Anchor Store
Hebrews 6:10-20
Dr. Pierre Cannings

Introduction:
Attention:

Subject: God has never broken a promise. He is immutable "unchanging" in His purposes, so why doesn't this change our hopes and our commitment to Hi s work.

Scripture: Hebrews 6:11-20

Background
The Jewish community in the Christian Church was undergoing persecution by apostate Judaism, and was growing restive because of the fact that Messiah's return was being seemingly delayed

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. The theological implications of Heb 6:13–20 at first appear to stand in stark contrast to what has been stated previously in vv. 4–6. In reality, rather than affirming the possibility of loss of salvation if one apostatizes, the entire sixth chapter of Hebrews serves to provide one of the strongest arguments for the eternal security of the believer. Hebrews 6:13–20 highlight two implications that all Christians must recognize. First, God has made promises to believers that by their nature demand patient endurance to receive. Second, these promises provide us a secure ground of hope because of God's fidelity to his promise and his oath. The author's purpose in using the Abraham and Isaac illustration is to demonstrate God's fidelity to his promises. Jesus as high priest has secured and guaranteed our promised salvation. His death on the cross, resurrection, ascension and enthronement at the right hand of God as both high priest and king open the door of access for us to the throne of grace. This access along with its implications has already been broached by the author in Heb 4:14–16, and are more fully developed in 10:19–25.

Body:

I. Anchor of Longevity v.17
   a. Not Forgetting
      i. Work and Love
         i. When v 10*a* is read in the light of 10:32–34, the "work" that God will not forget must have reference to their boldness before their persecutors, their practical concern for those abused or imprisoned, and the cheerful acceptance of the seizure of their property. Their loyalty to Christ and to one another on that occasion was an expression of firm faith and compelling hope (cf. 10:34) as much as of love. In view of this, it seems that the words καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης, "and your love," are not epexegetical or explanatory of τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν, "your work," but identify the ultimate source of the motivation for their bold stance as love for God

ii. Serve
    i. Ministering- present participle διακονοῦντες, “continue to serve,” in v 10*b* acknowledges that in some measure the exemplary service of fellow Christians that was the hallmark of the community in the past continued to find expression. Nevertheless, there are important hints in Hebrews that the expression of love within the congregation needed to be deepened and extended

b. The Jewish were growing weary of the persecution. The author encouraged them
c. Keep the same Diligence-
    i. **earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation or experience of a relationship, *eagerness, earnestness, diligence, willingness, zeal***
d. Do not get sluggish- lazy
e. Be Imitators-

II. Anchor of Hope v. 18
a. God Promise-- Declaration by one person to another that something will or will not be done, giving the person to whom it is made the right to expect the performance of whatever has been specified.
    i. **to declare to do something with implication of obligation to carry out what is stated, *promise, offer***
b. He Swears to Himself- **to affirm the veracity of one’s statement by invoking a transcendent entity, freq. implied invitation of punishment if one is untruthful, *swear, take an oath***
    i. There is no transcendent being Higher than himself. He can only swear upon himself.
    ii. He is bound to fulfill his promises and character
    iii. The divine oath provides the guarantee that excludes doubt and affirms the abiding validity of the promise.
c. His Promises ends disputes-
d. Abraham received the promise. Gen 22:16-
    i. Enduring disbelief- His wife Sarah Genesis 18:12-14
    ii. His faith in the promise changed his behavior
        i. Willing to sacrifice his son- Committed to the promise
        ii. He knew God would provide
        iii. He believed in God’s promise
            a. He was patient with the promise
        iv. He had already tried acting outside of God’s promise with Ishmael Genesis 15-16
    iii. Patiently- he received the promise
        i. A synonym, *hypomonē*, “endurance, perseverance,” means the ability to remain steadfast in the face of undesirable circumstances;

Transition: We are supposed to imitate Abraham. But the focus of the exposition shifts sharply from the patriarch to Christians, who are designated οἱ κληρονόμοι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, “the heirs of

the promise" The relevance to Christians of the oath sworn to Abraham lies in the proof that God is absolutely trustworthy in the act of promising

III. Anchor of Security vs. 19-20
  a. God's offer Immutable promise for His Heirs
    i. God's Character is unchanging
    ii. Interposed with an oath or promise.
    iii. Heir -
      i. All Christians are heirs of the Abrahamic promise according to Gal 3:29: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
      ii. Purpose-This purpose is for the readers to be "greatly encouraged." The means by which they are to be encouraged are "two unchangeable things," a reference in context most likely to God's promise and his oath
      iii. God placed Himself between Himself and the inheritors of the promise
    iv. For His Heirs- **one who receives something as a possession, *beneficiary***
  b. God's Immutable promise provides Hope
    i. The one who are running have hope
      i. There is refuge in His promise -suppliants fleeing or resorting to anyone for help will gain shelter from their danger
      ii. There is no doubt in his mind about the character of the encouragement. It is a seizure of *the hope set before us*. The idea of seizure implies a taking hold of and grasping in a resolute manner, which again stresses the supreme importance of the action. Hope is of such a character that it needs tenacity to retain it.
    ii. Hope- Hope- An expectation or belief in the fulfillment of something desired. Present hurts and uncertainty over what the future holds create the constant need for hope
      1. hope says that the future is the basis for changing the present, and that Christian service should be an attempt to make otherworldly hopes a present reality
      2. Christian hope is securely based upon the words and actions of God. The promises of God have proven to be dependable. The resurrection of Jesus becomes the ultimate basis for hope. Since God has already overcome death through Christ, the Christian can live with confidence in the present

  c. Those who are running have an anchor
      i. Anchor –
        a. Anchors were used many centuries before the time of Christ, beginning as simple stone weights and evolving into wooden hooks weighted with lead or stone. Not long after the time of Christ, iron anchors of the familiar modern

shape were used. Anchors are mentioned in Luke's account of the apostle Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:13, 29, 30, 40). Hebrews 6:19 uses "anchor" in a figurative sense to indicate the immovability of God's promise of salvation to those who believe in him.

b. Nowhere else in the New Testament is this used in a metaphorical way. It is a rich image. The job of the anchor is to remain fixed in the seabed whatever the conditions at sea. Indeed the rougher the weather the more important is the anchor for the stability and safety of the boat. It is an apt symbol of Christian hope

c. The entire phrase is metaphorical since an anchor connotes stability and security, hence the use of the adjectives "firm" and "secure." The anchor is "firm" because it won't bend, twist, or break when placed under strain, and it is "secure" because it won't drag or slip in the storm

ii. Soul - The use of *psuchē*, "soul," here refers to life as a whole.

iii. Jesus is sure and steadfast

a. "firm and secure," were used to describe anything that had sufficient stability and firmness not to be moved

iv. Jesus our High priest and frontrunner entered the veil

a. We can draw near to God

b. to "a new hope by which we draw near to God" (7:19). The objective content of the promised hope is the assurance that with the consummation of redemption the community may draw near to God in priestly service (so Hofius, *Vorhang*, 86; cf. Michel, 273). They have already been encouraged to "draw near" through prayer

c. We are reminded that the veil of the temple was split from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matt. 27:51). But our writer is concerned with a deeper spiritual reality. It is a *fait accompli* that our high priest is 'behind the curtain', i.e. in the direct presence of God. The close connection between Christian hope and our exalted high priest is one of the major themes in this epistle. Hope is based on the finished and yet continuing work of Jesus as high priest.

d. He is first described as *forerunner* (*prodromos*), a word which occurs only here in the New Testament and which was used of an advanced reconnoitring part of an army. A forerunner, therefore, presupposes others to follow. It is a great inspiration to realize that what Jesus has done, he has done *on our behalf*, a statement which strongly brings out his representative character and may indeed imply a substitutionary role.

e. Forerunner –

i. Regardless of the specific metaphor the author may have had in mind, the enthroned Christ in the heavenly sanctuary as our forerunner is the guarantee that we shall one day enter heaven as well. As our anchor of hope, he secures our entrance. Our author has invested this term with significant Christological freight, and along with *archēgos*

<u>Why are we changing if God is not. Stay Steadfast</u>

Cross References
1 Samuel 15:29-God will not change his mind
Mal 3:6- I do not change
Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus is the same yesterday
James 1:17- no shifting shadow
Psalm 102:27- Unchanging nature

Word Studies:

IMMUTABILITY OF GOD The unchangeability of God. In biblical theology God is described as unchanging in His nature and in His character. This includes God's being (essence), purposes, and promises.

Psalm 102:25–27 contrasts God's unchanging nature with that of the created order. Numbers 23:19 and 1 Sam. 15:29 indicate that God changes neither His plans nor His actions, for these rest on His unchanging nature. James finds assurance of God's future blessings in that there is in God "no variation or shadow cast by turning" (James 1:17 HCSB). After referring to His constant patience, long-suffering, and mercy, God concludes with a general statement of His immutability: "For I, the LORD, do not change" (Mal. 3:6 NASB).

Failure to allow the Bible to define precisely in what sense God changes, results in a distorted view of God. Being influenced more by Greek philosophy than by the Bible, some classical theologians have understood God's immutability to mean that God is unable to act and that He is uncaring and unresponsive to the created order. Overreaction to this error of viewing God as static results in an equally distorted view of God. Some recent thinkers have rejected the biblical teaching concerning God's immutability altogether. Being influenced more by process or existential thought, they understand God to be like the created order—experiencing change, maturing in knowledge and personal development, and having no certain knowledge of the future. Neither a static view of God nor a God in constant flux captures the biblical picture of God. Biblical theology portrays God as immutable, yet as acting, feeling emotions, and responding differently to various situations. In all such actions, feelings, and responses, God is constant and consistent.

On the surface it appears that some biblical passages represent God as changing. For example, He repents (Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11; Joel 2:13; Amos 7:3, 6; Jon. 3:9; 4:2); changes His purpose (Exod. 32:9–14; Jon. 3:10); becomes angry (Num. 11:1, 10; Ps. 106:40; Zech. 10:3); and turns from His anger (Deut. 13:17; 2 Chron. 12:12; Jer. 18:8; 26:3). The apparent problem

disappears upon close inspection of each text. These verses portray God changing in His relations and who sometimes appears to mere humans to alter His purposes but who never wavers or changes in His nature, purposes, or promises.

God's immutability is a great source of comfort to the believer. Whereas God is constant in His wrath against sin, He is equally constant in His forgiveness in response to faith and repentance.

God's immutability grants the assurance that "He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Phil. 1:6 HCSB). In a world that is in constant change, the believer finds peace in a God who does not change, knowing that truth and values are grounded in the nature and character of an unchanging God.[1]

Unchangeableness-

pertaining to that which does not change from one state to another—'not changing, unchanging, never to change.'[2] not transposed, not to be transferred, fixed, unalterable.[3]

God, unchangeableness of

God's nature, plans and actions do not change even though he is active and his relationships do not remain static. His moral consistency guarantees his commitment to unchanging principles.

God's being is unchangeable

Ps 102:27 *See also* **Heb** 1:12; **Mal** 3:6; **Heb** 13:8; **Jas** 1:17

God's characteristics do not change

God's love is constant Ps 89:2 *See also* **Ps** 136:1-26; **2Ti** 2:13

God's purposes and plans do not change

Heb 6:17 *See also* **Nu** 23:19; **1Sa** 15:29; **Pr** 19:21; **Jer** 44:29; **Heb** 7:21; **Ps** 110:4

God does not revoke his promises

Ps 132:11 *See also* **Ps** 145:13; **Heb** 4:1

God's word does not change

Isa 40:8 *See also* **Ps** 119:89; **Mt** 5:18; **1Pe** 1:23-25

God's failure to inflict promised judgment is a sign of his unchanging grace

Hos 11:8 *See also* **Ex** 32:10-14; **Jnh** 3:10; 4:2[4]

---

[1] Walter Johnson, "Immutability of God," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 810–811.

[2] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 155.

[3] James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

[4] Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

Promise- Declaration by one person to another that something will or will not be done, giving the person to whom it is made the right to expect the performance of whatever has been specified.[5]

to declare to do someth[6]. with implication of obligation to carry out what is stated, *promise, offer*[7]

> ***The Promise to Abraham*** In Genesis 12:1–7 Abraham is told to leave his people and country and to go to a land that the Lord would show to him. God, in turn, promises him that (1) his offspring would become a great nation; (2) he would be blessed and his name made great; (3) through him other nations would be blessed; and (4) the land of Canaan would be given to his descendants. Of particular significance among these promises given to Abraham is that through his offspring he will bless many nations. This promise is repeated five times in the book of Genesis (Gn 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) and points back to the promise of Genesis 3:15 as well as forward to Christ.[8]

Swear- **to affirm the veracity of one's statement by invoking a transcendent entity, freq[9]. w. implied invitation of punishment if one is untruthful, *swear, take an oath*[10]**

> God swears by Himself since He is the supreme being and can swear by none higher.[7114] In this respect the divine oath differs from human oaths. Men confirm their words by referring their statements to someone more powerful as a witness and guarantor. But God takes an oath by Himself to vouch for it that the will expressed in the promise will remain unchanged[12]

---

[5] Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1080.

[6] **someth. someth.** = something

[7] William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 356.

[8] Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1080.

[9] **freq. freq.** = frequent(ly)

[10] William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 705.

[1174] εἰ μήν in v. 14 is Hell. for ἦ μήν vl. This oath particle occurs only here in the NT; it comes from the LXX (for אִם לֹא). Cf. Deissmann NB, 33–36; Bl.-Debr.[7] § 24; 441, 1.

[12] Johannes Schneider, "Ὀμνύω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 184.

Oath - **OATH** Solemn vow or promise to fulfill a pledge.[13] *guarantee by means of an oath* **Hb 6:17.**[14]

> God himself was bound by his own oath (Heb 6:13–18) to keep his promise to the patriarchs (Gn 50:24; Pss 89:19–37, 49; 110:1–4).[15]
>
> to affirm the truth of a statement by calling on a divine being to execute sanctions against a person if the statement in question is not true (in the case of a deity taking an oath, his divine being is regarded as validating the statement)[16]

Purpose **- that which one decides, *resolution, decision***[17]

Refuge- suppliants fleeing or resorting to anyone for help

Anchor - **Anchor**. Object used to keep a ship or boat stationary in the water. An anchor is attached to a ship by a cable or chain, and when thrown overboard, its weight and/or ability to dig into the sea bottom keeps the vessel from drifting. Anchors were used many centuries before the time of Christ, beginning as simple stone weights and evolving into wooden hooks weighted with lead or stone. Not long after the time of Christ, iron anchors of the familiar modern shape were used. Anchors are mentioned in Luke's account of the apostle Paul's voyage to Rome (Acts 27:13, 29, 30, 40). Hebrews 6:19 uses "anchor" in a figurative sense to indicate the immovability of God's promise of salvation to those who believe in him.[18]

Soul

Biblical thought about the soul is different. In the O[19]T the soul signifies that which is vital to man in the broadest sense. The Hebrew and Greek words for soul often can be translated as "life"; occasionally they can be used for the life of creatures (Gen 1:20; Lv 11:10). "Soul for soul" means "life for life" (Ex 21:23). Blood is said to be the seat of life, for when blood is shed death

---

[13] Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 967.
[14] William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 723.
[15] Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 967.
[16] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 440.
[17] William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 181.
[18] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Anchor," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 86.
[19] OT Old Testament

ensues (Gn 9:4–6; Lv 17:11, 14; Dt 12:23). In legal writings a soul means the person concerned in a particular law (e.g[20]., Lv 4:2; 5:1, 2, 4, 15). When people were counted, they were counted as souls, that is, persons (Ex 1:5; Dt 10:22).

