

Notes on the Letter to the Hebrews

Introduction

This document is among the series entitled Notes or Expansions posted on this homepage. As stated in their respective Introductions, there is an abundance of fine commentaries which discuss the composition of the biblical book at hand. While valuable in their own right, what we have in this particular case stems from reading Hebrews in the contact of *lectio divina*, that slow, meditative perusal of a scriptural text traditionally associated with monasticism.

Such is the primary difference between reading scripture in the spirit of *lectio divina* from other approaches ranging all the way from scholarly to devotional. Primarily it's a kind of spring-board leading to contemplative 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. Perhaps the biggest problem for us moderns is to read the text s-l-o-w-l-y. This can't be stressed enough. Of prime importance is an intense 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 and perhaps earlier to the Desert Fathers.

Many people are unaccustomed to this age-old approach while at the same time there seems to be a renewed interest in *lectio divina* today. So with this in mind, these notes are offered simply as a means to stimulate the practice of *lectio divina*. Other than that it holds no value. This document goes through 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

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

Two similar adverbs prefaced by the adjective *polus* (much, many) which starts off Hebrews whose respective roots are the nouns *meros* and *tropos* or part and way in the sense of a means. Implied are the diverse manners of divine revelation instead of having it delivered all at once. Both are situated in the past or Israel's history, *palai* (of old). This past is specified as belonging to two groups, fathers and prophets. It would more accurate to put it as "to the fathers in the prophets."

For a more in depth discussion on *polumeros* and *polutropos* see an article on this homepage entitled "*In Many and Various Ways.*" That will suffice for an introduction to the text at hand.

1-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.”

1-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.”

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* or 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. *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 an apparently 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 discernible in the sense of it being available for perception: *rhema* and *dunamis* (word and 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. In the verse at hand, *dunamis* naturally flows from *rhema* and supports “the all.”

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-* (to) 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.”

1-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 serves to introduce seven passages from the Old Testament, several of which (vss. 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.

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. 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.”

1-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 present-ness of Ps 2.7, “today.”

1-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.

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]. Although Hebrews does not specify when the first-born does his “double into,” (*eis* and *eisago*) 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.

1-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.”

1-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.”

1-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 and hate (*ahav* and *sana’*), righteousness wickedness (*tsedeq* and *reshah*), all of which were examined in **Notes on the Psalms** 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* being 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 fellowship as well as transcendence.

1-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. The following is lifted from the **Notes on the Psalms**:

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.

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

Again, the following is lifted from **Notes on the Psalms**:

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 *beqed* usually refers to an outer piece of clothing. 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.

1-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 on the Psalms**:

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].

1-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 on the Psalms**:

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].

1-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.

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.

Chapter Two

2-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*.

2-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 relative to this verse from the critical text: “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 fulfillment 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 associating 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 direct 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 unwillingness 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 (*misthapodosia*): 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.

2-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].

2-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* and *epe* (with and 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.

2-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.

2-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 Psalms** 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”).

2-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.”

Anapotaktos: 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.

2-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 as 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.

2-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 vs. 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.

2-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 reverence 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]?

2-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 (*humneo*) which connotes the singing of a hymn. Such hymn/praise has a specific location, “in the midst of the congregation” (*ekklesia*) or church, that is, in its very center.

2-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 *peitho* 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.”

2-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.

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].

2-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*). Such bondage is not temporary but lasts as long as a person is alive.

2-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 harkens 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.

2-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 laid out the pattern.

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 and faithful (*eleemon* and *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.”

2-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

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

Therefore (*othen*) 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.

Epouranios is used ('place' included in the adjective): 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 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.

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*) 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.

3-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.

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).

3-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.

3-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. Here *oikos* (house) can refer to the tabernacle Moses, a likeness he received on Mount Sinai.

Faithful (*pistos*): again, as in vs. 2, which is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew 'aman 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.

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). 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. vss. 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.

3-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 Psalms** 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. 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.

Vs. 9: Where (*ou*) or reference is to a specific place, the desert of vs. 8, as opposed to the two facets of time already noted. Father” 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, 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*) 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*). 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.

3-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. The heart has two qualities: evil and unbelieving (*poneros* and *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.

3-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.

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* harkens 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*).

3-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. The confidence is specified as being first (*arche*) which most likely hearkens back to the listeners' first acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. Use of *arche* is interesting in that we have its opposite, end (*telos*) in the sense of completion and perfection. 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.

3-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.

3-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*).

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

So (*kai*): use of this conjunctive, 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 (*eiserchomai*) 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.

Chapter Four

4-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.

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*.

The goal presented in vs. 1 is rest (*katapausis*) as noted in 3.11 in conjunction with Ps 95. Cf. the verb to enter (*eiserchomai*) 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]?

4-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.

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. The verb is used here denoting that the author’s readers have become the

object of such tidings and have fully absorbed by it. 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.

Meet (*sugkerannumi*): literally, to mix together. The Greek text 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.

4-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 *kata-pausis*...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].

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.

World (*kosmos*): in contrast to *oikoumene*, inhabited world; *kosmos* infers a definite order and beauty.

