

## Where Is Exhortation in Hebrews? Discourse Analysis and Genre Division in the Epistle to the Hebrews



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### I. (WHIMSICAL) INTRODUCTION

Marcos could not imagine a happier day. Bright sunshine illuminated the park and ΠΠΟΣ ΕΒΠΑΙΟΥ put a spunk in his stride. Marcos, a Master's student at the local seminary, had enrolled in an exegesis of Hebrews course. Early in the semester the professor challenged the students to memorize the text in Greek. Mustering the courage, Marcos set out on what would become for him an assignment of pleasure.

As Marcos listened to the text on his iPod while walking that crisp October morning he was greeted by William, a fellow student at the seminary. William was working on his PhD in NT literature, and happened to be out for a jog that beautiful fall morning.

"Hey, Marcos! Good to see you," William said. "What are you listening to?" he asked as he gasped between deep breaths.

"I read Hebrews in Greek on my iPod recorder," Marcos replied, "and now I can listen when I exercise or drive or whatever. Dr. Rubenstein challenged us to memorize the text in Greek and promised a pizza party for whoever could finish by the end of the year."

"Are you in exposition or exhortation?" William asked.

Marcos gazed back with a grey stare. “Uh, I don’t know. It’s talking about Melchizedek as high priest and that we can go to God through Him.”

William, still breathing deeply from his jog, broke the awkward silence, “Uh, well, you’ll get to it later. It’s all genre shifts with Hebrews, exposition then exhortation, back and forth. First and second person pronouns, subjunctives, imperatives, warnings, that’s how things fit together. Well, have a good walk, Marcos. I’ll see you around.”

William set out again on his jog. Marcos stood for a moment, and noticed that clouds had just begun to form on the horizon.

## II. HEBREWS’ STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Among the modern proposals regarding the structure of Hebrews, few have received as much attention as the genre-division scheme(s) most recently associated with discourse analysis. In his informative survey of the structural approaches to Hebrews, Barry C. Joslin takes the reader through eight proposals.<sup>1</sup> He concludes with an affirmation of George H. Guthrie’s visual presentation of Hebrews’ structure according to discourse analysis, noting Guthrie’s argument that the author shifts from exposition to exhortation repeatedly throughout his discourse.

Guthrie calls his work a “text-linguistic analysis.”<sup>2</sup> In short, he proposes that several types of cohesion fields, along with inclusios, indicate shifts in the discourse; these become his methodology for investigating Hebrews.<sup>3</sup> The body of his proposed structure can be summarized as alternating units of exposition/exhortation: 1:5–14/2:1–4; 2:5–18/3:1–4:13; (4:14–16 overlap); 5:1–10/5:11–6:12; 6:13–20 unmarked; 7:1–10:18/(10:19–25 overlap)/10:26–13:19.<sup>4</sup> Guthrie suggests

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<sup>1</sup> Barry C. Joslin, “Can Hebrews be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches,” *CBR* 6.1 (2007): 99–129.

<sup>2</sup> George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (SNT 73; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 144. The influence of Guthrie’s analysis is seen in D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), who comment concerning Hebrews: “Perhaps the most detailed and consistent outline is that of Guthrie” (598). Likewise Peter T. O’Brien states in the introduction of his recent commentary, “The outline I have adopted in this commentary follows that of Guthrie, with minor variations . . . He has made a substantial contribution to our understanding of Hebrews’ structure, and to date his treatment is the most satisfying approach” (*The Letter to the Hebrews* [PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 34).

that these genre divisions serve the overall hortatory purpose of the letter but maintains that each genre plays a distinct role in Hebrews.<sup>5</sup>

In his analysis exposition and exhortation remain independent to the degree that each has its own center. He labels Heb 8:1–2 as the expositional center: “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (NAS). The hortatory center is found in the warning passage in Heb 6:4–8:

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy for the purpose of this study that the sections Guthrie labels as “exhortation” are grounded in the famous “warning passages” of Hebrews.<sup>7</sup> He gives special emphasis to these in his outline, placing them in capital letters, and bold, underline, and italic fonts. For Guthrie, Hebrews clearly identifiable exhortations never occur without a warning passage: **WARNING:** Do Not Reject the Word Spoken Through God’s Son! (Heb 2:1–4); **WARNING:** Consider the Power of God’s Word (Heb 4:12–13); **WARNING:** The Danger of Falling Away from the Christian Faith (Heb 6:4–8); **WARNING:** The Danger of Rejecting God’s Truth and God’s Son (Heb 10:26–32); **WARNING:** Do Not Reject God’s Word! (Heb 12:25–29).

