

# Resurrection and Priesthood: Christological Soundings from the Book of Hebrews

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In orthodox Christology, the priesthood of Christ has been a regular feature of Jesus' messianic portrait. In Reformed circles, the *munus triplex* goes back to before Calvin.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, when Jacob Arminius gave his doctoral sermon, his subject was none other than the priesthood of Christ.<sup>2</sup> In the seventeenth century, debate swirled around the Socinians,<sup>3</sup> who denied the earthly priesthood of Jesus, and evangelical scholars like John Owen, whose seven-volume commentary on Hebrews (with doctrinal excurses) all but exhausted the subject.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in more recent centuries the priesthood of Christ, when it has not been ignored entirely, has been truncated and tersely treated by most systematic theologians.<sup>5</sup>

A counter-example to this scholarly trend is the work of David M. Moffitt. His monograph, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle of Hebrews*, makes a bold argument for making resurrection central to of Hebrews' portrayal of Jesus' priesthood.<sup>6</sup> While this article does not stand in total agreement with his resurrection-centered approach to Hebrews or

Christ's priesthood,<sup>7</sup> I do agree that the resurrection plays an under-appreciated role in qualifying Jesus to be a *heavenly* priest. As Moffitt argues, Christ's resurrection is *the* central qualification for his priesthood, but, as I will argue, his resurrection does not begin his priesthood (so Socinus and Moffitt), and neither is his resurrection the only qualification.<sup>8</sup> Rather, his resurrection vindicates his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice, even as it transforms his priesthood to its exalted and perpetual status in heaven.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in dialogue with Moffitt's illuminating study, this essay will demonstrate how Christ's resurrection is the "qualifying" event that (1) *vindicates* his earthly life and priestly sacrifice and (2) *transforms* Jesus' earthly priesthood to that of his greater, eternal, heavenly priesthood.

The benefit of this proposal, which wades into a long and complicated debate,<sup>10</sup> is this: it provides a theological "solution" (read: proposal) that hopes to resolve *some* of the tensions between the resurrection's role and place in Hebrews and evangelical theologians who tend to center Christ's work on the cross.<sup>11</sup> For instance, biblical scholars like Moffitt and Kibbe argue that an honest reading of Hebrews moves them to embrace, or at least be sympathetic toward, a Socinian view of Christ's resurrection and priesthood.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of Hebrews, Moffitt rejects and Kibbe questions Christ's earthly priesthood. By contrast, theologians going back to Owen have disavowed Socinianism because in denying Christ's earthly priesthood, they undermine the priestly nature and sacrificial work of Christ's cross.<sup>13</sup> To be balanced, Moffitt and Kibbe's work on the resurrection in Hebrews recovers a missing piece in Christ's priestly sacrifice (namely, his resurrection, exaltation, and heavenly presentation), but their singular emphasis on Christ's *post*-resurrection priesthood leads to the same concerns that Owen issued more than three centuries ago. To deny Christ's earthly priesthood is to change the nature of his atoning sacrifice, and it may even create an unintended fissure in the person Christ—between the person he was on earth (a non-priest) and is now in heaven (a priest like Melchizedek).

In response, I will follow a biblical-theological course proposed by Bruce McCormack to engage Moffitt and Kibbe's exegetical labors.<sup>14</sup> To use McCormack's words, in this "collaborative, interdisciplinary exercise,"<sup>15</sup> I will suggest a way forward regarding Christ's resurrection and priesthood that incorporates many of Moffitt's exegetical insights into a larger biblical-theological framework—something Kibbe observes is lacking in Moffitt's methodology.<sup>16</sup>

However, while affirming his insights regarding resurrection and priesthood, I will add them to the longstanding view that Christ did priestly work on earth and on the cross.<sup>17</sup> My hope is that such a theological engagement of these exegetical debates will provide greater theological clarity to Christ's resurrection and priesthood, even as Moffitt's work has helpfully pressed our noses back into the text.

To sum up my proposal, I will seek to demonstrate that Christ's resurrection transforms his earthly but unrecognized priesthood into his heavenly priesthood. My thesis argues against those who stress his priestly sacrifice without consideration for his resurrection, and it critiques others who emphasize Christ's resurrection with little regard for his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice. The goal of this article, therefore, is to prove three things: First, I will note the central role of the resurrection in Hebrews. Second, from Hebrews 5:5–10 I will argue that Christ's resurrection secures his sonship and his priesthood. By looking at the biblical-theological work of Scott Hahn on sonship and priestly primogeniture, we can have a better understanding of how the title of "son" given to Christ at his resurrection qualifies him for his heavenly priesthood.<sup>18</sup> Third, from Hebrews 7:13–28 I will show how Christ's resurrection qualifies him to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. This section will also engage the Old Testament, as I engage the exegetical work of Karl Deenick on 1 Samuel 2:35, a passage that may have a surprising effect on the way we look at resurrection and priesthood in Hebrews 7.<sup>19</sup> By looking at the two main passages in Hebrews that relate Christ's resurrection to his priesthood in Hebrews, I will aim to prove the unity of Christ's priesthood, as well as acknowledging the transformation of Christ's priesthood that took place at the resurrection.

## **RESURRECTION AND PRIESTHOOD: SOUNDINGS IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

It is the aim of this section to demonstrate the relationship between priesthood and resurrection. Against commentators (e.g., Vanhoye, Bruce, Lane, Lindars, Ellingworth, O'Brien) who attach Christ's priesthood to his death (and intercession) in Hebrews,<sup>20</sup> and against others (e.g., Calvin, Peterson, Attridge) who interpret Christ's entrance into heavenly places as metaphorical,<sup>21</sup> this section will argue that Christ's bodily resurrection is necessary for

his heavenly priesthood. While it is a standard evangelical option to deemphasize or overlook bodily resurrection in Hebrews, I agree with Moffitt and Kibbe—Christ’s resurrection is extant in Hebrews and plays a significant part in the author’s explanation for how Christ could serve as high priest.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, it is the burden of this essay to prove that Christ’s resurrection neither initiates his priesthood (the Socinian view), nor bifurcates his humiliation from his exaltation.<sup>23</sup> Rather, Christ’s person and work is a unity,<sup>24</sup> and as such, our Lord’s resurrection qualifies him for heavenly service, even as his priestly service on earth qualifies him to be raised from the dead.

### ***Resurrection in Hebrews***

Moffitt has rightly observed that scholarly consensus on Hebrews views Jesus’ resurrection as secondary or even unnecessary.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, he ascribes to Christ’s resurrection *the* crucial role in qualifying Jesus to be a heavenly high priest.<sup>26</sup> While I contest the exaggerated position he gives to the resurrection because it eclipses Christ’s sacrifice, Moffitt’s work develops themes that others have ignored or explained away.<sup>27</sup> Building on and interacting with his research, I will seek to develop a reciprocal understanding between Christ’s resurrection and priesthood. That is to say, I believe that Jesus’ obedience as an earthly priest qualifies him to be raised from the dead after his offering, and in turn his resurrection qualifies him to be a greater high priest.

To assess the relationship between resurrection and priesthood, three propositions must be established. First, amidst the sacrificial imagery of the epistle, Hebrews affirms bodily resurrection. Second, Hebrews speaks explicitly of Christ’s resurrection. Third, Hebrews makes at least two significant textual connections between resurrection and priesthood (Heb 5:5–10 and 7:11–28). By briefly touching on the first two propositions and examining the third in greater detail, I will attempt to show the merits and missteps of Moffitt’s work.

