

# Renewing the “Wilderness Generation”

This paper responds to two interests of mine: one is pedagogical and the other is exegetical. First, my pedagogical interest. Even a cursory review of those think-tanks interested in church renewal these days tell us that the topic de jour at least in the first world church is how to bring disaffected Christians back into the fold. The current handwringing is not about an *apologia* that would convince non-Christians of the intellectual fluency or existential relevance of Christian discipleship, but a gospel for disaffected ex-believers whose faith no longer holds their interest. I meet them all the time in my Bible classes at SPU. The reasons they give for their disinterest in the Christian faith are many and varied. The Barna Group and Pew Research have recently catalogued most of them, although my sense in interacting with these students is that they just prefer other gods offered them on social media and by peers.<sup>1</sup> I would add in passing that I detect a difference in this regard between the millennials I taught 5-10 years ago and the centennials I now teach: the current cadre of students no longer require reasons for their disinterest; they simply have no existential need for a life with God.

Addressing an audience at Davidson College, David Brooks recently observed that American college students have lost a sense of our nation’s “Exodus” narrative, especially those students from more marginal social groups. These are the outliers who for generations have told their stories, whether as immigrants or plotted by their struggles for civil rights, in ways that resonate with a truncated version of the Exodus narrative. They tell of their departure from a land of death and oppression to enter into a promised land of equal opportunity where all had access to the resources of a good and happy life. Their present narrative, even if unwittingly shaped by Marxist ideology, is one of disillusionment and disaffection with the so-called American dream, whose promises have never been realized in their experience.

The problem with this version of the Exodus story as Brooks tells it is that its narrative fails to mention its middle. Stories have a beginning, middle, and an ending. They tell of their exodus and they hope for their promised land, but they fail to receive the existential middle ground of a wilderness journey fraught with temptation and struggle. These disaffected citizens and immigrants comprise a wilderness generation without knowing so. Yes, they are citizens of a liberal democracy who enjoy the benefits of freedom, but many have yet to experience the blessings they were promised: life, liberty, and happiness. And so they grumble and complain of unrealized promises. This has become a generation of protest in America: MeToo, BlackLivesMatter, DACA,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Barna Trends 2018* (Baker, 2018), which is provocatively subtitled, “The Truth about a Post-Truth Society;” esp. 116-21, 167-77.

White Privilege, and all other groups who take to the streets or blogosphere to wage political warfare against those institutions or agents of competing social preferences.

This extends to some of those students in my classroom who come from Christian families, who often have been helped find their way into our country by Christian groups, but who now seek after a future without Christ either because they have found no balm of Gilead in their faith or because their faith has become irrelevant to this future.

Certainly for these disenchanted Christians the reassertion of the wilderness story as the pivot point of God's way of salvation would correct a narrative of cheap grace that guarantees a cost-free discipleship or that the assurance of transformed existence extends beyond conversion into the future as though the baptized remain in a state of grace until God's coming victory. The elevation of the wilderness narrative in a biblical typology of salvation could at the very least make Christians more aware that the testing of their faith by temptation and struggle is the norm. Those who have experienced Exodus—JW calls it New Birth—are led by the Spirit into an existential wilderness of struggle, which is the only way to promised land. So let me propose that a pedagogical way forward may be to press for a Pentateuchal-shaped conception of Christian existence that locates believers in a cultural wilderness where the working out of their promised salvation comes with risks and costs, temptation and trials, but where God is present as partner in the working out of salvation.

With this prospect in mind, let me turn to my exegetical interest: the NT letter of Hebrews. Hebrews is surely one of scripture's most enigmatic books. Not only is its esoteric language strange-sounding, its anonymity and final placement within the biblical canon envisages a kind of homelessness (or restlessness) prescient of the history of its interpretation. The church finally placed Hebrews in-between the two canonical collections of apostolic letters, which is perhaps indicative of its potential mediating role within the biblical canon.

Moreover, Christian and Jewish readers of Hebrews have surmised its various comparisons between the exalted Christ and Israel justify a parting of the ways between the church and synagogue as though the one has replaced the other in the economy of God's salvation. The effect of reading Hebrews as scripture within the church has shaped the belief that to trust Christ for our salvation requires believers to detach themselves from the church's Jewish legacy and from the spiritual equipment passed on to Christians from our Jewish ancestors. The worse examples of this supersession heresy is to deny the authority of the OT and even to engage in the racial politics of anti-Semitism. Quite apart from the inability of modern historical criticism to locate this composition in its original setting or to identity who wrote it, for whom, when, and for what reason, the more important question remains theological: why should Christians read this odd letter addressed "to the Hebrews" as scripture in the first place?

For B. S. Childs, this question is answered by facing up to what, in his mind, is the most crucial problem of reading Hebrews in *canonical* context, which concerns the nature of the traditioning process in shaping the letter's final form. (I would update Childs' response by focusing on the letter's *paratext*, which was added to the letter during the postbiblical canonical process to frame the letter's ecclesial reading as scripture [see below].) He concludes, "The epistle to the Hebrews offers a programmatic statement of the theological relation of the two covenants (i.e., old and new), which receives its content from scripture and not from its historical setting in the first century."<sup>2</sup> A. Lincoln adds that Hebrews is the best NT example of a theology that is decisively shaped by the biblical story of Israel. He writes, "Of all the New Testament writings Hebrews provides us with the most focused and explicit treatment of the relationship between the new revelation in Christ and God's previous disclosure (in Israel's scripture)."<sup>3</sup>

Let me extend these programmatic observations about the intertestamentality of Hebrews in three directions to tie my exegetical interest to this Institute's organizing theme. First, the Pastor's initial reuse of his LXX's wilderness tradition to reconceptualize discipleship (in Heb 3-4), and then his concluding exhortation to them (in Heb 13), indicates his intended readers consist of second generation Christians (so Heb 2:3-4).<sup>4</sup> The use of LXX Ps 94:7-11 to interpret the space and time-zone of Israel's wilderness journey to Canaan distinguishes between them and the disobedient exodus (first) generation, and perhaps also between Joshua who leads this second or wilderness generation into Canaan and the second Joshua, Jesus, who now leads this generation of the Hebrews into the world to come (cf. 2:5ff). In any case, the focus of the Pastor's "word of exhortation" (13:22) is on the choices this current generation of wilderness Hebrews must make "today" in order to receive the blessings promised them.

