

5.4 Analysis of Heb 12:14-29

5.4.1 The internal structure of Heb 12:14-29

5.4.1.1 Colon analysis

v. c.

- 14 1 Εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὸν ἁγιασμόν,
 οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον,
- 15 ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ
 xxxxxxxxxx θεοῦ,
 "μὴ τις ρίζα πικρίας ἄνω φύουσα ἐνοχλή"
 xxxxxxxx καὶ δι' αὐτῆς μιανθώσιν πολλοί,
- A 16 μὴ τις πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος ὡς Ἡσαΐ,
 ὃς ἀντὶ βρώσεως μιᾶς ἀπέδετο τὰ
 πρωτοτόκια ἑαυτοῦ.
- 17 2 ἴστε γὰρ ὅτι καὶ μετέπειτα θέλων κληρονομήσαι τὴν
εὐλογίαν ἀπεδοκιμάσθη,
- 3 μετανοίας γὰρ τόπον οὐχ εὔρεν
 καίπερ μετὰ δακρύων ἐκζητήσας αὐτήν.

- 18 4 Οὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε ψηλαφωμένῳ καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ καὶ
γνόφῳ καὶ ζόφῳ καὶ θυέλλῃ
- 19 καὶ σάλπιγγος ἤχῳ καὶ φωνῇ ῥημάτων,
 ἧς οἱ ἀκούσαντες παρητήσαντο μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς
λόγον,
- 20 5 οὐκ ἔφερον γὰρ τὸ διαστελλόμενον·
- 6 κἂν θηρίον θίγῃ τοῦ ὄρους,
λιθοβοληθήσεται·
- 21 7 καί, οὕτω φοβερὸν ἦν τὸ φανταζόμενον,
 Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν·
 8 "Ἐκφοβὸς εἶμι" καὶ ἔντρομος.

- B
- 22 9 ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε Σιὼν ὄρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος,
Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ, καὶ μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει
 23 καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ
 24 κριτῇ θεῷ πάντων καὶ πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων
 καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ καὶ αἱματι ῥαντισμοῦ
 κρείττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἄβελ.

- 25 10 Βλέπετε μὴ παραιτήσησθε τὸν λαλοῦντα.
 11 εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι οὐκ ἐξέφυγον
 ἐπὶ γῆς παραιτησάμενοι τὸν χρηματίζοντα,
 πολὺ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς οἱ τὸν ἀπ' οὐρανῶν ἀποστρεφόμενοι,
- 26 12 οὐ ἡ φωνὴ τὴν γῆν ἐσάλευσεν τότε,
 13 νῦν δὲ ἐπήγγελλται λέγων.
- 13.1 "ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σείσω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν
 οὐρανόν."
 Α' 27 14 τὸ δὲ "ἔτι ἅπαξ" δηλοῖ [τὴν] τῶν σαλευομένων μετὰθεσιν
 ὡς πεπονημένων,
 ἵνα μείνη τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα.
- 28 15 Διὸ βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον παραλαμβάνοντες
ἔχωμεν χάριν,
- 16 δι' ἧς λατρεύωμεν εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ
δέους.
- 29 17 καὶ γὰρ "ὁ θεὸς" ἡμῶν "πῦρ καταναλίσκον."

Although colon 12 begins with a relative pronoun, it is treated as a separate colon because semantically it contains additional information. The same applies to colon 16.

Colons 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, and 17 are connected to the preceding colons by γὰρ. They are treated as separate colons because γὰρ is in these instances a "co-ordinating conjunction" (Blass 1961, 235) although it contains a motivation.

5.4.1.2 Explication of internal structure

As indicated above by the thematic markers introduced into the Greek text, we can find eight semantic slots in Heb 12:14-29:

1. The markers (_____) indicating that God speaks.

2. The markers (, , , , , , , , , ,) indicating formally the contrast between the old and new covenant.
3. The markers (c c c c c c c c c c) indicating the contrast between the old and new covenant in terms of "earthly" and "heavenly."
4. The markers (□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □) indicating the contrast between the old and new covenant in terms of "shakable" and "unshakable."
5. The markers (x x x x x x x x) indicating the need for watchfulness on the part of the readers.
6. The markers (_____) indicating what the readers need to be watchful for (the wrong responses and the consequent bad results) in view of the contrast between the old and new covenant.
7. The markers (~~~~~) indicating what the readers need to be reminded of and be urged to do (the good benefits made available by the new covenant and the following proper responses) in view of the contrast between the old and new covenants.
8. The markers (_ _ _ _) indicating that God is to be feared.

The first semantic slot consists of the words related to God's "speaking" (λαλέω in v. 25) in both old and new dispensations. In the old dispensation on Mt. Sinai God used "such 'a voice speaking words' (φωνή ῥημάτων)¹ that those who heard it begged that no further 'word' (λόγος) be 'spoken' (προστίθημι) to them, because they could not bear 'what was

¹ Cf. ἡ φωνή in v. 26.

commanded' (*τὸ διαστελλόμενον*)" (vv. 19-20). In v. 25 it is described that God "warned" (*χρηματίζω*) them on earth when he spoke on Mt. Sinai. In the new dispensation God continues to "speak" (*λαλέω*) through his Son (cf. 1:1-2) and the blood of his Son (v. 24).² This time the readers are urged not to turn away from "him who warns from heaven" (*τὸν [χρηματίζοντα] ἀπ' οὐρανῶν*). Even if God's speaking is still called a warning, it can also be called a promise (*ἐπαγγέλλομαι λέγων*) because it will make possible for the readers to receive the unshakable kingdom (v. 28; cf. 1:8).

As already made obvious in the discussion of the first semantic slot, the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant pervades the whole passage. Specifically it is formally expressed by *οὐ προσεληλύθατε ... ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε*. The main source of the contrast lies in the difference between the mediators (Moses and Jesus). In v. 26 the same contrast is expressed in temporal terms (*τότε ... νῦν*). The added dimension of the heaven (*οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν*) gives the new covenant a contrasting characteristic to the old covenant. Here the "heaven" (*οὐρανός*) seems to refer simply to the higher part of the created universe. Thus the earth and the heaven together represent "created things" (*πεποιμένων*) as explained in v. 27.

The third semantic slot well shows the contrast between the two covenants in terms of earth and heaven. But this time the earth represents the palpable and created order while the heaven represents the eternal and eschatological order. Words

² Cf. 7:11-10:18.

such as ψηλαφάω (v. 18), θιγγάνω (v. 20), φαντάζω (v. 21), σαλεύω (v. 27), and ποιέω (v. 27) are used to describe the former order which is expressed by γῆ (colons 11, 12) or by both γῆ and οὐρανός (colon 13.1). The latter order is related to words such as ἐπουράνιος (v. 22), οὐρανός (vv. 23, 25), or ἀσάλευτος (v. 28).

The fourth semantic slot expands on the contrasting element of "shakable" and "unshakable." The verbs σαλεύω (v. 26, 27) and σείω (v. 26) are used to describe "shaking," and the "unshakable" which "remains" (μένω) is described by ἀσάλευτος (v. 28).

The fifth semantic slot indicates that the following clauses are warnings to the readers (ἐπισκοπέω in v. 15 and βλέπω in v. 25). The author wants the readers to avoid the wrong responses or the consequent bad results (the sixth semantic slot), which are expressed by three μὴ τις clauses (vv. 15-16) and a μὴ clause (v. 25). The wrong responses are: allowing themselves to be "defiled" (μιαίνω) by any bitter root or being "sexually immoral" (πόρνος) or "godless" (βέβηλος) like Esau (in other words, selling "the inheritance rights as the oldest son" (τὰ πρωτοτόκια).³ In v. 25 these wrong responses are described as "refusing" (παραιτέομαι) God who speaks, or "turning away" (ἀποστρέφομαι)⁴ from God. The consequent catastrophic results are to "miss" (ὑστερέω)⁵ the grace of God, to be "rejected" (ἀποδοκιμάζω), or to "find no

³ Cf. πρωτότοκος in v. 23.

⁴ Cf. "shrinking back" in 10:38-39.

⁵ Cf. 4:1.

opportunity to repent" (μετανοίας τύπον οὐχ εὐρεῖν).

