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**A UNIQUE ROLE OF JESUS' HUMANITY
IN PARAENESIS
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

A treatise submitted to the
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Upon recommendation of

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ABBREVIATIONS:

// - "parallel to"

aor. – aorist

BKR – Bible kralická (1613)

CEP – Cesky ekumenicky preklad (1985)

EDNT - BALZ, H and SCHNEIDER, G. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*.
Vol. I-III, (Edinburgh : T&T Clark LTD, 1990 [1978-80])

ELB – Rediverte Elberfelder (1993)

fut. – futurum

gen. – genitive

GNV – Geneva Bible (1599)

imp. – imperative

KJV – King James Version (1611/1769) with Codes

KMS – Preklad Krestanske Misijni Spolecnosti (1994)

LUT – Rediverte Lutherbibel (1984)

LXX – Septuaginta Ralph's

M&M - MOULTON, J.H. and MILLIGAN, G. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*.
(Michigan : W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980 [1930])

mss. - manuscripts

MT – Masoretic text

NIV – New International Version

NIB – New International Bible

NAS – New American Standard Bible

NAU – New American Standard Version with Codes (1995)

NIDNT - BROWN, C (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament
Theology*. Vol.I-III, (Exeten, Devon: Paternoster Press, 1971-1975)

NIV – New International Version (1984)

NRS – New Revised Standard Version (1989)

pl. – plural

pres. – presence

RSV – Revised Standard Version (1952)

sg. – singular

subj. – subjunctive

TDNT - KITTEL, G., BROMILEY, G. W. (eds.) *Theological Dictionary of the New
Testament*. Vol. I-VIII Transl. and ed. Bromiley, G.W., (Grand Rapids,
Michigan: W.B.Eerdmans Publishing Company 1964-1974 [1933])

VUL – Latin Vulgate

Introduction

It is a strange thrilling experience to get on your knees in a quiet and decently illuminated upper room of public Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, and to be allowed to read the oldest preserved manuscript of the epistle to the Hebrews on the world from a short distance. A manuscript, which is the part of the famous papyrus P⁴⁶ from about 200 AD consisting of all Pauline's epistles and Hebrews. It is quite a peculiar idea to realize that our theological knowledge fundamentally depends on this kind of shabby bits of papyrus. However, this fact paradoxically makes our belief even more secure. What a massive impact have had these ancient yellowed records of a poor appearance during the centuries! They became the living witnesses bearing the testimony of God's word. "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (1 Co 4:7; NRS)

The epistle to the Hebrews is a fascinating piece of writing that has been rising many questions for centuries. Its author, recipients, date of origin, destination and literary genre has been always disputed until these days. Yet, the exceptional formal rhetorical and structural side as well as the uniquely deep inner theological thrust cannot be denied. The epistle to the Hebrews bears signs of homily and the main purpose of its origin rests in the author's paraenetical concern. Strictly speaking, Hebrews is a powerful pastoral writing. I am going to support this thesis by evidences from the Greek text itself. Nevertheless, the author's attitude to paraenesis is essentially based on deep understanding of theology.

Christology of Hebrews oscillates between two poles, the title of the Son and the title of High priest. The epistle uniquely combines high and low Christology in a way that belongs to the most radical ones in the NT. Oscar Cullmann puts it truthfully:

"the author of Hebrews, as perhaps no other early Christian theologian, had the courage to speak of the man Jesus in shockingly human terms – although at the same time he emphasized perhaps more strongly than any other the deity of the Son".¹

In my work I am predominantly concentrated on the texts referring to Jesus' humanity. The main task of my dissertation is to assess the author's comprehension of Jesus' humanity and what impact it has on the paraenesis in Hebrews. The author seems to react to a tough situation

¹ CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 93.

of the readers who were possibly asking themselves, "how can this glorious, enthroned Jesus know what I am going through down here?"

In the paper I will deal with two passages of Hebrews primarily: Heb 2:5-18 (including the introduction to chapter 1) and Heb 4:14-5:10. Both the passages seem to fundamentally constitute the author's comprehension of Jesus' identification with humanity, his earthly struggle, suffering and piety, which qualifies him as our Saviour, Redeemer, 'Archegos' and High priest. The author's detailed description of human Jesus is almost shocking for a reader. We see crying, praying and suffering Jesus, without strength and divine help at hand. This view seems to be scandalous. Yet, the author never separates this Man from the divine Son of Hebrews 1. This is very clearly, almost surprisingly, evidenced on the very place of Jesus struggle for sinlessness in Heb 5:7-8. The paraenesis is fully based on the fact that Jesus lived a life of an ordinary man in obedience, dependent on God. His obedience and reliance on God equipped him to become the Man for us. The pastoral encouragement (and exhortation) is thus twofold: 1) It is a powerful thing to know that **Jesus can understand me** in my humanity for he was and *is* a complete man 2) **Jesus can effectively help me** for he withstood the trials and God appointed him a High priest. There is a great invitation to God's throne of mercy.

"In him the fact is once for all established that God doesn't exist without man."² Yet, Pokorný is right to say that the Christian faith is no prolonged following of earthly Jesus; that issued into a flight.³ The author of Hebrews does not lead us to an adoration of earthly Jesus. We are called to follow the Man Jesus *who was raised from the death* and highly exalted so that he would become our Leader to the eschatological Sabbath rest.

² BARTH, K. *The Humanity of God*, 50.

³ POKORNÝ, P. *Vznik christologie : předpoklady teologie Nového zákona*, 109.

I. THE AIM OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

1) Prolegomena to the letter

The epistle of Hebrews is a strange epistle. There are hardly any introductory data, about which would not be a dispute. The authorship is the greatest mystery of the letter, in other fields of research, as for instance the date, address, literary genre or structure, we still must speak in humble terms of “possibilities” and “probabilities”. Delitsch was one of the first ones who very fittingly compared this certain vagueness with the words of the author himself speaking of Melchizedek: “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Heb 7:3). Yet nobody who has ever dealt with Hebrews to a certain detail, would not hesitate to designate it as an exceptional piece of writing of early Christianity. My purpose in this chapter is to give a brief introduction to the problems and difficulties of the letter as a whole, which is necessary for our following work.

a) authorship and the canonical problem

The author’s name is not mentioned in the epistle and it gave a birth to many suggestions during the centuries of who is the writer. This issue caused a major problem as whether we may accept the epistle to the NT canon as an authoritative writing or not. Traditionally, the letter is ascribed to the apostle Paul for the epistle has been placed into the corpus of Pauline epistles in couple of manuscripts.⁴ Given all testimonies about the text of Hebrews “man muß sagen, daß der Text des Hebr sehr gut bezeugt ist und keine grossen textkritischen Probleme stellt.”⁵ However, the Paul’s authorship of the epistle has been disputed already among the early Church fathers. The Clemens of Rome quotes the epistle about 96 AD, Clemens of Alexandria (died after 211 AD) ascribes the letter to Paul, Origenes (died 254) to Luke or Clemens of Rome, Tertullian (died around 215) to Barnabas. Generally said, the Eastern church mostly accepted the suggestion of Pauline authorship, whereas the West remained undecided and doubted the authority of the letter as well. Yet, the text of Hebrews has been quoted in many sermons and letters. The whole uncertainty regarding the Hebrews’ authorship is well expressed by Origenes:

“But as for myself, if I were to state my own opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle’s but that style and composition belong to one who

⁴ it is placed after Romans from the early age (P⁴⁶ from about 200 AD). In other manuscripts after 1 and 2Cor, in some after Galatians or Ephesians, etc.

⁵ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 14.

called to mind the apostle's teaching and, as it were, made short notes of what his master said... but who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows."⁶

The authority of Hebrews was finally recognised in the west by Augustine, Synods of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397, 419) and the authorship therefore ascribed to Paul. However, during the time some doubts about the letter remained. Luther challenged the authority and the authorship of Hebrews in full strength in the 16th century again. According to him, it is a second-hand epistle of a disciple (perhaps Apollos) of the apostles. Luther "called it 'marvelously fine epistle', while insisting that 'we cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles'".⁷ It is significant to note that the Lutherans didn't number James, Hebrews, Jude and Revelation into the canon of the NT until 1689!⁸ Calvin stood against Pauline authorship as well. Nevertheless, he said "I class it without hesitation among the apostolic writings." The question is not the authorship but if it is inspired by Holy Spirit. The quality of the epistle, theology and "consistency with the whole scripture" refer to its authority.⁹

Altogether, there has been suggested more than 13 names for the writer of Hebrews,¹⁰ most of them are implausible and the rest can not be sufficiently evidenced. Modern scholars often accept the theory that the writer intended to keep his anonymity.¹¹ What we know with certainty about the author is, that he was no eyewitness of Jesus (2:3) and thus accepted the Gospel indirectly (cf. Gal 1:1). This seems to be a decisive argument against Paul's authorship.¹² However, some contact of the author with the Pauline writing (there are quite a few linking thoughts) and other Christian literature (e.g. 1Pe) is quite assumable. We should not isolate Hebrews from the other early Christian letters at all. The writer of Hebrews was a man (11:32), very well educated in Greek (the epistle contains 140 happax legomena!), stylistics and rhetoric.¹³ He uses the Greek version of the OT, refers to the stadium (12:1) or Hellenistic pattern of education (5:11-14). Therefore, there is an ongoing debate as whether the author of Hebrews could be directly influenced by the Hellenistic Jewish school of Philo.¹⁴

⁶ HE 6.25.11-13 quoted from ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 5.

⁷ quoted from KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 35.

⁸ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 36.

⁹ quoted from Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁰ thus reckons Ellingworth.

¹¹ e.g. GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 190 or McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews in Recent Scholarship*, 66-86.

¹² ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7. Ellingworth is convinced that the epistle has a completely different style, a different use of the terms, a very different number of words typical for Paul. The use of name "Jesus" often occurs in Hebrew independently without any title or other name, whereas in Paul we regularly read: "Christ Jesus". Moreover, the author never speaks about his authority as Paul does. (7-12)

¹³ McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews...* 66-86, refers to Thompson 1982.

“The consensus is growing that the author was acquainted with the ‘intellectual presuppositions’ which were part and parcel of the educated Hellenistic world, and as such shared by Philo, and which can be roughly categorised as Middle Platonic.”¹⁵

It is highly probable that if we want to understand the author of Hebrews properly, we must enter the realm of Palestinian Jewish writing rather than the philosophy of Hellenistic Gnosticism. Evidently, Hebrews is heavily influenced by the apocalyptic literature in Palestine in its emphasis on the final days, judgement, angels or temporal and coming age, etc. The OT itself is immensely important for the writer. “Kaum ein Buch des Neuen Testaments zeigt uns die Einheit von Altem und Neuem Testament so deutlich wie gerade der Hebräerbrief.”¹⁶ On the other hand, it is not right to regard the writer of the epistle as a preserver of the Jewish faith whose relationship to the Christianity is only secondary. The Christ event decisively casts light on his interpretation of the Scriptures.

“Christ, by whom God has now spoken his final word (1:1f.), was alive and active in creation (1:2) and throughout Israel’s history. Any part of the OT may thus in principle be understood as speaking about Christ, or as spoken to or by him.”¹⁷

Who was the author of Hebrews then? Ellingworth points it out clearly: 1. primarily he was a Christian (not a Jew or Hellenist) 2. Christian building on the Jewish-Palestine tradition 3. Christian influenced by the Hellenistic “school of Philo”.¹⁸

b) recipients

There are a couple of myths running around the question to whom is the epistle addressed. ‘Is it a tractate for the Jews or Christians?’ or ‘was the letter written as a polemic against the Jews?’ These questions are absolutely crucial to answer for they significantly doubt the universality of the epistle for the Christian reader today. It is repeatedly argued by many Christians in our churches that Hebrews is a very complicated book about Jewish faith, which is not crucially relevant for the Christians of this day. Who were the readers of the epistle? It is very improbable that *prou Hebraeos* (the later inscription of the letter) means against

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. the “distinction between the temporal and eternal worlds” occurring in Philo. However, Koester is sure that the similarities between the both can be explained by the same Jewish Hellenistic milieu (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 59).

¹⁵ McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews...*, 74.

¹⁶ LAUBACH, F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1967), 11.

¹⁷ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

Hebrews.¹⁹ For the central Christological focus of the book and speaking to the readers as the followers of Jesus Christ, we may be very sure that the epistle is addressed to the Christian church. The main question of scholars is, whether the readers were Jewish Christians or Christians of gentile origin. The answer is not so easy because the recipients are not explicitly described.

The first point of view would probably regard the recipients of the letter as Jewish Christians . There is author's expectation of good knowledge of the Moses law. As we have argued earlier, the whole epistle seems to be rooted in the Jewish-Palestine context. Heb 10:25, for instance, calls the local gathering of these Christians ἐπισυναγωγή , which is clearly corresponding with the Jewish synagogue. According to Hagner, occurrences like Heb 1:1, 2:16 seems to point to the physical Jewish forefathers of the readers. Moreover, just Jewish Christian would have been tempted to return to Judaism. Therefore, he regards the readers with "high probability" as originally Jewish.²⁰ However, both the last arguments for Jewish Christian readership may be also satisfactorily interpreted in a different way, as Hagner himself admits. It is not impossible to understand (similarly as Paul the apostle does) the forefathers in 1:1, 2:16 as fathers of faith, not of flesh. Secondly, even non-Jewish Christians could be attracted to join the *religio licita* instead of insecure life of a Christian sect in the Roman Empire. In addition, Koester correctly notes that some essential markers of Judaism (Sabbath, circumcision or dietary prescripts) are not in the central focus of the author at all.²¹ Ellingworth highlights that the author also works with a couple of purely Hellenistic illustrations, as for example the stadium (12:1).²²

Most scholars remain therefore undecided in this question of recipients and often stand for the middle solution. It is notable that the author never uses a designation "Jews", "Israelites", "Hebrews" as well as "pagans" or "Greek" in the letter. It is surprising perhaps, especially in contrast to that negative part of the exegetical history of Hebrews, however we must conclude "im Hebr wird der Gegensatz Juden/Heiden überhaupt nicht behandelt".²³

Hagner thus finally says,

"nothing in the book *necessitates* that the original readers be Jewish, despite strong probability in favour of such a view, so *nothing* in the book

¹⁹ Ibid., 25. See also GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 24.

²⁰ HAGNER, D. A. *Hebrews*, 2.

²¹ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 70-89.

²² ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 25.

²³ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 24.

excludes the possibility of Gentile readership... By virtue of its contents the book possesses a universal applicability.”²⁴

Ellingworth argues for the mixed readership quite emphatically:

“The argument for mixed Jewish and gentile readership is strengthened by the systematic exclusion, from the author’s OT quotations and verbal allusions, of negative references to Israel, and also references to gentiles, present in the OT context.“ According to Ellingworth, it is “very likely” that “the first readers were a predominantly but not exclusively Jewish-Christian group, well known to the writer, but not including all members of a local Christian community, or its leaders.”²⁵

A good understanding of the situation of this particular Christian fellowship helps us to better figure out the author’s strong motivation to write this piece of writing. Koester recognises from the letter three phases of history of the community.²⁶ In the *first phase*, Gospel was proclaimed to them by some Christian evangelists. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that he as well as his readers heard Gospel from the second hand. These Christians experienced mighty deeds and wonders, power of Holy Spirit, baptism and conversion (2:3-4; 6:1-4). The *second phase* is marked by persecution and mutual solidarity (10:32-34). Koester suggests, that probably it was not an intensive attack or oppression but some lost their properties, some were imprisoned or physically attacked and the church thus also suffered psychically by losing their freedom, honour and security. They probably also experienced a pressure to leave Christian faith. The writer of Hebrews is sending the letter to the congregation going through the *third phase*, in which some Christians want to give up their calling as well as supporting others and feel tiredness from the lasting problems and suffering (3:12, 5:11nn). The state that is so typical for the second generation church.

c) **date and destination**

The epistle was definitely written before 96 AD when Clemens of Rome already quoted some parts of Hebrews in his first letter.²⁷ We should be possibly satisfied with this *terminus ad quem*, for any effort to point to a more precise date cannot be really proved. Some argue for the early date (before the fall of Jerusalem 70 AD) and support it by the understanding that the author would not describe a temple cultic activity in his letter without mentioning such an important

²⁴ HAGNER, D. A. *Hebrews*, 4. (Italics is mine)

²⁵ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 25 and 27. Similarly GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 79.

²⁶ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 63nn.

²⁷ However the date of the first letter of Clemens need not to be absolutely accurate.

historical event.²⁸ However many scholars consider it as a dubious suggestion.²⁹ McCullough argues 1) the cult in Jerusalem did not need to stop in 70 AD, it might continue to 135 (Bar Kochba), 2) there are evidences from other Jewish-Christian literature after the fall of Jerusalem describing cult in a present tense, 3) in Hebrews could be even reflected expectations of rebuilding the cult.³⁰ The argument of the Temple is also rather irrelevant because the author of Hebrews refers most probably to the tabernacle in the wilderness than in Jerusalem, as Matera points out.³¹ Heb 2:3 makes clear that the readers were already the second or third generation of Christians, but nor this fact solves our problem of dating the epistle.³² Most commentators thus still argue for the later dating of the epistle. Although there is a significant suggestion³³ recently gradually growing in support that the letter could be surprisingly quite old. Low Christology was perhaps not so easily accepted in the first Church as it has been always claimed! Defining the high Christology, on the contrary, could be a very early dogmatic step of the first Jewish Christians. According to Casey, “it took some 50 or 60 years to turn a Jewish prophet into a Gentile God.”³⁴ Hengel speaks about “stormy development of Christology after Easter. ... within a period of less than twenty years, that is, within one generation.”³⁵ It is possible then that the letter could come to life very early as well as quite late. The widely accepted span of years among scholars is 60AD - 95AD.

In the end of the letter (Heb 13:24) the author adds greetings from οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας. Two main questions arise from that – was the letter addressed “from Italy” or “to Italy”? Palestine (Jerusalem), Italy (Rome), or Alexandria are the most frequent suggestions of “where from” and “where to” the letter was sent. *hoi apo tes Italias* shall be translated as 1) “from the Italians” 2) “those who come from Italy”. According to Ellingworth, the second choice is most probable.³⁶ The notion of some brothers “from Italy” leads most of commentators to assume Italy as the

²⁸ Recently e.g. HAGNER, D. A. *Hebrews*, 5-10 or MARSHALL, I. H. *New Testament Theology. Many Witnesses, One Gospel*, 605, etc.

²⁹ This view has been again recently challenged by e.g. GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 24, McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews in Recent Scholarship*, 119, MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 185 or ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 30, etc.

³⁰ “The author’s point is that Christ’s sacrifice has destroyed for ever the efficacy of the Temple sacrifices. The destruction of the Temple cannot, therefore, be used with any certainty to date the Epistle.” McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews...*, 119.

³¹ MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 185.

³² We have no idea when the first generation heard the gospel. It could happen quite soon after Jesus’ resurrection but also dozens of years after that.

³³ while not necessarily insisting on the argument of the Jerusalem Fall.

³⁴ CASEY, M. *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God. The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology*, 97.

³⁵ HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 112-113. He interestingly argues that Jesus’ resurrection was probably interpreted “very quickly” through Ps 110:1 (exaltation to the God’s right hand), 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7. Cf. also Maran atha! and Rabbuni.

³⁶ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 29. He also presumes that we should seek the address “somewhere in Italy” (Ibid.).

destination of the letter.³⁷ Hagner, with many other scholars, suggests Rome to be the destination of the letter rather than Palestine, where we can hardly expect Christians having a significant property (cf. 10:34).³⁸ Another supportive argument for the Italy-Rome destination theory speaks the fact, that the letter to the Hebrews was known by Roman Christians very soon (Clemens, Shepherd of Hermas, etc.). It could be also more easily accepted to the Canon of the “NT” in Rome than anywhere else.³⁹ Finally we need to admit though, that we will probably never be certain about the destination of the letter. For its certain closeness to the Philo’s Alexandrian writing it has been sometimes suggested that the author wrote the letter in Alexandria (sending to Italy). Nevertheless, “where from“ the epistle was sent, is perhaps even more difficult to specify than the destination.

d) literary genre

The last issue I want to briefly discuss here is the question of genre, for even this is very disputable. It has been always stated that the rhetorical and language quality of Hebrews is going undoubtedly far beyond the NT corpus. According to Grässer, the fact that “the auctor ad Hebraeos is the best stylist among all other NT writers” first stated Clemens Alexandrinus.⁴⁰ Luther, even though he did not regard the letter as having the apostolic authority, called it a “marvelously fine epistle”.⁴¹ Koester, an expert on the Greek literature, claims that the “Hebrew’s style is remarkable for the visual quality of its language.”⁴² Our question stands, is the epistle to the Hebrews an “epistle” (ἡ ἐπιστολή)? The answer requires very good knowledge of the Greek patterns of writing as well as the Semitic ones. I do not have space (and sufficient education) here to go through all these quite complicated issues – however they are highly interesting. An introductory greeting of a letter is missing but the last salutations are present. There are two possibilities of explanation: 1) greetings have been lost 2) the salutations have been added later. Grässer stands for the second option, that is, the last passage of Hebrews has been inserted by somebody else for it is „der fremde Still“. According to him, Hebrews, as we have it, starts like “Abhandlung” but ends like a “Brief”.

Grässer summarises: “Nein, 13,12-25 dürfte kein Zusatz des Hebräerbriefautors sein, sondern ein Postskript von fremder Hand, das dem

³⁷ Thus observes McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews in Recent Scholarship*, (1994) 79.

³⁸ HAGNER, D. A. *Hebrews*, 4nn.

³⁹ Thus McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews...*, 79.

⁴⁰ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 16.

⁴¹ quoted from KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 35.

⁴² KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 92.

frühchristlichen Schreiben paulinische Dignität sichern soll und ...tatsächlich auch gesichert hat.“⁴³

However many scholars do not share this opinion because the Greek text in Heb 13 contents no significant textual variants. “Most commentators, in fact, take the view that Hebrews 13 is from the hand of the author of the rest of the book.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless Grässer’s doubting of Hebrews as a classical letter (for even the author is anonymous) seems to be correct. The recent observations of the text have pointed out that Hebrews was probably not a letter in its usual form compared to the epistles in the NT or Hellenistic world. Grässer rightly observes that the “Redestil” in Hebrews is more dominant than the “Schriftstil”.⁴⁵ Koester claims, that the written text was, very probably, intended to be read aloud. He evidences it by the exceptional quality of language (cf. an impressive five times use of *p* alliteration in Heb 1:1)⁴⁶ and fine observation of the rhetorical rules.⁴⁷ The rhetorical character of Hebrews is especially evidenced in exhortations appealing to emotions. The short exhortatory passages in Hebrews should be explained as a rhetorical drawing of attention to the subject. Koester quotes Cicero: “people decide far more problems by hate or love, or lust or rage, or sorrow or joy, or hope or fear” than a rational argument.⁴⁸ Many scholars thus argue that Hebrews looks like a homily or a synagogue preaching. Lane speaks of “a sermon reduced to writing”.⁴⁹ According to Ellingworth, the epistle bears signs of both, a personal letter and epistle-homily. He assumes, that the author of Hebrews wrote the message “for a congregation... which he would have delivered personally if he had been able to do so.”⁵⁰ With regard to the identification of “das literarische Genus des Hebr” Grässer is rather sceptical. According to him it is “ein polymorphes und insofern ‘wunderliches Gebilde’, mit dem sein Verf. aus dem übrigen Neuen Testament völlig heraustritt.” However, even Grässer accepts, that “die Kennzeichnung als ‘zugesandte Predigt’ kann den Befund zur Not erklären.”⁵¹ I am convinced that the character of Hebrews presupposes a particular Christian fellowship to which it was sent. I suppose we might conclude that the literary genre of Hebrews is closest to the “exhortatory sermon... that the author sent to a particular community as a letter.”⁵²

⁴³ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 18.

⁴⁴ Thus McCULLOUGH, J.C. *Hebrews in Recent Scholarship*, 111, footnote n14.

⁴⁵ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 16.

⁴⁶ Beside that, the author remarkably uses metaphors, anaphors, assonance, etc. in his letter.

⁴⁷ Three main rhetorical rules of the classical Greek, according to Koester, is: using the logic, emotions and character of the speaker. All the three can be found in Hebrews. KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 89.

⁴⁸ The exhortatory passages are thus not “abolishing the structure”, as Ellingworth claims. In KOESTER, *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 1.

⁵⁰ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 60.

⁵¹ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 15.

⁵² HAGNER, D. A. *Hebrews*, 12-13. In my thesis, I keep the terminology “the letter” or “the epistle”, because it has already become traditional. Although we need to bear in mind that “Hebrews”, with regard to the genre, is simply no classical letter or epistle as we have argued.

2) The Aim of the Epistle

I regard an ongoing discussion about the purpose of the epistle as quite essential. My understanding I am going to present here, will become, as I hope, much more convincing later, when we approach to a detail exegesis of some parts of the Hebrews' text. This introduction to the problem has a purpose to give us notice of this crucial issue that is so often distorted, undervalued or (which is the worst) practically neglected.

There have been suggested quite a few theories about the aim of the epistle. For instance that the letter was written by Appollos because he could not come to the church personally. 1 Corinthians thus was a Paul's reaction to the misinterpretation of the Appollos letter, cf. the issue of immorality in Hebrews and 1 Co (Montefiore). Another discussion was being held around the suggestion that the address of Hebrews was the Qumran community. The epistle was thus intended to persuade the people of Qumran to turn to the gospel (e.g. Kosmala) or to appeal to the Jewish priests who were open to convert to Christianity. These suggestions (as many other) are not significantly supported in these days. Thinking about the composition of the epistle, the first basic observation is that the theological passages are intertwined throughout the letter with the exhortatory units, the way we do not know from the Pauline epistles.⁵³ These two different styles of the author seem to create quite a distinctive scheme, which may also indicate two main goals leading the author to the intention to write the epistle.

a) theological goal

Quite a few scholars, for example Grässer referring to Dibelius, maintain that the letter is the only book in the NT with just one theological topic, that is, "Christus der wahre Hohepriester."

We should consider Hebrews quite generally as "theologische Meditation bzw. eine literarische Form der *Schriftgnosis*... Hauptthema des Hebr ist die 'theologische Ausweitung der Passionsbetrachtung' hin zu einem

⁵³ The structure of Hebrews is a very complex (however exciting) issue, about which a couple of monographs have been written. It is clear that the letter contains a very advanced structure with the regular use of number of the rhetorical tools. Scholars have dealt with that quite extensively, although there are many disagreements about the divisions of the particular passages. Because of this complexity, I can not work it out here in a greater detail, being limited by the proportion of this chapter. One of the major and widely respected attempts to define and describe the patterns of the structure of Hebrews and its peculiarities has been done by VANHOYE, A., *A Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964). Some of the very distinctive marks of the author's style recognised by Vanhoye is "the announcement of the subject" and "the repetition of characteristic terms" (e.g. angels). Quoted from LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 2-3.

himmlischen Kultmysterium, bei dem das Sühne geschehen in Mittelpunkt steht.”⁵⁴

Dibelius argues that the letter is for the whole church, not a special congregation. He says that immaturity and confusing eschatology were quite typical problems for many young congregations of that time. The purpose of the letter is thus undoubtedly the theological one. According to Dibelius’ understanding of Hebrews, Christian salvation comes in the form of “a sublime mystery-cult linking earth and heaven.”⁵⁵ Vanhoye also defends the doctrinal goal of the epistle to the Hebrews.⁵⁶

b) poimenic goal

Attridge correctly pointed out that we should not understand the epistle as an exclusively theological writing and tries to find a sort of balance.

He stresses that “the paraenesis is not a perfunctory afterthought to a dogmatic treatise” for “the pastoral thrust of the work is clear. Yet neither is the doctrinal exposition an unimaginative repetition of well-worn truths adduced to support an exhortation.”⁵⁷

The poimenic role of Hebrews is highlighted by other scholars even more intensively. The main reason to underline the paraenetical purpose dwells in the author’s own term, *logos tes parakleseos* (Heb 13:22). Thus he himself most probably indicated the direction, in which the epistle should be comprehended. Considering the epistle as *an exhortation* would also follow the rhetorical lines of the author’s argumentation in the epistle.⁵⁸ Ellingworth lays the question as whether the “essential message” of the epistle rests in the cultic language and priestly categories themselves, or if it is just means, “strategy” how to communicate to the Jews, if need be, how to confirm Christians in their “transition” from the Judaism. Ellingworth concludes that answer rests somewhere between. He does not hesitate to state that “Hebrews is a profoundly ecclesiological writing.”⁵⁹ Filipi is convinced that the theological exposition serves the paraenetical purposes, and paraenesis depends on the theological exposition.⁶⁰ According to

⁵⁴ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 16 and 48. In the second part of the quotation, he partly cites Lietzmann.

⁵⁵ quoted in PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 9.

⁵⁶ In MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 186.

⁵⁷ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21.

⁵⁸ So KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 89.

⁵⁹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 68.

⁶⁰ We can see in the composition of Hebrews that „christologické výklady jsou svérázným způsobem pointovány oddíly paraenetickými. V těch leží její teologická váha. Mnohem zřetelněji než ve spisech pavlovských je v epištole Žd teologický výklad ve službách parenése a parenése závislá na teologickém výkladu.“ FILIPI, P. *Verbum Solatii. Epištola Židům a pastýřská péče*, 92-93.

him, the church was experiencing a kind of “spiritual anemia” to which our author react.⁶¹ Also Lane in the prolegomena of his commentary openly states:

“it is the presupposition of this commentary that in Hebrews paraenesis takes precedence over thesis in expressing the writer’s (theological) purpose. Argumentation serves exhortation. Hebrews is a pastorally oriented sermon...”⁶²

Ellingworth seems to view author’s paraenesis in rather negative terms, primarily as warning the readers not to fall into apostasy, however the Christological expositions seem to present rather positive appeal to the readers.⁶³ I am not quite convinced of that. Even though there are five ‘warning’ passages in Hebrews, sometimes using quite strong expressions, the pastoral character of these sections is rather encouraging. It clearly works as affirmation of their faith by opening new horizons of what they believe about Christ, rather than warning not to fall away (however it is also present here). The author counts himself to be a part of this community, he never says that somebody of that community would have already fallen into apostasy, he also gives good examples of those who we can follow, etc. As Lane says, the author writes “to strengthen, encourage and exhort the tired and weary members of a house church.”⁶⁴ We also need to be cautious not to distinguish the expository and hortatory units too schematically. Hebrews is an exhortation (Heb 13:22) as a whole and the most impressive pastoral conclusions are already present in the expository parts. My exegesis of Heb 2:5-18 and 4:14-5:10 should support it by many evidences. Weiss too stands for the view, which is also apparent throughout his massive commentary, that the author’s exceptional theological exposition is finally subordinated to the paraenetical goal of the epistle. Weiss intentionally, and correctly in most cases, also takes the strong pastoral concern of the author into account of his detailed exegesis. In my opinion, he does it more faithfully than other commentators do. Weiss is convinced that the orientation of the epistle as a whole is “durchaus praktisch-theologisches”. It is “ein pastoral-seelsorgerliches Grundanliegen”.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 94. „Nejvlastnějším nebezpečím je ztráta eschatologické parésie...Snahou epištoly je tedy zakotvit znovu existenci společenství v eschatologickém dění.“ (95) The epistle to the Hebrews counsels those who doubt the validity of the baptism confession and truthfulness of the biblical message. (99)

⁶² LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, c.

⁶³ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 61-67.

⁶⁴ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, c.

II. CHRISTOLOGY IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

It is impossible to embrace the whole richness and complexity of Hebrews' Christology in one chapter. But we must dare to undertake this journey, however it will be just an overview, for only then can we properly understand the more specific issues in the epistle such as Jesus' humanity or paraenesis.

1) The Son and High Priest – God and Man?

Christology in the letter to the Hebrews oscillates between the titles of the Son and high priest. Designation of Jesus as the Son seems to be already traditional⁶⁶ but the title of high priest applied to Jesus, was certainly fresh for the readers of the epistle. The author wouldn't have developed high priest Christology in the letter so extensively if he had expected his readers to be familiar with it. On the other hand, it might be true that the Christian concept of high priest is not a discovery of the author of Hebrews himself. According to Cullmann, a foundation of the high priest Christology in the NT comes from the early Christian interpretation of Psalm 110 (cf. Mark 12:35ff).⁶⁷ Hengel, similarly, refers to other early Christian texts (e.g. Rom 3:25, 5:2, 8:34, Mark 1:24; 15:38, John 6:69, 1 John 2:1, *1 Clem*), that contain an idea of 'heavenly high priest' independently on Hebrews.⁶⁸ On the other hand, some convincingly argue that the independence of *1 Clem* on Hebrews is very improbable.⁶⁹

In any case though, the connection between the Son and high priest in the epistle to the Hebrews (see esp. Heb 5:5-6) represents a unique Christological model in the NT.