Second, the role performed by the community's leaders repeated in the Pastor's concluding exhortation (13:7, 17), including himself (13:22), is decisive in insuring the right choices are made in the face of their temptation and suffering (e.g., 10:32-34). Of course, this picks up on a theme central to the Pentateuchal wilderness tradition, since the failure to heed the leadership of Moses is reason "the dead bodies (of the first generation) fell in the wilderness" (Heb 3:16-17; cf. Num 14:29-32). I would argue the principal role of leadership is both prophetic and moral: to communicate God's word to God's people to guide their choices forged by Christological catechesis (esp. 5:11—6:12)

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<sup>2</sup> B. S. Childs, *The NT as Canon* (Fortress, 1984), p. 415.

<sup>3</sup> "Hebrews and Biblical Theology," in C. Bartholomew, ed., *Out of Egypt : Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 2004) 313-38. See G. Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics* (SNTSMS 36, Cambridge, 1979) who defends the claim that Hebrews is the first fully Christian biblical theology (pp. 42-43).

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller construction of this identity of the intended readers, see B. Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (NTT, Cambridge, 1991) 6-15.

and to lead the community by example, not only in worship pleasing to God (12:28-29) but in the practice of loving others (13:1-6). The way of salvation is made clear by catechesis and witness funded by the apostolic witness of the Son's incarnation (13:7-8; cf. 2:3).

Finally, if we identify this "wilderness generation" with any "second generation" Christian—and I teach plenty of them at SPU<sup>5</sup>—then perhaps the content of this canonical "word of exhortation" provides goods for those of us who are responsible for their care. Cued by JW's reception of and reflection on the wilderness tradition, I would suggest the renewal of this cadre of struggling saints engages two practices: First, to lead our classrooms or congregations in a curriculum of Christological catechesis. I've suggested that we apply the hermeneutics of the risen Christ in read our two-testament canon cover to cover (see Luke 24:44-49). (I prefer use of a Lectionary to insure this happens). Second, to cultivate in our own lives a Spirit-filled practice of holiness and love for all our neighbors that imitates the priestly ministry of Jesus.

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***[Optional reading: A Canonical Approach to the Title, "To the Hebrews"]***

*It is axiomatic among Bible scholars that the titles of New Testament books are not authorial properties but rather postbiblical additions by later editors, cued by the literary conventions of antiquity<sup>6</sup>, by secondary traditions, and by a common sense reading of the composition itself. As such, book titles rarely attract critical attention and are routinely dismissed as the misunderstandings of the second/third century church whose quest for a book's original address was well intended but simplistic.<sup>7</sup> Surely if book titles are accessed whether they contribute reliable historical markers of a composition's original address, they are deemed of little help.*

*We would argue, however, that an historian's approach to book titles is misplaced in two ways. In the first place, titles are not authorial properties at all and should not be approached as though they tell us something of a book's original address. They were attached by editors to texts*

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<sup>5</sup> I'm aware of the social science literature on the variegated problem of disaffection found among second generation Christians. Just ran out of time tracking and including this stuff in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> For example, H. Y. Gamble argues that titling the four canonical Gospels became necessary in response to the practical need of distinguishing between four different versions of a single Gospel so then to catalogue the four in congregational libraries and to order their use for liturgical readings; *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 153-54.

<sup>7</sup> See F. F. Bruce's discussion of the title, "To the Hebrews," as a viable if not vague entry point to his reconstruction of the letter's original address; *Hebrews*, pp. 3-9. Most commentators do not bother to discuss the title at all because it preempts a critical assessment of internal evidence that may lead to a plausible identity of the letter's addresses. The indeterminate nature of this quest of the letter's point of origin, which characterizes virtually every modern introduction to commentaries on Hebrews, may in fact commend a different approach that shifts readers away from speculations of a book's composition to refocus on its subsequent reception as scripture; see R. W. Wall, "The Canonical Approach," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (B. Stovell and S. E. Porter, eds., InterVarsity Press, 2012).

*during an early stage of their reception history when the text's enduring authority for subsequent generations was initially recognized by the church's episcopacy. Titling a book, then, is a phenomenon of the canonical process and may reveal something of the church's initial reception and intended role for a composition included in its biblical canon.*

Additionally, recent literary theory proposed by G. Genette has called attention to importance of those ancillary productions that surround a text even though not belonging to its main body. Genette calls these later additions, whether by the author or subsequent editors, the "paratext of the work."<sup>8</sup> These additions include the book's title and its precise placement within a larger textual field, as well as other literary conventions such as the author's name (whether real, a pseudonym, or anonym) and a preface or epilogue, all of which present the principal text in a manner that assures its reception and performance—its "transaction" with the reader as Genette calls it. He adds that the paratext of a work is typically modified to adapt the work to readers of a particular time and place to assure their transaction with the work will respond effectively to "differences of pressure."<sup>9</sup>

Following Genette's insight, then, I would argue the paratext that frames the church's "transaction" with Hebrews as scripture includes at a minimum its title, its anonymity, and its placement within the final redaction of the NT canon, and these productions were added during a postbiblical canonical process as I would argue, then the elements that constitute the paratext of Hebrews has a certain illocutionary force in clarifying the letter's role within the church's biblical canon for its current readers.<sup>10</sup> In addition, as properties of the canonical process, the importance of a book's paratext is not retrospective of its particular origins or of the communicative intentions of a particular author for a particular audience located in a particular social world at a particular moment in time. The effect of canonization (and so of each element of a book's paratext) was to universalize and globalize the intended audience. The interpretive act, then, is also transformed, evident in the history of a book's reception, to contemporize its meaning for its current readers. In this special sense, then, the title, "To the Hebrews," is affixed

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<sup>8</sup> G. Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991) 261. See a suggestive application of Genette's theory to the final placement of Hebrews within the NT canon by G. Goswell, "Finding a Home for the Letter to the Hebrews," *JETS* 59 (2016) 747-60.

<sup>9</sup> Genette, 262. This feature of a paratext shares with rabbinical midrash a vital concern to contemporize biblical texts for current readers. An approach to the book title, "To the Hebrews," as midrashic (see below), then, is apropos of its paratextual role. I would simply add that the paratext itself is a critical element of the canonical shaping of texts for inclusion in and continual use as the community's scripture.