But Guthrie is not the first to apply discourse analysis methodology to Hebrews. Previously Linda L. Neeley employed Robert E.

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<sup>5</sup> Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 115–16, 143.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 144. For an overview of theological interpretations of Hebrews’ warning passages, see Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007).

Longacre's<sup>8</sup> linguistic approach in her "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews."<sup>9</sup> Neeley, like Guthrie, is concerned to distinguish the parts which comprise the whole of Hebrews. She proposes four criteria for recognizing embedded discourse units: (1) change in genre; (2) transition introductions or conclusions; (3) use of relatively rare linguistic devices; and (4) evidence of the unity of the preceding embedded discourse.<sup>10</sup> Neeley's genre analysis of Hebrews is comprised of several embedded discourse units: 1:1–2:18, exposition (save 2:1–4, which she calls a hortatory introduction to chapter two); 3:1–4:13, exhortation; 4:14–6:20, exhortation; 7:1–28, exposition; 8:1–10:18, exposition; 10:19–39 exhortation; 11:1–40, exposition; and 12:1–29, exhortation.<sup>11</sup>

Cynthia L. Westfall<sup>12</sup> has followed Neeley and Guthrie in attempting a discourse analysis of Hebrews, emphasizing systemic-functional linguistics.<sup>13</sup> Westfall proposes that linear and vertical relationships must be examined in a text by noting: (1) the author's noun and verb choices within a grammatical system; (2) the connectives which create units of thought; (3) the use of lexis in grouping; (4) semantic emphases; and (5) repetition.<sup>14</sup>

Analyzing linear and vertical relationships Westfall recognizes divisions organized around the triplet of hortatory subjunctives in Heb 4:11–16 and 10:19–25. She labels these sections the "thematic peaks" of the discourse,<sup>15</sup> and notes that each plays a significant structural role in the development of the author's argument. Westfall proposes that Heb 4:11–16 provides a summary of the discourse to that point and at the same time points forward to the author's next theme. Likewise, Heb

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<sup>8</sup> See especially *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Linda L. Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews" (OPTAT 1.3–4; Dallas, TX: SIL, 1987). In brief, Neeley follows Longacre's view that four primary systems of information organization carry a discourse: (1) the combining of sentences into larger units; (2) the function of these units; (3) distinction between backbone, or primary, and support material; and (4) semantic organization; (1–4).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Cynthia L. Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: T&T Clark, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

10:19–25 summarizes the author’s flow<sup>16</sup> of thought and lays a foundation for the remainder of Hebrews. Westfall thus concludes that Hebrews has three main sections, divided by the two aforementioned units of hortatory subjunctives: “The occurrence of the hortatory subjunctive involves thematic repetition so that each occurrence is linked to one of three themes: ‘let’s hold on to the confession’, ‘let’s go forward spiritually’, and ‘let’s draw near to God’.”<sup>17</sup> Westfall thus does not divide the epistle by genre as categorically as her predecessors. She notes the significance of specific grammatical forms which have prominence when compared to the rest of the discourse, but maintains that Hebrews is mono-generic.

Neeley, Guthrie and Westfall have contributed to the structural analysis of Hebrews by opening new arenas of research. No longer does it seem sufficient to follow the various themes of the discourse. One must investigate how those themes are articulated in light of the author’s arrangement of repeated words and phrases, marked grammatical forms, and internal literary genre.

Here it will be argued that as τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, “this word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22), Hebrews resists genre division as a part of its structural analysis. This is so for at least two reasons. First, AH states toward the conclusion of Hebrews that the whole of his discourse is exhortation. Thus setting certain sections as the loci of exhortation, at the exclusion of the rest of the discourse, is to extricate portions of the text which AH wished to be viewed as hortatory in character. Second, the fact that Hebrews resists genre division can be seen in the variety of opinions about supposed genre shifts in the text at both the micro and macro level. Three scholars have applied similar discourse analysis methodologies to Hebrews. They often identify embedded discourse units in the same location, but they diverge in labeling those units as exposition or exhortation (or overlap). It will be argued that this lack of agreement results from some discourse analysis proponents’ attempts to identify units as exposition when AH composed a singularly hortatory discourse.

