

My Offering

Hebrews 11:4

I. Faithful Offering

- a. Faith- **state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence, faith**
 - i. For the writer of Hebrews, what gave Abel's offering greater value was his faith, not the fact that it was an animal sacrifice.
 - ii. What seems to be implied is that faith must inspire any worship that is to be acceptable to God from anyone who is to be God's **δίκαιος**
 - iii. The sacrifice is the outward expression of Abel's faith.
 - iv. Abel approached God earnestly with a firm expectation of the reward
 - v. First to be mentioned is the sacrificial faith of *Abel*. The Genesis account does not in fact refer to the faith of Abel. It simply states that Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions (Gen. 4:4)

II. Acknowledged Offering

- a. Sacrifice
 - i. Better Sacrifice –
 1. implying that God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice. This, together with the following example of Enoch, is explained by the principle that "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6). This in turn becomes the basis for the statement that Abel was "righteous," since righteousness and faith have just been linked)
 2. normally means "greater"; here the context requires "of greater value"; cf. the use of πλείων in expressions of value
- b. Testimony
 - i. Obtained - **to confirm or attest on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, bear witness, be a witness**
 - ii. Testimony - Consists of those who according to c. 11 have received witness (acknowledgment) from God because of their faith (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν, 11:2; cf. 11:4, 5, 39). As such, they bear witness by the very fact of their existence to the authenticity of faith
 1. but to the record of God's approval of his integrity and his sacrifice
 - iii. Righteous - **to being in accordance with high standards of rectitude, upright, just, fair**

III. Continual Offering

- a. Testifying -**to confirm or attest someth. on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, *bear witness, be a witness.***
 - i. Gifts
- b. Faith
 - i. Dead
 - 1. Even death does not extinguish the testimony of a man like Abel
 - ii. Still Speaks
 - 1. what the writer means to suggest (as in 3:15) is that Abel's faith still speaks to us
 - 2. It was through this that *he is still speaking*, the earliest demonstration that death, even violent death, cannot prevent the message of faith

Word Studies

Faith - state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, *trust, confidence, faith*¹

Obtained- to confirm or attest on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, *bear witness, be a witness*²

μάρτυς is used for the human witness to facts in Lk. 11:48, where to the Jews who build the graves of the prophets whom their fathers killed Jesus proclaims: ἄρα μάρτυρές ἐστε καὶ συνευδοκεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν. If the meaning of συνευδοκεῖτε is not very clear, it is obvious enough that the present generation with its cult of the graves bears witness to the fact that the fathers murdered the prophets. μάρτυς is used in the same sense, not only in 1 Th. 2:10, but also in 1 Tm. 6:12: Timothy has made the good confession (his baptismal confession) ἐνώπιον πολλῶν μαρτύρων (cf. Did³, 7, 4; Just⁴. Apol⁵, I, 61). In the phrase ἃ ἤκουσας ... διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, ταῦτα παράθου in 2 Tm. 2:2 there is again a reference to the fact that Timothy has received baptism (or possibly ordination) in the presence of many witnesses, and that the tradition, the παραθήκη, has been committed to him thereby. The μάρτυς is also a witness to an externally perceptible event in Hb. 12:1. After the long list of examples of faith in c⁶. 11, the author proceeds in 12:1: τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν, δι' ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα κτλ. The readers are represented as runners who have entered the arena. They make ready to run by laying aside everything that would impede them. Around them on the stands are the packed ranks of spectators, the νέφος μαρτύρων, who with avid interest follow the course of the runners as eye-witnesses.⁷¹ The distinctive thing here is, of course, that this νέφος μαρτύρων consists of those who according to c⁸. 11 have received witness (acknowledgment) from God because of their faith (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν, 11:2; cf. 11:4, 5, 39). As such, they bear witness by the very fact of their existence to the authenticity of

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 818.

² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 617.

³Did. *Didache*.

⁴Just. Justin Martyr, executed c. 165 A.D., author of an apology against the attacks on Christians, and also of a discussion with Judaism in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, ed. E. Goodspeed in *Die ältesten Apologeten*, 1914; ed. G. Krüer, 1915.

⁵Apol. *Apologia*.

⁶c. chapter.

⁷¹ Expositors often resist this most obvious meaning. But B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1889) is forced to admit: "It is impossible to exclude the thought of the spectators in the amphitheatre"; cf. *Class. Rev.*, 5 (1891), 21b.

⁸c. *circa*.

faith. It thus seems that the factual witness is also implicitly a confessing witness. But the witness which a man receives is different from that which he gives. The movement from a passive “attested by reason of faith” to an active “witness to the validity of faith” is not intimidated by the text itself. Without exact analysis one might easily presuppose here a technical use of μάρτυς which is certainly not present in Hb. One is forced to concede, however, that in 12:1 the term has a certain ambivalence in the light of c⁹. 11.
V 4, p 492 ¹⁰

Testimony -to confirm or attest someth¹¹. on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, *bear witness, be a witness.*¹²

Righteous - to being in accordance with high standards of rectitude, *upright, just, fair*¹³

Testimony - to confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, *bear witness, be a witness.*

to offer testimony¹⁴

⁹c. chapter.

¹⁰ Hermann Strathmann, “[Μάρτυς, Μαρτυρέω, Μαρτυρία, Μαρτύριον, Επίμαρτυρέω, Συμμαρτυρέω, Συνεπιμαρτυρέω, Καταμαρτυρέω, Μαρτύρομαι, Διαμαρτύρομαι, Προμαρτύρομαι, Ψευδόμαρτυς, Ψευδομαρτυρέω, Ψευδομαρτυρία,](#)” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 491.

¹¹**someth. someth.** = something

¹² William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 617.

¹³ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 246.

¹⁴ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 617.

