

Digest

Hebrews 5:11-14

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I. Lacking Nutrition v.11

a. Much to Say

- i. It is the whole subject under discussion, and not simply the priesthood like Melchizedek's, that requires the skill of the writer and the attention of the community.
- ii. The author has "much to say" that is "hard to explain," two expressions that are common in classical Greek. The phrase "hard to explain" may refer to the author, the readers, or the subject matter

b. Hard to Explain

- i. Explain - to express oneself orally or in written form, utter in words
 - 1. Among hellenistic writers it is used uniformly to describe a difficulty intrinsic to the material to be expounded and not extrinsic to it, i.e., a difficulty that derives from the complexity of the matter rather than the lack of skill in the writer or his audience.
- ii. Dull - lazy, sluggish
 - 1. This word, *nōthroi*, translated "slow," occurs only here and in Heb 6:12 in the New Testament, and connotes lethargy and mental dullness
 - 2. What is implied is a lack of responsiveness to the gospel and an unwillingness to probe the deeper implications of Christian commitment and to respond with faith and obedience (cf. 2:1–4; 4:1–2). If this apathetic attitude was not checked, it would lead to spiritual inertia and the erosion of faith and hope.
 - 3. Deafness or dullness in receptivity is a dangerous condition for those who have been called to radical obedience. The importance of responsible listening has been stressed repeatedly in the sermon (2:1, "we must pay the closest attention to what we have heard" [τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν]; cf. 3:7b–8a, 15; 4:1–2, 7b). The charge of having become spiritually lethargic in v 11 resumes the challenges expressed in the previous hortatory sections and

makes them more explicitly personal and relevant to the community

- iii. Hearing - the organ w. which one hears
 - 1. The Greek *akoais*, (lit) “hearing,” is a dative of respect rendered “to learn,” and probably contrasts the readers’ state with what has just been said about Jesus in Heb 5:7–10, where both concepts of “hearing” and “obedience” occur. The readers have not “been making the sort of theological effort that the Christological reflection of his [the author’s] work represents.” The teaching that the author will give in Heb 7:1–10:18 is not difficult in and of itself, but the author finds it hard to present in such a way that the readers will understand because of their dullness.

The presence of this rhetorical convention in vv 12b–14 has been characterized as a “pedagogical device” with which the writer sought to convince the community that they need to make greater progress in their understanding of biblical theology or of the OT when interpreted in the light of the Christ-event

II. Liquid Diet v.12

- a. By This Time
 - i. You Ought - The participle *opheilontes*, translated “though ... you ought,” is concessive, and the word conveys the notion of duty
 - 1. Semantically it introduces a contrast between what the readers are and what they should be.
 - ii. Teachers - instead of being teachers you still need a teacher.
 - 1. It was commonly believed that mature people should be able to teach the less mature. “Teachers” as used here probably does not denote the office of teaching, as the word is sometimes used in the New Testament. The meaning here is that mature believers have the capacity to teach, even if they are not filling the office of teacher
- b. Again
 - i. Teach You
 - ii. Elementary Principles
 - 1. Elementary - of things that constitute the foundation of learning, fundamental principles. very elements of the truths of God

2. Oracles of God - mostly of short divine sayings
 - a. This is followed by the compound genitive phrase (lit) “of the oracles of God,” translated “of God’s word.” This phrase is commonly used to refer to the Old Testament as divine revelation, but context makes it likely the author employs it here to include the content of the Christian message in Heb 6:1, without confining the meaning strictly to such
- c. Need
 - i. Milk
 1. The perfect tense “you have become” indicates the readers were previously in better spiritual condition, but now are in a state of dullness. There is no indication that the readers must remain in such a state.
 2. of elementary Christian instruction is a figure for the basic elements of divine teaching, for the elementary Christian instruction described The meaning in Hb. 5:12 is clearly “first principles” (→ 679, 2 ff.) with a slightly derogatory nuance: τὰ στοιχεῖα, “mere rudiments
 3. Milk” refers to basic instruction in the faith, and is further defined in Heb 6:1–2. “Solid food” refers to the more advanced truths, particularly the high priesthood of Christ and all that it entails.
 4. The instruction they need is said to be “the elementary truths of God’s word.” This noun, *stoicheion*, connotes “elementary concept,” “basic or fundamental principle,” and can be used of the letters of the alphabet
 - ii. Not Solid Food-
 1. In Hb. 5:12, 14 in the metaphor of “solid food” στερεός is used in a very special connection so that there is hardly any relation to usage elsewhere in the Bible. Food is here called “solid,” and as the less readily digestible nourishment of adults it is contrasted with the lighter fluid food appropriate to children

III. Solid Food vs. 13-14

- a. Milk
 - i. Partakes only Milk
 1. Partakes- whoever lives on milk

ii. Not Accustomed

1. Accustomed - to lack of knowledge or capacity to do something unacquainted with, unaccustomed
 - a. Anyone who can understand only the basic elements of Christian doctrine “lives on milk” and is inexperienced or unacquainted with the “teaching about righteousness.” The word translated “not acquainted” connotes lack of skill or experience.
2. Word of Righteousness
 - a. That which the readers lack skill in is the “teaching about righteousness,” which probably refers to the ethical dimensions of Scripture, taking “righteousness” here not in the forensic sense of “justification” but in the ethical sense of matters of right and wrong

iii. He is an Infant

1. Infant - a very young child, infant

b. Solid Food

i. Solid Food

1. Mature - to being mature, full-grown,
 - a. The noun *teleios*, “mature,” is fronted in the Greek text for emphasis. The author draws a sharp contrast between an “infant” and one who is “mature

ii. Practice

1. Practice - because of their mature state (have) their senses trained (to distinguish between good and evil)
2. Senses - capacity for discernment, faculty, of the ability to make moral decisions
3. Trained - to train, undergo discipline
 - a. The word is difficult to define, but it would seem to include intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity, perception, or sense. This capacity is said to be “trained,” where the Greek participle can be either middle or passive voice
4. Discern- the ability to distinguish and evaluate, distinguishing, differentiation of good and evil
 - a. The prepositional phrase “to distinguish” is the translation of *pros* with the noun meaning “ability to judge” or “ability to decide,” and includes intellectual as well as moral discernment, thus good and bad doctrines as well as moral

discrimination. It is rightly rendered verbally rather than nominally by virtually all translations. The use of “good and evil” probably alludes to Num 14:23 (LXX), given the significance of Numbers 14 for Hebrews 3–4, where the children are said not to know “good or evil” because of their lack of maturity.