<sup>10</sup> Some interpreters contend the final chapter of Hebrews, which differs from the rest of the letter in genre and idiom, was a secondary addition to the text perhaps by the author himself. The motive for doing so remains unclear and contested. Childs, for example, argues that this addition indicates a canonical shaping of a non-letter, adding a Pauline-like benediction so that Hebrews would fit more easily within the Pauline canon with which it circulated early in its reception history. Recent scholarship has dismissed this hypothesis, however, and virtually all recent interpreters accept the thirteen-chapter work as an integral whole. Not only is this conclusion secured by ms evidence but also by its rhetorical design. See C. Koester who considers Heb 12:28—13:21 as the conclusion or "peroration" of a public speech or homily, *Hebrews* (AB, Doubleday, 2001), 554-84.

to this ancient word of exhortation to continually encourage different communities of faithful readers who use Hebrews again and again to inspire their worship and catechesis to interpret and forge their lives and witness as disciples of Jesus within their respective time-zones.

We may suppose that when the book was titled, “To the Hebrews,” probably sometime late in the second century, Paul was viewed as its best candidate for apostolic authorship. Even though editors did not add Paul’s name to the letter’s address<sup>11</sup>, the title is shaped to correspond to the linguistic form of the titles of Paul’s canonical letters (see below). Especially since a Pauline canon would undoubtedly have already been in wide circulation by this time, the title’s implication of Pauline origins is puzzling, even apart from its anonymity, since nowhere in his canonical letters does Paul speak of a mission “to the Hebrews.” In fact, the Pastoral Epistles identifies him categorically as God’s appointed teacher of non-Hebrews (1 Tim 2:7; Titus 1:2-3).<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the reader may suppose, however, that among the canonical performances of the Book of Acts, especially if read as the NT’s introduction to the apostolic letters, is to delineate the borders of Paul’s mission as including Jews according to his commission by the risen Jesus (see Acts 9:15-16). One might speculate on this basis that perhaps the final placement of Hebrews in the NT at the tail-end of the Pauline collection intends to register this point: Paul’s personification of Israel’s vocation as a “light to the nations” is concentrated by a gospel message that the saving grace of Israel’s God is international. This conviction is surely thematic of the story of Paul in Acts. The canonical process merely reifies this theme by appending the Pauline corpus by adding Hebrews to it to correct the supersessionist impression shaped by reading the

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<sup>11</sup>Among the most persistent exegetical problems facing the interpreter of Hebrews is its anonymity. Considered as a paratextual property, the letter’s lack of authorial attribution—and one might even say the deliberate decision to retain its anonymity—may actually help clarify its function within the NT if the intent of doing so was to place the letter outside of the Pauline canonical collection (*contra* Childs). Especially if apostolic attribution (i.e., pseudonymity) was an accepted convention of the so-called “Pauline circle”—if, as most Pauline scholars suppose, Pauline attribution was added to several “disputed” Pauline letters for inclusion within the canonical corpus—the interpreter must ask why not then also add Paul’s name to Hebrews during the canonical process. In my view, leaving the author unknown is a deliberate decision of its canonization and perhaps may help explain its final location within the NT canon; cf. G. Gelardini, “‘As if by Paul?’: Some Remarks on the Textual Strategy of Anonymity in Hebrews” in I. W. Oliver and G. Boccaccini, eds., *The Early Reception of Paul the Second Temple Jew* (LSTS 92, T&T Clark, 2018) 267-86. I will return to this prospect later in this essay. In any case, I would allow that the doubt or even neglect this book has suffered during its reception history, especially in the West, is often due to a lack of clear apostolic attribution. In passing I would note that I am deeply suspicious of a line of reasoning that links authority with authorship and think the claim for a text’s apostolicity based upon its real author is fallacious. The claim of apostolicity to secure a book’s authority was registered because of its content and usefulness in forming the community’s faith and public witness. Hebrews in particular perhaps present a good case study in this fallacy of securing a text’s apostolic authority by historical reconstructions of authorship.

<sup>12</sup>In 1&2 Timothy and Titus (THCNT, Eerdmans, 2012), I argue that the late addition of the Pastoral Epistles to the Pauline corpus intended to perform a hermeneutical role by defining the terms of Paul’s apostolic tradition. Central to this role is the depiction of Paul as an apostle of singular importance whose missional vocation, now instantiated by his tradents, is to present the gospel to the nations/Gentiles. See the essay included in the present volume, pp. XX-XX.

*Pauline collection without Acts, which seems to present Paul's gospel as exclusively for non-Hebrews.*

*While many titles given to biblical writings seem perfunctory, some provide their readers with initial interpretive clues of a book's particular role or its relationship with other books within the biblical canon.<sup>13</sup> If we allow that a book's usefulness as scripture was first recognized by its congregational practice within catechetical, liturgical, or missional settings, the same may be inferred of its titles. Much like the superscriptions that were added to various Psalms to recall episodes from David's biblical narrative to contextualize their use in worship settings—an example of what Boyarin calls, "the intertextuality of midrash"—titles may also have been added to compositions or whole collections (e.g., "The Gospel") by later editors to guide their subsequent performances as scripture in worship and catechesis. Titles, then, are hermeneutical of a new setting where canonical compositions or collections are now used by the church catholic as sacred scripture to guide its mission, worship and catechesis for generation after generation of faithful readers.<sup>14</sup>*

*C. Koester follows the clear majority of interpreters when he concludes the title of Hebrews reflects a common sense reading of the letter's contents—its use of the synagogue's Bible (even if in Greek translation) and sustained commentary on the temple and its priestly practices.<sup>15</sup> This naturally leads exegetes to assume historical referents stand behind the Pastor's exhortations and Christological exposition; most proposals present, then, some version of the "back to Judaism" scenario with a "my gospel is better than yours" polemic in response. What should be said in this regard is that the historical record is silent about such an intention. Koester does allow, however, that "the Hebrews" may provide a more symbolic address of the letter's intended audience. He goes on to note the choice of "the Hebrews" may symbolize a community of pilgrims to a Greek-speaking audience, which he finally dismisses on the grounds that such an audience would be hard-pressed to recognize the wordplay.<sup>16</sup> But his criticism is based on linguistic grounds rather than the potential of "the Hebrews" as a midrashic device that recalls a particular biblical narrative in which the Hebrews played a central role as the antecedent text (or "co-text") for reading the letter within canonical context. I will return to this prospect below.*

*Apart from any other claim implied by a book's title, its literary form often placed it within a particular canonical collection, which when recognized as completed was added to the biblical canon with a particular role to perform within the whole. This observation is especially*

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<sup>13</sup> B. S. Childs introduced this essential insight of this phenomenon in his important study, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971) 137-50.