The seventh semantic slot indicates the good benefits made available by the new covenant and the required proper responses corresponding to all those privileges. This semantic slot describes exactly what the author wants the readers to enjoy and how he wants them to respond. If the readers respond properly to the new covenant made available through Christ's sacrifice, they will "see" (ὁράω) the Lord (v. 14)⁶ or "inherit" (κληρονομέω) the blessing (v. 17). This is expressed in v. 28 as "receiving" (παραλαμβάνω) the unshakable "kingdom" (βασιλεία).⁷ The proper response to these privileges is to pursue peace with all men and sanctification, which are also the active means to avoid the wrong responses and the bad results expressed by the sixth semantic slot. In v. 28 this response is described as "giving thanks" (ἔχω χάριν)⁸ to God and worshipping him acceptably with reverence and awe.

The eighth semantic slot describes the need to fear God. Vv. 18-21 are full of descriptions invoking fear of God such as the description of Mt. Sinai in vv. 18-19, the commandment to kill by stoning (λιθοβολέω), and the words φοβερός, ἔκφοβος and ἔντρομος. Despite all the differences between the old and new covenants, this need to fear God remains a constant element applying to both the old and new covenant peoples. The new covenant people also approaches God as the "judge" (κριτής). God may still be described as "a consuming fire" (πῦρ

⁶ Cf. προσεληλύθατε ... θεῷ in vv. 22-23.

⁷ Cf. πόλις in v. 22.

⁸ Cf. χάρις in v. 15.

καταναλίσκον).⁹ Surely he must be worshipped "with reverence and awe" (μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους).

Considering that vv. 18-24 is a well-defined smaller section contrasting the old covenant and the new covenant (οὐ προσεληλύθατε ... ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε ...), Heb 12:14-29 can be divided into three sections. The encouragement of the central section, that we have arrived at the goal at least proleptically in Christian worship, gives the motivation for the exhortations which frame the central section. It is observed by Lane (1991b, 446) that this structure "is parallel in composition to 12:1-13." The following diagram shows this parallelism:

| | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|------------------------|
| | 12:1-13 | | 12:14-29 |
| A | Exhortation (12:1-3) | A | Exhortation (12:14-17) |
| B | Exposition (12:4-11) | B | Exposition (12:18-24) |
| A' | Exhortation (12:12-13) | A' | Exhortation (12:25-29) |

Again in both exhortations the concern of the author for the readers, which may reflect the situation of the readers, is expressed by similar negative phrases ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ τις ... μὴ τις ... μὴ τις and βλέπετε μὴ.¹⁰ The difference is that in 12:14-29 the concern of the author becomes broader than in 12:1-13. As Lane rightly notes, "the focus shifts from the response of the community as it experiences sufferings to the peril of rejecting the God who continues to speak to the church through his Son and through the Scriptures" (1991b, 445).

The logic of the argument flows as follows:

1. God speaks in both the old and new covenants, but he

⁹ Cf. πῦρ in v. 18.

¹⁰ Cf. ἵνα μὴ in vv. 3, 13.

speaks differently in the new covenant than in the old covenant (shown by marker 1).

2. Therefore, the readers must progress in holiness instead of regressing (shown by marker 7).¹¹

3. They must see to it that they do not regress and refuse God who speaks (shown by marker 5), because if they do, the result will be catastrophic. They will be rejected by God and will not see the Lord (shown by marker 6).

4. But they have enough reason to progress with perseverance rather than to regress because they have come to the Mt. Zion, the city of the living God at least proleptically in the christian worship.

5. This privilege of access to Mt. Zion is in contrast to the previous access to the Mt. Sinai (shown by markers 2, 3 and 4) where fear is a prevailing element (shown by marker 8).

6. However, the eschatological shaking which will establish the unshakable kingdom (even though the readers enjoy it proleptically in worship) is still in the future. Therefore, the element of fear is yet to be taken into consideration (shown by marker 8). Especially the privileged status of the new covenant people calls for further responsibility and, consequently, severe warning.

7. Thus, the progress in holiness without which the readers cannot see the Lord must be expressed in thanksgiving and God-pleasing worship (shown by marker 7), but still with reverence and awe (shown by marker 8).

¹¹ This is from Theron's subtitle on Heb 12:14-17: "Warning to progress in holiness and not to regress" (1984, 210).

In the light of the discussion above, we can formulate the theme of this passage as follows: "God has spoken in both covenants, but differently. While the old covenant is characterized by fear and natural phenomena, the new covenant is characterized by festive joy and personal members of that festive gathering. The privilege of participating in the heavenly Jerusalem proleptically in worship not only gives a motivation to progress in holiness with perseverance, but also is accompanied by greater responsibility. Only when we do not refuse God who speaks, will we receive the unshakable kingdom. As a new covenant community we must give thanks and worship God acceptably because this unshakable kingdom is a present reality."

5.4.2 Exegetical remarks

5.4.2.1 Heb 12:14-17

This section tries to persuade the readers to persevere in their faith-race by emphasizing the irrevocability of the loss incurred when they regress. This irrevocable loss is well illustrated in the case of Esau.¹² The readers must be careful not to throw away their "inheritance rights" (*τὰ πρωτοτόκια*) as Esau did, but to "inherit" (*κληρονομέω*) that blessing. The motivation for this warning is given in the next section (vv. 18-24), which underscores the privileged status of the new covenant people by contrasting the new covenant to the old. The fact that a greater responsibility is required, corresponding

¹² Cf. similar warnings already given in 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31.

to the greater privilege, leads to the closing appeal (vv. 25-29) not to refuse God who speaks, but to respond properly by being thankful and worshipping God acceptably with reverence and awe.

As already pointed out, the exhortation to pursue "peace" (*εἰρήνη*) in v. 14 recalls a characteristic element of the fruit of God's discipline in v. 11.¹³ This peace "with all" (*μετὰ πάντων*)¹⁴ seems to refer to peace with all members of the community. "As the particular injunctions of 13:1-3, 7, 16-17 indicate, Hebrews is calling primarily for inner-communal harmony" (Attridge 1989, 367). Of course, this assumes that chap. 13 is an integral part of Hebrews and continues the communal aspect of the readers' faith-race. Eschatological fruit of peace must be first realized as peace among all the members of the community. This concern for the whole community without exception is further indicated by the use of "no one" (*οὐδεὶς*) or "lest there be any" (*μὴ τις*).¹⁵

Not only peace with all but also "sanctification" or "holiness" (*ἀγιασμός*) are the objects to be pursued. This object of sanctification was already intimated by the goal of sharing in God's "holiness" (*ἀγιότης*) in v. 10. As much as participation in God's holiness is the ultimate goal of the divine discipline, the process of sanctification must be begun and practically worked out within the community.

"Seeing" (*ὁρᾶω*) the Lord is thought to be possible either

¹³ Cf. *εἰρήνη* in 7:2; 11:31; 13:20.

¹⁴ Cf. Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13.

¹⁵ Note the threefold repetition of *μὴ τις*.

in the cult or in the eschatological manifestation. Here the Lord seems to be God, not Christ. The reference is ambiguous, but this ambiguity is insignificant since the readers approach both God (v. 23) and Christ (v. 24) in the cult. Also both God¹⁶ and Christ¹⁷ appear in the eschatological manifestation.

The juxtaposition of the words *εἰρήνη* and *ἀγιασμός* seems awkward at first sight, but its significance may be seen in the fact that "communal 'peace,' in the broadest sense, is rooted in, and is the fullest expression of, the holiness of the community gathered around Christ's 'altar'" (Attridge 1989, 367). As 13:12 indicates, Jesus' sacrifice¹⁸ is "the ultimate basis of the community's holiness" (Attridge 1989, 367).

What is exhorted positively in v. 14 is expressed negatively in a series of warnings to "watch" (*ἐπισκοπέω*).¹⁹ The things to watch against are specified by the repeated use of *μὴ τις*. The phrase *μὴ τις* not only shows the author's concern for individuals in the community, but also his genuine concern for the whole community without exception. Lane comments that "the admonition earnestly to pursue peace and holiness is given concreteness and a specifically communal dimension with the call to vigilance in vv. 15-16" (1991b, 451).

¹⁶ Cf. Isa 52:10; Matt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev 22:4.

¹⁷ 9:28; cf. Matt 26:64; Mark 13:26; 1 Pet 1:7; Rev 1:7.