The present study is not an exhaustive treatment of discourse analysis and Hebrews, nor of the broader structural approaches,<sup>18</sup> nor the

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<sup>16</sup> After, the convention “AH” will signify the longer phrases “the author of Hebrews” and the like.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>18</sup> For an historical survey of the more prominent approaches, see Joslin, *Assessment*. For the influence of discourse analysis approaches even upon thematic approaches to Hebrews structure, see e.g., Paul David Landgraf, “The

continuing debate of whether Hebrews is an epistle or a sermon.<sup>19</sup> The focus here is genre division and discourse analysis, and even this should be considered a feeble introduction to the matter.

### III. THE GENRE OF HEBREWS AS τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως

Hebrews resists genre division because AH states that the whole of his discourse is “this word of exhortation” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, Heb 13:22). The genitive singular παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22 functions as the direct object of the verb ἀνέχεσθε, “bear with,” thus, “bear with this word of exhortation.”<sup>20</sup> AH sees his discourse holistically, using τοῦ λόγου in the singular. This accords his statement in the following phrase, that, “I have written to you briefly” (διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα, [Heb 13:22]). Though often cited as a point of humor, as if AH suddenly grew sarcastic at the end of his discourse, one should take his statement in the context of the pastoral tone of Hebrews. What pastor, hoping to encourage his congregation, does not want to say more than the limitation(s) of the situation may allow? AH considers his exhortation brief.

Though not employing discourse analysis methodology, Lawrence Wills is among those proposing cycles of genre shift between exposition and exhortation in Hebrews.<sup>21</sup> He observes generic shifts within other ancient texts, including the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and among the Church Fathers, 1 Clement and Ignatius’ epistles Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Philadelphians.<sup>22</sup> To validate dividing Hebrews between exposition and exhortation, he points up the fact that

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Structure of Hebrews: A Word of Exhortation in Light of the Day of Atonement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (LNTS 387; ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 19–29.

<sup>19</sup> David Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; ed. Wayne A. Meeks; Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1989), 197–98, 213–4; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 24–25; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 20–22.

<sup>20</sup> Here a second person plural imperative of ἀνέχω. The verb takes the genitive as the direct object, as it does in 2 Tim 4:3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (τῆς ὑγιαίνουσας διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται).”

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence Wills “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *HTR* 77:3–4 (1984): 277–99.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 291–92.

“in a description of the liturgy for the ordination of a bishop, the Apostolic Constitutions calls the address (from Heb 13:22) ‘words of exhortation’ (λόγους παρακλήσεως, 8.5).”<sup>23</sup> Yet, removing the definite articles from these two genitives, τοῦ λόγου and τῆς παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22, and changing the singular λόγου to the accusative plural λόγους, changes the meaning in no small way.

The genitive singular τοῦ λόγου in Heb 13:22 emphasizes that AH views his work holistically. But what of the qualifying genitive τῆς παρακλήσεως? Here τῆς παρακλήσεως functions attributively to τοῦ λόγου.<sup>24</sup> As a genre label, ‘exhortation’ has a broad field of meaning. While the scope of this study does not include a thorough analysis of the term in ancient literature, a brief survey of two places where the forms of λόγος and παράκλησις are paired is in order.

This formulation occurs in 1 Macc 10:24. When Demetrius I Soter was King of Syria and Alexander was king of Ptolemias, the two rulers courted the support of Jonathan, and the people of Judea. Demetrius first sought his aid, but when Alexander won Jonathan’s support, Demetrius upped his offer to Jonathan, saying: “I too will send them cordial messages (λόγους παρακλήσεως) and offer honors and gifts to keep them on my side.”<sup>25</sup> Demetrius’ message to the Jews was a series of promises he would afford them for their support, including independence to the High Priest, freedom from certain taxes, freeing of prisoners, and funding for the temple. The plural λόγους παρακλήσεως is an apt description of the list of benefits Demetrius hoped would sway Jonathan in his favor.