<sup>14</sup> In this regard, see R. W. Wall, "The Significance of a Canonical Perspective of the Church's Scripture," in *The Canon Debate* (L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, eds., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), pp. 535-38.

<sup>15</sup> See in particular E. Ayal's SBL paper, "Hebrews' Priestly Christology and the Understanding of the Death of Jesus: Taking the Temple Cult Seriously" who takes these references to temple and priesthood as literal, not figural descriptions of Judaism's principal institutions.

<sup>16</sup> Koester, 171-73.

decisive for a canonical approach to Luke and Acts, whose respective roles within scripture are cued in part by their different titles. On the one hand, Luke's title, *Kata Loukan*, locates its story of Jesus within the fourfold Gospel collection rather than as a continuous narrative of Christian beginnings with Acts as though a canonical Luke-Acts. On the other hand, the title added to Acts, *Praxeis Apostolōn*, refocuses the reader's attention from the signs and wonders of Jesus from Nazareth (Acts 2:22) to those of his apostles, which authenticates their spiritual authority as successors of the risen Lord.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, what finally emerged during the canonical process is an ordered anthology of canonized collections—an ordered collection of ordered collections—whose sequence intends to target the spiritual benefaction of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. We contend, then, that some book titles may actually cue more than a precise location within a canonical collection and also may evoke a canonical book's theological potential when performed by faithful congregations in worship and catechesis. Further, even though a title often reclaims the address given by the book itself, which is typical of Pauline letters, it often implicates an apostolic tradition thereby securing its authority for subsequent use. This canonical move seems especially important for the NT's other anonymous compositions (Gospels, Acts, 1-2-3 John). I would add this is true as well of the inscription, *Apocalypsis Iōnnou*, which actually relocates the attribution to "Jesus Christ" in its preface to an apostolic tradition founded by his beloved disciple.

Unlike the Pauline letters, however, the title, "To the Hebrews," is not cued by the letter's internal address. Nowhere within the book are its intended readers identified as "the Hebrews." In fact, the closest marker we have of this audience is registered in 2:3-4, where they are addressed as second generation recipients of a gospel first proclaimed by the Lord subsequently confirmed as God's word by the "signs and wonders" of the Spirit of Pentecost. Whether these recipients of this saving message are Jews or non-Jews, the text simply doesn't say. A second clue is provided by 10:32-34, which speaks of these new converts to Jesus as mistreated by others, which they accepted in confidence of a future with God. The Pastor's concluding focus on the community's leaders (13:7-17) may indicate that this intersection between conversion and subsequent suffering is exacerbated by their unwillingness to follow the spiritual direction of their leaders.

In light of book's own markers, however faint, criticism's lingering presumption that the title addresses disaffected "Hebrews" whose conversion from Judaism to Christ is threatened by unexpected suffering is hardly secured on evidence. The theological crisis addressed by the Pastor is more likely the sort of existential weariness that sometimes face the second generations of socially marginal religious movements even today. This crisis appears to be deepened by a realized soteriology that has mistaken their dramatic conversion to Jesus and its Pentecostal

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<sup>17</sup> See R. W. Wall, "A Canonical Approach to the Unity of Acts and Luke's Gospel" in *Rethinking the Reception and Unity of Luke-Acts* (A. Gregory and K. Rowe, eds. University of South Carolina Press, 2010) 172-91.

confirmation (2:3-4) as an exodus from sin “once for all,” which would bypass any subsequent experience of temptation and suffering before entering into the blessed “world to come” (2:5). As B. Lindars puts it, “nothing was said to them about post-baptismal sin; they simply assumed they would remain in a state of grace until the parousia.”<sup>18</sup> If this is the situation of the book’s intended readers, the title given it does not direct the Pastor’s “word of exhortation” (13:22) toward disaffected Jewish believers but because it addresses all believers who struggle to remain faithful to their confession of Christ and approach this scripture to hear a word from God on target.

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### Reception of the Wilderness Tradition in Hebrews

The question remains as Childs has sharply put it: how does the title, “To the Hebrews,” function to guide those Christians who practice this canonical letter as scripture in their worship and catechesis? Childs is surely correct that the theological problem occasioned by Hebrews regards the intertextual relationship between Israel’s prophetic/biblical word and its definitive interpretation in the apostolic witness to the incarnate One.<sup>19</sup> But he does nothing to explain how this title functions hermeneutically to cue this intertextuality and so a reception of Hebrews as scripture.

In my mind, however, Childs provides a way forward in his earlier study of the Psalter’s superscriptions as midrashic prompts that recall biblical stories of David to contextualize various Psalms for their subsequent performances as scripture in the community’s worship and catechesis. Childs’ insight may help us understand better the function of this letter’s title, especially to provide a canonical context to guide those believers who struggle to keep on the pathway to full salvation.

(1) If prospective of its use as scripture, then, I commend an approach to the title that understands, “To the Hebrews,” as midrashic of antecedent traditions, intended to recall the biblical narrative of “the Hebrews” as hermeneutical of the existential situation that continues to face every generation of the letter’s Christian readers. Put differently, “To the Hebrews” is the figural address of *any* community of readers who confess Jesus as their “apostle and high priest” (Heb 3:1).<sup>20</sup> The title is an evocation for

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<sup>18</sup> B. Lindars, *Hebrews*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> For a somewhat different (but not incompatible) response to this same question, see C. R. Seitz’s treatment of Hebrews’ use of the OT as Christian Scripture in, *The Character of Christian Scripture* (STI, Baker, 2011), 115-35. Seitz follows the lead of B. S. Childs’ programmatic treatment of Hebrews in its canonical (i.e., Pauline) setting in *New Testament as Canon*, pp. 400-18.