Commentary Studies

11:4. Abel's sacrifice shows the results of faith

The OT story of Cain and Abel (Gn. 4:1–16) says nothing of the reason why God preferred Abel's sacrifice to Cain's. Speculation began in v. 7 LX¹⁵X: οὐκ, ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλης, ἤμαρτες;, a question which raises further problems about "rightly dividing" the "fruits of the earth" (cf. Philo, *Quaest. in Gn*¹⁶. 1.62; S-¹⁷B 3.759). The predominant view among OT scholars is that God was believed to prefer an animal sacrifice, as being of greater value than a cereal offering (cf. Lv. 5:11; 14:22, etc.). The author of Hebrews takes his starting-point from the statement, unexplained in the M¹⁸T, ἐπέϊδεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ Ἄβελ, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ (Gn. 4:4), implying that God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice. This, together with the following example of Enoch, is explained by the principle that "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6). This in turn becomes the basis for the statement that Abel was "righteous," since righteousness and faith have just been linked (10:38 = Hab. 2:4). Gn. 4 says nothing about either Abel's righteousness or his faith (Schröger 212f.; contrast Jos¹⁹. *Ant*²⁰. 1.53). For Hebrews, unlike Paul though falling short of contradiction, Abel's sacrifice is the expression of his faith: there is no sharp dichotomy of faith and works. Nor is Abel's (pre-levitical) sacrifice contrasted with that of Christ. In this respect there is an implied analogy between Abel, the first person in the Bible to offer a sacrifice, and Melchizedek (²¹→ Heb. 7:1–10), the first priest. In Mt. 23:35|²²|, he is mentioned as the first victim of murder.

Πλείονα: πλείων (²³→ 3:3; Bauer II.1b) normally means "greater"; here the context requires "of greater value"; cf. the use of πλείων in expressions of value (M²⁴M). Despite Zuntz 16, cf. 285, the old conjecture ΗΔΕΙΟΝΑ ("more pleasant") for ΠΛΕΙΟΝΑ is unnecessary and inappropriate (so Lane; cf. Tasker 1954–55.183). For the writer of Hebrews, what gave Abel's offering greater value was his faith, not the fact that it was an animal sacrifice. The contrast of Gn. 4:4f. is here attenuated to a comparison, though the difference is probably only stylistic; cf. Heb. 9:23. For παρά in comparisons, ²⁵→ 1:4; ²⁶→ 12:24 for a comparison between Jesus' blood

¹⁵LXX Septuagint (normally A. Rahlfs's ed., Stuttgart 1932)

¹⁶*Quaest. in Gn.* Quaestiones in Genesin

¹⁷S-B Strack-Billerbeck

¹⁸MT Massoretic Text

¹⁹Jos. Josephus

²⁰*Ant.* Antigone

²¹→ See

²²|| + parallel(s)

²³→ See

²⁴MM Moulton-Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*

²⁵→ See

²⁶→ See

and (that of) Abel. For θυσία, ²⁷→ 5:1. Neither in Hebrews nor in Gn. 4:3, 5 is there any distinction in meaning between θυσία and δῶρον: the two terms are used for variety.

Abel (12:24; Mt. 23:35 | ²⁸ | Lk. 11:51 *^{29*}; K. G. Kuhn in *TDN*³⁰ 1.6–8) is the subject, in apocryphal, pseudepigraphal, and other ancient writings, of much speculation, especially concerning the quality which made his sacrifice acceptable (Philo, *Sacr.* 52, 88; *Conf. Ling*³¹. 124; Jos³². *Ant.* 1.54), the means of his death (*Life of Adam and Eve* 21:3; cf. *Gn. Rab*³³. 22:8; *Jub.* 4:31), and the circumstances of his burial (*Life of Adam and Eve* 40:3–7). In *Test. Abr*³⁴. B 11:2, Abel has the role of judge; he is described as the first to bear witness (or suffer martyrdom: μαρτυρήσας); in *Ap. Const*³⁵. 8.5.3, he is a priest. The only two aspects of these extrabiblical traditions which are noticeably reflected in Hebrews are (a) his righteousness (Jos³⁶. *Ant.* 1.53 says that he “strove towards righteousness”; *Asc. Is.* 6:8 mentions “Abel and all the righteous”; cf. *Ap. Const*³⁷. 8.12.21; Le Déaut 1961.30–33; Delcor 1973.142–145) and (b) his call for vengeance (*1 Enoch* 22:7, extending to all Cain’s descendants; *Jub.* 4:3; cf. Mt. 23:35 | ³⁸ |; Heb. 12:24). See below on δίκαιος, λαλεῖ.

Κάϊν: for the spelling, see B³⁹D §37; in 1 Jn. 3:12 Cain is mentioned as inspired by the evil one (cf. *Apoc. Abr*⁴⁰. 24:5); cf. Jude 11; 4 Macc. 18:11; not otherwise mentioned in the Greek Bible outside Gn. 4.

Προσήνεγκεν: προσφέρω (5:1), also with θυσίαν; Gn. 4:7 of Cain; φέρω (Gn. 4:3f.) of both Cain and Abel.

“The overwhelming external evidence” (Metzger 671) favours the inclusion of τῷ θεῷ, omitted by Ψ¹³ Cl. Alex⁴¹., and probably by Armenian Ephraem (Ψ⁴⁶ is defective at this point). Προσφέρω τῷ θεῷ is otherwise used in Hebrews only of Christ, 9:14; cf. Lv. 3:9; 22:18; Jn. 16:2. Τῷ θεῷ is, however, a natural expansion, and the shorter reading is preferred by Zuntz 33, cf. 51 and RE⁴²B, against REV, NJ⁴³B, NRS⁴⁴V, Braun, Attridge, Lane, H.-F. Weiss.

²⁷ → See

²⁸ || + parallel(s)

^{29**} all references in NT listed

³⁰ *TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

³¹ *Conf. Ling. De Confusione Linguarum*

³² Jos. Josephus

³³ *Rab. Rabba*

³⁴ *Test. Abr. Testament of Abraham*

³⁵ *Ap. Const. Apostolic Constitutions*

³⁶ Jos. Josephus

³⁷ *Ap. Const. Apostolic Constitutions*

³⁸ || + parallel(s)

³⁹ BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*

⁴⁰ *Apoc. Abr. Apocalypse of Abraham*

⁴¹ Cl. Alex. Clement of Alexandria

⁴² REB Revised English Bible

⁴³ NJB (New) Jerusalem Bible

⁴⁴ NRSV New Revised Standard Version

Δι' ἧς, like δι' αὐτῆς later in the verse, should in strict grammar refer to θουσία (so Spicq; Zerwick-Grosvenor 679) rather than to πίστις; in meaning, the two are not sharply separated. The structure of the anaphora, however, almost certainly requires faith to be the antecedent (so explicitly TE⁴⁵V, NI⁴⁶V, RE⁴⁷B; NJ⁴⁸B and NRS⁴⁹V are perhaps deliberately ambiguous).

