An Exegetical Examination of the Humanity of Christ in Hebrews 2:5-18

By

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Declarations

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and to the best of my knowledge contains no materials previously published or written by another person. It contains no material extracted in whole or part by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. I also declare that any assistance received from others in terms of design, style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

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Abstract

It is widely recognised that the book of Hebrews presents a more explicit and thorough exposition of the significance of Christ's humanity than any other New Testament document. Despite this, the scholarly examination of Christ's humanity in Hebrews remains under-developed. Many works, while acknowledging its significance, examine it in only a cursory or tangential way. A few scholars have provided more extensive examination, but their conclusions have been controversial.

The present study is an exegetical examination in Hebrews 2:5-18—the first major section of Hebrews to give focused attention to the humanity of Christ. By careful analysis of the text, within its own context, this study aims to clarify and deepen our understanding of how the author of Hebrews presented the humanity of Christ and its significance.

This thesis argues that Christ's humanity is explained in Hebrews 2:5-18 through Old Testament categories, and particularly in relation to Psalm 8.

In Psalm 8, humanity is depicted as inherently frail but is exalted over creation through its relationship with God. In Hebrews 2, Christ is presented as having entered into human frailty and, in that position, exercised faith in the Father. As the true expression of what humanity was created to be, Christ also entered into the promised dominion of humanity. In so doing, he opened the way for other humans to receive the promised blessings of Psalm 8.

Hebrews 2:5-18 further depicts Christ as the human leader of God's people. This thesis argues that, as the ἀρχηγός, Christ exercises a role of leadership that was prefigured in the OT kingly and prophetic offices. Both of these offices intrinsically entailed identification of the leader with those who are led. To be perfected in this role, then, Christ needed to experience the frailty of humanity in a fallen world and demonstrate faith in the midst of his sufferings.

This thesis further argues that Hebrews 2:5-18 presents Christ's humanity as central to his sacrificial work. In becoming a human, Christ took on mortality such that he could die for his people. Christ's death is therefore presented as a substitutionary sacrifice—his mortal humanity took the penalty of human death that hung over sinful humans.

Hebrews 2:5-18 concludes by introducing the priesthood of Christ. This is the first explicit introduction of the concept of priesthood in Hebrews. By introducing Christ's priesthood as the conclusion of 2:5-18, the author frames priesthood in the categories of humanity expressed in this passage.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Topic and Necessity of the Thesis

This thesis presents an in-depth examination of the nature and significance of Christ's humanity as it is expounded in Hebrews 2:5-18. It aims to bring clarity to a theme of Hebrews that is widely observed but rarely studied. Three factors demonstrate the necessity for detailed consideration of the presentation of Christ's humanity in Hebrews:

1.1.1 Recognised Significance of the Theme

The first factor is the recognised importance of Christ's humanity in Hebrews. It is commonplace in the literature to find mention of the significance of Christ's humanity within the argument of Hebrews and the uniqueness of Hebrews among New Testament documents in developing this theme in depth.[1] Christ's humanity is clearly expressed in the gospels, which describe his ministry on earth, and is taken for granted and occasionally commented on in the rest of the New Testament. In Hebrews alone, however, is it given focused and sustained attention. The argument of Hebrews includes careful elaboration not only of the belief that Christ is human but also of its significance in relation to the author's theology and aims.

1.1.2 Lack of Focused Examination

The significance of Christ's humanity within Hebrews, however, is not sufficient to warrant this thesis. The second factor is the sparsity of detailed examinations of Christ's humanity in Hebrews. While scholars frequently recognise the importance of the theme, few have studied it in a focused way. Examples cannot prove such a deficiency, but a few will be illustrative:

[1] E.g., Cullmann, "the author of Hebrews, as perhaps no other early Christian theologian, had the courage to speak of the man Jesus in shockingly human terms" (Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall [Philadelphia: SCM, 1959]; Translation of *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), 93; cf. similar in James Thompson, *Hebrews,* Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 76; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (B&H: Nashville, 2015), 452; Marcus Bockmuehl, "The Dynamic Absence of Jesus in Hebrews," *Journal of Theological Studies* 70.1 (2019): 145.

Schreiner's commentary includes a 65-page discussion of the theological themes in Hebrews. It gives two and a half of these to Christ's humanity, and there only asserts that Christ was human.[2] Ellingworth has a more modest 15 pages on the theology of Hebrews, yet he covers Christ's humanity in one short paragraph that does little more than dismiss the applicability of Chalcedonian language for analysing Hebrews.[3] Koester's commentary comes closer to examining Christ's humanity. He provides 34 pages on the theology of Hebrews; three and a half of these he gives to Jesus' earthly career. Even so, he does not delve significantly into Christ's human nature as such.[4] Johnson is an exception to this pattern. His nine pages about Hebrews' Christology frequently incorporate elements of Christ's humanity. This, however, only scratches the surface of Hebrews' wealth of teaching on the theme. These commentaries contain further observations about Christ's humanity scattered throughout their analysis of the text, yet synthesis and developed examination is missing.

Turning to monographs, Lindars, in his book on the theology of Hebrews, touches in passing on Christ's humanity but never considers the theme in its own right.[5] Small's monograph on Hebrews' characterisation of Jesus devotes 13 pages to his divine nature[6] but only one to his human nature.[7] Similarly, Jamieson devotes a book to exploring Jesus' Sonship in Hebrews and emphasises that Jesus is the "theandric messiah," the human who reigns as God. Yet despite this focus, Jamieson never explains what it means for Jesus to be "human."[8] Other monographs shed light on Christ's humanity

[2] Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 452-454.
[3] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 67.
[4] Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 106-109.
[5] Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[6] Brian C. Small, *The Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews*, Biblical Interpretation Series 128 (Boston: Brill, 2014), 161-174
[7] Small, *Characterization*, 174-175. This comparison supports Winder's suggestion that the lack of focus on Christ's humanity may, in part, be due to a focus in scholarship on discussion of Christ's deity (Timothy J. Winder, "The Sacrificial Christology of Hebrews: A Jewish Christian Contribution to the Modern Debate about the Person of Christ" [PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2005], 10).
[8] Jamieson does make minor comments, such as that "what human beings are by nature is what Jesus became" (R. B. Jamieson, *The Paradox of Sonship, Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Studies in Christian Doctrine

from different angles, such as those of Richardson[9] and Easter[10] in relation to the theme of faith, the works of McCruden, which emphasise solidarity,[11] or Winder's Ph.D. thesis on the earthly life of Christ.[12] Focused examination of Christ's humanity itself, however, is largely absent. While both commentaries and monographs have valuable contributions to make, the themes of Christ's humanity in Hebrews has often been assumed and therefore neglected.

This combination of the widespread acknowledgement of the theme of Christ's humanity in Hebrews and the lack of detailed examination of the theme means that it is simultaneously overlooked and frequently appealed to. The lack of clarity allows various conclusions to be drawn from the concept of Christ's humanity without the necessary depth of analysis of the theme itself to either robustly support them or refute them. This is seen, for instance, in claims that Christ's humanity necessarily entailed his own active sin,[13] or that humanity and personal pre-existence are incompatible,[14] or even in missiological calls for the "incarnation" of Christ into other cultures.[15]

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and Scripture [Downers Grove: IVP, 2021], 79), or that Christ was "a finite man in a fallen world," who, "learns by experience what it is to refuse sin while suffering" (Jamieson, *Sonship*, 148). Such statements however are not elaborated.

[9] Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews,* WUNT II/338 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

[10] Matthew C. Easter, *Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus*. SNTS 160 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[11] Kevin B. McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected: Beneficent Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 159 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Kevin B. McCruden, *A Body You Have Prepared for Me: The Spirituality of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2013).

[12] Winder, *Sacrificial Christology*. Despite the fact that Winder explicitly seeks to address the gap in scholarship about the humanity of Jesus ("Sacrificial Christology," 10, 13), he does so only in relation to the earthly life of Christ and even in that regard says surprisingly little about what it actually means for Jesus to be human.

[13] See for example George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, AB 36 (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 8, 82, 129-131; Ronald Williamson, "Hebrews 4[15] and the Sinlessness of Jesus," *Expository Times* 86.1 (1974), 4-8; Lindars, *Theology*, 63; Richard Bending, "Difficult Texts: Hebrews 4:14-16," *Theology* 120.1 (2017): 35.

[14] G. B. Caird, "Son by Appointment," in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. William C. Weinrich (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1984), 81; John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 155-161; Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 116-117, 187; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews: Its Challenge from Zion*, Intertextual Bible Commentary (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 88.

[15] E.g., Edison M. Kalengyo, "The Sacrifice of Christ and Ganda Sacrifice: A Contextual Interpretation in Relation to the Eucharist," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology,* ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 313.

1.1.3 Correcting Existing Studies

The third indication of the need for a detailed study of Christ's humanity in Hebrews is that despite general neglect of the theme, there are, in fact, two significant contributions already available. These are the works of Albert Vanhoye and David Moffitt. We will argue, however, that while these studies make valuable contributions, they have misconstrued Christ's humanity in Hebrews. Before continuing, it will be helpful to outline the basic contours of these works as they bear on the question of Christ's humanity.

1.2 Major Contributions to the Study of Christ's Humanity in Hebrews

1.2.1 Albert Vanhoye

Albert Vanhoye was a dominant voice in Hebrews scholarship from his first monograph on the structure of Hebrews in 1963 until shortly before his death in 2021.[16] While Vanhoye did not write a specific study of Christ's humanity in Hebrews, his 1969 monograph *Situation du Christ: épître aux hébreux 1 et 2* provided a significant examination of the theme as expressed in Hebrews 2.

At the heart of Vanhoye's explanation of Christ's humanity in Hebrews is the notion that human nature itself needed to be perfected in order to be restored to relationship with God. Vanhoye explains this partly in relation to the sinfulness of human nature; pride and ego-centricity which cut humans off from God.[17] He also, however, suggests that human physical existence is an impediment to relating to God. Fallen humanity inhabits frail mortal flesh, which makes them unfit for spiritual realities.[18]

Vanhoye argues that Christ assumed this fallen human nature in the incarnation. Hebrews does not present Christ as ever participating in sin, but Christ nevertheless bore in his own humanity the

[16] His last commentary on Hebrews was published in 2015.
[17] Albert Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ*, Lectio Divina 58 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 324.
[18] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 348.

weakness, suffering, and death that were the consequence of sin. This fallen flesh separated Christ himself from the divine and even separated his human nature from his own divine nature.[19]

Christ's own humanity, therefore, needed to be perfected, and this happened in his death and glorification. For humans, death had been the great separator, and yet in Jesus' death, it became the great unifier. In his death, he entered to the fullest extent into solidarity with humans and also learned the fullest obedience to the Father, thus perfecting his human nature.[20] Vanhoye also suggests that Christ's death brings an end to his physical existence, allowing a restored spiritual relationship between the human and the divine. Christ's humanity, like that of his people, "devait passer d'un mode d'existence charnel à un mode d'existence parfaitement spirituel."[21]

Christ's death then transforms his own human nature, but Hebrews understands his death not as an isolated event but as the beginning of a new kind of human existence:

> Les souffrances assuméees dans l'amour, selon le dessein de Dieu, aboutissent au renouvellement de la nature humaine de Jésus. Envahie par la gloire de Dieu et spiritualisée, l'humanité du Christ acquiert la capacité d'attirer tout les hommes et de les accueillir en elle-même. Le Christ devient ainsi l'homme nouveau, seul capable de rassembler dans l'unité de son corps tous les enfants de Dieu disperses (cf. Jn 11, 49-52).[22]

1.2.2 David Moffitt

David Moffitt has become a prominent figure in Hebrews scholarship over the last decade, and central to his work is an insistence that Hebrews emphasises the glorified physicality of Christ.

[19] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 323, 349; Albert Vanhoye, *The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 61-62, 76.
[20] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 353-354.
[21] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 323.
[22] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 302-303.

In his 2011 monograph, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Moffitt argued that the logic of Hebrews is grounded in the affirmation of Christ's physical resurrection. His thesis is in direct opposition to what he identifies as a near-unanimous assumption that the resurrection has little or no place in the argument of the epistle. This consensus is driven not only by the paucity of explicit references to resurrection in Hebrews but also by the mapping of Christ's work onto the two stages of the day of atonement, corresponding to his atoning death and his exaltation to heaven. Moffitt challenges this consensus, insisting instead that it is the humanity of Christ, or more specifically, his bodily existence, which lies at the heart of both his glorified status and his priestly ministry in Hebrews.[23]

Moffitt first examines Hebrews 1-2, in which he contends that the Son is superior to angels because, while the angels are spirit, the Son possesses flesh and blood and is thus heir of the glory promised to Adam in Psalm 8. He argues that the οἰκουμένη of 1:6 is the same as that of 2:5; both refer to the heavenly realm where God and the angels dwell.[24] Passages such as Psalm 8 show that this οἰκουμένη is to be ruled by Adam. While the angels may now have some dominion over it, the fact that they are not human beings but only πνεύματα (emphasised in 1:7 and 1:14) shows that they cannot ultimately reign over it. Hebrews 2, however, declares that the Son has taken on humanity, defined by Moffitt in terms of flesh and blood. As a man, the Son can have dominion over the heavenly οἰκουμένη and over the angels which are a part of it.[25] Moffitt argues that, "it is the Son's humanity—his flesh and blood—that gives him the right to sit at God's right hand and reign over the other heavenly beings."[26]

Moffitt's second argument is that it is only as a glorified body, that is, a resurrected body, that Christ could ascend to the heavenly οἰκουμένη. He finds a recurrent theme in other Jewish literature in which

[23] See David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. NovTSup 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1-43, esp. 40-43.
[24] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 53-118.
[25] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 118-142.
[26] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 141.

bodily ascension to God's presence is accompanied by a transformation of the body into a glorified state. While flesh is necessary for assuming the prerogatives of Adam, mortal flesh cannot enter God's presence. This problem is solved by appeal to the resurrection. In the resurrection, Christ's mortal body was transformed into a glorified body fit for God's presence.[27]

In discussing Christ's priesthood, Moffitt again insists that his physical resurrection body is vital. He argues that Hebrews understood Melchizedek as an angel, and, as such, Melchizedek could never be a high priest. He was a priest and a member of the heavenly, angelic priesthood, but only a human could take the position of high priest. Christ can be a priest in the order of Melchizedek because he too shares incorruptible eternal life, but as an embodied human, he can take the position of high priest over the angelic order. All this is grounded in the resurrection, the event by which Christ both maintained his physical existence and was transformed in his flesh to a glorified and incorruptible state.[28]

Moffitt's final argument of significance to Christ's humanity is that the atonement is achieved through Christ's resurrected body and blood. He argues against traditional interpretations which locate the atonement on the cross, pointing out that Hebrews frequently describes the sacrifice as taking place in heaven (e.g., 4:14; 7:26; 8:1-2) and even appears to deny the possibility of Christ acting as a priest while on earth (cf. 8:4).[29] Moffitt solves this problem by borrowing from those who suggest that sacrifice in the Old Testament is not about the death of an animal but its life, often signified by reference to its blood.[30] This focus on life, Moffitt suggests, can make sense of Christ's offering in Hebrews. It was not, as many contend, his death on the cross that Christ offered to God. Rather, the

[27] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 148-181.
[28] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 194-212.
[29] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 220-229. While Moffitt's thesis brought this reading to prominence, see Kibbe, who traces a history back to Socinus (Michael Kibbe, "Is It Finished? When Did It Start? Hebrews, Priesthood, and Atonement in Biblical, Systematic, and Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 65.1 (2014): 27-30).
[30] See literature review in Herman V. A. Kuma, *The Centrality of Αἷμα (Blood) in the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2012), 5-81.

language of blood and sacrifice refers to Christ's life—life in a resurrected flesh and blood existence—which Christ brought into God's presence to effect atonement.[31] The death of Christ was necessary as part of the larger set of events that brought atonement, but it was necessary only as a preparation for the atoning entrance of Christ's living resurrected body into God's presence.[32]

All of these points support Moffitt's contention that the resurrection lies at the heart of the logic of the book of Hebrews. Christ is understood as the exalted human in a glorified human body and the perfect high priest who offers his resurrected human life—flesh and blood—in God's presence for the atonement of his people.

Moffitt's thesis helpfully challenges some widely held assumptions in Hebrews scholarship and provides insight into the role of Christ's embodied existence in the letter to the Hebrews. We will provide further critique in the body of the present thesis but, at this point, mention three overarching concerns with his work as a whole.

Firstly, while Moffitt frequently refers to Christ's humanity, he has unduly restricted the meaning of this term. His driving focus is on Christ's physical existence, and it is this physical existence that he equates with humanity. Without denying that human existence entails physical flesh and blood, and that the author of Hebrews applies these realities to Christ, we will argue below that Christ's humanity in Hebrews is more than his physicality. Christ has been made like his brothers[33] in every way (2:17) and been tempted in every respect (4:15).

Secondly, Moffitt's focus on glorified flesh has led him to almost entirely overlook references to Christ's sympathetic ministry. In focussing on Christ's priesthood as a function of his glorified flesh, he

[31] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 256-278.
[32] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 295.
[33] The gendered term "brothers" will be used throughout this thesis. While this term is understood to include women, and could thus be "brothers and sisters," Peeler notes that the use of masculine language to include women in Herbews connects the audience explicitly with the "Son" and, in fact, elevates, rather than excludes, women (Amy L. B. Peeler, "'Leading Many Sons to Glory': Historical Implications of Exclusive Language in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Religions* 12 (2021): 844).

has found little room for understanding Christ's sharing in humanity as something that equips him to act with mercy and sympathy.[34]

Thirdly, while Moffitt has appropriately drawn attention to the humanity of Christ and its significant role in Hebrews, we will argue that he has placed too much weight on Christ's humanity as such. This is seen, for instance, in Moffitt's contention that Christ's exalted status in Hebrews 1 is dependent on his humanity rather than his deity. Emphasis on physical human existence has also skewed his depiction of atonement in Hebrews. He contends that the glorified physicality of Christ is the locus of the atonement. We find, however, that atonement is achieved not by Christ's humanity per se but by the death he endured in his humanity.

1.2.3 The State of the Question and the Need for this Thesis

The contentions of Vanhoye and Moffitt have not been universally accepted, but there are, to date, no other works on Christ's humanity in Hebrews of comparable depth. There is a need for further examination of the portrayal of Christ's humanity in Hebrews, and we aim to provide one contribution to that end.

1.3 The Approach of this Thesis

This thesis aims to present an exegetical examination of the nature and significance of Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18. While it engages with existing scholarship on Hebrews, it has been structured primarily around the text itself. The aim is not to provide an exegetical evaluation of prior contributions per se but to offer an inductive study of the text of Hebrews 2:5-18.

The exegetical approach taken will be historical-grammatical with an accompanying focus on how the author has appropriated OT texts. There is nothing novel in this methodology because this thesis does

[34] Even when Moffitt does give a brief mention of the weakness and sympathetic ministry (*Atonement*, 194-195) he defines this in terms of Christ's mortality, again seeming to limit Christ's participation in humanity to participation in a mortal body. Perhaps Moffitt was restricted by the need to focus specifically on his thesis concerning the resurrection, yet the omission is surprising in a book which says much about both the humanity of Christ and his priesthood.

not seek to bring a new angle to a crowded field but rather to do what may be termed "traditional" exegesis in an area that has been under-examined.

1.4 The Limits of the Thesis

1.4.1 Focus on Exegesis rather than Theology

A thesis about Christ's humanity in Hebrews might be expected to make use of the growing interest in the intersection of biblical studies and systematic theology.[35] Without discounting the value of such study, particularly for those who give spiritual authority to the documents of the New Testament, the present thesis will not pursue that path. It will focus on the text of Hebrews within its own context rather than on later reflection and application of the text. The goal will be to explore what the author intended to communicate to his first-century audience about the nature and significance of Christ's humanity.[36]

1.4.2 Focus on Hebrews 2:5-18

A second methodological question concerns the narrow focus on Hebrews 2:5-18. The nature and significance of Christ's humanity continue to be developed and expounded throughout much of Hebrews, suggesting that a full examination would draw from the whole letter. The focus on 2:5-18, however, was based on three factors.

As is often the case, the limitations of the present work have forced a choice between depth and breadth. Given that a large part of the rationale for this work was to get beyond superficial analysis,

[35] Note for example the article of Bruce McCormack and Rowan Greer already beginning in this direction (Bruce L. McCormack, "'With Loud Cries and Tears:' The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 37-68; Rowan A. Greer, "The Jesus of Hebrews and the Christ of Chalcedon," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 [Atlanta: SBL, 2011], 189-208), as well as the more extensive contribution by Jamieson which approaches the text through the lens of patristic Christology but unfortunately does not delve into Christ's humanity (Jamieson, *Sonship*).

[36] Following the example of Cockerill, the author is referred to with masculine pronouns throughout this thesis in keeping with his use of the masculine participle in 11:32 (Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 2).

the decision was made to narrow the focus to Hebrews 2:5-18 in the hope that this would facilitate more rigorous, in-depth study.

The narrow focus brings its own dangers, particularly the risk that text will be misinterpreted precisely because it has been separated from its context. This work, therefore, strives to examine the specific section of Hebrews within the context of the whole. At times it has been necessary to attend to other parts of the letter, but what has been included has been driven by the need to understand the contribution of 2:5-18.

The second reason for selecting Hebrews 2:5-18 is the structure of Hebrews itself. This passage has often been recognised as a distinct unit, a conclusion we will briefly defend in chapter 2. While this does isolate it from the rest of the book, it does make it a fitting segment for particular focus.

The third reason for considering Hebrews 2:5-18 a suitable unit for examination is the order of Hebrews. Not only do these verses provide a detailed exposition of Christ's humanity, but they are the first in Hebrews to do so. As such, their contribution could be expected to be largely intelligible before reading the later chapters of Hebrews. This is not to say that every theme introduced in Hebrews 2:5-18 finds full expression within this passage. Some are raised in a partial way and developed later. But the fact that this is the first exposition of Christ's humanity means that what Hebrews 2:5-18 explains can likely be understood without excessive reference to later parts of the letter.

1.5 The Contribution of this Thesis

We will argue that Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18 is to be understood as an outworking of the anthropology of Psalm 8 applied to Christ and extended in light of the author's beliefs concerning Christ's person and work.

Christ's humanity is defined by two key attributes; frailty and faith. These concepts of frailty and faith underpin the author's thought and are developed in the various ways the author speaks about the

humanity of Christ in relation to the glorious inheritance of humanity, the rightful leadership of humanity, and the salvation of humanity.

1.6 Outline

The thesis will proceed as follows:

Chapter 2 will consider the place of Hebrews 2:5-18 within the letter and particularly in relationship with 1:1-2:4. It will argue that 2:5-18 is a distinct unit giving an exposition of Psalm 8 and that it complements 1:1-2:4. Both Hebrews 1:1-2:4 and 2:5-18 focus on Christ's qualifications for his reign, but they present this from different angles. In 1:1-2:4 the emphasis is on Christ's deity, while in 2:5-18 the emphasis is on his humanity.

Chapter 3 will examine Psalm 8 with a particular focus on features that will become important for its appropriation in Hebrews 2:5-18.

Chapters 4-7 will form the centre of our argument and provide a detailed examination of Hebrews 2:5-18's presentation of Christ's humanity.

Chapter 4 will focus on Hebrews 2:5-9, in which Christ takes on the position of frailty given to humanity and, in his frailty, inherits the honour and dominion promised to humanity in Psalm 8. This dominion is not simply a return to Eden but an eschatological reign over all things. Christ inherits this dominion as one who is himself human, and he also inherits it for other humans in him.

Chapter 5 will advance to Hebrews 2:10-13, in which Christ is depicted as the perfected leader of his people. It will particularly examine what it means for Christ to be the ἀρχηγός. It will argue that Hebrews draws on OT categories of leadership in which those who led God's people needed to identify with them in their position of frailty. Only in their weakness can leaders truly demonstrate faith and lead their people along the path of faith.

Chapter 6 will examine how Christ's humanity equips him as saviour. This theme is expressed throughout Hebrews 2:5-18. We will argue that Christ is the victorious conqueror whose conquest is still viewed through the lens of Psalm 8. Humanity needs saving because they have sinned and incurred the righteous judgement of God. Christ is able to save because he took on mortal humanity and, in his death, absorbed the judgement for sin that stood against sinful humans.

Chapter 7 will consider Christ's humanity vis-à-vis his priesthood; a theme raised particularly in 2:17-18. This chapter will argue that by introducing the title "high priest" at the conclusion of 2:5-18, the author takes up the presentation of Christ from this whole section and attaches it to the notion of priesthood. From its introduction, then, priesthood is understood as entailing concepts of frailty, identification, faith, dominion, and sacrificial salvation. These concepts form the foundation for the author's ongoing exposition of Christ as high priest in much of the epistle.

Finally, chapter 8 will synthesise the findings of this thesis regarding Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18.

2 Hebrews 2:5-18 within Hebrews

Before examining Hebrews 2:5-18 specifically, we will attempt to defend the selection of this text as a suitable unit for examination and to situate this passage within the structure of the letter, and particularly in relation to what has preceded it in 1:1-2:4.

2.1 Hebrews 2:5-18 as a Distinct Unit

Most interpreters consider Hebrews 2:5-18 a distinct unit,[37] though often with minor divisions after 2:9[38] or occasionally after 2:13[39] or 2:16.[40] Some, however, do not find the divisions after 2:4 or 2:18 to be as pronounced or place more weight on divisions within this passage, particularly after 2:9, than on those they discern after 2:4 or 2:18.[41]

To justify treating 2:5-18 as a unit for examination, four questions will be addressed:

1. Is there significant division between 2:4 and 2:5?
2. Is there significant division between 2:18 and 3:1?
3. Is there significant division between 2:9 and 2:10?
4. Is there significant thematic and structural continuity across 2:5-18?

[37] E.g., Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 19; David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 72; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, vi; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 19; Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 3 Vols, EKKNT 17 [Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1990], IX); Andrew T. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T&T, 2006), 24; Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, LNTS 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 100; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 17; David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC 35 (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 202. Grant R. Osborne, *Hebrews: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 11. Harris is not as explicit in her breakdown, but within the body of her commentary she more clearly identified 2:5-18 as a unit (Dana M. Harris, *Hebrews*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019], 45).

[38] E.g., Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 17; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 202; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 19; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 72

[39] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 100.

[40] Harris, *Hebrews*, 7

[41] George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text Linguistic Analysis*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 144; Craig R. Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 105, 110; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina 13 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2009), 21; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 79; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised Ed.; NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), vii-viii; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*. WBC 47A (Nashville: Nelson, 1991), cii-ciii; Friedrich Gustav Lang, "Observations on the Disposition of Hebrews," *Novum Testamentum* 61 (2019): 181; Jason Maston, "The Son and Scripture in Hebrews 1-2," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 44.4 (2022): 506-507.

2.1.1 Division between 2:4 and 2:5

In regard to the first question—the indications of division between 2:4 and 2:5—it must first be noted that there is considerable continuity between 2:5-18 and what comes before it. The author has not moved to an entirely new subject but opens this section with an explanatory conjunction (γάρ) and an explicit reference to the preceding discussion (περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν).[42] 2:5-18 is clearly tied to the earlier sections of the letter. The author has also maintained a thematic continuity, not just in his focus on Christ, but even in the comparison to angels and the theme of dominion.[43]

While keeping this continuity in mind, however, there is also clear evidence that 2:5 begins a new step in the author's continuing work. The following points indicate this transition:

The grammatical continuity is not absolute. While γάρ shows that the author is continuing his argument, it does not prevent this section from embarking on a new step in that argument. Dumbrell, for instance, suggests that οὐ γάρ, "indicates that the writer is not just continuing the theme but also moving on to a new aspect of his subject."[44]

Similarly, the thematic linkages are not as tight as sometimes suggested. Westfall has particularly pointed out the changing place of angels in the exposition. While continuity with 1:1-2:4 is created through the references to angels in 2:5, 7, 16, the angels are no longer foregrounded in the same

[42] Michael W. Martin and Jason A. Whitlark, *Inventing Hebrews: Design and Purpose in Ancient Rhetoric*, SNTS 171 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 111; Philip Arthur Frederick Church, *Hebrews and the Temple: Attitudes to the Temple in Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews*, NovTSup 171 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 296; Harris, *Hebrews*, 45; C. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols, Études bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 2:30; Angela Costley, *Creation and Christ: An Exploration of the Topic of Creation in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, WUNT II/527 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 210.

[43] Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Marcon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 38; Harris, *Hebrews*, 45; Scott D. Mackie, "Behold I am with the Children: Ekphrasis and Epiphany in Hebrews 1-2" in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. David M. Moffitt and Eric F. Mason, WUNT II/510 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 69; Jipp, Joshua W. Jipp, "The Son's Entrance into the Heavenly World," *NTS* 56.4 (2010): 569. Martin and Whitlark have argued that all of 2:1-18 forms an *argumentation* but within this they still divide 2:5-18 off as *amplificatio* further explaining the great salvation of 2:3 (Martin and Whitlark, *Inventing Hebrews*, 106-111; cf. Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 296).

[44] William J. Dumbrell, *Hebrews: A New Covenant Commentary* (North Parramatta, NSW: Redeemer Baptist: 2009, 28.

way.[45] As Westfall notes, "Jesus is identified as a messenger with prophets and angels in 1:1-2:4. In 2:5-18, Jesus is identified with humanity."[46] This thematic movement is evident also in the shift from emphasising the eternal deity of Christ to his assumed humanity (on which see section 2.2 below).

Another strong indicator of division is the shift from exhortation to exposition. It has long been observed that Hebrews alternates between these two forms of address. Expositions focus on explaining theological points from OT texts, largely using the indicative mood, while exhortations urge the recipients to action, with more focus on the imperative.[47] Such changes are clearly evident between 2:1-4 (exhortation) and 2:5-18 (exposition).[48]

The final indication that 2:5 begins a new section is the change in the manner of argumentation. Hebrews 1:1-4 is largely recognised as an introduction or exordium. 1:5-14 then launches into a catena of OT citations regarding the superiority of the Son. 2:1-4 gives the first hortatory section. From 2:5, the author embarks on the first of the longer expositions that will characterise the body of his letter.[49]

These indications, taken together, suggest that 2:5 launches a new section of Hebrews.

2.1.2 Division between 2:18 and 3:1

The second point to consider in defining this section is the evidence of significant division between 2:18 and 3:1.

As with the division at 2:5, the division between 2:18 and 3:1 is not a complete break in the argument. The adverb ὁθεν in 3:1 indicates continuity, showing that the author is drawing inferences from

[45] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 100.
[46] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 110.
[47] Though exhortation can also be stated in other means, as for instance the use of δεῖ and the infinitive in 2:1.
[48] Guthrie, *Structure*, 128; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 100; Frank J. Matera, "The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 190-191, 199. Contra Lang, who demies that this is an exhortation because of the lack of imperative ("Observations," 181).
[49] R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *Tyndale* 47.2 (1996), 255-256.

preceding material.[50] The author also begins 3:1 with a brief summary of the status of believers as expressed in 2:5-18.

Westfall, however, has noted that the use of ἐπεὶ οὖν in 2:14 and ὅθεν in 2:17 appear to indicate a conclusion of the preceding material, suggesting that the author is preparing to move to a new part of his argument.[51]

As with the division at 2:4, the clearest indication of a transition to a new section after 2:15 is the change between exposition and exhortation. While 2:5-18 has been pure exposition, the first verb of chapter 3 is the imperative κατανοήσατε which sets the tone of the following verses. Exhortation will then dominate until 4:16.[52]

There is, therefore, indication of division in the text both after 2:4 and after 2:18—the limits of this unit. Finally, we will consider the continuity between those divisions.

2.1.3 Division between 2:9 and 2:10?

In regard to the possible division between 2:9 and 2:10, there are three main indicators of a transition. Firstly, there is a move from explicit explanation of Psalm 8 to an ongoing exposition that ranges further from the text. Secondly, there is a slight shift in topic from Christ's inheritance of the promises of Psalm 8 to the unity of Christ and his followers. Thirdly, there is a change from the first person in 2:9 (βλέπομεν) to the third person in 2:10 (ἔπρεπεν).[53]

While it is reasonable, therefore, to identify some level of division here, Westfall notes that the use of γάρ "signals that the following subunit is support material that connects with v. 9."[54] Lane also notes

[50] Ὅθεν in 2:17 also indicates that the author is drawing an inference. The level of continuity however will be dependent on more than the conjunction alone.
[51] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 103.
[52] Cf. Guthrie, *Structure*, 144; Matera, "Theology," 190-191, 199.
[53] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 102.
[54] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 102; cf. Costley, *Creation and Christ*, 222; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 53; Victor Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics,* Studies in Biblical Literature 19 (New York: P. Lang, 2001), 81; Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 303. While we have suggested that γάρ was not sufficient in 2:5 to rule out significant transition, it is one indicator of continuity.

five connections in vocabulary and theme that connect verses 9 and 10. θεός, having just been used in 2:9, is expanded upon in the circumlocution δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα. Ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ expands upon χάριτι θεοῦ. Πολλοὺς υἱούς gives more specificity to παντός. Δόξα in 2:10 is a reference to the δόξα of Psalm 8 found in 2:9. Finally, the παθημάτων of 2:10 echo the πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου of 2:9.[55] These connections, Lane suggests, "alert the hearers that in the following paragraph the writer intends to take up and extend the comments he has just made on the basis of Ps 8."[56]

It appears, therefore, that while there is a minor division between 2:9 and 2:10, this indicates a progression within a single unit rather than a transition to a substantially new one.[57]

2.1.4 Unity across 2:5-18

Finally, the indications of thematic and structural continuity across 2:5-18 will be considered.

The consistent exposition in 2:5-18, framed by exhortation in 2:1-4 and 3:1, is a significant indicator that this material is a cohesive unit. Westfall further notes that there is a continuity in "participant chains." The focus on Jesus and his brothers unites this section of the letter and sets it apart from the surrounding material.[58]

A final indication of the unity across 2:5-18 is the significance of Psalm 8 across the whole. This is suggested already by referring to this section as an exposition, but a more thorough examination of this point will not only contribute to the discussion of the bounds of the unit but will inform the interpretation of this unit in the remainder of the thesis.

2.1.4.1 Hebrews 2:5-18 as an Exposition of Psalm 8

A number of interpreters have helpfully suggested that Hebrews is structured around expositions of key OT texts. In 1959 Caird identified extended expositions of Psalm 8, Psalm 95, Psalm 110, and

[55] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 52-53.
[56] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 53.
[57] Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews*, 81.
[58] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 104. See also, Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews*, 80-82; Costley, *Creation and Christ*, 209.

Jeremiah 31. He argued that, "All other scriptural references are ancillary to these four, which control the drift of the argument."[59]

When it came to the impact of Psalm 8, Caird argued that it controls not only chapter 2 but also chapter 1. He writes:

> The Psalm is quoted only at 2:6-8, but it controls the argument of the preceding chapter, for from the first mention of angels at 1:5 throughout the formidable catena of texts in ch. 1 the author's one aim is to illustrate the theme of the psalm that man has been destined by God to a glory excelling that of the angels and that this destiny has been achieved by Christ, both individually and representatively, as the pioneer of man's salvation who came to lead many sons to their destined glory.[60]

Stretching the controlling function of Psalm 8 to include Hebrews 1, however, is tenuous. It requires that more than a full chapter of exposition would have elapsed before the passage being exposited is introduced. More significantly, this reading makes Psalm 8 the controlling passage even across the transitions already noted and the changes from exposition to exhortation and back again at 2:1 and 2:5.[61] While it is possible that the author presents sustained expositions which continue even after parenetic applications, Caird's suggestion involves having such an interruption before the central passage being exposited appears.

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[59] G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5.1 (1959): 47.

[60] Caird, "Exegetical Method," 49.

[61] Guthrie notes that the structural significance of the changes between exposition and exhortation have been recognised as far back as the work of Büchsel in 1928 (Guthrie, *Structure*, 9; cf. Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 88). While unity can be recognised that spans across these sections, and, indeed, this thesis has already noted a strong continuity between Hebrews 1 and 2, the changes at 2:1 and 2:5 make it unlikely that the whole of chapters 1-2 is an exposition of Psalm 8. Guthrie's analysis lends further support for this division, arguing that, "the shift between Heb. 2:4 and 2:5 is effected in the genre, topic, actor, subject, reference, and lexical cohesion fields." (Guthrie, *Structure*, 64). Westfall also points out that διὰ τοῦτο in 2:1 suggests a conclusion to the argument of chapter 1 (*Discourse Analysis*, 93).

In 1975 Richard Longenecker developed Caird's thesis in a way that alleviated this problem. As well as adding some precision to the limits of the expositional sections identified by Caird, Longenecker also added a fifth expositional section, this one based not on a single passage but on a selection of verses to be read together. This new exposition meant that what, for Caird, had been the first exposition was now divided into two separate expositions. Longenecker's divisions were:[62]

Section of Hebrews	**Controlling Citation**
1:3-2:4	Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14; Deut 32:43; Ps 104:4; Psalm 45:6-7; Ps 102:25-27; Ps 110:1
2:5-18	Ps 8:4-6
3:1-4:13	Ps 95:7-11
4:14-7:28	Ps 110:4
8:1-10:39	Jer 31:31-34

Longenecker argued that these five expositions were the basis for the whole letter, stating that:

> All the exhortations of Heb 11-13 depend upon the exposition of these five biblical portions, and all other verses quoted in the letter are ancillary to these.[63]

Longenecker's outline has since been developed by R. T. France, who made helpful clarifications and a few modifications.[64]

France clarifies what he understands to be implicit in Longenecker's treatment—that he is not arguing that Hebrews is a set of separate expositions but is a series of expository sections that makes up a coherent whole.[65]

[62] Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 175.
[63] Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 175.
[64] France also notes a paper by Walters delivered in 1989 but not published until 1996 and which France did not have personal access to. Despite their independence, the two proposed outlines are remarkably close, and importantly for the present discussion, Walters also sees the whole of 2:5-18 as an exposition of Psalm 8 (John R. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *Asbury Theological Journal* 51.2 [1996]: 66).
[65] France, "Biblical Expositor," 249.

France also helpfully explains what he means by an "exposition." He writes:

> … in the argument of Hebrews we see a first century example of a Christian expositor whose instinct it was to develop his argument by focussing successively on a number of key texts, and in each case not simply to quote it and pass on, but to stay with it, exploring its wider implications, and drawing it into association with other related Old Testament ideas, so as to produce a richer and more satisfying diet of biblical theology than could be provided by a mere collection of proof-texts. Like a dog with a particularly juicy bone, he returns to his chosen text again and again, worrying at it and aiming to get all the goodness out of it for the benefit of his readers.[66]

This definition fits most of Longenecker's sections but not his first. While the other expositional sections take one text and explain it in detail, the citations in the first are quoted without further explanation. France, therefore, does not include Hebrews 1:3-2:4 as an exposition. He does not, however, thereby revert to the schema of Caird. Instead of either classing the catena in Hebrews 1 as its own exposition or including it as a part of another exposition, France recognises that it is unique.[67]

France is able to maintain this distinction because, unlike Longenecker, he does not insist that every part of Hebrews 1-10 must be part of an exposition. If a passage is not clearly connected to a dominant OT quotation, France does not categorise it as part of an exposition. For the purposes of examining Hebrews 2:5-18, however, it is noteworthy that France does not challenge Longenecker's suggestion that the whole of 2:5-18 is an exposition of Psalm 8.[68]

[66] France, "Biblical Expositor," 250.
[67] France, "Biblical Expositor," 255-256.
[68] France, "Biblical Expositor," 259.

There has been little progress in identifying the expositions of Hebrews since France. Many, however, have continued to make use of the basic categories and divisions he elucidated, and the present thesis continues in this vein.[69]

2.1.6 Summary

This survey suggests that Hebrews 2:5-18 may be taken as a distinct unit, with significant continuity across the whole, even as we recognise minor divisions within the unit, most markedly between 2:9 and 2:10, and the close relationship of 2:5-18 with material in the surrounding chapters. It has further suggested that part of the unity of this section may be found in a sustained exposition of Psalm 8 that underlies it.

2.2 Hebrews 2:5-18 and Hebrews 1:1-2:4

Having defended the selection of Hebrews 2:5-18 as a unit for examination, we turn now to situate this passage by considering its relationship with the preceding material in 1:1-2:4.

2.2.1 The Themes of Hebrews 1:1-2:4

At the heart of Hebrews 1:1-2:4 is the supremacy of the Son. Two questions about the Son's supremacy in this section will help to elucidate the argument leading up to Hebrews 2:5-18. Firstly, on what basis is the Son superior to the angels? And secondly, what is the significance of the Son's superiority to angels?

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[69] See for example, Harris, *Hebrews*, 53; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 24; Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Westmont: IVP, 2010), 50-51; Small, *Characterization*, 20 (though Small later, without explanation, refers to 2:5-9 as an exposition of Psalm 8 [*Characterization*, 270]). Without explicitly drawing on France, Church refers to at least 2:5-16 as an exposition of Psalm 8 (Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 295) and Buchanan refers to 2:10-13 as, "a continuation of the midrash of Ps 8" (Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews*, 83).
Griffiths follows a similar line of structuring Hebrews around a number of expositions, and comes up with a unique proposal. In relation to the present section of the letter, he finds a unit from 2:5-3:3 based on Psalm 8:4-6 as well as Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) and Isaiah 8:17-18 (Jonathan Griffiths, *Hebrews and Divine Speech,* LNTS 507 [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 28-31). While Griffiths gives some general comments on the characteristics of his sections, he does not explain why 2:5-3:3 is a distinct unit, nor how he understands Psalm 8 to relate to the subsequent citations in the structure of that unit.

2.2.1.1 The Basis of the Son's Superiority

Many have argued that the basis of the Son's superiority to angels is his divine nature. This understanding, however, has not been universally accepted, and David Moffitt, in particular, has argued that it is, instead, Christ's glorified human nature that makes him superior to angels in Hebrews 1. If correct, this would significantly impact the development of the theme of Christ's humanity in 2:5-18.

2.2.1.1.1 Superior by Virtue of Divine Nature

Richard Bauckham is a leading proponent of reading Hebrews 1 as a declaration of Christ's deity.[70] He begins by noting that within Jewish monotheism, there is an absolute distinction between God and created things. This boundary could be expressed in relation to certain attributes and actions that belong solely to the divine identity. Bauckham lists seven things that, in Jewish thought, were true of God and set him apart from all else:

> God is the sole Creator of all things (all others are created by God);
>
> God is the sole sovereign Ruler of all things (all others are subject to God's rule);
>
> God is known through his narrative identity (that is, who God is in the story of his dealings with creation, all the nations, and Israel);
>
> God will achieve his eschatological rule (when all creatures acknowledge YHWH's sole deity);
>
> The name YHWH names God in his unique identity;
>
> God alone may and must be worshipped (since worship *is* acknowledgement of God's sole deity)
>
> God alone is fully eternal (self-existent from past to future eternity).[71]

[70] For a recent survey of other proponents see Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Trinity in Hebrews" *SBJT* 24.1 (2020): 11-12.

[71] Richard Bauckham, "The Divinity of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald (Grand

Examining Hebrews 1, Bauckham finds that descriptions of the Son ascribe to him what is God's alone and thus identify him as Jewish monotheism's God.