<sup>20</sup> For an excellent study of biblical Israel as a figuration of the church (and synagogue), see now F. A. Spina, “Israel as a Figure for the Church,” in *The Usefulness of Scripture* (Eisenbrauns, 2018), 3-23. Especially important is Spina’s trenchant rejection of the heresy of supersession, which is an implication of the close intersection of Judaism and Christianity as figurations of biblical Israel. His study could be extended to include Hebrews as a case study of this very point, thereby subverting the persistent use of

Christian readers to identify with Israel, not only with its biblical narrative but also with the theological grammar of God's covenant people who in "these last days" have been chastened by the apocalypse of God's incarnation in the historical Jesus and called to a life of faithfulness for their wilderness journey to the coming world (so Heb 1-2). In this broad sense, I agree with Childs that the OT's story of Israel continues to vocalize God's eternal word in a way that links old with new, Christianity with Judaism, in a way that derails any effort to move Christian theological freight along separate tracks of the divine economy, for "there is neither Jew nor Greek for all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28; cf. Eph 2:13-16).<sup>21</sup>

(2) I would argue the more particular episode of Israel's biblical narrative recalled by this title is the Exodus story—what Brueggemann calls the elemental, non-negotiable story that lies at the heart of Israel's faith. While "the Hebrews" may have reflected a mostly gentile (non-Jewish) church's preferred name for Jews when the letter was canonized by a community of gentiles, its evocative power when approached within its present canonical context recalls a moment when the naming of their God as "the God of the Hebrews" (Ex. 3:18) prepares Israel for its Exodus into the wilderness and beyond to the land God had promised Abraham and Sarah.<sup>22</sup>

While the word, "Hebrews," surely refers to God's elect people, it is used sparingly and strategically of Israel in the biblical narrative. Its general use in the OT (including 1 Sam and Jonah's opening declaration, "I am a Hebrew" [Jon 1:9]) would seem to underscore Israel's outsider status as justification for its abusive, derogatory treatment by more powerful pagan others.<sup>23</sup> More significantly, several uses of "Hebrew" in Genesis mark out a particular group and prepare readers for God's naming in Exodus as "the God of the Hebrews." The first use is of Abraham (Gen 14:13) in a context that seems to indicate his alien and nomadic status.<sup>24</sup> The subsequent uses of "Hebrew" in Genesis are more telling. The two people who call Joseph a "Hebrew"—Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:14, 17) and a member of Pharaoh's staff (Gen 40:12; cf. 43:32)—do so in a clearly derogatory manner: Joseph the Hebrew is an outsider who is glibly devalued and accused of wrong. While this negative connotation does not continue in

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Hebrews to secure various theologies that claim Christians have replaced "the Hebrews" in the economy of God's salvation. Of course, Childs's own "theological reflections" found throughout his magisterial commentary on Exodus (OTL, Westminster, 1974) provide examples of this kind of theological reading.

<sup>21</sup> B. S. Childs, *The NT as Canon*, pp. 414-15.

<sup>22</sup> The function of the genitive "of the Hebrews" is debated but probably expresses a special relationship between God and "the Hebrews" that should be privileged by outsiders (e.g., the Pharaoh).

<sup>23</sup> So J. LaGrand, *The Earliest Christian Mission to "All Nations" in the Light of Matthew's Gospel* (Eerdmans, 1999) 49-55; cf. M. Akers, "What's in a Name? An Examination of the Usage of the Term 'Hebrew' in the Old Testament," *JETS* 55 (2012) 685-96.

<sup>24</sup> The plausible linguistic connection between the word "Hebrew" and its Akkadian cognate, *'apiru*, which means "alien" or "migrant," is well-known. At its root, the word "Hebrew" refers to a people's status as aliens and strangers whose nomadic life put them on the margins of civil society.

the story of Moses, the use of “Hebrew” to classify the midwives who saved him for his future as elect Israel’s messiah locates them as members of an enslaved, oppressed people.

Repeatedly in the narrative that stages scripture’s pivotal story of Israel’s journey to its promised land, God encounters Moses with the name, “The God of the Hebrews” (Exod 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). While God’s initial revelation (3:18) is addressed to Moses and marks out a primary way in which Moses should confess God publicly, its repetition frames how Moses introduces God to an obdurate Pharaoh, who nonetheless responds by asking the right question: “Who is this whose voice I should listen to so that I send away the children of Israel?” (LXX Exod. 5:2).

The naming of God is not incidental but central to the Exodus tradition received in Exodus. To know the name of God is to know something of who God is (cf. Ex 33:19; 34:6-7). In this case, the Creator God of the universe has a privileged relationship with a particular, elect people. Moreover, the naming of “the God of the Hebrews” shapes the identity and worship of a people who belong to God while at the same time producing conflict with the Pharaoh, who personifies unrelenting, fierce opposition to God and God’s people. There is a sense in which this naming of God is a wake-up call for Pharaoh’s benefit: it intends to put him on notice that God not only plans to liberate the Hebrews from his death-dealing oppression but then to separate them for worship of a holy Creator God. The endgame of the Exodus is announced with dramatic irony as “as journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to our Lord God” (Exod 3:18). Because of the concentration of this witness to God’s naming as “God of the Hebrews” to frame the Exodus event, I would contend that we can’t read the title, “To the Hebrews,” without having the biblical narrative of the Exodus in mind. That’s the intertextuality of this title’s midrash.

This makes sense of the letter’s description of its audience’s social status in Heb 10:32-34 as well as mention of their “shame” in Heb 12:2-3 (cf. 13:13). Lincoln concludes, “From the perspective of the writer, the real question in regard to social humiliation, as in regard to physical persecution and possible martyrdom, is whose approval, judgement and reward ultimately count—those of God or those of humans.”<sup>25</sup> This could be said of the occasion facing the enslaved Hebrews as they prepared for their journey to the land God had promised their ancestors.

(3) I would argue that more important than recognition of the title’s address “To the Hebrews” as allusive of the church’s identification with Israel’s marginal social status is its use in the Exodus narrative as harbinger of God’s plan to deliver the chosen Hebrews from their oppressive slavery for a future land of promised blessings. That is, the title, “To the Hebrews,” alludes to God’s initial self-presentation to Moses as “God of the Hebrews,” which provides a decisive theological claim that interprets the entire

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<sup>25</sup> A. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (T&T Clark, 2006) 56.

Exodus narrative as the liberation of an oppressed people from their slavery to an evil, death-dealing power for a blessed future with a faithful God. It is this theological marker that introduces and frames the Sinai revelation. I would contend that this same “transaction” (as Genette might call it) stipulates the canonical context for reading the Pastor’s word of exhortation as scripture. Sharply put, the letter of Hebrews is read as a Christian commentary on the biblical story of Exodus.

