11 at length in Heb 3 – 4. Heb 3:1-6 is “essentially a Midrash on Num 12:7” (Ellingworth 1993:194). Several allusions to Num 14 are made in this section of Hebrews, and as Bruce points out, the occasion “which is uppermost in the psalmist’s mind is that recorded in Num 14:20ff” (1990:98). Heb 3:17 also quotes part of Num 14:29 to illustrate the results of unbelief and rebellion against the Lord. The writer of Hebrews, like Num 13 -14, saw the behaviour of the wilderness generation as evil and as equivalent in magnitude to apostasy. He therefore warns his addressees to “take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12).

The challenge to interpreters of Numbers 13 have been to find from the narrative, what particular actions constituted so grave an offense to have merited its equivalence to apostasy. One interpretation is to fault the decision to embark on the spying expedition itself as the evil act. Moses’ clarification in Deut 1 that the decision for espionage was made after a request from “every one of you” (Deut 1: 22), and the fact that leading representatives from each tribe, rather than a smaller group were sent indicate that this was not necessarily an initiative from God, but from a stalling unbelieving people. They ceased to trust God who had guided them until now through the pillar of cloud and fire, and instead wanted to see and examine the land for themselves. Their unbelief made them set aside God’s guidance, and like many other instances in the Bible, when men leant on their own understanding, He did not continue to strive with them, but gave them up.

Such an approach interprets Num 13:1 as God granting Israel the permission to spy the land, in order to test them, and that the expedition itself was an evil act of

unbelief. Support for this view, as suggested by Sailhamer, is found in the Samaritan Pentateuch, “an earlier version of the Hebrew Bible” (1992:426), which inserts Deut 1:20-23a after Num 13:1 so that the two presentations of the incident are more easily harmonized. It seems however, even from the tone of Deut 1, that Moses did not personally regard the expedition itself as the major fault. After forty years reflection, he was content to say that the suggestion for the expedition “pleased me very much” (Deut 1:23). He would have preferred them to “Go up. Possess it” (Deut 1:21), but he implies by his assessment that the sin was more than sending spies. Indeed several espionage missions were subsequently conducted by Israel, including the famous one to Jericho involving Rahab.

A second approach is to regard this incident as the last of several acts of faithlessness by the exodus generation, the “final straw” or the crown of accumulated sins in the wilderness. In Num 14:22, God explains that the people “have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not listened to my voice”. This incident then, is regarded not in isolation, but as the final of ten sins of Israel in the wilderness²². Some commentators do not interpret the number ten, literally but as a metaphor for completeness and fullness of Israel’s “cup” of sins. Though this spying incident is clearly one of several acts of sin by Israel, there is something profoundly special about God’s anger in the narrative of Num 13-14. Of the ten incidents, it is in only two of them that God threatened to disinherit His people, the golden calf incident (Ex 32) and this one. In the golden calf incident, God responded positively to Moses’ intercession and plea; here, the response was partial, He did not completely replace Israel with Moses’ descendants, but he destroyed all those who left Egypt except Joshua and Caleb.

A third approach in investigating which actions in this narrative constituted rebellion, striving against God and unbelief along the lines of apostasy is through exploring the spatiality of the passage. Beck, in an excellent article titled *Geography and the Narrative Shape of Numbers 13* (2000), has analyzed, what he called “the strategic

²² The ten sins are the Red Sea complaints (Ex 14:11-12), bitter water at Marah (Ex 15:23), Murmuring in Wilderness of Sin (Ex 16:2), Concerning Manna (Ex 16:20), Sabbath breaking (Ex 16:27), no water at Rephidim (Ex 17:1), Golden Calf incident at Horeb (Ex 32), Complaining mixed multitude at Teberah (Num 11:1), Murmuring about meat (Num 11:4) and Spying incident (Num 13-14).

use of geography in Numbers 13...in patterns designed to impact the reader” (2000: 271). He examines the references to geography, hydrology, settlement issues, population density and other ethnographic elements in the narrative. He points out that the method for naming the spies shows that they were “esteemed and honored leaders of the community” (2000:273). The differences in the description of the search, in Moses’ instructions, in the manner of the narration of the actual search, and by the majority of the spies; may indicate that, “the spies did not adhere closely to Moses’ instructions. The search he asked for may have been different from the one he received” (2000: 274). Beck suggests then that there was a large element of disobedience and power struggle against Moses in this narrative. This is also demonstrated by the nature of the language they used in their search report. They “became untrustworthy manipulators of the truth. They played with the name of the land, simply calling it “the land where you sent us”...They added uninvited incendiary information to the report” (2000: 280).

Though Beck’s study is very useful, we yield more illuminating information and perhaps answers to the reasons for God’s anger in this narrative when we explore all the other dimensions of spatiality as our methodology has suggested. If we focus on the persons in this narrative and their relationships for example, we see the portrayal of hierarchical relationships, from God, through Moses and Aaron, the tribal leaders, the spies and the congregation of Israel. This hierarchical order has important ideological significance. We also note the relations of power based on knowledge. Moses receives instructions from God, which he duly relays and performs. He instructs the spies, but there is subversion and possibly a power struggle as Num 14 shows. Knowledge is used as a weapon, in the power relations especially by the majority spies. We also note that the tribal list, itself, an indication of the segmentary nature of this generation, may play an important role in the interpretation of the narrative (though commentators²³ are unsure what this role is).

²³ The order of the tribal list, being different from the usual order in other parts of the Pentateuch, have invited some to suggest that the spies went in pairs and not as one group. It is also suggested that it may indicate an internal strife or disorganization within the group. But buried in the list is a very important reference to change of name of Oshea to Joshua, whose role though muted in this narrative, was to become dominant subsequently (See Ashley 1993:232).

When we focus on the way the land of Canaan is represented in the narrative; we see that this land is described differently at every stage of the narrative. It was a land full of different factions and inhabitants; it was a contested land. “The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the coast of Jordan” (Num 13:29). God describes the land as “the land of Canaan, which I give to the sons of Israel”. God was thus intending to forcibly take away this land from the Canaanites and give it to Israel. Putting it another way, in God’s mind the land of Canaan was a contested space. God had his battle to win in this matter.

This is made even more poignant by the description of the land by the majority spies: “We came to the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey” (Num 13:27). This representation of the land of Canaan as “flowing with milk and honey” is not just a “stereotyped description of the land” as Noth (1962:41) dismisses it, nor “a stereotyped phrase referring to the raising of livestock and beekeeping, staple economies of the central Israelite hills” as McCarter (1988) suggests; it is more than these. As Levine has expertly shown (2000:57), “the phrase is invariably used with reference or allusion to the Covenant”. According to Stein (1992), there is evidence to suggest that this description of the land is a way of depicting the rivalry and battle between Jehovah and the Canaanite gods whom the Lord was to destroy. Stein examines the Ugaritic Ras Shamra text (KTU 1.6 (CTA 6) from a Baal epic, which describes the death and rebirth of the storm god and posits that “the phrase “land flowing with milk and honey” has its origin in the rivalry with Baal...YHWH had to wrest the rule of the land from Baal...” (1992:555-556). Stein points out that the “expression ...should not be viewed as stereotyped or as a lesson in simple pastoral economics but as evidence of a struggle, a Yahwistic counter slogan, as it were, in the continuing battle to attach Israel to Yahweh and to ward off the attraction of arch-rival Baal” (1992:556). Thus the representation of the land in Num 13 with this phrase is another indication of the elements of territoriality in this passage. This was the same type of rivalry²⁴, which

²⁴ In fact, the narrative in this unit of Numbers 12-14 is dominated by the theme of contest, rivalry and strife. It is important also to note the role of the tabernacle as described here, a role we shall refer to in our fourth chapter.

involved the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. God was contesting with the gods of Canaan for this land, this place, this space; and Israel at the threshold had to choose whose side she was on.

The theme of power rivalries, contests and strife in relation to the land becomes even more notable when we focus on the aspects of the spatial description of the spy mission as specified in Num 13:21-25. Only the southern and northern borders of the search are given; but described with it is a carefully constructed depiction of the spies' stop in Hebron. "And they went up by the south and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the sons of Anak were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt)" (Num 13: 22). The ideological connotations of the paraphrased insertion aside, Hebron and "sons of Anak" have important semiotic figurative functions in this narrative. It was near Hebron, that God first promised Abraham to give him and his descendants after him, "all the land which you see I will give to you, and to your seed forever" (Gen 13:15). Here, Abram's name was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:5). And this particular spot was the only place, the only piece of the Promised Land that Abraham owned. He bought a tiny piece of the Promised Land, "pitched his tent" here, turned it into his "zero point" as Bollnow would put it, traveled through and fro from here and this is where Isaac and Jacob spent much of their lives (Gen 35:27, 37:14). Here, Abraham, his wife Sarah and most of the other patriarchs and their wives were buried (Gen 23:17-20, 49:30, 50:13). The spies visited what they could truly call, in Bollnow's terms, "home". The cemetery in Hebron epitomized all the promises of God to the spies and their forefathers.

Hebron, however was not just, in Foucauldian terms "represented and inverted", it was also contested. The spies "came to Hebron, where...the sons of Anak were" (Num 13:22). The sons of Anak, or the Anakim for short, have been traditionally understood, as stated by Henderson (1869), as giants descended from Anak who dwelt in South and West of Canaan. They are mentioned fifteen times in the Old Testament²⁵ and as in our passage, are associated with and regarded as the descendants of the Nephilim. This

²⁵ Num 13:22, 33, Deut 1:28, 2:10, 11, 21, 9:2, Josh 11:21, 22, 14:12, 15, 15:14, 21:11, Judges 1:20

mythical association between the Anakim and the Nephilim brought enormous fears to the heart of the people of the ancient world who met them. MacLaurin explains that the term Nephilim denotes “the strange monsters which were believed to develop from abortions” (1965:469. n5). The etymology of the word “Anak” suggests a description for “those who fall down in worship ...and this could indicate that the Anakim were a priestly community...or ruling aristocracy” (1965:469. n5). MacLaurin also finds support for this view in the use of the term for Greek Homeric heroes and gods, as in Apollo II 1:390, Zeus II 3:351; 16:233.

Kraeling (1947:208) investigates the mythical significance of the Nephilim further and concludes that they “are related to primeval figures of huge size...who were cast down into Hades by a deity whom they dared to oppose”. Clines also suggests that one characteristic of these Nephilim and Anakim is their desire for names – they built cities after their names. “The striving for “name”, a permanent memorial in one’s descendants, belongs to the dynastic ambitions of these ante-dulivian rulers” (1979:37). The Nephilim were largely responsible for God’s exasperation with humanity before the flood, when He said, “My spirit shall not always strive with man” (Gen 6:3). A link then exists between Hebron, the sons of Anak, the Nephilim and striving with God

Thus the Hebrew spies went to the land owned by their forefathers, the patriarchs, and saw that it was occupied by giants, who they understood in mythical terms as the offspring of the rebellious angels of Genesis 6; the very epitome of the evil which led to the flood of Genesis. In Hebron, the spies came face to face with the Nephilim who symbolized idolatry and rebellion against God, and instead of taking sides with their God; they felt like grasshoppers in their own eyes (For discussion of the irony in this characterization of themselves, see Lerner, 1999: 545-548). They were sent to spy the land on God’s behalf as part of his army, preparing to do battle on His side. Instead they caved in and surrendered in this divine contest. In Numbers 13 -14, the spies and the congregation of Israel took sides in striving against God. Faith, like space is always contested and those who do not choose to be on God’s side have chosen the opposing side; in this case, the side occupied by Baal, the dying god. The spies can therefore be said to have departed from the living God, as Hebrews later describes it. In the golden calf incident, Moses issued the challenge to Israel, “Who is on Jehovah's side? Come to

me.” (Ex 32: 26), here in Numbers 13, the people did not take sides with Jehovah. It is this, which one would suggest, constituted the element of apostasy in their unbelief. The author of Hebrews had good reasons for warning his congregation to eschew “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12), for the unbelief that chooses not to be on the side of Christ is as rebellious, striving and is departing from the living God.

2.5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined several relevant theories in order to delineate the nature of spaces and places and how humans interact with it. In a summary, there is a multi-dimensional nature in the way humans conceive, perceive, and relate with each other when places and spaces are concerned. This is reflected in the way places and spaces are represented in texts. We have explored the influence of ideology or theology, hierarchy, power and knowledge in the way the triangular relationship between humans and places are represented. In Foucault’s maxim that; “space is simultaneously represented, inverted and contested”, we have a helpful system for investigating the spatiality of a text.

We have also shown that authors use several different strategies to represent spaces in texts. Very crucial is how spatiality influences the deeper structure of texts, especially in relation to spatial metaphors and semiotics. All these need to be borne in mind when examining the spatiality of a Biblical passage. Our methodology for spatial analysis, we have explained, is a modified structural analysis. We will now use this methodology to investigate the Christology of this wonderful epistle.

CHAPTER III

SPATIALITY, TERRITORIALITY AND THE CHRISTOLOGY OF HEBREWS

The writer of Hebrews organizes his Christological exposition, which involves elaborate comparisons of Jesus with the angels, Moses and Aaron, according to a series of spatial representations. These spaces function as the “intellectual scaffolding” (Toulmin 1990:116-117) for his argument. A focused investigation of the spatiality of the exposition, it is proposed, will enable identification of some of the reasons for the comparisons and contrasts in the Christology of Hebrews. In this chapter, we shall first, apply the methodology of spatiality to the Christological exposition of Hebrews. This will secondly, expose a pattern in the spatiality that will need further examination with regard to its significance. It is one’s suggestion that the pattern functions as spatial forms, which, is a model, or a typology of the message being conveyed by the writer of Hebrews. I intend to demonstrate in the following discussion that the spatial “typology” framing the exposition of Hebrews is the wilderness camp and tabernacle of the Pentateuch. Before we plunge ourselves into the Christological argument of Hebrews, however, we need to qualify the literary structure of Hebrews that guides our discussion.

3.1 THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF HEBREWS AND A QUESTION OF METHODOLOGY

To study the spatiality of the Christological argument of Hebrews, one must first isolate those passages containing the sustained argument. This has profound methodological consequences, since the author, according to DeSilva, had the “ability to weave his material together so artfully that no scheme will be able to separate perfectly what he has so closely joined together” (2000: 71). Nevertheless, “Hebrews is perhaps the most well structured of all the New Testament’s writings” (Isaacs 2002:17), and since our study deals more with the flow of the author’s argument rather than its exact details,

one needs to identify a literary structure before isolating those passages containing the argument. As Macleod asserts, “the epistle’s literary structure, is of importance in that it affects one’s understanding of how the book is to be divided and of the author’s development of his argument” (1989:185).

The literary structure of a text is defined by Swetnam as “The arrangement of the several parts of a written text according to criteria discernible on literary grounds” (1972: 368, n.1). Though the major commentaries note the proverbial lack of consensus on the question of the literary structure of Hebrews, the comprehensive work by Guthrie (1998), which combines the strengths of the linguistic, literary, thematic and rhetorical-critical approaches, identifies two major genres in the epistle: Expository and Exhortatory. He demonstrates that there is an independent development of the logic and argument between these two genres. These two units, he notes, “must, initially, be considered separately in order that the specialized functions of each may be discerned” (Levensohn 2001: 184). “The function of the expository units is thematic development, step-by-step, each unit of exposition building upon the preceding unit. The function of the hortatory units of the discourse is to articulate the urgency for obeying the word of God and to define the consequences for failing to do so” (Lane 1991: xcvi).

This finding of Guthrie’s confirms what many scholars have noted in the past. Attridge, for example, notes the presence of these two genres in the epistle but presses the priority of the exhortations over the exposition. “The scriptural exposition and doctrinal development ultimately have a hortatory aim and an important part of the exhortation derives its force from the doctrinal or expository development” (1990: 215). This point is useful when the whole argument of the epistle is being considered. According to Guthrie’s proposal however, it will methodologically be safe to initially isolate the two genres, consider their arguments independently and then attempt to reconcile them. This is what we will do in our study of the Epistle.

We will therefore use Guthrie’s proposed structure (with a slight modification²⁶) for our study. Guthrie identifies the following passages as the expository sections²⁷: 1:1-

²⁶ Guthrie identifies Heb 3:1-6 as an exhortation. Since it however contains a sustained Christological exposition and “midrash” in its middle portion, we shall regard it as both exposition and exhortation. For discussion of problems with the genre in Heb 3 - 4, See Ellingworth 1993: 193

4, 1:5-14, 2:5-18, 3:1-6, 4:14-16, 5:1-10, 7:1-10:18. Heb 1:1-4 is the introductory statement or prologue to the epistle. In Heb 1:5-14, the author uses a catena of Old Testament passages to compare the Son with the angels in Heaven. In Heb 2:5-18, there is an elaborate comparison of the Son with the angels in the “inhabited world”, which also involves the devil and all humanity. In Heb 3:1-6, the Son is compared with Moses in “his own house” (3:6). This leads to a long exhortation on faithfulness and persevering to “enter into my rest”. It is within this section that Joshua, also a member and servant of the “house”, is implicitly compared with the Son and found wanting (4:8). The three expository sections that follow (4:14-16, 5:1-10, 7:1-10:18) systematically develop the theme of the high priesthood of Christ; but share the same spatiality and are best discussed together. It is suggested that the interruptions of, and interjections into the expositions in these three sections act as “spatial form device”, a means of focusing the reader and hearer on the argument in this space and that they should all be taken together when their spatiality is being examined.

Each of these comparisons occurs within a certain space – some are real places; others are virtual and utopian spaces. What we have in this step-by-step thematic exposition in the author’s Christology, are spatial forms, linked together “like an orange ... structured into individual pieces ... focused on the single subject, the core” (Dozeman 1989:88). Each space is “...represented, contested and inverted” (Foucault 1986:24). Seen in this light, the comparisons and contrasts in the Christology of Hebrews take on a very interesting shape. We will now look at them more closely.

3.2 THE PROLOGUE

“Most commentaries and translations, working from the surface structure of the text, mark the end of the introduction after verse 1:4; that is at the end of the first sentence in Greek” (Ellingworth 1993: 53). This prologue is a very rich “sonorous and distinguished prose style” (Montefiore 1964:33), comparable to the exquisite prologue of John’s gospel. Though, in rhetorical terms, and according to Koester (2001), it serves to

²⁷ The Exhortations of the epistle are found in the following sections: 2:1-4, 3:1-4:13, 4:14-16, 5:11-6:20, and 10:19-13:17 and will be discussed in the next chapter.

prepare the listeners to be attentive and receptive to the message yet to come, it also anticipates and “introduces some of the major themes of what is to follow” (Isaacs 2002:19). The author does not state the argument or hypothesis that he aims to explore; but gives some clues as to what the major themes of the exposition would be. These themes are interwoven together “...as in a musical composition” (Ellingworth 1993:90). We shall not examine the prologue in details but a cursory consideration of the themes shows that they introduce us to the relationship between spatiality, temporality, territoriality and Christology.

Heb 1:1-2 is concerned with the relationship between revelation knowledge (“God...spoke”), time (“time past...last days”), spaces (“the worlds”), prophetic discourse (“spoke...to the fathers by the prophets”) and hierarchy (“spoken to us by His Son”) and creative power (“by whom He made the worlds”). These themes are particularly amenable to examination using the lens of spatiality. Contrast is made between the former prophetic revelation and that through the Son in 1:1, but the major element here is one of continuity of God’s revelation leading into its finality in His Son, rather than discontinuity. God’s revelation is expressed here as progressive and hierarchical, described by Clement of Alexandria as “leading from the beginning of knowledge to the end” (Royster 2003: 17).

Heb 1:3 again expresses Christological concepts using the relationship of time, spaces, knowledge and power, to the transcending glory of the Son. Heb 1:3-4 introduces us to the comparison with angels, based on the Son’s exalted and unique spatial relationship with the Godhead, “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High”. He has a more excellent name and an inheritance, denoting a hierarchical order and territorial claims in the heavenly realm. Thus the prologue interweaves themes of high Christology, spatiality, temporality and territoriality in both the created order and the heavenly realm that will be expressed more fully in the successive sections of the exposition. It is in the space of the heavenly realm that the author of Hebrews first begins in 1:5-14 to show how the hierarchical relations of the persons mentioned here function.

3.3 THE SON IN THE HEAVENLY ASSEMBLY

Heb 1:5-14 is one of the most fascinating pieces of scripture in the Bible. It is made up of a selection of seven citations from the Old Testament with very little exegesis or commentary by the author. Theological deliberations on this catena have ranged from issues about the sources of the citations and whether our author chose them for a particular purpose or he was reciting an already existing “testimonia”(Montefiore 1964: 43). There are also wider issues regarding how New Testament writers, and especially the author of Hebrews, used the Old Testament scriptures, and its implications for twenty first century hermeneutics; the literary structure of the passage itself, the intended interpretations of these quotations and the purpose of the catena in the whole argument of the epistle (See Ellingworth 1993: 108-110 for discussion of some of the issues with the catena). One agrees with those interpreters who posit that the catena is integral part of the author’s argument because of its structure, special characteristics, themes and its spatiality and examination of these helps to appreciate better the purpose of the catena.

3.3.1 The Structure and Purpose of the Catena

The literary structure of the catena has been expertly analyzed by Thompson (1976) who posits that it has three parts: Heb 1:5-6 contains three citations (Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14 and Deut 32:43); Heb 1:7-12 also contains three citations (Ps 104:4, Ps 45.6–7 and Ps 102:25-26) and Heb 1:13-14 contains one citation (Ps 110:1). Ps, 2 & 110 act as structural inclusion to the catena, pointing to themes of divine sonship and messianic kingship. The first part deals with the royalty of the Son, the second, His power and deity and the third, his exaltation. In each part Jesus is compared with the angels. Though the Old Testament contexts of these citations are important in the understanding of the passage, the catena as a whole functions like, “...a mosaic that depicts the image” as Koester observes (2001:198). They function synergistically to produce a composite image in heaven.

