Faithfulness in the things before God:
Caleb Typology in the Letter to the Hebrews

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Introduction
Writing well over a hundred years ago, before speculation as to Hebrews “sources” became a vogue academic discourse, before notions of intertextuality entered scholarly vocabulary and before discoveries at Qumran impacted upon the epistle’s interpretation, A. B. Bruce ventured his opinion that Hebrews’ portrayal of Christ is predicated upon two complementary and discrete roles, namely that of ἀρχηγός and ἀρχιερεὺς. The former, Bruce suggests, picks up the Son’s Mosaic (and perhaps Joshuanic) credentials, whilst the latter, he conjectures, continues the sacerdotal role formerly occupied by the Aaronic line. Summarising his thesis, Bruce avers that, in the Son, Hebrews ascribes “epithets to Christ descriptive of the respective offices of the two brothers, as both united in Him.”

There is much to commend Bruce’s core observation. It focuses attention on the two primary titles, locates Hebrews’ interests very much in the exodus and wilderness years, and provides a helpful mnemonic for explicating the contours of Hebrews’ Christology. I have further suggested elsewhere that we might “extend the analogy and propose that ἀρχηγός encapsulates the quasi-Joshuanic work of Christ as leader-author, distinct from, but complementary to, his cultic role as Melchizedeckian high-priest.” At the same time, however, one wonders whether Bruce’s proposal requires further nuance or explication. Whilst the Aaronic priesthood is surely a critical component of the discussion of the Son’s ἀρχιερεὺς status, Hebrews’ argument is famously predicated on the insufficiency of that priesthood, and appeals accordingly to the Melchizedeck tradition as an eternal and efficacious alternative. Moreover, Hebrews’ appropriation of Mosaic traditions is as much about leaving behind the figure of Moses, and replicating the transfer of power to a Joshua or Ἰησοῦς figure who functions as a typological precursor to the Son. If so, if Hebrews does seek to mirror the handover from old to new covenant as marked out at the edge of the land, is there a figure to whom Aaron ceremonially hands over the mantle, in the same way that Moses yields the baton to Joshua?

At one level, Aaron’s son, Eleazar, would appear to be the obvious candidate. In parts of the canonical narrative, he appropriately assumes this high-priestly mantle, and one sees him associated with Joshua, and operative with him in the early narratives of the Landnahme. He is involved in the distribution of the land (Josh 14:1), and is cited as Joshua’s partner in issues of leadership and priestly function (Josh 17:4, 19:51, 21:1). Yet Eleazar still does not quite fit the “role” encapsulated with the liminal handover moment; he actually assumes high-priestly responsibility before entry in the land – on the occasion of Aaron’s death (Num

1 Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews. The First Apology for Christianity. An Exegetical Study (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 93-94.
2 Bruce, Epistle (1899), 93.
3 David M. Allen, Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: An Exercise in Narrative Re-Presentation (WUNT 2/238; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2008), 173.
20:22-28) – and, in that sense at least, is one stage removed from the handover process. He also only receives one tangential mention from the Deuteronomist(s) (Deut 10:6), and isn’t party to the Deuteronomic depiction of the transfer of power with which Hebrews seems to working. Instead, closer attention to the text suggests an alternative possibility, one that befits Hebrews’ paraenetic interests more generally. It is the thesis of this paper that Caleb occupies this position, that he shares with Joshua in the Mosiac handover process, and that together they inherit and represent (or re-present?) the new covenant order. More specifically, we will propose that Caleb, whilst still being the pioneering spy who might properly fit the ἄρχηγός prototype, is actually better representative of the ongoing priestly tradition or function within the new covenant order. At the moment of handover in Deut 1:36-38, Caleb is cast in terms customarily attributed to priests, and we see in him the outline of a faithful “priest” entering into the land, one who therefore prefigures the subsequent actions of Jesus.

**Caleb in the Jewish Scriptures**

Within the texts of Numbers and Joshua, the figure of Caleb is portrayed as a paragon of faithfulness and obedience, an almost lone voice within apostate Israel who is rewarded with an inheritance of land for him and his sons on account of his trust in YHWH (Num 13:30, 14:6-9, 24, 30, 32:12; Josh 14:6-15). Such is his obedience and integrity within an otherwise unfaithful Israeliite people, he becomes the embodiment of dedicated loyalty to YHWH. With Joshua, he is one of only two spies to report back positively on the journey into Canaan (Num 14:6-9); where the rest of Israel rejects YHWH at Kadesh Barnea, occasioning forty years of wilderness wanderings, Caleb, along with Joshua, is praised for faithfully following after YHWH (Num 32:12). Accordingly, he is given special dispensation in the land and receives the city of Hebron as acknowledgement of his distinctive contribution (Josh 14:13-14). Thus whilst not a dominant person in either Numbers or Joshua, he appears frequently enough, and consistently enough, to be viewed as a character worthy of note, and later appropriation within Jewish tradition continues to portray him as an exemplary or model figure (cf. Sir 46:9-10).