In a narrower sense the soul denotes man in his varied emotions and inner powers. Man is called to love God with all his heart and soul (Dt 13:3). Within the soul lies the desire for food (12:20, 21), the lust of the flesh (Jer 2:24), and the thirst for murder and revenge (Ps 27:12). The soul is said to weep (Jb 30:16; Ps 119:28), and to be exercised in patience (Jb 6:11). Knowledge and understanding (Ps 139:14), thought (1 Sm 20:3), love (1 Sm 18:1), and memory (Lam 3:20) all originate in the soul. Here the soul comes close to what today would be called the self, one's person, personality, or ego.

There is no suggestion in the O[21]T of the transmigration of the soul as an immaterial, immortal entity. Man is a unity of body and soul—terms which describe not so much two separate entities in man as the one man from different standpoints. Hence, in the description of man's creation in Genesis 2:7, the phrase "a living soul" (KJ[22]V) is better translated as "a living being." The thought is not that man became a "soul," for clearly he had a body. The use of the word in the original draws attention to the vital aspect of man as "a living being." The Hebrew view of the unity of man may help to explain why man in the O[23]T had only a shadowy view of life after death, for it would be difficult to conceive how man could exist without a body (Pss 16:10; 49:15; 88:3–12). Where hope of an after-life exists, it is not because of the intrinsic character of the soul itself (as in Plato). It is grounded in confidence in the God who has power over death and the belief that communion with him cannot be broken even by death (Ex 3:6; 32:3–9; 1 Sm 2:6; Jb 19:25, 26; Pss 16:10, 11; 73:24, 25; Is 25:8; 26:19; Dn 12:2; Hos 6:1–3; 13:14).

In the N[24]T the word for soul (*psychē*) has a range of meanings similar to that of the O[25]T. Often it is synonymous with life itself. Followers of Jesus are said to have risked their lives for his sake (Acts 15:26; cf[26]. Jn 13:37; Rom 16:4; Phil 2:30). As the Son of Man, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). As the Good Shepherd, he lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:14, 17, 18). In Luke 14:26 the condition of discipleship is to hate one's soul, that is, to be willing to deny oneself to the point of losing one's life for Christ's sake (cf[27]. Lk 9:23; Rv 12:11). In Luke 12:19 the rich man addresses his soul, that is, himself. But the soul can indicate the essential self of a man with its desire for life and well-being.

---

[20]e.g. for example
[21]OT Old Testament
[22]KJV The King James Version
[23]OT Old Testament
[24]NT New Testament
[25]OT Old Testament
[26]cf. compare
[27]cf. compare

Frequently "soul" can mean "person" (Acts 2:43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:22; Rom 2:9; 13:1; 1 Pt 3:20). The expression "every living soul" (Rv 16:3 KJ[28]V; cf[29]. 8:9) reflects the vital aspect of living beings (cf[30]. Gn 2:7). In his teaching on the resurrection Paul contrasts the merely physical aspect of the soul with the resurrection body. "Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). In the following verses Paul goes on to contrast the resurrection body with the natural body. It is clear that Paul is talking neither about the immortality of the soul nor of the resuscitation of corpses to the state in which they were at death. The resurrection body will be a new kind of body. "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" ([31]v 49).

As in the O[32]T the soul can denote not only the vital aspect of the person on the physical level, but it can also connote one's emotional energies. It denotes man himself, the seat of his emotions, man in his inmost being. Jesus could speak of his soul being crushed (Mt 26:38; Mk 14:34; cf[33]. Ps 42:6). In Matthew 11:29 Jesus promises rest to the souls of those who come to him. Here as elsewhere "soul" denotes the essential person (cf[34]. Lk 2:35; 2 Cor 1:23; 2 Thes 2:8; 3 Jn 2).

Several passages place the soul alongside the spirit. Luke 1:46 is probably a case of Hebrew poetic parallelism which expresses the same idea in two different ways. Both terms denote Mary as a person to the depths of her being. Similarly in Hebrews 4:12, dividing the soul and the spirit is a graphic way of saying how the Word of God probes the inmost recesses of our being. The prayer in 1 Thessalonians 5:23—that the readers may be kept sound and blameless in spirit, soul, and body—is a way of speaking of man on the level of his mind, will, emotions, and physical needs. Here soul probably suggests physical existence, as in Genesis 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 2:14, whereas spirit may imply the higher or "spiritual" side of life.

In other passages the emotions, the will, and even the mind come to the fore, though in each case there is the accompanying idea of man in his inmost being. Man is to love God with all his soul (Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 2:27; cf[35]. Dt 6:5). The expression "from the soul" (Eph 6:6; Col 3:23) means "from the heart," with all one's being. In Philippians 1:27 believers are called to be of one mind (cf[36]. Acts 4:32; 14:2). Passages that speak of the soul in relation to salvation include Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5; Hebrews 6:19; 10:39; 12:3; 13:7; James 1:21; 5:20; 1 Peter 1:9, 22; 2:25; 4:19; and Revelation 6:9; 20:4. Such passages speak of the soul either to stress the essential human being, as distinct from the physical body, or to express man's continued existence with God prior to the resurrection. Jesus' promise to the penitent criminal (Lk 23:43;

---

[28]KJV The King James Version
[29]cf. compare
[30]cf. compare
[31]v verse
[32]OT Old Testament
[33]cf. compare
[34]cf. compare
[35]cf. compare
[36]cf. compare

see 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21, 23; 1 Thes 4:14) gives assurance of abiding in his presence without, however, using the word "soul."

In quotations from the O[37]T "my soul" is another way of saying "I." Thus God speaks of his soul, thereby summing up all that characterizes God in his love, holiness, wrath, and faithfulness (Mt 12:18, cf[38]. Is 42:1; Heb 10:38, cf[39]. Hb 2:4).[40]

Commentary Notes

6:18. Our hope is grounded in God's promise and his oath

The purpose of God's oath, as far as the author and his readers are concerned, begins to be explained; but explicit reference to Jesus is reserved for the climax of the passage in v. 20. Both

[37]OT Old Testament
[38]cf. compare
[39]cf. compare
[40] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Soul," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1987–1988.

the construction and the thought recall Rom. 12:3f. Ἵνα indicates God's purpose (cf. βουλόμενος, v. 17); "he wanted to give us double certainty." Yet result is also implied (Bauer *s.v*[41]. ἵνα, II.2): ἔχωμεν here passes quickly over into ἔχομεν in v. 19.

Διά and ἐν, both related to δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, are general in meaning and difficult to distinguish; "there are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie" (TE[42]V). The "two unchangeable things" ([43]→ v. 16) must be God's promise and his oath; certainly not the two oaths of 6:13 and 7:21, which are made to different people. Attridge, dissenting from Hofius 1973.142–144, quotes Philo, *Abr*. 273, where God's oath confirms a promise to Abraham. For διά, D reads μετά.

The meaning of πρᾶγμα covers word, object, and event (10:1; 11:1[44]*). Here the word is primary, but event is implied; only in Hebrews with a future reference (Braun). Cf. Philo's πράγματα ἀσώματα, θεῖα, νοητά, *Rer. Div. Her*. 63, 66; C. Maurer in *TDN*[45]*T* 6.638–640. Ἀμετάθετος, used as a noun in v. 17, is here repeated with its usual adjectival force.

Ἐν οἷς: ψεύδομαι ἐν is used in Lv. 6:2 (LX[46]X 5:21) of lying about something (MH[47]T 4.112); the more usual περί is used twice in Lv. 6:2f. (LX[48]X 5:21f.) to translate the Hebrew *b*^{e}.

Ἀδύνατον ([49]→ 6:4) introduces a presupposition which the author assumes that his readers will share. The conviction that God cannot lie is widespread both within and outside the Bible (1 Sa. [LX[50]X 1 Kgdms.] 15:29; Jb. 36:4 LX[51]X; Nu. 23:19; Ps. 33:11; Is. 46:10f.; *1 Clem*. 27:2; Archilochus 6.223, ἀψευδέστατος, of Zeus; Artemidorus 2.69; Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 1.283). This conviction lies deeper than the argument about the promise and the oath. The implication, somewhat veiled by the rhetoric, is: "In any case, God cannot lie." Ἐν οἷς is thus weak: it cannot imply that God could have lied if his promise had not been confirmed by an oath. Note the assonance between ἀδύνατον and ἀμεταθέτων; cf. 1:1; 10:3f.

Ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι[52]* is virtually a double negative, equivalent to a strong affirmation of God's ἀλήθεια in the sense of *ʾ*^{e}*met*, reliability (cf. Rom. 3:3–7). Cf. also 2:10; 6:10; Jas. 1:13, and more distantly Jn. 9:31; Rom. 9:4, 19, for statements of what it is impossible or inappropriate for God to do. See H. Conzelmann in *TDN*[53]*T* 9.600–603.

---

[41]*s.v. sub voce, sub vocibus* (under the word[s])
[42]TEV Today's English Version (= Good News Bible)
[43]→ See
[44]* all references in Hebrews listed
[45]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[46]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[47]MHT Moulton-Howard-Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*
[48]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[49]→ See
[50]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[51]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[52]* all references in Hebrews listed
[53]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

It is quite uncertain whether τόν before θεόν was omitted by the author, against his more common practice, for reasons of euphony after ἀδύνατον (so B D Ψ T[54]R, B[55]D §254[1], Zuntz 130, N[56]A[25]), or added by copyists by dittography (so 𝔓[46] א A C P 33 1739 1881 2495 *p*[57]*c;* Tischendorf, N[58]A[26]; Braun with hesitation; Attridge). The meaning is probably unaffected, though Lane, following Zuntz, considers the meaning: "It is impossible for *one who is God* to lie." Ἰσχυράν is figurative, in contrast to 5:7; 11:34[59]*. The image of physical strength is developed in v. 19.

Παράκλησις ([60]→ παρακαλέω, 3:13) may mean either "encouragement," "exhortation," or both. In 12:5; 13:22[61]* verbal encouragement, in 12:5 by scripture and in 13:22 by the epistle, is intended. In both instances, the meaning "comfort," common in the LX[62]X under Hebrew influence but less common elsewhere, is practically excluded by the sternness of the context. In the present verse, the element of encouragement or incentive predominates. It would be too weak to describe the purpose (ἵνα) of God's promise and oath as one of mere exhortation; the author has himself provided this in 6:9–12. Παράκλησις is linked with hope, as here, in Rom. 15:4; 2 Cor. 1:5–7; 2 Thes. 2:16. O. Schmitz in *TDN*[63]*T* 5.793–799.

For ἔχωμεν, K L P and many minuscules have the ungrammatical orthographical variant ἔχομεν ([64]→ v. 19 on ἔχομεν). Ἔχω is often used with expressions of hope; cf. Acts 14:15; Rom. 15:4 (ἐλπίδα); Heb. 10:2; 1 Pet. 3:16 (a good conscience); Eph[65]. 3:12; Heb. 10:19 (παρρησίαν); contrast Lk. 6:24. Here the whole expression means "we are greatly encouraged." See H. Hanse in *TDN*[66]*T* 2.824f.

Οἱ καταφυγόντες: the participle with the article, usually also with a personal pronoun, is equivalent to a relative clause: "we who flee …" or "… take refuge" (B[67]D §412[5]; Spicq 1978.420–422). The absolute use of the phrase leaves it open whether the meaning is that of fleeing from danger, or to a place of refuge (as literally in Acts 14:6*[68]*, figuratively in Ps. 143[LX[69]X 142]:9, πρὸς σὲ κατέφυγον); God as ἐλπὶς καὶ καταφυγὴ τῶν πτωχῶν, *Ps. Sol*.

---

[54]TR Textus Receptus
[55]BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
[56]NA *Novum Testamentum Graece,* ed. K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. Metzger, and A. Wikgren
[57]*pc* a few
[58]NA *Novum Testamentum Graece,* ed. K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. Metzger, and A. Wikgren
[59]* all references in Hebrews listed
[60]→ See
[61]* all references in Hebrews listed
[62]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[63]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[64]→ See
[65]Eph. Ignatius, *Ephesians*
[66]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[67]BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
[68]** all references in NT listed
[69]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)

15:2; the following words make it clear that the latter is intended. The aorist καταφυγόντες also leaves open whether (1) the readers are considered as already having taken refuge, or whether (2) they have still to do so, at least fully. Comparison with v. 11 suggests that (2) is meant. The present insecurity of God's pilgrim people is a recurring theme in the epistle (e.g[70]., 11:13–16, 35–38; 13:14), but is not emphasized here. Spicq speculatively suggests that this verse is evidence that the epistle was addressed to exiles or refugees.

It is difficult to be certain whether the rest of the verse has a predominantly present or future meaning. (1) Κρατέω may mean (a) "hold fast" something already in one's grasp, as in 4:14[71]* (so Bauer 2eβ, Spicq, Braun, TE[72]V, J[73]B?, RE[74]B), or (b) "take hold" of something not yet in one's possession (so Riggenbach, Moffatt, Michel, NRS[75]V, NI[76]V, NJ[77]B); possibly ingressive, "begin to take hold" (Lane, following MH[78]T 3.72; cf. Zerwick §250). (2) Πρόκειμαι may mean (a) "lie before, be present" (Bauer 2 gives this meaning for 12:2 and prefers it here; cf. 1 Cor. 8:12; Jude 7) or (b) "lie" or "be set before," as a goal (Bauer 3 gives this meaning for Heb. 12:1 and "perhaps" here; cf. Jos[79]. *Ant*. 1.14, εὐδαιμονία πρόκειταί τινι παρὰ θεοῦ. (3) Ἐλπίς, here as elsewhere ([80]→ 3:6), may mean (a) hope itself, or (b) the object of hope (cf. 2 Macc. 7:14; Rom. 8:24; R. Bultmann in *TDN[81]T* 2, here 530n[82].100). Braun follows Erasmus and others in subordinating present to future: "… so that we may take possession in the future age of the object of hope which lies before us." This is confirmed by the ἵνα, of unrealized purpose, which governs the whole clause, and by the aorist participle of a verb of movement καταφυγόντες. The tension between present and future is not merely a matter of lexical ambiguity: it lies at the heart of the situation which the writer addresses (cf. 12:22, προσεληλύθατε). He has previously (3:6, 14) spoken of holding on to the end to the faith which the readers have received; here he emphasizes on the one hand the absolute security of the place of refuge to which he and his readers "flee," and on the other hand the future reality of God's sworn promise, which is so to speak already displayed in this place of refuge. The readers are to seize it and hold it fast. The place of refuge implied by καταφυγόντες irresistibly recalls the κατάπαυσις of Ps. 95(LX[83]X 94):11, as expounded in Heb. 3:12–4:11; also the well-founded πόλις of [84]→ 11:10, and the long-sought πατρίς of 11:14.

---

[70]e.g. *exempli gratia* (= for example)
[71]* all references in Hebrews listed
[72]TEV Today's English Version (= Good News Bible)
[73]JB Jerusalem Bible
[74]REB Revised English Bible
[75]NRSV New Revised Standard Version
[76]NIV New International Version
[77]NJB (New) Jerusalem Bible
[78]MHT Moulton-Howard-Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*
[79]Jos. Josephus
[80]→ See
[81]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[82]n. note
[83]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[84]→ See

6:19. Believers follow Jesus into the heavenly sanctuary

In a typical chiasmus, vv. 19–20 announce themes which are developed in reverse order in the rest of the central doctrinal section: priest after the order of Melchizedek (6:20b; cf. 7:1–17); Jesus forerunner/priest on our behalf in the inner shrine (6:20a; cf. 7:18–10:18); and the hope/confidence that enters the inner shrine (6:19; cf. 10:19–39; see Rice 1981, 1987). In its relation to the rest of the sentence (vv. 16–20), the thought of this verse is generally clear, but there are problems of detail. These problems, though interrelated, may be distinguished as follows: (1) do (a) ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν, and (b) εἰσερχομένην agree with "hope" or with "anchor"? (2) How far is the objective meaning of ἐλπίς, "that which is hoped for," maintained in this verse? The problems arise because of a transition from the generally static language in which the firm basis of the readers' security is described (but cf. καταφυγόντες, v. 18), to the language of movement used in speaking of the work of Christ.