¹⁸ Cf. 9:13-14; 10:10, 14.

¹⁹ Cf. *προσέχω* ... *μήποτε* in 2:1; *βλέπω μήποτε* ... *ἐν τινι ὑμῶν* in 3:12; *φοβέομαι μήποτε* ... *τις ἐξ ὑμῶν* in 4:1; *βλέπω μὴ* in 12:25.

The first warning is to be watchful that no one "misses" or "falls short of" (*ὑστερέω*)²⁰ the "grace" (*χάρις*)²¹ of God. This general warning is further specified in the second warning, which cites Deut 29:17b. The MT reads: "lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood" (NASB) (*הַיֵּשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן יִשְׁבֹּט פִּרְיָהּ וְיִשְׁבֹּט וְיִשְׁבֹּט*). The close translation of MT in the LXX reads: "lest there be in you a root springing up with gall and bitterness" (Brenton 1851, 272) (*μὴ τις ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν ῥίζα ἄνω φύουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίῳ*). In some manuscripts of the LXX the phrase *ἐν χολῇ* is replaced by a verb *ἐνοχλῆ*, which is overwhelmingly attested in Hebrews. Yet P⁴⁶ reads *ερχ[.]λη*. Katz restored that reading as *ἐν χολῇ* and conjectured that *ἐνοχλῆ* is a corruption from the original *ἐν χολῇ* (1958, 213-17). However, as Ellingworth points out, "this verbal form disturbs the balance of the three *μὴ τις* phrases or clauses in vv. 15f., and is thus the harder reading" (1993, 663-64). It is more probable that the author of Hebrews relied on a LXX text reading *ἐνοχλῆ* and P⁴⁶ corrected *ἐνοχλῆ* by following a certain LXX text reading *ἐν χολῇ*.

In Deut 29:17 there are two parallel *μὴ τις* clauses. In view of Deut 29:17a, which warns against turning away from God and the covenant community and serving idols, "anyone missing the grace of God" seems to be refer to one who forfeits the grace²² of God, that is, eschatological salvation. This concern for falling away from God and the covenant community runs

²⁰ Cf. 4:1.

²¹ Cf. *χάρις* in v. 28.

²² Cf. 1 Pet 1:13.

throughout Hebrews (e.g., 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31).

What causes abandoning the covenant community is called a "bitter root" (ῥίζα πικρίας²³) which "causes trouble" (ἐνοχλέω). The expressions are obscure, but from the following phrase "many are defiled" (μιανθῶσιν²⁴ πολλοί) it can be inferred that the bitter root has a dangerous spreading influence. It seems that some members may feel some kind of bitterness. But it is not certain exactly from where this bitterness originates. This bitterness may come from external persecutions the readers have suffered or internal fatigue coming from the delay of their eschatological expectations, or both. In any case, by suppressing the bitter root springing up, the whole community must be preserved from being defiled. Rather they must pursue sanctification, which is the opposite of defilement.

The third warning is against being a "fornicator" (πόρνος) or being "godless" (βέβηλος). The author cites the example of Esau for being such a person. The use of πόρνος in relation to marriage in 13:4 suggests that the warning is against sexually immoral activities. Indeed, later Jewish traditions²⁵ describe him to be sensual. While this literal sense is not excluded, in

²³ Cf. παραπικρασμός in 3:8, 15. Ellingworth notes that "παραπικρασμός may be interpreted as καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας" in 3:12f. "which speaks of believers watching over one another (βλέπετε ... μήποτε), lest any individual fall into apostasy" (1993, 664).

²⁴ μιαινῶ is frequently used for ceremonial defilement in the LXX; cf. ἀμίαντος with a cultic nuance in 7:26 and with an ethical nuance in 13:4; μιαινῶ seems to be used to express both cultic and ethical aspects.

²⁵ See Strack (1926, 748).

view of the previous warnings *πόρνος* seems to represent metaphorically unfaithfulness to God, or specifically, idolatry in the Old Testament.²⁶ And in the LXX the term "godless" or "profane" (*βέβηλος*) has a strong cultic association which is in contrast to "holy" (e.g., Lev 10:10).

The author warns the readers not to give up their place within the new covenant community just as Esau gave up "his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (*τὰ πρωτοτόκια*) for a single "meal" (*βρῶσις*)²⁷ (Gen 25:27-34). Like Esau, the readers are "in danger of losing their association with the Firstborn (1:6) in the assembly of all the firstborn (12:23)" (Attridge 1989, 369). In other words, they are in danger of missing the grace of God and turning away from God and the covenant community. They should not be like Esau who disregarded his "heritage" for "immediate enjoyment" (P. R. Jones 1985, 395). Such a catastrophe must not happen to the community.

The warnings in vv. 15-16 are strengthened by emphasizing the fact that the readers themselves know (v. 17) that the process is irreversible. Once the inheritance rights are abandoned, "afterward" (*μετέπειτα*)²⁸ it is too late, and "missing" (*ὑστερέω*) the grace of God (v. 15) is the only possible result. As Esau was "rejected" (*ἀποδοκιμάζω*) by God when he wanted to "inherit" (*κληρονομέω*) the blessing (Gen

²⁶ P. R. Jones (1985, 395) gives two more options: 1) *πόρνος* may refer to "Esau's marriage to two Hittite women (Gen. 26:34-35), mixed marriages violating the Mosaic law"; 2) not *πόρνος* but only *βέβηλος* may apply to Esau.

²⁷ Cf. *βρῶμα* in 13:9.

²⁸ Cf. *πάλιν* in 6:6; *οὐκέτι* in 10:26.

27:30-40), so the readers will be rejected and lose what they want to inherit.²⁹

If we take the antecedent of αὐτήν as εὐλογία in colon 2,³⁰ then v. 17 can be translated as follows: "Afterwards when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected - he could bring about no change of mind - though he sought the blessing with tears." In this case, μετανοίας ... εὗρεν is construed as a parenthesis and the word μετανοία is translated as "change of mind." Esau tried, but could not achieve change of Isaac's mind³¹ (Gen 27:34). This interpretation agrees well with the biblical account.

But the use of γάρ in colon 3 is against taking μετανοίας ... εὗρεν as a parenthesis. And μετανοία is a nearer antecedent of αὐτήν than εὐλογία. Also "the close association of verb and participle (εὗρεν ... ἐκζητήσας) strongly support" (Attridge 1989, 370) μετανοία as the antecedent of αὐτήν. Previously we saw that the author of Hebrews was concerned with repentance in 6:1, 6. Especially in 6:4-6 he was painting a bleak picture, viz. that it is impossible (ἀδύνατον) for those who apostatize to be brought back to repentance. In view of this paraenetic purpose of the author as well as other grammatical reasons mentioned above, it seems preferable to take μετανοία as the

²⁹ Cf. 1:14; 6:17; 9:15; 11:7; though the word κληρονομέω does not occur in 12:22-24, a detailed, graphic description of what the readers want to inherit is given in that passage.

³⁰ See McCullough (1974, 4).

³¹ Cf. McCullough, who points out that "since the structure of the sentence would suggest that the same subject should remain throughout, it is likely that the reference is to repentance on the part of Esau" (1974, 4).

antecedent of *αὐτήν* even if this option somewhat strains the meaning of the biblical account in Genesis 27.

When Esau sold his birthright for a single meal, he found himself in a position where no repentance is possible. Once rejected, there is no room for a second repentance. Once rejected, he is eternally rejected. This fact applies to the new covenant people in the same way, or even more so due to the fact that they enjoy more privileges.³² In the following section (vv. 18-24) this privileged position of the new covenant people is graphically portrayed by contrasting the new covenant with the old covenant.

5.4.2.2 Heb 12:18-24

This expository section provides a positive motivation not to regress, but to progress in pursuing peace and sanctification (v. 14), by contrasting the situation of the readers with that of the Exodus generation.³³ Later this section is used as a ground for an exhortation not to refuse him who speaks (v. 25). As Weiß notes, "im Rahmen der Glaubenparänese von VV.14f einerseits (*ἐπισκοποῦντες μή τις κτλ*) und V.25 andererseits (*βλέπετε μή κτλ*)" vv. 18-24 are firmly integrated "in den paränetischen, auf Glaubensmahnung zielenden Kontext" (1991, 669). Thus, *γὰρ* in v. 18 "links vv. 18-24, not with the example of Esau, but with the general situation of the

³² Cf. McCullough, who argues that greater gifts in the new covenant require greater punishment, that is, that "if Esau was punished in this way for spurning the smaller gift, the blessing, how much more punishment can we expect if we spurn God's greater gift, His salvation in Jesus Christ" (1974, 5-6).