An additional comment in this regard. God’s self-presentation to Moses specifically indicates this Exodus event as a deliverance from Egyptian oppression for a three-day journey into the wilderness for a season of worship. This study will concentrate on the wilderness as the in-between place of Israel’s journey from slavery in a land not their own to salvation in a promised land God gifts to them. Despite what else we may think of the “wilderness,” it is the liminal place that Israel necessarily must pass through in order to receive the blessings promised to them. What happens there, whether to worship the Lord, the God of Hebrews, or another god made of gold in the image of a calf, is the necessary means to a hoped for end. What also seems true is that the Exodus—and a wilderness sojourn central to it—is God’s *elected* means of fulfilling the promise of land to Sarah and Abraham.

(4) Modern criticism has succeeded in reconstructing in general terms the changing historical contingencies, independent sources, diverse literary genre, and different theological traditions that helped shape the final redaction of the Pentateuch.<sup>26</sup> Various interpretive methods especially borrowed from the social sciences have helped us understand the reception history of this material not only in the synagogue but in the NT writings and then subsequently in the church as scripture. Nonetheless, the theological function of this narrative is to make clear the constitutive elements of Israel’s faith and life. It is in the mess and muck of the desert, where a Hebrew people’s allegiance to their God is tested in this place where their lack everything material.

Two observations may prove useful in framing how the Pentateuch’s wilderness story was appropriated by the Pastor in his word of exhortation “to the Hebrews.” First, two different interpretations of Israel’s wilderness tradition are evident in this material. Both interpretations conceive of the wilderness as a place of danger and spiritual testing. WB calls wilderness a place of lifeless chaos. It is, in his phrase, “a land without promise, without hope, where no newness can come.”<sup>27</sup> Simply put, it is a place where

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<sup>26</sup> I am well aware of the various ways in which the story of Moses in the Pentateuch has been deconstructed, especially since M. Noth’s *History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (1981). Some proposals focus on moments of transition in the narrative, especially between first and second generations, as decisive in the telling of this story (D. Olson, R. Knierim). The plotline is constructed by a conflict between the first generation who disobeys God (Num) and a second generation who instantiate God’s forgiveness (Deut). In any case, what seems clear to me is the elevated importance of “the second generation”—the wilderness generation—in the Exodus typology of salvation.

<sup>27</sup> W. Brueggemann, *The Land* (Second Edition, Fortress, 2002), p. 28.

choices of loyalty to the “God of the Hebrews” who delivered them from past evil is called for but where present evils make such a choice hard.

On the one hand, the wilderness stages a “murmuring” community’s protest movement against God and the leaders God has sanctified. This is the exodus (i.e., first) generation of the Hebrews whose persistent grumbling responds to hardship and suffering of a newly found freedom for which they were unprepared. The images of God characterize an angry God’s response to unfaithful, ungrateful Israel. There is no better episode that illustrates this tradition than the story of the Golden Calf, Israel’s “original sin.” The subtext of this storyline is framed by its juxtaposition with the songs of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 who celebrate in song and dance the community’s exodus from Egypt and expectation of life in a promised land of plenty. What isn’t part of their version of Israel’s post-Exodus life—even as it wasn’t a part of its earliest creed—is a wilderness that lacked everything they had come to expect of a future with God and it took them by surprise.

On the other hand, the wilderness is also a place where discloses God’s responsive grace in the gifts of provision and presence for a people in constant need of goods for their journey to promised land. The central character of this tradition is Israel’s covenant-keeping God who promised Sarah and Abraham a homeland for their future family and who providentially keeps the promise and whose acts are characterized by the Pastor’s apt phrase, “with well-timed mercy” (Heb 4:16b). Though they lacked resources, God’s provision resulted in a covenanted people who “lacked nothing.”

Perhaps for comic relief, the inclination of Israel is to save and store what meat and bread of God’s daily provision goes uneaten, only to find it unfit to consume the next morning. That is, God’s provision is precisely regulated to a community’s existential need. In any case, I take it that the people who are primary beneficiaries of God’s well-timed mercy are the wilderness (i.e., second) generation; the current wilderness generation are those the Pastor has in mind when writing Hebrews.

A second observation I would make of this Pentateuchal tradition is concentrated by the rabbi’s well-known phrase that the synagogue’s Torah consists of “five-fifths” of its whole.<sup>28</sup> While this shibboleth recognizes the discrete literary nature of its five books, God’s people receives them for worship and catechesis as a fivefold, interdependent whole (much like the fourfold Gospel, Torah’s NT parallel). Almost surely, the reception of the Pentateuch in Hebrews—the Pastor doubtless received the LXX Torah written on a single scroll as was typical of its production in the Diaspora—is as a whole consisting of five interdependent parts.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For a clever commentary of this idea of Torah, see R. Alter’s introduction to his *The Five Books of Moses* (Norton, 2004), ix-xvi.

<sup>29</sup> J. A. Sanders, *Torah as Canon* (Fortress, 1972).

The importance of this observation when applied to an analysis of the complex literary architecture of Hebrews is a reconsideration of the relationship between its discrete units. Almost all the book's commentators, ancient and modern, arrange these units in a way that separates the exposition of the community's wilderness sojourn (cf. Heb 3:1—4:16) from the expositions of Christ's high priestly ministry, its location in the heavenly temple, and its relationship with the new covenant (cf. Heb 5:1—11:40). However, if these themes—covenant, law, temple, priesthood, sacrifice—are all received and read as elements of a single desert tradition, Pastor's exhortation has a coherence that it otherwise doesn't. Christ's priestly ministry, past, present, and future, is an integral part of sustaining a wilderness people on their journey into the covenant blessings promised them by God (cf. Heb 12:1-29).

