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STRUCTURING HEBREWS

Modern Approaches to an Ancient Text

The Problem of Structuring Hebrews

This book revisits one of the persistent challenges in New Testament interpretation – the structure and argument of the Letter to the Hebrews. One of the essential tasks for understanding any text is to discern how its various parts relate to one another. Addressing this challenge in Hebrews, then, is essential if this enigmatic New Testament text is to be interpreted.

The many excellent surveys of this topic commonly note that very little consensus has emerged regarding the structure of Hebrews.[1] One reason for this lack of consensus is that numerous methods have been developed in an effort to discern the structure of Hebrews. Some approaches attempt to arrange Hebrews intuitively based on thematic or topical indicators.[2] Other approaches make the scriptural quotations or allusions in Hebrews the organizing principle.[3]

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[1] The history of research on this issue has been well-surveyed. For comprehensive surveys see George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 3–41; Cynthia L. Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 1–21; Gabriella Gelardini, *"Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht": Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu* Tischa Be-Aw (BIS 83; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–84; Barry C. Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches," *CBR* 6 (2007): 99–129.

[2] E.g., Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[3] E.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 175–84. Longenecker is followed with modification by R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as Biblical Expositor," *TynBul* 47 (1996): 246–76. See also Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Hebrews and Divine Speech* (LNTS 507; London: T&T Clark, 2014), 28–35. Griffiths's structure is a development of the one proposed by Lawrence Wills, "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *HTR* 77 (1984): 277–83. In many of these proposals, the various expositions of Scripture in Hebrews are only loosely held together when considered as a whole. It is not clear why the author moves from one major block of exposition to the next.

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Still other approaches emphasize literary indicators that demarcate the major divisions of Hebrews. Among these latter attempts, the proposals by Wolfgang Nauck and Albert Vanhoye have exerted considerable influence on the present study of Hebrews.

Nauck proposed a tripartite structure that emphasized the parallel exhortations in Heb 4:14–16 and 10:19–23.[4] Accordingly, he divided the discourse of Hebrews into the following sections, each with an overarching hortatory theme:

1:1–4:13	Listen carefully, believing in the Word of God which was delivered to us in the unique Son Jesus Christ who is exalted over the representatives of the cosmos and the old covenant.
4:14–10:31	Come near to God and hold firm to the confession because Jesus Christ has opened the way.
10:32–13:17	Stand firm and follow Jesus Christ who is the author and perfecter of faith.

Additionally, there is also some debate over whether there is a structurally significant and central Old Testament text in Hebrews. Psalm 109:1, 4 (LXX) has been a predominant choice due to its Christological focus and prevalence throughout Hebrews, e.g., see Harold W. Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 197–9; Guthrie, *Structure*, 123–4; Andrew Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 13, 69. A case has also been made for Jer 38:31–34 (LXX), e.g., see Gabriella Gelardini, "From 'Linguistic Turn' and Hebrews Scholarship to *Anadiplosis Iterata*: The Enigma of Structure," *HTR* 102 (2009): 72.

[4] Wolfgang Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche, Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (ed. Walter Eltester; BZNW 26; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960), 199–206. Nauck's observations (which developed those initially proposed by Otto Michel in his 1957 commentary on Hebrews) have had considerable influence on the arrangement of Hebrews by modern scholars. See Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 29–35; Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. H. C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 390–2; Heinrich Zimmermann, *Das Bekenntnis der Hoffnung: Tradition und Redaktion im Hebräerbrief* (Cologne, Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1977), 18–24; Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 42–51; Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbrief im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* (NTAbh 29; Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 63; David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 72–5; Gerd Schunack, *Der Hebräerbrief* (ZBK NT 14; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2002), 13–15; Martin Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Kapitel 5,11–13,25* (ÖKTNT 20/2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 379. James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker 2008), 19; Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 79–81; Kevin L. Anderson, *Hebrews: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (New Beacon Bible Commentary; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013).