There are several ways to describe Christology in Hebrews. One of them is to start speaking in terms of systematic theology and to distinguish different Christological concepts such as the divinity of Christ, the pre-existence of Christ and the humanity of Christ. These are actually all present in the epistle to the Hebrews. However, we should be rather careful to view the titles of the Son and high priest in terms of 'high' or 'low' Christology.

⁶⁵ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament*, 51-52.

⁶⁶ Although, as Hahn supposes, the conception 'Son' can be a part of independent tradition "associated only secondarily with the conception Son of God." (HAHN, F. *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 316.)

⁶⁷ CULLMANN, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, 88

⁶⁸ HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 159-165.

⁶⁹ COCKERILL, G.L. "Heb 1:1-14, *1 Clem.* 36:1-6...", 437-440.

It is true that Jesus' *high priesthood* is more associated with human life, suffering, sympathy and understanding (Heb 2:17, 5:2, 5:7). However, at the same time, we might find very bold exclusive statements in Hebrews about Jesus a high priest - e.g. his exaltation in Heb 5:9-10, 8:1. In addition, there is also no thought of sharing the priesthood with believers,⁷⁰ in contrast to the idea of Jesus' sonship that is applied to believers as well. Nobody else can substitute the key activity of Jesus the High priest, which is taking place in the holy of holies.

The first chapter of the epistle, artistically intertwined with OT quotations, provides mind-boggling divine claims about *Jesus the Son* through whom the universe was created (1:2, 1:10) and who is superior to the angels (1:4). However, again, Jesus sonship cannot be completely identified with Christ's divinity only. Chapters 1 and 2 share a very high view of the Son's companions (1:9) and the glorious sonship of believers (2:10) they share with (and because of) the Son.⁷¹ Moreover, the same as 'high priest', the term 'Son of God' is connected with the suffering of Jesus (6:6), as Matera rightfully noticed.⁷²

But Matera's attempt to describe the link between the terms 'Son' and 'high priest' in Hebrews still tends to distinguish these in categories of high and low Christology, for he says that "divine sonship of Christ... is foundational for all that Hebrews says about him. ...[it is] foundational to Christ's high priesthood."⁷³ Ellingworth is right, I think, in his observation that "the text of Hebrews does not allow us to press Christ's Sonship into the mould of what would later be defined as his divine nature, and his high priesthood into the later category of human nature."⁷⁴ On the other hand, it is questionable whether we can connect the title 'Son' in Hebrews only with "function", as Hahn does.⁷⁵ Ellingworth believes the term "Son" is referring to "Christ's status", and "high priest" to "Christ's work".⁷⁶ His distinction seems to fit quite well, although it is unavoidable simplification too, as Ellingworth himself admits.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ In contrast to 1 Peter 2:9 and Rev 1:6 which reflects the text of Ex 19:6.

⁷¹ To a certain extent, we also see Jesus' sonship in Hebrews to represent humankind reflecting the *imago Dei*. (This perspective develops, beside others, HURST, L.D. "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2".)

⁷² MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 195 ("The one who suffered in flesh was the Son" superior to the angels.); I believe that 'Son' is connected so narrowly with the suffering of the man Jesus in Hebrews that we cannot separate it from Jesus' humanity (Heb 5:5-10).

⁷³ MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 189. This statement is certainly correct but it seems to lack an important emphasis of the epistle that the *humanity* of a high priest Jesus is very 'foundational' for Jesus' appointment as the Son!

⁷⁴ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 71.

⁷⁵ Hahn assumes the title "Son" to be a reference to Christ's "function" rather than "nature, being of Son of God" (HAHN, F. *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, 316.)

⁷⁶ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 68.

⁷⁷ No doubt the term 'high priest according to the order of Melchizedek' designates Christ's status as well as the expression 'the Son'.

Christology in the letter to the Hebrews is too complex to be grasped through any generalizing theological conclusion that wouldn't distort it at the same time. We face the problem of permanent danger to read our own theological presumptions into the writings of the early Christianity. In the case of the distinctive letter to the Hebrews, the danger is especially strong.⁷⁸ In my opinion, the solution cannot be found in categories of systematic theology, as we have just tried to prove, but rather in deeper elaboration of both the titles in Hebrews' terminology itself. This conclusion has been crucial to make before we start to deal with Jesus' humanity in the epistle in a greater detail.

2) The Son in High Priest's Clothing⁷⁹

Let us start from a different angle now. The author of Hebrews develops Christology on **two levels of 'time'**. The first one is almost mythological and not precisely defined, whereas the second one refers more or less to the particular moment of history. Both the 'times' works perfectly together in the epistle though.

Jesus is presented as the eternal *Son* who was in the beginning of the world and whose years will never end (Heb 1:7-12). The Son is, like Melchizedek, without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of day or end of life (7:3). On the other hand, Jesus was appointed as the Son, after he had made purification of our sins through his death (1:3), at the moment of his exaltation (1:4, 1:13).⁸⁰ This 'paradoxical language of time' is quite well interpreted by Matera's distinction between the identity of Jesus and the role of Jesus. He says that Jesus' *identity* as the Son of God "was from the beginning", whereas from the point of view of his *role*, "he became the enthroned Son of God and high priest at his exaltation".⁸¹

But it has to be added that the beginning of Jesus' *high priesthood* contains traces of both the levels of time as well. The moment of Jesus' 'appointment a high priest' according to the order of Melchizedek after his resurrection (5:5-10) does not exclusively refer to his 'becoming a high priest'. Jesus' high priest ministry had already started on the earth, as Koester puts it: "at the

⁷⁸ As Ellingworth says, "Hebrews is a unique piece of early Christian writing... [It] must be understood on its own terms." (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 63.)

⁷⁹ The title of this chapter has been taken from PARKER M. *Son in Priest's Clothing. Christology in the letter to the Hebrews*. Unpublished dissertation for the Master of Philosophy. (Belfast: Union Theological College 1997). In my use, it wants to express the inseparable unity of both the titles.

⁸⁰ Marshall (MARSHALL, I.H. *Jesus the Saviour*, 150-164) makes a link here to Phil 2:9-11 where Jesus receives the title 'Lord'.

⁸¹ MATERA, F.J. *New Testament Christology*, 199.

time of his death he was already a high priest (9:11-14).⁸² And he, like Melchizedek again, remains a high priest forever (5:5-6, 6:20).

From the short examination of the titles Son and high priest we have done up to now it is becoming clearer, I believe, that these two Christological titles cannot be separated from each other. The author of Hebrews ties both the titles closely together, most remarkably in Heb 5:5-10 (but see also Heb 3:1-6). Jesus' priesthood makes no sense if it comes apart from Christ's sonship and *vice versa*. Parker expresses this unity as follows, Christ who was "faithful over God's house as a Son" (3:6) was also "a great high priest over the house of God" (10:21).⁸³

Keeping this in mind, we may move to the figure of high priest once more and cast more light on this unique presentation of Jesus.

3) Jesus a High Priest

The high priesthood of Jesus resembles the ministry of the Aaron high priests to a certain extent. Jesus fulfils three qualifications⁸⁴ to be a high priest (Heb 5:1-4): 1) a high priest has to be chosen *from human beings* to offer sacrifices for sins *on behalf of men* 2) he is able to deal with weaknesses 3) is called by God. These three characteristics are required for Aaronic priesthood and they are attested at Jesus as well. In fact, they stay in the very centre of the author's idea of Christ's high priesthood.

- a) Jesus had to be fully man. There are not many other NT writings (if any)⁸⁵ that would stress Jesus' humanity as strongly as does the epistle to the Hebrews (cf. Heb 2:5-18, 4:14-5:10). Marshall says, "there is sufficient ...evidence that the real human experience of Christ ...was a matter of great importance to the writer."⁸⁶ For example, Jesus is depicted as the one who "learned obedience through suffering" (5:8) and "was made perfect" (5:9). Another point of contact with Aaronic priesthood is found in the OT rooted belief (Lev 17:11) that without pouring of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22, 8:3). As a priest according to the order of Melchisedek, Jesus offered a sacrifice that was once for all (10:12).
- b) Jesus is able to deal with our weaknesses (2:18) as all Aaronic priests are supposed to do (5:2).

⁸² KOESTER, C. R. *Hebrews*, 109. Koester points to the divergence among scholars whether Jesus' priesthood in Hebrews refers more to his earthly or heavenly ministry.

⁸³ PARKER M. *Son in Priest's Clothing*, 137.

⁸⁴ They have a representative function here.

⁸⁵ Probably, the Johanine Christology only is similarly radical as Hebrews.

- c) It was God who called and appointed Jesus as high priest (5:5-6, 7:21), the same as Aaron (Ex 28:1).

However there are also very important differences in Hebrews between the Aaronic priesthood and Jesus' priesthood.

- a) Jesus is without sin and doesn't need to offer sacrifices for himself (7:27).
- b) Jesus' priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, which also means, he became an eternal and definitive high priest in contrast to the temporal Aaronic priests (7:26-28). The author's proof texts are Gen 14:17-21, and especially, Psalm 110:4. Abraham is inferior to Melchizedek for he i. gave tithes to Melchizedek (and through Abraham Aaron did as well) and ii. he was blessed by Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-3). Levite priests were born as descendants of Abraham, therefore their priesthood is inferior to Jesus' priesthood that was sealed by God's oath (7:20-21).
- c) The sympathy of high priest Jesus is greater than Aaron's could have ever been, for Jesus withstood the testing without having sinned (2:18; 4:15). As we consider paraenesis as the main purpose of the epistle, the references to Jesus' sympathy with his brothers fall into the category of the most serious statements of the letter to the Hebrews.⁸⁷

4) Pilgrimage

The comparison with the Aaronic priesthood is not sufficient to do justice to the whole meaning of Jesus' priesthood. What characterizes high priest Christology in Hebrews very concisely is *motif of journey*.⁸⁸ Jesus was a man in every respect as we are. He experienced and passed all kinds of trials and suffering during his earthly life. Therefore he became a leader of humanity (2:10, 12:2) and the source of our salvation (5:9). He is our forerunner (6:19) who went through the heavenly sanctuary (9:11) and was seated at the right hand of God's throne (8:1, 10:12, 12:2). He is the one we shall follow on our journey, similarly as the 'cloud of witnesses' lived and wandered by faith in God (11:1-12:1). But not like those who walked in the desert and fell away from the living God, Israelites, who did not enter the 'Sabbath Rest' (4:1-2). We may have confidence to enter the most holy place because he opened a new and living way (10:19-20). The pilgrimage motif is connected to the idea of Moses leading his people out of Egypt. Jesus is a 'perfecter' of our faith (12:2) and his priesthood is ongoing, he still makes intercession for us

⁸⁶ MARSHALL, I. H. *New Testament Theology*, 621.

⁸⁷ Jesus' ability to deeply sympathize with us is one of the main issues I am dealing with in this paper.

⁸⁸ "Pilgrimage" is one of the very key concepts in Hebrews, if not the main background motif of the whole epistle, as my friend, Colin Sims (writing his Doctorate thesis on this topic) noticed.

(7:25). This continuation of Jesus' ministry is not opposing the 'once for all' in Heb 10:12 (cf. 13:8).

5) "Jesus is superior"

The author's comparisons of Jesus to the representatives of the Old Covenant are a characteristic feature of Christology in the epistle to the Hebrews. We have already mentioned the superiority of *Jesus' high priesthood to Aaron's high priesthood*. Another comparison is made *with Moses*. He was the servant of God's house but Jesus is the Son who is 'over God's house' (cf. 3:1-6). Jesus is thus being equated with the builder of the house, that is, God himself (!). The third comparison that the writer of Hebrews brings out is that of the Son's superiority *to the angels*. This is a prevailing topic in the first two chapters of the letter. Hengel says that, "speculation was extensive in early Judaism over the hierarchically ordered angel world."⁸⁹ On the other hand, the epistle to the Hebrews is almost an exception in the NT writings that deals with this problem.⁹⁰ Therefore Hengel concludes that, "'Angel Christology' was apparently not a live option for earliest Christianity. The Son, lifted up and seated at the right hand of God, was from the beginning set *above* all angels."⁹¹ Similarly Lane, who says, there is "no polemical tone" against angels themselves. The angels play their positive role in the epistle to the Hebrews (e.g. 2:2).⁹² This view seems to be very close to the idea of Christ's exaltation above all rule, power and authority and dominion, and every title (Eph 1:20-23; cf. Col 1:15-20). There are various theories, as to why Jesus is linked with the angels in the first two chapters in the letter to the Hebrews, but let us conclude with the most convincing one, i.e. angels were assumed to be mediators of the Law (cf. 2:1-4!). This belief is widespread in Jewish apocalyptic⁹³ and the NT literature (Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19). Another clarifying point might be found in the book of 1 Enoch⁹⁴ that shows angels having the mediating role between God and men (e.g. 15:2-3).⁹⁵ The argument of the author of Hebrews is then similar in both cases: *the new covenant, the same as Son's mediating role, is superior to the angels*'.

⁸⁹ HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 376.

⁹⁰ The angels play important role only the book of Revelation, beside Hebrews.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 17. A negative role of the angels in chapter 1 holds ELLINGWORTH *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 89. The polemic angel Christology presupposes DELLING, *TDNT* VIII, 42 or COLPE, *TDNT* VIII, 464.

⁹³ See BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 67.

⁹⁴ Nickelsburg claims: 'In almost all the strata of 1 Enoch, angels play a crucial role as intercessors for humanity.' NICKELSBURG, G.W.E. *1 Enoch 1*, 208. See esp.44-45.

⁹⁵ For this important note I am indebted to Prof. McCullough and his lectures on 'Hebrews' at the Queen's University Belfast in 2004.

III. THE MAN JESUS: OUR BROTHER AND LEADER

(Exegesis of 2:5-18)

1) The Son superior to the angels: Introduction to Heb 1:1-2:4

Before we approach the exegesis of the passage 2:5-18 it is necessary to pay some attention to the first chapter. It has been argued that chapter one in the epistle is merely a preface or an introductory chapter has no significant relation to the rest of the epistle.⁹⁶ I believe that this evaluation of the first chapter is incorrect. The first chapter certainly makes up a unique piece within the whole body of the epistle.

a) Prologue (1:1-4)

The author of Hebrews starts with a style of high calibre. As Lane states, it is a very “artistically developed prose”, carefully “balanced” and full of “stylistic elegance” that implies the author’s education in rhetorics.⁹⁷ However, even more serious are the author’s theological claims that belong to some of the bravest in the NT. Hengel puts it distinctively: “As in the Prologue to John we meet statements here that, in their boldness and universality, completely transcend the possibilities of pagan-polytheistic apotheoses” of Greco-Roman world.⁹⁸ It is generally agreed that the prologue in Heb 1 “contains the fragments of the divine Wisdom Christology”.⁹⁹ The foundational text of divine Wisdom is found in Pr 8:22-31. In the light of this passage Bruce speaks about the Son as “divine Wisdom Incarnate”.¹⁰⁰ Lane refers to Wis 7:24-27 and suggests that the author of Hebrews wanted to combine the Wisdom theology with the concept of priesthood (cf. 1 Clem 36:1-4).¹⁰¹

The prologue seems to summarize the most crucial thoughts of the whole first chapter:

i. God spoke through his prophets in the past but now he has spoken in his Son (1:1-2a)

⁹⁶ This has been usually claimed because of specific use of the OT by the author of the Hebrews. For the list of scholars holding this position see HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2”, 154-155.

⁹⁷ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 5.

⁹⁸ HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 373.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁰⁰ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 47.

¹⁰¹ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 17.

Both continuity and discontinuity are present in this statement. Bruce comments that we should see this concept in terms of development from promise to fulfillment, rather than ‘the new’ proved ‘the old’ to be worthless.¹⁰²

ii. *The Son has been appointed heir of all things (2b)*

This is possibly echoing Psalm 2:8: ‘I will make the nations your heritage’ (RSV).

iii. *Through him God made the universe (2c)*

αἰῶν should be translated in a spatial rather than temporal sense.¹⁰³

iv. *He is the reflection of God’s glory and God’s being (3a)*

It means, he is “an exact representation of God’s substance”. χαρακτήρ is a hapax legomenon.¹⁰⁴

v. *The Son is holding the universe by his word, by the word of the Creator (3b)*

vi. *He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty (3c).*

This happened after he had made purification of our sins (the first hint to Jesus’ high priest ministry). The phrase ‘sitting at the right hand’ is an allusion to Psalm 110 and refers to Christ’s exaltation after resurrection (cf. Phil 2:9). Bruce makes an interesting comment that “a seated high priest” is the one who accomplished his work, despite the Aaronic priests who remain standing, for their work is never completed (10:11-14).¹⁰⁵ But most importantly, ‘sitting at the right hand’ represents Son’s status. Jesus “is thus given the most immediate form of communion with God, which was comprehensible to a Jew based upon the texts of the Old Testament”.¹⁰⁶ It is possible to see here a reference to the narrative of 1Kgs 2:13-22 (esp.v19). Thus, “the right side symbolized supreme authority and highest honour”.¹⁰⁷ However, even though ‘sitting at the right hand’ points to the Son who is “sharing God’s power without limitation”, we should still see the Son being “subordinated to his Father”.¹⁰⁸

vii. ‘High language’ about the Son is complemented by the statement ‘*he inherited the name superior to the angels*’ (4). To inherit a name signifies obtaining a new status. It is

¹⁰² BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 47.

¹⁰³ cf. Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 103.

¹⁰⁵ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 149.

¹⁰⁷ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 103.

not quite clear *what* name he exactly received but everything seem to point to the name of ‘the Son’.¹⁰⁹

An ongoing discussion is taking place whether Heb 1:1-4 contains a hymnic material. Verse 3 starts with ὁς that might presume the beginning of hymn (e.g. Phil 2, Eph 1 and 2., etc.). Poetic style and two *happax legomena* in this opening section in Heb 1 support the suggestion as well. High Christological statements may point to the liturgical use of this passage. The main arguments to regard the Hebrews’ prologue as a hymn are thus very similar for instance to those for the passage Phil 2:5-11.¹¹⁰ Whether it is an early Christian hymn or not,¹¹¹ what we can say with certainty is that the unit (1-4) and the following section (5-14) are very coherent without any disturbing or redundant element.¹¹²

b) The Son superior to the angels (1:5-14)

The following section Heb 1:5-14 develops the preceding verses. It is carefully built up using seven OT quotations.¹¹³ Most recent commentators are convinced that the author quotes the LXX rather than MT. Lane says: “it may be assumed that the biblical passages cited were already familiar to the hearers from the liturgical tradition.”¹¹⁴ To view Christ as having divine attributes, from the perspective of God, by comparing him with the angels, creates an absolutely unique scene in the NT.

¹⁰⁹ Heb 1:5 explicitly refers to the Son. See also *diaforoterion* in Heb 8:6, where it would point to “the Son” as well. Moreover, “to inherit” (Heb 1:4) and to be “son” is held together in R 8:17 and Gal 4:7 (cf. Mk 12:7). On the other hand, Phil 2:9 emphasizes receiving of “the name”. Ellingworth (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 104) asks, whether the fact that he has inherited the name of the Son doesn’t contrast Jesus’ eternal sonship (Heb 1:2). However, this does not seem to be in contradiction. The author regularly combines a kind of metaphysical with the concrete concept of time. (cf. Jesus’ priesthood in order to Melchizedek)

¹¹⁰ For more detailed discussion on Phil 2:5-11 see e.g. MARTIN, R.P. *An Early Christian Confession*. Philippians II.5-11 in recent interpretation. (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960); for the recent criticism see BOCKMUEHL M. *The epistle to the Philippians*. Black’s New Testament Commentaries. (4 edition. London : A&C Black, 1997), 116-123 and FEE G.D. *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 41-46, 192-193 (esp.n4)

¹¹¹ There is no evidence of using these verses from Hebrews anywhere else in the early Christian tradition. Therefore we can only suggest their independent origin. The author of Hebrews was fully capable of writing this ‘hymn’ without any transmission of foreign material to his writing. The whole epistle, not just this section, is marked by the stylistically and theologically very elegant and refined expressions “full” of *happax legomena*. I agree with Ellingworth that it sounds unconvincingly to claim that the author would be really interested only in the last words of the prologue, while he quoted the whole hymn (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 103).

¹¹² The structural points of contact between 1-4 and 5-14 are: Appointment as royal Son/heir (2b//5-9), Mediator of creation (2c//10), eternal nature (3//11-12), exaltation to God’s right hand (3//13) (see LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 22).

¹¹³ For greater clarity I will only refer to the MT numbering of the OT quotations.

¹¹⁴ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 32.

The first quotation in Heb 1:5a comes from the royal coronation *Psalms* 2:7. The Gospel of Mark quotes only the first part of *Psalms* 2:7 ('You are my Son') at the occasion of Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:11), in Acts 13:33 the quoted psalm exclusively refers to Jesus' resurrection. The author of Hebrews expresses by the citation the Son's appointment and exaltation.¹¹⁵ According to Hebrews, the psalm of enthronement of the new Davidic king has been thus fulfilled in the royal Son Jesus.

There are two candidates for the second OT quotation that the author of Hebrews could have used in Heb 1:5b. *2S* 7:14, that is often preferred,¹¹⁶ and *1Ch* 17:13. Both the occurrences in their original setting evoke the scenery when God announces to David that Solomon will build the temple and Solomon's throne will be established forever. Both references contain the same phrase ('I will be his father and he will be my son'). I believe that the original background of the OT text, as usually, has been preserved in Hebrews. Jesus is the one who fully enters to the unique relationship of the Son to his Father and is proclaimed a king forever. The cultic background of the original OT texts fits Son's cultic activity as well.

It is generally accepted that our writer in Heb 1:6 quotes Moses' song *De* 32:43 (LXX) rather than *Psalms* 97:7. This is the first explicit statement presenting angels as not just being lesser than the Son, but even paying the highest honour to the Son. It is one of the author's shocking statements that applies the object of such an exclusive word as προσκυνέω to the Son instead of God.¹¹⁷ Eschatological dimension is alluded by the Greek terms οἰκουμένη ('heavenly world')¹¹⁸ and εἰσάγω ('to bring'). Commentators are far from consensus about the interpretation of the introductory sentence ('when he brings his firstborn into the world'), that precedes the quotation. It is suggested that the phrase should be read as designation of Son's pre-existence or incarnation or parousia, but more likely it denotes the Son's exaltation after his resurrection. The passages Phil 2:9-11, Eph 1:20-23, Col 1:18, Rom 14:9-11 (all of them connected with Jesus' resurrection) seem to express a very similar thought to Heb 1:6. Bruce's interesting reference to Rev 5:6-11 fits this context very well too.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Rather than the Son's Incarnation or pre-existence. We don't need to accept the tension, as Lane does, that beside Son's appointment it may also refer to his Incarnation or pre-existence (LANE W.L. *Hebrews* 1-8, *ad loc.*). My understanding is closer to Hurst who considers this statement as a parallel to the *appointment* of the Son in 1:2 (HURST, L.D. "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2", 156), or even more to Bruce who speaks about *the royal enthronement* of the Son (BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *ad loc.*).

¹¹⁶ However Ellingworth argues for 1 Ch 17:13 (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 117).

¹¹⁷

¹¹⁸ LANE W.L. *Hebrews* 1-8, 27. Lane points to a parallel between this eschatological interpretation and 'the world to come' in 2:5.

¹¹⁹ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 58 n78.

The fourth OT quotation (*Psalms 104:4* - from the hymn of Creation) in Heb 1:7 illustrates a general problem that occasionally occurs in Hebrews, namely, that the author's argument rests on the LXX which is here particularly different from the MT reading.¹²⁰ The similar case occurs in the previous quotation as well. The point of this citation is that the angels are the Son's 'mutable' servants in contrast to the eternity and lordship of the Son (this antithesis is expressed in v8).

The royal *Psalms 45:6-7* (cited in Heb 1:8-9) was presumably sung as a love song at the occasion of a royal wedding. There are several *textual variants*¹²¹ in these verses that significantly change the understanding of the verse. All the suggested readings of the text create certain difficulties. It seems probable though that the Son is called 'God' here, even though this formulation would be quite unique in the NT. This crux interpretum can be explained by the fact that the author very probably follows the original setting of the psalm. In the MT, the king is addressed as God, or more precisely, as the true representative of God. The representative royal role could be therefore fittingly applied to Jesus by the author of Hebrews. In the disputed question 'who are *the companions* of verse 9', I rather disagree with Bruce's argumentation that "the angels cannot be intended" for it would stand against the author's emphasis on angels' inferiority to the Son.¹²² The scissors between the Son and the angels must not be opened so wide, I believe. Angels play a positive role in the epistle. They are the Son's servants (1:6-7!), therefore, they may be called the Son's 'companions' – even in the work of salvation (1:14!). Moreover, the Son's superiority to the angels would be convincingly preserved by the expression *παρὰ* (v9). Lane thus conceives the companions in verse 9 as "the angels".¹²³ However the possibility of regarding "the companions" as "sons" or "brothers" is not low as well.¹²⁴ The original context of the quotation considering royal court or other kings as the king's companions would fit "the angels" as well as the "sons". The author has not still spoken about humans in chapter 1 though, but he could have it in his mind already. This conclusion would perfectly fit the later argumentation of chapter about Jesus' complete identification with humanity, his brothers, his companions. For that reason I would slightly prefer the latter understanding of the word. The whole verse 9 thus serves to attest Son's kingship.

¹²⁰ A problem for us, who usually read a translation based on the MT, but not for the author to the Hebrews or the Church of the first century.

¹²¹ If we read the variant in verse 8 "αὐτοῦ", 2sg ('your throne, God' or 'your divine throne') can be changed to 3sg (e.g. 'God is your throne'). Another translation problem occurs in verse 9. We can either read "God, God" as nominatives (which seems to be a natural reading) or the first 'God' as a vocative and the second 'God' as a nominative (this reading would fit author's argument better).

¹²² BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 61.

¹²³ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 30. Cf. GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*.

¹²⁴ Beside Bruce, for the "men" reading argues also ELLINGWORTH, P. (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 125), who regard them as 'brothers' that are explicitly mentioned later in 2:10-11.

In vv10-12 the author of Hebrews cites a ‘song of an afflicted man’ - *Psalm 102:25-27*. The quotation serves again (cf. v8) as an antithesis to the changeable ministering angels (v7) and mutability of the universe.¹²⁵ Graduation of the declarations about the Son is reaching its climax here. The writer probably couldn’t go any further when he puts these statements about the Son into God’s mouth (!). The Son is depicted as a creator (cf. 1:2) and the unchanging κύριος. The temporally-mythical expressions present the Son as the one ‘in the beginning’, who is ‘remaining’ (cf. Heb 13:8) and ‘whose years will never end’. The phrase that the Son will ‘roll the universe up like the cloak’¹²⁶ seems to evoke eschatological language.¹²⁷

The last OT text inserted into the first chapter of Hebrews comes, again, from the most quoted psalm in the NT – *Psalm 110:1* (cf. Mt 22:41-46; Acts 2:34-35). Hengel believes that “the Christological interpretation of the psalm can ...very possibly be traced back to the earliest congregation.”¹²⁸ The phrase ‘sit at my right hand’ (v13) revives Heb 1:3. The author thus opens and closes the whole section of the OT quotations in Heb 1 with Psalm 110:1. Bruce supposes that there might be present an allusion to Mark 14:62 (cf. Da 7:13) as well.¹²⁹ The author of Hebrews portrays here the Son as an enthroned king who defeated his enemies (cf. Acts 2:34-35).

Verse 14 summarizes the author’s argument that the Son is superior to the angels. But, at the same time, the angels are positively viewed as λειτουργικά πνεύματα (v14) and λειτουργοί of the Son (v7).¹³⁰

Hebrews 1: Anthropology instead of Christology?

There are several scholars who maintain that the references to υἱός in Heb 1 point to the Man who represents humanity.¹³¹ In his article,¹³² Hurst interprets Psalm 8:5-7, quoted in Heb 2:6-8,

¹²⁵ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews, ad loc.*

¹²⁶ There are some mns. that read αλλαξεις (you will change) instead of ἐλίξεις (you will roll). Both versions are found in some LXX witnesses. The words ὡς ἱμάτιον in line 6 are omitted in many manuscripts. Quite a few scholars assume it as an author’s addition to the LXX (e.g. ATTRIDGE, H.W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 61 or LANE, W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*). However McCullough supposes these words were rather added by a copyist in a very early stage. (McCULLOUGH J.C. “The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews”, 372).

¹²⁷ An eschatological dimension of the quotation is surprisingly neglected by many commentators. An interesting parallel to Heb 1:10-12 occurs in the classical eschatological text of Rev 6:12-14 (see also Mk 13:24ff and //). The image of Rev 6:14 speaks about ‘**receding of οὐρανός**’ (cf. Heb 1:10-11: **perishing** of the foundations of the earth and οἱ οὐρανοί) like ‘**ἐλίσειν the scroll**’ (cf. Heb 1:12: **ἐλίσειν the cloak**).

¹²⁸ He also says that ῥαββονί in Mark 10:51 and John 20:16 “is not significantly different from *marī*” (cf. *maran atha*). See HENGEL, M. *Studies in Early Christology*, 155.

¹²⁹ ‘Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty one’. See BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews, ad loc.*

¹³⁰ If not his μετόχοι (v9).

anthropologically,¹³³ and similarly he expounds the first chapter. To summarize Hurst's argumentation, the OT quotations in Heb 1 speak of the Son - the representative Man, not the Son - God. The point of the author's argument is thus that through the Man Jesus (i.e. son of man) the whole of humanity is coming to the exalted state superior to the angels'.¹³⁴ Therefore, for instance, ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης in Heb 1:3 means *human* reflection of God's glory as *imago Dei*.¹³⁵ Robinson says that the author of Hebrews holds the position of incarnationism and adoptionism "without any sense of discomfort".¹³⁶ He criticizes Cullmann¹³⁷ for overlooking these expressions in Hebrews, which are very much like an adoptionist Christology.¹³⁸ However the 'anthropological' interpretation of Hebrews 1 is quite problematic, especially in a more detailed exegesis.¹³⁹ On the other hand, as we will see later (esp. Psalm 8 in Heb 2), the representative Man-Christology plays a significant role in the author's argument.

c) Exhortation (2:1-4)

The author is concerned with the pastoral situation of his readers. His brilliant Christological – or rather doxological – introduction exhorts and comforts his fellow brothers. God hasn't ceased speaking to his people! He has utterly and freshly spoken in his Son as never before. God has spoken in his Son to *us* (1:2), therefore it is necessary to pay attention to what *we* have heard (2:1).¹⁴⁰ The word of the 'Son superior to the angels' must be received very seriously. For it is clear that if the believers were punished justly for disobeying the word of the angels, i.e. the Law (2), how much more if we neglect the Son's word of salvation (3), God's Word himself (cf.1:2)? The word was spoken by the Lord (cf. Mark 1:14f, Luke 4:18-21) and has been conveyed to *us* (including the author) by those who heard him. Preaching of the message has

¹³¹ e.g. HURST, L.D. "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2" (151-164) or ROBINSON, J.A.T. *The Human Face of God* (155-161).

¹³² "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2"

¹³³ We will deal with the anthropological view of Psalm 8 in Heb 2 in the following chapter.

¹³⁴ This is certainly scriptural, see 1Cor 6:2-3!

¹³⁵ ROBINSON, J.A.T. *The Human Face of God*, 157.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ see CULLMANN, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, 93-102.

¹³⁸ Cf.1:4, 1:9, 1:13, etc. ROBINSON, J.A.T. *The Human Face of God*, 157.

¹³⁹ Hurst's argument for reading 1:6 as based on 4Q Deut 32 seems to be stretched. He interprets 'the firstborn' as a representative of Israel who is "the object of angelic prostration". Hurst argues that the author of Hebrews culled the first two lines of 4Q Deut 32:43 *out of context* (because the third line 'for he avenges the blood of his sons...' refers undeniably to God) and used it for his anthropological purpose. But this is not very convincing, the author of Hebrews does not usually work like that. Hurst's argumentation is also not convincing, because, when he argues for man-representative reading of another crucial OT quotation (Psalm 102:25-27 in Heb 1:10-12) he bases his argument on the very opposite assumption - that the author *certainly regarded the context* of the cited passage! His explanation of Psalm 102 in Hebrews is over-complicated. He argues that the LXX phrase 'he answered' in Ps 102:24 (that is not part of the quoted text in Hebrews) evokes a messianic connotation. Heb 1:10-12 is thus addressing a messianic figure, that is, *man* – but in terms of divine wisdom. The whole weight of the argument rests on Wisdom 7-9 where Solomon is given divine wisdom. Therefore, this connection, according to Hurst, enables and fully justifies the author of Hebrews to speak of a Man even as a Creator (!). In my judgment, this explanation is quite unlikely.