#### *Hebrews 6:2; 11:17–19; 11:35 affirm bodily resurrection*

There are four explicit references to resurrection in Hebrews. To begin, Hebrews 6:2 speaks of “the resurrection of the dead” as an “elementary doctrine” (v. 1). Thus, we can infer that the author of Hebrews both affirms the doctrine of bodily resurrection and that this doctrine informs his letter.<sup>28</sup> This affirmation of resurrection is verified in passages like Hebrews 11:17–19

and 11:35. In the former, the author suggests Abraham reckoned in his mind “that God was able even to raise him from the dead” when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:2). Likewise, Hebrews 11:35 speaks of women “receiv[ing] back their dead by resurrection” and others “refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again [*anastaseōs*, translated “resurrection” in 6:2; 11:35a] to a better life.” Moffitt rightly distinguishes temporary resurrection (e.g., “women receiving back their dead”) from eschatological resurrection (e.g., the “better life”), and concludes, “The better resurrection ... produces the kind of life fit to inherit the fullness of the other eschatological promises—an enduring city and a heavenly homeland.”<sup>29</sup> From his brief survey, it is evident that resurrection is a subject familiar to the author of Hebrews, and that it is not illegitimate to speak of resurrection in the epistle.

*Christ’s resurrection is explicitly mentioned in Hebrews 13:20–21*

Though not without detractors, most commentators recognize 13:20 as referring to Jesus’ resurrection.<sup>30</sup> In this passage the agent of resurrection is the Father (“the God of peace”); the object of resurrection is the Lord Jesus (“brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus”), and the place from which he is brought back is the “realm of the dead.”<sup>31</sup> Theologically, Hebrews 13:20 summarizes much of Hebrews covenant theology: “God has established a new covenant with his people through the ‘leading out’ of Jesus from the realm of the dead.”<sup>32</sup> Conceptually similar to Paul’s “raised with Christ” (Rom 6:4–6; 1 Cor 15:20–24), the author of Hebrews unites priest and people by means of the covenantal bond established by Christ’s death and resurrection. Even more, as Hebrews 13:20–21 stands dependent on the new exodus passage of Isaiah 63:11–14, the climactic reference to resurrection speaks of Christ leading his people out of death, much like Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

The point of his resurrection, therefore, is twofold. (1) Christ is raised ultimately to receive “glory forever and ever.” But also, (2) Christ’s resurrection situates him as the shepherd and priestly-mediator (cf. Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) “through [whom]” the Father equips the sheep with the promises of the new covenant, enabling them to “do his will” (13:21). We will return to the relationship between death and resurrection below, but for now it is worth observing that the author of Hebrews explicates in his concluding benediction what he has insinuated all along—namely, that a new priest

has “arisen” (7:15) who mediates a better covenant by means of his better life.<sup>34</sup> Though intimated in only one verse, it is well within reason to conclude that the author of Hebrews has a strong understanding of resurrection, and that Christ’s resurrection with his people depends on the blood he shed as priest for those same people. This will receive further corroboration in the next section, where Hebrews 5 and 7 ground Christ’s heavenly priesthood in his resurrection.

### ***Sonship, Resurrection, and Priesthood (Hebrews 5:5–10)***

Hebrews 5:1–10 is one of the two primary passages relating priesthood and resurrection. In the flow of the letter, chapter 5 begins to outline the way in which Christ is a legitimate (and better) priest. Already, the designation “high priest” has been used four times about Jesus (2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15), but now, anticipating objections to Jesus’ non-Levitical lineage (cf. 7:14), the author explains how a man from the tribe of Judah can be a priest.<sup>35</sup> While not fully developing his Melchizedekian explanation until chapter 7, Hebrews 5:1–10 drives toward this conclusion: Christ is “designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (v. 10). It is this typological description that legitimates Jesus’ priesthood. But why?

What is it about Jesus’ priesthood which stands in continuity with Melchizedek? In Hebrews 7, the connection will be explicated at length, and there the author of Hebrews will explain that Jesus’ indestructible life is like that of Melchizedek who had “no beginning days or end of life” (7:3). But what about in Hebrews 5:5–10? What do we find in this text that affirms and authorizes Jesus’ priesthood? And what relates Jesus’ priesthood to his resurrection? In one word the answer is “sonship.”

In Hebrews 5:5 the author compares Christ to the Aaronic priests of old (described in vv. 1–4). He states that Christ “did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him [God]” (v. 5), and then he cites two texts: Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4. These two passages are “mutually illuminating” with respect to the royal priesthood of Christ. As Hahn puts it, “In the author’s view, divine sonship, royal priesthood, and the order of Melchizedek represent different but complementary ways of stating the same essential truth of Davidic identity and messianic mission.”<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Christ’s appointment as “Son” corresponds with his appointment as priest.<sup>37</sup> Or to say it more precisely, Christ is appointed a priest when God calls him

“Son.” However, to understand the significance of his “sonship,” as newly appointed office at his resurrection, we need to see two things—first, we need to recognize the timing of his appointment; second, we need to return to the Old Testament to see the runway on which “sonship” takes off, so we can understand how it lands in Hebrews.

### *Appointed a Son at His Resurrection*

I will argue that Christ was appointed Son at his resurrection for three reasons. First, in Hebrews 1, Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 are referenced together. Verse 3 alludes to Psalm 110:1 (“he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”), while verse 5 quotes Psalm 2:7.<sup>38</sup> Standing between them is the announcement that Christ has received a better name than the angels (“having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs”). While debates range on whether the “inherited name” pertains to Christ’s deity or humanity, Moffitt’s argument that Hebrews 1 speaks of the resurrected Christ better explains the argument of the chapter.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, if Hebrews 1:3 speaks of the Son exalted at God’s right hand, then Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 have already been conjoined in Hebrews to posit the Son’s resurrection.

Second, the flow of thought and language in Hebrews 5 is best understood in terms of resurrection. Arguing on the basis of Christ’s “perfection,” Moffitt relates the logical order of Hebrews 5:7–9 to Hebrews 2:9–11; in both cases “perfection” (viz., “crowned with glory and honor” in 2:9; “being made perfect” in 5:9) follow his “suffering.”<sup>40</sup> He solidifies his case by showing that “perfection” in Hebrews relates to Christ’s “enduring life.” While both Levites and Jesus died, only one rose from the grave to have power over death. Therefore, Jesus is a better priest because he was raised to life. In Hebrews 5:7–10, Jesus’ prayer was heard, just like the righteous sufferers of old (cf. Ps 4:2–4; 6:9–10; 22:23–25; 31:20–25; 90:14–16),<sup>41</sup> only it was not answered in keeping him from death (see Heb 2:9), it was answered in raising him from the dead (cf. Ps 88). Nevertheless, that Jesus was heard and saved means that he did not regard iniquity in his heart (Ps 66:18); rather, he was heard for his righteousness and trust (cf. Ps 22:22–24).

Third, Romans 1:4 sheds light on Hebrews 5:5, for both speak of the Son of God with respect to the resurrection. Schreiner comments: “The title *huiou theou* in verse 3 is a reference not to Jesus’ deity but to his messianic

kingship as the descendent of David (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7),” a messianic kingship that was given to him “upon his resurrection.”<sup>42</sup> Significantly, the same verse (Ps 2:7) that informed Paul’s introduction to Romans (1:3–4) is quoted in Hebrews 5:5. In both texts, (royal) sonship and priesthood are conferred to Christ, not with respect to his divine nature, but with respect to his Davidic sonship and his priestly exaltation.<sup>43</sup> At his resurrection Christ received the title “Son of God,” and with that title came the universal right to rule as royal priest (Ps 110:1). Commenting on this point in Hebrews, Hughes represents many who see the strong association between royal son and priest: “The collocation of these two messianic affirmations ... shows how closely within the perspective of the history of redemption the Sonship and the Priesthood of Christ belong together.”<sup>44</sup> And it is to this redemptive history that we turn to understand better how Jesus’ resurrection elevates the priesthood of Christ by means of giving him the name “Son.”