Ἐμαρτυρήθη (⁵⁰→ v. 2; 7:8); here as elsewhere the reference is to the testimony of God in scripture; in this case, God as the one active in Gn. 4:4. There is in Gn. 4 no word or outward sign of approval; a Jewish tradition (S-⁵¹B 3.744), taken up among others by Theodotion and Luther, holds that God answered by fire (cf. 1 Ki. 18:1–40).

Δίκαιος: ⁵²→ 10:38 = Hab. 2:4; Bauer 1b. The closest the Greek Bible comes to calling Abel righteous is in the description of Cain in Wis. 10:3 as ἄδικος. The nominative is normal, as in classical Greek (B⁵³D §405[1]; MH⁵⁴T 3.146); the impersonal construction is also preferred in the NT (B⁵⁵D §405[2]).

The following genitive absolute, μαρτυροῦντος ... θεοῦ, emphasizes and expands the preceding ἐμαρτυρήθη; it is essentially a gloss on Gn. 4:4b, which is “not quoted, but interpreted” (Michel). Ἐπί introduces the reason for God’s favourable testimony (Bauer II.1bδ; cf. Rev. 22:16). Τοῖς δώροισις is taken from Gn. 4:4; the context suggests a number of animal sacrifices; cf. 1 Clem. 4:2. Δῶρον is commonly used of sacrificial gifts (Bauer 2).

Αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ is “all things considered, the least unsatisfactory reading” (Metzger 671f.); it is supported by Ɔ^{1356*}, 46 κ^c K P Ψ 81 614 1739 Byz Lect it^r, 61 cop^{bo} al. The most widespread variant, αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ, supported by κ^{57*} A D^{58*} 33 326 arm eth Euthalius^{ms59*}, produces bad grammar and tortuous sense. Hort (W⁶⁰H 587) conjectured αὐτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ to explain the variants, and this reading has since been found in Ɔ^{13c} cop^{sa}, which omit τῷ θεῷ earlier in the verse, and also in Clement. It is widely supported (Riggenbach, Windisch, Moffatt, Michel, Suggs 144), but it is “too meagerly attested and must be accounted a transcriptional error” (Metzger; so Braun); one might also expect the order μαρτυροῦντος αὐτῷ.

⁴⁵TEV Today’s English Version (= Good News Bible)

⁴⁶NIV New International Version

⁴⁷REB Revised English Bible

⁴⁸NJB (New) Jerusalem Bible

⁴⁹NRSV New Revised Standard Version

⁵⁰→ See

⁵¹S-B Strack-Billerbeck

⁵²→ See

⁵³BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*

⁵⁴MHT Moulton-Howard-Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*

⁵⁵BD Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*

^{56*} all references in Hebrews listed

^{57*} all references in Hebrews listed

^{58*} all references in Hebrews listed

^{59*} all references in Hebrews listed

⁶⁰WH Westcott-Hort, *Greek New Testament*

Δι' αὐτῆς, even more probably than δι' ἧς above, refers back to faith. The author moves from exegesis to contemporary application, the startingpoint for which is the present βοῶ in Gn. 4:10; cf. the interpretation of ζῆ in 7:8, and λαλοῦντι in 12:24.

Ἀποθανών: ἀποθνήσκω (⁶¹→ 7:8) is used of violent death also in 9:27; 11:37. The context requires the aorist participle to mean “having died” and to refer to Abel’s death in Gn. 4:8, thus before the “voice of [his] blood” was heard calling from the ground (v. 10). A concessive meaning, “though he is dead,” RE⁶²B, cf. TE⁶³V, NJ⁶⁴B, Attridge, Lane, is required by the context. Ἔτι (⁶⁵→ 7:10) of present time (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3; Bauer 1aα).

Λαλεῖ: λαλέω, ⁶⁶→ 1:1. The “speaking” is probably understood, as in Mt. 23:35|⁶⁷|, as a call for vengeance (see above). In the light of the stern words of 10:27, 29, it does not seem impossible for the author to have thought of such a call as an effect of faith; the connection, however, is indirect. Abel speaks out loud (λαλεῖ, Ϝ^{13,46} κ^{68*} A D^{69*} P 33 81 1739 1881 p⁷⁰c), not to himself or in conversation, which the middle λαλεῖται (D K L Ψ etc.) would imply (Braun). Goodspeed (1922; 1945.118) translates: “Even when he was dead he still spoke.”⁷¹

⁶¹→ See

⁶²REB Revised English Bible

⁶³TEV Today’s English Version (= Good News Bible)

⁶⁴NJB (New) Jerusalem Bible

⁶⁵→ See

⁶⁶→ See

⁶⁷|| + parallel(s)

^{68*} all references in Hebrews listed

^{69*} all references in Hebrews listed

⁷⁰pc a few

⁷¹ 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), 571–573.

4 The statement that “men of the past received attestation” from God on the ground of faith (v 2) is substantiated by a series of illustrations from the personal history of particular individuals who responded to God in faith during the centuries preceding the advent of Christ. Although there is rarely in Scripture an explicit warrant for categorizing them as exemplars of πίστις, “faith,” they share in common that they acted within the scope of faith as set forth in v 1 and thus demonstrated the effective power of faith. When the several illustrations are introduced with the stereotyped formula πίστει, “by faith,” they become exemplary figures and events, since πίστει refers to the characterization of faith in vv 1–3 (cf. Grässer, *Glaube*, 45–57).

The catalogue of attested witnesses begins with Abel, who “by faith offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain” (v 4a). The allusion is to Gen 4:3–5a, which offers the bare statement: “in the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.” The reference to Abel’s offerings as exemplary is traditional in character (e.g., the hellenistic-Jewish liturgical fragment in *Apost. Const.* 7.37.1: “In the first place, you respected the sacrifice of Abel and accepted it”; cf. 1 Clem; 4:2).

