

Notes on the Letter to the Hebrews (one of two)

Introduction

This document forms the latest in a series posted on the Lectio Divina Home Page and follows the recently completed text posted on the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page, **Notes on the Life of St. Anthony by St. Athanasius** (April 2001). As I state in the Introductions to these other documents, numerous good commentaries abound which go into more or less detail as to the meaning and background of the original text. I am fully aware of the value of these sources, yet take the liberty to offer the following running commentary from the vantage point of lectio divina, that slow, meditative reading of a scriptural text traditionally associated with monasticism.

The difference between many secondary sources and those which are part and parcel with the practice of lectio divina is that lectio is geared more specifically for employing the text as a spring-board for prayer. The reader alternates between slow, attentive reading and periods of quiet or rest, a process which has no goal nor time limit as commonly understood. This brings up the distinction between what may fall under the categories of “scholarly reading” and lectio divina: the former is associated with the process of gathering information and comprehending the text’s sources, etc., whereas for the latter, the collection of data is of secondary importance if not incidental. It has in mind the desire to contact the living God through the text itself which is part and parcel of monastic tradition dating from the time of St. Benedict himself.

Many people are unaccustomed to this age-old approach, thinking it is a relic from the past with no relevance for today. The thoughts or “notes” offered here are done from lectio divina’s point of view; as stated above, plenty of good books are out there for deepening one’s understanding of Hebrews as well as other books of the Bible. These **Notes** are simply offered as a means to stimulate the practice of lectio divina, to view Hebrews line-by-line, with the intent of seeing if can mirror anyone’s experience of employing the text as an aide to contemplation.

One point to keep in mind here: Greek makes wide use of prepositions which, in turn, offer many subtle distinctions. I have attempted to bring out these distinctions throughout both as stand-alone prepositions and those used as prefixes to nouns and verbs.

Texts excerpted from Hebrews as well as other biblical books are from the **Revised Standard Edition** of the Bible.

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Chapter One

Vs. 1: In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.

Two similar words prefaced by the adjective *polus*, *much*, *many*, which starts off Hebrews: they are the root adjectives *meros* and *tropos* which come from the nouns “part” and “way.” Implied are diverse manners as opposed to a fixed, almost exclusive form of divine revelation. Both are situated in the past, *palai* (*of old*). This past is specified as belonging to two groups, “fathers” and “prophets.” The latter is obvious reference to prophetic books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah; the former is more general in the sense of Dt 1.8: “A land which the Lord swore to your *fathers*.” Vs. one literally reads “to fathers *in* (en) the prophets” as if to say the general grouping of the former are situated in the particular “prophets” and maintain their paternity through them.

Vs. 2: but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

A continuation of vs. 1; “but” is lacking in the Greek text. Note the preposition *epi* (*upon*) which also has the

sense of “through” which follows from the earlier preposition *en*. It is as if to say this divine “inness” flows outward to the period of time the author has in mind. Such “inness” proper to the prophets may be said to be transferred to the “inness” of the Son, *en huio*, thereby coming to fulfillment. There is a definite connection between the Son and “*last days*” (*eschatos*), this adjective being closely associated with the immanent expectation of Jesus Christ. “He was destined before the foundation of the world but as made manifest at the *end* of the times for your sake” [1 Pt 1.20].

It is interesting that in Hebrews the (plural) term “day” is used, i.e., a twenty-four hour period as opposed to a week, month or year which intimates that time is short and therefore can be measured in a more manageable framework.

For another use of *eschatos*, cf. Acts 2.17 with regard to Pentecost, citing the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Note the use of *eschatos* here as pertaining to the Holy Spirit in distinction to the Son in Hebrews.

Verse one has “God spoke” whereas vs. 2 has “he has spoken,” the latter use of *laleo* being more definitive or specific, that is, with regard to the Son. This speaking is done literally “to us” (dative case without preposition) “in the Son.” Such is the word order of this verse.

Kleronomos: *heir*, which may be seen in light of “fathers” and “prophets,” the obvious successor and inheritor to these two groups. “And if children, then *heirs*, *heirs* of God and *fellow heirs* with Christ” [Rom 8.17]. The third noun has the preposition *sug/sun* (*with*) prefixed to it. In Hebrews the *heir* has “all things” which can include people as well as objects.

The uniqueness of this divine heir is shown by the fact that *through* (*dia*) him God created the *world* or *aion* (plural). In distinction to *kosmos*, this term is related to ages or long yet limited stretches of time, so the Son-as-heir receives not just persons and object but successions of time or ages. For another use, cf. Rom 12.2: “Do not be conformed to this *world*.”

Vs. 3: He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This is obviously the same “he” as the Son and heir of the previous verse, so it is interesting to keep in mind these two characteristics transferred to the verse at hand. The verb “to reflect” is lacking in the Greek which has the present participle *hon*, (*being*); it is connected with the noun *apaugasma*, *radiance*, in the sense of a reflected brightness. This is the only New Testament use of the word and suggests Jn 12.45: “And he who sees me sees him who sent me.” Here John uses the verb *theo* from which is derived the noun *theoria*. I.e., such *theoria* is a kind of participation in the nature of *apaugasma*.

Connected with *apaugasma* is God’s *glory* or *doxa*, the Greek term for the Hebrew *kavod* as associated with Moses’ vision: “The *glory* of God settled on Mount Sinai” Ex 24.16]. *Kavod* derives from a verbal root meaning “to be heavy” and implies that the divine presence “dropped” from heaven to earth by reason of its weight.

Very stamp or *charakter*: used with the verb *phero*, *to bear*, almost in the sense of transporting something. This noun refers to a mark or figure which either had been stamped or burned, that is, having become made permanent and visible to all. For a use in the LXX, cf. Lev 13.28: “For it is the *scar* of the burn.”

Charakter is used in conjunction with *hupostasis* (*nature*), the substantial quality of a person. “Now faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” [Heb 11.1]. Thus *charakter* is a kind of deep impression of this divine nature which is *borne* (*phero*) or carried about from place to place, almost as though it had mobility.

As noted, the verb *phero* is used with reference to a “static” divine nature. In the same sentence it applies to the *universe* (*ta panta*), literally “the all.” Here is a shift from imagery of brightness to that of speech which is less discernable in the sense of it being available for perception: *rhema* (*word*) and *dunamis* (*power*). The

former means anything uttered by the living voice or a sound which has a definite meaning (also from the human voice). It differs from *lego* (from which comes *logos*) in the sense of being the subject of speech. Christ is presented as the *Logos* of God, not the *Rhema* of God. "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the *preaching* of Christ" [Rom 10.17]. In the verse at hand, *dunamis* naturally flows from *rhema* and supports "the all" which keeps in line with its Stoic application. "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in *power*" [1 Cor 4.20].

The second sentence of 1.3 is a shift from the cosmic role of the Son/heir to the human sphere, more specifically, to that of *purification* or *katharismos*, as if the two principles of the first sentence (the visibility of "glory" and the sound of "word") came to bear as one force upon the newly introduced subject of purification. "And when the time came for their *purification* according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" [Lk 2.22]. *Katharismos* with respect to sins almost appears as secondary to the primary sitting down at God's *right hand* or *en dexia*, "in the right hand."

The phrase *on high* (*en hupselois*, plural) contains a second "in" as if to emphasize that Christ was thoroughly situated above the sphere of human activity despite having made purification. Most likely purification here pertains to his suffering and death. Cf. Ps 110.1 (of which Hebrews in many ways is a commentary): "The Lord said to my lord: 'Sit *at my right hand* until I make your enemies your footstool.'" The Greek text of the LXX has instead of the preposition *en*, *ek* (*out, from*), as if to show the derivative nature of this sitting. The Hebrew text has the preposition *l-* prefixed to "right hand," showing direction-towards-which.

Compare *megalosune* (*majesty*) with Heb 8.1: "We have such a high priest, one who is seated *at* (*en*) the right hand of the throne of the *Majesty* in heaven."

Vs. 4: having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

The conclusion of a sentence carried over from the previous verse which commenced with purification and which serves to introduce seven passages from the Old Testament, several of which (vs. 5-13) deal with angels.

Genomenos (*having become*): directly related to the past accomplishment of purification (*poiesamenos, having made*). The comparative "better" of *kratos* occurs thirteen times in Hebrews where divine power is stressed in various ways. In the verse at hand, superiority is with respect to angels.

Vs. 4 begins with *tosoutos* (*how much more*) to emphasize the comparison or loftiness over angels; it joined with *hosos* (for emphasis, "how very") to demonstrate the excellency of the divine name. The name is not mentioned here but applies to Christ, The Anointed One. Such a name is *obtained* (*keronomeo*), better, "inherited." "Good teacher, what must I do to *inherit* eternal life" [Mk 10.17]?

Christ's name is *more excellent* (*diaphoroteron*) than that of the angels which in Greek pertains to someone who had been sent (on a mission, for example). This adjective is the comparative of *diaphoros*, *different* in the sense of surpassing as opposed to one used in making a simple distinction. "Having gifts that *differ* according to the grace given to us, let us use them" [Rom 12.6]. Note the preposition *dia* (*through*) joined with *phero*, *to bear, to carry*, the root of this adjective, which literally means "to carry in different ways."

Vs. 5: For to what angel did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you?" Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?"

Both Old Testament verses deal with sonship and paternity to distinguish this divine relationship between Father and Son from that of angels whose nature is to be sent or dispatched on a mission. The first quote is from Ps 2.7. Note the literal text: "I today have begotten you," "today" being interposed between the person doing the begetting (God the Father) and the "you" or Jesus Christ, recipient of the begetting. *Semeron* (*today*) is inserted as opposed to "yesterday" or "tomorrow" in order to indicate an eternal reality transcending the limits of space and time.

Ps 2.7 is used in Acts 13.33 in conjunction with a passage from Isaiah (55.3) as well as Ps 16.10 to bolster Paul's argument in favor of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Note that the psalm verse is used in the broader context of "I will tell of the decree of the Lord," this *decree* (choq) dealing with Christ's begetting.

The second verse is from 2 Sam 7.14 and is addressed by God to King David. In the previous verse God bids him to build a house for his name. The "I" speaking as pertaining to father/son alludes to future action as opposed to the presentness of Ps 2.7, "today."

Vs. 6: And again, when he brings the first-born into the world he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

It may be helpful to read this verse in light of "he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" [vs. 3], that is, past action. Verse 6 is in the present tense referring to a time preceding this heavenly sitting. Note the two uses of the preposition *eis* (*in*), better "into," signifying full presence: *eisago* (*to bring*) and "*into* the world." The term for *world* is *oikoumene*, more specifically the inhabited world as opposed to its physical constitution. "I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole *world*, to try those who dwell upon the earth" [Rev 3.12].

First-born or *prototokos*: "He is the image of the invisible God, the *first-born* of all creation" [Col 1.15]. This term has its roots in the Passover: "At midnight the Lord smote all the *first-born* in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the *first-born* of the captive who was in the dungeon and all the *first-born* of the cattle" [Ex 12.29]. The Hebrew term *bakor* is interesting in that it intimates anything which is early or seasonable and thus pertains to the notion of time. Although Hebrews does not specify when the first-born does his "double *eis*," most likely it occurs at night if we keep the Passover image in mind.

The verse at hand has God exhorting the angels to *worship* (*proskuneo*) the first-born at his birth into the "inhabited" world. Note the preposition *pros* prefixed to the verb, signifying attention *towards*-which. Vs. 6 suggests the presence of heavenly beings at the physical birth of Jesus Christ: "And suddenly there was with the *angel* a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying 'Glory to God in the highest'" [Lk 2.13-4]. Here is a singular unidentified angel with a plurality of *host* (*stratia*), more specifically, a band of soldiers.

Vs. 7: Of the angels he says, "Who makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire."

Here God (the Father) speaks about the nature of the angels after setting down their task of worship the first-born. "Winds and fire" center around the two senses of sound and brightness. This verse is more or less a paraphrase of Ps 104.4 which is situated in the broader context of God as creating the world: "Who makes the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers."

The verse at hand has *pneuma* for *wind*, alternately connoting spirit; *servants* or *leitourgos* better refers to anyone involved with ministering such as in a liturgical context. Heb 8.2 has it pertain to Christ himself: "a *minister* in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord." Such ministers are not simply fire but "flames of fire" to connote their vital activity and possibly to the fire associated with offerings made to God in the Jerusalem temple.

As for the Psalm verse itself, note the difference: the Hebrew has *mal'ak* for *messenger* (i.e., "*your messengers*") which is the equivalent for "angel" and reveals the true nature of this being. The Hebrew also has "*burning* (*lahat*) fire."

Vs. 8: But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom."

A quote from Ps 45.6 which continues into the next verse. Here the author of Hebrews gets back to the Son to distinguish him from the nature of an angel, that is, as one who had been sent from God himself. The confusion between both is understandable, because both are spiritual beings as well as "messengers" and need

to be distinguished from each other.

Ps 45 6 in Hebrew reads: "Your divine throne endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity." The original text lacks "endures" or any verb. I.e., God's *throne* or *kise'* is thus equivalent with eternity ("forever and ever"). It is symbolic of divine kingship and judgment. "Throne" plays a significant role in the Book of Revelation, for example, "At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne" [4.2]!

Note that the Greek of this Psalm verse literally reads, "Your throne, O God, into forever and ever," using the preposition *eis* (*into*) to indicate endurance or continuance of throne.

The *scepter* or *shevet* is symbolic more of kingship than of judgment; it also means staff and tribe, a reference to the latter being Jud 20.2: "And the chiefs of all the people, of all the *tribes* of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God." Such a royal scepter is one of "equity" or in Hebrew, "the scepter of your kingdom is a right scepter."

Vs. 9: You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your comrades.

The conclusion of a citation begun in the last verse, here from Ps 45.7 which has two pairs of extremes: *love* ('ahav) and *hate* (sana'), *righteousness* (tsedeq) and *wickedness* (reshah), all of which were examined in **Notes to the Psalter** elsewhere on this Home Page. The same can also apply to other verse from the Psalter cited below. Note twofold mention of God: "God" and "your God," as if to exhibit special delight. This divine good pleasure expresses itself through an *anointing*, *mashach*, a verb from which is derived the name Christ. *Mashach* can apply to the ordination of a priest or the coronation of a king. In this verse, *mashach* is connected with oil of gladness, two words with similar sounds, *shemen sason*. Because it is "above your fellows," vs. 7 can apply more to the anointing of a king as opposed to a priest. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers" [1 Sam 16.13].

The LXX cited here in Hebrews has the verb *agapao* (*agape*) for *love*. Also, the preposition *para* (*beyond*) is used which can also mean "besides," intimating comradeship as well as transcendence.

Vs. 10: And, "You, Lord, did found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

Several verses from Ps 110 (25-7) are cited, that is, through vs. 12 which continue the theme of Son and angels. I lift the following from the **Notes to the Psalter**:

Vs. 25: "Of old you *laid* the *foundation* of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands." The first part of this verse in Hebrew is one word, *yasad*: "The Lord by wisdom *founded* the earth" [Prov 3.19]. In contrast to the 'erets (*earth*), the psalmist speaks of the *heavens* (*shamaym*) being the work of God's hands, that is, they are more immediate with respect to divine creation. Cf. Gen 1.8: "And God called the firmament Heaven."

As for the LXX used in vs. 10, note the use of *arche* (*beginning*): in the sense of the first principle of creation as used in Gen 1.1: "In the *beginning*." This pregnant use of the term is carried over to the opening words of John's Gospel: "In the *beginning* was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here *arche* and *Logos* share a common identity.

Vs. 11: they will perish, but you remain; they will all grow old like a garment.

Again, I lift the following from **Notes to the Psalter**:

Vs. 26: "They will *perish*, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. You change them like raiment, and they pass away." The first part of this verse contrasts the transitory nature of creation (the verb 'avad)

and God's eternal nature (the verb *hamad* (*to endure*); compare this word with *yasad* of vs. 25). A *garment* or *bege* usually refers to an outer piece of clothing. "She caught him (Joseph) by the *garment*" [Gen 39.12]. In addition to this vs. 26 has *raiment* or *levush*, a general term for clothing; it can refer to creation: "And all things stand forth as in splendid attire" [Job 38.14]. This piece of clothing is *changed* (*chalaph*); note that this same verb is used for pass away.

Diameno (*remain*): note the preposition *dia* (*through*) indicating divine presence as abiding through temporal vicissitudes and well as the coming into being and passing from being of the created realm.

Vs. 12: like a mantle you will roll them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end."

The close to citations from Ps 102 which centers upon the imagery of clothes as symbolic of alteration and that which is transitory. The following paragraph is lifted from **Notes to the Psalter**:

Vs. 27: "But you are the same, and your years have no end." The Hebrew reads "But you are he," i.e., you are the one with true being which the divine name YHWH suggests. In contrast, divine *years* (*kairoi*) lack an *ending*, the verb being *tamam* which also means "to complete" in the sense of having attained a goal. "And (Solomon) he overlaid the whole house with gold until all the house was *finished*" [1 Kg 6.22].

Vs. 13: but to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a stool for your feet?"

The final Psalm citation to distinguish the Son's superiority over angels. One more paragraph lifted from **Notes to the Psalter**:

Two "Lords:" YHWH and the psalmist's, 'adony, or the king of Israel. This verse is frequently quoted in the New Testament, for example, Mt 22.44, Acts 2.34, 1 Cor 15.25, Eph 1.20 and Heb 1.3, 13, as referring to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Implied in the psalm is that the king is newly established and will take his place at God's right hand. Note that this sitting extends for a period (*kairos*) of time: until (God is speaking now) he subdues the king's enemies and makes them a *footstool*, *hadom*. "I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the *footstool* of our God" [1 Chron 28.2].