b. Good and Evil

Word Studies

Explain - **to express oneself orally or in written form, utter in words, say, tell, give expression**¹

Dull - *lazy, sluggish*

Hearing - **the organ w². which one hears**³

Elementary -of things that constitute the foundation of learning, *fundamental principles. very elements of the truths of God*⁴

Principles- of things that constitute the foundation of learning, *fundamental principles*⁵

Oracles- mostly of short divine sayings⁶

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 588.

²**w. w.** = with

³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 36.

⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 946.

⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 946.

⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 598.

Solid Food- In Hb. 5:12, 14 in the metaphor of “solid food” στερεός is used in a very special connection so that there is hardly any relation to usage elsewhere in the Bible. Food is here called “solid,” and as the less readily digestible nourishment of adults it is contrasted with the lighter fluid food appropriate to children.³⁷² These figurative expressions are based on an academic tradition of Hellenistic Judaism³⁸³ which contains elements of the wisdom of Stoic pedagogy.³⁹⁴ In the Christian community the source of nourishment is basically the same for all ages, namely, revelation.³¹⁰⁵ But when Hb. 6:1 (→ VI, 209, 6 ff.) lists the first principles of Christian instruction, there remains as solid food for the perfect a Christian gnosis at the heart of which, as in Paul, are the cross and exaltation to the right hand of God, Hb. 12:2.³¹¹⁶

As compared with Gnostics who change or develop the Christian hope of the resurrection in a spiritualising sense, 2 Tm. 2:19 refers to the sure foundation stone of faith: ὁ μόντος στερεὸς θεμέλιος τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστηκεν. God Himself is the firm foundation, and He gives it. θεμέλιος (→ III, 63, 1 ff.) corresponds to the πέτρα (→ VI, 95, 9 ff.) and λίθος (→ IV, 268, 10 ff.) in many O¹²T and N¹³T metaphors. As God is the rock in the O¹⁴T, so here He is the foundation stone, which is also laid by Him. στερεός as an attribute belongs integrally to Him; it is a term for God in Aquila

⁷³² In Diod. S., 2, 4, 4 f. cheese is solid food as compared with milk. Philo Agric., 9 has ἐκ πυρῶν πέμματα, → γάλα I, 645, 35 ff.; βρῶμα I, 642, 23 ff.; νήπιος IV, 920, 14 ff.

⁸³³ Materially Philo Congr., 19; Som., II, 9 demands advance from academic instruction of the child in theoretical disciplines to the practical instruction of the adult in virtues. He makes the same distinction between the προκόπτων and the τέλειος as Stoicism. In Agric., 159 the ἀρχόμενος comes first; this is the νήπιος of 9; → προκοπή VI, 709, 25 ff.; W. Völker, *Fortschritt u. Vollendung bei Philon v. Alex.* (1938), 158–198.

⁹³⁴ Stoic pedagogy often distinguishes between the intellectual and philosophical food of adults on the one side and the playful element in the instruction of children on the other, cf. the comm., also A. Bonhöffer, *Epict. u. d. NT* (1911), 61–63, who quotes Quint. Inst. Orat., II, 4, 5 and Epict. Diss., II, 16, 39; III, 24, 9; Clemen, 316 f.

¹⁰³⁵ Mi. Hb., *ad loc.*; cf. Calvin on Hb., *ad loc.* (Corp. Ref., 83, 66): *sic etiam initio lace scriptura sugendum est ut eius pane deinde vescamur. Caeterum ita inter lac et firmum cibum discernit, ut sanam doctrinam utroque nomine intelligat.*

¹¹³⁶ On Hb. 12:2 cf. G. Bertram, “Die Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz aus,” *Festschr. A. Deissmann* (1927), 213–217.

¹²OT Old Testament.

¹³NT New Testament.

¹⁴OT Old Testament.

→ n. 1¹⁵6. We thus have all the associations which are bound up with στερεός and στερέωμα in the O¹⁶T → 609, 20 ff. God is He by whom the world and the believing community stand (ἔστηκεν).³¹⁷⁷ He is constant and He makes constant, and He demands true purifying and preparation, v¹⁸. 20, 21. The orientation V 7, p 613 of the saying about the foundation stone is not in the first instance to the Church³¹⁹⁸ or the system of doctrines but to the individual members of the believing community whom God has known.³²⁰⁹ Hence the foundation stone referred to is the constancy and faithfulness with which God calls His community afresh each day, and the individual within it,⁴²¹⁰ and holds them fast to Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord. In this way He is the firm foundation of faith.⁴²²¹

With reference to men the adjective στερεός is used in the admonition in 1 Pt. 5:9 to resist the devil: ὃ ἀντίστητε στερεοὶ τῇ πίστει. Those addressed are not to hold fast to the faith but

¹⁵16 At ψ 27:1; 30:3; 61:8; Is. 30:29; Dt. 32:31 Ἀ and some other Hexapla transl. have στερεός for ρα “rock” as a term for God. LXX simply has θεός, ΣΘ often φύλαξ cf. also ψ 60:3 Σ, perhaps also ΑΘ R. 9:32 f.; 1 Pt. 2:8 take Is. 8:14 christologically. LXX has πέτρας πτώματι, Ἀ στερεὸν σκάνδαλον. Is. 50:7: πρόσωπον ὡς στερεὰ πέτρα, is taken christologically with a ref. to the passion in Barn., 5, 14; Just. Apol., 38, 3. The symbol of the hard rock in Is. 50:7 is ref. in Barn., 6, 3 to the fact that “the Lord has powerfully offered His flesh (Himself)” → VI, 98, 30 ff.; 99, 24 ff.