The lack of detail in the biblical account invited elaboration in the subsequent Jewish tradition (see especially Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel*, 37–55, who arranges the primary sources in terms of traditions concerning the condition of Cain’s offering [37–41], the acceptance of Abel’s offering [41–43], the death and burial of Abel [43–55]). Two concerns of the later tradition are relevant to the representation of the matter in v 4: (1) Why should God have shown regard for Abel’s offering, while rejecting Cain’s sacrifice? (2) How did the two brothers know that God had accepted Abel’s sacrifice, but not Cain’s?

The Jewish tradition tended to approach the first question by concentrating on the rejection of Cain’s sacrifice (cf. Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel*, 37–41). There was a deficiency of a ritual character in the presentation of the sacrifice (so Gen 4:7 LX⁷²X, “if you had offered it correctly [ὀρθῶς], but you did not divide it correctly,” with the implication that Abel had, in fact, cut up the pieces of his sacrifice in a ritually correct manner), or in the quality of the offering (e.g., Philo, *On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 88: “But Abel brought different offerings, and in a different manner. His offering was living, Cain’s was lifeless. His was first in age and quality, Cain’s was second”; *On the Confusion of Tongues* 124: “Cain retained in his own possession the firstfruits of his farming and offered, as we are told, merely the harvest of a later time, although he had beside him a wholesome example,” while Abel “brought to the altar the firstborn, not the later-born”). Other lines of the tradition concentrated on piety as the determining factor for the acceptance or rejection of the offerings. Cain’s moral disposition was deficient (e.g., Jos., *Ant.* 1.61: Cain was depraved and his only motive was profit; cf. *Apoc. Mos*⁷³. 1:3; 2:2; 3:1–3; 40:3; 43:1, cited by le Déaut, *Bib⁷⁴* 42 [1961] 31) and his works were evil (1 John 3:12; Jos., *Ant.*, 1.53: “Abel was attentive to righteousness ... but Cain was depraved”).

⁷²LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

⁷³*Apoc. Mos.* Apocalypse of Moses

⁷⁴*Bib Biblica*

According to the tradition preserved in the several recensions of the Pal. Tgs⁷⁵. Gen 4:8, a quarrel arose between the two brothers over God's response to their respective offerings. The dispute between the brothers provided an occasion for two different professions of faith, which become transformed in the successive recensions, but the general sense remains the same: Abel was slain by his enraged brother after he affirmed his faith in God who created the world in love and who governs it righteously. The oldest expression of the tradition appears to be that preserved in the fragments from the Cairo Geniza (so Grelot, *R⁷⁶B* 82 [1975] 72–73; le Déaut, *Bi⁷⁷b* 42 [1961] 32):

Cain spoke and said to Abel, "I see that the world has been created by love and that it is governed by love. Why, then, has your offering been received from you with favor, and mine has not been received with favor?" Abel spoke and said to Cain, "Without doubt the world has been created by love and it is governed by love; but it is also governed according to the fruit of good works. It is because my works were better than yours that my offering has been received from me with favor, and yours has not been received from you with favor." And the two of them were disputing in the field (Frg. Tg⁷⁸. Gen 4:8).

In later recensions Cain's response is modified. He denies that the world was created by love or that it is governed by love, and he accuses God of injustice: "there is no judgment and there is no judge, and there is no other world; there is no giving of a good reward to the righteous person and there is no retribution exacted from the wicked," all of which Abel affirms (*Tg. Neof⁷⁹*. Gen 4:8; cf. *Tg. Ps.-J⁸⁰*. Gen 4:8). These Palestinian traditions are interesting precisely because they portray Abel as an exemplar of confessing faith, and they clearly date from a period prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see S. Isenberg, "An Anti-Sadducee Polemic in the Palestinian Targum Tradition," *HT⁸¹R* 63 [1970] 433–44).

Less attention was devoted in the tradition to the manner in which the acceptance of Abel's offering was indicated (for the primary sources, see Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel*, 41–43). The most graphic suggestion was that fire fell from heaven and consumed Abel's offering, but Cain's offering remained untouched. This tradition found its way into the early second-century Greek translation of the Pentateuch by Theodotion, who added to Gen 4:4 the words καὶ ἐνεπύρισεν, "and it was consumed by fire," and to Gen 4:5 οὐκ ἐνεπύρισεν, "it was not consumed by fire" (F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplarum quae supersunt* [Oxford: U⁸²P, 1875] 17). The source of this conjecture is, of course, itself biblical (cf. Lev 9:24; 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Chr 7:1), although it finds no support in the detail of Gen 4:4–5 (see, however, the suggestion in LS⁸³J 549, under ἐμπυρίζω).

⁷⁵Pal. Tgs. *Palestinian Targums*

⁷⁶*RB Revue biblique*

⁷⁷*Bib Biblica*

⁷⁸Frg. Tg. *Fragmentary Targum*

⁷⁹*Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti I*

⁸⁰*Tg. Ps.-J. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*

⁸¹*HTR Harvard Theological Review*

⁸²UP University Press

⁸³LSJ Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*

The reference to Abel in v 4 shows little interest in the traditional elaboration of the biblical narrative. Taking the Scriptural account at its face value, the writer simply notes the acceptable quality of Abel's offering, using πλείονα in its qualitative sense ("more acceptable"; see above, *Note*^{84m}), without commenting on the basis for the acceptance of the sacrifice. The general tenor of Scripture indicates that the superior quality of Abel's offering derived from the integrity of his heart rather than from the nature of the offering itself. This is the clear implication of Gen 4:7, where the Lord says to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" For the writer of Hebrews, the fact that Abel offered his sacrifice πίστει, "by faith," is sufficient explanation for the acceptance of his offering by God. His act of worship entailed the thoughtful exposure of his self to the living and holy God.