The themes, which are covered by the citations, have led some scholars to conclude that a particular heavenly liturgical ceremony is being depicted by the citations. Koester believes they depict the “drama of Christ’s enthronement” (2001:201).

Ellingworth agrees, explaining that the catena represent three stages of a coronation liturgy “(a) a declaration by God that he has adopted the king as his son...(b) the presentation of the king to his people...[and] (c) the enthronement proper” (1993: 108). The modeling of the citations into a particular event, i.e. the enthronement of Christ, is commonly agreed among other recent commentators (See Schenck 2003, Lane 1991 and Isaacs 2002), and may be supported by the author’s introductory reference to the exaltation of Christ at God’s right hand in Heb 1:4 (cf. Ps 110).

This interpretation however has its own particular problems. Some of the older commentaries tended to regard the themes in the catena as referring to several events spanning the pre-existence, earthly life, resurrection, exaltation and enthronement of Christ. Augustine for example regarded Heb 1:5 as referring “not to that one day of time on which He was baptized, but to the one day of an unchangeable eternity” (*Enchiridion*: A.D. 421: 49), whereas Calvin directly disagrees with Augustine, and asserts that Heb 1:5 is related to the post-resurrection “declaration or manifestation which Paul mentions in Romans 1:4 ... a sort of an external begetting” (Calvin’s Commentary, Webpage). Chrysostom on the other hand believes Heb 1:6 refers to the occasion of Christ’s incarnation, arguing, “”To-day” seems to me to be spoken here with reference to the flesh” (Homilies, Webpage). Other interpreters (See Lane 1991:26 for list & Koester 2001:192-193 for discussion of translation and interpretation of this verse) have also regarded Heb 1:6 to be referring to the second coming of Christ; thus not restricting the catena to one event.

Another difficulty is related to the translation and interpretation of Heb 1:6a. Opinions are divided as to which “world” is being referred to in “when He brings in the First-born into the world”? Those interpreters who view the whole catena as presenting a single event of enthronement of Christ, tend to interpret “inhabited world” as “the heavens or future world”; but those who view the catena as referring to several different events interpret “οἰκουμένην” plainly as the earth or universe. One suggests that the main focus of the catena should be on its spatiality, rather than its temporality and such a focus throws some of the difficulty into sharp relief.

3.3.2 The Spatiality of Heb 1:5-14

3.3.2.1 The Spatial Topography of Heb 1:5-14

The catena identifies some of the topographical landscapes of heaven that is very important to the message of the author. The heavenly realm is depicted here as having territorial boundaries, since the Son's entrance into "the world" is marked by angelic worship (1:6). Access to this space is controlled by a "barrier", the breach of which is marked, in this case by the command by God to the angels to worship the Son. We are not here told what the barrier is but this verse indicates that the breaching of the heavenly boundary is a major event in itself. The penetration of the heavenly boundary is a recurring theme in both the Old²⁸ and New²⁹ Testaments. During Jesus' earthly life, the barrier is penetrated on at least seven occasions, by the Holy Spirit (at his baptism), by angels (at his birth, transfiguration, death and resurrection and in relation to Nathaniel), in revelations to (Mary, Joseph, the shepherds) and by Jesus himself at His ascension. Schmidt (1992) has analyzed many of these presentations of the penetration of the heavenly barrier in the gospels and noted that despite the lack of a single connecting theme, there is invariably association of these penetrations with divine disclosure often in the form of God's voice and of other signs such as, in the case of the baptism, the Holy Spirit coming down on the Son in the form of a dove.

The penetration of the heavenly barrier by Christ is very important to the whole message of the epistle. The breaching of the barrier that Heb 1:6 depicts is as crucial as the actual timing of the event(s). Here, God commands the angels to worship the Son "when He brings in the First-born into the οἰκουμένην". In Heb 4:14, Jesus the High Priest is depicted as having "passed into the heavens" and in Heb 7: 26, He is "made higher than the heavens". By His own blood, Jesus "...entered once for all into the Holies" (Heb 9:12). In Heb 10: 19-20, the writer establishes some of the benefits of this breaching of the barrier to heaven. Because Jesus has breached this barrier, believers now have

²⁸ Gen 5:24, 28:12, 2 Kings 2:11, Ps 24:7-10,

²⁹ John 1:51, 3:13, 20:17, Eph 4:8, Rev 7:2

“boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil”. The catena also refers to another breach of the boundary of heaven, by the angels. They are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). Unlike that of the Son, however, there are no razzmatazzes accompanying this breach.

Another aspect of the heavenly topography that the catena depicts is the presence of the throne of God. Kingship and royal themes permeate the whole catena. The Son is addressed as God by God in Heb 1:8. He is depicted “as the true, eternal and only king of men” (Brown 1982:41). The depiction of heaven as an imperial palace is another frequent theme in both the Old³⁰ and New³¹ Testaments. Jesus indeed said that heaven is God’s throne (Mat 5:34). That the author of Hebrews had a palatial setting in mind is in no doubt shown by his use of some of the major royal Psalms (Ps 2, 45, and 110 and 2 Sam. 7:14) and is again indicative of the focus of the message of the epistle. He, for example, refers to the throne in other parts of the homily. In Heb 4:16, He exhorts the hearers to approach this “throne of grace” to “obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”. As our eternal High Priest, He is sat down on “the right of the throne of Majesty in Heaven” (Heb 8:1), after He had “endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). Thus the heavenly space is not an ordinary palace, but a form of imperial temple and the throne is one of grace, which is occupied by the High Priest. The author will come to discuss this later, but for now, what the catena aims to depict for the hearers is the Divine Son sitting on His throne, and the “posture of the angels then is on bended knee, worshipping before the Son’s throne, along with the rest of creation” (Charles 1990:178). The picture develops further as we look at the persons in this space.

³⁰ Ex 17:16, 1 Kings 22:19, Job 26:9, Ps 9:4,7, 11:4, 47:8,103:19, Is 6:1, 66:1, Ezek 1:26, Dan 7:9

³¹ Mat 5:34, 19:28, 23:22, 25:31, Rev 1:4, 3:21, and 4:2ff.

3.3.2.2 The Persons in the Heavenly Assembly

3.3.2.2.1 The Firstborn Son as Divine King

The focus of the catena of Heb 1 is on the Son. God the Father points to the exalted status of His Son and commands the angels to worship Him. As God's "First-born" Son (Heb 1:5), Jesus has complete territorial claim to the Heavenly space. Again, commentators are not in agreement as to the specific timing that the author of Hebrews is pointing to in referring to "...this day I have begotten you". Ps 2, which the author of Hebrews quotes here, concerns the Son of God inheriting the nations. Interpretation of this quotation needs to focus more on the element of birthright rather than the timing of "today". He has already noted that Jesus the Son is appointed heir of all things in Heb 1:2. In declaring that Jesus is First-born, king and creator of the universe, God, in Sack's definition of the phenomenon of territoriality, "is delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (1986:19) and at the same time communicating, "the social ordering" in this space.

3.3.2.2.2 The Angels as Royal Servants

Also present in this space are the angels. The angelology of Hebrews especially the first two chapters has always fascinated interpreters of the epistle. The suggested purpose for the epistle's interest has ranged from discussion of Old Testament mediators, correction of distorted teaching on angels such as angel Christology, or angelic worship, or as part of a rhetorical strategy of the author of Hebrews (See Gleason 2003). The author draws on and interacts with the copious speculations, teachings and attention to angelology in the Jewish circles of his time. Many of these are reflected in the literature of sectarian Judaism from Qumran (See Charles 1990) but the author, despite his many references to the angels, focuses on Jesus the Son. From the catena, we learn about the nature and function of angels. It is from Hebrews that the Bible emphasizes that angels are essentially spirits (Heb 1:7, 14). As Ellingworth notes, the aim of the quotation of Ps 104:1 in Heb 1:7 is not to speculate about the elemental nature of angels, but their instability, impermanence and function (1993:120). As Lane also observes, "The ephemeral, mutable form of the angels underscores their inferiority to the Son, who stands above the created order and is not subject to change and decay" (1991:29).

Functionally, the catena portrays the angels as servants and messengers who worship the Son (Heb 1:6) and are sent out from His presence “to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). As Barclay observes, the Jews distinguished the angels of God’s presence, i.e. the hierarchy of higher angelic beings, “the seraphim, the cherubim and the ofanim...always around the throne of God” (1976:21) and who continually minister in His presence, from those who are sent out to perform various tasks³². Though these distinctions may have been in the author of Hebrews’ mind, he was particular to include all angels in his description. None escapes the characterization as mutable servants and worshippers of the Son. The heavenly space is thus depicted as a regal temple, with God and His Son Jesus as occupiers of the throne and the angels as the senate or *familia* and royal servants of the throne³³. The emphasis of the catena however is on the distinction and relationship between the Firstborn Son and the Angelic Servants in the heavenly royal assembly.

3.3.2.3 The Relationship between the Persons in the Heavenly Assembly

The main point of the catena is to describe aspects of the relationship between the Persons in the heavenly space. This is done through the structure of the discourse, (i.e. the manner and the content of the discourse). When we examine the manner of the divine discourse in Heb 1:5-14, we find that it is a peculiar way of speaking. The catena is a “colloquy...” in which “The seven quotations are presented as a succession of words spoken by God to the Son, which the Church on earth is permitted to overhear” (Lane 1991:32). It is not a vision but rather an aural depiction of the heavenly realm. The author portrays himself, and his hearers as eavesdropping on a heavenly conversation.

³² The other functions of angels in the epistle to the Hebrews include mediating the delivery of the Law of Moses (Heb 2:3), administering the nations in the present age (Heb 2:5) and visiting the saints (Heb 13:2).

³³ The depiction of a heavenly court of God with His angels occurs frequently in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament, and is a common motif in the Jewish inter-testamental Literature. See Gen 1:26, 1 Kg 22:19-23, Ps 89:5-7, Ex 24:9-10, Is 6:1-8, Jer 23:18-22, Job 1:6-12, Ps 103:19-22, Job 15:8, Ezek 1, Zech 3:1-5, Ex 15:11, Deut 32:8, 33:2, Ps 29:1, Neh 9:6, Dan 7:9-14, Job 38:1-7 Jubilees 30:18, 1 Enoch 71, Ascension of Is 6-11, Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice. For more on the Heavenly Assembly, see Mullen 1994 & Seitz 1990.

In addition, the texts that the author has chosen depict direct speech by the Father to the Son. The Father does not speak to any angel in this catena, hence the author's two rhetorical questions in Heb 1:5, 14. When the Father speaks in relation to the angels, it is as a command or declaration from the heavenly King (Heb 1:6), and is a description of the nature (Heb 1:7) and function (Heb 1:14) of the angels. In other words, the angels are talked about but never spoken to. They are referred to with the third person pronoun, "they", and never with the Son's "my" and "you". This is one of the characteristic features of discourse portraying power relations in the Greco-Roman society. As Seneca points out for example, slaves in this society and especially in public functions "...were normally required to curb their tongue" (Seneca *Epictetus* 47.3). This is in sharp contrast to the free citizen's fundamental freedom of speech "for which Greek had a special word (παρρησία)" as Fitzgerald has observed (2000:75). The Jews also, as Philo points out, believed that angels were "emissaries from humanity to God and from God to humanity" (*Gig.* 16). The author's notable restraint in exegesis is another indication of his intention of depicting the heavenly assembly and its power relations. Only God speaks and with His Firstborn Son. As Zech 2:13, and Rev 8:1 among other biblical texts suggest, and as Wick (1998) has noted, silence and often, restricted speech characterizes important occasions of a sometimes, "noisy" heaven.

The content of the divine discourse of the catena also portrays relations of hierarchical order, power and authority in the heavenly assembly. The tone is set when the author declares in Heb 1:4 that Jesus has been made "so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name". The heavenly space, like all spaces is "contested", and God through the catena provides the reasons why the Son is better than the angels in this space. He is better because He is begotten of the Father; the firstborn Son who inherits the Father (Heb 1:5-6), and that is why the angels are commanded to worship Him. He is better because He is divine Son, everlasting king, (Heb 1:8) and creator of all things (Heb 1:10) whereas the angels are created servants (Heb 1:7). He is better because He is immutable, unchanging and unchangeable (Heb 1:11-12) whereas the angels are mutable. 4 Ezra 8:21 describes how "the angels are renewed every morning and after they have praised God, they return to the stream of fire

from whence they came”. It is this type of Jewish speculative angelology that forms the background of the comparison.

The authority of the Son is far superior as He sits at God’s right hand (Heb 1:13). Ps 110, which is quoted here, is the most widely used Old Testament text in the New Testament, and is a crucial text for Hebrews, reference to which is made on eight occasions: in Heb 1:3, 5:6, 6:20, 7:17, 21, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2. In fact Buchanan suggests that the whole of the epistle “...is a homiletical Midrash on Psalm 110” (1972: xix). The spatial representation of the supreme authority of Jesus, as He sits on the right hand of God on the throne, is also significant. Power is being expressed here in terms of proximity and orientation. As Koester points out, to be “seated at someone’s right hand was a position of favor (Sir 12:12) and a place from which to make intercession (1 Kgs 2:19). God’s “right hand” was powerful (Ex 15:6, Ps 118:15-16) and protective (Ps 80:17)” (2001:196). That Jesus sits on God’s right hand is a powerful symbol of His divinity and power. His exalted position on God’s right hand should induce in the angels, in Foucault’s words, “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (1979: 201). The angels on the other hand are ministering spirits “who are sent” (Heb 1:14) from the presence of God. Thus we have a comparative scenario of hierarchy and power being represented by proximity and distance.

3.3.3 Semiotic Figuration in the Spatiality of Heb 1:5-14

The second part of the quotation in Heb 1:13 is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the eschatological significance of the word “until” is important to the theology of Hebrews (for which see Koester 2001:100-104, and Ellingworth 1993:684-689). Here, we see the Son, seated on God’s right hand, in ultimate authority; but He does not yet have “all his enemies” under subjugation. An “already and not yet” eschatological theme will be referred to on several occasions and the “until” here in Heb 1:13 is a hint or foretaste of it. Secondly, there is scholarly debate on the identity of the “enemies”. Heb 1 does not tell us who they are. Ellingworth suggests that it is “misconceived to ask who...are the “enemies”...since the author’s concern is not negatively with the destruction of enemies, but positively with the Son’s sovereignty over all creation”

(1993:131-132). Though one agrees with this, there is an important point being made here. Jesus' authority will not tolerate any challenge and all creation must eventually either be on His side or be against Him. At the conclusion of his expositions in Heb 10:13, the author will repeat this reference to enemies, showing why it is important to take note of this allusion in Heb 1. The theme of contest, as we noted with regard to Num 13 in the previous chapter, applies not only to space, but also to faith in Jesus.

A third aspect of the quotation is the word "footstool". As Koester rightly explains, it "suggests complete subjugation to the sovereign" (2001:196). We should however not lose sight of the semiotic and cultic function of the word. The footstool is often understood literally as part of the throne of God, "a sort of step or support for the feet placed before the throne" (ISBE Dictionary, Webpage). But it is more often used in the Bible figuratively to represent the earth (Is 66:1), God's enemies (Mt 12:36), the Ark of the Covenant (2 Chron 28:2) and the temple (Ps 99:5). It is important to keep all four interpretations in mind as we look at the catena. There is a heavy use of cultic language in the catena, and especially Heb 1:13-14, and "footstool" has a cultic function here that is related to the ark/tabernacle/temple theological complex (cf. 1 Chron 28:2, Ps 99:5, 132:7). Indeed, it appears that what the author of Hebrews is doing with the catena is that he is starting off from what was known and familiar among his audience and drawing from it the Christological significance. The citations were probably well known to the audience. What they did not appreciate was the cultic functions of the Son in heaven. The author thus drops hints at the close of the catena, which as we shall see, relates to the tabernacle as the throne room of God. He quoted Psalm 110:1 in full in Heb 1:13 for an important reason (contra Ellingworth 1993:132), and we should not perhaps lose sight of this second part of the citation.

3.3.3 An Excursus - The Catena as a Visionary and Apocalyptic Depiction

Our approach to the catena may appear to be transforming what is essentially an anthology of Old Testament citations into a visual, almost apocalyptic, depiction of the heavenly realm. There are good grounds for this interpretation. In Heb 1, our author is not claiming an "unmediated access to the heavenly throne room and cannot gaze directly upon the exalted Christ" (Koester 2001:198). The author's restraint in exegesis, as if to

let the Word of God speak for itself, is one of the puzzling features of the catena. Catenae in biblical times were not always used as plain recitals but frequently conveyed detailed messages to readers. There are a number of catenae in the New Testament (e.g. Rom 3:10-18 & 1 Cor 6:16-18), which demonstrate that the practice of “stringing” a series of texts together to establish a point or present a message was not uncommon. In the Dead Sea Scroll text called Florilegium (4Q174), a series of texts from 2 Sam & the Psalter, (with some commentary) are used, according to Vermes, to “present the sectarian doctrine identifying the community with the temple and to announce the coming of the two Messiahs...” (2004:525). Also of interest are the texts, 4Q177 & 4Q182 which are made up of citations from the Psalter, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and “the book of the Law”; all connected by an eschatological theme³⁴.

Moreover there are instances apart from Hebrews where a visual presentation of a heavenly scene was portrayed by the use of a catena of scriptural verses. O’Neill (2000), has pointed to the similarities between Heb 1-2, John 3:13 and two Cave 4 Dead Sea Scroll fragments (4Q491 & Fragment 11 (4Q491C), all of which seem to be made up originally of disconnected texts put together to describe an ascended man “...exalted to heaven to receive an incomparable name” (2000:24). He suggests that the practice of weaving scriptural texts together to depict what is essentially the heavenly assembly with an ascended and glorified Son of man sitting on the throne was a tradition that predated Jesus who applied it to Himself and as did the author of Hebrews.

Another support for the approach we have adopted for the interpretation of the catena of Hebrews 1 is the presence of apocalyptic thought in Hebrews. Hebrews, by definition, is not an apocalyptic³⁵. The author however, like the other authors of the New Testament, draws from a general apocalyptic worldview of first century Judaism and Christianity. This worldview, as explained by Ashley, involves “...a particular way of

³⁴ Another DSS text called “The Triumph of Righteousness or Mysteries” (1Q27, 4Q299-301) is a very interesting anthology of apocalyptic writings but the degree of fragmentation makes determination of its nature difficult.

³⁵ Apocalyptic genre is defined by Collins as “...a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world” (1979:22).

thinking and talking about God's agency in history and the community's role therein. Second, apocalypticism provides a rhetorical strategy for mustering the resources of a community in the face of grave challenges to its way of envisioning that divine agency" (2000:24). The key elements of apocalypticism i.e. emphasis on revelation, cosmological dualism, conviction that events are divinely predetermined and the focus on the afterlife (See Collins 1997:1-11, 151) are all present in Hebrews³⁶. The citations of the catena are focused on themes closely related to apocalyptic thought such as references to angels, royal throne, eschatology, cosmogony, and worship. Moreover, authority is very important in apocalyptic rhetoric and its legitimation is commonly achieved by the use of pseudonymous authorship (in the case of the catena, letting God speak directly through the Old Testament and without interruptions), visions and sometimes, heavenly journeys³⁷.

The apocalyptic nature of sections of Hebrews are important for our interpretation of the significance of the series of spatial representations in the Christological argument as related to the tabernacle, and should always be borne in mind. We shall however turn our attention to the next stage of the author's argument.

3.4 THE SON MADE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS IN THE WORLD.

Hebrews 2:5-18 is, in one's view, one of the most important passages, in the epistle, for it can easily be entitled, as suggested by Miller, "*Why God became Man*" (1969:408). It is a passage which unashamedly exploits the humanity of the God-Human Jesus as our Substitute, Representative, Sanctifier, Captain, Champion, Hero, Pioneer, Example,

³⁶ The following passages demonstrate the apocalyptic element in Hebrews: Fragmentation of history into periods (Heb 1:1-2, 9:26, 2:5, 9:11, 10:1, 25-27, 6:5), An apocalyptic battle between Good and Evil (Heb 2:10), Judgment by fire at end of the age (Cosmic cataclysm) (Heb 6:2, 7-8, 10:26-31, 4:12-13, 12:26-29), Rest as Eschatological salvation (Heb 4:3-11) and focus on heavenly realities (Heb 8:2, 11, 12:22, 13:14). For a discussion of the apocalyptic elements in Hebrews, see Koester 2001:62 & Lane 1991: cv-cviii.

³⁷ Also of interest is the notable link between ancient Jewish Wisdom literature and apocalypticism. The book of Job for example has long been noted to have several elements of apocalypticism and has led to the suggestion by some scholars that it may be an earlier form of apocalyptic. Though discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study, the genre of Hebrews has also been shown to have some elements of Jewish Wisdom literature (See Attridge 1989:80).

Kinsman-Redeemer, Senior Brother and High Priest. Koester, suggests that Heb 2:5-9 contains the main proposition for the rhetorical structure of the whole sermon (2001:84). Similarly, Schenck posits that the narrative plot of the whole epistle begins in this passage (2003:5). Many of the important themes which would subsequently occupy our author; sacrifice, atonement, High Priest Christology, suffering, fear, perfection, sanctification, fellowship of the brethren and pilgrimage are all introduced in a fascinating narrative and proposition in Heb 2:5-18.

The passage is comparable to Rom 3 - 8, where Paul, like the author of Hebrews discusses the problem of sin in humanity and God's solution to it. Unlike Romans however, Hebrews expounds God's solution to sin in stages; or better put, in different "spaces", in such a way that lack of appreciation of the spatiality of his argument causes some difficulties. The manner in which Heb 2:5-18 discusses the sacrifice of Christ, as beginning in the inhabited world, but is only completed when, as High Priest, He enters the heavenly Holy of holies to present His own blood to God for the full remission of our sins; is one of the major reasons why one postulates that the author has, in the first instance, chosen the spaces as the "scaffolding" or frame for his argument and the choice of persons for the comparisons in the various spaces are secondary to the spaces he has chosen. We will however have to wait till the next chapter to discuss the reasons for his choices, but for now we need to closely examine the spatiality of Heb 2:5-18.