Perhaps the nearest parallel to the use of παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22 is its location in Acts 13:15. There the leaders of the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia inquired of Paul and his companions, “if you have any word of exhortation (λόγος παρακλήσεως) for the people, say it.” Here the phrase λόγος παρακλήσεως, “a word of exhortation,” differs from Demetrius’ aforementioned letter to Jonathan in that the singular λόγος παρακλήσεως requires viewing Paul’s message holistically; παρακλήσεως, as an attributive genitive paralleling its use in Heb 13:22, functions as a generic label for the whole of Paul’s discourse. Paul’s message in Acts 13:16–41 is dominated by an historical review of salvation history from the redemption of Israel in the exodus to the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 86-88.

<sup>25</sup> John R. Bartlett, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees* (CBCNEB; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 133.

resurrection of Jesus Christ. F. F. Bruce comments, “Paul’s exhortation takes the form of a historical retrospect, as Stephen’s defense did.”<sup>26</sup>

Paul’s *λόγος παρακλήσεως*, “word of exhortation,” in Acts 13:16–41 manifests the broad range of the term *παρακλήσεως*. It includes the quotation of six Old Testament texts,<sup>27</sup> passages which cited in his message would have encouraged and edified his audience. Paul’s word of exhortation announced that forgiveness of sins was available to all, and that through Christ one could be justified from everything they could not be justified from through the law of Moses. His exhortation concluded with the warning that the message of salvation in Christ be received with faith and humility. Paul’s *λόγος παρακλήσεως* in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch displays the broad range of the term: encouragement, edification, warning, exhortation, and appeal.

The same is true in Hebrews. AH’s genre description *τῆς παρακλήσεως* includes themes of the text which appeal to the audience by way of providing edification, even apart from the warning passages. In his final homily on Hebrews, Chrysostom noted of AH: “And observe his wisdom. He says not, ‘I beseech you, suffer the word of “admonition,” (warning, rebuke, reprimand)’ but ‘ “the word of exhortation,” ’ that is, of consolation, of encouragement.”<sup>28</sup>

The argument of the present study is not without practical concern. If a local pastor were to preach through Hebrews, stating, along with Neeley, Guthrie, Westfall (and others),<sup>29</sup> that the thrust of the text is exhortation, but locating exhortation only around the warning passages, the believers in the pew may not receive all the encouragement, edification, and comfort AH intends. Those passages typically labeled, “exposition,” are a part of Hebrews’ overall exhortation. They exhort the hearer(s) to believe all that God has done from them in Christ so that they can remain strong in the face of opposition and persecution (Heb 10:32–34).

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<sup>26</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 253.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Sam 13:14 and Ps 88:21 (LXX) in Acts 13:22; Ps 2:7 in Acts 13:33; Is 55:3 in Acts 13:34; Ps 15:10 (LXX) in Acts 13:35; and Hab 1:5 in Acts 13:41.

<sup>28</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily XXXIV*, Heb 13:17, (ET: Schaff).

<sup>29</sup> Wolfgang Nauck has influenced many in this regard, and Westfall’s structure reflects his emphasis of the hortatory subjunctives in 4:11–16 and 10:19–25; “Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes,” in *Judentum Urchristentum Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (BZNW 26; ed. Walter Eltester; Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1960), 199–206.



Harold W. Attridge proposes that the thrust of AH's hortatory emphasis is to augment the faith of his listeners.<sup>30</sup> According to Attridge, AH's concept of faith has two components: static, that the audience in view maintain their confession; and dynamic, that they move forward to and with God. Attridge's framework provides a window for seeing the hortatory value of passages once thought outside the range of exhortation, passages that encourage and edify the static faith of the audience. These texts exhort the audience to consider all the benefits God has bestowed upon them in Christ. Consider thus the hortatory value of Hebrews' repeated presentation of Jesus Christ as High Priest, noted in the following three passages; none of these are labeled "exhortation" by Neeley or Guthrie.<sup>31</sup>

Heb 2:17–18 describes the help God provides believers in temptation: "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered (πέπονθεν, perfect active), He is able to come to the aid of those who are (presently) tempted (δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι)." This is an exhortation to believe that Jesus is the High Priest who can help in the present crisis because of His past sufferings.

In Heb 7:26–28 AH exhorts his audience to trust in the perfection of Christ as High Priest. Placing himself alongside the audience, he writes: "For it was fitting for us (Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν, first-person plural) to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (v. 26). He goes on to say that unlike priests under the law, our priest is "a Son, made perfect forever" (υἶὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον [v. 28]). This is an exhortation for the audience in view to believe all that God had done for them in

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<sup>30</sup> "Paraenesis in a Homily: The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 221.