¹⁶OT Old Testament.

¹⁷³⁷ This ἔστηκεν is in Philo a basic saying about God: Poster. C., 30; Leg. All., II, 83 etc., cf. Leisegang, s.v. ἰστάναι Völker, *op. cit.*, 326.

¹⁸v. verse.

¹⁹³⁸ But cf. H. Grotius, Annotat, in NT, II, 2 (1757), *ad loc.*: *Deus, moliens civitatem illam aeternam, decreta quaedam substravit, velut fundamenta, quae manent inconcussa.*

²⁰³⁹ Calvin on 2 Tm., *ad loc.* (Corp. Ref., 80, 370): *nos revocat ad Dei electionem, quam metaphorice appellat fundamentum, firmam et stabilem eius constantiam hoc nomine indicans ... proprium Dei est, nosse quinam sint sui.*

²¹⁴⁰ B. Weiss, *Die Br. Pauli an Tm.*, *Krit.-exeget. Komm. über d. NT*, 117 (1902), *ad loc.*, rejects the institutional and dogmatic interpretation; God calls persons to the fellowship of faith.

²²⁴¹ That the ref. is to the foundation of faith and not of the church may be seen from the preceding v. 2:18, in which the danger of turning from the faith is considered. Eph. 2:20; 1 Tm. 3:15 are related sayings, but they establish the distinctiveness of 2 Tm. 2:19.

steadfast⁴²³² in faith they are to resist the devil. τῇ πίστει can be taken either as a dative of relation (Ac. 16:5; 1 C. 14:20) or as a dative of cause (R. 4:20). πίστις is the chief term, and στερεοί could well be left out without any essential alteration of sense. It simply serves to strengthen the admonition to resist, cf. 2 C. 1:24: τῇ γὰρ πίστει ἐστήκατε.⁴²⁴³ Here as in the other N²⁵T references the use of στερεός is positive.²⁶

Milk - of elementary Christian instruction²⁷ is a figure for the basic elements of divine teaching, for the elementary Christian instruction described²⁸ The meaning in Hb. 5:12 is clearly “first principles” (→ 679, 2 ff.) with a slightly derogatory nuance: τὰ στοιχεῖα, “mere rudiments”²⁹

Partakes- *whoever lives on milk*

Accustomed - **to lack of knowledge or capacity to do someth³⁰., *unacquainted with, unaccustomed*³¹**

²³⁴² Calvin on 1 Pt., *ad loc.* (Corp. Ref., 83, 289) transl.: *firmi fide* (Vg *fortes fide*), and comments: *in fide satis esse firmitudinis*.

²⁴⁴³ The στερεῇ φρενί in Quintus Smyrnaeus *Posthomerica*, 5, 597; 9, 508 (ed. A. Zimmermann [1891]), a poet of the 4th. cent. A.D., is different; in this expression, quoted by Pape and Pr.-Bauer, s.v. στερεός, στερεός is the chief term and φρήν is dispensable.

²⁵NT New Testament.

²⁶ Georg Bertram, “[Στερεός. Στερεώ. Στερέωμα.](#)” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 612–613.

²⁷ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 186.

²⁸ Heinrich Schlier, “[Γάλα.](#)” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 646.

²⁹ Gerhard Delling, “[Στοιχέω. Συστοιχέω. Στοιχεῖον.](#)” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 687.

³⁰**someth. someth.** = something

³¹ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 100.

Infant- a very young child, *infant, child*³²

Mature - to being mature, *full-grown, mature, adult*³³

Practice - *because of their mature state (have) their senses trained* (to distinguish between good and evil) **Hb 5:14**³⁴

Senses- capacity for discernment, *faculty*, of the ability to make moral decisions³⁵

Train - *to train, undergo discipline*³⁶

Discern - the ability to distinguish and evaluate, *distinguishing, differentiation* of good and evil³⁷

³² William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 671.

³³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 995.

³⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 350.

³⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29.

³⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 208.

³⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 231.

Commentary Studies

5:11 Verse 11 begins with the preposition *peri* followed by the relative genitive pronoun *hou*, and (lit³⁸.) means “about this.” The key question is whether the antecedent of this pronoun is neuter or masculine. If it is taken as neuter, it can have a general topical reference with the meaning of “about this subject,” which contextually is the high priesthood of Jesus. If it is masculine, the reference would be either to Melchizedek or Christ.²⁰³⁹⁸ There is little practical difference between the two.²⁰⁴⁰⁹ The authorial plural *hēmin* refers only to the author. The author has “much to say” that is “hard to explain,” two expressions that are common in classical Greek. The phrase “hard to explain” may refer to the author, the readers, or the subject matter. Most take it in the first sense, but Bruce takes it as referring to the readers,²¹⁴¹⁰ and Lane takes it as referring to the subject matter, basing his decision on the use of the word in Hellenistic writers.²¹⁴²¹ The reason for the difficulty in explanation is expressed in the causal clause

³⁸lit. literal(ly)

³⁹²⁰⁸ Those who take it in the former sense include Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:140; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 69; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 189; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 156; Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 136; and the NIV. Those who take it in the latter sense referring to Melchizedek include Alford, “Hebrews,” 99; Dods, “Hebrews,” 290; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 133; and Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 299, who takes it as referring “on syntactical grounds” to Melchizedek, but “Christ” is implied due to the “later development of the argument.”