3.4.1 The Literary Structure of Heb 2:5-18

It is generally agreed among commentators that Heb 2:5 structurally follows on from Heb 1:14, with Heb 2:1-4 serving as a parenthetical interlude of exhortation. Guthrie's text-linguistic structure splits the passage in two parts: Heb 2:5-9 describes the temporary positional abasement of the Son to the angels, and Heb 2:10-18 describes the purpose of this abasement, i.e. to suffer and die. Heb 2:5-9 is a "homiletical midrash" (Lane 1991:43) on Ps 8:4-6 in which the author both states the originally intended glory of humankind as created by God and how Christ in becoming human opens the way to restore humanity to become "many sons unto glory". There is scholarly debate as to whether the cited passage introduces the "Son of Man" Christology or "Adam Christology". Even if the quotation is only an expression of the unachieved ideal for all

humanity, Heb 2:9 shows the identification of Jesus, the Son of God with humankind in his or her fallen state. Heb 2:10-16 explores the implications of this solidarity of Jesus with humanity. God became human in Christ, “son of man” as the Psalter puts it, or “the second Adam” as Paul calls him, and “seed of Abraham” in particular, to taste death, destroy the devil who held humankind in bondage, and lead us, as His brothers and sisters to become “sons unto glory”. It is this, which also qualifies Him to be our “merciful and faithful high priest”. Heb 2:17-18 which follows is “structurally transitional” (Ellingworth 1993:143) and introduces the title of Jesus as High Priest for the first time. This in itself is an important link to the argument in this space, because following on from here, the author moves on in Heb 3:1-6 to discuss Christology in terms of “the house”.

3.4.2 The Spatiality of Heb 2:5-18

3.4.2.1 The Spatial Topography of Heb 2:5-18

It is clear from Heb 2:5 that the author’s attention in his argument shifts from the heavenly realm to the inhabited world. Heb 2 addresses the intended glory of creation at its inception, and how God redeems it through the Son. The author refers to the earth in a roundabout way, since it is soon to disappear (Heb 1:11-12). God, he says, “Has not put in subjection to the angels the world to come, of which we speak”. The author’s interest is more in the coming new world and his consideration of the present world is largely limited to its sustenance by the power of the Word of the Son (Heb 1: 3), its redemption by the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10) and its imminent disappearance and replacement (Heb 9:26, 12:27). Unlike the heavenly realm in Heb 1, Heb 2:5-18 describes the territorial boundary of the world and its crossing in a different way. He had already alluded to the Son crossing the boundary in the Heb 1:6 as the firstborn is “brought into the world”. Regardless of one’s interpretation of “the world” in this verse, what is important for our purposes is the crossing of the boundary. In addition, the angels, also cross the boundary as they are “sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation”(Heb 1:14).

Death is the other boundary of this world; and the devil exploited the power inherent in the nature of this boundary to keep humanity in bondage to its fear. Job's erstwhile friend, Bildad, describes death as "king of terrors" (Job 18:24). Similarly, the Psalmist describes it as a "valley of shadows" (Ps 23:4), associated with fearfulness, trembling and horror (Ps 55:4-5). Fear of death was also one of the major sources of superstitious ideas that preoccupied the Greco-Roman writers of antiquity. Discussion of the subject is prominent in the dark poetry of Lucretius, and in essays by Seneca, Cicero and Plutarch. In the *Odyssey* (XI: 488) for example, Homer describes how Achilles exclaims: "Say not a word in death's favor; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than a king of kings among the dead". Gray, in his published dissertation titled *Godly Fear: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Greco-Roman Critiques of Superstition*, asserts "the motif of fear pervades the argument in Hebrews at almost every turn" (2003:185). Arguing that Plutarch's attacks on the fear of death was based on his belief that such fear originated from superstition, Gray suggests, "The author [of Hebrews] has an apologetic interest in addressing the perception that Christianity is a superstition"(2003:6). Thus while on one hand some of the readers may have been gripped with the fear of death to the point of immobilization, Christ's death has set them free from the devil's power. In destroying the devil by His death, Christ has taken away "the sting of death", as Paul describes it in 1 Cor 15:56. Hebrews also discusses what should constitute "appropriate fear" or what the writer calls, "godly fear" in the Christian (Heb 12:28, see also Heb 4:1).

Hebrews' discussion of death in this passage should not be seen only as a way of dealing with superstition. The fact is death is the ultimate nemesis of humanity in the world. It is the boundary to the inhabited world, which no human was able to breach. We spend all our lives, trying to devise means of overcoming or evading death without success. And that is why the devil finds it such a powerful tool of subjugation. The pursuit of a way of conquering death, was aptly described by the Russian novelist, Dostoevsky as: "Neither a man nor a nation can live without a 'higher idea,' and there is only one such idea on earth, that of an immortal human soul; all the other 'higher ideas' by which men live follow from that..."(1957:105). Heb 2:5-18, like Romans 3-6, discusses the major consequence of sin in the world as death and shows us how Christ

has dealt with it by His own death. As we shall shortly see, death as a boundary has an important semiotic function in this passage.

3.4.2.2 The Persons in this Space

3.4.2.2.1 The Angels

Hebrews refers to four different personalities in this world. First are the angels. The writer implies that the angels are in administrative charge of the present world. As Bruce notes, “The biblical evidence for the angelic government of the world is early; it goes back to the Song of Moses in Deut 32...the administration of the various nations has been parceled out among a corresponding number of angelic powers” (1990:71). The same idea is found in Dan 10:21, 12:1 where angelic beings are referred to as “Prince of Persia” and “Prince of Greece”. 2 Kings 19:35-36 suggests that God used angels to intervene in the course of events in history. Barclay describes the various first century speculations on the role of angels in the world: “There were 200 angels who controlled the movement of the stars and kept them in their courses. There was an angel who controlled the never ending succession of the years and months and days” (2002:22). An angel controlled the sea, frosts, dew, rain, snow, thunder, lightning etc. Some were wardens of hell; others were destroyers who executed God’s punishment on the world. “So many were the angels that the Rabbis could even say: “Every blade of grass has its angel”” (2002:22). Thus our author writes in a first century religious speculative milieu where the agency of angels in the world was regarded as ubiquitous. He however, does not conjecture on the exact functions of angels regarding their administration of the world. He points rather to their limitations. They clearly were unable to take on the nature of humankind, and in that state be able to confront and defeat the devil. Christ on the other hand, “did not take the nature of angels, but He took hold of the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16).

3.4.2.2.2 Humanity

In this space also is humanity. Humankind's exalted position in the created order as intended by God mystified David who wrote Psalm 8. God intended all things to be in subjection to humankind, who in turn was made a little lower than the angels, "crowned him with glory and honor". He/She was purposed by God to be a "creature of special privilege...unique dignity...[and]...unrivalled dominion" (Brown 1989:55-56). The frustrated, disorderly and stark failure of humans to fulfill this exalted function, is simply put by our author as evident to all: "But now we do not see all things having been subjected to him". Unlike Paul, Hebrews does not discuss in detail what caused this failure. The readers knew that the frustrated and shambled state of humankind was caused by sin. It is terribly ironic, that humanity, who was to rule in this world, is rather "all their lifetime subject to bondage"(Heb 2:15). Humanity's territorial claim to the inhabited world is visibly weakened and disrupted by death and his or her bondage to the fear of it. When Christ shares in humanity's nature, and defeats the devil, humans are transformed from "son of man" (2:6), to become "many sons unto glory" (2:10), called "brethren" (2:11, 12), "the assembly" (2:12), "the children" (2:13, 14); seed of Abraham who are sanctified by Christ (2:16), and people of God who are rescued by the merciful and faithful High Priest in their temptations (2:18).

3.4.2.2.3 Jesus the Son and our Brother

The third personality in this space is Jesus himself. This is the first time the author uses the name Jesus, and appropriately so since the interest of Heb 2 is in the humanity of the Son. The depiction of Jesus in this passage goes through a number of stages. He is firstly made a little lower than the angels in camaraderie with humankind. His lowering is both in terms of the shortness of the time and the hierarchical position, "short space", as DeSilva prefers to put it, (2000:109) in relation to the angels. He shares in the total nature of humanity for he partook of mankind's "flesh and blood" (Heb 2:14). The writer categorically denies that Jesus could have been an angelic being: "For truly He did not take the nature of angels, but He took hold of the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16).

Jesus' lowering was secondly, "for the suffering of death" (Heb 2:9). The sacrificial death of Christ is the most significant event in this space and the author explores several dimensions of it. He notes for example, that Jesus' death was for his "perfection". The use of the word "τελειῶσαι" to describe the suffering of Christ is "distinctive and complex" (Ellingworth 1993:161) and has several semantic undertones ranging from the telic to cultic relevance. Lindars has pointed out that the general idea of perfection is very pervasive in the epistle, and is more related to the completion of God's plan rather than ethical perfection. "Though Hebrews is deeply concerned about the conquest of sin, he does not use the idea of perfection to denote the moral ideal, except in so far as that is entailed in the completion of God's plan" (1991:44). Perfection means that Jesus' death makes Him completely suitable as the sacrifice for our sins. The themes of suffering and glory through perfection in this epistle are illustrated by how Jesus as our pioneer and example, was made perfect through suffering. The perfection of Christ, as Peterson points out, also "...provides a pattern for Christian discipleship" (1982:20). Similarly, Stevenson-Moessner explains, "Hebrews prepares the reader to expect suffering in this life...Hebrews clearly presents the suffering of Christ as justified. Obedience was learned through suffering and perfection was achieved" (2003:281).

Jesus' death is also seen in this passage in ritual terms. By His death, Jesus sanctifies humanity and makes us one with Him. As noted by Nelson, "Hebrews reflects the complexity of Israelite sacrifice by describing the sacrificial act of Jesus as a ritual script that entailed three episodes: the death of the victim, passage by the priest into the realm of the holy, and the use of blood to effect purification and to create a covenantal relationship" (2003: 252). The author saw the covenant confirmation ceremony in Ex. 24:3-8 and the Day of Atonement rituals described in Lev 16 as template for the interpretation of the death of Christ. He enriches these with ideas from depictions of other sacrifices in the Pentateuch such as the red heifer ritual of Numbers 19, the sin offerings of Lev 4:1-6:7 and the daily sacrifices (Heb 7:27; Num 28:1-8). The author discusses the significance of the death of Jesus in such a way that it conforms to these three episodes: His death as victim identified with the sacrificer, His passage as High Priest into the Holy of Holies and His presentation of His own blood to God. We shall discuss the semiotic implications of this shortly.

3.4.2.2.4 The Devil

The other person in this space is the devil. Even the devil has his domain, and in this inverted sphere, he holds unforgiven sinful humanity in bondage. According to Hebrews he used the power of death and the fear of it to oppress humankind. The actual mechanism by which the devil achieves this is not stated. What is apparent from Heb 2:14-15 is that Jesus had to become human in order to defeat the devil. Implying that the power, which the devil held over humanity, is related to his or her physical nature. As Schenck observes, “our physicality itself lies at the heart of the devil’s strength over us. After all it is our bodies that are susceptible to death in the first place” (2003:28).

3.4.2.3 The Relationship between the Persons in this Space

A complex network of relationships in the inhabited world are depicted in Heb 2:5-18, characterized by relations of power, hierarchy and contest, with Jesus at the centre. Disentangling and exploring them would yield very interesting results.

3.4.2.3.1 The Angels and Humanity

The relationship between the angels and humanity may be seen as comparable to temporary governors sent out to an unruly state to administer and take charge until order is restored. It is a relationship characterized by territoriality. Humans have lost territorial claim to be the persons “set over the works of your hands” (Heb 2:7). It is the angels who administer on God’s behalf until the world, “which is to come”. In relation to redeemed humanity, the angels are “ministers for those who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). This service, which Montefiore describes as “discharging a function of social obligation” (1964:49), is not directed to humans, but rather rendered “on behalf of” or “for the good of” believers, as Ellingworth asserts (1993:133). They are sent not to effect salvation, but to help those in whom the Son has already effected it.

3.4.2.3.2 Humankind and the Other Creatures

The citation of Ps 8:4-6 demonstrates the hierarchical order by which God intended creation to be governed. The present world as we see it is not what it was meant

to be by God. Humanity's relation with "the works of God's hand" was meant to be one of entrusted glorious responsibility and stewardship. We were meant to be God's "vice-regent on earth" (Montefiore 1964:56). Thus humankind was to relate to God's creation based on the authority and power, which God has entrusted to him or her. As Swindoll describes it, "When the psalmist looked at the Creation account in Genesis 1 he wasn't dizzied by the starry breadth of the Milky Way or awestruck by sapphired depths of the Mediterranean Sea. What amazed him was the quintessential honor upon man to rule such an incomparable domain" (1983:33). This was the ideal, but the actual state of affairs is different: "But now we do not see all things having been subjected to him" (Heb 2:8). The Human-Creation relationship is shown in Hebrews as disrupted and disorderly.

3.4.2.3.3 Humankind and the Devil

Instead of the glorious ideal, we rather see humankind, "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:15). A reversal of power relations occurred when humanity fell into sin and so brought death unto itself. The devil has used his deceptive power to enslave humanity as if in a jail "all his lifetime". A territorial boundary is here viciously exploited by the devil in order to enslave humans, with powerful effects. This is the most brutal and abusive of all relations. Death has become a "henchman in the devil's service and the threat of death as an instrument with which he bludgeons humanity into submission"(Lane 1991:61). The devil is depicted here as "executioner in chief"(Bruce 1990:86, 80n) and unredeemed humanity is like a slave bound to his/her master, gripped with the fear of the full effects of death and spends all their lives fruitlessly seeking ways to escape it.

3.4.2.3.4 Jesus and the Angels

The primary frame of Heb 2:5-16 is the comparison between Jesus and the angels in the inhabited world. This is important to remember, not just because it "resumes the scriptural exposition of 1:5-14 with its aim of demonstrating that Jesus excels the angels..." (Isaacs 2002:38), but also because the author has moved on to another space in his argument. The author needed to show how the Son's exalted hierarchical position in

heaven was reversed, albeit temporarily, in relations to the angels in the inhabited world in order to achieve humanity's salvation. In taking on the nature of humankind, Jesus became "a little lower than the angels" and yet fulfilled for humanity what the angels, by their nature, could not achieve. The relation between Jesus and the angels is thus framed in terms of a contest. The angels by their nature could not "take on" the devil, only Jesus the Son could, because he partook of humanity's "flesh and blood" and "took hold of the seed of Abraham". It is therefore the Son and not the angels under whom all things are "put in subjection... in the world to come". This could be interpreted, in Foucauldian terms, as "subversion" of the power dynamics in the relation. The one higher up in the power hierarchy was unable to accomplish the redemption of humanity. It is rather the Son who by being made a little lower than the angels was able to achieve humanity's eternal salvation.

3.4.2.3.5 Jesus and Humanity

Heb 2:5-18 portrays Jesus in solidarity with humanity. In fact, according to this passage, one main objective of His death was to be identified with humankind. Jesus is a son of man who shares the lowered position of humanity, suffers death and leads many sons into glory as Captain of their salvation. He is their senior brother, who shares fellowship of praise with "the children whom God has given me"; and partakes of their flesh and blood to defeat the devil. Indeed "in all things, it behoved him to be made like His brothers, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of His people" (Heb 2:17). Gray has observed that "The juxtaposition of the images of brother and high priest is most conspicuous in Heb 2:10–18, but the linkage is implicit in several other passages throughout the letter" (2003:336). Drawing on Plutarch's thesis on the characteristics of true "brotherly love" in ancient Greco-Roman society, especially in Plutarch's *De fraterno amore*, Gray emphasized that the solidarity of Christ with his brethren is illustrated by how the epistle "weaves together a wide range of concepts related to the role of brother in the Hellenistic world—inheritance, affection, trustworthiness, sympathy, moral uprightness, accountability, guardianship—to develop the image of Jesus as high priest" (2003:350).

What must be noted however is that the key emphasis of Jesus' solidarity with humanity in Heb 2:5-18 is on how it makes him a suitable sacrifice, "that He by the grace of God should taste death for all" (Heb 2:9). This has important semiotic connotations, which is discussed below. It is also important to observe that the work of Christ in the world, as described in Heb 2:5-18 is portrayed as only the beginning and not the end. It is completed when as ἀρχηγὸν, Captain, "Path-breaker" or Pioneer of humanity's salvation; He delivers (Heb 2:15), rescues (Heb 2:18), sanctifies (Heb 2:11) and leads them into glory (Heb 2:10). A pilgrimage into glory motif is already developing.

3.4.2.3.6 Jesus and the Devil

The relationship between Jesus and the devil is depicted, as more than a contest, it is actually a combat. Jesus became human so that "through death He might destroy him who had the power of death (that is, the Devil)" (Heb 2:14). This portrayal of the cosmic battle between Jesus and the devil may be understood with the help of at least five different allusions or parallels. Firstly is the concept of the Kinsman-Redeemer described in Lev 25. The solidarity of Jesus with humanity makes him mankind's kinsman and so qualifies him to redeem enslaved humanity. Thus Jesus is here, both the redeemer of enslaved humanity and his life is the ransom, which was paid on humankind's behalf for their liberation from bondage. A second possible allusion is the concept of Christus Victor, which is one of the "classic" theories of atonement. As Aulén describes it, the "Christ – Christus Victor – fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the "tyrants" under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world unto Himself" (1931:4). Indeed these two allusions together are portrayed in a classic myth in Plutarch's *Theseus*, in which Pollux and Castor team up to invade Attica in order to rescue their sister Helen from Theseus. When the human Castor dies in the battle, Pollux the god implores Zeus "to be allowed to die with him; this being impossible by reason of his immortality, Pollux was permitted to spend alternately one day, among the gods, the other in Hades with his brother" (Plutarch, *Theseus* 32-33, Webpage). In the case of Jesus however, He defeats death and Hades and frees his brothers and sisters from their power.

A third possible allusion is with reference to God as the Divine Champion warrior who leads His people into battle (cf. Is 42:13). As Lane describes it, this is related to the practice in the ancient near east whereby opposing commanders “agree in advance to settle the military issue in accordance with the outcome of a contest between two or more champions representing the two armies” (1991:62). A fourth parallel is similar but is a reference to the legendary exploits of Hercules. In *Iliad*, Homer describes how Hercules descended into the dungeon of the dead and wrestled with the “lord of death” to free Alcestis (See Koester 2001:239 & Lane 1991:61). Though this parallel to Champion or Hero Warrior motif may not be far off the mind of our author, a fifth possible allusion could also have influenced the depiction of the combat between Jesus and the devil. Moses as the deliverer of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the leader of the exodus generation may have served as a template for our author here since the epistle will in a short while describe the wilderness wandering of the Israelites and failure of that generation (See Koester 2001:240).

3.4.3 Semiotic Figuration in the Spatiality of Heb 2:5-18

The author of Hebrews systematically drops hints that point to the scheme constraining the spatiality of his argument. As we have noted already, Hebrews separates the interpretation of the sacrificial death of Jesus into stages, so that its significance in the space of Heb 2:5-18 (i.e. the inhabited world) matches the Old Testament template. The death of Jesus is interpreted in Heb 2 as the first component in the three episodes of the sacrificial ritual. In this first episode, the animal victim must be identified closely with the one on whose behalf the sacrifice was being made (cf. Nelson 2003:252-258). Similarly, Heb 2:5-18 describes Jesus’ death as a matter of solidarity with the brothers and sisters whom he delivers as he destroys the devil that held them in bondage. As Nelson explains, “His death was an offering of his body (10:5, 10; cf. the “flesh” in 10:20), yet for the efficacy of his overall sacrificial offering his blood was more significant (9:12, 14; 12:24)” (2003:258). The writer will later stress that the space in which the blood of Christ is presented is not the earth but “Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24), but the cosmological aspect of this

interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ, is not to be pressed too far, certainly not as much as the sacrificial template which governs the staged explanation of Christ's death.

Scott has vividly, but perhaps unfairly, described this complex approach by the author of Hebrews as one "engaged in pouring new wine into old bottles, which are burst under the strain" (1922:124). One suggests however that the author of Hebrews had very good socio-cultural and theological reasons for "sticking to the spaces" and making a typological or analogical application of the sacrifice of Christ to them. In the Old Testament sacrificial template from which the author of Hebrews draws his analogies, the animals were sacrificed elsewhere; in or outside the camp depending on the type of offering, and the blood was brought into the tabernacle for the rest of the ritual. In the covenant establishment ceremony of Ex. 24 for example, Moses sent young men to sacrifice the animals and then brought the blood for sprinkling on the altar, which he had built within the exclusion zone below the mountain (Ex 24:4-5). When Heb 9:18-20 comments on this ceremony, it is the sprinkling of the blood, which occupies the author's attention, since the space he was dealing with in Heb 9, is "the holy of holies". Similarly, the animals for the Day of Atonement and the Red heifer rituals were sacrificed elsewhere; in the case of the latter, "outside the camp" (Num 19:3). Thus spatiality and typological interpretation of the Old Testament heavily influence the interpretation of the death of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins in Hebrews.

As we gather more evidence, I will demonstrate that the author of Hebrews was constrained by an ideological interpretation of the spatiality of the wilderness tabernacle and camp, and the symbolic significations he saw in the sacrificial rituals of the Pentateuch to interpret the death of Christ. In the author's mind, this "inhabited world" corresponded to the wilderness space in which the sacrificial animal was ritually identified with the sacrificer and then killed. This space extended from the camp to the worshippers' square in the eastern front gate of the tabernacle, near the altar for burnt offerings (Ex 27:13-16). This explains why Hebrews states in Heb 13:12 that "Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered *outside the gate*". Throughout the epistle, Jesus' suffering is equated to His death. In addition, the idea that death is the boundary for this space and became a means of subjugation of humanity by the devil would support this interpretation. Apart from the priests, no other member of

public was allowed to cross the boundary of this space into the holy realm. Any trespasser was put to death (Ex 19:20-24, 20:19-20, Num 3:38).