4-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.

4-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 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. 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.

4-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.”

4-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 can be rendered as Jesus) was designated at the conclusion of Deuteronomy to succeed Moses. Yet despite his commission, 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.”

4-Vs. 9: So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Sabbatismos or Sabbath rest is left (*apoleipo*) for Israel, the people of God.

4-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 and also (*gar* and *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* or better, “one’s own;” i.e., a more personal connection between a person’s labors and those belonging to God.

4-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.

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*. 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."

4-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 and active (*zoon* and *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 *energes* 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. 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 and marrow (*harmos* and *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 and intentions (*enthumesis* and *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.

4-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. 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 our of many hearts may be revealed (*apokalupto*).”

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.

4-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*). 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 means the physical sky above as opposed to God's dwelling, Jesus transcending them.

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.

4-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 (*homoiotes*), a word usually meaning likeness. The verse at hand enhances this sharing/difference with regard to Christ by saying that he was "without sinning;" the Greek text uses the preposition *choris* (without) in the sense of being fully apart from.

4-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.” 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* and *charis*): the former plays an important role in the Book of Revelation, 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 is used frequently throughout the New Testament.

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*.

Chapter Five

5-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. 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*.

5-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 and wayward (*agnoeo* and *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 *planao*, 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).

5-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 earthy life as well as that in heaven after his Ascension. *Opheilo* has a two-fold obligation with respect to offering of sacrifices (*prospheero*) 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.”

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.

5-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*.

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.

5-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 being a messenger discussed there and in subsequent verses are common to both; Christ as high priest distinguishes them even further.

5-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.

5-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 and supplications (*deesis* and *hiketerios*, adjective) which may be attributed to his role as high priest. The former more specifically pertains to a need. The latter is the only New Testament use of this term.

“Loud cries and tears (*ischuros* [literally, strong], *krauge* and *dakru*) which show the humanity of Jesus Christ as high priest. They are in conjunction with his offering up (*prophero*, verb) of the above mentioned prayers and supplications, literally, his

bearing-towards (*pros*) God. This verb 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.

5-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.

5-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. *Teleioo* 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 vss. 10-12, which conclude on a joyous 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. 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.

5-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.”

5-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’). 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 and hard (*polus* and *dusermeneutos*); the latter has as its root the verb *ermeneuo* (to interpret).

5-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.

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].

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

Lives on (*metecho*): 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.

Child (*nepios*): in the sense of an infant and as applied to an adult, someone who is unskilled or untaught.

5-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.

Faculties (*aistheterion*): related to the noun *aisthesis* (cognition, discernment) and suggesting our five senses. 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*.

Distinguish (*diakrasis*): “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

6-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* or completion.

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). Foundation (*themelios*): an adjective used as a noun, here in a negative sense. 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.

6-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 .

-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*.

6-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. Such divine permission is conditioned by a willingness (“this we will do”).

6-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* (glory) with respect to the heavenly Jerusalem.

2) Tasted (*geuomai*): for the opposite sense and perhaps applicable in the New Testament context as opposed to the just enumerated Judaic practices. The object of taste is the heavenly (*epouranios*) gift which is not specified.

3) Partakers (*metochos*): from the verb *metecho*, literally, “to have with,” and as noted several places above. The object here is the Holy Spirit.

6-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.

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.

6-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 with the preposition *para* (besides) in the sense of having been left behind. This is the only use of this verb in the New Testament.

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*): also with the preposition *para* prefaced to it. It has 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].

6-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].

6-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 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.

6-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 and derived from the New Testament *agape*.

Better things (*ta kreissona*): not spelled out here but they hearken back to vss. 4-5. Nevertheless, they pertain to salvation or *soteria*.

6-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). *Epilanthanomai* has two objects: work and love (*ergon* and *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; the preposition *ek* or from prefaced to the verb) 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 *ek-deiknumi* or showing just noted.

6-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, it 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.

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*.

6-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 and patience (*pistis* and *makrothumia*), that latter comprised of the noun *thumos* noted in vs. 11 as a strong emotion which has the implication of suffering.

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.”

6-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 is bound up with the offering his son Isaac (cf. Gen 22.9-14).

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.”

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

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.

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

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

Patently 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. 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.

6-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 “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. Such finality applied to an oath is fulfilled in its confirmation, *bebaiosis* also as steadfastness.

6-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.

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. God's *boule* has a character (*epaggelia*) first noted in 4.1 as promise. 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.

6-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.

Encouragement (*paraklesis*): alternately as summons, exhortation. Note its close relationship to *parakletos*, a term used to describe the Holy Spirit as helper. The object of divine encouragement is to seize (*krateo*) hope. Note hope's location as "before us" or *pro-keimai*, a verb implying that which is destined.

6-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. 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 and steadfast (*asphalos bebaios*); the former literally means “safe from falling and the latter is derived from *bebaiosis* of vs. 16, confirmation.

Keeping with 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].

6-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; eis* or into prefaced to the verb) parallels that anchor of the last verse, in fact, is the fulfillment 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.

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 fulfillment 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.