It is possible to shed further light on the writer's understanding of the detail that God accepted Abel's sacrifice by observing that the example of Abel forms a pair with that of Enoch in v 5. The first two examples are brought together formally not only by the explicit mention of attestation received from God (see *Form/Structure/Setting* on 11:1–40) but, more subtly, by a common interest in death. This suggests that it is the responsibility of v 6 to clarify not simply the example of Enoch, but that of Abel as well, precisely because it describes the response of faith to God without reference to the spoken word of God (as in the case of Noah) or the promise of God (as in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). It establishes between faith and divine approval a rigorous connection, and thus furnishes an explanation for the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice (as well as of Enoch's translation). Abel approached God earnestly with a firm expectation of the reward, in the sense of the share of those who seek God himself. God was pleased with Abel and his offering because Abel fulfilled the conditions set forth in v 6. What fixed the attention of the writer on Abel was that he and his sacrifice were pleasing to God. The comparison of the fate of Abel as a martyr, and of Cain as a murderer, did not interest him in

^{84m} The comparative adj πλείονα usually has a quantitative value, "more abundant." Over a century ago C. G. Cobet found in this reading evidence for primitive corruption in the text of Hebrews and conjectured that in the course of transcription an original ΗΔΙΟΝΑ, "more pleasant," had been displaced by ΠΛΕΙΟΝΑ, "more abundant." This conjecture was adopted by J. M. S. Baljon and F. Blass in their critical editions of the Gk. text and was accepted as "brilliant" by Zuntz, *Text*, 16. The corruption of ἡδίων into πλεῖον is attested for Demosthenes, *Prooemium* 23, and for Plutarch, *On the Cessation of Oracles* 21, 421B (see Zuntz, *Text*, 16, 285). Moreover, Maynard (*Exp* 7th ser. 7 [1909] 163–71) argued that when Justin declares that God accepts the sacrifices of believing Gentiles more agreeably (ἡδίων) than those of the Jews (*Dialogue with Trypho* 29) he had Heb 11:4 in mind and is a witness to the preservation of the original text of Hebrews into the second century. Finally, Josephus (*Ant.* 1.54) uses the cognate verb ἡδεῖται when he states that God "was more pleased" with Abel's sacrifice than with Cain's.

Emendation of the text, however, is unnecessary since it is clear that πλεῖον may have a qualitative rather than a quantitative significance (cf. Matt 6:25 [=Luke 12:23]; 12:41–42 [=Luke 11:31–32]; Mark 12:23). This is certainly the case here (so Tasker, *NTS* 1 [1954–55] 183; cf. F. F. Bruce, 282, n. 26; P. E. Hughes, 453, n. 1).

itself. Rather, it is the extraordinary fact that a person found access to God and that he received attestation of a favorable welcome (following Bénétreau, *ETR*⁸⁵ 54 [1979] 627–29).

God's recognition of Abel's faith and acceptance of his offering is underscored by the clause δι' ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, "by which [faith] he received attestation [from God] that he was righteous, God himself approving of his gifts." Two terms stand out in this statement: "faith" (πίστις), the substantive of which is resumed by the prepositional phrase with the relative, δι' ἧς (see above, *Note*⁸⁶n), and ἐμαρτυρήθη, "he received attestation," which is explicated by the participle μαρτυροῦντος, "approving," that follows, and to which corresponds the qualitative adjective πλείονα, "more acceptable," at the beginning of the sentence. As in v 2, the writer establishes a correlation between faith and divine approval of a stance of commitment to God. The association of Abel with righteousness is found elsewhere in sources contemporary with Hebrews (Matt 23:35; 1 John 3:12; Jos., *Ant.* 1.61). For the writer of Hebrews it was axiomatic that the source of righteousness was faith (see vv 5–7).

The further statement that δι' αὐτῆς ἀποθανῶν ἔτι λαλεῖ, "through [faith] he is still speaking, although he died," is distinguished from the Jewish tradition about Abel because it reflects no interest in the act of fratricide nor in Abel as the proto-martyr (in contrast to *Jub*⁸⁷. 4:2–3; 1 *Enoch* 22:6–7; *T. Benj*⁸⁸. 7:3–5; 4 Macc 18:11; Matt 23:31; Luke 11:50–51; 1 John 3:12, for example; cf. Heb 12:24 below). All of the emphasis falls on the fact that it is *by his faith* (and not by his blood) that Abel continues to speak. The allusion is thus not to Gen 4:10, which speaks of the cry of Abel's blood from the ground for retribution or reconciliation (cf. Spicq, 2:343), but to the record of God's approval of his integrity and his sacrifice in Gen 4:4. It is significant that the writer does not use the verb βοᾶν, "to cry out," as in Gen 4:10 LX⁸⁹X, but the verb λαλεῖν, "to speak," which in Hebrews is never used of speaking to God. The writer affirms that Abel's faith continues to speak *to us* through the written record of his action in Scripture, which transmits to us the exemplary character of his offering (Moffatt, 164).

It has been proposed that the allusion in this final clause is to Abel's defense of his faith as attested by the Pal. Tgs.⁹⁰ tradition (so le Déaut, *Bib*⁹¹ 42 [1961] 34–36). The absence of any awareness of a profession of faith by Abel in hellenistic-Jewish sources, however, makes it wholly uncertain that the writer or his audience even knew of this aspect of the Palestinian tradition. It is preferable to find in the clause the substantiation of the prophetic oracle (from Hab 2:4), cited in 10:38, that God's righteous one shall live on the ground of his faith. Although Abel died, his voice continues to speak of the faith that wins approval from God. Remembrance of the faith of Abel (as opposed to a profession of faith) harmonizes with the other examples

⁸⁵*ETR* Etudes theologiques et religieuses

⁸⁶n It is necessary to relate the relative pronoun (δι' ἧς) to πίστει, "by faith," rather than to θυσίαν, "sacrifice," as do Spicq, 2:342, and Zerwick and Grosvenor, *Grammatical Analysis*, 679. In 11:2 it is said explicitly that it is faith which wins divine approval.

⁸⁷*Jub.* Jubilees

⁸⁸*T. Benj.* Testament of Benjamin, etc.

⁸⁹LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

⁹⁰Pal. Tgs. *Palestinian Targums*

⁹¹*Bib Biblica*

the writer extracts from the biblical record: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses (cf. le Déaut, *BI*⁹²*b* 42 [1961] 36).⁹³

The faith of Abel and of Enoch is not **πίστις ἐλπιζομένων**, which is not introduced till v. 7. In 4 Mac 16:20f. the illustrations of steadfast faith are (a) Abraham sacrificing Isaac, (b) Daniel in the den of lions, and (⁹⁴c) the three men in the fiery furnace; but in 18:11f. the list of noble sufferers includes (a) Abel, (b) Isaac, (c) Joseph in prison, (d) Phinehas, (e) the three men in the fiery furnace, and (f) Daniel. Sirach's eulogy of famous men in Israel (44–50) has a wider sweep: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, the judges, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job, the twelve prophets, Zerubbabel, Joshua the son of Josedek, Nehemiah, and the highpriest Simon (*i.e.* down to the second century B.C.).