Vs. 14: Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

The author to Hebrews sums up his opening theme of Son vs. angels by posing this rhetorical question to his readers. He identifies the angels as *pneuma* whose primary task is that of *ministering* (*leitourgyikos*), hearkening back to vs. 7 where both terms are used. Here the adjective is used, that is, spirits which do the ministering.

Such heavenly beings are *sent forth* (*apostello*): this verb is the root for "apostle" or the twelve human associates of Jesus Christ. The connection is brought out by Lk 11.49: "I will *send* them *apostles*."

Diakonia (*to serve*): the English uses a verb for the Greek noun, this New Testament term often being associated with persons who fulfill the commands of another as well as those coming from God. "All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the *ministry* of reconciliation" [2 Cor 5.18].

In the verse at hand, *diakonia* has a specific aim, that is, lying in the future or for those to *obtain* (*kleronomeo*) salvation, better, "to inherit." The noun "heir" is found in vs. 2 in conjunction with the Son and his inheriting "all things."

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Vs. 1: Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Therefore (dia touto): serves to make a transition from Chapter One to the current chapter which deals more fully with the person of Jesus Christ as a man as opposed to the tendency to confuse him with an angel

Perissoteros (*closer*): in the sense of more abundantly and earnestly, an adverb focused upon the preposition peri, *around, about, concerning*. That is, to exercise “more about-ness,” another way of stating *attention* which applies to the verb prosecho, *to hear*. That is to say, attention in-the-direction-*towards* (pros)-which. The exact nature of hearing as applied to the past is unspecified but most likely hearkens back to the Psalm verses of Chapter One which distinguish the Son from angels.

Pararreo (*to drift away from*): a verb which connotes a river passing by a given location or a ship sailing by, the only New Testament use. Note the preposition para (*besides*) prefixed to the root rheo (*to flow*) which stresses the drifting nature of one’s attention with respect to “what we have heard.” The Greek text does not specify the English “it;” this lack serves to highlight the aimless meandering of pararreo.

Vs. 2: For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.

This verse is a prelude to the question of the next verse.

Logos: *message* which to the sensitive reader suggests Jesus Christ as Logos...Word...as expression of the Father: “the very stamp of his nature” [1.3].

Two pertinent references with regard to angels: “You received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” [Acts 7.53]. “And it (the offspring promised) was ordained by angels through an intermediary” [Gal 3.19]. The divine Law or Torah was handed to Israel through Moses as mentioned in Deuteronomy and as given on Mount Sinai.

In the verse at hand, the logos can be taken as fulfilment of Torah, that is, as being *valid* (bebaios) or trustworthy. “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may *rest* on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants” [Rom 4.16]. This verse may be perceived as taking logos and associate it with *grace* (charis) to establish the new order as distinct from Judaism.

Transgression (parabasis): literally, a “going over” or *besides* (para), suggesting parallel action or one imitating the other to a certain degree without participating in its reality. “Why then the Law? It was added because of *transgressions*” [Gal 3.19], because of “goings over.” Such attempts are not so much at being at directly odds with the divine Torah but of paralleling it, as it were, by perverse practices as idolatry.

Disobedience (parakoe): a second para word, here a “hearing aside” or beside, which can be one of over-hearing or an unwilling to hear. “If he *refuses* to listen to them, tell it to the church” [Mt 18.17]. Note this refusal is with reference to an entity larger than an individual, the *church* or ekklesia.

Just retribution (misthapodasia): a term composed of misthos and apodidomai; here it means the sense of payment of wages or recompense, reward as well as punishment. Cf. Heb 10.35 & 11.26. This term is applied to the transgression and disobedience or those forms of activity “running *beside* (para)” what God had ordained and proclaimed through the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 3: how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

The answer to a rhetorical question posed in vs. 3. It is interesting to consider the verb *escape* (ekpheugo) as the natural consequence of those two para words noted in the last section: transgression and disobedience. Here the notion of flight results by *neglecting* (ameleo) salvation; not so much rejecting it but by being

unmindful of its reality. *Salvation* or *soteria* is equivalent to the person of Jesus Christ or the content of that “message declared by angels.” Again, it may be seen in light of the parallel realities of *para-basis* and *para-koe*.

The salvation at hand is *telikautos*, *such* (a) *great*, an adjective usually referring to bulk or duration.

In the second sentence of vs. 3 note the connection between *declaring* (*laleo*: the common term for speaking or talking) and *at first* (*archen labousa*), literally, “having received a beginning (to be spoken).” Here the noun *arche* is used which designates the first principle or origin of all things and is freighted with divine meaning. Such divine origins is all the more prominent by the *Lord* (*Kurios*); in the verse at hand the preposition *dia* (*through*) is used.

The time signified by “at first” is not specified but reference to “us” as applied to those who heard Jesus can mean those churches founded by the apostles. Note the emphasis upon hearing which *attests* (*bebaioo*) to salvation. This verb connotes fastness and stability. “And they went forth and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and *confirmed* the message by the signs that attended it” [Mk 16.20].

Vs. 4: while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

At the same time the previous verse has the Lord declaring salvation, the verse at hand has the concurrent reality of God *bearing witness* or *sunepimartureo*. This verb contains two prepositions as prefixes: *sun* (*with*) and *epi* (*upon*) which give extra force to the root *martureo*. I.e., God not only bears witness but does so “with” and “upon” at the same time or from the two directions of horizontal and vertical. “It is the Spirit himself *bearing witness* with our spirit that we are children of God” [Rom 8.16].

This *sun + epi-martureo* is effected by four means which may be outlined as follows. Keep in mind this dual prepositional relationship with all four and that they are related to the Holy Spirit:

- 1) *signs* (*semeion*): pointing to a reality beyond the sign itself. “Thus tongues are a *sign* not for believers but for unbelievers” [1 Cor 14.22].
- 2) *wonder* (*teras*): in the sense of a prodigy or something unusual. In the New Testament this word is found in the plural and joined with *semeion*. “Unless you see signs and *wonders* you will not believe” [Jn 4.48].
- 3) *miracle* (*dunamis*): more properly, “strength,” and concerned with the result of a given event. “And seeing signs and great *miracles* performed, he was amazed” [Acts 8.13]. Note that *dunamis* is not used in the New Testament as pertaining to Christ’s miracles.
- 4) In the Greek text “gift” is not used; *distributed* (*merismos*) or “division” seems more attune to the Holy Spirit’s nature as at Pentecost: “tongues as of fire, *distributed* and resting on each one of them” [Acts 2.3]. The verb here is *diamerizo*: a “dividing *through* (*dia*).”

All four are in accord with God’s *will* or *thelesis*, the only use of this term in the New Testament, *thelema* being the more common word.

Vs. 5: For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come of which we are speaking.

Note the contrast between Holy Spirit of the previous verse who in turn is connected with the Lord of vs. 3 and the angels of vs. 5. That is, the author of Hebrews continues his theme of the superiority of Jesus Christ over the angels, over them as “messengers.”

Subject (*hupotasso*): a verb signifying acquiescence to another person, here not with respect to angels. Cf. 1 Cor 15.28 for a key reference: “When all things are *subjected* to him, then the Son himself will also be *subjected* to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone.” By way of note, Gregory of Nyssa has a treatise devoted to this topic; cf. the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page. In the verse at hand, there are two uses of *hupotasso*: first “all things” or most likely inanimate objects as well as animals, etc; second, the Son being subjected to God the Father. Note the temporal gap: “all things” require being subjected

to the Son after which the Son will be subjected to the Father, intimating that both do not completely fall under full hupotasso.

In vs. 5 hupotasso has a specific object, the “*world* (oikoumene) to come” or the inhabited world as noted in 1.6, inhabited that is, not now but in the future which is distinct from the inhabited world of the present. For a description, refer to the Book of Revelation.

There are two tenses involved regarding hupotasso: God having effected subjection (past) and the world to come (future), something beyond the capacity of an angel or any spiritual being.

Vs. 6: It has been testified somewhere, “What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him?”

The beginning of several verses (through vs. 8) excerpted from Psalm Eight. As in other citations from the Psalter above, I excerpted sections pertaining to the verses at hand from **Notes on the Psalter** located elsewhere on this Home Page and refer the reader to this document. On the other hand, Hebrews uses the LXX or the Greek text, some key points which may be outlined as follows:

Mindful (mimnesko): or to remember, here with regard to “man.” Compare with “son of man” for whom God *cares* (episkeptomai). This verb means a looking *upon* (epi) in the sense of examining something. “To *visit* orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world” [Jms 1.27].

“*Than* (para) the angels:” the verb here being *elattoo* (*to be less*) joined with *brachu* (*a little*). The purpose is to compare “man” with the angels, that is, just being situated under them or as the preposition *para* intimates, a certain being “besides” them.

Crown (stephanoo): from which is derived the noun *stephanos*, a wreath or garland given as prize to victors in a public contest such as race. “And I will give you the *crown* of life” [Rev 2.10].

Subjection (hupotasso): the same verb as in vs. 5, here with reference to *everything* (panta). Note the two uses of the preposition *hupo* (*under*): in the verb itself and in the adverb *hupokato*, the second instance with reference to man’s “feet.” This Psalm verse is quoted in 1 Cor 15.27 or in the larger context of hupotasso discussed above: all things->Son->Father (“all in all”).

Vs. 8: Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

These two sentences follow in the same verse the concluding citation from Psalm Eight, vs. 6 and which continue the theme of hupotasso, a key word to distinguish between the angels and Christ as respective “messengers.”

Anupotaktos: an adjective (a + hupotasso) for “not subjected” or not under the control of Jesus Christ. “Not open to the charge of being profligate or *insubordinate*” [Tit 1.6].

As it is (nun): or “now,” referring to present reality as opposed to “the world to come” of vs. 5 and can intimate the realm of *chronos* as opposed to *kairos*. Note that the English “now” which begins the first sentence is lacking in the Greek. *Nun* serves to introduce the sense of *sight* (*horao*, verb) within *chronos*-logical time. This verb has *ta panta* (*everything*) as its object and implies that there are some things subject to God and others which are not. The other four senses (hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling) are omitted. The sentence under consideration can include those persons in the church who have submitted themselves to its authority and therefore to that of Jesus Christ. Presumably, that would include humanity as understood at this early date of the church’s development.

Vs. 9: But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor

because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Another (partial) quote from Ps 8.7 which begins the Greek text of this verse, again stressing the role of Jesus and angels as “messengers.” In order to avoid confusing the two, the author tacitly acknowledges the similarity of their messenger-ness and situates Jesus in a state below angels, that is, as an incarnate person, not by reason of his inherent divinity.

The object of *seeing* (blepo) is Jesus, that is, as a person living in a particular time and place as opposed to the come-and-go nature of angels depicted throughout the Old and New Testaments. Such human seeing has a time span of a *little while* (brachu; cf. vs. 7) which would presumably embrace the time from Jesus’ birth to his death but not beyond, that is, from his resurrection which begins in time and extends through eternity.

The author to Hebrews beholds Jesus—rather “we,” the members of the church—*crowned* (stephanoo, vs. 7) with glory and honor, to cite Ps 8.5 once again. This two-fold splendor results (dia, *because of* in the sense of “through”) death’s *suffering* (pathema). “I consider that the *sufferings* of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” [Rom 8.18]. Note the phrase *present time* (nun kairos), or what might be termed a “now-special occurrence” which harmonizes with the “little while” of the verse under consideration.

While attention is brought to bear upon the “little while” of Jesus’ earthly life, the central point is death which is made more evident by *so that* (hopos). This adverb brings readers to Jesus’ experience of death, better, his *tasting* (geuomai) of it which implies ingesting death.

Grace (charis): here, “of God” which can be seen as opposite to the reality of death. Such grace is intended for *all*, pantos being in the genitive which geuomai takes. Such “all-ness” is not specified as belonging to those persons who belong to the church but appears to be inclusive.

Vs. 10: For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Fitting (prepo): a somewhat generic term which suggests an action taken in accord with a beneficial, overall plan which is usually manifest. Its object is Jesus Christ presented in terms of two uses of the same preposition, dia (*for, by...in* the sense of “through-ness”); the first is in the accusative case and the second, the genitive. Both have *all* (ta panta) as object, literally, “the all.” The Greek text lacks a verb here, “exist.”

The first dia or “through-ness” suggests that created beings are in a state of passage, that is, through the person of Jesus Christ. The second dia can relate to their being generated, that is, being “of” him. By way of side note, it may be helpful to read the first chapter of Ephesians which contains numerous uses of prepositions, especially en and eis, with regard to the person of Christ.

This two-fold accent upon dia is further clarified by the Father engaged in the act of *bringing* (ago: in the sense of leading) “many sons *to* (eis, *into*) *glory*” (doxa). Here doxa is a terminus, as it were, of the Father’s leading. The glory of Hebrews is reminiscent of Jn 17.24: “Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to behold my *glory* which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world.” Thus doxa is a being-*with* (meta) Christ in a “place” before the world’s foundation.

Pioneer (archegos): closely related to arche as first noted in 1.11, the first principle of creation, only here this principle is embodied as a (divine) person. Archegos generally applies to the founder of a city. For another use, cf. Acts 3.15: “And killed the *Author* of life whom God raised from the dead.” Keeping in mind the sense of this word related to a *city* (polis), it can be paralleled with the heavenly Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven from God” [Rev 21.10], more specifically, as pertaining to its twelve foundations described in vss. 15-21.

In the verse at hand, archegos is related to *salvation* (soteria) which is the person of Jesus Christ himself. The pioneer requires being made *perfect* (teleioo) or being made “complete” in the sense of telos, which in turn,

connotes a predetermined or worked-out plan. “I in them and you in me, that they may *become perfectly one*” [Jn 17.23].

Suffering (pathema): cf. 2.9, “suffering of death.” In the verse at hand, the preposition *dia* is used. Note that *pathema* is related to *pathos*, *feeling*, *affection*, and thus to suffer means to feel something thoroughly.

Vs. 11: For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

A close identity between Jesus Christ who effects *sanctity* (*hagiazō*) and those human beings who receive it. “*Sanctify* them in the truth; your word is truth” [Jn 17.17]. For a parallel meaning of the same verb, cf. 1 Pt 3.15: “But in your hearts *revere* Christ as Lord.”

For the English “one origin” the Greek text has “*all* (*pantes*) from *one* (*hen*)” which applies to God the Father as source both of Christ and those sanctified by him.

As for “brethren,” cf. Mt 25.40: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” This verse is situated in the larger context of the coming of the Son of Man who separates the sheep from the goats. Also refer to Paul’s (Saul) vision where Christ identifies himself with the church: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me” [Acts 9.4]?

Vs. 12: saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

The first of three verse (Psalter, 22.22, and Isaiah) intends to reveal the relationship of Christ who sanctifies, those sanctified and their common source.

Proclaim (*apaggello*): future tense is used here indicating that Christ is uttering these words in advance of his mission or incarnation. These words are reminiscent of Christ’s reading of Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” [Lk 4.21]. For another sense of this verb, cf. Jn 16.25: “The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but *tell* you *plainly* of the Father.”

The object of proclamation is God’s *name* or *onoma* to “my brethren” or those who are sanctified which ultimately can be traced to Ex 3.14: “I am who am” which alternately reads as “I am what I am” or “I will be what I will be.” Note that YHWH applies to God the Father whereas Christ applies to Jesus, the Anointed One.

In addition to this proclamation, vs. 12 adds *praise* (*humnō*) which connotes the singing of a hymn. Such hymn/praise has a specific location, “in the midst of the *congregation*” (*ekklēsia*) or “church,” that is, in its very center.

Vs. 13: And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

These two quotes are from Is 8, vss. 17 and 18 respectively; the words “and again” serve to link them together, that is, to demonstrate the connection between God, Christ and people. The Hebrew text of the former reads “I will *hope* (*qawah*) in him.” This verb also means “to be strong” and implies a type of “strong expectation.” The Greek of vs. 13 reads literally, “*upon* (*epi*) him” in conjunction with the verb *peithō* which also means “to persuade.”

Idou ego: or “behold I” to indicate both readiness and sudden appearance along with “children.” For a similar sentiment, cf. Lk 1.38: “And Mary said, ‘*Behold*, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’”

The two verses from Isaiah may be situated in their totality as follows: “I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs are portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts who dwells on Mount Zion.”

Vs. 14: Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Another reference to *children* (*paidion*, singular), the first one being in vs. 13. These persons have a *share* (*koinoneo*) in human nature, a typical expression of the time being “flesh and blood.” This verb is one frequently associated with the New Testament alternately translated as “fellowship,” “communion.” “No church entered into *partnership* with me in giving and receiving except you only” [Phil 4.15].

Likewise (*paraplesios*): an adverb used to balance *since* (*epei*) which states the condition of humanity in order to introduce a similarity with regard to Christ. The notion of balance/comparison is demonstrated by the preposition *para* (*beside*) coupled with the adjective *plesios* (*near, close*).

Paraplesios is used with the verb *metecho*, *to partake*; note the preposition *meta* (*with*) prefixed to the verb *echo*, *to have*, i.e., “to have-with.”

The object of divine participation: the “same (human) nature” or in the Greek text, “of these” (flesh and blood).

That (*hina*): a conjunction which fills out or completes *epei* and *paraplesios*, *since* and *likewise*. Mention of death intimates human nature in terms of flesh and blood. Here death is not presented as an obstacle but as an implement for *destruction* (*katargeo*, verb). Note the preposition *kata* (*according to*) prefixed to the verb *argeo*, *to lie idle*. The point is to bring an adversarial force to a standstill. “Cut it down. Why should it *use up* the ground” [Lk 13.7]?

The verse at hand does not have Christ destroy death per se but the *devil* (*diabolos*) who has the *power* (*kratos*) of death. If this person is brought to ruin then death will similarly come to an end. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the *devil*” [Mt 4.1].