(5) The special role Deuteronomy performs in transmitting the wilderness tradition needs comment, especially because of Deuteronomy's allusive role in Hebrews. The Pastor's appeal to LXX Ps 94:7b-11 to provide God's commentary on Torah's wilderness narrative (Heb 3-4) rereads the prior narrative through the lens of the Deuteronomist: what is crucial is the community's covenant-keeping response to God's revelatory word (= Torah), which brings God's promised blessing rather than curse.<sup>30</sup> This point is scored as an exhortation to a people not yet in the promised land. The genre differences between Deuteronomy and Exodus/Numbers is important to note. Like Hebrews, Deuteronomy is a word of exhortation, not a story. What is made clear in the use of Moses's exhortation in Josiah's renewal movement 700 years later is that the desert is the place where Israel's identity, its covenant with God and the Torah that guides it are disclosed. The wilderness sojourn is not forgotten in any revival meeting precisely because this is where the motives and plotline of covenant renewal are made clear. First, the character of a people in need of renewal is made clear by the rebellion of a people who have quickly forgotten their experience of liberation. Second, the character of their God who renews is made clear by God's persistent presence and by the well-timed mercy of God's provisions—so that God's elect people who once lacked everything now lacked nothing. The wilderness narrative (Deut 29:16-29) is God's word brought near (Deut 30:1-14; cf. Rom 10:5-13!).

Regarding the Pastor's use of Ps 94, besides the centrality of obedience to God's word, which is thematic of Hebrews (cf. Heb 4:11-13), the Psalmist's reception of the wilderness narrative (esp the tradition found in Num 14) adds two elements to the wilderness tradition that the Pastor exploits. First, is the idea that the destiny of the wilderness journey is entering into God's "rest"—a creational idea (cf. Gen 2:1-3; Heb

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<sup>30</sup> The intertextual relationship between Hebrews and Deuteronomy is critical to the letter's exegesis. The Deuteronomist's commentary on the Exodus—Israel's journey to Canaan—is viewed as exemplary of the community's future life with God in the land; see D. M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews* (WUNT 238, Mohr-Siebeck, 2008) for an expansive treatment of this intertext.

4:2-6) that may allude to the prospect of a new creation as the community's future inheritance (cf. Heb 12:27-28). The Pastor reinterprets the Psalm's "rest" as a future "sabbath rest," which is realized by Jesus since the first "Jesus" (= Joshua) entered a "rest" that did not endure.

Second, and perhaps more critically, the Psalm dates the choice Israel must make in obeying God's word as "today." Both spatial and temporal aspects of the wilderness are tropes of Christian existence. The wilderness is sacred space in which believers make their way to new creation. It is a place where the community's faith is tested and challenged daily—as long as it is "today" (i.e., any day of "these last days" prior to the coming victory of God in the "coming world").

(6) In my view, then, the title cues the Pastor's Pentateuchal-shaped conception of Christian discipleship in his "word of exhortation" that not only concentrates readers on the biblical story of Israel's wandering in the wilderness but does so in a way that integrates both traditions into this book's dialectical design. Simply put, the Christological exposition throughout Hebrews emphasizes the provisions of the exalted Son who "pioneers" and pastors his church through the temptations and hardships of the wilderness of this present age into the world to come. Especially in the opening, programmatic portion of the letter (1:4—4:16), disciples are addressed the current wilderness generation; they are the people who belong to "the God of the Hebrews" who is incarnate in the Son.<sup>31</sup> The Pastor's exhortations in dialogue with this exposition trade on the Pentateuch's narrative of spiritual failure in which the exodus generation failed God because they could not endure their suffering and gave into their temptation to refuse God's covenant and return to Egypt.

The integration of the two wilderness narratives in the final form of the canonical story places a keen emphasis on the existential conflict that characterizes Christian discipleship. Surely it is impossible to describe the post-baptism state of Christian existence in ways that promise to converts a life without suffering and temptation as though one's exodus from death and sin prompts an immediate leap into the blessings promised by God. Discipleship is marked by a constant struggle to remain faithful to God, provoked in part by an aggressively hostile world. Allusions to the Golden Calf story are never far from the hortatory sections of Hebrews and its implicit warning to the wilderness generation not to follow the example of the exodus generation.

Trading on the wilderness narrative, the Pastor locates his highly creative commentaries on the priesthood, the temple, and the covenant as theological constructions of God's provision. Virtually every proposal of Hebrews' rhetorical design separates out these different expositions from the opening exposition of the wilderness generation and exhortation to remain faithful to the Christian confession in the midst of temptation and suffering. This misses the integral nature of the

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<sup>31</sup> The images of a "second generation" abound in Hebrews beginning with 2:3-4.

Pentateuch's wilderness narrative, which introduces these resources as part of God's Sinai theophany.

In passing I would contrast Paul (in 1 Cor 10:1-13) and the Pastor's reuse of the wilderness traditions as one example of how similarly and differently the Pastor appropriates biblical traditions he shared with Paul.<sup>32</sup> In both letters, the analogy to the Pentateuch's wilderness tradition lies in the possible failure of Christian readers to understand and apply a biblical theology of grace freighted by scripture's story of Israel's Exodus. In the case of 1 Cor, the intended audience is worldly and conflicted. The warning issued by the Apostle is very real. In the case of Hebrews, there is no indication the intended audience is "worldly" or that its primary struggle is to retain its faith. The threat is a theologically immature and easily distorted understanding of what they confess as Christians to be true. Additionally, while Paul argues the effect of Christ's death frees believers from sin to be instruments of righteousness (= moral rectitude), the application of God's grace in Christ does not provide cover for a free-wheeling discipleship, which in particular allows for conflict between believers from different social classes. Paul's concern is with a graced people's practice of grace toward others. The Pastor's warning seems more confessional than ethical. The worry is rather a puny Christology that may in turn shape a distorted or disaffected discipleship if a rigorous catechesis is not enjoined (Heb 5:11—6:12).

Finally, while the priestly Christology of Hebrews looks backwards to the Cross in ways similar to Paul's theology of the Cross, the Pastor's primary emphasis is on the present ministry of the exalted Son whose priestly practices of mercy and faith target struggling believers of the wilderness. He is the presence of a faithful God who constantly provided necessary goods for the wilderness generation to enable their journey to their promised inheritance. The centrality of the present ministry of the living Jesus in Hebrews reads differently from Paul's apocalyptic Christology. It may well be the case that Pauline pneumatology covers this base in contrast to the Pastor's pneumatology, which is quite thin.

