This book attempts to situate the Epistle to the Hebrews within an ongoing debate between Jewish priests and emergent Christians in Rome. It demonstrates that Hebrews and Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice share several features. These commonalities do not establish literary dependence but instead indicate that their authors and users participated in a broad conversation about access to the holy, how it is attained, and who mediates it that took place throughout the Second Temple period. Songs and Hebrews appropriate a priestly framework of ideas in which the sanctity of the sanctuary and Sabbath are correlated. This framework emerged in the Holiness School’s contributions to the Pentateuch, Ezekiel, and Trito-Isaiah. Hebrews and Songs are the first two texts to recombine the Sabbath and sanctuary. Hebrews, however, reworked and inverted key elements of this framework in response to priestly claims about mediation and access to God. Hebrews’ counterclaim is that only Jesus’s sacrifice allows one to enter Sabbath rest, enter the heavenly sanctuary, and draw near to God. This reconfigured framework is said to resemble accounts and attitudes toward the earthly cult found in Christian texts written after the Jewish War. Hebrews is therefore dated to the decades after the
destruction of the temple, when Jews and Christians were coming to terms with the temple’s loss (75–115 CE).

Chapter 1 reviews literature focused on the themes of Sabbath, sanctuary, Platonism, and apocalypticism in Hebrews. It also discusses the letter’s date and destination. Calaway asserts that ‘Jerusalem has been proposed on the shaky evidence of the superscription ‘To the Hebrews’ and the assumption that the audience was Jewish-Christian’ (11). This caricature suggests insufficient familiarity with the history of scholarship and recent arguments for a Jerusalem destination. The case for Alexandria is similarly dismissed in a single sentence (11). Two paragraphs briefly present a case for Rome (12–13), but not in its strongest form. Calaway apparently did not consult the detailed arguments for this view by Adolf von Harnack, F.F. Bruce (in ANRW), and William Lane. This is surprising, given the importance of a Roman location for his proposal.

Calaway suggests that it is unhelpful to focus simply on whether Hebrews was written before or after the temple’s destruction (70 CE). A better question is “whether Hebrews makes more sense situated in the turmoil leading up to, during, and just after the Jewish War (c. 60–75) or situated in the decades of coming to terms with the aftermath (c. 75–115)” (16). This is a useful suggestion. In the final chapter Calaway sketches three scenarios, one early and two late, in which Hebrews is situated according to these time frames (189–202). However, like his treatment of destination, the discussion is unbalanced and insufficiently informed by relevant scholarship. Calaway makes it out as if the only evidence scholars cite for a pre-70 date is the letter’s use of present-tense verbs in reference to the sacrificial system (14). Interaction with scholars who situate Hebrews in the turmoil around the time of the Jewish War would have enriched the discussion considerably. Peter W. L. Walker’s important essay (‘Jerusalem in Hebrews 13:9–14 and the Dating of the Epistle,” TynBul 45 [1994]: 39–71) on the date of Hebrews especially comes to mind, since it addresses some of the same themes Calaway treats elsewhere in this book.

Chapter 2 identifies ways in which the sanctity of the Sabbath and sanctuary are interrelated in the Pentateuch, Ezekiel, and Trito-Isaiah. In the priestly framework of ideas that emerges from these texts, the sanctuary expresses God’s holiness in space, while the Sabbath expresses it in time. The Holiness School and Ezekiel held that, not only was the sanctuary holy and susceptible to profanation, but so were the Sabbath and land. Profaning the sanctuary and Sabbath incurred being cut off (כרת), while failure to give the land its septennial Sabbath led to exile. From this Calaway infers that the sanctuary and Sabbath became “qualitatively equivalent” (34, 46) and therefore equal in holiness. By the Persian period “God’s holiness could be experienced by anyone within the covenant, anywhere, every Sabbath” (35). The reason is that the Sabbath provided “temporal access
to the sacred space of the sanctuary” (58). It could do this because “the Sabbath acquired the sanctity of the sanctuary; through the Sabbath, one can experience the sanctity of the sanctuary in a temple-less context” (51).