The first illustration (v. 4) is much less natural than most of those that follow. In the story of Gn 4:4–8, **ἔπιδεν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ Ἄβελ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτοῦ**. But why God disregarded Cain's sacrifice and preferred Abel's, our author does not explain. Josephus⁹⁵ (*Ant.* i. 54) thought that an offering of milk and animals was more acceptable to God as being natural (τοῖς αὐτομάτοις καὶ κατὰ φύσιν γεγονόσι) than Cain's cereal offering, which was wrung out of the ground by a covetous man; our author simply argues that the **πλείων θυσία** of Abel at the very dawn of history was prompted by faith. He does not enter into the nature of this **πλείονα** (in sense of Mk 6:25 or Mk 12:43 ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἡ πτωχὴ πλείον πάντων βέβληκεν) **θυσίαν παρὰ** (as in 1:4) **Καῖν**, offered at the first act of worship recorded in scripture. What seems to be implied is that faith must inspire any worship that is to be acceptable to God from anyone who is to be God's **δίκαιος** (10:38). Josephus held that Abel **δικαιοσύνης ἐπιμελείτο**, the blood of Ἄβελ τοῦ δικαίου is noted in Mt 23:35, and the Genesis-words **ἔπιδεν ὁ θεός** are here expanded by our author into **ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος**. Note the practical equivalence of δώρα and θυσία, as already in 5:1 etc. There is nothing in **Πρὸς Ἑβραίους** like Phil⁹⁶'s effort (*Quaest. in Gen.* 4:4) to distinguish between δώρα and θυσίας as follows: ὁ μὲν θύων ἐπιδικαιρεῖ, τὸ μὲν αἷμα τῷ βωμῷ προχέων, τὰ δὲ κρέα οἴκαδε κομίζων. ὁ δὲ δωρούμενος ὄλον ἔοικε παραχωρεῖν τῷ λαμβάνοντι· ὁ μὲν οὖν φίλαυτος διανομεὺς οἶος ὁ Καῖν, ὁ δὲ φιλόθεος δώρηται οἶον ὁ Ἄβελ.

Πλείονα: of the conjectural emendations, ΠΙΟΝΑ and ΗΔΙΟΝΑ (Cobet, Vollgraff), the latter is favoured by Justin's reference in *Dial.* 29 (εὐδόκησε γὰρ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ τὰς θυσίας ἥδιον παρ' ἡμῖν ἢ παρ' ὑμῶν λαμβάνει· τίς οὖν ἔτι μοι περιτομῆς λόγος, ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαρτυρηθέντι;), and is admitted into the text by Baljon and Blass (so Maynard in *Exp.*⁷vii).

⁹²*Bib Biblica*

⁹³ William L. Lane, [Hebrews 9–13](#), vol. 47B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 333–337.

⁹⁴c (Codex Colbertinus: saec. xii.)

⁹⁵ Josephus *Flavii Josephi Opera Omnia post Immanuelem Bekkerum*, recognovit S. A. Naber.

⁹⁶Philo *Philonis Alexandriai Opera Quae Supersunt* (recognoverunt L. Cohn et P. Wendland).

164 f., who infers from μαρτυρηθέντι that Justin knew Πρὸς Ἑβραίους, the original text of the latter being αὐτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ). In Demosth. *Prooem.* 23, ἥδιον has been corrupted into πλεῖον.

In what follows, (a) the original text (**μαρτυροῦντος ... αὐτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ**) is preserved in ⁹⁷p¹⁹⁸³ Clem. (om. τῷ θεῷ). (b) αὐτῷ then became αὐτοῦ under the influence of the LX⁹⁹X, and τῷ θεῷ was inserted after προσήνεγκε to complete the sense (¹⁰⁰κ^c ¹⁰¹D^c ¹⁰²K ¹⁰³L ¹⁰⁴P ¹⁰⁵r ¹⁰⁶g syr bo¹⁰⁷h arm Orig. Chrys. etc.). Finally, (¹⁰⁸c) τοῦ θεοῦ became assimilated to the preceding τῷ

⁹⁷p saec. iv. [α 1034] cont. 2:14–5:6; 10:8–11:13; 11:28–12:17: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, iv. (1904) 36–48. The tendency, in 2:14–5:5, to agree with B “in the omission of unessential words and phrases ... gives the papyrus peculiar value in the later chapters, where B is deficient”; thus p 13 partially makes up for the loss of B after 9:14. Otherwise the text of the papyrus is closest to that of D.

⁹⁸13 saec. iv. [α 1034] cont. 2:14–5:6; 10:8–11:13; 11:28–12:17: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, iv. (1904) 36–48. The tendency, in 2:14–5:5, to agree with B “in the omission of unessential words and phrases ... gives the papyrus peculiar value in the later chapters, where B is deficient”; thus p 13 partially makes up for the loss of B after 9:14. Otherwise the text of the papyrus is closest to that of D.

⁹⁹LXX *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint Version* (ed. H. B. Swete).

¹⁰⁰x saec. iv. (v.) [01: δ 2).

¹⁰¹D saec. (vi.) [06: α 1026] cont. 1:1–13:20. Codex Claromontanus is a Graeco-Latin MS, whose Greek text is poorly* reproduced in the later (saec. ix.–x.) E = codex Sangermanensis. The Greek text of the latter (1:1–12:8) is therefore of no independent value (cp. Hort in WH, §§ 335–337); for its Latin text, as well as for that of F=codex Augiensis (saec. ix.), whose Greek text of Πρὸς Ἑβραίους has not been preserved, see below, p. lxi.

¹⁰²K saec. ix. [018:1:1].

¹⁰³L saec. ix. [020: α 5] cont. 1:1–13:10.

¹⁰⁴P saec. ix. [025: α 3] cont. 1:1–12:8; 12:11–13:25.

¹⁰⁵r (codex Frisingensis: saec. vi., cont. 6:6–7:5, 7:8–8:1; 9:27–11:7)

¹⁰⁶vg Vulgate

¹⁰⁷boh *The Coptic Version of the NT in the Northern Dialect* (Oxford, 1905), vol. iii. pp. 472–555.