Albert Vanhoye proposed a five-part chiastic structure based on such literary indicators as announcement of the subject, inclusions, variation in genre, transitional hook words, characteristic terms that repeat, and symmetrical arrangements.[5] Vanhoye produced the following structure (D = doctrinal; P = paraenetic):

		1:–4	Exordium	
I		1:5–2:18	A name so different from the name of angels	D
II	A	3:1–4:14	Jesus, faithful high-priest	P
	B	4:15–5:10	Jesus, compassionate high-priest	D
III		5:11–6:20	Preliminary exhortation	P
	A	7:1–28	Jesus, high-priest in the order of Melchizedek	D
	B	8:1–9:28	Come to fulfillment	D
	C	10:1–18	Cause of an eternal salvation	D
		10:19–39	Final exhortation	P
IV	A	11:1–40	The faith of the ancestors	D
	B	12:1–13	The necessity of endurance	P
V		12:14–13:19	The peaceful fruit of justice	P
		13:20–21	Peroration	

The continuing influence of Nauck and Vanhoye can be seen in two subsequent and significant efforts by George Guthrie and Cynthia Westfall to explain the structure and argument of Hebrews based on discourse analysis.[6] Gabriella Gelardini's more recent proposal of a five-part, chiastic structure of Hebrews (1:1–2:18; 3:1–6:20; 7:1–10:18; 10:19–12:3; 12:4–13:25) shows the influence of Vanhoye's proposed concentric relationships in Hebrews.[7] Still,

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[5] Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure Littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (2d ed.; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1976). Vanhoye's structural analysis has influenced Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 19; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), lxxxvii–viii; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 58; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (SP 13; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 21.

[6] Guthrie, *Structure*; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*. Guthrie's study has been approvingly cited in the commentaries by Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, xc–xcviii, and adopted by Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 34; as well as Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured?" 115–22.

[7] Cf. Gelardini, "Linguistic Turn," 51–73; idem, *"Verhätet eure Herzen nicht,"* 83. Gelardini shifts the center of Hebrews from Christ as high priest (9:11) in Vanhoye's arrangement to God's covenant-making in Heb 8. Gelardini's structural arrangement makes Hebrews more theocentric and covenantal. We think that Gelardini rightly emphasizes the overarching covenant theology and theocentricity of Hebrews, although our structure enshrines the covenantal emphasis through the topical arrangement of the epideictic syncrises in Hebrews. For another distinct attempt to arrange Hebrews as a chiasm at the macro- and micro-level see John Paul Heil, *Hebrews: Chiastic Structures and Audience Response* (CBQMS 46; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2010).

other hybrid approaches have emerged that attempt to incorporate the insights of Nauck with the ancient categories of rhetorical arrangement.[8] In some cases Nauck's tripartite structure exerts a stronger influence over the articulation of the macro-structure and argument of Hebrews than the rhetorical categories.[9]

Nauck's observations are not easily ignored and draw attention to the primarily hortatory nature of Hebrews. We, in fact, will address their place in structuring the discourse of Hebrews, though we do not adopt an overall tripartite structure for the entire discourse or even its *argumentatio.*

With regard to Vanhoye and those he has influenced, we make three observations. First, one of the problems with chiastic macro-arrangements of Hebrews is that they often make the exposition of Christ's high priesthood or God's covenant-making the focal point of Hebrews; but, as we will argue, the focal point is always the exhortations that follow the expositions in Hebrews.[10] The expository material with its theological and Christological implications is not unimportant to Hebrews, but structurally, this material is always placed in service to the hortatory focus throughout Hebrews, as Nauck's proposal rightly recognizes. We will also show that the considerable material devoted to Christ's priestly deeds has more to do with the rhetorical topic under consideration than with that topic being at the center of the discourse.

Second, Luke Timothy Johnson notes that any chiastic arrangement of Hebrews potentially misses "the linear and cumulative force of Hebrews's argument."[11] Likewise, we will demonstrate that the

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[8] For example, Weiss, Backhaus, Karrer, Thompson, Cockerill, and Anderson give careful attention to the rhetorical categories of arrangement for structuring Hebrews, but they are also significantly influenced by Nauck's tripartite structure (see the survey at the end of this chapter).

[9] Cockerill, *Hebrews,* 79–81.