The contrast with angels in this description reinforces his point. The angels are the pinnacle of glorious created beings, yet in denying to them what he applies to the Son, the author of Hebrews asserts that nothing on the creature side of the creator/creation distinction possesses the attributes or prerogatives that belong to the Son. Such things are exclusive to God and shared by the Son. In this way, Hebrews strongly affirms the Jewish boundary between God and creation and, at the same time, places Jesus firmly on the divine side of that boundary.[72]

Bauckham's presentation has much to commend it, particularly as it is based on more than a single phrase or an isolated attribution. He persuasively explains the whole flow and driving force of Hebrews 1 with an affirmation of the Son's deity at its core.

Some, however, have questioned whether the items on Bauckham's list were, in fact, understood to be exclusive to God.

Whether God alone is creator has come into question, particularly in light of the role of wisdom as an agent of creation. Caird, for instance, argues that Hebrews 1 presents Christ as the embodiment of God's creative wisdom, which was active in creation, rather than the creator himself. Christ, "is the man in whom the divine Wisdom has been appointed to dwell, so as to make him the bearer of the whole purpose of creation."[73] While there is significant overlap between Hebrews' presentation of

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 16; Richard Bauckham, "Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1," in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 167-168.

[72] Bauckham, "Divinity," 22-23; "Monotheism," 170-175. Cf. Peeler's similar suggestion that the author is removing potential ambiguity in the sense in which Christ is called "Son" in comparison to the angels, sometimes referred to as "sons" (Amy L. B. Peeler, "The Son Like No Other: Comparing the Son of God to the Angelic 'Sons of God' in the Epistle to the Hebrews." in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. ed. David M. Moffitt and Eric Farrel Mason, WUNT II/510 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020], 8-11).

[73] Caird, "Son by Appointment," 76. So also, L. D. Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 161-162; Kenneth Schenck, "Keeping His Appointment:

Christ and Jewish depictions of wisdom,[74] however, this does not demonstrate that Christ was limited to the functions attributed to wisdom.[75] While the language of 1:2 is inconclusive about whether Christ was creator, or merely an instrument,[76] Schreiner points out that the description of the Son as creator is repeated in stronger terms in 1:10-11 without the language of agency. Furthermore, the language employed to refer to the Son's creative work is taken directly from Psalm 102:26-28 (LXX 101:26-28 Eng. 102:25-27),[77] where it describes the work of YHWH. While Caird is correct that not all participation in creation is divine, the descriptions of the Son's role in creation do attribute to him the divine activity of creation.[78]

Whether God was the exclusive object of worship has also been questioned. Schenck points particularly to the Son of Man in *1 Enoch* and Adam in *The Life of Adam and Eve*, both of which were counted worthy of a form of heavenly worship.[79] Schenck has demonstrated that within some strands of Jewish thought, a form of worship could be applied to a creature. What Schenck has to concede, however, is illuminating:

> The fact that the angels 'worship' (προσκυνέω) Jesus in 1:6 does not tell us exactly how exalted Jesus is. Clearly he is exalted higher than the angels, exalted high enough in fact to be enthroned as divine Son. He is even exalted enough to be called 'God' in 1:8. The question is

Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews," *JSNT* 66 (1997), 111-115; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1987), 206-209.

[74] See Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Charts on the Book of Hebrews*, Kregel Charts of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 115-119.

[75] Amy L. B. Peeler, *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, LNTS 486 (London: T&T Clark, 2014), 25-26.

[76] Costley points out, δι' οὗ is also used of the Father's creative work in 2:10, suggesting that the language in 1:2 does not diminish the Son's full participation in the work of creation any more than it does for the Father (Costley, *Creation and Christ*, 223).

[77] Where verse numbers differ OT citations will be given according to the MT with the LXX and English reference in brackets. Where the LXX is specifically cited MT and English verses will be given in brackets.

[78] Schreiner, "Trinity," 21; cf. Peeler, *You are My Son*, 56-57; Cullmann, *Christology*, 98.

[79] Kenneth Schenck, "The Worship of Jesus among Early Christians: The Evidence of Hebrews" in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn for His 70th Birthday,* ed. Brisio J. Oropeza, C.K Robertson and Douglas C. Mohrmann, LNTS 414 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 121-123.

> whether he is so exalted that the oneness of *the* God is called into question, particularly from the standpoint of prior Jewish understanding.[80]

To explain this exalted language for Christ without identifying Christ with God, Schenck suggests, "a fine distinction between Yahweh, who is supreme God and LORD, and Christ, who is representative God and Lord."[81] Such a distinction, however, may be overly fine. While an isolated mention of worship—even worship of one seated on a heavenly throne—may not be sufficient in itself to demonstrate Christ's deity, the placement of such descriptions alongside other attributes and actions displaying Christ's glory suggests something beyond that which in rare instances is, according to Jewish literature, appropriately given to a creature.

A third description of Christ, which will be particularly significant for the present thesis, is his eschatological reign. Bauckham argues that, "God's rule over all things defines who God is: it cannot be delegated as a mere function to a creature."[82] This statement does appear to over-reach. Its weakness is seen not only in the designation of reign to David and his heir to which Bauckham gives attention, but even more so in the eschatological rule of humanity described in Psalm 8 and expounded in Hebrews 2.[83] Even for those who take a Christological reading of Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 8 (see discussion in 4.1.2), almost all commentators agree that Christ inherits the dominion described there as a man inheriting the promise given to humanity. While Jewish thought may well have insisted, as Bauckham argues, that God rules the eschatological world, at least some strands of Jewish thought could, nevertheless, hold this together with expressions of eschatological rule by non-divine beings, even if, as in Psalm 8, their rule is a mediated expression of divine sovereignty.

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[80] Schenck, "Worship," 121.
[81] Kenneth Schenck, "A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1," *JBL* 120.3 (2001): 485.
[82] Bauckham, "Divinity," 17.
[83] Cf. Schenck, "Celebration," 472-473.

While the eschatological reign of humanity, and Christ as human, will be significant for the present thesis, Bauckham's insistence that the reign of Christ in Hebrews 1 is intrinsically divine may also be correct. Christ's reign in Hebrews 1 is illuminated by the various other descriptions which emphasise his participation in the divine identity. Eschatological reign may not in every instance be exclusively divine, yet in its context, the eschatological reign of Hebrews 1 is.[84]

Bauckham's basic thesis therefore appears sound in what it affirms. The Son in Hebrews 1 is superior to angels because of his divine identity. There is, however, another weakness in Bauckham's reading, namely, that it minimises the change to the Son within Hebrews 1. The Son is not simply affirmed as superior by virtue of his sharing eternally in divine nature. There is a point at which the Son becomes superior and inherits a name greater than the angels (1:4). While Hebrews 1 does expound the Son's superiority from his pre-existence to his future eternity, the focal point is on his enthronement at a particular time: the today in which he was begotten (1:5), his introduction into the οἰκουμένην (1:6), his anointing (1:9), and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father (1:14). Bauckham interprets this language in relation to eternal generation and "the eternal today of divine eternity,"[85] but this appears to underemphasise what in Hebrews 1 is arguably central—the definitive enthronement of the Son into glory.

This transformation of the Son becomes central in the reconstruction to be considered next.

2.2.1.1.2 Superior by Virtue of Glorified Humanity

As an alternative to reading Hebrews 1 as an affirmation of Christ's deity, a few scholars have read this chapter as describing his exalted humanity. While this basic position has been advocated by

[84] So Peeler, "By portraying him as the eternal Creator-King worthy of the worship of the angels, the author has portrayed God attributing to his Son his own divine attributes." (*You are My Son*, 59).
[85] Bauckham, "Divinity," 33-34. Cf. similarly Webster who interprets enthronement language as a reiteration of the Son's eternal reign (John Webster, "One Who Is Son: Theological Reflections on the Exordium to the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart, and Nathan MacDonald [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 91-93).

scholars such as Hurst and Schenck,[86] it is David Moffitt who has more fully developed it and given it prominence in recent years. According to David Moffitt, "when the author contrasts the angelic spirits with the royal status of the Son in Heb 1, he relies upon the assumption that the key difference between the two is that of the humanity of the Son."[87]

It has been noted above (see 1.3.2) that Moffitt emphasises physical existence as intrinsic to the Son's heavenly reign. This emphasis allows Moffitt to give due weight to the apparent change within the Son described in Hebrews 1. The Son has become superior to the angels (1:4), inherited a name (1:5), become Son (1:6) etc. through his enthronement as a resurrected physical human being.[88] In Moffitt's reading then, Hebrews 1 takes on more of a narrative shape. It is not a timeless declaration but an account of God's glorifying of the Son.

Moffit's specific emphasis on the Son's humanity may seem obscure, given that there is little, if anything, explicitly stated about the Son being human or being physical in Hebrews 1, yet Moffitt argues that these aspects remain implicit in the argument, waiting to be developed through the introduction of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2.

While the attention to a narrative flow, and specifically to a transformation through which Christ is exalted, are helpful correctives, there are three main problems with Moffitt's model.

Firstly, Moffitt's reading is built on the notion that kingship is based on corporeal existence, yet this cannot be sustained in Hebrews 1.

Moffitt has oversimplified the depiction of kingship in these chapters by viewing it all through the lens of Adamic dominion. While he notes the application of Davidic language to the Son in Hebrews 1,[89] he does not develop this observation. Instead, he explains the dominion of the Son as based on the

[86] Hurst, "Christology," 154-162; Schenck, "Celebration," 472-473.
[87] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 142.
[88] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 48-49.
[89] E.g., Moffitt, *Atonement*, 70-74, 79.

promises to Adam mediated through Psalm 8. This narrower focus on Adamic kingship allows Moffitt to argue that kingship in Hebrews 1 must be based on the humanity of the Son.[90] Hebrews 1, however, does not use any Adamic language to describe the Son's dominion. It is possible, though by no means necessary, that Hebrews has not maintained a clear distinction between Adamic and Davidic kingship. If that is the case, however, it would be further evidence that the Son's dominion is not predicated on his embodiment. Adamic and Davidic kingship have several points in common, most noticeably that they are both instituted by God as ways to mediate his own reign. But while Moffitt argues that possession of a body is the reason for Adam's reign, the same could not be said of Davidic kingship. David, as an embodied person, reigns as king, but it is not the superiority of his body that is the reason for his position above his fellow Israelites (cf. esp. 1 Sam 16:6-13).[91]

The second weakness in Moffitt's reading is that the flesh/spirit dichotomy cannot account for all the points of the comparison of the Son to angels. Moffitt's case is strongest when noting that Hebrews describes the angels as πνεύματα (1:7, 14). Through tying physicality to dominion, Moffitt's reading also accounts for images of inheritance (1:2), providence (1:3), enthronement (1:3, 8-9, 13), name (1:4), sonship (1:5), and worship (1:6). It is less clear, however, that the flesh/spirit distinction could explain the emphasis on the Son as agent of creation (1:2, 10), as the ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως of God (1:3), or as eternal (1:10-12). This appears to show that, at the very least, there is more to the contrast of the Son to angels than the possession or lack of a body.

The final reason for rejecting Moffitt's thesis is his conflation of the argument of Hebrews 1 and Hebrews 2. While seeking to maintain the unity of Hebrews 1 and 2, Moffitt has not given sufficient attention to the differences between them and so does not deal adequately with the distinctive elements in either chapter. Like Caird, Moffitt reads Hebrews 1 and 2 as an exposition of Psalm 8, but

[90] E.g., Moffitt, *Atonement*, 142-143.
[91] Even in relation to Adamic kingship it could be argued that what sets him apart is not his physicality (shared with the animals) but his being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-30).

this reading was rejected above because it requires not only that an exposition extend across a section of exhortation but also that such an interruption to the exposition take place before the text being exposited was introduced. Moffitt's version of this structure only makes this more unlikely because it requires that chapter 1 not only lacks the passage being exposited but is missing even the fundamental basis for the superiority of Christ over angels.[92]

While Moffitt rightly emphasises the exaltation of the Son as an event in Hebrews 1, rather than a timeless status, his explanation of this event as being grounded in the Son's humanity, understood specifically in terms of physicality, fails to persuade.

2.2.1.1.3 Superior as the Exalted Son

Moffitt's contention that Christ is superior to the angels *because of* his exalted humanity has been deemed unlikely, yet Bauckham's contention that the superiority of the Son is simply about his divinity also appears incomplete. A more nuanced position that incorporates the strengths of each of the previous approaches while avoiding their weaknesses has recently been offered by R. B. Jamieson.

Jamieson particularly examines what it means for Christ to be "Son," arguing that it can be used in two distinct ways. One use of the term Son is as an affirmation of Christ's divine existence. From the opening of the letter, "Hebrews acclaims the Son as divine in the fullest sense of the word."[93] The Son is pre-existent and qualified to sit on the throne of God and receive the worship of God. In this sense, "the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the title 'Son' to say of Jesus something that never has been and never could be said to one who is merely a man."[94]

The second use of the term "Son," however, is to refer to Jesus precisely as the human messiah. Jamieson argues that when Christ received a name or was begotten, this language refers specifically to his enthronement as Davidic messiah. In this sense, the name Son is only inherited when, following

[92] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 49-52.
[93] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 59.
[94] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 49.

his incarnate life, Christ is enthroned in heaven.[95] It is this enthronement that is central to Hebrews 1. Christ became superior to the angels not only because of his timeless deity but also because he sat down at the Father's right hand to begin his messianic reign.

What holds these two uses of the title "Son" together, according to Jamieson, is that only because Christ was the divine Son could he become the messianic Son.[96] The office of messiah entailed doing things that could only properly be done by God, and yet it was an office that could only be held by a man. Jamieson describes it as a "theandric office," meaning that "only one who is both divine and human can do all that the job requires."[97] The message of Hebrews 1 then is that, "When Jesus sat down, a man began to reign as God."[98]

Jamieson's thesis that the [divine] Son became the [messianic] Son is able to account for both the clear divine language of Hebrews 1 and the emphatic place of the Son's exaltation and his inheritance of a new name by which he is superior to the angels. His reading is therefore adopted in the present thesis.

The significance of Jamieson's work for our purposes is that it suggests that the exaltation of the Son in Hebrews 1, while it was the exaltation of a man, was not an exaltation on the basis of his humanity. Christ was exalted *as a man*, but he was exalted *because he is God*. While Christ's humanity is necessary to Hebrews 1, therefore, discussion of what it means for Christ to be human does not begin in a focused way until Hebrews 2.

[95] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 99-106.
[96] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 122.
[97] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 122.
[98] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 125. Schenck also sees two meanings to the title "Son." He is equivocal about the exact distinction, though Jamieson seems right in saying that for Scheck, Sonship as identity is only proleptically true prior to the Son's incarnation and enthronement. (Schenck, "Keeping His Appointment," 95-100; Jamieson, *Sonship*, 9-10).

2.2.1.2 The Significance of the Son's Superiority

2.2.1.2.1 Deity and Revelation

In Hebrews 1:1-2:4 the glory of the Son as one who shares in the identity of the one God is on display, but the author's point is not simply that the Son is glorious. The point is what the Son's glory means for how he relates to his people.[99] This is seen firstly in the emphasis on the Son as a source of revelation.[100] The exordium opens by contrasting how God had spoken with how he now speaks. The OT prophets had mediated God's previous words in many parts long ago. The angels are likewise not merely foils for Christ's glory, but, as those traditionally held to have played a role in that revelation, they function as foils to the Son's superior revelation.[101]

To further the case for the Son's superior revelation, the author describes him as ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαπακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. The prophets and angels brought a good and important but also limited and fragmentary revelation. The Son, however, perfectly expresses in his own being the nature and character of God. He is thus a perfect revelation that needs no further additions, the perfect eschatological prophet.

The initial section of Hebrews therefore concludes with a warning to pay attention (2:1-4). The divine Son has brought a far greater revelation than anything before him, and so the urgency to heed this word is also greater.[102]

The revelation of the Son is implicitly a fuller revelation in contrast to that which came πολυμερῶς και πολυτρόπως. The Son is himself the radiance of God's glory and the imprint of his being, and so he

[99] Mathias Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser*, WUNT II/41 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 50-51.
[100] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 95-98.
[101] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 91
[102] John P. Meier, "Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1,5-14," *Biblica* 66.4 (1985): 521-522; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 51.

brings a far greater revelation than the intermediaries who preceded him.[103] The Son's revelation is also explicitly a revelation with greater immediacy; it is to us in these last days rather than to the fathers long ago.[104] As the argument of the letter unfolds, it will also become clear that this revelation is better because of its content, a new and better covenant through which humans may be fully cleansed from sin and so draw near to God with confidence.[105]

2.2.1.2.2 Deity and Reign

Alongside the focus on the Son's divine revelation, a second theme rises to particular prominence in Hebrews 1:1-2:4; the Son who reigns by virtue of his deity.

This concept of authority is stressed even within the exordium by the description of the Son as the κληρονόμος πάντων,[106] by the claim that he upholds all things, and particularly by his position seated ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς.

In 1:5-14, the Son's authority continues to be emphasised. The very title "Son" is applied to Christ on the basis of verses that, in their OT context, use the title to describe the exalted reign of anointed kings (Heb 1:5; cf. Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14). The OT citations also apply to Christ other images of dominion exercised by kings, such as a throne and a sceptre (1:8-9). This authority extends over every part of creation, which he is able to simply roll up and change (1:12), and is declared once more in the climactic citation of Psalm 110 (109) in 1:13, in which the Son is again invited to sit at the right hand

[103] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 56. Ribbens and Kibbe, however, point also to the continuity of the previous revelation and that in the Son (Benjamin J. Ribbens, and Michael H. Kibbe, "'He Still Speaks!" The Authority of Scripture in Hebrews," in *Authoritative Writings in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 441 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020], 200-201).

[104] David Alan Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4: A Discourse Analysis," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 180.

[105] Some argue the revelation is not only by the Son but is the Son (Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4," 188; Webster, "One Who is Son," 79; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 90; Ribbens and Kibbe, "He Still Speaks," 200). Without denying that the Son's message is about himself, or the broader unity of the person and the message of prophets generally which will be seen in the analysis of Hebrews 2 below, there is no evidence that this idea is present in Hebrews 1:1-2. The use of ἐν after the verb λαλεω is frequently instrumental and would most naturally be read that way here. Johnson is more circumspect reading ἐν as instrumental but with some locative sense included (Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, New Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006], 65). This is possible.

[106] Possibly another allusion to Psalm 2:8 (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 94; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 92-93).

of God where his enemies will be subjugated to him. In contrast to the angels, who were sent by God with limited authority, Hebrews 1 declares that the Son is sovereign.[107]

When the author turns to his warning in 2:1-4, the focus on the Son's authority continues. The one who speaks is the Lord (2:3). The word of the Lord is not to be treated lightly. The angels were given a limited scope of authority, yet their words were binding. How much more the words of the Son who reigns at God's right hand.

Hebrews 1:1-2:4, then, casts the Son as the supreme king. In this passage it is the Son's relationship to God that fits him for this office. The Son reigns because the Father has recognised him and because he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hebrews even goes so far as to cite a description of God's own throne in Psalm 102:26-28 (LXX 101:26-28 Eng. 102:25-27) and apply it directly to the Son, apparently because what is true of God is true of the Son in his deity.

2.2.1.4 Summary

Hebrews 1:1-2:4 introduces the Son's role in revelation and his authority to reign. In each of these, he is supreme, out-performing anything that has come before. Importantly, it is the Son's deity that supports these claims. The Son is the superior revealer of God because he is the God whom he reveals. The Son is the superior ruler because he is the Lord of the universe. These two aspects of the Son's work are wound together and anchored in his divine nature.

2.2.2 The New Emphasis of Hebrews 2:5-18.

It may be useful at this juncture to outline how the themes and argument of Hebrews 1:1-2:4 progress into 2:5-18. Such an outline is necessarily dependent on the more detailed examination of Hebrews 2:5-18 that is to come.

[107] Bauckham, "Monotheism," 178; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 73; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 31-32, 53, 54; Peeler, *You are My Son*, 37, 55-56, 59.

Following 1:1-2:4, in which the author has emphasised the Son's likeness to God, Hebrews 2:5-18 is an expositional section focusing on the Son's likeness to humanity because of the incarnation.[108] The Son shared the position of humanity "a little lower that the angels" (2:9), shared human flesh and blood (2:14), suffered (2:10), and even died (2:9, 14). The Son in Hebrews 2:5-18 calls humans his brothers (2:11-13) and is made like them in every respect (2:17).

This marked shift, however, does not indicate a complete break with what has come before.[109] The superiority of the Son is still the driving theme, but is now viewed from a new angle; that of Christ's humanity.[110] In 2:5-18 Christ's glory is viewed through the lens of Psalm 8, in which it is humanity that is crowned with glory and honour. It is Christ the human, in his solidarity with humans and through his death on their behalf, who is exalted over all things.

The emphasis on the Son's dominion continues to flow through this section, but now the Son is qualified to reign not only because of his relationship with God but also because of his relationship with humanity. Psalm 8 describes dominion over the created order, and it is dominion given to humanity. It is Christ the human who receives this dominion. Similarly, Hebrews 2:12-13 quote Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) and 2 Samuel 22:3 which describe the Davidic king over God's people.

[108] France, "Biblical Expositor," 261; Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, SNTS 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 81-82; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 71; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 61. Guthrie argues that 2:5-9 is a hinge passage between the discussion of Christ's superiority to the angels and his solidarity with humanity (George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 944). This is possible but it is better to connect 2:5-9 firmly with what follows. 2:5-9 does have elements of both exaltation and solidarity, but those elements flow through the whole of 2:5-18.

[109] Note especially the use of γάρ in 2:5 (Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews*, WUNT II/269 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], 95; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 89; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 85). Contra Hughes who sees 2:5-18 as an interruption to the argument inserted to comfort suffering Christians (Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 8-9, 58, 81-82; c.f. also Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 64; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979], 21).

[110] Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 15-17; Small, *Characterization*, 270; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 145; Samuel Bénétreau, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols. (Vaux-sur-Seine, France: Edifac, 1989), 1:107.

While Christ could reign over the cosmos by virtue of his deity, the office of Davidic king entails identification with God's people that Christ only achieved by sharing their humanity.

The theme of the Son as God's greater revelation is less pronounced in Hebrews 2:5-18 but is picked up in a minor way in 2:13, where the Son is likened to Isaiah the prophet. While the Son needed to be like God in order to reveal God, Hebrews 2 presents the Son in prophetic imagery. The prophet not only speaks the word of God but models a faithful response to it.

Hebrews 2:5-18 will also bring to the fore other themes, such as Christ's sacrifice and his priesthood, which 1:1-2:4 had kept in the background. It is not a slavish echo of 1:1-2:4. There is, however, substantial thematic continuity. Both passages declare Christ's glory and dominion, yet they approach the theme from different angles. Christ is the one to whom the Hebrews are to pay attention because he is divine (1:1-2:4) and because he is human (2:5-18).

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has found that Hebrews 2:5-18 is a suitable unit for examination as a unified exposition of Psalm 8. These verses have significant thematic continuity with 1:1-2:4 yet are discontinuous at a most substantial point, namely, while 1:1-2:4 explains Christ's glory by reference to his deity, 2:5-18 explains it in relation to his humanity.

3 An Examination of Psalm 8

3.1 Introduction

It has been argued above that Hebrews 2:5-18 can be understood as an exposition of Psalm 8. Before delving into the exposition then, it is appropriate to briefly examine the text on which the author's argument is based. The psalm is a passage of immense significance about which much has been written, and this thesis will not offer a comprehensive exposition. Instead, following a brief summary of the psalm, a number of points of particular relevance to its use in Hebrews will be examined.

3.2 Overview of Psalm 8

Psalm 8 is, in essence, a paean to God's glory. This is clearly seen in the inclusio which frames it: יהוה אדנינו מה־אדיר שמך בכל־הארץ (Ps 8:2,10 [1,9]).[111] Psalm 8 is sometimes also classified as a "creation psalm."[112] It recounts the glory of God, particularly as seen through his forming of the universe, from the great heavenly bodies (Ps 8:4 [3]) to the beasts, birds, and fish (Ps 8:8-9 [7-8]). The central element of creation on which the psalmist reflects, however, is humanity. In 8:4 (3) the psalmist notes the grandeur of the heavens, and then in 8:5 (4) he comes to the central question of the psalm: מה־אנוש כי־תזכרנו ובן־אדם כי תפקדנו. This question is not primarily a philosophical question regarding ontology. It is a rhetorical question implying the response, "nothing." Within the immense and magnificent

[111] J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 57; Leonard P. Maré, "The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:6-9. Part I," in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception,* ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn LHBOTS 527 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 105; Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*. 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 107; Derek Kidner, *Pslams 1-72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*, TOTC (Leicester: IVP, 1976), 65-66; Gerda de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation and Humankind in Psalm 8, the Septuagint and Hebrews," in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn, LHBOTS 527 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 69; John Goldingay, *Psalms,* 3 vols; Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 1:154; Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms,* New International Biblical Commentary 11 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 71; Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 22-23; James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 65-66.

[112] Craigie, *Psalms*, 106; Maré, "Messianic Interpretation," 103; Chris L. De Wet, "The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:6-9: Part II," in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn, LHBOTS 527 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 118; A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 100; Ellen T. Charry, *Psalms 1-50: Sighs and Songs of Israel,* Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015), 40; Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 120.

creation, mankind seems small and insignificant.[113] This question thus sets the background for the wonder expressed at the attention God has chosen to show human beings.

Verses 6-9 (5-8) are then given over to recounting how God has expressed his concern for humanity. God has chosen to honour the otherwise insignificant human with a place only a little lower than אלהים and make him ruler over all other living things. As Craigie summarises it:

> From an objective perspective, human beings are but the tiniest fragments of a giant universe; it is not conceivable that they could have significance or a central position in that universe. But the name of God, through which revelation comes, indicates that the very opposite is true.[114]

This basic outline of the psalm is largely agreed upon.[115] There are, however, several details requiring further examination before returning to Hebrews 2:5-18.

3.3 Background

The first question demanding attention is the background of the psalm. We have mentioned that this is a creation psalm. Several commentators go further, either arguing or assuming that Psalm 8 is consciously reflecting on the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3.[116]

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[113] deClaissé-Walford et. al., *Psalms*, 124; Craigie, *Psalms*, 108; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:159; Broyles, *Psalms*, 72; Hans-Jehoiachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986); translation of *Thelogie der Psalmen* (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 148-149; Anderson, *Psalms*, 102; contra Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews*, trans. J. J. Pelikan and W. A. Hansen (St Louis: Concordia, 1968), 128.

[114] Craigie, *Psalms*, 108.

[115] Wenceslaus Mkeni Urassa, *Psalm 8 and Its Christological Re-Interpretations in the New Testament Context: An Inter-Contextual Study in Biblical Hermeneutics*, European University Studies XXIII/577 (New York: P. Lang, 1998), 39-41; 50-57; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 944-945; Craigie, *Psalms*, 106, 8-109; Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, NABPR 10 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1994), 91; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 71.

[116] de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 70; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary,* trans. Hilton C. Oswald, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988); Translation of *Psalmen 1-59* (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 180; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:159; Mays, *Psalms,* 67; Charry, *Psalms*, 40-41; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 73; George H. Guthrie and Russell D. Quinn, "A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9," *JETS* 49.2 (2006): 236. Others find Canaanite myths in the Psalm though for a response see Hubert James Keener, *A Canonical Exegesis of the Eighth Psalm: YHWH's Maintenance of the Created Order through Divine Intervention*, JTISup 9 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 52-54.

In favour of this view are the significant overlaps between the two passages. Not only do both reflect on the ordering of creation, but they do so using similar concepts. In Genesis 1, God makes humanity in his own image and likeness. Some suggest that this is reflected in Psalm 8's description of humanity as a little lower than אלהים.[117] In Genesis 1, God's command gives humanity dominion over all the creatures he has made, and so in Psalm 8, God places humans over all creatures. At this point particularly, the similarities go from merely overlapping themes to the use of the same literary form to express such themes; both Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 express humanity's dominion with a list of creatures on the earth, in the sky, and in the sea, over which humanity is to rule.[118]

There are, however, also significant differences between Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Psalm 8. Firstly, the shared vocabulary between the two passages is surprisingly small, and what vocabulary is shared is often used differently.[119] At the thematic level, there are also noticeable differences. Firstly, in Genesis 1 creation is brought forth by the word of God. In Psalm 8, however, it is the work of his fingers (8:4 [3]) or hands (8:7 [6]).[120] Secondly, while both passages present the ideal dominion of humanity, only

[117] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 103; Kidner, *Psalms*, 67.

[118] Note, however, that the order of elements is reversed in Psalm 8 (Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 51, 103).

[119] Genesis 1:1-2:3 uses ארץ 21 times, two of which are prefixed by כל, matching the phrase כל־הארץ in Psalm 8 (though Genesis 1 never explicitly connects this phrase with God's glory). Genesis 1:1-2:3 uses שמים 11 times, and Psalm 8 uses it thrice. The verb ראה is used 8 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and once in Psalm 8, though in Genesis God looks at what he has made while in Psalm 8 it is the psalmist who looks at creation. בהמה is used thrice in Genesis 1 and once in Psalm 8, though never in Genesis 1 is it qualified by שדי. נתן is used twice in Genesis 1 and once in Psalm 8. Genesis 1:1-2:3 used the verb שבת twice of God's rest while Psalm 8 employs it for the destruction of his enemies. אדם is used twice in Gen 1 but never בן־אדם. אלהים is used 36 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and once in Psalm 8 but it is debated whether it refers to God in Psalm 8 (see section 3.5.4). The verb משל is used in both chapters but in Genesis the heavenly bodies rule while in Psalm 8 mankind does. There are a few other near matches: עשה is used 10 times in Genesis but never מעשה as in Psalm 8. דג is used in Psalm 8 while Gen 1 uses the feminine דגה. Given the similarities in theme and form, this lack of shared words being used in the same way is substantial.

The language which Psalm 8 didn't adopt if it was based on Genesis 1 is also noteworthy. Key terms from Genesis 1 such as ברא and טוב are absent in the psalm (cf. also significant terms from Psalm 8 not found in Genesis 1:1-2:3: יהוה, אדון, אדיר, שם, הוד, עולל, יונק, יסד, עז, צרר, אויב, נקם, אצבע, ירח, כון, אנוש, זכר, פקד, חסר, מעט, כבוד, הדר, עטר, יד, שית תחת־רגל, עבר ארחות עמים). Even more significant are the terms for which Psalm 8 has employed synonyms. In talking of God אלהים has been replaced by יהוה. The language for humanity has shifted from אדם to אנוש and the phrase בן־אדם. Humanity's rule is described with the verb משל and the phrase תחת־רגל rather than רדה or כבש. Similarly, terms for creation have been changed so that ירח replaces מאור, צנה and אלף are used while רמש is omitted, צפור replaces עוף, and ים replaces מים.

[120] J. H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 80.

Psalm 8 reflects on the frailty of humanity.[121] Finally, Psalm 8 reflects on the silencing of God's enemies (8:3 [2]). While a few have found echoes of opposition to God in Genesis 1:1-2:3,[122] it is more likely that Genesis 1 avoids any hint of powers that may rival or be hostile towards God. In Genesis 1, creation is the unopposed work of a perfectly sovereign God.[123] These differences do not indicate that the creation account of Psalm 8 is antithetical to that of Genesis 1. Like Genesis 1:1-2:3, Psalm 8 presents the transcendent sovereignty of God over creation and the dominion of humanity within it in a way that minimises all other claims to power.[124] While Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 agree on this broader point, however, they employ different images to express it.

In light of both the considerable similarities and the significant differences between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1:1-2:3, some have suggested that, while the two are related, it is better to see their relationship as indirect. Keener, for instance, suggests that, "Psalm 8 reflects another version of the creation account that is similar in substance to, yet distinct in vocabulary from Genesis 1," and Anderson thinks it probable that, "both come from the same circles."[125] Another possibility would be that Psalm 8 was composed by someone whose worldview was formed by the creation account of Genesis 1 but who was not intentionally echoing that account, or even that the psalmist was directly reflecting on Genesis 1 but with a significant amount of creativity and freedom to deviate from the language and images of that passage.

It is impossible to be certain of the exact relationship between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1:1-2:3, yet in any of these understandings, one finds a significant overlap of themes but not a forced adherence to the way such themes are expressed. Such a relationship is significant for the interpretation of Psalm 8

[121] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 127.
[122] E.g., Westerman, 104.
[123] Eaton, *Psalms*, 80; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 73; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 105, 110-111, 113, 127-128; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 15,* WBC 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), 16, 21.
[124] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 106, 108-109; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 74.
[125] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 100; Anderson, *Psalms*, 100; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 270. Others such as Maré ("Messianic Interpretation," 104-105), Tate (*Exposition*, 356) and Craigie (*Psalms*, 106) are content to note the similarities without probing the relationship.

because it leads one to expect broad similarities with Genesis 1:1-2:3 without demanding rigid correspondences in the use of terms or images with which such themes are portrayed.

3.4 Temporal Reference

A second question to be examined is the temporal reference of Psalm 8: Is it a psalm about the original state of humanity, about the created order when the psalm was composed, or about a future reality?

As has been noted above, Psalm 8 is generally understood as a reflection on God's ordering of creation. The relationship of Psalm 8 to Genesis 1 suggests that this is not a timeless image of the order God has established but a reflection on that order prior to the introduction of sin. Several commentators, in light of both the relationship of the psalm to Genesis 1 and the absence of any mention of human guilt and depravity, suggest that Psalm 8 meditates on the original, pristine state of humanity before the fall.[126] Some have even suggested that the "I" of Psalm 8 is the primal man.[127]

While this focus on the original state of creation is clear, it is unlikely that either Psalm 8 or, in fact, Genesis 1:1-2:3, was written merely about a pristine past. Instead, the psalmist draws on this picture of the original creation as a reason for praise in the present. The ordering established from the beginning is clearly understood to find expression in the psalmist's own day. While Genesis 3 will go on to describe the "fall" and its damage to the created order and Psalm 8 will speak of foes and enemies that threaten God's order, both understand God's created purposes to persist. Psalm 8 describes what humanity continues, albeit imperfectly, to be.[128]

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[126] Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 86-87; Mays, *Psalms,* 69; Eaton, *Psalms*, 81.

[127] Kraus, *Psalms*, 180; cf. Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 130-131.

[128] Similar continuity between pre and post fall humanity is seen closer to the time of Hebrews in the writing of Philo. While Philo sees vast difference between Adam and his later descendants (*Opif*, 136, 140-141), he writes, "And it cannot be but that his descendants, who partake of his original character, must preserve some traces of their relationship to their father, though they may be but faint." (*Opif*, 145). One characteristic that Philo sees preserved is dominion over creation:

> Since even those who have been born so many generations afterwards, when the race is becoming weakened by reason of the long intervals of time that have elapsed since the beginning of the world, do still exert the same power over irrational beasts, preserving as it were a spark of the dominion and

Some commentators further suggest that Psalm 8 has an element of future hope. While the glorious position of humanity in God's original creation finds echoes in the psalmist's world, the extravagant language of the psalm cannot but awaken some recognition of dissonance between description and experience. In much of life, the psalm's description of humanity in its glory would not find concrete expression.[129] It is unlikely that this song would have been written and sung in denial of the real-life situations of those who sang it or in nostalgia for something that was lost forever. Instead, the psalm most likely declares not just of what was and is in part but also what "ought to be."[130] In projecting this image of life as intended by God, Psalm 8 generates hope that such could again be realised.[131]

Drawing these strands together, Psalm 8 may be described as a psalm reflecting on the position of humanity within the original creation, under the conviction that this continues to inform humanity's place in the present creation, and likely also expressing hope for a future when humanity will again realise the full dimensions of God's intention for them.

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power which has been handed down to them by succession from their first ancestor. (Opif, 148, Yonge trans.).

[129] Craigie, *Psalms*, 110; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 46; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 129.

[130] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 129. Craigie finds further support for this future expectation of the psalm in the tenses of the verbs in Psalm 8:6-7 (5-6). While noting the unresolved complexities of Hebrew verb tenses, Craigie suggests that the variation is significant. He posits that it may reflect a chiastic description which moves from past (ותחסרהו) to future (תעטרהו and תמשילהו) and back to past (שתה) (Craigie, *Psalms*, 105-106; 110-113). This reading of the tenses has not yet received widespread acceptance. Goldingay agrees with the basic idea of a chiasm in the tense but interprets the imperfect verbs as referring to the present (*Psalms*, 1:159). Keener suggests that the variation of tensed simply gives the psalm, "a timeless quality" (*Canonical Exegesis*, 56). Urassa tries to solve the problem simply by noting that, "there are some *yiqtols* with no *iterative or durative* aspect and thus having [sic] the value of qatal" (*Psalm 8*, 38).

[131] Cf. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 46; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 276-277, 282. Contra Kraus, *Psalms*, 185-186; Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 58; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:160-161; Steve Moyise, *The Later New Testament Writings and Scripture: The Old Testament in Acts, Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 87. Terrien suggests the Psalm may refer to a messianic figure, though he gives no evidence (Terrien, *Psalms*, 130-131).

Gheorghita has argued that the LXX gives Psalm 8 an eschatological flavour which may be significant if the author was dependent on the LXX (Radu Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews: An Investigation of its Influence with Special Consideration to the Use of Hab 2:3-4 in Heb 10:37-38*, WUNT II/160 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 134). If Craigie's interpretation of the Hebrew imperfect tense (see above footnote) is correct, however, the LXX has in fact lost some of the most important grammatical indications of future expectation. Urassa also argues that early Rabbinic exegesis and midrashim saw a future expectation in this psalm (Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 106-112).

3.5 Key Figures in Psalm 8

Having considered the background and temporal orientation of Psalm 8, we now turn to the identity and significance of three figures which have caused considerable confusion. The ינקים/עללים and the מתנקם/אויב/צוררים of 8:3 (2) and the אלהים of 8:6 (5).

3.5.1 Children

The first significant figure in Psalm 8, aside from YHWH himself, is the children or infants (ינקים/עללים) of 8:3 (2). An examination of their identity and purpose within the psalm will begin with consideration of the structure of the psalm.

3.5.1.1 Structure

The MT punctuation has a sillûq at the end of 8:2 (1) and another one at the end of 8:3 (2). This suggests that the ינקים/עללים find their meaning in relation to the rest of 8:3 (2), and particularly the enemies in the second half of the verse. Some, however, have argued that this structure is awkward. Kraut, for instance, suggests that this leaves 8:2c (1c) standing as a single line followed by a tristich in 8:3 (2), six distichs in 8:4-9 (3-8), and a repeat of the opening affirmation in 8:10 (9). He argues that a clearer structure emerges if the punctuation is amended so that 8:2c (1c) is read as the opening part of a distich concluded in 8:3a (2a) (to ינקים). 8:3b (2b) (from יסדת) then begins a new distich. According to this structure, there are eight distichs enclosed by the repeated inclusio.[132] If this amended structure is adopted, the infants become the means of setting God's glory above the heavens rather than silencing his enemies.[133] The enemies may instead be silenced by God directly, perhaps because he is protecting the infants.[134]

[132] Judah Kraut, "The Birds and the Babes: The Structure and Meaning of Psalm 8," *JQR* 100.1 (2010): 13-14; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:155-156.
[133] Kraut, "The Birds," 12, 14.
[134] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:156-157.

The apparent strength of Kraut's interpretation is that it cleans up the structure of the psalm, yet Kraut overstates both the difficulty with the psalm as found in the MT and the level of balance achieved by his emendation. His emended punctuation yields substantial variation in the length of the lines within each distich.[135] More significantly, a workable structure can be achieved by reading the psalm as composed not of eight distichs but as four quatrains, each expressing a central theme.[136] There is therefore no need to depart from the tradition preserved in the MT, a tradition that was clearly already present among first-century Christians.[137]

3.5.1.2 The Role of the Children

Taking the psalm as punctuated in the MT, one must consider who these infants are and how they establish strength for the silencing of God's enemies.

Most interpreters agree that the infants are powerless, whether interpreted as actual children or as an image of the powerless more generally.[138]

These powerless "children" establish the strength, or perhaps a bulwark, of God through their mouths.[139] The reference to mouths suggests some form of speech. Opinions differ as to what that speech might be,[140] but more important than the form of the words is their meaning, and on this, there is a broad agreement; these "children" are praising God.[141] Some commentators develop this

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[135] Kraus, *Psalms*, 179.

[136] Terrien lists out the themes of the quatrains as: 8:2c-3 (1c-2) – The Majesty of God; 8:4-5 (3-4) – The Fragility of Man; 8:6-7 (5-6) – The Greatness of Man; 8:8-9 (7-8) – The Service of Animals (Terrien, *Psalms*, 126). This simple structure also avoids the difficulties formed by Kraut's more detailed chiasm in which for instance, 8:2c-3a (1c-2a) is required to match 8:9 (8) or 8:3bc (2bc) to match 8:8 (7) (cf. Kraut, "The Birds," 17-23).

[137] Cf. Matt 21:16

[138] Craigie, *Psalms*, 107; Broyles, *Psalms*, 70-71; Marvin E. Tate, "An Exposition of Psalm 8," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28.4 (2001): 351; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 54-56. Goldingay particularly emphasises children as victims of injustice (*Psalms*, 1:155-156). Smith, pointing to some ANE myths, argues instead that they are divine children which threaten the created order and thus are the enemies (Mark S. Smith, "Psalm 8:2b-3: New Proposals for Old Problems," *CBQ* 59 [1997]: 639-641).

[139] Tate, "Exposition,"351.

[140] E.g., incomprehensible babble of infants, the words of older children, or, if infants are a metaphor, the speech of the powerless (cf. Mays, *Psalms*, 66; Tate, "Exposition," 351).

[141] "מפי will in the context of the hymn have to be considered a brachyology – and that in the sense of 'from the praise of the mouth…'" (Kraus, *Psalms*, 181; cf. Walter Harrelson, "Psalm 8 on the Power and Mystery of Speech,"

further, noting that the whole psalm is devoted to the praise of YHWH's name, as seen in the inclusio of 8:2 (1) and 8:10 (9), and concluding that it is in confessing the name of YHWH that the "infants" find strength against God's enemies. The "infants" are weak and feeble in themselves, but their declaration of the name of YHWH is the means by which God's power is manifested against his enemies.[142]

3.5.2 Enemies

With this understanding of the children and infants, we can turn to consider the identity of God's enemies.

3.5.2.1 The Nature of the Enemies

Before addressing the identity of the enemies, it will be useful to consider their nature. Psalm 8 addresses God and speaks of "*your* enemies" (צוררֶיךָ; 8:3 [2]). This appears to be a parallel description with the synonymous אויב and with the מתנקם in the later part of the verse.[143] The use of מתנקם, however, might seem out of place for God's enemies because it refers to vengeance or revenge.[144] Peels observes that in approximately 85% of occurrences of נקם it is God himself who carries out vengeance, and several other occurrences refer to the just retribution called for by the OT Law.[145] He suggests that, "The idea of legitimacy and competent authority is inherent in the root *nqm*' and that the term is generally avoided in cases of illegitimate revenge."[146] There are a few instances where the

in *Tehilla le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, ed. M. Cogan, B. L. Eichler and J. H. Tigay [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997], 72; Kraut, "The Birds," 12-13; Schafer, 23). This interpretation also appears to lie behind the LXX - ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον.

[142] Craigie, *Psalms*, 107; Harrelson, "Psalm 8," 70, 72. Tate notes the possibility of more than just praise being referred to (e.g., petition, teaching, prophecy) but again notes the centrality of the declaration of YHWH's name (*Exposition*, 351).