¹⁴⁰ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 35.

been accompanied with mighty works, wonders, signs and the distribution of Holy Spirit (4). Mighty works marked Jesus' preaching (Acts 2:22) the same as the apostles' (Acts 2:43). Therefore, the author is warning his readers – do not drift away but stay fastened (1)!¹⁴¹

2) Jesus for a little while lower than the angels: Exegesis 2:5-9

The section 2:5-18 seems to be fluently following the hortatory unit 2:1-4 and thematically extends the exposition of 1:1-14 ("angels" is the key structural word of 1:5-2:18). The **structure of the passage 2:5-18** has been recently challenged by Koester who presupposes much closer connection between the units 2:5-18 and 3:1-6 than most commentators have noticed before. He is convinced that the themes of 3:1-6 are already present in our passage implicitly.¹⁴² Therefore, his divisions are as follows, 2:5-9 and 2:10-3:6 (the second part shall be then internally divided into 2:10-18 and 3:1-6). Regarding 2:5-18 as a whole, says Koester, separates this section "too sharply" from the following passage.¹⁴³ Despite this interesting suggestion, I would rather still argue for the traditional¹⁴⁴ section 2:5-18, with the subdivisions 2:5-9 (Psalm 8 and its interpretation) and 2:10-18 (Christ's identification with humanity).¹⁴⁵ The connection between 2:5-9 and 2:10-18 seems to be clearer than the link between 2:10-18 and 3:1-6. We should also note quite a significant change of tone between the verses 4 and 5. The passage 2:5-18 is thus distinctly opened by οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλους (2:5) and similarly closed by οὐ γὰρ δῆπου ἀγγέλων (2:16).¹⁴⁶

After the hortatory words, the author of Hebrews returns to the theme of 'angels' again (cf. 1:5 and 1:13), but this time, in a special context of Psalm 8 "God did not subject the coming world to the angels" (Heb 2:5). The phrase is introduced by οὐ γὰρ that refers back to chapter one.

¹⁴¹ The author is using nautical terms. προσέχειν means 'to hold a ship toward port, to fasten the anchor'. παραρρεῖν signifies 'to drift away from one's course' (ibid.).

¹⁴² The points of contact between both the passages: The theme of Creator 3:4 // 2:10, household (3:2-6 // 2:11-12), sanctification 3:1 // 2:11. (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 220)

¹⁴³ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 220.

¹⁴⁴ Thus LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, GRASSER E. *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1-6)*, WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*. A slightly different structure presents MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:5-10 and 2:11-18)* and BUCHANAN, G.W. *To the Hebrews*. (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981): 1:5-2:18, eventually 1:5-2:9 and 2:10-2:18).

¹⁴⁵ See LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8, ad loc.* or ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews, ad loc.* Verses 17 (see ὅθεν) and 18 (see γὰρ) seem to be directly subordinated to v16 and the preceding arguments.

¹⁴⁶ However I do not agree with the opinion that 'the angels' is the major theme of the whole passage 1:5-2:18 (e.g. PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 50.). This is true statistically and structurally but not thematically. Jesus' humanity, redemption of man and the pastoral impact of that on believers seem to constitute the major author's concern in 2:5-18. The angels play here an important role though, for they

However, the emphasis here is laid on the ‘subjection of the world to come’ rather than ‘the angels’. The LXX use of οἰκουμένη (40x) usually refers to the earth as a whole, people on the earth or kingdoms. The Secular Greek knows it as a geographical, cultural or political term. οἰκουμένη occurs 15x in the NT¹⁴⁷, which is in a striking contrast to the extensive NT use of κόσμος that is an especially Johanine (102x) and Pauline (37x) favourite term.¹⁴⁸ Balz supposes that “in Roman times οἰκουμένη increasingly gained a political meaning in connection with the widespread ‘imperial formulas’.”¹⁴⁹ The connection with μέλλουσα gives οἰκουμένη a significant eschatological shape (cf. 2:4!). The whole phrase thus “clearly represents the old apocalyptic phrase עוֹלָם הַבָּהָה.”¹⁵⁰ Radl observes that μέλλω, when used as an adjective, “it appears *always* in the attributive position and means *coming future*.”¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, we should not understand this term as strictly speaking of future things, but rather of the *eschatological reality* that includes both the present and the future dimension. ὑποτάσσω (‘to place under’, ‘to affix under’, ‘to subordinate’)¹⁵² is the key term for the whole unit 2:5-9 (vv5, 8a, 8b, 8c). It carries the connotations of king’s or creator’s activity. The author of Hebrews might thus react to the natural readers’ evocation of the idea from Deut 32:8 about the angels over the nations and kingdoms. A similar thought to that, the angelic ‘prince of Persia’ or ‘prince of Greece’, is also found in the book of Daniel (Dan 10:20-21; 12:1) or rabbinic literature.¹⁵³ We should notice though, that these figures in the OT tradition have a protective rather than an explicitly governing function, a fact that is in consent to Heb 1:14. On the other hand, Eph 6:12 mentions the cosmic powers and authorities having rather negative role. The author of Hebrews does not seem to deny the prince’s role of angels in general (cf. 1:7,14), but his distinct emphasis is laid here on *the new kingdom to come*, the eschatological world that God did not place under the subjection of the angels. However, as Ellingworth rightly comments, the question ‘who has God actually subjected this coming world to’ remains open.¹⁵⁴ Did he subject it to the Son or to men? The author does not answer it intentionally, I think. The tension of that uncertainty powerfully draws attention to the new topic the author wants to present now – Jesus’ identification with humanity.

were believed to be mediators of the Law (cf. my chapter on Christology in Hebrews). However, Jesus, *in his humanity*, became the new mediator to God and thus superior to the angels.

¹⁴⁷ Including 2x in Hebrews (here and 1:6).

¹⁴⁸ BALZ, H. *EDNT*, Vol. 2, 503-4.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ MICHEL, O. *TDNT*, V, 159.

¹⁵¹ RADL, W. *EDNT*, 2, 403-404 (Italics his). μέλλω occurs 18 times in the NT as an absolute participle and 11 times as an adjective. The adjective use of μέλλω participles in the NT occurs most times in the epistle to the Hebrews (2:5; 6:5; 10:1; 13:14)! This fact underlines the conviction about the significant role of eschatology in Hebrews.

¹⁵² DELLING *TDNT*, VIII, 39-46.

¹⁵³ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 72; similarly LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 46. See also ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 70.

¹⁵⁴ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *ad loc.*

a) Interpretation of Psalm 8:5-7 in Hebrews 2

The first step to that is undertaken with the quotation of Psalm 8:5-7 (LXX) in vv6-8. The psalm is introduced quite vaguely, διεμαρτύρατο δέ πού τις λέγων,¹⁵⁵ that underlines the writer’s concern to consider the quoted OT texts in Hebrews as *logia theou* whose ‘human authorship’ is basically unimportant.¹⁵⁶ The author’s quotations of the OT in the epistle to the Hebrews are mostly very accurate. The only significant alteration from Psalm 8 (compared to e.g. Ralph’s LXX) is the omission of one phrase in v7.¹⁵⁷ Some important manuscripts (incl. P⁴⁶) read τὶς instead of τι (LXX). The suggestion that the author changed the LXX reading due to the support of his Christological argument is rather unlikely though.

In the original context of the psalm, the psalmist worships God’s majesty and his creative power. He stands in amazement that this powerful God is mindful¹⁵⁸ of human beings (‘son of man’).¹⁵⁹ However not only that, he also crowned them with glory and subjected the created world to them. This meaning of Psalm 8 is perhaps identical in both the MT and the LXX reading. However the Greek version (that is followed by Hebrews) is characterized by some shifts from the MT.

Psalm 8: 4-6 (MT)	Psalm 8:5-7(Ralph’s LXX)	Psalm 8:5-7 in Heb 2:6-8
<p>5 מִה־אֲנוּשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבְן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ:</p>	<p>5 τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμνήσκη αὐτοῦ ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν</p>	<p>6 τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμνήσκη αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν;</p>
<p>6 וַתַּחֲסֶרְהוּ מְעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים</p>	<p>6 ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχὺ τι</p>	<p>7 ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχὺ τι</p>

¹⁵⁵ As Ellingworth put it, the phrase “seems perversely vague” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 147), or Grässer who speaks about the “lässige” introduction (*An die Hebräer*, 115). Montefiore (and similarly Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 70-71) believes that this “seemingly poor” introduction in fact “follows an Alexandrian formula” found in Philo’s writings (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 56).

¹⁵⁶ Thus most commentaries. This fact should be also taken in account as we interpret the OT quotations in chapter 1, for instance in Heb 1:10-12 where God is explicitly addressing the Son as a creator through the words of the psalmist.

¹⁵⁷ Some mss. include the missing part of the psalm. Lane explains that as to be “almost certainly due to scribal assimilation of the text to the LXX” (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 43). Similarly most of the commentators. But see McCULLOUGH, J.C.M (“The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews”, 367-368) who argues against the explanation that it is due to the author’s mistake or failure of memory.

¹⁵⁸ Michel says that μιμνήσκομαι in the LXX “corresponds almost exclusively” to זָכַר. “God’s remembering is thus an efficacious and creative event.” But God can also remember the wicked acts of enemies of Israel. In the NT, μιμνήσκομαι is not just a mental process. Commenting Heb 2:5-8 Michel notes, “Heb, too, recalls the God who thinks on man but can also withdraw from him.” (MICHEL, O. *TDNT*, IV, 675-678)

¹⁵⁹ ‘What is man’ phrase is also used negatively and ironically in the OT. Cf. Job 15:14; 7:17; 25:4-6. (GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 116)

<p>וְכַבֹּד וְהִרְרָה תַעֲטֶרְהוּ: תִּמְשִׁילֶהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיָךְ⁷ כָּל שְׂתָה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו:</p>	<p>παρ' ἀγγέλους δόξη καὶ τιμῆ ἔστεφάνωσας αὐτόν ⁷ καὶ κατέστησας αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ</p>	<p>παρ' ἀγγέλους, δόξη καὶ τιμῆ ἔστεφάνωσας αὐτόν, ⁸ πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ.</p>
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The most significant alterations are: 1) אֱלֹהִים translated as ἀγγέλους (Heb 2:7)¹⁶⁰ 2) הַמַּעַל translated as βραχύ τι (Heb 2:7). In the second case, the Hebrew expression denotes the spatial meaning, whereas the Greek equivalent allows to assume either spatial ('little lower') or temporal ('little while lower') interpretation of Psalm 8:6 (LXX). There are some who prefer spatial or comparative understanding of the word in Heb 2:7 and 2:9.¹⁶¹ However, according to Légasse, four occurrences (including Heb 2:7, 9) of βραχύ out of seven in the NT clearly refer to time.¹⁶² Most modern commentators are convinced that the author of Hebrews operates with the temporal rather than spatial meaning of βραχύ in Heb 2:7 and 2:9.¹⁶³

“Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control” (Heb 2:8b, RSV). The author’s artistic play with words in these verses (ὑπέταξας¹⁶⁴, ὑποτάξει, ἀνυπότακτον¹⁶⁵, ὑποτεταγμένα) demonstrates the contrast of two levels of eschatology, as Attridge noticed. ἀνυπότακτον expresses the *present* potentiality (nothing is ‘unsubjectable’ to him) standing beside the *future* expectation of ὑποτεταγμένα (but we do not yet see everything ‘subjected’ to him).¹⁶⁶ The author then brings into notice of the fact that Jesus, who was

¹⁶⁰ The LXX thus chose one of the possible translations and wiped the certain ambiguity of אֱלֹהִים (= gods or God) away.

¹⁶¹ “A little lower” translate mostly the older versions: English KJV, NKJ, ASV, NIB, YLT, NIV. Calvin’s GNV (“litle inferiour”), Czech BKR (‘maličkos’), German ELB („ein wenig unter“). J.A.T. Robinson, who reads the psalm strictly anthropologically and translates βραχύ τι in Heb 2 as ‘a little lower’, argues that mankind has not been “a little while lower” than angels but “this has always been so” (*The Human Face of God*, 160).

¹⁶² Heb 2:7, 9; Lk 22:58, Acts 5:34. The remaining three occurrences should be translated non-temporally (‘a few’ - John 6:7, ‘briefly’ – Heb 13:22, ‘a little farther’ – Acts 27:28). LÉGASSE, *EDNT*, 1, 226-7.

¹⁶³ Légasse, F.F. Bruce, Montefiore, Attridge, Ellingworth, Lane, Grässer, Weiss. The temporal meaning of the word is reflected in these translations: English NJB, NAU, RSV, NRS, German LUT, Czech CEP, KMS.

¹⁶⁴ On ὑποτάσσω see my comment on verse 5.

¹⁶⁵ Dellling says that the word ἀνυπότακτος is not found before 200 BC, not even in the LXX. In the Hellenistic Greek, it mainly has the meaning “not capable of being subjected” which fits the context of Heb 2:8 well (DELLING, *TDNT*, VIII, 47). Bauer translates the phrase in Heb 2:8: “er hat nichts unabhängig von ihm gelassen”, i.e. „nichts hat er seiner Herrschaft entzogen“ (BAUER D.W. *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 127).

¹⁶⁶ ATTRIDGE, H *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 72.

‘crowned with glory and honour’¹⁶⁷, ‘was made for a little while lower than the angels’ (9). Both phrases directly correspond with the preceding description of ‘man’ in the quoted psalm. The reason for Jesus’ glorious coronation lies in his suffering of death¹⁶⁸ he tasted for all. γεύομαι signifies “a graphic expression of the hard and painful reality of dying which is experienced by man.”¹⁶⁹

The crucial question we posed in verse 5 arises here again. The readers might have expected that the quotation of Psalm 8 was going to give an answer, but in fact, the author of Hebrews has magnified our inquisitiveness even more. *Who* then receives this subjecting all things, if not the angels (2:5)? *Who* does ‘him’ (αὐτῷ) in 2:8 refer to? *Who* does the quoted Psalm 8 point to? The answer to this question is extensively disputed among scholars. Basically, there are 3 main understandings of Psalm 8:5-7: i. the strictly Christological, ii. the strictly anthropological, and finally iii. the Christological Man-representative reading. It has to be said that all the three stand on quite firm grounds.

i. Strictly Christological interpretation

By the ‘strictly Christological’ reading I mean the attempt to understand Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 as referring to the person of Christ exclusively. Psalm 8 occurs in this conception as a direct prediction of Christ’s humiliation, the fulfillment of which the author of Hebrews is confirming. A support for this understanding might be found in the exclusive Christological use of Psalm 8. The psalm is “almost invariably”¹⁷⁰ cited with Psalm 110:1 in the NT.¹⁷¹ Therefore, as Grässer says, the Christological understanding of Psalm 8 “scheint bereits traditionell zu sein”.¹⁷² The connection with Psalm 110:1 (‘sit at my right hand’) is undoubtedly present in Hebrews 2 as well (cf. Heb 1:13). The broader context of Hebrews, in which the psalm is cited, is certainly Christological, the author of Hebrews seems to progress from the depiction of Christ as the Son (chapter 1) to Christ as a man (chapter 2). The author of Hebrews thus does not develop a new theme (‘humanity superior to the angels’) but expands his prior argument (‘the Son superior to the angels’). In this view, it is often argued that the ‘son of man’ of Ps 8 has been used for the author’s Christological purpose. Quite a few commentators thus view in vv6ff the Son of

¹⁶⁷ The ‘honour of high priest’ (see 5:4-5) might be meant here as well. Koester points out to Sir 45:12 which speaks of the crown upon the high priest turban. Nevertheless, Koester concludes, the ‘royal aspect of the crown is dominant’ in Heb 2:9 (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 217).

¹⁶⁸ Jesus’ suffering in Hebrews is always closely bound with his death. Peterson though warns to view the terms interchangeably as many commentators do. Each of the phrases ‘suffering’ (v9) and ‘suffering of death’ (v10) stress a different aspect of Christ’s passion (PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 68).

¹⁶⁹ BEHM, *TDNT*, I, 677. ‘To taste death’ is especially found in the Semitic languages (but not in the OT). It occurs in 4 Esra 6:26. Its meaning is ‘to taste’, ‘to eat’, ‘to enjoy’. In Hb 2:9 it denotes “to experience death as what it is (cf. Hb 11:5).” (Ibid., 675-77.)

¹⁷⁰ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 46-47.

¹⁷¹ 1 Co 15:25-27; Eph 1:20, Heb 10:12-13. Cf. Phil 3:21, 1 Pet 3:22.

¹⁷² GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 117.

Man Christology, which is a very significant concept in the Synoptic Gospels, John and Revelation.¹⁷³ ‘Son of man’ and ‘man’ in Heb 2:6 do not refer to the same thing – as the holders of the anthropological view object to the critics. The Son’s lowering for a little while should be explained as a reference to Christ’s incarnation and redemptory work. Verse 8 thus primarily refers to Christ’s exaltation. Despite the strengths of this view, the ‘strictly Christological’ reading of Heb 2:5-8 remains rather minority among scholars.¹⁷⁴

ii. Anthropological interpretation

Many more stand for the anthropological understanding of Psalm 8.¹⁷⁵ The main arguments are as follows: a) ‘son of man’ in Heb 2:6 has no definite article,¹⁷⁶ therefore, the ‘Son of Man Christology’ is excluded.¹⁷⁷ The phrase ‘son of man’ in the NT often refers to an ordinary man (Mk 2:27f, Mk 10:45, 1 Tm 2:5f). Moreover, in Heb 2:6, it is concurrently linked, and thus explicitly paralleled, with ‘man’. b) Even though the NT use of Psalm 8 is governed by the Christological interpretation, there is no evidence of its messianic use in Jewish and Rabbinic writings.¹⁷⁸ The original understanding of the Psalm is surely anthropological. c) The name ‘Jesus’ is not mentioned before Heb 2:9. The author put it in the emphatic position at the end of the clause.¹⁷⁹ Lane comments, “there is nothing corresponding to this in any other author.”¹⁸⁰ Moreover, this verse seems to be distinctly separated from verse 8 by the adversative conjunction $\delta\epsilon$ (‘but we see Jesus’). To summarize these arguments, the whole section 2:5-8 depicts mankind being made for a little while lower than angels¹⁸¹, crowned with glory and honour and to whom all things are subjected. But tragically (or ironically), as the author of Hebrews comments in v8, we can not yet see all things subjected to humankind. The argument then follows, ‘but we see Jesus’ who identified with the humanity in their lowliness and who won back the lost glory of mankind (9). The strictly anthropological reading of 2:5-9 thus presents a very strong and coherent view.

¹⁷³ Son of Man Christology follows the apocalyptic vision of the heavenly messianic figure in Da 7:13 (cf. Mt 26:64, etc.). The Son of Man Christology underpins for instance BUCHANAN, G.W. *To the Hebrews*, 38-51.

¹⁷⁴ As the representatives of this approach might be assumed Windisch or Braun (see ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 150) or Buchanan, Cullmann, Hanson, Giles (see HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2”, 153 n8), many other scholars hold only some of the presented arguments.

¹⁷⁵ see MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 56-58, LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 47, ROBINSON, J.A.T. *The Human Face of God*, 160 and partly HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1...”

¹⁷⁶ In contrast to the other NT references that read υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου . Only such exception might be found in John 5:27. However Lane argues that the definite article is missing in J 5:27 due to the writer’s reference to the messianic ‘son of man’ in Dan 7:13 that occurs without the article as well. (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 47).

¹⁷⁷ This argument is accepted by more scholars, see also GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 71-73;

KOESTER, C.R., *Hebrews*, 215 or HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2”, 153-4.

¹⁷⁸ This psalm “is certainly not important messianically” in Judaism (DELLING, *TDNT*, VIII, 41).

¹⁷⁹ Similarly as in 3:1; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2; 13:20 (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 49).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ The phrase ‘little while lower’ can be also understood as a temporal tragic subjection of man to the angels, which was not intended in the beginning at all. Christ thus does not identify (v9) himself with ‘humanity’ generally but rather with this ‘unnatural state of humanity temporally subjected to the angels’ and brings mankind to its prior purpose, that is, ruling over all things including the angels.

iii. *The Man-representative interpretation*

This comprehension of Heb 2:5-8 is a sort of compromise between the prior two presented views.¹⁸² The proponents of the Christological Man-representative view on Heb 2:5-9 agree with the supporters of the ‘strictly anthropological’ understanding that the concept of “Erniedrigungs- und Hoheitsaussage des Menschen” in Ps 8 is “aus der anthropologischen in die christologische Relation transportiert.”¹⁸³ Therefore, the anthropological meaning of the psalm has to be kept.¹⁸⁴ However, in contrast to the 2), they argue that already the unit 2:5-8 speaks of Christ as a man-representative. The problematic verse for the man-representative interpretation is then v8. It is argued though that $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ may refer to Christ as well as man. The conjunction $\delta\epsilon$ shouldn’t be taken adversatively. Probably the strongest argument contra the strictly man-reading lies in the undisputable Christological context of the quotation in Hebrews.¹⁸⁵ Ellingworth thus speaks about the double application of Psalm 8.¹⁸⁶ In other words, the depiction of the Man Jesus as a representative of humankind might suppose the presence of the so-called ‘Adam Christology’ here. Bruce argues that the conception of the last Adam was probably not just Pauline (especially if Phil 2:6-11 is not by Paul) and it is “certainly no innovation” of the author of Hebrews.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Dunn claims that Heb 2:5-9 “has simply demonstrated the logic of the early use made of Ps.8:4-6”, that is, Adam’s Christology. The author of Hebrews, according to Dunn, expressed the thought here more clearly than Paul himself: Jesus was the one “who had fulfilled the complete divine plan for humankind.”¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Attridge is cautious to see in Hebrews 2:6-8 ‘pure’ Adam Christology. He points, I think rightly, to the fact that the figure of Adam doesn’t seem to be so especially significant for the writer to the Hebrews as, for instance, Abraham. Attridge thus refers rather to the ‘ironical meaning’ of the text.¹⁸⁹ We cannot see an exalted Jesus (‘all things subjected to him’) if we do not see a *human* Jesus first.¹⁹⁰ Another aspect of the Man-representative interpretation has been brought to the discussion by Grässer. He suggests reading of the section in Hebrews *ecclesiologically*, “unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Solidarität von Erlöser und Erlösten“, rather than purely messianically or anthropologically.¹⁹¹

¹⁸² It is held by GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 116-118; WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 196-198; KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 215-217; BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 72-75. ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 152. HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2”, 153-4.

¹⁸³ GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 116.

¹⁸⁴ The protagonists of this view mostly disagree with the opinion that the author wants to present the Son of Man Christology. The phrase ‘son of man’, when applied to Christ, more likely denotes the human nature of Jesus (ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 71-74).

¹⁸⁵ Luther who was, according to Grässer, basically right by saying that if Psalm 8 in Heb 2 speaks about ‘man’ only, then, one must “die vorhergehenden und folgenden Worte wunderbarlich auf die Folter spannen, kreuzigen und in den anderen Sinn hineinzwängen.” (*An die Hebräer*, 117)

¹⁸⁶ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 73.

¹⁸⁸ DUNN, J.D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 201-2.

¹⁸⁹ In this regard he is very close to the strictly anthropological reading of the passage which he himself regards as “still possible” (ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 71-74).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ GRASSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 117-118. However, Grässer views this solidarity and unity of the Man Jesus and mankind through the Gnostic spectacles which is not necessary, in my judgment. He says: “Das bedeutet, dass Hebr in c.2 einen eigenständigen christologischen und soteriologischen Entwurf vorlegt, der ohne Einschlag gnostischer Urmenschspekulationen nicht erklärbar ist, wie die Einzelexegese zeigen mag.“ (118)

,Neutral' reading (KJV)	Strictly anthropological reading (NRS)	Christological Man-representative reading (NJB)
<p>⁶ But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?</p> <p>⁷ Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:</p> <p>⁸ Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing <i>that is</i> not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.</p> <p>⁹ But we see Jesus, who...</p>	<p>⁶ But someone has testified somewhere, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?"</p> <p>⁷ You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor,</p> <p>⁸ subjecting all things under their feet." Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,</p> <p>⁹ but we do see Jesus, who...</p>	<p>⁶ Someone witnesses to this somewhere with the words: What are human beings that you spare a thought for them, a child of Adam that you care for him?</p> <p>⁷ For a short while you have made him less than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honour,</p> <p>⁸ put all things under his feet. For in putting all things under him he made no exceptions. At present, it is true, we are not able to see that all things are under him,</p> <p>⁹ but we do see Jesus, who...</p>

My **conclusion** is that the author of Hebrews chose this OT witness and applied it to Christ, yet without losing its original anthropological meaning. The ambiguity thus created - who does the psalm actually refer to - seems to be quite intentional. The psalm refers to both. Weiss says that Ps 8:5-7 speaks of the 'son of man' and 'man', and it still remains partly concealed what is exactly meant by that. But verse 9 comes with clarification then – "Jesus, der Erniedrigte, das ist der 'Mensch', der 'Menschensohn' von Psalm 8:5!"¹⁹² The writer thus presents a very distinctive use of Psalm 8 in the early Christianity which is, however, not contrasting the exclusively-Christological application of the psalm in the rest of the NT. Therefore, I personally incline to the representative understanding of Ps 8 where Christ identifies himself with humanity. The ecclesiological and pastoral aspect of this approach is evident. All the writer wants to share with us is the complete solidarity of the Man with men.

The author's emphasis on the phrase "little while lower" presents another unique feature of the use of Psalm 8 in the NT. Most commentators do not answer the important question whether the LXX translation βραχὺ τι, adding temporality into the MT spatial reading, shall bring any consequences for the anthropological (and Man-representative) interpretation of Ps 8. Might this shift have allowed the author of Hebrews to understand humankind of Ps 8 being in rather negative state, in other words, *being 'a little while lower' than angels for their fall?* If so, does

¹⁹² WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 197.

the author of Hebrews build his argumentation on that?¹⁹³ I suppose, it might be possible interpretation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 as well.¹⁹⁴ What implications would it bear then? The phrase ‘but we see Jesus, who was made for little while lower than angels’(9) would not only express the Son’s identification with ‘humanity’ but the Son’s identification with ‘fallen humanity’! Interpretation of Psalm 8 then goes further than a mere announcement of Christ’s incarnation. It speaks of Christ’s incarnation into *the human desperate situation*. The author’s pastoral concern would be thus even more evident here. In the context of Heb 2, this interpretation works well too, for the following section speaks of Christ’s solidarity with *enslaved* humanity whom Jesus is not ashamed to call ‘brothers’ (!).¹⁹⁵

b) „But we see Jesus“ (Heb 2:9)

There are two difficulties in the last phrase of verse 9, both related to each other. The first problem is whether the ὅπως clause (‘so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone’) refers to the very preceding phrase in the Greek text (‘was crowned’)¹⁹⁶ or to the prior one (‘for the suffering of death’)¹⁹⁷. O’Neill argues that the last sentence in verse 9 is a gloss referring to neither of the mentioned phrases but going back to Jesus’ lowering (9a).¹⁹⁸ Bruce understands the clause even more generally as embracing Jesus’ lowering, suffering and

¹⁹³ The author’s irony about man in Heb 2:8a and 2:8b (ἀνυπότακτον and ὑποτεταγμένα) has been recognized by several scholars (see ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 74). Furthermore, the LXX translation of עֲלֵי אֲנָשִׁים as ἀγγέλους literally opens the door for that understanding as well. Montefiore thus might be right in assuming that the author of Hebrews speaks about the man’s temporal degradation that implies humankind not always being inferior to the angels (MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 57). Miller too, even though he does not develop this thought further, says that the psalm reveals both “the glory and the tragedy of man” (MILLER, D.G. “Why God Became Man. From Text to Sermon on Hebrews 2:5-18”, 413). Hurst is quite close to this interpretation as well. He says that Christ is the forerunner leading the mankind to their glory (see 2:7 // 2:10 and 2:9). The redeemed humanity will share supremacy over these angels (HURST, L.D. “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2”, 153-4).

¹⁹⁴ Another, and surely possible, option is to see the temporal lowliness of humanity as that eschatological ‘not yet’ when the humanity still waits for the glory Jesus prepared for them. This view doesn’t suppose the state of mankind to be necessarily negative.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. 2:5-18; 4:14-5:10, ch7. However at least two objections could be raised against this view on ‘man’ in Heb 2:6-8. 1) The original context of Psalm 8 (man’s glorious status) is more or less abolished in this interpretation 2) it necessitate an acceptance of some portion of speculation about a) the original state of humanity towards the angels b) the ‘lost’ of this position. These objections might be partly resolved though: ad1) The LXX reading seems to justify the author of Hebrews to come to this conclusion. The general anthropological meaning of the psalm remains preserved. This interpretation fits the context of 2:5-18 very well. ad2) The weight of these implicit (speculative?) statements is quite significant. ad 2a) the angels in Hebrews are described as the servants of humans rather than some ruling powers over the humans (cf. my comment on verse 5). Ad 2b) the author describes the fallen and enslaved humanity (2:14-15) that needs Christ’s atonement (2:17) so that they can enter to the God’s rest (4:1-11).

¹⁹⁶ This reading prefers Peterson (following Vanhoye and Spicq). The clause logically follows Jesus’ prior crowning as a “repercussion”(PETTERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 55).

¹⁹⁷ Thus Grässer who comments it, “damit er nämlich durch Gnade Gottes zugunsten jedermanns den Tod schmeckte“ (GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer* 123-4).

¹⁹⁸ O’NEILL, J.C. “Hebrews 2:9”, 81.

crowning.¹⁹⁹ O’Neill’s understanding of the clause as a gloss seems to be convincing. I would thus argue, partly with O’Neill and partly with Bruce that this *gloss* refers to the whole sequence of preceding events, similarly as the Czech translations CEP and KMS put it.

The second disputed problem is whether we should read χάριτι θεοῦ or χωρίς θεοῦ. Even though the latter collocation has quite a strong support²⁰⁰ the χάριτι reading remains the most likely one. It is attested by the absolute majority of the manuscripts – this textual support “seems decisive”.²⁰¹ Grässer supposes that χωρίς θεοῦ was “eine Randglosse” that was intended to connect τὰ πάντα in verse 8 with the idea of ἐκτός (‘outside’) in 1 Co 15:27. The later transcribe then probably included the gloss into the body of the Hebrews’ text. Some Church Fathers in the 2nd century used this reading to support the Nestorian heresies to broaden the Christological space between God and man. But after that, this ‘separatist’ reading vanished again.²⁰² The phrase ‘God’s grace’ in connection with the terrible ‘tasting of death’ of God’s Son might look quite awkward at first glance. Commentators correctly stress though that the word grace is linked with ‘for all’. But we can even go a step further. Our tendency to separate God the Father and his suffering Son does not seem to be a tendency of the author of Hebrews. God was fully present in his Son when he was experiencing the suffering of death. This *divine* sacrifice became χάρις θεοῦ for all.

3) Jesus’ identification with humanity and his redemptive work: Exegesis 2:10-18

a) God perfected the Leader (Heb 2:10)

Verse 9 described Jesus’ work as God’s grace for all. Verse 10 shares more about this grace. ‘For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons into

¹⁹⁹ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 76.

²⁰⁰ The textual variant χωρίς θεοῦ (‘out of God’) occurs only in the old mss. 1739 and few later ones, nevertheless, it seems to be perhaps the prevailing reading for many Church fathers, as for instance Origenes. The Hebrews’ clause thus would be quite easily understood as Christ’s desolation on the cross (Mk 15:34 // Ps 22:1 – that is the psalm quoted in Heb 2:12). It seems, also, that the change from χωρίς to χάριτι is much better understandable than *vice versa*. Bruce takes χωρίς as an original version that was changed in the very early versions (already before P⁴⁶ – A.D.200) to χάριτι. Bruce’s explanation of the change is based on assimilation to 1 Co 15:27 (BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 70). Koester suggests that the χωρίς reading may have been abandoned because it would favour the Gnostic statement that “the divine element left Jesus prior his death” (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 218). The χωρίς variant thus prefer BRUCE, F.F. (70); MONTEFIORE (58); O’NEILL (80) following Tischendorf, Harnack and Zuntz.

²⁰¹ LANE, W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 43.