Heb 2:5-18 also intimates that the death of Christ makes the next two stages of the sacrificial ritual possible. His death made Him a merciful and faithful High Priest “to make propitiation for the sins of His people”. But to the author of Hebrews, these two stages would occur in another space, not in this one. This also explains the transitional nature of Heb 2:17-18. It is easy for a modern reader of Hebrews to envisage that since some time elapsed between Jesus’ death on the cross and the drama of his ascension to heaven³⁸, Hebrews’ interpretation of His death as sacrifice in three stages reduces the importance of the cross and His resurrection. We should however remember that in the metaphorical elaboration of the significance of death of Jesus in Hebrews, the time interval between His death and ascension does not matter. It is the spatiality, which was important for this particular argument.

Hebrews, it appears, freezes or “contracts time” as Bakhtin would put it, in order to focus on space, and discuss the atoning death of Jesus in metaphorical terms. This Bakhtinian phenomenon of the intermittent dissociation of space from time in Hebrews is important in the literary analysis of the epistle. Reed has for example suggested that Hebrew’s use of spatial imagery disposes the letter to have a “static view of time” (1993:161). Though Via (1999) accepts the presence of elements of decoupling of space from time in Hebrews, he suggests that time is not “static or frozen, for Christ is to appear again (9:28), and believers still wait for the heavenly city...” (1999:230). The nature of the handling of time by Hebrews is therefore not straightforward³⁹. Clearly, our

³⁸ The actual timing of the ascension of Christ to heaven, whether immediately at His resurrection then followed by its dramatization forty days later, or even at His death etc, is itself a matter of scholarly debate. See the review of the various opinions by Toon (1983:195-205).

³⁹ As we shall see in the next chapter, one of the interpretations which Hebrews gives to the parts of the tabernacle is that they represent time periods or “ages”, but with regard to the death of Jesus, time is dislocated from space in the argument. Elsewhere in the epistle, the author does not seem to follow a chronologically linear description of events. In Heb 5:12-6:11 for example, the past, present and future spiritual history of the community is presented in a “haphazard” chronological fashion, from the present to the recent past, then to the possible future, then back to the far past and then to the present again. Similarly, Meier (1985:168-189) has pointed out how in its prologue, Hebrews begins the story of Christ with His exaltation, moves back in time to His work in creation, then further back to His relationship with the Father before time, then forward to His present work in sustaining creation, back again to His ministry of

author at some junctures focuses on the spatiality to the extent that time appears to be dissociated from space. Here in Heb 2:5-18, Jesus the Son became son of man and a little lower than the angels, to be our perfect sacrifice in order to become our “merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of His people”. We will now move on, following our author into the next space, i.e. “the house”.

3.5 THE SON, GREATER THAN MOSES IN THE HOUSE

The spatiality of the Christological argument from Heb 3 onwards assumes a more metaphorical and “utopian” tone with the use of several figures of speech, some with double meanings, new word coinages, play on words and puns. We do well to pay close attention to the twists and turns in the argument. The contrast between Jesus and Moses in Heb 3:1-6 has been pivotal to the school of thought which interprets the theology of Hebrews as a polemic against Judaism (see Lane 1991:cxxxviii) and yet when we closely examine the passage, we realize that the emphasis is on continuity of the people of God more than discontinuity. Both Moses and Jesus are seen as members of the same household of God, together with the first hearers of this sermon. Jesus is the Son and heir, Moses is a servant in the house, and both are faithful to God. As DeSilva (1995:215) and Ellingworth (1993:203) both observe, Moses is not denigrated at all in this passage. Scott has posited that the comparison “serves as a rhetorical device to persuade the readers to accept the New Covenant, to enjoy the direct access to God, and to recognize Jesus Christ as the faithful Mediator between God and Man” (1998:201). Swetnam, on the other hand points out the close link between this passage and Heb 2 with its imagery of “leading sons into glory” and suggests that this passage is continuing that theme to demonstrate that “Christ, who is foreshadowed by Moses, is leader, under God, in this journey to the spiritualized promised land” (2001:102). Oberholtzer has also drawn attention to the manner in which the first readers of Hebrews are addressed in this passage, “as part of a worshipping community of believer-priests” (1988:186). Thus a strong ecclesiological theme may be found here.

redemption on earth and forward again to His present exaltation at God’s right hand. One finds this phenomenon in relation to time in Hebrews rather intriguing.

Others have noted the similarity of this passage with 1 Cor 10:5-10 and have suggested a reference to a common tradition of Moses Christology. Hay has examined the references to Moses in the New Testament and has noted that they “fall into three functional categories depending on whether their chief function is to clarify Christology, to assess Mosaic scripture, or to advance the church’s self-understanding” (1990:240). He notes, “Fundamentally, however in Hebrews, the relation of Jesus to Moses is that of a witness, one who points out what is to come (3:5)” (1990:245). One would suggest that this passage fits into all three categories. We learn a bit more about Christology; understand how the early church interpreted parts of the Pentateuch and its own self-interpretation as God’s people in an alien world. Jones, largely drawing from this passage has also suggested that the figure of Moses may indeed be used as a heuristic device in examining the pastoral theology of Hebrews. He points out that “the pastoral theology of the author responded to the crisis of the absence of Christ and cult by creative reference to Moses and the exodus generation...He conveyed the presence of Christ and cult by comparing the leader and cult of the old covenant with the leader and cult of the new covenant” (1979:96). The passage is hence vital to the epistle’s argument.

Yet the various examinations of the spatiality of the epistle do not consider this passage as dealing with a particular space. The tendency has been to regard the author as progressing in his Christological argument from heaven (Heb 1), to earth (Heb 2) and back to heaven (Heb 5ff.). This has led to the common interpretation that the spatiality of Hebrews essentially amounts to the author’s cosmology. One proposes that the reason for the deliberately awkward and frequent use of “house” (six times) and built (three times) in this passage is for an important semiotic figuration that contributes to the overall spatial picture of the epistle.

3.5.1 The Literary Structure of Heb 3:1-6

The classification of Heb 3:1-6 as an exposition is not straightforward. Guthrie’s text linguistic structure, categorizes it as part of the whole exhortation of Heb 3:1- 4:13. This is understandable since; unlike the previous sections, the theme of the exposition in Heb 3:1-6 is more closely linked with the theme of the exhortation that follows it. Heb 3:1-6 introduces the concept of “fidelity” or “trustworthiness” (Isaacs 2002:49), using

Jesus and Moses as examples and then applies it in Heb 3:7- 4:11 to the wilderness generation who failed the test of faithfulness. In fact Heb 3:1-6 demonstrates the very close relationship between the two genres in the epistle since it has a mixture of both exposition and exhortation. Brief exhortations bracket the argument in this section, a feature that occurs elsewhere in the epistle. The exposition on the greater glory and superiority of Jesus over Moses however, dominates the passage so much that, despite the exhortational pointers at the beginning and the end, the doctrinal part cannot be overlooked (contra Isaacs 2002:49). As Ellingworth explains, the paranaetic element of this passage is confined to the periphery, its bulk contain "...further teaching about the status of Jesus" (1993:193). Thus it is reasonable to treat this passage as largely exposition with exhortational elements.

Structurally, Heb 3:1-6 "is a very complex midrashic treatment of a number of texts" (D'Angelo 1979:68). The main text is from Num 12:1-8, but allusions to the oracles to Eli in 1 Sam 2:35 and to Nathan in 1 Chron 7:14 may have contributed to the author's discussion of "house" and "faithful" in relation to Jesus and Moses. Lane (1991:72) divides the passage into four; Heb 3:1-2 introduces the comparison between Jesus and Moses, Heb 3:3 asserts the superiority of Jesus over Moses, Heb 3:4-6a explains this assertion and Heb 3:6b draws out the relevance of the comparison for the congregation.

3.5.2 The Spatiality of Heb 3:1-6

3.5.2.1 The Spatial Topography of Heb 3:1-6

A cursory reading of the passage gives the idea that the author has in mind a comfortable family and household imagery, made up of a Father, a Son and Servants. Three different Greek words are used for "house", each of which is repeated twice, οἶκω (Heb 3:2, 5), οἴκου (Heb 3:3, 6a) and οἶκος (Heb 3:4, 6b). Hebrews does not use the other two Greek words for house, i.e. οἰκία (which is used for "dwelling", but "is never used of the tabernacle or the Temple" (Vine, 1997:566)) and οἰκεῖος (household). In addition, the formation of the house is described with the use of the Greek word, κατασκευάζεται which, as explained by Strong's Greek Dictionary means "to prepare thoroughly

(properly by external equipment; whereas G2090 refers rather to internal fitness); by implication to construct, create: - build, make, ordain, prepare” (1890 Webpage). Thus Koester, drawing from John Chrysostom’s homilies, highlights the “several senses” (2001:245) of “house” in this passage, including “people”, “the universe” and “sanctuary”. Ellingworth similarly posits that “house” is being used as both a community and a structure and notes that this structural use “is widespread in the NT...perhaps especially the temple” (1993:197).

Put together, we get a picture of a group of disparate people who have lived centuries apart, being described as a single family using the imagery of a house. Our author is playing on words to keep all three imagery, that of a people (or nation) of God, a family of God and a cultic building, together in this passage. The strict distinction between house as a structure and house as a community is more of a modern pre-occupation of exegetes and not necessarily that of the author of Hebrews. As we have noted in the previous chapter, in first century Mediterranean societies, communities were defined, more by the social network between the people than the structural buildings they occupied. This worked both ways so that a group of people was equivalent to the space they occupied. As Malina summarizes it, “people moved through other people, not through space.” (1993: 370). We shall shortly see that the cultic element of the “house” imagery corresponds to the tabernacle structure.

The house is built by Jesus (Heb 3:3), yet “He who built all things is God” (Heb 3:4). This is another powerful statement in the epistle on the divinity of Christ, a fundamental belief the author shared with his hearers so much that he found it unnecessary to expound and explain. As we have noted with regard to the word *κατασκευάζεται* (build), the sense in which the writer uses it is one of constructing a house and preparing it for use. Thus there is a transitional element to this “house”. The house is both built and being built – portraying an “already and not yet” eschatological imagery and theme of liminality. It is also a house for a specific purpose, built for the “glory” (Heb 3:3) of the one who constructs it⁴⁰. The means of creating this community

⁴⁰ There are several parallels between Heb 3:1-6 and 1 Pet 2:9-11 where believers are described as a royal priesthood and the holy nation of God on pilgrimage in a hostile world. The theological affinity of

of the people of God is by a “heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1), and separation unto God as “holy brothers” (Heb 3:1). It is God who also appoints “servants” in His household (Heb 3:2). The concept of the church as a house also gives it a sense of security and protection, as Bollnow would have described it. Thus the author of Hebrews asserts that members of God’s house have left the world behind them and “fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18). It is therefore a secure holding house but not the final resting place, a notion that has strong echoes with the wilderness tabernacle.

The author does not elaborate an exit boundary for this house, though he hints with the word “if” in Heb 3:6, that faithfulness and perseverance is required from members of the house. Members of the house should “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end”. The “exit boundary” then, may be regarded as opening the way to the eventual goal, i.e. “the end” (Heb 3:6, 14). Entering this “end” is also described as entering into God’s “rest” (Heb 3:18, 4:1), or “the heavens” (Heb 4:14), where “the throne of grace”(Heb 4:16) is. All these imagery of what constitutes “the end” of Heb 3:6 would again point to the important semiotic figuration of the tabernacle imagery in the passage. As MacRae (1978) observes, the author’s peculiar use of “hope” and “faith” in the epistle is related to his combined apocalyptic and eschatological interpretation of the tabernacle. In the pilgrimage theme of Hebrews, “hope is the goal and faith is a means toward its full realization” (1978:192). The hope is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil” (Heb 6:19). Thus this “exit boundary” as we shall shortly see, marks out the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Hebrews with 1 Peter has been noted by commentators (see e.g. Attridge, 1989:30-31) and the parallels between these two passages would seem to support the approach we have adopted.

3.5.2.2 The Persons in the House

3.5.2.2.1 The Members of God's Household

Hebrews calls the members of God's household, "holy brothers". The author had already alluded to this description in the previous space where they who are sanctified, share the same flesh and blood with He who sanctifies them. They are holy because they have now crossed the line into the purity zone. They are called by God, like Jesus (Heb 5: 4, 10), Aaron (Heb 5:4) and Abraham (Heb 11:8), and that calling is heavenly, i.e. from heaven into heaven, into the very presence of God. He calls them into His "glory" (Heb 2:10), toward the "perfection", the goal and the completion within the veil. As Koester explains, "heavenly calling" is an allusion to the heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary (Heb 8:5, 9:23; cf. 10:19)(2001:242). In a sense therefore, all the members of the household are called to be servants of God in His very presence.

The Ecclesiology of Hebrews is one of the most elegant in the New Testament; in Ellingworth's words, "Hebrews is a profoundly ecclesiological writing" (1993:68). One reason for this is its simplicity, the author describes the church as people who have been "enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come" (Heb 6:4-5). Lindars posits "Hebrews does not have a developed theology of the church...[and] shows no development of an institutional ministry, referring only to "your leaders""(1991:127). Despite this, the depiction is one of a closely-knit community of believers, full of love and affection for each other. The author hence exhorts them to "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb 13:1). He nowhere singles out individuals for attention, preferring to speak to them together as a group, and as a family of brothers and sisters. As Brown insightfully comments, "This epistle has little time for the spiritual individualist" (1982:77).

It is generally agreed among commentators that the community receiving this epistle was most likely a "house church" (See Lane 1991:liii). The portrayal of believers in this epistle, especially in Heb 3:1-6, using cultic language such as holy brothers and heavenly calling, would also suggest that Hebrews has an element of the theology of the

“priesthood of all believers”, following after Christ in ministry in God’s house. They are all “brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19). They are hence exhorted to “consider one another to provoke to love and to good works... exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”. The epistle does not directly refer to the sacrament, but several commentators have suggested the presence of allusions to the Eucharist (See Koester 2001:31-33; Ellingworth 1993:68). It also makes a large contribution to the concept of the church as a pilgrim people in continuity with the covenanted people of God in the Old Testament. Though this was appreciated by the Eastern Church as far back as 600 AD (See Koester, 2001:19), it was Käsemann who first popularized the concept in the West in his *“The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews”* in 1954, using it to motivate the Confessing Church of Germany during their struggles with the authorities. “Though it is now widely agreed that he [Käsemann] exaggerated Gnostic influence on the author of Hebrews” (Ellingworth 1993:43), it is equally accepted that the author of Hebrews saw an analogical parallel between the liberated exodus generation on their way to the Promised Land and the Church of God on its way to heaven.

3.5.2.2.2 Moses as a Servant in the House

Moses is compared to Jesus based on his faithfulness as a servant in the house. He is one of many servants, Joshua being another. It is however of no surprise that it is Moses who is compared with Jesus in the house. Regarding the figure of Moses in the Old Testament, Achtemeier, observes, “Protected by God at his birth, chosen by God as a man, led by God through his career, buried by God at his death – surely, there was not a prophet in Israel like Moses” (1990:227). Thus, in the first century AD, according to Scott, Moses was “held in almost God-like esteem, even higher than angels” (1998:203), and his faithfulness, according to Lane “appears to have been a significant consideration to the men and women” (1991:79-80) who are addressed by Hebrews. Ellingworth posits how, in rabbinic discussions of the first millennium, it was suggested that God trusted Moses more than the angels (1993:202).

The Jewish extra biblical literature has several accolades for Moses. He is described as “holy prophet” (Wisdom of Solomon 10:6, 11:1) and “our counselor” (4 Mac 9:2). Ben Sirach describes him as a “merciful man...beloved of God and men...like the glorious saints...his enemies stood in fear of him...[God] showed him part of his glory...He sanctified him in his faithfulness and meekness, and chose him out of all men” (Sir 45:1-5). Josephus praises him as the best philosopher, suggesting “The wisest of the Greeks learnt to adopt the conception of God from the principles with which Moses supplied them” (*Apion* 2.164-171). As Barrett notes, “The notion that the best Greek philosophy was plagiarized from Moses was current long before Josephus (e.g. in the Jewish apologist Aristobulus, *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* Xii), and was taken up by the Christians (e.g. Justin, *Apol* i. 60)” (1987: 284). Philo equally describes Moses as “the best of kings” (*Of the Life of Moses* 2.92, 187, 201), “the holiest of men” (*Of Cherubim* 45) and “the holy prophet” (*Allegories of the Laws* 3.185). Thus the author of Hebrews writes in a Jewish religious atmosphere of greatly exalted esteem of Moses. He was indeed counted worthy of some glory, though this glory is not as much as the Son’s.

The writer may have had more pressing reasons however to cite Moses as a servant in God’s house. One reason is the influence of the Pentateuch on the author of Hebrews, for this is the part of the Old Testament from which the writer draws most of his typologies, analogies and theological motifs. Thus in Heb 3-4, a section where he deals with the pilgrimage of the Old Testament people of God to the Promised Land, Moses is the leader to be compared with Christ. The author of Hebrews explores God’s evaluation of Moses in Num 12:1-8 and points out that “Moses truly was faithful in all his house, as a servant”. When he cites the spiritual giants of the Old Testament in Heb 11:23-28, Moses gets more attention than any other person, stressing not only his faith but also his perseverance in suffering, in “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt”. Hebrews does not use Moses as a typology of Christ; he is presented as a witness rather than a type for Jesus (Heb 3:5), as God’s servant who faithfully served him in testifying about the Son in his house.

3.5.2.2.3 Christ Jesus the Son over the House

The Son is referred to in this passage as Christ Jesus, “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession”. Apostle here means the “Sent One”, sent into another place as a representative. It is a motif which Hebrews shares with John’s Gospel, though only Hebrews uses the title “Apostle” for Jesus. Jones notes that the title in this section is appropriate since “Moses is described as an apostle in Ex 3:10, one called, appointed and sent by God to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (1979:98). For the second time, the author of Hebrews uses the title of High Priest for Jesus, but he does it tentatively, as foretaste of what he is later to dwell on. Thus it is not just prophetic but priestly functions of Christ that are in view in this space. He was appointed by God and sent to die for the remission of our sins. In this regard, he was “faithful to Him who appointed Him” (Heb 3:2). The use of “Apostle” as title also introduces us to the progressive or pilgrimage theme of this section of the epistle. As Nelson notes, Apostle depicts Jesus as leader who crosses “...the boundary line into the perilous zone of the holy...for the benefit of the whole people” (1993:83).

As Son over God’s house, Jesus is the heir, and like His Father, is builder of all things (Heb 3:4, 6). Once again Christology is being expressed in terms of territoriality. The writer is unambiguous that in this space Jesus has absolute claim of ownership, for He is the Son, the heir; he built it; it is his own house. He is thus worthy of more glory than Moses.

3.5.2.2.4 Joshua the successor of Moses

The mention of Joshua (Heb 4:8) within the paranaetic section of Heb 3-4 is not meant to be a direct exposition of the person of Christ, certainly not in the way the angels, Moses and Aaron are also compared to Jesus. It is however an indication that the author is mindful of the other servants in the house who were to lead the people of God through to the Promised rest. Ellingworth has noted that there are three main views of the crux presented in this verse (1993:252-253), the historical Joshua view, the literal Jesus view and the typological use of the person of Joshua. One subscribes to the first view and understands the passage to be contrasting the historical Joshua as servant in the house with Jesus the Son. The contrast or contest is based on achievement and faithfulness.

3.5.3 The Relationship between the Members of the House

There are a number of relationships one can explore in this space. The writer does not dwell much on the nature of the relationship among the “holy brothers”, though as partakers or sharers together of the same heavenly calling, he no doubt expects a strong bond of love and camaraderie as he had already referred to in Heb 2. Equally, the relationship between Moses and the people of God is glossed over, since it was familiar to the readers. The relationship between Jesus and the members of the house is seen in terms of leadership, as the One they should look up to and “consider”. “The word means to fix attention on something in such a way that its inner meaning, the lesson that it is designed to teach, may be learned” (Barclay 2002:35). As Apostle and High Priest of “our profession”, Jesus is also our example in faithfulness and trustworthiness.

The comparison of Moses with Jesus dominates the relationships reflected in this space. This house, like all other spaces is contested and the relationship between Jesus and Moses is hence presented as a contest. They were both appointed and sent by God. They were both faithful in the house. Jesus however “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, because he who has built the house has more honor than the house”. Jesus is greater than Moses because, as Son, heir and builder, He has territorial claim to God’s house. The superiority of Jesus is also expressed in spatial terms, so that whereas Jesus is Son “over” God’s house, Moses is servant “in” the house.

3.5.4 Semiotic Figuration in the Spatiality of Heb 3:1-6

Several pointers help us to identify the representational space in our author’s mind in this part of the exposition. We have already noted that the concept of “the house” has a cultic imagery in relation to the tabernacle that should not be discounted. As Hodges observes, “By a natural semantic shift to which the Greek word for house naturally lends itself, the writer moved from the thought of “house” as a sphere where priestly activities transpired to the thought of the “house” as consisting of the people who engaged in these activities” (1985: 786). That the incident in Num 12, which served as the basis for the Midrash in Heb 3:1-6 occurred in the tabernacle, would also support this view. We have also noted that the author understood the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as marking the “exit boundary” of this “house”. In addition, the use of cultic

language to describe the believers as “holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling” would suggest that the writer is mooting the idea of believers as a priestly community.