³³ Cf. 3:1-6, 3:7-4:13; 11:23-29.

readers, as outlined in vv. 14-17" (Ellingworth 1993, 670).

Vv. 18-24 is explicitly divided into two contrasting segments (*οὐ προσεληλύθατε ... ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε*).³⁴ The Exodus generation led by Moses approached God at Mt. Sinai, which is characterized by fearful impersonal features. On the other hand the readers have come to Mt. Zion, which is characterized by a joyful gathering. The list of the participants in that gathering makes evident its privileged status. Especially, they come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Jesus appears at the end of the list for emphasis just as Moses does.³⁵

Both segments (vv. 18-21 and vv. 22-24) enumerate items connected by *καί*. Not correspondence between items in the two segments, but contrast between the overall pictures of the two segments is what the author wants to convey. In this contrast the author encourages the readers not to miss,³⁶ but to appropriate the grace of God made available in the sacrifice of Christ.

The word "approach" (*προσέρχομαι*) may reflect the real experience at Mt. Sinai,³⁷ but it also reminds the readers of

³⁴ Casey sees a certain apologetic strain in this contrast. She comments: "Perhaps we see in Hebrews a community grown weary of the less elaborate, less tangible, less 'satisfying' reality of Christian worship; a community, perhaps, nostalgic for the old cult" (1982, 334). However, the contrast rather seems to underscore the privileged status of the new covenant community.

³⁵ Cf. Jesus in v. 24; Moses in v. 21.

³⁶ Cf. v. 15.

³⁷ Cf. Deut 4:11.

its use for coming near to God in worship.³⁸ This cultic implication becomes explicit in vv. 22.³⁹ The place which the Exodus generation approached is Mt. Sinai, which is not explicitly mentioned in the text probably because the author rather wants to emphasize Mt. Zion.

Mt. Sinai is described by seven items connected by *καί*.⁴⁰ The first item is "something that can be touched" (*ψηλαφωμένω*), which is not found in the biblical account.⁴¹ This verb *ψηλαφάω* is "probably a stylistic variant for *θιγγάνω* in v. 20" (Ellingworth 1993, 671). But the author seems to try to characterize what the Exodus generation encountered at Mt. Sinai, using this word at the beginning. Mt. Sinai is "palpable," and thus "of this creation,"⁴² in contrast to Mt. Zion which is "heavenly,"⁴³ and thus "not of this creation."⁴⁴

³⁸ Cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6.

³⁹ Cf. Käsemann's comment that the idea of the people of God in Hebrews is defined "kultisch." He also says, "So ist ja auch der at.liche λαός seinem Wesen nach Kultgemeinde" (1961, 27).

⁴⁰ Both *ψηλαφωμένω* and *κεκαυμένω* may modify *πυρί*, but this is unlikely. Or both participles can be taken absolutely: "to something palpable and something burning, to fire and darkness ..." But it is most natural to take "burning" (*κεκαυμένω*) with "fire" (*πυρί*) (cf. Deut 4:11).

⁴¹ Cf. "'palpable' (*ψηλαφητόν*) darkness" in Exod 10:21.

⁴² See Thompson, who comments: "That which is 'heavenly' (*ἐπουράνιος*) is set over against that which is *ψηλαφωμένος*. This contrast indicates that *ψηλαφωμένος* is used by the author as a code-word for 'earthly' in a metaphysical sense" (1982, 45; 1975b, 582); cf. *γῆ* in v. 25; *σαλευομένων* and *πεποιημένων* in v. 27.

⁴³ Cf. *ἐπουράνιος* in v. 22; *οὐρανός* in vv. 23, 25.

⁴⁴ Cf. *οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως* in 9:11; *ἀσάλευτος* in v. 28.

"Fire" (πῦρ),⁴⁵ "darkness" (γνόφος), and "whirlwind" (θύελλα) are found in the biblical account of the theophany at Mt. Sinai in Deut 4:11 or 5:22. "Gloom" (ζόφος) seems to be added to intensify the fearful imagery although it is not found in the biblical account.

The remaining two items given in v. 19 are σάλπιγγος ἦχος and φωνῆ ῥημάτων.⁴⁶ The former is derived from Exod 19:16⁴⁷ and the latter from Deut 4:12 (cf. Deut 5:24). The whole fearful image is confirmed by the response of "those who heard" (οἱ ἀκούσαντες). They "begged" (παραιτέομαι)⁴⁸ any further "message" (λόγος) not to be "added" (προστίθημι) directly.⁴⁹

The reason for their request not to add any further message includes not only the fearful scene of the theophany (vv. 18-19) but also a specific "command" (τὸ διαστελλόμενον) threatening the penalty of death (v. 20). They simply could not "bear" (φέρω) what was commanded. This command is given as a citation condensed from Exod 19:12-13.⁵⁰ If even a "beast" (θηρίον) cannot escape "stoning" (λιθοβολέω), how much less can a human being escape?⁵¹

The scene of the encounter between God and his people,

⁴⁵ Cf. πῦρ in v. 29.

⁴⁶ Note the chiasm (σάλπιγγος ἦχος ... φωνῆ ῥημάτων) here.

⁴⁷ Exod 19:16 LXX reads: φωνῆ τῆς σάλπιγγος ἦχει μέγα.

⁴⁸ The same verb is used negatively meaning "to refuse" (v. 25).

⁴⁹ Cf. Exod 20:18-19; Deut 5:23-27.

⁵⁰ For more details, see Thomas (1964-65, 317).

⁵¹ In fact, a human being is also included in the command in Exod 19:12-13.

referred to as a "sight" (*φανταζόμενον*), is characterized as "awesome," "fearsome" or "terrifying" (*φοβερός*).⁵² This fearful imagery reaches its climax when even Moses, who is the mediator of the old covenant, said, "I am 'terrified' (*ἐκφοβός*) and 'trembling' (*ἐντρομος*)."

But the occasion for this utterance seems to be different from that of theophany at Mt. Sinai. In Deut 9:19 Moses says *ἐκφοβός εἰμι* because he fears the anger which God will show against those who made the golden calf. The word *ἐντρομος*⁵³ also suggests a different occasion from the theophany at Mt. Sinai. This word is used in Acts 7:32 to describe Moses at the burning bush in the desert near Mt. Sinai. Therefore, if "the sight" (*τὸ φανταζόμενον*) refers to the theophany at Mt. Sinai, *ὅυτω ... φανταζόμενον* must be treated as a parenthesis. Ellingworth takes this view and comments: "the meaning is not 'the sight was so terrifying that Moses said ...,' but 'moreover (so terrifying was the sight!) Moses said ...'" (1993, 675). On the other hand, if "the sight" refers to the scene of a generic encounter with God in the old covenant situation, *ὅυτω ... φανταζόμενον* needs not be treated as a parenthesis.

The whole picture in vv. 18-21 (the theophany at Mt. Sinai, the response of the people, the command not to touch the mountain, and Moses' words) is intended to emphasize the distance between God and his people in the old covenant

⁵² Cf. 10:27, 31.

⁵³ Cf. Thomas who thinks that *καὶ ἐντρομος* is "added to make Moses' statement of fear even stronger" (1964-65, 318).

situation.⁵⁴ But the new covenant people is in an entirely different situation. Fear is not totally excluded,⁵⁵ but the unapproachability of God and the distance between God and his people was removed for the new covenant people through the person and work of Christ.

This new covenant situation is the concern of vv. 22-24. The contrast is emphatically presented by ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε (cf. οὐ προσεληλύθατε in v. 18). In view of the eschatological character of the whole scene in vv. 22-24, some⁵⁶ have tried to interpret the word προσεληλύθατε as "you have come near, but not reached." But if we consider that the contrast is in the cultic dimension,⁵⁷ it is not necessary to limit προσεληλύθατε to the eschatological future. The readers have come to the eschatological reality proleptically in their cult. The whole community have come to God (v. 23)⁵⁸ in worshipping God (cf. v.

⁵⁴ Cf. 9:8; for the opposite situation, see 10:19-20.