²⁰² GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 124-126. Beside Lane and Grässer the χάρις reading is supported by ELLINGWORTH (156), WEISS (202), KOESTER (222) and by the vast majority of modern translations.

glory, should make the Leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings.²⁰³ The subject of the clause is obviously *God* who has been mentioned at the end of verse 9.²⁰⁴ There are several crucial points the author of Hebrews highlighted here, nevertheless, they all are aimed to the only one, ‘bringing many sons in glory’, eventually their ‘salvation’. πολλοὺς υἱοὺς (‘many sons’) straightly corresponds with ὑπὲρ παντὸς (‘for all’) in 9b. πολλοὺς might imply certain exclusion from παντὸς. This “reduction”²⁰⁵ thus may stress the need of ‘endurance’ and ‘faith’ on the side of believers as the author of Hebrews has already alluded in 2:1-4 and will develop in chapter 3. Peterson explains the contrast as between *the universal* (‘for all’) and *particular* (‘many sons’).²⁰⁶ Primarily, it seems though, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς in v10 rhetorically works as a contrasting word to ‘one God’ and ‘one Son’ (cf. v11).²⁰⁷ The phrase ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ (‘it is fitting/suitable for him’)²⁰⁸ as referring to God is entirely unique in the NT as well as the LXX.²⁰⁹ Commentators fumble a little as to how to make the statement clear.²¹⁰ Bruce makes an appropriate theological comment on that, saying, “in fact the only way to discover what is a worthy thing for God to do is to consider what he has actually done.”²¹¹ The ‘fittingness for God’ seems to thematically correspond with ‘*God’s grace... for all*’ (9b) and it is further explained in the climax of chapter 2 – verse 17 (see ὄφειλεν). From God’s point of view, therefore, “it was fitting that it should be *by sufferings*, that is, by Christ’ death”.²¹² Peterson argues that the phrase διὰ + πάθημα has slightly different function in v9 than in v10. In the former case, ‘suffering’ occurs in the accusative (διὰ τὸ πάθημα) signifying that Jesus *passed through* suffering and was exalted. In the latter, διὰ is connected to ‘sufferings’ in the genitive form (διὰ παθημάτων), which denotes suffering as *being the ground* of Jesus’ perfection and exaltation.²¹³ We may see a similar pattern in Phil 2:9 (διο).

²⁰³ My translation.

²⁰⁴ Thus most commentators. Some Bible versions translate αὐτῷ straight as ‘God’ (e.g., RSV, NRS, NJB, NIV). If the subject of the clause was Christ, it would illustrate his pre-existence and supremacy as the creator. However this interpretation does not fit the context of the passage smoothly, in addition, the whole idea of the eternal Son bringing many (his?) sons would have rather confusing effect. Most problematic is to reconcile the fact that Christ would be the acting subject as well as the receiving object, in other words, it would be Christ who makes perfect himself as ἀρχηγός. This would be a very serious statement in regard to the believers who are then supposed to follow Jesus in this self-perfecting!

²⁰⁵ Windisch’s term – see ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 159.

²⁰⁶ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 56. Cf. 1 Tm 2:6 and 1 J 2:2. Peterson understands the universal dimension of ὑπὲρ παντὸς as ‘a potential effectiveness’ (Ibid., 217 n46).

²⁰⁷ ELLINGWORTH, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 159.

²⁰⁸ ROHDE, J. *EDNT*, 3, 147. The word is also used in Mt 3:15, 1 Co 11:13, Eph 5:3, 1 Tm 2:10 and Tit 2:1. Attridge says that “Hebrews uses language at home in Hellenistic theology” (ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 82).

²⁰⁹ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 55.

²¹⁰ See, for instance, Koester’s paraphrase: It “is morally consistent for God to carry out his purposes in this way...” (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 235).

²¹¹ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 80.

²¹² ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 158.

²¹³ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 68.

The next two expressions we are going to discuss belong to the most important terms in the epistle to the Hebrews. ἀρχηγός and τελειώω need to be treated together because the meaning of both overlaps each other.

ἀρχηγός, occurring four times in the NT (Acts 3:15, 5:31, Heb 2:10 and 12:2), was used “exclusively as a Christological title for the exalted Jesus” in the Christian church.²¹⁴ Jackson points to the striking verbal agreement between Luke, Acts and Hebrews and suggests that ἀρχηγός may have been “an early title employed in the worship of the Hellenistic congregations”, where Hebrews and Acts “must have circulated at first”.²¹⁵ There is “an extremely polyvalent spectrum of meaning”²¹⁶ of ἀρχηγός; the fact that is well reflected in many different commentators’ and Bible translations. R.R. Niebuhr states that ἀρχηγός “commends itself as the most descriptive, the most elastic, and the least metaphysical” title of all in the NT.²¹⁷ Probably the most influential studies on ἀρχηγός, coming to the partly conflicting conclusions though, were presented by Delling and, more recently, by Müller.

Archehos: a Hellenistic idea?

Delling’s interpretation²¹⁸ tends to show that the author of Hebrews used the word in its exclusive Hellenistic context. In Hellenistic Greek ἀρχηγός was used for the ‘hero’ or ‘captain’. “The hero of a city, who forwarded it, often gave it his name and became its guardian, as, e.g., Athene for Athens...” Another Hellenistic usage of the word, more significantly reflecting the linguistic root ἀρχη (‘beginning’), is ‘originator’ or ‘author’; in Philonic language applied also to ‘Adam’, ‘Noah’ or even ‘Creator and Father of all things’ (Ebr., 42. Philo does not use ἀρχηγός but its cognate ἀρχηγητής). Commenting on Heb 2:10, Delling says that ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας as well as ἀγαγόντα refer to the motive of ‘leading’. The similar expression ἀρχηγὸν τῆς πίστεως in Heb 12:2 means 1) ‘author’ or ‘founder’ and 2) ‘the one who gave an example of his faith’. Jesus is thus the Hero we should follow. Very close to Delling’s position are Lane and Montefiore who speak of the “divine hero” who descended from the heaven on the earth. This concept is especially clear in Heb 1 and 2. The Hebrews’ description thus fits Hercules who wrestled with Death. The idea, that was certainly evoked in the minds of hearers.²¹⁹ A very good study on ἀρχηγός has also Grässer in his commentary, considering both the OT as well as the Gnostic influence. Grässer notes that the Christological title both in Acts and Hebrews can not be correctly explained without a reference to Moses (cf. Acts 3:15, 3:22-26, 7:26 and Heb 2:10, 3:2-6). He concludes though that the Gnostic interpretation of ἀρχηγός is governing its use in Hebrews.²²⁰ The same conclusion makes also Ellingworth who says that “Hebrews’ use of πρόδρομος (6:20) of Christ suggests that ἀρχηγός in Hebrews may have

²¹⁴ MULLER, *EDNT*, 1, 163.

²¹⁵ JACKSON, H. M. “Christ as Archehos”, 381.

²¹⁶ MULLER, *EDNT*, 1, 163.

²¹⁷ NIEBUHR, Richard R. “Archehos...”, 87.

²¹⁸ His key study on ἀρχηγός was published in *TDNT*, 1, 487-488.

²¹⁹ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 56-7, MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 61.

²²⁰ GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 130-133.

kept alive the Hellenistic metaphor of a pioneer opening a path on which others can follow.” He suggests that ἀρχηγός rather points to the NT idea of discipleship and following Christ (Mk 2:14 and J 1:43) and “less directly to Moses leading Israel out of Egypt”.²²¹

Archegos: a Jewish scriptural concept?

Müller²²² takes quite a different course from that of Delling’s. ἀρχηγός, according to him, basically means, “he who is the fist, who stands at the head of, who leads”. The word occurs 35x in the LXX with nine main senses. Müller especially points to the OT idea of “Yahweh’s leading in the course of salvation history” which might be understood as “the credo theme of ‘led out of Egypt’”. Müller argues, similarly as Delling, that the connection between ἀρχηγός and ἀγαγόντα is decisive for the ‘leader’ understanding. However, he disagrees with the Gnostic Delling’s ‘hero’ or Käsemann’s ‘leader of soul’ understanding. Müller says that Heb 2:10 and 12:2 show Jesus as an eschatological leader of believers, rather than the one who only gave an example to follow. Acts 5:31, with its ‘pioneer of their salvation’, expresses thus the same idea as Heb 2:10. Müller’s view is almost invariably held by Peterson who stresses the dominant line in Heb 2:10 of ‘Israel led by God’ as being essential for the correct understanding of perfection in Hebrews.²²³

In my opinion, the argumentation of Müller seems to be slightly more convincing. The OT concept of liberation from the bondage of slavery and eschatological pilgrimage of God’s people out of Egypt to the Sabbath Rest composes a very important motive of Hebrews in chapter 2 (vv15-16) as well as in the rest of the epistle (see esp. chapters 3-4). Grässer’s remark on the connection of ἀρχηγός with Moses is thus very important. On the other hand, Müller, in his intention to oppose Delling’s position, probably got rid of the Hellenistic picture of ἀρχηγός too definitely. It can be hardly denied that the readers of the epistle, living in diaspora in the Hellenistic world, would not associate this term with the Gnostic redeemer or Divine hero at all. The author was surely aware of that connotation and he obviously did not see danger to evoke it. I would therefore agree with Weiss who regards the ‘Archegos-Christology’ as coming *predominantly* from the Jewish biblical sources,²²⁴ even though at the same time, it is “naheliegend” to expect Gnosis having some influence on reader’s understanding of ἀρχηγός as well.²²⁵

What is even more important though, is *the pastoral dimension of the Leader*. As most commentators note, ἀρχηγός stands near to αἴτιος (‘the source’) in Heb 5:9 and πρόδρομος (‘forerunner’) in Heb 6:20. Christ is “the living commentary on the still living faith between

²²¹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 161.

²²² I am using one of his several studies on this word, *EDNT*, 1, 163-164.

²²³ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 58; 69-70.

²²⁴ Weiss is explicitly endorsing Müller’s position.

²²⁵ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 203; 211.

patriarchs, prophets, and kings and their God.” In this sense, Jesus cannot be a completely new “*archegos* of faith”.²²⁶ As a human he became part of our history but he surpassed all our ‘leaders of faith’ in the history. Hebrews thus presents the earthly and exalted Jesus “as the leader of the faith in order to encourage believers to endure in their *Christological* life of faith”.²²⁷ I believe with Weiss, that the Archegos-Christology is constitutive for the author’s main pastoral statement of the passage, that is, the description of the merciful high priest in verse 17.²²⁸ The Archegos Christology in verse 10 is therefore essentially still the same representative Man-Christology developed in verses 5-9.

The **concept of perfection** in Hebrews has been, and still remains, a disputed issue in scholarly circles. There are probably six main understandings of τελειόω (‘to make perfect’ or ‘to become perfect’) as counted by Ellingworth referring to Bauer: 1) telic (to fulfill a goal) 2) cultic (to reach cultic purity) 3) ethical (to have no imperfection) 4) organic (to make mature) 5) eschatological (to complete) and finally 6) human (to die).²²⁹

It is generally accepted that the polyvalent word τελειόω and its cognates gains quite different connotations in different contexts. One of the key and probably most thorough studies on perfection in Hebrews is that by Peterson.²³⁰ He stresses that the context in which the expression occurs in Hebrews is quite essential for the understanding of the word. We may see that the author of Hebrews expounds the concept of perfection gradually from 2:10 through 5:8-9 to 7:28. Therefore, we will deal with the concept of perfection once more in the exegetical chapter on passage Heb 4:14-5:10 in which the author further developed this idea. Among scholars prevail four main understandings of τελειόω in Heb 2:10.

Telic perfection

The telic understanding of perfection is probably the most frequent in the NT and is accepted by the vast majority of commentators, but far not all of them take it as the prominent interpretation. Ellingworth formulates the telic view, as follows: “by undergoing death, God accomplished his purpose whereby the Son would become High Priest”.²³¹ A more specific description offers Paterson. He says that τελειόω in 2:10 should be understood in a vocational sense as fulfilling “the qualifications for priesthood”, which “include necessity for the *person of Christ* to be prepared for his salvific ministry” whereas “suffering

²²⁶ NIEBUHR, R. R. “Archegos...”, 88-89. Niebuhr then concludes, “to be born again, one must first of all to be born into a human condition.”

²²⁷ MULLER, *EDNT*, 1, 164 (Italics mine).

²²⁸ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 204.

²²⁹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 162. A very good overview of these has also ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 83-87.

²³⁰ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1982).

²³¹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 163.

was the part of the process by which he was perfected”.²³² Peterson considers the telic understanding of perfection as the substantial perspective of the author of Hebrews. This view is in an almost identical form accepted by Attridge: “Christ’s perfecting” is “a vocational process by which he is made complete or fit for his office”.²³³

Eschatological perfection

The second view, stressing the eschatological dimension of perfection, is compatible with the preceding one. This concept is defended by Weiss (who also holds the cultic understanding of Christ’s perfection) saying that Christ’s *exaltation* accomplishes and fulfills Christ’s perfection. “Erhöhung als ‘Vollendung’! Schliesst das nicht zugleich ein für den Hebr charakteristisches Verständnis der Erhöhung in sich?”²³⁴ Similarly argues Attridge, “Christ’s perfection is consummated in his exaltation, his entry into ‘honour and glory’, the position where he serves to guarantee his followers’ similar perfection”.²³⁵ Wikgren highlighted the idea of eschatological perfection of believers with a distinct emphasis on the “pilgrim progress” of God’s people to the Sabbath rest.²³⁶ This pilgrimage imagery, which seems to be quite important in Hebrews, is also loosely evoked by Bruce who speaks of the “pathfinder to be followed”.²³⁷

Cultic perfection

The cultic view on perfection in Hebrews is prominent for many scholars.²³⁸ Peterson connects this view especially with Häring who became one of its first defenders.²³⁹ The sacrificial dimension of τελειόω is following the predominant LXX usage of the word. It is often argued that Heb 2:10 (similarly as 5:9) reflects the consecration act of ‘filling the hands’ as described for example in Ex 29 or Lv 8. The meaning of τελειόω in Hebrews thus means, according to Delling, “to put someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God”. Delling says, “it is obvious why Heb no longer has τὰς χεῖρας; the way had been prepared for dropping this, cf. Lv 21:10.” In the case of Jesus though, according to Delling, the qualification for his cultic ministry does not need “liberation from sin”, his equipping for the priest ministry (i.e. consecration) happens through his obedience and suffering.²⁴⁰ The cultic understanding of perfection is thus related to the vocational one. However, Attridge criticizes it by saying that τελειόω of Christ does not designate “a cultic installation, although as a result of Christ’s perfecting, he serves as the sanctifying high priest”.²⁴¹ Peterson doubts the whole connection of τελειόω in Hebrews with the LXX phrase τελειόω τὰς χεῖρας. According to him, this understanding cannot be satisfactorily proved in Hebrews. The cultic meaning of perfection in Hebrews is rare and quite late in the Christian writings. Although the cultic dimension is present in v17, the whole unit Heb 2:5-18 is much more focused on Jesus as a Man of Psalm 8. The consecration in Hebrews is never used “in the sense of consecration to

²³² PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 67-68 (Italics his).

²³³ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 86.

²³⁴ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 207.

²³⁵ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 87.

²³⁶ WIKGREN, A. “Patterns of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews”, 163.

²³⁷ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 80.

²³⁸ see e.g. DELLING, *TDNT*, VIII, 82-83 or LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 57.

²³⁹ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 6-7.

²⁴⁰ DELLING, *TDNT*, VIII, 82-83.

priesthood” but it rather refers to the new Covenant. ‘Brothers’ are sanctified by Jesus but Jesus himself is never said to be sanctified, whereas perfection is applied to both (!). This “covenantal” consecration thus rather points to glorification, according to Peterson, which seems to be more important in Heb 2 than any cultic aspect.²⁴²

Personal-ethical perfection

The fourth view understands perfection in categories of the personal progression of Jesus (probably more developed in 4:14-5:10). Most commentators agree the author of Hebrews does not portray the ethical perfection of Jesus in terms of his moral improvement, for Jesus’ sinlessness is stressed several times in the epistle (Heb 4:16, 7:26-28). Rather we may speak about the existential progress as Attridge puts it, “this process doesn’t involve moral dimension but an existential one”.²⁴³ According to Montefiore, τελειώω in verse 10 signifies “the full development of Jesus’ human character in response to his intense suffering”. Heb 2:10 thus seems to resemble 4 Macc 7:15 speaking of the through martyrdom perfected life.²⁴⁴ Personal development leading to Jesus’ completion is also followed by Cullmann²⁴⁵ and Koester²⁴⁶. However, Peterson notes that we must not understand perfection as personal progression *primarily*, because it would separate τελειώω from ἀρχηγός. To reduce perfection just to the personal qualitative development would mean to lose the ‘leader’ perspective.²⁴⁷

From what precedes we shall claim that τελειῶσαι in Hebrews mainly refers to the fulfilling of Jesus’ mission **through his suffering** and death, his equipping for the priestly office. It denotes a process that carries an eschatological dimension of reaching the goal on Jesus’ pilgrimage, expressed in his exaltation as well as certain human existential development on Jesus’ side. O. Michel’s note that “it is impossible to distinguish the inner personal perfection from the outer, vocational” is quite correct.²⁴⁸ Thus, Jesus became an eschatological leader of humanity on their journey to perfection. Verse 17 will repeat that motive of leading humanity to perfection with the emphasis on Christ’s mercy and faithfulness. The cultic dimension of perfection is possible but more disputable.²⁴⁹ Finally we can say, that even the cultic understanding of perfection, if the perspective is radically posed, is in fact strongly telic because purification (i.e. perfection) of a priest from sin is definitively excluded in Jesus’ case.²⁵⁰ The author’s comprehension of perfection thus wholly remains in the realm of humanity where Jesus stands as a Pathfinder of

²⁴¹ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 86.

²⁴² PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 71-72.

²⁴³ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 87.

²⁴⁴ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 61.

²⁴⁵ CULLMANN, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, 97.

²⁴⁶ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 236.

²⁴⁷ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 69-70.

²⁴⁸ Quoted from PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 4.

²⁴⁹ Some argue that ‘sanctification’ in v11, which has a cultic meaning, significantly casts light on the previous ‘make perfect’ in v10. This debate remains open.

us all. The writer does not speak of a sort of supernatural moral perfection of Jesus. The means of Jesus' perfection was nothing more (and less) than his human suffering (Heb 2:9 and 10). The situation of suffering qualified Jesus as a priest. Suffering, i.e. experiencing physical, mental and spiritual distress of an ordinary believer, equipped him for his priestly ministry on our behalf, in which he fully sympathises with believers in distress and comes with an effective help (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15).

b) Unity of Jesus with his brothers before God (Heb 2:11-13)

The first part of the eleventh verse literally runs: "For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified [all] are from one." The subject of the clause has changed from the previous verse because ἀγιάζων here refers to Christ. In the OT, the consecrator was always God but sometimes he used agents through which he sanctified people.²⁵¹ In the OT language to be 'sanctified', means 'to be clean' (e.g. from a disease) but not automatically 'to be holy', that is, 'to be set apart for God'. Sometimes though, both meanings overlap each other.²⁵² Peterson rather stresses the covenantal dimension of sanctification here.²⁵³ These cultic expressions ὁ ἀγιάζων καὶ οἱ ἀγιαζόμεν, suddenly mentioned by the author of Hebrews, prepare the ground for the future notion of 'high priest' (v17).

The *crux interpretum* is the author's phrase 'from one' (ἐξ ἑνὸς). If we take it as neuter, it might refer to their common human nature. If it is a masculine, the possible interpretations of ἑνὸς are a) Adam b) Abraham c) 'man' in general d) God. The solution of the disputable question is not straightforward. Weiss, one of the relatively recent commentators, argues for the neuter reading ('one')²⁵⁴, which in his opinion, signifies the anthropological unity of ὁ ἀγιάζων and οἱ ἀγιαζόμεν that is expressed in v14 as 'sharing flesh and blood'. That understanding follows the "Leidensmotiv (διὰ παθημάτων)" of verse 10. The phrase then unequivocally designates "die Verbundenheit von 'Sohn und Söhnen' im Raum des Menschlichen".²⁵⁵ The first two 'masculine' interpretations are not strongly supported.²⁵⁶ The understanding 'man' or

²⁵⁰ This is stressed even by Delling himself. He says, the qualification for Jesus' cultic ministry does not need "liberation from sin", his equipping for the priest ministry (i.e. consecration) happens through his obedience and suffering (*TDNT*, VIII, 83).

²⁵¹ e.g. priests – Ex 29:33; 30:30; 1 Sam 16:5, etc.

²⁵² KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 121.

²⁵³ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 59; 72.

²⁵⁴ Neuter is also read by Vanhoye or Hughes who regard it as a reference to "the same substance or the same race" (ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 88, n111). See also NEB: "all one stock", NJB: "all of the same stock".

²⁵⁵ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 213.

²⁵⁶ Even though the Adam Christology is quite often viewed to be present in Hebrews (especially in connection to Psalm 8 in chapter 2), only few seriously stand for the argument that 'the one' in v11 refers to Adam as a typological figure of the original man. This view is mainly construed on Acts 17:26. The

‘humanity’ in general is, it seems, slightly preferred by Ellingworth. This reading fits the main theme of the passage, that is, Christ’s identification with humanity. However, the identification of ἐξ ἐνὸς with ‘man’ or ‘humanity’ does not seem to suit the coming verses 12-13. Probably the strongest support has the interpretation ‘from God’, which smoothly follows the subject of the clause in v10 and functions as a linking point for the coming citations. ἐξ ἐνὸς can thus express several meanings: “the one spiritual family”²⁵⁷, a “common parent”²⁵⁸, God as a creator, or the Redeemer’s and the redeemed “letzten, bestimmenden Quell- und Einigungspunkt” – that is God.²⁵⁹ To conclude, we notice that there are in fact only two main interpretations of ἐξ ἐνὸς, the anthropological and the theological one.²⁶⁰ The grammatical distinction between the genders does not in fact help much to understand the phrase, for the ‘neuter’ as well as ‘masculine’ reading might finally point to the same anthropological understanding as we could see in Weiss and Ellingworth. The theological address of ἐξ ἐνὸς seems to be stronger but even the anthropological one might be valid as Attridge puts it:

“The ambiguity that has occasioned so much controversy needs to be recognized. Hebrews employs here the same literary device used in vss 8-9, where the identity of the ‘man’ was dramatically revealed only at the culmination of the argument.”²⁶¹

“For this reason **Jesus is not ashamed** to call them ‘brothers’ (and sisters)” (v11b) functions as an introductory sentence to the coming OT citations. Ellingworth comments that ‘to be ashamed’ does not denote a psychological state but it is a language of public humiliation resulting from the failure to witness.²⁶² Humanity has its origin in God (ἐξ ἐνὸς) who crowned them with honour and glory (Ps 8). Jesus is ‘not ashamed’ of them because God is neither (Heb 11:16! Cf. Mk 8:38). But this statement includes also – and in fact foremost – that Jesus is not ashamed of his *fallen* human brothers, brothers whose situation differs from Psalm 8 so much as the author pointed out in vv8-9. Koester expresses it so that Jesus identified himself with the

, ‘Abraham interpretation’ is based on the similar text in Heb 11:12 where ἀφ’ ἐνὸς points to Abraham. However, the context of the passage in Heb 2 does not stress the role of Abraham so much, moreover, his name first appears not before 2:16.

²⁵⁷ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 59. Cf. NAB: “all have one origin”, RSV: “all one origin”, NIV: “of the same family”.

²⁵⁸ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 62. cf. NRS: ‘all have one Father’.

²⁵⁹ Thus Kögel (GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 135.), similarly also KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 230.

‘God’ reading also prefer BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 81; LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 58; ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 88-89.

²⁶⁰ Koester chooses to discuss the issue according to this distinction, not according the ‘neuter’ or masculine’ reading (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 230).

²⁶¹ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 89.

²⁶² ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 166.

slaves of fear of death.²⁶³ ‘To call them brothers’ is a collocation carrying a strong pastoral ecclesiological dimension. It occurs in a present tense implying continuation – he still calls them ‘brothers’. The author might have alluded here to the gospels’ references, where Jesus calls his fellows ‘brothers’.²⁶⁴

The author of Hebrews supports his statement of 11b with the quotation of *Psalm 22:22* (21:23 LXX), the speaker is Jesus: ‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of congregation I will sing praise to you.’ The Hebrews quotation reads a variant ἀπαγγελω̄ (‘I will announce’, ‘I will declare’)²⁶⁵ instead of the LXX version διηγῆσομαι (‘I will tell’). The change of the meaning is thus basically insignificant. McCullough argues that the most likely explanation of this shift rests in “a Septuagintal translational variant” in the manuscript the author disposed of. The Hebrew word רַבּ is translated in the LXX as both διηγέομαι (Ps 21:23) and ἀπαγγέλλω (Ps 77:4.6). The author thus most possibly just copied his version of the LXX.²⁶⁶ The psalm should be probably interpreted as an individual psalm that was used liturgically in the context of the believing community.²⁶⁷ The messianic use of Psalm 22 is attested in no rabbinic writings but it was employed quite frequently in the Christian worship, regarding the Passion story especially. Designation of the psalm as “the ‘Fifth Gospel’ account of the crucifixion” has its good reason.²⁶⁸ It is very likely that the author of Hebrews used the psalm because it was a well known Christological text to his Christian readers. In the original context the psalmist expresses his great distress, best represented by his shocking questioning in verse 1 without hearing any answer, ‘my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ As Peter Craigie comments, “the sufferer of Ps 22 is a human being, experiencing the terror of mortality in the absence of God and the presence of enemies.”²⁶⁹ Verse 22 is the breaking point in the psalm between the lament of an individual and thanksgiving to God in the congregation. It is the statement of confidence that God will answer the prayers.²⁷⁰ This whole context must be considered in the interpretation of Heb 2:12, I suppose. The author of Hebrews thus identifies

²⁶³ “Slavery is the most shameful state” (Dio Chrysostomos). KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 238.

²⁶⁴ Mark 3:31-35 and //; Mt 25:40; after resurrection: Mt 28:10, J 20:17. Cf. also R 8:17.

²⁶⁵ BROER, *EDNT*, 1, 12-13; Schniewind observes that outside of the NT ἀπαγγελω usually appears in the official or judicial style. He counts 25 occurrences of ἀπαγγελω in the Lucan writings and 14 elsewhere in the NT. The verb is frequently used in the accounts of miracles, the message of God or Christ’s resurrection. Ἀπαγγελω is almost interchangeable with ἀναγγελω (SCHNIEWIND, *TDNT*, 1, 64-67).

²⁶⁶ McCULLOUGH J.C. “The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews”, 367. McCullough disagrees that the change was made due to the doctrinal reasons (the shift is only slight and the author is not concerned with preaching in the Hebrews’ passage), a mistake (the author’s quotations are always very accurate) or replacing the word by its synonym, as was recently once more suggested by Ellingworth: Author replaced the verbs possibly because of a “remembrance of the similar passage Ps 78 (LXX 77): 3-6” (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 168).

²⁶⁷ Cf. CRAIGIE, P.C. *Psalm 1-50*, 198.

²⁶⁸ See Matt 27:35, 39, 46; Mark 15:24, 29, 34; Luke 23:34, 55; John 19:24. Craigie takes the phrase from Frost (CRAIGIE, P.C. *Psalm 1-50*, 202).

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Jesus with the psalmist in his desperate (human) situation and his (human) reliance on God. The original congregational dimension of the quotation is very important for the author too. In the same way as the psalmist, Jesus praises God with his brothers in the midst of the ἐκκλησία, the community of faith.²⁷¹ Koester correctly points to the possible connotation of some gospels' witnesses that show Jesus as he proclaims God to his followers in synagogues and the Temple.²⁷² The eschatological aspect of Jesus' proclamation might be seen here as well. It is conceivable to assume that the author, following thus the usual practice of the first Christians, cites Psalm 22 to allude the Passion story, which would underline author's argument about Jesus' suffering. Regarding its original context then, the quotation of Ps 22:22 seems to be a proof text *par excellence*, that in his identification with men Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Jesus is found side by side to his fellows in the community praying to God.

The next citation (in Heb 2:13) comes from, in the early Christianity well known, Isaiah's chapter 8.²⁷³ The author of Hebrews divides the quotation of Is 8:17-18 into two parts by using the same introductory phrase as we find in the beginning of verse 13. It is argued sometimes that the division between the two Isaiah's verses is not original and has been made by the inscription καὶ πάλιν. More likely though, the writer wanted to make three separate quotations, each supporting his argumentation independently.²⁷⁴

Isaiah 8 brings us into the times of the civil war between Judah and Israel who was in coalition with Syria. The threat to Judah may be resolved by cooperation with Assyria – the Judah's temptation the prophet warns against. The prophet's oracles are completely neglected though. Therefore, he seals God's words and hands them to his disciples. "Yahweh's face is hidden, deathly trouble is sure to come."²⁷⁵ In spite of that despair he turns to God and says: "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and *I will hope in him*. See, *I and my children whom the Lord has given me* are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of the hosts, who dwell on the Mount of Zion" (Is 8:17-18, NRS). His own two children and their names (cf. 7:3; 8:3) became the signs for Israel. The short citation from Is 8:17²⁷⁶ 'I will trust him' is introduced simply by καὶ πάλιν that extends the previous author's argumentation. The

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 200.

²⁷¹ The understanding of ἐκκλησία as the exclusive designation of Christian church does not probably play a significant role in the author's argument, even though the meaning can not be completely dismissed.

²⁷² See Matt 4:23; Mark 1:21; 6:1-2; Lk 19:47, J 18:20, etc. (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 238.)

²⁷³ Mt 1:23; 1P 2:8 and 3:14, Rom 9:33.

²⁷⁴ Thus ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 169 and McCULLOUGH, J.C. "Isaiah in Hebrews", Queens University Belfast, 2005 – the essay is going to be published during this year.

²⁷⁵ BRUEGGEMANN, W. *Isaiah 1-39*, 79.

²⁷⁶ The Hebrews' phrase ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ' αὐτῷ may well have been taken from 2 Sam 22:3 or Is 12:2 as well, but the following citation in Heb 2:12 surely coming from Is 8:18 seems to be decisive to regard Is 8:17 as the original text of the first Hebrews' quotation. Thus most commentators.

Hebrews' version of Isaiah 8:17 reads ἐγὼ ἕσομαι whereas the LXX has only ἕσομαι. The Hebrews' reading is thus more emphatic but otherwise the meaning remains the same in both cases.²⁷⁷ In his deep study, Bultmann²⁷⁸ noticed that there are many Hebrew expressions in the MT that had been translated as πέποιθα in the LXX. The Greek word in the LXX thus carries the whole span of meanings circulating around the idea of 'hanging', 'trusting', 'resting on', 'hoping' or 'waiting' and the like, whereas most occurrences of πέποιθα are found in the book of Isaiah. Bultmann says that the expression וַיִּשָׁב (‘to wait’, ‘to endure’) occurring 48x in the MT is translated as πέποιθα only in Isa 8:17 and Isa 33:2.²⁷⁹ Bultman's suggested translation of πέποιθα is “to have conceived trust”.²⁸⁰ He concludes that “it is surprising and significant” that there is explicitly said so little about “confidence” in God in the NT, whereas in the OT this feature represents a very characteristic and important dimension of faith. “As an aspect of *piety*”, says Bultmann, this phrase is used of Jesus himself only on two places – Heb 2:13 and Mt 27:43.

Isa 8:18 (‘I and my children whom the Lord has given me’) in Hebrews 2:13 intensifies two previous statements about Jesus' solidarity with men (quotation of Ps 22:22 and Isa 8:17). The author of Hebrews does not have problem to call humans Jesus' ‘brothers’ as well as ‘children’. In the light of Isaiah 8, the ‘children’ were those who were supposed to carry prophet's message, those of the same blood, those who the prophet trusted.

To summarize, in all the three quotations in vv12-13 the speaker is Jesus, who identifies himself with his brothers in their distress as well as dependence on God and the collective worship. The original context of both the OT passages does not seem to be neglected by the author of Hebrews.²⁸¹ In my opinion, the logic in which the sequence of the three citations (Psalm 22:22 and Is 8:17 and 18) is bound up with the preceding verses rests in the reference to *God* who is the acting subject of verse 10, the unifying agent (ἐξ ἐνός) of the sanctifier and the sanctified (v11), and the one who is praised, trusted and who gives children to Jesus (vv12-13).

²⁷⁷ The addition may have been done intentionally by the author or later copyist but it is also possible that the ἐγὼ reading was part of the author's LXX copy he worked with. The ‘added’ pronoun does not occur in the other 2 candidates (2 Sam 22:3 or Is 12:2) as well.

²⁷⁸ BULTMANN, *TDNT*, VI, 1-11.

²⁷⁹ Otherwise, וַיִּשָׁב is most times translated (28x) as ὑπομένειν (‘to endure’, ‘to hold out’) - which is, interestingly, quite a typical expression for the epistle to the Hebrews as well.

²⁸⁰ Sand observes that “πέποιθα with ἐπί means *depend on* after one has already been securely convinced”. SAND, *EDNT*, 3, 63.