One will therefore suggest that the writer of Hebrews considered this space to correspond to the parts of the tabernacle that was accessible only to the Levitical priests; i.e. the priestly courtyard and the Holy Place (Ex 29:42-43, 30:6-8, Num 18:1-8, Heb 9:6). The priests entered this area daily for ritual washings, sacrifices, dedications and fellowship, in “accomplishing the service of God” (Heb 9:6). In this sphere, Moses exercised considerable authority and leadership as he established and consecrated Aaron and his sons for the ministry (Lev 8).

Another point in support for this interpretation is the use of the word “servant” for Moses in this Heb 3:1-6. The Greek for servant here, *θεράπων*, is used for “a free man offering personal service to a superior. In some non-biblical writings...of a temple servant; otherwise it implies a cultic office” (Ellingworth 1993:207). When God referred to Moses within the confines of the wilderness tabernacle as; “My servant Moses, he is faithful in all my house” in Num 12:7, He used the same word, *θεράπων*, (temple servant). Thus Moses in Heb 3:1-6 may be seen as a servant who serves in God’s tabernacle. It is important to note that Moses elsewhere uses *θεράπων* for himself (Ex 4:10, 14:31, Num 11:11, Deut 3:24) and Hebrews consistently avoids using the other Greek words for servant in the rest of the epistle. Hence Ellingworth’s suggestion that it is Moses’ “prophetic rather than a cultic role” (1993:207) that is being referred to in Heb 3. The prophetic role is nevertheless fused with cultic priestly functions, as is seen in the dual titles of Jesus as Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Consequently the cultic connotations of the description of Moses as servant in the house cannot be discounted. The presence of the cultic imagery therefore supports the suggestion that the space which occupies our author’s attention in Heb 3:1-6 is the priestly courtyard and the Holy Place.

This view is also shored up when the author later links Moses with the first Covenant and the Holy Place in Heb 9 (as opposed to the new covenant which corresponded to the Holy of Holies), thus emphasizing the cultic functions of Moses. In Heb 9, the author equates the Mosaic Covenant to the Holy Place and describes the cultic

functions of Moses that he performed in the priestly courtyard and the Holy Place with its vessels and furniture. Hebrews does not describe any major functions performed by Moses in the Holy of Holies. Moreover, it is very instructive to observe that in describing the nature of these priestly activities, Hebrews mentions the death of sacrificial animals as required before the beginning of activities in this space (Heb 9:15-18). This was part of the priestly ministry at the brazen altar right within the eastern gate of the courtyard. He also notes the dominant role of Moses here, describing how “Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people... he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry” (Heb 9:21). The author of Hebrews hence took a serious view of the priestly functions and leadership of Moses and yet restricted those functions to the Holy Place and the priestly courtyard.

As we shall discuss in the next chapter, there is scholarly debate regarding the exact typological interpretation of the wilderness tabernacle offered by Hebrews. One subscribes to the view that the author gave multiple interpretations, especially to the various regions of the tabernacle and that his approach may serve as useful template for understanding parts of the Pentateuchal theology of the tabernacle. Whichever view one has, it is clear that the writer interpreted the symbolic representation(s) of the priestly courtyard and Holy Place as of temporary and transitional nature, as something that is about to change, disappear or be withdrawn (Heb 9:8-10, 26). This corresponds to the “pilgrimage of the people of God” motif in this section of Hebrews⁴¹.

A final and potent indicator regarding the author’s metaphorical understanding of the “present” state of the “people of God” as transitional and as corresponding to the priestly court and Holy Place may be found in Heb 13:9-14. In a mixture of dissimilar and complex imageries, the author encourages the believers to be wary of “different and strange doctrines”, presumably involving special foods and meals. He refers to the sacrifice of Jesus outside the gate as a sign that believers should “*go forth*” after him in

⁴¹ Origen of Alexandria, in *Homilia IX in Leviticum 9*, gives a similar interpretation of this part of the tabernacle or temple as symbolizing the church.

bearing His reproach because they are pilgrims in the world in which they have “no continuing city, but we seek one to come”. More importantly, he makes the cryptic statement that believers “have an altar of which they have no right to eat, those who serve the tabernacle” (Heb 13:10). The vividness of the metaphors in this crux passage is very informative though several attempts to particularize what exactly they mean have not yielded scholarly consensus. This is simply because the author is mixing several different and apparently incompatible imageries from the Pentateuch together (See Ellingworth 1993:708-712 & Koester 2001:567-577). What is clear, though, is that our author metaphorically represented the church as the priestly community occupying the priestly court and Holy Place, ministering at its altar and eating from its sacrifices.

Having set out that the Christological exposition is following the wilderness camp and into the courtyard and Holy Place of the tabernacle, we shall now proceed to the next space, the holy of holies, where the author of Hebrews propounds his main thesis.

3.6 JESUS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

From Heb 4:14 onwards, we encounter the major thesis of the author that Jesus Christ is our eternal high priest who ministers in the heavenly holy of holies in the very presence of God enthroned at His right hand of Majesty. Though the High Priest Christology is universally appreciated and qualified as the distinctive contribution of the author of Hebrews to New Testament Christology, it appears from the tentative manner in which he approaches it, that it was a major novelty on the part of his audience. It was a theological proposition that the author regarded as “solid food” (Heb 5:12) and which was “hard to be explained” (Heb 5:11) to the congregation.

The concept of Jesus as High Priest is first alluded to in Heb 1:3 where His function in “cleansing of our sins” is mentioned. He is then called the “merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of His people” in Heb 2:17 but the author does not stop there to elaborate. In Heb 3:1, Jesus is again described as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” but once again the author does not clarify what his functions were. He rather focused on showing that Jesus is indeed faithful as a Son over God’s House. From Heb 4:14, the author begins to unveil his major thesis: “Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed into the

heavens, Jesus the Son of God...” He proceeds to show how Jesus qualifies to be the great High Priest, and how His office is greater and better than Aaron’s because it is in the order of Melchizedek, and how by having a ministry in the heavenly holy of holies, he has inaugurated a better, more effective and more enduring covenant.

Scholarly interest in this portion of Hebrews has been dominated by the examination of its unique Christology. Cullmann observes how this is a “more complex Christological conception than that of Prophet or Servant of God since the title does not exclusively concern the historical work of Jesus” (1959:83). The uniqueness of this Christology has led to several suggestions regarding its source and the possible socio-cultural situation of the congregation. Some scholars have suggested that the congregation may have been former priests who were attached to the Jerusalem temple. Others have concluded a possible derivation from the Qumran Essenes (See Bruce 1991:5-9). Lindars posits that the manner in which the author juxtaposes the “priesthood theme with dire threats, both growing in intensity and fullness as the letter moves forward...give the strongest indication that the priestly work of Jesus is the heart of our author’s doctrine and the crucial issue in the situation which he is trying to remedy” (1991:59). Based on this he has suggested that the congregation was struggling with how to deal with sin and guilt in the New Testament era. Longenecker on the other hand has argued that despite its distinctiveness, the motif is also present in other parts of the New Testament and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. “The fourth Gospel strikes a similar note in its presentation of Jesus as assuming the place of centrality in the nation’s religious festivals...in the Pauline letters, the exalted Christ is spoken of as making intercession for his own...” (1970:114-115). Priesthood itself was very central to the socio-political environment of the first century. As Songer comments, “the priesthood was perceived as the foundation for meaningful and successful human life in two dimensions. First it was the priesthood that provided access to deity...[I]n the second place, the priesthood guaranteed the security and good fortune of races, cities and nations by their routine performance of the designated rituals” (1985:345). Thus despite the unrelenting interest and sustained exposition of the theology of High Priesthood of Christ in Hebrews, we are not dealing with an isolated thinker who is espousing an esoteric theology. Indeed as Scott asserts, the author’s ideas “are not altogether novel” (1922:46).

3.6.1 The Literary Structure of Hebrews 4:14-7:28

Guthrie structures this portion of Hebrews into four divisions. Heb 4:14-16 is an introduction, which, like Heb 2:17-18 also functions as a transitional passage containing both exhortation and exposition. It asserts that Jesus is the Sinless and Great High Priest who has gone into the presence of God, enabling us to come boldly to the heavenly throne of grace. Heb 5:1-10 presents Jesus' priesthood in the order of Melchizedek and this is followed by a long exhortation in Heb 5:11-6:17 with stern warnings against "falling away" from the living God. On resumption in Heb 6:18-7:28, the author advances three arguments to show that Jesus' priesthood is superior: (i) because Melchizedek is superior to Abraham (Heb 7:1-10), (ii) because Melchizedek is superior to the Levitical priesthood (Heb 7:11-19) and (iii) because Jesus by being in the priestly order of Melchizedek has a superior priesthood. Our examination of the spatiality of Heb 5-7 will be brief and summarative. Our focus is to explore the way he deals with the space in question and how through the spatiality, he compares Jesus' ministry in the heavenly Holy of Holies with Aaron's in the earthly tabernacle.

3.6.2 The Spatiality of Hebrews 4:14-7:28

3.6.2.1 The Spatial Topography

The author emphatically states that Jesus as the Great High Priest, has "passed into the heavens" (Heb 4:14). As we noted in our examination of the catena, the author there depicted the heavenly space as a royal palace. He hinted in an allusive and figurative manner that the throne with its footstool is not just a palace of imperial judgment but also a place of worship and cultic functions. It appears that the congregation who first heard this sermon knew and understood their Christology in terms of the royal theme in the heavenly space, the cultic theme was however, largely unappreciated by them. The author's aim in his progressive account therefore was to gradually expose the cultic aspect of the heavenly throne. Having gone through the other spaces, the author is now ready to unveil to them what he had hinted regarding the cultic functions of Jesus in the heavenly space. He thus exhorts the congregation, pointing out that the throne that Jesus now sits on at God's right hand is a throne of grace, which

believers can approach, “that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help” (Heb 4:16). In addition to depicting heaven as God’s palace, Hebrews also depicts it as the Promised Land (Heb 3 & 4), the City of God (Heb 11:10), the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22) and the unshakeable kingdom (Heb 12:28). Following our great High Priest, we now have access to this glorious space, this Divine Presence that the death of Jesus has opened for us (See Koester 2001:284, 295 and DeSilva 2000:226-239 for application).

By drawing Aaron into the discussion, the author uses the Holy of Holies as a metaphor for heaven. This heaven where Jesus, the “Forerunner has entered for us” (Heb 6:20), is “within the veil” (Heb 6:19). The veil hence constitutes the entry boundary of this space. It is not necessary to view this veil as corresponding to the sky, for what the author is referring to here, is not so much the ascension of Jesus but rather the fact that Jesus’ ministry as our High Priest is effectual because He, in Jewish cultic terms, has crossed the line into the very presence of God. Aaron ministered in a different space from that which Jesus has entered; the two are however compared in the same spatiality. Aaron’s space was earthly, fleshy, and temporary and in any case an ineffectual space. Jesus’ space is heavenly, eternal, spiritual and there, He saves to “the uttermost those who come unto God by Him” (Heb 7:25). Jesus therefore performs an inverted, virtual and perfect function to Aaron’s ineffective ministry. Jesus’ space is utopian; it is more perfect and more exalted for it is the very presence of God. The complexities of Foucault’s categorization of spaces into real, utopian and heterotopic (1986:24) are manifest here. Jesus our Saviour is the only one who has entered this space and so provided for us access into God’s very presence.

The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the wilderness tabernacle had images of the cherubim embroidered in it (Ex 26:31), much the same way as the cherubim guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden, barring Adam and Eve from entering (Gen 3:24). Hebrews teaches us that Jesus, the Second Adam, our Great High Priest has now opened the way, for us “within the veil” so we can meet with God. In Heb 10:20, the writer equates the veil to the Body of Christ, though commentators are not in exact agreement regarding this interpretation (See Ellingworth 1993:518-521). What is clear though is that beyond the veil Jesus has entered as our Purifier (Heb 1:3), our

Propitiation and Rescuer in temptations (Heb 2: 17-18), our Forerunner (Heb 6:20), our Great High Priest ((Heb. 6:20), our “hope” (Heb 6:19) and our intercessor (Heb. 7:25).

3.6.2.1 The Persons in this Spatiality

3.6.2.1.1 Jesus the Great High Priest

The writer of Hebrews elaborates the qualifications of Jesus as our eternal High Priest, His appointment by God, His perfection to fulfill this purpose and His functions. The nature of His priesthood is shown to be in the order of Melchizedek and based on that it is demonstrated to be superior to the Aaronic priesthood. His call by God establishes Him as the One appointed to be our heavenly High Priest. His humanity qualifies Him to be man’s representative before God. His Sinlessness makes Him an everlasting and efficient Mediator so that we can “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”(Heb 4:16). His suffering enables him to be merciful and sympathetic to the wayward, the “Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him” (Heb 5:9).

By exploring the priesthood of Jesus in the order of Melchizedek, Hebrews demonstrates that Jesus is king, eternal, and superior to Abraham and to Aaron. It is regrettable that the exposition on the priestly order of Melchizedek has given rise to speculations such as those found in the theology of the Latter Day Saints and sections of the Seventh Day Adventists. The discoveries of several Qumran texts that suggest that Melchizedek was regarded as a heavenly mediator figure or angel in some Jewish and Hellenistic Gnostic circles of the first century AD has fueled further speculations. Käsemann had for example conjectured that “The religio-historical derivation of the high priest in Hebrews is the single most difficult problem of the epistle. Any exegesis which sees itself forced at this point to have recourse to purely Old Testament or Jewish roots, whereas elsewhere it cannot deny Hellenistic influence on Hebrews, will be divided and unclear” (1939:116). Thus he posited that the author of Hebrews derived the concept from a “Gnostically-remoulded Jewish messianism” via Christian liturgy (Horbury 1983:66). Neyrey on the other hand has suggested a Greco-Roman influence noting that the background to the description of Melchizedek in Heb 7:3, represent “topoi from

Hellenistic philosophy on what constitutes a true god” (1991:440), though the author directs this ascription not to Melchizedek but to Christ.

It does appear to one that many of these speculations make a plain presentation by our author look extremely contrived and overly complex. As Thompson has shown, the author of Hebrews is merely pursuing his style of exegesis to expound Jesus as the eternal High Priest, greater than Aaron, and greater than the patriarch Abraham whom the first priest in the Bible, Melchizedek blessed. Thompson notes, “The conceptual framework which is exhibited in Hebrews VII finds its closest analogies in the works of Philo” (1977: 223). There is a possible suggestion that the author of Hebrews saw Melchizedek as a Christophany, but even this interpretation is not a necessary prerequisite to understanding the epistle’s treatment of the typology of Melchizedek. By showing that Jesus’ High Priesthood is by that order, Hebrews demonstrates its superiority, abiding permanence, effectiveness and spirituality.

Hebrews explains the threefold functions of Jesus as our eternal High Priest. Firstly, He is the sacrifice itself (Heb 2:9, 5:8, 7:27, 8:3, 9:14-15, 23, 25-28, 10:12-14, 13:12). Secondly, as High Priest, He offered sacrifice in the sanctuary (Heb 1:3, 2:17, 3:1-2, 4:14-15, 5:5-10, 6:20, 7:11-17, 20-28, 8:1-4, 6, 9:11-12, 14-28, 10:12-21). Thirdly His Blood, signifying His death, is eternally present in the presence of God as the seal of the new and better covenant (Heb 9:12, 14, 10:19, 12:24, 13:12-20).

3.6.2.1.2 Aaron and the Levitical High Priests

Aaron ministered in a different space, but shared the same spatiality with Jesus. He is mentioned as the head and progenitor of the Levitical Priesthood. Like Jesus, he “has representative capacity, human sympathy and divine appointment as three necessary qualifications for the high priesthood” (Montefiore 1964:96). Elsewhere in the epistle, the author shows interest in the appointment of Aaron to the ministry by referring to his rod that bud and was subsequently kept in the tabernacle (Heb 9:4, cf. Num 17:10). Horbury asserts, “the theocracy of the sons of Aaron is thus conceived as mediating divine rule in no attenuated sense...[and] the writer of Hebrews would thus be seen as profoundly influenced, like Josephus and Philo, by the theologico-political ideas of the Pentateuchal “theocracy”” (1983:45). Aaron’s several failings in the Pentateuch are well known,

especially in relation to the golden calf incident in Ex 32. Our author however does not give any hint of criticism of Aaron's shortcomings. The polemical approach to the interpretation of Hebrews meets a major weakness here, for what more opportunity could our author have wished for than this, to compare a deeply flawed Aaron with Jesus. On the contrary, Hebrews presents an ideal Aaron, as one who held his office in high esteem. He does this because it is necessary to show that the highest and best that any human can achieve, as High Priest, is still inadequate to provide eternal and abiding access to the presence of the living God. Only the God-Human Jesus could cross the line and open the way for us.

3.6.2.2 The Relationship between the Persons in this Spatiality

All spaces, even a "hybrid space" like what we find in Heb 5-7, is represented, inverted and contested. Thus the relationship between Jesus and Aaron is presented here as contested. After setting out the general qualifications of a High Priest in Heb 5:1-4 the author shows that they apply to both Aaron and Jesus. He then proceeds to show that Jesus' priesthood is more glorious, effectual and eternal. His priesthood was established by divine oath (Heb 7:20-22), which makes it permanent (Heb 7:23-25). If the comparison between Moses and Jesus was based on faithfulness, that between Aaron and Jesus is based on effectiveness of ministry. The Aaronic priesthood was "according to the law of a fleshly commandment", whereas Jesus' is according to the "power of an endless life" (Heb 7:16). Aaron's ministry was weak, "and made nothing perfect" whereas Jesus' brought a "better hope by which we draw near to God". In other words, and in Scott's words, "Christianity is the ultimate religion because it transforms the ancient symbols into their realities" (1922:135-136).

The author has clearly reached the summit of His Christological argument and from now on He is going to apply what He has expounded concerning Jesus the Son and our Eternal High Priest. He shows for example that Jesus as High Priest in the heavenly Holy of Holies inaugurates a permanent and more effective covenant (Heb 8-9), presents to God, a permanent sacrifice, which tops all sacrifices (Heb 10). We have only briefly touched the surface of the multifaceted argument in this section of Hebrews. Our major interest, which one hopes has been adequately shown, is that Aaron is compared with

Jesus in a Hybrid Spatiality, the heavenly holy of holies is seen as a more perfect, virtual and inverted image of the earthly holy of holies, and within this contested spatiality, Jesus our Great High Priest is far superior because of his divinity.

3.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPATIAL PATTERN IN THE EXPOSITIONS OF HEBREWS 1 –7

We have shown that the writer of Hebrews organizes the Christological argument in its first seven chapters according to a series of spatial representations. Each space has been shown to exhibit elements of territoriality and power contests that are depicted by the comparisons and contrasts. We have shown that the catena of Heb 1 gives us a picture of the heavenly assembly, which is also portrayed as a regal temple. In Heb 2, the author's interest was in what pertained in the world and we examined a complex of relationships ranging from the filial love and camaraderie between Jesus and believers to his combat with, and defeat of the devil on their behalf. In the context of the House of God, the Son is shown to be Superior to the servant Moses, for He is both the builder of the house and the heir. In Heb 5-7, Jesus as High Priest ministers in heaven, which is shown to be an inverted and virtual Holy of Holies, in which Aaron ministered on earth. What is the significance of this spatial pattern? And how does this pattern influence the whole theology of Hebrews?

3.7.1 The Cosmology of Hebrews

It is common for the exploration of the spatiality of Hebrews to emphasize its Cosmology. Koester rightly posits, "Hebrews begins and ends by emphasizing that the world is dependent upon the word of God" (2001:97). His exploration of this Cosmology however focuses on the varying degrees of Jewish apocalyptic and Mid- Platonic influences on the author. He does not make any major conclusions but helpfully notes that "the author shows remarkable fluidity" (2001:99) in his exposition of the spatiality. Also, and as we have already noted, if the author's primary vehicle in the spatial pattern was Cosmology, the reason for his separation of the space of Jesus' death and the space where His blood is offered will remain a difficult theological conundrum. Cosmology is secondary, one suggests, to a more primary pattern in this exposition.

3.7.2 The Pilgrimage Theme

As already discussed in the previous chapter, Isaacs's very interesting Monograph series on Sacred Space (1992), correctly notes the movement of the argument in spatial terms, from heaven to earth and back to heaven. She does not see this in terms of any major cosmological influence but rather as a "vehicle" for the epistle's eschatology. Isaacs' thesis is that this movement in the argument is basically a motif of pilgrimage to the heavenly sacred space, which to the first century Christians, was a theological replacement to the destroyed Jerusalem temple. She notes that the spatiality of Hebrews "has not been inspired by Greek metaphysics, Gnosticism, or Jewish mysticism. Rather he [the author] uses biblical traditions of pilgrimage to encourage his recipients to persevere in and through human history, not to withdraw from it" (2002:12).

The pilgrimage theme is indeed evident in these expositions and Isaacs is right in noting that the spatial concerns of Hebrews espouse this theology. Pilgrimage is not the only theme however, as she rightly admits, and thus one will argue that the Pilgrimage Eschatology is not the primary vehicle here, though it is one of the secondary interpretations of the spatiality of the tabernacle that the epistle gives. Moreover, and as already noted in the previous chapter, Isaacs reaches her conclusion based on the assumption that the epistle was written in response to the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. This is by far not a majority view among recent scholars and thus weakens her conclusions. In addition, Isaacs does not take into consideration the spatial implications of "the house" in Heb 3. As we have noted, the deliberate play on words in Heb 3 is exactly that "deliberate". Hebrews does similar exegetical moves throughout the epistle and a surface reading of the epistle does not sufficiently expose how the argument unfolds. Even if "the house" is understood purely as "community of believers", it is still a spatial representation, for as we have noted, in ancient Mediterranean societies, territories were expressed in terms of community.