There is much of value in this chapter, and it is probably the strongest in the book. Nevertheless, Calaway overplays his hand. If the sanctity of the sanctuary and Sabbath were fully equivalent and symmetrical as he contends, then we would expect purity regulations governing access to sacred space to have been extended to govern Sabbath observance as well. However, none of the texts Calaway relies upon suggests that a state of ritual purity was requisite for proper Sabbath observance. Subsequent Jewish groups did not draw that inference either. While Calaway demonstrates that the Sabbath was invested with greater sanctity over time and the penalty for profaning it became more severe, his argument falls short of establishing full equality and symmetry with the sanctuary.

Chapter 3 argues that land is closely related to Sabbath and sanctuary in Hebrews, just as it is in the priestly framework. However, here it is deterritorialized and temporalized as Sabbath rest (3:7–4:11) and then reterritorialized as heavenly homeland (11:13–16, 39–40). This is an important observation overlooked by Hebrews specialists. Calaway does a fine job describing the “exegetical virtuosity” (96) Hebrews employed to reconfigure the land promise. Since at least Käsemann scholars have also observed that these same passages highlight Israel’s wilderness wandering, the patriarchs’ sojourn in Canaan, and exemplars of faith “going out” from their homelands, lands of servitude, and cities (see 11:22, 27, 31, 38). Calaway hints at this co-theme in passing without exploring it, nor does he discuss the role Hebrews’ treatment of the land plays in the letter’s overall rhetorical strategy. In the final chapter Calaway speculates that Hebrews may be offering an alternative vision to works that look forward to a restored or recreated earth (e.g., 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, 2 Peter, Revelation), the implicit point being that “no earthly land will do, even a restored or completely recreated one; only the heavenly homeland counts” (195). One suspects something more pressing motivated Hebrews to make such a radical move.

Chapter 4 discusses the heavenly tabernacle and entry into the heavenly sanctuary, while chapter 5 contends that Jesus both provides access to these realities and makes his followers priests themselves. These chapters contain the main discussion of similarities between Hebrews and Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. The chief similarities are: (1) Songs and Hebrews are the first two texts after the Hebrew Bible to bring the sanctuary and Sabbath back together, (2) they are the first two works to associate both sanctuary and Sabbath with the heavenly realm, (3) both portray a heavenly tabernacle rather than temple, (4) both interpret the “pattern” (תבנית) Moses saw (Exod 25:9, 40) as an enduring
heavenly tabernacle, (5) both describe a heavenly bloody sacrifice, and (7) both likely place a priestly Melchizedek figure within the heavenly tabernacle.

Some of these similarities may not be as close as Calaway suggests. Two examples. First, it is not certain that the relevant passages in Songs refers to God’s tabernacle or that they even refer to a single tabernacle. Song 7 (4Q403 1ii:10) mentions either “the exalted chief tabernacle” or “the tabernacle of the exalted chief” (משכן ראש בראש). On the basis of similarities with the hekhalot literature, where multiple tabernacles are found in heaven, James R. Davila (Liturgical Works, ECDSS [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 129) argues that the latter interpretation is more probable and sees it as a reference to the tabernacle of an exalted chief angel, presumably Melchizedek. This possibility is mentioned in passing (137, 152) without appreciation for the fact that it renders the parallel with Hebrews less “striking” than made out to be. Song 12 mentions “the glory in the tabernacle of…” which many scholars restore as “the tabernacle of the God of knowledge.” Other possible restorations include “the tabernacle of all gods of knowledge” and “the tabernacle of those who draw near to knowledge” (Davila, Liturgical Works, 148). Regardless of which reconstruction one prefers, Davila makes a good case for the probability that the author of Songs envisioned multiple heavenly tabernacles, whereas Hebrews depicts only one. In addition, for reasons that are unclear, Calaway reads Heb 9:24 to indicate that the “heavenly tent is not in heaven but is heaven, as is the city in Heb 11:10, 13–16” (105, emphasis added; see also 106). I am unconvinced, but if granted, this constitutes another significant dissimilarity.