²⁸¹ Cecil McCullough argues that the LXX version, slightly different from the MT, justifies the author's hermeneutical approach to Isaiah's quotations in Hebrews, whereas the original context of the OT text remains preserved (McCULLOUGH, J.C. “Isaiah in Hebrews”). McCullough thus follows the thesis of C.H. Dodd, quoted by Bruce: “The OT quotations in the NT are not isolated proof-texts, but carry their contexts by implication.” BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 82. For criticism of this view see ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 90-91.

c) The Man who delivers (Heb 2:14-16)

Verses 14 and 15, at the first time in chapter 2, explicitly express Christ's incarnation. As usually though, the writer carefully proceeds in his argument by following the latest thought he has stated.²⁸² The binding point between vv13 and 14 is the expression 'children'. "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same..." (NAU) There are two synonyms of 'sharing' used by the writer. The first one, κοινωυέω, means "to share with someone (to be κοινωυός) in something which he has" or "does not have".²⁸³ The second one, μετέχω, occurs only in 1 Co (5x) and Hebrews (3x) and denotes simply 'to share'.²⁸⁴ By comparing 1 Co 10:16-17 and Magn 44:17 (the end of the 3rd century BC), Moulton and Milligan come to agreement that "μετέχω and κοινωυέω must be regarded as synonymous".²⁸⁵ The meaning of 'sharing' is specifically used in Plotinos who also used κοινωυέω in the sense when "the lower participates in the higher", that is, supernatural.²⁸⁶ The author of Hebrews thus accepts quite an opposite imagery, when he proceeds from the eternal Son to the human Jesus. The writer used two synonymous verbs, although in two different tenses. The first verb occurs in the perfect active tense (κεκοινωυήκειν) signifying the past action having its impact to the present signifying that children always shared and still share 'flesh and blood'. On the other hand, the second verb is in the aorist tense (μετέσχευ) denoting the single past event – Jesus' incarnation. Some commentators are tempted to come through this grammatical distinction to quite serious conclusions in the field of the systematic theology, as for example Ellingworth who says that "since Christ exaltation, he no longer shares 'flesh and blood' as he did during his earthly life",²⁸⁷ which brings us almost into the centre of burning Lutheran-Calvinist controversy of *extra calvinisticum*. I am afraid, though, that the author of Hebrews did not intend to press his Christology to such conclusions. The author's purpose is to stress that *Christ*

²⁸² ἐπεὶ is one of the favourite coordinating conjunctions of the author of Hebrews (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 171).

²⁸³ HAUCK, *TDNT*, III, 797-809. It can be translated as "Anteil haben" (BAUER, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch...*, 727.), "to receive, to share (of), to partake" if genitive follows the verb (LAMPE, G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 762.), "to have a share, to give a share, to take a share, to have fellowship" (HAINZ, *EDNT*, 2, 303).

²⁸⁴ PESCH, *EDNT*, 2, 420.

²⁸⁵ M&M, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 405. When Hanse comments Heb 2:14, he concludes similarly: "He who comes from the divine world shares flesh with men (note that it is here fully synonymous with κοινωυεῖν)" (HANSE, *TDNT*, II, 830).

²⁸⁶ HANSE, *TDNT*, II, 830.

²⁸⁷ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 171. Even though he is right that his bodily existence has been changed after Jesus' glorification, this statement seems to go too far. Bruce is right in saying that "'flesh and blood' form no essential part of his eternal being" because he has already existed before his incarnation (BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, n55, 78). However, this note of Bruce might also imply that after Jesus' exaltation Christ's 'essential being' can be separated from 'the flesh and blood', which seems to be quite problematic. Nevertheless, later on, commenting 'in the days of his flesh' in Heb 5:7, Bruce correctly stresses, that Jesus' "human condition" after his exaltation has not finished (p126).

became a man by sharing the real 'flesh and blood' in the corrupted conditions of humanity. The phrase αἵματος καὶ σαρκός is well known in Rabbinic Judaism²⁸⁸ and bears the connotation of human frailty and suffering.²⁸⁹

Jesus identified himself with the humanity in its glory and tragedy, "so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (14b-15, NRS). The author speaks of Christ's redemptory death several times in chapter 2 but he always does so by using different images. In verse 10, Jesus leads his brothers into 'the glory', verse 11 portrays Jesus as being 'the sanctifier' of his people and here, in verse 15, Christ 'liberates' the brothers from the fear of death.²⁹⁰ The tendency to personificate the OT *s-t-n* ('accuser', 'slanderer') became more frequent in later Judaism.²⁹¹ The author of Hebrews, similarly as other NT writers, follows this rabbinic understanding and portrays Satan as the 'one having the power of death'. καταργέω means both "to destroy" and to make "ineffective/powerless".²⁹² "Even the one who has power of death, the διάβολος (2:14), is condemned to inactivity or ineffectiveness in relation to the Christian."²⁹³ Kratz notices that the expression ἔνοχος in the NT frequently has a forensic meaning of "to be subject to", or more generally, "to be held in", eventually "to be guilty". According to him, Heb 2:15 is "the only passage in the NT in which ἔνοχος appears with neither connotation of judicial language nor a figurative meaning".²⁹⁴ The whole picture of enslaved humanity and defeating the Satan's power of death by Christ might be understood on the OT²⁹⁵ as well as Hellenistic²⁹⁶ ground. Confrontation of devil's power with Jesus' sovereignty is richly attested in the NT where the devil comes as an agent of death,²⁹⁷ chief of demonic powers²⁹⁸ and tempter.²⁹⁹ However Jesus liberates from devil's enslavement³⁰⁰ and delivers from the fear of death.³⁰¹ The devil's "eschatological annihilation"³⁰² is described in 1 Co 15:26 or Rev 12:9.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 78.

²⁸⁹ The phrase denotes the 'inevitable' corruption, death, persecution and fear of death (MONTEFIORE, *H. A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 65).

²⁹⁰ In verse 17, the author of Hebrews speaks of Jesus' atonement of sins. This repeating, and yet always fresh message about Christ's redemption in chapter 2 was noticed by ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 171.

²⁹¹ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 231.

²⁹² HÜBNER, *EDNT*, 2, 267-8.

²⁹³ DELLING, *TDNT*, I, 452-4.

²⁹⁴ He translates ἔνοχοι in Heb 2:15 "to be held in slavery". KRATZ, *EDNT*, 1, 457.

²⁹⁵ Gen 3:1-7, Job 1-2, Zech 3:1, Wis 2:17-24, etc.

²⁹⁶ Koester cites Euripides (*Orestes* 1522) who uses same terminology as Hebrews but the whole idea is different from Heb 2 (KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 232). Lane again evokes the idea of Hercules fighting against Death (LANE W.L. *Hebrews* 1-8, 60nn).

²⁹⁷ J 8:44; 13:2, 27; 1Pe 5:8, 1 J 3:12, Rev 12:9.

²⁹⁸ L 11:18-22.

²⁹⁹ Mt 4:1, Rev 2:10.

³⁰⁰ Mark 5:1-20, Ro 6:17f, 8:21, Rev 1:18, etc.

³⁰¹ J 16:33, Col 2:15, 2 Tm 1:10, 1J 4:16-18!

The author does not explain *who* are those in the life-long³⁰³ enslavement of the fear of death, he also does not explicitly say, *how* did Jesus free them. However, the main message of vv14-15 seems to be clear, the death is not absolute because Jesus overcame it. Defeating of death was conditioned by Jesus' full identification with his brothers leading to Christ's atoning death. The pastoral point of view might clarify the otherwise vague phrase about slavery of the fear of death. The author might have used this image to encourage his readers in the situation of persecution, in which they could feel various kinds of fear, included the fear of death. But now, says the author of Hebrews, there is no longer a need to be bounded up by paralyzing fear, we are freed through Jesus' death, yes, through his own fear of death in which he said to God, 'not my will but yours be done'.

The author turns back to the idea of the angels (cf. v9) in verse 16 and states that it is not the angels of whom Jesus takes a hold but the seed of Abraham. The word ἐπιλαμβάνομαι produces some difficulties in translation of the verse, yet, its basic meaning is clear: "to grasp, to seize, to stand by"³⁰⁴ or "to capture"³⁰⁵. The translation 'to help' seems to be too loose.³⁰⁶ Very recently, Gudorf published the article where he argues that the subject of the clause is not 'Jesus' but 'the fear of death' from verse 15, to which δήπου refers to. He thus translates: "for it [the fear of death] clearly does not **seize** angels, but it does indeed **take hold of** the seed of Abraham".³⁰⁷ This interpretation is assumedly possible and it would cast new light on Christ's identification with men and carry even deeper paraenetical dimension of Christ's solidarity with humankind. However, some objections could be raised against Gudorf's reading³⁰⁸, one of the strongest would be the uneasy bridge to verse 17 where the subject of the clause is surely 'Jesus'. The

³⁰² MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 66.

³⁰³ See the unusual phrase παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν.

³⁰⁴ DELLING, *TDNT*, IV, 9.

³⁰⁵ MÜLLER, *EDNT*, 2, 30.

³⁰⁶ There was also time when ἐπιλαμβάνομαι in Heb 2:16 was understood as 'taking human nature' (e.g. Chrysostomos followed by some Latin translations of Bible). However this connotation is very unlikely (see ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 176).

³⁰⁷ Gudorf refers to Plato using the same phrase οὐ γὰρ δήπου several times "to support positive statements by appealing to the impossibility of their opposites". Gudorf argues that this understanding of ἐπιλαμβάνομαι thus dovetails with the theme of fear and enslavement of verse 15. The connection between ἐπιλαμβάνομαι ('seizing') with δουλεύω ('to be slave') is attested in Plato as well (*Laws* - book 3, 699b-d). In the whole context, Jesus is presented as lower than the angels, the one who suffered and died to deliver the enslaved men by the fear of death. The angels are immortal and "the fear of death doesn't affect angels at all". Gudorf concludes, "this statement brings into sharp focus the difference between the two natures and strengthens the author's argument as to why it was necessary for Jesus to have a mortal, human nature." By implication then, Jesus' identification with us includes *the fear of death* (GUDORF, M.E. "Through a Classical Lens: Hebrews 2:16", 105-108). This interpretation could also influence the *Criux* in Heb 5:7. To my knowledge, nobody else has yet suggested such understanding.

³⁰⁸ The whole concept of the fear of death, not seizing the angels but griping the seed of Abraham, seems to be based on the speculative ground assuming angel's impossibility to die or have the fear of death. However, this is quite an uncertain presupposition for Bible does not say much about the ontological nature of the angels. Moreover, the fallen angels and demons are said to have fear of God and his judgement (e.g. Mk 5:1-13 //, etc.).

phrase σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ clearly represents “something more concrete than ‘human nature’”.³⁰⁹ Some scholars³¹⁰ assume that the phrase naturally refers to ‘Jews’ but this explanation is not fully satisfactory. The Old and the New Testament know Abraham as a Father of the ‘multitude of nations’, including Ishmael. Jesus himself makes the strictly ‘national’ comprehension of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ quite relative (J 8:33, 8:31-59). Moreover, the theme of Abraham as a ‘Father of all believers’ possibly was a living picture in the early Christian church (Rom 4, Gal 3). Therefore, it is unlikely that “σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ would be used exclusively for the Jews”.³¹¹ On the other hand, we should not probably identify the Pauline concept of Abraham with that of the author of Hebrews completely.³¹² Our writer does not seem to take the phrase as an explicit reference to the ‘believers of the whole humanity’ as Paul does. σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ in Heb 2:16 thus cannot denote the Pauline “Heilsgemeinde”, Grässer comments. The phrase is not addressing to those whom Christ has already helped, but those who currently needs Christ’s help (note the present tense of ἐπιλαμβάνομαι).³¹³ The author might have used the reference to Abraham because Jesus was historically an Israelite, but most naturally, ‘the seed of Abraham’ functions as a parallel expression to the ‘God’s sons’ (v10), those ‘being sanctified’ (11), Jesus’ ‘brothers’ (vv11-12) and his ‘children’ (13). Dimension of faith is undoubtedly present here though, for Abraham is described in Hebrews as an example of faith (6:11-15; 11:8-20). The picture of Jesus taking hold of the seed of Abraham is most probably taken from Isaiah 41:8-10.³¹⁴ The author thus seems to evoke that very essential OT emphasis on Jahve’s glorious redeeming, leading and helping Israel. A similar picture also depicts Jeremiah 31:32, portraying the powerful pastoral image of God who took the hand of Israel and led him out of Egypt (ἐπιλαβομένου μου τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν [LXX]). In my judgment this type of passages of the OT perfectly fits the context of Heb 2:16. In contrast to the book of Isaiah or Jeremiah though, the author Hebrews quite deliberately, uses „the pastoral present tense“ of holding (the hand of) Abraham’s children by Jesus. This understanding directly corresponds with the idea of ἀρχηγός from Heb 2:10, the saving Leader, who “grasp[s] the hand of his people to help them”.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 177.

³¹⁰ Bleek, Riggenbach, Michel, Buchanan (Ibid).

³¹¹ Ibid., 178.

³¹² This identification of ‘Abraham’ in Hebrews with ‘Abraham’ in the Pauline writings makes e.g. BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 87. It is criticized by GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 150 or ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 177-8.

³¹³ GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 150.

³¹⁴ Thus PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 62; LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 52; ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 176. Isaiah uses the same phrase σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ (41:8) and the synonymous word ἀντιλαμβάνομαι. Ellingworth even suggests, that the passage Is 41:8-10 is alluded more frequently in the letter. The Isaiah’s expressions might be reflected in Heb 2:13 (παῖς), 2:15, 13:5 (μὴ φοβοῦ), 5:2, 13:6 (μὴ φοβοῦ), 2:18, 13:6 (ἐβοήθησά).

³¹⁵ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 52.

d) A nerve center of the epistle (Heb 2:17-18)

Verses 17-18 create the climax of the author's exposition in chapter 2 and indicate "the author's complementary pastoral concern".³¹⁶ Many ideas the author has carefully examined in the previous verses appear here again. However, the writer does not only summarize, he pushes us further on and lets us reach the sole glittering snowy peak of his exposition: the merciful High Priest atoning sins of people (17). Verse 17 shall be regarded in Ellingworth's words as "a nerve centre of the epistle".³¹⁷ However, there is a very important condition before we come to that goal, a prerequisite that rests in one Greek phrase κατὰ πάντα...ὁμοιωθῆναι. *In all things, in every respect, without any exception, he needed to be made like his brothers.* Only thus he could become a priest sacrificing himself ὑπὲρ παντός (v9). This is the core of the author's message, variously expressed through vv5-16, **Jesus' complete identification with humanity** (cf. παραπλησίως in v14). Hebrews uses almost identical expressions for Jesus' incarnation as the 'Philippians' hymn' (ἐν ὁμοιώματι³¹⁸ ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος). Christ's obligation (ὀφείλω)³¹⁹ to be a man mirrors the phrase of verse 10, 'it was fitting (ἔπρεπεν) for God'. However, this necessity of men to be saved by Man is not a necessity of God to become a man! It is God's free choice of love and grace that is bounding him to redeem humanity. Although hints at the cultic terminology might be already seen in 1:3 and perhaps in 2:10-11 too, here the author calls Jesus a high priest for the first time in the epistle.³²⁰ It is striking and significant, Weiss therefore correctly points out, that the author first mentions Jesus as high priest by using the description a "barmherziger und getreuer bzw. glaubwürdiger Hoherpriester". The author is thus apparently concerned with the "pastoral-seelsorgerlichen Grundanliegen" before the actual teaching about Jesus a high priest³²¹ takes a place! This Hebrews' designation of the **high priest as being full of mercy** is the "Hauptakzent" of the letter and it stands "ganz im Sinne der Glaubensparaklese des Hebr".³²² In the NT, 'having mercy' is mostly attributed to God, Montefiore's remark might

³¹⁶ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 179.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ In the context of Phil 2:7, Moulton and Millington speak about "accidental" meaning of ὁμοίωμα, using the metaphor "as one egg is like another". This is in contrast to εἰκὼν, which rather points to an "archetype", "the likeness or form". ὁμοίωμα is "thing made like" something else and has rather "concrete" sense than e.g. ὁμοιότης ("resemblance" – abstract sense). This corresponds also to the very concrete use of ὁμοίωμα in Ex 20:4: "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (NAU). M&M *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 449.

³¹⁹ "to owe, to deserve, to be bound to, be obliged to" (LAMPE, G.W.H *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 988). The word is frequently used in the Hellenistic Greek as "to owe (money)" (M&M *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 468).

³²⁰ More about High Priest Christology in the NT and Hebrews see II. CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS.

³²¹ 4:14-5:14; 6:20-8:6; 9:6-10:31; etc.

³²² WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 204 and 226. The fact that the author of Hebrews is coming straight from the 'champion' to 'high priest' without any previous theological argumentation is a sign, according to Lane, that High Priest Christology was already known to the readers. This similar

be therefore correct when he says that Jesus is not *merciful* because he forgives (God does) but because he is “compassionate”.³²³ On the other hand, we know from the gospels that many cried to Jesus to have mercy upon them³²⁴, Jesus forgave sins (Mk 2:5-9) and ἔλεος was a significant part of his teaching.³²⁵ The Greek Bible does not know the ἐλεήμων high priest though. πιστός³²⁶ can be translated in two ways: ‘faithful’ or ‘worthy of faith’. A collocation ‘faithful priest’ occurs in 1 Sa 2:35 where God says that he will raise up the ἱερέα πιστόν.³²⁷ In Heb 2:17, it seems that the greater weight is laid on ‘faithful’ meaning emphasizing Jesus’ faithfulness to the mission God has given him. The use of πιστός as ‘believer’, which is richly attested in the NT,³²⁸ cannot possibly be excluded as well.³²⁹ Jesus’ human reliance on God and obedience to him is the very significant theme in the letter to the Hebrews (cf. ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ in v13; 5:5-10; 12:2). We should not neglect even the understanding ‘trustworthy’ because it smoothly would fit the Hebrews’ argument about Jesus as the leader of faith (cf. 12:2).³³⁰

This high priest **expiates the sins** of the people. ἱλάσκομαι (the root ἵλεω = to be merciful) is mostly a cultic expression.³³¹ Beside Heb 2:17, the verb occurs also in L 18:13 where it probably means “cry out to God for mercy”.³³² There are also two other occurrences of its cognate ἱλαστήριον (Heb 9:5; Rom 3:25). The Hebrew equivalent of ἱλάσκομαι is כָּפַר (“cover completely”, “wipe out”) used for the mediating role of the priest between the man and God on the Day of Atonement.³³³ Dunn says that ἱλαστήριον “must have a sacrificial reference, for the term is used almost exclusively in LXX for the lid of the ark, the ‘mercy seat’, the place where, on the Day of Atonement, atonement was made for the holy place and for all assembly of Israel (Lev. 16.16-17).” Although, according to Dunn, ἱλαστήριον can also signify ‘the means’ of atonement.³³⁴ The main point of controversy rests in the question as whether the term overtakes the rather Hellenistic understanding of appeasing wrathful God (propitiation) or the rather OT

progression (champion-high priest) is found in the Testament of Levi (18:10-12) as well (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 65).

³²³ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 67. In Montefiore’s opinion, the author of Hebrews ‘disagrees’ with Philo who says, “a high priest shouldn’t show human affections” (*de Spec. Leg.* 1:115).

³²⁴ Cf. Mt 9:27; Mt 15:22; Mt 17:15; Mk 10:47-8.

³²⁵ Cf. Mt 5:7; Mt 23:23; L 1:50, 72; L 10:37.

³²⁶ The whole phrase ἐλεήμων...καὶ πιστός in Heb 2:17 might resemble the typical OT clause כָּפַר וְיָדָבָר. Its covenantal context fits Heb 2:17 quite well (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 182).

³²⁷ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 65.

³²⁸ Acts 10:45; 2 Co 6:15; Eph 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Ti 4:3, 10,12; 2 Ti 2:2.

³²⁹ I think that Ellingworth is not right in saying that “it is going rather beyond the language of Hebrews to describe Jesus as himself a believer” (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 182).

³³⁰ Thus e.g. PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 64.

³³¹ For a list of extensive literature on ἱλάσκομαι see e.g. BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 79, n57.

³³² BÜCHSEL, *TDNT*, III, 315.

³³³ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 78.

³³⁴ DUNN, J.D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 212-221.

atonement of sins of the people (expiation).³³⁵ The whole issue is quite complicated because it actually points to both. In the strict meaning of the word though, ἱλάσκομαι always denotes ‘to expiate’. Dunn claims, “properly speaking, in Israelite cult God is never ‘propitiated’ or ‘appeased’.”³³⁶ Montefiore observes the same, saying, “God is never reconciled to men” in the field of the NT “but men to God”.³³⁷ The object of the expiation thus cannot be God but ‘sins’, whereas the acting subject is Christ and in him God as well.³³⁸ The whole understanding of ἱλάσκομαι is therefore completely opposite to the idea of a human effort satisfying unwilling God. However, as we have already said, the ‘propitiation understanding’ is here present as well. Koester is right when says that the “removal of sins” (expiation) actually has an effect on “averting of divine wrath” (propitiation).³³⁹

Comparison of Bible versions on Heb 2:17b

VUL	NAU (ASV, ESV, YLT)	RSV (NEB, NJB)	NIV (NIB, NRS)	GNV	LUT (ELB)	BKR	CEP (KMS)
ut misericors fieret et fidelis pontifex ad Deum ut repropitiaret delicta populi	He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.	he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people.	he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.	in things concerning God, that he might make reconciliation for the sinners of the people.	damit er barmherzig würde und ein treuer Hoherpriester vor Gott, zu sühnen die Sünden des Volkes.	aby milosrdný byl a věrný nejvyšší kněz v tom, což by u Boha k očistění hříchů lidu jednáno býti mělo.	aby se stal veleknězem a milosrdným a věrným v Boží službě a mohl tak smířit hříchy lidu.

The passage 2:5-17 culminates in the powerful pastoral climax (v18) that Jesus is able to help those who are tempted because he himself was tempted in what he had suffered. The connection between the words πάσχω and πειράζω is not very clear but most probably the temptations and testing are subordinated to Jesus’ suffering. As we have already mentioned in commenting vv9-10, πάσχω (‘to suffer’, ‘to endure’) in Hebrews always works in connection with death.

³³⁵ There are few manuscripts (A Ψ 33 pc) that omit τὰς ἀμαρτίας. The phrase thus created reads ἱλάσκεσθαι τοῦ λαοῦ. Nevertheless, the complete version is attested by the vast majority of the manuscripts.

³³⁶ DUNN, J.D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 214.

³³⁷ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 68.

³³⁸ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 225. In the same sense, Miller comments: “God in Christ initiates the ‘expiation’” (MILLER, D.G. “Why God Became Man. From Text to Sermon on Hebrews 2:5-18”, 412).

³³⁹ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 241. Similarly argues Kistemaker, who warns to view the whole concept of ἱλάσκομαι merely in the terms of impersonal expiation, for the author of Hebrews “repeatedly speaks about God’s wrath against sin” (KISTEMAKER, S.J. “A Merciful and Faithful High Priest...”, 163-167).

Therefore some scholars argue that the word in fact exclusively denotes Christ's death.³⁴⁰ However, we must not get rid of the dimension of 'suffering' itself by simplifying exchange of it with "death". Jesus' experience of suffering (not just a moment of death) seems to play a significant role in Jesus' perfection. Ellingworth's interpretation of πέποιθεν αὐτὸς as "his endurance of a period of suffering culminating in his death",³⁴¹ thus seems to be more balanced. The theme of testing and temptation is opened just briefly in 2:18, similarly as the idea of high priest, for the author will come back to both in chapters 4 and 5. πειράζω may refer either to temptation or testing, but in fact, the two understandings cannot be completely separated from each other in Heb 2:18.³⁴² The testing of Jesus is joined with Son's suffering. His messianic role and God's calling were seriously endangered through those temptations (πειρασθεῖς) but finally proved.

In the comparable way, the readers too are in danger to give up God's calling to faith (cf. πειραζομένοι).³⁴³ The solidarity of Jesus with his brothers goes far beyond a mere experience of sharing human flesh and blood. It is based on the most serious existential struggle of human beings, the struggle for faith alone (cf. Heb 2:1-3)! The conclusion following from that falls into the category of the most important statements in the epistle to the Hebrews. 'Therefore **he is able to help**' (δύναται βοηθῆσαι). "Nowhere in Hebrews does δύναμαι denote a mere possibility."³⁴⁴ The present tense of δύναται (in contrast to the perfect of πέποιθεν) does not mean some kind of "psychische Prädisposition zum 'Helfen'"³⁴⁵ but real δύναμις to radically change the helpless situation of the believer. The motive of Helper appears hand by hand with the idea of the Leader, who was perfected by suffering, and the Redeemer, who takes a hold of the seed of Abraham. It is not a mere memory of the suffering and the temptations that would enable him

"to know what force of temptation suffering exerts to make sinner fall. His mercy thus grasps the sufferer in his moral capacity, in the very crisis where suffering threatens to issue into sin or actually issues into the same".³⁴⁶

³⁴⁰ "The author is not thinking of Gethsemane, as the expression πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου in 2:9 shows, and as may be seen also from 5:7ff. In 2:18 πέποιθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθεῖς refers exclusively to the death of Jesus" (MICHAELIS, *TDNT*, V, 487-488). "πάσχω is the only verb used of Jesus' death. In 2:18 πάσχω characterizes his death from the perspective of a test" (KREMER, *EDNT*, 3, 51-52). PETERSON, D. (*Hebrews and Perfection*, 68) disagrees.

³⁴¹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191.

³⁴² In this sense Heb 2:18 is related to James 1:2-3 and 13.

³⁴³ This is the very theme of the epistle. (PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 66).

³⁴⁴ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 191.

³⁴⁵ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 226, n79.

³⁴⁶ Peterson quotes Vos (PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 65).

Christ gives more than compassion, he offers expiation of sins and mercy for those who have fallen (cf. 4:16), he stretches his hand to “help... in the face of temptations”.³⁴⁷

Let us conclude this chapter with Miller. If Christ’s expiation and redemption had to be accomplished, “it could not be done by fiat; it had to be done in the moral realm where sin had occurred, on the battleground of human evil where sin reigned, in the arena of human temptation and suffering.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 65.

³⁴⁸ MILLER, D.G. “Why God Became Man. From Text to Sermon on Hebrews 2:5-18”, 412.

IV. THE MAN JESUS: OUR MERCIFUL HIGH PRIEST

(Exegesis of 4:14-5:10)

The structure of Hebrews is a complex and disputed issue among scholars. It is agreed that the author of Hebrews follows a very advanced and rhetorically carefully elaborated outline in the letter. However, commentators differ in opinion of how the particular themes dovetail with each other. The thematic closeness of 4:14 to the preceding section leads some scholars to the assumption that v14 concludes the previous hortatory passage 3:1-4:11.³⁴⁹ This opinion can not be completely dismissed. The division 4:14-5:10 makes a slightly better sense though.³⁵⁰ Most probably, the section 4:14-5:10 works as a **conclusion** of the previous series of arguments regarding Jesus' humanity and priestly compassion with man (see especially 2:17-18, the first explicit mention of Jesus' merciful high priesthood). At the same time, this passage **introduces** the exposition about the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek that is to follow in 6:20-10:18. Our passage might be further divided into the first part 4:14-16, which is closely connected with the preceding themes of holding on faith and entering the Sabbath rest (3:1-4:11), and second part 5:1-10, describing Jesus high priest ministry by comparison with the Levitical priesthood. The chiasmic structure of 5:1-10 has been recognized by many scholars,³⁵¹ even though the chiasmus seems to be slightly incomplete here (vv7-10 match up vv1-3 very vaguely).

1) “Let us come”: Heb 4:14-16

The strongest statement of verse 14 is not the theologically ‘crowded’ expressions such as ἀρχιερέα μέγαν, διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, but Ἔχοντες οὖν (“we have”). Weiss pinpoints the confessional character of the statement within the Christian community of which he himself counts to be a part (“we”). The author’s primary paraenetical concern is expressed in this *Bekennnis Satz*.³⁵²

Whom do we have then? Jesus is portrayed in verse 14 as ‘a great priest who has passed through the heavens’. Μέγαν is “a qualification of excellence” and probably denotes the

³⁴⁹ Lane argues that the exhortation in v14 after the words of warning “is not an afterthought, but the intended conclusion of the entire argument”. His structure divisions are 4:1-14 and 4:15-5:10 (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 105). Similarly Montefiore who views 3:1-4:14 as one unit (MONTEFIORE, H. A *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 91).

³⁵⁰ Thus argues the majority of commentators.

³⁵¹ Especially if the passage 5:1-10 is (wrongly) viewed as to highlight the contradiction between the Levitical (5:1-4) and Jesus’ (5:5-10) priesthood.

³⁵² Weiss (*Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 292-3) is quite a rare exception among the commentators who highlight this confessional and paraenetical dimension of the statement.

exceptional quality of the merciful priest able to help (2:17).³⁵³ The collocation διελθῆναι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς might allude a typical apocalyptic understanding of Judaism assuming several layers in heavens. However, we do not need to numerate heavens as in 2 Co 12:2 or the apocryphal literature³⁵⁴ for the author is apparently much more interested in the result, the goal of Christ's διέρχουμαι. Jesus is the high priest who “*durch* Himmel hindurchgeschritten ist”,³⁵⁵ and was highly exalted *above* the heavens.³⁵⁶ In the sense, the author's imagery of Jesus who “has passed through the heavens to the divine presence”, reflects the OT picture of the priest who passes the sanctuary to the holy of holiest on the Day of Atonement.³⁵⁷ Two pictures seem to be thus present here, the picture of High priest as our representant, and the concept of the one, who opens the way for us so that we could go in his footprints. The idea of Jesus ‘going through the heavens’ would not make sense if it was not connected to the belief that believers may *follow* Jesus as their Leader and forerunner on this journey.³⁵⁸

Another important point in Heb 4:14 is the explicit link between the high priest and the Son of God connecting two main Christological concepts in one person, Jesus.³⁵⁹ The powerful pastoral statement *we have* (such a **high priest** and **Son of God**) is completed in the exhortation ‘let us hold the confession’. “ὁμολογία is a free act of confession of the Gospel or a traditional liturgical form of confession in the community.”³⁶⁰ The word is well attested in the NT and denotes the whole scale of expressions connected to obedience, commitment, and particular confessions.³⁶¹ Michel supposes that the word in Hebrews alludes to “a firmly outlined, liturgically set tradition”, possibly “an ecclesiological confession of faith or baptismal confession”, to which the readers were already committed. However, Michel wants to be probably too precise when he regards the mere mention of the word ὁμολογία in Heb 4:14 as a

³⁵³ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 103 and WEISS *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 293.

³⁵⁴ Bruce refers to e.g. Test. Levi 2:7; Ascension of Isaiah, 3 Enoch, etc (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115).

³⁵⁵ WEISS *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 293 (italics mine).

³⁵⁶ Notice the plural form ‘heavens’. Cf. Heb 7:26, cf. Eph 4:10, 1:20-21.

³⁵⁷ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 94. Cf. KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 282.

³⁵⁸ Heb 2:10; cf. 6:19-20, 10:19-20.

³⁵⁹ I argued for the inextricability of the concepts in Chapter II. Verse 14 confirms our conclusion that we cannot distinguish the titles in terms of high or low Christology. The OT knows several messianic figures. Beside the idea of Prophet (cf. Is 61:1; 1 Kings 19:15), also the *King* (thus e.g. Koester argues that the title ‘Son of God’ in Heb 4:14 has royal connotations, cf. Heb 1:5, Ps 2:7, 2Sa 7:14. KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 282). The third one is the messianic idea of the *Priest*. Generally said, the King and Priest in the OT had to be strictly separated from each other (cf. 1 Sam 13:8ff.). Both the messianic lines of expectations have been fulfilled in one person of Christ-Messiah though, for Jesus’ priesthood is not of the Aaron’s origin but of Melchisedek, who is the prototype of King and Priest in one person. However, the suggestion that the author of Hebrews explicitly alludes the *priestly and royal messiahship* in Heb 4:14 cannot be probably satisfactorily proved.

³⁶⁰ MICHEL, *TDNT* V, 215.

³⁶¹ The confession of Jesus’ name (Mt 10:32, Rev 3:5); Jesus came in the body (1 J 4:2-3); Jesus is the Son of God (1 J 4:15); Jesus is the Lord (R 10:9-10); confession of faith (1 Tit 6:12-13); proclamation of the Gospel of Christ (2 Co 9:13); mystery of godliness (1 Ti 3:16), etc.

terminus technicus for the formula of ‘Son of God’.³⁶² More probably, the author of Hebrews seems to use the term in relatively general shape here. What is really important though, is his exhortation to κρατέω the confession of faith. Von der Osten-Sacken emphasizes the “dynamic quality” of κρατέω in Hebrews (cf. 6:18) that is better expressed by translation “to grasp” than “to hold firm”. Therefore, in Heb 4:14, the author “exhorts the troubled church to *grasp* the (baptismal) confession”,³⁶³ in other words, to become a confessing fellowship again. Even though we possibly cannot decode the exact content of that confession, the author clearly exhorts and encourages his readers *to renew their profession of faith*.