⁴⁰²⁰⁹ Ellingworth and Nida, *A Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (London: UBS, 1983), 102–3, think it is better to make the translation specific and avoid vague phrases such as “about this” or “about him.” They take the antecedent as masculine and suggest the meaning could be expressed as “about Christ being a high priest like Melchizedek.”

⁴¹²¹⁰ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 133. So also Koester, *Hebrews*, 300, based on the following causal clause.

⁴²²¹¹ Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 136. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 300, accepts this interpretation as well, but thinks a sharp distinction should not be drawn between the three views, since the meaning may imply “teaching difficult in itself, and therefore doubly difficult for you to understand in your present state.”

“because²¹⁴³² you are slow to learn,” the NI⁴⁴V rendering for the (lit⁴⁵.) “you have become dull in hearing.” The perfect tense “you have become” indicates the readers were previously in better spiritual condition, but now are in a state of dullness. There is no indication that the readers must remain in such a state. This word, *nōthroi*, translated “slow,” occurs only here and in Heb 6:12 in the New Testament, and connotes lethargy and mental dullness.²¹⁴⁶³ The Greek *akoais*, (lit⁴⁷.) “hearing,” is a dative of respect rendered “to learn,”²¹⁴⁸⁴ and probably contrasts the readers’ state with what has just been said about Jesus in Heb 5:7–10, where both concepts of “hearing” and “obedience” occur. The readers have not “been making the sort of theological effort that the Christological reflection of his [the author’s] work represents.”²¹⁴⁹⁵ The teaching that the author will give in Heb 7:1–10:18 is not difficult in and of itself, but the author finds it hard to present in such a way that the readers will understand because of their dullness.

5:12 Verse 12 provides an explanation (*gar*) as to why the author considers the readers to be “slow to learn.” Semantically it introduces a contrast between what the readers are and what they should be. Because they have been Christians long enough, they should by now be able to teach others. But in fact, they need to be taught. The participle *opheilontes*, translated “though ... you ought,” is concessive,²¹⁵⁰⁶ and the word conveys the notion of duty.²¹⁵¹⁷ It was commonly believed that mature people should be able to teach the less mature. “Teachers” as used here probably does not denote the office of teaching, as the word is sometimes used in the New

⁴³²¹² P. Andriessen and A. Lenglet propose that ἐπεί should be translated “otherwise” (“Quelques passages difficiles de L’Épître aux Hébreux [H5, 7.11; 10, 20; 12, 2],” *Bib* 51 [1970]: 207–20.) This, however, is sufficiently answered by Peterson, “The Situation of the ‘Hebrews’ (5:11–6:12),” *RTR* 35 (1976): 14–21. A good summary of the issue is found in Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 130–31.

⁴⁴NIV New International Version

⁴⁵lit. literal(ly)

⁴⁶²¹³ H. Preisker, “*νωθρός*,” *TDNT* 4:1126; *TLNT* 2:552–54. The usage in Heb 6:12 does not refer to the readers “becoming more lazy than you are” but rather means “don’t go on being lazy.”

⁴⁷lit. literal(ly)

⁴⁸²¹⁴ Dods, “Hebrews,” 291, suggested the word connotes “intelligent hearing.”

⁴⁹²¹⁵ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 158. Moffatt translates, “The fault lies with you, not with the subject” (*Hebrews*, 69). Bruce, *Hebrews*, 134, takes the meaning to be something along the lines of “it is not easy for me to put it in a way that you will understand,” because their minds are sluggish.

⁵⁰²¹⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 133, takes it as temporal, “When you ought.”

⁵¹²¹⁷ See BDAG 743.

Testament. The meaning here is that mature believers have the capacity to teach, even if they are not filling the office of teacher.²¹⁵²⁸ The participle modifies the subject of the verb *echete*, “you have.” The object of this verb is the noun “need.” The “need” is further defined by the present infinitive “to teach,” semantically implying a process.²¹⁵³⁹ The subject of the infinitive “to teach” is the indefinite pronoun translated “someone.” The object of the infinitive is “you.” This reads (lit⁵⁴.) “need you have [for] someone to teach you again.” The indefinite pronoun “someone” functions as the subject of the infinitive “to teach.”²²⁵⁵⁰

The instruction they need is said to be “the elementary truths of God’s word.” This noun, *stoicheion*, connotes “elementary concept,” “basic or fundamental principle,” and can be used of the letters of the alphabet.²²⁵⁶¹ It is followed by the descriptive genitive translated “elementary.”²²⁵⁷² This is followed by the compound genitive phrase (lit⁵⁸.) “of the oracles of God,” translated “of God’s word.” This phrase is commonly used to refer to the Old Testament as divine revelation, but context makes it likely the author employs it here to include the content

⁵²²¹⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 135. See 1 Thess 1:8 for a similar semantic and syntactic construction. The noun “teachers” could be verbalized to make clear the point, as does Moffatt in his translation: “by this time you should be teaching other people” (*Hebrews*, 69).

⁵³²¹⁹ Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 303. Greenlee, *Exegetical Summary*, 178: “The infinitive tells what the need is ... a need to teach you.”

⁵⁴lit. literal(ly)

⁵⁵²²⁰ Some manuscripts have τινὰ; “someone,” while others read τὴν, “which,” or τινὰ with no accent, which can have either meaning. UBS⁴ reads τινὰ; with a “C” decision. This reading fits the context best. If it is read as “which,” it functions as the subject of the clause it introduces: “teach you what the rudiments are” (Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary*, 179). The pronoun has occasionally been taken as interrogative. Alford, “Hebrews,” 101, and Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 516, suggested that the use of the indefinite pronoun implies reproachfully the notion that “anyone” could teach them.