¹⁰⁸c (Codex Colbertinus: saec. xii.)

θεῶ, and μαρτυροῦντος ... αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῶ (¹⁰⁹κ* ¹¹⁰A ¹¹¹D* 3¹¹²3, 10¹¹³4, 32¹¹⁴6, 131¹¹⁵1, 183¹¹⁶6, eth) became current, as though Abel witnessed to God, instead of God witnessing to Abel. Thus after προσήνεγκε the Greek originally ran: **δι' ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ.** Then another application of the LX¹¹⁷X was added. The phrase in Gn 4:10 (φωνὴ αἵματος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου βοᾷ πρὸς με) had already suggested to Phil¹¹⁸o that Abel was in a sense still living (*quod det. potiori insid. soleat*, 14: ὁ Ἄβελ, τὸ παραδοξότατον, ἀνήρηταί τε καὶ ζῆ· ἀνήρηται μὲν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ ἄφρονος διανοίας, ζῆ δὲ τὴν ἐν θεῷ ζωὴν εὐδαίμονα· μαρτυρήσει δὲ τὸ χρησθὲν λόγιον, ἐν ᾧ “φωνῆ” χρώμενος καὶ “βοῶν” (Gen 4:10) ἃ πέπονθεν ὑπὸ κακοῦ συνδέτου τηλαυγῶς εὐρίσκεται· πῶς γὰρ ὁ μηκέτ' ὦν διαλέγεσθαι δυνατός;). Our author takes a similar line here: **καὶ δι' αὐτῆς** (*i.e.* **πίστεως**) **ἀποθανῶν ἔτι λαλεῖ.** Even after death, Abel's cry is represented as reaching God, so Philo puts it (*ibid.* 20), ζῆ μὲν γάρ, ὡς καὶ πρότερον ἔφην, ὁ τεθνάναι δοκῶν, εἴ γε καὶ ἰκέτης ὦν θεοῦ καὶ φωνῆ χρώμενος εὐρίσκεται. Only, it is not the fact that the cry was one for retribution (12:24) which is stressed here, not the fact that his blood cried to God after he died; but, as λαλεῖν is never used of speaking to God, what the writer means to suggest (as in 3:15) is that Abel's faith still speaks to us (λαλεῖ, not the historic present, but = in the record). Not even in 12:24 does he adopt the idea of a divine nemesis for the sufferings of the pious in past generations. He does not represent the blood of martyrs like Abel as crying from the ground for personal vengeance; he has nothing of the spirit which prompted the weird vision of the wronged souls under the altar crying out for retribution (Rev 6:10). **Ἐτι λαλεῖ** means, in a general sense, that he is an eloquent, living witness to all ages (so recently Seeberg). Primasius (“qui enim alios suo exemplo admonet ut justii sint, quomodo non loquitur?”) and Chrysostom (τοῦτο καὶ τοῦ ζῆν σημεῖον ἐστὶ, καὶ τοῦ παρὰ πάντων ἄδουθαι, θαυμάζεσθαι καὶ μακαρίζεσθαι· ὁ γὰρ παραινῶν τοῖς ἄλλοις δίκαιοις εἶναι λαλεῖ) put this well. The witness is that πίστις may have to face the last extreme of death (12:4), and that it is not abandoned by God; **ἀποθανῶν** is never the last word upon a δίκαιος. Compare Tertullian's argument from

¹⁰⁹κ saec. iv. (v.) [01: δ 2].

¹¹⁰A saec. v. [02: δ 4].

¹¹¹D saec. (vi.) [06: α 1026] cont. 1:1–13:20. Codex Claromontanus is a Graeco-Latin MS, whose Greek text is poorly* reproduced in the later (saec. ix.–x.) E = codex Sangermanensis. The Greek text of the latter (1:1–12:8) is therefore of no independent value (cp. Hort in WH, §§ 335–337); for its Latin text, as well as for that of F=codex Augiensis (saec. ix.), whose Greek text of Πρὸς Ἐβραίουσ has not been preserved, see below, p. lxix.

¹¹²33 saec. ix.–x. [δ 48] Hort's 17

¹¹³104 saec. xi. [α 103]

¹¹⁴326 saec. xii. [α 257]

¹¹⁵1311 saec. xi. [α 170]

¹¹⁶1836 saec. x. [α 65]

¹¹⁷LXX *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint Version* (ed. H. B. Swete).

¹¹⁸Philo *Philonis Alexandriaei Opera Quae Supersunt* (recognoverunt L. Cohn et P. Wendland).

Abel, in *De Scorpiace*, 8: “a primordio enim justitia vim patitur. Statim ut coli Deus coepit, invidiam religio sortita est: qui Deo placuerat, occiditur, et quidem a fratre; quo proclivius impietas alienum sanguinem sectaretur, a suo auspicata est. Denique non modo justorum, verum etiam et prophetarum.”¹¹⁹

11:4. **Abel** represents the **righteous man** referred to in 10:38, whose acceptance before God was based on a superior sacrifice. Like Abel, the readers found acceptance before God on the basis of the better sacrifice of the New Covenant. Their unbelieving brethren, like **Cain**, found no such divine approbation. Even death does not extinguish the testimony of a man like Abel.¹²⁰

The second item in the catalogue, and the first actual exemplar of faith in the Old Testament, is Abel. His faith is appropriately bound up with his sacrifice, as the faith of Christ is intimately connected with his sacrificial death (12:1–3^{121*}). The author alludes to the account of Abel’s

¹¹⁹ James Moffatt, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*](#), International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1924), 163–165.

¹²⁰ 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), 807.

^{121*} ¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

offering in Gen 4:4^{122*}, but his embellishments on that account suggest that he utilized haggadic expansions of the spare scriptural story. The fact that Abel's sacrifice was accepted while Cain's was not implies that his was in some sense superior to his brother's. In what that superiority consisted is not made clear in scripture, and exegetical traditions supplied various answers, usually focusing on the quality of the offerings.¹³¹²³¹ In describing Abel's sacrifice as "greater than" Cain's (πλείονα ... παρὰ¹³¹²⁴² Κάιν), our author may have such traditions in mind, although the adjective could simply refer to the quantity of the sacrifice.¹³¹²⁵³ Neither Genesis nor haggadic traditions that treat the quality of Abel's victims provide any grounds for seeing his sacrifice as connected with "faith." There is, however, another tradition represented in the Palestinian Targum that describes the dissension between Abel and Cain as arising from their different beliefs about God,¹³¹²⁶⁴ and it is possible that such a tradition underlies this verse.