[10] Cf. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 15, who states that the focal point in Hebrews is not on Jesus's priestly ministry but on the climactic exhortations that follow. See also Barnabas Lindars, "The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews," *NTS* 35 (1989): 406. Gelardini ("Linguistic Turn," 72) is willing to identify the climactic exhortations (at least in chapter 12) as the pragmatic-paraenetic center of Hebrews. Yet for Gelardini, Heb 8:7–13 remains the logical, structural center by which the whole discourse is understood.

[11] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 12. See also Guthrie, *Structure*, 143, and Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 301, who place the climax of Hebrews at 12:18–24 and 12:18–29 respectively. By including the exhortations (vv. 25–29) in the climax, Westfall emphasizes the hortatory character of Hebrews. Craig R. Koester ("Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* [ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden; RBS 66; Atlanta: SBL, 2011], 108–9) as

topical arrangement of Hebrews is both linear and cumulative. Additionally, we should recognize that ancient rhetoricians such as Quintilian (a contemporary of the author of Hebrews) instruct that the weakest arguments be placed at the center of the speech whereas the stronger arguments are reserved for the beginning and end of a speech and thus are the speech's focal points (cf. *Inst.* 5.12.14).[12] In fact, the author of Hebrews saves what he admits is the most difficult (not necessarily the weakest) part of his discourse for the more central and lengthier sections of his argument (cf. Heb 5:11).

Third, another problem arises when we consider that many of the literary indicators identified by Vanhoye and others such as hook words, chiasmus, repetition, and inclusions are ancient stylistic rhetorical devices. The discussion of style was taken up along with invention and arrangement as one of the tasks of the ancient rhetorician.[13] One of the virtues discussed under style was ornamentation.[14] As ornamental devices, these rhetorical phenomena do not provide a sufficient foundation for the overall structure and logic of a speech like Hebrews.[15] These stylistic devices are helpful for identifying topics and discreet thought units, but prior understanding of invention and arrangement in ancient rhetoric is necessary to recognize how these stylistic elements are deployed in Hebrews.[16] For

well emphasizes the linear and cumulative perspective of Hebrews in his articulation of three series of repetitive but also progressive arguments in Hebrews.

[12] See also Cicero, *De or.* 2.313–14; Rhet. Her. 3.18.

[13] Isocrates, in *Soph.* 16–17, appears to be one of the earliest to comment on these three tasks of composition.

[14] Cf. Cicero, *De or.* 3.37; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.1.1. Style should be correct, lucid, ornate, and appropriate.

[15] Isocrates (*Soph.* 16–17) sequences compositional tasks starting first with invention, then arrangement, and lastly style: "But to choose from these elements those which should be employed for each subject, to join them together, to arrange them properly, and also, not to miss what the occasion demands but appropriately to adorn the whole speech with striking thoughts and to clothe it in melodious phrase" (Norlin, LCL). Cicero (*De. or.* 1.142) and Quintilian also sequence these activities in the same order: invention (*Inst.* 4–6), arrangement (*Inst.* 7), and style (*Inst.* 8–11.1). Treating style in third place after invention and arrangement alerts us that stylistic devices do not provide a framework for the whole speech or composition. These rhetorical devices enhance and assume prior decisions made for arranging a speech – decisions that are based on the other rhetorical tasks of invention and arrangement.

[16] Cf. Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," 201–3. The finding and arranging of arguments as well as choice of style were organically related as Catherine Steel ("Divisions of Speech," in *A Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric* [ed. Erik Gunderson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 80) notes, "It is impossible to separate entirely the finding of arguments from their arrangement; choice of style depends on judgments about the kinds of arguments which a speech will employ; and delivery must accord with style."

example, the announcement of a subject ahead of time has figured significantly in the discussion of Hebrews for Vanhoye and others.[17] Quintilian discusses this rhetorical figure as a matter of style. "Deferring the discussion of some points after mentioning them" lends charm to the speech (*Inst.* 9.2.63 [Russell, LCL]). This feature by itself does not explain, at least from the perspective of ancient rhetoric, why certain topics are addressed and why they might be taken up in the order that they are. The coherence of these topics must be supplied from elsewhere.[18] Thus, discerning the appropriate intertextual or cultural background is a necessary complement to any structural analysis of Hebrews. Such contextual considerations often illuminate connections, arguments, or logics that are not readily apparent to the modern interpreter but are persuasive to the original audience.[19]

The question still remains: By what method or methods will we identify the structure of Hebrews?