By contrast, however, his depiction in Deuteronomy seems (surprisingly) much more muted, limited to only one verse, namely 1:36. Coupled with the acknowledgement that he will “see” the land on which he has already set foot, Caleb is affirmed for τὸ προσκεῖσθαι ... τὰ πρὸς κύριον (1:36). This statement about him is surely laudatory, but it is nonetheless tantalisingly opaque, an ambiguous reference bearing in mind the positive and distinctive adulation loaded onto him in the two texts canonically either side of Deuteronomy. The meaning of the phrase τὰ πρὸς

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4 Thus, strictly speaking, it is not Aaron handing over to Caleb, but rather Moses (partially doing so).

5 This is not to ignore the appointment of leaders in Deut 1:9-18, nor the inclusion of Levites, elders and Torah itself in Deut 31-32. On the implications and portrayal of the handover process more generally, see Dennis T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994).

6 Questions of J and P sources impact here, but our concern is to read the text in a given form, rather than to engage in source-critical discussion.

7 It interesting, therefore, that, to the knowledge of this writer at least, no monograph currently exists focused on the figure of Caleb.
κύριον is not immediately obvious, whilst the verse itself offers no clarification or insight as to of what Caleb’s fidelity is comprised; there is perhaps the expectation that the reader is aware of his actions from other sources (the text of Numbers, one assumes). But as it is Deuteronomy’s sole mention of him, and because it nuances the picture of him given elsewhere, this elusive reference to Caleb is one worth pursuing, especially because of its parallels to Hebrews’ articulation of the activity of the high priest. Such language of τὰ πρὸς κύριον resonates with the high-priestly language of Heb 2:17 and 5:1, and provides a potentially interesting parallel between Deuteronomy and Hebrews at this point.

The content of Deut 1:36-38 adds to the suggestive parallels with Hebrews. McConville, for example, comments that 1:37 is premised upon Moses’ “solidarity” with the people – here is someone who fails because of and with them. The corollary, therefore, is that Caleb is the paradigm of faithfulness, one who has not been tarnished by the actions of corporate Israel. He will see the land – unlike Moses who only views it from afar (Deut 34:1-4) – and he thus serves as an antitype, or rather a positive counterpoint to the work of Moses. In this sense, Caleb succeeds where Moses failed, and he becomes “a paradigm of the proper loyalty to Yahweh that the people lack.”

Could Caleb be someone who is at one with the people of Israel, but who also provides a model of faithfulness in respect of the things before God (cf. Heb 2:17)?

The significance of Deut 1:36-38

In terms of structure, there is good reason to view Deut 1:36-38 as a discrete unit, a chiastic arrangement of A-B-A form. The negative verdict upon Moses (1:37), the consequences of faithlessness, is ensconced between the two positive affirmations of faithful behaviour, exhibited respectively by Caleb and Joshua (1:36, 38). Some scholars read the structure as a twofold unit (i.e. Caleb and Moses/Joshua), but there seems no reason not to see a more chiastic A-B-A structure in place, with 1:36-38 perhaps functioning as a parenthesis between 1:35 and 1:39.

I have argued elsewhere for the significance to Hebrews of the Deuteronomic threshold moment, the point at which authority is passed from Moses to Joshua. Much of Hebrews’ borrowing draws on Deut 32 and the way in which the Song of Moses encapsulates the significance of that transition moment. Hebrews’ core material thus derives from the climax of Deuteronomy, the latter “bookend” or