⁵⁶²²¹ BDAG 946. Cf. L&N 58.19; G. Delling, “στοιχεῖον,” *TDNT* 7.670–87.

⁵⁷²²² One could take the genitive “elementary” as modifying “truths,” as does Bruce, *Hebrews*, 133, in his translation “the preliminary ABC.” It would seem highly unlikely that τῆς ἀρχῆς could refer to the time when the oracles began to be taught, as Dods, “Hebrews,” 291. The author’s semantic repetition in the use of στοιχεῖα and ἀρχῆς serves to emphasize the point.

⁵⁸lit. literal(ly)

of the Christian message in Heb 6:1, without confining the meaning strictly to such.²²⁵⁹³ The final genitive *tou theou*, “from God,” likely indicates the source of the “oracles” or “words.”

The final phrase of v. 12 is introduced by *kai* in the Greek text, but is rendered as a new sentence: “You need milk, not solid food.”²²⁶⁰⁴ “Milk” refers to basic instruction in the faith, and is further defined in Heb 6:1–2. “Solid food” refers to the more advanced truths, particularly the high priesthood of Christ and all that it entails. A parallel is often drawn with 1 Cor 3:1–4, but it is doubtful if any literary or historical relationship exists, as these were common metaphors in the Hellenistic period as well as in the apostolic era (1 Pet 2:2).

5:13 A new subordinate sentence (*gar*) begins here that functions as the reason for the latter part of v. 12 (note the repetition of “milk”).²²⁶¹⁵ Anyone who can understand only the basic elements of Christian doctrine “lives on milk” and is inexperienced or unacquainted with the “teaching about righteousness.” The word translated “not acquainted” connotes lack of skill or experience.²²⁶²⁶ That which the readers lack skill in is the “teaching about righteousness,” which probably refers to the ethical dimensions of Scripture, taking “righteousness” here not in the forensic sense of “justification” but in the ethical sense of matters of right and wrong.²²⁶³⁷

⁵⁹²²³ So Attridge, *Hebrews*, 159; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 304; and Hughes, *Hebrews*, 190; against Westcott, *Hebrews*, 133, who restricts the meaning to the OT as Scripture. Koester, *Hebrews*, 301, remarked: “The basic elements of God’s oracles (Heb 5:12) and the basic word of Christ (6:1) are not identical, but neither can be taken without the other.”

⁶⁰²²⁴ The Greek uses a complicated periphrastic construction: the perfect of γίνομαι, “you have become,” is followed by the present participle ἔχοντες, “having,” with its object, “need.” “The author of Hebrews uses the Perfect γεγόνατε to describe the state of his readers, in which they are seen as in progress requiring milk, not solid food, since they have been lazy” (Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 491). He further explains, “γίνομαι appears to be the aspectually marked lexical equivalent of the lexically vague εἰμί, and thus its vague meaning is suitable to any number of contexts, while still contributing an aspectual semantic component.” Porter translates the latter part of Heb 5:12: “and you are [become] in a state of having a need for milk, [and] not of solid meat.”

⁶¹²²⁵ So Lünemann, *Hebrews*, 517; Dods, “Hebrews,” 292; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 305. Alford, “Hebrews,” 102, views the γὰρ as introducing a reason for vv. 11–12. Verses 13–14 expand on the notions of “milk” and “solid food,” but in reverse order.

⁶²²²⁶ See BDAG 100; L&N 28.15.

⁶³²²⁷ So Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 306. The noun δικαιοσύνη has been understood in one of three ways: (1) physiologically or psychologically, with reference to an inability to speak or comprehend correctly; (2) in an ethical sense as in Num 14:23 LXX; and (3) in the sense of teachings foundational to Christianity or more specifically in context to teaching about Melchizedek. The entire genitive phrase λόγου δικαιοσύνης may be grammatically

The final clause introduced by *gar* functions as a reason for the immediately preceding statement and is translated “being still an infant.” Although a subordinate clause, it receives semantic emphasis by being placed at the end of v. 13. The word “infant” here refers to a child who has not been weaned.

5:14 Verse 14 is the second half of the sentence begun in v. 13 and introduces a contrast “but” (*de*) which, as noted above, semantically conveys greater weight than the preceding clause. The noun *teleios*, “mature,” is fronted in the Greek text for emphasis. The author draws a sharp contrast between an “infant” and one who is “mature.”²²⁶⁴⁸ It is difficult to capture the

construed in a number of ways: (1) adjectivally, in the sense of right teaching; (2) as a genitive of content, “the teaching whose content is righteousness”; (3) as an objective genitive, “teaching about righteousness.” The NIV takes it as an objective genitive. Surprisingly, Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 138, appeals to a second century “technical” use of the phrase by Polycarp: “Polycarp’s use of the motifs of endurance to the end and of imitation in a context referring to known martyrs as those who had obeyed ‘the word of righteousness’ is suggestive for the interpretation of Hebrews.... If this is the proper linguistic context for interpreting verse 13, it suggests that what was involved in the regression of the community was a failure in moral character rather than in keen theological insight.” The problem with Lane’s interpretation is that it is anachronistic in its appeal to the second century.