Another problem with interpreting the spatial pattern as primarily representing the theme of pilgrimage is that the movement of the argument from one space to another is

not necessarily time dependent⁴². Some scholars have construed the movement of the argument as starting from the pre-existence of Christ, through His life on earth, His death and to eternity in the future, (See Koester 2001:103) but this interpretation is very hard to justify from the manner in which the argument progresses. Whereas one agrees that there is a theme of pilgrimage in the progress of the argument, this is not conveyed directly through the temporal progression of the argument of the epistle but rather through a typological use of spatiality of the tabernacle and wilderness camp. Indeed it will be demonstrated in the next chapter that the major theological motifs of Hebrews, including its Christology, Soteriology, Cosmology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology were being channeled through the author's theology of the Tabernacle and Wilderness community.

3.7.3. The Tabernacle as a Heuristic Device for Interpreting the Christology of Hebrews

By investigating the semiotic figurations in each space and in comparison with the other parts of the epistle, we have suggested that the spaces are metaphorical representation of the wilderness camp of Israel and the tabernacle. In the catena, our author is recounting a picture of heaven that is already known to his audience, and uses allusions and hints to intimate what he is about to expound. In Heb 2 we have suggested that he saw the world as corresponding to the camp and the area of the tabernacle court that is accessible to the public in general and where sacrifices took place. In Heb 3, we have suggested that he represented the church as a priestly community in a liminal space within the priestly court and the Holy Place. In Heb 5-7, it is clear that the author is now dealing with the holy of holies. It is one's suggestion that the author used the tabernacle and camp as a heuristic device to convey his Christological exposition and in the next chapter, we shall find further textual and theological support for this conclusion. We will also demonstrate how the author's theology of the tabernacle was a vehicle for addressing

⁴² Hebrews' handling of time is itself very curious though one is at best unable to fully understand it at this juncture. As already noted, the author dislocates time from space at certain points of his argument, and considering that "the representation of time as movement by the subject" (Bettini 1988:135), is very typical of classical antiquity, exploration of the writer's handling of time in socio-anthropological terms could be rewarding, I think.

the major theological, sociological and pastoral problems of the community that first received this epistle.

3.8 Conclusion

One believes it has been adequately demonstrated, using the methodology for examining the spatiality of a biblical text that the Christology of Hebrews is presented using a series of spaces, which are represented, contested and inverted. It has also been demonstrated from examination of the semiotic figurations of these spaces that the spatiality of the argument is patterned after the wilderness camp and tabernacle and that through this, the author presents a theology that spans his Christology, Cosmology, Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Soteriology.

CHAPTER IV

THE TABERNACLE AND THE CHRISTOLOGY OF HEBREWS

The series of spaces that act as the scaffolding for the Christological argument of Heb 1 - 7 are spatial forms, which together constitute a semiosphere, i.e. the “universe of possible meanings of signs in the narrative” (Lotman 1977:218). We have proposed that the spatial forms embody the typology of the wilderness camp and tabernacle in the Pentateuch, which was used by the author of Hebrews as a heuristic device in the argument. The Spatiality of the tabernacle served as the primary vehicle conveying the Christology and therefore the theology of the epistle. At this stage, a reasonable question will need answering: do we have sufficient warrant from the epistle to make such a conclusion? Since the tabernacle is not mentioned in these seven chapters, on what basis can it be proposed that its spatiality was the a priori outline for the argument? And if it is true that the spatiality of the tabernacle was a semiosphere in this argument, what is the significance of such a conclusion to understanding the epistle? It is these questions, which will be the focus of the present chapter.

I propose four series of tests to be used in examining the validity of our conclusion. The first series of tests is textual; i.e. does the text of Hebrews state or give sufficient clues to justify such a conclusion? One recommends that this is so, and that the epistle’s detailed description of the tabernacle and its ministry in Heb 8 - 10 is preceded by ten or more allusions to the tabernacle in Heb 1 – 7. Seen in this light, the author’s emphatic statement in Heb 8:1-2, summing up what he had said so far makes good rhetorical and intellectual sense. The second series of tests are theological; i.e. do the theological themes, motifs and the author’s general theological stance fit with such a conclusion? Again, our answer will be positive and one will advocate that most, if not all the theological motifs of Hebrews can be shown to be directly or indirectly related to the theology of the wilderness tabernacle. If such a conclusion is correct, it will be suggested

that Hebrews provides for us a very powerful template for a twenty first century understanding and application of the theology of the tabernacle and wilderness camp. The third test is sociological: i.e. from what can be known about the social location of the community behind Hebrews, would a theological exposition which is based on insights from the spatiality of the wilderness tabernacle, have helped to resolve the social challenges that faced this group of believers? One's answer to this question is yes, and that a brief social profiling of the first recipients of this epistle would suggest that it was a community in social liminality, and with the application of Turner's theory on liminality and the ritual process (1969), one will recommend that the author of Hebrews saw the theology of the tabernacle as playing a similar social role as it did in the Pentateuch. The final and perhaps most important test is pastoral, for Hebrews is a pastor's sermon or exhortation dealing with real problems and not just a theoretical or philosophical treatise. Does the theology of the tabernacle help tackle the pastoral problems which the author intended to address and which dominates the exhortations? Our answer to this is also positive and we shall suggest that the two genres of Hebrews, i.e. the exhortations and expositions can be satisfactorily connected together through the author's theology of the tabernacle⁴³.

4.1 TEXTUAL SUPPORT

The expositions of Heb 1-7 are presented in an orderly spatial manner, from the heavenly assembly, to the inhabited world, to the "house" and then into the space "beyond the veil", the holy of Holies, i.e. heaven, the very presence of God. Along the way, the author "digresses" (Koester 2001:84) to give exhortations and sometimes very fierce warnings regarding paying closer attention to God's word, and cautioning the believers to "take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12). From Heb 4:14, he begins his major thesis on the High Priesthood of Jesus, and compares him with Aaron in the holy of holies. He then

⁴³ Several of the points to be made in this chapter will be in summarative and tabular forms. Some are stronger than others as support for my postulate; and a number may actually be inferences that may require further development. They are however presented based on the burden of probability.

“digresses” in Heb 6 to exhort them, this time with an even sterner warning, concerning apostasy, stating that “it is impossible for those who were once enlightened... who have fallen away; it is impossible, I say, to renew them again to repentance since they crucify the Son of God afresh to themselves and put Him to an open shame” (Heb 6:4-6). When he returns to the expositions in Heb 7, the author provides an elaborate but admittedly difficult elucidation of the high priesthood of Jesus in the priestly order of Melchizedek. When he moves on from Melchizedek to Heb 8, our author makes a statement that must have made an immense impression on his hearers:

“Now the sum of the things which we have spoken is this: We have such a High Priest, who has sat down on the right of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”.

(Heb 8:1-2)

This statement, one suggests, is central to the whole epistle. In addition, Heb 8-13, and 1-7 contain important pointers which when pooled together support the view that the author uses the wilderness camp and tabernacle as heuristic device in his exposition.

4.1.1 The role of Heb 8:1-2 in the whole epistle

Heb 8:1-2 is the zenith of the argument of the epistle. The author indicates this by his concise but forceful statement in his summing up. The Greek word, *Κεφάλαιον*, translated as “sum” in the MKJV, occurs only twice in the New Testament: in Acts 22:28 where it is used for “sum of money” and here in Heb 8:1. It was frequently used by philosophers of classical antiquity at decisive junctures in their orations and arguments. Plato (*Phaedo 95b*), Philo (*Names 106*) and Thucydides (*Peloponnesian Wars 4.50.2*) used *Κεφάλαιον* to indicate “the main point” of the argument. Thus Chrystosom notes, “that which is greatest is always called *Κεφάλαιον* i.e. the head, or chief” (*Homilies*, Webpage). In Philo’s *Allegorical Interpretation 2.102* on the other hand, he uses *Κεφάλαιον* to denote “the crowning affirmation” of his series of allegorical interpretations of Gen 25:26. Many other Greek philosophers of antiquity used

Κεφάλαιον to mean “summary” of what they were saying (e.g. Isocrates *Panegyricus* 149, Demosthenes’ *On Organization* 36, Epictetus’ *Discourses* 1.24.20, Josephus’ *Antiquities* 17.93).

Various commentators of the epistle have preferred one or other of the above three interpretations of Κεφάλαιον as the intended meaning in Heb 8:1. Montefiore (1964:132), Ellingworth (1993:400), Koester (2001:375), and most of the other recent commentaries maintain that Heb 8:1 identifies the main or principal point of the homily; it is however not its summary. In Koester’s words, “Christ’s priesthood is a point, but not the only point in Hebrews” (2001:375). Heb 8:1-2 however does not just highlight the priesthood of Christ but also the spatiality of His ministry. He is “sat down on the right of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle”. When this spatiality is taken into consideration, we get a greater appreciation why the author calls Heb 8:1-2 as the sum of what he is saying. As we shall shortly see, though the exhortations of Hebrews do not directly mention the priesthood of Christ, the contents are closely related to the author’s theology of the tabernacle.

Other commentators, e.g. Isaacs (2002) posit that Heb 8:1-2 is a summary of “the author’s argument in the previous chapter” (2002:105). Heb 8:1-2 is said to summarize the difficult discussion of the priestly order of Melchizedek in Heb 7 and “allows for a refocusing of the argument” (DeSilva 2000:279). There is no good reason however to restrict the author’s “summing” up only to this section of Hebrews. References to the ministry of Jesus as High Priest, is made throughout the earlier parts of the epistle, starting in Heb 1: 3. This point has therefore been always there from the beginning; so that if Κεφάλαιον means “the main point”, then it is indeed the chief or principal point, the gist or essence, of what has been said so far, and not just of Heb 7. It also sets the scene for the rest of the epistle, as Ellingworth observes, “It is contrary to the author’s way of writing to offer a mere summary which does not advance the argument” (1993:400). Heb 8:1-2 should therefore be understood as stating the essential substance of what the author has been saying in Heb 1 – 7, that Jesus the Son of God is our High Priest ministering in the heavenly tabernacle. Our postulate, based on the exploration of the spatiality of Heb 1 – 7, has a strong textual support here.

Other commentators (e.g. Lane (1991:200) & Manson (1951:123)) interpret “sum” in Heb 8:1 to mean “the crowning affirmation” of the argument. Manson goes as far as to suggest that the author in Heb 8:1 is stating the thesis of his crowning affirmation before he proceeds to elaborate what it is. Though this is a variant of the interpretation that “sum” advances the argument further; it completely changes the meaning of Heb 8:1 to denote “The sum of what we are about to say”, rather than “The sum of what we have spoken”. There is an element of elaboration and explanation of Heb 8:1-2 throughout Heb 8 – 10 but the author is clearly giving the pith of what he has been saying before he elaborately shows the implications of Christ’s ministry in the tabernacle. “Sum” in Heb 8:1 is more of a summary of what has been said than a gist of what he is going to say.

One shares the view of the minority of commentators (e.g. Bruce 1990:180, Vanhoye 1977:59, Calvin: Webpage) who would prefer the word *Κεφάλαιον* to stand as it is; i.e. it is the “sum” of what was being said. In addition to the “sum” being the plain meaning of the *Κεφάλαιον*, Heb 8:1-2 indeed is a summary of what is being said for three other reasons. Firstly the rhetorical force of the declaration at the beginning of the chapter suggests the climax of a heuristic exposition that would endorse the view that it has a major link with the rest of the epistle. The author positively expected attention to this declaration. Secondly, as a summary it states the essentials, making explicit what has been implicit in the allusions to Jesus and the tabernacle from Heb 1 - 7. Thirdly, the elaborations that follow after the summary are the implications of the summary in Heb 8:1-2; for Heb 8 – 10 discusses the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus the High priest in the heavenly tabernacle. We shall examine these in more details shortly; but if even *Κεφάλαιον* means the “main point” and not the “summary”, it still would support the view that the author uses the spatiality of the tabernacle as a heuristic device in the expositions.

4.1.2 Textual Support in Heb 8 – 13

Heb 8 elaborates on the nature of the High priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle and draws out its implications. In this tabernacle, Jesus inaugurated

the new covenant by which He provides a “more excellent” ministry because he is “Mediator of a better covenant which was built upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). The new covenant that was prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah (Heb 8:10-12 cf. Jer 31:31-34) is fulfilled through the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle.

Heb 9 is crucial for understanding the author’s theology of the tabernacle and we shall shortly be discussing it separately. Briefly, the author describes the wilderness tabernacle and the ministry of the High Priest in relation to it and elaborates on what he means by a tabernacle in heaven. He asserts that the wilderness tabernacle and ministry was a “sign” (Heb 9:8) from the Holy Spirit and a “figure” (Heb 9:9) of what Jesus was going to do. Indeed the author’s use of “copy”, “pattern”, “example” (Heb 8:5), “shadow” and “very image” (Heb 10:1), is “not so much in the Platonic sense” but rather is a reflection of his analogical style of exegesis (see Isaacs 2002:117 & Bruce 1990:235). Heb 9 therefore teaches that the author of Hebrews follows a typological exegesis of the tabernacle. The author elaborates on the correspondences between the priestly ministry in the wilderness tabernacle and the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle, some of which (e.g. Heb 9:23) has remained difficult for commentators to interpret. Hebrews does not give any attention to a heavenly Holy Place; hence the heavenly tabernacle of Hebrews is the same as the heavenly holy of holies, the very presence of God. As we have suggested, the Holy Place in our author’s mind, corresponded to the liminal condition and representational space of the people of God on pilgrimage to heaven.

Heb 10 focuses further on the ministry of Jesus the High Priest whose sacrifice of his body “ends all sacrifices” (Isaacs, 2002:118). The author concludes his expositions here by making a magnificent link to an allusion he had made earlier on in Heb 1:13, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of God from then on expecting until His enemies are made His footstool” (Heb 10:12-13). Thus we now see that the author’s reference to the footstool in Heb 1:13, was to link it with the priestly ministry of Christ. Also in this chapter, the body of Christ is equated with the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Heb 10:19-20).

Heb 11 – 13 are made up of exhortations largely encouraging the Christian virtues of faith (Heb 11), perseverance in hope (Heb 12) and continuance in love (Heb 13). References and allusions made to the theology of the tabernacle at certain junctures of

these exhortations. The ever-popular classic of Heb 11 is actually enshrined in a theme of the pilgrimage of the people of God. The pilgrimage theme of the epistle is directly related to the spatiality of the wilderness tabernacle. Moreover, a very important clue exists in the well-known definition of faith, which our author provides in Heb 11:1. In defining faith as “the substance of things hoped for”, the author of Hebrews projects faith or faithfulness as a journey of perseverance and dedication to the course of Christ, leading to the goal of perfection or completion, which is the hope “within the veil” where the Forerunner has entered for us (Heb 6:19-20). In MacRae’s words, “hope is the goal and faith is a means toward its full realization” (1978:192). Faith therefore is the expected attitude of the people of God in the liminal space of the Holy Place; hope is the perfection and goal in the Holy of Holies within the veil.

Heb 12:14, which states that without holiness, “no one shall see the Lord”, has a very important idiomatic and cultic signification, related to the tabernacle and later, to the temple, and which a first century Jew would have more strongly appreciated. Ex 23:17 stipulates that three times a year “all your males shall appear before the Lord God” or literally “come and see my face”. All male Jews were to come to the tabernacle or temple thrice a year and “see the face of God at the tabernacle”. Seeing the face of a king was an expression of favour (cf. 2 Sam 14:24). With reference to God, the concept was derived from the theophanic experiences of Israel in the Pentateuch that was often related to the tabernacle. It is this allusion that lies at the root of Hebrews’ exhortation that without holiness, no one shall see the Lord (see also Ps 11:7; 17:15, 42:2, 63:2). Such an understanding of Heb 12:14 makes the meaning of Heb 12:15 where we are exhorted to “look” diligently, “lest any fail of the grace of God” clearer. The rich imagery of cultic worship at Mount Zion, “the city of the living God” which follows in Heb 12: 18-24 will also support the view that an allusion to the tabernacle and temple is being made in Heb 12:14. Indeed as we shall shortly demonstrate, the epistle shows a link between revelation from God and the tabernacle.

We have already noted in the previous chapter that Heb 13:9-15 envisages the people of God as a worshipping priestly community that corresponded to the Levitical priests of the wilderness generation who ministered in the priestly courtyard and Holy

Place. Though the difficulty of the passage is appreciated, for our purpose, it illustrates how the typology of the tabernacle was never far from our author's mind.

4.1.3 The Allusions to the Tabernacle in Heb 1 –7

The definition and criteria for identification of what constitutes an allusion to parts of the Old Testament in the New is not an exact science. Hays' (1989) influential contribution is very helpful, and yet Hebrews, it must be admitted, because of the complex nature of its argument and rich metaphorical language will remain fraught with lack of consensus regarding what constitutes allusions to the Old Testament in that epistle. With an average of 3 explicit quotations from the Old Testament per chapter, there is no doubt that the author was steeped in the Hebrew Bible. Because He understood "the OT to contain a shadow of what has been revealed in Christ" (Koester 2001:117), many of his references to the OT are in the form of allusions and echoes. Longenecker (1975) for example identifies as many as 55 allusions to the OT in this epistle. Table 4.1 is a summary of the allusions and echoes in Heb 1 – 7 that one suggests are related to the wilderness tabernacle and camp. The presence of these allusions and echoes supports the view that the author uses the spatiality of the tabernacle as a heuristic device in his Christological exposition.

Table 4.1 Summary of Allusions and Echoes of the Wilderness Tabernacle and Camp in Heb 1 – 7

Passage	Comments
Cleansing of our sins (Heb 1:3)	High priestly office of Christ
Penetration of the heavenly barrier (Heb 1:6)	High Priest movement through the veil
Footstool (Heb 1:13, cf. Heb 10:12-13)	Significance explained in Heb 10
See Jesus (Heb 2:9, cf. 12:14, Ex 23:17; 24:11)	Revelation within the tabernacle. This is a rather faint echo!
The discussion of the death of Christ as three stages of sacrifice in Heb 2 - 9	Jesus' sacrificial death as three episodes of tabernacle sacrifice of the Pentateuch.
Heavenly calling (Heb 3:1)	God's Call from within the veil
House of God (Heb 3:2-5)	See discussion of passage in the text
Servant (Heb 3:5)	Temple servant

Sabbath Rest (Heb 3:11)	The theology of “Sabbath Rest” has close link with the tabernacle and is explained in the next section
Throne of Grace (Heb 4:16)	Reference to the mercy seat of the Ark
Refuge (Heb 6:18-19)	The tabernacle or temple as safe refuge
Veil (Heb 6:19)	Veil of the tabernacle
“Hold fast” (Heb 3:6 & 4:14-16), in relation to “draw near” and “house of God” in Heb 10: 21-23	See explanation below

Hays (1989:29-32) has suggested seven tests⁴⁴ for examining suggested allusions and echoes of Old Testament references in the New Testament. One believes that the allusions we have noted in our examination of the expositions of Heb 1 –7 meet most, if not all these criteria. The last allusion in the above table involves a very interesting interplay of words that supports the view that the “house” in Heb 3 is directly related to the tabernacle. The exhortation to “hold fast” occurs on three occasions in this epistle, in two of them, it is related to the “house” of God and in the remaining to the heavenly tabernacle. Thus our author understood “the house” as in some way equivalent to the tabernacle. In Heb 3:6, the hearers are exhorted to “*hold fast* the confidence” to the end as members of Christ’s house. In Heb 4:14, the author more explicitly notes, “Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us *hold fast* our profession”. After explaining the details of the tabernacle, the author in Heb 10:21-23 exhorts: “...having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil... Let us *hold fast* the profession of our faith without wavering...” The link between “hold fast”, and the “house of God” is thus provided by the High Priestly work of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle.

⁴⁴ The seven tests are: (1) Availability of the source of echo or allusion to the author, (2) Volume of the echo, usually reflected in repetitions, distinctiveness and syntactical patterns, (3). Recurrence elsewhere (4) Thematic coherence (5) Historical Plausibility (6) History of Interpretation (7) Satisfaction (Hays, 1989:29-32)

4.1.4 The Rhetorical Function of Heuristic Devices

If the wilderness camp and tabernacle was the semiosphere in the expositions of Hebrews, why didn't the author directly refer to the tabernacle in Heb 1-7, but chose instead to allude to it throughout these chapters? The answer to this vital question is multifaceted. Firstly, it must be noted that allusions do not necessarily constitute a lesser form of intertextual reference. As posited by Moyise, "under the right conditions, allusions and echoes might be just as important as explicit quotations for an understanding of a text" (2002:428). Secondly, as the spatial framework in the author's argument, the wilderness camp and tabernacle plays a background artifactual role to the Christological expositions, so much so that it is only by foregrounding the text's spatiality, as has been done in this study is the identity of the semiosphere made evident. Thirdly, the wilderness camp and tabernacle undergoes a typological transformation in the expositions of Hebrews. Heb 6:19-20, 8:1-4 & 9:24 indicate the cosmological correspondences of the parts of the tabernacle in the author's typology. This typology applies throughout the epistle.

The author however had a more fundamental reason for suspending direct reference to the tabernacle till halfway through the sermon: he uses the spatiality of the tabernacle-camp complex as a heuristic device. Heuristic devices play important pedagogical and rhetorical functions in aiding the communication of complex ideas. The word "heuristic" is derived from the same Greek root as "eureka" – discovery; they are conceptual devices that are employed to aid the discovery of larger and more difficult ideas. A heuristic device is a provisional conceptual model that fruitfully directs a search for answers to other more complex questions. In their simplest forms, symbols, metaphors and simple narratives such as parables constitute heuristic devices. In their more complex forms, typological and allegorical presentations are sometimes used for heuristic purposes to direct one to discover and grasp more complex ideas. Plato, for example, in *The Republic* (360 BC, Webpage) uses an elaborate depiction of a utopian state as a heuristic device to present how the political life of the Greek city-states should or should not be run.