<sup>31</sup> Alan H. Brehm notes that Guthrie's genre division scheme does not explain fully the function of the sections he labels exposition; review of *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, *SJT* 38.1 (Fall 1995): 61. The three examples noted above demonstrate that units of discourse categorized as "exposition" in Hebrews actually have hortatory in and of themselves, calling the audience to faith in particular aspects of AH's Christology.

Christ, the One who is unchanging and secures them even in the present moment.

In Heb 10:12–14 AH exhorts his audience to acknowledge and rely upon the holy and perfected status God has granted believers because of Christ’s high priestly work: “He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God . . . For by one offering He has perfected (τετελείωκεν, perfect) for all time those who are sanctified (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους, present)” (Heb 10:12, 14).

These texts exhort the listener to consider all the benefits God has bestowed upon them in Christ. In Attridge’s aforementioned scheme, Heb 2:17–18; 7:26–28; and 10:12–14 exhort the hearer to static faith. Should not their hortatory value be considered just as significant as that of the warning passages? The argument of the present study is that, in light of AH’s genre label in Heb 13:22, these texts too, apart from the warning passages of Hebrews, should be considered for their hortatory implications. Todd S. Still notes the hortatory significance of the texts of Hebrews which describe the High Priesthood of Christ:

Hebrews makes a unique contribution to the New Testament canon. In this anonymous “word of exhortation,” Christ is lauded as one who trusts in God and is trustworthy before God. What is more, Christ is set forth in the letter as the example of one who lived a faithful life and died a faithful death. More than simply a model for believers, however, Jesus is presented in Hebrews as the mediator between God and humanity and is viewed as the pure High Priest who makes expiation for People’s sins and who has compassion upon their earthly plight (2.18; 4.15; 12.2).<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. THE SUBJECTIVITY OF GENRE DESIGNATION IN HEBREWS

But what if the author of Hebrews had not stated his genre designation? What if, like 1 Clement or the Epistles of Ignatius, interpreters simply witnessed a cyclical pattern of exposition and

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<sup>32</sup> Todd S. Still, “*Christos as Pistos: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews*,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (LNTS 387; ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 48–49.

exhortation? Could discourse analysis methodology guide the interpreter in generic divisions of chapter and verse? Perhaps, but the data accumulated by discourse analysis does not always indicate whether a particular embedded discourse unit should be considered as exposition or exhortation.<sup>33</sup> This is a second reason Hebrews resists being broken into clearly marked generic divisions. In short, the data is open to subjective interpretation. As C. Adrian Thomas writes: “It seems not only artificial, but also too subtle and sophisticated where discussions attempt to dismantle the book into its various parts, especially dissecting it into expository and paraenetic materials for the purpose of independent analyses.”<sup>34</sup>

Though Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall demonstrate individuality in their discourse analysis philosophy, their approaches mirror one another at several points. They propose that a specific matrix of lexical and grammatical factors signal shifts in the discourse and thus transitions from one unit to another.<sup>35</sup> Like other discourse analysis proponents, Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall seek to identify units within the broader discourse.<sup>36</sup> While one should not expect exact correspondence between

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<sup>33</sup> In his article “Linguistics and Rhetorical Criticism,” in *Linguistics and the New Testament: Critical Junctures* (JSNTSS 168; ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 63–92, Stanley E. Porter notes discourse analysis’ openness to subjective conclusions. He cites the contradictory conclusions of D. A. Black, “The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Text-linguistics,” *NovT* 37.1 (1995): 16–49, and W. Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohnhammer, 1984), 13–28. The former argues for unified structure of the Epistle, the latter that Philippians lacks unity. Porter concludes: “It appears that unity or coherence is something that the interpreter demonstrates rather than discovers in the text, or vice versa” (89).

<sup>34</sup> C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case for Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008), 8–9, n. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 45–75; Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 1–19; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 22–87.