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8 For some suggestions for translation, see F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 88.
14 Allen, *Deuteronomy*, passim.
frame of the handover process (in comparison to Deut 1-3, which might be said to comprise the former one). In this (later) narrative, Caleb is absent, and only Joshua participates, and he will subsequently assume the primary ἀρχηγός function within Israel. By contrast, in the parallel passage at the outset of Deuteronomy (1:36-38), Caleb is integrally involved in the transfer process and appears to be critical to it. Where the closing chapters of the text remove him from the ceremony, in the opening declaration he becomes, if anything, the superior figure of the two leaders. Indeed, it is notable that Joshua receives less recognition in Deut 1:36-38 than he does elsewhere (both in Deuteronomy and other canonical texts). Israel is exhorted to encourage him (1:38), but there is no affirmation of his faithfulness akin to that accorded to Caleb (1:36). This would seem a surprising omission bearing in mind that it is Joshua who is ultimately being given leadership responsibility. Elsewhere in the broader Jewish narrative, Caleb tends to be subsumed under the Joshua tradition and, for whatever reason, the latter becomes the more remembered figure of the two. Deuteronomy 1:36-38, however, seemingly reverses that trend, and presents Caleb as, in some way, the senior, or more respected, figure. Where, for example, Num 32:12 speaks of both Caleb and Joshua following wholeheartedly after YHWH, Deut. 1:36 reserves the praise only for the former of the two. This lack of praise for Joshua in Deut 1:36-38 is also noticeable by its absence since he is the (true) Israelite and Caleb a mere Kenizzite outsider (Num 32:12; Josh 14:14), one who is somehow subsumed into the Judah tribal tradition. Within the narrative flow of Josh 14:6-14 (in which the affirmation of “following wholeheartedly after YHWH” is thrice applied to Caleb), the roles are reversed; Caleb is still portrayed as in some fashion ‘inferior’ to Joshua – he comes to Joshua (14:6), and Joshua blesses him, not vice-versa (14:13). Deuteronomy 1:36 is therefore significant in its explicit rendering of “faithful following” solely to Caleb and in a way that, contextually at least, depicts him as somehow ‘superior’ to Joshua. Because of such uniqueness, and because of Hebrews’ interest in this “moment,” the phraseology is likely to be of interest for our understanding of Caleb and of his contribution to the context of the letter. This is particularly true with the Greek tradition; whilst the Hebrew rendering of 1:36 is in continuity with, and comparable to, the other references (e.g. Num 14:24, 32:12, Josh 14:14), the LXX form is discrete from these other readings, and attracts the attentive intertextual eye.

What then is the significance of Deut 1:36? The Hebrew form of the phrase is a rare, but certainly not unique, occurrence in the MT. It occurs six times (Num 32:12; Deut.

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15 According to Sir 46:1, Joshua succeeded Moses’ prophetic function.
16 Sirach, for example, seems to transfer the language of “faithful following” from Caleb to Joshua (Sir 46:7 LXX). Source critical work may offer insight into the way in which Joshua assumes more recognized status viz-à-viz Caleb, but such concerns are beyond the scope of this essay.
17 It is, of course, Caleb who expresses the desire to go into the land (Num 13:30), and Joshua is found somewhat silent on this occasion. Likewise it is Caleb – and not Joshua – who is recognized as having a “different spirit” upon him (Num 14:24). On the silence of Joshua here, see Michael Widmer, Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer: A Study of Exodus 32-34 and Numbers 13-14 (FAT II/8; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2004), 271-2 and the concept of narrative effect.
18 Sirach 46:6 accords the honour to Joshua alone; this is a second instance where something formerly attributed to Caleb is transferred instead to Joshua (cf. Josh. 1:3).
19 Numbers 13:6 identifies Caleb as being from the tribe of Judah (cf. also Num 34:19), but elsewhere his background is cited as Kenizzite (Num 32:12, Josh 14:6, 14:14).
20 As noted above, both Num 13:30 and 14:24 are likewise distinctive in this regard, but neither verse sets Caleb in explicit superiority to Joshua.
1:36; Josh 14:8, 14:9, 14:14; 1 Kings 11:6)\(^{21}\), all with  הָלַךְ in the piel, and all bar the final one pertaining to Caleb (this also being the only negative rendering of the phrase). As such, the phrase is distinctive, but, in the Hebrew at least, appears to be not especially lexically significant. Rather, the substance of the verse emerges when one compares the LXX rendering of the phrase across the six verses. It is immediately noticeable that in all the verses bar Deut 1:36, the phrase is rendered using a form of the root ἀκολουθέω or, in the case of 1 Kgs 11:6, a paraphrase of it, ‘going after’ (ἐπορεύθη ὀπίσω), rather than ‘following.’ Deuteronomy 1:36 is thus distinctive, partly in its choice of the verb πρόσκειμαι,\(^{22}\) partly for its use of the construction τὰ πρὸς κύριον. Both factors are worthy of further comment.