Verse 15 brings us literally back ‘from the heaven on the earth’. It is significant to notice that the author of Hebrews first encourages his readers that we have a **sympathetic high priest** and appeals to approach the throne of mercy in the paraenetical passage 4:14-16, before the actual theological argumentation about the ‘*metriopathic*’ human priests takes its place in 5:1-10. The verse thus demonstrates the same pattern we noted in Heb 2:17, where “the *merciful* high priest” is mentioned without any previous theological explanation of Jesus’ priesthood itself. I think that the author’s reason of doing so dwells in his primary *pastoral concern*. Quite a number of other striking points of contact between 4:15 and 2:17-18 might be found here:

4:15	κατὰ πάντα καθ’ ὁμοιότητα	2:17	κατὰ πάντα... ὁμοιωθῆναι
4:15	δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖν	2:18	δύναται... βοηθῆσαι
4:15	πεπειρασμένον	2:18	πειρασθείς

The rhetorical quality of Heb 4:14-15 is very high. After the author’s saying “we have a great priest that...” (Ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα) in v14, follows the seemingly opposite statement “we do not have a priest who...” (οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα) in v15, which definitely raises attention on the reader’s side. The contrast thus made is only rhetorical however, for the second phrase is complemented by another negative phrase “unable to sympathize” (μὴ δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖν) that finally leads to the positive understanding of the whole sentence: “we have a priest able to sympathize”. Jesus’ sympathy is demonstrated as a distinct feature of his high priesthood.

There are no early evidences of the expression συμπαθέω in the non-biblical literature.³⁶⁴ In the Aristotelic time, the verb is connected with somebody “who suffers, experiences etc., *the same*

³⁶² Michel says that the content of the confession is well attested as “the formula of divine sonship (4:14; 6:6; 10:29)” (TDNT V, 215-217). For instance, ὁμολογία in Heb 3:1 is connected to ‘the apostle and high priest’. The explicit ‘Son of God’ connotation is lacking in Heb 10:23 and 13:15 as well. For criticism see also ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 267.

³⁶³ This is also Bornkamm’s interpretation. VON DER OSTEN-SACKEN, EDNT II, 314-315 [brackets mine].

³⁶⁴ M&M *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 611. The more spread is the synonym *sympascho*.

as another” or who is “affected *like another by the same* sufferings, impressions, emotions”.³⁶⁵ The later use of the word gains the meaning, the one “who has fellow-feeling, sympathy with another”.³⁶⁶ Michaelis regards the translation “to have a fellow-feeling” in Heb 4:15 as slightly more accurate than “to suffer with”³⁶⁷. He says that συμπαθήσαι denotes a “disposition, rather than act”. Jesus himself “learned to know ἀσθένεια in all their greatness and as our fault”, therefore, his fellow-feeling “derives from full acquaintance with the seriousness of the situation... which can take in the guilt concealed from us.”³⁶⁸ We do not speak about a disposition (δυσάμενος) to a mere *mental* understanding our situation. His understanding, his fellow-feeling is completely *existential*! Christ is able to identify with those who are weak for he himself experienced great weakness. It is very probable that the occurrence of συμπαθήσαι in Heb 10:34 means just the same thing, i.e. to have a deep existential fellow-feeling for those brothers in prison. This is a very important ecclesiological dimension deriving from Christ’s own fellow-feeling with us. The strength of the word συμπαθήσαι rests on that “being a part of *the same* feeling, suffering, experience *as another*”.

The author humbly admits the weakness of himself as well (ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν), which makes his argument much more personal and genuine. The mentioned expression ἀσθένεια basically denotes “a want of strength, weakness”. In the LXX, it frequently occurs in connection with the “flesh frailty” (רֶפְּאָ), but it does not necessarily signify sin.³⁶⁹ In Hellenistic Greek, ἀσθένεια is frequently translated as “weakness, impotence of different kinds” or “times of difficulty, sickness”.³⁷⁰ The NT use of ἀσθένεια is quite wide, Stählin counted about six main meanings.³⁷¹ He translates the phrase in Heb 4:15 “with our infirmities”.³⁷² The Hebrews’ use in 4:15 and 5:2 seems to mainly reflect the OT understanding of physical frailty or susceptibility to sin³⁷³ but probably not ‘sin’ explicitly. This weakness is based on the fallen earthly humanity inclined to sin. I am convinced that the author of Hebrews includes Jesus to have had this frailty. The author thus seems to follow the same pattern as in Heb 2:18 about suffering and 4:15 about

³⁶⁵ MICHAELIS, *TDNT*, V, 935. Cf. M&M *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 598. (italics mine)

³⁶⁶ MICHAELIS, *TDNT*, V, 935. Thus also in Philo and Josephus: “fellow-feeling, mutual participation, sympathy”, also in connection with *eleos*. 4 Macc 13:23 and 5:25 (LXX) similarly as “fellow-feeling”.

³⁶⁷ In German tradition, it is strongly embedded to translate συμπαθήσαι as “mitleiden”. Cf. LUT and ELB. Weiss thus similarly expounds: Jesus is the one who is coming “dem Leidenden and Versuchten zu ‘helfen’”. WEISS *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 295.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 935-936.

³⁶⁹ LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 243.

³⁷⁰ STÄHLIN, *TDNT*, I, 490-93; M&M *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 84.

³⁷¹ The NT knows 1) a positive weakness (1 Co 1:25,27), 2) weakness as immaturity (R 15:1, 1 Co 8:7, 1 Th 5:14), 3) physical weakness, bodily sickness (Mk 6:56, J 5:5, Acts 28:9, etc.), 4) inner poverty, incapacity (e.g. Heb 7:18), 5) economic weakness, poverty (Acts 20:35) or 6) perhaps even ‘sin’ itself (R 5:6/8).

³⁷² STÄHLIN, *TDNT*, I, 490-93.

³⁷³ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 77; LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 107; “ability to be tempted” CULLMANN, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, 94.

temptations. Likeness of the flesh means “the real image of human flesh. His flesh is our flesh. Liability to sin and self-will are an essential part of our flesh.”³⁷⁴ The writer’s description of Christ does not portray a strong hero but, quite reversely, a struggling man totally dependent on God. As the apostle Paul declares, “Christ died on the cross in *weakness*” (ἀσθένεια, 2 Co 13:4).

ἐχομεν ἀρχιερέα (15a) also relates to the second part of the verse ‘who was similarly tested in every respect (as we are)’.³⁷⁵ This statement can be true only because we already know that he ‘was made like his brothers in every respect’ (2:17). The author has already said in 2:18 that Jesus can help those who are tempted, because he himself was tempted. A very similar thought appears in 4:15 too: he is able to sympathize because he was tempted κατὰ πάντα as we are. περιάζω may generally refer to both the temptations as well as testings. I suppose it is better to keep both meanings in Hebrews together.³⁷⁶ The writer deliberately focuses on the testings, temptations and human weaknesses, because they demonstrate the present dark side of our earthly humanity. It is quite obvious that the author’s concentration on these aspects of human life follows his pastoral intention to encourage the tested readers (cf.2:18). Some commentators argue that the author is referring in verse 15 to the Christ’s last days’ testings only.³⁷⁷ However, this seems to be quite an inaccurate statement exclusively following one particular interpretation of Heb 5:7-10. The phrase in 4:15b much more likely gives a general description of Jesus’ human life. This comprehension might be strongly supported by a paralell text Heb 2:17 that clearly speaks (using almost the same phrase) about Christ’s identification with humanity. This identification has lasted, of course, during his whole life and has not ceased yet.³⁷⁸ Gospels clearly mention many occasions when Jesus was tested.³⁷⁹ I agree, therefore, with Culmann that

“the author of Hebrews really thinks of the common temptations connected with our human weakness, the temptations to which we are exposed simply because we are men. ‘In every respect as we are’ refers not only to form but also to content.” Culmann concludes, “this statement of Hebrews... is perhaps

³⁷⁴ BONHOEFFER, D. *Christology*, 112.

³⁷⁵ For *hoi othesai* and *kata panta* see my comment on Heb 2:17.

³⁷⁶ See more in my comment on Heb 2:18. Cf. also ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 268.

³⁷⁷ Thus for instance KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 283.

³⁷⁸ This is not to say that we can not see in 4:15 any reference to Gethsemane and the crucifixion.

However, the author in the section 4:14-16 is not yet interested in detailed description of any particular moments of Jesus’ life. The passage is explicitly paraenetical. It is definitely more likely to assume that the author refers to the whole human life of Jesus. For this opinion see also PETERSON, D. *Hebrews...*, 189-190.

³⁷⁹ L 4:1-13 (wilderness), Mk 8:33 (Peter); Mk 12:15-16 (portrait of Caesar), J 16:15 (coronation), etc.

the boldest assertion of the completely human character of Jesus in the New Testament.”³⁸⁰

Weiss rightly understands Jesus’ testings ecclesialogically. He is the suffering and tempted Man whom “im Glauben angefochtenen Gemeinde vor Augen gestellt wird”.³⁸¹ As we noted in Heb 2:18, the temptation to give up God’s calling was possibly his most powerful temptation ever. However, we need to be careful to see in Heb 4:15 a particular hint to the messianic temptation. I stand for the comprehension that the author uses general language on this place.³⁸²

The author then hurries to add, ‘**tempted, but without sin**’. Some very serious questions must be raised here: Has Jesus really experienced genuine testings and temptations as an ordinary man? Could he ever be “truly” tempted without having an experience of the fall into the sin? Could Jesus actually sin? We need to realize that the negative answer to any of these questions might completely play down all the previous arguments about the Son’s identification with humanity. The paraenesis based on Christ’s full solidarity with man would be thus quite meaningless! In other words, to prove Jesus’ real testings and temptations to sin is to prove Jesus’ humanity. The author of Hebrews dared to step on the very difficult and hard-fought ground but it was absolutely necessary to do so for the sake of his genuine paraenetical concern in the epistle.

‘In everything tempted but without sin (χωρίς ἁμαρτίας)’ can be explained in two ways, 1) tempted in everything, without sinning, 2) tempted in everything except the temptation that would cause sin. However, most commentators agree that χωρίς ἁμαρτίας does not limit the range of temptations but designates *Jesus’ sinlessness*. We must spend more time on this issue because this lays a crucial foundational argument for my thesis in the dissertation.

Jesus sinlessness

Bonhoeffer said, “the doctrine of sinlessness of Jesus is not one *locus* among others. It is a central point on which all that has been said [i.e. about Christ’s divinity and humanity] is decided.”³⁸³ We are moving between two poles in the discussion of this issue. The first one might represent Atkinson who argues that

³⁸⁰ CULLMANN, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*, 95.

³⁸¹ WEISS, H. –F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 296.

³⁸² Weiss even argues that the author of Hebrews “in jedem Fall” does not mention here any messianic testing of Jesus (ibid.).

³⁸³ BONHOEFFER, D. *Christology*, 111-112.

χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας denotes Christ's *sinless nature*, which means it was impossible for Jesus to sin. "His sinless nature contained nothing that responded to temptation, as does ours".³⁸⁴ The other side of the spectrum is for instance held by Williamson, who comes to the conclusion that Jesus could not save sinners, "if he had not fully shared himself in the human condition... including actual participation in the experience of sinning".³⁸⁵ His argument is thus not placed just into the paraenetical but even soteriological context. Wellbourn argues alike - the strong accent of the author of Hebrews is that Jesus' human nature *includes human sinfulness*.³⁸⁶ In my judgment, both of the views fail to understand Christ's humanity correctly. Nevertheless, it seems that major part of Christianity today tends (often unintentionally) to accept rather the first interpretation, which we need to assess first.

i. Does sinlessness mean a sinless nature?

Robinson (in his exceptional and provoking book *The Human Face of God*) is quite right to say that the contemporary Christianity is "irredeemably docetic".³⁸⁷ But this is by far not a new problem in the Christian Church. It is quite astonishing that one of the first serious Christological heresies was docetism. Coming back to our problem in Heb 4:15, we need to stress that Jesus' sinlessness *does not* presuppose Jesus had a 'new flesh' or 'unfallen human nature'. This would be a wrong interpretation of Adam Christology, in which Jesus appears as Adam *before* his fall and thus untouched by any drastic consequences of the sin. But Jesus' situation is that of Adam *after* his fall! Rom 8:3 puts it very clearly: ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας. As we have argued in Heb 2:17 and now in 4:15 too (cf. Phil 2:7), the word ὁμοίωμα and its cognates express much more than mere 'resemblance' to Jesus' brothers.³⁸⁸

Barth put it as follows:

"He was not a sinful man. But inwardly and outwardly His situation was that of a sinful man. He did nothing that Adam did. But he lived life in the form it must take on basis and assumption of Adam's act. ...Freely he entered into solidarity and necessary association with our lost existence. Only in this way 'could' God's revelation to us, our reconciliation with Him, manifestly become an event in Him and by Him."³⁸⁹

And Bonhoeffer alike:

"In his flesh, too, was the law that is contrary to God's will. He was not the perfectly good man. He was continuously engaged in struggle. He did things which outwardly looked like sin... He entered man's sinful existence past recognition."³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴ Quoted from BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116.

³⁸⁵ WILLIAMSON, R. "Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus", 7.

³⁸⁶ Wellbourn quoted by WILLIAMSON, R. "Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus", 4.

³⁸⁷ ROBINSON, J.A.T., *Human Face of God*, 115.

³⁸⁸ On the other hand, 'likeness to the sinful nature' cannot support the argument that Jesus was 'sinful'. The weight of the argument does not lay here.

³⁸⁹ BARTH, K. *CD I/2*, 152.

³⁹⁰ BONHOEFFER, D. *Christology*, 112.

Yes, Bonhoeffer is completely right that “the sinlessness of Jesus is incognito”, if we judge it according to his deeds, because it can be judged only by faith.³⁹¹ There were many who accused Jesus of serious sins, as for instance, ‘he is possessed by Belzebul’ (Mk 3:22), he is ‘a glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners’ (Mt 11:19), a deceiver of people (J 7:12) or blasphemer (Mk 2, Mat 26:65-66), etc. As Robinson rightly points out, it is striking that the writers of the four Gospels make no effort to prove and defend Jesus’ sinlessness. On the contrary, they preserve quite controversial stories such as that of the prostitute who was kissing Jesus’ feet (L 7:37-38)!³⁹² In spite of that though, the testimony of Jesus’ goodness and moral purity (Mk 10:18//) and sinlessness (beside Heb 4:15 also Heb 7:26, 9:24, J 8:46, 1 J 3:5, 1 Pe 2:22) is very convincing in the NT. Jesus’ sinlessness is simply a strong testimony of the believing church.

But still, “there is every reason to suppose that any goodness Jesus had, was won – and hard won – out of the struggle with evil within him and around.”³⁹³ *Whether Heb 4:15 does not presuppose that in Jesus’ temptations there was a strong possibility for him to sin, the author’s argument about Son’s identification with humanity, and consequently Jesus’ solidarity, sympathy and help, loses its whole foundation.* According to Cullman, the fact that Jesus is sinless

“becomes really meaningful only in connection with the strong emphasis on his susceptibility to temptation.” Cullmann even boldly claims, “at this point Hebrews understands the humanity of Jesus in a more comprehensive way than the Gospels or any other early Christian writing.”³⁹⁴

By using the old Latin terminology,³⁹⁵ we cannot accept docetic *non posse peccare*, but only *posse non peccare*, which points to Jesus’ free decision *not to sin*. “His sinlessness was the outcome of genuinely *human freedom*”³⁹⁶ and *human dependence on God*. It does not come out of his divine nature! Cullmann thus correctly highlights **the powerful pastoral dimension** of this truth: “The assertion that Jesus had to withstand the same temptations as we is extraordinary far-reaching.”³⁹⁷ On this account, we must agree with Williamson who claims, that Jesus did not own a “kind of built-in pre-disposition against sin which would have infringed the reality of his humanity”, and that “there is no essential conflict between belief in the moral goodness of Jesus and belief that sinlessness had to be struggled for”.³⁹⁸

ii. Is Jesus’ sinlessness just the final stage of his moral perfection?

Williamson’s arguments go too far, however. He argues that Jesus sinlessness was the final stage of his life and tackles Jesus’ sinlessness before his completion. According to Williamson, Jesus offered sacrifice

³⁹¹ Ibid., 113.

³⁹² ROBINSON, J.A.T., *Human Face of God*, 98.

³⁹³ Ibid., 77.

³⁹⁴ CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 94.

³⁹⁵ As Robinson does it (ROBINSON, J.A.T., *Human Face of God*, 94).

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 95 [Italics mine].

³⁹⁷ CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 95.

³⁹⁸ WILLIAMSON, R. “Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus”, n40,8.

for his own sins.³⁹⁹ This is “untenable” though, as Lane rightly points out.⁴⁰⁰ Heb 7:26-27 and explicitly 9:14 (‘he offered himself without blemish to God’) denies this conclusion. The NT simply does not recognize Jesus sacrificing himself for *his own* sins but only for *our* sins. Moreover, whereas there is an apparent lack of evidence in the NT for accepting the view that Jesus really sinned,⁴⁰¹ the message of the first Christian witnesses is extraordinary strong – Jesus was without sin. Our refusal of Jesus’ sinfulness during his life is thus not primarily made of the dogmatic reasons but simply due to the obvious unsatisfactory textual support of this assumption. Williamson’s, Wellbourn’s (and perhaps Robinson’s) argumentation that Jesus possibly committed some sins during his life also cannot be satisfactorily supported by the concept of ‘moral perfection’, as we have argued by commenting on Heb 2:10. The author of Hebrews primarily works with the vocational and eschatological concept of Jesus’ perfection. Finally, Williamson’s argument, that χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας applied to the whole of Jesus life does not resonate with κατὰ πάντα καθ’ ὁμοιότητά is theologically wrong. We cannot (as Williamson tends to) substantially link the humanity with sin (R 7:13-25)! Yes, Jesus came to the sinful conditions of humanity, and fully experienced the dreadful consequences of the Adam’s fall outwardly and inwardly, but it does not mean that he needed to participate in sinning so that his humanity would be complete (R 8:2-4)! In fact, it is *his* (fought out) sinless human life that reveals the God-purposed foundation of our humanity. In this sense he has become our Leader (Heb 2:10). Schillebeeckx says, that Jesus’ humanity is the decisive criterion of humanity, not that our perception about human nature is the criterion of Jesus’ humanity. We need to approach Jesus with „open knowledge“ and without „preconception“ what it means to be a man.⁴⁰²

We shall **conclude** that Jesus’ sympathy and identification with man, even in his tendency to sin, does not include participation in sin, but depends “on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity”.⁴⁰³ Verse 4:15b thus means, that Man Jesus has been tested in all respects as we are but “*without the result of sin in his case*”.⁴⁰⁴

The discussed issues in Heb 4:15 are variously reflected in Bible translations. Notice different suggestions of translation of the expression συμπαθήσαι, especially between German translations and the rest here displayed. Πειράζω is translated in both ways, as temptation or putting to the test. NJB lets us presuppose that Jesus was not tempted to sin, other versions (except of NIV or ČEP) choose the literal translation of χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, which indicates no direction of interpretation.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁰⁰ See Lane’s (*Hebrews 1-8*, 115) and Peterson’s (*Hebrews and Perfection*, 188-190) criticism of Williamson.

⁴⁰¹ In fact, all we have are few stories that might sound ambiguously (I mentioned the references above), but still do not offer any sufficient proof of Jesus’ sinfulness.

⁴⁰² SCHILLEBEECKX, E. Jesus. An Experiment in Christology, 601.

⁴⁰³ Westcott, quoted from BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116.

⁴⁰⁴ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 108.

KJV	NAU	NIV	NJB	RSV	LUT	ELB	BKR	CEP
For we have not an high priest	For we do not have a high priest	For we do not have a high priest	For the high priest we have is	For we have not a high priest who is	Denn wir haben nicht einen Hohenpriester,	Denn wir haben nicht einen Hohenpriester	Nebo nemáme nejvyššíh o kněze,	Nemáme přece velekněze ,
which <i>cannot be touched with the feeling</i>	<i>who cannot sympathize</i>	who is <i>unable to sympathize</i>	<i>not incapable of feeling</i>	<i>unable to sympathize</i>	der <i>nicht könnte mit leiden</i>	der <i>nicht Mitleid haben könnte</i>	kterýž by <i>nemohl čitedlen býti</i>	který <i>není schopen mít soucit</i>
of our <i>infirmities</i> ; but was	with our <i>weaknesses</i> , but One who	with our <i>weaknesses</i> , but we have one who <i>has been</i>	our <i>weaknesses</i> with us, but	with our <i>weaknesses</i> , but one who	mit unserer <i>Schwachheit</i> , sondern	mit unseren <i>Schwachheiten</i> , sondern	<i>mdlob</i> našich, ale	s našimi <i>slabostmi</i> ; vždyť
<i>in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.</i>	<i>has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.</i>	<i>tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.</i>	<i>has been put to the test in exactly the same way</i> as ourselves, apart from sin.	<i>in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.</i>	der <i>versucht worden ist in allem wie wir, doch ohne Sünde.</i>	der <i>in allem in gleicher Weise wie wir versucht worden ist, doch ohne Sünde.</i>	<i>zkušeneh o ve všem nám podobně, kromě hříchu.</i>	<i>na sobě zakusil všechna pokušení jako my, ale nedopustil se hříchu.</i>

For ‘we have’ a high priest ‘let us grasp the confession’ (v14) and ‘let us come to the throne of grace’ (προσερχώμεθα οὖν... τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος). Verse 16 forms the climax of the paraenetical section 4:14-16. If Jesus’ temptations to sin were easier than ours, verse 16 would be a merely rhetorical ending of the passage. The author’s daring step into to the sector of sinful and tempted humanity, where Jesus is suprisingly found not as an almighty Son of God but as a struggling brother among us with no more power and strength than we could have, and yet without sin, makes the invitation to the throne of grace incredibly powerful.

The expression προσέρχομαι in the LXX⁴⁰⁵ denotes the “approach of the worshipper to God”. In the LXX it is often used in quite a general sense of gathering of God’s people.⁴⁰⁶ In the Hellenistic Greek, it can bear the connotations of entering the court, if it is not used generally, as “to come, to enter”.⁴⁰⁷ This variety of the word-usage including a possible cultic dimension is also attested by Lampe.⁴⁰⁸ The context of Heb 4:15 would suggest a priestly connotation of the expression,⁴⁰⁹ nevertheless, as Attridge comments, the cultic language here seems to be rather

⁴⁰⁵ Lev 9:5,7ff, Deut 4:11, Ps 34:5.

⁴⁰⁶ Exod 16:9; 32, 34; Num 10:3-4.

⁴⁰⁷ M&M, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 547.

⁴⁰⁸ LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1169. The Church fathers used the expression to designate God’s approach to men, or coming for instruction, approach to faith, baptism, etc.

⁴⁰⁹ A strictly cultic understanding of προσέρχομαι is held by PALZKILL (*EDNT*, 3, 163-164) pointing to Heb 7:25; 10:1,22; 11:6, 12:18,22; 1 Tm 6:3 and 1 Pet 2:4; BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116-117 or ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 269-270.

metaphorical.⁴¹⁰ We may conclude that the writer encourages the congregation to directly approach God (for Jesus' sacrifice, cf. Heb 10:19-25), with confidence, trust (cf. R 5:2!) and prayer.⁴¹¹ Grässer's viewing of προσέρχομαι as a pilgrimage imagery is also possible. The author's invitation to come near to God's merciful presence is thus addressed to the "wandernde Gemeinde" following their Leader and High priest.⁴¹² The author's appeal to the readers to approach the throne of grace is a calling to make a new step out of the old things to God. This seems to correspond to the previous calling to "grasp" the confession. Both the imperatives in 4:14-16 thus probably express the same intention 'to move forward'.

The author encourages us to approach the throne of grace μετὰ παρρησίας. Balz observes that "παρρησία refers properly to one's freedom to say anything... and thence to straightforwardness and openness in speech."⁴¹³ In the LXX (e.g. Lev 26:13) it bears a unique significance "in freedom/with raised heads". In Job 22:26 it denotes a righteous person having "freedom, confidence and joyous trust". According to Balz, God too manifests himself in παρρησία – "openly in both word and judgment" (Ps 93:1, 11:6). Balz concludes that the expression in Heb 4:16 signifies "confidence/certainty of one's free access to God".⁴¹⁴ The readers are invited to the throne of God's grace, not the throne of God's judgement, the author paraenetically stresses. This "throne characterized by grace"⁴¹⁵ is "christologically grounded"⁴¹⁶. Therefore, let us come freely with confidence, so that λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν εὐρώμεν!⁴¹⁷ I suppose that we do not need temporally distinguish 'mercy' from 'grace' here as some commentators do,⁴¹⁸ for both expressions traditionally belong to each other.⁴¹⁹ This is amazing encouragement. The congregation is assured that beside deep sympathy and identification with us in our troubles, **Jesus also stretches his hand to help**. The link between 2:17-18 and 4:14-16 is confirmed again by the expression βοήθεια occurring in both the passages.⁴²⁰ It is a help in times we need it most (εὐκαιρος). This is what makes him our merciful high priest.

⁴¹⁰ "To find here a reference to a specific Christian cultic activity is dubious" (ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 141).

⁴¹¹ Thus PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 79. Cf. also WEISS *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 298-299 and MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 92-3.

⁴¹² GRASSER, E., *An die Hebräer*, 257-260.

⁴¹³ BALZ, *EDNT*, 3, 45.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

⁴¹⁵ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 108 (the word order is mine). Against the Bruce's suggestion of 'the priestly throne' (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 116-117).

⁴¹⁶ WEISS, H. –F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 300.

⁴¹⁷ For ἔλεος and χάρις see my comment on Heb 2:9 and 2:17.

⁴¹⁸ Some regard λάβωμεν ἔλεος as referring to the past and χάριν εὐρώμεν as pointing to the future (beside Westcott, see also PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 80 or ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 142). However, this temporal distinction (heavily based on εὐκαιρον) does not seem to be significantly present here.

⁴¹⁹ Wis 3:9; 1 Tm 1:2; 2 Tm 1:2; Tit 1:4; J 1:16. See WEISS *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 300; ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 270.

⁴²⁰ Another, strikingly similar, paraenetical text is found in Heb 10:19-25.

2) Our suffering high priest: Exegesis 5:1-10

a) The crucial features of high priesthood

The author of Hebrews comes to the short excurs about high priesthood (5:1-6), after the few mentions of Jesus' priesthood we have noticed so far (2:17; 3:1; 4:14). The author of Hebrews will systematically develop the priestly theme down to the chapter 10. The passage 5:1-4 introduces three qualifications of high priests that are compared (and identified!) with Jesus' priesthood:

- i. a high priest has to be a man to represent human beings and offer sacrifices for their sins (v1)
- ii. he is supposed to be able to deal with weaknesses (vv2-3)
- iii. he must be called by God (v4).⁴²¹

Some other important requirements the Levitical priests need to fulfil are not mentioned here though. For example, the author does not emphasize the priest needs to be a male and a Jew, although in Jesus the both were fulfilled. Do these chosen features of priesthood in Hebrews characterize the very core of the scriptural idea of priesthood itself? Or does the author of Hebrews just mention some points of contact (or contrast if you like) between Jesus' and Aaronic priesthood? My conviction (against many commentators) is that the author does not oppose Jesus' priesthood to the Levitical one in verses 1-6. A careful observation reveals it is rather the other way round. *The author's primary concern is to present the substantial features of priesthood in itself, not just the Levitical high priesthood, and apply them to Jesus' high priesthood.* The superiority and otherness of Christ's priesthood ministry in contrast to the Aaronic one is not yet significantly stressed at this point.

i. human priests representing men and offering the sacrifices

Even though Peterson argues that the phrase ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος (5:1) contrasts the earthly Levitical priesthood with the heavenly Jesus' priesthood,⁴²² this is not convincing, for the author of Hebrews in 4:14–5:10 clearly concentrates himself on the *earthly* Jesus. Moreover, the author starts the section with quite a general phrase “for every priest”. V 1 fits the previous and following argumentation very well: Jesus too is a “high priest taken from among men”.⁴²³ In

⁴²¹ See II. CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS, c) Jesus the High Priest. It is more accurate to distinguish three qualifications for priesthood in ch5 rather than only two, as BRUCE does (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 118ff).

⁴²² PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 82.

⁴²³ One might object that this interpretation applied to Christ tends to accept a sort of adoptionism. However, the author's main intention is to stress the representative role of the human priest on behalf of men - God's calling to the ministry will take a special place in vv4-6.

other words, Jesus had to be a man to become a priest. As the Aaronic priests were representatives of humans, so also Jesus.

The main task of the priest is the sacrificial one,⁴²⁴ to offer (προσφέρω)⁴²⁵ sacrifices (δωρά τε καὶ θυσίας)⁴²⁶ for sins (ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν). Lane suggests that the author “carefully and accurately distinguishes two classes of offering”.⁴²⁷ However, many commentators argue that the author does not actually follow the distinction very clearly (see 9:7 and 10; 7:27, 10:12). The emphasis in v1 is laid on ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν, to which the verb προσφέρω mainly refers.⁴²⁸ It is sometimes argued that v 1 is reflected in Heb 5:7 (Jesus offering tears), so that it helps to build a nice chiasmic structure of 5:1-10. However, verse 7, especially if it speaks of the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement, refers to v 1 only very vaguely. Moreover, an offering of tears (v 7) can be hardly linked with Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins.⁴²⁹ On the other hand, Heb 2:17 (Jesus, identified with men and atoning the sins of people) is the reference par excellence to Heb 5:1.

ii. a priest is supposed to be able to deal with weaknesses

The priest’s ability to deal with weakness (ἀσθένεια) is called μετριοπαθῆω (v 2). The expression μετριοπαθῆω reflects the semantically stronger term συμπαθῆω (Heb 4:14). μετριοπαθῆω “generally denotes the golden mean between indifference and mawkish sentimentality”,⁴³⁰ the priest is thus supposed to be “able to curb his emotions” and have a “moderate” feeling.⁴³¹ The object of that considerate dealing is those ‘ignorant and erring’ (τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν καὶ πλανωμένοις). The language seems to allude the OT distinction between the unintentional (ἀκουσιάζομαι) and intentional (ποιέω ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας) sins (cf. Num 15:28-30), which possibly appears elsewhere in Hebrews (3:12, 6:6, 10:26). However, it is not quite clear that the author wants to stress the necessity of sacrifices for the unintentional sins, because “no such provision was made for the deliberate and defiant lawbreaker.”⁴³² I think, that the *author intends to lay foremost emphasis on the priest’s own ἀσθένεια* as a prerequisite for his μετριοπαθεια with

⁴²⁴ And thus, by implication, not political or legal (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 273).

⁴²⁵ προσφέρω occurs 21 times in Hebrews, always (except 12:7) in connection with sacrifice (ibid).

⁴²⁶ τε (“both”) is omitted in some mns. Ellingworth suggests that it is the addition influenced by 8:3 and 9:9.

⁴²⁷ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 108. 1) δῶρον is generic (cereal offering) 2) θυσία is more specific (animal sacrifice). Thus also KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 285.

⁴²⁸ The substantives generally signify the “expiatory sacrifices for sins” (MONTEFIORE, H. A *Commentary*..., 94). Similarly ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle*..., 82; BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle*..., 119; PETERSON, D. *Hebrews*..., 82; ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle*..., 273-274.

⁴²⁹ ATTRIDGE, H. (*The Epistle*..., ad loc.) and SWETNAM, J. (“The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8”, ad.loc.) are right in viewing the sacrificial language of verse 7 rather metaphorically.

⁴³⁰ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 120.

⁴³¹ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 285.

⁴³² BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 121. Ellingworth is correct that this is not true absolutely for e.g. Lev 6:1-7 explicitly gives a second chance even for the intentional ‘lawbreakers’ (*The Epistle*..., 276).

those who are sinful.⁴³³ V 3 repeats the information of vv1-2 about offering the sacrifices (προσφέρω, v1) for sins (περὶ⁴³⁴ ἁμαρτιῶν, v1) coming through our weakness (ἀσθένεια, v2 // δι' αὐτήν).⁴³⁵

The new, and essential, piece of information of v 3 is that the priests have to (ὀφείλει)⁴³⁶ bring the sin-offerings for themselves as well (Lev 9:7). It seems to me that the author just makes a mention of that but still does not have any deeper interest to contrast it with Christ. Notice a total absence of polemical language here. The essential distinction between Jesus as priest and the Levitical priests will be discussed in detail later, in Heb 7:26-28.

iii. God's calling to high priest ministry

The third qualification of the priest seems to be especially important for the author on this place. The first two requirements for the high priest in chapter 5 refer back to 2,5-18 and 4, 14-16 (Jesus' humanity, help, sacrifice and sympathy with us), therefore, the author does not need to argue for them here once again. However, the writer of Hebrews has not even hinted yet, *how* Jesus became a priest.⁴³⁷ *The necessity of God's calling the priest is thus the central theme of 5:1-6.* Bruce interestingly points out that the author's accent on *God's* calling to the high priest office (καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) could strike the readers of the epistle, who knew the usual practise of their time of appointment high priests by political authorities.⁴³⁸ The author therefore recalls the OT practice, in which the priests had to be called by God. Thus Aaron (Ex 28:1, Lev 8:1ff, Nu 3:10) as well as his successors (Num 20:23ff, 25:10ff).