Vs. 15: and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

In addition to destroying the devil who has the power of death, the author includes another category, those with the “*fear* (*phobos*) of death.” From this Christ *delivers* (*apallasso*) people. Such fear creates *bondage* (*douleia*). “For you did not receive the spirit of *slavery* to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship” [Rom 8.15]. Such bondage is not temporary but lasts as long as a person is alive.

Vs. 16: For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham.

Concern (*epilambano*): note the preposition *epi* (*upon*) prefixed to the verb, a “laying hold of.” Thus “concern” signifies a taking into possession, of incorporation by Jesus Christ, the object being Abraham’s *descendants* (*sperma*). This term literally means “seed.” “And not all are children of Abraham because they are his *descendants*” [Rom 9.7]. This verse hearkens back to Gen 21.12: “But God said to Abraham...‘for through Isaac shall your *descendants* be named.’”

The very mention of “descendant” in conjunction with “angels” again brings back the relationship of these beings and Jesus Christ. Refer to Christ’s genealogy which opens the Gospel of Matthew (1.1-18); Abraham is mentioned first as well as vs. 18: “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations.” i.e., Abraham and King David are the two great dividing lines, so to speak, in this genealogy.

Vs. 17: Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people.

In every respect (*kata panta*): literally, “according to all.” Here it relates to Christ’s *brethren* (*adelphos*) which contrasts with its opposite, *douleia*, in vs. 15.

Had (*opheilo*): in the sense of following an obligation which in this context are the “descendants of Abraham.”

Such obligation appears greater than the person of Christ to which must conform. For example, the obligation under consideration bears a certain parallel with statements in the New Testament as related to the Old such as Jn 13.18: "That the scripture may be fulfilled."

To be like (homoioo): the kata noted just above suggests something akin to following a plan after which Jesus Christ himself had patterned. Consider this in light of Gen 1.26 which uses a noun derived from this verb: "Let us make man in our image, after our *likeness*." Homoiosis is more dynamic, in the process of becoming, and seems founded on the static eikon or *image*. For another use of the same verb: "Do not *be like* them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him" [Mt 6.8].

In the second half of vs. 17 such being-like now assumes a more specific form, *high priest* (archiereus), which has its roots in the Old Testament: "The priest who is chief among his brethren upon whose head the anointing oil is poured" [Lev 21.10]. More often than not, this term in the New Testament pertains to those associated with the religious and political system in Jerusalem and which was opposed to Jesus' teaching, etc. Note the word arche (*beginning*) prefixed to the root hierus.

Almost as if the author of Hebrews had the negative meaning of the term in mind, he calls Jesus the "high priest" as *merciful* (eleemon) and *faithful* (pistos). This is the first time archiereus is used in Hebrews; it soon forms an essential element of the letter.

In the service of God (ta pros ton theon): literally, "the (things) to God." Note the preposition which indicates direction-towards-which, as if to indicate that Christ as high priest is constantly making offerings to God.

Make expiation (hilaskomai): a verb with a reflexive connotation, that is, with reference to the person engaged in the action it signifies. The verb also means "to render propitious to oneself," "to conciliate to oneself." It is as though *the things* (ta) which are oriented *towards* (pros) God the Father by Jesus Christ are the expiation itself...not only regarding the Father but by reason of hilaskomai's reflexive nature, for Christ as well. Cf. Heb 4.15: "For we have not a *high priest* who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are."

Vs. 18: For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

This verse fleshes out the role of Christ as high priest who differs from his Old Testament predecessors by reason of two elements:

1) *suffered* (pascho): the verb, while in the perfect tense, suggests a completed (past) action which endures into the present. "For to this you have been called, because Christ also *suffered* for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" [1 Pt 2.21]. A certain parallel can be drawn here of Christ as harchierus and hupogrammos (*example*). The latter more specifically means a "writing copy" or something given to students to learn all the letters of the alphabet, that is, by copying them.

2) *tempted* (peirazo): The verb dunamai (*able*) imparts not so much a condescending attitude but a willingness to help. Peirazo is reminiscent of Christ's temptation by the devil in the desert: "And he was in the wilderness forty days, *tempted* by Satan" [Mk 1.13]. Perhaps the special meaning of forty days can be brought to bear on the verse at hand, that is, as reminiscent of Israel's time of wandering.

To help (boetheo): the natural consequence of Christ having suffered and having been tempted. "But if you can do anything, have pity on us and *help* us" [Mk 9.22]. Since Hebrews has been drawing a distinction between angels and the divinity of Jesus Christ, such help is interesting to view in light of Mt 4.11 as pertaining to Christ's temptation by Satan: "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and *ministered* to him." The verb diakoneo is used here which has a broader sense of help in addition to providing for one's physical needs.

Chapter Three

Vs. 1: Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

Therefore (othen): this word serves to introduce the theme of Chapter Three, Christ's superiority to Moses after having established the difference in the "messenger-nature" of Jesus Christ and the angels. Othen literally translates as "from which," that is, from the vantage point of this now established distinction.

"*Holy* (hagios) brethren:" addressed by the author to his readers, the use of which is not found otherwise in the New Testament and alludes to the fact that they have been brought to glory (cf. 2.10, etc.).

This readers' holiness derives from the fact that they *share* (metecho, as in 2.14 or "have-with") a "heavenly call" (klesis), that is, as not deriving from themselves but from God. As noted in 2.14, metecho has the preposition meta (*with*) prefixed to the verb "to have" and can alternately mean "to have with" as distinguished from "to have in."

This verse is reminiscent of Eph 1.3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the *heavenly places*." Here epouranios is used ("place" included in the adjective) as in the verse under consideration; note the preposition epi (*upon*) prefixed to ouranos, i.e., "upon the heavens." For another reference to klesis, cf. 2 Pt 1.10: "Be the more zealous to confirm your *call* and election, for if you do this you will never fall."

Once the "having-with" (meta) has been implanted in the readers' ("holy brethren") minds, the author bids them to *consider* (katanoeo) Jesus. Note the preposition kata (*according to*) prefixed to the verb noeo; it is as though the readers are to apply their *minds* (nous) "according" to Jesus, as if they were to follow him after a given preordained plan not so much in the physical sense but spiritually. "Jesus" is used here as opposed to "Christ" or "Jesus Christ" which seems to stress the personal element between him and the persons addressed by the author of Hebrews.

Two roles of Jesus are mentioned:

- 1) *the apostle* (ho apostolos): the definite article is inserted; it distinguishes Jesus from the twelve apostles as well as inferring that he is the "pioneer of their salvation" [2.10]. Furthermore, ho apostolos—as one who is sent (i.e., the verbal root)—is parallel to Jesus has having been sent from God, that is, the distinction Chapter One made between this divine sending and that with regard to the angels.
- 2) *high priest* (archierus): cf. 2.17. Here Jesus performs this ministry with respect to "our *confession*" (homologia); there it is with respect to the "service of God." Note the first person plural, i.e., "holy brethren." "You will glorify God by your obedience in *acknowledging* the gospel of Christ" [2 Cor 9.13].

Vs. 2: He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house.

Appointed (poieo): the simple verb "to make" is used and refers to God the Father as the agent who is not explicitly mentioned. Perhaps this is to demonstrate the continuation and fulfillment of the New Testament from the Old, for example, by introducing the person of Moses.

The second half of vs. 2 is a direct quote from Num 12.7: "Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house." Vs. 7 is situated within the larger context of God revealing himself to persons in dreams (cf. vs. 6). The preeminence of Moses is more clearly brought out in vs. 8: "With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord." Such mouth-to-mouth speaking can be related to kissing: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" [Sg. 1.1]. The Hebrew temunah is used for *form*; it is used negatively in Ex 20.4. The LXX uses doxa (*glory*) and contrasts it with ainigma (*dark speech*).

"God's *house*" (oikos): this term refers to Israel which Moses guided; it can imply Moses having received a copy of God's house on Mount Sinai, more specifically, the divine tabernacle which, like Israel under the leadership

of Moses, was not permanent but subject to forty year's wandering in the desert. The Greek text of Hebrews has "all his house;" also, it lacks *faithful* (pistos) which is applied only to Jesus. The conjugation hos (*as*) signifies a shift of Jesus' faithfulness to Moses, the latter being derivative of the former.

Note that before Israel came into Egypt Pharaoh set Joseph over his house, a foreshadowing of Moses' role: "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are; you shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command" [Gen 41.39-40].

Vs. 3: Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house.

Another mention of Moses, an important figure whom the author of Hebrews both parallels and contrasts with Jesus Christ here as well as throughout this chapter. Moses as receiver of the Torah and "pattern of the tabernacle" [Ex 25.9] should be kept in mind. That is, a tabernacle exists in heaven after which Moses is to construct a likeness.

In the verse at hand, both Moses and Jesus Christ are presented in terms of *builder* (kataskeuazo, aorist active participle used) and *house* (oikos). The verbal root suggests furnishing and adorning as well as the construction itself. For another use of this verb: "Behold, I send my messenger before your face who shall *prepare* your way before you" [Mt 11.10, quoting Mal 3.1].

Counted (axioo): in the sense of being judged worthy and deserving. This verb is used impersonally, with no explicit mention of who is doing the estimation. Such indefiniteness is intentional in that it can include God as well as Israel and the Church.

More (pleion): followed by the genitive of comparison, that is, Christ and Moses, with respect to *glory* (doxa). Cf. 2 Cor 3.7-8 which situates this doxa in better perspective: "...the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its *brightness*, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor?"

Such doxa is presented in terms of degrees, of *honor* (time). "Outdo one another in showing *honor*" [Rom 12.10].

Vs. 4: (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)

A verse in parentheses according to the RSV version, almost as a footnote to vs. 3. Both verses contain the word gar (*yet, for, respectively*), which heightens the character of the comparison between Moses and Christ.

The verb kataskeuazo is used again as well as the nominative singular aorist participle, *builder*. The notion of furnishing and adornment noted in vs. 3 with respect to kataskeuazo applies to *all things* (panta) which can include the physical world as well as humanity. I.e., the fundamental notion is that of getting a dwelling ready for habitation (and furnishing it); this habitation may be taken as a foreshadow of the heavenly Jerusalem described at the end of the Book of Revelation.

Vs. 5: Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.

This verse contains a partial quote from Num 12.7 which is also used in vs. 2 only here adds that Moses was a *servant* (therapon), a term which differs from doulos (*slave*) in that it suggests servant-as-attendant, that is, an office willingly undertaken as used by the LXX of Jos 1.2: "Moses my *servant* is dead." Here oikos (*house*) can refer to the tabernacle Moses, a likeness he received on Mount Sinai and in which Joshua remained: "When Moses turned again into the camp, his therapon Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent."

Faithful (pistos): again, as in vs. 2, which is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew 'amun from which "amen"

derives and in the context of house, denotes the stability shown by Joshua's example, the successor of Moses.

Testify (marturion): the noun is used here with the preposition eis (*into*), again suggesting stability of remaining in the divine house which can be expanded into the wider "house" of Israel.

To be spoken (laleo): future passive participle is used here; the English "later" is lacking in the Greek text but implied in the form of this verb. Perhaps an example of this "later-ness" is Moses' presence along with Elijah at the transfiguration of Christ: "And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, *talking with* (sullaleo) him" [Mt 17.3].

Vs. 6: but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

A continuation of vs. 5 introduced by kai (*but*); it can also translate as "and." Here Christ is *over* (epi) the divine house as opposed to Moses who was faithful *in* (en) the same house. Compare him as *son* (huios) with Moses as therapon noted in the last verse.

The people to whom the author of Hebrews addresses his letter uses the first person plural with respect to God's house "epi" which Christ is situated. Such a promise has a condition, namely, our *holding fast* (kataskeuazo): cf. vs. 3 and 4 which use this verb as "builder" and "to build." In other words, kataskeuazo suggests both a finished product and the process of constructing it. The verb has two objects:

1) *confidence* (parresia): alternately, "boldness" and "confidence" with respect to freedom of speech by the citizen of a city-state. "In whom we have *boldness* and confidence of access through our faith in him" [Eph 3.12].

2) *pride* (kauchema): more specifically as pertaining to boasting which can be positive or negative. "Your *boasting* is not good" [1 Cor 5.6]. In the verse at hand, kauchema is in conjunction with *hope* (elpis), the genitive case being used.

In sum, parresia and kauchema are both "built" and the "builders" with respect to Christ being "epi" God's house.

Vs. 7: Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice,

The beginning of a quote from Psalm 95, verses 7 through 11 which, as the author states, comes from the Holy Spirit or Pneuma. Since pneuma also means "breath," another way of looking at the way the Holy Spirit speaks in these verses as a way of breathing, of exhaling. Since these five verses form a single unit, they may be outlined as follows, keeping in mind the **Notes to the Psalter** elsewhere on this Home Page to which the reader may refer. Remarks will be limited to the Greek text as opposed to the original Hebrew:

Vs. 7: *When* (ean): it can alternately translate as "if." With this in mind, there is the chance that a person will neither hear nor recognize the Holy Spirit. Accent upon *today* (semeron) suggests a special occasion or kairos event as well as heightening the possibility that a person may hear this speaking yet not accept its content. As for the voice, cf. Acts 2.2: "And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind." Note the parallel between *suddenly* (aphno) and semeron.

Vs. 8: *Harden* (skleruno): literally, "to dry up," "to harden." With this in mind, the verb suggests not simply becoming resistant to the Spirit's breathing but losing one's vital moisture, as it were, by this breathing. "But when some were *stubborn* and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them" [Acts 19.9]. Such "drying up" is with regards to the human *heart* (kardia), that is, the vital beat of this organ withering away.

Day of rebellion: (parapikrasmos): the Greek translation of the Hebrew Meribah ("conflict"). Cf. Ex 17.17 for an account of this rebellion by Israel when Moses struck the rock and caused water to issue forth. Note that God

says to him (vs. 6), “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb” and then adds, “and you shall strike the rock and water shall come out of it that the people may drink.” In the context of the verse at hand, this water may be equated with the *breath* (pneuma) of the Holy *Spirit* (Pneuma).

On the day (kata ten hemeran): note the preposition kata, an alternate translation as *according*. Compare “day” with “today” of vs. 7. This shift connotes a refinement, if you will, making that occasion...kairos...of *testing* (peirasmos) “kata” it, *according* to its’ full length. For a reference to peirasmos, cf. Lk 8.13: “But these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of *temptation* fall away.” Kairos is used here for *time*.

Vs. 9: *where* (ou): reference is to a specific place, the “desert” of vs. 8, as opposed to the two facets of time already noted. “Fathers” indicates that little or no spacial/temporal gap exists between these ancestors and the present generation as far as putting God to the test is concerned.

Works (ergon): or those wonders which God had performed for Israel during its forty years’ wondering in the Sinai desert. The psalmist as well as the author of Hebrews wish to highlight the contrast between such works and putting God to the test. The forty years may be taken as another type of kairos, a special occasion.

Vs. 10: *Provoked* (prosochthizo): or “to be laden down, burdened.” Note the preposition pros, towards, with respect to the verbal root ochtheo; it indicates a heightened sense of rage.

“This generation” can refer to the one in the Sinai wilderness as well as the one existing at present. There is no temporal/spacial discrepancy between the two with regards to provoking God.

Go astray (planao): or “to wander,” here not spatially but “in their hearts.” Such deviation does not last for a given period of time but *always* (aei). The Greek text has the singular “heart.”

Knowledge (ginosko, verb) is used with respect to the plural *ways* (hodos) which belong to God. Compare with Jn 1.23, John the Baptist’s citation of Is 40.3: “Make straight the (singular) *way* of the Lord.”

Vs. 11: *Wrath* (orge): this term can apply to any impulse or impetuous desire of the soul. Here God makes an oath as a result of intense anger, namely, that Israel will not enter his *rest* (katapausis). Cf. 4.1: “Therefore, while the promise of entering his *rest* remains.” The Greek text has the preposition eis (*into*) twice: *enter* (eis-erchomai) and *into* with respect to katapausis, indicating a full entry which in this context God swears he will not permit. “What is the place of my *rest*” [Is 66.1]?

Vs. 12: Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

The author of Hebrews resumes his discourse after the citation from Psalm 95. He continues to spell out its theme of warning by the words *take care* (blepo) which basically means “to see.” The object of this seeing is the *heart* (kardia) of those persons the author addresses which is considered as the fountain and seat of thoughts, passions and desires. “Why do you think evil in your *hearts*” [Mt 9.4]?

The heart has two qualities: *evil* (poneros) and *unbelieving* (apistia); the latter is a noun using the genitive of quality. Both are present “*in* (en) you.”

The in-ness of evil and unbelieving are pictured spatially in the sense of causing people to *fall away* (aphistami) “from the living God.” Note the two-fold use of the preposition apo (*from*): in the verb itself and with respect to God. The author does not simply posit the term “God” but the “living God” as if the adjective was intended to strike fear into his listeners. For another used of the verb ahistami, cf. Lk 8.13: “They believe for a while and in time of temptation *fall away*.”

Vs. 13: But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Exhort (parakaleo): this verb is prefixed by the preposition *para* (*besides*) and suggests a calling aside from a person's normal routine or way of behavior. For an alternate meaning, cf. Rom 12.1: "I *appeal* to you therefore, brethren,...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Parakaleo is the verb for Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, i.e., the One who "calls-aside."

"Each day:" that is, through the temporal succession of days which here the author of Hebrews *calls* (kaleo...parakaleo) *today* (semeron). He wishes to show the unity between semeron as a kairos event or special occasion and this temporal succession of "each day." Semeron hearkens back to 3.7: "*Today*, when you hear his voice" or Ps 95.7.

Harden (skleruno): also as in 3.8; here it is in reference to sin's *deceitfulness* (apate). Note an alternate meaning: "But the cares of the world, and the *delight* in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" [Mk 4.19]. This verse is in the broader context of seeds falling on different types of ground. The hardness of skleruno may be likened to the "rocky ground" of vs. 16.