⁶⁴²²⁸ Koester, *Hebrews*, 303, pointed out the Philonic use of the word “for those who had completed the course of education and were qualified to be teachers.” Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 308, stated this is the only place in Hebrews where the word applies to people. Τελείων is a rare predicate genitive of possession.

feel of the Greek word order and syntax in an English translation.²²⁶⁵⁹ The NI⁶⁶V is particularly weak in its translation of the latter half of v. 14. It does not make explicit the noun *aisthētērion*, meaning “sense,” “faculty,” or “capacity to understand.” The word is difficult to define, but it would seem to include intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity, perception, or sense.²³⁶⁷⁰ This capacity is said to be “trained,” where the Greek participle can be either middle or passive voice. The NI⁶⁸V takes it as a middle voice and translates “trained themselves.” This training is accomplished by “constant use” *hexis*, where the word in Greek primarily means a state resulting from training, not the process of training.²³⁶⁹¹ Ellingworth suggested that the noun indicates a state, not a process, and when used with the participle “have trained themselves”

⁶⁵²²⁹ The latter part of the verse reads in Greek: τῶν διὰ τὴν ἕξιν τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα ἔχόντων πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ. The genitive article τῶν governs the participle ἔχόντων. This participle is in apposition with τελείων at the beginning of the verse. There is quite a bit of intervening material between the article and noun ἔχόντων: (1) There is an adjectival participle γεγυμνασμένα in the predicate position. This participle is in agreement with (2) αἰσθητήρια, which functions as the direct object of ἔχόντων. This is preceded by (3) διὰ with its accusative object ἕξιν, which can indicate means (NIV) or reason (KJV; NASB). The final prepositional phrase following the participle ἔχόντων is introduced with πρὸς with its accusative object διάκρισιν, which can be taken as purpose, result, or content. A lit. rendering would be something like “but solid food is for the mature, namely, those who have the senses trained by/because of constant use for the purpose/with the result of/to distinguish(ing) both good and evil.”

⁶⁶NIV New International Version

⁶⁷²³⁰ On this word, consult L&N 32.28; BDAG 29; and G. Delling, “αἰσθητήριον,” *TDNT* 1:188. Ellingworth and Nida, *Handbook*, 106, point out that αἰσθητήριον “involves physical or mental fitness, for example, in Sirach 30:14, where it means that a person is ‘in good condition.’ The rare word which RSV translates ‘faculties’ does not refer only to intellectual powers; in the Septuagint of Jeremiah 4:19 it includes emotional awareness.”

⁶⁸NIV New International Version

⁶⁹²³¹ So J. A. L. Lee, “Hebrews 5:14 and ‘*hexis*’: a History of Misunderstanding,” *NovT* 39 (1997): 151–76. See Koester’s translation, *Hebrews*, 303, “who, because of this state.” The word is unique in the NT, but common in philosophical Greek. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 161, for examples.

points to “the process of exercising which results in a particular [*hexis*].”²³⁷⁰² The prepositional phrase “to distinguish” is the translation of *pros* with the noun meaning “ability to judge” or “ability to decide,”²³⁷¹³ and includes intellectual as well as moral discernment, thus good and bad doctrines as well as moral discrimination. It is rightly rendered verbally rather than nominally by virtually all translations. The use of “good and evil” probably alludes to Num 14:23 (LX⁷²X), given the significance of Numbers 14 for Hebrews 3–4, where the children are said not to know “good or evil” because of their lack of maturity.

Ellingworth and Nida paraphrase the meaning of vv. 13–14 as: “Anyone who lives on milk is a baby who does not know by experience what is right. But mature people, on the other hand, can take solid food, because they have learned by practice and training to be sensitive to the difference between good and evil.”²³⁷³⁴

In summary, Heb 5:11–14 gives three indicators for the immaturity of the readers. First, their inability to teach others; second, they need “milk” and not solid food; third, they are spiritually untrained in distinguishing good from evil. The crucial thing to note here is that this paragraph is dealing with an issue of sanctification, not salvation. This contextual clue is crucial for a correct interpretation of Heb 6:1–8.⁷⁴

⁷⁰²³² Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 309. “The perfect indicates a continuous process, and, together with ἐχόντων, suggests that γεγυμνασμένα is to be understood with verbal force (Bleek) rather than as a predicate adjective (Moffatt); but the difference in meaning is slight.”

⁷¹²³³ Whether πρὸς is taken as indicating purpose, result, or content (so virtually all translations, including the NIV), makes little difference in terms of overall meaning.

⁷²LXX Septuagint

⁷³²³⁴ Ellingworth and Nida, *Handbook*, 105.

⁷⁴ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 334–339.

11a περὶ οὗ πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος καὶ δυσερμήνευτος λέγειν, “We have much to say about this subject, and it is hard to explain intelligibly.” To prepare the community for the development of the subject announced in vv 9–10, the writer formally declares his intention to treat it fully. In the expression περὶ οὗ it seems preferable to consider the relative pronoun οὗ as a neuter, having reference to the priesthood of Christ in its totality (i.e. “about this subject,” J⁷⁵_B; Spicq, 2:140), rather than as a masculine relative, which has for its antecedent “Melchizedek” in v 10 (i.e., “about him,” NE⁷⁶_B; Williamson, PhiloAbr, 278). **It is the whole subject under discussion, and not simply the priesthood like Melchizedek’s, that requires the skill of the writer and the attention of the community.**

The rhetorical training of the writer is reflected in the wealth of literary vocabulary, idioms, and thought in vv 11–14. The discussion appears to have been aimed at a highly literate audience. As an educated person, the writer was familiar with the oratorical procedures used by speakers and writers to indicate a transition to an important subject. The expression πολὺς ὁ λόγος is a common literary phrase for “there is much to say” (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.23.1; *First Letter to Ammaeus* 3; Lysias, *Against Pancleon* 11; Philo, *Who Is the Heir?* 133, 221). In these sources the idiom occurs in a context where a writer wishes to draw attention to the importance of the subject to be treated.

