

Abstracts of Professors Mason's, McCruden's, and Torgerson's chapters from
Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students
Resources for Biblical Study Series (SBL/Brill)
Edited by Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden

Eric F. Mason, Judson University

“Cosmology, Messianism, and Melchizedek: Apocalyptic Jewish Traditions and Hebrews”

The author of Hebrews uses the figure of Melchizedek in a very important way in his argument that Jesus is an eternal high priest with a status greater than the Levitical priesthood. In doing so the author utilizes the two biblical accounts of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20 and Ps 110:4) but also reflects traditions about the figure current in Second Temple Judaism, including apocalyptic traditions from Qumran. Though much debated in Hebrews scholarship, the author also holds to a cosmology strongly influenced by Jewish apocalyptic thought. This essay considers Hebrews' discussion of Melchizedek, its cosmology, messianism, and other ties to Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic traditions.

Kevin B. McCruden, Gonzaga University

“The Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews”

Hebrews is one of the few texts in the New Testament to apply the terminology of perfection directly to the person of Jesus (Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:28). At the same time, Hebrews is also concerned with the question of what perfection means for the faithful in Christ. This study will explore 1) the Christological portrait of Jesus that emerges from Hebrews' depiction of Jesus as perfected through suffering and death; 2) the precise relationship between Jesus' perfection and the perfection of the believer and the response of faith/faithfulness on the part of Jesus and the believer; and 3) the theological significance of the author's treatment of Christ as “perfected” High Priest.

Mark A. Torgerson, Judson University

“Hebrews in the Worship Life of the Church: A Historical Survey”

Eucharistic celebrations, homilies, prayers, lectionary selections, hymns and visual art expressions have been inspired by the rich theological reflections found in the book of Hebrews. Early Jewish worship practices, such as the keeping of Sabbath, the offering of sacrifices, and the role of the priesthood, are interpreted with a Christological lens in Hebrews that would have a powerful impact on patristic theologians and their development of worship understandings and resources. The insights and materials of these church leaders continue to influence our understanding of worship today. Examples of liturgical artifacts from a range of historical periods will be examined in order to demonstrate the significant role that Hebrews has had in enriching the worship life of the church.