The Approach of This Study

As Gelardini has aptly stated, "it is a method that generates a structure."[20] We begin by asking how the audience of Hebrews

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[17] E.g., Guthrie (*Structure*, 34) states that "any investigation into the book's structure must consider this phenomenon."

[18] E.g., Gelardini ("Linguistic Turn," 72–3) anchors her logical connections in the intertext of the exodus story from the golden-calf incident to the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. Gelardini acknowledges that her arrangement based on stylistic, lexical, and thematic considerations did not readily suggest the logical connections between some of the topics of her arrangement until she considered the intertext of the exodus narrative. We acknowledge that the narrative substructure assumed by Hebrews is an important aspect of interpreting Hebrews and is a topic that has been given explicit methodological consideration by Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Schenck gives emphasis to Ps 8 quoted and interpreted in Heb 2:5–9 as the foundation of the metanarrative assumed in Hebrews. Interestingly, Schenck's narrative substructure is more universal in scope because he begins with the creation and destiny of humanity in the author's use of Ps 8. For a similar perspective to Schenck's but shaped by an analysis of rhetorical categories, see Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future," 106, where he identifies Heb 2:5–9 as the *propositio* of the entire discourse.

[19] For additional discussion of these points see Bryan J. Whitfield, *Joshua Traditions and the Argument of Hebrews 3 and 4* (BZNW 194; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 22–47. Whitfield ultimately opts for what he labels as reading practices from the first-century Jewish context to discern the connection between Heb 3 and 4 and between the high priest and the sojourning people of God.

[20] Gelardini, "Linguistic Turn," 58.

(and its author) would have conceived or even articulated the struc-
ture of this "word of exhortation." Thus, to solve the riddle of the
structure of Hebrews, we adopt an audience-critical approach. This
question recognizes, as some of our critiques above indicate, that
there were rhetorical and compositional categories and strategies
peculiar to the historical context of Hebrews that would have guided
the compositional practices of the author and informed the expect-
ations of his audience. Thus, we will propose an arrangement that
gives serious consideration to the rhetorical categories of arrange-
ment ubiquitously discussed and practiced in the ancient Medi-
terranean world.[21] We are helped immensely in our task by the
preservation of numerous ancient rhetorical handbooks that embody
centuries of instruction as well as numerous extant speeches that
exemplify the type of rhetorical training found in the handbooks.
The handbooks especially provide us with a metadiscourse on actual
rhetorical practices in the ancient world and thus serve as self-
conscious reflections and evaluations of living rhetoric.[22] It is within
a context informed by this kind of rhetorical training that Hebrews,
a first-century speech, was composed.

In regard to our use of the rhetorical handbooks and ancient
speeches, we recognize that the rhetorical tradition of the ancient
Mediterranean world was not monolithic. Yet it was a tradition that
was reflective of an ongoing conversation. George A. Kennedy, in
his overview of ancient rhetoric, recognizes both the variation in
details among rhetorical instructions and speeches and also that
"it is possible to speak of a standard system of classical rhetoric,
expounded in the handbooks and illustrated in practice."[23] We,
therefore, attempt to discern, when possible, where there was broad
agreement among the theorists on a rhetorical topic. Sometimes the
theorists themselves will highlight commonly accepted ideas prac-
ticed in their time with which they might agree or which they might
critique. These areas of consensus or common practices alert us to
what ancient audiences anticipated in a speech such as Hebrews.
Thus in our analysis of Hebrews, we look for points of contact and

[21] For a similar perspective see Peter Lampe, "Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline
Texts – Quo Vadit?" in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe;
New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 7.
[22] Cf. Cicero, *De or.* 1.146; Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.10.119–25.
[23] George A. Kennedy, "Historical Survey of Rhetoric," in *Handbook of Classical
Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley Porter; Leiden: Brill,
1997), 6.

convergence. The more that Hebrews reflects broad areas of practice and agreement with the rhetorical tradition of its time, the more it reveals the conventional nature of its arrangement.