(1) The clearest sequence of thought is obtained if ἀσφαλῆ, βεβαίαν, and εἰσερχομένην are all related to ἐλπίδα (so Braun), and ὡς ἄγκυραν … τῆς ψυχῆς is considered as an adjectival phrase synonymous with, and grammatically parallel to, ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαῖαν. The difficulty in relating v. 19b (from ἀσφαλῆ) to ἄγκυρα is greatest in the case of εἰσερχομένην, a verb not naturally used of an anchor, but chosen as suitable to describe both the exaltation of Christ (as in v. 20; 9:12, 24; 10:5; cf. [85]→ 1:6, εἰσαγάγῃ; 7:19, ἐπεισαγωγή) and the access of believers to the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 3:11–4:11 *passim* as access to the place of heavenly rest; 10:19, εἴσοδον). It is true that ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν are more closely linked with one another, both grammatically (τε καί) and in meaning (cf. 2:4); yet this is insufficient reason for making the adjectives agree with ἄγκυρα and the participle with ἐλπίδος, as do Bleek and Riggenbach. The language used elsewhere in the epistle about hope is compatible with making v. 19b relate to ἐλπίδος (though since there is no other mention of an anchor, the argument is not conclusive): βεβαία of hope, 3:6; πληροφορία τῆς ἐλπίδος, 6:11; ἐπεισαγωγή … κρείττονος ἐλπίδος, 7:19; cf. 10:23. The most likely explanation, though not the clearest for a modern western reader, is that the author's thought gradually glides from the anchor to the hope of which it is the image.

(2) A similar gliding is possible in the author's use of ἐλπίς. An objective meaning, that for which one hopes, was considered likely for τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος, and makes good sense in v. 19 as far as ψυχῆς, perhaps even to βεβαίαν, but it is doubtful whether it can be sustained from εἰσερχομένην onwards, unless ἐλπίς is actually identified with Jesus (as by Windisch; cf. Käsemann 1984.147), a harsh construction unsupported by the context (so Michel). That for which Christians hope is already in heaven, like the κατάπαυσις of 3:11ff., but they now reach out to grasp it, filled with a hope which is secure because it is grounded in the work of Christ. For the thought, cf. 1 Pet. 1:3–5.

Ἄγκυρα is used three times literally in Acts 27, but nowhere else in the Greek Bible. Postbiblical Hebrew and Aramaic have no indigenous term for an anchor, and the Peshitta transliterates forms deriving from the Greek word (Delitzsch). Nonbiblical, especially Greek, use of the image of the anchor is widespread—on coins, on tombs, and in literary texts. Plato, *Leg*[86].

---

[85]→ See

[86]*Leg. Leges*

12.961C, describes the city assembly as ἄγκυραν πάσης τῆς πόλεως; Plut. *Mor*[87]. 446A, quoting a poetic fragment, describes actions not under the control of reason as an "anchor-hook in sand"; Lucian, *J. Tr*[88]. 51, quotes as proverbial for a "last hope" the ἱερὰ ἄγκυρα or sheet-anchor which cannot be cut away; Euripides's Helen describes her hope for Menelaus's return as ἄγκυρα δ' ἥμου τὰς τύχας ὤχει μόνη (*Helen* 277); and Philo, *Sacr*. 90, compares the stability of virtue with a safe anchorage (further references in Braun). In the present passage, Spicq (1949c) believes that the nautical metaphor extends to πρόδρομος, but this would be scarcely compatible with the main image of the OT sanctuary; πρόδρομος ([89]→ v. 20) is best understood as a synonym of ἀρχηγός ([90]→ 2:10). What is remarkable is the author's restraint in the use of the anchor image. (He does not even adopt the current saying about the value of having two anchors, Pindar, *Ol*[91]. 6.100; Plut. *Solon* 19, which would have followed on well from his reference to God's promise and oath.) Many commentators, both ancient and modern, press the metaphor further; Spicq, for example, refers to the "waters above the firmament" of Gn. 1:7. It is simpler, and more in harmony with the context, to see the anchor as an image of security: the object of hope can be relied on.

Ἔχομεν, not ἔχωμεν (D $p^{92}c$ a $v^{93}g^{ms94s}$), as in v. 19; [95]→ 4:3; 6:3; here possibly influenced by ἔχωμεν in v. 18. The meaning is "we possess," not "we hold fast" (κατέχομεν). Ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν describe the object of hope as it is in itself, not the way in which believers possess it.

Τῆς ψυχῆς [96]→ 3:12, "an anchor for the soul" or "for (our) life" (E. Schweizer in *TDN*[97]*T* 9.650f.).

Ἀσφαλῆς καὶ βέβαιος are frequently used together: for example, Wis. 7:23, of wisdom; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Logic*[98]. II.374, of a logical presupposition; Polyb[99]. 6:48.5, βεβαίαν … παρεσκεύασε τὴν ἀσφαλείαν, "secured (someone's) absolute safety"; Plut. *Marcus Cato* 21.5, of investment, ἀσφαλῆ πράγματα καὶ βεβαία; Polyb[100]. 12.25a.2 negatively, of an unreliable author (contrast ἀσφάλεια in Lk. 1:4); Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.283, describes Alexander as βεβαιότατος and ἀσφαλέστατος; Philo, *Cong. Erud*[101]. 141, of knowledge; *Conf. Ling*[102]. 106, in a punning reference to the "asphalt-pitch" (Ex. 2:3) with which Moses' basket was smeared.

---

[87] *Mor. Moralia*
[88] *J. Tr. Juppiter Tragoedus*
[89]→ See
[90]→ See
[91] *Ol. Olympian Odes*
[92] *pc* a few
[93] vg Vulgate
[94] mss manuscript(s)
[95]→ See
[96]→ See
[97] *TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[98] *Adv. Logic. Adversus Logicos*
[99] Polyb. Polybius
[100] Polyb. Polybius
[101] *Cong. Erud.* De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia
[102] *Conf. Ling.* De Confusione Linguarum

Nothing in the context suggests the distinction between ἀσφαλής as "strengthened from outside," and βέβαιος as "firm in itself" (Westcott). Elsewhere in Hebrews, βέβαιος is used with expressions similar in meaning to ἐλπίς: [103]→ 3:6 with παρρησία; 3:14 with ὑπόστασις. On the anomalous variant form ἀσφαλῆν or ἀσφαλήν (A C D[104]* P), see Tischendorf; MH[105]T 2.139 (§58 [d]); B[106]D §46 (1); cf. μονογενήν, 11:17 D[107]*. On ἀσφαλής, see Spicq 1982.74f., 77.

Εἰσερχομένην ([108]→ 3:11): the present tense suggests either an action still in progress, or, perhaps less probably in the context, a repeated action (Westcott); contrast the aorist εἰσῆλθεν in v. 20 of Christ. In hope, believers may now enter where Jesus has already entered in reality, namely into the heavenly sanctuary. The same language is used of Christ entering heaven as high priest (9:12, 24f.; 10:5; cf. 9:25), and of believers entering their heavenly rest (3:11ff.), either in the last days, or by hope in the present time, διὰ … τῆς ἐλπίδος ἤδη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐσμεν (Chrysostom).

Εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον (Acts 16:24*[109]*) τοῦ καταπετάσματος: an allusion to Aaron (and, by implication, his successors) entering εἰς τὸ ἅγιον ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος to make a sin offering (Lv. 16:2, cf. vv. 12, 15; Nu. 18:7, τὸ ἔνδοθεν τοῦ καταπετάσματος). The author typically announces in passing a theme which will become central in chap[110]. 9. The two curtains of the OT sanctuary are usually, but not always, distinguished in the LX[111]X as κάλυμμα *(māsāḵ)* before the outer tabernacle, and καταπέτασμα *(pārōḵeṯ)* before the Holy of Holies. Here, as in 9:3; 10:20, the latter is meant. In Hebrews, the καταπέτασμα is viewed primarily as a means of access to God, in contrast to Mk. 15:38|[112]|*[113]*, where, especially in Mark, the account of the rending of the veil expresses the evangelist's horror at the crucifixion. Cf. Jos[114]. *War* 5.219, where the καταπέτασμα screens the ἐνδοτάτω μέρος of the temple from its outer portion; cf. *Ant*. 8.75, ἐνδοτέρω καταπετάσματα; Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 2.101, δύσιν ὑφάσμασι, τῷ μὲν ἔνδον ὅ καλεῖται καταπέτασμα, τῷ δ' ἐκτὸς ὃ προσαγαρεύ εται κάλυμμα; an extended meaning in *Gig*. 53, of the mind having τὸ ἐσωτάτω καταπέτασμα καὶ προκάλυμμα τῆς δόξης removed, so that it is face to face with God; in a noncultic setting in *Joseph and Asenath* 10.2 (Charlesworth 2.215); see Cassien; Lindeskog; Hofius 1972; Theissen; Attridge 184–185; Carl Schneider in *TDN[115]T* 3.628–630.

6:20. A high priest of a different kind

---

[103]→ See
[104]* all references in Hebrews listed
[105]MHT Moulton-Howard-Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*
[106]BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
[107]* all references in Hebrews listed
[108]→ See
[109]** all references in NT listed
[110]chap. chapter
[111]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[112]|| + parallel(s)
[113]** all references in NT listed
[114]Jos. Josephus
[115]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

This is the first explicit reference to Jesus since 5:10, apart from the passing mention of the "word of Christ" in 6:1. Meanwhile, the author has related his readers' condition to the purpose of God, as evidenced especially in his dealings with Abraham. In this verse, the author completes his careful preparation for the "teaching difficult to explain" (5:11). He does this by a skilful combination of motifs: (1) traditional teaching about the resurrection or exaltation of Christ is re-expressed in terms of the entry of a high priest into the inner sanctuary; and (2) the contrast between Jesus' ministry and that of the OT priesthood is expressed by use of the Melchizedek motif. This comparison and contrast, both based on exegesis of OT texts, will prove to be the heart of the epistle. The present verse thus forms a structurally important bridge, comparable with 5:5f., in which the themes of Son and high priest were combined. The christological development is clear:

- Jesus is Son (chap[116]. 1)
- He is high priest (2:17)
- The same Christ is both Son and high priest (5:5–10)
- His priesthood is like that of Melchizedek (6:20–7:19)

Ὅπου, like ποῦ in the NT and modern Greek, means both "where," as in 9:16; 10:18[117]*, and "whither," as here with a verb of movement (B[118]D §103).

The meaning and background of πρόδρομος*[119]* have been extensively but inconclusively discussed. The basic meaning is that of "running before." In nonbiblical Greek, the word is used both as an adjective and as a noun. Of the two semantic components "precede" and "run," the latter is the weaker unless reinforced by the context, which is not the case here. Cf. δρόμος, which means "course (of life)" in Acts 13:25; 20:24; perhaps even in 2 Tim. 4:7, where the NRS[120]V translates "race," but TE[121]V "I have run the full distance." Προ- implies a reference to those who follow (Louw-Nida 36.9), in this case clearly the "we" of ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; cf. Cambier 1950.78; Heb. 13:14. Just as the author's use of the OT runs from passing allusion (e.g[122]., 11:35–38) to detailed exposition (as of Ps. 110:4), so some of the names or titles which he applies to Jesus are central (especially ἀρχιερεύς), while others, such as πρόδρομος, ἀπόστολος (3:1), and πρωτότοκος (1:6), are not developed. Πρόδρομος is used in nonbiblical Greek from Aeschylus and Herodotus: of emissaries (Hdt[123]. 7.203; 9.14 with ἄγγελοι; Soph[124]. *Ant*. 108); of winds (Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 2.15.2; *Problemata* 26.12.1; Theophrastus, *Winds* 2.11; further references in Spicq); of a military advance guard (Aeschylus, *Sept*[125]. 80; Hdt[126].

---

[116]chap. chapter
[117]* all references in Hebrews listed
[118]BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
[119]** all references in NT listed
[120]NRSV New Revised Standard Version
[121]TEV Today's English Version (= Good News Bible)
[122]e.g. *exempli gratia* (= for example)
[123]Hdt. Herodotus
[124]Soph. Sophocles
[125]*Sept. Septem contra Thebas*
[126]Hdt. Herodotus

1.60; 4.121f.; cf. Wis. 12:8 of wasps as the advance guard of God's avenging host); of a light ship running before the rest of the fleet (Alciphro 1.11); and of early figs (Is. 28:4) or grapes (Nu. 13:20 [LX[127]X 21]). Spicq 1949a, following J. Hastings, *Speaker's Bible* 138, presses the naval metaphor, linking it with ἄγκυρα in v. 19 (cf. Philo, *Flacc*.26, δρόμος of a pilot's course). However, this would confuse still further the imagery of an already complex passage. Even if the "hope" of v. 19 is not identified with Jesus in v. 20, the picture of an anchor embedded in another ship is difficult, and the conflict between static and dynamic language is thereby made unnecessarily harsh. Moreover, a sustained naval metaphor would be incompatible with the cultic language which predominates from this point onwards. The closest parallel is between 6:18–20 and 12:1f.; [128]→ 2:10 for ἀρχηγός; for the thought, cf. Jn. 14:2. See Cullmann 101; O. Bauernfeind in *TDN[129]T* 8.235.

Ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν should probably be grammatically linked with εἰσῆλθεν (Bleek, Delitzsch, Spicq) rather than with πρόδρομος (Zimmermann 1977.39); cf. 9:24: … εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός … ἐμφανισθῆναι … ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; 10:19ff.; 7:25, of Christ's intercession for believers; 2:9, of his death ὑπὲρ παντός. A contrast between Jesus and the levitical priesthood is implied by the emphatic placing of κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ; the levitical high priest did indeed act on behalf of the people (9:7), but not as πρόδρομος, obtaining access to the inner sanctuary for anyone else.

Εἰσέρχομαι ([130]→ v. 19), like προσέρχομαι ([131]→ 4:16), is used in Hebrews in cultic contexts, of entry into God's presence. The aorist εἰσῆλθεν, of Jesus' exaltation, contrasts with the present εἰσερχομένην used in v. 19 of believers.

Ἰησοῦς is typically emphasized by its position ([132]→ 2:9): D adds Χριστός.

V. 20b (from κατά) is a clear verbal allusion to Ps. 110:4, first quoted in [133]→ 5:6, and recalled in 5:10 and 7:17. In 5:6, 10, the point was that equal divine authority conferred the titles of Son (cf. 5:9) and high priest. In the present verse, the word order is changed to throw emphasis on κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ, which introduces the special teaching on Melchizedek in chap[134]. 7. In 7:17, the context will give emphasis to εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

On the distinction in use, though not in meaning, between ἱερεύς and ἀρχιερεύς in quotations of, and allusions to, Ps. 110:4, [135]→ 5:10.