<sup>36</sup> Johannes P. Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament” *BT* 24.1 (1973): 101–18; Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1989), 230–56; D. A. Black, Katharine Barnwell, and Stephen Levinson, eds., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992); Stanley Porter and D. A. Carson, eds., *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek* (JSNTSS 113; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” in *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 189–217; George H.

multiple authors' conclusions even when working within the same general theory, Neeley, Guthrie, and Westfall disagree in categorization of exposition and exhortation. For Westfall these features mark units within the broader hortatory genre of the whole of Hebrews. Concerning the author's concluding statement, τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, in Heb 13:22, she writes, "Many have taken this description to mean that the discourse has a paraenetic purpose, but 'exhortation' is an apt description for the entire structure of Hebrews."<sup>37</sup>

For Neeley and Guthrie though, the grammatical and lexical composition of Hebrews can be interpreted to identify shifts in genre.<sup>38</sup> Within this rubric it is difficult to overstate the role of verbal tense-forms.<sup>39</sup> By the general standards of discourse analysis, the present and the perfect are the more marked tense-forms when compared to the aorist and imperfect; the former are employed by the author to set the scene before the reader and engage him in it.<sup>40</sup> Units of text dominated by the present and perfect are thus inclined toward the genre of exhortation; aorist and imperfects toward exposition. While Neeley and Guthrie agree on the role of tense-forms in the genre designation of units of discourse, they disagree at a few significant points as to whether a unit is exposition or exhortation.

Generally speaking Guthrie posits more repeated genre shifts than Neeley. For instance, Neeley labels Heb 4:14–6:20 as hortatory, where

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Guthrie, "Discourse Analysis," in *Interpreting the Text of the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (eds. D. A. Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 253–271.

<sup>37</sup> Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 294.

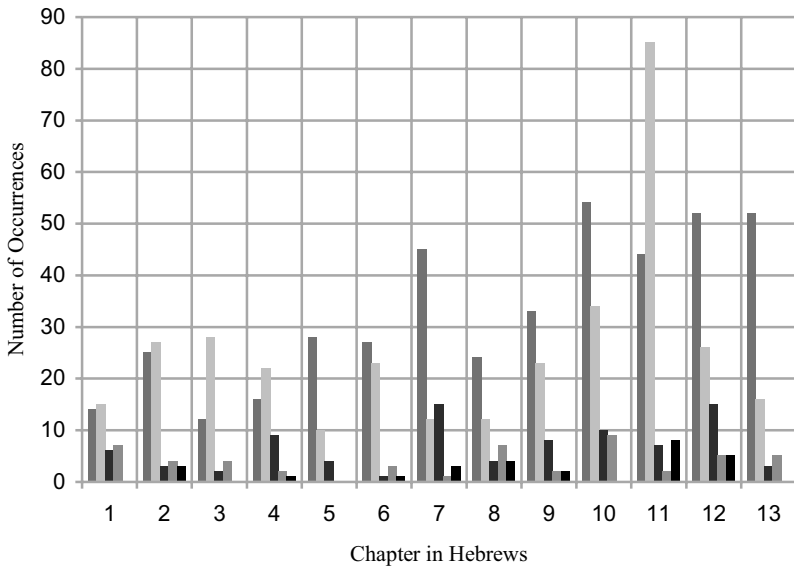
<sup>38</sup> Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 61–74; Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 2–8.

<sup>39</sup> Westfall, though disagreeing with Neeley and Guthrie regarding genre shifts in Hebrews, presents a more thorough grammatical investigation, especially regarding tense forms; *Discourse Analysis*, 28–78. Stanley E. Porter questions Guthrie's conclusions because of his more superficial grammatical analysis; "How can Biblical Discourse be Analyzed?: A Response to Several Attempts," in Porter and Carson, *Discourse Analysis*, 111.

<sup>40</sup> Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 56–7; Porter, "How can Biblical Discourse be Analyzed? A Response to Several Attempts," in Porter and Carson, *Discourse Analysis*, 111–14.; Jeffrey T. Reed "Identifying Theme in the New Testament: Insights from Discourse Analysis," in *ibid.*, 85. Though limited to narrative texts, Constantine R. Campbell likewise notes the relationship between the present and perfect tense-forms; *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek New Testament* (SBG 13; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 241–42.

Guthrie proposes an expository interruption at 5:1–10.<sup>41</sup> Further, he does not see 6:13–20 fitting under either genre heading, and labels this unit as a bridge from exhortation to exposition.<sup>42</sup> But perhaps the most significant disagreement between Neeley and Guthrie concerns Heb 11. As one might expect, Heb 11 is dominated by the aorist tense-form, numbering roughly ninety occurrences, as compared to less than fifty present tense-forms. Hebrews' tense-form distribution is demonstrated in fig. 1.