⁵⁵ Cf. κριτῆς in v. 23; μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους in v. 28; πῦρ καταναλίσκον in v. 29.

⁵⁶ Käsemann comments that "Das προσεληλύθατε V.22 darf also nicht so verstanden werden, als sei dieses Ziel erst im Laufe der christlichen Wanderschaft erreicht worden" (1961, 30-31); Montefiore also comments that "his readers have not yet actually arrived at Mount Zion: they have drawn close (cf. v. 18)" (1964, 229); Ladd comments that "we come near to the heavenly Jerusalem, but we do not yet enter it" (1974, 576); also Isaacs (1992, 87) comments that προσέρχομαι in vv. 18, 22 is "the language of approach rather than final attainment."

⁵⁷ Note the use of προσέρχομαι for "man's approach to God ... through prayer (Jer. 7:16) or more generally in worship (Sir. 2:1; Deut. 4:11; Exod. 16:9)" (Best 1960, 280).

⁵⁸ In Hebrews προσέρχομαι is always used to describe "coming near to God in worship" (cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6). Here the perfect seems to indicate that "this approach to God has become for Christians a new, continuing reality" (Casey 1982, 332).

28). Dahl rightly comments that "through worship they participate in the heavenly worship of the angels, and perfected saints ... i.e. proleptically" (1951, 409).⁵⁹

The place where the readers have come is called Mt. Zion, the city of the living God,⁶⁰ the heavenly Jerusalem.⁶¹ The term "heavenly" (ἐπουράνιος) makes evident that this place does not refer to the earthly Mt. Zion or city of Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem is in contrast to "palpable" (ψηλαφωμένος) Mt. Sinai. Mt. Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, which were derived from the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature,⁶² were already introduced as "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10, 16).⁶³

This city is the goal of the pilgrimage of all God's people, including the readers. In that sense, it is "the city that is to come" (13:14), that is, the city to be ultimately realized only in the eschatological consummation when the "heavenly" city will be revealed as the "eschatological" city.

⁵⁹ Cf. Michel's comment that προσέρχεσθαι "bleibt ein kultisches Ereignis" (1975a, 461); P. R. Jones who says that in 12:22-24 "worship ... was interpreted as realized eschatology, as a proleptic experience of the future" (1979, 101); Arowele (1990, 444-45), who comments that the encounter in 12:22-24 is "not final arrival but a cultic experience"; Scholer, who comments that "at 12.22-24 Heb presents the parallel between the heavenly 'worshippers' and the earthly Christians, whose access to God appeared to be through a similar 'worship'" (1991, 107, 144-45); Gärtner (1965, 89-90, 93); McKelvey (1969, 152-53); Johnsson (1978, 246-47); Lehne (1990, 106, 111).

⁶⁰ Cf. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31.

⁶¹ These three terms seem to be used synonymously, καὶ before πόλις being epexegetic.

⁶² Cf. Jerusalem in Gal 4:21-31; Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10; Mt. Zion in Rev 14:1; 4 Ezra 13:36; 1 Enoch 25:3.

⁶³ Note ἐπουράνιος in 11:16.

How then have the readers come to this city? When considering the wider context of 12:14ff., which is concerned about the community life, especially cultic life in worship (cf. 12:28; 13:15),⁶⁴ they have already come to this city in advance in their worship. This proleptic participation in the life of the city to come⁶⁵ is a great motivation to continue their pilgrimage to that city. They should not give up, but rather persevere in meeting together in worship.⁶⁶

After specifying the place to which the readers have come, the author begins to list the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem to show the privileged status of the readers. In contrast to the description of the terrifying objects characteristic of Mt. Sinai, the heavenly Jerusalem is characterized by helpful persons.⁶⁷ The first of the inhabitants are "myriads of angels" (μύριοι ἀγγέλων). It is not clear how to relate the following word "festal gathering"

⁶⁴ The other significant area of community life will be real-life walking in ways pleasing to God (cf. 12:14; 13:1-5, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17).

⁶⁵ Aune well explains the proleptic participation as follows: "In Christian worship the anticipated goal of final, eschatological deliverance was drawn into the sphere of present experience and celebrated as if it had been fully and finally achieved. In the phenomenology of this worship, past and future collapse into an eternal present; and the spatial distinction between heaven and earth is momentarily obliterated. In the light of this kind of cultic experience, there can be no hard and fast dichotomy between the presence of Jesus in the midst of the worshipping community and the 'distant' presence of Jesus at the right hand of God" (1992, 596).

⁶⁶ Cf. 10:25.

⁶⁷ "Nicht schreckende Dinge, sondern helfende Personen" (Braun 1984, 435).

(πανήγυρις).⁶⁸ But as in the description of Mt. Sinai, the references to inhabitants appear to be linked by the repeated *καί*.⁶⁹ In this case, the word *πανήγυρις* may be simply in apposition to myriads of angels, thus giving "myriads of angels, a festal gathering." Or it may be a further description of myriads of angels. In this case, the translation will be "myriads of angels in festal gathering." Other less likely options are: 1) "myriads, a festal gathering of angels" taking *πανήγυρις* with *ἀγγέλων*,⁷⁰ 2) "myriads of angels, a festal gathering and assembly of the firstborn" taking *πανήγυρις* with *ἐκκλησία*.

The second of the inhabitants is "an assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven" (*ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς*). The firstborn could refer to angels, but the modifying phrase "enrolled in heaven"⁷¹ makes certain that it refers to human beings. As in 2:12, *ἐκκλησία* seems to refer to an assembly of God's people. The "firstborn" are those who did not sell but kept their inheritance rights.⁷²

⁶⁸ In the Old Testament this term was used for Israel's religious assembly related to a "feast" (*ἐορτή*) (Ezek 46:11; Hos 2:11; 9:5; Amos 5:21). Michel comments: "Im griechischen Kulturkreis hat es kultische Bedeutung, bezeichnet aber dann auch die großen Versammlungen anlässlich der Wettspiele und Kämpfe" (1975a, 463).

⁶⁹ Exceptions are: as noted above, the first *καί* before *πόλει* is epexegetic; the second *καί* signals the transition from the place to the inhabitants; the last *καί* connects Jesus to his blood.

⁷⁰ In this case, it is difficult to determine how many of the following items are in apposition with "myriads."

⁷¹ Cf. Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:29; Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 3:20; 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8.

⁷² Cf. vv. 16-17; also 11:7.

They seem to have their status as the firstborn because they are "brothers" or "children" (2:10-18)⁷³ of the Firstborn (1:6).⁷⁴ The assembly of the firstborn probably indicates all the faithful human inhabitants in the heavenly Jerusalem in distinction from angelic inhabitants. As Dumbrell comments, what is portrayed by this assembly appears to be "the end-time picture of the totally redeemed community" (1976, 156).⁷⁵ As in Rev 7:9-11, both all the angels and all the redeemed human beings gather together in the presence of God.⁷⁶

The third of the inhabitants is God. The phrase κριτῆς θεοῦ πάντων may be understood as either "the judge, God of all" or "God, the judge of all." In either case, the reality of judgement⁷⁷ is not altogether removed even in the description of the heavenly city. To lessen the negative force of this

⁷³ Here the brothers or children are called "Abraham's descendants" and are contrasted with angels (2:16).

⁷⁴ Cf. Helyer (1976, 13) who comments that the word "first-born" links believers to "the first-born par excellence, Jesus"; also see Scholer's comment: "At Heb. 1:6 the 'first-born' is Jesus Christ, and therefore the 'First-born' and 'the first-born (plural)' belong together, just as 'Son' and 'sons' (e.g. Rom. 8.29; Heb. 2.10-18)" (1991, 146).

⁷⁵ Helyer also says that the assembly of the firstborn refers to "all the faithful of both covenants" (1976, 15-16); cf. Scholer, who limits this assembly to "the dead Christians already worshiping in heaven" (1991, 146). Later he limits "just men made perfect" to "the deceased Old Testament faithful who are now enjoying direct access to God" (1991, 147). In both cases, he misses the point that this is the end-time picture.

⁷⁶ Cf. Schoonhoven's comment that in Hebrews it is important that "redeemed man will experience that redemption not in isolation but in continuity and company with a host of others" (1978, 102).