Vs. 14: For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end,

Share (metchos): a noun in Greek from the verb metecho first noted in 2.14, a "having *with*" (meta); here it is used directly with regard to the person of Christ. This participation is conditional, that is, it depends upon a *holding* or katecho. One meaning of the preposition kata is *according to*; thus the verb is a "holding in accord with" in contrast to the "sharing with" of metchos.

The object of katecho: *confidence* (hupostasis) which infers the essence of a thing, that which has real being or the ground on which something rests. "What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful *confidence*" [2Cor 11.17].

The confidence of vs. 14 is specified as being *first* (arche) which most likely hearkens back to the listeners' first acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. Cf. 1.10: "You, Lord, did found the earth in the *beginning*." Use of arche in the verse at hand is interesting in that we have its opposite, *end* (telos) in the sense of completion and perfection. For use of this term's verbal root, cf. 2.10: "...should *make* the pioneer of their salvation *perfect* through suffering." Thus the sharing in Christ, the meta-echo with him, is essentially the same whether at arche or telos. It depends upon *holding* (the kata-echo) of this arche-*confidence* or remaining bebaios, *firm*.

Vs. 15: while it is said, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

A continuation of the previous verse, this one presupposing that the delineation of arche/telos is kept in mind. Here the author again cites from Psalm 95 as in vss. 7-8. He prefaces his citation with the authority of Scripture ("while it is said") to support his use of these verses with respect to Jesus Christ. This English phrase in Greek reads legesthai with the preposition en (to) which may be taken as either temporal or causal.

Vs. 16: Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

Here begins the first of several rhetorical questions through vs. 18 to which the author responds with an equally rhetorical question. All refer to the Israelites who are intended to be representative of those reading his letter. Since the questions form a unit, they may be outlined as follows:

-*heard* (akouo)/*rebellious* (parakikraino): those who left Egypt under Moses' leadership. The Greek text reads "*through* (dia) Moses."

-vs. 17: *provoked* (prosochthizo): those who sinned and died in the wilderness.

-vs. 18: *swear* (omnumi)/not to enter *rest* (katapausis): *disobedient* (apeitheo).

Vs. 19: So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

So (kai): use of this word implies its alternate meaning of “and” as if to bring to dramatic conclusion the purpose of the author’s asking the just mentioned rhetorical questions.

Note the contrast between two prepositions: the *eis* of *enter* (*eisrchomai*) and the *dia* (*through, by*) related to unbelief. It is interesting to observe that Israel did enter the Promised Land after wandering forty years in the Sinai wilderness but Moses did not. “For you shall see the land before you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the people of Israel” [Dt 32.52]. This closing note upon entering/not entering serves as an introduction to the next chapter.

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Chapter Four

Vs. 1: Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.

The Greek text begins with “let us *fear*” (*phobeo*), the object being judged, more specifically, with regard to not having attained divine rest.

Kataleipo is the verb for *to remain* and suggests the temporary presence of a divine offer. This term also connotes a leaving behind, of missing something which one has intended. For another sense of the same verb, that is, with a positive meaning, cf. Mt 19.5: “For this reason a man shall *leave* his father and mother and be joined to his wife.”

Promise (*epaggelia*): more specifically, an announcement and the object of *kataleipomai*. “The law...does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the *promise* void” [Gal 3.17]. Here the law is viewed as secondary compared with the divine promise. Note the noun itself: the preposition *epi* (*on, upon*) prefixed to the root *aggello* (*to announce*; verbal root for “angel”).

The goal presented in vs. 1 is *rest* (*katapausis*) as noted in 3.11 in conjunction with Ps 95. Cf. the verb *to enter* (*eisrchomai*) prefixed by the preposition *eis* (*into*) which is also used with regard to the noun. The notion is a full entry with regard to divine rest.

To fail (*hustereo*): denotes a falling behind as when not being able to keep pace with an army or runners in a race. “All these I have observed; what do I still *lack*” [Mt 19.20]?

Vs. 2: For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them because it did not meet with faith in the hearers.

Good news (*euaggelizo*): literally, “have become good news-ed.” The verb is used here denoting that the author’s readers have become the object of such tidings and have fully absorbed by it.

For...as (*kai...kakeinoi*): two words which set up a comparison between the current readers of Hebrews and Israel as depicted in the context of Ps 95 cited earlier in the Letter. The latter came first temporally, so the author wishes to point out the manner by which they “have been good news-ed” with respect to entering the divine rest of vs. 1. One example of this first promise is Num 14.8: “If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.” This and other references pertaining to Israel entering the Promised Land/rest is suggested as a model for current readers to examine in order to better comprehend their having become “good news-ed” through Jesus Christ.

Message (*ho logos tes akoes*): better, “the word of hearing” which implies active attention as well as absorption. “You shall indeed *hear* (*akoe*) but never understand” [Mt 13.14; Is 6.9].

Meet (sugkerannumi): literally, “to mix together.” The Greek text better reads, “they were not united in faith with the hearers.” Here is implied a distinction between “they” or the Israelites and “hearers” or those among them who did pay attention to the logos. “But God has so *adjusted* the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part” [1 Cor 12.24]. This Pauline corporate image is applied to the Church which, in turn, was taken from the nation of Israel.

Vs. 3: For we who have believed enter that rest, as he said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall never enter my rest,” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

A further elaboration on the *rest* or *katapausis* as cited once again from Ps 95.11. In the verse at hand, *belief* (*pisteuo*, verb) is equivalent with *katapausis*. As a side note related to the latter word, note the preposition *kata* (*according to*); thus *katapausis* may be taken as a rest “according to” one’s belief not in the sense of something one makes up, but one with a structure. Also note another use of the verb *eiserchomai* with the prefix *eis* and coupled with the same preposition.

“*Foundation* (*katabole*) of the world:” a correspondence of sorts may be drawn between *kata-bole* and *katapausis*...both are in *accord* with an order. *Katabole* literally means a laying or throwing *down* (another meaning of *kata*; it can refer to the making of a building’s foundation. “I will utter what has been hidden since the *foundation* of the world” [Mt 13.25]. Christ’s words are taken from Ps 78.2 which reads: “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark saying from of old.”

In the verse at hand, “foundation” bears a parallel with divine *works* (*ergos*) which can apply to natural phenomena or miraculous events. To have such works concomitant with the world’s *katabole* implies that they had already come into existence, “kata-like” as intimated with regards to this preposition, that is, *according to* a (divine) plan. With this *kata* in mind, debate regarding instantaneous vs. evolutionary creation is less important; implied is that Greek idea of *arche-telos*, *first principle-completion* (of first principle) which comprises true reality.

World (*kosmos*): in contrast to *oikoumene*, *inhabited world*; *kosmos* infers a definite order and beauty yet in the New Testament can apply to worldly affairs: “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the *world* has been crucified to me and I to the *world*” [Gal 6.14].

Vs. 4: For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”

A citation from Gen 2.2; the verb *katapauo* is used from which *katapausis* is derived. Here the author of Hebrews situates rest in its most all-encompassing form, as applied to God after having completed six days of creation. In Gen 2.1 cited in the second sentence there is a play on Hebrew words between *rest* (*yashav*; from which derives Sabbath) and *seventh* (*shavah*, i.e., seven). Both the Hebrew and Greek use “from” to indicate full separation from creation and rest. While the six days may be said to continue in existence for an indefinite future period, this divine *yashav* is eternal, i.e., it does not partake in this temporal/spacial extension. Note that Gen 2.3 says that God *blessed* (*barak*) this day as well as having *hallowed* (*qadash*) it. That is, by so separating the seventh day from the six and which later tradition prohibited work from being performed, this human rest from labor is intended to imitate the divine rest.

Verse five restates Ps 95.11 (cf. 3.11). By citing the divine prohibition about (Israel) not entering God’s *rest* or *katapausis* in the context of Genesis’ *yashav* as in the last section, the author of Hebrews brings into close alignment the human and divine types of rest. I.e., that rest associated with the Promised Land as implied in Psalm 95 imitates the seventh day after creation.

Vs. 6: Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

Refer back to 3.19 which also speaks of some persons not being able to enter the divine *katapausis*: “So we see

that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.” This unbelief has a parallel with *disobedience* (apeitheia; compare with parakoe, another term for the same English word in 2.2). More specifically, apeitheia means “unpersuaded;” for another reference, cf. Eph 2.2: “following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of *disobedience*.”

The sense of not being persuaded implies that a person has paid attention to the *good news* (euaggelizo). Note the use of the verb as opposed to a noun as used in vs. 2; cf. remarks there as having been “good news-ed.” Both vss. 2 and 6 draw parallels between the Israelites of old and the current listeners to the author’s letter. This can be implied by use of *formerly* (proteron): Israel and those who first received the Gospel message.

Vs. 7: again he sets a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

A continuation of the last verse begun by *again* (palin) to demonstrate the close connection between katapausis and the present moment, *today* (semeron), as noted in 3.7 & 13 regarding Ps 95.7, King David traditionally being taken as author of the Psalter. Use of the verb *to set* (orizo) may be taken in the sense of ordering or delineating a specific time or kairos. For another use of this verb, cf. Acts 10.42: “and to testify that he is the one *ordained* by God to be judge of the living and the dead.”

Vs. 8: For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.

Here attention is shifted from Moses who failed to give Israel rest; cf. 3.19 which cites Dt. 32.52. Moses was allowed to see the Promised Land from on top Mount Pisgah: “And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan (etc.)” [Dt 34.1]. However, Joshua (whose name means “Jesus”) was designated at the conclusion of Deuteronomy to succeed Moses: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; so the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses” [34.9]. Despite Joshua’s commission from Moses, the author of Hebrews says that his leadership does not compare with “another day” or a kairos. Cf. Jos 22.4 which has Joshua speaking: “And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren as he promised them.”

Vs. 9 then states that a superior kind of rest, that associated with the Sabbath, is set aside for God’s people.

Vs. 10: for whoever enters God’s rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his.

A continuation from vs. 9: note the couplet of *for* (gar) and *also* (kai). It serves to enhance the *entry into* (eis-erchomai...eis) the divine katapausis on one hand and on the other hand, the *cessation* (katapauo, verb) from labors in imitation of the seventh day of Genesis.

His (autos) which is paralleled with *idios*, also *his* or better, “one’s own;” i.e., a more personal connection between a person’s labors and those belonging to God.

Vs. 11: Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Strive (spoudazo): an exhortation which connotes making haste. It is as though the author of Hebrews knew, almost like Moses on top of Mount Pisgah, the rest that stretches out before him. Again, like Moses, there is the threat of not entering it. “*Eager* to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” [Gal 4.3].

One aspect of the Genesis story that can be brought to bear on this somewhat lengthy treatment of divine rest has to do with the consequences of our first parent’s banishment from Eden. This garden was constructed during the interim period of six days of creation and is a mirror-image of the seventh day. Note their banishment: “He drove out the man (NB: the text says that God did not drive out the woman); and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” [Gen 3.24]. With this image in mind, the “striving” which the author of Hebrews exhorts

starts from the east...sunrise...and proceeds along that “way” to the tree of life. This journey is a backward one, as it were, or one of recovery. The chief obstacle: cherubim and flaming sword, the latter acting almost like a revolving door through which the man or Adam must enter.

Disobedience (apeitheia): as noted in vs. 6 (“failed to enter because of *disobedience*”). In the verse at hand, apeitheia is associated with *falling* or pipto. “Other seed *fell* on rocky ground where it had not much soil” [Mk 4.5].

Example (hupodeigma): used here in the sense of a warning; the common meaning applies to an example as in 2 Pt 2.6: “and made them an *example* to those who were to be ungodly.”

Vs. 12: For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God’s *word* or logos is presented as antidote to disobedience and the inability to enjoy divine rest. Logos has five qualities:

1-2) *living* (zoon) and *active* (energes), the latter suggesting the ability to see an action to completion. Compare with 1 Pt 1.23: “You have been born anew...through the *living* and abiding word of God.” The only other use of energeis is 1 Cor 16.9: “for a wide door for *effective* work has opened to me.”

3) *sharper* (tomos): the only New Testament use of this term, here with respect to a “two-edged *sword*” (machaira). This weapon is a small sword or a large knife in contrast to a romphaia which pierced Mary’s heart, Lk 2.35. For the former, cf. Eph 6.17: “And take the helmet of salvation and the *sword* of the Spirit which is the word of God.” Machaira suggests close combat which is implied further by it being two-edged in order to cut one way and another in a confined space.

4) *piercing* (diikneomai): the only New Testament use of this term which corresponds to the LXX use in Ex 26.28 referring to the tabernacle: “The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall *pass through* from end to end.” Such piercing separates *soul* and *spirit* (psuche and pneuma) which because of their immaterial natures are difficult to separate. Keep in mind that the agent doing this separation is the logos as a (small) machaira designed to work in confined places as opposed to the unwieldy romphaia. In brief, psuche is vital force, the seat of feelings and affections; pneuma is the principle which animates the body, the spirit. In addition to piercing these two incorporeal features of a person, the logos/machaira applies to a person’s skeletal structure: *joints* (harmos) and *marrow* (muelos). These are the only New Testament uses.

5) *discerning* (kritikos): the only New Testament use of this adjective, from the verb krino which connotes obtaining an accurate opinion which most likely but not necessarily attains the truth of a matter. In the verse at hand, kritikos applies to the *heart* (kardia) which is two-fold: *thoughts* (enthumesis) and *intentions* (ennoia). For the former, cf. Mt 9.4: “But Jesus, knowing their *thoughts*.” For the latter, cf. 1 Pt 4.1: “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same *thought*.” Both terms are similar; ennoia seems to compass feelings in addition to mental action. Since the verse at hand situates them in the heart, the fountain and seat of human life, enthumesis and ennoia assume a special intimate sense.

Vs. 13: And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Creature (ktisis): anything created as well as inanimate objects; here it suggests non-human as well as human beings. “For the *creation* waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” [Rom 8.19]. The verse at hand follows upon the previous one in the sense that the divine logos/machaira has effected an uncovering or manifestation, aphanes (*hidden*; alpha privative with a negative meaning; the only New Testament use of this term).

Open (gumnos): literally connotes being naked in the context of an athletic event and can be suggestive of man

being self-aware: “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was *naked*, and I hid myself.’ ‘Who told you that you were *naked*” [Gen 3.10-11].

Laid bare (trachelizo): in the sense of cutting the throat of a sacrificial animal, used only here. Compare with Lk 2.35: “that the thoughts out of many hearts may be *revealed* (apokalupto).” NB: this laying bare is effected by that large two-handed romphaia mentioned above in connection with machaira.

With whom we have to do (pros hon hemin ho logos): a use of logos which can mean “affair” and is suggestive of anything orally presented or spoken. Note the use of pros, *towards*-which. I.e., our logos assumes this forward direction to Jesus Christ.

Vs. 14: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

High priest (archiereus): cf. 2.17, 6.20, 7.26, 8.1 and 9.11. The verse at hand presents Christ as archiereus as being in motion, as one who has *passed through* (dierchomai: compare with another dia verb, diikneomai in vs. 12, *piercing*). The verse most likely alludes to Jesus’ ascension into heaven: “And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight” [Acts 1.9]. Note that “heavens” of vs. 14 means the physical sky above as opposed to God’s dwelling.

For another reference to the title used here, cf. Jn 1.49: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God!”

Confession (homologia): as in 3.1, also in conjunction with archiereus (“and high priest of our *confession*”). Here this belief is *held fast* or krateo. “Only *hold fast* what you have until I come” [Rev 2.25]. Note that krateo takes the genitive case as if to insinuate that homologia becomes a possession or is incorporated into the person(s) intent upon it.

Vs. 15: For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sinning.

Sympathize (sumpatheo): sum + pathos, a “feeling-with,” not necessarily suffering although this is often the intended meaning. This instance plus 10.34 are the only New Testament uses, the latter reading as follows: “For you *had compassion* on the prisoners.” Use of this verb in conjunction with archiereus demonstrates the full human nature of Jesus Christ, a term which at first sight seems at odds with this office usually remote from common people. The object of sumpatheo: human *weakness* or astheneia.

Christ as archiereus experienced *temptation* (peirazo, verb) as noted in 2.18, again with respect to this divinely appointed office (“For because he himself has suffered and been *tempted*, he is able to help those who are *tempted*”). The verse at hand specifies Christ’s temptation: “in every *respect*” (homoiotēs), a word usually meaning “likeness.” Such resemblance has its first biblical expression in Gen 1.26 with man being made in the divine *image* (eikon) and *likeness* (homoiotēs). With this in mind, vs. 15 can suggest that although Christ fully assumed human nature, he was never in its “image” but “likeness.” That is, Christ remained fully divine. Vs. 15 enhances this sharing/difference by saying that Christ was “without sinning;” the Greek text uses the preposition choris (*without*) in the sense of being fully apart from.

Vs. 16: Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Confidence (parresia): as in 3.6 (“if we hold fast our *confidence* and pride in our hope”). “But that with full *courage* now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” [Phil 1.20]. The natural boldness described in vs. 16 naturally leads to *drawing near* or proserchomai (pros + erchomai); note that such an approach admits of distinction between the space one person may allot between himself and divine reality.

“*Throne of grace*” (thronos): a word which plays an important role in the Book of Revelation (cf. **Notes** elsewhere on this Home Page), for example 1.4: “Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and

who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his *throne*.” Keeping in mind the verses pertaining to Christ as archiereus, he is also a king sitting on a throne which in vs. 16 is one of *grace* (charis). Charis pertains to anything that is lovely and charming: “And all spoke well of him and wondered at the *gracious* words (i.e., ‘words of grace’) which proceeded out of his mouth” [Lk 4.22].