Our approach is not new. While rhetorical studies of Paul's letters received new impetus beginning in the 1970s with the Han Dieter Betz's rhetorical study of Galatians,[24] Hermann von Soden's commentary on Hebrews published in 1899 had already acknowledged the value of the ancient handbooks and the rhetorical categories of arrangement for understanding the purpose and organization of Hebrews. There, in fact, have been several attempts after von Soden to understand Hebrews's structure and genre by ancient rhetorical canons. Key distinct proposals of this approach in Hebrews have been listed at the end of this chapter spanning from von Soden into the twenty-first century.[25] A cursory examination of the survey indicates that, even within this focused area of inquiry, little consensus has developed. Furthermore, there have been some critiques of this approach to Hebrews. Many of these critiques have arisen from the fact that Hebrews seems to resist the conventional arrangement of an *exordium* followed by a *narratio* followed by an *argumentatio* followed by a *peroratio.* Thus, any attempt to fit Hebrews into these categories has sometimes been seen as artificial.[26] There have been two primary and discrete reasons offered for this critique:

[24] Cf. Hans Dieter Betz's seminal article on Galatians, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 21 (1975): 353–79. Paul's letters afterwards have witnessed a robust application of ancient rhetoric with regard to invention, arrangement, and style. For an overview of the use of ancient rhetoric in Pauline studies see Troy W. Martin, "Invention and Arrangement in Recent Pauline Studies: A Survey of the Practices and the Problems," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams; Pauline Studies 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 48–118. For an excellent introduction to the early scholars who have shaped the contemporary application of ancient rhetoric to the New Testament see Troy W. Martin, ed., *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

[25] There are some who use the rhetorical categories of *exordium* and *peroratio* to identify structural elements in Hebrews, but their overall structuring of Hebrews is based on different considerations than the rhetorical arrangement of ancient discourses (e.g., Albert Vanhoye, *A Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* [trans. James Swetnam; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964], 7; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 46; Attridge, *Hebrews,* 17; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 21).

[26] Cf. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, lxxix; Guthrie, *Structure*, 33, 35; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 46; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 26; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 6–7; Gabriella Gelardini, "Rhetorical Criticism in Hebrews Scholarship: Avenues and Aporias," in *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge* (ed. Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards; RBS 67; Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 235.

(1) Hebrews is thought to be patterned after the fringe rhetorical phenomenon of a synagogue homily, and (2) rhetorical handbooks encourage flexibility in arrangement.

According to the first critique, the identification of the Hebrews as a synagogue homily[27] is assumed *necessarily* to preclude identification with Greco-Roman genre categories such as deliberative, epideictic, and judicial. This perspective acknowledges the influence of classical rhetorical practices on Jewish homilies, but it ultimately judges the synagogue sermon to be its own genre, and certainly one whose arrangement cannot be explicated by the categories of pagan oratory.[28] Setting aside the question of whether the Christian sermon developed from the synagogue sermon,[29] we acknowledge that the

[27] See Guthrie, *Structure*, 32–3; Gelardini, "Rhetorical Criticism in Hebrews Scholarship," 235. Gelardini ("Hebrews, Homiletics, and Liturgical Scripture Interpretation," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* [ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden; RBS 66; Atlanta: SBL 2011], 121–41) has argued, rather eloquently, that Hebrews is "the oldest synagogue homily of the (proto-)*petichta* type" that interprets the central scriptural quotations from Ps 94:7b–11 (LXX) and Jer 38:31–34 (LXX). Her more extensive arguments can be found in *"Verhätet eure Herzen nicht,"* passim. For an earlier study that employs Hebrews as a source to determine the form of a Hellenistic-synagogue homily see Hartwig Thyen, *Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie* (FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandehoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 16–18.