To be called a priest is honour. Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς (Heb 5:5) connects the exposition about the author's idea of the (Levitical) priesthood with Christ's priesthood explicitly. Christ did not glorify himself by usurpation the title of high priest but was glorified by God who had called him to this ministry. It is very clear thus, that the third qualification for high priesthood is valid

⁴³³ The frequently proposed distinction between the intentional and unintentional sins is in fact quite unnecessary because both are regarded as sins to be repented of (L 23:34, 1 Tm 1:13; Acts 3:17-19; 17:30; 1 Pe 1:14).

⁴³⁴ Quite a few mns. read ὑπὲρ instead of περὶ.

⁴³⁵ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 277. The author predominantly operates with the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) sacrifices. Nevertheless, Attridge mentions even the daily sacrifices in Israel could be understood as sin-offerings (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 144).

⁴³⁶ Cf. Heb 2:17. Ellingworth says that ὀφείλει denotes "a requirement under the law incurred because of ἀσθένεια" (ibid.,277-8), Lane similarly speaks of "a moral obligation" (*Hebrews 1-8*, 108).

⁴³⁷ All the references to Jesus a high priest up to now view Jesus as a high priest already: 2:17, 3:1, 4:15.

⁴³⁸ Similarly Montefiore: The author of Hebrews evokes the "actual circumstances of his day under which high priests were elected to their office" (*A Commentary...*, 94). Jason and Menelaus were appointed by Antiochus IV; Alcimus by Demetris I (162 BC), etc. After the fall of the Hasmonean house the priests were appointed by Herod the Great (37-4BC), by Archelaus (4 BC -6 AD), by Roman governors (6-41 A.D.) or by Herod family (41-66). The last high priest was elected by a ballot (BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 122).

for the Aaronic as well as for Jesus' eternal priesthood. The author's scriptural support of Jesus' appointment a high priest by God is remarkable. The writer combines here two very well-known Christological psalms (2 and 110), from which he had already quoted in chapter one.

The quotation of *Ps* 2:7 brings us back to Heb 1:5 where the Son's superiority to the angels is attested by exactly the same words of exaltation as it is in Heb 5:5.⁴³⁹ Jesus "was appointed by him, who said (ὁ λαλήσας): 'You are my Son (υἱός μου), today I have begotten you.'" Heb 5:5 thus also evokes Heb 1:1-2 where God spoke (ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας) in his Son (ἐν υἱῷ). Most probably, the quotation does not refer to Jesus' baptism (Mk 1:11), however to his resurrection (cf. R 1:4). 'Today I have begotten you' represents "the day when the Most High gave public notice that he had exalted the crucified Jesus".⁴⁴⁰

The second quotation of *Ps* 110:4 recalls the scene of enthronement in Heb 1:3 and 13.⁴⁴¹ However, for the first time in Hebrews, and perhaps in the whole Christian tradition, the author quotes verse 4 of Psalm 110 as speaking of Christ: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek". The author's quotation thus opens two ideas of Messiah. In the OT, of course, there was a strict separation between the office of a Davidic king and an Aaronic priest. Therefore it is not surprising that "in some strands of Jewish expectation, a distinction was made between the lay Messiah... and the priestly Messiah".⁴⁴² According to Bruce, "the writer to the Hebrews was the first to identify these two eschatological personages in such a way as to provide the fulfillment of the divine oracle in *Ps* 110:4."⁴⁴³ The author of Hebrews used the two-dimensional (priestly and royal) messianic Psalm 110 and connected the idea of the royal Messiah with the priestly Messiah of the Melchizedek's order. The author builds his understanding of Messiah on the person of Melchizedek from Gen 14 who was a priest as well as a king.

Coming back to the first quotation, we might ask, why has the author of Hebrews quoted *Ps* 2:7 (referring to the Son) in this priestly passage? Peterson describes it as follows, "*the priestly act of Christ* derives its special character from the fact that it is *the act of the eternal Son*".⁴⁴⁴ The author lets us see here the mutual relationship of both the christological concepts. *Even though we still speak of the man Jesus who became a priest and sacrificed himself, the efficiency of that for our salvation lies in the fact it was the Son's sacrifice.* As we have noticed in the

⁴³⁹ See my comment on Heb 1:5.

⁴⁴⁰ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 123.

⁴⁴¹ See my comment on these verses.

⁴⁴² BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 123.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 125-126. The author develops it further in chapter 7.

⁴⁴⁴ PETERSON, D. *Hebrews and Perfection*, 84-85 (italics is mine).

introduction to the Christology of Hebrews (Chapter II) both the titles (High priest and the Son) seem to be intertwined with each another and the author does not identify the exact ‘moment’ when Jesus was appointed the Son or a high priest.⁴⁴⁵ Even though Ps 2 and 110 in Heb 1 connect Jesus’ high priesthood with his heavenly exaltation, there are other passages that definitively presuppose his ministry has started on the earth, at least in his suffering and sacrificial death (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15, 5:7-10!)⁴⁴⁶. Attridge’s remark, that “the attempts to be overly precise about when Christ became High Priest ignore this complexity”,⁴⁴⁷ must be therefore accepted.

b) Conclusion

The whole passage Heb 5:1-10 in fact does not significantly contrast the Aaronic and Jesus’ priesthood. The author highlights three main features of the high priesthood that are valid for Jesus, as they were valid for the Aaronic priests. To view 5:1-4 as speaking of the Levitical priests, and 5-10 as of Jesus’ priesthood (when the latter more or less stays against the first one) seems to be an inaccurate scheme.⁴⁴⁸ The recognition of a chiasmic structure in 5:1-10 here is thus also uncertain. The chiasmus rather appears within the verses 5-10, when the first and last point (Jesus’ appointment a priest) directly corresponds to each other. The first two qualifications of the priest are identified with Jesus’ priesthood implicitly for the author has convincingly argued for Jesus’ humanity and sympathy already in chapter 2 and 4. A completely new argument introduced here is the appointment a high priest springs out of God’s calling. This is valid for Aaron as well as for Jesus. The main differentiating points between the both are present in the passage,⁴⁴⁹ but the author does not highlight them here. There is no mark of polemical language or tone of speech. On the contrary, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς compares the both positively. There is also an evident parallel between “the honour” of being a priest (v 4) and “the glorifying” Jesus by appointing him a priest (v5-6). And yet Jesus’ priesthood is according to the ‘new’ order of Melchizedek. We do not know anything more about the Melchizedek’s priesthood until now, but one thing is clear, it is a priesthood standing on the same (however more complete) qualifications as the Aaronic one, even though it comes out of a different origin.

⁴⁴⁵ I argued in the chapter II. that the language of time in Hebrews tends to be rather mythological and not precisely definable in history.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. 9:14, 26; 10:10. Attridge is correct that we cannot overemphasize Jesus’ heavenly priesthood at the expense of his earthly priesthood (*The epistle to the Hebrews*, 146-147). Nevertheless, he himself fails to recognize Heb 2:17 and 4:15 as referring to Jesus’ earthly ministry primarily.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁴⁸ However it is possible to divide the passage into 5:1-4 (which is using the present tense) and 5:5-10 (which is using the aorist).

⁴⁴⁹ He will explain them thoroughly in a detail in the next chapters. For instance, the necessity of the Aaronic priests to bring the sin-offering (7:26).

3) Jesus' suffering and appointment a high priest: Heb 5:7-10

The exegetical complexity of Heb 5:7-8 is representatively mirrored in different translations.

KJV	GNV	NIB // NIV	NAS	LUT	BKR	CEP	KMS
<p><i>Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;</i> ⁸ Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;</p>	<p><i>Who in the dayes of his flesh did offer vp prayers and supplications with strong crying and teares vnto him, that was able to saue him from death, and was also heard in that which he feared.</i> ⁸ And though he were ye Sonne, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered.</p>	<p><i>During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.</i> ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered</p>	<p><i>In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.</i></p>	<p><i>Und er hat in den Tagen seines irdischen Lebens Bitten und Flehen mit lautem Schreien und mit Tränen dem dargebracht, der ihn vom Tod erretten konnte; und er ist auch erhört worden, weil er Gott in Ehren hielt.</i> ⁸ So hat er, obwohl er Gottes Sohn war, doch an dem, was er litt, Gehorsam gelernt.</p>	<p><i>Kterýž za dnů těla svého modlitby a ponižené prosby k tomu, kterýž ho mohl zachovati od smrti, s křikem velikým a slzami obětoval, a uslyšán jest i vysvobozen z toho, čehož se strašil.</i> ⁸ A ačkoli byl Syn Boží, z toho však, což strpěl, naučil se poslušností.</p>	<p><i>Ježíš za svého pozemskéh o života přinesl s bolestným voláním a slzami obět modliteb a úpěnlivých proseb Bohu, který ho mohl zachránit před smrtí; a Bůh ho pro jeho pokoru slyšel.</i> ⁸ Ačkoli to byl Boží Syn, naučil se poslušnosti z utrpení, jímž prošel,</p>	<p><i>On ve dnech svého pozemskéh o života s hlasitým křikem a slzami obětoval modlitby a úpěnlivé prosby tomu, který byl mocen ho zachránit ze smrti, a byl vyslyšen pro svou zbožnost.</i> ⁸ Ačkoli to byl Syn, naučil se poslušnosti tím, co vytrpěl.</p>

a) The background of the passage

Jesus' humanity is hardly stressed more in the epistle to the Hebrews than in Heb 5:7-8. These verses recall Heb 2:17-18 and 4:15. There exists a wide discussion as to whether the author of Hebrews alludes here to the **Gethsemane story**. Several points of contact between Heb 5:7-10 and the Gospel narratives would suggest so. Jesus pleaded for escape from the suffering of death and yet submitted himself to God' will (Mk 14:34-36). He was "overwhelmed with terror and anguish" (Mk 14:33//, REB). These circumstances seem to fit the strong language of Hebrews 5, so that many scholars (even recently) suppose the author here describes Jesus' prayer in the Garden.⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, other commentators rightly point out that the Hebrews' description goes beyond the Gospels' stories of Gethsemane. Ellingworth argues that it is evident if the literary side is considered, because the author of Hebrews uses quite a different

⁴⁵⁰ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary...*, 97-8; CULLMANN, O. *The Christology...*, 96; PETERSON, D. *Hebrews...*, 86-92; KISTEMAKER, S.J. "A Merciful and Faithful High Priest...", 163-175. See e.g. Montefiore, he automatically accepts this interpretation and comments v7: "It implies that Christ's agony in Gethsemane was a representative act, summing up and representing before God all the entreaties of men in their hour of desperate need." (p97)

vocabulary from the Garden story.⁴⁵¹ The explicit evidences of Jesus' weeping (L 19:41; J 11:35) as well as God's hearing of his prayer (J 11:41) occur outside of the passion story. The Gethsemane narrative also does not contain the mention of loud cries (κραυγή ἰσχυρά). They would probably better reflect Jesus' cries from the cross (Mk 15:34//) or his torturing and crucifixion, but can refer to his earthly ministry as well. The interpretation of 'he was heard' is also problematic, if regarded as a reference to Gethsemane.⁴⁵² The opening phrase 'in the days of his flesh' of the verse is very general, which can be also correctly translated as 'in the days of his earthly life'. From these evidences outside of the passion story, we may satisfactorily prove that *Heb 5:7 does not refer to the Gethsemane exclusively or even primarily*, although the Garden story probably provides "the most telling illustration" of Heb 5:7nn.⁴⁵³

There is another important source that could have a very significant influence on our author's words, **the psalmic tradition**. The striking similarity of Heb 5:7 to the language of some psalms (esp. Psalm 22, 31, 116) is recognized by the majority of scholars. In his recently published article, Swetnam argues that the assumption of Psalm 22 (21 LXX) as the *Sitz im Leben* of Heb 5:7 is "much more plausible" than the Gethsemane story.⁴⁵⁴ Ps 22:25 uses the same vocabulary as the author of Hebrews in 5:7.⁴⁵⁵ Moreover, Psalm 22 is *a very well attested early-Christian psalm reporting Jesus' death* on the cross.⁴⁵⁶ Swetnam suggests that the author of Hebrews reflects the original background of the psalm, that is, the *toda* ceremony. "A bloody sacrifice and *toda* ceremony are offered by someone who has escaped from the danger of death..."⁴⁵⁷ However, in my judgement, Swetnam identifies Heb 5:7 with Ps 22 too exclusively. He dismisses any connotation of the Gethsemane narrative (as well as other psalms) at all, which is incorrect.

A less radical view than the Swetnam's, but also considering the OT background as dominant in Heb 5:7, is given by Weiss. He claims that viewing the Gethsemane tradition in Heb 5:7 is really at hand, but *even the Garden story reflects the OT motif of the believer "in tiefer Not"*. This motif might be seen in Psalm 116 in particular, including its vocabulary that is strikingly

⁴⁵¹ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 286.

⁴⁵² Grässer is not completely incorrect to say that, who insists on Gethsemane interpretation of Heb 5:7, must also insert οὐκ before εἰσακουσθῆναι with von Harnack and Bultmann (*An die Hebräer*, n240, p297). On Harnack's and Bultmann's solution of the exegetical problem in v7 see my comment further on.

⁴⁵³ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128.

⁴⁵⁴ He praises Nestle Aland's 26th edition that refers to Ps 22:25 only.

⁴⁵⁵ δέησις, κράζω, εἰσακούω, see also v3 or v6.

⁴⁵⁶ cf. Mk 15:34 (// Ps 22:1), Mt 27:46, etc. SWETNAM, J. "The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8", 355-360.

Swetnam heavily depends on the Hese's work, e.g. "Psalm 22...Der älteste Bericht vom Tode Jesu und die Entstehung des Herrenmahles".

⁴⁵⁷ SWETNAM, J. "The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8", 358. Swetnam argues that the Jesus' cry from the cross, as reported in the Gospels, "is designed to indicate not that God had abandoned the petitioner, but that

similar to Heb 5:7nn.⁴⁵⁸ Weiss concludes, that we should understand Heb 5:7-10 as a passage reflecting the traditional biblical scheme of the suffering ones crying to God in hope of deliverance.⁴⁵⁹ This interpretation seems to be very convincing. It allows a **synthesis of both**, the Gethsemane as well as the psalmic background of our text, while the story of Gethsemane itself needs to be viewed from the psalmic perspective. Supporting the crucial Christological statements by the OT is a distinctive feature of the author to the Hebrews as we see elsewhere in the epistle. Jesus used the words of psalms to express himself quite often (e.g. Ps 110:1 in Mk 12:36), even his last words on the cross is the quotation of Psalm 22:2. Seeing Jesus' life, suffering and death from the psalmic point of view is thus a fully legitimate approach, which narrowly corresponds with the practice of the early church.

b) The suffering man of faith (Heb 5:7-8a)

The seventh verse literally runs as follows, “*in the days of his flesh*,”⁴⁶⁰ Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear” (RSV). The temporal dimension of the phrase ‘in the days of his σάρξ’ (‘‘during his life on earth’’)⁴⁶¹ unambiguously refers to the whole of Jesus' earthly life.

The expression σάρξ in v7 reflects the LXX translation of בשר. Sand says, “the range of meaning extends from the substance *flesh* (both human and animal), to the human body, to the entire person, and to all humankind. This variety is already seen in the LXX...”⁴⁶² Schweizer observes, that in the OT, “the concept embraces the whole of human nature including the intellectual functions”.⁴⁶³ He says about the letter to the Hebrews, that “in all passages σάρξ denotes the earthly sphere which is separated from the world of God. But the sin is never linked with it”. Schweizer's advice, not to identify σάρξ with sin, is very important as we have already noted in Heb 4:15. However, Schweizer claims that in Heb 5:7 the author mainly emphasized the “substantial” (i.e. physical) part of man and thus distinguished Jesus from the angels. According to him, Heb 5:7 shows Jesus as a heavenly being, who shared flesh for a period.⁴⁶⁴ Schweizer's understanding of σάρξ in Heb 5:7 is rather platonic than scriptural, in my opinion. Sand is quite correct in the criticism of Schweizer, that the comparison of Heb 5:7 (referring to

salvation through death – Jesus' death – is occasion for the arrival of the Kingdom of God as interpreted in Ps 22[21]” (358). Heb 5:7 should be seen from the same angle, Jesus thus prayed to be allowed to die.

⁴⁵⁸ εἰσακούω, δέησις (v1), δάκρυον (v8).

⁴⁵⁹ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 312-313.

⁴⁶⁰ Quite a few modern versions translate ‘during his life on earth’ (NJB, NIV, etc.)

⁴⁶¹ Robinson suggests that ‘in the days of his earthly life’ points to the time “when he was not yet priest but was... preparing for the priesthood” (*The Human Face of God*, 158).

⁴⁶² SAND, *EDNT*, 3, 230.

⁴⁶³ SCHWEIZER, E. *TDNT*, VII, 141-143.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Jesus' *earthly life*) and Heb 2:14 (Jesus shared flesh and blood "as does every person") "prohibits the assertion that 'the substantial' character... is now much more prominent'.⁴⁶⁵ The author emphasises human life in his entirety, not a concrete physical part of humanity.

Bruce correctly argues that the phrase 'in his days of flesh' does not imply that Jesus' "human condition came to an end with his exaltation to the right hand of God. ...it would seriously weaken our author's argument that Christians have right now a high priest who feels for them and with them in all their temptations and sorrows."⁴⁶⁶

Σάρξ seems to function here as a *terminus technicus* representing rather entire humanity (physical, intellectual, spiritual) than the physical body exclusively. This understanding of σάρξ occurs in the LXX quite regularly. In every case though, the expression stands in a kind of contrast to the heavenly realms.

The author then uses the cultic language of offering the sacrifices (cf. 5:1, 3). The expressions do not describe any specific priestly act of Jesus,⁴⁶⁷ but are rather meant poetically or metaphorically.⁴⁶⁸ Jesus is said to offer (προσφέρω) the prayers (δέησις) and supplications (ἱκετηρία),⁴⁶⁹ with loud cries (κραυγή ἰσχυρά) and tears (δάκρυον),⁴⁷⁰ to him who was able to save (δυνάμενον σώζειν) him from (ἐκ) death.⁴⁷¹ In other words, this vivid picture depicted by the author is a description of Jesus' ἀσθένεια (cf. 4:15, 5:2). In the NT, the initiator of σώζω⁴⁷² is often God. The situations mentioned in the NT, "from which one is saved include mortal danger, death, disease, possession, sin and alienation from God, and eternal ruin."⁴⁷³ s

⁴⁶⁵ SAND, *EDNT*, 3, 230-233.

⁴⁶⁶ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 126.

⁴⁶⁷ Ellingworth comments, that even though there is no problem to see an allusion to Jesus' sacrificial work even before the cross, προσφέρω does not explicitly denote here a Christ' self-offering (*The Epistle...*, 286).

⁴⁶⁸ SWETNAM, J. "The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8", 350.

⁴⁶⁹ The two words (δέησις and ἱκετηρία) collocation does not occur in the NT but in Isocrates, Polybius or Philo (BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, n23, p122). Cf. KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 288. The first one is quite frequent in the NT, ἱκετηρία is hapax legomenon. Ellingworth translates it as "urgent supplication" (*The Epistle...*, 287).

⁴⁷⁰ Tears of suffering (Re 21:4), not of joy (Lk 1:41). "κραυγή denotes a loud noise, not necessarily articulate or even human... but often associated with prayer (e.g. Ps 5:2-4; Job 34:28)" (Ibid., 289).

⁴⁷¹ The reference is to God who is δυνάμενος σώζειν. Cf. with Jesus who δύναται βοηθήσαι (Heb 2:18) and is δυνάμενος συμπαθήσαι (Heb 4:15).

⁴⁷² σώζω, in the LXX mostly rendering the Hebrew word *נָצַח*, occurs 106 times in the NT. The verb is frequently used indirectly in the passive (RADL, *EDNT*, 3, 319-321).

⁴⁷³ ἀπὸ in Mat 1:21; Acts 2:40; Rom 5:9; ἐκ in John 12:27; **Heb 5:7**, Jas 5:20; Jude 23 (ibid., 319-320).

Montefiore comments v7 as follows: “the fact that Jesus prayed for himself demonstrates his real humanity, for deity has no need to make supplication.”⁴⁷⁴ As Koester put it, the fact that “Jesus prayed ‘to the one who was able to save him from death’... gives the strong impression that he prayed for deliverance.”⁴⁷⁵ The author of Hebrews continues promptly, “and he was heard for his godly fear” (RSV). We need to assess the last phrase of v7 and beginning of v8 in a greater detail now. There are three cruxes of interpretation: the phrase ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλάβειας; ‘he was heard’ and the conjunction καίπερ.

The first disputed issue (ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλάβειας) derives from the polyvalence of the word εὐλάβεια creates a significant exegetical problem as to whether we should accept the understanding “fear” or “piety”. Dictionaries attest that both translations are generally correct.⁴⁷⁶ The motif of Jesus’ fear as well as the motif of his pious reverence would fit the passage almost perfectly. A dispute is then at hand.

i. fear/anxiety

The first understanding, ‘fear’ or ‘anxiety’, prefer e.g. Bultmann,⁴⁷⁷ Montefiore,⁴⁷⁸ Cullmann,⁴⁷⁹ Robinson,⁴⁸⁰ etc. The argumentation follows the logic that ἀπὸ τῆς means ‘out of something’, grammatically, the genitive of locus. Therefore, the reading ‘out of fear’ is quite natural. As Montefiore puts it, the ‘fear’ reading does not need to deal with the criticism of the view, that although Jesus was heard/delivered out of death, he died, because Jesus was delivered ‘out of his fear’. Jesus thus experienced fear so that he could set free those who are kept by fear (2:15).⁴⁸¹ Some who stand for the ‘reverence’ understanding of the word argue that it is difficult to conceive that the author of Hebrews would praise Jesus for his trust in God (2:13) while he “became a prey of terror”.⁴⁸² However, this argument cannot stand its ground at all for the author does not exclude any experience from Jesus’ humanity (except of sin). The serious objection against the ‘fear/anxiety’ reading rests in the use of εὐλάβεια in other two places in Hebrews, 11:7 and 12:28 where it convincingly indicates the ‘reverence’ rather than ‘fear’.

⁴⁷⁴ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary...*, 98.

⁴⁷⁵ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 288.

⁴⁷⁶ See BALZ, *EDNT*, 2, 78-79. Bultmann says that in the NT “εὐλάβεια always means ‘pious’ or ‘devout’ as in the LXX”. On the other hand Acts 23:10 almost certainly reads ‘to fear’, perhaps as well as Heb 11:7, 12:28 and Phil 2:12 (*TDNT*, II, 751-3).

⁴⁷⁷ *TDNT*, II, 751-3.

⁴⁷⁸ *A Commentary...*, 98-99.

⁴⁷⁹ *The Christology...*, 96.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Human Face...*, 158. (see also Michel, Andriessen, Friedrich, Strobel, Wilckens, etc.)

⁴⁸¹ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary...*, 99.

⁴⁸² SWETNAM, J. “The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8”, 348. Similarly Lane who sees a difficulty that Jesus freed some from fear even though he himself had been shaken by fear (LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 109).

ii. reverence

In the NT εὐλάβεια mostly refers to ‘reverence’ or ‘godly fear’.⁴⁸³ This interpretation is held by most commentators.⁴⁸⁴ In this case, we understand ἀπὸ + genitive as a causal genitive.⁴⁸⁵ The advantage of this reading is that we find here a fluent bridge between “he was heard” and “reverence”. Even though the concept of reverence/godly fear is,⁴⁸⁶ it is quite obvious from Heb 5:7-10 that Jesus’ reverence to God is mentioned in the unequivocal context of his struggles, prayers, tears, sufferings and cries to God and, yes, the fear of death. Both ideas thus might be naturally linked, for Jesus had an ordinary human fear of death, he experienced being forsaken by God, he was tempted to give up his calling, and yet he put his trust in God and submitted himself to him in his reverence.⁴⁸⁷

The second problem is the interpretation of the phrase ‘he was heard’. Following the ambiguity of εὐλάβεια, the phrase ‘and he was heard’ thus can be also comprehended in several ways.

i. he was heard to be allowed to die

Swetnam suggests that the phrase καίπερ ὧν υἱός (v8) should be taken “as an adaptation of the plea of Ps 22[21]”, which is probably the text reflected in Heb 5.⁴⁸⁸ Swetnam’s interpretation of Heb 5:7-8 therefore solves some of the translational problems we have dealt earlier.

“This plea of Jesus in Heb 5:8 is a request that he not be spared as Isaac was spared by a last-minute divine intervention through the agency of angel (Gen 22:11-14).” He prayed and was heard in his reverence, “so that he was allowed to die”.⁴⁸⁹

Swetnam’s exclusive dependence on Psalm 22 here is problematic though. In his interpretation, the psalm is stressed more dominantly than the actual context of Hebrews 5. The Isaac parallel is very interesting but it does not quite fit the statements of Heb 5:7 (as well as 4:15). V7 much more naturally evokes Jesus’ typically human experiencing of the extreme physical and spiritual sufferings. I can not get rid of the impression that Swetnam is too cautious about to depict Jesus in these shockingly human terms (viz. his resolute objection against Jesus experiencing fear or terror of death, p348).

⁴⁸³ Cf. Lk 2:25, Acts 2:5; 8:2, 22:12, etc.

⁴⁸⁴ Balz concludes: “εὐλάβεια involves a once-for-all (cf. 4:15) *devotion to God or piety*” (*EDNT*, 2, 79, [italics his]); Grässer: “die ehrerbietige Scheu vor der Gottheit, nicht aber Todesfurcht” (*An die Hebräer*, 304); Weiss translates as “Gottesfurcht” (*Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 315); “reverence” by ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 291; KISTEMAKER, S.J. “A Merciful...”, 174-5; “godly fear” by LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 109; “reverent awe” by PETERSON, D. *Hebrews...*, 90.

⁴⁸⁵ ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλάβειας can be both, genitive of locus as well as a genitive of cause.

⁴⁸⁶ There is also one minor interpretation that views εὐλάβεια as God’s (or angel’s) title, reflecting the OT usage קַח־פֶּחַד (Gen 31:42). This reading is hardly probable here though. The advantage of following the OT idea of the ‘Fear of Isaac’ meaning is that we do not need to distinguish between ‘fear’ and ‘reverence’.

⁴⁸⁷ This view is explicitly shared by PETERSON (*Hebrews...*, 92) as well.

⁴⁸⁸ We described and commented his argumentation for Ps 22 a few pages back.

⁴⁸⁹ SWETNAM, J. “The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8”, 356.

ii. he was delivered (or was not delivered) from the death

Many scholars assume that ‘to be heard’ means ‘to be delivered’. Considering the (less probable) ‘fear’ translation, Jesus could have been delivered from the fear of death.⁴⁹⁰ However, it seems little awkward Jesus offered supplications to God who could save him from the ‘death’ with the result that he was delivered from the ‘fear of death’ only. Bultmann criticizes that this reading does not do justice to *καίπερ ὧν υἱός*.⁴⁹¹ Bultmann therefore suggests, that the only solution is to assume the text is corrupt, that means, “there ought to be an *οὐκ* before *εἰσακουθεὶς* which was understandably cut out on religious grounds.”⁴⁹² The insertion of *οὐκ* makes the text almost perfectly clear, Jesus was *not* delivered out of death. However, this conjecture is quite unjustifiable, as most scholars criticize. There is absolutely no evidence for that Bultmann’s suggestion in any available manuscripts.

iii. he was delivered for his reverence

Another, largely accepted, interpretation of ‘heard’ as ‘delivered’ (adopting the ‘reverence’ reading) assume deliverance not from the physical death⁴⁹³ but from the power of death. However as Attridge points out, God’s hearing of Jesus’ prayers, and Jesus’ resurrection, cannot be viewed as contemporaneous.⁴⁹⁴ Some, as for instance Kistemaker, do not significantly separate these two realms from each other.⁴⁹⁵ Swetnam’s criticism of this unseparated understanding is definitively correct, because it could mean that Jesus “begged for his glorification” and was heard.⁴⁹⁶

I think, the whole logic, that ‘heard from’ automatically means ‘delivered from’, should be reconsidered. After the careful study of the biblical and Hellenistic sources, Koester has recently stated that “heard from” nowhere occurs as “heard and delivered from”.⁴⁹⁷ Grässer suggests that Heb 5:7 demonstrates “ein Gebet um die Kraft, die nötig ist, *χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας* bleiben zu können inmitten aller Anfechtungen und Schwäche, durch die sich der Sohn in nichts von den Söhnen unterscheidet (4:15)”.⁴⁹⁸ Jesus was heard *because of his reverence*, not because of his cries and tears, or ‘out of’ his fear. F.F. Bruce says, “Jesus has been qualified for his high-priestly service by his agony and tears, his supplication and suffering, throughout which his *trust in God* never failed”.⁴⁹⁹ *In other words, the author of Hebrews does not seem to stress Jesus’ deliverance but rather his reliance on God.* This conclusion strikingly reflects a regular OT motif of God hearing the prayers of the believer in despair. This is especially well demonstrated in Ps 23:25

⁴⁹⁰ Thus MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary...*, 99.

⁴⁹¹ BULTMANN, *TDNT*, II, 753.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.* Bultmann thus adopts von Harnack’s interpretation.

⁴⁹³ For Bultmann rightly criticizes the translation “he was heard because of his piety”, which presupposes “hearing could then consist only in his deliverance from death”, but Jesus died (*ibid.*).

⁴⁹⁴ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle...*, n175, 151.

⁴⁹⁵ See KISTEMAKER, S.J. “A Merciful and Faithful High Priest...”, 173-174.

⁴⁹⁶ SWETNAM, J. “The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8”, 349.

⁴⁹⁷ KOESTER, C. *Hebrews*, 289.

⁴⁹⁸ GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, 301.

or Ps 114:1 (LXX), the psalms the author could have alluded to in Heb 5:7 as we have already argued:

	LXX	NRS
Ps 23:25 (MT 22:24)	ὅτι οὐκ ἐξουδένωσεν οὐδὲ προσώχθισεν τῇ δεήσει τοῦ πτωχοῦ οὐδὲ ἀπέστρεψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ κεκραγέναι με πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰσήκουσέν μου	For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.
Ps 114:1 (MT 116:1)	ἀλληλουια ἠγάπησα ὅτι εἰσακούσεται κύριος τῆς φωνῆς τῆς δεήσεώς μου	I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

The vocabulary as well as the whole setting of these psalms is very similar to Hebrews 5:7. Jesus, as a Jewish believer, cried to God in his pain and fear, and God heard him. The afflicted Jews praying to God in psalms did not hear God’s answer immediately. They were mostly not delivered at that very moment of their prayer. So even Jesus himself did not see anything of God’s intervention during his suffering. The situation depicted by the author of Hebrews (building on the psalmic tradition and evoking the Gethsemane’s story) thus also tells us, that even though Jesus *was heard* by God in his total dependence on him – we know that he was cruelly murdered. He is even said to experience total forsakeness of God (Mk 15:34)! *Yet, the author’s primary intention in Heb 5:7 is to emphasize that God hears the prayers of his faithful one crying to him.* God is close to those who rely on Him (Ps 145:18). He heard Jesus’ prayers. The pastoral conclusion from that is literally immense. Our reverence and trust in God should surpass present suffering, yes even our own death. There are some psalms, as for instance the quoted Ps 114 LXX, *ex post* declaring God helped the believer from his troubles. We may see the pattern present in Heb 5:7 as well. Retrospectively, from the author’s point of view, it is possible to say, “Jesus was delivered from the power death and was resurrected”,⁵⁰⁰ so that God’s completed “Erhörung” finally meant Jesus’ “Erhöhung”.⁵⁰¹ God evidenced that he heard Jesus by raising him from the death.

The third *crux interpretum* in Heb 5:7-8 is the conjunction *καίπερ*. The conjunction *καίπερ* (v8) is “in the NT always followed by a participle to form a concessive clause.”⁵⁰² The core of dispute rests in the question as whether the conjunction is related to the preceding phrase or to the following one.

⁴⁹⁹ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 129 (italics mine). A.B. Bruce is correct in his comment that “the point to be emphasised is, not so much that the prayer of Jesus was heard, as that he *needed* to be heard”.

Nevertheless, he links it too heavily with Gethsemane (quoted from BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 128).

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. R 4:24; 1 Te 1:10, Gal 1:1, 1 Co 6:14; 2 Co 4:14, etc.