Γενόμενος ([136]→ 2:17) here, and παραγενόμενος in [137]→ 9:11, are used of Christ's becoming high priest; here and in 9:11 they are grammatically subordinate to εἰσῆλθεν. It is

---

[127]LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)
[128]→ See
[129]*TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
[130]→ See
[131]→ See
[132]→ See
[133]→ See
[134]chap. chapter
[135]→ See
[136]→ See
[137]→ See

natural to take the participles as expressing an action identical with that of the finite verb (B[138]D §239[1]; Spicq and P. E. Hughes disagree). The meaning is thus that God declared Jesus to be high priest because of his self-offering. His entry into the heavenly sanctuary, and his appointment as high priest, are one; Jesus was made high priest because of what he did. Westcott believes that Jesus' eternal high priesthood followed on his exaltation, but if this is understood as a logical rather than a temporal sequence, the meaning is close to that suggested above. Alternatively, Spicq and others press εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα to refer to an eternal attribute, namely Sonship (cf. 1:10 with 1:8), but this is not supported, either grammatically in the present verse, or by the exposition of εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in [139]→ 7:15f. as meaning "arising now, and henceforth indestructible."[140]

6:18–20. The strength of God's promise provided hope and encouragement for the readers of Hebrews. Where did they find this hope?

First, they found it in the complete trustworthiness of God's Word. When God—who cannot lie—supports his statement with an oath, his followers find hope and encouragement.

Second, they could find it through their own tenacity in seizing the hope that was available. Retaining hope demanded strong action. The readers had drifted along aimlessly. They needed to understand and grasp the promises the Father had offered them. They should flee to Christ for security and protection from the uncertainty of the world.

Third, they found it in a safe and secure anchor—Jesus, our High Priest. We have a firm basis for our hope because Jesus finished his work on earth and continues that work in heaven as our High Priest, carrying us into God's very presence. He has gone before us as a forerunner and is the assurance of our admission into God's presence. His prayers for his people guard the church (Heb. 7:25) and give believers the hope of future glorification. Christians find a basis for hope in the completed and continuing work of Jesus.

Fourth, they found it because Christ is our High Priest *forever*. The fact that we have access to God's presence **forever** gives us a firmness for our hope. This is a new idea. The next chapter of Hebrews develops the relationship of Christ as a priest to the priest Melchizedek.[141]

Word Commentary

[138]BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*

[139]→ See

[140] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 342–349.

[141] Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 115–116.

13–15 There is in Hebrews a sustained interest in Abraham (2:16; 6:13–15; 7:4–5; 11:8–19). The appeal to Abraham as the prototype of faithful endurance in vv 13–15 gives specific content to the exhortation in v 12. The occasion for the repetition and elaboration of God's earlier promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2–3; 15:5) and its confirmation with an oath was the obedience of the patriarch to the divine command to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:1–12). In response God reaffirmed his pledge to bless Abraham, reinforced by a promissory oath in which he named himself as the guarantor of his word (Gen 22:16; cf. White, *JBL* 92 [1973] 173). The account of the *ʿĂqēʾdâ*, the offering of Isaac, had a firm place in the liturgy both of the synagogue and the Church and would have been thoroughly familiar to the congregation (Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, 79, 87–88, 123; cf. Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 23–75).

The declaration that God swore by himself (καθ' ἑαυτοῦ) because there was no one greater by whom he could swear (v 13) is made by Philo as well (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.203). This is simply a logical deduction from the statement of the text "I swear by myself" (κατ' ἑαυτοῦ, Gen 22:16 LXX). When the two writers comment on the purpose of the divine oath, however, they diverge. Philo concludes that God swore an oath to Abraham "to assist faith" (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.204, 207), whereas the writer of Hebrews explains that the purpose of the oath was to prove how irrevocable was the resolve expressed in the divine promise (v 17). The notion that God swears by himself (cf. Exod 32:13; Isa 45:23; Jer 22:5; 49:13) signifies that he is bound to his word by his character. The divine oath provides the guarantee that excludes doubt and affirms the abiding validity of the promise.

The quotation of Gen 22:17 in v 14 differs both from the LXX and the MT. The result of the alteration of the LXX text, πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου, "I will multiply your seed," to πληθυνῶ σε, "I will multiply you," is a promise consisting of two clauses with identical endings ("I will bless you and I will multiply you"). With this modification the promise of blessing is sharply focused upon Abraham (Schröger, *Verfasser*, 128). According to Gen 22:17, the divine oath extended both to the promise of numerous descendants and to possession of the land. In specifying only the promise of numerous descendants, the writer of Hebrews prepares his hearers for his emphasis in 11:17–19, when he again refers to the *ʿĂqēʾdâ*, and focuses on Abraham's concern for the posterity promised to him through Isaac (cf. Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 185).

Abraham received the definitive confirmation of the divine promise after having been severely tested both in faith and endurance (v 15; cf. Gen 22:1, 15–18). The fulfillment of the promise he had received from God (Gen 12:2; 15:5) depended upon Isaac. The steadfast trust in God's word of promise that he displayed when he was commanded to offer up his son is precisely the quality of commitment appropriate to those who are currently the heirs to the divine promise. The writer's stress on Abraham's patient endurance (μακροθυμήσας, v 15) gives specific content to the summons in v 12 to imitate those who "through trust and μακροθυμίας [patient endurance] acquired the promises." A number of commentators are prepared to find in the declaration ἐπέτυχεν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας an indication that Abraham "received what was promised," namely, the birth of his son Isaac or of his grandchildren Esau and Jacob (e.g., Michel, 251; Spicq, 2:160; Köster, "Die Auslegung," 103–4; cf. RSV, NEB, JB, NIV). The immediate context, however, points to the reception of the reinforced promise of numerous descendants after Isaac had been restored to him (Gen 22:15–17). The writer's exposition in vv 13–15 provides a biblical basis for the community to emulate the faith and endurance of Abraham in the certain expectation that they will receive what God has promised to them (cf. Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 90, n. 22, 184–85).

16 The fact that God swore an oath to Abraham is compared to the universal human practice of regarding an oath as final for confirmation (cf. Cicero, *Topica* 20.77; Philo, *On Noah's Work as a Planter* 82). By common definition, an oath is a definitive and binding confirmation of the spoken word and invalidates any contradiction of the statement made. In the OT it was prescribed that oaths should be taken in Yahweh's name (Deut 6:13; 10:20), and lying under oath was condemned as a violation of the Third Commandment (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11; Zech 5:3–4; Wis 14:29–31; cf. Trites, *Witness*, 28–29, 219; Horst, "Der Eid im Alten Testament," *EvT* 17 [1957] 366–71). In practice, an oath involved the solemn calling upon God to ratify the unequivocal truthfulness of what was asserted or promised. Philo declares, "an oath is nothing else than to call God to bear witness in a disputed matter" (*On the Special Laws* 2.10). The writer may have had in mind the fact that Abraham himself swore by God and required others to do so (Gen 14:22; 21:23–24; 24:3).

17–18 Abraham remains in view through v 17; the statement that God ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ, "guaranteed with an oath," the irrevocable character of the intention expressed in his promise has specific reference to Gen 22:16–17. But the focus of the exposition shifts sharply from the patriarch to Christians, who are designated οἱ κληρονόμοι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, "the heirs of the promise" (cf. v 12). As those who have inherited the promises through Christ, they are to appreciate the relevance of the biblical account to them. What is recorded in Scripture is intended to strengthen them in their conviction that God's purpose for them is also unalterable. The sworn assurance of God is extended to them (cf. Michel, 252; Spicq, 2:165; Foerster, *TDNT* 3:785). The relevance to Christians of the oath sworn to Abraham lies in the proof that God is absolutely trustworthy in the act of promising (Köster, "Die Auslegung," 106). The unchanging purpose of God provides a strong reason for emulating the trust and steadfastness of Abraham.

On δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, "two irrevocable facts," rests the assurance of receiving the blessings that are the content of Christian hope and that are already prepared for the people of God (v 18*a*). Although the two items remain unspecified in the text, the reference is almost certainly to the promise of God and his oath (vv 13, 17; cf. Michel, 253; Kuss, 84; Köster, "Die Auslegung," 100; Hofius, *ZNW* 64 [1973] 135–36). F. Schröger, however, prefers to think of the declarative utterances of God in Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:4, which were brought together and applied to the Son of God in 5:5–6 (*Verfasser*, 128–29); E. Reisner (122) thinks of the two divine oaths that figure prominently in Hebrews, Gen 22:16 and Ps 110:4. In view of the context and the focus on the Christian community in vv 17–18, it would appear to be proper to regard the promise given to Abraham and confirmed with an oath as the type that is given to the community of the new covenant in Christ. B. Klappert has recognized the parallel in formulation between 6:13–20 and 7:19–21, which indicates that the promise of 6:16–20 is identical with the high priesthood introduced with an oath (*Eschatologie*, 27–28, 32; cf. Köster, "Die Auslegung," 105–8; Hofius, *Vorhang*, 85, n. 207). Christ is himself the eschatological word of promise (1:2), and his redemptive achievement has been confirmed with an unalterable oath (Ps 110:4; cf. Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 28).

The irrevocability of God's promise and oath is underscored by the relative clause "in which it is impossible for God to lie." This deduction is rooted in the OT, but is not derived from any single passage (cf. Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 89[LXX 88]:35; Isa 31:2). O. Hofius has demonstrated that in the OT there is a strong connection between God's word and oath and between his word and plan (*ZNW* 64 [1973] 137–39). He found the closest parallel to the statement in Hebrews in the interpretation of Num 23:19 in rabbinic texts, where the conviction concerning God's unchanging will is made to rest on his fidelity to the covenant (141–44). In

Hebrews the thought of v 18 is resumed in the confessional formulation πιστὸς ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος, "he who promised is faithful" (10:23; cf. 11:11).

The definition of Christians as fugitives (οἱ καταφυγόντες, "those who had fled for refuge") is suggestive, but remains undeveloped. In the LXX the compound verb καταφεύγειν is used for fleeing from the avenger to the asylum of the cities of refuge (Deut 4:42; 19:5; Josh 20:9), but in the papyri the word is almost technical for suppliants fleeing or resorting to anyone for help (MM 334). Christians are fugitives who have sought asylum and ultimate deliverance from God. It was God's intention that they should have "a strong incentive to take hold of the hope set in front of them" (v 18*b*). The qualification of *hope* as something placed in front of the community (προκειμένης ἐλπίδος) defines hope as the objective gift that God extends to his people through Christ. In Hebrews, the word "hope" never describes a subjective attitude (i.e., "our hope," or "hopefulness") but always denotes the objective content of hope, consisting of present and future salvation (so Michel, 253; Grässer, *Glaube*, 32–33; Mora, *La Carta*, 205–6). In vv 18–20 the community is led to consider the character of hope as "promise" and "realization" (cf. v 11), as announcement and fulfillment (cf. 7:19). The writer declares that the eschatological redemptive hope of the Christian community has attained a double certainty through God's irrevocable promise and through the realization already achieved in Christ (Schierse, *Verheissung*, 200). The encouragement and consolation this offers to the congregation are powerful for resisting all assaults and temptations to waver in confidence (Schmitz, *TDNT* 5:797).

19–20 The literary use of the anchor as a nautical metaphor was widespread in the ancient world (cf. Wettstein, *H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, 406–7; Hilgert, *The Ship*, 22, 135; Eitrem, *ConNT* 4 [1940] 6; Spicq, *ST* 3 [1949] 185–86). The source of the metaphor was the common experience of the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean basin that "the firm grip of the anchor's teeth holds the ships fast" (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6, ll. 3–5). In Greek literature the metaphor was used constantly to evoke the notion of stability provided by adherence to virtue, and especially to hope. The basis of the comparison is the security which firm anchorage provided for a ship (e.g., Epictetus, *Fragment* 30: "we ought neither to fasten our ship to one small anchor, nor our life to a single hope"; cf. Philo, *On Dreams* 1.277; Acts 27:29, 40). The nearly synonymous terms ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν, "firm and secure," were used to describe anything that had sufficient stability and firmness not to be moved (e.g., Wis 7:23; 3 Macc 5:3; 4 Macc 17:4). In Hebrews, βέβαιος is a favorite term for that which is assured (2:2; 3:6, 14; 6:19; 9:17). The pair of terms is appropriate to the metaphor (cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 2.374; Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 74.24) and here qualifies the antecedent "hope." As a ship is held fast when at anchor, the life of the Christian is secured by hope that binds that life to Christ, who has entered the heavenly sanctuary (Hofius, *Vorhang*, 85–87).

The further qualification of hope as "having entered behind the curtain" where Christ has entered as high priest gives to the concept of hope a precise eschatological nuance. The notion that the participle εἰσερχομένην, "entering," qualifies ἄγκυραν, "anchor," so that it is the anchor that "has entered behind the curtain," accounts for so many commentators identifying the anchor with Jesus (Windisch, 59; Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*, 147, n. 3; Grässer, *Glaube*, 116, n. 302; Köster, "Die Auslegung," 106; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 151, 211; et al.). It seems preferable to recognize that the antecedent is the relative pronoun ἥν, which is itself the complement of the immediately preceding word ἐλπίδος, "hope" (so Kuss, 85; Michel, 253–54; Spicq, 2:165). That it is hope which penetrates behind the curtain is confirmed when the writer subsequently refers to "a new hope by which we draw near to God" (7:19). The objective content of the promised hope is the assurance that with the consummation of redemption the community

may draw near to God in priestly service (so Hofius, *Vorhang*, 86; cf. Michel, 273). They have already been encouraged to "draw near" through prayer (4:16).

The curtain before the Throne of God is described in terms borrowed from the LXX, where τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος, "the inner sanctuary," signifies the inner curtain that separated the sanctuary of God from the holy place in the tabernacle (Lev 16:2, 12, 15; cf. Exod 26:31–35; Lev 21:23; 24:3; Philo, *Moses* 2.86, 101; Jos., *Ant.* 8.75; Heb 9:3). This area could be entered by the high priest alone and then only on the occasion of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:2). The representation of Jesus as having entered the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf (v 20) presupposes this cultic background. The expression ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, "on our behalf," introduces the motif of the unique self-offering of the high priest Jesus as the ground of Christian certainty: Jesus is our eternal high priest who has opened for us the true presence of God (cf. 10:19–21). His presence behind the curtain is the firm pledge that we also shall pass through the curtain and enter within the inner sanctuary (10:19, 22; cf. Hofius, *Vorhang*, 88–89).

The designation of Jesus as πρόδρομος, "forerunner," is intriguing and has elicited a variety of proposals (cf. Bauernfeind, *TDNT* 8:235; Cassien, *Th* 27 [1956] 106–8; Spicq, *ST* 3 [1949] 186–87). The question of the derivation of the term, however, is still unanswered. The word rarely occurs in the singular in classical or hellenistic literary sources and has not been found in the papyri. In the plural the word πρόδρομοι designates advance military scouts or a corps moving ahead of the main army (Herodotus, 1.60; 4.121, 122; Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.12; Polybius, 12.20.7), advance ships of a fleet (Alciphron, *Letters* 1.14.1; cf. Livy, 36.41.7), early ripened fruit (Num 13:20; Isa 28:4), or heralds who announce the approach of a party (Herodotus, 7.203; 9.14). Julius Pollux defined the word in the singular in an athletic sense; it refers to the swiftest runner who breaks away from the group and wins the course (*Onomasticon* 3.30.148). The notion common to these references is that of precedence. πρόδρομος is a relative term, like "precursor" or "forerunner," implying a sequence. Only one proposal takes serious account of the immediate context. Cassien has suggested that the usage in Hebrews is explicated by the concluding phrase in v 20*b* (*Th* 27 [1956] 106–7). The writer makes the quality of "precursor," which he attributes to Jesus, dependent upon his high priestly ministry. Jesus is the πρόδρομος in that he has entered behind the curtain as our precursor in his office as high priest like Melchizedek. The assured character of God's promise is confirmed in the life, death, entry, and high priestly investiture of Jesus (cf. Bauernfeind, *TDNT* 8:235).