#### *Sonship in the Old Testament and in Hebrews*

Scott Hahn, discussing the importance of sonship in Hebrews, notes, “the inner unity of sonship, royalty, and priesthood is not readily apparent” to “the modern reader,” but that in the worldview of first-century Judaism “Christ’s threefold role as firstborn son, king, and high priest (i.e., Christ’s royal priestly primogeniture) represents the restoration of an original and superior form of covenant meditation.”<sup>45</sup> But what exactly is that “original and superior form of covenant mediation?” Hahn’s contention is that the superior form of meditation relates to “kinship” or “sonship,” the familial bond made through a covenant (hence, his “kinship by covenant”).<sup>46</sup> On this reading, the priesthood is not tied to legal heritage (like with Aaron and Levi) but to family relations and blessed birthright. Indeed, Hahn argues that Hebrews is showing that the covenant Christ mediates is not just replacing the servile law of Moses (cf. Heb 3:1–6), but it is returning to the better privilege of sonship, whereby the son of God is permitted to come into his presence on behalf of all those children God has given him (Heb 2:11–18; 5:1). But to appreciate fully the priestly sonship God conferred upon Jesus, we need to return to the Old Testament.

Hahn provides a well-documented case for the “the cultic-familial nexus of primogeniture, priesthood, and paternal succession.”<sup>47</sup> Discussing primogeniture in Genesis and Exodus, he argues the ancient rite carried with it a



priestly status: "Canonical evidence points to the existence of a pre-Levitical form of priestly activity before the Mosaic period."<sup>48</sup> Citing arguments from natural law,<sup>49</sup> Jewish Targums on Genesis,<sup>50</sup> and the biblical text itself (e.g., Gen 49:3; Exod 4:22; 19:5–6; Num 3:11–13; 8:16–18; 18:15),<sup>51</sup> Hahn maintains that the eldest son was "in the natural position not only for paternal succession but for mediation (social, legal, and cultic) between father and siblings as well."<sup>52</sup> He shows that many Jewish interpreters of Genesis 49:3 ("Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power") ascribe a priestly significance to Reuben, believing that Jacob's eldest son was considered a priest among his brothers, before he fell by defiling his father's bed (49:4; cf. 35:22).

Other recent scholars have followed this interpretation of priestly primogeniture. Speaking specifically of the language of Genesis 49:3, J. R. Porter describes the "special authority of the first-born." He writes, "The first-born was in a unique position, depending on the fact that he was 'the beginning of the father's strength,' which seems to be almost a technical expression and which means that the son in question was endowed with the fullness of the father's authority and power."<sup>53</sup> Likewise, H. C. Brichto summarizes his copious work on kin, cult, land, and afterlife, by saying, "There is ample evidence that the role of priest in the Israelite family had at one time been filled by the firstborn."<sup>54</sup> Finally, Van Groningen writes, "In the firstborn the dual capacity for king and priest is implicitly implied."<sup>55</sup> Later Scriptures, while separating the priesthood (in Levi) from the kingdom (in Judah and David), would also see the reunification of royal and priestly offices (cf. 1 Sam 2:35; Ps 110; Jer 30:21–22; Zech 3:1–10; 6:9–15).

Following Genesis, sonship and priesthood continued to overlap in the life of Israel. In Exodus 4:22, Israel is called God's "firstborn," and later they are referred to as a "royal priesthood" (19:6).<sup>56</sup> Such identity-markers stand as weather vanes for the whole book of Exodus, where from one angle, we can see the whole drama of Exodus as a competition of "firstborn sons." Van Groningen writes, "The Egyptians believed that the firstborn son was a direct link between generations of royal people. In fact, the firstborn son was considered a specific and direct representative of the gods to the Egyptian people." Hence, Moses was to "inform Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, that God, the Lord of the patriarchs, claims Israel as his representative people," a role that Pharaoh wrongly claimed for himself.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the story of the exodus

becomes not only a story of deliverance, but also the redemption of God's firstborn who will become his true royal priests. As Hahn concludes, in Exodus "Israel is called to royal priestly service as the collective firstborn son within God's family of nations."<sup>58</sup> Identified as God's "firstborn" (4:22) and "royal priesthood" (19:5–6), Exodus shows priestly service as an out-working of Israel's sonship.

Moving into Israel's history, Israel's priestly status rose and fell with its covenantal sonship.<sup>59</sup> When the people of God kept covenant with God, they receive God's blessings. When they sinned against God, and especially when the priests failed to keep covenant with God, the whole nation suffered (cf. Ezek 8:1–18; Hos 4:6; 5:1; 6:9). While Israel eventually experienced exile because its royal sons failed to keep the Davidic Covenant (Ps 89), it is equally the case that the sons of Levi failed to keep their covenant (Mal 2:1–9). As a nation whose identity found its origins and vocational pursuits in Adam—the prototypical royal-priest and firstborn son—when Israel broke the covenant, God could no longer treat them as a son (cf. Mal 1:6–14; 2:10).

The Golden Calf incident, it has been argued, disqualified Israel from retaining its full priesthood.<sup>60</sup> After Exodus 32, only the sons of Levi, who sided with God against their brothers, could be priests (Exod 32:25–29; Deut 33:8–11). Independent of one's final conclusion about the Golden Calf's effect on Israel's priesthood, the rest of the Old Testament shows a downward spiral of priestly service. Whereas the Pentateuch provides the biblical ideal, the Prophets record the collapse of the priestly office.<sup>61</sup> By Zechariah 3:1–4 and Malachi 2:1–9, the priesthood was defiled and dead. It had failed to guard the temple, teach the people, or provide atonement that cleansed the flesh.<sup>62</sup> What laws promised "maintenance of life" (Lev 18:5) and "access" to God (Lev 26:11–12) had failed, and now a new priesthood needed to be raised from the dead. Metaphorical as this sounds, the reality and the promise is absolutely literal: God was going to raise a new royal son who would be a better priest (see the treatment of 1 Sam 2:35 below).

Based on Hahn's biblical-theological study, we need to recapture Christ's "threefold role" in Hebrews. And more, we need to recognize that Christ's appointment as "Son" at his resurrection exalted the offices he already possessed in humility. This article focuses on his priesthood, but Schenck has made the same point regarding his sonship and his royal office, which, as Hahn has shown, are essentially related to Christ's priesthood.<sup>63</sup> Schenck writes,

At his enthronement, Christ truly *becomes* Son in the sense that he assumes his royal and takes his divine ‘appointment,’ but in his *identity* he has always been the Son, ... One might say, thus, that although Christ is always the Son in terms of his *identity* (even before his exaltation, as a kind of ‘heir apparent’), he can only be said to be ‘enthroned’ as Son in the inheritance of his royal *office* when he is exalted to God’s right hand.<sup>64</sup>

Schenck’s proposal guards against adding something to Jesus, a concern shared by theologians who take seriously the unchanging, divine nature of the Son (Heb 13:8), but it also recognizes that his resurrection does something in the human life of Jesus.<sup>65</sup> Whereas his earthly obedience was not recognized as a legitimate priesthood; now, named “Son,” exalted above the angels, and seated at God’s right hand (Heb 1:5–14), he has become the source of eternal life (5:9) and has the right to intercede for all those whom he led from death unto glory (13:20–21; 2:9–11).