In a similar fashion, the author of Hebrews employs the tabernacle-camp complex as the heuristic device for channeling his Christological teaching. As noted earlier, the tentative manner in which the author approaches the whole concept of the High Priestly

functions of Jesus in the heavenly tabernacle, suggests that this was a major novelty on the part of his audience. It was a theological proposition that the author regarded as “solid food” (Heb 5:12) and which was “hard to be explained” (Heb 5:11) to the congregation. He therefore gently leads them in this discovery, from Heb 1:3 referring to the cleansing of their sins, making ten or more allusions to the tabernacle-camp complex as he exposes the superiority of Christ in each space. The references to the cultic functions of Jesus becomes more frequent as he neared the rhetorical climax of Heb 8:1-2. Having laid sufficient preparatory ground for understanding the concept in Heb 1-7, the author uses this emphatic summary to unveil the teaching on the tabernacle-camp complex, in a manner characteristic of a heuristic discovery.

4.2 THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The theology of Hebrews provides support for regarding the spatiality of the wilderness tabernacle and camp as a heuristic device for its Christology. Examination of the author’s theology of the tabernacle will show the fluidity of his typological analysis of the tabernacle. The author’s own philosophical theology would make this approach a very likely scenario. Moreover, the various biblical writers with affinity for Hebrews also show interest in the tabernacle and portray similar multiple interpretations of it. Finally, majority of the theological motifs and themes of the epistle have close relationship with the theology of the tabernacle.

4.2.1 The Theology of the Tabernacle in Hebrews⁴⁵

The author sets out his basic theology of the tabernacle in Heb 8-9. This constitutes the most in depth analysis of the “mystery” of the tabernacle outside the Pentateuch. Despite this, what we find is generally a fluid and “unstable” (Koester 2001:400) interpretation that allows for multiple understanding of the significance of the

⁴⁵ In this study it is assumed that the wilderness tabernacle is the same as the tent of meeting or tent of testimony. See Lewis 1977:537-548 who suggests that two different traditions of the “prophetic” and earlier Tent of meeting and the “priestly” and later Tabernacle containing the ark are combined in the Pentateuchal narratives.

tabernacle. Koester indeed explains that, “The flexibility of the language in Heb 8-9; is similar to the way the LXX uses terms in relation to the tabernacle” (1989:156). Based on his analysis of Hebrews’ interpretations of the tabernacle, he suggests “that the author knew a form of the tradition about the hidden tabernacle and its vessels similar to that found in 2 Macc 2:4-8 and which had strong ties to Egypt” (1989:175).

MacRae also notes that the epistle’s description is a combination of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic eschatological analysis of the tabernacle. He posits, “In his effort to strengthen the hope of his hearers, the homilist mingles his Alexandrian imagery with their apocalyptic presuppositions” (1978:179). Thus he suggests that Heb 8:1-5, 9:23, 9:11-12 depict an apocalyptic and complete tabernacle in heaven, whereas Heb 9:8-9 is a mixture of futurist and realized Alexandrian eschatology. The later is also combined with Hellenistic Cosmology along the lines of the interpretations of Philo and Josephus as in Heb 9:24, 10:19-20, and 6:19-20. Thus there are different shades of the interpretations of the tabernacle in Hebrews.

Isaacs on the other hand asserts that Hebrews’ portrayal of the heavenly tabernacle is not apocalyptic. She notes that in Hebrews, “heaven itself is depicted not as containing a shrine but as being a shrine – or more precisely being the inner sanctum, the holy of holies of the wilderness tabernacle” (2002:107-108). Hebrews does not give any attention to a Holy Place in heaven, and the epistle’s insistence that Moses was instructed by God to “make all things according to the pattern shown to you” (Heb 8:5) should not be understood in a Platonic sense but rather as a statement of the promise-fulfillment style of his exegesis (see Ellingworth 1993:408 & Wright 2003:82).

Table 4.2 next page summarizes the various interpretations that Hebrews gives to the wilderness tabernacle. Hebrews’ flexible interpretation of the tabernacle was not a one-off practice in the early church but as we shall see is also reflected in the gospel of John. This fluidity of interpretation serves as template in our understanding of the spatiality of the Christological argument of the epistle.

Table 4.2 The Various Interpretations of the tabernacle in Hebrews

	Camp, Courtyard & Holy Place	Holy of Holies
Cosmological	This world (Heb 6:19-20, 8:1-4)	Heaven (Heb 9:24)
Eschatological	Holy Place as the Present Time (9:8-10)	The Eschaton (Heb 9:10, 6:5)
Anthropological	The Flesh (9:8-10)	Conscience (9:8-10)
Covenantal	Old Covenant (9:15-22)	New Covenant (9:15-22)
Christological	The Veil is interpreted as the body or flesh of Christ (Heb 10:19-20). Some scholars also understand Heb 9:11-12 to be referring to the whole body of Christ as the “building”, the tabernacle (see Ellingworth 1993:447 for discussion).	

4.2.2 The Philosophical Theology of Hebrews

Consideration of the philosophical background of the author of Hebrews will support the view that he uses the wilderness tabernacle as a heuristic device in his exposition. The author’s worldview is one that sees reality as the coexistence of both the visible and the invisible with constant interaction of the heavenly and earthly realms throughout the epistle. In Hebrews, the existential and the essential cohabit; and the historical intermingles with the trans-temporal. Several passages in Hebrews portray an interface of humans with the spiritual, with even the Divine. Heb 10:12 is typically illustrative: “But this *Man*, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of *God*”. Heb 12:22-24 is another case in point. Here believers, are exhorted to join the “innumerable company of angels” and “the spirits of just men made perfect” at Mount Zion, which is the heavenly Jerusalem, to worship the living God. No symbol epitomizes this worldview most than the wilderness tabernacle, where God meets with man and speaks to him “face to face” (cf. Ex 33:8-11). Moreover, the dominance of the cultic terminology in Hebrews means that even if the author was not a former priest, it would not be inconsistent with his character to use the tabernacle as heuristic device in this argument. Indeed, the author’s heavy reliance on the wilderness narratives of the Pentateuch makes such a conclusion credible.

4.2.3 The Theological Affinities of Hebrews and the theology of the Tabernacle

Despite the distinctiveness of Hebrews, there are other parts of the Bible with which it has theological affinity. Most of these also show some internal variations in the interpretation of the significance of the tabernacle or temple.

4.2.3.1 Hebrews and Luke-Acts

The affinity between Hebrews and Luke-Acts, for example, led to the suggestion by Clement of Alexandria that this epistle was Luke's translation of Paul's original work (See Guthrie 1990:676). Major differences between the two exist, not the least being the obvious polemic nature of Stephen's speech (See Lane 1991:cxlvi). In addition, Stephen points to an earthly tabernacle, and Hebrews to a heavenly one. Despite these differences, an overall positive evaluation of the tabernacle theological symbolism and multiple dimensions of the interpretation occur in both (See Manson 1951:36). Luke, like Hebrews, associates the tabernacle (Acts 7:44) and temple (Lk 19) with themes of pilgrimage and ecclesiology. In both, the temple/tabernacle are associated through the use of allusions, with the presence of Christ (Luke 1-2, 19-21, Heb 4:14-16, See Hutcheon 2000:3-33). Also, the tearing of the temple veil in Luke (Lk 23:45) and Heb 4: 14-16, 10:19-20) are given multiple significations (See Sylvia 1986: 239-250).

4.2.3.2 Hebrews and John's Gospel

Hebrews also shares similar theological outlook with John's gospel (See Hickling 1983: 112-116), which is reflected by parallels in their explorations of the tabernacle-temple theological symbolism. John describes the incarnation of Jesus as the "tabernacling" of God in the flesh (Jn 1:14). Jesus' body is also equated to the temple in Jn 2:21. In addition and according to John, Jesus announced during the feast of tabernacles, in an allusion to Ezekiel's imagery of the heavenly temple (Jn 4:6-10, 7:37, Ezek 47) that He is the living water. In Jn 14, Jesus' presence is described in a series of "divine dwellings", of the Father, through Jesus, through His Spirit and through the believers. This was after he had also referred to the "many mansions" in His Father's

house. Thus the Presence of God with His people is portrayed with the use of multiple imageries in both John and Hebrews.

4.2.3.3 The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Numbers

There are curious parallels between Hebrews and the Book of Numbers that has not been fully explored by commentators. The two books share similar reputations as being among the most difficult books of the Bible to survey (See Whybray 1995:77-79). Sailhamer has noted, “The traditional Hebrew title of Numbers is “And He Spoke” or “In the Wilderness” because these are the first words of what was considered the Book of Numbers” (1992:369). Num 1:1 begins with God speaking to Moses in “the tabernacle of the congregation” just as Heb 1:1 begins by referring to the final speech by God “through His Son”. The phrase, “the LORD spoke to Moses” occurs more than 50 times in Numbers, and is paralleled by the generous nature of Hebrews’ references to God’s speech. Direct quotations of, and allusions to Numbers are also found in Heb 3:5 (cf. Num 12:7), Heb 3:17 (cf. Num 14:29), Heb 8:5, Heb 9:4 (cf. Num 17:8-10), Heb 9:19, Heb 10:26-29 (cf. Num 15:22-31) and Heb 12:21. The wilderness theme, which in Numbers, tells the story of the guiding presence of God through the tabernacle and the overshadowing cloud (Num 9:15–23; 10:11–12, 33–36; 11:25; 12:5, 10; 14:10, 14; 16:42) is also explicitly treated in Hebrews. The central section of Numbers (11-14), which may be titled: “Drawing Back”, contains the theological motif of interest to the author of Hebrews (see Heb 10:38). In addition, many of the cultic imageries in Hebrews are drawn from Numbers. Thus it will be useful to closely examine the relationship between the two books.

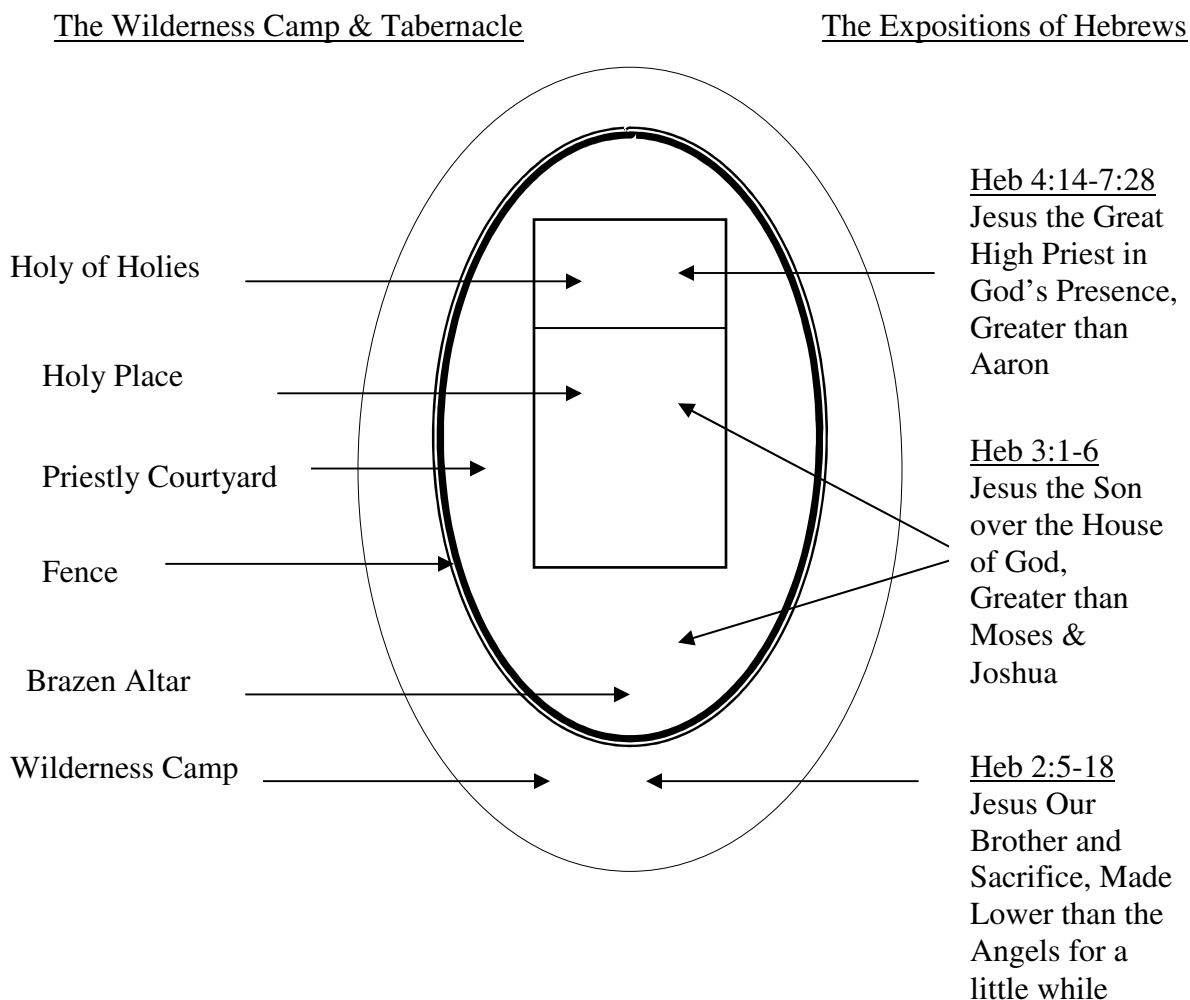
There are two major aspects of the parallels between Hebrews and Numbers that offer intriguing insights into understanding the epistle. Firstly is the literary structure of Numbers and secondly is the role of the tabernacle in Numbers. The nature of the literary structure of Numbers remains disputed among scholars, some describing it as chaotic, though the book clearly seems to have a structure. The narratives of Numbers are not arranged chronologically but in a thematic fashion, “interspersed with other types of material”(Whybray 1995:78). The exposition of the Laws in Numbers alternate with narratives of rebellion, disobedience, strife and faithlessness in a similar fashion to

Hebrews' alternation of erudite expositions with harsh exhortations. Douglas (2001) has for example demonstrated a regular concentric ring structure to the way the laws and narratives are arranged into twelve pairs in Numbers. What is most intriguing for our purposes is that the tabernacle plays a crucial role in each of the alternating narratives of Numbers. One is unsure if one can postulate dependence of the Epistle to the Hebrews on the Book of Numbers; but the parallels between the two would suggest that a relationship exists in the way Hebrews is structured to the literary structure of Numbers. Our conclusion that the tabernacle is used as heuristic device in the epistle may therefore find a very potent support in this association.

Numbers places the tabernacle at the centre of the life and activities of the people of God. Reference is made to it more than a hundred times and the whole camp is arranged in a concentric manner around the tabernacle. In Wenham's words, "Both at rest and on the move the camp was organized to express symbolically the presence and kingship of the Lord" (1981:56). From Numbers, we learn that the tabernacle played multiple roles, ranging from the cultic (Num 1:53, 4:15), military (Num 10: 35-36, 31:6), social (Num 7:8-9) and judicial (Num 11) functions. The tabernacle in Numbers acted as both a symbol of God's mercy (Num 1:53, 18:5) and also of the burning fire of God's wrath (Num 16). Thus we get a multi-dimensional picture of the role of the tabernacle among the people of God, a lesson which the author of Hebrews draws on, perceiving that his congregation were in a similar Liminal state as the wilderness generation of Numbers.

Fig. 4.1 next page is a diagrammatic representation of the correlation between the spatiality of the wilderness camp and tabernacle and its typological interpretation as is applied in the expositions of Hebrews. This illustrates how the author of Hebrews used the typology as heuristic device in his homily.

Fig 4.1 Diagrammatic Correlation of the Wilderness Camp and Tabernacle and the Expositions of Hebrews



4.2.4 The Theological Motifs of Hebrews and the Wilderness Tabernacle.

Examination of the major theological motifs of the epistle shows that most of them are directly or indirectly related to the theology of the tabernacle. This correlation will suggest that at least, the theology of the epistle to the Hebrews is interwoven with its theology of the tabernacle. One suggests that this provides a powerful tool, not only to a better understanding of what the tabernacle symbolizes but also how the various genres of the epistle may be fitted together. Table 4.3 is a summary of the main themes of Hebrews and how they may relate to the tabernacle.

Table 4.3 The Correlation of the Theological Themes of Hebrews with the theology of the tabernacle

Theological Theme	In Hebrews	Theology of the Tabernacle
Pilgrimage	Heb 3 – 4	1. Tabernacle as “dynamic” sacred space. 2. Ps 95 is song about the pilgrimage of God’s people
Worship	Heb 4:16, 7:19, 25; 10:22, 12:18-25	Ps 95 was used in temple worship
Faith & Hope	Heb 3:7, Heb 11	Hope as the goal “within the veil”, faith as the means of holding fast through to the end or goal. (See MacRae, 1978:179)
Sanctification	Heb 1:3, 2:11, 9:11, 23; 13:12	Ex 19:22-23, 29:1, 44; Lev 8:11
Sacrifice & Atonement	Heb 2:14-18, Heb 8-9	Lev 16
Eschatological Sabbath Rest	Heb 3 – 4	Ex 33:14, Lev 16:30-33, Num 10:33, Is 66:1 (See Gleason, 2000: 281-303)
Angelology	Heb 1 – 2	1. The cherubim of the ark 2. Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q ₄₀₀₋₄₀₇)
Cosmology	Heb 8 Life in the world as labour Heb 10:32-34, 11:4, 23-27, 35-38	Life in God’s presence as Rest Heb 4:10, 6:10 Philo’s interpretation of the tabernacle Jewish Apocalypticism
Apostasy	Heb 3:17-19; 4:11, 6:5 -6	Num 13-14 – failure to possess the land The construction of the wilderness tabernacle is presented as a correction for apostasy in respect of the golden calf (Ex 32-33)
Ecclesiology	Heb 3 – 4, 13	The Book of Numbers
Heavenly Session	Heb 8	Lev 16
Covenant	Heb 8-10	Lev 16
Suffering leading to Perfection	Heb 2:10, 5:7-10, 7:27-28, 13:12-14	Lev 16
Revelation	Heb 9:26 (See Swetnam, 1968:227-234) The emphasis on the Word of God throughout the epistle as revelation.	Ex 25:22 Num 7:8-9, Lev 1:1-17, Deut 31:14-21

The relationship between the theology of Sabbath rest in Heb 3 –4 and the tabernacle is a case in point. Though the author of Hebrews did not directly refer to this aspect of it, the Day of Atonement rituals, which had the tabernacle at its centre was regarded as the holiest of the Sabbath days (Lev 16:30-33). Ex 33:14 links the presence of God with the Rest He provides; and Num 10:33 connects the ark of God with the resting place for God’s people. Thus Kaiser Jr was right in asserting, “Rest is where the presence of God stops...or dwells” (1973:140). Indeed the ancient Rabbis regarded the Sabbath Rest as the “image of the world to come” (Genesis, Rabba 17:12a) and the Greek word for rest, *κατάπαυσιν*, was also used to designate the eschatological future, as in *Joseph & Asenath* 8:9; 15:7; 22:13. Gleason therefore explains that Ps 95:11, which is quoted in Heb 3:11, “is best understood as a warning against forfeiting the right to worship before the presence of the Lord in His Holy Sanctuary and to enjoy the covenantal blessings” (2000:296). Thus though the author of Hebrews does not directly mention the tabernacle in Heb 3-4; its symbolism and theological meaning is likely to have been on his mind and before his audience. Similar correlations are found with the other theological motifs of this epistle.

4.3 SOCIOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The main question to be answered in this section is this: from what may be understood as the social location and profile of the community behind Hebrews, will the theology of the tabernacle, serving as the a heuristic device in the author’s homily, have “connected” with the audience. This question has to do with relevance, for Hebrews was written in response to a particular social situation. The search for the answer is however not a straightforward endeavor since the social context of the epistle remains an incomplete picture. Lane therefore helpfully warns “a reconstruction of the life situation that makes Hebrews intelligible must be advanced tentatively as a working proposal” (1991:liii). Nevertheless, one suggestss the social profile and characteristics of this community, which we are about to examine, was one of liminality, a situation that is adequately alleviated by reflections on the theology of wilderness tabernacle.

4.3.1 The Social History and Characteristics of the Community

The social history of the community has been elucidated, convincingly, one would suggest, by Koester (2001:64-72) who posits that the community had been through three phases in its social history by the time of the homily. The formation of the group through proclamation of the gospel (Heb 2:3-4) was soon followed by an early major persecution and solidarity among the believers (Heb 10:32-34, 13:14). This was in a little while replaced by a minor, low level harassment and persecution (Heb 13:13) that had resulted at the time of writing in a disturbing spiritual malaise and neglect of fellowship (Heb 5:11, 6:12, 10:25, 13:3, 13-14). Though Koester does not mention it, there are reasons to believe that the spiritual doldrums were so deep that the author genuinely feared apostasy could result among the believers (Heb 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26; 12:16-17) and hence the urgency of the threats and warnings in the epistle.

A summary of the social characteristics of this community is provided in table 4.4. These characteristics show a community at the threshold of a major experience, both in a positive sense as “entering into God’s rest” and the negative sense of “apostasy”. This can be analyzed using the theory related to the sociological condition of liminality.