According to 5:7–10 Jesus was confirmed in his high priestly office after an earthly career of suffering and obedience. His ascension and priesthood go together. This same understanding is reflected in v 20, which indicates that Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary through his death, which secures for the people of God the purification that enables them to draw near to God (cf. 10:14). The phrase "a high priest like Melchizedek" is thus joined to the saving work of Jesus in v 20, as in 5:10. This is striking precisely because in chap. 7 the phrase will be attached to Jesus' office but not his activity (Hay, *Glory*, 145–46). The concluding phrase also functions as a fresh announcement of the subject of 5:10, which prepares the hearer for the exposition of Jesus' high priestly office in 7:1–28.

New International Greek Testament Commentary

6:13–20. God's promise and his oath

Most commentators (also Vanhoye 120–123; Dussaut 54–57) identify these verses as a separate section or paragraph. As usual, however, the transitions are smooth: ἐπαγγειλάμενος in v. 13 takes up τὰς ἐπαγγελίας in v. 12: μακροθυμήσας in v. 15 recalls διὰ … μακροθυμίας in v. 12; and the discussion about Melchizedek in 7:1–10 is introduced in 6:20. In the wider context, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἀρχιερεύς (v. 20) recalls the allusion to Ps. 110(LXX 109):4 in 5:10, and prepares for it to be quoted explicitly in 7:17.

The purpose of this passage is to express as strongly as possible the unchanging faithfulness of God. These verses thus complement the positive statements in 6:9–12 about the author's hopes for his readers, statements which have already included reference to God (v. 10a); these verses also balance the severe warning of 6:4–6.

For this purpose, the author uses the example of Abraham, mentioned in passing in 2:16. It is possible to trace a steady development of the Abraham theme throughout the epistle; the theme continues in 7:1–10 and reaches its fullest expression in 11:8–19, where Abraham, together with Sarah, occupies the foremost position among the heroes of faith. Within the present passage, the author emphasizes God's faithfulness rather than Abraham's faith. In chap. 11 the balance is reversed, God's faithfulness being mentioned only in passing (11:11), and Abraham's faith becoming the dominant theme. In the present passage, Abraham's rôle is relatively passive, and he is not mentioned after v. 15, so his subordination to Melchizedek in 7:1–10 does not involve any abrupt change of direction or tone.

Despite the quotation in vv. 13f. of parts of Gn. 22:16f., the language of this passage generally is not Septuagintal; the detailed notes below will refer to hellenistic parallels and nonbiblical terms. Lane notes the concentration of forensic language (ἀντιλογία, κατά + gen., of the guarantee of an oath, εἰ μήν, μεσιτεύω, εἰς βεβαίωσιν, ἀμετάθετος) in vv. 13–18.

These verses raise two related exegetical and logical problems which affect the coherence of the entire section: (1) What is the distinction between God's promise and his oath? and (2) Why should the author attach such importance to the strengthening of the promise by an oath?

(1) The heart of the first problem lies in the "two unchangeable things" mentioned in v. 18. These are usually, and correctly, understood as God's promise and his oath to Abraham, both mentioned in the previous verse. But what is the basis for this duality? Its starting-point may be the separation in Gn. 22:16f. of κατ' ἐμαυτοῦ ὤμοσα and εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε by λέγει κύριος (= λέγων in Heb. 6:14) and a subordinate clause. The distinction, on such a basis, between the oath and the promise seems harsh to the modern exegete; but if the author of Hebrews held to any extent the widespread Jewish doctrine of the "plenitude of scripture," it is not impossible (cf. Mt. 21:2, 5, 7 with Zc. 9:9). Nevertheless, the promise expresses the content of the former, and the two are linked by λέγων. There is no suggestion in the NT context of a distinction between "blessing" and "multiplying": the future blessing is the promise of descendants, as 11:12, 18 makes clear. It makes better sense, in the light both of the "two unchangeable things" and of the wider OT context, to take ἐπαγγειλάμενος as referring to the entire series of God's promises to Abraham (Gn. 12:2, 3, 7; 13:14–17; 15:5–7, 13–16; 17:4–8, 19), considered as a unity, and to understand ὤμοσεν as referring to the climax of the oath sworn by God following Abraham's offering of Isaac (so Riggenbach; similarly Spicq; Windisch disagrees). This does not entail taking ἐπαγγειλάμενος as equivalent to a pluperfect, as in d r cop, since the action which it indicates extends to the time of the oath.

(2) Discussion about the status of a divine oath is found already in ancient times, and some of the same questions arise for modern readers also. The implied argument, developed in vv. 16–18, is that God, by confirming his promise with an oath, set up the two witnesses (Dt. 17:6; cf. Heb.

10:28) required by the law. It might be argued (a) that God has the authority to override or change a law which he has himself established (cf. 7:12); (b) that his word alone is enough, and needs no confirmation (cf. Jn. 17:17); (c) that a promise and an oath from the same source do not constitute independent confirmation; and (d) that in any case, oaths are unworthy even of believers (Mt. 5:33–37||; Jas. 5:12), and therefore much more unworthy of God himself. A reply to these objections, from within the author's own thought world, must take account of his purpose, namely to encourage his readers to trust God to the end. For this reason, (a) it is all the more important to emphasize, as in 3:7–4:16, the continuity of God's purpose for his people under both old and new dispensations. (b) The author regularly uses two or more texts (e.g., 1:5–13; 5:5f.; 10:30) to confirm one another as evidence of God's purpose, and it is natural that he should think of God as offering similar confirmation. (c) What matters for the writer is not independent confirmation from two sources, but repeated evidence of God's continuing purpose (cf. 4:7f.). (d) The writer seems unaware of the tradition represented by Mt. 5:33–37||; Jas. 5:12. In general, however, swearing is subordinate to God's promise and faithfulness, and human faithfulness and hope (v. 16).

See E. Hatch 162; H. Koester 1961; Schröger 127–30; Laub 1980.244–246; Swetnam 1981.184f.

6:13a. God's promise to Abraham introduced

Γάρ links the general statement in v. 12, about those who "inherit the promises," with the specific example of Abraham. Ἀβραάμ is thus emphasized as "new information" in the linguistic sense, by contrast with ἐπαγγειλάμενος which recalls τὰς ἐπαγγελίας in v. 12. Lane (148) claims that "the dominant idea … is the promise, and the swearing of an oath was only an attendant circumstance," so that the main idea is expressed, not by the main verb ὤμοσεν, but by the participle ἐπαγγειλάμενος. This is quite possible grammatically (Zerwick §§263, 376), but in the immediate context (vv. 13–18) the focus is rather on the oath.

Ἐπαγγειλάμενος indicates action at the same time as that of the main verb (MHT 3.80; Lane); the promise and the oath go together.

Ἐπεί:→ 2:14.

Ὀμνύω, ὄμνυμι usually takes the accusative of the person or thing by which one swears (in the NT only Jas. 5:12); also ἐν + dat. (Mt. 5:34) or εἰς + acc. (Mt. 5:35b). The construction with κατά is determined by Gn. 22:16 (cf. Heb. 6:16), and is found also in Gn. 31:53; Ex. 32:13; 1 Sa. (1 Kgdms.) 30:15; Am. 6:8; Zp. 1:5; cf. Mt. 26:63 wth ἐξορκίζω; further references in Bleek, Braun, Bauer *s.v.*, Moule 60, J. Schneider in *TDNT* 5.176–185, cf. 457–462. The thought of God swearing by himself occurs explicitly in Ex. 32:13; Am. 6:8; cf. the use by God of the expression ζῶ ἐγώ (Nu. 14:28; Dt. 32:40; Je. 46(LXX 26):18. There is a close parallel in Philo, *Leg. All*. 3.203f.: "It is excellent that the promise is confirmed by an oath, and indeed by an oath appropriate to God; for God swears, as you see, not by another, since there is none stronger than he, but by himself, the best of all beings." (Cf. *Sacr*. 91; *Abr*. 273: Herm. *Vis*.2.2.8.) Williamson unconvincingly argues that "the Writer of Hebrews was completely unaware of the teaching of Philo on the subject" (209), but he is correct in claiming that the treatment by the two writers is different. Philo feels that divine oaths need to be explained, whereas the author of Hebrews feels no need to justify what scripture clearly states, since his purpose is not speculative but pastoral. Michel believes that a common exegetical tradition underlies both Philo and Hebrews. It is also possible that the author of Hebrews knew of the discussion in Philo, but ignored those aspects of

it which were alien or irrelevant to his own purpose. Cf. also R. Eleazar ben-Pedat in *Ber.* 32a (S-B), c. A.D. 270.

Ἔχειν + infinitive means "have the possibility, be able, be in a position to" (Bauer I.6a); it is found only here in the NT with God as subject. Hence here, with the negative οὐδείς: "he was not in a position to swear by anyone greater" ("than himself," supplied in the next clause). Οὐδενός and μείζονος may be taken as neuter, giving the more inclusive meaning "by anything greater" (so *BHD*). The masculine is generally preferred as giving the meaning more appropriate to the immediate context, but in view of → v. 16 the neuter is also possible.

In view of the author's interest in the first priest (7:1–10) and the first murder (11:4; cf. 12:24), it is possible that he was drawn to Gn. 22:16f. (cf. 26:3; 50:24) because it is the first of God's oaths recorded in scripture; however, this point is not made explicit.

6:13–14 (from ὤμοσεν). God's promise to Abraham quoted

The essential point of the quotation is contained in its first words, LXX κατ' ἐμαυτοῦ ὤμοσα, taken from the middle of Gn. 22:16 and changed to the third person to fit the grammar of the sentence in Hebrews. The quotation thus has no introductory formula, and should be classified as implicit. The change of word order throws the emphasis onto καθ' ἑαυτοῦ as "new information" in the linguistic sense.

Λέγων occurs in Gn. 22:16 just before the words quoted, but it is so natural an introduction to the words spoken by God (cf. 2:6, 12, etc.) that there is no need to consider it part of the quotation.

There is considerable manuscript variation between the classical ἦ μήν (Ψ 𝔪), the hellenistic εἰ μήν (𝔓^{46} ℵ B D* P 33 104 326 2464 *pc*, adopted by editions since Tischendorf), and even εἰ μή (D^{1} L^{c} [corrected from ἡμῖν!], also found as a *v.l.* in Rom. 14:11). There is similar confusion in the LXX tradition. In the NT, it is possible that the similar use of ἀμήν in solemn asseverations (e.g., Mk. 8:12) may have added to the confusion. Εἰ μήν and ἦ μήν are now considered orthographical variants, and there is in any case no difference of meaning. Cf. Bauer s.v. εἰ μήν, "more correctly εἶ μήν," Doric (LSJ *s.v.*); BD §§24, 441 (1), and 454 (5), with further references; MHT 3.336.

Εὐλογέω in Hebrews is consistently used of blessing (Louw-Nida 33); as the author will state explicitly in 7:7, of an inferior by a superior: here of God blessing Abraham; in 7:1, cf. v. 6, of Melchizedek blessing Abraham; in 11:20f.* of Isaac and Jacob blessing their respective children; similarly ἐυλογία in 6:7 (but with an inanimate object); 12:17. Εὐλογέω is not used in Hebrews in the sense of praising God (e.g., Jas. 3:9; Louw-Nida 33.356). Hebrews does not use ἐνευλογέω, found in Gn. 12:3; 18:18; cf. Gal. 3:8; Acts 3:25. See H. W. Beyer in *TDNT* 2.761–764; Schenk 1967.65–67.

Εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω translates the Hebrew infinitive absolute and adds emphasis to the meaning of the verb. Parallels in nonbiblical Greek are remote, and in the NT this usage is found only in quotations from the LXX (Mt. 13:14; Acts 7:34; cf. BD §422). Similarly πληθύνων πληθυνῶ** (Bauer 1a; G. Delling in *TDNT* 6.281f.).

The final σε represents τὸ σπέρμα σου in Gn. 22:17. The author will return in 11:12 to the thought of Abraham's innumerable descendants, expressed in Gn. 22:17b and elsewhere. For the moment, anything beyond God's promise to Abraham himself, and Abraham's trust in God, is outside the scope of the argument. In particular, reference to Abraham's levitical descendants would confuse the argument of 7:11ff. For similar narrowing of focus in Hebrews, cf. 6:6 with

Sir. 45:24f., and the concentration on Isaac in 11:18. The author of Hebrews is not concerned with the implications of God's promise to Abraham for other nations (Gn. 13:3; contrast Gal. 3:8).

The function of the quotation is related to the paraenetic intention of the entire passage 5:11–6:20: God swears an oath for the same reason that the author of Hebrews calls attention to it, namely ἵνα … παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν (v. 18; cf. 13:22).

6:15. Abraham's patience rewarded

Οὕτως is linked with ἐπέτυχεν rather than with μακροθυμήσας. It may be understood as drawing an inference, either (1) from vv. 13f.: God gave his promise, and thus what he had promised came to pass; or (2) from v. 12; thus Abraham gained his place among those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." (2) alone does not carry the thought of the passage any further, but v. 15 is so short that it is difficult to choose between the options, and both may be implied. But οὕτως cannot be an adverb of manner ("having in this way patiently endured"), since Abraham's patience has not been mentioned before.

Μακροθυμήσας* (cf. μακροθυμία*, v. 12) implies the condition necessary for the fulfilment of the promise (cf. TEV "Abraham was patient, *and so* he received what God had promised"; *Gute Nachricht: darum*; → v. 12 on πίστις). Μακροθυμήσας may suggest either (1) holding out to the end of a period of trial, as in Sir. 2:4, or (2) waiting patiently, as in Jas. 5:7f. Meaning (1) would suggest a reference to the OT context, namely the offering of Isaac, a theme to which Heb. 11:17–19 returns, and which fits in well with the author's purpose and with his readers' situation of trial (12:3–11). Meaning (2) would suggest Abraham's twenty-five years of waiting between God's first promise and the birth of Isaac (Gn. 12:2, 4; 21:5); perhaps also, since the promise quoted in vv. 13f. is made after the offering of Isaac, to the further sixty years before the birth of Esau and Jacob (Gn. 25:26). See Bauer 1; J. Horst in *TDNT* 3.386.

Ἐπέτυχεν τὰς ἐπαγγελίας. On ἐπαγγελία, → 4:1; ἐπιτυγχάνω is used in a similar context in 11:33; cf. Rom. 11:7; Jas. 4:2; MM; Jos. *Ant*. 11.262; 12.121; 14.230; 20.15, 184, 209. There is no significant difference between ἐπιτυγχάνω τῆς ἐπαγγελίας here, and κληρονομέω τὰς ἐπαγγελίας in v. 12; the variation is stylistic. The aorist ἐπέτυχεν must refer to an event during Abraham's earthly life. The problem (→ v. 12) is to reconcile the positive statements of vv. 12 and 15 with the apparently contradictory negative statements of 11:13, μὴ κομισάμενοι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας, and 11:39, οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, both of OT believers. There are three main possibilities: (1) Abraham received a promise from God, but not its fulfilment. (2) God both made and kept his promise to Abraham that he would have descendants, but no OT figure received the fulfilment of what God now offers to believers in Christ. (3) Abraham was given a special revelation of Christ, though he did not see him physically. (1) is harsh in a passage the whole point of which is to emphasize that God keeps his promises. Ἐπιτυγχάνω is in any case too strong for being merely the recipient of a verbal promise. (2) gives the most natural meaning: there is no reason why ἐπαγγελία should always have the same reference. Yet (3) cannot be entirely excluded; the spiritual foresight of Abraham is a belief attested in Jn. 8:56; Gal. 3:8 (cf. Gn. 12:2); *Barn*. 9:7, supported by rabbinic tradition (*Gn. Rab.* 44.25; S-B 2.525), and perhaps implied in → Heb. 11:13, "having seen (what was promised) and greeted it from afar." In the present verse, (2) is the meaning immediately in focus, but the development of the argument from v. 18 shows Abraham's faith as a type of persistent faith in Christ, and God's faithfulness to Abraham as a secure basis for relying on his faithfulness to "us" (so generally Braun, with

further references). A similar overlap of immediate and wider meanings was noted in the discussion of ὄνομα in 1:4.