Summing up our consideration of Hebrews 5, we can say Jesus’ greater priesthood stands on the basis of his resurrection, but his resurrection stands on the basis of his reverence as a true son (5:7). In his earthly life, he learned obedience, as he obeyed the law as human son (cf. Gal 4:4). Facing death, he cried out for salvation, and like David in the Psalms, and because of his greater covenantal obedience under the old law, he was heard and raised from the dead. Upon that resurrection, his pre-existent sonship was vindicated and his priesthood was transformed. At the very same time, his resurrection became the source of life for all his people. While the resurrection “perfected” Jesus (5:9) and situated him in the heavens as a priest like Melchizedek (5:10); it also ratified a covenant with the people God gave to him (i.e., his sons and daughters, the seed of Abraham, 2:11–18). While sounding like Paul’s doctrine of imputation, Christ’s priestly role (5:1) means that his reverence became our reverence, his holiness our holiness, his resurrection our resurrection. In this way, he became the source of eternal salvation, not by simple force of nature (life conquering death), but rather by his sinless life (4:15) and sin-canceling sacrifice (9:22, 26), he led his people out of death into life by his blood (13:20–21).

From this reading of Hebrews 5:5–10, we begin to see the interconnectedness of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The son who was born in Bethlehem, who walked through Galilee, who pleased his Father at his

baptism, and died on Calvary, is given the name “Son” and enthroned on high. Moffitt is surely right that perfection in Hebrews relates to Christ’s resurrection and enduring life; however, if his resurrection grants him perfection and life, it is because he has already lived a sinless life while on earth (4:15). By means of his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice, Christ perfectly fulfilled the law and as such, the Father granted him life as his reward (cf. Lev 18:5) and the heavenly position to grant life to all those he died for as priest. To clarify and confirm that assertion, we turn to Hebrews 7.

### ***A Priest like Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:13-25)***

Though mentioned only twice in the Old Testament (Gen 14; Ps 110:4), the author of Hebrews finds in Melchizedek an enigmatic priest-king who is greater than Abraham and Levi. More importantly, Melchizedek provides a solution to the riddle mentioned in Hebrews 7:14: How can a non-Levite arise as high priest? For Israelites, especially those who sought to keep the law, a non-Levitical priest was an oxymoron, and thus a strong reason to reject Jesus. The whole of chapter 7 is spent answering that question and expounding the meaning of Psalm 110:4, which advocates a different and better kind of high priest.<sup>66</sup>

Simon Kistemaker outlines the chapter, noting how Hebrews explains Psalm 110:4 in reverse order.

The exegesis recorded in the pericope 7:1–25 in general terms may be classified in four divisions ... The author takes hold of the last word “Melchizedek” and places it in a historical setting (7:1–3); in the next passage he discusses the word “priest” (7:4–11) and priestly “order” (7:11–13); two verses are devoted to the personal pronoun “thou” (7:13–14); and the remainder (7:15–25) elaborates “for ever.”<sup>67</sup>

Kistemaker makes the additional point that while the four divisions are “rather vague,” “there is a well-defined division between 7:1–12 and 7:13–25,” and the latter section “exegetes the clause ‘thou art a priest *forever*.’”<sup>68</sup> As we will see, it is this section that expounds most clearly the way in which Christ’s resurrection qualifies him to be a high priest like Melchizedek. In this section, there are at least four passages that show how resurrection stands behind Christ’s claim to priesthood. We will consider them in order, with the first

point taking us back to 1 Samuel 2:35, a passage that greatly informs Christ's exalted priesthood.

*Christ's Resurrection Makes Him Like Melchizedek*

Verse 15 speaks of "another priest *arising* in the likeness of Melchizedek." In the context, the verb "arises" (*anistēmi*) can "simply refer to a state of affairs coming into being or to an individual taking an office ... but the writer seems to use this language in 7:15 to indicate something more."<sup>69</sup> What is the "more"? Moffitt suggests that it is a subtle affirmation of Christ's resurrection.<sup>70</sup> O'Brien concurs. While affirming Christ's incarnation in general, he states the term "is likely ... an implicit reference to the resurrection."<sup>71</sup> In addition to the context of Hebrews 7 and the recurring use of *anistēmi* in resurrection passages, there may also be a connection with 1 Samuel 2:35,<sup>72</sup> a passage which speaks of God "raising up" a new priest from the line of David. Though this inter-textual link has not received much attention, in the matrix of priesthood and resurrection it bears consideration.

When the priesthood of Eli was crumbling due his sons' wickedness, God said, "And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever" (1 Sam 2:35). In this priestly promise, resurrection language (i.e., "raise up," *anastēsō*) appears. In its original setting, bodily resurrection was not likely in view.<sup>73</sup> However, it could not be far from the author's mind. For, it is more than coincidental that in the same chapter, Hannah praises God for "raising" the dead to life: "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (2:6). In its immediate context, "raise up a faithful priest" has the notion of appointment to an office, but when Yahweh speaks of "a *sure* house" and "my anointed *forever*," something more enduring must be in mind.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, when we read 1 Samuel 2:35 in light of the full biblical canon, a significant verbal connection is found with Hebrews 7:15.<sup>75</sup>

In Hebrews 7:11 and 15, the language of "arise/arises" is used to speak of a new priest. Nelson observes, "Just as God 'raised up' a faithful priest in the crisis brought on by Eli's sons (1 Sam 2:35), God has now 'raised up' (pun no doubt intended) another priest outside the Aaronic system."<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, Nelson sees the verbal connection as a pun and no more. Moffitt rightly endorses "arising" in 7:15 as "a reference to Jesus' resurrection," but doesn't

make a connection with 1 Samuel 2:35.<sup>77</sup> We need both observations. The near context of Hebrews shows that Christ's resurrection qualifies him for his heavenly ministry, but the canonical context helps explain the origins of Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood. If we permit, therefore, a connection between 1 Samuel 2:35 and Hebrews 7:15, we may also find that Jesus' exalted priesthood not only has Psalm 110 in its background, but a whole Davidic priesthood that is gradually developed over the course of the Old Testament. But can we say that 1 Samuel 2:35 advocates a Davidic priesthood? On what basis? And by whose law?

Interpretive history has typically assigned Samuel or Zadok to be the "faithful priest" of 1 Samuel 2:35.<sup>78</sup> However, Karl Deenick is more persuasive.<sup>79</sup> Considering a number of textual indicators (the language of "messiah" in the early chapters of 1 Samuel,<sup>80</sup> historical context,<sup>81</sup> literary development,<sup>82</sup> and covenantal promises<sup>83</sup>), he argues David is the fleeting fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Eugene Merrill writes, "The strongest suggestion of Davidic royal priesthood occurs in 2 Sam 6" when "David himself was in charge [of] leading the entourage" to the temple, and he was "clothed in priestly attire, offering sacrifice and issuing priestly benediction."<sup>85</sup> Going further, Merrill adds, "Neither the chronicler nor the author of Samuel mentions a priest in the whole course of sacrificing. Clearly David saw himself as a priest and was accepted by the people and the Levites as such."<sup>86</sup>

Merrill is on solid biblical ground when he makes his assertion that David functions as a priest, but it should be recognized, as Deenick observes, that David's fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35 is ephemeral. While 1–2 Samuel indicates that he is a "priest-king," his own sin truncates his priestly service.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, by the end of David's life what was promised in 1 Samuel 2:35 is still without fulfillment. The people of Israel must await another "anointed priest."<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, 1 Samuel 2:35 adds to the composite picture of the eschatological priest.<sup>89</sup>

Through the complex history of 1–2 Samuel, God refined and advanced the typological shape of his priest.<sup>90</sup> God's "faithful priest" will not stumble like the sons of Levi (Mal 2:1–9), but will perfectly succeed like the "king of righteousness" himself (Ps 110). In this way, "Yahweh has used David to demonstrate the kind of priest-king about which 1 Samuel 2:35 is prophesying. The flawed David is held up as a model, as a picture ... of what the

ultimate priest-king would be.”<sup>91</sup> Speaking of David as a kind of mold for the eschatological priest, Deenick writes,