The adjective δυσερμήνευτος, “hard to explain,” occurs only here in the Greek Bible. **Among hellenistic writers it is used uniformly to describe a difficulty intrinsic to the material to be expounded and not extrinsic to it, i.e., a difficulty that derives from the complexity of the matter rather than the lack of skill in the writer or his audience.** This is the case whether it is a question of dreams, of the colors of the light, of bitter or sweet flavors, of the course of the stars, of the nature of the soul, of the creation of the world, or of the resurrection (cf. Artemidorus, *On Dreams* 3.66; Diodorus Siculus, *World History* 2.52; Galen [ed. C. G. Kühn] 9.454; *Catalogus codicum astrologorum Graecorum* [ed. F. Cumont] 1.114.22–24; Philo, *On Dreams* 1.188; Origen, *On John* 1:21 [SC 157, 193], *Against Celsus* 5.59 [SC 150, 85], 4.37 [SC 136, 276]). This usage is consistent with the use of adjectives composed with the prefix δυσ-, which are employed in the LX⁷⁷X and the NT solely when the matter is difficult in itself (cf. Wis 17:1; Luke 11:46; 2 Pet 3:16). In view in v 11a is the important and profound theme announced in vv 9–10 (Andriessen, NR⁷⁸T 96 [1974] 1058; *En lisant*, 16–17).

11b The reason it was necessary to alert the readers to the importance of the announced subject is that they have become νωθοὶ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς, “sluggish in understanding” or “hard of hearing,” cf. Preisker (*TDN*⁷⁹T 4:1126). The choice of terms is significant in the context of v 9,

⁷⁵_{JB} A. Jones (ed.), *Jerusalem Bible*

⁷⁶_{NEB} The New English Bible

⁷⁷_{LXX} The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

⁷⁸_{NRT} La nouvelle revue théologique

⁷⁹_{TDNT} G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

where Jesus was designated “the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν). Deafness or dullness in receptivity is a dangerous condition for those who have been called to radical obedience. The importance of responsible listening has been stressed repeatedly in the sermon (2:1, “we must pay the closest attention to what we have heard” [τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν]; cf. 3:7b–8a, 15; 4:1–2, 7b). The charge of having become spiritually lethargic in v 11 resumes the challenges expressed in the previous hortatory sections and makes them more explicitly personal and relevant to the community (so Peterson, RT⁸⁰R 35 [1976] 15–16). What is implied is a lack of responsiveness to the gospel and an unwillingness to probe the deeper implications of Christian commitment and to respond with faith and obedience (cf. 2:1–4; 4:1–2). If this apathetic attitude was not checked, it would lead to spiritual inertia and the erosion of faith and hope.

12 The key to the interpretation of vv 12–14 is the recognition of the presence of irony. The rebuke administered in v 12 may be related to a tendency to withdraw from contact with outsiders and to the loss of certainty which this presupposes. This proposal is supported by the contention that they ought to be διδάσκαλοι, “teachers,” which refers specifically to an ability to communicate the faith to others (cf. Spicq, 2:143). The correlative statement that “you need someone to teach you again the elementary truths of God’s revelation” is normally taken to be the writer’s considered judgment on the actual condition of the community. This understanding, however, is difficult to reconcile with his determination to respond to them as to mature Christians (cf. 6:1, 3). It is possible that the hearers themselves had expressed to the writer, or to someone else, a need for rudimentary instruction (cf. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood*, 333; Peterson, RT⁸¹R 35 [1976] 17). That would explain the slightly derogatory nuance in the expression τὰ στοιχεῖα, “mere rudiments” (where the notion of basic principles is strengthened by τῆς ἀρχῆς, rendered “elementary” above; cf. Delling, *TDN*⁸²T 7:687; NE⁸³B: “the ABC of God’s oracles”), as well as the touch of sarcasm in the formulation of v 12a. The writer’s response in v 12b, then, is ironical.

The source of the metaphors γάλακτος, “milk,” and στερεᾶς τροφῆς, “solid food,” was the assimilation of education to nurture in hellenistic popular philosophy. In the ethical tradition the distinction between those at an elementary stage of instruction and those who had attained an advanced stage was commonly expressed in the comparison of infants who require a diet of milk and adults who can enjoy solid food (for references to the Greek ethical tradition, see Thüsing, *TT*⁸⁴Z 76 [1967] 233–34; for a review of the relevant passages in Philo, Williamson, *PhiloAbr*, 280–85; cf. 1 Cor 3:1–3). The presence of this rhetorical convention in vv 12b–14 has

⁸⁰RTR Reformed Theological Review

⁸¹RTR Reformed Theological Review

⁸²*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁸³NEB The New English Bible

⁸⁴*TTZ Trierer theologische Zeitschrift*

been characterized as a “pedagogical device” with which the writer sought to convince the community that they need to make greater progress in their understanding of biblical theology or of the OT when interpreted in the light of the Christ-event. Williamson, for example, asserts that the writer “inherited an understanding of education in terms of food and the various *stages* of human development” (*Philo*, 285–86 [italics mine]; cf. 277–308), and H. P. Owen finds evidence in 5:11–6:3 for speaking of “stages of ascent” (*NT⁸⁵S* 3 [1956–57] 243–53). Although this manner of characterization is appropriate to Epictetus or Philo, it is inappropriate to Hebrews because there is no reference in the text to an intermediate stage between infancy and adulthood. In addressing the community the writer recognizes only an either/or. The idea of progressive stages, or of development and growth toward maturity, seems *not* to have been in his mind. This is not normal pedagogics, because it acknowledges no alternative except regression to infancy or adult acceptance of responsibility. With biting irony, the writer calls the community to acknowledge its maturity, which has both ethical and theological ramifications for responsible life in the world.

13–14 The interpretation of v 13 is contingent upon a proper understanding of the phrase ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης, “inexperienced (or, unacquainted) with the teaching about righteousness,” or “unskilled in the word of righteousness.” The expression λόγος δικαιοσύνης, however, is unusually difficult and has called forth a variety of proposals, listed below:

(1) The genitive case of δικαιοσύνης is one of definition. The expression signifies “right speech” and is to be interpreted in the light of the immediate context, which refers to a νήπιος, an “infant.” One who is an infant is incapable of speaking correctly (Riggenbach, 144–45; Michel, 236–37) or of understanding the meaning of normal speech (Schrenk, *TDN⁸⁶T* 2:198; &BD⁸⁷F; §165).