[143] Tyler F. Williams, "איב," *NIDOTTE* 1:366.

[144] See Hendrik G. L. Peels, "נקם," *NIDOTTE*, 3:154-156; E. Lipiński, "נָקַם; נָקָם; נְקָמָה," *TDOT* 10:1-9; G. Sauer, "נקם, Nqm, to Avenge," TLOT 2:767-769.

[145] Peels, *NIDOTTE*, 3:154. Cf. Lipiński, 2, 3-5, 8-9.

[146] Peels, *NIDOTTE*, 3:154.

term refers to human vengefulness or is related to enemies.[147] However, while such instances cast the acts of retribution in a negative light, they do not negate the notion of responding to a grievance.[148]

Goldingay points out the awkwardness of applying this definition to God's enemies. If God has an avenger, it implies that God has done something for which retribution is to be given. Goldingay seeks to solve this problem by suggesting a change of object between 8:3a (2a) and 8:3b (2b). While the צורר is God's צורר, the אויב and the מתנקם are the adversaries of the infants.[149] This maintains that God is innocent and is therefore not liable to be paid back for any wrongdoing, while his people will sometimes appropriately be the recipients of retribution. This explanation is possible, but there is no grammatical or structural indication of a change in object.

A variation on Goldingay's suggestion would be to understand the three terms to have one referent but see them through the lens of God's covenant with his people. The enemies of God are often those who attack his people and who carry out retribution on his people. While the avengers' actions are directed against God's people, this is ultimately an affront to God himself.[150]

3.5.2.2 The Identity of the Enemies

Having suggested that those opposing God are carrying out vengeance and opposing his people, we now consider the identity of these foes.

Some suggest that the psalmist alludes to creation accounts which, unlike Genesis 1, depict God's creation in terms of a cosmic battle. God's enemies are the forces of chaos that he subdued at creation

[147] Peels notes Lev 19:18; Psa 44:17; Lam 3:60; Ezek 25:12, 15 (*NIDOTTE*, 3:156).
[148] The only use which may appear not to entail avenging is Psalm 44:17 (16). While the psalmist protests innocence, however, it is the incongruity of the situation that is central to his cry, and thus vengeance is likely still in view. (cf. Craigie, *Psalms*, 333-334; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:44-47).
[149] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:157.
[150] On Israel's enemies being God's enemies see Helmer Ringgren, "אָיַב; אוֹיֵב; אֵיבָה," *TDOT* 1:215-216; Helmer Ringgren, "צָרַר; צוֹרֵר; צרר," *TDOT* 12:466-467; Williams, *NIDOTTE* 1:367; and references cited there.

(e.g., Job 26:12-13; Psalm 74:13-14; 89:10-11 (9-10); Isa 51:9).[151] As noted above, the relationship between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 is not close enough to rule this out, though it weighs against such a reading.[152] That these forces are silenced by the mouths of "infants," however, makes this interpretation particularly difficult. No other passage which uses the image of cosmic warfare for creation suggests that humanity, or anything else that could be identified with "infants," was involved, and the presence of infants suggests that the world in which they live has already been established. Finally, the portrayal of God's enemy as a מתנקם seems out of place in the creation context where there is no history of offences for which retribution is due.

One could maintain an identification of God's primordial foes, whether an identification of identity or symbol, with the enemies of Psalm 8 only if God's victory over them continues to be enacted in the world of the psalmist.[153] This would be comparable to other passages which use the image of a cosmic battle at creation and relate it to God's ongoing subjection of his enemies.[154] In this case, Psalm 8 refers to God's defeat of cosmic powers which oppose his purposes. Equating the enemies of Psalm 8 with cosmic powers would also be possible, however, without any connection to the image of creation as cosmic warfare, and in avoiding that connection, one would avoid the abovementioned difficulties

[151] Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 68-69; Anderson, *Psalms*, 102; DeClaisse, et.al. 123-124; Goldingay, 1:156-157; C. L. Crouch, "Made in the Image of God: The Creation of אדם, the Commissioning of the King and the *Chaoskampf* of YHWH," *JANER* 16 (2016): 16-17; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 275. Jacobson suggests that עז is, "part of the vocabulary or creation conflict myth" (DeClaisse, et.al. 123-124), while Goldingay suggests that the verb יסד is used to describe God's founding of creation (*Psalms*, 1:156). While both words would be suitable for creation contexts, however, they also frequently occur in other contexts. In fact, of the 44 instances of עז in the Psalms, only 6 are clearly related to creation (Ps 29:1; 74:13; 89:11 (10); 93:1; 96:6, 7), and of the ten uses of the Piel form of יסד in the OT this would be the only one to refer to creation.

[152] Crouch argues that Genesis 1 is a reworked version of an account which originally contained the theme of a cosmic war at creation, yet concludes that its present form it is, "a narrative designed to eliminate any element of the *Chaoskampf* creation myth which might threaten YHWH's sole sovereignty" (Crouch, "Made in the Image," 7-13; cf. Keener, *Canonical Exegesis,* 106).

[153] Crouch, "Made in the Image," 16-18.

[154] Psalm 74 relates the defeat of Leviathan (74:13-14) with God's salvation (74:12) and a call for him to act against his foes in the present (74:4-11, 18-19, 22-23). Psalm 89 relates the defeat of Rahab (89:11 [10]) to the defeat of the enemies of Israel's king (89:20-30 [19-29]). Isaiah 51 relates the defeat of Rahab (51:9) to drying up the sea so that the redeemed could cross over (51:10).

with it. God's enemies would simply be those powers that continue to oppose his will, regardless of their origins or history.

A different possibility is that the enemies of Psalm 8 are proud and arrogant humans. In contrast to the humble "infants" who confess God's name, these people reject God and rebel against his ways.[155] Their enmity toward God is manifest in their acts of aggression toward Israel or toward righteous individuals.[156] They may thus be given power to avenge but will ultimately be silenced by those who praise YHWH.

These two options, however, may not be entirely discrete. The cosmic adversaries of God are sometimes connected with people and nations in history which harm his people.[157] Furthermore, a number of commentators point out that, in leaving his terms undefined, the psalmist can refer to the broad spectrum of "beings and forces, human and non-human, seeking to impede or thwart the purposes of Yahweh in creation."[158] God's enemies, whether cosmic forces in rebellion against him, humans who arrogantly oppose him, or some conglomeration of the two, will all be silenced by the trust and praise of the "infants."

It was concluded above that Psalm 8 speaks of what was established in the past because of its ongoing partial expression in the present, and likely also its expected restoration in the future. The above discussion noted the difficulty of placing God's enemies in the context of creation. Enemies, and particularly avenging enemies, seem out of place in that context. These enemies, however, are forces that threaten the created order. They should be understood, therefore, as present in the world of the psalmist, causing it to fall short of the original creation he describes. But while the enemies threaten

[155] Craigie, *Psalms*, 107; Schafer, 23.
[156] The words צורר and אויב are frequently used of both individuals and nations (Ringgren, *TDOT* 12:466-467; Williams, *NIDOTTE* 1:366-367, 368-369)
[157] E.g., Job 1:15, 17.
[158] Tate, "Exposition," 351; Cf. Harrelson, "Psalm 8," 70-71.

and damage the created order, they are kept at bay by the faith of the "infants," ensuring that some limited expression of God's intention continues to find realisation in the present world.

If the above reading is correct, the silencing of God's enemies is also central to the future expectation of the psalm. The psalm anticipates the restoration of creation. That reality is unrealised in the present because of God's enemies, but his enemies will be silenced, and when they are, God's intentions for creation will again find full expression. The means by which God silences his enemies and fulfils his eschatological purposes is the faith and praise of frail humanity.

3.5.3 Psalm 8:3 (2) within Psalm 8

Having attended to 8:3 (2), a few comments are in order concerning how this verse relates to the subsequent picture of seemingly insignificant humanity exalted over creation. Keener notes that while 8:3 (2) is almost an excursus, it corresponds to the larger body of the psalm as it unfolds in 8:4-9 (3-8). Just as the infants are weak and insignificant, so humanity is as nothing in comparison to the heavenly beings. Nevertheless, it is from the mouths of children that God will enact his dominion over hostile forces, and it is through humanity that he maintains his rule over creation.[159] These two images, then, become mutually explanatory. The human relationship with God in 8:4-9 (3-8) echoes the relationship of praise expressed by the "infant" that takes YHWH's name upon its lips. Similarly, the dominion of humanity over creation in the second half of the psalm probably includes the subjection of hostile forces within that creation in the first half.[160]

3.5.4 אלהים

The third figure in this psalm that requires identification is אלהים. אלהים in the OT most commonly refers to the God of Israel, though it is also regularly used for other "gods." Sometimes these "gods"

[159] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 56-57. Cf. also Benjamin J. Segal, *A New Psalm: The Psalms as Literature* (Springfield, NJ: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2013), 39-40; Craigie, *Psalms*, 107-108; Broyles, *Psalms*, 70-71.

[160] Cf. Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 57. Costley suggests that this connection is strengthened by the LXX ὅτι in place of כי in 8:4 (3) (Costley, *Creation and Christ*, 205-206).

are impotent or deceptions (e.g., 1 Chr 16:26/Ps 96:5) while elsewhere they simply appear as forces inferior to YHWH (e.g., Ex 18:11; 2 Ch 2:4 [5]; Ps 86:8) and sometimes they are even called to worship YHWH (e.g., Ps 97:7).[161] God can be described as surrounded by a council of "gods" over whom he is sovereign as the אלהי האלהים (e.g., Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2; cf. Ps 82:1; 138:1).[162] These figures may be equivalent to the בני אלהים which surround God elsewhere (e.g., Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). In such instances, אלהים likely refers to angelic beings.[163]

In describing the state of humanity, Psalm 8 declares that YHWH has made humans a little lower than אלהים. The ambiguity of אלהים has led interpreters to understand this either as a reference to humanity's position in relation to God or in relation to divine/heavenly beings, particularly angels.

Many throughout the history of interpretation have understood the אלהים of Psalm 8 to refer to God. Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion used θεός to translate אלהים.[164] The Psalms Midrash interprets it as a reference to God (*Midr. Pss 8.7*), and Calvin suggests this as the view of Jewish interpreters he is aware of.[165] Many modern commenters also favour this position.[166] Its main strength is that this is by far the most frequent way the OT uses אלהים. The relationship between Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 may also favour this understanding, since מעט מאלהים could refer to humanity בצלם אלהים (Gen 1:27).[167]

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[161] David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and John W. Rogerson, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 277-286; Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 43-44.

[162] Cf. deSilva, *Perseverance*, 93-94. Occasionally אלהים may even refer to human judges (Exod 21:6; 22:7, 8; BDB, 43) or the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 28:13; Clines et al., *Dictionary*, 286; HALOT, 53).

[163] Cf. BDB, 43. Stec notes that the Qumran documents frequently use אלהים in referring to angels (David M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*. The Aramaic Bible 16 [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004], 37). The LXX uses ἄγγελοι to translate אלהים in Psalms 8:6 [5], 96:7 (MT and ET 97:7) and 137:1 (MT and ET 138:1) and בני האלהים/בני אלהים in Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7.

[164] Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 72; Craigie, *Psalms*, 108 ; Margaret Kim Peterson, "Psalm 8: A Theological and Historical Analysis of Its Interpretation" (PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1998), 44.

[165] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 103.

[166] E.g., Craigie, *Psalms*, 108; Lanier Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues and Principles in Hebrews as Exemplified in the Second Chapter," *JETS* 39.4 (1996): 598; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 78; Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 72; Tate, "Exposition," 355; Kraut, "The Birds," 23; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:159; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 72.

[167] Craigie, *Psalms*, 108. Cf. Kidner, *Psalms*, 67; Terrien, *Psalms*, 131; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 103; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 88; Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 53; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946.

Other ancient interpreters, however, including several early translations (LXX, Syriac, Targums, Vulgate)[168] and medieval Jewish scholars (Rashi [1040-1105] and Redak [1160-1235])[169] have understood אלהים as a reference to heavenly beings other than God. Some have dismissed the testimony of the early translations and other Jewish sources, suggesting that they were motivated by theological sensitivities and sought to safeguard divine transcendence.[170] While this is possible, the fact that several early interpretations of this psalm understood אלהים as angels remains significant, particularly as some of them had no Christological motivation for doing so.[171]

Reading אלהים as "heavenly beings" or "angels" has also received considerable support from modern exegetes, both Jewish and Christian.[172] While this is the less common meaning of אלהים, it is still well attested in the OT.[173] Eaton notes that, it would be awkward, though not unprecedented, to speak to God in the third person.[174] Anderson further points out that the tenor of the psalm is exalting the transcendence of God and that a reference to humans as only slightly less than him would be jarring.[175] While a definitive conclusion may not be possible, there is good reason to take אלהים as a reference to heavenly beings/angels as Hebrews itself has done.

[168] Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 72; Craigie, *Psalms*, 108 ; M. Peterson, "Psalm 8," 44.
[169] A. J. Rosenberg, ed. *The Book of Psalms: A New English Translation*, Judaica Books of the Hagiographa (New York: Judaica Press, 1991), 27.
[170] Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 72; Craigie, *Psalms*, 108; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 78; Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 598.
[171] Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 107.
[172] E.g., Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1-50,* AB 16 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 51; Eaton, *Psalms*, 81; Kraus, *Theology*, 149; Stec, *The Targum of the Psalms*, 37; Terrien, *Psalms*, 130; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 24-25; Avrohom Chaim Feuer, Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, *Tehilim: A New Translation with Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources*, ArtScroll Tanach (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1985), 127; Charry, *Psalms*, 43; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 89-90; Clifford, *Psalms*, 69; Anderson, *Psalms*, 103; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 71. Bratcher and Reyburn favour reading "a god" not in comparison to other heavenly beings but simply as a reference to humanity as not quite divine (Robert G. Bratcher, and Willian David Reyburn, *A Handbook on Psalms*, UBS Handbook [New York: United Bible Societies, 1993], 82).
[173] Clifford, *Psalms*, 69; Stec, *The Targum of the Psalms*, 37.
[174] Eaton, *Psalms*, 81.
[175] Anderson, *Psalms*, 103.

3.6 Kingship

Two broader themes in the psalm will finally be considered before turning to its use in Hebrews: what the psalm says about kingship and how it presents humanity.

Jacobson notes that alongside the theme of creation in Psalm 8 comes a secondary theme of royalty.[176] The ultimate king of Psalm 8 is clearly YHWH himself. His name is majestic; his glory is over the heavens; and he establishes strength against his enemies: indeed, YHWH has the power to define the authority of humanity over creation.[177]

Psalm 8 also attributes royal images to humans. Terms such as עטר and משל as well as כבוד and הדר are frequently associated with royalty, whether God's or that of other kings. The subjugation of all creatures under the feet of the human also emphaises dominion.[178] Humanity in Psalm 8 is thus a royal figure, but it is not the absolute monarch. The glory, honour, and dominion of humanity are all given by God. The relationship between God and humanity appears to be similar to a Suzerain treaty. God, the absolute sovereign, has granted kingship to humanity. Human dominion is therefore not absolute but derivative and is only legitimate within the relationship through which it comes.[179]

The enthronement of humanity as a whole raises questions concerning the relationship of this psalm to humans who reign as kings over other humans. Some suggest that the purpose of Psalm 8 is the "democratisation" of power. By enthroning all humans, the psalm undercuts the claim of any one human to ascend a throne over another.[180] It is unlikely, however, that the psalm should be understood this way. A significant indication of this is the superscript. At whatever point it was

[176] De-Claissé-Walford, et. al., *Psalms*, 120.
[177] De-Claissé-Walford, et. al., *Psalms*, 120.
[178] De-Claissé-Walford, et. al., *Psalms*, 125; Tate, "Exposition," 355; Eaton, *Psalms*, 81; Clifford, *Psalms*, 69-70.
[179] James L. Mays, "What is a Human Being?: Reflections on Psalm 8" *Theology Today* 50 (1994): 518; *Psalms*, 69; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:159; Eaton, *Psalms*, 81; Kraus, *Theology,* 149-150; Feuer et al., *Tehilim*, 128; Maré, "Messianic Interpretation," 111.
[180] Eckart Otto, "Hermeneutics of Biblical Theology, History of Religion and the Theological Substance of Two Testaments: The Reception of Psalms in Hebrews," in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception,* ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn, LHBOTS 527 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 12-15; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 74-76; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:159.

attached to the psalm, it would appear that interpreters saw no conflict between the royalty of humanity described in the psalm and the king to whom this psalm is ascribed.[181] It seems instead that the sphere of humanity's rule differs from that of the Davidic monarch. Both forms of kingship derive their authority from God, and both are his instruments for maintaining order in the cosmos, but, in Mays's terms, Davidic kingship responds to the "chaos of history" while the dominion of all humankind is over the "chaos of wildness." These two forms of kingship are therefore complementary rather than competing.[182]

In this light, the Davidic king may, in fact, be intended to facilitate the dominion of the people as a whole. Several commentators note that a representative king is not simply given dominion over his domain but charged with its care. The reign of the king is therefore not exploitative but rather instituted to enable the flourishing of those in his dominion.[183] For the Davidic king to fulfil his charge, he is to lead those under him into a fuller expression of their own divinely given purpose as rulers over creation.[184]

3.7 The Nature of Humanity in Psalm 8

A few brief notes are finally in order concerning the nature of humanity in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8 shows the frailty of humankind as it maintains the creator/creation distinction and places humans firmly on the creation side.[185] God set the heavens in place with his fingers and displayed his glory over them; humans, on the other hand, appear insignificant in relation to the heavens. Even as humanity is given dominion, it is dominion over the works of God's hand; humanity is steward, not creator. Human frailty is clearly conveyed with אנוש and בן־אדם, terms implying mortality and

[181] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 62-63.
[182] Mays, *Psalms*, 67; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 67-73; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 82-83; Kraus, *Psalms*, 183-184.
[183] Mays, *Psalms*, 69; De-Claissé-Walford, et. al., *Psalms*, 127; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:160.
[184] Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 89.
[185] De Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 74-76.

weakness.[186] Mays summarises: "Finitude, fallibility, and ultimate dependence are structural to human existence."[187]

Yet humanity, though frail, is granted a position of royal dominion over creation. This dominion is not intrinsic but is always derived. Humans, like the "infants" confessing YHWH's name, are the means by which God maintains order and defeats his enemies, but it is YHWH who is defeating his enemies through them. Humanity is YHWH's vassal king and only within their relationship to God can they actualise the dominion for which he created them. This implies that humanity must intrinsically be viewed in relation to the creator—the truest form of a human is the one which is rightly related to God, confessing his name in trust and praise and reigning under him.[188]

[186] Fritz Maass, "אֱנוֹשׁ," *TDOT*, 1:347; Maré, "Messianic Interpretation," 109; Feuer et al., *Tehilim*, 126; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 24; Keener*, Canonical Exegesis*, 127; John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews,* 1668-1684, ed. William H. Goold, 4 vols (Evansville, Ind.: Sovereign Grace, 1960), 3:336-337.
[187] Mays, *Psalms*, 68.
[188] Mays, *Psalms*, 67-68 ; "Human Being," 515, 519; Maré, "Messianic Interpretation," 108-109, 111; Kraus, *Theology,* 143.

4 Christ and the Inheritance of Humanity (2:5-9)

This chapter will explore how Hebrews 2:5-9 depicts Christ as receiving the inheritance of humanity. It will argue that, in becoming a human, Christ identified with humanity as described in Psalm 8, and so was able to inherit the full dimensions of dominion described in that psalm.

Psalm 8 describes the position God gave to humanity in the original created order, a position of glory and dominion only partially expressed in the present state of humanity. We will argue that according to Hebrews 2, Christ became a human and experienced human life in a world marred by sin, but he then broke the curse of sin by his own death. In so doing, he inherited the promises of Psalm 8 in their fullness and even beyond their initial pre-fall expression. Christ is now crowned with glory above the angels, reigning as the king over creation in the eschatological world.

Hebrews, however, does not simply transfer the promise of Psalm 8 from humanity to Christ. The psalm is fulfiled in Christ as a human, but as he tastes death for all, Christ becomes the head of a new humanity no longer defined by death but rather heir to the promises given to Adam before the fall, and to the eschatological heightening of those promises in the world to come. The promises of Psalm 8, therefore, find fulfilment not only in the person of Christ but also, through him, in those who have faith.

4.1 The Use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:5-9

An initial exegesis of the most pertinent features of Psalm 8 has been provided in the previous chapter. To understand how Hebrews appropriates the psalm, it will be helpful to now consider the new context of this citation as the author of Hebrews packages and tailors Psalm 8:5-7 (4-6) to his own purposes.

4.1.1 Introducing the Quotation

Hebrews 2:5-6a introduces the quotation of Psalm 8 with the words, οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλοις ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν, περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν. This phrase begins to shape the way the psalm will be understood even before it is quoted, introducing two features against which the psalm is to be viewed. Firstly, the psalm becomes part of the comparison with angels. Secondly, the psalm is interpreted not in regard to the present world but explicitly in relation to τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν. Both of these elements relate the psalm back to chapter 1, and the connection informs both chapters.[189]

In Hebrews 1, the Son inherits a new name and a throne as he enters into an οἰκουμένη at his ascension (1:6; cf. 1:3-4, 5, 8-9, 13). Hebrews 2:5 confirms that this οἰκουμένη is the future world. A number of commentators further note that Hebrews merges spatial and temporal categories. The future world corresponds to the heavenly world, elsewhere described as a future homeland (11:14), city to come (11:16; 13:14), and heavenly Jerusalem (12:22).[190] In ascending to heaven, Hebrews understands Christ to have gone ahead of his people into the eschatological world. For the church, that world remains future, yet the exalted Son already reigns in it.[191]

This is significant for the interpretation of Hebrews 2. As the author turns to dominion over the coming world, that world is the heavenly/eschatological world over which the Son has already been exalted

[189] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 53-69; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 126-127; Jipp, "The Son's Entrance," 562-563; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 86-87; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 64; Vanhoye, *Situation,* 259; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 117-118; Jason Maston, "'What Is Man?' An Argument for the Christological Reading of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2," *ZNTW* 112.1 (2021): 93; Dana M. Harris, "Typological Trajectories in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Interpreting the Old Testament Theologically: Essays in Honor of Willem A. VanGemeren*, ed. Andrew T. Abernethy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 289; contra Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 81. Meier also points out that the author has elsewhere consistently used κόσμος when referring to the present inhabited world (Meier, "Symmetry," 507).

[190] E.g., Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 25-34; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 86-87; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 45-46; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 58-63; McCruden, *A Body,* 56-57; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 45-46; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 43; Guthrie and Quinn, "Psalm 8," 239; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:108; Alexander Stewart, "Cosmology, Eschatology, and Soteriology in Hebrews: A Synthetic Analysis," *BBR* 20.4 (2010): 550; cf. Neil R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 72.

[191] See Scott D. Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, WUNT II2/223 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 43; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 104-105; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 63, 72; Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:108; Easter, *Faith*, 116-117. Contra Owen who sees the world to come as the present church (*Hebrews*, 3.324-326).

in chapter 1. Just as in that chapter it was Christ, not the angels, who is sovereign, so here dominion over the world to come is denied to the angels and given instead to the ἄνθρωπος of Psalm 8.[192]

4.1.2 Anthopological or Christological?

A fundamental question about the use of Psalm 8:5-7 (4-6) in Hebrews 2:5-18 is whether the author applies this psalm immediately to Christ from its introduction in 2:6, sometimes referred to as the "Christological reading," or whether he first speaks of its application to humanity in general before applying it to Christ in 2:9, the "anthropological reading."[193]

4.1.2.1 Christological Reading?

The clear link with the preceding argument seems to favour applying this psalm directly to Christ. Throughout chapter 1, the author contrasts Christ with angels, and that contrast includes the issue of who will reign over the world to come. Following a brief exhortation in 2:1-4, Hebrews 2:5 opens the next expositional section with another contrast; still with angels, and still concerning ruling the coming world. The connection is further strengthened by the specific image of subjection under foot which appeared at the climax of the previous chapter (1:13) and is central to the use of Psalm 8 in the present section. If the author is progressing his argument from chapter 1, we might expect him to continue stressing that the Son's reign is greater than that of the angels.[194]

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[192] Some further suggest a reference to the idea, current in Second Temple Judaism, that angels ruled over the nations in the present world (e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 146; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1892], 41; cf. Deut 32:8 [LXX]; Dan 10:13, 20-21).

[193] A third option is given by Moffitt who argues that traditions concerning the ascension of Moses may stand behind this passage so that the audience expects the figure to be named as Moses rather than Jesus (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 150-162). In light of Moses' absence from both Psalm 8 and Hebrews 1-2, this view is unlikely.

[194] Maston, "What is Man," 91-94; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 144; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 45-46; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 127-129; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 60, 69 David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the "Epistle to the Hebrews,"* SNTS 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 52; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 27; C. K. Barrett, "The Christology of Hebrews," in *Who Do You Say that I Am: Essays on Christology*, ed. Mark Allen Powell and David R. Bauer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 117; Amy L. B. Peeler, "The Eschatological Son: Christological Anthropology in Hebrews," in *Anthropology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jason Maston and Benjamin E. Reynolds, LNTS 529 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 162. The emphatic "all" (2:8) over which this figure has dominion has also been taken to suggest it is Christ (Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 110; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 130).

If Psalm 8 is applied directly to Christ from 2:6, then it refers to him as a glorified human.[195] Having assumed a position below the angels, he has now been crowned with glory and honour. Hebrews 2:8b, however, raises a problem—we do not yet see everything subject to this figure. Some interpreters read this as a deficiency in human perception; all things are submitted to Christ, but humans cannot yet *see* that reality.[196] Others argue that Christ is still waiting for his enemies to be finally put under his feet (as in 1:13). He has taken the humble position of Psalm 8 and has partially inherited the promises of that psalm in his exaltation to the Father's right hand. There is more to come, but his present partial inheritance is the guarantee that he will inherit those promises in their fullness.[197]

Some find further support for the Christological reading in the term υἱὸς ἀνθπώπου which they suggest is intended as a title of Christ, as in the gospel traditions.[198] There are, however, several problems with taking υἱὸς ἀνθπώπου as a messianic designation. In the New Testament, the use of "Son of Man" as a

[195] Though cf. Buchanan who argues that Psalm 8 is not to be read of the Son's humanity but of his messianic kingship as the glorified "Son of Man." According to Buchanan, "The author of Hebrews… was no longer interested in Ps 8 in relationship to the nature of man as such, but interested only in Jesus, the Son of man…" (Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews*, 79) Even the lowering of the Son is therefore not necessarily related to his incarnation but only his death (Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 26-29).

[196] George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research," *CBR* 1.2 (2003): 281; cf. similar in Paul-Gerhard Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ: Der religionsgeschichtliche und theologische Hintergrund einer neutestamentlichen Christusprädikation*, Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII/28 (Bern: Lang, 1973), 281-282; Rissi, *Die Theologie*, 71; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:32-33; Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric and the Future of Humanity," 106-107; Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 37.

[197] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 151; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 131; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 60; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:32; Harris, *Hebrews*, 49; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 209; Peeler, "The Eschatological Son," 171-172; Peter Nyende, "Tested for Our Sake: The Temptations of Jesus in the Light of Hebrews," *The Expository Times* 127.11 (2016): 528; Knut Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, Regensburger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 116; Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 86-87.
Vanhoye divides Christ's career into three parts: the humiliation, the glorification and the reception of universal dominion. The first two are accomplished but the third is yet to be fulfilled (Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 73-74). Maston has a similar outline but specifically argues that by omitting Ps 8:7a (6a), the author has changed the relationship between the lines so that it no longer gives synonymous couplets but instead a three-point narrative (Maston, "What is Man," 95). While insisting that the author has carefully curated this citation, however, Maston says of Ps 8:5a (4a) that these words, "had no special meaning" (Maston, "What is Man," 99). One might ask, however, if the author was so carefully choosing which lines of the Psalm he used, why he kept what seemed to run against his interpretation.

[198] Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 202-207; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 72-73; France, "Biblical Expositor," 262-263; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:31; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 27, 38-51; Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 104-105; Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, New International Biblical Commentary 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 45; Cullmann, *Christology*, 188; McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 67; James Swetnam, *Hebrews: An Interpretation* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2016), 88.

messianic designation is almost always articular.[199] The anarthrous use in Hebrews 2 favours a qualitative reading.[200] The author of Hebrews does not use the term elsewhere in the letter, nor does he draw particular attention to it here.[201] Furthermore, the author has preserved the preceding line of the psalm, which gives ἄνθρωπος as a parallel designation for υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου.[202]

Vanhoye argues that the language of abasement (ἠλάττωσας) found in Psalm 8 requires a previous position of exaltation above the angels. He therefore concludes that, "Applied to humans in general the expression in the psalm is not suitable."[203] It is, however, entirely suitable in relation to Christ.[204] Vanhoye however fails to note that both the Hebrew חסר and the Greek ἐλαττόω can refer to being less than or lacking without implying a previous high position (e.g., Greek – Num 26:54; 33:54; 1 Sam 21:16; Sir 19:23; 23:10; 31:27; 32:24; 47:23. Hebrew – Ex 16:18; Deut 2:7; Deut 8:9; 15:8; Neh 9:21; Prov 31:11; Ecc 4:8; 9:8; Isa 51:14). Furthermore, this interpretation implies that the language of Psalm 8 would never have fitted humanity as a whole, a difficult proposal to maintain in light of the psalm's history of interpretation.[205]

[199] Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 105; Koester, *Hebrews*, 215; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47; Easter, *Faith*, 41; Osborne, *Hebrews*, 48. For exceptions see John 5:27; Rev 1:13; 14:14 though these may carry a more qualitative idea.

[200] Vanhoye, *Situation,* 265.

[201] Koester, *Hebrews*, 215-216; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 105; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 88; Hurst, "Christology," 153; Easter, *Faith*, 41. Note also that the use of the title "Son" in Hebrews 1 refers not to the Son of Man but the Son of God (Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 104).

[202] Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 84-85; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 265; Jean Massonnet, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, Commentaire biblique: nouveau testament 15 (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2016), 86-87; Easter, *Faith*, 41. Contra Terrien and Allen who understand the parallelism to be progressive (Terrien, *Psalms*, 133; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 206-207; cf. also Moffitt, *Atonement*, 123, who argues that the original parallelism is synonymous but that Hebrews makes it progressive).

[203] Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 74; cf. also Luther, *Works*, 127.

[204] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 287.

[205] On the lack of messianic interpretations of Psalm 8 see e.g., Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint*, 144; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 92-93; Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 58. Urassa differs from most commentators at this point, arguing that there are significant messianic dimensions in the later Jewish use of the language of Psalm 8, particularly the language of "son of man," but the connections between these later passages and Psalm 8 are not convincingly demonstrated (*Psalm 8*, 85-96).

4.1.2.2 Anthropological Reading?

In contrast to the "Christological" interpretation, the "anthropological" interpretation states that Hebrews applies Psalm 8 initially to humanity in general rather than to Christ in particular. In Psalm 8, God promised the rule of the world not to angels but humans. Hebrews 2:8 then raises the obvious problem that humanity does not now reign as described in Psalm 8. The answer to this problem appears in 2:9: Jesus, who assumed the position of a human being below the angels, now reigns in glory in the world to come, that is, the heavenly world. The expectations of Psalm 8, which thus far remain unfulfilled in humanity as a whole, are now fulfilled in Jesus, the perfect human.[206] This does not mean that the promise has transferred from humanity to Jesus, but rather that Jesus the human has inherited what was promised to him as a human. This realisation of the psalm for one human does

[206] Hebrews 2:9 is the first occurrence of the name Jesus in Hebrews. Numerous commentators have found in this name particular reference to the Son in his humanity and Melbourne went so far as to argue that it is used as a Christological title in Hebrews (Bertram L. Melbourne, "An Examination of the Historical-Jesus Motif in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *AUSS* 26.3 [1988]: 281-286; cf. Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 63-69; Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963], 95; Harris, *Hebrews*, 50; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 209; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 47; Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 25; Karen H. Jobes, "Putting Words in His Mouth: The Son Speaks in Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 [New York: T&T, 2019], 42; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 87). Melbourne found a significant number of uses of the name Jesus that appeared to be used emphatically, and that were connected in some way to the humanity of Jesus. That "Jesus" appears to be used in emphatic positions, however, may show that it is a word of particular importance to the author, or it may simply reflect that the one so named has an emphatic role within the epistle. Similarly, that the name occurs in contexts related to Christ's humanity may not be abnormal given that much of the argument of Hebrews could be connected back to Christ's humanity. Of particular note, Melbourne finds connections to Christ's humanity even in 7:22 and 12:24 (Melbourne, "Historical-Jesus Motif," 284-285) – such connections may be present, but if that level of connection is accepted, one would be hard pressed to find a part of Hebrews that could not be so connected.
In contrast to the idea that the name "Jesus" carries within itself an affirmation of Christ's humanity, Small suggests that "[t]he author does not appear to make any distinction between the designations 'Jesus' and 'Christ'" (Small, *Characterization*, 160). Small points to the way the title "Jesus" and "Christ" and "Jesus Christ" are used in similar contexts, both earthly and heavenly, and concludes that, "The earthly Jesus, who suffered and died, is coterminous with the exalted Jesus who now serves as high priest" (Small, *Characterization*, 160).
It may be that the truth lies between these extremes. A comparison of the uses of "Jesus" and "Christ" in Hebrews does reveal an apparent preference for "Jesus" in contexts that emphasise humanity or suffering. Of the ten occurrences of the name Jesus (without Christ) in Hebrews, five refer to Jesus as one who has moved from humiliation to glory (2:9; 3:1; 6:20; 12:2; 13:20), another one to Jesus' sympathetic ministry (4:14), and two more to Jesus' sacrificial work (10:19; 13:12). In contrast only two of the nine uses of the term "Christ" (without Jesus) refer to his sacrificial death (9:14, 28) and the rest are not strongly tied to his humanity. The two instances of the name, "Jesus" that are not closely tied to Christ's humanity (7:22; 12:24 – unless the connection is argued based on the usage of the term itself) suggest that while there may be a general preference to use the name "Jesus" in contexts related to his humanity, any overtones that may be read back into the name are not strongly pronounced or immutable.

not negate its validity for others but rather confirms that God is enacting his promises. Jesus, as the first human to inherit what was promised, has become the guarantee of the future fulfilment of these promises to other humans who are joined to him.[207]

A strength of the anthropological reading is that it allows the psalm to speak on its own terms before reading it through the lens of fulfilment in Christ.[208] Not only would this be the natural reading for those who were familiar with Psalm 8, but the author of Hebrews appears to encourage this interpretation by preserving 8:5 (4) rather than beginning his quotation with 8:6 (5). While all of his exposition of the psalm will focus on 8:6-7 (5-6), he opens the quotation with an explicit reference to the ἄνθρωπος as the one whom God is exalting and gives no indication of a subject change until 2:9.[209]

The connection with chapter 1 was suggested above as a point in favour of the immediate christological application of Psalm 8. An interpretation that retains an anthropological reading in 2:6-8 but introduces a christological application in 2:9 would maintain this connection. Christ is still the one exalted over the world to come; it's just that, rather than assuming such a reading of Psalm 8, the author has taken a couple of sentences to make the connection. Furthermore, while Hebrews 1 emphasises the dominion of the Son, it concludes by describing angels as ministering spirits sent to

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[207] Vanhoye, *Situation,* 283-285, 293; Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 73-74; Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint*, 128; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 66; Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 96; France, "Biblical Expositor," 262-263; Schenck, "Keeping his Appointment," 102; Easter, *Faith*, 36-45; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 23; Morna D. Hooker, "Christ, the 'End' of the Cult," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 198; Morris, *Hebrews*, 24-25; Félix H. Cortez, *Within the Veil: The Ascension of the Son in the Letter to the Hebrews*, Studies in Jewish and Christian Literature (Dallas: Fontes, 2020), 182-184; Osborne, *Hebrews*, 48; Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews*, 82-84; Jared Compton, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*. LNTS 537 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 41-44; Jamieson, *Sonship*, 78; Gert J. Steyn, "An Overview of the Extent and Diversity of Methods Utilised by the Author of Hebrews when using the Old Testament" *Neotestamentica* 42.2 (2008): 337.

[208] Easter notes that not only is this interpretation in line with the psalm itself but accords with how Psalm 8 was commonly understood by Hebrews' contemporaries (Easter, *Faith*, 43).

[209] Vanhoye, *Situation,* 261, 276, 281; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 150; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 128; Rick Boyd, "The Use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews," in *Listen, Understand, Obey: Essays in Honor of Gareth Lee Cockerill*, ed. Caleb T. Friedman (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017), 7-8. The indication of a subject change at 2:9 may be further evidence for the anthropological reading. Compton particularly notes that the positions of Ἰησοῦν in 2:9 and αὐτῳ in the end of 2:8 would likely have been reversed if Christ was the subject throughout (Compton, *Psalm 110*, 43; cf. also Easter, *Faith*, 44-45; Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 300-301; R. B. Jamieson, *Jesus' Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*, SNTS 172 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 100-102.)

serve those about to inherit salvation (1:14).[210] If 2:5-9 is read as a reference to humanity before it is read in relation to Christ, the author would maintain both the contrast of angels and humanity implicit at the conclusion of chapter 1 and, more importantly, the overarching contrast of angels and the Son. The angels will not be rulers over the world to come; instead, humans will be, and Christ the human already is.

The contextual support for an anthropological application of Psalm 8 is even stronger in regard to what follows. In Hebrews 2:10 the author mentions in a participial phrase that God is πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα. The way glorification of the children is briefly stated as the context for God's actions in 2:10-13 suggests that the concept has already been introduced. The only obvious place to see that introduction is in the crowning of humanity with δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ in the quotation of Psalm 8.[211] This strongly suggests that 2:6-8 is to be read anthropologically. The implied contrast in 2:5 of angels with the reigning figure of Psalm 8 may also be restated more explicitly in 2:16.[212] In this case the angels are compared not with Christ but with the σπέρματος Ἀβραὰμ, that is, those humans who are inheriting God's promises.[213]

[210] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 122; Koester, *Hebrews*, 220; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 110. Vanhoye further notes that the intervening material has introduced the situation of believers (*Situation*, 261).

[211] Hurst, "Christology," 154; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 110; Koester, *Hebrews*, 234; Madison N. Pierce, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture* SNTS 178 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 97; Compton, *Psalm 110*, 44. Jipp finds an allusion in 2:10 to 1:6 (Jipp, "The Son's Entrance," 570) but the distance between the two make it unlikely that the audience would be expected to make the connection without a greater lexical overlap.

[212] A number of commentators suggest that 2:5 and 2:16 form an inclusio (e.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 107). There are clear differences between 2:5 and 2:16, most notably, that the notion of dominion has been replaced that of being helped. To the extent that they are mutually explanatory however, that relationship favours an anthropological reading of Hebrews 2:6-8.

[213] Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 143-144; Easter, *Faith*, 38. Cockerill argues that Hebrews 2:6-8 cannot refer to humanity because it is not humanity as a whole which inherits the world to come but the elect, and that even they are not described as having dominion but they "inherit" it, "enter" it, "receive" it (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 130). Neither of these objections however is decisive. Firstly, the anthropological reading recognises the created purpose of humanity in reigning over creation but sees that fulfilled specifically in Christ and through him in the elect. Secondly, while Hebrews does not elsewhere describe the dominion of humans, this falls short of showing that such an idea is foreign to either the author or the audience.

4.1.2.3 Both?

While the evidence for the anthropological reading outweighs that for the Christological reading, the strengths of both positions have led some to suggest that a sharp distinction between them can be avoided. The author may have intentionally left the referent ambiguous so as to encompass both human beings in general and Christ in particular.[214]

On closer inspection, however, a double reference compromises the clarity of the argument. This is most evident when interpreting the contrast between 2:8 and 2:9. According to the anthropological reading, the issue needing resolution is the evident lack of true dominion in the lives of the recipients and other humans. The answer is that Christ has received the promise and become the guarantee for others. The Christological reading, however, finds the apparent problem in the very thing the anthropological reading takes as the solution—the present state of Christ. It maintains that the problem is Christ's dominion being incomplete, either in reality or perception, but the solution is his future glory, now anticipated and guaranteed in his ascension. Either reading has its own logic, and both may well play a part in the theology of Hebrews as a whole, yet the different meanings given to the terms of the comparison make them incompatible with each other as interpretations of this text.[215]

A possible solution has been suggested in a close unity of Jesus and his people. As Mackie argues:

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[214] Mackie, "Behold! I Am with the Children," 69; Eric Farrel Mason, *"You are a Priest Forever:" Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 20; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 206, 208; De Wet, "Messianic Interpretation," 124; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 41; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 110; Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 218. Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 97-98 (though Pierce emphasises the anthropological). Schreiner's view is unclear: "The author thinks here of human beings in general and not Jesus in particular"; "The text refers both to human beings in general and to Jesus in particular" (*Hebrews*, 86, 87).

[215] Mackie, a proponent of the "both and" reading, has nevertheless suggested that the author is engaged in ekphrasis, in which the audience is enabled to vividly see the reality through the way it is described (Mackie, "Behold! I Am with the Children," 63-76). For ekphrasis however to be effective it must be clear (Mackie, "Behold! I Am with the Children," 57). It is difficult to visualise an ambiguity as would be required for the "both and" reading!

> By leaving the referent of the pronoun unresolved, Hebrews establishes a sense of mutual identification and participation—Christ with the human condition, and the community with the path of suffering Jesus faithfully endured…[216]

But while 2:5-18 will emphatically assert this "mutual identification," the author has done little in 1:1-2:4 to prepare his audience to read such identification as the assumption of the opening words of 2:5-18. His argument has thus far focused on the matchless glory of Christ and the need for people to pay attention to him. That the audience would then be expected, at this point of the letter, to immediately recognise in the generic αὐτός of 2:6-8 both the glorified Son and their own human existence is unlikely.

4.1.2.4 Conclusion

We conclude, therefore, that the anthropological reading is preferable. There is a dual reference in the use of Psalm 8, but that is because it refers to humanity in general in 2:6-8 and then to Christ as a human in 2:9. Christ's reception of the promise is central to the hope of all humanity, but this is seen more clearly if the present non-fulfilment in regard to humanity as a whole is expressed in 2:6-8.

4.1.3 Βραχύ τι

4.1.3.1 Temporal Reading of βραχύ τι

The next significant question for the interpretation of Hebrews 2:5-9 is the meaning of βραχύ τι. As noted above, Psalm 8 places humanity slightly below angels (מעט מאלהים). The LXX and Hebrews both express this as βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους. Several interpreters have suggested that this translation introduces or permits a temporal meaning in Psalm 8; the ἄνθρωπος is not "a little lower" but "for a little while lower."[217]

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[216] Mackie, "Behold! I Am with the Children," 69.