Perhaps most surprising to the careful reader is that it is a king who is intended to function as a priest not after the *mold* of Aaron, but, as Ps 110 and the writer of Hebrews make clear (Heb 7), after the *mold* of a superior priesthood (Heb 5:1-7:28), after the *mold* of Melchizedek ... In Heb 5:1-2 the “weakness” of the earthly high priests is identified as their sinfulness. In contrast, the oath of Ps 110:4 appointed Jesus as a priest who is without such weakness. This is the central thought of the Melchizedekian priesthood. So, although the books of Samuel show that the fulfillment of the promise of 1 Sam 2:35 was to be found in the house of David, they also show that the ultimate fulfillment of the “anointed priest” lay not in David, but in Jesus Christ.<sup>92</sup>

How do we pull this together? Preliminarily, I suggest that the priesthood that arises from this text and ultimately culminates in Christ, includes both a genealogical principle (the priest will come from the house of David) *and* a supernatural power (the priest must have an indestructible life and power to raise the dead to life). Regarding the former, the genealogical principle is carried along in David’s lineage and validated by the promise of being called God’s son (2 Sam 7:14), which as we have seen comes to have great priestly significance in Christ’s resurrection (cf. Heb 5:5-6). Additionally, David’s covenant comes with a new law (see 2 Sam 7:19); this “charter for humanity” may adumbrate Hebrews 7:12: “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”<sup>93</sup> Regarding the latter supernatural power, the later prophecies in Isaiah 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2 couple Davidic kingship with divine attributes, thus joining together what seems improbable to mankind. But as Gabriel said to Mary, with respect to the fulfillment of these prophecies, “Nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37)—certainly not a royal priesthood that looks like Melchizedek, not like Aaron.

All in all, weaving through the Old Testament, these two principles find their interpretive end (*telos*) in Jesus Christ. It is possible that David himself foresaw this coming royal priesthood when he wrote Psalm 110. After all, Peter, in Acts 3:29-35, assigns him the appellation “prophet” (v. 30), when he speaks of David receiving an oath (v. 30; cf. Ps 110:4), beholding



Christ's resurrection (v. 31), and quoting from Psalm 110 (v. 34–35). In fact, Acts 3:22 and 26 speak of God "raising up," respectively, a "prophet like Moses" and "his servant." Is this further evidence for seeing Christ's resurrection elevating, even transforming, his various offices? It is worth further consideration.

Indeed, through the interpretive lens of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as his unified offices, we can better see how Hebrews applied Old Testament types and shadows to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. To say it another way, what is seen in the shadows of the Old Testament has found its substance in Christ (cf. Heb 10:1), a priest-king like Melchizedek who arises from the line of David and who even rises from the dead. This son of David is the one spoken of in Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4 (cited together in Heb 5:5–6) who was to receive his promised inheritance, and who now intercedes for his people as a priestly-king (Ps 2:7; cf. Isa 53:10–12) and rules the nations as warrior priest (Ps 2:8; cf. Ps 110:4–7). And all this was to transpire when he God raised him from the dead to receive the triple office of son, priest, and king, which brings us back to Hebrews 7.

*Christ's Indestructible Life Makes Him a Better Priest*

The second evidence for how Christ's resurrection transforms Christ's priesthood is found in verse 16. In that verse Jesus is said to be a priest "not on the basis of a legal requirement, but by the power of indestructible life." The contrast between Jesus and the sons of Aaron focuses on their differing qualifications for priesthood. The Levites had served as Israel's priests for more than a millennium and their claim on the priesthood was established "by bodily descent."<sup>94</sup> To faithful Jews, no other priesthood could exist—the law established the Levites. However, as Hebrews 7 asserts, there existed in Israel's history an antecedent and superior priesthood—it was the priesthood of Melchizedek who had "neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues forever a priest forever" (7:3). Hebrews picks up this typological similarity and argues that Christ is a priest like Melchizedek. Consequently, he is greater than Aaron, because his life has no end. As Hebrews 7:15 puts it Christ has become a priest based on "the power of an indestructible life."<sup>95</sup> This is the qualification that transforms Christ's priesthood—namely the resurrection he experienced because of his perfect holiness, that he would in turn pass on to his brothers as he became



the source of their sanctification (2:10) and eternal salvation (5:9).<sup>96</sup>

The logic of resurrection resulting from his death has been observed by Moffitt in Hebrews 2:9–11 and again in Hebrews 5:7–10.<sup>97</sup> After suffering for his brothers, the Son was raised from the dead and given authority to bring many sons to glory. In this way, he became the source of life for all who were sanctified—first Christ, then his brothers. Moffitt, however, downplays the importance of his suffering, saying it “is not the author’s point.”<sup>98</sup> While not denying the role of Christ’s death,<sup>99</sup> he makes Christ’s death a preparatory prerequisite for his priesthood, rather than a performative one, to use Kibbe’s nomenclature.<sup>100</sup> The problem arises in this: by limiting the role of Christ’s sacrifice, Moffitt undermines the very thing that qualifies Jesus to be raised from the dead—namely, his obedience unto death. While Christ’s exalted priesthood depends on his resurrection from the dead; his resurrection depends on his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice (see the tight relationship in Heb 13:20–21). The two work in tandem, and one cannot be held over against the other. Therefore, while Moffitt is right to assert that Christ’s indestructible life qualifies him to be a priest like Melchizedek, his resurrection is ultimately grounded in his moral perfection, not his mere power to overcome death.

#### *Christ’s Resurrection Enables Him to Mediate an Eternal Covenant*

The third argument for resurrection in Hebrews 7 concerns the displacement of the old covenant and inauguration of the new. Verse 18 reads, “a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness.” Already, the priesthood of Jesus has been posited as the reason for a new law (7:12). Likewise, “weakness” (*asthenēs*) used adjectivally of “the former commandment” is also used to speak of Levites in verse 28 and priests who are “beset with weakness” in Hebrews 5:2. By common language, and the way Hebrews 7:12 makes the priest antecedent to and the basis for the new covenant and not the reverse, it is entirely plausible that the whole covenant stands on the blood of Jesus Christ *and* his resurrection.

In fact, when we examine the covenantal transition initiated by Christ, we find two inseparable ideas. First, the penalty of the first covenant has been set aside. This is addressed in Hebrews 9:15–17, where Jesus’ death puts to death the curses of the old covenant. As Hahn writes, “The particular covenant occupying the author’s thought in 9:15–22 is the first Sinai

covenant, seen as a *broken* covenant after the calf incident.”<sup>101</sup> In his death Christ redeemed “the called” (i.e., the people he represents as priest) from the “transgressions committed under the first covenant” (v. 15). In other words, his death closed the book, so to speak, on the old covenant and established a “new covenant” containing “the promised eternal inheritance” (v. 15). Significantly, his death resulted in life—a fact that must be kept in mind as we speak of Christ’s resurrection. Whenever we speak of his resurrection, we must remember his death; whenever we read of his death, we must not forget his resurrection. Theologically, the two are inseparable, which brings us to the second idea to consider.

Jesus’ death ends the first covenant to establish a “new covenant,” one that cleanses the conscience (9:14), secures forgiveness (9:22), and makes a way for sanctified sinners to enter God’s presence (10:20). Regardless of how atonement, resurrection, and exaltation exactly fit together in Hebrews—a conundrum of no small measure—it is clear that death *and* resurrection are *both* required to put aside the old covenant and establish a new and living covenant. In fact, as Hebrews 13:20 indicates, it is the God of peace who raised Jesus from the dead “by the blood of the eternal covenant.” In other words, because Jesus, as mediator of the new covenant merited life as the reward of his earthly reverence, God raised him to life. And with his resurrection Jesus became a high priest who secured the gifts of forgiveness (8:13), cleansing (9:14), and indestructible life—the ability to draw near to God and not die (7:19). From heaven, he now bestows those gifts by means of the Holy Spirit.