The verbal idea of πρόσκειμαι is suggestive of intimacy in relationship (and this would befit the context of Deut 1:36), though it need not necessarily be so. The term is used elsewhere in terms of dwelling or residence (e.g. Num 19:10), but in Deuteronomy itself, it is used specifically of faithfulness to YHWH (οἱ προσκείμενοι κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ὑμῶν - 4:4). Hence it befits the context of someone who exhibits obedience before God, but on its own, it need not express anything beyond that. The phrase τὰ πρὸς κύριον, however, is more suggestive. Grammatically speaking, the expression is likely an accusative of reference; it occurs four times in the Septuagint, three times in Deuteronomy (1:36, 9:7, 9:24) and once in Isaiah (3:8).\(^{23}\) In every occurrence other than Deut 1:36, the prevailing verbal idea is rebellion (MT – הָלַךְ; LXX – ἀπειθέω); i.e. the subjects have acted un-faithfully before God. Such rebellious connotations are perhaps telling – after all, it is Caleb who emerges as the one who does not rebel in Deut 1:19-36 and Num 13-14, and Hebrews itself also uses ἀπειθέω to describe those who did not inherit the land because of their lack of faithfulness (3:18, 11:31). But more significant is the fact that, in Deut 1:36, we have the one instance where an unusual construction - τὰ πρὸς κύριον - is used with the ideas conveyed within the semantic domain of the Hebrew piel הָלַךְ, the very opposite of הָלַךְ. By virtue of faithfully doing the things before God, Caleb embodies the direct contrast to the wilderness generation, and provides a counterpoint to those who exhibit ἁπιστία (cf. Heb 3:12, 3:19). In a sense then, our question is: what does it mean to ‘appropriately’ or ‘positively’ carry out τὰ πρὸς κύριον – and to do so faithfully? Are there other instances of ‘positive’ action in respect of τὰ πρὸς κύριον? Help in answering this question may come from examining the usage of the similar Greek phrase τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν (Exod 4:16, 18:19; Deut 31:27).

When one considers this alternate rendering, one immediately notices the somewhat ‘priestly’ context to the phrase’s usage. In Exod 4:16, YHWH instructs Moses that he will be “as if … God” (NIV, NASB) or “as … God” (NRSV) for Aaron, the latter of course being the first high priest of Israel. Later on in the text, Jethro is found charging Moses with the responsibility of being the people’s divine

\(^{21}\) Variants of the phrase occur in Num 14:24, 32:11; both convey essentially the same sense as Num 32:12.

\(^{22}\) Aquila has the more literal rendering πληρῶσαι – see John William Wevers, Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy (SBLSCS 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 22n67.

\(^{23}\) Paul Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 188 mentions the similar phrase found in Sophocles’ Philoctetes, 1441: ‘εὐσεβεῖν τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν’. This seems to function more as standard direct object (“to reverence its gods”) than an accusative of reference.
representative, a quasi-intercessor to bring matters of the people to God (γίνου σὺ τῷ λαῷ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν - Exod 18:19). Jethro himself has already fulfilled the priestly function by offering sacrifices (Exod 18:12; cf. Exod 3:1), but then disappears off the horizon, suggesting that Moses (and perhaps latterly Aaron) has somehow replaced him in that function. One might therefore suggest that Moses fulfils the priestly role without actually being designated as a priest. That mantle will eventually be assumed by Aaron, but in this particular instance, Moses exhibits an alternative, “non-ordained” priestly function.

The priestly context of Deut 31:27 is similarly focused. Seemingly addressed to the Levites (cf. 31:25-26), Moses’ statement reflects their rebellious and stubborn nature before God as part of their priestly action. Moses also uses the verb παραπικραίνω in respect of their rebellion, the same term utilized by Hebrews to reflect the paradigm of wilderness unfaithfulness (Heb 3:16).

One might say two things as a result. First, such wilderness rebellion language (ἀπειθέω, παραπικραίνω) is terminology that Hebrews itself is interested in and appropriates. It is fertile lexical and narratival soil for Hebrews, and it informs the exposition of Ps 95 in particular (Heb 3:12-19). Second, and perhaps more significantly, it would seem that the LXX texts consistently use τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν within a priestly domain, suggesting that it may well be a phrase imbued with priestly connotations. If so, it would seem feasible for τὰ πρὸς κύριον to bear the same sense, and the textual evidence certainly points in that general direction. Aside from Deut 1:36, τὰ πρὸς κύριον occurs three times elsewhere in the LXX. The occurrence in Isa 3:8 is broadly priestly in its regard, and pertains to defying the glory or presence of God. The other two uses (Deut 9:7, 9:24) are not quite so obvious and bespeak a more general rebellion, but still imply a personal/close encounter with the divine. Given that Deut 1:36 offers no other evidence or sense to how the phrase should be interpreted, and given that τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν is so redolent with priestly activity, it would seem legitimate to see the reference as articulating some sort of priestly credentials to Caleb.

Reference back to the Hebrew text would also support such a contention. In the piel, the שָׁלֹם root is itself found operative with connotations of priesthood, and especially of fulfilling a priestly vocation (cf. Num 3:3, Judg 17:5, 12). It would therefore be entirely conceivable for a Hebrew phrase containing שָׁלֹם in the piel and rendered by the phrase τὰ πρὸς κύριον to depict an act of priestly function. Consequently, the juxtaposition of Caleb as being faithful in or following after the τὰ πρὸς κύριον.