⁷⁷ Cf. 10:27; 30-31; 39; 13:4, 17.

phrase in the immediate context characterized by festivity,⁷⁸ the former option was sometimes chosen. But the latter option is in agreement with the traditional concept of God as the universal judge⁷⁹ and conveys a somewhat stronger sense which is not incompatible with what is given later in v. 29.

The fourth of the inhabitants are called the "spirits of the righteous made perfect" (πνεύματα δικαίων τετελειωμένων). The righteous⁸⁰ clearly refer to human beings and τελειόω, which is a characteristic term in Hebrews, would have the same sense as in 11:40.⁸¹ It seems that the phrase "spirits of the righteous made perfect" refers to the same group as the phrase "an assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven." As far as the phrase "spirits of the righteous made perfect" describes the total redeemed community,⁸² this expression does not contradict the clause ἵνα μὴ ... τελειωθῶσιν in 11:40.

The reason for the repetition of the same group of inhabitants may be found not only in the author's intention to present the privileged status of readers in the new covenant dispensation, but also in the position of the expression "the spirits of the righteous made perfect" between God the judge and Jesus the mediator. Dumbrell points out that the scene is

⁷⁸ Also the order of the words favors this option.

⁷⁹ Cf. Rom 2:16; 3:6; 1 Pet 4:5; Rev 20:12.

⁸⁰ Cf. 10:38; 11:4.

⁸¹ Cf. 2:10, where Christ's exaltation is referred to as "being perfected."

⁸² Cf. Silva (1976, 70); D. G. Peterson (1979, 80), who identifies "spirits of just men made perfect" with "the saints of all ages."

the portrayal of the "covenant conclusion." He explains that "perfected"⁸³ through the sacrifice, or rather ... the sacrificial blood of the mediator,⁸⁴ the assembly stands awaiting covenant conclusion... the formal approval for which the assembly of Heb 12:23 stands convened may be expressed in the next phrase, 'the spirits of just men made perfect'" (1976, 158).

Dumbrell continues that the reason why the total redeemed community is called "spirits" is that "the final event in the great eschatological drama has not yet taken place" (1976, 159). In other words, they are called "spirits" because the resurrection of the dead has not yet occurred. But in view of the fact that the author is now describing the scene of the ultimate goal of the pilgrimage of the faithful under both covenants, that is, the heavenly city,⁸⁵ it appears that those who have arrived there must lack nothing in their perfection. In this case, the redeemed community for whom the bodily resurrection⁸⁶ has already occurred is called "spirits" to stress the "spiritual and immaterial nature"⁸⁷ of the new order

⁸³ Cf. Caird, who relates the perfection of believers to the perfection of Christ and comments: "Christ ... was made perfect ... he won the right to enter God's presence, and won it not for himself alone but for all who were prepared to let him call them brothers. The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem can be called just men made perfect for no other reason than that they have been admitted to the presence of God" (1966, 93).

⁸⁴ Cf. 10:14, 19-20; 12:24.

⁸⁵ Cf. 11:10, 13-16; 12:28; 13:14.

⁸⁶ Cf. 6:2; 11:35.

⁸⁷ Cf. "It is raised a spiritual body" (ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν) in 1 Cor 15:44.

of existence" (Montefiore 1964, 232).

The last of the inhabitants in the heavenly Jerusalem is Jesus,⁸⁸ the "mediator of a new covenant" (διαθήκης νέας⁸⁹ μεσίτης).⁹⁰ The positive picture in vv. 22-24 reaches its climax in coming to the mediator who made all these privileges possible and available, as the negative picture in vv. 18-21 reached its climax in a reference to Moses, the mediator of the old covenant. This verse (v. 24) cannot be properly understood without understanding the previous argument in chap. 7-10, specifically 9:15-22. As in the previous argument, the reference to Jesus cannot be separated from the reference to his blood.⁹¹ The readers have come to Jesus and at the same time to his blood, which is "sprinkled" (ῥαντισμοῦ)⁹² as the blood of sacrifices was sprinkled under the old covenant (9:13, 19).⁹³

Then it is said that Jesus' blood "speaks" (λαλέω) "better" (κρείττον)⁹⁴ than Abel.⁹⁵ In what sense does Jesus and

⁸⁸ The human name Jesus recalls what has been said about the humanity of Jesus, especially his identification with human beings in his suffering (e.g., 2:9; 12:2).

⁸⁹ The use of νέα instead of καινή seems to be a stylistic variation; for new covenant, see 8:8, 13; 9:15.

⁹⁰ Cf. 8:6.

⁹¹ Cf. 9:12-14; 10:19, 29; 13:20; 1 Pet 1:2.

⁹² The phrase "blood of sprinkling" is a Hebraic expression for "sprinkled blood."

⁹³ For the metaphoric use of sprinkling, see 10:22; also 1 Pet 1:2.

⁹⁴ 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40.

⁹⁵ It is not necessary to limit the reference to Abel's blood because of the masculine article in τὸν Ἀβελ.

his blood speak better than Abel and his blood? In line with the interpretation of 11:4 the comparison is not considered to express the contrast between grace and vengeance,⁹⁶ but rather the difference concerning atonement. Jesus' blood achieves atonement,⁹⁷ which Abel's blood could not. In that sense Jesus' blood speaks to us more effectively than Abel's blood does.⁹⁸ This better effectiveness gives a strong motivation for the readers to persevere faithfully in their pilgrimage until the end.

The reason why the author expresses the gathering of the new covenant community in the words of vv. 22-24 is to present their worship experience "from a cosmic perspective as the final gathering of the Christian church before the eternal presence of God" (Aune 1992, 596). By making known their extremely privileged status as the new covenant community the author wants the readers to pursue holiness (v. 14) and persevere in their pilgrimage instead of missing the grace of God (v. 15), and thus reach the final gathering described in v. 22-24, which they now enjoy only proleptically, at the final consummation.

5.4.2.3 Heb 12:25-29

⁹⁶ In 11:4 it is not Abel's blood crying out for vengeance, but Abel himself that speaks. Abel speaks about his faith through the witness of scripture though dead.

⁹⁷ Cf. 8:12; 10:17-18; along with 9:22.

⁹⁸ Attridge speculates that Abel may have been considered as the first martyr whose death had "an atoning significance." If this is right, "Christ's blood which effects true and lasting remission of sin speaks not in a 'different' but in a 'superior' way" (1989, 377).

The fact that the readers have come to the eschatological goal proleptically in their worship (vv. 18-24) not only encourages the readers to more positive efforts (v. 28; cf. v. 14), but also warns them to be more watchful. This warning is expressed by *βλέπετε μὴ*⁹⁹ in v. 25.¹⁰⁰ This warning urges the readers not to "refuse" (*παραιτέομαι*)¹⁰¹ "the one who speaks" (*τὸν λαλοῦντα*). This phrase *τὸν λαλοῦντα* refers to God, whose voice was heard at Sinai.¹⁰² But God's speech¹⁰³ continued and became better in the new covenant because God spoke through his Son.¹⁰⁴ The word *λαλέω* repeated so soon after v. 24 links vv. 18-24 to vv. 25-29 and underscores the fact that if the readers refuse the one who speaks better, the consequence will be more serious. The author warns that better speaking requires better attention.

The reason for the warning is further explained by an a fortiori argument which contrasts *ἐκεῖνοι*¹⁰⁵ and *ἡμεῖς*.¹⁰⁶ If "those" (*ἐκεῖνοι*) who "refused" (*παραιτέομαι*) the one who

⁹⁹ Cf. *βλέπετε μήποτε* in 3:12.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ἐπισκοποῦντες μή τις ... μή τις ... μή τις* in vv. 15-16.

¹⁰¹ This word is used once more with the same sense in the same verse. It was used with much the weaker sense of begging in v. 19.

¹⁰² Cf. *φωνὴ ῥημάτων, λόγος, or τὸ διαστελλόμενον* in vv. 19-20.

¹⁰³ This is one of the major themes in the first part of Hebrews (1:1-4:13). Specifically see 1:1-2; 2:1-4; 4:12-13.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. 1:2; 2:3; *κρεῖττον λαλοῦντι* in v. 24.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 4:2.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ἡμεῖς ... ἀμελήσαντες* in 2:3.