6:16. Even human oaths are accepted as valid

This verse introduces the lesser, human part of a comparison which extends to v. 19a (βεβαίαν), the rest of the sentence (vv. 19b–20) forming the transition to chap. 7. Similar comparisons are found, for example, in 9:16f., 27f. In the present passage, the second, divine part of the comparison is naturally more developed:

v. 16	**vv. 17–19a**
(1) ἄνθρωποι	ὁ θεός
(2) κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος	[καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ, v. 13]
(3) ὀμνύουσιν	ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ, v. 17
(4) καὶ πάσης αὐτοῖς	ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι
ἀντιλογίας πέρας	[τὸν] θεόν, v. 18
(5) εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὅρκος	βεβαίαν, v. 19
	διὰ δύο πραγμάτων
	ἀμεταθέτων.

The various elements in this comparison call for separate comment.

(1) In isolation, ἄνθρωποι may include women, and even children (Jn. 16:21), as well as men. In fact, here, as in 7:8 and especially 5:1, it is likely that only men are intended. There are biblical examples of oaths being made to women (Jos. 6:22; 1 Ki. [3 Kgdms.] 1:28f.; Mk. 6:23), but not by them. The contrast with ὁ θεός shows that here, as in 7:8; 8:2, the author is concerned with humanity and not with sex. Indeed, as in 5:1; 7:8, the context may imply a further limitation to Jewish men, with a possible allusion to Ex. 22:10 (EVV 11); in the LXX, see also v. 7, ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ … ὀμεῖται, cf. Heb. 3:13. For the settlement of disputes by oath at Nuzi, cf. *ANET*[3] 220. For Philo’s definition of an oath, see *Sacr*. 93.

The addition of μέν after ἄνθρωποι is poorly attested (C D[1] 𝔪 bo). It is doubtless intended to emphasize the contrast between vv. 16 and 17–19a, but there is no addition of δέ in v. 17; 𝔓[46] א A B D* P 81 1739 1881 2495 *pc* omit μέν.

(2) Κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος establishes a link with the previous argument; any parallel in the second part of the comparison is superfluous. The implied parallel with καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ in v. 13 may suggest that τοῦ μείζονος is to be taken as masculine and as a reference to God, but → v. 13.

(3) Stylistic variation. On ἐμεσίτευσεν, → v. 17.

(4) In the immediate context, ἀντιλογία evidently refers to human disputes, as in 7:7. Riggenbach believes that the meaning here is “contradiction,” not “dispute” as in Ex. 18:16; Dt. 19:17; 2 Sa. (2 Kgdms.) 15:14. Yet in view of the author’s interest in Israel’s rebellion at Kadesh

(ὕδωρ ἀντιλογίας, Nu. 20, especially v. 13; cf. 27:14; Dt. 32:51; Ps. 81:7 [LXX 80:8]; 106[LXX 105]:32; Heb. 3:8; 12:3), which he views as essentially a refusal to believe or trust God's promises, it is difficult to exclude entirely overtones of the Israelites' dispute with God. Cf. the legal overtones of βεβαίωσις, on which see (5) below. Αὐτοῖς = τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. Πέρας is here used in the temporal sense of the end or conclusion of a dispute (Bauer 2; Louw-Nida 61.51; cf. 1 Esdr. 9:17; 2 Macc. 5:8; 3 Macc. 5:5; also classical, LSJ *s.v.* III; not, as in Mt. 12:42||Lk. 11:31; Rom. 10:18** = Ps. 19:5; and most commonly in the LXX, in the spatial sense of the set phrase "the ends of the earth" (Bauer 1; Louw-Nida 80.6). The postposition of πέρας adds to the emphasis of πάσης: the statement is axiomatic.

(5) The whole of vv. 18–19a, not just the word βεβαίαν, emphasizes the guarantee given to God's promise by the addition of his oath. In the first part of the comparison, there is no separate mention of a human promise, yet this may be implied as the thing secured by the act of βεβαίωσις or giving a legal guarantee (cf. Bauer *s.v.* βέβαιος with further references; Lv. 25:23 LXX of selling land absolutely; Wis. 6:18; Phil. 1:7 may imply that the Philippian Christians added their guarantee to Paul's defence of the gospel)***. The opposite of εἰς βεβαίωσιν in legal terminology is εἰς ἀθέτησιν, "for annulment" (MM *s.v.* with further references; Heb. 9:26; cf. 7:18**). Ὁ ὅρκος (v. 17*) is generic and = "oaths."

6:17. God's oath is still more powerful

Ἐν ᾧ may be taken either (1) with … βουλόμενος, ἐν ᾧ being equivalent to ἐν τῷ ὅρκῳ, or (2) with ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ meaning "because," as in Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:18 (Bauer *s.v.* ἐν, IV.6d) (so already Theophylact and Primasius, quoted by Bleek; also Lane). (2), though a rather loose construction, is preferable to (1), since ὅρκῳ is repeated at the end of the verse.

The neuter singular adjective περισσότερον (7:15*, in a similar context) is used adverbially (Bauer *s.v.* περισσός 3; BD §60[1]), with ἐπιδεῖξαι, and means "all the more," like the more common περισσοτέρως (2:1; 13:19), which is read here by B.

Βουλόμενος* and βουλή* are related in sound, derivation, and meaning. Both are used especially though not exclusively of God's will; often, as here, in passages of high rhetorical emphasis (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27; Eph. 1:11). The order βουλόμενος ὁ θεός is weakened by inversion in $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ D 323; cf. Rom. 9:22, … θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι … Ὁ θεός is slightly emphasized, to contrast with ἄνθρωπος in v. 16.

For the active ἐπιδεῖξαι, A *pc* have the middle ἐπιδείξασθαι, cf. Rom. 9:22, Ἐπιδείκνυμι is used figuratively in contexts which suggest revelation by God (Is. 37:26; *Ep. Diog*. 8:5; cf. v. 6; *Barn*. 6:13); or, with a human subject, of logical proof (e.g., 4 Macc. 1:1, 7, 9).

Since βουλόμενος implies a future reference, οἱ κληρόνομοι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας must mean, not "those to whom God once uttered a promise," but "those who would later receive from God (→ 1:4, κληρονομέω) what he had promised." Vv. 13–15 were devoted to the example of Abraham, for whom the promise of posterity was fulfilled. The author now begins to return to the wider perspective of those who, in the present age, were described as κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας (v. 12), and who in God's purpose include the author and his readers (ἵνα … παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν, v. 18). Nothing in the NT context justifies, on the one hand, a limitation of οἱ κληρόνομοι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας to the patriarchs, or, on the other hand, an extension to "all the nations of the earth" (contrast the use of Gn. 22:18 in Acts 3:25; also Gal. 3:16 [cf. 2:16]. 69 adds κλητοῖς, either for dogmatic reasons or under the influence of the following κληρονόμοις.

Τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς* (→ βουλόμενος above) αὐτοῦ. For the word ἀμετάθετος, cf. 3 Macc. 5:12; Xen. *Ep.* 1:2; MM. The idea of God's unchangeable purpose is widespread. The closest OT parallels are Ps. 33(LXX 32):11 = Pr. 19:21, ἡ … βουλὴ τοῦ κυρίου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μένει; Ezk. 12:28 has close affinities with Hab. 2:3f., quoted in Heb. 10:37f. God's unchangeable purpose is affirmed as a general principle which, in different contexts, may be applied negatively (Is. 14:24; 31:2; Ezk. 12:28; Mal. 3:6), positively (Ps. 33[LXX]:11; Is. 40:8; 45:23 [κατ' ἐμαυτοῦ ὀμνύω]; Je. 4:28), or neutrally (Pr. 19:21b; Is. 46:10b). Outside the OT, there are verbal parallels with the interpretation of Nu. 23:19 by Philo in *Vit. Mos*. 1.283; *Deus Imm.* 26, and especially in the rabbinic tradition (*Nu. Rab.* 23:8 on 34:2). Qumran parallels (1QS 3:15f.; 1QH 15:12ff.) are more remote, because they do not directly refer to a historical situation. In the NT, cf. Rom. 3:3f.; 9:6, 11; 11:29 (ἀμεταμέλητος); Jas. 1:17 (Hofius 1973). For the thought, cf. also Heb. 1:12 (= Ps. 102[LXX 101]:27); 7:21 (= Ps. 110[LXX 109]:4); 9:15; 12:17; 13:8. Because God is faithful to his own purposes, the readers should remain faithful to their hope of sharing in what he has promised them.

Βουλή (Louw-Nida 30.57), as distinct from θέλημα (Louw-Nida 15.2; 30.59), conveys not only will power but purpose and decision. Since, however, both terms are used predominantly in the NT of God, their meanings tend to flow into one another.

Ἐμεσίτευσεν*** is unexpected in this context, since there is no reference to a third person acting as a mediator (→ μεσίτης, 8:6). In nonbiblical Greek, the verb is generally transitive, with the meaning "act as mediator between" (Diod. Sic. 19.71; Dion. Hal. 9.59; Polyb. 9.34.3; cf. Philo, *Plant.* 2.10, τοῦ θείου λόγου … μεσιτεύοντός τε καὶ διαιτῶντος). In Jos. *Ant*. 7.193; cf. 16.118, the verb is used intransitively, ἐμεσίτευσε πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα, with the meaning "intercede." In the present verse, the idea of God "mediating" his own purpose by an oath (Oecumenius; cf. vg *interposuit*) is strained; the context requires the meaning "guarantee, vouch for" (Bauer). In hellenistic usage, μεσίτης is sometimes similarly used of the guarantor of the execution of an agreement (A. Oepke in *TDNT* 4.598–624, here 600, 620). → 8:6, μεσίτης.

Ὅρκῳ is "new information" in the immediate context, since the last oath mentioned was the generic ὁ ὅρκος of v. 16; so no article is used here. There is no reference to the oath made to Jesus in Ps. 110(LXX 109):4a as quoted in Heb. 7:21; but in writing of God's unchangeable purpose (see above), the author may have had in mind the words οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται.

6:18. Our hope is grounded in God's promise and his oath

The purpose of God's oath, as far as the author and his readers are concerned, begins to be explained; but explicit reference to Jesus is reserved for the climax of the passage in v. 20. Both the construction and the thought recall Rom. 12:3f. Ἵνα indicates God's purpose (cf. βουλόμενος, v. 17); "he wanted to give us double certainty." Yet result is also implied (Bauer *s.v.* ἵνα, II.2): ἔχωμεν here passes quickly over into ἔχομεν in v. 19.

Διά and ἐν, both related to δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, are general in meaning and difficult to distinguish; "there are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie" (TEV). The "two unchangeable things" (→ v. 16) must be God's promise and his oath; certainly not the two oaths of 6:13 and 7:21, which are made to different people. Attridge, dissenting from Hofius 1973.142–144, quotes Philo, *Abr*. 273, where God's oath confirms a promise to Abraham. For διά, D reads μετά.

The meaning of πρᾶγμα covers word, object, and event (10:1; 11:1*). Here the word is primary, but event is implied; only in Hebrews with a future reference (Braun). Cf. Philo's

πράγματα ἀσώματα, θεῖα, νοητά, *Rer. Div. Her*. 63, 66; C. Maurer in *TDNT* 6.638–640. Ἀμετάθετος, used as a noun in v. 17, is here repeated with its usual adjectival force.

Ἐν οἷς: ψεύδομαι ἐν is used in Lv. 6:2 (LXX 5:21) of lying about something (MHT 4.112); the more usual περί is used twice in Lv. 6:2f. (LXX 5:21f.) to translate the Hebrew *b^e^*.

Ἀδύνατον (→ 6:4) introduces a presupposition which the author assumes that his readers will share. The conviction that God cannot lie is widespread both within and outside the Bible (1 Sa. [LXX 1 Kgdms.] 15:29; Jb. 36:4 LXX; Nu. 23:19; Ps. 33:11; Is. 46:10f.; *1 Clem*. 27:2; Archilochus 6.223, ἀψευδέστατος, of Zeus; Artemidorus 2.69; Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 1.283). This conviction lies deeper than the argument about the promise and the oath. The implication, somewhat veiled by the rhetoric, is: "In any case, God cannot lie." Ἐν οἷς is thus weak: it cannot imply that God could have lied if his promise had not been confirmed by an oath. Note the assonance between ἀδύνατον and ἀμεταθέτων; cf. 1:1; 10:3f.

Ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι* is virtually a double negative, equivalent to a strong affirmation of God's ἀλήθεια in the sense of *'emet*, reliability (cf. Rom. 3:3–7). Cf. also 2:10; 6:10; Jas. 1:13, and more distantly Jn. 9:31; Rom. 9:4, 19, for statements of what it is impossible or inappropriate for God to do. See H. Conzelmann in *TDNT* 9.600–603.

It is quite uncertain whether τόν before θεόν was omitted by the author, against his more common practice, for reasons of euphony after ἀδύνατον (so B D Ψ TR, BD §254[1], Zuntz 130, NA[25]), or added by copyists by dittography (so 𝔓[46] א A C P 33 1739 1881 2495 *pc;* Tischendorf, NA[26]; Braun with hesitation; Attridge). The meaning is probably unaffected, though Lane, following Zuntz, considers the meaning: "It is impossible for *one who is God* to lie." Ἰσχυράν is figurative, in contrast to 5:7; 11:34*. The image of physical strength is developed in v. 19.

Παράκλησις (→ παρακαλέω, 3:13) may mean either "encouragement," "exhortation," or both. In 12:5; 13:22* verbal encouragement, in 12:5 by scripture and in 13:22 by the epistle, is intended. In both instances, the meaning "comfort," common in the LXX under Hebrew influence but less common elsewhere, is practically excluded by the sternness of the context. In the present verse, the element of encouragement or incentive predominates. It would be too weak to describe the purpose (ἵνα) of God's promise and oath as one of mere exhortation; the author has himself provided this in 6:9–12. Παράκλησις is linked with hope, as here, in Rom. 15:4; 2 Cor. 1:5–7; 2 Thes. 2:16. O. Schmitz in *TDNT* 5.793–799.

For ἔχωμεν, K L P and many minuscules have the ungrammatical orthographical variant ἔχομεν (→ v. 19 on ἔχομεν). Ἔχω is often used with expressions of hope; cf. Acts 14:15; Rom. 15:4 (ἐλπίδα); Heb. 10:2; 1 Pet. 3:16 (a good conscience); Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19 (παρρησίαν); contrast Lk. 6:24. Here the whole expression means "we are greatly encouraged." See H. Hanse in *TDNT* 2.824f.