The motif of divine attestation from 11:1^{127*} is repeated. The cause of this attestation (δι' ἧς ἐμαρτυρήθη) is ambiguous since the relative pronoun could refer either to "faith" (πίστει) or "sacrifice" (θυσίαν). The parallels in vss. 1^{128*} and 7^{129*} (δι' ἧς) support the former option,¹³¹³⁰⁵ although there is ultimately little difference, since the sacrifice is the outward expression of Abel's faith.

³ Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1–3 (NRSV)

^{122*} ⁴ and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,

Genesis 4:4 (NRSV)

¹²³¹³¹ Philo's lengthy treatment of the episode frequently refers to the qualitative difference of the offerings. Cf. *Sacr. AC* 52, 57, 73, 88. Cf. also Josephus *Ant.* 1.2.1 § 54, who sees the distinction as one of nature in opposition to culture.

¹²⁴¹³² For this comparative construction, cf. 1:4*.

¹²⁵¹³³ This reading of the contrast is occasionally defended. See Westcott, p. 356.

¹²⁶¹³⁴ See Pierre Grelot, "Les Targums du Pentateuque," *Sem* 9 (1959) 59–88; Roger Le Déaut, "Traditions targumiques dans le Corpus Paulinien (Hebr 11, 4 et 12, 24; Gal 4, 29–30, II Cor 3, 16)," *Bib* 42 (1961) 28–48; Geza Vermes, "The Targumic Versions of Genesis 4, 3–16," *ALUOS* 3 (1961–62) 81–114; M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966) 159; Buchanan, p. 185.

^{127*} ¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)

^{128*} ¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)

^{129*} ⁷ By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

Hebrews 11:7 (NRSV)

¹³⁰¹³⁵ Most commentators interpret thus. See, e.g., Westcott, p. 257; Spicq 2.342; Braun, p. 345.

The testimony that Abel was “righteous” (δίκαιος) goes beyond the biblical account but is firmly anchored in tradition.¹³¹³¹⁶ The nature of the testimony that God provides “over the gifts” (ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις)¹³¹³²⁷ is not specified. It is likely that the phrase does not simply refer to Yahweh’s acceptance of the sacrifice mentioned in Genesis but to legendary embellishments that told of a heavenly fire sent to consume the offerings.¹³¹³³⁸

A second result of Abel’s faith¹³¹³⁴⁹ is that he “still speaks, though dead” (ἀποθανῶν ἔτι λαλεῖ). He thereby provides one example of the principle enunciated by Habakkuk according to 10:39. Beyond death this righteous man still exercises a living function.¹⁴¹³⁵⁰ The account in Gen 4:10^{136*} of the cry of Abel’s blood certainly is the source of this comment, as of the similar remark at 12:24^{137*}. Yet how Hebrews understands Abel to be speaking is not clear. Some Jewish traditions referred to the martyr’s cry of vindication,¹⁴¹³⁸¹ while patristic interpreters frequently understood Abel’s speech to be the voice of his scriptural witness which still addresses Christians.¹⁴¹³⁹² Our author may, however, have viewed Abel as a suppliant interceding before God. A tradition of this sort may be involved in Philo’s allegorical treatment of Abel’s post-mortem voice.¹⁴¹⁴⁰³ It is for this reason that Hebrews will attribute a greater voice

¹³¹¹³⁶ On Abel as a judge, cf. *1 Enoch* 22.7; *T. Abr.* 13.2–3. In the NT, cf. Matt 23:35* and 1 John 3:12*.

¹³²¹³⁷ Δῶρα, as usual, is simply synonymous with θυσίαί. Cf. 5:1*; 8:3*, 4*; 9:9*.

¹³³¹³⁸ Theodotion’s translation of Gen 4:4* (ἐνεπύρησεν for ἐπεῖδεν) attests this tradition. Cf. also Chrysostom, *PG* 63.155; Jerome *Quaest. in Gen.*, *PL* 23.992. The locus classicus for the fire from heaven is, of course, 1 Kgs 18:38*.

¹³⁴¹³⁹ The pronoun in δι’ αὐτῆς is formally ambiguous, as was the relative pronoun earlier in the verse. Both probably have the same antecedent.

¹³⁵¹⁴⁰ Of Abel, who symbolizes the soul alive with virtue, Philo says in *Det. pot. ins.* 48: ζῆ δὲ τὴν ἐν θεῷ ζωὴν εὐδαίμονα. μαρτυρήσει δὲ τὸ χρησθὲν λόγιον, ἐν ᾧ “φωνῆ” χρώμενος καὶ “βοῶν” ἃ πέπονθεν...εὐρίσκεται, “He is alive with the happy life in God. To this the declaration of Scripture shall be our witness, where Abel is found quite manifestly using his ‘voice’ and ‘crying out’ the wrongs which he has suffered.”

^{136* 10} And the Lord said, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!

Genesis 4:10 (NRSV)

^{137* 24} and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:24 (NRSV)

¹³⁸¹⁴¹ Cf. *1 Enoch* 22.7. For the image of the martyrs’ blood crying for divine vengeance, cf. Rev 6:9–10*.

¹³⁹¹⁴² See Moffatt. p. 164.

¹⁴⁰¹⁴³ *Det. pot. ins.* 70: ζῆ μὲν γάρ...ὁ τεθνάναι δοκῶν, εἴ γε καὶ ἰκέτης ὢν θεοῦ καὶ φωνῆ χρώμενος εὐρίσκεται, “He that seems to be dead is alive, since he is found acting as God’s suppliant and using His voice.” Precisely in what sense Abel is a suppliant is not, however, here specified. See Spicq 2.343.

to the blood of Jesus (12:24^{141*}), because the intercession of the true High Priest is more effective.¹⁴²

^{141*} 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:24 (NRSV)

¹⁴² Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, [*The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*](#), Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 316–317.