Moffitt does not spend enough time considering the covenantal structures of Hebrews and therefore does not attend to the way in which Christ’s priesthood—at every point (life, death, and resurrection)—is representing the members of his covenant. In his life, he is obeying the law so that his obedient will might sanctify them (10:10). In his death, Christ offers himself up as the perfect and final sacrifice for their sins (9:15–28) thus propitiating the wrath of God (2:17). And in his resurrection, he receives his reward for his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice.

What is his reward? On one hand, we can say, it is everything promised to him, but more concretely, he receives his life back as a reward. Then, because he is a priestly figure and not just a private person, he also receives the lives of all those people for whom he died. In this way, his reward is the incalculable

joy of bringing his people into the presence of the Father, something no son of Israel ever did before (see Heb 3–4).

*Christ's Resurrection Proves His Holiness and Procures Ours*

In verse 21, the author quotes again from Psalm 110, focusing this time on the oath God swore (v. 20). Verse 22 indicates that this oath “makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.” Just as the oath God swore to Abraham secured his future and eternal blessings (Heb 6:13–20; 11:17–19), so the oath sworn to Jesus secured his priesthood. Explaining the significance of his perpetual priesthood, the author contrasts the Levites with Jesus. The former, he says, “were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (v. 24). This verse highlights the great weakness of the first priesthood—mortality. Because they died, their priesthood could not continue. Though Phineas was promised a “perpetual priesthood” (Num 25:13), he died in such a way that his priestly reverence was, in the end, no better than his brothers, Nadab and Abihu, who died offering strange fire (Lev 10:1–3).

Putting the pieces together, Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices for themselves because they were sinners. Before God they were unclean and unfit to enter his presence on the basis of their earthly lives. The same is *not* true for Jesus. Hebrews 10:5–10 makes it evident that he perfectly pleased the Father by doing his will (v. 9). Interestingly, in that same verse, Hebrews says, “He [Jesus] does away with the first in order to establish the second.” As observed in the last point, the covenantal transition cannot be limited to one aspect of Christ’s person and work (i.e., his death *or* his resurrection). The same point is made here: the new covenant is not only secured by his sacrificial death (10:10), but also through his earthly obedience (10:9). Indeed, the purity of his sacrifice, and hence its purifying (and life-giving) power, comes from the purity of his own life. Likewise, the bestowal of covenant blessings come not only from Christ’s death but also from his resurrection, and his heavenly session, where he always lives to intercede and plead the merits of life and death on behalf of those people who he represents as priest.

In theological terms, the efficacy of Christ’s passive obedience depends on his active obedience. And the resurrection then becomes the reward (think: covenantal blessing) Jesus receives for his earthly obedience and sacrificial death. And then as a priest who does nothing for himself, he shares

his reward with his friends, just like Zechariah 3 said the priest would do. Hebrews 7:25 summarizes nicely, “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

This is the foundation of the gospel in Hebrews. Jesus, who died in order to procure forgiveness, has been raised from the dead so that all who draw near to God through him may find life in God’s presence. Or, to put it more monergistically, as Hebrews 5:9 does, “being made perfect [i.e., resurrected], he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” And who obey him? All those whom Christ intercedes for (Heb 7:25), applying the blessings of the covenant to them—namely, the gift of purity, life, and desire to do God’s will (Ezek 36:26–27). In other words, Christ who died to establish a new covenant for his people was then raised to life in order to give eternal life. In his death, he redeemed his people from the death they deserved under the old covenant (9:15–17); and in his life, he intercedes on behalf of those same people (7:25), that they might experience his grace now and his glory when we comes—for after all, as Hebrews 9:28 says, the same Christ who lived, died, and rose again for his people is the same Christ who is coming for them at the end of the age (cf. 13:8).

## CONCLUSION

When we step back to look at Christ’s priestly résumé in Hebrews, it appears like a beautiful jewel. Or, maybe like a dozen jewels emblazoned on the chest of Christ’s priestly robe. From one angle his priesthood reflects the simple purity of his earthly life, from another the dark hues of his death bleed through, and from yet another angle the radiant glory of his resurrection and heavenly session are observed. In truth, depending on which aspect of his ministry we focus, the Son may appear to be different—meek and humble in one place, reigning and resplendent in another. But let us make no mistake: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8). Therefore, as we formulate a priestly Christology, we must grapple with his unchanging nature *and* the way in which the resurrection “changed”—or what I have called “transfigured”—his priestly office.

If my proposal is in any way on track, then it must at one and the same time maintain the unity of Christ’s person and work, even as it recognizes the

contours of his redemptive history. With respect to his resurrection, David Moffitt has shown conclusively that there is something the resurrection does to Christ's priesthood. While denying Christ's earthly priesthood, Moffitt's attention to Christ's heavenly priesthood has helped sharpen the focus on how Christ's resurrection and priesthood relate. Unfortunately, in emphasizing the latter, he has minimized the former and thus bifurcated Christ's priesthood and undermined the propitiatory nature of the cross. This essay has sought to address that concern and provide a constructive model for conceiving of Christ's multi-staged priesthood. It has argued that Christ was a priest in his earthly life, in his sacrificial death, and in his glorious resurrection—only, as Hebrews requires, Christ's priesthood today is greater than that of his earthly life, because in his resurrection, his priesthood was transformed from nameless and humble to glorious and entitled—he is the Son of God and priest like Melchizedek.

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- <sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1:501–03; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources* (ed. Ernst Bizer; trans. G. T. Thomson; London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 448–87; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1872–73; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 2:464–79; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), 361–66; and Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 483–520.
  - <sup>2</sup> Jacob Arminius, "The Priesthood of Christ," in *The Writings of James Arminius* (trans. by James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1956), 1:402–33.
  - <sup>3</sup> On a history of the debate, see Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Theological Studies* 65 (2014): 25–30; cf. Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 401–03.
  - <sup>4</sup> Most recently, one of these excurses has been republished in a stand-alone volume (John Owen, *The Priesthood of Christ: Its Necessity and Nature* [Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2010]).
  - <sup>5</sup> Peter J. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 3–4.
  - <sup>6</sup> David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews* (Novum Testamentum Supplements, vol. 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011). Michael Kibbe ("Is It Finished?": 25–61) follows Moffitt in his approach to the resurrection in Hebrews, even as he critiques Moffitt's understanding of the cross in Hebrews.
  - <sup>7</sup> "The resurrection stands at the logical center of the high-priestly Christology the author [of Hebrews] defends and develops" (Ibid., 148). Other reviewers (Chris Byrly, "A Review of Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews" SBJT 17.2 [2013]: 88–92; Nicholas J. Moore, "A Review of Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to Hebrews," *Journal of Theological Studies* 64.2 [2013]: 673–75; Aubrey Sequeira, "Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews [Review]," *CredoMag* [blog on-line]; accessed 19 December 2014; available from <http://www.credomag.com/2014/01/16/atonement-and-the-logic-of-resurrection-in-the-epistle-to-the-hebrews-review>) explain the concerns I have with Moffitt's work: (1) a forced reading of Hebrews that conforms to his insightful but fallible understanding of *Yom Kippur* in Hebrews, (2) an overemphasis on the soteriological implications of resurrection that

effectively override the more evident themes of blood sacrifice and atonement in Hebrews, and (3) the Socinian-like assertion that Christ's priesthood does not begin until his resurrection. As will be argued in this article, we do need to (re)consider the soteriological implications of Christ's resurrection, but not at the expense of Christ's earthly obedience and sacrificial death.