Before this priestly/kingly throne people are to receive *mercy* and *grace* (eleos and charis). Such divine attributes are intended “in the *time* (eukairos) of need:” that is, in a kairos or occasion which is eu or seasonable (*well*). “But an *opportunity* came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet” [Mk 6.21]. The “eu” nature of this kairos in vs. 15 is intended to balance one’s *need* or boetheia.

NB: everything above this point has been corrected and added to the Home Page.

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Chapter Five

Vs. 1: For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Here an archiereus or *high priest* is situated within the context of election; use of the passive “was chosen” suggests that God is the agent but may include human involvement by way of participation.

This verse is interesting to observe from the standpoint of prepositions. For example, compare the different uses of two: “*from among* (ex) men” and “*on behalf of* (huper) men.” The former involves separation, of moving from the human to the divine realm, whereas as the latter sets the chosen high priests at the service of their fellows. Note that huper suggests being-over as well as beyond, so it implies distance as well as readiness to be at one’s disposal. In the verse at hand, the verb kathistemi (*to act*) is used along with huper. “...and *appoint* elders in every town as I directed you” [Tit 1.5].

In relation to God (ta pros ton theon): literally, “the things to God.” Here the preposition pros with its sense of in-the-direction-towards-which takes aim, as it were, at God.

To sum up the prepositions in this verse, we have a transition outlined as follows: *from* (ex)→*on behalf of* (huper)→*in-the-direction-towards-which* (pros). Another way of putting this: start with an origin, move on to service of this origin while at the same time keep in motion while never full attaining the goal or opposite end of this origin (i.e., God).

The verb *to offer* (prosphero, literally, “bring *towards*, pros) takes up and subsumes, as it were, the just noted preposition pros and directs human gifts and sacrifices; the latter are connected with sins in the sense of atonement and is governed by the preposition huper.

Vs. 2: He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

The theme of Jesus Christ as high priest is developed throughout Chapter Five with the accent on his humanity. Note the contrast: *deal gently* (metriopatheo), composed of the noun pathos (*suffering*; cf. 2.10: “the pioneer of their salvation perfect through *suffering*”) and the adjective metrios (*moderate*, in the sense of a measure). Metriopatheo, the only New Testament use of this word, is used in Aristotelian philosophy to describe the moderation of one’s feeling and passions to avoid extremes.

For its object, metriopatheo has those persons who are *ignorant* (agnoeo) and *wayward* (planao). The former applies to anyone without knowledge which can apply to not knowing that divine rest spoken of earlier with respect to Ps 95. The latter can pertain to persons who have knowledge of the divine rest, for example, yet stray from it. The notion of wandering is more suitable because it involves not taking a direct path into divine rest. For the use of planaio, cf. 3.10 which is in this same context.

Beset (perikeimai): literally, “to be surrounded by (peri).” For another use of this verb, cf. 12.1: “Therefore since we are *surrounded* by so great a cloud of witnesses.” The object of perikeimai is *weakness* or asthenia as in 4.15: “We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our *weaknesses*.” For another use of this term, cf. Rom 6.19: “I am speaking in human terms because of your natural *limitations*,” i.e., here asthenia is used with sarx (*flesh*).

Vs. 3: Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

“Because of this:” referring back to the previous two verses, the chief elements being Christ as “high priest...to offer gifts and sacrifices, “deal gently” and “beset with weakness.”

Bound (opheilo): not by reason of his divinity but by reason of being a high priest which applies to both Christ’s earthly life as well as that in heaven after his Ascension. Opheilo has a two-fold obligation with respect to *offering of sacrifices* (prosphero) as in vs. 1, “to *offer* gifts and sacrifices for sins.” First, it is “*for* (peri) his own sins” and secondly, “*for* (peri) the people’s.”

This verse is reminiscent of Lev 9.7: “Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them as the Lord has commanded.” The Hebrew kaphar (*make atonement*) literally means “to cover.”

The words “for his own sins” are traditionally interpreted as not pertaining to Jesus Christ himself but in his having assumed the role of redeemer. Christ’s full identity with the human condition can be inferred by the preposition peri used twice.

Vs. 4: And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God just as Aaron was.

Honor (time): a word noted earlier in different contexts and here with regard to Christ being a high priest. Implied in the verse’s first part is usurpation in contrast being *called* or kaleo. For another use of this verb but one which parallels this divine summons, cf. Rom 8.30: “And those whom he predestined he also *called*; and those whom he *called* he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Earlier the author of Hebrews compared Moses with Jesus Christ; he shifts attention to Aaron who, unlike his contemporary, was a high priest. “Then bring (words addressed to Moses) near to you Aaron your brother and his sons with him from among the people of Israel to serve me as priests” [Ex 28.1]. Note the verb *bring near* (qarav) which can also refer to the offering of sacrifices and gifts to God.

Vs.5: So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you;”

This verse continues the theme of divine election; “*exalt* himself” (doxazo; doxa, *glory*) or attribute God’s *glory*—the Hebrew being kavod which essentially means “heaviness”—to himself. Kavod is thus something essential or proper to God. The verse at hand is as though divine “heaviness” moved in its opposite natural direction downward to one which is upwards.

“Appointed:” lacking in the Greek text which simply has God addressing Christ in the words of Ps 2.7; cf. 1.5 which uses this same Psalm verse in order to contrast Jesus Christ with the inferior role of angels. The notion of “messenger-ness” discussed there and in subsequent verses are common to both; Christ as high priest distinguishes them even further.

Vs. 6: as he says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

A continuation of vs. 5, here citing Ps 110.4 which the author of Hebrews wishes to closely parallel Ps 2.7’s election of Christ as son. In the former psalm, the king is ordained by the Lord to be a *priest* (kohen) which

finds its source in a divine oath. Melchizedek (literally, “King of Righteousness”) was the priest of Salem who brought bread and wine to Abraham after his victory over kings from the east (cf. Gen 14.18). Cf. Heb 6.20 & 7.17, the latter again quoting Ps 110.4.

Vs. 7: In the days of his flesh 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.

This verse intimates Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mk 14.32-42): “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”

“In the days of his *flesh*” (*sarx*): another way of speaking about the time between Jesus’ birth and temporal life, possibly including the time of his glorified condition between his resurrection and ascension into heaven. “Since therefore Christ suffered in the *flesh*” [1 Pt 4.1].

This biblical way of expressing chronos-logical time (as opposed to *kairos*) is used in two ways: *prayers* (*deesis*) and *supplications* (*hiketerios*, adjective) which may be attributed to his role as high priest. The former more specifically pertains to a need. “Worshiping with fasting and *prayer* night and day” [Lk 2.37]. The latter is the only New Testament use of this term.

“*Loud* (*ischuros*, literally, ‘strong’) *cries*” (*krauge*) and *tears* (*dakru*) which show the humanity of Jesus Christ as high priest. They are in conjunction with his *offering up* (*prosphero*, verb) of the above mentioned prayers and supplications, literally, his “bearing-*towards*” (*pros*) God.

Prosphero takes a specific direction (*pros*): God who had the power to *save* (*sozo*) Christ-as-high priest from death.

Godly fear (*eulabeia*): literally, “good grasping” which alternately translates as caution, veneration or piety. For another use of this verb, cf. 11.7: “(Noah) being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, *took heed* and constructed an ark.”

Heard (*eisakouo*): literally, “into-hear” used with the preposition *apo* (*for*) and “godly fear.” “For they think they will be *heard* for their many words” [Mt 6.7]. Note the passive use of *eisakouo* which seems more suggestive of the mysterious nature of God.

Vs. 8: Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;

Son (*huios*): note the lack of a definite article; Christ’s sonship is intimately bound up with his role of high priest. The author of Hebrews seems to presuppose the revelation of Jesus Christ as Son of God which leads him in the same verse to say that Christ had to undergo a *learning* (*manthano*, verb) process. Being Son (of God) does not require this; being son of man does.

The object of *manthano*: *obedience* or *hupakoe*, literally, a “listening *under*” (*hupo*). For an adjective derived from this noun, cf. Phil 2.8: “And being found in human form he humbled himself and became *obedient* unto death.”

Suffering (*pascho*) is similarly the object of learning, better, learning as a means to obedience. Cf. 2.18 where *pascho* is united with temptation: “For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” With this verse in mind, the purpose of suffering is to offer help, that is, through the office of high priest.

Vs. 9: and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

A verse midway, so to speak, between the sentence begun in the previous verse and carried over into the next one where it is concluded in vs. 12.

There seems to be a correspondence between “perfect” and “source of eternal salvation.” Teleio means *being made perfect*; use of the verb as opposed to an adjective suggests that Christ is actively engaged in the process of having an (implied) arche or *beginning* (in the Father) and is moving towards a *goal* or telos which similarly is the Father; cf. 10.10 & 31.4. Christ achieves this telos through suffering and obedience noted in vs. 8; it is reminiscent of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (53), especially vs. 10-12, which conclude on a joyous “telos note.”

Source (aitios): an adjective of the noun aitia, hinting that Christ is residing (or actually is) the cause itself. For another use of this adjective showing the role of a person-as-cause, cf. Acts 19.40: “For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, there being no *cause* that we can give to justify this commotion.”

The object of aitios: “*eternal* (aionios) salvation,” i.e., a salvation which lacks beginning or end. Compare with 9.14: “thus securing an *eternal* redemption.” Since Christ had become telios (using the adjective), those persons who *obey* (hupakouo: cf. hupakoe, vs. 8) him stand-out from the temporal realm, that is, they participate in the arche-telos or Alpha-Omega nature of Christ. Hupakouo is in the present tense intimating that obedience transcends the linear nature of time.

Vs. 10: being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was last noted in vs. 6, quoting from Psalm 110.4. The verb prosagoreuo means *to designate*. It conveys the notion of addressing or saluting someone in public; this is the only use in the New Testament. Note that the verb is the root for the noun agora (*market place*) or public forum for speaking; it is prefixed by the now familiar pros, signifying in-the-direction-towards-which.

As in vs. 6, *order* (taxis) is used with respect to Melchizedek; it means a right order or arrangement as in Col 2.5: “rejoicing to see your good *order* and the firmness of your faith in Christ.”

Vs. 11: About this we have much to say which is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing.

Dull (nothros): connotes being languid; cf. 6.12 (“so that you may not be *sluggish*”). For another example, cf. Sir 4.29: “Do not be reckless in your speech or *sluggish* and remiss in your deeds.” The author of Hebrews does not elaborate on this dullness as applied to hearing, but it is presumably in conjunction with his discourse on Jesus Christ as high priest, that is, his divinity and humanity.

Logos is used for *to say*; note the use of the verb legein (*to say*). In the context of vs. 11, logos may allude to the author’s wish for his audience to grasp Christ as the Logos of God. Two adjectives are used to modify logos: *much* (polus) and *hard* (dusermeneutos); the latter has as its root the verb ermeneuo (*to interpret*). “And they said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which *means* Teacher), ‘where are you staying’” [Jn 1.38]?

Vs. 12: For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God’s word. You need milk, not solid food;

Here the author of Hebrews better describes those whom he addressed in the previous verse, *teachers* (disaskalos) or persons authorized to instruct Christians or most likely catechumens in the faith. “Let not many of you become *teachers*, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness” [Jms 3.1].

By this time (dia ton chronon): reference is to chronological time or that period during which those so chosen should have become qualified teachers.

First principles (ta stoicheia; stoicheion, singular): a word with Stoic roots (basically with respect to speech) applied to the elements comprising the created universe which in the context of the New Testament stand opposed to Christ: “See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit according to

human tradition, according to the *elemental spirits* of the universe and not according to Christ" [Col 2.8].

In Hebrews, *stoicheion* has a positively sense and is used in union with *arche* (*first*) or as the beginning of a sequence; cf. 1.10 and other places above. One could almost say regarding Jn 1.1 ("In the beginning was the Logos...") that *ta stoicheia* comprise the "other letters" of Christ-as-alphabet starting with Alpha and terminating at Omega.

Ta logia: used in the RSV translation as "word" which better implies "oracle." "And he (Moses) received living *oracles* to give to us" [Acts 7.38].

In place of the "solid food" of the divine "oracle" for his audience the author of Hebrews recommends milk: "I fed you with *milk*, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready" [1 Cor 3.2].

Vs. 13: for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child.

Lives on (*meteicho*): as in 2.14, 31 & 14, or as "having with" which here signifies complete dependence almost in the sense of being addicted (to milk).

Unskilled (*apeiros*): the only New Testament use, here regarding the "logos of *righteousness*" (*dikaiousune*). Since *ta stoicheia* have been noted above as originally applied to the alphabet, such a logos suggests not being able to speak or to speak coherently; it is almost as though this incoherence did not follow the proper sequence of the alphabet. 1 Pt 2.2 also speaks of milk as nourishment but in a more positive way ("*spiritual* milk"); the adjective is *logikios*.

Child (*nepios*): in the sense of an infant and as applied to an adult, someone who is unskilled or untaught. "But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men but as men of the flesh, as *babes* in Christ" [1 Cor 3.1]. Note the contrast between *pneumatikos* and *sarkinos*, *spiritual* and *flesh(ly)*.

Vs. 14: But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Solid (*stereos*) food:" this adjective can apply to anything stiff or harsh. "Resist him (the devil), *firm* in your faith" [1 Pt 5.9].

Mature (*teleios*): an adjective related to the noun *telos* (*end*), in the sense of completion or fulfillment of *arche* as noted above. For a fuller sense of this adjective, cf. Mt 5.48: "You, therefore, must be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is *perfect*." Such perfection requires awareness of the equality of *arche* and *telos* while living "in between" them.

Faculties (*aistheterion*): related to the noun *aisthesis* (*cognition, discernment*) and suggesting our five senses. The LXX of Jer 4.19 uses this term: "Oh, the *walls* (i.e., faculties) of my heart!" Such means of perception which suggest the whole person are *trained* (*gumnazo*), that is, engaged in a process similar to athletic training for a contest. "*Train* yourself in godliness" [1 Tm 4.7].

Such training is equated with *practice* or *hexis*; an alternate term to this practice is *askesis* and is used in monastic literature (cf. **Notes to The Life of Saint Anthony**, elsewhere on this Home Page). The meaning in Hebrews seems to pertain more to one's inner disposition as opposed to external behavior. "Do not look on his appearance on the height of his *stature*, because I have rejected him" 1 Sam 16.7, LXX].

Distinguish (*diakrisis*): "to another the ability to *distinguish* between spirits" [1 Cor 12.10]. Like St. Paul, the author of Hebrews sees this expertise at the service of a larger community or the Church, that is, with respect to good and evil and making the proper moral choices.

Chapter Six

Vs. 1: Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Therefore (dio): a term which serves to leave behind, as it were, those persons who have been nourished on milk (cf. 5.12-3), and focus upon those who are *mature* (teleiotes, noun). This noun is related to teleios of 5.14 (*mature*). It is almost as though the author of Hebrews were encouraging this select group to advance towards Christ-as-telos; it does not imply leaving behind persons but to include them in the spirit of the Song of Songs: "Draw me after you, let us make haste" [1.4].

That which the mature are exhorted to *leave* (aphiemi) are *elementary doctrines* (ton tes arches) as pertaining to Jesus Christ, that is, the fundamentals of faith. Note that the Greek text lacks "doctrines" and uses a definite pronoun with arche in the genitive case, literally, "the of the first." Thus leaving assumes a deeper meaning, of beginning to move forward from the first letter (alpha), as it were, en route to the alphabet's completion. Again, aphiemi (*to leave*) is positively countered by phero (*to go on* in the sense of carrying). Refer back to 5.12, *first principles* or ta stoicheia which bears a parallel with "elementary doctrines."

Laying (kataballo): literally, "to cast down" and used with "again," possibly alluding to a previously laid structure (foundation). Perhaps the author of Hebrews had in mind the negative sense of kataballo, for example, Rev 12.10: "for the accuser of our brethren has been *thrown down*," and can allude to avoid such a laying such foundation by his audience of mature listeners or those not nourished by milk.

Foundation (themelios): an adjective used as a noun, here in a negative sense. For the positive meaning, cf. Lk 6.48: "he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the *foundation* upon rock." Hebrews' use of themelios parallels this parable in that it is susceptible to the words of vs. 49, "and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

This foundation which the author does not wish to be established consists of *repentance* (metanoia) "from dead works" and "faith toward God." Note the preposition epi for *toward*, literally, "on."

Vs. 2: with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

The author of Hebrews continues to enumerate what he had begun in the previous verse, namely, those practices consisting of a false foundation taken from Judaic practices:

-*ablutions* (baptisma): cf. 9.10; in contrast to Christian baptism as 1 Cor 12.13: "For by one Spirit we were all *baptized* into one body."

-*laying on of hands* (epithesis): an Old Testament example being Num 27.18: "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and *lay* your hand *upon* him."

-*resurrection of the dead* (anastasis): perhaps the author has in mind the Pharisees who held this belief; contrast with the Sadducees who denied it (cf. Mt 22.23).

-*eternal judgment* (krima): possibly misunderstandings about the role of Jesus Christ alluded to in Mt 24.3: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" Note that aion for *age*; compare with eternal in the verse at hand, aionios.

Vs. 3: And this we will do if God permits.

That is, hearkening back to the author's opening statement in vs. 1 about leaving the "elemental doctrines of Christ and going on to maturity."

Permits (epitrepo): the verb suggests a turning which in this context is a moving away from that false foundation of vs. 1 and the Judaic practices noted in vs. 2. The author leaves open the possibility that God may

not allow advancement or “going on to maturity.” However, such divine permission is conditioned by a willingness (“this we will do”).

Vs. 4: For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.