[217] E.g., Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 117; De Wet, "Messianic Interpretation," 116; Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalms Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961), 30, 105; de Villiers, "Reflections on Creation," 81; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 109-110; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 46; Svendsen, *Allegory*

The translation, however, is not the issue. Both the Hebrew and the Greek permit a temporal reading while neither requires it.[218] What rules out a temporal meaning in Psalm 8:6 (5) is not the lexeme but the place of this verse in the structure and message of the psalm as a whole, whether MT or LXX. In Psalm 8, being only a little lower than the angels is the position of glory and honour. While the psalm does contrast a lowly and an exalted description of humanity, 8:6 (5) is clearly part of the exalted description.[219]

While admitting that Psalm 8 places humanity a little lower than angels and says nothing of the time frame, most scholars, however, still argue that Hebrews 2, or at least 2:9, introduces a temporal contrast by means of the ambiguity of the phrase βραχύ τι. Christ, in his earthly life, or perhaps specifically in his crucifixion,[220] took on the human position below angels for a brief time. Then, in his ascension, he was crowned with glory and honour.[221] As Attridge puts it, "[T]he primary interpretive

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Transformed, 95; Koester, *Hebrews*, 116, 216; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 75-76; Mary Healy, *Hebrews*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 58-60; Harris, *Hebrews*, 47; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 48; Boyd, "The Use of Psalm 8," 6; Maston, "What is Man," 97.

[218] For מעט referring to a short time see e.g., Job 24:24; 32:22; Psa 2:12; 37:10; 81:15 (14); 94:17;Song 3:4; Isa 10:25; 29:17; Jer 51:33; Eze 11:16; Hos 1:4; Hag 2:6. Leschert suggests that for a temporal meaning "other contextual clues such as the temporal adverb עד are needed" (Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 105), yet such a grammatical indication is only present in seven of the thirteen examples listed here, and even his own three examples include Job 24:24 where such clues are absent. Βραχύς in the LXX more often refers to the smallness in something other than time (Ex 18:22; Deut 26:5; 28:62; 1 Sam 14:29, 43; 19:37; Psa 104:12 [MT and ET 105:12]; 118:87 [MT and ET 119:87]; Wis 12:8, 10; 16:27; Dan 11:34. Cf. βραχύς referring to time in 2Ma 7:36; 3Ma 4:14; Psa 93:17 [MT and ET 94:17]). The phrase βραχύ τι only occurs two other times in the LXX, of which one instance is temporal (Isa 57:17) and the other is likely not (2 Sam 16:1). Βραχύ τι appears one other time in the NT and in that instance it does not refer to time (John 6:7 – the textual evidence is divided). Philo generally uses βραχύ τι without reference to time (Agr, 1:10; Ios, 1:230; Mos, 1:30; Fla, 1:37, 79, 168; Gai, 1:128). He does use it once in relation to time in Cnt 1:34, though more often he changes to the masculine βραχύν τινα χρόνον (Leg, 3:25; Imm, 1:27; Som, 1:46; Ios, 1:168; Spe 1:69). Josephus likewise uses βραχύ τι without reference to time (Ant. 1:204; 6:71; War 5:124, 542; Apn 1:284 [βραχυτατόν τι]), using the masculine βραχύν τινα χρόνον once referring to a short time (War 7:53). Cf. Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 83; Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 208.

[219] In this regard Craigie's structure is typical (*Psalms*, 106-107).

[220] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 91; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 154.

[221] Not unlike Philippians 2:5-11. See Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 208; Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews*, 78; Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint*, 103-107; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 87, 106, 117-118; John W. Pryor, "Hebrews and Incarnational Theology," *RTR* 40.2 (1981): 44-46; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946; Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 95; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 42-43, 48; Ellingworth, *Hebrews,* 154; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 46; Thompson, *Hebrews,* 62, 70; Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 599; France, "Biblical Expositor," 262-263; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 65; Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ,* 283; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:32; Massonnett, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 87; Boyd, "The Use of Psalm 8," 6; Gabriella Gelardini,"Frei von Blut und Fleisch, Sündenbewusstsein und Todesfurcht: Die Hoffnung auf einen vollkommenen Menschen im Hebräer," in *Menschsein denken: Anthropologie in theologischen Perspektiven*, ed. Christina aus der Au. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener

move is to drive a wedge between the third and fourth clauses of the text. Being 'less than angels' is now not the equivalent of being crowned with honor and glory, but is, rather, its antithesis."[222]

This interpretation has a number of strengths. Firstly, it gives a clear answer to how Christ, the one made lower than angels, is now exalted above them. A number of commentators see this as the driving purpose of the exposition of Psalm 8. The author has been stressing the transcendence and majesty of the Son, but one of the potential objections to his argument is the incarnation: If Christ is a man, doesn't that make him less than an angel? If βραχύ τι is interpreted temporally, the author gives a clear answer. Christ was placed below angels, but only for a brief period. Having completed his mission on earth, he was then exalted far above the angels in the ascension.[223]

The temporal reading of this passage would also fit the broader exhortation of the letter. The believers are subject to difficulties in this world but are called to live by faith, fixing their eyes on their inheritance which is yet to come. This exhortation would be bolstered by the picture of Christ himself being lowered for a time but then inheriting eternal glory.[224] If the contrast is not only present in 2:9 but also read back into the quotation of the psalm in 2:7, then temporal humiliation preceding eternal exaltation may also be applied to humanity more broadly.[225]

Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005), 47; Carl Bernhard Moll, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. A. C. Kendrick (New York: Charles Scribner 1868), 47, 50; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 207; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 39; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 45; Pryor, "Hebrews and Incarnational Theology," 44-45; Edgar V. McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews–James*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2004), 68; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 85. In a variation, some identify Christ's humiliation with the cross and the three days in the grave (Chrysostom and Photius [Erik M. Heen, and Philip D. Krey, *Hebrews*. Ancient Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 10 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 36], Aquinas – who sees both smallness of degree and briefness of time [Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. trans. Chrysostom Baer, (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine, 2006), 54, 56], Luther, *Works*, 127; Koester, *Hebrews*, 217).

[222] Attridge, *Hebrews,* 72. Cf. also Harold W. Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," in *The Psalms in the New Testament,* ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 205; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 175; Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," 107; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 66, 69; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 22-23; Harris, *Hebrews*, 48; Maston, "What is Man," 96-97; Small, *Characterization*, 210; Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, 36.

[223] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 46; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 100; Small, *Characterization*, 273-274.

[224] Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 83-84.

[225] Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 84; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 88-89; Jamieson, *Sonship*, 128; Schenck, "Keeping his Appointment," 102. Though others suggest that the phrase may retain its original meaning in regard to humanity but transform to a temporal idea when applied to Christ (Osborne, *Hebrews*, 49; Easter, *Faith*, 45; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 181-182).

The main difficulty with a temporal reading of βραχύ τι in Hebrews 2 is that it is foreign to Psalm 8 and the use of βραχύ τι in that context.[226] In Psalm 8, being a little lower than the angels is not contrasted with crowning with glory and honour but parallel to it. Hebrews would then be applying this psalm in a manner contrary to what the psalm was originally saying. While some have argued for a de-contextualised use of OT citations in Hebrews,[227] there is reason to question this. Cockerill notes that the author, "makes no direct claim to apostolic authority, nor does he allege that he has special illumination from the Spirit that enables him to give scripture new meaning. He argues his case on the basis of the Old Testament Scripture and a gospel that asserts that all previous revelation has been fulfilled in Christ (Heb 1:1-2)."[228] The author of Hebrews was clearly well versed in the OT, so a mistake in relation to the basic meaning of Psalm 8 would be unlikely. While it is possible that he intentionally used the text he was ostensibly interpreting in a way that conflicted with the original meaning, this runs counter to his exegetical practice elsewhere. Such a departure also risked being

[226] Keefer has pushed for greater precision on what is meant by "context" in discussions of the use of the OT in the NT. He lists eight potential meanings:

(a) the language of the original (linguistic/grammatical);
(b) the surrounding verses of the quotations;
(c) similar texts elsewhere in the OT;
(d) major section(s) of the OT (esp. a single book);
(e) OT theme(s);
(f) God's redemptive-historical action (salvation history/theology);
(g) the historical situation of the original authors;
(h) the meaning within the mind of the original authors.

(Arthur Keefer, "The Meaning and Place of Old Testament Context in OT/NT Methodology," in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, ed. David Allen and Steve Smith, LNTS 579 [New York: T&T Clark, 2019], 73-85).

When the present thesis speaks of the "context" of an OT citation without qualification, what is primarily intended is meaning b. What a verse meant within the surrounding verses however will be shaped by each of the definitions of "context" given by Keefer, and these will be discussed in the present work where relevant.

[227] See esp. Docherty who claims that the author saw scripture as containing, "endless depths of meaning" (Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*, WUNT II/260 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 181) and Hughes who argues that the author of Hebrews would see any interpretation of an OT text as legitimate provided it was not explicitly prohibited either by something within that passage or the context and worldview of the audience (Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 58, 83).

[228] Gareth Lee Cockerill, "The Truthfulness and Perennial Relevance of God's Word in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172 (2015): 190-191.

counterproductive if, instead of bolstering his argument, it left him open to criticism and thus weakened the force of his letter.[229]

These points compel us to ask if there is another way to read Hebrews 2:5-9 in which the author's interpretation arises from Psalm 8, rather than simply exploiting the ambiguity of its wording.[230]

4.1.3.2 The Son Eternally Lower

Gareth Cockerill has offered one alternative. He simply reads Hebrews 2:5-9 as an interpretation of Psalm 8 which maintains the perspective of the psalm. Christ, in assuming humanity, entered into the position of humanity slightly below the angels. Having assumed that position, he remains there even after the exaltation. The glorified transcendent Son of chapter 1 is then, by virtue of his ongoing humanity, also now forever, in some sense, lower than the angels. These two elements of Christ's

[229] Peter Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation and Critique of Prosopological Exegesis," *SBTJ* 23.2 (2020): 120. Note that the vague introduction of the citation with διεμαρτύρατο δέ πού τις λέγων may suggest that the author expected the audience to be familiar with the psalm (Mary Ann Beavis and HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Hebrews*, Wisdom Commentary 54 [Collegeville, Min: Liturgical Press, 2015], 21), increasing the chance that the author could face criticism if he misapplied it.

[230] For other significant advocates of reading the OT citations in Hebrews according to their context see esp. Kowalski, who argues that, "The NT authors count on 'biblical' insider knowledge of their readers," and that citations and allusions, "evoke the entire literary and historical context" Beate Kowalski, "Selective Versus Contextual Allusions: Reconsidering Technical Terms of Intertextuality," in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, ed. David Allen and Steve Smith, LNTS 579 [New York: T&T Clark, 2019], 86-87) and Bateman, who examines Jewish exegetical principles and finds that they were attentive to grammatical and literary context (Herbert W. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage,* American University Studies VII/193 [New York: Lang, 1997], 19-20).
Rikki E. Watts has also recently argued that too often examination of the NT use of the OT has begun in the wrong place – with the NT application of OT passages rather than with than the broader sweep of the OT that shaped the NT author's worldview. For the NT authors, the narrative of scripture testified to God and his character and ongoing actions. This was not merely a source of proof texts; rather, the authors held the scriptures to have authority over them, and understood God's work around them as an ongoing expression of his faithful character. If this is so, then the NT authors were free neither to change nor atomise the meaning of their texts, but only to let them speak afresh in the present (Rikki E. Watts, "Rethinking Context in the Relationship of Israel's Scriptures to the NT: Character, Agency and the Possibility of Genuine Change," in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, ed. David Allen and Steve Smith, LNTS 579 [New York: T&T Clark, 2019], 157-177; cf. also James M. Hamilton, Jr., "Typology in Hebrews: A Response to Buist Fanning," *SBTJ* 23.2 (2020): 126).
The present work is sympathetic to the conclusion that OT citations are read in light of their context, particularly given the apparent biblical literacy of both the author and the audience of Hebrews. These connections however will not be assumed. Interpretations which accord with the OT context will be given priority but only if they make sense of the new context of the citations in Hebrews. Similarly, evidence of allusion to the broader context of the OT citations will be examined, but only accepted if they make sense of the text of Hebrews itself.

identity must be held side by side.[231] This view was also put forward in the 19th century by B. F. Westcott, who argued that the meaning of βραχύ τι in Hebrews, as in Psalm 8, is a small degree rather than a brief time.[232] This new status of the Son is the status of his human nature, and as the Son retains his human nature, he remains lower than the angels.[233]

This reading is attractive because it maintains the perspective of Psalm 8 and suggests that the argument of Hebrews arises from that passage. It also accords with Hebrews' insistence on Christ's ability to fully relate to those whom he leads in salvation. Christ in Hebrews is not just exalted over all, but also able to sympathise with humans in their weakness. His identification with humanity was not limited to his earthly life. It remains a central aspect of his ongoing heavenly ministry as the great high priest and leader of his people.[234] There are, however, two key issues which require further attention before any conclusion on the plausibility of this suggestion is reached. Firstly, in what sense could Christ be both above and below angels? And secondly, what does Hebrews presentation of the exaltation of Christ suggest about changes to his state? We will examine these questions in turn.

4.1.3.2.1 Christ Above and Below?

The most obvious objection to Westcott and Cockerill's interpretation is that it results in Christ being glorified above all things while simultaneously being below the angels. Unfortunately, neither author explains how these realities could be reconciled within Hebrews. Westcott says nothing at all, and Cockerill simply states that, "this paradox is nothing other than the paradox inherent in the incarnation."[235] In one sense, this is a reasonable assertion for one coming from a traditional Christian

[231] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 132-233. Cockerill buttresses this idea by appeal to the perfect tense of ἠλαττωμένον (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 132) though Maston points out that the tense is not decisive (Maston, "What is Man," 97).
[232] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 44.
[233] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 45. Church also seems to indicate this view, though he is less explicit. He notes that the use of perfect participles in 2:9 (ἠλαττωμένον and ἐστεφανωμένον) run against reading humiliation and exaltation as consecutive, and instead, "describe the characteristics of Jesus as we see them" (Church, *Hebrews and Temple*, 301-303).
[234] Cf. 2:11. Though some aspects of Christ's identification with the present state of humanity were apparently temporary, such as his suffering and temptation (2:18; 4:15; 5:8).
[235] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 133.

position. This is a paradox that will confront any interpreter who holds something close to a historically orthodox Christology. Richard Bauckham, for instance, argues that Christ is both, "the divine Son of God above the angels and the human Son of God below the angels."[236] Vanhoye similarly notes the paradox, saying that, "Christ is at once above and below the angels, for he is the Son of God (1:5) and brother of humankind (2:11-12), which means that he is a much better qualified mediator than the angels."[237] The difference is that these authors situate this paradox not in the glorified Christ, but in Christ during his earthly life. While living on earth, Christ was both the divine Son who sustains the universe and a frail human subject to all the weaknesses inherent to that position, but his humiliation below angels was only temporary.[238] Cockerill and Westcott are justified in questioning this: If humanity is lower than angels, then does it not follow that Christ as a glorified human is a little lower than angels?

This raises the question of the sense in which Christ (and humanity generally) is considered lower than the angels. For Westcott and Cockerill's interpretation to be viable, being βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους must be compatible with Hebrews' presentation of Christ's glorified position.

Westcott's own answer is that Christ is a little lower than the angels in nature. He claims that Psalm 8 reveals a "triple divine endowment of nature, honour, dominion."[239] These three are the subjects of 8:6a (5a), 8:6b (5b), and 8:7-9 (6-8) respectively.[240] For Westcott, then, βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους is a description of the "nature" of humanity, though he gives no further clarification as to what that nature entails or in what sense it is lower than the angels.[241] Nature could include passibility, as found in

[236] Bauckham, "Monotheism," 170.
[237] Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 17. Cf. also Augustine, cited in Heen and Krey, *Hebrews*, 37. McCann also argues for the compatibility of a place of humility and suffering and that of glory, though he does so by minimizing the creator/creation distinction so that God naturally experiences suffering: "If humanity is in the 'image of God,' then God too shares in the distress and suffering of the creation and the human creature" (McCann, *Theological Introduction*, 63).
[238] Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 73; Bauckham, "Divinity," 23; "Monotheism," 169.
[239] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 42.
[240] That this removes what would otherwise be read as synonymous parallelism between 8:6a (5a) and 8:6b (5b) weakens but does not necessarily prohibit this interpretation.
[241] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 43.

Aquinas and Hugh of St Cher,[242] or bodily existence, or inferiority in knowledge, also in Aquinas as well as in some rabbinic traditions on Psalm 8.[243] The term, however, could just as easily include physical frailty and mortality, which John Owen argues comprise the human "nature" on view here.[244] Westcott's suggestion is broad enough to be potentially compatible with his reading of Christ's glorification in Hebrews but too vague to elucidate Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2.

Instead of "nature," humanity could be lower than the angels in their authority.[245] Burns particularly argues this because he understands אלהים as a reference to God, and he suggests that it would have been considered blasphemous to say that God was only "a little" higher than humanity in terms of nature.[246] If Psalm 8:5 (4) is a reference to humanity in its nature being insignificant, then 8:6a (5a) could be understood as a reference to humanity as βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους/מעט מאלהים not in nature but authority. This accords with humanity being crowned and having everything placed under their feet in the rest of the paragraph (8:6b-9 [5b-8]).[247] This view is plausible but difficult to either prove or disprove.[248] If this view of βραχύ τι were adopted, the authority attributed to the Son in 1:1-2:4 would make it very difficult to reconcile it with Christ remaining lower.

[242] M. Peterson, "Psalm 8," 119, 127; Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 56.
[243] Feuer et al., *Tehilim*, 127; Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 56-57. For Aquinas, though, the body, once glorified and immortal, no longer limits Christ's glory (Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 57).
[244] Owen, *Hebrews*, 3:357; cf. also Moll, *Hebrews*, 55; Pink, *Hebrews*, 99.
[245] Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 598.
[246] Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 598.
[247] As was noted in the exegesis of Psalm 8 above, it may be better to see the difference between 8:4-5 (3-4) and 8:6-9 (5-8) not as distinguishing nature from authority but as viewing humanity in themselves and humanity in its relationship with God. It is only in that relationship that human nature is, in fact, fully and rightly expressed. Nevertheless, Psalm 8 focusses on the dominion received in that relationship and so authority is clearly central to 8:6-9 (5-8).
[248] The relative authority of angels and humans is not addressed elsewhere, either in Psalm 8 or in Hebrews. While Moffitt argues that angels were understood to rule over the nations (*Atonement*, 119-120; cf. also Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 86), Cockerill argues that Hebrews 1:14 is an explicit denial of such (*Hebrews*, 115). Hebrews 1:14 does refer to angels as being sent on humanity's behalf, and 2:2 talks about humanity being bound by the words received by angels. In both of these cases however the submission or service is not directly to the other but to God himself who is over both angels and humans (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 133). The authority of the earthly Christ in relation to angels is also left undefined both in Hebrews and in the rest of the NT. The earthly Christ is served by angels (e.g., Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43), but he is never depicted as either commanding or being commanded by them. The closest one comes to this is Matthew 26:53, but there Jesus only says that if he would speak to his Father, the Father would send the angels.

Another view of the lower position of humanity is given by Richard Bauckham, who suggests that the metaphor of height refers to "status and identity."[249] This view would again be consistent with both Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2. Although sharing in divine status and identity, Christ chose to take on human status and identity as well in the incarnation. While Bauckham himself applies this only temporarily, there is no more reason to deny its compatibility with Christ's possession of divine status and identity in eternity than there is in his earthly life.[250]

While the above three views are possible and may each be a part of how humanity in Psalm 8 falls short of the angels, there is good evidence that physical frailty and mortality are at least a significant part of the human situation in view. While this understanding is less commonly stated by modern commentators,[251] it has been popular historically, being held, for instance, by Theodoret of Cyrus, Chrysostom, Cassiodorus, Aquinas, Hugh of St Cher, and John Owen.[252] Owen states this view as follows:

> And thus was he made less than angels in part in that nature which he assumed. He was obnoxious unto all the infirmities which attend it, as hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, sorrow, grief; and exposed unto all the miseries from without that any person partaker of that nature is obnoxious unto; and, in sum, death itself: from all which miseries angels are excepted. This we see, know, and grant to have been the state and condition of Jesus.[253]

[249] Bauckham, "Divinity," 23.
[250] Bauckham, "Divinity," 23; "Monotheism," 169.
[251] Though see Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 90; Maston, "The Son and Scripture," 507-508, and more general references in I. Howard Marshall, "Soteriology in Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 257 and possibly Vanhoye, *Situation*, 272.
[252] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms*. trans. Robert C. Hill. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, v. 101-102 (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2000)*, 1-72,* 85; M. Peterson, "Psalm 8," 87, 119; Craig A. Blaising, and Carmen Hardin, *Psalms 1-50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament VII (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 71; Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 56; Owen, *Hebrews*, 3:357. It is implied but not explicit in Dods who argues that the cross particularly is in view (Marcus Dods, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The Expositor's Greek Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 91).
[253] Owen, *Hebrews*, 3:357.

That Psalm 8 presents humanity in its weakness is clear. Humanity is the powerless infants of 8:3 (2) and the אנוש and בן־אבם of 8:5 (4). That this weakness entails mortality might be questioned on the basis of Psalm 8's relationship with Genesis 1-2. The latter reflects on human nature that was not dying. This, however, is less problematic than it may initially appear. Genesis does present the natural state of humanity as one free from death. Death is an intrusion into God's creation after humanity sins and is banished from God's presence. To say that death is foreign to humanity, however, is not the same as saying that mortality itself is an intrusion, provided mortality is understood not as being destined to die but as being susceptible to death.[254] Humanity was not created to die, but death appears in the Genesis account as an inherent possibility.[255] God could warn of the judgement humanity would experience in suffering death precisely because humanity, as created, was capable of dying. It is likely that physical frailty and mortality were intrinsic to the created nature of humanity in Genesis even before the fall and that Psalm 8 reflects on this when describing humans as lower than the angels.[256]

There is evidence that Hebrews 2 has read Psalm 8 as referring, at least in part, to humanity in its physical frailty and mortality. In 2:9, Jesus' identification with humanity is displayed in his tasting death in their place. This idea is repeated in 2:10-13, in which he can call humans brothers because of his

[254] As in Owen's language of being "obnoxious unto." Pink makes a similar distinction, though not in his discussion of Adam but of Christ: "When we say that Christ, by virtue of His incarnation, became 'mortal,' it must not be understood that He was subject to death in His body as the fallen descendants of Adam are. His humanity was holy and incorruptible: no seed or germ of death was in it, or could attack it. He laid down His life of Himself (John 10:18). No; what we mean is, and what Scripture teaches is, that in becoming man Christ took upon Him a nature that was *capable* of dying. This the angels were not; and in *this* respect He was, for a season, made lower than they." (Pink, *Hebrews*, 99).

[255] Though cf. Wisdom 2:23-24 as an example of a Jewish work which not only says that God did not create death (1:15) but also that he made humans to be ἀφθαρσία (2:23).

[256] This view of pre-fall humanity is similar to that of Philo. Having described the first man created ἀσωματος and thus ἀφθαρτος φύσει (*Opif*, 134), Philo then turns to consider the nature of man once he became incarnate but pre-fall. Philo understands Adam's body to far exceed any human who had come since (*Opif*, 136-141). Initially this man was not subject to ἀρρωστήματος ἢ νοσήματος ἢ πάθους (*Opif*, 150). Despite this however, from the moment of his incarnation Adam was θνητὸν ... κατὰ τὸ σῶμα (*Opif*, 135), and shared in God's nature only in so far as is possible for one with θνητὴν σύστασιν (*Opif*, 151). Whether Philo would say that Adam was inherently headed to the grave from the moment of incarnation is unclear (though cf. *Opif*, 151 which may suggest that to be the case), but at the very least, Philo understands the first man to have had a mortal nature prior to the fall.

suffering, and in 2:14-15, in which he shared human flesh and blood so that he could die and free them from fear of death. When Hebrews 2 applies Psalm 8 to Jesus, it insists that he shares mortal flesh in which he can suffer and die.

Human weakness in Psalm 8 is not limited to physical frailty and mortality. Humans not only die but, even while living, appear as nothing compared to the heavenly bodies. Physical frailty and death, however, fit within that context as a significant part of what it means to be human, and Hebrews appears to have understood Psalm 8 in relation to that mortality.

If physical frailty and mortality make Christ lower than the angels, this could not be reconciled with Cockerill and Westcott's argument that Christ remains lower that the angels beyond the resurrection. On the contrary, the risen Christ is declared to have the power of an "indestructible life" (Heb 7:16).

4.1.3.2.2 Christ Before and After Exaltation

In evaluating the argument that Christ is eternally lower than the angels, a second question to consider is how Hebrews presents the exaltation of Christ. Westcott and Cockerill's suggestion stresses continuity of Christ's earthly existence with his now glorified state. Their reading, however, may emphasise this continuity more than Hebrews does.

Hebrews stresses the consistency and unchangeable character of the Son. While some have argued to the contrary, there is good reason, particularly in Hebrews 1, to suggest that the Son is presented as pre-existent and eternal (1:2, 3, 8-9, 10-12; cf. also other possible references to pre-existence in 2:14; 7:3; 10:5; 13:8).[257] The eternality of the Son does not simply affirm his existence from the beginning

[257] A number of scholars have denied that Hebrews presents Christ as pre-existent. Dunn writes:

> Hebrews describes Christ as God's Son in language which seems to denote pre-existence more clearly than anything we have met so far… At the same time, there is more 'adoptionist' language in Hebrews than in any other NT document – that is, language which speaks of Jesus as becoming, or being begotten or being appointed to his status as decisive intermediary between God and man during his life or in consequence of his death and resurrection (*Christology in the Making*, 52; cf. also Robinson, *The Human Face of God*, 155-161).

but aligns him with the eternality of God himself, and so his eternality is also a statement about his constancy.[258] This finds clearest expression in 13:8 in which the Son is ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.[259]

The Son's eternality and consistency, however, sit alongside language of the Son "becoming" and being enthroned at his exaltation.[260] This language of change in the Son appears throughout Hebrews. The Son, for example, has been perfected as the saving leader through his temporal sufferings (2:10), learned obedience (5:8), been perfected as the source of salvation (5:9), been designated (or become, arisen, been appointed, perfected or come) as priest (5:5-10; 6:20; 7:15-17, 20-21, 28; 9:11) and has obtained a (priestly) ministry (8:6), become guarantor and mediator of a new covenant (7:22; 8:6; 9:15), offered himself as a sacrifice once for all (9:14, 25-28; 10:12, 14; 13:12), and sat down at God's right hand (10:12-13; 12:2). These developments in Christ do not erase what Hebrews also says about the eternal consistency of the Son, but they do show that Hebrews did not hold such consistency to

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For Dunn the language of pre-existence therefore should not be applied directly to the Son but rather seen within the context of platonic dualism in which the Son pre-exists as an ideal in the mind of God. Jesus is the embodiment of the same impersonal creative power and purpose expressed by God in creation, not a personal pre-existent being (*Christology in the Making*, 54-56). Dunn also explains this in terms of wisdom imagery in which the Son is the eschatological expression of God's creative wisdom (*Christology in the Making*, 206-209).
Caird likewise argues that "[Christ] is the man in whom the divine Wisdom has been appointed to dwell, so as to make him the bearer of the whole purpose of creation" ("Son by Appointment," 76). Hurst carries this idea forward concluding that God can address the Son as if he pre-existed because he was not speaking to the Son as such but was, "addressing his own wisdom in its earthly receptacle, the Messiah-king." (Hurst, "Christology," 162). While more restrained in his conclusions, Schenck largely follows Caird and Hurst, arguing that language of pre-existence should be seen in relation to impersonal categories of wisdom ("Keeping his Appointment," 111-115; "Celebration," 476).
Schreiner however has pointed out that, whether or not wisdom concepts lie behind elements of the description of the Son in Hebrews 1, the presentation of the Son goes beyond such a concept. While in Jewish works such as Wisdom and Philo, wisdom is personified, it is never hypostatised (cf. Schenck, "Keeping his Appointment," 106-110). The Son is not just personified but clearly presented as a person. His pre-existence is the pre-existence of a person (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 446-447; cf. also Meier, "Symmetry," 531-533; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 61).

[258] Bauckham, "Monotheism," 184-185.

[259] Again Schenck argues that this says no more than that he existed before the exaltation (i.e. during his earthly life; Schenck, "Keeping his Appointment," 115). If his earlier argument about wisdom Christology as opposed to personal pre-existence is rejected however, there is no reason to restrict the referent of "yesterday" to the earthly life of Christ. Furthermore, in so doing, Schenck ignores the way this description echoes other descriptions of the eternality and consistency of God (See Koester, *Hebrews*, 560).

[260] Cf. Meier, "Symmetry," 530-531; Schenck, "Celebration," 472-479.

prohibit his development into his salvific offices. The Son is able to assume a new position at God's right hand at the ascension, just as he is able to assume humanity in the incarnation.

Particularly significant for the present discussion is the description of the Son's exaltation in Hebrews 1. The Son is explicitly described as being elevated above the angels—receiving a greater name than theirs (1:4) and being worshipped by them at his entrance into the heavenly world (1:6). These affirmations would still be ringing in the recipients' ears when they came to Hebrews 2, and must be allowed to inform interpretation of Christ's being lowered here. Their contribution, while not definitive, weighs heavily against interpretations which maintain that the Son is eternally lower than the angels.[261] Both the way in which Christ became lower than the angels and Hebrews' emphasis on his exaltation make Cockerill and Wescott's interpretation unlikely.

4.1.3.3 The Son Indefinitely Lower

Rather than reading Christ's lowering in 2:9 as either explicitly temporary or as a permanent state, a third possibility would be that the author accepts that Psalm 8 places humanity, and Christ as a human, below angels, and leaves the timeframe indefinite. He is not concerned, at this point, with the temporal limits of the humbling of the Son but with showing that angels are sidelined with regard to dominion over the world to come. Even while humanity is lower than the angels, humans, not angels, are chosen to rule the world. Even when Christ takes on the human position below angels, he rather than the angels, is chosen to rule the world to come. In this reading, Psalm 8 is not cited to show that Christ has now returned to his rightful position above the angels, neither is it used to elucidate the relationship between Christ and the angels as such. It only shows to whom dominion has been given.

[261] Cf. Schenck, "Keeping his Appointment," 94.

Whether Christ is now lower or higher than the angels is not expressed but only that the angels have been sidelined, and it is the human Christ and humanity in him who reign over the world to come.[262]

This reading rightly notes that dominion is central to Hebrews 2's use of Psalm 8. The author uses the question of dominion to introduce Psalm 8, and dominion remains in focus in the subsequent exposition. While the angels are mentioned in 2:5, they do not appear again until a brief mention in 2:16, and there the author no longer compares them to the Son but instead affirms a "lack of relation."[263] This suggests that the author's focus has shifted away from comparison with angels.

The problem with Christ being placed indefinitely lower than angels, however, is that it entails the author introducing, but not addressing, an apparent contradiction with what he asserted in the preceding chapter. While the Son's relationship to angels is not central in Hebrews 2:5-18, it is in 1:1-2:4. Quoting a passage in which the Son is placed below the angels and leaving the temporal reference undefined would threaten to undermine the force of the author's earlier argument.[264] Furthermore, there is likely a hint, when the author begins his interpretation, that the ἄνθρωπος from Psalm 8 does not simply rule instead of angels but over them. Hebrews 2:8 emphasises that everything without exception is subjected to this human.[265]

[262] Vanhoye appears to suggest this. He argues against a temporal reading of ἠλαττωμένον but also argues against Westcott, that the lowering on view was in the past (*Situation,* 287-288). Dods may also take this view. He clearly argues for a non-temporal meaning of βραχύ τι and presents the angels as being sidelined (Dods, *Hebrews*, 262-263). It seems more likely however that he takes the "eschatological heightening" view (see section 4.1.3.4).
[263] Albert Vanhoye, *A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Leo Arnold, Rhetorica Semitica (Miami: Convivium Press, 2011); trans. of *L'épître aux Hébreux: 'un prêtre different'* (Gabalda: Pendé, 2010), 112.
[264] Indeed, Guthrie and Quin argue that one of the central aims of the author in this section is reconciling the language of Christ's enthronement (esp. in Psalm 110) with his incarnation (esp. Psalm 8) ("The Use of Psalm 8," 242; cf. also Sebastian Fuhrmann, "The Son, the Angels and the Odd: Psalm 8 in Hebrews 1 and 2," in *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, ed. Dirk J. Human and Gert J. Steyn, LHBOTS 527 [New York: T & T Clark, 2010], 89-90).
[265] Hughes, *Hebrews*, 86; Pink, *Hebrews*, 93.

4.1.3.4 The Eschatological Heightening of Psalm 8

Having found fault with the previous three suggestions, we turn now to a more promising alternative; that Psalm 8:5-7 (4-6) is read in light of the psalm as a whole but particularly understood in light of its eschatological heightening in Christ.

Christ has been humbled to the situation of humanity, whose honoured place is a little lower than the angels. He experienced human life in the fallen world and so, in his humanity, was liable to experience the effects of sin in this world. Christ then inherited the dominion promised to humanity.[266] The glory of Christ, however, goes a step further. He inherits not just the dominion of primal humanity but of eschatological humanity, reigning specifically over "the world to come." This exalted position is similar to the original position of humanity but taken to greater heights. While humanity in the original created order was elevated to a place almost as great as angels, the eschatological position of humanity elevates them further still. Christ has inherited indestructible life (7:16) and dominion over the angels (Heb 1). This does not contradict the thrust of the psalm but extends it along its own trajectory. The original human position was one of exaltation; the eschatological position is one of greater exaltation.[267]

The author of Hebrews finds this eschatological expectation in the psalm itself, stressing the universality of the dominion promised to humanity. He has intentionally left out elements of the psalm which point to its realisation in the present order. As Vanhoye notes, "The preacher takes great care

[266] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 108.

[267] Dods does not explicitly state this view but appears to hold it. He denies that βραχύ τι is temporal while maintaining that the Son was only temporarily lower than the angels (*Hebrews*, 261-262), he sees the position lower than angels as the glory of humanity which is fulfilled in Christ (*Hebrews*, 262), and he argues that Jesus fulfils the psalm in a heightened way in relation to the coming world (*Hebrews*, 262-263).
David Moffitt has argued that dominion over angels was true of primal humanity. He points to later Jewish traditions in which angels are commanded to worship humanity at the time of creation (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 133-141). The problem for Moffitt's view is that in Psalm 8 being a little lower than the angels is the place of glory for which humanity was intended. Aquinas also places humanity as a whole over the angels, finding this in Psalm 91:11 (Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 58). This however confuses God's commanding his angels to serve with humans having dominion over the angels.

to omit these details because what he wants to propose is another reading of the psalm in the context of "the world to come" (Heb 2,5), that is to say, of the new creation inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ (see Heb 9,11)."[268] This is not, as some suggest, because Psalm 8:7a (6a) and 8:8-9 (7-8) contradict the author's purposes. These verses display human dominion in the present age, which extends over beasts and birds, but they are illustrative rather than exhaustive.[269] Hebrews finds in Psalm 8 the suggestion of an all-encompassing eschatological rule and, by omitting the list of earthly creatures, he focuses the audience's attention on that eschatological dominion glimpsed in part through the psalm.

In many ways, the conclusions of this reading are similar to those of the first, in which βραχύ τι was read temporally.[270] Christ was only temporarily lower than the angels, being humbled for a time on the path to greater glory. Engagement with the psalm focuses on the eschatological glory of Christ, a glory above the angels, and a glory that humanity in Christ inherits through him. This final reading, however, interprets the author's argument in a way that is consistent with the passage he is explaining. Psalm 8 pointed to the honour and dignity of man, even to a height just below angels, but in it was the suggestion of a still greater height. That is what Christ the man has now inherited, having risen with indestructible life and been enthroned above the angels.

4.1.3.5 Conclusion

While some details remain uncertain, the best reading proposes that Christ was lowered below the angels to then receive a glory that surpasses theirs. This is not because the author has changed the meaning of Psalm 8, but rather because βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους in Psalm 8 described human exaltation, an exaltation even to just below the angels. The glory that Christ inherits exceeds that of the angels

[268] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 107-108.
[269] Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 90-91. Vanhoye notes a similar passage in the Epistle of Barnabas which speaks of the promised dominion of Adam being realised in the world to come. Barnabas however retains reference to the parts of creation listed in Psalm 8 (*Situation*, 280).
[270] Some who read βραχύ τι temporally also see a heightened application of the psalm in the final state of Christ (e.g., Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 68).

and is, therefore, a new height for humanity, but this is the eschatological heightening of the psalm rather than its contradiction.

4.2 Christ's Humanity in Hebrews 2:5-9

Having addressed some details of exegesis, we can now surmise four implications of Hebrews 2:5-9 in regard to Christ's humanity.

4.2.1 A Lower Glory and Weakness

Firstly, Christ's humanity entailed taking a position of lower glory and a form of weakness.

Having just proclaimed the exalted descriptions of Christ in Hebrews 1:1-2:4, Hebrews 2:5-9 describes Christ as one who entered fully into the position of humanity expressed in Psalm 8. The author has chosen to begin his citation of Psalm 8 with the suggestions of human impotence and insignificance – τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμνήσκῃ αὐτου, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν. The one who created all in Hebrews 1 is now said to have become a seemingly insignificant part of his own creation.

In his earthly life, Christ was brought lower than the angels and shared in a weakness which entailed at least physical frailty and mortality, and possibly also a level of honour and authority, which, while glorious for humanity, was a lowly position for Christ. The humanity of Christ has been defined by weakness.[271]

4.2.2 Dominion

The second thing Hebrews 2:5-9 shows about Christ's humanity is that it entailed dominion.

Intrinsic to the human position in Psalm 8 was a dominion that exceeds their feeble stature. This dominion was not based on the intrinsic glory of their nature but on the relationship God had chosen to establish with them. While Hebrews 2:8 suggests a deficiency in the extent of this human dominion

[271] The relation of this weakness to the ἀσθένεια of 4:15, 5:2 and 7:28 is beyond the scope of the present work. The weakness of Christ in Hebrews 2:5-9 does not have any moral connotation (as may be found in 5:2).

in the present, it points to Christ as the human who has inherited the promised human rule and, in fact, who has inherited not just what was lost, but a greater eschatological dominion.

Christ's dominion in Hebrews 2:5-9 is a function of his humanity. While we argued above that Christ's dominion in Hebrews 1:1-2:4 is not a function of his humanity (see 2.2.1.1), the dominion in Hebrews 2:5-9 clearly is the dominion of a human—a dominion promised to humanity which Christ could not have received had he not become human.

Jamieson has suggested that the dominion over *πάντων* in 1:2 is different from that over *τὰ πάντα* in 2:8. The dominion of chapter 2 is dominion over the earth, or, in eschatological perspective, the new earth. The divine rule of Christ, however, is over the entire universe.[272] This distinction helpfully separates the divine and human prerogatives in Christ, and yet Hebrews 2 defies neat delineation. Christ's eschatological human rule is emphatically all-encompassing (*οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ ἀνυπότακτον* [2:8]).

As Hebrews 2 continues, it will express some unique elements of Christ's dominion as human (see esp. 5.4 below), just as there are uniquely divine elements in the description of Christ's reign in Hebrews 1. A precise division of the two, however, does not appear within Hebrews, a reality Jamieson expresses when he concludes that, "We have seen that inheriting the universe is a divine prerogative, and that the Messiah Jesus inherits it as a man."[273] This paradox expresses what Psalm 8 had declared. Human dominion was never separable from divine dominion. The rule of humanity was an expression of mediated divine rule. Both Christ's humanity and deity, then, are necessary for the full dimensions of his reign.

4.2.3 An Ongoing but Changing Humanity

Hebrews 2:5-9 thirdly presents Christ's humanity as ongoing and yet changing.

[272] Cf. Jamieson, *Sonship*, 132-133.
[273] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 133.

Hebrews does not attach human nature to Christ only for the duration of his earthly ministry and death. Christ's exaltation is also a human act in continuity with the categories of Psalm 8—even as those categories are realised in new heights. Christ, in his exalted status, still rules as the human of Psalm 8. The ongoing humanity of Christ will also become significant in the remainder of the chapter (and letter) for understanding Christ's ongoing relationship with his people. Hebrews 2 argues not only that Christ was human but that he is human.

But while Hebrews presents Christ as permanently human, it does not present his humanity as unchangeable. Hebrews 2:9 describes a transformation as Christ is crowned with glory and honour, echoing other depictions of Christ's exaltation throughout the letter. Attempts to define Christ's humanity in Hebrews in a single static form fail to encompass the stark differences in how Christ's humanity is expressed. The humanity in which Christ walked the earth and suffered on the cross was physically frail and necessarily mortal. The same cannot be said of his risen and ascended humanity. Similarly, the Son's lowering himself to a position below the angels need not refer to an ongoing status. Christ's humanity remained but was transformed as he received the fullness of God's eschatological intention for humanity.[274]

It was suggested above that Psalm 8 defines humanity in part by the experience of frailty and Hebrews appears to maintain this category. To be human is to know frailty. Christ in his exalted status, however, does not still participate in frail mortality. He knows it only based on what he has experienced in his earthly life. It will be argued below that 2:10-13 predicates Christ's human leadership on his past sufferings, 2:14-16 grounds the saving work of Christ's humanity in his past death, and 2:17-18 assures of Christ's merciful help for those who are tempted by highlighting his past temptation. Bockmuehl slightly overstates this reality when he says that, "Hebrews goes out of its way to separate what Jesus

[274] Cf. Kibbe whose focus is on Hebrews 7:16 but who argues at greater length both that Jesus remains human, and that his humanity is now indestructible (Michael Kibbe, "You are a Priest Forever: Jesus' Indestructible Life in Hebrews 7:16," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 39 [2017]: 134-155).

is and does now from the earthly past in which he was incarnate," but his basic point is correct.[275] Hebrews 2:5-9 sets the groundwork for this by insisting that Christ's humanity remains, yet allowing for genuine transformation in the expression of that humanity.

4.2.4 The Representative Human

Hebrews 2:5-9 further suggests that Christ's humanity is a representative humanity. Christ, as a human, is not one among many, nor one who is completely separate from the many, but rather one who is united to the many.

A number of scholars describe this as an "Adam Christology," or speak about Christ as a "second Adam." Loader, for instance, suggests that:

> Adam mythology may well have informed the opening two chapters of the letter… It enabled the author to take up the christological tradition which linked Ps 110,1 and Ps 8,7, which already has associations with Adam typology in 1Cor 15,21-28, and to exploit the ambiguity of Ps 8,7 to affirm Jesus as the representative human…[276]

Loader's words demonstrate both the appeal of an Adam Christology and the potential pitfalls. Positively, Adam Christology brings together the themes of Christ's humanity and his representative place in relation to humanity as a whole and casts these in the creation imagery that informs Psalm 8. Adam Christology also connects Hebrews with concepts found within the early Christian community. Negatively, the concept of Adam Christology has taken on a life of its own in New Testament, and

[275] Bockmuehl, "Dynamic Absence," 147.

[276] William Loader, "Revisiting High Priesthood Christology in Hebrews," *ZNTW* 109.2 (2018): 255. Cf. also, Hagner, *Hebrews*, 45; Kenneth Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 143 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58; Costley, *Creation and Christ*, 224-228; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 47-48; Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 107-108; Hamilton, "Typology in Hebrews," 132; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:32; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 72-73; L. Michael Morales, "Atonement in Ancient Israel: The Whole Burnt Offering as Central to Israel's Cult," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*. ed. Jon C. Laansma, George H. Guthrie, and Cynthia Long Westfall (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 39; David Peterson, *Hebrews*, Tyndale (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020), 30.

particularly Pauline, scholarship, and introducing the term to explain this portion of Hebrews risks importing such a schema rather than examining this passage on its own terms.