24 It is interesting, and maybe more than a coincidence, that Exod 18:19 is part of pericope (18:13-27) in which Moses appoints leaders for Israel because he cannot lead the people alone. The same episode is recounted in Deut 1:9-18, which precedes the section in which Caleb is lauded for following τὰ πρὸς κύριον.
27 Both BDB and Koehler/Baumgartner include the notion of ‘following wholeheartedly’ and priestly vocation within the domain of שָׁלֹם in the piel but do so within different semantic groupings. Arguably here Deuteronomy is playing on the priestly associations of the שָׁלֹם root and the LXX translator has been sensitive to the wordplay with the rendering of τὰ πρὸς κύριον.
things of God (τὰ πρὸς κύριον – Deut 1:36) would be to locate Caleb in some fashion within the priestly boundaries, or performing a function attributed to priests.

The NT testimony also affirms this conclusion. Τὰ πρὸς κύριον does not occur in the NT, but τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν does, though only in three instances (Rom 15:17, Heb 2:17, 5:1), each of which presents some form of priestly activity. This is self-evident in the Hebrews examples, and we will consider these further below, but the Pauline example (Rom. 15:17) is likewise highly suggestive. In the preceding verse (15:16), Paul casts himself as a quasi-priest, a minister (λειτουργός) serving as a priest (ἱερουργέω) such that the offering (προσφορά) might be sanctified (ἁγιάζω). Such priestly activity comprises Paul’s work before God (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν - 15:17), and he himself would perhaps offer another instance of someone operating within a “priestly” role without being formally part of that sacerdotal constituency.

If this were just a throwaway Deuteronomic verse with little supporting evidence elsewhere, then one might be tempted to dismiss 1:36 as nothing more than a translational oddity. Evidence elsewhere in the tradition, however, whilst never explicitly naming him as a priest, does at least support this unusual characterisation, and Deuteronomy, it seems, is not alone in this designation, or rather, not alone in wanting to affirm Caleb’s priestly credentials. It is interesting, for example, that that Hebron – given to Caleb as his core inheritance (Josh 14:13-14) – becomes the place subsequently given to Aaron’s descendants (Josh 21:13); the territory of Caleb and the territory of the priestly line thus become intertwined.

The Midrash Rabbah also proves to be a salient source of information. Its commentary records a debate over whether Moses can find eighty righteous men may within Israel (Deut. Rab. 3.15). Moses initially points to seventy of them – (cf. Num 11:16-17) – but they are the seventy of the elders, and are not specifically named. The next seven are Aaron, Nadab Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar, Phinehas and Caleb – seventy-seven in total. The remaining three are, unsurprisingly, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For our purposes, it is notable that Caleb is grouped in a cohort where everyone else is a priest, as if that is the most fitting place or group to locate him, rather than the seventy elders. It is similarly notable that Joshua is not included in the eighty, a surprising omission perhaps, but is a further instance of Caleb being the more recognized figure. At the same time, the depiction of Caleb as a priest is not universal; in Numbers Rabbah, Caleb is seen as one of the two spies (along with Phinehas) sent into Jericho ultimately to be housed to Rahab (Num. Rab.

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28 Generally speaking, scriptural quotation aside, Hebrews prefers to use θεὸς for God and reserves κύριος for Christ (8:2 perhaps being the exception); hence to use τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν to depict priestly action before the divine would be perfectly appropriate for Hebrews (i.e. rather than using τὰ πρὸς κύριον).

29 BDF §160 categorizes Rom 15:17 as an adverbial accusative, rather than an accusative of reference (so Heb 2:17, 5:1), but the differing syntactical classification does not negate the phrase’s priestly context.

30 If there is an exception to the priestly context of the phrase, Josephus Ant. 9.236 may be one. Jotham, king of Judah, is described as being εὐσεβὴς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, without there necessarily being any obvious sacerdotal referent. It seems to be more descriptive of his own personal virtue and righteous state, rather than a claim to exercise of priestly responsibility.

31 It may be that Joshua is assumed to be among the seventy elders, but even so, he still remains unnamed.
Phinehas is explicitly declared a priest – and is not hidden for this reason; Caleb, on the other hand, is secreted, because, the text suggests, he is not a priest.