A contrast between the negative aspect of repentance, a term lacking in the Greek text; the original simply has *apax* (*once*), i.e., there is no need for further validity. Thus in contrast to the Judaic practices just enumerated (which perhaps some of Hebrews’ audience still adhere), the author offers three features distinctive of Christ’s message (NB: a fourth is noted in vs. 5):

- 1) *enlightened* (*photizo*): in its “final” manifestation, that is, of divine *doxa/kavod* (*glory*) with respect to the heavenly Jerusalem: “for the Lord God *will be* their *light*, and they shall reign forever and ever” [Rev 22.5].
- 2) *tasted* (*geuomai*): for the opposite sense and perhaps applicable in the New Testament context as opposed to the just enumerated Judaic practices, cf. Lk 14.24: “For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall *taste* my banquet.” The object of taste is “the *heavenly* (*epouranios*) gift” which is not specified but is reminiscent of Eph 1.3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the *heavenly* places.”
- 3) *partakers* (*metochos*): from the verb *metecho*, literally, “to have with,” and as noted several places above. The object here is the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 5: and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,

A continuation of the three spiritual blessings begun in the previous verse:

- 4) *taste* (*geuomai*): as in vs. 4 regarding “heavenly gift;” here the object is four-fold which begins its sequence as follows:
 - a): *goodness* (*kalon*); an important term in Greek and Platonic philosophy which many (Greek) Church Fathers identified as another term for God.
 - b): this goodness belongs to the *word* (*logos*; referring to scripture but implying Christ as Logos).
 - c): the *logos*, in turn, belongs to God. The genitive case is used here, but take into consideration Jn 1.1: “and the Logos was *with* (*pros*, in the direction-towards-which) God.”
 - d): *powers* (*dunamis*): perhaps referring to Christ’s miraculous deeds which had already taken place yet are a *foretaste* (cf. *geuomai* used in the future, if you will as opposed to the past tense in the verse at hand) of the *age* or *aion* to come. “But those who are accounted worthy to attain to that *age* and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage” [Lk 20.25].

Vs. 6: if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.

The conclusion of a lengthy sentence begun in vs. 4. All the benefits just enumerated are in jeopardy of being lost and follows the earlier image of *rest* or *katapausis* with regard to Ps 95 in Chapter Three.

Commit apostasy (*parapipto*): composed of the verb *pipto* (cf. 4.11, “that no one *fall*”) prefixed by the preposition *para* (*besides*) in the sense of having been left behind. This is the only use of this verb in the New Testament. “When a land sins against me by acting faithlessly...and *cut off* from it man and beast” [Ezk 14.13, LXX].

Reference to Jesus Christ as crucified is reminiscent of 1 Cor 2.8: “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have *crucified* the Lord of glory.” The verb used in the verse at hand is *anastaurao*, literally, “to crucify again,” used with the dative of advantage (“on their own account” or “for themselves”).

Contempt (*paradeigmatizo*): in the sense of making a public example. “And her husband Joseph, being a just

man and unwilling to *put her to shame*, resolved to divorce her quietly" [Mt 2.19].

Vs. 7: For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

This verse sets up a contrast between land favorably disposed to divine *blessing* (eulogia: better, words well spoken) and the next verse, a land which brings forth thorns and thistles.

Eulogia is used with the verb *metalambano*, *to receive*. Note the preposition *meta* (*with*) as if to indicate that such a divine benediction remains "with" the person receiving it after the example of rain falling upon the earth.

Both vs. 7 and vs. 8 are reminiscent of the parable in Mt 13.3-9, for example, vs. 8: "Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty."

Useful (euthetos): literally, "well placed." Compare with eu-logia in the same verse. "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is *fit* for the kingdom of God" [Lk 9.62].

Vs. 8: But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

Again, refer to the parable in Mt 13.3-9, especially vs. 7: "Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them." The verse at hand is lifted from Gn 3.17-8: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you."

Two adjectives are used to describe this waste:

- 1) *worthless* (adokimos): literally, "not approved." "But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be *disqualified*" [1 Cor 9.27].
- 2) *cursed* (katara): "For all who rely on works of the law are under a *curse*" [Gal 3.10]. In the verse at hand, note *eggus* (*near*); the author of Hebrews says that such worthless land is not cursed outrightly but close to being so.

End (telos): as noted above on several occasions, "end" in the sense of having achieved a goal with *arche* or *beginning* implied. Such a telos is self-activating, as it were, as coming from within a person. "But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" [Mt 3.12].

Vs. 9: Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation.

The Greek text does not use "speak" but has the verb *peitho*, *to persuade*; it is as though the author is not speaking on his own but has the larger Christian community behind his utterance (i.e., "we").

The author of Hebrews assumes a more favorable attitude towards his listeners and addresses them here as *beloved* (agapetos), the only occasion in his letter. Note that this term is derived from the New Testament *apape*. "This is my *beloved* Son, with whom I am well-pleased" [Mt 3.7].

Better things (ta kreissona): not spelled out here but they harken back to vss. 4-5. Nevertheless, they pertain to *salvation* or *soteria*. "To give knowledge of *salvation* to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" [Lk 1.77].

Vs. 10: For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints as you still do.

Unjust (adikos): a negative human trait applied to God used in an almost rhetorical manner to emphasize *overlooking* (epilanthanomai), that is, the possibility that God will do so. This verb fundamentally means "to forget" as emphasized by the preposition *epi* (*upon*) prefixed to *lanthano* (*to hide*). For another use, cf. 13.2:

“Do not *neglect* to show hospitality to strangers.”

Epilanthanomai has two objects: *work* (ergon) and *love* (agape), both of which have God for their object (“for his sake”); the Greek text reads *into his name* (eis to onoma autou), “name” most likely inferring Jesus Christ. The verb ekdeiknumi (*to show*) represents a type of awareness flowing from being situated “into” (eis) the divine name.

Serving (diakoneo): the present participle indicates constant service, this verb usually connoting Christian ministry. Note the preposition dia (*through*) as if to indicate full penetration which has its source in that ekdeiknumi or showing just noted. For another use, cf. Acts 6.2: “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to *serve tables*,” i.e., to exchange one diakoneo for another.

Vs. 11: And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end,

Desire (epithumeo): alternately, “to covert,” or to manifest a very strong longing signified by the preposition epi (*upon*); from this verb is derived thumos which refers to any strong, violent emotion. “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman *lustfully* has already committed adultery with her in his heart” [Mt 5.28]. Here the noun epithumia is used with the preposition pros signifying in-the-direction-towards-which, as it to stress further an already strong word.

The object of epithumeo is a *showing* (ekdeiknumi, as in vs. 10) which, in turn, has as its object *earnestness* (spoude). The author of Hebrews designates it as “the same,” that is, spoude directed towards God and the saints of vs. 10. This term connotes haste and diligence, for example, 2 Cor 8.16: “Thanks be to God who puts the same *earnest care* for you into the heart of Titus.”

The Greek text lacks “realizing;” it has the preposition pros, another instance of in-the-direction-towards-which or *full assurance* (plerophoria). “...to have all the riches of *assured* understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ” [Col 2.2]. In the verse at hand, plerophoria has as its object *hope* (elpis) which, in turn, is intended to endure “until the *end*” (telos), or the termination of that arche mentioned several times above.

Note that the adjective pleros (*full*) prefixes phoreo (*to bear, carry*); this sense of motion can thus tie in with movement from arche to telos.

Vs. 12: so that you may not be sluggish but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The conclusion of the sentence begun in vs. 11 (hina, *so that*). The author of Hebrews wishes his listeners not to be *sluggish* (nothros) as in 5.11: “since you have become *dull* of hearing.”

The opposite of sluggishness is *imitator* (mimetes) as used in Eph 5.1: “Therefore be *imitators* of God as beloved children.” In the verse at hand, such imitation is not directly focused upon God but upon those persons who best replicate his divine qualities; these qualities, in turn, are manifest as virtues. The means of doing this: *faith* (pistis) and *patience* (makrothumia), that latter comprised of the noun thumos noted in vs. 11 as a strong emotion which has the implication of suffering. “As an example of suffering and *patience*, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” [Jms 5.10].

Makrothumia almost seems as if the innate human thumos were extended...made *large* (makros)...that it may lead to *inheriting* (kleronomeo) *promises* (epaggelia). The latter is used in 4.1 with respect to entering divine rest; here epaggelia is in the plural which can be used as in 7.6 and as explained in the verses following 12: “...and (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abraham) who had the *promises*.”

Vs. 13: For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,

Here the promises of vs. 12 are traced to their source, God (epaggellomai); this term plays an important role later in Hebrews, especially Chapter Eleven, which gives examples of faith. In the verse at hand, the author mentions Abraham, the first person to whom God had made a promise from which all other Old and New Testament persons had received it as transmitted in different ways.

The promise to Abraham needs to be prefaced by the offering his son Isaac (cf. Gen 22.9-14). Note that Abraham names the place of sacrifice “The Lord will provide”...“On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided” [vs. 14]. The Hebrew for “provide” reads “The Lord will *see* (yire’eh).” This verb is in the future, for God had just “provided” for Abraham by sparing Isaac; the future may relate to vs. 17: “I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants.” That is to say, such blessing and multiplication is the result of God seeing future accomplishments already effected in the person of Abraham.

Swear (omnumi): as in 3.18 (“And to whom did he *swear* that they should never enter his rest?”). The verse at hand almost suggests that God was searching for someone greater than himself. Since this did not exist, God swore by himself. These words are lifted from Gen 22.16: “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord.”

Vs. 14: saying, “Surely, I will bless you and multiply you.”

Here is the actual terms of the swearing cited from Gen 22.17. *Bless* or eulogeo, literally, “to speak well,” as though giving a favorable report. *Multiply* (plethuno) as in 2 Cor 9.10: “and *increase* the harvest of your righteousness.”

The Genesis text enhances this divine blessing and multiplication, comparing Abraham’s descendants to sand on the seashore and stars of heaven. Note that vs. 18 has the earth’s nations blessing themselves in these same descendants.

Vs. 15: And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise.

The Greek text simply has “he” in place of “Abraham.”

Patiently endured (makrothumeo): cf. vs. 12 with the noun derived from this verb, “patience.”

Promise (epaggelia): as in vs. 12 where it was in the plural. Abraham *obtained* (entugchano) this promise. For another use of this word, cf. Rom 8.27: “because the Spirit *intercedes* for the saints according to the will of God.” Keeping in mind God’s command to Abraham to consider the stars and sand, symbolic for an uncountable throng, he did not obtain the promise but seminally which Hebrews later amplifies by speaking about other prophets and holy persons.

Vs. 16: Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

The swearing *by a greater* (kata tou meizonos) or better, “according” intimates a kind of pattern of which they may or may not be fully aware. Such “greater” in the verse at hand most likely refers to a judge or arbitrator.

Dispute (antilogia): something which reads like “against word” or against anything logical or reasonable. For a stronger use of antilogia, cf. 12.3: “Consider him who endured from sinners such *hostility* against himself.”

Here an *oath* (horkos; from omnumi as in vs. 13) is presented as *final* or peras which has the sense of a boundary or frontier. “For she came from the *ends* of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon” [Lk 11.31]. Such finality applied to an oath is fulfilled in its *confirmation* (bebaiosis). “For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and *confirmation* of the gospel” [Phl 1.7].

Vs. 17: So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath,

The verb *boulomai* is used for *desire* which signifies more a willing or purpose. It relates to the verb *epideiknumi* (*to show*); note the preposition *epi* (*upon*) which intensifies the notion of this showing. “*Show me the money for the tax*” [Mt 22.19].

More convincingly (*perissoteron*): from *perissos*, *exceeding*. As an adverb, it heightens God’s promise belonging to *heirs* or *kleronomos* as in 1.2 which pertains to Jesus Christ, “the *heir* of all things.”

The object of God’s desire/willing is his *purpose* or *boule* which derives from *boulomai*, thus showing the unity between divine intent and its goal. “For David, after he had served the *counsel* of God in his own generation, fell asleep” [Acts 13.36]. Here *boule* assumes a broader context, as extending throughout a person’s entire life span.

God’s *boule* has a *character* (*epaggelia*) first noted in 4.1 as “promise.” “So that those who are called may receive the *promised* eternal inheritance” [9.15]. Such *epaggelia* is *unchangeable* or *ametatheton*; it is used as a noun which in the Greek reads, “the unchangeability of the character of his purpose.” As noted below, *ametatheton* is used as an adjective in vs. 18, *unchangeable*. This term means a not-placed-afterness, if you will.

Interposed (*mesiteuo*): in the sense of intervening, of acting as a mediator (here regarding an *oath* (*horkos*, cf. vs. 16), which is spelled out in the verse which follows and continues the sentence begun in vs. 17.

Vs. 18: so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us.

“Two *unchangeable* things” (*ametathetos*): cf. vs. 17 which refers to the oath and promise reminiscent of Num 23.19: “God is not man that he should lie or a son of man that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”

Prove false (*pseudomai*): the opposite of *bebaiosis* (*confirmation*, vs. 16).

Flee for refuge (*katapheugo*): note the preposition *kata* (*according to*) prefixed to the verb as if to intensify its original sense; *kata* may be used here as refuge “according” to a given divine order, not simply liberation from conflict. “They learned of it and *fled* to Lystra and Derbe” [Acts 14.6]. Draw a parallel between such refuge and that divine rest of Ps 95 discussed in Chapter Four.

Encouragement (*paraklesis*): alternately as “summons,” “exhortation.” Note its close relationship to *parakletos*, a term used to describe the Holy Spirit as *helper*. “*Begging* (literally, ‘with much begging’) us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints” [2 Cor 8.4].

The object of divine encouragement: to *seize* (*krateo*) hope. Note hope’s location as “*before us*” or *pro-keimai*, a verb implying that which is destined. “And let us run with perseverance the race that is *set before us*” [12.1]. Both verses do not say that the future promise has been grasped already, only the opportunity to do so is offered.

Vs. 19: We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain,

“This” refers to the hope of vs. 18 which the author of Hebrews posits as an *anchor* (*agkura*) and which was a common way of describing hope at the time. “And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let out four *anchors* from the stern and prayed for day to come” [Acts 27.29]. An anchor is intended to lay at the bottom of the ocean and is invisible, an image which can be applied to the invisibility of the *soul* or *psuche* (cf. 4.12). In the verse at hand, the anchor is both *sure* (*asphalos*) and *steadfast* (*bebaios*); the former literally means “safe from falling and the latter is derived from *bebaiosis* of vs. 16, *confirmation*.”

Keeping the image of an anchor as something invisible, vs. 19 says that it-as-hope (not mentioned in the Greek text) *enters into* (eiserchomai...eis) that *inner shrine* or esoteros. This is an adjective meaning “inner,” the English “shrine” not in the Greek text. It does, of course, apply to Holy of Holies. “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, lest he die” [Lev 16.2]. This *veil* (paroketh in Hebrew) comes from an unused verbal root, “to break down.” With this in mind, the veil is almost inviting a tear or rending. “...and the *curtain* of the temple was torn in two” [Lk 23.45]. Here the word is katapetasma as in 10.20 (cf. Ex 26.37).

Vs. 20: where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

This “where” Jesus had *gone* (eiserchomai) parallels that anchor of the last verse, in fact, is the fulfilment of it (i.e., hope).

Forerunner (prodromos): compare with *pioneer* (archegos) of 2.10; prodromos is the only New Testament use and connotes a spy or scout not unlike Josh 2.1: “And Joshua the son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies.”

Vs. 20 concludes with mention of Melchizedek, the priest of Salem who met Abraham (cf. Gen 14.18) and was first mentioned in 5.6. Keeping in mind the importance of Abraham, a parallel may be drawn between him and Jesus Christ as fulfilment of God’s promise. Abraham too was a prodromos in the sense of having left his native land for an unknown destination.

Note that Jesus Christ as a *high priest* (archiereus) is identical with him as a forerunner; he follows that divine *order* or taxis noted in 5.10.

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Chapter Seven

Vs. 1: For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him;

The next few verses more or less recapitulate the Genesis account of Melchizedek and Abraham.

Traditionally, Salem has been understood as *peace*, shalom (cf vs. 3). Compare Melchizedek as a *priest* (hiereus) with Jesus Christ as *high priest* (archiereus) in 2.17 and onwards. I.e., the word prefaced to hiereus is arche, *high* or first in the sense of a beginning.

The author of Hebrews situates Melchizedek in the context of Abraham’s return from battle, the cause of which was the kings having taken captive Abraham’s kinsmen (cf. Gen 14.14). Note that at this time he was called Abram and did not receive the name Abraham until 17.5, “father of a multitude.”

Vs. 2: and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

Apportioned (merizo): literally, “to divide.” Abraham re-possessed his belongs which the kings had taken as booty: “Then he brought back all the goods and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his goods and the women and the people” [Gen 14.16].

The author of Hebrews follows the traditional interpretation of Melchizedek’s name, “king of *righteousness*” (dikaiousune for the Hebrew tsedaqah which is more inclusive, that is, it embraces the notion of welfare and piety).

Note that Melchizedek is *first* (protos); refer to vs. 1 where he is a hierous and Christ is an (arch)iereus. Protos here is used in the sense of the beginning of a sequence whereas arche is first as a principle which initiates a sequence of events.

Translation (ermeneuo, verb): more specifically, this verb means “to interpret” which is a looser form than translation, and more insight can be read into it. “And they said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which *means* Teacher)” [Jn 1.38]. The translation is eirene, the Greek for shalom. “Peace I leave with you; my *peace* I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” [Jn 14.27].

Vs. 3: He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

Apator, ametor, agenealogetos: an interesting way to say *without* or a- (father, mother, genealogy). The author of Hebrews is simply following the lack of ancestral records with regard to Melchizedek; he is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, let alone the Old. This is significant because ancestry is paramount and pertains to Jesus’ earthly lineage as testified by the Gospel of Matthew. By reason of his lack of genealogy, Melchizedek falls into the same category of his predecessors Enoch (“and he was not, for God took him,” Gen 5.24) and Elijah who ascended into heaven (cf. 2 Kg 2.11).