A further problem with describing Hebrews 2 as expressing an "Adam Christology," is that Hebrews 2 has no explicit reference to Adam. Psalm 8 is a creation psalm, but is focused on the nature of humanity as a whole, in light of creation, rather than on Adam himself.[277] Despite the clear overlap between this passage and other early Christian descriptions of Christ in relation to Adam, we will therefore not use the term "Adam Christology" to describe Hebrews 2.

Considering Christ's representative humanity within Hebrews 2:5-9 itself, however, it is clear that the inheritance of Christ in his humanity opens the door for the inheritance of other humans in him. While 2:5-9 speaks only of the exaltation of Christ and not of the exaltation of other humans, this passage lays the foundation on which 2:10 declares that through Christ God is πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα. While the details are not spelled out, Christ's inheritance of the promised human glory is what opens the way for his people to inherit that same glory.[278]

Christ's death in his humanity is also, in some way, effective for his people. We will return to this in chapter 6, where we argue that his death ὑπὲρ παντός is a substitutionary death in which Christ dies for his people by dying in their place. While that examination will wait, the death of Christ ὑπὲρ παντός may shed light on the relationship between his humanity and the humanity of his people more generally. If what happened to Christ the human on the cross is counted as having happened to all those whom he represents, the same logic may play a part in the inheritance of glory. While it is not spelled out, what happened in Christ's exaltation may be understood not in relation to him alone but

[277] Fuhrmann, "The Son," 88.
[278]Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 107-109; Costley, *Creation*, 222; Albert Vanhoye, "Christ as Re-Creator of Humanity and Restorer of Human Rights According to the Letter to the Hebrews," in *A Perfect Priest*, ed. and trans. Nicholas J. Moore and Richard J. Ounsworth. WUNT II/477 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); trans. of "Le Christ recréateur de l'homme et restaurateur de ses droits selon l'épître aux Hébreux," pages 27-45 in *Droits de l'homme approche chrétienne* (Rome: Herder, 1984), 217-218.

as being effective for those who belong to him. Christ functions as a kind of representative head for humanity so that his inheritance is their inheritance.[279]

4.3 Conclusion

Hebrews 2:5-9 picks up Psalm 8's depiction of humanity, one in which frail humanity, by faith, receives dominion. Christ takes on this humanity. In his incarnation, and particularly his death, he experienced human frailty and weakness, yet through his faith he inherited also the promised dominion, an eschatological reign that takes the promised glory to a new height. Even in his exaltation, then, Christ remains a human, reigning as a human, though his humanity is no longer characterised by frail mortality. Christ's humanity is furthermore the foundation for the hope of other humans. He has become their representative in both his death and his exaltation, and so, in him, they too can inherit glory.

[279] So Hurst, "Christology," 153-154; De Wet, "Messianic Interpretation," 122; Urassa, *Psalm 8*, 199; 210-214; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 119-121; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946-947; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 72-74; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 48.

5 Christ the Human Leader (2:10-13)

5.1 Introduction

Hebrews 2:5-9 expounds Christ's humanity through the lens of Psalm 8. Christ, in taking on the humble position of humanity in a fallen world, has received the promised inheritance of humanity in the world to come. As he enters into this glory, he becomes the guarantee that the purposes of God for humanity will be fulfilled not only in him but also through him to other humans who attach themselves to Christ. Thus the glorified human Christ is the assurance of the glorification of humanity in Christ.

In 2:10-13 the author continues to explain how God brings many sons to glory through Christ. While Psalm 8 remains the overarching background, Hebrews 2:10-13 develops the argument through a discussion of Christ as the ἀρχηγός. This title, repeated again in 12:2, has been widely recognised as one of the dominant features of Hebrews' Christology.[280] In 2:10-13 it is expounded in relation to Christ's suffering, perfection, and unity with other humans. These connections mean that it holds promise for understanding Hebrews 2:5-18's presentation of Christ's humanity. Unfortunately, however, there is no consensus concerning its meaning. This chapter will therefore examine this title and consider its connection with Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18. The first part of the chapter will seek to define the lexeme itself by considering its use in other literature. The second part of the chapter will then seek to understand this term as the author of Hebrews applies it to Christ, and to see how it interacts with elements of its context as they work to build a portrait of Christ and his humanity.

5.2 The Meaning of Ἀρχηγός

The standard lexicons list a range of meanings for ἀρχηγός. BDAG lists three: "one who has a preeminent position, *leader, ruler, prince,*" "one who begins someth. that is first in a series," and "one

[280] Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 73; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 57; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 11.

who begins or originates... *originator, founder.*"[281] LSJ similarly lists three meanings for the substantive: 1) founder/ancestral heroine/founder of a family, 2) prince/chief/chief captain/leader, and 3) first cause/originator/the originating power/primary/fundamental.[282]

The most substantial study of the word to date was undertaken by Paul-Gerhard Müller. Following a survey of literature related to the term, he begins with etymology.[283] Müller argues that the ἄρχ- comes from ἄρχω, whose basic meaning is "to be first" in a local, temporal or qualitative sense. This root idea is seen in secondary concepts of beginning, ruling, or leading.[284] He notes that the -ηγος could be derived from ἡγέομαι or ἄγω, concluding that it is more likely from ἄγω and that ἀρχηγέτης comes from combining ἄρχω and ἡγέομαι.[285] Combining these ideas, Müller argues that the ἀρχ- denotes superiority in a static relationship while the -ηγός introduces dynamic movement. An ἀρχηγός, then, is a leader who is hierarchically above his people but who leads them in procession/campaign.[286]

Müller's explanation has two flaws. Firstly, while insisting that ἀρχηγός derives from ἄρχω and ἄγω rather than ἄρχω and ἡγέομαι, he suggests that ἀρχηγός and ἀρχηγέτης, the latter of which he argues is based on ἄρχω and ἡγέομαι, are "undifferenzierbare Synonyme."[287] This calls into question his conclusion that ἄγω makes the term dynamic rather than static. Secondly, and more problematically, it will be seen below that Müller's definition does not match the actual usage of the term ἀρχηγός. Whether or not his etymological history is correct, the usage of the term does not always reflect

[281] Frederick W. Danker, Walter. Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 138-139.
[282] Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 252. Other authors simplify this to two meanings, such as Peterson, "chieftain" or "founder" (D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 57).
[283] Müller notes the diversity of opinion among linguists concerning the importance of etymology and recognises that etymology is not in itself sufficient to determine the meaning of a word but cites some linguists in support of his approach which considers etymology helpful when it can be aligned with word usage (Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 55-56).
[284] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 68.
[285] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 69-71.
[286] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 71-72.
[287] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 70-71.

dynamic ideas, being sometimes used simply to refer to those in authority or even merely to prominent people. The well-attested meaning of "source" is also difficult to reconcile with Müller's basic definition, and may call into question his stated goal of reducing the term to one basic root meaning ("die Einzelelemente des Wortkompositums auf ihre Wurzeln zu reduzieren").[288]

In order to better establish the term's lexical range, the present thesis will begin by examining its usage in Greek literature prior to or roughly contemporary with the book of Hebrews. A TLG search for all forms of ἀρχηγός yields 198 results dated to the 1st century CE or earlier.[289] The non-Jewish sources—accounting for 140 instances of ἀρχηγός—will be considered first. While space prohibits an examination of every occurrence, representative samples will be given. We will then attend to Jewish sources, considering all forty-eight instances, albeit often briefly. Finally, we will consider early Christian sources. Because there are only ten extant Christian uses of ἀρχηγός from the first century, including the two in Hebrews, we will extend the examination of Christian sources into the second century. This examination will lay the foundation for considering the meaning and significance of the term ἀρχηγός in Hebrews and how it contributes to the presentation of Christ's humanity.

5.2.1 Ἀρχηγός in Non-Jewish Sources

The non-Jewish sources display a number of different meanings for ἀρχηγός but can helpfully be examined under a few broad headings:

[288] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 68; cf. also frequent references to the "Bedeutungskern," "Bedeutungskonstante," "Motivkonstante," etc. in Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 52-61 and passim.

[289] This count includes alternate spelling ἀρχαγός.
Many documents are difficult to date with precision and/or were the product of ongoing editorial activity. TLG sometimes lists these with a date range. Documents whose date range includes the 1st century CE or earlier are included even when their date range extends well beyond it (e.g., the Sibylline Oracles whose range is listed as 2 B.C.–A.D. 4).
Duplicates from different edited collections have been removed but repetition of the same accounts in different documents have been retained.

5.2.1.1 Leader or Commander

Firstly, the word ἀρχηγός is frequently used in contexts of leadership and authority. It is employed in contexts of military leadership where it refers to generals or commanders, or to kings preparing their armies for battle.[290] It also describes positions of leadership that are not necessarily military roles, such as kings in political or civil contexts, rulers of cities, heads of political factions or even leaders in a cultic setting.[291] Another frequent use of ἀρχηγός is for the leaders of various rebellions and conspiracies, though these are more difficult to interpret since the leaders are often also instigators.[292]

5.2.1.2 Ancestor, Founder or Source

The second dominant use of ἀρχηγός is for an ancestor, founder, or source. A progenitor in the most basic sense is evident in Aristotle's discussion of an "ancestor" through whom various cousins and family members define their own relationships.[293] Other uses show the founding of a race or nation.[294] At least sometimes, however, the ἀρχηγός of a race is something other than simply the first ancestor. Isocrates, for instance, calls Teucer the ἀρχηγός of a race, yet he makes clear that he founded it by taking others along with him who were also ancestors to the people. Teucer himself became the first king of this new nation.[295]

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[290] Aesop, *Fab*., 51.3; Simonides, *Epigrammata*, 6.197; Thucydides, *Historiae*, 1.132.2; Demosthenes, *Neaer*., 97.7; Aristodemus, *Fragmenta*, 1.107; Plutarch, *Her. mal*., 873.C; Xenophon, *Anab*., 3.1.26; cf. 3.1.15; 3.1.24; Euripides, *Ion*, 723; *Tro*., 1267; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 17.30.2.

[291] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 31.8.9; Euripides, *Hipp*., 152; *Iph. taur*., 1303; *Tro*., 196; Aeschylus, *Ag*., 259; Xenophon, *Hell*., 5.2.25; Plutarch, *Aetia Romana et Graeca*, 293.F.

[292] Xenophon, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Polybius all use ἀρχηγός to refer to the instigators of conspiracies against kings, in which setting origin may be more fitting than authority (Xenophon, *Hell.,* 3.3.4; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom.,* 3.73.4; Polybius, *Historiae*, 5.25.7; 5.28.5). Polybius also applies the term ἀρχηγός to leaders of a mutiny, whom he also refers to as αἰτιοί which he appears to use as a synonym (Polybius, *Historiae*, 11.26.5; 11.30.3). For more ambiguous cases see Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom.,* 8.58.4; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica,* 36.5.1-2 ;37.1.6; Polybius, *Historiae,* 33.10.3.

[293] Aristotle, *Eth. nic.,* 1162a.

[294] Berosus, *Fragmenta*, 14a; Plutarch, *Alc*., 1.1; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 3.60.4; 5.72.2; Dionysius Scytobrachion, *Fragmenta*, 7.248; Bacchylides, *Epinicia*, 9.

[295] Isocrates, *Nic.,* 28.2 (Müller's translation "Ahnherr" is misleading).

Various gods are also mentioned as the ἀρχηγοί of nations and cities, apparently a reference to their founding role.[296] These ἀρχηγοί, however, not only founded the city but had an ongoing role in it. They were sometimes believed to still visit the city,[297] and its citizens were to continue to worship them.[298] The nature of the ἀρχηγός was also to be emulated by the citizens who came after him or her.[299]

Ἀρχηγός is also used for the founders of various schools of thought or philosophy. The ἀρχηγός was the figure who had first come up with a way of thinking and who had handed this down to others.[300]

There are many other diverse applications of ἀρχηγός which, broadly speaking, appear to demonstrate the meaning "source." Those who install a king are the ἀρχηγοί of kingship,[301] Upper Egypt was the ἀρχηγός of life after the flood,[302] certain conditions are ἀρχηγοί of rebellions,[303] a democratic system of governance was the ἀρχηγός of Peloponnesian unity in the Achaean league,[304] and people can be the ἀρχηγοί of laws or policies.[305] These examples demonstrate that "source" was an established meaning for ἀρχηγός.[306]

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[296] Isocrates, *Phil.,* 32.7; 105.9), Helius of the Rhodians (Zeno of Rhodes, *Fragmenta*, 1.57; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 5.56.4; Plato, *Tim.,* 21.e; Plutarch, *Demetr.,* 40.8; Dio Chrysostomus, *1 Tars.,* 1; Sopholces, *Oed. col.,* 60.

[297] Dio Chrysostomus *1 Tars.,* 47.

[298] Plato, *Leg.,* 848.d.

[299] Demosthenes, *Epitaph.,* 30.4; 30.7; 31.2.

[300] Thales, *Testemonia*, 12.9; Aristotle, *Metaph.,* 983b; Parmenides, *Testemonia*, 44a; Posidonius, *Fragmenta*, 13.10; Strabo, *Geogr.,* 2.2.2; Xenocrates, *Testemonia, doctrina et fragmenta,* 82.4; Posidonius, *Fragmenta*, 252b; Zeno Citieus, *Testemonia et fragmenta,* 36.2; 247.2; Zeno Tarsensis, *Fragmenta,* 1.3; Zeno Eleaticus, *Testemonia*, 10.4; Aristotle, *Fragmenta varia*, 1.9.65; Heraclitus, *All.,* 22.2; 34.8. Gods can also be described as the ἀρχηγοί of a craft (Plutarch, *Aetia Romana et Graeca*, 299.B; Plutarch, *An ignis*, 958.D; Sosipater, *Fragmentum*, 1.14; Aristoxenus, *Fragmenta,* 83.14).

[301] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 16.3.6.

[302] Hecataeus, *Fragmenta*, 25.19; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica,* 1.10.4.

[303] Polybius, *Historiae,* 1.66.10; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom.,* 6.83.4; cf. similar use in Polybius, *Historiae*, 1.81.10.

[304] Polybius, *Historiae*, 2.38.9.

[305] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica,* 13.26.3; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom.,* 6.43.2.

[306] See also Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 2.32.3; 5.64.6; 5.65.3; 5.73.2; 5.75.1; 9.20.4; 15.81.2; Strabo, *Geogr.,* 7.3.4; Isocractes *Panath.,* 101.2; *Paneg.,* 61.8; Polystratus, *Περὶ ἀλόγου καταφρονήσεως*, 23a; Polybius, *Historiae*, 2.21.8; 4.60.10; 5.10.1; 24.10.8; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom.,* 8.69.3; 10.57.4; Plutarch, *Fragmenta*, 190.6; *Def. orac.,* 427.E.

While the diversity should not be overlooked, these instances can be grouped together. The ἀρχηγοί are those who lie at the beginning of something—whether families, nations, cities, schools of thought, rebellions, prosperity, or laws. One distinction which should be maintained is that the ἀρχηγός can be at the beginning either as the first instance, as for instance philosophers, or as the first cause, such as gods who found a city or the conditions which produce rebellion.

5.2.1.3 Other

The term is used in a number of other ways. Space prohibits the discussion of all of them, but a few general comments can be made.

In a few texts, ἀρχηγός refers to those who set an example. It was suggested above that some of the uses of ἀρχηγός as "founder" speak of one who is to be imitated. Other texts also speak of examples, whether positive[307] or negative.[308]

Finally, a few times ἀρχηγός refers simply to something prominent without implying that it is a source, leader, or example, such as the "chief" idea to be discussed,[309] a main blood vessel,[310] or sound as more important than content.[311]

5.2.1.4 Summary

Müller provides a selection of passages and translations from the non-Jewish writers and concludes that they express, "In einer Sache oder gegenüber einer Gemeinschaft führend sein," thus demonstrating the "Bedeutungskonstante" suggested by his etymology.[312] This conclusion, however, does not do justice to the variety of uses. We suggest, in agreement with BDAG, LSJ, etc., that ἀρχηγός

[307] Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom., 6.47.3*, cf. similar in Polybius, *Hist.,* 10.34.2.6.
[308] Polybius, *Historiae*, 4.60.6.
[309] Plato, *Soph.,* 243.d.
[310] Aristotle, *Part. an*., 666b.25.
[311] Philodemus, *Περὶ ποιημάτων*, 114.19. Though Janko suggests that Philodemus employs military imagery to describe the priority of sound over content (Richard Janko, *Philodemus: On Poems*, Philodemus–The Aesthetic Works, v. 1, I-3/4 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 351, cf. 327).
[312] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 81.

does not have one consistent meaning. It was used in a number of distinct though overlapping ways. Uses referring to some form of "source" or "founder" appear to dominate, though use for a person with authority or a "leader" is well-attested, and use for a "pattern" or "example," while less common, can be found. Each of these meanings appears in documents roughly contemporaneous with Hebrews, so none can be ruled out at this stage.[313]

5.2.2 Ἀρχηγός in the LXX

In light of Hebrews' evident dependence on the OT, we will give closer attention to the use of ἀρχηγός in the LXX. Various forms occur 32 times, in a variety of contexts and with a variety of Hebrew equivalents.[314]

By far the most frequent use of ἀρχηγός in the LXX is as a translation of the Hebrew ראש (thirteen times). Sometimes this refers to family heads. The list of ἀρχηγοί in Exodus 6:14 are ancestors (cf. Gen 46:9; Num 26:5-7; 1 Chr 5:3; 8:28 [A]), while the ἀρχηγοί τῶν πατριῶν in Nehemiah 7:70 and 7:71, the ἀρχηγῶν τῶ[ν] Λευιτῶν in Nehemiah 11:16 (א[1]) and the ἀρχηγοί οἴκου πατριῶν in 1 Chronicles 5:24 are living heads of ancestral units. 1 Esdras 5:1 also appears to show living heads of families, though in that case not based on a Hebrew equivalent. In other instances, ἀρχηγός translates ראש where it is not

[313] E.g., "leader" in Plutarch, *Her. mal.*, 873.C; *Aetia Romana et Graeca*, 293.F, "source" or "founder" in Heraclitus, *All.,* 22.2; 34.8; Dio Chrysostomus, *1 Tars.,* 1, 47; Plutarch, *Demetr.,* 40.8, and "example" in Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ant. rom., 6.47.3*

[314] The verses of the LXX in which ἀρχηγός appears and the Hebrew words it translates:

Hebrew	*No.*	*Verses*
ראש	12	Exod 6:14; Num 10:4; 13:3; 14:4; 25:4; Deut 33:21; Judg (B) 9:44; 1 Chr 5:24; 8:28 (A) 12:21; Neh 7:69, 70; Neh (א[1]) 11:16, 17; Lam 2:10
שר	4	Judg (B) 5:15; 1 Chr 26:26; Neh 2:9; Isa 30:4
קצין	4	Judg (B) 11:6, 11; Isa 3:6, 7
נאשי	2	Num 13:2; 16:2
פאה	1	Num 24:17
פרע	1	Judg (A) 5:2
ראשית	1	Mic 1:13
אלוף	1	Jer 3:4
פקד	1	2 Chr 23:14
חבש	1	Isa 3:7
No Hebrew	4	1 Esd 5:1; Jdth 14:2; 1 Mac 9:61; 10:47

necessarily related to primacy in a familial group but may simply be a chosen or recognised leader (Num 14:4;[315] Judg [B] 9:44;[316] 1 Chr 12:21; Neh [א[1]] 11:17[317] for ambiguous examples see Num 10:4;[318] 13:3;[319] 25:4;[320] Deut 33:21). Some of these instances refer to military leadership (Judg (B) 9:44; 1 Chr 12:21), while others are apparently civic or political leadership (Num 10:4; 14:4; 25:4).

Ἀρχηγός is also used several times to translate שר (Judg (B) 5:15; 1 Chr 26:26; Neh 2:9; Isa 30:4), קצין (Judg (B) 11:6, 11; Isa 3:6, 7), and נאשי (Num 13:2; 16:2). These words generally refer to positions of leadership or authority. The context of these verses confirms such a meaning both for the Hebrew words and for ἀρχηγός. Again one finds both military (Judg (B) 5:15; 1 Chr 26:26; Neh 2:9) and civic or political (Num 16:2; Isa 3:6-7) positions of leadership, though, as the case of Jephthah makes clear, these roles were not always clearly distinguished (Judg (B) 11:6, 11).[321] A military leader is also apparent in Judges (A) 5:2 and 2 Chronicles 23:14, translating פרע and פקד respectively, and in Judith 14:2 without a Hebrew equivalent.

[315] Cockerill suggests that Num 14:4 indicates that Moses is an ἀρχηγός because the people, "wanted to choose 'another' ἀρχηγός to replace Moses" (*Hebrews*, 138). This, however, appears to be based on a misreading of the text. Ἕτερος τῳ ἑτέρῳ most naturally refers to the people speaking to each other, and does not match the accusative case ἀρχηγόν. It could be argued that within the broader narrative this ἀρχηγός would be an alternative to Moses, but the grammar does not link Moses with the specific lexeme.

[316] Many render הראשים in Judges 9:44 as "companies" but the LXX is able to make sense of the passage translating it with ἀρχηγοί (or in codex A – αἰχαί) which Butler translates "princes" (Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, WBC 8 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009], 232). Müller suggests that ἀρχηγός may possibly refer here to a group rather than a leader, though he gives no support for this idea (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 85).

[317] While applied to a head of house, ἀρχηγός here describes his function as a liturgical leader (ἀρχηγός του αἰνου; Müller translates as "liturgischen Gesangsleiter" [*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 86]).

[318] Levine suggests that ראש אלפי here is "functionally equivalent" to שר אלף in 1 Sam 18:13 in which it refers to a chosen leader of an army unit rather than a familial head (Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* AB 4 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 305).

[319] A number of Hebrews scholars have drawn particular attention to this verse for understanding the role of the ἀρχηγός, suggesting that Jesus' role may be comparable to the spies entering the promised land (Easter, *Faith*, 148-149; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 129-130; Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 304-305; Peeler, *You are My Son*, 82). This appears to confuse what the ἀρχηγοί were with one specific role that these ἀρχηγοί did. Being an ἀρχηγός was a pre-requisite for the mission into Canaan; the mission into Canaan did not define what it meant to be an ἀρχηγός (though cf. Ashley who suggests that these are new leaders appointed for the task of spying out the land [Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 232]).

[320] See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 4A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 285; Ashley, *Numbers*, 512, 246-247.

[321] A point missed by Müller who finds only military leadership here (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 85).

Several instances of ἀρχηγός in the LXX require closer attention. Numbers 24:17 describes the destruction of τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς Μωαβ, translating the MT's פאתי מואב. The Hebrew expression is unusual. פאה generally refers to sides or corners, though it may, and here likely does, refer to the "forehead" or "temples" (as in Leviticus 13:41 [though there with פנה]; 19:27 [פאת ראש]; Jer 48:45).[322] Ashley suggests that if "forehead" is read then this verse refers to "those at the 'head' of Moab, i.e., the leaders."[323] The LXX rendering with τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς Μωαβ in this context would make sense if the translators had likewise understood the Hebrew to figuratively refer to the leadership of Moab.[324]

Isaiah 3:6-7 uses ἀρχηγός three times. In Isaiah's prophecy, the judgement of the Lord has brought calamity and removed all those who had formerly held positions of authority. Isaiah 3:6-7 shows people begging a man to step into leadership, but the man, lacking solutions, rejects the position of authority. In 3:6 and 3:7b ἀρχηγός is used in place of קצין to describe the leader; but in 3:7a ἀρχηγός surprisingly comes in place of the Hebrew חבש, commonly rendered as "healer." The most likely explanation is that the LXX deviates from the MT.[325] As the text of the LXX stands, it would be odd for ἀρχηγός in 3:7a to mean something other than what it means in 3:6 and 3:7b. It should therefore be read as referring to a leader.

In Jeremiah 3:4 the nation of Judah calls out to God as its father and אלוף נעריי. While most translate אלוף as "friend," Thompson observes that it "has a variety of meanings—tame animal, ox, friend, companion, husband, head of family or tribe," and that, "[i]t may have been chosen advisedly by Jeremiah, for it conveyed the wide range of functions that Yahweh had served since Israel's youth."[326]

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[322] Ashley, *Numbers*, 497; Levine, *Numbers 21-36*, 202; Eryl W. Davies, *Numbers*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995), 274. It could alternatively refer to the "frontiers" of Moab (cf. Ashley, *Numbers*, 497; Davies, *Numbers*, 274).

[323] Ashley, *Numbers*, 500-501.

[324] C.f. John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers*, Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 46 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 413-414; Ashley, *Numbers*, 497. Müller however argues that פאה is a reference to the temple "als tötliche Stelle am Kopf," and that the LXX has misunderstood the reference (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 84).

[325] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 87.

[326] J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 192.

The range given for the term אלוף overlaps that usually attributed to ἀρχηγός in the area of "head of family or tribe." It thus seems likely that this is the intended meaning in the LXX of Jeremiah 3:4.

Lamentations 2:10 is another curious case. Whereas the MT describes the virgins of Jerusalem bowing their heads to the ground (הורידו לארץ ראשן בתולת ירושלם), the LXX has the head virgins being brought down to the ground (κατήγαγον εἰς γῆν ἀρχηγοὺς παρθένους ἐν Ιερουσαλημ). The LXX may have misread the Hebrew, or be based on a variant no longer extant. Even so, Lamentations 2:10 in the LXX seems to speak not of leaders but of those who are prominent, a usage also suggested for Numbers 13:3.[327]

The ἀρχηγοί of a rebellion are found in 1 Maccabees 9:61. Here ἀρχηγός has been variously translated as "leader" (NAB)[328] or "author" (KJV). The verse refers to the slaughter of fifty men who had been involved in the conspiracy to hand Jonathan and his men over to Bacchides. These are likely the same men mentioned in 9:58 who had devised the scheme, hence "author" may be a valid option. They appear, however, to have been involved in more than just the origin of the plot as Bacchides tells them to carry it out (9:60). They thus had an ongoing role in leading an attack on Jonathan and his men. Designating them as ἀρχηγοὶ τῆς κακίας may show their position of leadership in relation to the whole of the conspiracy. This verse gives a potential instance of ἀρχηγός being used for an "originator," but may otherwise be another instance in which the ἀρχηγός is a leader.

Finally, there are two verses which appear to use ἀρχηγός as the "first" or "beginning" which would be followed by others. In Micah 1:13 Lachish is said to be ראשית חטאת. While the details are not entirely clear, it seems that Lachish was among the first to adopt sinful practices that subsequently spread

[327] See Peter Gentry's translation, "leading young women" (Peter Gentry, "Lamentations," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under that Title,* ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 937). On Numbers 13:3 (Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 351).

[328] So also Goldstein – "ringleader" (Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 41 [New York: Doubleday, 1976], 379).

through Judah.[329] Delling thus appropriately says of this instance that, "the ἀρχηγός is the leader and example in an action, who stirs others to follow."[330] Such a meaning also seems apparent in 1 Maccabees 10:47, where Alexander is the "first" (KJV, NAB) to seek peace with Jonathan and the Jews, followed later by Demetrius.[331]

In summary, the preponderance of uses of ἀρχηγός in the LXX refers to a prominent person, usually a leader with authority. This leader can be a family head, a military leader, or a civic leader, roles that often overlap. The family head is sometimes an ancestor, though often he is rather a leader within the family. Two instances refer to someone who is first and is subsequently followed by others, and one may refer to an "originator."[332]

5.2.3 Ἀρχηγός in Other Early Jewish Works

Turning from the LXX to the broader corpus of extant Jewish works, one finds a different picture. The Pseudepigrapha use ἀρχηγός five times. Pseudo-Phocylides 1:44 and the identical passage in the

[329] Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 24E (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 229-230. Wolff argues that ראשית חטאת is to be understood as "chief sin" and is a reference to the military might found at Lachish in which Israel was trusting (Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*, Continental Commentaries [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990], 61-62). Waltke accepts that Micah 1:13 is a critique of trusting in the military as built up at Lachish but still suggests that it is better to translate as "first" (Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 80-81).

[330] Gerhard Delling, "Ἄρχω, κτλ.," *TDNT* 1:487. See also similar usage in Plutarch in which the Ionians are seen as the ἀρχηγοί of bringing foreign gods to Greece (Plutarch, *Fragmenta*, 190.6). This idea is close to that of the example or pattern seen above in non-Jewish literature.

[331] So BDAG, 138. Goldstein has noted a difficulty in this verse because Demetrius had sought an alliance with Jonathan before Alexander had (10:3-6). He therefore suggests that Alexander is not the first to speak of peace but rather the "original cause of their opportunity for peaceful discussions," since it was the threat from Alexander that caused Demetrius to seek the help of Jonathan (10:1-5; Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 403, 414). It is unclear however why Alexander being the "original cause" for Demetrius to seek peace with the Jews would cause Jonathan to reject Demetrius in favour of Alexander. There is also less difficulty than Goldstein suggests in taking Alexander as the first to seek a genuine peace. While Demetrius had authorised the release of hostages and allowed Jonathan to raise an army to support him (10:6), Alexander appoints Jonathan as high priest and friend of the king, dressing him in purple and crowning him with gold (10:18-20). Demetrius himself recognises that Alexander had preceded (προφθάνω as in 10:4) him in gaining the friendship of the Jews (10:23). Demetrius' second letter which Jonathan rejects is therefore not a letter of one who has taken the initiative but of one who is following the example of Alexander (γράψω αὐτοῖς καγὼ [10:24]).

[332] Müller concludes that "Obwohl der Ausdruck eine so disparate Verwendung in der Septuaginta findet, beinhaltet er doch an allen Stellen die Bedeutungskonstante, ein dynamisches Führungssubjekt, den Primus eines Vorganges, den Träger einer führenden Initiative zu bezeichnen" (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 90). The idea of "dynamisches" however, which appears in his conclusion, is never argued in his analysis of the text and does not naturally arise from it.

Sibylline Oracles (2:115) address gold as κακῶν ἀρχηγέ, using ἀρχηγός to mean "source." In the oracles against the nations in book five, Corinth is twice referred to as the κακῶν ἀρχηγέ (*Sibylline Oracles*, 5:231; 5:242 [κακῶν ἀρχηγὲ μεγίστων]). In light of similar descriptions in 5:229 and 5:244 (both using ἀρχή), this probably refers to Corinth as a "source of evils." In 5:180, however, Memphis is told, πόνων ἀρχηγὸς ἔσῃ, apparently referring to Memphis as one of the first cities to be destroyed, a meaning close to that of the first in a series.

Philo uses ἀρχηγός only twice and then only in quotations from the LXX of Numbers 14:4 and 25:4 (*Leg*., 3:175; *Som*., 1:89). In both of these cases, ἀρχηγός refers to a leader. The fact that they are in quotations makes it difficult to assess how significant these instances are. Philo has not employed the term in his own words but recognised and perpetuated this usage.[333]

Josephus uses ἀρχηγός five times. He recounts that when David was fleeing Absalom, Shimei came and denounced him as πολλῶν ἀρχηγὸν κακῶν (*Ant*. 7:207). This usage could conceivably fit into a number of categories, depending on whether Shimei considers David to have begun many evils by not submitting to Saul, to represent a pattern of insubordination imitated by Absalom, or simply to have reigned on the throne in wickedness.[334] In Ant. 20:136 ἀρχηγός is a synonym for αἴτιος (*Ant*., 20:127, 129, 135), describing the Samaritans as the source of a conflict between the Samaritans and the Jews. In Apn 1:270 Josephus notes that Manetho never accused the Jews from Jerusalem of being the ἀρχηγοί of a revolt. This text is similar to the use of ἀρχηγός in the non-Jewish literature for those who either instigated or led rebellions and could potentially have either meaning here.[335] In Apn 1:71 Josephus recounts that τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν ἀρχηγούς came from the Chaldeans, a reference to the

[333] Müller notes that Philo does use ἀρχηγέτης more frequently (33 times), generally referring to various forefathers and founders of races (*Opi* 1:79, 136, 142; *Pos* 1:42; *Mut* 1:64, 88; *Fug* 1:73, 89; *Abr* 1:9,46, 276; *Mos* 1:7, 34, 242; 2:65; *Dec* 1;1; *Spe* 2:3, 217; 4:123, 181; *Vir* 1:193, 199, 206; *Pep* 1:57, 60, 166; *Prb* 1:10, *Gai* 1:54; *Qge* 2:17; *Qgi*, 1:17), though also to instigators/leaders of an impiety (*Mos* 2:274), founders of schools of thought (*Cnt* 1:29) and even of God as the ἀρχηγέτης of all (*Ebr* 1:42; Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 90).

[334] Christopher Begg translates as "source of many calamities" (Christopher Begg, *Jewish Antiquities Books 5-7* ed. Steve Mason. Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 4 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 263; so also BDAG, 139).

[335] Barclay translates, "Originators of this criminal behavior" (John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion*, ed. Steve Mason. Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 147).

ancestors of the Jewish nation.[336] Similarly, Noah is described in Apn 1:130 as ὁ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν ἀρχηγός, again referring to the ancestor of humanity and thus the originator of the race.[337] Josephus, therefore, uses ἀρχηγός primarily to refer to a "source" or an "ancestor," though he may also use it as "leader" and perhaps "example."

While there are only twelve examples of ἀρχηγός in non-biblical Jewish literature up to the first century CE, they show a tendency to use ἀρχηγός to describe a "source" (7-9 times), though the meaning "leader" (2-4 times) and "example" (1-2 times) also appear.

5.2.4 Ἀρχηγός in Other Early Christian Literature

5.2.4.1 Acts

The book of Acts contains the only other extant instance of ἀρχηγός in mid-1st century Christian writing. The term appears twice,[338] both times, as in Hebrews, in reference to Christ. There is no consensus on its meaning in Acts, but the similarities to Hebrews in content, date, and community justify deeper examination of these passages.

5.2.4.1.1 Acts 3:15

In Acts 3:15 Peter addresses a crowd in Jerusalem, telling them that τὸν δὲ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἀπεκτείνατε ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

Some commentators argue that here ἀρχηγός is best read as "originator" (NIV, NRSV and ESV, "Author of life"). They point out that Jesus' name, and faith in his name, just brought healing to a lame man (3:6, 16), and Christ is portrayed in Peter's speech as the one who can also bring forgiveness and restoration to the crowd (3:19-20). Jesus is therefore understood as the one who can give life. This

[336] Barclay translates "since they constitute also the original ancestors of our people" (Barclay, *Against Apion*, 47).
[337] Barclay, *Against Apion*, 81. Cf. Berosus, *Fragmenta*, 14a.
[338] A third instance occurs in codex A in 7:35. There it is clearly parallel to ἀρχων and describes God making Moses "ruler" over his people.

reading also accords with the contrast between Jesus, the giver of life, and the murderer in 3:14 who takes life.[339]

It is preferable, however, to take ἀρχηγός here to refer to Jesus as the leader of God's people. Müller has shown that the emphasis of this part of Peter's speech is the resurrection (cf. 3:15) and the eschatological restoration of God's people (cf. 3:20). According to Müller, Christ becomes the ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς when he himself enters into resurrection life and opens the way for others to follow.[340]

While Müller rightly emphasises the connection between the resurrection and the meaning of ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς, he overlooks the clear overtones of the authority of Jesus in this section. This authority has been demonstrated in the healing of the lame man through the name of Jesus and through faith in that name (3:16). The emphasis on "name" here implies not simply that Jesus has preceded others but that he holds authority, in this case, authority in relation to life.[341] This authority may be further evidenced in Peter's affirmation that Jesus is the messiah (3:20), a title with royal overtones. The restoration Peter proclaims is based on Jesus being the anointed king.[342] Finally, Peter emphasises Jesus' authority by connecting him with Moses. Jesus is the prophet like Moses, and as such obedience to him is mandated (3:22-23).[343] Müller is forced to divorce this theme from that of Jesus as ἀρχηγός, insisting that because Moses had not risen from the dead, his example does not inform Jesus' status as ἀρχηγός.[344] This argument, however, appears to be an admission that Peter's speech as a whole fits awkwardly with Müller's interpretation, forcing him to unduly atomise the passage.

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[339] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BEC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 171, (though Bock only sees this reading as "slightly more likely"); David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 175-176; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 286.

[340] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 254-258; "ἀρχηγός," *EDNT*, 1:163. In this case ζωῆς is a genitive of direction (Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 256; so also C. K. Barrett, *Acts 1-14,* ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994; repr., London: T&T Clark, 2008), 198). Delling likewise opts for the idea of a pioneer, though he particularly understands this in terms of a Hellenistic "hero" figure (Delling, *TDNT* 1:488).

[341] C.f. NIDNTTE, 3:521.

[342] Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 181.

[343] Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 2:1098.

[344] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 257-258.

If, however, one reads ἀρχηγός against the background of the LXX, the most likely background since Peter addresses a Jewish audience,[345] it becomes more likely that Jesus is presented as one who, by virtue of his resurrection, has received authority as leader over God's people (cf. KJV and NASB, "Prince of life"). This would not necessarily rule out Müller's suggestion entirely, though we lack evidence that Acts presents salvation as a journey to heaven.[346] What is apparent is that Jesus' ability to save his people is strongly tied to his authoritative dominion over them, through which he pours out the blessing of life, as demonstrated in this healing miracle.

5.2.4.1.2 Acts 5:31

Acts 5:31 contains the second use of ἀρχηγός, where Peter tells the Sanhedrin that God had exalted Jesus to his right hand as ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτῆρα. Most commentators agree that here ἀρχηγός denotes a "leader;" indeed, Barrett suggests that it, "would not differ widely from κύριος."[347] Müller, however, argues that it should be understood as "one who leads the way into life."[348] While such a meaning remains possible, there is even less evidence for it in Acts 5:31 than in Acts 3:15. Again Müller rightly points out that the resurrection and ascension of Christ are present in the context, but he gives no reason why these should be understood primarily in relation to Jesus preceding his people on a journey rather than demonstrating his authority as the one now seated at God's right hand.[349]

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[345] Keener, *Acts*, 2:1097-1098; Bock, *Acts*, 171. Müller surprisingly argues that the prevalence of words more common in classical Greek than in the LXX shows that the LXX is not likely to be the background (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 264-265). This however seems to read too much into word frequencies. The whole of this speech is emphasising the fulfilment of God's OT promises so the OT would be the most natural background.

[346] Evidence for this could be found in Stephen's prayer for Jesus to receive his Spirit (Acts 7:59), though this idea would not seem to dominate, particularly as Acts begins not with a promise of believers following Jesus but of Jesus returning to them (Acts 1:11).

[347] Barrett, *Acts*, 290. C.f. D. Peterson, *Acts*, 222; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1219; Bock, 247-248; Barrett, *Acts*, 290; William J. Larkin, *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary 5 (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 94; BDAG, 138. Schnabel tries to maintain all three of BDAG's potential meanings in both 3:15 and 5:31 yet he only supports this by showing that all three meanings would be true of Jesus (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*. ZECNT 5 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 210-211, 312). Fitzmyer may also see the idea of originator in 5:31 but his justification is simply a reference back to his discussion in 3:15 (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 286, 338).

[348] Paul-Gerhard Müller, *EDNT* 1:163; cf. *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 271-278.

[349] Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 2:1219; Bock, 247-248. Several commentators point out the apparent allusion to Psalm 110:1, a text which emphasises the dominion of God's appointed king over his enemies (Schnabel, *Acts*, 312; D. Peterson, *Acts*, 222; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1219).

It is noteworthy that, as in Acts 3:15, Christ is the one who gives salvation, in this case entailing repentance and forgiveness. His gifts in relation to salvation, however, do not require that in the title ἀρχηγός Christ is presented as the "source," rather these gifts are expressions of his authority as the one seated in glory.

5.2.4.1.3 Conclusion

In Acts, Jesus the ἀρχηγός brings life and salvation. In at least one and probably both instances, however, he does this as a figure of authority and leadership rather than as a "source" or "pioneer." The depiction of an ἀρχηγός preceding his people into glory is possible but neither clearly demonstrated nor, if present, the primary focus.

5.2.4.2 Post New Testament Works

Drawing on the usage of ἀρχηγός in later Christian works to understand Hebrews can be problematic because Hebrews itself may have influenced them (especially in the case of 1 Clement, which shows familiarity with the letter). Coming from the same broad community as Hebrews, however, these works could also bear witness to specific developments of the term in that context. They demonstrate that ἀρχηγός did not develop a narrow technical usage in early Christian writings but continued to be used as "leader," "source," and "example."

1 Clement is written to a church experiencing schism. While the letter is positive towards the presbyters and deacons in general (cf. 44), another group has risen up to cause division. The recipients are warned not to follow the leaders of the schism (*1 Clem,* 14.1; 51.1). 2 Clement refers to Jesus as τὸν σωτῆρα καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας, potentially a reference to Jesus as the "source of immortality" though it could easily be a reference to him as the "leader of immortality" (*2 Clem,* 20.5).[350] Clement's

[350] cf. Lightfoot, "Prince of immortality." Müller notes that while 2 Clement is likely from the mid second century, this section is doxological so may be picking up on titles already in circulation (Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 95).

Homiliae refer to some who claim that the mind was the ἀρχηγός of creation, apparently using ἀρχηγός to mean "source" (*Homiliae*, 6.19.1).

Ignatius warns against envy because, "its ἀρχηγός is the devil." This is probably a reference to the devil as the first example who was followed by others, as indicated by the way Cain is then presented as successor (Ignatius, *Epistulae interpolatae et epistulae suppositiciae (recension longior),* 10.5.1). Ignatius can also describe Jesus as the ἀρχηγός of Christian love and harmony. This may refer to Jesus as the source, as suggested by the next verse mentioning Jesus praying for unity. Alternatively, it could refer to the example of Christ whose unity with the Father is presented for imitation (Ignatius, *Epistulae interpolatae et epistulae suppositiciae (recension longior),* 11.4.1-2).

Justin Martyr uses ἀρχηγός twice in quotations from the OT. The first instance quotes Amos 6:1 where the LXX does not have ἀρχηγός. Amos refers to well-off men in Israel and Judah, perhaps suggesting leadership but more likely simply referring to prominence (Justin Martyr, *Dial.,* 22.4). The second instance quotes Isaiah 30:4, speaking of "officials" (Justin Martyr, *Dial.,* 79.3).

Aristides the Athenian refers to the Chaldeans, Greeks, and Egyptians as the ἀρχηγοὶ καὶ διδάσκαλοι of the worship of many-named gods. By connecting ἀρχηγός with the concept of teaching, he seems to use it of those who are both examples and leaders, though the closest parallel would seem to be in a "founder" (Aristides, *Fragmenta*, 2.2).

Irenaeus refers to the devil as the ἀρχηγός τῆς ἀποστασίας. This appears to mean more than "source" because those with the devil are described as οἱ συναποστάται αὐτοῦ, indicating that the devil himself shares in the ἀποστασία. Ἀρχηγός in this instance, therefore, appears to be either "leader" of rebellion or perhaps "pattern" of rebellion (Irenaeus, *Haer.,* liber 4*,* 27.3).

Theophilus refers to Eve as the ἀρχηγός of sin, which likely refers to her as the one through whom sin entered the world, but could mean Eve led Adam into sin or was a pattern of sin (Theophilus, *Autol.*, 2.28).