So what is the ‘payback’ for such analysis? What does one glean from this consideration of an apparently minor, insignificant LXX phrase? Whilst one should be hesitant about building too much from just one verse, there does nonetheless seem to be evidence in Deut. 1:36 of Caleb being cast as a quasi-priestly figure by the author(s) of Deuteronomy. Where, in Deuteronomy at least, Joshua is portrayed in terms of a military figure that will bring about Israel’s inheritance, Caleb is depicted as a more priestly character, the faithful one who will bring about and model the ‘spiritual’ conquest of the land. Where Joshua is the heir of Moses, perhaps Caleb is in some sense the heir of Aaron, not as someone who necessarily offers sacrifices or presides at the cult, but as the one who models what a priest should and ought to embody. Whilst not of priestly lineage, Caleb offers a “pro-forma” of priestly obedience and is counted broadly among those who are of priestly line.

**Caleb as Priest in Hebrews**

It would, of course, be foolish to ignore the primary influence that the figure of Melchizedeck has upon Hebrews’ depiction of (high) priesthood. Such Melchizedeckian influence is paramount, impacting upon epistolary themes such as the eternal nature of the priesthood (Heb 5:6, 7:15-25), its non-Levitical character (7:1-10), and its origins outside of the formal Jewish community (7:1-3). As is well known, Melchizedeck is a peripheral figure that moves in from the fringes of Gen 14 and Ps 110 to become a core focus of Hebrews’ sacerdotal discourse.32

At the same time, however, if the contextual moment of the move from old to new covenant is so significant for Hebrews, if the Deuteronomic liminal or threshold moment is so critical, then one figure potenti


33 Caleb is also not a high priest, but as the parallels being drawn relate to character and fidelity, rather than particular priestly qualification, to seek precision on such matters is to miss the point of the argument.
or corresponding equivalent. But at the same time, aside from the mysterious Melchizedeck speculation, there is little substantive agreement as to the sources of the letter’s high priestly Christology, and one suspects that there may be a number of factors or components that feed it. Deuteronomy 1:36 is effectively silent on what Caleb has done as a “priest,” but that is not really the point of the affirmation; the germane aspect is rather the faithfulness in which he inhabits the role, not the precise activity, cultic or otherwise. If we take the suggested Caleb link seriously, particularly when coupled with the Moses-Joshua context, we may have at least some exemplar or source by which to explicate the particular faithful, high-priestly disposition that Hebrews details.

Moreover, the prospect of Caleb impacting upon the priestly portrayal of Jesus is enticing. The one who is faithful in the things before God is part of the tribe of Judah, the problem that Hebrews wrestles with in terms of Jesus’ Judah/non-Levitical origins (Heb 7:13-14). Furthermore, with his questionable non-Judah origins, Caleb is also on similar terms to Melchizeck as someone whose background is outside of Israel, not quite ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος perhaps, but still someone possessing impure familial credentials. Hebrews seems to be aware of those who did “listen” whilst the rest of the wilderness generation expressed disobedience (4:2), presumably an allusion to Caleb and Joshua. With Joshua (Ἰησοῦς), Caleb shares in leading the people into their inheritance (Sir 46:9; cf. Heb 1:14, 4:8), the future goal of Hebrews’ faithful pilgrims. As one of the spies chosen to represent Israel, Caleb is presumably a faithful figure chosen from among the people (cf. Heb 5:1); one might even see him as a prototype of Heb 12:2, the τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸς being the one who is the faithful pioneer leader. His interest for Hebrews, therefore, would not be a question of his involvement in the cult, but rather in his faithful exercise of the priestly office or character.

Hebrews 2:17 is probably the core verse in this regard. Although the letter has already broached the topic of atonement and sacrifice (1:3), 2:17 is its first formal mention of Jesus as high priest. Within Hebrews’ priestly narrative, it suggests the two fundamental dimensions of sacerdotal engagement – fidelity and mercy – both of which will be subsequently unpacked in the letter’s exposition. But most significantly, it frames that characterization within terminology that is invariably used of priests – specifically the activity τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, effectively the same terminology used of Caleb’s contribution in Deut 1:36.

Bearing in mind our above analysis of τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν/κύριον, and its overtly priestly aspect, Lane’s observation that 2:17 “is a standard phrase in the Pentateuch meaning ‘with regard to God’” seems to fall short of the mark. The connotation of

35 This does not rule out the oft-cited, mooted allusion in Heb 2:17 to 1 Sam 2:35 (ἱερεύς πιστός).
36 Reading συγκεκερασμένους in the text-critical question of 4:2.
37 Reading τῆς πίστεως as an attributive genitive – “faithful pioneer.”
38 And maybe for the epistle as a whole – so Ceslas Spicq, L’Épitre aux Hébreux (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 46.
2:17, and indeed 5:1, coupled with the references from the LXX, suggest that this is priestly regard to God, not merely any serviceable action practiced by person or persons unidentified. Paul Ellingworth, by contrast, seems to acknowledge this particularity, and begins to tease out its significance. In his commentary on 2:17, he refers to the previous LXX occurrences of τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν/κύριον, and notes that “in the light of Heb. 3:1-6 and 3:7-4:11, any or all of these passages may have influenced the author's use of the phrase here” and also points to the corresponding verses of Deut 1:36, 9:7 and 9:24. He thus seems to suggest the possibility of the priestly connection and we are following through the implications of that hypothesis.