Table 4.4 The Social Characteristics of the Community Behind Hebrews

Characteristic	Comments
Faith community Heb 2:3-4	A community of believers who are saved and being saved
A Closely knit House Church, Heb 3:6, 10:21, 25, 13:24	Commentators’ estimate 15 – 40 people. D Guthrie suggests they had “separatist tendencies” (1990:684); but Lane prefers a “withdrawn group” (1991:lvii). G Buchanan - a “monastic group” (Bruce, 1990:8)
An Urban Setting Heb 13:1-6 Possibly Aliens in a City Heb 11:9-13	Resident aliens, transients, and foreigners were socially and legally inferior to citizens.
Not an impoverished Group Heb 13:2-5, 14-16 10:33-34	Highly educated audience, capable of charitable activities and hospitality
Plurality of leadership Heb 13:7, 17, 24	Members expected to have developed capacity to teach others (5:11-14) and help each other to withstand temptations (3:12-13; 10:25; 12:15-16) (See Koester, 2001:75)
Indeterminate ethnicity	There are arguments on either side in support of a Jewish or Gentile group. Could be mixed. I think it is a

Jewish Hellenistic group, but no one can be certain.
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4.3.2 The Social Anthropology of Liminality

The concept of liminality was introduced into social anthropology by Turner who defined it as a period of transition during which a person abandons his or her old identity and dwells in a threshold state of ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. The word is derived from the Latin “*Limen*” which means threshold. Turner explains: “During the Liminal stage, the between stage, one’s status becomes ambiguous; one is “neither here nor there,” one is “betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” (1974:232). People in this state; straddle the brink between their world and another, thus spanning the two realms. It “is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon” (Turner 1969:95). Another important feature of liminality is *communitas* “a phenomenon one experiences through comradeship, lowliness, sacredness and homogeneity with other “liminars” who have broken down or reversed the hierarchical barriers of structured society” (Turner & Turner 1978:250). Thus Turner asserts that the monastic life is one example of liminality. It is a life characterized by deep interest in rituals and closer relationship with the spiritual world. In this state, visions come freely and the imaginations are very active part of one’s spiritual life. New and utopian worlds are imagined and time is often made to stretch on end. It is also characterized by a sense of pilgrimage and marginality in the social environment.

Several biblical scholars (e.g. Meeks 1983, Wedderburn 1987 & McVann 1991) have used these concepts to examine the social circumstances of the earliest Christians. Oropeza (1999) has also explored Paul’s exhortations in 1 Cor 10:1-12 that uses the Pentateuchal wilderness narratives as “examples and warnings” in the light of Turner’s concept of liminality. He asserts that the several rituals of the Pentateuch, especially in Leviticus and Numbers are related to the people’s sense of liminality. “It was during the Israelites’ wilderness trek that the conceptions of liminality and *communitas* affected the social and religious values of the people in a religious way” (1999:75). Oropeza suggests that Paul’s stern warnings of possible apostasy in the wilderness are a result of his reflection that the liminal status of the Corinthian believers was comparable to the

Israelites, “at the climax of redemptive history”(1999:83). Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the wilderness generation was regarded to be in the state of liminality by the early church and lessons from their experiences were applied in this light.

4.3.3 The Social Role of the Tabernacle in a Liminal State

Examination of the wilderness narratives demonstrates a crucial social function of the tabernacle in the liminal state of the Israelites. The various ritual laws (e.g. Lev 12, Num 6, Deut 21) were designed to preserve the cultic separation of the people from Egypt and the other nations, to maintain their continued relationship with God and to prepare them for their final inheritance in the land of promise. All these functions had very close relationship with the tabernacle. The tabernacle provided the people a prospective and a foretaste of life with God. Its other names as Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle of Testimony illustrate how it was the central focus of the social life of the wilderness generation. Placing it in the centre of the camp in the Book of Numbers was both a symbolic and a social declaration. It functioned in resolving issues of socio-political and religious leadership and power relations, land distribution and military strategies. It brought order into a chaotic situation and provided a transitional political identity, to an “indeterminate” group of people. As demonstrated by Suh (2003), the wilderness tabernacle was the focus of life itself in this community till they settled in the Promised Land.

4.3.4 The Community Behind Hebrews as “Liminars”

The social history and characteristics of the community behind Hebrews exhibit a situation of liminality. Examination of the five exhortations of Hebrews, which commentators agree, hold the key to understanding the social circumstances of the community behind Hebrews also reveals that the author saw a typological relationship between the community and the exodus generation. Based on this it becomes clear why the author used the theology of the tabernacle as a heuristic device in his expositions. Table 4.5 shows the correlation between the two communities.

Table 4.5 The Correlation between the Five Exhortations of Hebrews and the Wilderness Generation of the Pentateuch.

Exhortations of Hebrews	Wilderness Generation
Danger of Disobedience – Heb 2:1-4	Rebellion against God’s Word accompanied by swift punishment Lev 10 (Nadab & Abihu), Num 16 (Korah), Ex 32 & Num 13-14 (The whole congregation),
Danger of Doubting – Heb 3:7-4:11	Kadesh-barnea Num 13-14
Danger of Immaturity – Heb 5:11-6:20	Repeated grumbling and complaining (Ex 15:24, 17:3, Num 11:1), Their decisive refusal to press on – Num 14:1-10; followed by their carnal attempt to enter resulting in defeat (Num 14:40-45)
Danger of Willful Sin – Heb 10:26-31	Their idolatry (Ex 32), Num 15:30-31
Danger of Indifference – Heb 12:25-29	Ex 19:18-21 – They blocked their ears to God’s word

4.4 PASTORAL SUPPORT

4.4.1 The Pastoral Problems of the Community Behind Hebrews

It is universally agreed among biblical scholars that Hebrews is a pastor’s sermon written to meet a real pastoral need. Any proposal therefore must show how the pastoral situation is addressed by it. Though, as we have already suggested, there were multiple factors ranging from external religio-political pressures to an internal individual spiritual lethargy and intra-group factors contributing to the situation, no consensus has emerged as to the single most important factor that had led to the situation. Perhaps there wasn’t one, but many. Commentators have made varying but useful suggestions in the attempt to link what they have individually identified as the crux of the pastoral problem of the community. The difficulty is that consensus has been hard to achieve due to the multiple nature of the factors. As we have discussed in our introduction, the liturgical approach, whether in the negative sense of Lindars’ suggestion of a guilt ridden community seeking assurance of permanent forgiveness, or the positive sense of Dunhill’s Adventist group in need of a “replacement liturgy of worship”, do not adequately on their individual merits provide the link between the pastoral situation and the homily. Similarly, the other

suggestions remain incomplete in providing this link. I suggest that the typological theology of the tabernacle and wilderness camp provides this link.

4.4.2 The Theology of the Tabernacle as the Pastoral Link

Most of the pastoral factors suggested by scholars may be channeled through the author's multi-dimensional theology of the tabernacle, as table 4.6 illustrates.

Table 4.6 The Correlation between the Suggested Pastoral Situation in Hebrews and the theology of Tabernacle

Suggested Pastoral Situation in Hebrews	Theology of Tabernacle in Hebrews
Drifting into spiritual malaise and lethargy (Heb 2:1-4, 3:7-4:16, 5:11-6:12, 10:19-39, 12:1-13:17), "Waning commitment" Attridge (1989:13)	Revelation through the tabernacle, the exhortations to 'hold fast' and not to abandon the Christian hope "within the veil" (Heb 3:5; 4:14; 10:23, 35)
Unable to deal with Sin & Guilt in the NT era (Lindars 1991:10). A perceived "cultic deprivation" (Gordon 2000:20), They longed for "the sumptuous liturgy of Judaism"(Spicq 1977:30)	Jesus as the Great High Priest ministers in the heavenly tabernacle and provides a permanent and abiding covenant of forgiveness and effectual "ritual" that provides the power to obey God.
Loss of the temple in Jerusalem and desire to return to Judaism (Isaacs 1992: 67). "Neglect of worship (10:25) is symptomatic of external pressure and inner fatigue" (Pfitzner 1997:20).	Heavenly Tabernacle as centre of Christian worship, therefore "Let us draw near...Let us approach...Let us come boldly to the throne of grace" Theme of Pilgrimage with the tabernacle.
An Impoverished or Inadequate Christology (Lane 1991: cxxxviii)	Jesus the Great High Priest ministers in the heavenly tabernacle. See Cullmann, who suggests that this represents "a full Christology in every respect" (1959:103)
Under-realized Eschatology	Tabernacle theology of Sabbath Rest in Heb 3-4
External Pressure to partake of Jewish rituals (Cockerel 1999:17)	Christ has gone outside the camp, let us follow after Him Heb 13:9-16
Social problem of Shame and loss of Honour (DeSilva 2000)	The heavenly tabernacle as goal of Christian pilgrimage, therefore, we should despise the shame of this world.
Disillusionment & Separation from the larger community of faith	The Sociological function of the tabernacle

I conclude that our author constructed this homily with the spatiality of tabernacle in mind, and used it as a semiosphere; i.e. "the universe of possible meanings" (Lotman

1977:218), for his sermon. In so doing, the tabernacle and camp served as a continuous background picture that helped the hearers understand the homily. If this is correct, it has several implications related to the methodology of spatiality, our understanding of the epistle of Hebrews, and a modern application of the theology of the tabernacle. This will be briefly enumerated in our final chapter.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have tested the validity of the proposal that the author of Hebrews uses the spatiality of the tabernacle and wilderness camp as a heuristic device in his Christological argument. Our examination of the text itself suggests that there are sufficient references, both in the surface structure and the deeper semiotic figuration throughout the epistle to support such a conclusion. We have also demonstrated, satisfactorily that the author was of the philosophical theological predisposition to do this, and that most of the theological motifs of the epistle may be channeled through his theology of the tabernacle. In our brief examination of the sociological basis for our postulate, we have suggested that the community was in a state that could be described as liminal, and in this state, which is comparable to that of the wilderness generation, the theology of the tabernacle played crucial functions of social stability, spiritual renewal and eschatological anticipation. And we have also shown that many of the varying scholarly proposals regarding the pastoral situation in the community and the manner in which the homily addresses it may be channeled through the theology of the tabernacle.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In the first few sentences of his elegant examination of the doctrine and significance of the epistle to the Hebrews, the late E F Scott comments: “The Epistle to the Hebrews is in many respects the riddle of the New Testament...Almost from the beginning the church was aware of something strange and perplexing about this Epistle” (1922:1). One of the puzzling features of Hebrews is its use of comparisons and contrasts to present Christ and His continuing work on God’s Right Hand. This study has examined the Christological argument of Hebrews by focusing on the comparisons, in order to ascertain the deeper theological underpinnings of the epistle. I will now summarize my findings and their implications, and point to further questions that need to be explored.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Summary of Chapter 1

The Introduction was devoted to setting out the main questions that are answered by the study. Pointing out the plethora of comparisons throughout the epistle, we noted how the Christology of Hebrews is presented mainly with the use of the comparisons and contrast of Jesus with the Angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. We have shown that a lot of scholarly work has been published, attempting to explain the reasons for these comparisons without adequate success. Some of the suggested reasons, especially, those that assert that the language of the epistle is a polemic against Judaism aimed at dissuading faltering Jewish Christians from defecting back to their former religion, have been shown to be largely deficient. Though other categories of suggested reasons, i.e. Rhetorical, Pastoral and Liturgical, have great merit, our examination

showed that none on their own adequately account for the use of the comparisons and contrast to present Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews.

A closer look at the argument of the epistle shows that each of the comparisons and contrasts is framed within various spaces. Heb 1 contrasts Jesus with the angels in heaven and Heb 2 compares Him, again with the angels, in the inhabited world. Heb 3-4 compares Jesus the Son with Moses and Joshua in the “house of God”, and Heb 5-7 compares Jesus the High Priest with Aaron in the Holy of Holies. These spaces, it was postulated, act, as *a priori* framework for the comparisons and examination of the argument of the Epistle from the perspective of the spaces that frame the comparisons would yield fruitful answers. It was proposed to examine the Christological argument using the paradigmatic framework of Spatiality and hypothesized that the *a priori* spatial outline was a typological representation of the wilderness camp and tabernacle, and that the author used its spatiality as a heuristic device for the argument.

5.1.2 Summary of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 was dedicated to methodological issues. It was recommended that two major methodological steps were necessary for answering the question at stake. Firstly we needed to foreground the spatiality of the text and examine all its dimensions. We secondly then, have to assess the significance or nature of the influence of the spatiality on the overall argument or narrative of the text. Because the discipline of Integrated and Critical Spatiality as applied to Biblical Studies is relatively young, and the spatial theories are themselves varied, this chapter examined several of the theories and briefly pointed to some of their applications in Biblical Studies.

Examination of the history of ideas about space and place, and consequent theoretical models in spatiality shows that humans relate to their spaces in a predictable fashion, which sociological and anthropological theories help us to understand and study. Eliade’s theory of Sacred and Profane Spaces was the first theory we examined. Its application in Worship studies and the study of the central role of Biblical Jerusalem, its temple and the whole concept of the Promised Land as heavily influencing the theology of the Old Testament in particular was discussed. Criticisms of Eliade’s typology were also discussed. Bollnow’s phenomenological approach to human behaviour in relation to

spaces on the other hand asserts that humankind's conception of space is derived basically from its utility as "dwelling" and not from miraculous encounter with the "spiritual world" as Eliade had suggested. Bollnow's work is reflected in other theories in Human Geography and has important implications to biblical studies, especially in the discipline of biblical archaeological.

Humans also relate to each other in a predictable manner when spaces are concerned. Michel Foucault's theories on spatiality that postulate that space is "simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (1986:24) were discussed. Humans, according to Foucault, relate in a hierarchical manner based on power and knowledge when spaces are concerned. The positions and locations of various individuals in a given space have signifying connotations of ideological nature, and are primarily reflected in power and hierarchical relations that are culturally conditioned. The hierarchical relationships of power and knowledge are exhibited through contests, which are expressed by the behaviour, attitudes, gestures, coded signals and discourses involving the people in that space. Another important contribution of Foucault was his interesting categorization of spaces into real, utopian and heterotopias and these were briefly highlighted. Robert Sack's theory of territoriality also serves to enhance our understanding of human behaviour in spaces and places.

We also noted that a nuanced approach is required in examining the spatiality of a text since the textual representation of space can be different from the actual situation it describes. Thus maps, historical presentations and other textual representations of spatiality are influenced by important authorial choices that need to be borne in mind and if identified, do help us understand the text better. We examined three important theoretical contributions to examining of the spatiality of the text: those by White, Bakhtin and Lotman. Lotman's concept of spatial form devices, that proposes that these devices have crucial semantic and semiotic significance is very important for our study. The spatial forms constitute the "model of the structure of the space of the universe of possible meanings of signs in the narrative" (1977: 217-218). This Semiosphere serves as the typology, or the deeper semiotic structure to the argument.

Based on these theories, I proposed a methodology for studying the spatiality of a Biblical text. This methodology is a modified Structural Analysis that examines the text

at three levels: superficial narrative level as well as the mythical or semantic and semiological levels. The methodology was then successfully validated in a study of Num 13, a narrative whose deeper theological message is explored by the Psalmist in Ps 95 and consequently by the author of Hebrews in Heb 3-4.

5.1.3 Summary of Chapter 3

Chapter three applies the methodology to examine the expositions of Heb 1-7. We immediately find that the opening sentence of Hebrews (1:1-4) is pregnant with the various dimensions of spatiality. Jesus the Son is introduced in this prologue, which describes the relationship between revelation knowledge (“God...spoke”), time (“time past...last days”), spaces (“the worlds”), prophetic discourse (“spoke...to the fathers by the prophets”) and hierarchy (“spoken to us by His Son”) and creative power (“by whom He made the worlds”).

The comparison with angels as presented in Heb 1-2 is framed within the setting of heaven and the world. In heaven, Jesus is demonstrated to be the Royal Son who is enthroned on God’s right hand and the angels as attendants and worshippers of His throne. In the world, Jesus shared the nature of humanity, which made Him for a little while lower than the angels. This solidarity with humankind made him able to deliver enslaved humanity from the devil’s tyranny, a feat that the angels, because of their non-human nature could not achieve. The contrast with Moses is in the spatial setting of “the house”, the community of God’s people that is also a representation of the wilderness tabernacle structure and the future temple. Jesus as Son and heir is over this house that he built, Moses as a servant serves within the house. Aaron is compared with Jesus in the hybrid spatial setting of the Holy of Holies. Aaron and the Levitical priests ministered while standing in the Holy of Holies of the wilderness tabernacle and are compared with Jesus who ministers while sitting in the inverted and utopian heavenly Holy of Holies. Jesus therefore enacts a better, more perfect, more effective and more abiding covenant in this heavenly space which is the very presence of God.

The comparisons in Hebrews are therefore a reflection of the contested nature of the spaces, and the contests reveal hierarchical relations of power, knowledge and territoriality. The contrasts are consequently secondary to the series of *a priori* spaces

that the author, for ideological or theological reasons, is following in his argument. The spaces themselves are arranged according to a pattern that together serves as a spatial form, providing the intellectual scaffolding for the epistle's exposition. Applying Lotman's concept of the Semiosphere, it was suggested that this spatial pattern represents a typology of the wilderness camp and tabernacle and that the author of Hebrews uses it as a heuristic device for his homily. In this typology, the world corresponds to the wilderness camp and the area of the tabernacle enclosure near the altar for burnt offering and which was accessible to the general congregation. The "house" represents the priestly courtyard and the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies is the region beyond the veil. It is suggested that the author uses the catena of Heb 1 to restate what the audience already knew about the exaltation of Christ in heaven and to introduce them in an allusive way to the concept that Jesus' exalted status is associated also with His cultic functions in the very presence of God.

5.1.4 Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 sets out four series of tests to demonstrate the validity of our conclusion regarding the use of the spatiality of the wilderness camp and tabernacle as typological heuristic device in this homily. In the surface text of Hebrews, it was demonstrated that the epistle's detailed description of the tabernacle and its ministry in Heb 8 - 10 is preceded by ten or more allusions to the tabernacle in Heb 1 - 7. In this respect, the author's emphatic statement in Heb 8:1-2, that sums up what he had said so far makes good rhetorical and intellectual sense. Heb 11-13 also provides some references, motifs and allusions that are best explained with the spatiality of the wilderness camp and tabernacle as heuristic tool.

On the deeper theological level, we demonstrated that the author's own philosophical theology would be very much suited to this approach. The author presents multiple interpretations of the typology of the tabernacle, the most prominent of which was that heaven was represented by the Holy of Holies, the wilderness camp represented the world and the priestly courtyard and the Holy Place represented the liminal state of the people of God. Moreover, we have shown that the various biblical texts with affinity for Hebrews, especially the Book of Numbers, portray similar approaches that employ the

tabernacle/temple theological complex to express their various traditions and arguments. It was also demonstrated in chapter 4 that majority of the theological motifs and themes of the epistle to the Hebrews have close relationship with the theology of the tabernacle and its typology.

At the sociological level, I have shown through a brief social profiling of the first recipients of this epistle that it was a community in social liminality, and with the application of Victor Turner's theory on liminality and the ritual process (1969), The author of Hebrews saw the theology of the tabernacle as playing a similar social role as it did in the Pentateuch. In the case of the Pastoral Theology of the epistle, the author uses the typological theology of the wilderness camp and tabernacle to help address the pastoral problems he judged to be at the root of the spiritual malaise of this congregation. We have also demonstrated that most of the pastoral problems suggested by various biblical scholars are addressed when viewed through the lens of the theology of the tabernacle as propounded by Hebrews. The typology of the tabernacle therefore was the primary channel for conveying the author's themes and the means of responding to the social and pastoral situation of the congregation.

We have therefore proved and confirmed the validity of our hypotheses,

- a. That the writer of Hebrews organizes his Christological argument according to a series of spatial representations, which suggests that he, uses the tabernacle as a heuristic device.
- b. That the wilderness tabernacle, the events surrounding its construction and its cultic practices provided the heuristic background for the author's Christology.
- c. That the Christology of Hebrews, viewed from this angle, would "fit" with the exhortational parts of the epistle and so serve the author's pastoral intentions.

5.2 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main achievement of the study, I trust, is that it has confirmed the benefit of Critical Spatiality as a methodology in Biblical Studies. By exploring the network of relationships within spaces and places, the methodology has enabled the explanation of the comparisons and contrasts in Hebrews. It has also demonstrated an application of Foucault's dictum that spaces are simultaneously "represented, contested and inverted",

and so shown how sociological theories can continue to be used productively in Biblical Studies. The application of other theories of Spatiality, especially as related to literary criticism, has also been demonstrated in this study. In particular, Lotman's concept of the semiosphere has been applied, I think, fruitfully to show that the typology of the tabernacle and wilderness camp lies in the deeper structure of the epistle and provides the uniting theme for the epistle. This last conclusion, on the uniting theme of the epistle, may appear rather grand but I shall leave it to others to test its validity further.

There are further questions that are raised by the study, related to the methodology, the epistle to the Hebrews and to the theology of the tabernacle. The methodology could for example be applied to other narratives of the Bible. John's Gospel readily comes to mind, for there is a generally agreed consensus that this gospel has an *a priori* framework for presenting the life story of Jesus. Its affinity with Hebrews, the manner in which it deals with the relationship of Jesus with "the Jews" and its "sectarian" nature are reasons for conjecturing whether one may be able to employ the methodology to some questions in this gospel. We have also pointed to the parallels between Hebrews and Numbers, and if these are not mere coincidences; perhaps further exploration of the link may be useful.

In relation to the epistle itself, it may have been observed that we have completely ignored the "movement of time" in the argument of Hebrews. As noted earlier, time seem to be treated in peculiar ways in parts of the argument of the epistle, sometimes seeming to be completely dislocated from space. Other times the author does not follow a linear chronology. Perhaps the sociological approach could help explore how the epistle deals with time. We have also avoided moving beyond the trailing of the argument to show the "practical meanings" of the metaphors of the epistle. For example, in practical terms, and to the modern reader, is "draw near" just a call to prayer or more than that? Is "let us approach" another way of just saying, "Let's bow our heads in prayer"? Or is "Let us hold fast" just a way of saying "Let's hang on in there"? What does "let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short" of the eternal rest mean to today's congregation? These have been left unexplained not just because of lack of space, but perhaps because they are better understood with the typology of the tabernacle and wilderness camp on the mind's eye of the reader. That deep structure, it is suggested, should be used to convey

the “practical meanings” of these metaphors. Thus our study raises some practical challenges in the manner in which we understand and apply the theology of the tabernacle in our sermons. Like the author of Hebrews, the use of its spatiality as a heuristic device can be very fruitful.

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