[28] E.g., Gelardini ("Liturgical Scripture Interpretation," 141) states that the author of Hebrews "incorporates elements of ancient rhetoric … But I doubt whether deliberative, forensic, or epideictic oratory can do justice to a synagogal context." Also, Harold W. Attridge ("Paraenesis in a Homily [λόγος παρακλήσεως]: The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 [1990]: 216–7) identifies Hebrews as a synagogue homily or paraclesis which is "a mutant on the evolutionary trail of ancient rhetoric." See also Folker Siegert, "Homily and Panegyrical Sermon," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley Porter; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 421. Siegert acknowledges that the author of Hebrews might have been a professional orator (431). Similar claims have also been made for Philo's treatises. For example, Thomas M. Conley ("Philo of Alexandria," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* [ed. Stanley Porter; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 695–713) demonstrates how thoroughly immersed Philo is in the classical rhetorical practices of the first-century – even Philo's exegetical and argumentative strategies from Scripture. Conley, however, believes that we will not find a precise analogy to the standard parts of speech of Greco-Roman rhetoric in Philo's treatises, in part, because these rhetorical techniques are adapted to broad homiletic ends and exegetical activities occurring in the synagogues of Alexandria and the Diaspora.

[29] E.g., Siegert, "Homily and Panegyrical Sermon," 431–3. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (*From Prophecy to Preaching: A Survey for the Origins of the Christian Homily* [VCSup 59; Leiden: Brill, 2001], 15) notes the problem of being able to demonstrate whether the line from the synagogue to the practices of the Christian assembly was direct or "more crooked." He believes that, as Christian assemblies developed, Christian liturgical practices such as reading the Scriptures and preaching were influenced by synagogue practices (6), but he does not think that those influences are seen in the first-generation of Pauline churches (10).

reading and exposition of Scripture (i.e., a sermon or homily) was likely a practice of many of the synagogues in the first century.[30] There is, however, no clear evidence of a regular form that such a sermon took in the synagogue at this time.[31] Most of the evidence for possible synagogue sermons is taken from rabbinic sources, which are late, dating from the third to sixth centuries.[32] Moreover, these rabbinic expositions are clearly redacted and may not even have developed from a liturgical context.[33] Thus, the problem of evidence arises concerning what comparative material counts for discerning a typical form of a synagogue homily in the first century. The critique that Hebrews represents the form of a synagogue homily and not classical rhetorical arrangement is ultimately circular and is often employed based on the apparent lack of consensus among interpreters of Hebrews and not primarily on the evidence of the rhetorical handbooks or extant ancient speeches. In fact, if we look at one of the earliest extant Christian liturgical homilies from the mid-second century, *Peri Pascha* by Melito of Sardis, this example of epideictic oratory indeed conforms, as Alistair Stewart-Sykes has argued, to the standard categories of rhetorical arrangement: *exordium, narratio* with *digressio, probatio,* and *peroratio*.[34] Stewart-Sykes

[30] Cf. Stephen K. Catto, *Reconstructing the First-Century Synagogue: A Critical Analysis of Current Research* (LNTS 363; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 116–25. For a brief discussion of the development of preaching in Christian assemblies of the first and second centuries, see Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy to Preaching*, 14–23.

[31] See the conclusion by Günter Stermberger, "The Derashah in Rabbinic Times," in *Preaching in Judaism and Early Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity* (ed. Alexander Deeg et al.; SJ 41; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 20.

[32] Cf. William Richard Stegner "The Ancient Jewish Synagogue Homily," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; SBLSBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 51. Most of the evidence used for Christian sermons also begins at the end of the second century, cf. Stewart-Sykes, *Prophecy to Preaching*, 3.

[33] Cf. Stermberger, "Derashah," 7–21; idem, "Response," in *Preaching in Judaism and Early Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity* (ed. Alexander Deeg et al.; SJ 41; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 45–8; Annette von Stockhausen, "Christian Perception of Jewish Preaching in Early Christianity?" in *Preaching in Judaism and Early Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity* (ed. Alexander Deeg et al.; SJ 41; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 55–7.

[34] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (VCSup; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 72–92, 113–39 (esp. 114). He structures it as follows:

Exordium	1–10
Narratio	11–45
(*Digressio*)	(34–43)
Probatio	46–65
Peroratio	66–105