The two aspects of priesthood that particularly concern Hebrews are the way in which Jesus is found to be both faithful and merciful, a combination that 2:17 famously brings out. The faithful characterization is particularly significant: πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν juxtaposes the concept of fidelity specifically alongside the idea of “the things before God.” In regard to 2:17, Hebrews commentators differ as to whether this faithfulness is expressed to God or whether it is exhibited in relationship to humanity (i.e. the person is regarded as an upright or trustworthy individual), particularly in view of the similar phrasing in 3:2. The former, more active option is perhaps the more likely rendering of 2:17, but both senses are probably in view; as Still observes, “(i)n 2:17, it appears that πιστὸς is utilized to describe Christ both as ‘a trustworthy or reliable high priest’ and as ‘one who is faithful to God,’ even if in this instance the latter valance is stronger than the former.” More specifically perhaps, the sense of 2:17 is not a disposition towards God that could be putatively embodied by any human being, but is rather the persona articulated by one with special responsibility for dealing with matters pertaining to and before the divine. It is a human who goes in place of, or on behalf of other humans – in short, one who, ordained or otherwise, fulfils a priestly mantle. To an extent, this equates to Caleb’s articulation of faithfulness; it is divinely-focused, but he has responsibility for others, and his faithful action should be to their benefit (i.e. Israel should be better prepared to enter the land because of his obedience).

Deuteronomy 1:36 consequently resonates strongly in this regard; not only does it share the τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν/κύριον language of Heb 2:17, but it also seems to replicate its desire for the faithful outworking of such action, not least because of the immediate comparison drawn with Deut 1:37. Moses will not get into the land because of the unfaithful action of the people (1:37), but Caleb will do so because of his inherent fidelity. He emerges as faithful partly through positive affirmation, partly through comparison with the faithlessness of those around him (Hebrews

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40 Ellingworth, Epistle, 188.
3:1-6 and 3:7-19 surely draw a similar contrast). Caleb thus provides not just an example of priestly obedience, but also, one suggests, the example of a human figure who is faithful, who is able to live obediently, in contrast to the sinfulness apparent amongst the rest of humanity. One might therefore say that Caleb is a priest, but not a priest; he is articulated as a priest, but without priestly lineage or ratification, a priest who has slipped in under the radar, so to speak, without the requisite certificate or professional membership. He provides a prior exemplar of faithful obedience (cf. Heb 3:2), a rare breed perhaps as one of the few figures within the broad biblical narrative that remains essentially faithful in their conduct (and is praised for so being).

The narrative of Caleb and Joshua reporting back on the spies’ expedition may also be relevant, particularly in articulating what it means to be “faithful”. Although not directed specifically to connotations or priesthood, or indeed to Hebrews itself, the nature of the Caleb’s faithful action provides a suggestive connection to the epistle: “Faith is not depicted here as an ignorant or unseeing optimism. The failure consists in an inability to see these difficulties in their true perspective. Caleb’s observation … [in Num 14:30] … is not that their difficulties are imaginary, but that Israel is well able to overcome them. Faith seeks to view the circumstances of existence from a divine perspective.”44 In the same way that Hebrews addresses a people in danger of falling away from reaching the primary goal, so Caleb provides a positive example of one wilderness figure who did not fall by the wayside. As Miller summarizes: “Only Caleb and Joshua, who believed in the possibilities of God and the people and the land, shall be allowed to see promise fulfilled and possibility become reality.”45

Caleb’s distinctiveness may extend even beyond this faithful characterization. Whilst Deuteronomy, it is true, seems more attuned to Caleb’s fidelity, he is elsewhere described as showing mercy (ἐποίησεν ἔλεος - Sir 46:7, attributed to both Joshua and Caleb). Sirach’s context for such merciful action is the duo’s dealings with Israel, supposedly preventing the people from falling into sin and restraining their grumbling rebellion (46:7-8). Such “mercy,” one suggests, seems not too distant from the type of merciful role upheld by Hebrews’ high priest (cf. Heb 4:15-16), especially as Sirach juxtaposes it with leading Israel into their inheritance (46:8), the same motif Hebrews uses for the climax of the new covenant believers’ journey (1:14, 9:15). If so, one is presented with a matrix of themes (the language of priesthood, fidelity and mercy – all outworked within a wilderness milieu) that portray Caleb as a quasi-type of Jesus the ἀρχιερεύς, in similar ways to those found within Hebrews.