Tatianus sets out to show that Christian wisdom pre-dates Greek wisdom. He sets up a contrast between Homer and Moses in which Moses is the ἀρχηγός. Moses' temporal primacy is clearly intended, but so is his role as an example. Moses is not simply the ἀρχηγός of wisdom but the ἀρχηγός of βαρβάρου σοφίας, the pattern from which all pagan wisdom derives, albeit in a corrupted form (Tatianus, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 31.1).[351]

The evidence from early Christian documents suggests that ἀρχηγός did not become a widespread technical term for describing Christ. Outside the NT, it is used only once for Christ in the first and second centuries. Ἀρχηγός continued to be used in Christian writings to mean "source," "pattern," and "leader," and is applied to diverse subjects, whether positive or negative.[352]

5.2.3 Summary

To summarise: three uses are well-attested in extant literature up to, at, and shortly after the time Hebrews was written. While "source" or "founder" was more common in literature outside of Jewish and Christian sources and in some non-canonical Jewish sources, the LXX and Acts use ἀρχηγός far more frequently to describe "leaders" with authority, while other early Christian literature readily uses both meanings. The meaning "pattern" was less common but also found across all types of literature.

5.3 The Meaning of Ἀρχηγός in Hebrews

Hebrews uses ἀρχηγός once in 2:10 and once in 12:2, both referring to Christ.

[351] For this reading see Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 97. It would be possible to read this verse so that Homer is the βαρβάρου σοφίας ἀρχηγός, though this would not significantly alter the meaning of ἀρχηγός.
[352] Müller does not provide a comprehensive list but examines a significant number of references dating as late as the fourth century and likewise concludes that usage is varied (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 92-102).

Some have understood ἀρχηγός in Hebrews to mean "source" or "founder," often translating it as "author."[353] Others suggest that it means "leader," often including a secondary sense of example. Many have opted for the term "pioneer" as one which encompasses both leadership and example.[354] While this is an attractive solution, it needs to be recognised that the "leadership" of a pioneer differs substantially from the concept of "leadership" found in the documents surveyed above. A pioneer leads people by going before them, and the word does not connote authority over others. The leadership depicted in the occurrences of ἀρχηγός in other literature, however, is generally related to having authority over those led. While these notions are not mutually exclusive, and may both be found in Hebrews, the distinction should be recognised.[355]

Finally, a number of scholars have suggested Hebrews uses ἀρχηγός to encompass leadership and source and that Christ is depicted as both.[356]

To determine the basic meaning of ἀρχηγός in Hebrews, we will consider more carefully the two passages in which it is used.

5.3.1 Hebrews 2:10

In Hebrews 2:10 the author writes that, Ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι' ὃν τά πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τα πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.

Several elements in the context require consideration for interpreting the meaning of ἀρχηγος.

Firstly, the presentation of Christ as the ἀρχηγός in 2:10-13 further explains (γάρ) Christ's role as described in 2:5-9.[357] In Hebrews 2:5-9 Christ is the one who, having been humbled as a human being,

[353] E.g., BDAG, 138-139; NIDNTTE, I:418; NIV84, ASV, NASB, NKJV; CSB – source; ESV – founder.
[354] Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 76; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 73; Easter, *Faith*, 148; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 138; McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 70; Peterson, *Hebrews*, 91.
[355] Spicq suggests the French word *chef* as one which encompasses both authority and going before (*L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:39)
[356] Koester, *Hebrews*, 228-229; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 97-99; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 96.
[357] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 53.

has received the glory promised to humanity, and the one in whom humanity can now enter into that glory. The presentation of Christ in 2:5-9 overlaps considerably with the concept of a pioneer.

The author continues his exposition in 2:10, where the ἀρχηγός is introduced in connection with God's leading (ἀγαγόντα) many sons to glory.[358] While one could suggest that God leads by providing Christ as the "source" of salvation, depiction as a "leader" or "pioneer" would be more natural.[359] Christ, having entered God's glory for all humanity in 2:5-9, here leads all humanity with him into that glory.[360]

The way Hebrews progresses from talking about Christ as the ἀρχηγός to explaining him in light of Psalm 22, 2 Samuel 22, and Isaiah 8 further suggests the concept of leadership. These passages will be discussed below (see section 5.4.3.5), but at present, we note that while introduced to explain the necessity of the identification of the ἀρχηγός in suffering, they bear no connection to the concept of source but are readily explained by connection with leadership. The type of leadership expressed in those passages is also more than simply a pioneer. If the argument below is correct, then Christ is cast in kingly and prophetic terms. The OT presentation of these roles clearly entails going before the people as an example and was always to be directional, leading people towards a fuller expression of their inheritance. In that sense, these offices resemble that of a pioneer, but their leadership cannot be reduced to that of a pioneer.[361]

The primary objection raised against interpreting ἀρχηγός as leader relates to the fact that ἀρχηγός does not stand alone but is qualified with a genitive phrase: τὸν ἀρχηγὸν *τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν*. Because

[358] Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:38.
[359] As ἀγαγόντα agrees with ἀρχηγόν in gender, case and number some have even suggested that it is not God who is leading many sons to glory but Christ as ἀρχηγός (see for example Delling, *TDNT* 1:488; Käsemann, 143; less definitively, D. Stephen. Long, *Hebrews*, Belief [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011], 60-61). This reading however is awkward and has not gained widespread acceptance (see Massonet, 95; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:38; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 308; Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 284-285; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 159; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 55-56; Koester, *Hebrews*, 227; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 51; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 56).
[360] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 51; R. J. McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 23; Koester, *Hebrews*, 228; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 98.
[361] In light of the familial imagery in the context, Peeler also suggests ἀρχηγός may here incorporate the idea of a family head – with both the authority and the intimacy of that role (Peeler, *You are My Son*, 83).

salvation comes from Christ to his people, some insist that ἀρχηγός must mean source.[362] The manner in which salvation comes from Christ to his people, however, can be understood in two ways. Christ could be the "source of salvation," or the "leader" who provides salvation as he leads his people along the path to glory.[363] A survey of the use of the genitive of σωτηρία yields many similar instances in which salvation is achieved by the subject (e.g., κέρας σωτηρίας μου [2 Sam 22:3; Psa 17:3 (with dative ἡμῖν [Odes 9:69; Luke 1:69])], ὑπερασπισμός σωτηρίας μου [2 Sam 22:36; Psa 17:36], ὁ φύλαξ τῆς σωτηρίας μου [2 Sam 22:47], ὁ θεὸς τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν [1 Chr 16:35]; ὁ θεὸς τῆς σωτηρίας μου [Psa 17:47; 50:16; 87:2], κύριος τῆς σωτηρίας μου [Psa 37:23; Odes 11:19; Isa 38:20] ἀντιλήμπτωρ τῆς σωτηρίας μου [Psa 88:27], δύναμις τῆς σωτηρίας μου [Psa 139:8]).[364] Not only does the use of the genitive of σωτηρία fall short of demonstrating the meaning "source," but there is substantial evidence that ἀρχηγός followed by a genitive abstract noun can refer to a leader. The clearest example is the description by Irenaeus of the Devil as the ἀρχηγός τῆς ἀποστασίας. As mentioned above, it is clear that the Devil is not just the source of ἀποστασία but one who participates in it and leads others with him, whether by his example or his authority.[365]

That Christ is more than a leader in the immediate context is clear. He not only has authority over his people and sets an example for them but also provides definitively for his people. This is demonstrated in 2:11, in which Christ is sanctifier (ὅ ἁγιάζων) and his people are sanctified (οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι). Similarly, the reference to suffering in 2:10 suggests that the ἀρχηγός is connected to the subsequent description

[362] NIDNTTE suggests the meaning, "the one who brought about the salvation of human beings" (I:418). Cf. D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 58; "The Incarnation," 92-93; J. Julius Scott, Jr. "Archēgos in the Salvation History of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.1 (1986): 51.

[363] See for example D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 214.

[364] Ellingworth helpfully suggests following the NEB with "the leader who delivers them" (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 161). This is perhaps closest to a "genitive of product" or perhaps a "genitive of direction." Cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 100-101; 106-107.

[365] Cf. Also discussion of Acts 3:15 above. The main difference between Irenaeus' use and that of Hebrews is that Hebrews includes the pronoun αὐτῶν suggesting that the salvation is not for Christ but for those to whom he is ἀρχηγός. Another example may be seen when Diodorus of Sicily recounts that people expected Pharacidas to be an ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ἐλευθερίας, as admiral of the allies he was to take a leading role in pushing for freedom (Diororus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historia,* 14.70.1). Oldfather translates, "take the lead for liberty" (*Diodorus Siculus* Translated by C. H. Oldfather, 12 vols, *Loeb Classical Library* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977], 6:203).

of Christ freeing his people through his death (2:14-15). In 2:14-15, Christ not only leads his people on the path he has taken, but he objectively achieves on their behalf something they neither can nor need to do.[366]

These ideas will be further examined below, but for now we can conclude that the fact that Christ gives things to his people does not require that ἀρχηγός means "source." The dominance of the usage of ἀρχηγός for a "leader" in the LXX and the way this meaning explains the citations of Psalm 22, 2 Samuel 22, and Isaiah 8, suggest that ἀρχηγός means "leader" here—a leader with authority, and likely also one who pioneers. Such a rendering can explain other elements such as the blessings as coming from the leader. If, however, ἀρχηγός were to mean "source," the significance of the subsequent OT passages would be obscure.

5.3.2 Hebrews 12:2

The second occurrence of ἀρχηγός is in Hebrews 12:2, where Christ's exemplary role is more prominent. The image of an athletic race leads most commentators to suggest that Jesus is a pioneer who runs ahead of the pack and whom they follow along the course.[367] This passage would therefore draw on previous descriptions of Christ as the one who has gone before his people into glory (2:9-10) and into the heavenly holy place (4:14; 6:20; 9:11-12; cf. 10:19-20). The concept of authority may also be present in depicting Jesus as one who has ascended to the right hand of the throne of God. As in 2:10, it is possible that concepts of "pioneer" and "leader" coalesce in a figure who is both an example for and an authority over his people.

Several scholars also suggest that the ἀρχηγός is not simply a leader here but the initiator, as suggested by its pairing with the concept of completion in τελειωτής.[368] While this secondary nuance is possible,

[366] D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 58.
[367] Koester, *Hebrews*, 536; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 640; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 356; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*. WBC 47B (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 411; George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 398-399; McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 134-139; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 99.
[368] Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 398-399; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 640; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 99; McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 20-21; Attridge, *Hebrew*, 356.

it is not required to make sense of the pairing with τελειωτής. Christ could perfect his people simply as their leader taking them to their final goal.

Πίστις in 12:2, furthermore, most likely refers not directly to the faith of Christ's people but more simply to "faith," the faith that was expressed by the heroes of Hebrews 11 and which comes to perfect expression in Jesus himself, who then leads his people in it. According to this reading, Jesus is not, in the first instance, perfecting faith in others but his own expression of faith.[369] Jesus, as the ἀρχηγός, goes before his people in the journey of faith, and because he is the τελειωτής, his people can have confidence that faith will reach its goal, as it has in him.[370] If Jesus is included among those who exercised faith, the suggestion that he is the initiator of faith, while still possible, becomes less likely,[371] and Jesus as the source of faith would not be prominent.[372]

5.3.3 Summary

While a more extensive examination of Hebrews 2:10 is to come, based on the above examination, it is possible to provide a basic definition for ἀρχηγός in Hebrews. The term carries multiple nuances that generally fit under the rubric of a "leader." This leadership is not simply a rank of authority nor merely an example or pioneer but encompasses both concepts. The ἀρχηγός reigns over his people but also goes before them and provides for them as they follow the path he has opened.

[369] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 95-97; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 171-173; McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 136; Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 78-80; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 356. In this regard Collins observes a sharp division between modern translations and modern commentaries (Gerald Glyn O'Collins, "The Faith of Jesus: Translating Hebrews 12:2a," *The Expository Times* 132.9 (2021): 387-393).
[370] Cf. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 99-101; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 356.
[371] Richardson notes that, "if πίστις refers to Jesus' own faith(fulness), then ἀρχηγός is best translated as 'leader,' but if it refers to the hearers, then 'founder' is preferred (*Pioneer and Perfecter*, 99). In this we concur, though while Richardson adopts both concepts, we would suggest that faith, in the first instance, is expressed by Jesus himself, making the meaning "leader" primary.
[372] Harris argues that Jesus is also the source of faith, a reading she is able to maintain because she also reads πίστεως as an objective genitive (*Hebrews*, 359).

5.4 The Presentation of Christ as Ἀρχηγός in Hebrews 2

Having argued for a basic meaning of ἀρχηγός in Hebrews, we turn from a narrow word study to a broader consideration of how Hebrews depicts Christ's leadership in 2:10-13 and what that reveals about Christ's humanity. This section will briefly examine a few backgrounds suggested for the depiction of Christ as ἀρχηγός in Hebrews before turning to Hebrews 2:10-13 to examine indications within the text itself as to how Christ's leadership is portrayed.

5.4.1 Suggested Hellenistic Backgrounds for Christ the Ἀρχηγός

Some have suggested that by using the term ἀρχηγός Hebrews seeks to present Christ in the role of a Hellenistic "divine hero." Most prominent among these heroes was Heracles, sometimes referred to as an ἀρχηγός.[373] Heracles was a son of Zeus but was nevertheless a human being. Unlike many heroes, however, he was not associated with a particular grave site, and some held that through his toil and hardship he had become a god and achieved immortality.[374] Some traditions further recount that Heracles wrestled death until death released Alcestis, a tradition argued to be parallel the defeat of death and liberation of its slaves in Hebrews 2:14-15.[375] Attridge further notes the prominence in some forms of the Heracles myth of the fear of death, and suffering as the road to glory.[376] Aune concludes that,

> the similarities between Heracles imagery and the Christology of Hebrews … suggest that many of the important and vital functions attributed to Heracles as a Hellenistic savior figure

[373] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 56-57; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 21; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 50-69; David E. Aune, "Heracles and Christ: Heracles Imagery in the Christology of Early Christianity," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David E. Aune, David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 16; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 44; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:39.
[374] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 50-51; Aune, "Heracles and Christ," 5.
[375] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 51-53; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 57.
[376] Harold W. Attridge, "Liberating Death's Captives: Reconsideration of an Early Christian Myth," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James Robinson*, ed. James E. Goehring, Charles W. Hendrick, James T. Sanders and Hans Dieter Betz, Forum Fascicles 2 (Sonoma, CA.: Polebridge, 1990), 110-111.

were understood by some early Christians as applicable to Jesus to an even greater extent than they were to Heracles.[377]

While similarities between Hebrews' presentation of Christ and Greco-Roman descriptions of Heracles have been demonstrated, however, considerable differences make close identification between them unlikely. The most important contrast is that Christ defeats death not by wrestling it but by enduring it. Both Heracles and Christ triumph over death, but the manner and means of that victory differ greatly.[378] McCruden, therefore, suggests that the parallels are not due to direct borrowing but only that Jesus is presented as a philanthropic hero.[379] Attridge likewise argues only for a broad parallel with mythological guides to a heavenly path.[380] The vagueness of this association makes it unlikely that Hebrews intends to portray Christ as a Hellenistic divine hero.

An alternative Hellenistic background to Christ the ἀρχηγός has been found in the gnostic redeemer. Initially suggested by Käsemann, this view persisted for some time but has generally been abandoned.[381] While there are points of connection between Hebrews and what is known of early gnostic thought, we lack evidence of a gnostic redeemer myth within the first century.[382] This association is further undermined by the stark differences between the worldview of Hebrews and early Gnosticism. Hebrews emphasises concepts like suffering and the fear of death.[383] In fact, it is the death of Christ, rather than knowledge, which saves in Hebrews; and the death of Christ is a defining element of the context of the ἀρχηγός in both its occurrences in Hebrews.[384]

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[377] Aune, "Heracles and Christ," 19.
[378] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 53, 60. While Attridge suggests that some Stoic forms of the Heracles myth transform the idea of the defeat of death so that is achieved in "the conquest of his own irrational self" so that he can accept his own death (Attridge, "Liberating Death's Captives," 111), even this is far from Hebrews. McKelvey also notes that whereas Heracles receives immortality as a reward for his labours, it is difficult to read Hebrews that way (McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 184).
[379] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 59, 61.
[380] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 79-82, 88; followed by Thompson, *Hebrews*, 65.
[381] Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 119; Cf. Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 27-37; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 42-45; McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 184-185; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 15.
[382] Koester, *Hebrews,* 61.
[383] Attridge, "Liberating Death's Captives," 106, 109.
[384] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 34-35, 295-301.

While there are clearly parallels between the presentation of Christ in Hebrews and some wider Hellenistic figures, particularly Hellenistic divine-heroes such as Heracles, and even some parallels with gnostic redeemer myths, the similarities are not consistent enough to suggest that either of these was an intended background to Hebrews.

Some recent scholars have also questioned the starting point of these searches for Hellenistic parallels to Hebrews, noting that they come from, "religious backgrounds alien to Hebrews."[385] These concerns are well-founded. Hebrews itself does not overtly draw on any Hellenistic literature but is saturated with quotations, references, and allusions to Jewish literature, most notably the OT. A Jewish background to the concept of an ἀρχηγός is suggested not only by the nature of the book as a whole but also by the way the OT is employed in relation to the figure of the ἀρχηγός in 2:10 where it first appears.

5.4.2 Suggested Jewish Backgrounds for the Ἀρχηγός of Hebrews

Some scholars have therefore attempted to place the use of ἀρχηγός in a Jewish context, the most substantial contribution being that of Paul-Gerhard Müller.[386]

Müller locates ἀρχηγός within Judaism and particularly the OT, but also argues that the term is modified by early Christian confessions about Jesus.[387] He notes that ἀρχηγός appears in NT contexts related to Judaism and goes so far as to suggest that the application of the term may find its roots in Palestinian Christianity, perhaps even as a translation of an Aramaic title.[388] Having concluded that ἀρχηγός refers to a leader who is both authoritative and dynamic, Müller looks for the portrayal of such leadership in the OT and then in other Jewish works, whether or not the term ἀρχηγός appears.[389]

[385] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 137-138. Even if Lane's contention that Hellenistic Judaism was having its language coloured by wider Greek influences (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 56), the saturation of Hebrews in the world of the OT makes it unlikely that the intended background of Hebrews is to be found in pagan myths.
[386] See also those whom Müller notes and his critiques of their specific approaches (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 34-42).
[387] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 52-61.
[388] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 266-270, 301.
[389] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 114-248.

He finds that God himself is the ultimate leader of his people, and human leaders are appointed by God and subordinate to him.[390] The leadership exercised by God and those he appoints is tied to the concept of a journey; God "leads out" of Egypt, "leads through" the desert, and "leads into" the promised land.[391] This applies to the first exodus but also the prophetic hope of a new exodus, though there the spatial dimensions sometimes shift from the concrete to the figurative.[392]

Müller finds this same presentation in Hebrews. God is leading many sons to glory, but he does so through the perfecting of Christ their ἀρχηγός (2:10). This leadership in Hebrews is intimately connected with the cross and resurrection. By going before his people through death and into glory, the Son becomes their leader.

Müller makes a strong case for reading ἀρχηγός in the NT against a Jewish background. His particular appropriation of that background, however, is problematic and risks imposing his conclusions onto the text of Hebrews rather than letting the text itself guide the investigation and inform what parts of the Jewish background are most immediately relevant.[393]

5.4.3 Analysis of Hebrews 2:5-18

We agree that Hebrews is to be understood against a Jewish background, and particularly an OT background. How this background influences the author and is employed by him, however, must be the result of careful study of the text rather than its starting point. The following section will attempt such an analysis, attending to background issues but doing so through the clues provided by the text

[390] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 114-248.
[391] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 126-127.
[392] Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 127-129, 137-142. Müller maintains that Israel's kings are examples of this leadership but gives little detail about how they can be understood as fitting into the journey context (e.g., *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 122-124, 129-130).
[393] Müller does recognise that the text itself has to be the determinative factor (e.g., Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 247-248), and his examination of the text introduces new elements to his discussion, particularly in his insistence that the term be connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus, yet these are further developments of a concept that Müller has already developed largely independently of the text. This means for example that texts like Psalm 8, Psalm 22, 2 Samuel 22 and Isaiah 8, all of which are intimately connected with the use of ἀρχηγός in Hebrews 2:10 are completely overlooked in defining the background themes of ἀρχηγός, and barely mentioned even when it comes to applying that meaning in Hebrews itself.

itself. This analysis will find that the presentation of Christ's leadership is particularly grounded in the OT offices of leadership as exemplified in the kings and prophets. The author of Hebrews draws attention to the way such offices intrinsically entailed identification of the leader with those whom she/he leads towards the full realisation of the promises of God.

5.4.3.1 Leading Many Sons to Glory

Before ἀρχηγός is introduced, the discussion of Christ's leadership is framed in 2:10 by a path toward glory. The glory described is most likely that of Psalm 8, the full inheritance of the promises given to humanity in creation and heightened in the eschaton. In the perfection of the relationship between God and humanity, humans receive dominion over all things.[394]

The path to human glory is defined firstly in this verse by God himself, described as the one, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα. The same God who made all is now the one leading his people towards what he promised at creation.[395] The focus of 2:10, however, falls on the second half of the sentence, in which Hebrews gives Christ the title ὁ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.

The concept of salvation, while not explicitly expressed in Psalm 8, is readily understood in relation to humanity longing for the restoration of their promised inheritance. The introduction of an ἀρχηγός, however, is a new development. Psalm 8 has a simple cast of characters—God, the weak humans, and the enemies. The drama unfolds with no reference to another figure of leadership. It is possible that Hebrews has drawn on a wider array of concepts from his understanding of Scripture and of Christ and introduced a new character into his exposition without grounding it in Psalm 8. There is, however,

[394] Mackie, "Behold! I Am with the Children," 71. Cf. the extensive links noted by Lane between 2:9 and 2:10 which he takes as evidence that "the writer intends to take up and extend the comments he has just made on the basis of Ps 8" (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 52-53).

[395] Müller finds echoes of the exodus and the entrance to the promised land in the way God is leading his people (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 291). Such echoes may be present, particularly as the exodus and entrance into the land is itself closely reminiscent of the restoration of creation promises. The context however favours creation and restoration as the dominant background.

some indication that this development is at least consistent with Psalm 8 and possibly drawn intentionally from it.

While the text of Psalm 8 says nothing about one leader over a people, the superscription attributes the psalm to David. This is not the place to consider the historical provenance of the superscription, but its attachment to the psalm is evidence that the psalm was widely read not in isolation but in connection with the theme of Davidic kingship. We suggested above that the implied relationship between the two is that the leadership of the Davidic king was to help his people realise the promises of Adamic kingship. This concept of kingship accords with Hebrews 2, in which the people are being led to their promised inheritance by an ἀρχηγός who, in 2:12-13, is described using citations traditionally attributed to David.

Whether the author has drawn these themes from Psalm 8 or intended to introduce something entirely new in his exposition of the psalm is impossible to demonstrate. The figure of the ἀρχηγός as described in Hebrews, however, is not out of place in an exposition of the psalm.

5.4.3.2 The Perfecting of the Ἀρχηγός through Suffering

When the ἀρχηγός himself is introduced, the author says that it was fitting for him to be perfected through suffering (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι). The theme of Christ's perfection has generally been understood in Hebrews scholarship either in relation to Christ's person or to his vocation.[396]

[396] For a more detailed taxonomy see McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 5-24. McCruden himself proposed an alternative in which perfection is attesting who Christ is rather than effecting any real change on either Christ's person or his office. (*Solidarity Perfected*, 25-27). McCruden's dependance on a small group of non-literary texts to explain, what is evidently a sophisticated literary text, and his lack of unambiguous parallels comparable to Hebrews weigh against his reading, and McCruden himself may have abandoned it. In his subsequent article, "The Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews," McCruden makes no reference to perfection as divine attestation, arguing instead that Christ is perfected through his maturation in his earthly life of obedience and his subsequent resurrection which together equip him for his sympathetic high-priestly role Kevin B. McCruden, "The Concept of Perfection in the Epistle of the Hebrews," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 [Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2011], 209-229).

Some explanations of personal perfection insist on moral growth, whether understood as going from deficient to complete or merely from immature to mature.[397] Johnson, for instance, writes: "We correctly infer that the human Jesus grows from one stage to another in the direction of perfection."[398] Others focus more on the transformation of Christ's person such that it is able to access God, sometimes even defining perfection as access to God.[399] Moffitt, in particular, emphasises perfection as being made fit to enter God's presence, which he insists is possible by the transformation of Christ's human body to immortality.[400]

While the perfection of Christ may be achieved through some form of transformation, others have rightly pointed out that in the three instances in which Christ is described as being perfected in Hebrews, it is always tied to his vocation. David Peterson, in particular, has therefore argued that perfection is not firstly describing a transformation within Christ but is instead pointing to his qualification to exercise his salvific offices.[401] This understanding has gained widespread acceptance and, particularly in 2:10, appears to best explain the text. Christ is not perfected in an abstract or personal sense but perfected specifically as τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας.[402]

To conclude that perfection means being made fit for an office leaves unanswered the question of what makes Christ fit to be the ἀρχηγός. Several interpreters who embrace a vocational reading of perfection seek to answer this question by explaining what developments within Christ or his situation

[397] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 96; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 320-324; Healy, *Hebrews*, 62; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:39-40; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 165. See also discussion in McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected*, 18-20.
[398] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 52.
[399] Caird, "Son by Appointment," 80-81; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 197-199; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 95, 98; Jipp, "The Son's Entrance," 570-571, 574-575.
[400] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 194-200.
[401] D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 49-125. Some have gone further, arguing that perfection refers specifically to priestly ordination (e.g., Healy, *Hebrews*, 63; Albert Vanhoye, "La 'Teleiôsis' du Christ: Point Capital de la Christologie Sacerdotale d'Hébreux," *NTS* 42 [1996]: 331). While τελειόω was used in the phrase τελειοῦν τὰς χεῖρας to refer to priestly ordination, however, Peterson has shown that there is insufficient evidence that the unqualified use of τελειόω should be understood this way (D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 26-30).
[402] See also, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 86; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 80; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 344-345; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 65; Koester, *Hebrews*, 124; Rissi, *Die Theologie*, 79; Osborne, *Hebrews*, 51; Small, *Characterization*, 222-223. Peeler argues a similar concept in which Christ is perfected as heir, though this reading also helpfully incorporates relational tones as the Son inherits his people (Peeler, *You are My Son*, 78-80).

qualify him for his office.[403] The answer, however, is not found in the meaning of perfection itself but in what 2:10-13 says equips Christ for his office. The "perfection" of Christ does not intrinsically say anything about his human nature, but it may yet include Christ's humanity, as expounded in the literary context.

5.4.3.3 Sanctification and Unity

Coming to 2:11, the author connects the perfecting of the ἀρχηγός with his being ὅ ἁγιάζων who is ἐξ ἑνός with οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι.

5.4.3.3.1 Sanctification

Holiness and sanctification emerge as key concepts in later chapters of Hebrews, but, as fundamentally cultic terms, their appearance in 2:10 might initially seem out of place.

Holiness vocabulary in the book of Hebrews is primarily used to describe three things: the Holy Spirit (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15), holy places (8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11) and the saints and their sanctification (2:11; 3:1; 6:10; 9:13; 10:10, 14, 29; 12:10, 14; 13:12, 24).

The descriptions of the Holy Spirit are suggestive of his role in sanctification, though Hebrews does not elaborate on this and only uses "holy" as part of the title for the Spirit (πνεύματος ἁγίου [2:4; 6:4]; τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον/τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου [3:7; 9:8; 10:15]).

More clearly connected are the holy places and the sanctification of the saints. Holiness is a necessary requirement for people to enter the holy places of God's presence (cf. esp. 9:1-14; 10:19; 12:14). Holiness is related to cleanness. In the OT, unclean people and things were not permitted to enter God's holy presence. Hebrews maintains this framework and emphasises the hope of cleansing. It

[403] E.g., Schriener, *Hebrews*, 240; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 101.

further insists that the cleansing required is not simply from external pollutants but entails cleansing of the conscience (9:13-14).[404]

Hebrews' depiction of sanctification is further characterised by its once-off, definitive nature.[405] While Hebrews may sometimes speak of holiness in relation to ongoing behaviour (12:10, 14), it more often emphasises holiness as something achieved by the sacrifice of Christ. Through his blood and body offered up in one act, Christ sanctifies his people (9:13-14; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12).[406]

The presence of a cultic term in a section of Hebrews otherwise devoid of cultic language can be understood when one recognises the close connection of sanctification with themes of Hebrews 2. In making humanity fit to enter God's presence, sanctification answers the problem raised in relation to Psalm 8, that humanity no longer experienced the dominion they should receive through relationship with God. Sanctification enables the restoration of the divine-human relationship, and so opens the way for the restoration of human dominion. The achievement of true sanctification is therefore vital to the ministry of the ἀρχηγός. Further explanations of holiness follow in the letter, but at this point, holiness can be understood as intrinsic to how God will lead his people to glory through their ἀρχηγός.[407]

[404] Koester, *Hebrews*, 119-122; Benjamin J. Ribbens, *Levitical Sacrifice and Heavenly Cult in Hebrews*, BZNW 222 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 213-215. In the OT sanctification related broadly to various forms of impurity including both moral corruption and ceremonial defilement. Hebrews fixes its attention on the moral elements of uncleanness (Koester, *Hebrews*, 119-122).

[405] Stewart, "Cosmology," 557; Osborne, *Hebrews*, 52. Peeler suggests that the present tense of the participles in 2:11 may indicate an ongoing work of sanctification, though she sees this alongside a definitive act of sanctification (Peeler, "The Eschatological Son," 172-173; cf. Small, *Characterization*, 237). Ribbens, however, argues, particularly in light of the OT cultic consecration, that it refers to a definitive, using a timeless present (*Levitical Sacrifice*, 214; cf. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 150).

[406] Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 193-194. In the language of systematic theology, Hebrews refer to positional sanctification more than progressive sanctification (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 329-331).

[407] Cf. Koester, *Hebrews*, 235; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 90; David Peterson, "Atonement in the New Testament," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today*, ed. David Peterson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 54; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 329-331; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 32; Mackie, "Behold! I am with the Children," 47-48.

5.4.3.3.2 Ἐξ Ἑνός

While the details of holiness await further elaboration, in the present passage the author makes one claim about Christ as the ἁγιάζων that illuminates who he is as ἀρχηγός, and particularly as human ἀρχηγός. Hebrews 2:11 insists on the unity of ὅ ἁγιάζων and οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι. The precise nature of this unity and the meaning of ἐξ ἑνός will be significant for understanding how Christ's humanity is related to his leadership.

Some have taken ἐξ ἑνός in a broad sense, referring to a divine origin, often suggesting it means "one source" or "one father."[408] This solution is attractive because God has just been referred to as the one leading many sons to glory and perfecting the ἀρχηγός. A problem with this view, however, is that the connection is not close enough to explain why it is employed within Hebrews 2. The problem is seen clearly, for instance, in Farley's explanation that, "Jesus looks to the Father as to His coeternal Source, and we Christians also look to the Father as the Monarch of all."[409] While Hebrews would no doubt affirm that both sanctifier and sanctified share a source/monarch, if this is the extent of their unity, then there is no clear reason why it does not also include the rest of creation, including the angels, for whom Hebrews says the Son did not come (2:16).[410]

Those who more strongly emphasise a relational unity, rather than simply a unity of origin,[411] may avoid some of this difficulty, but even this unity is likely too broad. That the sanctifier and the

[408] McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 62-63; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 58; Koester, *Hebrews*, 229-230, 236; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 97-98; Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 138; Harris, *Hebrews*, 56; Moll, *Hebrews*, 55; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 43; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 74; Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 77; Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 145; Peterson, *Hebrews*, 93.

[409] Lawrence R. Farley, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: High Priest in Heaven* (Chesterton, IND: Ancient Faith, 2013), 41.

[410] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 331-332; Morris, *Hebrews*, 27. It could be argued that angels did not require salvation, but it is clear that the OT and second temple Judaism and early Christianity conceived of angels who had fallen. Gudorf has argued that 2:16 should be read as asserting that the fear of death does not take hold of angels (Michael E. Gudorf, "Through a Classical Lens: Hebrews 2:16," *JBL* 119.1 [2000]: 105-108). If this was the case, the basic point for the present discussion would not be changed because Hebrews would still be asserting that the Son set out to save humans (thus taking their death) rather than angels.

[411] See especially Peeler, "The Eschatological Son," 168, though note that she also sees a reference to Christ's human nature ("The Eschatological Son," 164).

sanctified are united by an intimate father-son connection to God is consistent with Hebrews' broader theology, but such unity does not require the suffering of the ἀρχηγός in 2:10, the point the author is continuing to explain (note the γάρ). The Son and those sanctified would have been ἐξ ἑνός in this sense before he ever took on flesh and suffered.

A number of interpreters have therefore taken ἐξ ἑνός to refer not to divine origin but shared humanity. Ἑνός is understood as a reference either to one human nature or, more concretely, to one father, who is Adam.[412] Such a reading accords with the focus on Psalm 8 that undergirds 2:5-18 and also with the particular emphasis on suffering in 2:10. As one who shares in human nature, and particularly human suffering, the ἀρχηγός can sanctify his people.[413]

Some commentators have suggested a more specific relationship traced not through Adam as the εἷς but Abraham. They argue that in Hebrews, the Son does not sanctify every human but only those who receive God's promises.[414] This view rightly emphasises that the unity of the sanctifier and sanctified is expressed in the Son addressing his "brothers" in 2:12-13. These are specifically those who believe. This view is further strengthened when, towards the end of this section, Hebrews compares the angels, for whom Christ did not come, with those for whom Christ did come. They are not the seed of Adam generally but specifically the seed of Abraham (2:16).[415]

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[412] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 130-132; Hooker, "The 'End' of the Cult," 200; Morris, *Hebrews*, 27. The reading of ἑνός as a neuter referring to a shared human nature has gained less support (though cf. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 105; Jamieson, *Sonship*, 80 and discussion in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 164; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 130-132) but does not differ substantially in meaning from a reference to Adam.

[413] Compton objects to this reading on the grounds that the οὖν in 2:14 likely expresses an inference from 2:11a. If 2:11a refers to human solidarity then Compton says Christ's human solidarity would be a consequence of his human solidarity (Compton, *Psalm 110*, 55). While this may appear circular, however, 2:14f adds specificity to what was given in broad terms in 2:11a.

[414] D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 60; Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 124. Though it could be argued that it is not necessary that all of those who are ἐξ ἑνός are Christ's brothers, but only that all of Christ's brothers are ἐξ ἑνός.

[415] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 17-19; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 164-165; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 97-98; Daniel Boyarin, "Midrash in Hebrews/Hebrews as Midrash," in *Hebrews in Contexts*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini and Harold W. Attridge, AJEC 91 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 19.

The main awkwardness with tracing the unity of the sanctifier and the sanctified to Abraham is that the intrinsic connection to suffering would be diminished.[416] If Abraham is the referent, then his sufferings are at least largely the result of his own descent from Adam, though it may be suggested that they also include some measure of suffering on the path of faith.

Choosing between Adam and Abraham is difficult, as both have strong contextual connections and make reasonable sense of the passage. In either case, however, the unity entails, as at least a significant element, a shared human nature and the sufferings undergone in that nature.

The significance of Christ taking on human nature and suffering will be explored more in relation to how Christ saves his people in our next chapter. There we will argue that his sanctifying work is grounded in his death in the place of his people. While that meaning is likely the primary emphasis, there is reason to suggest that Christ's sharing in human nature in 2:11 is also closely tied to ongoing interaction with his people. We will now further explore this in the OT citations employed in 2:12-13.

5.4.3.4 Not Ashamed to Call them Brothers

Having insisted that it was fitting that the ἀρχηγός be perfected through suffering and that the sanctifier and the sanctified are ἐξ ἑνός, the author states that the Son οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν (2:11b). This phrase turns from the general language of unity to the explicit familial imagery which will dominate the remainder of 2:10-13. The unity of the ἀρχηγός to his people is not merely one of descent, nature, or experiences of suffering. Those may be necessary grounds of unity, but the ἀρχηγός is united with his *brothers* in an ongoing, intimate relationship.

5.4.3.5 OT Citations

Having given a basic description of Christ as the leader who identifies with and saves his people, leading them to the glory that God had promised them, Hebrews 2:12-13 grounds the author's

[416] Allen also argues that Abraham would likely have been named as he has not yet been clearly alluded to (*Hebrews,* 216).

argument in three OT citations: Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) (Heb 2:12), what has been understood as a citation of 2 Samuel 22:3, Isaiah 8:17 or both (Heb 2:13a), and Isaiah 8:18 (Heb 2:13b). These citations are most immediately related to Christ calling his people brothers, but the tight connections throughout 2:10-13 suggest that these passages are used to prove Christ's identification with his "brothers" as something intrinsic to his perfection as the leader of God's people.

The use of these citations will now be examined, starting with the clear references in Hebrews 2:12 and 2:13b and then returning to consider the ambiguous reference in 2:13a in light of the clearer references.

5.4.3.5.1 Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22)

Psalm 22 (21) is attributed to David. The first half (22:1-22 [LXX 21:1-22; Eng 22:1-21]) cries to God from the midst of intense suffering and persecution and finishes with a brief note of deliverance. From 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22), however, the tone shifts to praise for deliverance.

Coming at the opening of the second half, Ps 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) provides the author of Hebrews with a clear declaration of identification and solidarity. The speaker of the psalm expresses his faith by declaring God's name and praising him. His declaration, however, is not private, nor is it a means to separate the speaker from others. Instead, the speaker identifies with those around him, calling them brothers and placing himself in the midst of the congregation.

While the basic picture of solidarity in Ps 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) is clear, there remains a question as to why the author of Hebrews would have understood this verse as applicable to Christ and how it was understood to demonstrate Christ's need to identify with his brothers through suffering. Such examination necessarily touches on how Hebrews uses the Old Testament. While we cannot offer a full discussion, this subject must be addressed, albeit in a limited way, and focused on the verses under consideration.

5.4.3.5.1.1 Why Ps 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) is Applied to Christ

5.4.3.5.1.1.1 Messianic Psalm

Some suggest that the author of Hebrews applied Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) to Christ simply because the psalm was recognised among early Christians as messianic.[417] That other early Christians applied elements of this psalm to Christ is clear. The UBS5 lists 3 citations and eighteen allusions to Ps 22 (21) in other NT books.[418] Of these, all three citations (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34; Jn 19:24) and twelve of the allusions (Mt 26:24; 27:35; 27:39; 27:43; Mk 9:12; 15:24; 15:29; Lk 23:34, 35-36; 24:27; Jn 19:28; 1 Pet 1:11) are applied to Christ. While some of the allusions listed are vague and may be disputed (esp. Mt 26:24; Mk 9:12; Lk 24:27; 1 Pet 1:11), the overall importance of Ps 22 (21) for first-century Christians is clear. We note, however, that without exception, these citations and clear allusions are taken from the first half of the Psalm and applied to Christ's suffering.

Some interpreters apparently find no difficulty here. If part of the psalm was widely applied to Christ, then Christ becomes the speaker of the whole psalm, and no more rationale is needed for Hebrews to place the latter part of the psalm on the lips of Christ.[419] The simplicity of this explanation is attractive. The major drawback, however, is that the hermeneutic it attributes to the author could not have been consistently applied by the author.

This shortcoming is most clearly demonstrated in the previous chapter of Hebrews, in which 2 Samuel 7:14 is quoted (Heb 1:5). It is unsurprising that this passage was recognised as messianic. It describes God raising up a son after David to maintain David's throne forever. But while Hebrews quotes from

[417] See for example, Small, *Characterization*, 197; McCruden, *Solidarity Perfected,* 63; Ron Man, *Proclamation and Praise: Hebrews 2:12 and the Christology of Worship* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 8. Vanhoye, *Situation*, 338-340; *A Different Priest,* 108, Bruce, *Hebrews*, 82; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 116; D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 217; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 51; Farley, *Hebrews*, 41; Morris, *Hebrews*, 28; Jobes, "Putting Words in His Mouth," 47; McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 72-73.
[418] Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, et. al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, Fifth Revised Edition (Münster: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), 858, 872.
[419] Rodrigo Franklin de Sousa, "The Hermeneutics of the Scriptural Citations in Hebrews 2:12-13," *Biblical Research* 64 (2019): 98; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 82.

7:14a, 7:14b takes for granted that this son will sin, something Hebrews emphatically denies in the case of Christ (cf. 4:15). It appears that the author of Hebrews was able to read 2 Samuel 7:12-16 messianically without directly applying every part to the messiah.[420]

While some could argue that the author had an inconsistent hermeneutic or was inconsistent in applying his hermeneutic, the evident care and precision of the author's use of scripture suggest that this explanation can only be last resort. If, on the other hand, the author had further criteria for determining what was or was not to be applied to Christ, then the common use of Ps 22 (21) among first-century Christians, while it may explain the psalm's familiarity to the author and his audience and may even suggest a starting point for the author to examine the latter part of Ps 22 (21), is not a sufficient explanation for his application of Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) to Christ. We will therefore consider other possible reasons for the author to put the words of this psalm on Christ's lips.

5.4.3.5.1.1.2 Prosopological Exegesis

Matthew Bates has recently argued that New Testament authors, including the author of Hebrews, use "prosopological exegesis" to appropriate the OT to Christ,[421] and has been followed by others, most notably for Hebrews, Madison Pierce.[422] They suggest a common hermeneutic derived from the realm of Greek drama, in which unattributed or ambiguous speech could be placed into the mouth of

[420] The presence of sin in 2 Samuel 7:14b leads Ellingworth to suggest that the citation is taken instead from 1 Chronicles 17:13 (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 114). This however does not solve the difficulty unless one were to posit that the author of Hebrews would draw a sharp distinction between 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 such that the latter is Christological while the former is not.

[421] Matthew Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*.

[422] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*. Cf. Bryan R. Dyer, "'In the Midst of the Assembly I Will Praise You': Hebrews 2.12 and its Contribution to the Argument of the Epistle," *JSNT* (2021): 2-3, 5-6; Dana M. Harris, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *SJT* 60.1 (2021): 101-103; de Sousa, "Hermeneutics," 95; Jamieson, *Sonship*, 108; cf. Andrew D. Streett, "New Approaches to the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 64.1 (2021): 11-14. Gentry suggests that Docherty should be seen as a proponent of prosopological exegesis but, while her conclusions overlap with prosopological exegesis, her focus is not on Greek drama but Jewish hermeneutics (Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 107).

a new speaker.[423] There are three main reasons why the present thesis finds this an unlikely explanation for the hermeneutics of Hebrews.

Firstly, while prosopological exegesis appears to be found in some patristic authors, the proponents of this method have not clearly demonstrated that it was practised, let alone accepted and widespread, in the first century or before. Pierce has sought to demonstrate such usage. She begins with Greek theatre, noting that scripts were sometimes produced in which speeches would not indicate which character was speaking. In such instances, the reader would be required to interpret the text, assigning it to the appropriate character. Pierce concludes that, "ancient readers were trained to identify and resolve ambiguities regarding speakers based on their knowledge of the characters acting within the narrative."[424] Such a conclusion may be sound, yet, as Pierce herself concedes, "a direct line from this to prosopological exegesis cannot be drawn."[425]

Gentry raises a further question concerning the relationship of Greek texts adduced in support of prosopological techniques and NT authors. Most of these texts are late and significantly removed from the Jewish milieu of much of the New Testament.[426] Gentry concludes with a loaded question, "why should we look for inspiration from Greek and Roman handbooks on rhetoric popular from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD and favour this evidence over evidence, for example, from Second Temple Judaism?"[427]

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[423] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 3.
[424] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 8.
[425] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 7-8. One critical plank missing in connecting the interpretation of a script with "prosopological exegesis" is that evidence has not been produced to show that readers would reattribute words to a speaker other than the one they understood to be intended by the author, in so far as they could discern it. In fact, Pierce notes that some readers would indicate the characters in the margins and, on occasion, felt obliged to justify their attributions (Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 7). This may suggest that readers saw the task not as one of giving new meaning through reattribution but of trying to decipher what the author intended.
[426] Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 107-108.
[427] Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 119. While Pierce published after Gentry, her argument places significant weight on the *prosgymnasmata* of Theon, Hermogenes and Libanius to which Gentry referred (Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 6-7). The other source she cites is the *Scholia Vetera in Aristophanis Ranas*, though she provides no date.