Οἱ καταφυγόντες: the participle with the article, usually also with a personal pronoun, is equivalent to a relative clause: "we who flee …" or "… take refuge" (BD §412[5]; Spicq 1978.420–422). The absolute use of the phrase leaves it open whether the meaning is that of fleeing from danger, or to a place of refuge (as literally in Acts 14:6**, figuratively in Ps. 143[LXX 142]:9, πρὸς σὲ κατέφυγον); God as ἐλπὶς καὶ καταφυγὴ τῶν πτωχῶν, *Ps. Sol*. 15:2; the following words make it clear that the latter is intended. The aorist καταφυγόντες also leaves open whether (1) the readers are considered as already having taken refuge, or whether (2) they have still to do so, at least fully. Comparison with v. 11 suggests that (2) is meant. The present insecurity of God's pilgrim people is a recurring theme in the epistle (e.g., 11:13–16, 35–38; 13:14), but is not emphasized here. Spicq speculatively suggests that this verse is evidence that the epistle was addressed to exiles or refugees.

It is difficult to be certain whether the rest of the verse has a predominantly present or future meaning. (1) Κρατέω may mean (a) "hold fast" something already in one's grasp, as in 4:14* (so Bauer 2eβ, Spicq, Braun, TEV, JB?, REB), or (b) "take hold" of something not yet in one's possession (so Riggenbach, Moffatt, Michel, NRSV, NIV, NJB); possibly ingressive, "begin to take hold" (Lane, following MHT 3.72; cf. Zerwick §250). (2) Πρόκειμαι may mean (a) "lie before, be present" (Bauer 2 gives this meaning for 12:2 and prefers it here; cf. 1 Cor. 8:12; Jude 7) or (b) "lie" or "be set before," as a goal (Bauer 3 gives this meaning for Heb. 12:1 and "perhaps" here; cf. Jos. *Ant*. 1.14, εὐδαιμονία πρόκειταί τινι παρὰ θεοῦ. (3) Ἐλπίς, here as elsewhere (→ 3:6), may mean (a) hope itself, or (b) the object of hope (cf. 2 Macc. 7:14; Rom. 8:24; R. Bultmann in *TDNT* 2, here 530n.100). Braun follows Erasmus and others in subordinating present to future: "… so that we may take possession in the future age of the object of hope which lies before us." This is confirmed by the ἵνα, of unrealized purpose, which governs the whole clause, and by the aorist participle of a verb of movement καταφυγόντες. The tension between present and future is not merely a matter of lexical ambiguity: it lies at the heart of the situation which the writer addresses (cf. 12:22, προσεληλύθατε). He has previously (3:6, 14) spoken of holding on to the end to the faith which the readers have received; here he emphasizes on the one hand the absolute security of the place of refuge to which he and his readers "flee," and on the other hand the future reality of God's sworn promise, which is so to speak already displayed in this place of refuge. The readers are to seize it and hold it fast. The place of refuge implied by καταφυγόντες irresistibly recalls the κατάπαυσις of Ps. 95(LXX 94):11, as expounded in Heb. 3:12–4:11; also the well-founded πόλις of → 11:10, and the long-sought πατρίς of 11:14.

6:19. Believers follow Jesus into the heavenly sanctuary

In a typical chiasmus, vv. 19–20 announce themes which are developed in reverse order in the rest of the central doctrinal section: priest after the order of Melchizedek (6:20b; cf. 7:1–17); Jesus forerunner/priest on our behalf in the inner shrine (6:20a; cf. 7:18–10:18); and the hope/confidence that enters the inner shrine (6:19; cf. 10:19–39; see Rice 1981, 1987). In its relation to the rest of the sentence (vv. 16–20), the thought of this verse is generally clear, but there are problems of detail. These problems, though interrelated, may be distinguished as follows: (1) do (a) ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν, and (b) εἰσερχομένην agree with "hope" or with "anchor"? (2) How far is the objective meaning of ἐλπίς, "that which is hoped for," maintained in this verse? The problems arise because of a transition from the generally static language in which the firm basis of the readers' security is described (but cf. καταφυγόντες, v. 18), to the language of movement used in speaking of the work of Christ.

(1) The clearest sequence of thought is obtained if ἀσφαλῆ, βεβαίαν, and εἰσερχομένην are all related to ἐλπίδα (so Braun), and ὡς ἄγκυραν … τῆς ψυχῆς is considered as an adjectival phrase synonymous with, and grammatically parallel to, ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαῖαν. The difficulty in relating v. 19b (from ἀσφαλῆ) to ἄγκυρα is greatest in the case of εἰσερχομένην, a verb not naturally used of an anchor, but chosen as suitable to describe both the exaltation of Christ (as in v. 20; 9:12, 24; 10:5; cf. → 1:6, εἰσαγάγῃ; 7:19, ἐπεισαγωγή) and the access of believers to the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 3:11–4:11 *passim* as access to the place of heavenly rest; 10:19, εἴσοδον). It is true that ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν are more closely linked with one another, both grammatically (τε καί) and in meaning (cf. 2:4); yet this is insufficient reason for making the adjectives agree with ἄγκυρα and the participle with ἐλπίδος, as do Bleek and Riggenbach. The language used elsewhere in the epistle about hope is compatible with making v. 19b relate to ἐλπίδος (though

since there is no other mention of an anchor, the argument is not conclusive): βεβαία of hope, 3:6; πληροφορία τῆς ἐλπίδος, 6:11; ἐπεισαγωγή … κρείττονος ἐλπίδος, 7:19; cf. 10:23. The most likely explanation, though not the clearest for a modern western reader, is that the author's thought gradually glides from the anchor to the hope of which it is the image.

(2) A similar gliding is possible in the author's use of ἐλπίς. An objective meaning, that for which one hopes, was considered likely for τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος, and makes good sense in v. 19 as far as ψυχῆς, perhaps even to βεβαίαν, but it is doubtful whether it can be sustained from εἰσερχομένην onwards, unless ἐλπίς is actually identified with Jesus (as by Windisch; cf. Käsemann 1984.147), a harsh construction unsupported by the context (so Michel). That for which Christians hope is already in heaven, like the κατάπαυσις of 3:11ff., but they now reach out to grasp it, filled with a hope which is secure because it is grounded in the work of Christ. For the thought, cf. 1 Pet. 1:3–5.

Ἄγκυρα is used three times literally in Acts 27, but nowhere else in the Greek Bible. Postbiblical Hebrew and Aramaic have no indigenous term for an anchor, and the Peshitta transliterates forms deriving from the Greek word (Delitzsch). Nonbiblical, especially Greek, use of the image of the anchor is widespread—on coins, on tombs, and in literary texts. Plato, *Leg.* 12.961C, describes the city assembly as ἄγκυραν πάσης τῆς πόλεως; Plut. *Mor.* 446A, quoting a poetic fragment, describes actions not under the control of reason as an "anchor-hook in sand"; Lucian, *J. Tr.* 51, quotes as proverbial for a "last hope" the ἱερὰ ἄγκυρα or sheet-anchor which cannot be cut away; Euripides's Helen describes her hope for Menelaus's return as ἄγκυρα δ' ἥμου τὰς τύχας ὄχει μόνη (*Helen* 277); and Philo, *Sacr*. 90, compares the stability of virtue with a safe anchorage (further references in Braun). In the present passage, Spicq (1949c) believes that the nautical metaphor extends to πρόδρομος, but this would be scarcely compatible with the main image of the OT sanctuary; πρόδρομος (→ v. 20) is best understood as a synonym of ἀρχηγός (→ 2:10). What is remarkable is the author's restraint in the use of the anchor image. (He does not even adopt the current saying about the value of having two anchors, Pindar, *Ol.* 6.100; Plut. *Solon* 19, which would have followed on well from his reference to God's promise and oath.) Many commentators, both ancient and modern, press the metaphor further; Spicq, for example, refers to the "waters above the firmament" of Gn. 1:7. It is simpler, and more in harmony with the context, to see the anchor as an image of security: the object of hope can be relied on.

Ἔχομεν, not ἔχωμεν (D *pc* a vg), as in v. 19; → 4:3; 6:3; here possibly influenced by ἔχωμεν in v. 18. The meaning is "we possess," not "we hold fast" (κατέχομεν). Ἀσφαλῆ and βεβαίαν describe the object of hope as it is in itself, not the way in which believers possess it.

Τῆς ψυχῆς → 3:12, "an anchor for the soul" or "for (our) life" (E. Schweizer in *TDNT* 9.650f.).

Ἀσφαλῆς καὶ βέβαιος are frequently used together: for example, Wis. 7:23, of wisdom; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Logic.* II.374, of a logical presupposition; Polyb. 6:48.5, βεβαίαν … παρεσκεύασε τὴν ἀσφαλείαν, "secured (someone's) absolute safety"; Plut. *Marcus Cato* 21.5, of investment, ἀσφαλῆ πράγματα καὶ βεβαία; Polyb. 12.25a.2 negatively, of an unreliable author (contrast ἀσφάλεια in Lk. 1:4); Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.283, describes Alexander as βεβαιότατος and ἀσφαλέστατος; Philo, *Cong. Erud.* 141, of knowledge; *Conf. Ling.* 106, in a punning reference to the "asphalt-pitch" (Ex. 2:3) with which Moses' basket was smeared. Nothing in the context suggests the distinction between ἀσφαλής as "strengthened from outside," and βέβαιος as "firm in itself" (Westcott). Elsewhere in Hebrews, βέβαιος is used with expressions similar in meaning to ἐλπίς: → 3:6 with παρρησία; 3:14 with ὑπόστασις. On the anomalous variant form ἀσφαλῆν

or ἀσφαλήν (A C D* P), see Tischendorf; MHT 2.139 (§58 [d]); BD §46 (1); cf. μονογενήν, 11:17 D*. On ἀσφαλής, see Spicq 1982.74f., 77.

Εἰσερχομένην (→ 3:11): the present tense suggests either an action still in progress, or, perhaps less probably in the context, a repeated action (Westcott); contrast the aorist εἰσῆλθεν in v. 20 of Christ. In hope, believers may now enter where Jesus has already entered in reality, namely into the heavenly sanctuary. The same language is used of Christ entering heaven as high priest (9:12, 24f.; 10:5; cf. 9:25), and of believers entering their heavenly rest (3:11ff.), either in the last days, or by hope in the present time, διὰ … τῆς ἐλπίδος ἤδη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἐσμεν (Chrysostom).

Εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον (Acts 16:24**) τοῦ καταπετάσματος: an allusion to Aaron (and, by implication, his successors) entering εἰς τὸ ἅγιον ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος to make a sin offering (Lv. 16:2, cf. vv. 12, 15; Nu. 18:7, τὸ ἔνδοθεν τοῦ καταπετάσματος). The author typically announces in passing a theme which will become central in chap. 9. The two curtains of the OT sanctuary are usually, but not always, distinguished in the LXX as κάλυμμα *(māsāḵ)* before the outer tabernacle, and καταπέτασμα *(pārōḵeṯ)* before the Holy of Holies. Here, as in 9:3; 10:20, the latter is meant. In Hebrews, the καταπέτασμα is viewed primarily as a means of access to God, in contrast to Mk. 15:38||**, where, especially in Mark, the account of the rending of the veil expresses the evangelist's horror at the crucifixion. Cf. Jos. *War* 5.219, where the καταπέτασμα screens the ἐνδοτάτω μέρος of the temple from its outer portion; cf. *Ant*. 8.75, ἐνδοτέρω καταπετάσματα; Philo, *Vit. Mos*. 2.101, δύσιν ὑφάσμασι, τῷ μὲν ἔνδον ὅ καλεῖται καταπέτασμα, τῷ δ' ἐκτὸς ὃ προσαγαρεύ εται κάλυμμα; an extended meaning in *Gig*. 53, of the mind having τὸ ἐσωτάτω καταπέτασμα καὶ προκάλυμμα τῆς δόξης removed, so that it is face to face with God; in a noncultic setting in *Joseph and Asenath* 10.2 (Charlesworth 2.215); see Cassien; Lindeskog; Hofius 1972; Theissen; Attridge 184–185; Carl Schneider in *TDNT* 3.628–630.

6:20. A high priest of a different kind

This is the first explicit reference to Jesus since 5:10, apart from the passing mention of the "word of Christ" in 6:1. Meanwhile, the author has related his readers' condition to the purpose of God, as evidenced especially in his dealings with Abraham. In this verse, the author completes his careful preparation for the "teaching difficult to explain" (5:11). He does this by a skilful combination of motifs: (1) traditional teaching about the resurrection or exaltation of Christ is re-expressed in terms of the entry of a high priest into the inner sanctuary; and (2) the contrast between Jesus' ministry and that of the OT priesthood is expressed by use of the Melchizedek motif. This comparison and contrast, both based on exegesis of OT texts, will prove to be the heart of the epistle. The present verse thus forms a structurally important bridge, comparable with 5:5f., in which the themes of Son and high priest were combined. The christological development is clear:

- Jesus is Son (chap. 1)
- He is high priest (2:17)
- The same Christ is both Son and high priest (5:5–10)
- His priesthood is like that of Melchizedek (6:20–7:19)

Ὅπου, like ποῦ in the NT and modern Greek, means both "where," as in 9:16; 10:18*, and "whither," as here with a verb of movement (BD §103).

The meaning and background of πρόδρομος** have been extensively but inconclusively discussed. The basic meaning is that of "running before." In nonbiblical Greek, the word is used both as an adjective and as a noun. Of the two semantic components "precede" and "run," the latter is the weaker unless reinforced by the context, which is not the case here. Cf. δρόμος, which means "course (of life)" in Acts 13:25; 20:24; perhaps even in 2 Tim. 4:7, where the NRSV translates "race," but TEV "I have run the full distance." Προ- implies a reference to those who follow (Louw-Nida 36.9), in this case clearly the "we" of ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; cf. Cambier 1950.78; Heb. 13:14. Just as the author's use of the OT runs from passing allusion (e.g., 11:35–38) to detailed exposition (as of Ps. 110:4), so some of the names or titles which he applies to Jesus are central (especially ἀρχιερεύς), while others, such as πρόδρομος, ἀπόστολος (3:1), and πρωτότοκος (1:6), are not developed. Πρόδρομος is used in nonbiblical Greek from Aeschylus and Herodotus: of emissaries (Hdt. 7.203; 9.14 with ἄγγελοι; Soph. *Ant*. 108); of winds (Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 2.15.2; *Problemata* 26.12.1; Theophrastus, *Winds* 2.11; further references in Spicq); of a military advance guard (Aeschylus, *Sept.* 80; Hdt. 1.60; 4.121f.; cf. Wis. 12:8 of wasps as the advance guard of God's avenging host); of a light ship running before the rest of the fleet (Alciphro 1.11); and of early figs (Is. 28:4) or grapes (Nu. 13:20 [LXX 21]). Spicq 1949a, following J. Hastings, *Speaker's Bible* 138, presses the naval metaphor, linking it with ἄγκυρα in v. 19 (cf. Philo, *Flacc*.26, δρόμος of a pilot's course). However, this would confuse still further the imagery of an already complex passage. Even if the "hope" of v. 19 is not identified with Jesus in v. 20, the picture of an anchor embedded in another ship is difficult, and the conflict between static and dynamic language is thereby made unnecessarily harsh. Moreover, a sustained naval metaphor would be incompatible with the cultic language which predominates from this point onwards. The closest parallel is between 6:18–20 and 12:1f.; → 2:10 for ἀρχηγός; for the thought, cf. Jn. 14:2. See Cullmann 101; O. Bauernfeind in *TDNT* 8.235.

Ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν should probably be grammatically linked with εἰσῆλθεν (Bleek, Delitzsch, Spicq) rather than with πρόδρομος (Zimmermann 1977.39); cf. 9:24: … εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός … ἐμφανισθῆναι … ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; 10:19ff.; 7:25, of Christ's intercession for believers; 2:9, of his death ὑπὲρ παντός. A contrast between Jesus and the levitical priesthood is implied by the emphatic placing of κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ; the levitical high priest did indeed act on behalf of the people (9:7), but not as πρόδρομος, obtaining access to the inner sanctuary for anyone else.

Εἰσέρχομαι (→ v. 19), like προσέρχομαι (→ 4:16), is used in Hebrews in cultic contexts, of entry into God's presence. The aorist εἰσῆλθεν, of Jesus' exaltation, contrasts with the present εἰσερχομένην used in v. 19 of believers.

Ἰησοῦς is typically emphasized by its position (→ 2:9): D adds Χριστός.

V. 20b (from κατά) is a clear verbal allusion to Ps. 110:4, first quoted in → 5:6, and recalled in 5:10 and 7:17. In 5:6, 10, the point was that equal divine authority conferred the titles of Son (cf. 5:9) and high priest. In the present verse, the word order is changed to throw emphasis on κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ, which introduces the special teaching on Melchizedek in chap. 7. In 7:17, the context will give emphasis to εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

On the distinction in use, though not in meaning, between ἱερεύς and ἀρχιερεύς in quotations of, and allusions to, Ps. 110:4, → 5:10.

Γενόμενος (→ 2:17) here, and παραγενόμενος in → 9:11, are used of Christ's becoming high priest; here and in 9:11 they are grammatically subordinate to εἰσῆλθεν. It is natural to take the participles as expressing an action identical with that of the finite verb (BD §239[1]; Spicq and P.

E. Hughes disagree). The meaning is thus that God declared Jesus to be high priest because of his self-offering. His entry into the heavenly sanctuary, and his appointment as high priest, are one; Jesus was made high priest because of what he did. Westcott believes that Jesus' eternal high priesthood followed on his exaltation, but if this is understood as a logical rather than a temporal sequence, the meaning is close to that suggested above. Alternatively, Spicq and others press εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα to refer to an eternal attribute, namely Sonship (cf. 1:10 with 1:8), but this is not supported, either grammatically in the present verse, or by the exposition of εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in → 7:15f. as meaning "arising now, and henceforth indestructible."[142]

Wuest

(6:13) In verses 11, 12, the writer exhorts the unsaved among his readers, to go on to the act of faith in Messiah as High Priest, and thus to be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. In this verse, he cites the example of Abraham as an illustration of one of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The Jewish community in the Christian Church was undergoing persecution by apostate Judaism, and was growing restive because of the fact that Messiah's return was being seemingly delayed. The writer is conscious of this, and seeks to comfort these Jewish believers by the words "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (10:37). All the examples of faith in chapter 11 illustrate the long outlook of faith, involving patient waiting and endurance. Abraham is one of them (11:9, 10). The example of Abraham shows that the promise of God is sure.

> Translation. For when to Abraham God made promise, since He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself.

(6:14) The words "blessing I will bless," and "multiplying I will multiply," are Hebraisms, the repetition emphasizing the idea.

> Translation. Saying, Blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

(6:15) "Patiently" refers back to the word "patience" in verse 12. The word "obtained" is the translation of epitugchano (ἐπιτυγχανο) which means "to light or hit upon a person or thing, to attain to, obtain." The word here indicates that Abraham did not personally receive the entire fulfilment of the promise, but only the germ of that fulfilment. The promise was that Abraham was to become a great nation, and that the earth was to be blessed through Abraham. Isaac, born miraculously, was a partial fulfilment of the promise, and the Lord Jesus as Saviour and coming Messiah fulfils all that God promised Abraham.

> Translation. And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

[142] Ellingworth, P. (1993). *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 334–349). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

(2) God's oath and God's promise guarantee the believer's eternal retention of salvation (vv. 16–18).

(6:16) The writer now illustrates the security of the divine promise by using the analogy of human practice. The word "oath" is preceded by the definite article in the Greek text. The oath, which is used with a view to confirming something, is the end of all disputes. Thus, the act of God in confirming His promise by an oath, is justified by human practice. The confident hope which God's oath warrants is justified by the fact that even a human oath puts an end to dispute.

Translation. For men swear by the greater, and the oath which is for the purpose of confirmation, is to them an end of every dispute.

(6:17) The word "wherein" refers to the entire previous clause. The idea is "in accordance with this universal custom." Since the oath has this convincing power among men, God disregards the insult implied in man's doubting His Word, and condescends to human infirmity, confirming His Word by an oath. The word "willing" is the translation of boulomai (βουλομαι) which speaks of a desire that is based upon the reasoning faculties as over against thelo (θελο), a desire that arises from the emotions. God, facing human infirmities, was minded to do thus and so.

The word "immutability" is the translation of *ametatheton* (ἀμεταθετον). The word is from *metatithemi* (μετατιθεμι). *Tithemi* (Τιθεμι) means "to place," and *meta* (μετα) prefixed refers to a change. Thus, the compound word means "to change place," thus "to transpose" two things, one of which is put in place of the other. The derived noun *metathemenos* (μεταθεμενος) means "a turncoat." The Greek letter Alpha prefixed to the word makes it mean the opposite to what it meant originally. That is, God will not change His position as to His promise. Having made the promise, He will stand by it. He is not a turncoat. He will not change His position as to His promise, because that promise rests upon His counsel, and that is *ametatheton* (ἀμεταθετον) also, immutable. The word "counsel" is the translation of *boule* (βουλε), which word is allied to *boulomai* (βουλομαι) "to desire, which desire comes from one's reason." The Triune God in council convened brought forth this counsel to the effect that the soul might find a sure refuge in the Lord Jesus. This counsel is immutable.

The word "confirmed" is the translation of *mesiteuo* (μεσιτευο) which means "to act as mediator between litigating or covenanting parties, to accomplish something by interposing between two parties." A *mesites* (μεσιτες) is a sponsor or surety, so *mesiteuo* (μεσιτευο) comes to signify "to pledge one's self, to give surety." God placed Himself between Himself and the inheritors of the promise. Expositor's quotes Delitzsch as follows: "God descended, as it were, from His own absolute exaltation, in order, so to speak, to look up to Himself after the manner of men and take Himself to witness; and so by a gracious condescension confirm the promise for the sake of the inheritors"; and Davidson, "He mediated or came in between men and Himself, through the oath by Himself."

The word "promise" is preceded by the definite article in the Greek text, pointing to a definite, particular promise defined in the context. It is the promise to Abraham and his posterity found in verse 14.

Translation. In (accordance with) which God more abundantly desirous of demonstrating to those who are inheritors of the promise, the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath.

(6:18) The word "things" is the translation of pragma (πραγμα), which comes from prasso (πρασσο), "to do, practice, accomplish, perform." Pragma (Πραγμα), therefore, means more than "thing." It speaks of an accomplished fact, of that which has been done. The two accomplished facts, the two things which were done, are the act of God making a promise and the act of God taking an oath. And these are not subject to change. They are immutable.

The word "consolation" is the translation of *parakaleo, kaleo* (παρακαλεο, καλεο) meaning "to call," *para* (παρα) prefixed being perfective in its function, thus making the compound word mean "to call earnestly," thus "to exhort, to encourage." "Strong" in the Greek text is *ischuros* (ἰσχυρος) which speaks of indwelling strength embodied or put forth either aggressively or as an obstacle to resistance, as an army or a fortress. Thus the encouragement which God's promise and God's oath afford is a strong army or a fortress against doubt and discouragement. God's promise and God's oath should keep these Jews from apostatizing through the encouragement they give.

The writer says that this encouragement is for those of his readers who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them. The Greek word meaning "to flee for refuge" *katapheugo* (καταφευγο) is used in the LXX (Deut. 4:42) of the slayer who killed his neighbor unawares, and who, to escape the avenger, flees for refuge to one of the cities of refuge. Here it speaks of the sinner fleeing for refuge from the penalty of sin, to the High Priest who has offered atonement for him and his sin. His only hope is in his High Priest, the Messiah.

Translation. In order that through the instrumentality of two immutable facts in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might be having a strong encouragement, we who fled for refuge for the purpose of laying fast hold of the hope which is lying before us.

---

(3) This salvation made possible by the presence of the High Priest in the heavenly Holy of Holies (vv. 19, 20).

(6:19) The writer speaks of the hope of eternal life as an anchor of the soul. He uses two adjectives to describe this anchor, "sure" and "steadfast." The distinction between these two adjectives here is in the relation of the same object to two different tests applied to it from without. The word "sure" is the translation of *asphale* (ἀσφαλε), which is made up of *a* (α), "not," and *sphallo* (σφαλλο), "to make totter," the compound word meaning "not to make totter, not to baffle or foil." It speaks, therefore, of something that cannot be made to totter when put to the test. "Steadfast" is the translation of *bebaian* (βεβαιαν) which means "sustaining one's steps in going." Thus it speaks of something which does not break down under the weight of something that steps on it. This hope which the believing soul has in the Lord Jesus is an anchor of the soul which cannot be made to totter nor break down when put under stress and strain. The words "which entereth" go back syntactically to the word "anchor." It is the anchor that enters into that within the veil. The words "that within" are the translation of *to esoteron* (το ἐσοτερον), the definite article and the comparative, the latter speaking of something farther within. The words speak, therefore, of the place within the veil. The word "that," properly a demonstrative, does not point to anything definite here. The idea is merely that the anchor is within the veil. The veil of the temple separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. But the writer is not speaking here of the type but of the reality, the Holy of Holies of heaven itself which is the reality of which the earthly Holy of Holies is the type. The anchor of the believer is, therefore, fastened within the veil of the Holy of Holies of heaven.

We have some rich figures here. This present life is the sea; the soul, a ship; the hidden bottom of the sea, the hidden reality of the heavenly word. The soul is seen as storm-tossed on the troubled sea of life. The soul of the believer, as a tempest-tossed ship, is held by the anchor within the veil, fastened by faith to the blessed reality within the veil.

Translation. Which (hope) we are having as an anchor of the soul both stable and steadfast and which anchor enters into the place within the veil.

(6:20) The anchor of the believer's soul, his hope of eternal life in his High Priest, the Messiah, is fastened securely to a Rock within the veil of the Holy of Holies in heaven. That Rock is Messiah, whom the writer now speaks of as the forerunner. Here an entirely new idea is introduced, foreign to the ideas of the Levitical economy. The Aaronic high priest did not enter into the Holy of Holies as a forerunner, but only as the people's representative. He entered a place where the one in whose behalf he ministered, could not follow him. He entered the Holy of Holies in the stead of the believer, not as one cutting a pioneer path for him. The writer in 10:19, 20, when exhorting the unsaved professing Jew to place his faith in the Messiah as High Priest, urges him to enter the Holy of Holies personally, a thing which the First Testament believer could only do in his high priest. The Authorized Version misses the point entirely, when it places the definite article before the word "forerunner," as if the idea of a high priest being a forerunner were perfectly familiar to the Jewish recipient of this letter. Again, the name Iesous (Ἰεσους), in the English translation, Jesus, reminds the reader of the fact that the Jehoshua of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament, that it was the God of Israel who died on the Cross as an atonement for sin.

But this High Priest is not in the line of Aaron, but in that of Melchisedec. He is an eternal High Priest. His priesthood had no beginning nor will it have an ending. This High Priest is the Rock of Salvation into which the anchor of the believer's soul is fastened, which anchor is his faith in the atonement his High Priest has offered.

The high priest in Israel arrayed in his gorgeous robes, would enter the sanctuary, wearing on his shoulders twelve onyx stones upon which were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and upon his breastplate, twelve onyx stones with the names of the tribes of Israel upon them. Thus he would carry upon the shoulders of his strength and upon the heart of his love, the saved of Israel into the presence of God. Just so, this heavenly High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, carries upon the shoulders of His omnipotence, and upon the heart of His infinite love, those who place their faith in Him, into the presence of God. Thus does the writer encourage the unsaved reader to put his faith in the New Testament Sacrifice, the Messiah, rather than go back to the First Testament sacrifices which were set aside by God at the Cross.

Translation. Where a forerunner on behalf of us entered, Jesus, having become a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

---

h. A High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (7:1–3).

(1) Melchisedec, a sinner saved by grace, had no recorded parents, no recorded date of birth or of death.

(2) A type, therefore, of Messiah in His eternal priesthood.[143]

6:11–12. If they would only diligently hold onto the good course they already were pursuing—and of which God was fully mindful—they would thus guarantee the **hope** which is duly awarded to those who so persevere. He added, **We do not want you to become lazy**. The word "lazy" (*nōthroi*) is the same word rendered "slow" in 5:11 in the phrase "slow to learn." The sluggishness which marked their immaturity was to be shrugged off. (The Gr. of this verse can mean, "We do not want you to *be* lazy" rather than "*become* lazy.") Their real goal should be the inheritance that is set before them. They were to be imitators of **those who through faith and patience inherit** God's promises.

6:13–15. If the readers were searching for models to "imitate," there was the case of **Abraham** who received an oath from **God**, the **promise** that assured the multiplication of his seed. In due time his patience was rewarded in that he (lit.) "received the promise." Since the reference is to the promise given in Genesis 22:17 after the offering of Isaac, the author may have been thinking of the reception of the promise itself as the reward. In that case the idea is that after Abraham had patiently endured (the test involving Isaac), he obtained the promise. **Waiting patiently** translates the participle *makrothymēsas*, related to the noun "patience," *makrothymias* in Hebrews 6:12. This word, common in the New Testament, refers to the ability to hold one's feelings in restraint without retaliation against others (cf., e.g., Col. 1:11; 3:12; James 5:7–8, 10). A synonym, *hypomonē*, "endurance, perseverance," means the ability to remain steadfast in the face of undesirable circumstances; cf. Col. 1:11; Heb. 12:1–3, 7; James 5:11).

6:16–18. At this point Abraham is left behind as a model and **the oath** made to him is treated as for the benefit of Christians generally. That the promise of Genesis 22:18 had messianic aspects is clear from these words: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." Then the author of Hebrews affirmed that the messianic hope which the promise entailed was sure, not only to Abraham, but also to the Christian **heirs of what was promised**. As in human affairs an oath **puts an end to all arguments**, so too there can be no argument about this expectation since God **confirmed it with an oath**. If anyone, such as a sectarian, denied this eschatological anticipation, he was flying in the face of the strongest possible divine guarantee. Not only was it **impossible for God to lie**, but His ever truthful Word was supported in this case by His oath. These are the **two unchangeable things**, which encourage those who **take hold of the hope.**

6:19–20. The image suggested in verse 18 by the words "fled to take hold" of hope was that of a fortified refuge. By a swift change in his figure, the writer then suggested the thought of a harbor where **the soul** may securely drop **anchor**. That anchor has been carried to the safest point of all—**the inner sanctuary behind the curtain**—by **Jesus, who went before us**. The Greek *prodromos* ("who went before us") suggests a "forerunner," and if the harbor imagery is still in mind it recalls the role of sailors who leave their ship in a smaller craft in order to carry

---

[143] Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Heb 6:9–20). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

the anchor forward to a place where it can be firmly lodged. So too the Lord Jesus, by His entrance into the heavenly sanctuary where He functions as **a High Priest forever**, has given to a Christian's hope an anchorage from which it cannot be shaken loose. Since, therefore, the readers' hope was sure, they could cling to it tenaciously right to the very end.[144]

[144] Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 796–797.