One further observation might be made. Caleb is described as having another or different spirit on him (πνεῦμα ἔτερον - Num 14:24), a reference to which certain other texts allude (cf. Num. Rab. 16.19, which distinguishes the spirit on Caleb from that present upon the other spies). It may, however, also have resonance for Hebrews, especially in describing the particularity of the character – or “spirit” – that enables the faithful action of Caleb, and latterly Christ. Whilst, of course, the respective wording differs (Caleb’s πνεῦμα ἔτερον is Christ’s πνεῦμα αἰώνιος), in both instances, the exercise of the spirit (different or eternal) is associated with the

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44 Philip J. Budd, Numbers (WBC 5; Waco: Word, 1984), 147.
faithful, perhaps even unblemished, behaviour of Caleb and Christ. In both incidences, it also results in those associated with him coming into receipt of their inheritance, be it the physical land (Num 14:24) or the promised eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15). The association is not a loud one, but one might hear Heb 9:14 as a faint echo of the Caleb narrative reflecting the prior narrative of the faithful quasi-priest. One might even suggest something of a contextual parallelism between Num 14:24-25 and Heb 9:14-15. In both instances, the inheritance or gain achieved by one who is faithful in the things before God and by one on whom a particular spirit rests, is juxtaposed with the transgressions or sins of the previous era or dispensation. On the one hand, Caleb’s familial inheritance in the land (Num 14:24 – in the new covenant era in the Land?) contrasts with the impending wilderness fate of the present generation (Num 14:25). On the other, Christ’s action ushers in the eternal inheritance (9:15), distinct from the age in which dead works (9:14) and former covenant transgressions pervaded.

Conclusion:
As with all hypotheses, our suggestion of Caleb’s impact upon Hebrews’ hierology must carry some caveats or limitations. Hebrews’ silence on Caleb cannot be dismissed lightly and arguments from silence are commonly problematic or unpersuasive. The Caleb narratives – canonical or otherwise – yield nothing in terms of atonement or sacrifice imagery that the epistle so favours. But as Hebrews itself is only too well aware, the Lord had never served at an altar (Heb 7:13), and thus Caleb’s similar lack of cultic experience seems less of an obstacle. Moreover, our analysis of the textual tradition associated with him offers some tantalising associations, casting him as someone quintessentially faithful and merciful and as one who acts in the mould of the priest even if not “ordained” as such. Indeed, whilst Melchizedeck offers the ingredients for an eternal, non-Levitical priesthood, his actual persona remains unexamined by Hebrews and one is not privy to his character or to any way in which he actions warrant particular approval.\footnote{Hebrews 7:6-8 barely qualifies in this regard.} What one encounters with Caleb, however, is a model or outline of how a faithful (high) priest might conduct himself, or go about his business, even if he never exercises the full gamut of the priestly role. As Johnson notes, “Hebrews’ treatment of Christ’s priesthood first emphasizes his moral dispositions”;\footnote{Johnson, Hebrews, 103.} character, rather than action, is the letter’s initial concern, and this makes the Caleb prototype a more persuasive option. He is faithful in the things before God (Deut 1:36) and, even when apostasy and rebellion lingers on the horizon, as it does for Hebrews’ readers (cf. Heb 10:26-39), he emerges as one who models what it is to follow faithfully after YHWH. Deuteronomy 1:36, and in its context in the Mosaic new covenant handover process, therefore seems to point in the direction of another faithful priest, or properly said, a faithful figure whose “priesthood” is expressed in different fashion to those from inside the priestly caste. It is one exercised by a faithful figure from the tribe of Judah, whose commendable faithfulness in the “things before YHWH” make him a suitable prototype of Jesus.

Moreover, if we contend that Hebrews views Kadesh Barnea as the quintessential locus of rebellion (cf. Heb 3:7-19), and, by contrast, the place at which true faithfulness might be exhibited, Caleb offers – with Joshua, but to an even greater
extent – an example of one from amongst humanity who does exhibit such faithfulness at that critical threshold moment (and almost uniquely so). We might conclude that Hebrews is drawing extensively on the handover moment at the entry into the land, but that such a handover is in some sense two-dimensional. Both “bookends” of Deuteronomy, both narratives of the Mosaic handover process are appropriated; in the first, the “priestly” aspect of Caleb is foreseen, whilst in the latter (Deut 29-32), Joshua’s core contribution is set forth. Bruce’s broad separation of Christ’s role into the two functions of ἀρχιερεύς and ἀρχηγός therefore seems to be upheld, but in a more developed fashion than he allows.