Pierce does seek to demonstrate analogous interpretive moves in Jewish sources. The evidence she produces, however, is unpersuasive. She cites Docherty's work on later rabbinic sources, though the gap between rabbinic works and earlier hermeneutics again calls their relevance into question.[428] Pierce finds further evidence of something akin to prosopological exegesis in two Dead Sea Scrolls (11QMelch, 4QFlor). Pierce observes that in these documents, "an ambiguous participant is identified."[429] Even if this is the case, however, that such identification of ambiguous participants is meaningfully analogous to prosopological exegesis is doubtful.[430] The core of prosopological exegesis is the reattribution of speech to a new speaker, the very thing missing in the texts Pierce cites.[431] In 11QMelch and 4QFlor the subject of a text/speech is reinterpreted, but the text/speech itself is never reattributed.

Pierce's connection is further weakened by the fact that these texts redefine not only participants but also times[432] and geographical locations.[433] Rather than reading these texts as analogues to prosopological exegesis, therefore, it is better to recognise them as examples of *pesher* interpretation, a recognised interpretive method in Qumran exegesis.[434] *Pesher* has similarities with prosopological exegesis but these appear to be limited to reappropriating a respected text to apply it to a new

[428] Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 119.
[429] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 10.
[430] Pierce has not demonstrated that the identified participant in all of these texts is ambiguous, nor that the Qumran exegetes preferentially selected ambiguous texts as suitable for re-appropriation.
[431] Pierce widens the definition so that the "unspecified participant in the base text" could also be the addressee or subject of the speech, though she still notes that it will "usually" be the speaker (Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 21).
[432] Jubilee is interpreted in relation to the eschatological time of Melchizedek (11QMelch II, 6-10), as is the proclamation of peace from Isaiah 52:7 (11QMelch II, 15-16).
[433] The "mountains" of Isaiah 52:7 are interpreted as prophets (11QMelch II, 17). This arguably turns them into participants, but the reinterpretation begins with a word that is not, on face value, a participant.
[434] Vermes states that *pesher* is "The most typical interpretative genre at Qumran" (Geza. Vermes, *Scrolls, Scriptures, and Early Christianity*, Library of Second Temple Studies 56 [London: T&T Clark, 2005], 51). Vermes uses a more narrow definition of pesher when it comes to defining a text as *pesher*, suggesting that *pesharim* move section by section through the text being interpreted. Perry and Tov use a broader definition of *pesher*, in which both 11QMelch and 4QFlor are labelled "Thematic Pesharim" in contrast to "Continuous Pesharim" (Donald W. Parry, and Emanuel Tov, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], v). However the texts are classified, the same interpretive moves are clearly evident in the passages Pierce cites, and are even signposted by repeated use the term פשר in introducing the reappropriation of OT texts (11QMelch II, 12, 17 [likely also in the lacunae in 11QMelch II, 4; 4QFlor 9-10, 4]).

situation. What is central to prosopological exegesis (re-attribution of speech to a new character) has not been demonstrated in the *pesher* of 11QMelch and 4QFlor.

The second reason that prosopological exegesis is unlikely in Hebrews is that the evidence for its use in other Chrsitian writings of the period is inconclusive at best. Pierce has identified six criteria to identify prosopological exegesis. The first three of these relate to the text cited (referred to by Pierce as BT):

> BT1: The text in question will be speech.
>
> BT2: The text must contain some lack of specificity with regard to participants.
>
> BT3: The text will have classic and/or authoritative status.[435]

Pierce's second three criteria relate to the text employing prosopological exegesis (referred to as PE):

> PE1: The prosopological exegesis must identify an unspecified participant of the base text in a way that is not obviously indicated by a plain reading.
>
> PE2: The presence of an introductory formula with προσώπον.
>
> PE3: Finding a similar interpretation in another text.[436]

While Pierce suggests that PE2 and PE3 are not essential to prosopological exegesis, she dispenses with them altogether when it comes to identifying prosopological exegesis in the New Testament. Her reasons are given:

> My evaluation of prosopological exegesis in Hebrews will focus on the author's identification of unspecified participants. I find this necessary since the New Testament authors never use

[435] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 20-21.
[436] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 21.

> a (PE2) prosopological introductory formula, and (PE3) similar readings are an external characteristic.[437]

This narrowing of criteria is questionable. That PE3 is an external characteristic is true for any text, and does not explain how it could be a useful criterion elsewhere but not in the New Testament. More concerningly, PE2 is dispensed with simply because it is not found in the New Testament. Having sought to establish objective criteria for identifying prosopological exegesis, Pierce seems to narrow those criteria according to what she finds in the New Testament rather than giving those criteria due weight in determining whether the New Testament employs prosopological exegesis.

The third reason that prosopological exegesis is unlikely in Hebrews is that even after Pierce scales back to one criterion regarding the text employing prosopological exegesis and three criteria for the source text, she cannot find these criteria displayed in instances such as the present text, Hebrews 2:12. Indeed, she concedes that "unlike most of the prosopological readings we have discussed thus far, the author quotes from a portion of a text that has no clear rationale for its prosopological reading…"[438] In spite of this admission, however, Pierce maintains that this is prosopological exegesis. In place of the criteria she carefully established, she simply notes the use of other parts of Psalm 22 (21) in early Christian literature.[439] How this indicates prosopological exegesis is never stated.

In summary, then, we do not dispute that people could speak in character or "according to face." The Hebrew prophets clearly exhibit this form of communication, often speaking on God's behalf or, on occasion, in the voice of another. Proponents of prosopological exegesis, however, have not demonstrated that there was an interpretive technique employed within the first-century Christian

[437] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 21.
[438] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 99.
[439] Pierce, *Divine Discourse*, 100-101. Cf. Dyer, who follows Pierce but has not even noted that the citation of Psalm 22 (21) does not meet her criteria, a surprising omission given that this citation as prosopological exegesis is the very subject of his article (Dyer, "In the Midst of the Assembly," 5).

community by which the words of a text could be re-assigned to a new character to give new meaning.[440]

5.4.3.5.1.1.3 Typology

A more promising approach to understanding the hermeneutics of Hebrews is typology.[441] Beale defines typology as, "the study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God's special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning."[442] For Beale, therefore, there are 5 elements to a type: "(1) analogical correspondence, (2) historicity, (3) a pointing-forwardness (i.e., an aspect of foreshadowing or presignification), (4) escalation, and (5) retrospection."[443]

Like prosopological exegesis, typology applies a text to a new referent. Unlike prosopological exegesis, however, the rationale for this reapplication is not found in separating the base text from its original referent but rather in discerning continuity between the original referent and the later figure/event to which the text is applied.[444] At the heart of typological exegesis is the conviction that God works in

[440] Dernell has helpfully suggested that what is often included under the term "prosopological exegesis" includes two distinct practices. One employs a text which itself includes an ambiguous figure and creates anticipation about a character who will fulfil that role. The other employs a text that does not, by a plain reading, indicate the presence of an additional character. According to Dernell, the first kind of "prosopological exegesis" is evident in NT writings, the second however is more doubtful (William James Dernell, "Typology, Christology and Prosopological Exegesis: Implicit Narratives in Christological Texts," *SBJT* 24.1 (2020): 140-143). In the present instance, the first kind of prosopological exegesis could not apply as there is no indication of an additional character within Psalm 22 (21) itself.

[441] Stanley has helpfully suggested that Hebrews does not employ only one hermeneutic, that it employs the Old Testament in three main ways: prophetic fulfilment, typology, and what Stanley terms "universal fulfilment," in which the original significance of the OT passage is grounded in the eternal nature of God and thus endures into the NT situation. Among these three however Stanley notes that Hebrews makes most use of typology (Steven K. Stanley, "A New Covenant Hermeneutic: The Use of Scripture in Hebrews 8-10" [PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1994], 247-261).

[442] G. K. Beale, *Handbook of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 14.

[443] Beale, *Handbook*, 14. By "retrospection" Beale means foreshadowing found within the OT itself but better understood post-resurrection (Beale, *Handbook*, 14-15).

[444] Dernell, "Typology, Christology and Prosopological Exegesis,"153-154.

patterns and that his earlier works often prefigure later eschatological realities.[445] This way of expressing typology makes it far more than a literary technique. Behind this hermeneutic lies a wider understanding of the nature of God's works and of scripture.[446]

While reading Hebrews' use of the OT as typology necessarily entails significant claims, not only about the author's hermeneutical method but also his broader conception of God's work in history, the conceptual framework on which typology rests is not imported to the text but expressed in it. Hebrews explicitly portrays history, and particularly scripture, along a trajectory from shadow to reality.[447] This is evident in the following examples:

- The partial revelation of the prophets is surpassed by the eschatological fulfilment in the Son (1:1-4).
- The Old Testament nation Israel expressed an anticipation of the promises now received by the church. It is this relationship that allows them to serve as both an example and a warning to the audience of Hebrews (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 10:39-12:1; 12:25-29), even while Hebrews insists that those of former times did not receive the fullness of what was promised (11:39-40).
- The levitical priests are, on the one hand, inferior and impotent (7:11-28) but, on the other, real expressions of what priesthood is and thus anticipate Christ the perfect priest (8:1-4).

[445] Brian Pate, "Who Is Speaking? The Use of Isaiah 8:17-18 in Hebrews 2:13 as a Case Study for Applying the Speech of Key OT Figures to Christ," *JETS* 59.4 (2016): 738. Hamilton describes this as reading scripture in light of the "master story" (Hamilton, "Typology in Hebrews," 106) while Gentry refers to "the metanarrative of scripture" (Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 109).

[446] Richard J. Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology in the New Testament*, WUNT II/328 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 51-53; Stephen Motyer, "The Psalms Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?" *Tyndale* 50.1 (1999): 8. Ribbens distinguishes "retrospective" and "prospective" typology. Retrospective (used differently to Beale) typology is no more than an interpretive approach by a NT author, while prospective typology is a theological framework of God's work across history (*Levitical Sacrifice,* 14-15). For our purposes, the theological question can be bypassed, except to note that the interpretive approach in Hebrews is grounded in the author's prospective typology.

[447] Harris uses the term "trajectory" for a type already established in the OT, as evidenced when Hebrews quotes OT passages which themselves refer back to earlier OT passages ("Typological Trajectories," 284). We use the term more generally for developed themes or figures in the OT which Hebrews appropriates through its OT citations and allusions.

- The temple is a shadow of the coming/heavenly temple, one which did not provide true access to God but was nonetheless a pattern of what was to come (8:1-5; 9:1-12, 24)
- The new covenant both replaces the inferior former covenant (8:6-13) and corresponds to it (9:15-23).
- The OT sacrifices, while in and of themselves ineffective (9:9-10, 13; 10:1-4, 11), were anticipations of the greater sacrifice of Christ (9:12-14; 10:5-10, 12-14).

Within these trajectories, the correspondence of the pattern to its fulfillment means that the specifications of the type find expression in the antitype. Because of this correspondence, what was applied to the pattern as pattern can be applied to the fulfilment, which lies along the same trajectory. This approach explains more than just the re-attribution of speech, though speech is included in it. A word spoken to/by a shadow may express something intrinsic to what they are foreshadowing and, if so, belongs equally to the eschatological antitype.

One important qualification about typology is that not everything said or done by the shadow applies to its fulfilment, but only what was intrinsic to the trajectory by which the two are connected.[448] This explains, for instance, why Hebrews can use the levitical priests as both a comparison and contrast to Christ's priesthood. Everything that was true of those priests by virtue of their participation in priesthood will be true of the fulfilment because he too participates in priesthood. Other details about the levitical priests, however, for example that they sin, or that they die, are not applied to the antitype because they are not part of the trajectory connecting the two.[449] Similarly, it was noted above that Hebrews 1:5 applies 2 Samuel 7:14 to Christ. Typology gives a coherent explanation for why 7:14a applies to Christ but not 7:14b. The father-son relationship expressed in 7:14a forms an intrinsic part

[448] Pate rightly objects to a simplistic typology along vocational lines: "To say that all prophets, priests, and kings serve as patterns to Christ, and thereby their words are appropriate to attribute to Jesus, seems insufficient as a methodology to explain what the author of Hebrews is doing." (Pate, "Who is Speaking?" 736).
[449] Cf. Kelly M. Kapic, "Typology, the Messiah, and John Owen's Theological Reading of Hebrews," in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier. LNTS 423 (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 146-148.

of the kingly office and is shared by Solomon and every other Israelite king, including, climactically, Jesus. Solomon's iniquity, however, expresses not his kingly role but his sinful nature. It is therefore not attributed to the antitype.[450]

Typology offers a promising avenue by which to examine Hebrews 2:12-13. We will therefore consider which typological connections could explain the OT citations here.

5.4.3.5.1.1.4 Suffering Typology

While recognising that the author of Hebrews quotes from the second half of the psalm, many have nevertheless pointed to the apparent sensitivity of the author of Hebrews to the context of his citations. Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) is not simply a declaration of praise, but a declaration of praise coming from a righteous sufferer now vindicated. Some, therefore, suggest that these words could be applied to Christ in Hebrews because he too is a righteous sufferer who is vindicated, the ἀρχηγός perfected through suffering.[451] This connection to Christ's suffering adds colour to how one reads the citation of Psalm 22 (21). In turning to Psalm 22 (21), the author intends his readers to recognise not only the speaker's identification with his brothers but also the suffering which was expressed in the previous twenty-one verses of the psalm and the theme of vindication and praise in the following nine verses.

While reading this citation in light of the suffering and vindication in the whole psalm elucidates some of its meaning in relation to Christ, however, it does not answer the more fundamental question of how these words came to be attributed to Christ. Clearly Psalm 22 (21) describes a righteous sufferer who identifies with his people, but how does this psalm prove the author's point that Christ must

[450] Cf. Kapic, "Typology," 150. A typological hermeneutic could read 7:14b as an affirmation of God's faithfulness to the king which is intrinsic to kingship but that this affirmation is expressed in the context of Solomon's sin which is not intrinsic to kingship. Such a reading would be consistent with how typology is presented here, though it goes beyond what Hebrews expresses.

[451] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 59; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 116; de Sousa, "Hermeneutics," 92-93; cf. Peeler, *You are My Son*, 88; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 107-108.

assume that role? If the author applied Psalm 22 (21) to Christ simply because it referred to suffering and identification, then his argument would have been irredeemably circular and would likely have lacked persuasive power: One cannot prove that Christ needed to identify with his people through suffering simply by offering another example of someone who both suffered and identified with his people. To put it another way, one cannot prove that Christ needed to be human by merely showing that a suffering man in the OT was human–unless there is another connection between Christ and this man, a connection that intrinsically entails humanity or identification.[452]

5.4.3.5.1.1.5 Kingship Typology

Can we find another meaningful connection between Christ the ἀρχηγός perfected through suffering in Hebrews 2 and the figure of identification in Psalm 22 (21); a connection that necessitates Christ's identification with his brothers through the sharing of their humanity and suffering? A likely candidate for such a connection is found in the superscription of the psalm. The author of Psalm 22, according to its traditional ascription, is David, and there is no reason to suggest that the author of Hebrews would have questioned that ascription. Some have therefore suggested that the citation of Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) may be drawing on the theme of davidic kingship.[453]

In favour of this suggestion is the pervasive connection of David with the messiah within second temple Judaism and early Christianity. The messiah was, almost by definition, a king in the line of David. That Hebrews presents Christ as a royal figure is also rarely questioned. While a few interpreters have sought to separate Christ from Davidic images,[454] the terminology, and particularly the Davidic

[452] Hughes denies that Hebrews "proves" anything with its citations, but rather reaffirms what the audience already accepts (Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 27-28, 55). Others however rightly point out that the NT author's apparent appeal to scripture lose their force if the scriptures they cite do not support their argument (Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 120; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 15; Motyer, "Psalm Quotations," 8).
[453] E.g., Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 94, 100.
[454] Ellingworth says that, "Davidic messianism is not prominent in Hebrews" (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 169; cf. 114-116). Eisenbaum argues that the themes of alienation and wandering have led the author, in Hebrews 11, to intentionally exclude references to the institutions of Israel in the land, including that of the monarchy (Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBL Dissertation

citations, in Hebrews 1 demonstrate that such concepts were not foreign to the author's presentation.[455] Jamieson rightly concludes: "That Jesus is the Davidic Messiah is foundational to Hebrews' Christology and is pervasive, though often implicit, in its exposition."[456] While Christ's kingship in Hebrews surpasses anything found in the earlier Davidic monarchy, it is nevertheless a fulfilment of that monarchy.[457]

We turn, therefore, to consider whether the OT office of kingship matches the kind of leadership specifically depicted in Hebrews' presentation of Christ as ἀρχηγός. We argued above that the ἀρχηγός held authority over those who were led, which accords with kingly leadership. The ἀρχηγός in Hebrews,

Series 156 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1997], 187-188). Whether or not her argument is valid, it was limited to Hebrews 11 and entailed the exclusion not only of kingship but also of priests, a conclusion that cannot applied to the whole letter (Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 187-188). In his commentary, Cockerill cites Eisenbaum's contention in order to argue for a general absence of the earthly institutions in Hebrews and to downplay Davidic references in Hebrews as a whole and Hebrews 1 in particular (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 49-51; 93; cf. similar idea in John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*, SNTS 75 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 143). In a subsequent article, however, he gives far more place to the fulfilment of Davidic promises in Hebrews (Gareth Lee Cockerill, "From Deuteronomy to Hebrews: The Promised Land and the Unity of Scripture," *SBJT* 24.1 [2020]: 93-94).

[455] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 75; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 31-32, 38-39, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59 and passim; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 73; Bauckham, "Divinity," 19; Jipp, "The Son's Entrance," 565, 567; Amy L. B. Peeler, "Promises to the Son: Covenant and Atonement in Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*. ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma, and Cynthia Long Westfall. LNTS 516 (New York: T&T Clark, 2019), 196-197. Cortez has also helpfully pointed to considerable parallels between the Davidic Covenant and the depiction of Christ the "Son" in Hebrews. He suggests that while the author never argues for Davidic messiahship, "the Davidic promises seem to function as a subtext of Hebrews more than as part of its argument." (Félix H. Cortez, "The Son as Representative of the Children in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. David M. Moffitt and Eric F. Mason, WUNT II/510 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 34-42, esp. 37).

[456] Jamieson, *Sonship*, 106-107. Cf. Small, *Characterization*, 187-189; Motyer, "Psalms Quotations," 13-21; Stanley, 105; Docherty, "The Use of the Old Testament," 178.

[457] Bauckham, "Monotheism," 178. Note that even in the OT, Davidic kingship and the reign of YHWH were not entirely discrete. OT Israel was, both before and after the establishment of the monarchy, a theocracy. While human kingship could sometimes be contrasted with God's own kingship (Judg 8:22-23; 1 Sam 8:6-9; 10:17-19; 12:12; Cf. Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009], 312-313), it was intended to be, and is sometimes clearly described as, one of the means of God's reign. This is most clearly expressed in passages such as 1Chronicles 29:23, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord (יהוה) as king in the place of David his father." (cf. also 1 Chr 17:14; 28:5; 2 Chr 9:8; 13:8). Sara Japhet comments that in these verses "Israel's monarchy – the actual political institution – is none other than divine kingship" (Japhet, *Ideology*, 312). This is not to suggest that the king himself was in any way deified but rather that, like Adamic kingship over creation, Davidic kingship over God's people was an expression of God's own kingship.

however, not only rules over his people but is God's instrument in leading them to their promised inheritance of glory.

While less pronounced than the concept of authority, the OT depicts kings not simply as rulers but as instruments through whom God would fulfil his promises to his people. Cortez suggests that all the covenant promises come to hinge on the faithfulness of the Davidic king. Pointing to 2 Sam 7:9b-11a, for instance, he shows that the promise to the king as an individual includes the fulfilment of God's promised place of rest for his people and of peace within the land.[458] This is heightened in the prophetic hopes that came to be attached to a future king who would not simply maintain a status quo but would lead his people into a new experience of God's blessing. According to Cortez:

> Thus, righteous kings attempted to reunite Israel by means of the cult; the eschatological king, however, will "gather the dispersed of Judah [and Ephraim] from the four corners of the earth" (Isa 11:10-13; cf. Amos 9:11-12; Hos 3:5; Ezek 37:16-22; Mic 5:3). Righteous kings promoted the renewal of the nation's covenant with God; the eschatological king will mediate a new "covenant of peace … an everlasting covenant" between God and the nation (Ezek 37:26-27; Isa 55:3). Righteous kings cleansed the land from idolatry; the eschatological king "will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them" and forgive them (Ezek 37:23; cf. Isa 55:7). Righteous kings reformed the cult by modifying the laws of the sacrifices and reorganizing the priesthood; the eschatological fulfillment implicates the writing of the law in the heart of the nation so that "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD" (Isa 11:9; Ezek 37:24; cf.Hos 3:5; Zech 12:10; also related are Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27). God defended the righteous king from his enemies and provided rest for the land; the eschatological king "shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth" and even the natural order will be transformed so that no one will "hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain" (Isa

[458] Cortez, "The Son as Representative," 34-42, esp. 37.

> 11:3-9; cf. Isa 9:5-7; Mic 5:4-5). Righteous kings repaired the temple; the eschatological king "shall build the temple of the LORD" (Zech 6:13; cf. Ezek 37:26, 28). Finally, alongside the righteous king often appeared the figure of a faithful priest; alongside the eschatological king "there shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them" (Zech 6:13; cf. Jer 33:16-26; Hos 3:4-5).[459]

Cockerill has similarly pointed out that within the sweep of the OT, the Davidic king was a figure who would restore God's rule and thus enable his people to express more of the blessings God promised, particularly the enjoyment of the promised land.[460]

5.4.3.5.1.1.6 Kingship and the Identifying ἀρχηγός

Having suggested that the concept of kingship appears in Hebrews and accords with the dimensions of leadership exercised by the ἀρχηγός in 2:10-13, it remains to explore how this connection could explain the citation of Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) to specifically show that Christ had to suffer and identify with those whom he leads.

Although David is presented in Psalm 22 (21) as one who suffered and identified with his people, this does not demonstrate that such suffering was an intrinsic part of his royal office. When, however, one reads Psalm 22 (21) against the background of the broader OT portrayal of kingship, and particularly against the foundational law of kingship in Deuteronomy 17, it becomes clear that identification, which necessitates suffering, is presented as intrinsic to God's intention for kingship.

While hints that God will lead his people through a king appear in earlier texts of the OT, Deuteronomy 17 is the first and clearest description of how Israelite kingship is to function. In that text, Moses,

[459] Cortez, *Within the Veil*, 109.
[460] Cockerill, "From Deuteronomy to Hebrews," 91-92; Cf. also Müller, *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ*, 129-130, 135-136, 146-147.

looking ahead to a time when Israel will appoint a king, establishes requirements concerning who can be appointed and how they must act.

The two initial requirements for this king are that he be chosen by God and that he not be a foreigner but rather, "one from among your brothers" (Deut 17:15). The second of these criteria is particularly significant for the present discussion. Deuteronomy frequently refers to "brothers" of the Israelites. Twice "brothers" denotes the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau (2:4, 8), but in all other instances, the Israelites' brothers are fellow Israelites in contrast to foreigners (see esp. 1:16; 15:3, 12).[461] That is clearly the basic meaning in this instance (17:15b).[462] The subsequent discussion of how the king is to rule, however, suggests a secondary element: The king, as a brother, is to continue to identify with, rather than exalt himself over, his people.[463]

The responsibilities of the chosen king can be summarised into two broad requirements. Firstly the king must not acquire great wealth and symbols of status (17:16-17); secondly, he is to live under the law of God (17:18-20). The author says that one of the reasons he is to do these things is, "that his heart may not be exalted above his brothers" (17:20).

The limitations on the king's acquisition of horses, wives, and riches prevent him from distancing himself too far from the estate of those over whom he reigns. As Jamie Grant says, "the king is not to be set apart from the people because of his status, quite to the contrary, he is to be intimately associated with them, being constantly reminded that he is one of them."[464] Grant further argues that

[461] Deuteronomy 13:7 also uses ἀδελφός/אח to refer to a brother within a family but this is different to referring to the "brothers" of the nation as a whole.
[462] Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 2nd ed. WBC 6a (Waco: Word, 2001), 384; J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5 (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 294. One of the reasons for this is likely that foreigners will encourage apostasy (Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy,* New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament 4 [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996], 209; Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation [Louisville: John Knox, 1990], 147-148).
[463] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 294.
[464] Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, SBL Academia Biblica 17 (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 200. Nelson suggests that the triple repetition of "for himself" (לו) connects with the exaltation of the king's heart over his brothers in 17:20 (Richard D. Nelson,

these restrictions do more than limit luxuries. Horses were not only a symbol of wealth but were particularly used in pulling chariots, "the greatest of military strengths in the Near East at that time."[465] Wives are prohibited because they will turn the king's heart away. The wives therefore appear to include some who are not faithful to Yahweh, likely those who were acquired through international diplomacy. In cutting off the possibility of many wives, this law puts limits on the king's ability to build large networks of political alliances. Wealth is another means to power, and yet this too is restricted. Ancient kings found their security in horses, wives, and wealth, but Israel's king, "is to place his trust entirely in Yahweh and his ability to provide for king and people."[466]

Grant further notes that the Law calls every Israelite to rely on and trust in Yahweh. Deuteronomy 8, in particular, recalls God's provision throughout Israel's journey in the desert and warns that when God settles them in the promised land they must be careful lest their hearts are exalted and they attribute their success to their own power. Deuteronomy 17:14-20 applies this theme to the king. As leader of the people, he must exemplify trust in Yahweh and continued reliance on him for ongoing protection and provision.[467]

The requirement that the king write and continually read the Law (Deut 17:18-19) again places him in the same position as the people he leads. The king is not under a different Law but is called to devote himself to the same Law in an exemplary way.[468] The command to write out and constantly read the Law echoes the command given to all Israelites to immerse themselves in the Law (e.g., Deut 6:1-9). The king's responsibility is not different; it is intensified: "His role, in short, is to become the model

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Deuteronomy: A Commentary, Old Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 224). Note also Josephus' rendering. While clearly holding objections to the idea of Monarchy (e.g., Ant. 4.223; 6.36), Josephus recounts the limitations of Deuteronomy as limiting the king's pride so that he will not be arrogant over the laws and preventing the king becoming too powerful for the common good (Ant. 4.224).

[465] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 203.

[466] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 203-204; cf. Roy L. Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy: The Character of Samuel and the Deuteronomistic Evaluation of Prophecy*, LHBOTS 440 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 91; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 209; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 294-295.

[467] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 202-203.

[468] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 200, 206-209; Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 91; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 224-225; Gentry, "A Preliminary Evaluation," 115.

(Deuteronomic) Israelite: writing, reading, studying and obeying the Torah."[469] In this way, the king becomes an exemplar of faithful life under the Law of Yahweh, and the people, "are able to follow that example because the king is essentially the same as they are."[470]

The commands of Deuteronomy do not empty kingship of authority or power. The king is still placed over the Israelites as their leader.[471] These commands do, however, require that the king identify with the people over whom he reigns as brother. While the subsequent history of kingship in Israel falls short of the foundational description, the ideal shape of Israelite kingship remains.[472]

Coming to Psalm 22 (21), we noted that the superscription attributes authorship to King David. While the OT portrays David as flawed, he is nevertheless the archetypal expression of Israelite kingship. Like Deuteronomy 17, the model of David becomes a high point against which subsequent kings are measured. As the words of Psalm 22 (21) are read on David's lips, they focus on his positive expression of kingship. This king has gone through suffering in which he had entrusted himself to Yahweh. As Yahweh delivers him, the king bears witness in praise among those whom he identifies as his brothers, calling them to follow his example of trust and praise.[473]

Such a conception of kingship fits perfectly within Hebrews 2 and provides a clear foundation for Hebrews' claim that a perfect ἀρχηγός must be one who has suffered and who calls his people brothers. The leadership of the ἀρχηγός is shaped by OT categories of kingship, vividly illustrated in Ps 22 (21). Intrinsic to this leadership is true identification with those led; the leader shares in their situation in order to give them an example of faith.

[469] Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 25.
[470] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 213. Cf. Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 206-210; Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 91; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 209-210; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 148-149.
[471] Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 222.
[472] Grant, *The King as Exemplar*, 9; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 38.
[473] Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 600.

5.4.3.5.2 Isa 8:18

In considering Christ's role of leadership as the ἀρχηγός, we turn next to Isaiah 8:18, quoted in Hebrews 2:13b. Similar explanations have been given for the use of Isaiah 8:18 here as for Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) in 2:12, namely that it has been applied to Christ because it is drawn from a context widely held to be messianic,[474] and/or that it was employed because of its description of suffering or even a vindicated righteous sufferer.[475] As in the use of Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22), both of these explanations may form part of the answer, yet in this instance they explain even less than for Psalm 22 (21).

While Isaiah 8:14-15 was understood by early Christians as a messianic prophecy, the connection to 8:18 is less obvious. Isaiah 8:14-15 contains words spoken by and about YHWH. There is a transition in 8:16 to instruction given to the prophet who is waiting on YHWH. That these verses were rolled together into a single messianic prophecy is therefore unlikely. While the context of Isaiah 8:18 may have contributed to its familiarity to the author and audience of Hebrews, this does not itself explain why the author would place these words on Christ's lips.

The theme of suffering is clearly found within the context of Isaiah 8:18, and may again have played a role in the author's choice of this text, but the observation that suffering appears in the context cannot by itself explain much. The suffering in Isaiah 8 is neither primarily that of the prophet himself nor of a righteous figure who will be vindicated. In Isaiah 8, God tells the prophet that he will bring the Assyrians to conquer Syria and the northern kingdom Israel, which had been planning to unite against Judah (8:3-4; cf. 7:1-2). The Assyrians, however, will not stop after Israel but will overflow into Judah, bringing devastation as God's punishment upon those who have not trusted in him (8:5-8). More

[474] E.g., D. Allen, *Hebrews,* 207, Small, *Characterization*, 199; Jobes, "Putting Words in His Mouth," 48; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 98-99. See especially Isa 8:14 in Rom 9:32-33 and 1 Pet 2:8; cf. also Luke 2:34.
[475] E.g., Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 60; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 83; Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 601; Guthrie, *Hebrews*,116.

explanation would be required before this depiction of suffering could explain the application of Isaiah 8:18 to Christ.[476]

As with Psalm 22 (21), a more helpful explanation may be found in attending to the place of the speaker within the narrative of Isaiah 8. Within the broader context of the suffering that will befall the rebellious, Isaiah and a group around him are to stand as a contrast to the nation as a whole.[477] They are not to imitate their countrymen (8:11-12) but to fear and honour God himself (8:13). God then declares that he will be both a sanctuary and a stone of stumbling for both houses of Israel (8:14-15). The people are thus divided on the basis of their relationship to God; the nation as a whole (both Israel and Judah) has been faithless and will fall and be broken on the stumbling stone, but those who honour and fear God will know him as the sanctuary where they experience his relational presence.[478] It is at this point that the chapter introduces "my disciples,"[479] among whom Isaiah's teaching[480] is to be preserved (8:16),[481] and Isaiah himself declares his commitment to wait for and hope in the Lord (8:17). Isaiah and his disciples are thus presented as a faithful remnant among the people of Israel.

Isaiah then declares that he and his "children" stand as signs (אות/σημεῖον) from God to the people of Israel. The children are understood by most commentators as the physical children of Isaiah, and with good reason. In 7:3, Isaiah and his son Shear-jashub go together to meet Ahaz and deliver God's word. In 7:10-16 another son is explicitly promised as a "sign" (אות/σημεῖον; 7:11, 14) of what God will do,

[476] J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 93-94; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 82; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 349-353. Watts suggests that the end of 8:8 through to 8:10 are actually spoken by the rebellious people in response to the words of the prophet (John D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, revised ed. WBC [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005], 153-155). This is in accord with his contention that Isaiah is a "literary drama" (cf. *Isaiah 1-33*, lxxxii-cxvi) but he gives no other support for this idea.

[477] Note the plural verbs in 8:12-13 (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 94).

[478] Motyer, *Isaiah*, 92-93, 95.

[479] Whether the disciples are disciples of Isaiah (Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 82) or of God (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 96; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 367) is of little consequence for the current discussion as it is clear that they were a group separate from the nation who accepted Isaiah's teaching, and thus apparently his authority as a prophet.

[480] Or perhaps, "the Law" (see Wilderberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 366-367)

[481] Wilderberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 365-366.

and his birth is recounted in 8:3-4.[482] Isaiah and his physical children are thus signs to Israel. The way Isaiah 8 portrays a split within Israel, with Isaiah and his disciples standing in contrast to the faithless nation, however, suggests that the "children" of 8:18 should not be entirely separated from the "disciples" of 8:16. Indeed, the name of Isaiah's first son suggests that his physical children may be taken to represent the remnant as a whole.[483] In their faithful commitment to God, this band of disciples is led by the prophet to demonstrate God's ways and proclaim God's law in the midst of a faithless nation (8:18, 20).[484] Isaiah is presented as a leader of God's chosen people, in this case, the faithful remnant. In his role as prophetic leader, he stands with those he leads even as he sees the threat of impending judgment and exemplifies faith in the face of a suffering shared with his followers.[485]

5.4.3.5.2.1 Prophets and Leadership

The above reading of Isaiah's leadership in Isaiah 8 overlaps considerably with the depiction of leadership in Ps 22 (21) and with the ἀρχηγός of Hebrews 2. Isaiah, however, was a prophet not a king. We turn, therefore, to examine whether the prophetic office was also understood as one of leadership, and specifically of a type of leadership that entailed identification, or whether the leadership displayed in Isaiah 8 was tangential to his prophetic office, forcing us to pursue a different line of connection between Isaiah 8:18 and Christ the ἀρχηγός in Hebrews 2.

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[482] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 161-162; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 369; Mason, *Priest Forever*, 19.

[483] Shear-jashub means "a remnant will return" (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 127-128). On the children as representative of the remnant see Vanhoye, *Situation*, 346; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 103; also in rabbinic interpretation cited in Boyarin, "Midrash," 21.

Motyer suggests that in 8:18 Isaiah sets himself and his physical children as signs *to the remnant*, to encourage them in faith (Motyer, *Isaiah, 96*). This is difficult to reconcile with the fact that Isaiah declares himself and his sons to be signs in relation to Israel itself.

Wildberger argues that the use of ילדים shows that Isaiah is referring to his physical children rather than to the disciples of 8:16 (*Isaiah 1-12*, 369). If Isaiah was referring only to his disciples then בנים would have been a more appropriate choice (*Isaiah 1-12*, 369). Having granted that Isaiah does intend a reference to his physical children however, there his disciples also being included.

[484] Motyer, *Isaiah*, 96; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 22-23.

[485] The idea of leadership is clear in Isaiah being not simply a brother but a father (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 145; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 60).

In considering the nature of the prophetic office, Deuteronomy is again foundational. Deuteronomy 18 promises that God will raise up a prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-22). God's revelation at Sinai is the primary event for understanding this promised prophet. The people acknowledged their own inability to deal directly with God (Deut 18:16), and in response, God promised to raise up a prophet who would mediate between him and his people (Deut 18:17-19). In the account of Deuteronomy 5, this need for a mediator was met in Moses (Deut 5:22-31; cf. Ex 20:18-21), yet in recounting this event in Deuteronomy 18 Moses speaks not of himself as God's solution but of God's promise to raise up another like him. While the people's need for a prophet was initially recognised at Sinai, it was a need that would persist in the life of the nation. The Sinai event, and Moses' reflection on it in Deuteronomy 18, therefore, lay the foundation for an ongoing prophetic office as well as setting up the possibility for a future figure to climactically fulfil the prophetic office of Moses.[486]

[486] David Petersen has rejected the idea that Deuteronomy 18:15-22 presents Moses as a prophet. He argues that כמוך should not be read as modifying נביא so that the subsequent prophetic office is seen through the lens of Moses, but as מקרב אחיהם. The similarity between later prophets and Moses then is not that both are prophets, but that both are Israelites (David Petersen, *The Role of Israel's Prophets*, JSOTSup 17 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1981], 311-312). Another alternative he suggests is that the later prophets simply demand the same obedience as Moses (*Israel's Prophets*, 312). Neither alternative is satisfactory.
The modifier כמוך is distant from the call to obey in 18:15 and is repeated in 18:18 where the call to obey is absent. Even if it were linked with obedience, to liken the authority of a prophet to that of Moses would be suggestive of Moses' own prophetic character.
It seems that כמוך must relate to the prophet whom God will raise being either a brother like Moses or a prophet like Moses. While being a brother like Moses is possible, Petersen has not sufficiently addressed why the author would specify such an idea here. The author can elsewhere talk about people who are brother Israelites without reference to Moses, yet in the discussion of a prophet there is an explicit likeness to Moses.
Even more detrimental to Petersen's claim is the connection of the prophetic office to the Sinai theophany, because at Sinai it was Moses who fulfilled the need for a mediating prophet. Petersen argues that Moses is not elsewhere described with the same prophetic language of God putting words in Moses' mouth but, while the precise term is absent, the concept is pervasive both at Sinai and throughout the Pentateuch (Petersen, *Israel's Prophets*, 312; Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Prophets and Prophecy in the Book of Ben Sira," *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak, LHBOTS 427 [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 139). Note also the application of prophetic language to Moses in Josephus (*Ant.* 2:327; 4:165, 320, 329; Sirach 46:1).
Petersen concedes that Deuteronomy 34 does present Moses as a prophet but he argues that this is not to set Moses up as a pattern for a later prophet or prophetic line but rather, in direct opposition to Deuteronomy 18, it is an attempt to de-value later prophetic ministries by distancing them from Moses. No prophet can claim to be like Moses, the giver of the law (Petersen, *Israel's Prophets*, 315-317). Petersen's contention is largely based on the fact that Deuteronomy 34 rules out the idea of an unbroken prophetic legacy, yet such an unbroken line is not necessarily implied in Deuteronomy 18. As Robertson argues, the prophetic office is not passed through a natural line. Instead various individuals are raised up by God (O. Palmer. Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets* [Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004], 39-41). The fact that a prophet like Moses has not arisen does not mean that one will

The prophetic office is presented firstly as God's way to relate to and communicate with sinful people without breaking out against them in judgement (Deut 5:27-31; 18:16-17). At the primary level then, the transmission of revelation was central to the prophetic office.

Moses, however, the prototypical prophet, was also a figure of great authority and leadership (cf. Ex 2:14 [and Acts 7:35]; 3:10; 18:13; Num 11:10-17; 16:13; 27:15-21; Deut 1:9-18), elements that the author of Hebrews utilises in Hebrews 3. While Moses' leadership has often been seen as foreshadowing the kingly office, this leadership also connects to his exercise of the prophetic office. The leadership of Moses is primarily expressed through his speech, which is generally portrayed not as an expression of his personal authority or wisdom but as revelation from God.[487] When Aaron and Miriam challenge his leadership in Numbers 12, therefore, they do so by questioning the uniqueness of God's revelation to Moses and thus his prophetic ministry (Num 12:2). God responds likewise, not by asserting that Moses has been given a particular office of political/royal authority but by affirming that Moses receives the words of God with clarity and intimacy beyond any other (Num 12:6-8). The leadership of Moses is first questioned and then confirmed on the basis of his prophetic credentials rather than any kingly status, suggesting that a "prophet like Moses" may also be a figure of leadership.[488]

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not arise. Certainly for the present discussion of Hebrews one may assume that the author of Hebrews would not have read Deuteronomy 34 as a later scribe's attempt to push back against Deuteronomy 18, but would rather have seen a promised prophet from Deuteronomy 18 still as a future anticipation at the time of Deuteronomy 34.

[487] Note for instance the difference in the way Moses deals with difficult cases brought before him (Lev 24:10-16; Num 9:6-14; 15:32-36; 27:1-11) and how Solomon deals with a difficult judgement (1 Kings 3:16-28).

[488] While Numbers 12 contrasts Moses to the prophets, the contrast is not so much one of nature but degree. Moses, as a prophet is a figure through whom God's revelation comes, yet unlike others, he receives this revelation clearly and through direct access to God (Num 12:6-8; cf. also Deut 34:10).
Levine has argued that the use of terms עבדי, ביתי and נאמן in Numbers 12:7 show that Moses is being cast as royal/Davidic figure (Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 342). This however seems unnecessary. Not only does the comparison in the text focus on Moses as a source of revelation, but these terms are also applied to prophets elsewhere (On עבד see esp. mention of "my/your/his servants the prophets," 2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Ezra 9:11; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Eze 38:17; Dan 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6; on אמן see 1 Sam 3:20. בית is less clearly related to the prophetic office but most of its uses relating to the kingly office describe not God's house but David's [though cf. 1 Chr 17:14]). Levine is right in noting that the only place these terms

The portrayal of prophets after Moses is more complex. This nexus of leadership and prophecy is further suggested in the appointment of the seventy elders to assist Moses in leading the people. When the elders gather, and God gives them the Spirit which was on Moses so that they can assist him, they prophesy (Num 11:25-26).[489] On the other hand, Joshua might cast doubt on this connection between leadership and prophecy. While he is the most obvious successor to Moses, he is not cast in obviously prophetic images.[490] Given that Deuteronomy 18 strongly implies that Joshua is not a "Prophet like Moses" (34:10-12), however, he seems to demonstrate the breadth of Moses' roles rather than discount Moses' prophetic leadership.

The next prophet mentioned in Israel's history is Deborah. In Judges 4 she is introduced as an אשה נביאה (LXX - γυνὴ προφῆτις). While Deborah is a complex character, Block suggests that,

> The designation [נביאה] here deliberately places Deborah in the succession of Moses (cf. Deut 18:15-22) and in the company of other female bearers of this title. Whatever else the narrative will say about Deborah, the reader must remember that she is first and foremost, if not exclusively, a prophet.[491]

It is as a prophet then that Deborah is "judging Israel" (היא שפטה את ישראל; Jud 4:4). While the details of her authority continue to be debated,[492] even if her leadership differed in form and degree from

occur together is in 1 Samuel 22:14 but there David is not described as a faithful servant in God's house but in Saul's and it is doubtful that Ahimelech was making royal claims for David in that passage.

[489] Numbers 11:29 may suggest that it is appropriate to call the elders "prophets" (Ashley, *Numbers*, 214), but if not, the basic connection between prophecy and leadership stands. Budd for instance concludes that, "They are not prophets as such… but the spirit of leadership and the spirit of prophecy are closely related" (Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, WBC 5 [Waco: Word, 1984], 130).