"warned" (χρηματίζω)¹⁰⁷ them "on earth" (ἐπὶ γῆς) did not escape¹⁰⁸ [judgment], "how much less" (πολὺ μᾶλλον)¹⁰⁹ will "we" (ἡμεῖς) [escape judgment], if we "turn away" (ἀποστρέφομαι)¹¹⁰ from him who ["warns" (χρηματίζω)] us "from heaven" (ἀπ' οὐρανῶν)? The parallel situation is that both they and we are warned by God, and that if God is refused or turned away, the judgment is inescapable for both groups. The contrasting element which makes an a fortiori argument possible is the difference in the place of warning. One warning came from earth, but the other from heaven.¹¹¹

In vv. 26-27 the same contrast is formally expressed by τότε ... νῦν. The parallel situation is that both then and now God speaks and that shaking follows God's speech. The word φωνή in v. 26 refers to the same φωνή heard at Mt. Sinai in v. 19. This voice at that time "shook" (σαλεύω) the "earth" (γῆ). On the other hand, now God "has promised" (ἐπαγγέλλομαι)¹¹² saying that once more he will "shake" (σείω) not only the "earth" (γῆ) but also the "heaven" (οὐρανός). The contrasting element between the shaking at Mt. Sinai and the eschatological shaking

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 8:5; 11:7.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 3:7-4:13; for the same a fortiori argument, see 2:2-3 (also note the same word ἐκφεύγω in 2:3); 10:28-29.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 12:9; for similar expressions, see 9:14; 10:29.

¹¹⁰ This is synonymous with παραιτέομαι. Due to the present context, both words recall the description of apostasy in earlier warnings (2:3; 6:6; 10:29).

¹¹¹ The contrast between "earthly" and "heavenly" was already seen in vv. 18-24 (for example, see ψηλαφωμένος versus ἐπουράνιος); also see chap. 9.

¹¹² The perfect tense signifies that the promise given by Haggai is still in force.

is to be found in the objects of shaking.

The author cites the promise of the eschatological shaking in Hag 2:6 to bolster his argument. The original context concerning the restoration of the temple in the post-exilic period appears to be insignificant in the present context, where the emphasis is on the eschatological shaking which will establish an "unshakable" (ἀσάλευτος) kingdom for the readers. The author omits the references to "sea" and "dry land" in the LXX and adds "not only ... but also" to put more emphasis on the shaking of the heaven. Because even heaven will be included in the shaking, this eschatological shaking will be a comprehensive one. As Ellingworth rightly points out, "οὐρανός here ... refers to the higher part of the created universe,¹¹³ rather than, as probably in 9:24 (αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν), and even in 12:23, 25, to the immediate presence of God." He continues that "the use of a quotation leads the author to use οὐρανός in a different sense than in the preceding paragraph" (1993, 687).

That οὐρανός in the citation of Hag 2:6 refers to the physical heaven which was created is further indicated by the author's exegetical comment in v. 27. The phrase τὸ δὲ marks a quotation, so the translation may be "the words 'once more' indicates ...". Here the author makes evident that by the citation he means the "removal" (μετάθεσις)¹¹⁴ of "what can be shaken" (τῶν σαλευομένων) - that is, "created things"

¹¹³ Cf. 1:10-12.

¹¹⁴ Cf. 7:12; 11:5; Thompson rightly comments on the ἵνα clause in v. 27: "The ἵνα clause ... implies that τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα will remain. Therefore, the μετάθεσις of heaven and earth must be understood as 'removal' [not 'transformation']" (1982, 48-49).

(πεπονημένων).¹¹⁵

What the author wanted to convey to the readers in v. 26 is that while shaking was "then" (τότε) not comprehensive and the sphere of God's dealing with men still belonged to what can be shaken, in other words, to the order of created things, "now" (νῦν) God's promise points to the order of "what cannot be shaken" (τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα).¹¹⁶ The phrase ἔτι ἅπαξ may suggest that the removal is radical and "once for all."¹¹⁷ After this radical removal of what can be shaken, only what cannot be shaken will "remain" (μένω)¹¹⁸ and thus "an unshakable kingdom" (βασιλεία ἀσάλευτος)¹¹⁹ will be

¹¹⁵ The created order seems to be taken somewhat pejoratively in contrast to the eternal order; cf. 9:11; 11:3; also Thompson's comment that both σαλευόμενα and πεπονημένα "are descriptive of the earthly sphere" (1982, 49).

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gräßer, who interprets the ἵνα clause in v. 27 as follows: "damit die μὴ σαλευόμενα, die ungeschaffenen Dinge also, nämlich die ἐπουράνια bleiben" (1986, 171-72); also Thompson, who rightly comments: "Τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα refers ... to the 'axiologically' [not 'cosmologically'] heavenly world of Christ's exaltation, the world that is οὐ χειροποίητος (9:24)" (1982, 50). But he is wrong when he identifies τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα with the intelligible world which is only stable in a Platonic sense (1982, 48-51). On the other hand, see Hurst (1984, 69-73), who also unjustly tries to explain the text exclusively from the apocalyptic viewpoint.

¹¹⁷ Gräßer comments: ἔτι ἅπαξ does not indicate "die Temporalität der Endkatastrophe," but "die Einmaligkeit und Unwiederholbarkeit des eschatologischen Ereignisses" (1986, 171); cf. 9:26-28; 10:2; for ἐφ'ἅπαξ, see 7:27; 9:12; 10:10.

¹¹⁸ Cf. 1:10-12; Gräßer (1965, 1174) rightly comments that this term is not only a "Zeitbegriff," but also a "Qualitätsbegriff" emphasizing the stability of the kingdom we receive; also cf. Isa 66:22 LXX; Zech 14:10 LXX.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Dan 7:14, 18, 27 (LXX); also Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Apoc. Bar. 59:3, 4; 2 Esdr 6:11-28; 10:25-59; Jub. 1:29; Rev 21.

established.¹²⁰ As in v. 25, so in vv. 26-27 the contrast is made between the order of "shakable," "transitory," "visible," "earthly" and the order of "unshakable," "permanent," "invisible," "heavenly."

Even though the unshakable things which will remain are not further specified, we can get some idea of them from the things that were thought to remain in Hebrews, such as Melchizedek (7:3), Christ (1:11; 13:8) and his priesthood,¹²¹ the new covenant (13:20), the better possession reserved for the faithful (10:34), and the city that is to come (13:14). Thus it appears that the unshakable kingdom the readers receive is characterized by Christ and all the benefits resulting from his work, just as is the heavenly Jerusalem to which they have come.¹²²

The inferential particle "therefore" (*διό*) in v. 28 brings not only vv. 25-27 but also vv. 14-27 to a paraenetic conclusion. The motivation for the conclusion is summarized in a participial phrase *βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον παραλαμβάνοντες*. Since in Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, the unshakable

¹²⁰ Cf. Goppelt, who comments: "At the time of the end, according to Hag 2:6, God will shake not only the earth, but heaven also. In other words, he will transform everything that has been created Therefore, the 'heavenly' which remains is not some higher part of creation; it is God's eternal kingdom (12:27f.)" (1982b, 174).

¹²¹ Cf. 5:6; 6:20; 7:28; 10:14.

¹²² Gräßer rightly comments that the unshakable kingdom is "zusammenfassender Begriff für die lokal vorgestellten himmlischen Heilsgüter, zu denen die Christen unterwegs sind, um das, was sie jetzt schon 'empfangen', dann endgültig zu besitzen" (1986, 172). In other words, this kingdom is "das Ziel der Glaubenswanderschaft, das verheißen ist (vgl. ἐπιγγελαται λέγων V.26)" (1986, 173).

kingdom that will appear after the eschatological shaking is not only guaranteed to the readers as their possession but also enjoyed as a present reality proleptically in their worship,¹²³ they are urged to "be thankful" (ἔχω χάριν)¹²⁴ and "worship" (λατρεύω)¹²⁵ God "acceptably" (εὐαρέστως)¹²⁶ with "reverence" (εὐλάβεια)¹²⁷ and "awe" (δέος).

The exhortation in vv. 14-17 began with a positive appeal; now the exhortation in vv. 25-29 ends with a positive appeal. Even though the element of warning still plays an important role in vv. 28-29,¹²⁸ the whole passage vv. 14-29 can be characterized as an encouragement to pursue peace and sanctification (v. 14) and worship God acceptably (v. 28).¹²⁹ These two positive encouragements¹³⁰ prepare the major themes of chap. 13. The former is developed in 13:1-6, 12-13, 16. The

¹²³ Cf. a similar connection between "worship in praise" and "not being shaken" in Ps. Sol. 15:4: "The one who does these things (a new psalm, the fruit of lips, or the first fruits of lips which are specified in 15:3) will never be 'disturbed' (σαλεύω) by evil" (Charlesworth 1985, 664); for a reference to "the fruit of lips" in Hebrews, see 13:15.