⁵⁰¹ WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 315.

⁵⁰² Phil 3:4; Heb 5:8, 7:5, 12:17; 2 P 1:12; Rev 17:8 (BAUMGARTEN, *EDNT*, 2, 232).

i. he was heard although he was Son

In Hebrews, as in the rest of the NT, *καίπερ* always refer to the previous statement. The reading of Heb 5:7-8 would run in that case: 'He was heard because of his reverence although he was Son'. Thus reads Swetnam who is very convinced that the use of *καίπερ* in Heb 5:8 is not an exception in the NT.⁵⁰³ This presumption also led von Harnack and Bultmann (who read 'out of his fear' though) to include *οὐκ* before *εἰσακουσθεὶς*.⁵⁰⁴ In other words, even though Jesus was the God's Son, he fully identified with men and as any other man he was thus also dependent on God's hearing. God heard him because of his piety, piety of an ordinary believer.

ii. he learned obedience although he was Son

On the other hand, Ellingworth rightly points out that outside of the NT⁵⁰⁵ *καίπερ* refers to the following argument sometimes. Therefore, he reads Heb 5:8:⁵⁰⁶ 'although he was Son, he learned obedience'.⁵⁰⁷ Swetnam criticizes Ellingworth that the acceptance of that reading by implication means that the subject of Jesus' plea was to be obedient, or to have willingness to obey, whereas Heb 10:5-7 says that, "he already is obedient explicitly".⁵⁰⁸ However this Swetnam's argumentation is not very convincing for the mutually linked expressions *ἔμαθεν* and *τελειωθεὶς* definitely point to some kind of real development of Jesus' personality.⁵⁰⁹ A more significant argument against this second understanding of the phrase rests in the fact that it is not very clear why should be the idea of the Son learning obedience so controversial so that the author needed to use *καίπερ* for it.

It is probably not possible to say definitively as whether the conjunction *καίπερ* refers to the following or preceding phrase. However, I would rather stand for the first (mostly neglected) interpretation of *καίπερ* (with von Harnack, Bultmann and Swetnam) for the unequivocal and indubitable use of the conjunction in the NT.⁵¹⁰ This reading makes sense perfectly: Jesus was heard in his piety as a man relied on God, even though he was the Son from Heb 1. More importantly though, I would argue for this understanding of *καίπερ* for *Jesus needed to learn*

⁵⁰³ Swetnam says that the NT use of *καίπερ* is "a decisive pendent" for Heb 5:7 ("The Crux...", 350ff).

⁵⁰⁴ It is surprising that Swetnam in his article does not support his view on *καίπερ* by von Harnack or Bultmann at all. From the functional point of view of the conjunction the arguments of von Harnack and Bultmann are the same as Swetnam's.

⁵⁰⁵ In the LXX: Pr 6:8; Wis 11:9; 2 Macc 4:34; 4 Macc 3:10,15; 4:13 as well as in the non-biblical Greek.

⁵⁰⁶ This reading is adopted in most of the recent commentaries: GRÄSSER, E. *An die Hebräer*, ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle...*, PETERSON, D. *Hebrews...*, 95, ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, KOESTER, C. *Hebrews*, etc. and by the vast majority of modern translations.

⁵⁰⁷ According to Ellingworth, the whole interpretation of vv7-8 runs as follows: Jesus prayed to be delivered from the power of death and was heard and answered (?) because he humbly submitted himself to God's will and learned thus obedience even though he was God's Son. Both verses are therefore closely bound together and follow the same theme (ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 289-291). Swetnam is quite correct that Ellingworth's interpretation here dwells too heavily on the exclusive rendering of the text of "Agony in the Garden" (SWETNAM, J. "The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8", 350).

⁵⁰⁸ SWETNAM, J. "The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8", 350-353.

⁵⁰⁹ see my next comment on 'learning obedience' and 'perfection'.

⁵¹⁰ Phil 3:4, Heb 5:8, Heb 7:5, Heb 12:17, 2 Pe 1:12.

obedience, *because he was Son*.⁵¹¹ As Bruce remarks, the author of Hebrews significantly stresses the need of having discipline and learning obedience, which is the sign of God's sonship (12:5ff). It would be thus nothing surprising if the principle was applied not just ecclesiological (in Heb 12) but Christologically in preference.⁵¹²

c) Jesus' perfection and declaring him a high priest (Heb 8b-10)

Jesus' learning obedience is closely connected to his suffering (verse 8b),⁵¹³ strictly speaking to *sufferings*, for the author does not pinpoint a particular moment of suffering in Jesus' life.⁵¹⁴ This idea may also reflect the suffering obedient Servant of Isa 50:4-9. The theme of Jesus' suffering is immensely important for the author, only thus was Jesus perfected and learned obedience. The use of the words ἔμαθεν ... ἔπαθεν is widely attested in the Hellenistic literature. In Philo, "the proverbial play" ἔμαθεν ἔπαθεν indicates that some people can learn only from their failures causing suffering.⁵¹⁵ However, the argument of the author of Hebrews is quite opposite. His suffering had no cause in his failure, from which he would need to learn obedience. To view the problem from the High Christology perspective, the idea of suffering could be problematic for the Greek Christians of the first centuries. Learning obedience through suffering "was a daring paradox for Hellenistic thought, where it was axiomatic that God is impassible."⁵¹⁶

Cullmann is convinced that **learning obedience** in Heb 5:8 is *one of the most important evidences of Jesus' complete humanity* in Hebrews. Ἐμαθεν ὑπακοήν denotes "inner human development", which is deeply characteristic for humanity.⁵¹⁷ The theme of Christ's obedience is not unknown in the NT, it prominently occurs in the Gospels, within the passion story as well as outside.⁵¹⁸ However, Hebrews does not seem to lead to the conclusion that Jesus had been disobedient before he learned obedience. Jesus sinlessness was explicitly stressed in 4:15. To assume Jesus' previous disobedience and unfaithfulness means to go beyond the testimony of the NT.⁵¹⁹ At the same time though, *his learning obedience does not simply mean that his perfect obedience was 'only revealed' or 'demonstrated'*. Swetnam argues that Jesus'

⁵¹¹ Thus also BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 130. Against is RENGSTORF, *TDNT*, IV, 412.

⁵¹² BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 130.

⁵¹³ For πάσχω see my comment on Heb 2:10 and 18.

⁵¹⁴ The plural ἄφ' ὧν support our thesis that 'suffering' and 'death' are not simply interchangeable in the letter to the Hebrews (see ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 292).

⁵¹⁵ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle...*, 152-153; for greater detail see RENGSTORF, *TDNT*, IV, 405-406.

⁵¹⁶ MONTEFIORE, H. *A Commentary...*, 99.

⁵¹⁷ CULLMANN, O. *The Christology...*, 97.

⁵¹⁸ L 2:41-52; J 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, Mk 14:36//. Cf. Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8.

⁵¹⁹ Robinson has almost caught himself to this trap when he wants to prove a development in Jesus' career within three stages. In the beginning "Jesus evidently starts with all the inbuilt racial prejudices of the Jew, describing the Gentiles as dogs" (Mt 15:28). ROBINSON, J.A.T. *The Human Face...*, 85.

learning obedience rests in that he “comes to realization” of what obedience to God really is.⁵²⁰ However this explanation does not do completely justice to the word *μανθάνω*, which in the Jewish context clearly evokes learning by experience.⁵²¹ In the LXX “the true original for *μανθάνω*” is *לָמַד*. Even though *לָמַד* also has a connotation of learning information (Torah), “we learn only what is ultimately to be practised or fulfilled.”⁵²² Similarly in Josephus, “in many instances *μανθάνω* simply means “to experience”.⁵²³ Rengstorf observes in the NT, “the linguistic findings, and investigation of the various passages, show that *ἀκολουθεῖν* rather than *μανθάνειν* is the true mark of *μαθητής*.” In the Gospels, Jesus’ “concern is not to impart information, nor to deepen an existing attitude, but to awaken unconditional commitment to Himself” (see Mt 11:29!).⁵²⁴ We must stress that the obedience the author of Hebrews speaks about is not an ontological *datum*, something what already exists in Jesus as a substance. In the strict sense of the word, obedience simply can never be imparted by birth but it must be proved. Jesus’ obedience is completely experiential, in all sorts of human situations exercised and proved submission to God’s will, *a submission that was gradually growing*. In this sense, Jesus could not be truly ‘obedient’ before he had himself experienced struggles in temptations, hostility, deep grief, thirst and hunger, ingratitude, betrayal of his closest friends, the strength of defamations and false testimonies and other drastic physical, mental and spiritual suffering.

Hebrews’ Christological motif of Jesus’ learning obedience through suffering is “primarily paraenetic”.⁵²⁵ The author thus encourages his readers to learn obedience and endurance through their suffering for faith. The writer is completely naturalistic in the description of the desperate Man, loudly crying with the tears of pain, supplicating and praying to God who could save him. The essential message of the author to the Hebrews is that the man Jesus “did not seek a way of escape by supernatural means of a kind that they [men] do not have at their disposal.”⁵²⁶ What a shocking message! What a powerful encouragement!

Before we come to the exegesis of v9 we need to notice its strikingly similar vocabulary to Heb 2:10

⁵²⁰ SWETNAM, J. “The Crux at Hebrews 5:7-8”, 350-353.

⁵²¹ The Hellenistic Greek knows this practical dimension of *μανθάνω* as well. In the times of Plato, it rather denoted an intellectual learning (RENGSTORF, *TDNT*, IV, 391-399).

⁵²² This emphasis was endangered in the rabbinic Judaism where some Rabbis already regarded “the Torah above the temple cultus and works of love”. On the other hand, “Shim’on the son of the elder Gamaliel, could still say that observance rather than study is the chief thing” (Ibid., 402-404).

⁵²³ Ibid., 405.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 406. Surprisingly though, Rengstorf does not significantly enough reflect these findings in his interpretation of Heb 5:8. According to him, *ἐμαθεν ὑπακοήν* in verse 8 means a mere “conscious demonstration of obedience”! (Ibid., 411)

⁵²⁵ ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle...*, 153.

Hebrews 2:10

πολλοὺς υἱοὺς
ἀγαγόντα
τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας
τελειώσαι

Hebrews 5:9

πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ
ἐγένετο
αἴτιος σωτηρίας
τελειωθεὶς

As in Heb 2:10 also here God is the acting subject who **makes Christ perfect**. Ellingworth assumes that in Hebrews' concept of perfection "the sense of consecration as high priest is also almost certainly present".⁵²⁷ Lane accepts the consecrational understanding of perfection as well. According to him, τελειόω means "to put someone in the position in which he can come, or stand, before God".⁵²⁸ However, Heb 5:9 as well as Heb 2:10 does not necessitate a cultic understanding of the word.⁵²⁹ The most accurate understanding of perfection in Hebrews seems to be the vocational one.⁵³⁰ As Peterson says, the vocational sense not merely "supersedes" but "subsumes the meaning of consecration."⁵³¹ The concept of perfection in Hebrews seems to develop the telic idea of equipping for high priest ministry by suffering and death of the cross as well as 'coming to exaltation'⁵³² in the context of pilgrimage having impact on Jesus' inner human development as well. The suffering, which is the ground of Jesus' perfection, definitely influenced Jesus existentially and personally as it is clearly expressed by the preceding phrase of learning obedience. However, we must repeat again, the perfection cannot be understood in terms of moral improvement.⁵³³

The author of Hebrews in v9 paraenetically connects Christ's ὑπακοή to πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν, so that they can find in him the source (αἴτιος) of eternal salvation. Αἴτιος in Heb 5:9 is a masculine. The Greek expression usually occurs as a neuter usually being translated as "a cause, reason, occasion". Radl says that in Heb 5:9 "αἴτιος designates a person as a cause, i.e., as the *originator*".⁵³⁴ In the Patristic Greek αἴτιος frequently refers to God, eventually God

⁵²⁶ BRUCE, F.F. *The Epistle...*, 130 [my brackets].

⁵²⁷ ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 294.

⁵²⁸ LANE W.L. *Hebrews 1-8*, 110.

⁵²⁹ Peterson claims that "the linguistic basis for a cultic rendering of τελειωθεὶς is thin" (PETERSON, D. *Hebrews...*, 97); According to Attridge, "the participle τελειωθεὶς is not simply a synonym for προσαγορευθεὶς in v10, designating Christ's consecration as High Priest"(ATTRIDGE, H. *The Epistle...*, 153). See more in III.3.a)

⁵³⁰ On vocational (telic) dimension of perfection see more in the chapter III.3.a)

⁵³¹ PETERSON, D. (*Hebrews...*, 97) in agreement with DuPlessis.

⁵³² For the argumentation for the eschatological concept of perfection see more in chapter III.3.a)

⁵³³ Peterson is convinced that "the functional or vocational understanding of Christ's perfecting should not be allowed to exclude the concept of his personal development as man and preparation for his salvific roles. On the other hand, to give primary emphasis to the perfecting of Christ as *man*, rather than Saviour, is to obscure the real focus of our writer in favour of a subsidiary theme" (*Hebrews...*, 101 [Italics his]). He supports this thesis by the ecclesiological dimension of perfection: the idea of "perfecting of humanity is not essentially a moral concept" (Ibid., 102). See more in III.3.a).

⁵³⁴ RADL, *EDNT*, 1, 43-44.

Father or Logos as to the creative cause.⁵³⁵ It is significant to notice a development of the author's argument here. In his days of flesh Jesus was completely dependant on *God who could save him* (σώζειν)⁵³⁶ from death. However, through Jesus' obedience to God in times of suffering, he was perfected and thus *he himself became the originator of salvation* for those who are obedient to him. The chiastic structure of Heb 5:7-9 is completed (σώζειν - ὑπακοήν - ὑπακούουσιν - ἄτιος σωτηρίας). The description of Christ as the ἄτιος of eternal salvation wholly corresponds with the idea ἀρχηγός τῆς σωτηρίας (2:10). The eternal salvation Jesus fought out for us means the liberation of those, who were kept in the slavery of fear of death for all their life (2:15). Jesus, as the Leader of humanity, first experienced our human despair, temptations and fear, and he first learned obedience in discipline to God who saves. Therefore now, we can fully rely on him, our human mediator to God, our high priest, the Son of God, who was proved, perfected and enthroned at the right side of God. Son he was, high priest he became.⁵³⁷

The author started the exposition about Jesus' priesthood by God's calling to this ministry (vv5f) and finished with designating⁵³⁸ Jesus *a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek* (v10). The mysterious name of Melchizedek, the priest (Ps 110:4) and king of Salem (Gen 14:18), appears two times in this section (v6 and v10). In a very similar way to Heb 2:17, where Jesus is mentioned as a high priest but his high priesthood is explained later, the author of Hebrews just in a glance points out that Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. v6). So the author prepared the ground for the following very important exposition from Heb 6:19 down to the chapter 10 about the Melchizedek's priesthood.

⁵³⁵ LAMPE, G.W.H *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 54.

⁵³⁶ Cf. my comment on σώζειν in Heb 5:7.

⁵³⁷ ὦν υἱός (v8), προσαγορευθεὶς... ἀρχιερεὺς (v10). cf. 2:17, 5:5, 6:20, 7:22, 26. The phrase taken from Michel, quoted in ELLINGWORTH, P. *The Epistle...*, 294.

⁵³⁸ προσαγορευθεὶς might be translated as a "friendly calling" or "greeting" (Ibid.). Weiss translates it as "benennen, ernennen" (WEISS, H.-F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 320).

V. CONCLUSION

1) The aim of the epistle

I presented a thesis in “Prolegomena” that I believe Hebrews is a homily-epistle where **paraenesis plays the primary role**. The unique understanding of Jesus Christ in the epistle, artistically combining high and low Christology thus lays an essential foundation for the paraenetical conclusions.

2) Christology of Hebrews

The author builds the Christology in Hebrews on two main pillars, **the Son and High priest**. Neither of the titles can be simply identified to Jesus’ divinity or humanity, they are rather intertwined with each other.

3) The task of dissertation

In my dissertation, I was especially concentrated on Jesus’ humanity, which is crucially important for the whole author’s comprehension of Jesus’ atoning and pastoral ministry as High priest. Being limited by the proportion of the paper I was able to cover the exegesis of only two substantial passages of Hebrews referring to Jesus’ humanity: Heb 2:5-18 (including the introduction to Heb 1) and Heb 4:14-5:10. *The main task of my dissertation was to find out how these passages speaking of Jesus’ complete identification with humanity, his suffering and perfection, are reflected in the paraenesis of Hebrews.* It would be useful also to deal with other parts of the epistle, particularly Heb 7:24-25 and Heb 12:1-3 speaking about Christ as our Intercessor and Perfecter of faith. On the other hand, the sections I exegeted here give us sufficient material to demonstrate *uniqueness of the pastoral conclusions of the author to the Hebrews substantially based on very bold statements of Jesus’ humanity.* It would be extremely interesting to compare this pattern of paraenesis with the pastoral scheme of Pauline literature that does not seem to explicitly stress the importance of Jesus’ earthly life so much. Even though this topic could not be covered in my thesis, I suppose, the paper might lay a sufficient foundation for a research of this kind in future.

4) Exegesis of Heb 2:6-18: conclusions

I included a brief introduction to Hebrews 1, the jewel of the epistle, into the first exegetical part of dissertation (3.1 *Our brother and leader*) from the several reasons. First, the sole exegesis of Heb 2:5-18 cannot be correctly understood without the first chapter. The theme of ‘angels’ seems to constitute the structure of both the chapters. Secondly, it is immensely important to deal at least to some extent with the author’s concept of the Son superior to the angels before we approach to the texts referring to Jesus’ humanity. In other words, we must preserve **the tension** of the deep statements regarding Jesus’ humanity that are inextricably connected to the proclamations about Jesus using the language of very high Christology in Hebrews. Hebrews 1 quotes several OT quotations that support and develop the author’s argument. The OT citations in Hebrews (quoted from the Septuagint) function as the proof and authoritative texts that have been often used so in the early Christian church.

The author’s exposition about Jesus’ humanity in Heb 2 is grandiosely open by the citation of the majestic Psalm 8: 5-8 (in LXX), which effectively draws the readers’ attention and inquisitiveness: who does God subjected the coming world if not to the angels? Does the Psalm speak of manhood in general or Jesus the Man? Most probably, the Psalm refers to both and after that certain ambiguity the author exclaims in verse 9, “behold, it is Jesus, the humiliated one, the man of Psalm 8!” The author’s understanding of the Psalm includes a sort of irony. We do not see this glorious state of humanity yet at all. Rather the other way round, first we need to see the suffering Jesus. Heb 2:9 makes clear that the author does not point to the mere fact of the Son’s incarnation, becoming a Man. There would still remain an abyss between the estranged men from God and the perfect Man Jesus. **The author’s intention is to go further than a “classical” teaching of incarnation. He speaks about the Son’s incarnation into the desperate situation of corrupted mankind.** Thus only, Jesus stands on the same side of the dreadful abyss with us and ‘tastes death for all’ (2:9). The thesis is strongly supported by the following statements where Jesus is described as our brother (Heb 2:12), a brother of those who *need to be* consecrated (2:11), a brother of those who are enslaved by the fear of death (2:15) and *need to be* helped (2:18).

The author’s paraenesis is thus based on Jesus’ solidarity with enslaved humanity whom Jesus is not ashamed to call ‘brothers’. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus is far away from understanding our problems, struggles and the lack of freedom. He identified with the slaves of the fear of death, and Heb 4 and 5 attest he experienced these things individually as well. The author walks on a dangerous ground here but he dares to do that without sacrificing Jesus’ sinlessness as he is prepared to argue in Heb 4:15.

“Archehos” (Heb 2:10) is therefore one of the most telling titles of Jesus in Hebrews, if not in the whole NT. Jesus became our human Leader, the Leader of our faith, going first through the suffering to God’s glory. He is like Moses leading his people to the eschatological Sabbath rest. **As a leader he needed to be perfected, that means, he fulfilled his earthly mission and was proved for the role of a saviour.** The writer does not primarily speak of Jesus’ moral perfection. The means of Jesus’ perfection was nothing more (and less) than his human suffering (Heb 2:9 and 10). The powerful image of suffering Archehos challenges us **to follow him.**

We are Jesus’ brothers. God is the Father of Jesus, who sanctifies, as well as Father of us, who are being sanctified (Heb 2:11). This claim is evidenced by the Scriptural reference. Both the OT quotations (Ps 22 and Isa 8) in Heb 2:12-13 in their original background evoke the situation of the writer who was going through the period of frustration. Both the OT references are well known in the early Christianity. Psalm 22 also inevitably alludes the Passion story, which would underline author’s argument about Jesus’ suffering in Heb 2:10. Regarding its original context then, the quotation of Ps 22:22 seems to be a proof text *par excellence*, that in his identification with men Jesus is not ashamed to call humans ‘brothers’. Similarly in Isa 8:17-18 Jesus is depicted as the one who puts his trust in God despite of the unpromising circumstances and hands God’s words over to his disciples. **Jesus portrayed as an ordinary believer, side by side to his fellows brothers in the worshipping community, praying to God, although not hearing God’s immediate answer,** is quite an unusually strong scene in the NT having great pastoral impact to Jesus’ followers.

Jesus’ complete carnality and mortality, explicitly expressed in 2:14, qualifies him **as the one who liberates** those, who are kept by Satan in the power of fear (2:15). What an encouragement for the congregation, that that suffering one and brother from my community of faith, has such a power to break the devil’s chains!

Thus, Jesus takes **hold of the seed of Abraham** (2:16). It means, he takes a hold of those, who believe him, but predominantly of those, who have not become his true believers yet and need his very help (2:15,18). **The author evokes here an amazing OT motive of God grasping the hand of his son to lead him out of the Egyptian slavery.** (Cf. the striking word similarities in Isa 41:8-10 and Je 31:32). This is no ancient story of Israel that happened some time in the past. It is the very present story (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι) of which you can be a very part, encourages the author.

It is hardly possible to overestimate the author's effort to express that Jesus was like his brothers in every respect (κατὰ πάντα...ὁμοιωθῆναι – 2:17). **He shared complete physical, mental and spiritual disposition of a human.** And yet, this is not to deny or even lessen Christ's divinity. Robinson puts it very clearly that Jesus had to be either choleric or melancholic or sanguinic. He had to have a particular blood group, etc. If not, he was not a man like we are. The author comes to this revealed truth again and again with a new strength of the argument. **Only this comprehension of Jesus' humanity can make sense to Jesus' priestly ministry on our behalf.** The very first piece of information about his priesthood is not its origin, order or qualification, although his character. **Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest for his existential link to humanity. This high priest expiates the sins of mankind (2:17).**

The glittering collocation δύναται βοηθῆσαι (Jesus is able to help) is the paraenetical peak of Hebrews 2. The immense weight of this encouraging word is caused by the preceding very carefully depicted picture of Jesus' identification with man, even in his temptations (2:18). The line of the author's argument is thus not that he is able to help because he is a superman, a divine man or even God's Son, however, because **he himself fully relied on help of God, who has perfected him and appointed him our high priest. His suffering and total obedience of the Son to God qualified him to be able to help us in our troubles.**

5) The exegesis of Heb 4:14-5:10: conclusions

The hortatory passage Heb 4:14-16 develops and deepens the previous serious conclusions. The author of Hebrews starts in a very confident encouraging way of speech. Because we have such a great priest, who has gone through the heavens, grasp the confession and turn to him again, approach the throne of mercy (4:14-16). How could we so confidently and freely turn to him? The answer is very convincing: **'for we have a priest who is able to sympathise!'** The expression συμπαθεῖν is deeper than a mere mental understanding of our feelings. It is a theological statement expressing Jesus' very engagement in our situation, deep fellow feeling with his brothers or even his active fellow suffering. **His existential fellow-feeling is towards our ἀσθένεια, infirmity, weakness, illness, tendency to sin and all kinds of temptation we face (4:15).**

It seems to be quite probable that the author builds this argument on the presupposition (cf. Heb 2:18) that **Jesus himself entered this area of dark incompleteness (ἀσθένεια) every human is experiencing** (see especially 5:7). The author of Hebrews thus speaks of an existential closeness of the one, who himself experienced temptations, struggles and suffering, and

withstood it. Therefore, he is δυνάμενον συμπαθῆσαι. Jesus' identification with us goes to the real depths of consequences of human corrupted life.

The fact that Jesus was tempted to sin and tested is pastorally powerful. The author goes even so far to say that Jesus was tempted κατὰ πάντα, in every respect (4:15)! Nothing more needs to be said to convince us that we cannot assume Jesus as a divine man, on which temptations had no effect. The author perhaps risks more than any other NT writer to let Jesus so deeply struggle with temptations, however, **this is an inevitable consequence of careful and honest consideration of Jesus' radical humanity.** The boldness of the author is very telling, impressive and shocking. He tries to balance what is almost impossible to balance. Jesus completely entered our human fallen world, yet he remained without sin.

How is it possible? Could have Jesus sinned actually? Were the temptations real? To defend and correctly comprehend Jesus' sinlessness (Heb 4:15) is absolutely essential for making a correct picture of Jesus' humanity. I argued in the excursus about Jesus' sinlessness that **we cannot substantially link Christ's complete identification with humanity with the experience of actual sinning.** This would be an unscriptural conclusion about Jesus as well as a theologically wrong presupposition, for the humanity is never fundamentally connected to sin (cf. R 7:13-15). **On the other hand, it is very dangerous to deny that Jesus could have potentially sinned.** In fact, if there was no real possibility for Jesus to sin, there was also no real temptation and no real entering the human situation.

The hortatory section 4:14-16 culminates in the **invitation to God's throne of mercy.** The congregation is called to come with confidence and trust and find a timely help. The climax of the paraenetical passage (4:14-16) in v16 is thus strikingly similar to the climax of the section 2:5-18 in verses 17-18. In both the cases the chapter is completed with an assurance of Christ's merciful acceptance of the tempted and suffering brothers and with offering them an effective help.

The following section Heb 5:1-10 deals more concretely with the idea of high priesthood. I have argued that it does not seem convincing to see a visible clash between **Jesus' priesthood** and the Levitical priesthood in these verses. Rather the other way round, the author intentionally finds the points of contact between the both: a) high priest represents men b) he is able to deal with weaknesses c) he is called by God. The fundamental differences of Melchisedek's order of priesthood from the Aaron the high priest are stressed not before the chapter 7.

The argument that the whole expository passage **Heb 5:7-10** reflects the **OT motive of an afflicted and suffering believer** seems to be convincing. The linguistic resemblance of several psalms (mainly Ps 116 and Ps 22) to the Hebrews' expressions is striking in particular. This OT background also most probably constituted the Gethsemane tradition that is thus probably reflected in Hebrews 5:7nn as well. During his earthly life, Jesus offered prayers, supplications, with loud cries and tears to God who was able to save him. The suggested psalmic background of the passage locates Jesus' humanity into the setting of purely Jewish belief in God, similarly as in the OT citations in Heb 2. The author thus intentionally uses those OT references in his epistle, which evoke the Passion story we know from the Gospels. **Jesus is found in a state of complete reliance on God who is able to save** (Heb 5:7). The fact that Jesus prayed to the one who is able to save "gives a strong impression that he prayed for deliverance".⁵³⁹ Author thus impressively hints, 'do not regard Jesus as an angelic figure or a divine being possessing and using an extraordinary power', for these have no need to make supplication to God. The Greek expression εὐλάβεια expresses the **reverent piety** of Jesus towards God, his Father. Jesus, as a Jewish believer, cried to God in his pain and fear, and God heard him. The afflicted Jews praying to God in psalms did not hear God's answer immediately. They were mostly not delivered at that very moment of their prayer. So, even Jesus himself did not see anything of God's intervention during his suffering. This is a very evident motive in the Gethsemane prayer as well (Mark 14:35-36). The author's intention in Heb 5:7 is to emphasise that God hears the prayers of his faithful one crying to him even though we cannot feel it. **God hears our prayers, even though nothing good is happening around us. We can believe it is true because of Jesus who experienced that so dramatically.** God is close to those who rely on Him (Ps 145:18). Jesus, as a man relied on God, was *heard for his piety, although* (καίπερ) *he was the Son from Heb 1*. However, God's final "visible" hearing of our prayers is often before us. There are psalms, as for instance Ps 116 (very likely alluded in Heb 5:7), *ex post* declaring, God helped the believer from his troubles. The author of Hebrews thus also finally hints: God evidenced that he heard Jesus by resurrecting him. Before that though, he was tortured and sentenced to death. Therefore we must ask, how can God be claimed "to be able to save from the (spiritual as well as physical) death" though? *Even though Jesus lived in a deep reverence to God he experienced desolation from God! How is it possible then to say that God heard his prayers and supplications?* On the example of Jesus, the author leads his readers to the very important piece of information that **reverence and trust in God should reach beyond our present suffering, yes even beyond our own death.**

⁵³⁹ KOESTER, C.R. *Hebrews*, 288.

The aim of the author to the Hebrews here is quite evident: Jesus' suffering and struggle of his earthly life is identified in a great detail with a regular human (in the Scripture described) experience of a believer being in deep need. Indeed, Jesus' suffering was even more intense than ours can ever be, for he was bound to his messianic task. Nevertheless, even as a Messiah he did not use any means that would not be at disposal of an ordinary human to evade his struggles. By highlighting this, the author significantly bridges the abyss between each believer's suffering and suffering of God's Son. **If Jesus lived the same human life as I live, if he suffered and prayed to God in his need as I do, what an amazing example I have in Him? He is my Archegos who first walked through this hard life and he is my saving great high priest full of compassion.**

Probably, the most important evidence of Jesus' humanity is the fact that **he needed to learn obedience**. Inner development is a characteristic feature of humanity. The obedience, the author of Hebrews speaks of, is not something what already exists in Jesus as a substance. Jesus' obedience is completely experiential, in all sorts of human situations exercised and proved submission to God's will, a submission that was gradually growing. This is an only possible definition of human obedience in general. In this sense, Jesus could not be truly 'obedient' before he had himself experienced struggles in temptations, hostility, deep grief, thirst and hunger, ingratitude, betrayal of his closest friends, the strength of defamation and false testimonies and other drastic physical, mental and spiritual suffering. And yet, this is not to say that there was time when Jesus was disobedient to God (Heb 4:15).

The author repeats the conclusion of Heb 2:10: Jesus was perfected by suffering and became an **originator of our salvation**. God saves (Heb 5:7), he saved Jesus from death by resurrecting him, he will save us as well. The "cause" of our salvation is His Son, our High priest.

As the Son needed to learn obedience to God through the suffering, so we are called to obey Jesus (Heb 5:9) and accept God's discipline (Heb 12:5ff). Our learning obedience to Jesus seems to be paralleled to Jesus' learning obedience to God. These texts about learning obedience and coming to perfection point out, that it can be achieved in a process only. The author of Hebrews thus exhorts his readers/hearers to hold on in faith and be prepared that they will go through the afflictions for some time to learn obedience and to be perfected (i.e. to come to the Sabbath Rest and exaltation). Cf. Heb 10:35-38.

A final word

The hearers were probably going through the dry valley of tiredness and suffering. They were losing hope in a real help of Christ, who seemed to be so exalted and glorified above them. In that situation it could be quite impossible to imagine he would deal with such fearful and helpless people as they could feel to be. There are quite a few signals in Hebrews letting us presuppose the readers were well acquainted with the high Christology but began to lose the perspective of the suffering earthly Jesus, who is close to the suffering ones and existentially linked to them. This is a tendency, which appears in our churches so frequently today as well.

My conviction about the essential role of Jesus' humanity in paraenesis (as well as in the whole scope of Christology) in Hebrews is well expressed by Weiss:

”So gesehen kann man sagen, daß der für den Hebr in besondere Weise charakteristische Rückbezug auf den irdischen Jesus (und insbesondere auf das Verhalten des irdischen Jesus in Leiden und Anfechtung!) ganz in das christologische wie auch in das pastorale Grundanliegen des Hebr integriert ist.”⁵⁴⁰

It is hardly possible to keep high and low Christology altogether and not to make either of these blunt. How to deeply express Jesus' shocking identification with humanity in every respect as well as his divine preexistence and creatorship, and not to fall to the extreme of arianism on the one side and adoptionism on the other side? It is astonishing, that the author managed to balance it in such a convincing way. I find immensely attractive and literally breathtaking the boldness of the author to the Hebrews going in his radical Christological statements onto the sole edge of heresy without falling into it. This makes the letter to the Hebrews a unique writing in the NT corpus. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the author has not undertaken this very risky business from a need to prove and satisfy his doubtless high intellectual and rhetorical qualities. The driving power to formulate the Christological statements so radically and comprehensively rests in his clear decision to encourage and exhort the readers! The author thus reveals his deep conviction that effective pastoral care must be firmly anchored in the correct comprehension of Christology.

⁵⁴⁰ WEISS, H. –F. *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 327.

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