FIGURE 1. OCCURRENCES OF TENSE-FORMS IN HEBREWS<sup>43</sup>



■ Present ■ Aorist ■ Perfect ■ Future ■ Imperfect

According to the aforementioned discourse analysis methodology, the verbal landscape of Heb 11 indicates exposition, and Neeley concurs

<sup>41</sup> Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 48; Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 144.

<sup>42</sup> Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 144.

<sup>43</sup> Statistics are based on searches conducted with the software tool *BibleWorks 8.0*, using the BNM database, which is an electronic version of the Nestle-Aland 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Greek New Testament.

arguing that Heb 11 is definitely expository.<sup>44</sup> While Guthrie acknowledges that the aorist (normally past tense) indicates an expository, not hortatory, unit,<sup>45</sup> he interprets the list of the faithful in Heb 11 as part of the author's broader exhortation to endure and receive the promise, noting that the list of the faithful confronts the hearer with the absurdity of falling away.<sup>46</sup>

The present study is not an exhaustive treatment of discourse analysis and Hebrews. It has been limited to considering how this emerging theory has been applied to Hebrews and the differences of opinion that have resulted, especially concerning internal genre designations. This paper has argued that Hebrews resists genre division as a part of its structural analysis. The brief exegesis of τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως in Heb 13:22, and the parallels in 1 Maccabees and Acts 13 show that παράκλησις includes encouragement and edification, not just warning. Thus, AH's presentation of the new covenant High Priest Jesus, and all of the benefits He offers, is an exhortation to faith, for the audience to maintain their adherence to the confession of the new covenant.

The fact that Hebrews resists genre division is further noticed by the lack of agreement among those who propose that units of text are one genre or another. Recognizing breaks in genre is a subjective endeavor. Concerning generic classification of whole texts, David Scholer writes: "Modern attempts to classify Greco-Roman literature by types or genres are fraught with difficulties and are in serious danger of anachronistic or rigid misrepresentation."<sup>47</sup> If this is true on the macro-level, how much more difficult within individual texts, especially something as brief as Hebrews, of which the author says, "I have written to you briefly," (διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα, [Heb 13:22])?

Among the three discourse analysis proposals investigated here, Westfall's presentation is noteworthy for acknowledging the generic consistency of Hebrews. Although she argues that the triplet of hortatory subjunctives in 4:11–16 and 10:19–25 are prominent within the whole of the discourse and serve as its thematic peaks,<sup>48</sup> her outline of Hebrews is stated in a hortatory format also for units outside of these two significant sections of the text. Her outline includes the headings: "Let's hold on to the message that our apostle gave us" (1:1–3:1); "Let's respond to Jesus'

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<sup>44</sup> Neeley, *Discourse Analysis*, 56.

<sup>45</sup> Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 115.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 131, 144

<sup>47</sup> David Scholer, "Writing and Literature: Greco-Roman," *DNTB* 1:1284.

<sup>48</sup> Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 300.

voice today and enter the rest” (Heb 3:1–4:13); “Let’s press on to maturity with new teaching about Jesus’ priesthood” (4:11–7:3); “Let’s draw near to God” (7:4–10:25); “Let’s run the race” (10:19–12:2); “Let’s serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem” (12:1–29); and “Let’s go to Jesus and offer sacrifices of love, good works and sharing” (12:28–13:16).<sup>49</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

What does the future hold for discourse analysis and Hebrews? Its proponents are split over whether it necessitates dividing the text generically into exposition or exhortation. This author proposes that further fruitful work will result as discourse analysis acknowledges the singular hortatory genre of Hebrews, and moves on to investigate other features of the text. Perhaps the most striking phenomenon of Hebrews is AH’s repeated use of the Old Testament to form the skeleton of his argument.<sup>50</sup> Guthrie provides a thorough and insightful analysis in his chapter on Hebrews in *Commentary on The New Testament use of the Old Testament*.<sup>51</sup> One wonders how future discourse analysis in Hebrews could take into account the fruit of Guthrie’s work there, with a view to exploring the hortatory force in each use of the Old Testament.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 299–301.

<sup>50</sup> R. T. France, “The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor,” *TnyBul* 47.2 (1996): 245–76; William L. Lane, “Hebrews,” *DLNTD* 1:443–58; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 140–65.

<sup>51</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 919–96.