Note the use of arche and telos (*beginning* and *end*) as used in vs. 3 which refer to the temporal extension of human life (“days” and “life”). Such an a-temporal existence is a kind of *resembling* or aphamoiatio, the only New Testament use of this verb; it implies making a facsimile or to cause a model to pass *off* (apo) into an image or shape like it.

The title “Son of God” is used here instead of the proper name Jesus Christ because it implies a-temporal existence transcending arche or telos.

There is an interplay of sorts between *remain* (meno) and *forever* (eis to dienekes) which regards to the Son of God’s priesthood. The latter may literally be taken as, “into that which has no interruption.” Note the connection between remaining and the preposition eis (*into*) in the sense of being-fully-present-within. Also, another eis is used with *forever*, eis ton aiona. 12.1, 12 & 14 give examples of this continuousness.

Vs. 4: See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils.

See (theoreo): in the sense of having theoria, a contemplative insight into the matter at hand, a kind of beholding, which deals with Melchizedek as “resembling the Son of God” (vs. 3). “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who *sees* the Son and believes in him should have eternal life” [Jn 6.40].

Spoils (akrothinion), the only New Testament use of this word which can apply to the first-fruits of anything: it is comprised of akros, an *extreme* point, and this or *heap*, better, the very top of a heap. Compare with aparche (*first-fruits*): “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first-fruits* of those who have fallen asleep” [1 Cor 15.20]. Thus Abraham’s tithe of spoils—really his own possessions as noted earlier—may be taken as a type or foreshadowing of Christ as aparche.

Note that the author of Hebrews has been referring to “Abraham” whereas the Old Testament has him as “Abram;” he does not yet receive the name “Abraham” until Gen 17.5 as noted in vs. 1.

The Greek text has dekate or *tenth* instead of “tithe.”

Vs. 5: And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a command in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham.

This verse refers to Num 18.21: “To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance in return for their service which they serve, their service in the tent of meeting.” The Hebrew for *tithe* is mahser which in

Hebrews reads as apodekatoō, another example being Lk 11:42: “But woe to you Pharisees! For you *tithe* mint and rue and every herb and neglect justice and the love of God.” The citation from Numbers situates the proper context, “tent of meeting.”

Priestly office (hierateia), the only other New Testament reference being Lk 1:9: “according to the custom of the *priesthood*, it fell to him (Zechariah) by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.” Like the Levites, Zechariah enters the Lord’s temple which has succeeded the tent of meeting.

“*In the law*,” the Greek articulates it better by using the preposition kata or *according to* which serves to demonstrate the harmony between Levites, Torah, people and God.

The Letter to the Hebrews identifies the Levites with “their *brethren*” (adelphos) despite the fact that they had no share in Israel’s heritage: “For the tithe of the people of Israel which they present as an offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel” [Num 18:24]. Despite this lack of inheritance which bears a certain parallel with Melchizedek’s lack of genealogy, the author of Hebrews attributes to Abraham their (and his readers) common ancestry.

Vs. 6: But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

Another reference to Melchizedek and his lack of genealogy (me genealogoumenos); compare with genealogetos of vs. 3 which parallels the Levites’ not participating in the inheritance of Israel.

Bless (eulogeo): literally, “to speak *well*” (eu). “And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke *blessing* God” [Lk 1:64].

Vs. 7: It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

Dispute (antilogia): also can mean “contradiction” as signified by the preposition anti. For another meaning, cf. Jude 11: “...for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error and perish in Korah’s *rebellion*.”

The author of Hebrews sets up a contrast between *inferior* (to elatton) and *superior* (hupo tou kreittontos) or between Abraham and Melchizedek. Note that Abraham did have a genealogy whereas Melchizedek did not. For an example of an inferior (the woman) addressing a superior (Jesus Christ), cf. Lk 11:27: “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked.”

This verse contains another uses of eulogeo, of “speaking well,” as in vs. 6.

Vs. 8: Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives.

Reference (*here* or hode, in the sense of “thus”) is to the Levitical priests; note the passive (“are received”), almost as though an agent larger than both mortal men and the Levites is involved, namely, God.

Mortal men (apothnesko): the present participle is used showing that human beings who offer the *tithes* (dekate or “tenth” part of something) are in a continuous state of passing out of existence.

There (ekei) differs from hode; the former pertains to Melchizedek who *lives* (zao). A contrast of sorts is presented, namely, Melchizedek lacks a genealogy whereas the Levites have one as well as Jesus Christ as noted above. The impersonal “by one” suggests this absence of human ancestry. A similar impersonal note is present by “it is *testified*” (martureo).

Vs. 9: One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham,

Hos epos eipein: literally, “as word to say,” or the equivalent of “If I may be allowed the expression.”

The author of Hebrews focuses upon Levi himself, that is, a person who is first mentioned in Gen 29.34; note that Levi is son of Leah, one of the wives of Jacob, the other being Rachel who was barren. Later Moses is mentioned as being the son of a “man from the house of Levi” [Ex 6.1] and implies that Moses was a Levite (i.e., priest) of sorts.

Compare the active receiving of tithes here with the passive mode of the previous verse. The situation in vs. 9 is inverted, namely, Levi, the receiver of tithes, gives them through an intermediary or Abraham.

Vs. 10: for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

Levi was Leah’s son as noted above (cf. Gen 29.34) and had Abraham as his father.

“In the *loins*” (osphus): i.e., location of the generative power. “Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his *descendants* upon the throne” [Acts 2.30]. Compare with a similar notion in Lk 1.41: “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb.”

The verse at hand juxtaposes the lack of genealogy of Melchizedek with the one of Levi, yet both take on new direction in the person of Abraham. Note the verb *to meet* or sunantao as in Acts 10.25: “When Peter entered, Cornelius *met* him.” In the verse at hand, the preposition sun (*with*) suggests this juxtaposition of temporal/a-temporal coming together.

Vs. 11: Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than the one named after the order of Aaron?

Perfection (teleiosis): a term closely related to telos as noted in vs. 3 which pertains to Melchizedek (“and has neither beginning of days nor *end* of life”). As pointed out there and elsewhere, telos is intimately bound up with arche, *beginning*; here the term has a more technical sense, as pertaining to the requirements and obligations of the clerical state. “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a *fulfilment* of what was spoken to her from the Lord” [Lk 1.45].

In the verse at hand such perfection is presented as not attainable (through the Levitical *priesthood* (hierosune)); compare with hierateia in vs. 5, *priestly office*.

The **RSV** puts in parentheses the author of Hebrew’s intent to contrast the dispensations or priesthood in both the Old and New Testaments.

Received the law (nomotheteomai): consists of nomos (*law*) and tithemi (*to place*); nomos is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew Torah. Note too that Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai who transmitted it to the Israelites (cf. Ex 20-31) as well as particulars about the priestly office entrusted to Aaron detailed in Ex 28-9.

The author of Hebrews rhetorically asks about the need for “another priest” to *arise* (anaistemi) in the sense of emerging from the *order* or taxis of Melchizedek (cf. 5.10). Such “arising” is in accord with Melchizedek’s timeless character.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is inferred as successor to that of Melchizedek, i.e., both have in common their apartness from the spacial-temporal realm (“without father or mother or genealogy,” vs. 3, despite the record of Christ’s genealogy). On the other hand, Aaron is a historical figure whose priesthood is described in Ex 28-9. Note that it is Moses who consecrates Aaron and his sons. Ex 29.46 concludes with the familiar reminder, “And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I

might dwell among them.”

Vs. 12: For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

This verse centers around the notion of *change* or metathesis in the sense of a transfer; the verb *metatithemi* is used in the first instance and the noun in the second. Cf. 12.27 for another use of the noun: “This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the *removal* of what is shaken.” Since vs. 12 deals with the shift from the Levitical priesthood to Christ’s, perhaps the notion of “removal” can be inferred. Keeping in mind the genealogy-less nature of Melchizedek, one feature of Christ’s priesthood was his participation in human genealogy while at the same time remaining eternal.

The Levitical priesthood is changed/removed along with the Torah (*nomos*). This is reminiscent of 1 Cor 13.9-10: “For our knowledge is *imperfect* and our prophecy is *imperfect* (*ek merous*, ‘from part’); but when the *perfect* (to *teleion*) comes, the *imperfect* will pass away.” I.e., a contrast of “part-ness” with *telios* (*telos*).

Vs. 13: For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar.

Jesus Christ did not share in any priesthood, neither that of Aaron, Zadok or Levi. The “other *tribe*” (*phule*) is not specified from among the traditional twelve tribes of Israel whose father was Jacob. However, by reason of his Jewish heritage, Jesus Christ traced his genealogy (again, unlike Melchizedek) from King David who was “the son of Abraham” [Lk 1.1]. Also, cf. Rom 1.3: “The gospel concerning his Son who was descended from David according to the flesh.” Note the preposition *kata* (*according to*) which implies following a specific *order* (*taxis*) first noted in 5.10.

This notion of “another tribe” bears a certain affinity with Nathaniel’s remarks about Christ: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth” [Jn 1.46]? No one who came from Nazareth has ever served at the altar.

Belong (*metecho*): literally, “to have *with*” (*meta*): “He himself likewise *partook* of the same nature” [2.14].

Altar (*thusiasterion*): In the context of priesthood—both that of Melchizedek and Aaron—refer to detailed descriptions regarding this place of sacrifice in Ex 29; the altar was made of acacia wood (cf. Ex 27.1). *Thusiasterion* is used in 13.10: “We have an *altar* from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” For a transformation notion of altar, cf. Rev 6.9: “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the *altar* the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”

Serve (*prosecho*): more specifically, “to give attention to,” a fact borne out by the preposition *pros*, in-the-direction-*towards*-which. Cf. 2.1: “Therefore we must *pay* the closer *attention* to what we have heard.” Compare the verbal root echo (*to have*) used with the just noted *metecho*. I.e., in one verse we have a “with” and a “towards.”

Vs. 14: For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

Evident (*prodelos*): the preposition *pro* (*before*) prefixed to the common adjective *delos* (*clear* in the sense of conspicuous) which heightens the sense of something obvious. This is true for the author of Hebrews (compare with “more evident” of vs. 15) who wishes to impart his understanding of Jesus Christ handed down by the church.

With regards to Christ’s lineage from the tribe of Judah: the Greek *anatello* for *descended* more specifically means “to spring up,” “to arise.” Emphasis is upon an *upward* (*ana*) motion, as it were, suggests movement from *arche* to *telos*; here it applies to Jesus Christ having perfected the election of Israel and her tribes, one of which is Judah. “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel” [Mt 2.6, quoting Mic 5.2].

Despite the royal calling of Judah, Moses is silent about priests associated with it. Nevertheless, cf. Rev 5:5: "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

Vs. 15: This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,

A transition from *prodelos* (*evident*) to *perissoteron eti katadelon* (*even more evident*). *Perissoteron*: note the preposition *peri* (*around*), as though such evidence "surrounded" what the author of Hebrews is discussing. It is used in conjunction with the adjective *katadelos* (the only New Testament use), again, *delos* prefixed (as in vs. 14 with *pro*) by the preposition *kata* (*according to*). We thus have a clarity along with a specified order or "according to" such an order which is the subject of discussion.

Relate the use of *kata*(*delos*) with the second *kata*: "*according to* the likeness of Melchizedek." It is as though both *kata*'s were pointing to the new priesthood of Jesus Christ as fulfillment of the old.

Likeness (*homoites*): that is, following the second *kata* just discussed or with respect to the "order" of Melchizedek. Cf. 4:15: "in every *respect*." The verb *anistemi* (*to arise*) is used with *homoites*, as though Jesus Christ as priest "rises" into this likeness, an ongoing process. Compare *anistemi* with *anatello* (*to descend*) used in the previous verse.

Vs. 16: who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life.

"Has become" may be aligned with that *anistemi* or *rising* of vs. 15.

This verse contrasts two uses of the preposition *kata*:

- 1) *legal requirement* (*nomon entoles*): referring to what (the Jewish priesthood) in the author's time had become encrusted as legal formalism and had lost sight of Moses' original vision on Mount Sinai where he received guidelines for this sacred office. Note the emphasis on *bodily descent* or *sarkines*, an adjective which in the New Testament has a negative connotation in contrast to the spirit. "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am *carnal*" [Rom 7.14].
- 2) "*indestructible life*" (*akatalutos*): literally, "*not* (a) *according* (note another *kata*) *loose* (*luo*). Here *kata* is used with *dunamis* (*power*) which governs, as it were, a life free from all vicissitudes. "Think not that I have come to *abolish* the law and the prophets" [Mt 5.17].

Vs. 17: For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

The impersonal *witnessed* (*martureomai*) intimates something larger than human and angelic testimony. "Now I affirm and *testify* in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do" [Eph 4.17]. In the verse at hand, the Greek lacks "of him." Again, keep in mind the importance of *kata* (*according to*) that taxis or *order* founded upon Melchizedek's priesthood.

Vs. 18: On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness

An incomplete verse which has two uses of *gar* (*on the one hand*), here and in vs. 19 (*on the other hand*) which sets up a contrast as parallel to Christ's distinction from the role of angels discussed at the beginning of Hebrews.

"*Former commandment*" (*proagouses*): from the verb *proago*, *to go before*, *to proceed* as though this commandment were a forerunner or herald. It is *set aside* or *athetesis*, a legal term (noun) applied to cancellation of an obligation. *Athetesis* occurs only one other time, 9.26: "to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Weakness (asthenes) and *uselessness* (anopheles); the former can still mean that the law has power, albeit diminished; the latter (only use of the term in the New Testament) refers to something utterly ineffectual. Again, keep in mind the contrast this verse has with the “strong” and “effective” character of Moses on Mount Sinai where he received the Torah. Vs. 18 is reminiscent of Lk 16.16: “The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone enters it violently.”

Vs. 19: (for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.

The RSV uses the parentheses as an observation, if you will, on the two words asthenes and anopheles; they are contrasted with (nothing) *perfect* or the verb teleioo. Cf. 5.9 which employs the same verb: “and *being made perfect*,” that is, being made telos through suffering and implying Christ’s crucifixion. An important aspect of the Torah was its role as an arche or *beginning*. However, in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the arche of Torah assumed a fulfillment or telos which many in Israel did not expect.

The second gar (*on the other hand*) is the second word in the Greek text which serves to *introduce* (epeisagoge, noun is used; only New Testament usage) a “better hope.” Note the two prepositions prefixed to the verb ago: ep(i) and eis, *upon* and *into*. It is meant to convey a thorough incorporation of *hope* (elpis) through the person of Jesus Christ in comparison with (i.e., “better”) that offered by the Mosaic Law.

Epeisagoge is a refinement, as it were, of *drawing near* (eggizo) to God, which is in the dative case. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*” [Mt 3.2].

Vs. 20: And it was not without an oath.

This short verse begins with kath’ hoson which literally means “according to how much” or “inasmuch as.” The term for *oath* here is horkomosia (only occurrence in the New Testament) and is related to horkos first used in 6.16 (“and in all their disputes an *oath* is final for confirmation”). Despite its brevity, vs. 20 serves to introduce further reflections on the priesthood of Jesus Christ in light of Melchizedek’s.

Vs. 21: Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever.”

The Greek text of vs. 20 continues with the words of the RSV to vs. 21, “Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath.”

In place of an oath, the priests in former times (that is, before Jesus Christ) traced their lineage from Aaron who, in turn, was appointed by Moses: “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests” [Ex 29.1]. Again, keep in mind that the transmission of priestly ordination was given on Mount Sinai, that is, “Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was” [Ex 20.21] and there received details concerning the Torah, etc.

The often noted verse from Ps 110.4 first cited in 5.5 has an added term, metamelomai (*to change*), in the sense of “it repents (behooves) one.” “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not *regret* it” [2 Cor 7.8].

Vs. 22: This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant.

That is to say, the context of Ps 110.4 just cited in reference to Melchizedek who lacks genealogy. Here Jesus equals *surety* (egguos), the only New Testament occurrence. “Do not forget all the kindness of your *surety*, for he has given his life for you” [Sir 29.15]. Such surety is in relationship with the “better *covenant*” (diatheke) or in the sense of a dispensation and can refer to both the Old and New Testaments. “For this is my blood of the *covenant* which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” [Mt 26.28].

Vs. 23: The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office;

It seems that having a multitude of Levitical priests was intended as a kind of surety in that the required sacrifices and rites associated with them might continue, especially in the face of a calamity which could destroy them. This verse is intended as a contrast with Christ's abiding priesthood in the next few verses.

Continuing (parameno): literally, "to remain besides" in the sense of being near. The Greek text lacks "office." "I know that I shall remain and *continue* with you call" [Phl 1.25].

Vs. 24: but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

An allusion to Melchizedek's genealogy-less background which finds fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ *permanently* (aparabatos) holds his priesthood; this term has alpha privative attached to the verb parabaino, *to trespass, over-(para)-step*, the only New Testament usage.

Christ's *priesthood* (hierosune; cf. vs. 11 which is Levitical) is eternal. The Greek way of expressing this is through the verb meno (*to remain*; compare diameno, vs. 23) coupled with aion (*eternity*). Aion also means *age* and in the context of the verse at hand, can imply that Christ's priesthood endures for an indefinite succession of eras.

Vs. 25: Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For all time (eis to panteles): literally, "into completeness," pan(teles) being associated with telos discussed earlier. The only other New Testament reference is Lk 13.11: "She was bent over and could not *fully* straighten herself." In the verse at hand, such "all complete-ness" is related to *saving* (sozo), that is, Christ's priesthood which he holds *permanently* (aparabatos), vs. 24.