(7) *Optional reading: The text used by the Pastor who wrote Hebrews to shape his conception of discipleship is one particular version of the LXX. Susan Docherty's study of the biblical quotations of Hebrews concludes not only that he has reproduced his scriptural citations accurately without theological tampering but used a variant of the LXX without recourse to other versions (Greek or Hebrew) at his disposal.<sup>33</sup> Docherty supposes his variant is simply the one and only scripture in play within the authorial community. This surely comes into play, for*

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. C. S. Works, *The Church in the Wilderness: Paul's use of Exodus Traditions in 1 Corinthians* (WUNT 2/379, Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> S. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT 260, Mohr-Siebeck, 2009).

example, in the Pastor's use of LXX Ps 39 in Hebrews 10, where the Greek variant translates Ps 39:7, Θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἡθέλησας, σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι, changing the Hebrew word for "ears," **מַעֲנָה**, for σῶμα in a midrash that concludes saints are made holy through the bodily sacrifice of Jesus Christ "once for all" (Heb 10:12).

We all recognize the massively complicated textual and social histories of the LXX, the axiom holds that no translation envisages a purely pragmatic or philological sensibility and so a translator's choices typically communicate her theological or ideological preferences. For many readers, Hebrews 10 evinces a "hermeneutical problem" precisely because the author uses the OG Psalm 39 rather than the MT Psalm 40 to score his Christological point and so to secure a related interest in a manner of Christian existence that embodies holiness. The problem is more than a practical one, of course, having to do with the decision to make the MT our canonical first testament rather than the OG, a decision which then is put at odds in Hebrews 10. It has also to do with our theology of Scripture whose nature as a divinely inspired text is related to its production. That is, the inspired author of the MT Ps 40 conflicts with the inspired author of Hebrews 10 over whether to use an ear or a body when speaking of Messiah.

### Reception of the Wilderness Tradition in Wesley: a Précis

In his preface to the bicentennial collection, A. Outler claims his arrangement of Wesley's (JW's) canonical sermons envisages "JW's own sense of their proper order" (1:ix). Whilst admitting there is no normative ordering of these sermons, he allows that their sequence instantiates a theo-logic superior to any chronological or thematic pattern since his sermons set out JW's grammar of faith. According to Outler's ordering, one observes the standard sermon on "New Birth" (#39) is followed by the pair of sermons on "The Wilderness State" (#40) and "Manifold Temptations" (#41). The deep logic of this triad is that the convert's experience of new birth not only transforms the whole of human existence as the gateway into full salvation but also into a competing kind of religious experience Wesley calls, trading on 1 Peter's, a *Leidenstheologie*, "a heaviness of manifold temptation." Such a testing of the newly converted sometimes occasions spiritual failure, shrouded in a "second darkness" of the soul, which threatens the gains of trusting Christ and the Spirit's transformative distributions at NB. I would argue that for both Wesley and the Pastor a "wilderness experience" is constitutive of the reborn life and a necessary testing ground of "real Christians." While also in his *Notes* and sermons, JW argues that the real Christian doesn't stay in this wilderness state for long if at all, nonetheless NB occasions a spiritual struggle that is elemental of a Wesleyan typology of conversion—a struggle whose effect is to provoke a decisive and persistent choice for Christ that marks out the narrow way of salvation.

This spiritual crisis, more vividly drawn in "Wilderness State" than in "Manifold Temptations," follows the new believer immediately after the exodus from sin into a wilderness *stasis* of temptation and torment—a radically different kind of Christian

experience than the bliss of promised rest. This I take is an element of JW's normative typology of conversion, rooted in his own experience, that the newly converted will experience temptation and inward torment to test their spiritual mettle. What more can be said, I think, is that the very prospect of entering a "second darkness" is the peculiar experience of the regenerated occasioned by new birth and should be considered an element of it.

In no way do I wish to qualify the gains made for a Wesleyan soteriology by JW's treatment of NB as a discrete operation of divine grace. Yet his own experience following Aldersgate, recorded in the Journal, suggest the kind of spiritual ambivalence reflected in the triad of canonical sermons on New Birth and the experience of a "second darkness" that follows. What I have tried to show in this paper is the usefulness of Hebrews in offering a pastoral response to those believers—and our congregations are filled with them—who struggle to remain faithful and hopeful in the face of "manifold temptations" occasioned by hardship, heartbreak, headaches of one kind or another. Unlike his Reformed colleagues, then, JW understood that justification by faith and its regenerative effects occasioned a discrete crisis of faith that presents the need for a subsequent decision whether to work out of the "great privilege of being born of God" on the way to holiness and heaven. To apostatize Christ, to reject the joy of his Spirit, to lose all assurance of forgiveness, and to fall back into sin is the real possibility that leads the believer back into spiritual darkness and death. In my mind, this triad of Wesley sermons commends this fuller typology of new birth that describes regeneration as a gateway into either spiritual rest or relapse.<sup>34</sup>

It strikes me that a Wesleyan soteriology is often debated by outsiders in a similar way: whether we teach that salvation can be lost, under what conditions, and with what relative ease. This continues to attract the attention of my Reformed students who consider me a liberal because I allow some wiggle room on the question. Let's be clear that this particular theodicy does not focus readers on a lost salvation but rather urges us to press what the Preacher allows is God's deepest desire "to realize the full assurance of hope until the end" (Heb. 6:11).

JW's handwringing about the believer's wilderness existence is concerned mostly with two losses gained in New Birth: **the loss of steady faith in Christ** and so also of love; and **the loss of the holy Spirit** and so also of power over sinning. Accepting this as a target in a Wesleyan theological interpretation of Hebrews for the spiritual renewal of a wilderness generation, the Pastor's dialectic between Christological exposition and

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<sup>34</sup> JW is more specific than the Preacher regarding the nature of these manifold temptations (however, see 10:32-24). This triad of sermons catalogues various sicknesses, sins, and theological ignorances caused by various inward dispositions such as willful laziness or inattentiveness. What Hebrews contributes in turn are normative patterns of communal practices that guard against the spiritual retreat into a "second darkness" and enable a people's perseverance in holiness to heaven (e.g., Heb. 10:19-25).

exhortations of covenant-keeping discipleship might be mined as a biblical source for two practices of the renewal of a disaffected wilderness generation. Most importantly (by far!), Hebrews offers readers the NT's most robust curriculum of Christological catechesis (see Heb 5:11–6:12); and it suggests Spirit-led practices of a holy life “without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See J. Levison, “A Theology of the Spirit in the Letter of Hebrews,” *CBQ* 78 (2016) 90-110. I’ve suggested what this curriculum might include and what that practice might look like at ground level in my unpublished paper on “New Birth in Hebrews,” WTS annual meeting at PLNU, March, 2015.