¹²⁴ Cf. v. 15; also 13:9; 25.

¹²⁵ Cf. 13:10.

¹²⁶ Faith pleases God in 10:38, 11:5-6 (cf. 10:6, 8); worship expressed by good works pleases God in 13:16, 21.

¹²⁷ Cf. 5:7; 11:7.

¹²⁸ See phrases such as μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους and πῦρ καταναλίσκον.

¹²⁹ λατρεύωμεν is the verb in the relative clause which is syntactically subordinate to ἔχωμεν χάριν, but that verb λατρεύωμεν specifies what the author really wants to exhort.

¹³⁰ They are in fact related to each other because "serving" (λατρεύω) God is possible when Christ's blood cleanses our consciences (9:14; cf. 9:9; 10:2) and makes us holy (10:10, 14; 13:12).

latter is developed in 13:10, 15-16.¹³¹

Along with the phrase "with reverence and awe" v. 29 keeps reminding the readers of the greater responsibilities accompanying greater privileges. In fact, v. 29 provides motivation for reverence and awe, resorting again to Scripture. V. 29 is clearly based on Deut 4:24,¹³² where Moses warns the Israelites against breaking covenant with God and turning to idolatry. The image of consuming fire is usually connected with judgment, as it was in 6:8 and 10:27.¹³³ Some commentators¹³⁴ have seen the conclusion to the whole epistle in this dramatic warning. But as we will see soon, chap. 13 shows too much connection with the preceding chapters to be ignored.

5.4.3 Rhetorical devices

Χάρις in vv. 15 and 28 forms an inclusion to demarcate the present passage, at least formally because *χάρις* has a different sense in each verse. In v. 14 there is a transition from the previous section (vv. 1-13) to a new section. This transition is made abrupt by using asyndeton to get renewed attention. Similarly, in v. 25 an abrupt warning is given after a lengthy contrast between the old and new covenant. This

¹³¹ In 13:16 sanctification is related to worship by calling the real outworking of sanctification by good works "sacrifices" pleasing God.

¹³² Deut 4:24 LXX: ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου πῦρ καταναλίσκων ἐστίν, θεὸς ζηλωτῆς; also cf. Exod 24:17; Deut 9:3.

¹³³ Cf. πυρὸς ζῆλος in 10:27; also compare with the general judgmental note of 10:26-31.

¹³⁴ For example, see Moffatt (1924, 224); Buchanan (1972, 226).

abruptness enhanced by asyndeton gets more attention from the readers.

Mack comments: "One form of invention in early Christian circles would be the practice of searching the Scriptures to find just the right example ... for a given argument" (1990, 32). He continues: "In early Christian circle ... 'nontechnical proofs' were highly prized" (1990, 39). The negative example of Esau in vv. 16-17 serves as one of these "nontechnical proofs" which will support his argument. This example will illustrate the warnings in two other μή τις clauses given in v. 15 and make those warnings seem to be more than a mere assertion. In the use of the example of Esau the author reminds the readers of what they already know (cf. ἴστε in v. 17) to persuade them not to follow the well-known bad example. This argument presupposes the readers' general familiarity with Scripture (Gen 27:30-40).

In vv. 18-24 many evocative, apocalyptic images connected with καί (polysyndeton) are used to emphasize both the fearful situation of the old covenant and the privileged situation of the new covenant. To highlight the contrast the antithesis is expressed by "οὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε ... ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε ...". Note the sound effect of the list in v. 18: "ψηλαφωμένω καὶ κακαυμένω πυρὶ καὶ γνόφω καὶ ζόφω καὶ ...". In the exegetical remarks we have already noticed a chiasm on a small scale in v. 19: σάλπιγγος (A) ἦχω (B) καὶ φωνῆ (B') ῥημάτων (A'). In v. 21 we can note the oral effect by the elements of alliteration and assonance: "φοβερον ... φανταζομενον ... ἔκφοβός ... ἔντρομος." Also note the sound effect in the phrase ὄρει καὶ πόλει in v.

22 and a catchword association between λαλοῦντι (v. 24) and λαλοῦντα (v. 25). In v. 24 ellipsis is used while comparing Jesus' blood and Abel's blood. To show that the real basis of comparison is in the persons of Jesus and Abel, not in the blood itself, blood is not mentioned in the case of Abel (παρὰ τὸν Ἄβελ).

Mack points out: "Early Christians were not unskilled, either as critics of their cultures of context or as proponents of their own emerging persuasions" (1990, 31). Using the remarkable contrast given in vv. 18-24, the author shows that choosing the situation of the old covenant simply would not make any sense. He dissuades the readers from being attracted to the old covenant and at the same time persuades them to appreciate and appropriate what was given to them in the new covenant.

In v. 25 we have already seen that ἐπὶ γῆς goes with τὸν χρηματίζοντα, not with παραιτησάμενοι. Here ἐπὶ γῆς is "thrown to the front for the sake of emphasis" (Moffatt 1924, 220). This use of the so-called "hyperbaton"¹³⁵ is to stress the contrast between the earthly character of the old covenant and the heavenly character of the new covenant. This contrast is further highlighted by ellipsis in the phrase τὸν [χρηματίζοντα] ἀπ' οὐρανῶν.

In v. 25 the so-called a fortiori argument¹³⁶ is used to emphasize the greater responsibility (πολὺ μᾶλλον) of the readers corresponding to their greater privilege. Fenton's

¹³⁵ Cf. Moffatt (1924, 220); Attridge (1989, 379; 1992, 99).

¹³⁶ Cf. 9:13-14; 10:25; 10:28-29; 12:9.

comment on 10:29 applies here in exactly the same way. He says: "If God has provided us with better things, our punishment will be worse (*χείρων*) if we misuse them" (1982, 178-79). The effect of this argument is enhanced by the use of the rhetorical question. In v. 26 a prophetic prediction is used to strengthen the argument. This is particularly effective because the author shares the common conviction that the Old Testament is the very word of God. As usual the author uses both imperative (v. 25) and hortatory subjunctive (v. 29).

As Attridge (1989, 383) comments (in fact, he says that "this is a clear case of hendiadys"), the phrase "with reverence and awe" in v. 28 may be considered as a hendiadys and can be rendered as "with reverent awe." In v. 29 the author concludes this section with a memorable sententious phrase.

In this section also many rare terms (*ἐπισκοπέω, ἐνοχλέω, πρωτοτόκια, γνόφος, ζόφος, θύελλα, φαντάζω, φοβερός, ἀσάλευτος, δέος* and *καταναλίσκω*) are used to get attention from the readers. The phrase *διαθήκη νέα* is also "unique in early Christian literature" (Attridge 1989, 376). The noun *βρῶσις* is unique at least in Hebrews, though the synonymous word *βρῶμα* is used in 13:9.

5.4.4 Conclusions regarding perseverance in Heb 12:14-29

1. The readers are strongly warned against apostasy. The author wants the readers not to miss the grace of God by apostasy. Once rejected by God, there is no possibility of repentance. The readers must not refuse him who speaks. He will once more shake what can be shaken so that what cannot be

shaken may remain. He is a consuming fire. Although being negative, fear of God is an important motive for the readers' endurance.¹³⁷

2. More positively, the author motivates the readers to persevere in their race of πίστις because they are already participating in the blessings of the ultimate eschatological goal proleptically in their worship. By emphasizing the privileges they enjoy, the author encourages the readers to continue their pilgrimage to the city of the living God.

3. Both enjoying the privileges and taking the accompanying responsibilities must be expressed by pursuing peace and holiness in the privileged new covenant community, being thankful to God and worshipping him acceptably with reverence and awe.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Cf. 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:15-17.

¹³⁸ Cf. Minear, who aptly comments that the author desires that "the readers will become so keenly aware of their environment in the heavenly Jerusalem ... that their actions in their immediate social environments will constitute 'acceptable worship' of this God who speaks to them from Mount Zion" (1981, 149).