The saving effected by Christ applied to persons who *draw near* (proserchomai) to him, that is, initiative must come from them. Note the verb prefixed by the preposition pros, in-the-direction-towards-which. Here pros is employed with regard to God and *through* (dia) Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews correlates Christ's "*always living*" (pantote; compare with panteles) and his act of *interceding* (entugchano). This verb applies to meeting or consulting a person, for example, Acts 25.24: "You see this man about whom the whole Jewish people *petitioned* me."

Vs. 26: For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Fitting (prepo): in the sense of being seemly or conspicuous; the word implies something beautiful, lovely, which in this instance is Christ as *high priest* (archieus as in 2.17), who in this office has five qualities:

- 1) *holy* (hosios): connotes piety towards God. "Nor let your *Holy One* see corruption" [Acts 2.27].
- 2) *blameless* (akakos): alpha privative prefixed to the adjective kakos, *evil*; i.e., "not evil." The only other New Testament reference is Rom 16.18: "by their own flattering words they deceive the hearts of the *simple-minded*."
- 3) *unstained* (amiantos): alpha privative; cf. 13.4: "and let the marriage bed be *undefiled*."
- 4) *separated* (chorizo): "What therefore God has joined together, let not man *put asunder*" [Mk 10.9]. In the verse at hand, such separation pertains to sinners.
- 5) *exalted* (hupselos); here it is in the comparative degree, i.e., "higher;" with respect to *heavens* (ouranos).

Vs. 27: He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

This verse deals with the nature of priestly sacrifice and is situated within the context of temporal vs. eternal orders or the Levitical one (kath' hemeran, *daily*) compared with Jesus Christ (ephapax, *once*). The temporal

order is accented by *need* (anagke, also *necessity*) which does not apply to Jesus.

“*Offer* (anaphero) sacrifices:” literally, “to bring *up*” (ana) or to transfer from one realm to the other. “Let us continually *offer up* a sacrifice of praise to God” [13.15]. Anaphero is used a second time with respect to Christ having offered himself.

The author of Hebrews follows the Old Testament order of *high priests* (note: archiereus as opposed to *priest* or *hiereus*) first making sacrifices for their personal sins followed by those on behalf of the congregation. “*Draw near* to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and bring the *offering* of the people and make atonement for them” [Lev 9.7]. Words addressed by Moses to Aaron to whom this office was first entrusted. Note the two Hebrew terms for *draw near* (qarav) and *offering* (qarban), the latter being derived from the former verb. Thus the notion of offering implies an approach, a coming close.

Vs. 28: Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Compare this verse with 5.1-2 which deals with *weakness* (asthenia): “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our *weaknesses*.” Such shortcomings the Law or Torah takes into account by reason of *appointment* (kathistemi, verb). “For every high priest chosen from among men is *appointed* to act on behalf of men in relation to God.”

Word of oath: a combination of logos and horkomosia as in vs. 20: “And it was not without an *oath*.” Although not implicit, logos can suggest Christ as Logos who came *later* (meta) or “after” the Torah or nomos.

The verb kathistemi (*appoint*) is used once with two objects, the first one noted as “men in their weakness” and second, a Son which lacks a definite article.

To make perfect (teleioo): “should *make* the pioneer of their salvation *perfect* through suffering” [2.10]. In the verse at hand, teleioo is a perfect passive participle, that is, action has been completed in the definite past. At the same time this verb is used with eis ton aiona, *forever*, or literally “into the ages.” Aion can apply to a definite period of time or age as well as eternity.

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Chapter Eight

Vs. 1: Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

Point (kephalaion): literally, “pertaining to the *head*” (kephale) or the sum of parts which have attained full sum; as related to money, this term refers to the capital as distinguished from the interest. “I bought this citizenship for a large *sum*” [Acts 22.28]. In the verse at hand, kephalaion sums up what the “we” or author of Hebrews had discussed with regards to the priesthood of the Levitical and Christian orders. Vs. 1 recapitulates, as it were, (epi tois legomenois: *what we are saying* or “upon what had been spoken”) the essence of this distinction and continues to reflect upon the heavenly sanctuary and new covenant.

Christ as archiereus hearkens back to the verse quoted from Ps 110.1 quoted in 1.13; also cf. 3.11, 4.14, 6.20, 7.26, and 9.11; here he is *seated* (aorist active, kathizo) with respect to a *throne* (thronos), reminiscent of Rev 4.2: “At once I was in the Spirit and lo, a *throne* stood in heaven with one seated on the *throne*!”

Note two uses of the preposition en (*in* or *at*) to show a two-fold presence or dwelling-in: “en the right hand” and “en heaven.”

Majesty (megalosune): cf. 1.3: "...he sat down at the right hand of the *Majesty* on high." This verse is preceded by Christ reflecting God's glory and bearing the stamp of his nature which can be taken as the fulness of the two-fold en regarding the verse at hand.

Vs. 2: a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.

A continuation or amplification of Christ as archiereus in vs. 1, that is, as a leitourgos (*minister*). The latter is a more general term applying to anyone in the service of religion. "With all your might love your Maker and do not forsake his *ministers*" [Sir 7.30]. For another sense of this word, cf. 1.7: "Who makes his angels winds and his *servants* flames of fire."

The leitourgos of vs. 2 is situated in the *sanctuary* (ta hagia), literally, "the holy things." The most common Hebrew term is qodesh (i.e., that which is "holy") and applies to that inner sanctum of the larger temple as in Ex 36.1: "...in whom the Lord has put ability and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the *sanctuary*." Note that the construction required special gifts, *ability* (chakmah) and *intelligence* (tevunah); former applies to wisdom and the latter to discerning, the verbal root being byn.

The leitourgos also functions in the "true *tent*" (skene), the larger context or shelter, if you will, of ta hagia. Cf. 9.8: "By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the *sanctuary* is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing." As for skene, it indicates something transitory and provisional which later evolved into the Jerusalem temple: "For a *tent* was prepared, the outer one" [9.2].

The author of Hebrews has God who *set up* the "true tent" (and by implication the sanctuary), the verb being pegnumi which literally means "to fix, fasten" (as tent pegs), this being the only New Testament occurrence. Keep in mind this divine agent with the command of Ex 25.40: "And see that you make them after the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain."

Vs. 3: For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.

Is appointed (kathistemi): as in 7.28, whereas the verse at hand the verb is passive, the agent presumably being God.

The object of such an office: to *offer* (prosphero) as in 5.1: "to offer *gifts* and *sacrifices*," the two words being doron and thusia. For the former: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the *gift* of God" [Eph 2.8]. For the latter: "...he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself" [9.26].

The verb prosphero is used a second time, aorist active, indicating that the implied sacrifice of Christ happened once and has no need of being repeated.

Vs. 4: Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.

Christ not being *on earth* (epi ges) is a kind of refinement on the genealogy-less nature of Melchizedek discussed earlier. Although Christ's death on the cross (that is, epi ges), is essential to his priesthood, its fulfillment does not remain there but "at the right hand of the throne of the *Majesty* in heaven" [vs. 1].

Hiereus is used instead of archiereus, *high priest*. Most likely it is intended to contrast the office of Jesus Christ with those "who *offer* (prosphero) gifts *according* (kata) to the law." Kata signifies the following of a pattern, here the Torah, which may be taken as belonging to the realm of epi ges.

Vs. 5: They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you

on the mountain.”

Serve (latreuo): in the sense of paying homage; originally to “serve for hire.” “Therefore they are before the throne of God and *serve* him day and night within his temple” [Rev 7.15].

This verse is suggestive of Ex 25.40 as noted under vs. 1: “And see that you make them after the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain.” The LXX has tupos for *pattern*; the Hebrew term is tavnyth which implies an image as well as something that has been constructed.

Latreuo has two objects: *copy* (hupodeigma) and *shadow* (skia). The former suggests something to be imitated. For another reference, cf. 9.23: “Thus it was necessary for the *copies* of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites.” The latter is similar to the English term and can apply to shade, usually in the negative sense. “For since the law has but a *shadow* of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities...” Compare both hupodeigma and skia with 1.3: “He reflects the *glory* of God and bears the very *stamp* of his nature where doxa and charakter pertain directly to divine reality.

Both copy and shadow apply to the singular reality of the *heavenly sanctuary* (epouranios; noted earlier as in 3.1, 6.4), the adjective “heavenly” being in the plural; “sanctuary” is lacking in the Greek text. Thus both are epi ges (*on earth*) as noted on vs. 4. “But you have come to Mount Zion, the *heavenly* Jerusalem” [12.22].

Erect (epiteleo): used with mello (*about to*), indicating future action in the future which is more or less proximate. Epiteleo is often associated with the performance of religious services as in 9.6: “*performing* their ritual duties.” It is closely related to the notion of telos (*end*) and has the prefix epi (*upon*) as if to indicate seeing something through to the very end. In the verse at hand, epiteleo is used in reference to Moses’ setting up the *tent* or skene as in vs. 2. “The temple of the *tent* of witness in heaven was opened” [Rev 15.5].

Moses was *instructed* (chrematizomai) by God about the task before him, this being a verb applied to management of public affairs or the giving of a response to those who consult an oracle. Cf. 12.25: “much less shall we escape if we reject him who *warns* from heaven.”

The verse under consideration quotes Ex 25.40 cited just above; Moses is to engage in the act of epiteleo by *seeing* (horaio) which here is *according to* (kata) that tupos/tavnyth or *type*. Note that the Hebrew text has the present tense (“being shown”), whereas the Greek cited in vs. 5 is an aorist passive participle.

Moses received his vision of the heavenly sanctuary on Mount Zion or according to the Greek text, “*in* (en) the mountain.”

Vs. 6: But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises.

But as it is (nun): alternately, “now.” This verse centers around Christ’s *ministry* (leitourgia) which fundamentally means a public office undertaken by a citizen. “Risking his life to complete your *service* to me” [Phil 2.30]. The proper name “Christ” is lacking in the Greek text.

The perfect active indicative of tugchano (*to obtain*) indicates continual possession. This verb is used in 6.15 with the prefix en-: “And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, *obtained* the promise.” The object of tugchano: Christ’s ministry which is “much more *excellent*” (diaphoros), literally, “different” and used in 1.4: “the name he has obtained is more *excellent* than theirs,” that is, the angels.

Diaphoros is used with regards to the “old *covenant*” (diatheke) as noted in 7.22. Thus we have two instances of the preposition dia (*through*) used as a prefix. Jesus Christ is *mediator* (mesites, noun used here). Note the LXX of Dt 5.5: “while I stood *between* the Lord and you at that time to declare to you the word of the Lord.” Here Moses acts as a mesites, the word mesos (*between*) signifying the role of mediator. “And to Jesus, the *mediator* of a new covenant” [12.24].

Enacted (nomotheteo): a verb pertaining to the enactment of laws, *nomos* being part of this word. “For under it the people *received the law*” [7.11]. Instead of the Torah, *nomotheteo* refers to “better *promises*” (*epaggelia*; cf. 4.1). Also, cf. Acts 1.4: “to wait for the *promise* of the Father,” that is, the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost.

The contrast between the old covenant and that of Jesus Christ is foretold in Jer 31.31 & 33: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts.”

Vs. 7: For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

Faultless (*amemptos*): the occasion for the first covenant to contain faults was not due to its divine origins on Mount Sinai but the lack of the fulness of revelation or Jesus Christ as Messiah, i.e., a “second” covenant. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*” [Lk 1.6]. Reference is to Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist. Another way of distinguishing between the first and second covenants in light of John is Mt 11.11: “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Occasion (*topos*): literally, “place.” In the Greek text, *topos* is used with the verb *zeteo* (*to seek*), that is, “no place for seeking” (a second).

Vs. 8: For he finds fault with them when he says: “The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

Vs. 8 commences a lengthy quotation from the prophet Jeremiah 31.31-4 and runs through vs. 12.

The *fault* (*memphomenos*; present middle participle) is not to be taken as a defect in the negative sense but hearkens back to the partial nature of that “copy” and “shadow” mentioned in vs. 5.

Note the future coming of the plural “days” uttered by the (singular) Lord. Such reference to temporal extension is akin to the Greek *aion* first discussed in 1.2 and which bears a certain parallel with the verse at hand: “but in these last days...through whom he created the *world*.” Thus *aion* can connote an extended yet definite period of time just like the “days” of vs. 8. Also parallel these “days” with the “*last* (*eschatos*) days” of 1.2.

Establish (*sunteleo*): future tense keeping with the equally future “days will come.” This verb consists of the now familiar *telos* (*end*) prefixed by the preposition *sun*, *with*. Implied is the “end/perfection” activity of God with respect to the “new covenant.” “And when Jesus *finished* these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching” [Mt 7.28]. In the Hebrew text, *sunteleo* corresponds to *karath*, *to cut* (a covenant); it also can apply to the destruction of anything.

“New *covenant*” (*diatheke*): as in 7.22 & 8.6; that is, as opposed to the implied old one. “For this is my blood of the *covenant* which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins” [Mt 26.28].

The preposition *epi* (*upon*) is used for “with” or in conjunction with “house of Israel” and “house of Judah” as if to say that the new covenant is placed physically “upon” both houses as an obligation to fulfill.

Vs. 9: not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

The conclusion of this verse has “says the Lord,” a typical Old Testament expression to get the people’s attention, that is, not focus upon the person uttering these words but their divine source. Note that it is used in vs. 8 as well as vs. 10.

“Their fathers” stands in contrast with the “new covenant” of vs. 8. Compare “on (literally, *en* or *in*) the day” with the plural “the days with come” also in vs. 8. The preposition *kata* (*according to*) is used for “not *like* the covenant” implying the following of this covenant in a close, methodological fashion. This “in the day” is in conjunction with the verb *epilambano* (*to take*), the preposition *epi* (*upon*), again signifying a firm grasp of Israel; the verb also means to take possession of anything. “Surely it is not with angels that he is *concerned* but with the descendants of Abraham” [2.16]. The Hebrew *chazaq* for this Greek verb means to “make firm,” “to strengthen.”

A two-fold *out of* or *ex*: *to lead* (*ex-ago*) and *out of* (Egypt) which serves to contrast the *epi-lambano* mentioned just above. Such leading is done in a child-like way, “by the hand,” which is also in the Hebrew text.

Continue (*emmeno*): in the sense of remaining: “exhorting them to *continue* in the faith” [Acts 14.22]. This verb is used with the preposition *en* (*in*) “my covenant” which refers to the time after Israel had left Egypt and was wandering in the Sinai Peninsula. The Hebrew for *emmeno* is *parar*, *to break into pieces*, which is a more forceful verb.

Did not pay attention (*ameleo*): or “to neglect” as in 2.3: “How shall we escape if we *neglect* such a great salvation?”

Vs. 10: This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

“After those days:” not those of vs. 8, (“the days will come”) but the (plural) days after that day when God led Israel out of Egypt (vs. 9) or better, that time period when God “paid no heed to them.”

Covenant/make (*diatheke/diatithemi*): an instance of the noun and the verb from which it is derived, both having the preposition *dia* as prefix, that is to say, a making or place *through*. Such through-ness is further accentuated by a three-fold action of God, all in the future tense:

- 1) putting his *laws* (*nomos/torah*) *into* or *eis* the Israelites’ *minds* (*dianoia*) or in the Greek text, “in the mind of them,” as if Israel had one mind for a plurality of members. *Dianoia* pertains to the mind as faculty of understanding as well as feeling and desire. “Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and *mind*” [Eph 2.3]. The Hebrew text has *qerev*, signifying the center of anything.
- 2) *write on* (*epigrapho*): a verb with the preposition *epi* (*upon*); a verse also quoted in 10.16 with specific reference to the Holy Spirit. “Heart” is in the singular with the plural personal pronoun “their.”
- 3) *Eis theon*: “(I will be) their God” or literally, “*into* (*eis*) God.” The Hebrew text has the preposition *l-* prefixed to “God” and “people” which corresponds to the Greek *eis*.

Vs. 11: And they shall not teach everyone his fellow or everyone his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest.

The act of *teaching* (*didasko/lamad*) is presented with two different verbs of knowing:

- 1) *Ginosko*, which corresponds in the Hebrew text to *yadah* and connotes intimate familiarity. “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife” [Gen 4.1]. In the verse at hand it is presented as a command which is no longer required. This type of knowing pertains to *fellow* or *polites*, better, “fellow citizen.” “So he went and joined himself to one of the *citizens* of that country who sent him into his fields to feed swine” [Lk 15.15].
- 2) *Eido*, a knowing which implies the application of sight or seeing. The Hebrew also reads *yadah*. This type of knowing applies to the full range of humanity (“least/greatest”).

Vs. 12: For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

The conclusion of the excerpt from Jeremiah ending on a two-fold note:

- 1) *Merciful* (hileos): another reading as in Mt 16.22: “God *forbid*, Lord!” The Hebrew verb is *salach* which also connotes pardon; the Hebrew text lacks “towards their *iniquities* (*adikia*, in the sense of unrighteousness).” “But there is *forgiveness* (noun) with you, that you may be feared” [Ps 130.4].
- 2) *Remember* (mimneskomai): the Hebrew verb is *zakar* from which is derived “male” implying the continuation of a blood line. If such remembering were applied to sins, they would therefore be propagated, so to speak, with respect to future generations.

Vs. 13: In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

“New” vs. *obsolete* (*palaioo*) or that which is old. “They will all *grow old* like a garment” [1.11]. Also, “Provide yourselves with purses that do not *grow old*” [Lk 12.33].

Palaioo and *gerasko* (*growing old*): the latter refers to the former Law which is old in the sense of wearing out with age. “But when you *are old*, you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go” [Jn 21.18].

Both verbs—present active participles—show a process observable in the present with respect to decay, of fading, and are related to that which is *vanishing away* (*aphanismos*, adjective) or disappearing from sight, the only use of this word in the New Testament. Note the other adjective *eggus* (*ready*), more properly, “near” in the sense of being close at hand.

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