- 8 To be fair, Moffitt does recognize other priestly qualifications for Jesus—namely his ability to sympathize with the weak and his divine appointment (194–95), as well as his death as a step in the process of his resurrection and priesthood (287).
- 9 This view is very similar to that of Kenneth Schenck ("Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JSNT* 66 [1997]: 99) and not without theological precursors. For instance, Francis Turretin argues for an inaugurated priesthood (as part of Jesus' mediatorial office): Jesus' baptism "consecrates," his transfiguration "confirms," and his resurrection and exaltation consummates ("fully made") his priesthood (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology* [trans. George Musgrave Giger; ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994], 391–92). Cf. John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. W. H. Goold; London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1855; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 2:152–54;
- 10 On the exegetical debate regarding Christ's resurrection and priesthood in Hebrews, see Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 30–45; cf. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 198–208. Although presently unpublished, R. B. Jamieson's paper ("Aligning Jesus' Death, Offering, and Heavenly Entrance in Hebrews: An Assessment of Recent Scholarship") is the most extensive survey.
- 11 E.g., Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965); Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James (eds.), *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); John R. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Foundations in Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997); Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).
- 12 See Kibbe's concluding assessment, where he affirms that the "Socinian" understanding of the sequence of to atonement "deserves another further exegetical consideration, as "in the recent work of David Moffitt" (Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 60–61).
- 13 Kibbe ("Is It Finished?": 25–61) has argued perceptively that it is possible to hold to Socinus's view of Hebrews without denying it's sacrificial emphasis, but his article is not sufficient to prove that one can press for a Socinian view (as Moffitt does) without undoing much of the sacrificial and covenantal structures in Hebrews. History, though not an absolute master, works against such a proposal. To deny the earthly priesthood of Christ has great ramifications on the nature of the atonement, because as the person of Christ goes, so goes his work (cf. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 149–63).
- 14 Bruce L. McCormack, "'With Loud Cries and Tears': The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 38. He writes, "Every time an exegete comes up against a problem in a text that is clearly theological in nature (as is the case with the Christology of Hebrews), she will immediately run through a list of logically possible meanings, eliminating those she believes to have been impossible to the author and then choosing amongst those that remain."
- 15 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 16 Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 30.
- 17 In defense of Christ's earthly priesthood as articulated in the Gospels of Mark and John, see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1," *JHSJ* 4 (2006): 155–58; *idem*, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *JHSJ* 5 (2007): 57–79; cf. J. P. Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 729–45; André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).
- 18 Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 19 Karl Deenick, "Priest and King or Priest-King in 1 Samuel 2:35," *WTJ* 73 (2011): 325–39.
- 20 Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1991); Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

- 21 John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. W. B. Johnston; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005); David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the "Epistle to the Hebrews"* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989).
- 22 There is an equally large body of literature arguing for Christ's resurrection in Hebrews. From R. B. Jamieson's presently unpublished taxonomy on this debate ("Aligning Jesus' Death, Offering, and Heavenly Entrance in Hebrews: An Assessment of Recent Scholarship"), I cite a few examples: Aelred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspectives* (St. Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960), 168–202; John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 165–78; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 117, 411, 415; Richard D. Nelson, "He Offered Himself": Sacrifice in Hebrews," *Interpretation* 57 (2003): 254–56; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 20, 52, 71–72, 139, 222; Eric F. Mason, "You Are a Priest Forever": Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews (STDJ 74; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 35, 39, 194–95; Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Theological Studies* 65 (2014): 25–61; Nicholas J. Moore, "Jesus as 'The One Who Entered His Rest': The Christological Reading of Hebrews 4.10," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 36 (2014): 395.
- 23 Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 49–51.
- 24 Owen, *Hebrews*, 2:153.
- 25 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 1–43.
- 26 Moffitt intimates, "the Son's humanity is the crucial factor in his being invited to sit on the heavenly throne at God's right hand" (ibid., 145), and "the resurrection of Jesus is a crucial premise for the apology the author develops ... in defense of the confession that Jesus is a high priest" (ibid., 147).
- 27 Michael Kibbe's proposal also esteems the importance of the resurrection. While his proposal critiques Moffitt for minimizing the cross, he retains the Socinian notion of Christ's post-resurrection priesthood ("Is It Finished?" 38–42).
- 28 On resurrection in Hebrews, see William L. Lane, "Living a Life in the Face of Death: The Witness of Hebrews," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. Richard Longenecker; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 254–62.
- 29 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 188. Moffitt also makes a strong point that the adjective *kreitton* ("better," "superior") in places like Hebrews 7:19 ("better hope"), 7:22 ("better covenant"), 8:6 ("better promises"), 9:23 ("better sacrifices"), 10:34 ("better possession"), 11:16 ("better country"), 11:35 ("better life") "all relate to the fact that Jesus' ministry occurs in heaven (cf. 8:4) and can therefore bring people into God's presence" (187).
- 30 Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 589; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas, TX: Word, 2000), 575; O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 533–34. Those who deny resurrection in Hebrews 13:20 include Bertram, Käsemann, and Attridge, (see Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 27–40).
- 31 Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 561–62.
- 32 Lane, "Living a Life in the Face of Death," 268.
- 33 Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 560–65.
- 34 Moffitt (*Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 194) also argues Christ's resurrection is implicitly affirmed. He is raised from the dead as the reward for his exemplary faith: "[Jesus] is the *Paradebeispiel* of someone who faithfully suffered in order to obtain the greater joy promised to him. By placing Jesus at the list's apex [Heb 12:1–2], the author holds him up as the main example to be emulated." Jesus receives resurrection in a similar but superlative manner to those who waited for a "better city" and a "better resurrection" (Heb 11:17–19, 35).
- 35 Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36.
- 36 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 293.
- 37 Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*; 117–18; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 178–81; contra Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 123.
- 38 On the relationship between Hebrews 5:5–10 and Hebrews 1, see David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973), 114–145.
- 39 See his lengthy chapter, "Angels, Anthropology, and the Age to Come in Hebrews 1–2" (*Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*, 45–144).