Second, while Calaway correctly observes that bloody sacrifice in heaven is rare in Jewish literature, there are crucial differences between Songs and Hebrews on this point. Song 13 (11Q17 ix:4–5) mentions “sacrifice” associated with angelic offerings. The framework of the text leads one to presume this would be a Sabbath holocaust, but mention of “libations” and “soothing odor” may point to a peace offering (see Davila, Liturgical Works, 158). Hebrews is concerned with an eschatological Day of Atonement sacrifice. In Songs, sacral slaughter apparently takes place in heaven; in Hebrews, the victim is slaughtered on earth (13:12). What does take place in heaven, according to Hebrews, is the sprinkling of blood (9:12–14, 23; 10:19). This simultaneously corresponds to the high priest sprinkling blood inside the holy of holies (Lev 16:14–16) and covenant inauguration (Exod 24:3–8). Finally, we should not forget that in Hebrews the high priest is also the sacrificial victim, something quite unprecedented in other Jewish texts. So, Songs and Hebrews depict different sacrifices and different kinds of sacrificial victims and locate slaughter in different locations. Calaway’s discussion of important differences between theses texts does not mention any of these significant dissimilarities (182–83).
Chapter 6 summarizes conclusions reached in earlier chapters and sketches three scenarios that might account for Hebrews’ distinctive appropriation and transformation of priestly ideas about Sabbath, sanctuary, and access to the divine. Calaway’s preferred scenario postulates ongoing debate between Jewish priests transplanted to Rome as slaves and emergent Christians during the decades after the temple’s destruction. Hebrews is dated late because the manner in which it reworks priestly frameworks “resembles postwar accounts,” especially the tearing of the curtain in Matthew and statements in John that “imply or explicitly state that Jesus is now the means of access to the divine” (202).

Numerous stories in the gospels recounting conflict between the priestly hierarchy and Jesus and similar stories in Acts with the apostles are cited as evidence for ongoing debate between priests and emergent Christians. However, no attempt is made to show that these conflicts centered on competing claims about the mediation of divine access. Calaway also claims, “It is difficult to find a positive reference to a priest in the Gospels or Acts. The exception is Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father” (200). Key evidence has been overlooked. According to Acts 4:36, Barnabas, a prominent early Christian leader, was a Levite. More significant, according to Acts 6:7 “a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” Any continuing conflict during this period was not so sharp that it would have been absurd to imagine Levites and priests who also identified as Christ-followers (and a sizable number of them at that). These passages also evidence a distinction between common priests and members of the priestly elite. Conflict stories exclusively involve the latter. Calaway’s postulates conflict with priests taken to Rome as slaves, but it is unlikely that priests from prominent families would have suffered this fate. Standard Roman practice would have led to their execution in a triumph or rehabilitation as either local officials or clientes. In any case, Calaway presents no concrete evidence for disputes in Rome involving Jewish priests of any kind.

This revision of a 2010 Columbia University doctoral dissertation supervised by the late Alan Segal is one of a spate of recent studies of Hebrews to make serious use of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a refreshing and long overdue development. Calaway makes commendably good use of recent German scholarship on Hebrews throughout. However, references to several important commentaries (e.g., Bruce, Lane, Michel, O’Brien) are conspicuously absent, while significant studies bearing directly on key themes are overlooked. Most notable are Jon Laansma’s monograph on the rest motif, several pieces by Daniel Gurtner on tabernacle/temple veil traditions, David Moffitt’s monograph on heavenly atonement in Hebrews, and Eric Mason’s monograph on Jewish messianism and priestly Christology (which also discusses Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice). The literature is too large for anyone to be exhaustive, but in this case one wonders why some of these oversights were not pointed out by dissertation examiners or manuscript referees.
Shortcomings aside, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary* presents a new and potentially fruitful approach to the question of Hebrews’ date and identifies important similarities between Hebrews and Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice that merit further investigation. For this, students of Hebrews should be grateful.