(2) The expression should be interpreted in a manner consonant with the concentration of ethical vocabulary in 5:11–14. The infant does not know “what is right” (*NE⁸⁸B*); he lacks “a moral standard” or “a principle of righteousness.” Consequently, he is unskilled in ethical reasoning (T. H. Robinson, 67; Spicq, 2:144; Owen, *NT⁸⁹S*; 3 [1956–57] 244). He requires “instruction regarding the will of God” (Delling, *TDN⁹⁰T* 8:77). A variation on this proposal acknowledges that the formulation was drawn from the ethical teachers, but what it refers to in Hebrews is

⁸⁵*NTS New Testament Studies*

⁸⁶*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁸⁷BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

⁸⁸*NEB* The New English Bible

⁸⁹*NTS New Testament Studies*

⁹⁰*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

“correct theology.” The person described in v 13 is unskilled in making the basic distinctions in exegesis and consequently was unprepared to engage in the discussion of the larger problems of christology or Christian thought (Williamson, *Philo*, 288–92, 299; Peterson, RT⁹¹R 35 [1976] 20).

(3) The formulation is synonymous with the figurative expression “strong food” in vv 12 and 14. It has specific reference to the instruction presented in 7:1–10:18 and is roughly equivalent to “the teaching of the Christian religion” (Gyllenberg, “Zur Exegese,” 77; Thüsing, TT⁹²Z 76 [1967] 239–40).

(4) The formulation connotes “the teaching about righteousness” that is foundational to Christian faith, namely “the insistence on Christ as our righteousness” (P. E. Hughes, 191).

All these proposals, we suggest, are not based on a firm linguistic foundation. They draw their primary support from the immediate or more distant context. It may be preferable, therefore, to take account of a technical use of the formulation in the early second century that clearly links the phrase with martyrdom. In calling for unceasing perseverance in Christian hope, Polycarp appeals to Christ Jesus and says, “he endured everything. Therefore, let us become imitators of his patient endurance and glorify him whenever we suffer for the sake of his name. I, therefore, exhort you *to obey the word of righteousness* [πειθαρχεῖν τῷ λογῷ τῆς δικαιοσύνης] and practice patient endurance to the limit—an endurance of which you have had an object lesson not only in those blessed persons Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in members of your own community as well as in Paul himself and the other apostles” (*Phil.* 8.1–9.1). J. A. Kleist comments on the expression τῷ λογῷ τῆς δικαιοσύνης: “Polycarp now shows that the great and paramount *lesson in holiness* which a Christian has received is to hold himself in readiness for martyrdom” (ACW 1:193, n⁹³. 65 [italics mine]). Polycarp’s use of the motifs of endurance to the end and of imitation in a context referring to known martyrs as those who had obeyed “the word of righteousness” is suggestive for the interpretation of Hebrews (cf. Heb 6:11–12; 10:36; 13:7). If this is the proper linguistic context for interpreting v 13, it suggests that what was involved in the regression of the community was a failure in moral character rather than in keen theological insight. The expression ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης acknowledges a basic moral weakness aggravated by the fear of violent death (cf. 2:14–15). If the community had begun to avoid contact with outsiders because they were unprepared for martyrdom, a social setting is established for the rebuke of v 12, for the reference to the sharpening of one’s faculties in the arena of moral decision in v 14, and for the prospect of crucifying the Son of God again and exposing him to public shame in 6:6.

In contrast to the child (v 13), the τέλειοι, “adults,” are those who are prepared for στερεὰ τροφή, “solid food” (v 14). In this context, “solid food” must have reference to the actual instruction about the high priestly office of Christ provided in 7:1–10:18, which makes explicit

⁹¹RTR Reformed Theological Review

⁹²TTZ *Trierer theologische Zeitschrift*

⁹³n. note

what was implied in the foundational truths entrusted to the community (so Thüsing, *TT*⁹⁴ 76 [1967] 239–41, 275; see Comment on 6:1–2). The emphasis in v 14, however, falls on the further qualification of adults as those who have their spiritual faculties trained by experience to distinguish good from evil. The Stoics had used αἰσθητήριον as a technical term for an organ of sense; by metaphorical extension it acquired an ethical sense (e.g., Jer 4:19 LX⁹⁵X). The plural form speaks of a plurality of capacities for moral decision, which, through continual use (ἐξίς), have developed into specific qualities (cf. Delling, *TDN*⁹⁶ 1:188; Williamson, *Philo*, 114–16). The formulation of v 14b seems to imply a capacity for spiritual discrimination and not simply moral discernment (Michel, 237). The period of time contemplated in v 12 (διὰ τὸν χρόνον, “by this time”) has provided the community with the opportunity to achieve a condition of moral and spiritual maturity that makes them capable of sound discrimination. The play on words καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, “good and evil,” evokes one strand of Jewish hope preserved in a Targumic comment on Gen 3:22: “Many people are to arise from the man, and from him will arise one people who will be capable of distinguishing between good and evil” (*Tg. Neof*⁹⁷. and *Tg. Ps.-J*⁹⁸. Gen 3:22).

In the contrast posed in vv 13–14 it is significant that the writer alternates between the singular (νήπιος, “an infant”) and the plural (τελείων, “adults”). It is v 14, with its description of a plurality of persons, that describes the community prior to its recent withdrawal and regression. In vv 11–14 the writer uses irony effectively to summon the house church to resume their status as adults with its attendant responsibilities.⁹⁹

⁹⁴*TTZ Trierer theologische Zeitschrift*

⁹⁵LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

⁹⁶*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

⁹⁷*Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti I*

⁹⁸*Tg. Ps.-J. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*

⁹⁹ William L. Lane, [Hebrews 1–8](#), vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 135–139.