- 40 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195–96.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 191.
- 42 Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 42.
- 43 What Schreiner (*ibid.*) says of Jesus in Romans 1, “The appointment of Jesus as the Son of God should not be understood as a reference to his exaltation to deity. It is crucial to recall that the one who is exalted as Son of God in power was already the Son,” pertains to the inaugurated Christology of Hebrews.
- 44 Hughes, *Hebrews*, 180.
- 45 Hahn, *Kingship by Covenant*, 278–79.
- 46 *Ibid.*, *passim*.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 137. Hahn’s endnotes provide copious quotations from the sources mentioned here (408–13).
- 48 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 49 Hahn (*ibid.*, 409) cites Thomas Aquinas as saying “Note that in the law of nature, all firstborn enjoyed the privilege of priesthood, ... In the law of nature, primogeniture was great, because the firstborn received the blessing from the father (and this was in place of the consecration)” (*Enchiridion of Commonplaces* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], 234).
- 50 Hahn (*ibid.*, 410) lists *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*; *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 138.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 J. R. Porter, *The Extended Family in the Old Testament* (London: Edutext, 1967), 10.
- 54 H. C. Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex,” *HUCA* 44 (1973), 46.
- 55 Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 221.
- 56 Deut 32:6 also refers to God as Israel’s father, and Hosea 11:1 will also continue to keep this Father-Son relationship as a primary metaphor for understanding Israel’s identity.
- 57 Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 220.
- 58 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 141–42. Hahn continues, “Likewise, each individual firstborn son was called to a subordinate share of this royal priestly ministry within all the twelve tribes of the family of Israel” (*ibid.*, 142). Cf. John Sailhamer’s comments on Exodus 13:1–2 and Numbers 3:41 (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], 266, 373).
- 59 On Israel’s priestly status, see John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 61–102; Jo Bailey Wells, *God’s Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 98–101, 115–19.
- 60 Hahn, *Kinship through Covenant*, 144–47.
- 61 Some of the sins of the priests include “venality (Mic 3:11; Jer 6:13; 8:10), drunkenness (Isa 28:7; Jer 13:13), negligence and ignorance (Zeph 3:4; Jer 14:18; Ezek 22:26), and even murder (Hos 6:9)” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 83).
- 62 On the basis of Heb 9:13–14, we can surmise that the old covenant sacrifices were effective to purify the flesh, if not the conscience.
- 63 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 278–79.
- 64 Schenck, “Keeping his Appointment,” 99.
- 65 John Webster, “One Who Is Son,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, 93.
- 66 Schenck, “The Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews,” 36.
- 67 Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 118.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 202.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 202–03. Vanhoye is even more forceful (*Old Testament Priests*, 167).
- 71 P. T. O’Brien, *Hebrews*, 258. On the use of *anistēmi* as it is associated with resurrection, see Mark 9:31; 10:34; 12:23, 25; John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; Acts 2:24, 32; cf. Acts 3:22, 26. On the theological meaning of *anistēmi*, see John Murray, “Who Raised Up Jesus?” in *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 4:83, 85–86.
- 72 Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 147. Nelson makes an analogy between 1 Sam 2 and Heb 7, but because he does not see 1 Sam 2:35 as referring to David, he doesn’t see how Hebrews fulfills the promise of 1 Sam 2:35.
- 73 A striking commentary on Hannah’s song (1 Sam 2:1–10) is provided by R. Martin-Achard, cited by C. Brown, “Resurrection,” in *NIDNTT* (ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 3:263:



- "Yahweh freely disposes of life, He bestows it, withdraws it, and gives it again. The history of the Chosen People and the existence of the Israelite alike abundantly testify to this sovereign power that Yahweh exercises at the expense of His enemies and for the sake of His own. The writers of these hymns do not envisage the resurrection of the dead, they are simply asserting that the living God is able to intervene, effectively, everywhere, and at all times, even in the darkest hour."
- <sup>74</sup> Cf. R. K. Youngblood, *1 Samuel* (EBC; ed. Frank E. Gaebelien; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 3:588.
- <sup>75</sup> Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 147.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 203.
- <sup>78</sup> See Deenick for the various positions ("Priest-King," 327-29). Youngblood, in nuanced fashion, suggests that 1 Sam 2:35 is first fulfilled by Samuel, then Zadok, and ultimately by Jesus Christ (*1 Samuel*, 588). Ironically, Youngblood makes verbal connections between the faithful priest and David's "faithful house" (2 Sam 7:27; 25:28; cf. 1 Chr 17:23), but he does not make the priestly connection with David.
- <sup>79</sup> Karl Deenick, "Priest and King or Priest-King in 1 Samuel 2:35," *WTJ* 73 (2011): 325-39.
- <sup>80</sup> "Given the overwhelming interest in priesthood in these early chapters and the relative disinterest in kingship, and given that the entire context is bound up with priesthood, there seems little reason to understand *messiach* as meaning anything other than priest. And, as we shall see, Hannah's remarks are simply a portent of what is to come in the rest of Samuel, and of the rather surprising direction from which this promise is fulfilled" (Deenick, "Priest-King," 330).
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., 329; Gordon J. Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom: The Message of 1 Samuel* (Welwyn, UK: Evangelical, 1988), 46-48.
- <sup>82</sup> Deenick concludes that "the writer [of 1-2 Sam] is trying to make a strong link between David and the promised priest of 1 Sam 2:35" (ibid., 334).
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., 331-34.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., 334-38. Similarly, Eugene Merrill writes, "The strongest suggestion of Davidic royal priesthood occurs in 2 Sam 6" when "David himself was in charge [of] leading the entourage" to the temple, and he was "clothed in priestly attire, offering sacrifice and issuing priestly benediction" (Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BibSac* 150 (1993): 60. Going further, Merrill adds, "Neither the chronicler nor the author of Samuel mentions a priest in the whole course of sacrificing. Clearly David saw himself as a priest and was accepted by the people and the Levites as such" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008], 283-84).
- <sup>85</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BibSac* 150 (1993): 60. "David led the procession, clothed in the priestly linen ephod and sacrificing and dancing before Yahweh. When the ark was safely ensconced in the tabernacle, David and the Levites offered up burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before Yahweh, thereby attesting to the covenant union between Yahweh and Israel ... His sacerdotal function is seen also in his appointment of the religious personnel to attend to the tabernacle (1 Chron. 16:4-6) ... That no mention is made of a priest at Jerusalem may imply that David himself fulfilled that responsibility, at least initially" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008], 283-84).
- <sup>86</sup> Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 283-84.
- <sup>87</sup> Deenick, "Priest-King," 334-35. In this way, David is no better than the generations of Levites, who also broke covenant with God (cf. Mal 2:1-9). Perhaps, this is why David and Levi are both rehabilitated in the new covenant, through the greater priest-king, Jesus Christ (cf. Jer 33:14-26).
- <sup>88</sup> "In the light of earlier biblical history those who heard this promise of 1 Sam 2:35 would surely have understood 'anointed' to refer to a priest" (ibid., 335-36).
- <sup>89</sup> David G. Firth (*1 & 2 Samuel*, [AOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 377) observes, "David acquired a priestly role with Jerusalem's capture, a theme hinted at in Ps 110:4 ... His removal of the ark joins with the psalm in linking priestly and royal roles, and may also explain the fact that Jerusalem is never directly named in [2 Sam 6] but is always the 'city of David' (vv. 9, 12, 16)."
- <sup>90</sup> On God's "stubborn" commitment to bringing his priest into being, see Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011), 38-39.
- <sup>91</sup> Deenick, "Priest-King," 338.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid., 337. Emphasis mine. For more on typological "molds," see David Schrock, "What Designates a Valid Type? A Christotelic, Covenantal Proposal," *Southeastern Theological Review* 5.1 (2014): 3-26.
- <sup>93</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, "The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," in *The Law and the Prophets: Old*

*Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis* (ed. John H. Skilton; Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 298-318.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-22.

<sup>95</sup> Highlighting the disparity, F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964], 148) comments, the "Levitical regime ... was marked by transience" and death (cf. 7:23), but Christ's priesthood "is immortal; having died once for all and risen from the dead, he discharged his ministry on his people's behalf in power of a life that can never be destroyed."

<sup>96</sup> The logic of resurrection resulting from his death has been observed by Moffitt (*Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195-96) in Heb 2:9-11: After suffering for his brothers ("suffering of death ... tast[ing] death for everyone") the Son was raised from the dead ("crowned with glory and honor") and given authority to "bring many sons to glory." In this way, he became the one source for all who were sanctified—Christ first, then his brothers. However, Moffitt downplays the importance of his suffering, saying it "is not the author's point" (196). However, by denying the role of Christ's sacrifice, Moffitt undermines the very thing that qualifies Jesus to be raised from the dead—namely, his obedience unto death and leading his people out of death (Heb 13:20-21). While Christ's exalted priesthood depends on Christ's resurrection; his resurrection depends on his earthly obedience and priestly sacrifice.

<sup>97</sup> Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 195-96.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>100</sup> Kibbe, "Is It Finished?": 26, 30.

<sup>101</sup> Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 317.