[490] While Gordon Oeste has argued that Joshua is the first example of a "prophet like Moses" ("The Shaping of a Prophet," 23-42), scripture never calls him a prophet (though cf. Antiquities, 4:165, 311; Sirach 46:1 and comment in Beentjes, "Prophets," 139) nor explicitly relates him prophesying. Joshua being "prophet like Moses," in the fullest sense, is also denied in Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

[491] Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth,* NAC 6 (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 192.

[492] Block suggests that Deborah's "judging" may have been seeking an answer from God in a time of distress (*Judges, Ruth*, 193-197). While Lindars dissects the narrative according to sources in a way which would be foreign to the author of Hebrews, his basic conclusion that, "the source presupposes that Barak is the leader of whatever political organisation obtained in his time" has some merit (Barnabas Lindars, *Judges 1-5: A New Translation and Commentary* [Edinburgh: Bloomsbury, 1995], 183).

others in the book of Judges, Deborah is nonetheless another example of a prophet who, as a prophet, exercises some kind of authoritative leadership.[493]

Following Deborah, the next significant figure described as a prophet is Samuel.[494] He is recognised as a prophet following the reception of a word from the Lord and the passing on of that word to Eli (cf. 1 Sam 3:1-18), and, as a prophet, continues to receive revelation from God and speak to Israel (1 Sam 3:19-21).[495] There is no disputing that Samuel also functions as a leader of the people, yet as with Moses, there is some ambiguity in that Samuel may be filling multiple offices, particularly as he carries out priestly functions and his leadership is finally succeeded by that of a king.[496] He is, however, another clear example of a prophet who leads God's people as a prophet, and later Jewish reflection recounts the demand for a king not as a rejection of Samuel as judge, but of Samuel as prophet (Josephus, *Ant* 6:38). While the king differs from the prophet, it is clear in Josephus' recounting that the offices were considered to have substantial overlap.[497]

With the establishment of the monarchy, the office of prophet appears to change. The prophets now carry a significant role in speaking God's word to the king, who holds civil leadership. This shift, however, is not absolute. The description of prophetic ministry in the latter part of 1 Samuel and in 2

[493] Cf. Butler, *Judges*, 90-93.
[494] There is a brief mention of another prophet in Judges 6:8.
[495] Some argue that Samuel is intentionally cast as a prophet like Moses (see Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 42-43). Bruce also notes that Hebrews 11 closely associates Samuel with the prophets (*Hebrews*, 320).
[496] Heller rightly notes that Samuel fulfils the offices of prophet, priest, and judge (*Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 78-79). Curiously, when Samuel anoints a king one sign the king is given is that the Spirit comes upon him and he prophesies (1 Sam 10:5-6). This sign is given particular emphasis, being the only one of the three to be described again in its fulfillment (1 Sam 10:9-13), and being noticed by the people who ask, "is Saul also among the prophets" (1 Sam 10:11-12). While concluding from this episode that Saul is a prophet in the fullest sense is unnecessary, it is another instance where the ideas of leadership, in this case kingly leadership, and prophecy come into close proximity (David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 8 [Nottingham: Apollos, 2009], 126, P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary,* AB 8 [New York: Doubleday, 1980], 187).
[497] Jewish reflection on Samuel appears to have maintained and emphasized his role as prophet. Sirach makes this his dominant role (cf. Beentjes, "Prophets," 140-141) while Feldman notes 45 instances in which Josephus adds a reference to Samuel being a prophet or prophesying not found in the OT segments he is recounting (Lois H. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus." in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism,* ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak, LHBOTS 427 [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 213-214). The overlap of kingly and prophetic offices is seen also in the expectations of the crowd in John 6 who, on concluding that Jesus is the prophet, decide to anoint him as king (John 6:14-15).

Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles focuses on the role of the prophets as they interact with the kings. There are instances when the prophet speaks directly to the people, but these are more the exception than the rule.[498] This, however, may say as much about the focus of these books as it does about the nature of prophecy. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles largely trace the history of the nation through its kings, so it is unsurprising that prophets appear primarily interacting with the monarchs.[499] The writings of the prophets, however, contain speeches both to the kings and to the people, and those writing prophets who interact with the monarchy in Kings and Chronicles are seen in their own writings to have a ministry to all levels of society.

We may ask, however, whether this involvement was in any sense leadership. To put it another way, would it have been appropriate to refer to prophets after the rise of the monarchy as ἀρχηγοί? The writing prophets spoke to the people, commanding action in line with God's laws and calling for repentance. The difficulty a prophet faces is that his authority resides in his word. When the word of God is spurned, as it was during much of the period when the writing prophets ministered, the prophet, in contrast to the king, has no recourse to an army. He generally lacks the means to enforce his authority and can only continue to speak. The prophets, however, do find a remnant that is obedient to the voice of God, and among such people, the prophets take a position of leadership.[500] Isaiah 8:18 fits within this context. The nation as a whole rebels against God, yet among those who will turn to God and trust in him, Isaiah stands as a father figure.[501]

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[498] Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 16.

[499] Feldman notes this both in regard to Samuel/Kings and Josephus' *Antiquities* (Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus," 217-218)

[500] Note for instance the faithful gathered around Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2, 4:38-44; 6:1-7), or Baruch with Jeremiah (Jer 36, 45). Beyond prophetic groups or servants are occasional broader responses to prophetic leadership (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:39-40).

[501] It is possible that some prophets, particularly those who apparently gave an oracle and left (see for example those listed in Yairah Amit, "The Role of Prophecy and Prophets in the Chronicler's World," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*. ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak, LHBOTS 427 [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 85-87), do not exercise a leadership role. It could be that not all prophets fill all aspects of the prophetic office. It is, however, also possible that in the very act of delivering their message these

One may therefore suggest that the prophetic office carries authority for leadership. It is not the leadership of kings who can enforce obedience but functions alongside (and ideally complementary to) the king. The prophet's leadership over people is through the spoken word of God. It is an authority that will be heeded by those who are submissive to God's commands. This leadership was a foundational part of the prophetic office when Moses led the nation, and it remained intact as Isaiah stood at the head of a faithful remnant.

5.4.3.5.2.2 Prophetic Leadership and the leadership of the ἀρχηγός

It appears then that the prophetic office ideally included an element of leadership, but to assess whether that element of the prophetic office lies behind the use of Isaiah 8:18 in Hebrews 2, one must also consider whether the kind of leadership described matches the portrayal of the leadership of the ἀρχηγός in Hebrews 2:10-13. Two questions require consideration: Is the leadership of the prophet defined by identification with those who are led? And, is the leadership of the prophet directional, i.e. is its goal to lead the people towards a greater realisation of God's promises rather than simply to preside over them?

5.4.3.5.2.2.1 Identification

Returning to Deuteronomy 18, the prophetic office is defined in relation to Moses. Davis, pointing particularly to Moses' choice to go out and see his people and to his joining their plight, states that, "Moses' costly identification with the sufferings of his people is one of the constants of his character as represented in every biblical tradition."[502] While a few of the details of Davis' assessment are questionable, the depiction of Moses as a figure who identified with his people and shared their lot is clearly something the author of Hebrews also found in the OT. (Heb 11:24-25; cf. similarly Acts 7:23-

prophets held authority and the potential for some expression of leadership, fleeting though it may be, which could be either accepted or rejected by those to whom they spoke.

[502] Ellen F. Davis, *Biblical Prophecy: Perspectives for Christian Theology, Discipleship, and Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 36-38.

26; Josephus, *Ant.* 4:177). If Moses himself was depicted as one who identified with his people, it is likely that identification is intrinsic also to the "prophet like [Moses]" in Deuteronomy 18.

This possibility is supported by the requirement that the prophet will be "from among your brothers," a phrase appearing twice in this short passage (Deut 18:15, 18). As in the description of the king in Deuteronomy 17, this primarily requires that the prophet be an Israelite. Such a demand may be driven by religious concerns about foreign prophets promoting foreign worship. The main rationale for this criteria is then likely to be the preservation of true Israelite worship over against beliefs and practices imported from the nations.

The notion of identification, however, is likely also to be present as a secondary implication of this command. It has been argued that the king coming "from among your brothers" was not simply a description of his bloodline but was also to inform how he ruled. In applying this same requirement to the prophet so soon afterward, it is likely that Deuteronomy intends these nuances to carry over into the prophetic office. Just as Moses had left the courts of Egypt, refusing to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter and choosing instead to suffer among the people of God (Heb 11:24-25), so subsequent prophets, if they were to be true to his example, would be the brothers of the Israelites to whom they ministered.[503]

Coming then to Isaiah 8, one finds a striking example of this identification in practice. Isaiah speaks of the coming calamity on the people of Judah as the Assyrian king invades. Within that context, the prophet does not expect immunity for himself, nor does he flee for safety. Instead, Isaiah identifies with his "children," showing them what faith looks like in the context of upheaval. His prophetic words are given concrete expression through his prophetic life. Isaiah waits on the Lord and hopes in him (8:17) as the people should have done (8:6), and so his call to them comes with greater force. It is not

[503] Heller, *Power, Politics, and Prophecy*, 28-29.

a word from outside the context of suffering but arises within the crucible. It is at least in part because of this identification in suffering that Isaiah can be a leader or father to his "children."[504]

5.4.3.5.2.2.2 Directional Leadership

In assessing whether prophetic leadership matches that of the ἀρχηγός, we finally consider whether it is directional, that is, whether the prophet is leading his people towards God's promises. The directional nature of Moses' prophetic leadership is obvious in his taking the people out of Egypt and towards the promised land. Other prophetic voices also join a chorus declaring a way out of distress and into the promised inheritance of God.

Isaiah 8 concretely expresses this directional nature of prophetic leadership. The prophet stands with the faithful remnant, leading them in a response of faith amid calamity. Yet the prophet's leadership, like that of the ἀρχηγός, is not defined merely by identification in present suffering but also in hope for future restoration. Isaiah 8:16 begins with the commands to "bind up the testimony and seal the teaching" The prophet then declares that he waits for the Lord (8:17)—an expression of hope for the future. Without interruption in the flow of the narrative, Isaiah 9 transitions to a depiction of a future glory of unimaginable peace (9:1-7), a message that will be further expounded throughout the book. Isaiah's leadership, then, clearly generates a future-focussed hope, and as a prophet, he seeks to lead his people towards their divinely promised inheritance.

[504] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 20-25; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 96. de Sousa dismisses the idea that the audience of Hebrews would read the citation of Isaiah 8:18 against the context of the Syro-Ephraimite war ("Hermeneutics," 100). What we argue, however, is not that the audience would be expected to conjure up the entire story, but rather that, since their familiarity with these words would come from hearing them read within that story, they would hear them in Hebrews as the words of a prophetic leader standing with his people, whether or not they recalled the details of the account.

5.4.3.5.2.3 Hebrews 2 and Christ as Prophet?

Having argued that Isaiah 8:18 exemplifies the leadership embodied in the prophetic office, one which entails authority, identification, and direction, we must finally consider whether a comparison between Christ and the prophetic office would fit within the context of Hebrews 2.

The first thing to note is that while Hebrews introduces "the prophets" in the very first sentence,[505] it does so in order to explicitly contrast the prophets with the Son (1:1-2). The prophets are not like the Son! Their revelation comes to the fathers in bits and pieces over a long time. The Son, however, is the final, perfect revelation to us in these last days. In one sense, then, Hebrews asserts that Christ is not a mere prophet.

While maintaining this distinction, however, Rodrigues observes that the contrast only makes sense if the author, "assumes some kind of commonality between the prophets and Jesus."[506] The discontinuity in Hebrews is not because Christ does not fulfil the prophetic role; rather, it is that Christ does it better and more completely. The Son is not simply among the prophets, he is and does what they were to be and do in a way that eclipses their ministry.[507]

The prophets were mediators of revelations and, while the prophets themselves are not named again, the theme of revelation dominates the comparison between the Son and the angels in the remainder

[505] Johnson suggests that the term προφήτης "is probably meant to suggest all the agents by whom God's word and will were disclosed to the people, including angels, Moses and Joshua, and the priestly cult, in addition to all the heroes of the faith recorded in chapter 11" (*Hebrews*, 65). He does not however give any other examples where the term is used in such a broad manner. He offers as a second suggestion that the plural here may suggest scripture in which God's revelation is recorded (*Hebrews*, 65; cf. Ribbens and Kibbe, "He Still Speaks," 197). This idea however is difficult to reconcile with the relegation of their ministry to the past, and would differ from the other use of προφήτης in Hebrews 11:32.

[506] Adriani M. Rodrigues, "Thinking Systematically with the Scriptural Christology of Hebrews: Contributions to the Theology of Christ's Threefold Office," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 58.1 (2020): 49.

[507] Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 37-38; Maston, "The Son and Scripture," 509. Note similarly how the comparison of Moses with prophets in Numbers 12:6-8 does not mean that Moses is not a prophet, but that he is a far greater expression of the prophetic office.

of the chapter. The angels declared a reliable message, but the Son declared a great(er) salvation to which the Hebrews needed to pay attention (2:1-4).[508]

The shift from prophets to angels does not signal that prophets have vanished from sight. Hebrews 1:5-14 elaborates on the contrast between the Son and the former revelation mentioned in Hebrews 1:1-2a. But while those verses pointed out the diversity of the former revelation (πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως), they still described it all as ἐν τοῖς προφήταις.[509] Angelic revelation is included in prophetic revelation. If a specific incident is in view, as some have argued, it is most likely Sinai, when, according to Jewish tradition, Moses received the law from angels.[510] In this instance, angelic revelation came through a prophet. Hebrews, however, insists that the Son speaks a more significant word than the OT prophets, even than those who received their message from angels.[511]

A number of scholars have noted that this emphasis on revelation and God's word that is set up in Hebrews 1 remains in focus until at least 4:13.[512] Allen goes further, tracing at length the Son's revelatory ministry throughout the letter.[513]

At the opening of Hebrews 3, Christ is compared to Moses. It has already been noted that Moses is the archetypal prophetic leader. This would not in itself show that the comparison in Hebrews 3 incorporates a prophetic focus. Such a connection, however, is confirmed by the allusion to Numbers

[508] Ellingworth downplays the prophets since they are not mentioned again explicitly except in 11:32, and then notes that it is "difficult to find a direct link between the reference to 'the prophets' here and the quotations in 1:5-13." (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 92-93). It is unlikely however that Hebrews has raised the prophets within the very first clause if they play no appreciable role in the letter.
[509] Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 37-39.
[510] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 137-138; Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 8; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 118-119.
[511] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 62; Ellingworth even suggests that 2:1 may contain an allusion to Deuteronomy 32:46 in which Moses warns the people to pay attention to the words he is speaking to them (*Hebrews*, 136).
[512] Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 46; Koester, *Hebrews*, 225; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 19, 29. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:1; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, cxxvii; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 36.
[513] Michael Allen, "Living and Active: The Exalted Prophet in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 (New York: T&T Clark, 2019), 149-152. Westfall similarly argues that the Son as divine messenger is a "global theme" of Hebrews (*Discourse Analysis*, 98-99).

12. In Numbers 12:7 Moses is described as a "servant" (עבד/θεράπων) who is "faithful in all my house" (בכל־ביתי נאמן הוא / ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός). In this account, Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' leadership. As already noted, they did so questioning his status as the mediator of God's revelation, and God responded by affirming that Moses received God's word with an immediacy and intimacy unparalleled in other prophets. As Hebrews draws on this passage to compare Moses with Christ, it demonstrates Christ's superiority by claiming that, unlike Moses, who was a servant (θεράπων), Christ is the Son over God's house. This affirms Christ's authority but likely goes further. Moses' greatness beyond other prophets in Numbers 12 was seen in the immediacy and intimacy of the revelation he mediated. Likewise, in Hebrews, it is the Son who mediates a greater revelation than the prophets as he leads God's people.

Numbers 12 affirms Moses as God's greater prophet appointed to lead his people, but in Hebrews 3, the argument is made that Moses does not reveal the definitive word of God: even as a great prophet, he simply witnesses to what would one day be said (εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν λαληθησομένων, 3:5).[514] Moses the prophet speaks of a greater revelation yet to come, a revelation that, according to Hebrews, arrives in Christ. Richardson therefore argues that, "the author of Hebrews regards the faithful prophet Moses as an imperfect anticipation or type of the future prophet."[515] While Hebrews does not apply the term "prophet" to Christ, he is presented as the eschatological fulfilment of what the prophetic office was.

The comparison of Christ and Moses as revelatory leaders informs the rest of chapters 3 and 4. Moses led the people out of Egypt (3:16), but they fell in the desert because they did not hear the word and respond in faith (3:16-4:2). The Hebrews are therefore warned to listen to the voice of God that has come in their own day in Christ. This emphasis on revelation and hearing God's word then climaxes in

[514] Cf. Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 9; Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 102; contra Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 53-54.
[515] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 69.

4:11-13, where the author gives an extended description of the Word of God (4:12-13) to support his exhortation not to disobey (4:11).[516]

That the prophetic role is of great importance in 1:1-4:13 has been demonstrated,[517] yet conspicuously absent in our overview was any mention of 2:5-18. Indeed, while 2:1-4 and 3:1-6 both have pronounced prophetic imagery, it is scarcely present between those two passages.[518] An assessment of the role of Isaiah 8:18 in Hebrews 2:13 must balance both the dominance of prophetic imagery in 1:1-4:13 and its relative absence in 2:5-18. The prophetic themes in 1:1-4:13 suggest that 2:13 connects with the prophetic office.[519] The lack of such themes elsewhere in 2:5-18, however, indicates that the author is not transforming the whole discussion of the perfecting of the ἀρχηγός into one about the prophetic office.[520] It is better to see the prophetic role of Isaiah then as one example, alongside the kingly role of David, of true leadership of God's people. In drawing on both of these offices, Hebrews highlights what is common to them—both types of leadership intrinsically require a level of identification with the people who are led. For this reason, it was fitting that the ἀρχηγός be perfected through suffering.

[516] Cf. Hughes, *Hermeneutics*, 10-11.
[517] For further expression later in the letter see esp. 5:11; 10:26-31; 12:25-26.
[518] Though Westfall argues that, "The dominance of the identity and process chain of God speaking is deactivated, though references to Jesus' function as God's messenger is still active" (*Discourse Analysis*, 104). Allen finds prophetic overtones in 2:11 in which Jesus is calling others his brothers and in 2:12 in which the Son is declaring God's name and his praise to the congregation (M. Allen, "Living and Active," 149-150). In both these verses the Son is exercising a verbal ministry towards other humans, and their close relationship to the quoted words of a prophet in 2:13 is intriguing, yet there is no indication that the words described in 2:11 and 2:12 are primarily revelatory. The emphasis in 2:11 is not on what the Son has revealed to others but on the title he takes in identification with others. In 2:12 the emphasis is not on revelation but on praise. David as king, rather than prophet, praised God's name, and, in fact, all Israelites were expected to do so with him. Without suggesting a black and white distinction between prophetic speech and other forms of speech, we note that there is nothing in the form of these words to lead to the conclusion that they are specifically prophetic in nature.
[519] As for example, Bénétreau, *Hébreux,* 1:127 ; Philip E. Hughes, "The Christology of Hebrews," *SJT* 28.1 (1985): 19.
[520] Contra Spicq, "Le Christ ἀρχηγός est sonc présenté en premier lieu comme un révélateur" (*L'épître aux Hébreux,* 1:301)

5.4.3.5.3 "I Will Trust in Him" – The Qualification for Leadership

The above examination of the use of Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) and Isaiah 8:18 in Hebrews 2:10-13 has argued that the ἀρχηγός of Hebrews 2 is depicted as a leader in continuity with the OT offices of leadership, particularly those of the king and the prophet, and that as such it was necessary for him to identify with his people in suffering. This provides a foundation to consider the third quotation within this passage. Between Psalm 22:23 (LXX 21:23; Eng 22:22) and Isaiah 8:18 the author puts on Christ's lips the words, Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ' αὐτῷ.[521]

We will firstly consider the source of this citation. While the word order differs slightly, 2 Samuel 22:3, Isaiah 8:17, and Isaiah 12:2 all read, πεποιθὼς ἔσομαι ἐπ' αὐτῷ.[522] Many commentators argue or assume that the second of these verses must be the source because Isaiah 8:18 immediately follows,[523] yet it may be that familiarity with Hebrews has clouded our judgement. A number of commentators have noted that the author deliberately separated this citation from the following quotation of 8:18 by the words καὶ πάλιν, turning it into a distinct unit that makes its own point.[524]

Taking the letter in sequence, the citation in 2:13a immediately follows David's words from Psalm 22 (21). Because 2 Samuel 22:3 also recounts David's words, it has a natural connection with Psalm 22

[521] Svendsen suggests that this quote is not said by Christ but by the believer (Svendsen, *Allegory Transformed*, 101). He finds this in Attridge but appears to have misread him (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90-91; cf. 89-90).
[522] In changing the word order and adding ἐγω, the author has not obscured the citation but has emphasised Christ's choice to personally embody faith (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 59-60).
[523] See for example de Sousa, "Hermeneutics," 86; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 59; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 950; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 99; Ellingworth, 168-169; Kevin B. McCruden, "The Eloquent Blood of Jesus: The Neglected Theme of the Fidelity of Jesus in Hebrews 12:24," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 511; Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 16; Eisenbaum, *Jewish Heroes*, 113; Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 600; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 116; Koester, *Hebrews*, 231; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 101; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 74; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 33-34; Boyarin, "Midrash," 20; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 165; Moll, *Hebrews*, 54; Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 77; Small, *Characterization*, 198; Morris, *Hebrews*, 28; Easter, *Faith*, 155; Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 303-304; McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 73. Ellingworth also suggests that citation of 2 Samuel 22 is unlikely because, "Davidic messianism is not prominent in Hebrews" (*Hebrews*, 169), yet, as has been argued above, this is not the case.
[524] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 83. Lane notes that this separation does not prove that two different citations are intended (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 59), but it certainly allows the possibility.

(21) and would be the obvious background for understanding Hebrews 2:13a.[525] These words would therefore be heard firstly as the words of a king recounting his trust in God throughout his struggles. The ideal of kingship in Deuteronomy 17 required kings to be leaders who identified with their people in faith, not relying on their military power, diplomatic dealings, or vast wealth but on the God in whom all Israelites were called to trust.[526] David exemplified this in 2 Samuel 22, facing many hardships but resolving to trust in God throughout them. The connection is clear; Christ, likewise, the perfect ἀρχηγός, was made a little lower than angels and brought to a place of suffering. In that context, he too declared his resolve to trust in God and so became an example of faith to those whom he leads.[527]

Hebrews, however, does not stop there. Having just cited these words against a Davidic background, the author follows them in 2:13b with words from the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 8:18. This new citation, drawn from the immediate context of πεποιθὼς ἔσομαι ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ in Isaiah 8:17, would evoke that verse as another source for 2:13a. This second source creates another layer of meaning. The affirmation of trust in adversity is now echoed on the lips of a prophet standing as the head of a faithful remnant and demonstrating faith in the face of upheaval and suffering.[528]

Hebrews thus evokes both the leadership of king and prophet, which together show that the leadership God intended for his people always entailed identification in suffering and faith in the midst of suffering.[529] For this reason, it was fitting that Christ also, to be perfected as the ἀρχηγός of God's

[525] Especially since 2 Samuel 22 may have been familiar in the early church through liturgical use (cf. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 19).
[526] On Hebrews 2:13 as an expression of faith see Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 20-25.
[527] Cf. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 144; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 133; Healy, *Hebrews*, 64; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 78; *Situation*, 343-344. deSilva argues that the "him" whom Christ trusts is his brothers (*Perseverance*, 116), though see critiques (Small, *Characterization*, 200; Matthew C. Easter, "Faith in the God who Resurrects: The Theocentric Faith of Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 63 [2017]: 79)
[528] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 144; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 133; Healy, *Hebrews*, 64; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 78; *Situation*, 343-344.
[529] Some suggest that the second citation takes prominence (Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," 208 J. Ross Wagner, "Faithfulness and Fear, Stumbling and Salvation: Receptions of the LXX Isaiah 8:11-18 in the New Testament," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, Christopher Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 99; de Sousa, "Hermeneutics," 86, 95-96). If this is the case the idea of faith would be further emphasised. Indeed, Swetnam

people, would undergo suffering so that he could demonstrate faith and lead his brothers in the life of faith.[530]

5.5 Christ's Humanity and the Perfecting of the Ἀρχηγός

Four conclusions concerning the humanity of Christ may now be drawn from the examination of Christ as the ἀρχηγός in Hebrews 2:10-13.

5.5.1 Identification in Leadership

Hebrews 2:5-9 emphasises that the human Christ received dominion over all things; all creation is placed under the feet of the human Lord, Jesus. Hebrews 2:10-13 continues to speak about Christ as the exalted Lord, but with a significant new element as Christ's authority is expressed in his leadership as the ἀρχηγός. In 2:10-13 Christ is not described as Lord over creation but as the leader of his people. Human beings, who in 2:5-9 were declared to have fallen short of the glory promised in Psalm 8, are now described as many sons whom God is leading to glory, and Christ, who in 2:5-9 was enthroned in glory, is now their leader on that journey.

Christ as leader of God's people is not described as δεσπότης or even as κύριος but with the rarer word ἀρχηγός. While this title sometimes refers to nothing more than one who holds authority over others, the lexeme also has the potential to express a leadership that entails the concept of example or pioneering. This potential in the lexeme is developed as the passage continues. Christ's leadership was only perfected when by experiencing suffering (2:10). His leadership was defined by being ἐξ ἑνός with his people (2:11). As leader, he is not ashamed to call his people brothers (2:12). And his leadership thus gives expression to the strands of identification in the OT types of king and prophet, both of which

goes so far as to suggest that 2:13a is the "key" and "center" of 2:5-18 (Swetnam, *Hebrews*, 86, 98). Heil suggests that Christ's trust is one form of praise (John Paul Heil, *Worship in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 43), though it is more likely that trust is the dominant category.

[530] Christ is thus living out the exhortation to faith which dominates the book of Hebrews (Attridge, "Liberating Death's Captives," 114). Kistemaker further notes a possible connection to the traditions surrounding Christ's death in which he was taunted with the words πέποιθεν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν (Mt 27:43; Kistemaker, *Psalms Citations*, 84). It is difficult to know how familiar this account would have been to the author or audience of Hebrews.

were to lead not while standing apart from their people but standing among them (2:13-14). Christ's leadership remains a position of authority, but his authority does distance him from his people. He is their brother and, as such, is one whom they can trust and follow on the path he has trodden before them.

5.5.2 Weakness and Suffering

Christ's human identification with his people, which perfects him as their ἀρχηγός, is firstly defined by suffering. In 2:10 Christ's παθήματα perfect him as ἀρχηγός. It may be helpful to probe the nature of these παθήματα. In light of the explanatory γάρ at the start of this verse, it is likely that these sufferings are at least in part to be identified with Christ's death in 2:9.[531] This does not mean, however, that death is the totality of παθήματα. Christ's sufferings are also closely connected with his being ἐξ ἑνος with those whom he sanctifies (2:11), even though they continue to live on earth. His sufferings are the reason he can call them brothers and take upon his lips the words of OT leaders who foreshadowed his ministry. The leadership of those types was defined by identification throughout life rather than simply in death. Given the strong emphasis on Christ identifying with his people on their journey to glory, it is likely that the author also intends παθήματα to include the whole range of frustrations, difficulties, and pain associated with mortal existence in a fallen world. Such sufferings climax in death but are not limited to it. Christ's human nature, which was necessary for him to be perfected as the leader of his people, is then to be understood as one which shared in the whole range of human suffering and so can identify with those who suffer in their ongoing earthly life.[532]

As in 2:5-9, it is noteworthy that Christ's weakness is not an obstacle to his enthronement but is rather pre-requisites for its full dimensions. Christ, who in Hebrews 1 reigned by virtue of his deity, could

[531] Peeler, *You are My Son*, 77

[532] Bryan Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*, Library of New Testament Studies 568 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 87; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 68-70; Gordon J. Thomas, "The Perfection of Christ and the Perfecting of Believers in Hebrews," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament,* ed. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 295; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 138.

only become the ἀρχηγός of his people by taking on human weakness and experiencing human suffering.

5.5.3 Faith and Praise

Christ's human leadership is furthermore defined by faith and praise, both of which were intrinsic to the identity of a human in Psalm 8. Hebrews 2:5-9 did not explicitly expound this theme, but the additional OT citations in Hebrews 2:10-13 show a leader who not only identifies with his people in their situation but who demonstrates a right response to God in those circumstances.

This is expressed firstly in 2:12. While this citation expresses identification with the brothers, the psalmist stands in their midst as a figure who praises the Lord and who implicitly (and explicitly in the following verse of the psalm) calls the brothers to join in praise.[533] So in Hebrews, in praising the Father, Christ expresses what humanity in Psalm 8 was intended to be, and he calls his brothers to join him. His praise is an expression of his personal humanity but also a summons to his brothers in their humanity.[534]

Hebrews 2:13a continues to speak of Christ's horizontal relationship with his brothers as one with a vertical dimension. This citation, while included to demonstrate Christ's identification with his brothers, lacks any mention of the brothers themselves, simply presenting Christ as one who faithfully trusts in God as they are called to do. As their ἀρχηγός, he exemplifies faithful dependence on God.[535]

[533] Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 600. Small suggests that ἀπαγγελῶ may refer to a declaration while ὑμνήσω refers to singing (*Characterization*, 215; cf. also Dyer, "In the Midst of the Assembly," 6). The evident parallelism however suggests that the distinction is not to be stressed (cf. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 335).
[534] Dyer, "In the Midst," 10; Small, *Characterization*, 215. Dyer suggests that leading God's people in praise is a priestly responsibility (Dyer, "In the Midst," 10). This is an intriguing suggestion given the emphasis on priesthood later in the letter, though most of the examples Dyer cites to demonstrate this refer to Levites rather than specifically to priests. The strong Jewish tradition of connecting the psalter to David and the specific superscription to this psalm also demonstrate that leading in praise could be a function of types of leaders other than priests.
[535] Peeler, *You are My Son*, 90.

Christ's faith and praise in weakness make him a fitting ἀρχηγός. He not only stands with his people in all of their struggles but demonstrates in those struggles the fullest expression of what humanity was created to be and urges them to follow in his path.

5.5.4 Christ's Humanity Past and Present

Finally, we note that Christ's humanity in his enthronement appears to differ from the humanity of his earthly life.

As in 2:5-9, connecting Christ's human nature to suffering raises questions about the relationship of his exaltation to his humanity and his suffering. This question is amplified by our argument above that Christ is the antitype of the leadership of Israelite kings and prophets. An Israelite king, according to Deuteronomy 17, was to safeguard his identity as brother by retaining a position of worldly weakness in which he would depend on the Lord.

Hebrews 2:10-13, however, does not suggest that Christ's identification with his people is predicated on an ongoing experience of suffering. On the contrary, 2:10 presents Christ as having been perfected into the office of ἀρχηγός on the basis of what he has suffered. This deviates from the expressions of leadership to which Christ is the antitype, yet Hebrews appears to sustain this by insisting on the fullness of Christ's past experience. Christ is the perfected leader, not by virtue of the continuation of his suffering, but because, unlike any other, he has taken suffering and faith to their limit. Christ's ongoing leadership of his people, therefore, is characterised by a perfect understanding of their struggles, and in their struggles he remains the perfect example of faith. Hebrews 2:10-13 thus re-affirms the need for Christ to identify with his people in weakness and suffering while leaving room for a transformation to glory in which Christ continues to qualify as a human leader without the need for ongoing suffering in his glorified humanity.

5.6 Conclusion

In Hebrews 2:10-13 Christ is perfected to lead humanity through his participation in humanity. As one who has shared in suffering and, in the midst of it, demonstrated faith and praise, Christ is qualified to lead his people in their own journey to the human glory he has already inherited. Like the leadership of kings and prophets to which it is the antitype, Christ's leadership identifies with those who are led and sets them an example of a faithful response to God.

6. Christ, the Human Deliverer of his People

6.1 Introduction

So far, this thesis has argued that frailty and faith characterise Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18. Chapter 4 concluded that Christ entered a position of lower glory and of suffering so that he could inherit the eschatological glory and dominion promised to humanity. Chapter 5 then argued that Christ chose to identify with his people in suffering and, in that position, to express faith in the Father. In so doing, Christ was perfected as the leader of his people, through whom God was leading many to the glory of their promised inheritance. The present chapter turns to examine how Christ saves his people in Hebrews 2:5-18. His ability to lead his people and to bring them into the eschatological inheritance promised to humanity is grounded in his saving work on their behalf, and in this too, Christ's humanity is of central importance.

An examination of Christ's humanity in relation to his saving work introduces a whole new set of questions concerning how Christ is depicted as saving in Hebrews. A full evaluation of the scholarly views is beyond the scope of this work and would risk distracting from its overall aim. Our focus will be particularly on the relationship of Christ's saving work to his humanity. Because the mechanism of how Christ saves is so closely related to the significance of his humanity for salvation, however, the major proposals for Hebrews' understanding of Christ's salvific work itself cannot be bypassed.

This chapter will therefore proceed along the following path:

It will begin with a brief outline of seven proposals for how Hebrews presents Christ's saving work.[536] This will set the context but not the agenda for the following examination of the text; such views will continue to be interacted with in the following examination only where and to the degree that they

[536] The breakdown of views provided is based only on the means by which Christ saves his people. To see views divided in relation to the place and time of atonement as well as the relationship of Christ's death to his sacrifice see R. B. Jamieson, "When and Where Did Jesus Offer Himself?: A Taxonomy of Recent Scholarship on Hebrews," *CBR* 15.3 (2017): 338-368.

are pertinent. An analysis of Christ's saving work will then begin by examining the problem from which humans need saving, as expressed in Hebrews 2:5-18. Having ascertained what salvation answers, attention will then turn to the various descriptions of how Christ saves his people. In the process, the significance for Christ's humanity will be noted. These findings concerning Christ's humanity will then be synthesised in the conclusion.

6.2 Proposals concerning Christ's Saving Work in Hebrews

While there is a wide variety of views on how Hebrews understands Christ's saving work, we will summarise the main ones under seven headings. Outlining these will give the groundwork for subsequent discussion of Christ's salvation in 2:5-18.

6.2.1 Christ's Vicarious Death

The first proposal for Hebrews' understanding of Christ's saving work is that he saves through his vicarious death for humans. This view commonly includes with it the notion of penal substitution. According to this view, Hebrews understands human sin to be the fundamental problem facing humanity. Sin results in guilt, and thus people become liable to God's punishment. Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews is his death as a human which he dies in the place of guilty humans, taking their sin on himself and bearing its full punishment for them. It is only by dying in their place that Christ can offer them forgiveness, purify them and allow them to draw near to a holy God.

Ribbens states this view clearly and succinctly:

> The human conscience is burdened by sins that demand death, and only the death of Christ as a blameless sacrifice is able to purify the conscience (9:14). The price of redemption is the substitutionary death of Christ.[537]

[537] Benjamin J. Ribbens, "Forensic-Retributive Justification in Romans 3:1-26: Paul's Doctrine of Justification in Dialogue with Hebrews," *CBQ* 74 (2012): 558. For other examples of this view see Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 150-151; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 91, 94, 105; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 81, 85; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 65-66; Koester, *Hebrews*, 222-223;

6.2.2 Christ's Cultic Death

Some scholars have maintained that Christ's sacrifice is his death but do not understand such sacrificial death as a punishment or substitution. Instead, they drive a wedge between the forensic images of substitution and propitiation and the cultic images that they find in Hebrews. Thompson, for example, summarises the historical debate between a substitution view of atonement and a conquest view of atonement, and, while he identifies the conquest image in 2:14-15 (he apparently doesn't find any expression of substitution), he says that, "The Levitical cultus provides the author with the imagery for portraying the impact of the cross in taking away sin in a more profound way than the images from the law court or the battlefield."[538]

How this imagery works is not entirely clear and may even be beside the point. Montefiore, who similarly describes Christ's death as a cultic sacrifice, writes:

> There is no explanation of sacrifice in the Old Testament. Its efficacy is assumed. Our author does not question it for a moment: he simply takes it for granted, and to query the validity of the sacrificial system is to ask a question which would never have occurred to him.[539]

6.2.3 Christ's Internal Transformation

Albert Vanhoye has argued that Christ saves through the transformation of his own internal human nature, by which the human nature of his people is also transformed.

Small, *Characterization*, 230, Osborne, *Hebrews*, 55. R. B. Jamieson has a novel and promising explanation of Christ's sacrifice. He argues that "according to Hebrews' specialized use of sacrificial terms and concepts, Jesus' death is not where and when he offers himself, but it is what he offers." He thus separates what he calls the "formal question" of the sequence of events involved in the sacrifice of Christ and the "material question" concerning the role of Christ's death in relation to his self-offering (Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 1). This is a distinct approach, yet because the present thesis is interested in the "material question," Jamieson can be included among those who argue that Christ's sacrifice is achieved through his vicarious death.

[538] Thompson, *Hebrews*, 198.

[539] Hugh. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Blacks New Testament Commentaries (London: Black, 1964), 159. For another example of this view see Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:53 and perhaps Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 57.

Vanhoye's starting point is that humanity is separated from God because of their corrupted nature and their sin. For a sinful human to enter God's presence would evoke his wrath and their destruction.[540] When Christ became a human, he did not sin, but he did share in the fallenness of human nature, "that bore the consequences of sin and was therefore weak, destined for suffering and death."[541] This fallen human nature was alienated from the divine, including from his own divine nature.[542] The way this imperfection is overcome is through the cross, and particularly through the obedience displayed in the cross. Christ willingly endured a violent death in obedience to the father, and as he did so, he opened his human nature to the divine and was transformed. His humanity was perfected and renewed such that it now shared in perfect fellowship with God.[543]

> In the Passion of Christ, human nature was radically renewed. A new human being was created who corresponds perfectly with the divine intention because he agreed to learn obedience in the crucible of suffering.[544]

Christ's death is thus firstly the means for his own entrance into heaven. As one who shares in human nature but is also perfectly united with God, however, his perfection is available to those who follow him.

> Christ's solidarity with us was such that by beseeching God for salvation for himself, he obtained it for all human nature at the same time and therefore for all human beings who follow him.[545]

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[540] Vanhoye, *Situation,* 82-83, 240-241; *Different Priest*, 157.
[541] Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 76. Vanhoye denies that these consequences include punishment. ("Christ as High Priest," 38).
[542] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 323, 349; *New Commentary*, 61-62, 76.
[543] Albert Vanhoye, "Esprit éternel et feu du sacrifice en He 9,14," *Biblica* 64.2 (1983): 274; *A Different Priest*, 110-111; "Teleiôsis," 334-335;.
[544] Vanhoye *Different Priest*, 167.
[545] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 168; cf. also *Situation*, 302-303. It should be noted that Vanhoye does not exclude the idea of expiation in the sense of removing sin (cf. *Situation*, 378-383; *Different Priest*, 113-114, 314). At times he even expresses this in terms which come close to the language of vicarious death:

6.2.4 Christ's Vicarious Life

The next three views are united in their insistence that Christ's sacrifice is not his death but his life. The first of these finds that Christ's sacrifice was vicarious but argues that it is his life, rather than his death, which is offered in the place of his people. This view draws on a particular interpretation of OT sacrifice that suggests that OT worshippers were united to the sacrificial animal such that the application of the blood/life of the animal in God's presence united the worshipper with the divine.

Johnson expresses this understanding clearly. He argues that all living beings participate in life and that the life of one can represent another. In the act of sacrifice, then, the animal represents the worshipper:

> The intended effect of the animal sacrifice, then, is the "perfection" or "consecration" of the victim—its movement through death from the profane life of the herd into the realm of "holiness" or apartness that is in God's presence; and with the "finishing" or "sanctification" of the victim—its entering into God's sphere in the holy of holies—comes the consecration or perfecting of the people as well. They also, through this process of vicarious representation—through the life of the animal, through the action of the priests—enter into the space of

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> Mais cette mort que nous méritons, c'est lui-même qui l'a endurée, dans l'obéissance généreuse et dans l'amour. Il a transporté ainsi le combat dans sa propre humanité et, ce faisant, il a obtenu, selon la volonté de Dieu, la victoire de la miséricorde. De conséquence et châtiment du péché, la mort humaine est devenue dans le Christ le moyen qui a fait triompher la charité. Poussé à cet extrême, le don de soit a remplacé tous les anciens sacrifices, car il a réalisé ce aue ceux-ci cherchaient en vain à obtenir : unir les hommes entre eux en les unissant à Dieu.' (*Situation*, 374).

Vanhoye however does not appear to mean by this that Christ bore the penalty for the sins of humans in the vicarious sense but simply that he entered into their fallen situation and bore its effects. This is effective for Vanhoye not because a debt has been paid but because a new and transformed humanity has been realised (*Different Priest*, 110-111).

For other related views note Massonet who argues that sacrifice was always primarily about the internal disposition of the heart which Christ exemplified and calls his followers to follow (Massonet, 278-279) and McCrudden who emphasises Christ's death as an internal act of solidarity with others (McCrudden, "The Concept of Perfection," 224; cf. also Beavis, *Hebrews*, lxxvii-lxxx).

> holiness, and are consecrated, perfected. They are at peace with God. The covenant is restored.[546]

Applied to Hebrews, this view argues that believers are identified with Christ and that his entrance into heaven fulfils the role of a sacrifice in uniting them to the heavenly realm. The difference between the OT sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ is that sacrificial animals are insufficient because they are "incapable of fully representing the internal dispositions of the human heart."[547] Christ, however, in his human nature, can pass into the holy presence of God on behalf of his people, representing every part of them and thus reconciling them completely to God.

6.2.5 Christ's Sanctifying Life

The fifth view resembles the fourth in that it identifies the significance of Christ's sacrifice with his blood which symbolises life. Unlike the "vicarious life" view, however, the efficacy of the blood is not found in the worshippers' identification with the sacrificed animal. Instead, the life liberated from the body becomes an agent of purification. Alan Stibbs traces this understanding back to Westcott's commentary on the Johanine Epistles.[548] Westcott describes such sacrifice as "the liberation, so to speak, of the principle of life by which it had been animated, so that this life became available for another end."[549] For Westcott, this view did not entirely replace the vicarious death interpretation of Christ's sacrifice. He saw both concepts expressed in the NT, and indeed both expressed in the image of blood.[550] This, however, is not true of all who followed him.

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[546] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 26; cf. Morales, "Atonement," 33-39. For a variation on this see Janowski who argues that Christ's life given for his people is about his decision to live in solidarity with them which had death as a consequence but not as an aim (Bernd Janowski, "Das Leben für andere hingeben: Alttestamentliche Voraussetzungen für die Deutung des Todes Jesu," in *Deutung des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, ed. Jörg Frey and Jens Schröter, WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 97-118). See also views listed by Eberhart, though not all of these are specifically related to Hebrews (Christian Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus: Understanding Atonement Biblically* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], 14-15, 16-17, 21-23).

[547] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 27.

[548] Alan M. Stibbs, *His Blood Works: The Meaning of the Word "Blood" in Scripture* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2011), 26-28.

[549] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St John: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*. 4th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1902), 35.

[550] Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, 34-37.

Willi-Plein for instance argues that,

> [A] sin-offering is no act of violence, no expiatory killing, and probably even no gift to God, for life has always belonged to God. Rather, it is a presentation of life, an act which was authorized, according to the priestly writer (P), by God himself to remove the bad pollutions of sin.[551]

So in Hebrews,

> Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary not by slaughtering, not even by sacrificing himself, but by bringing uncontaminated life into the sanctuary—his own life after his innocent suffering.'[552]

One of the most influential proponents of viewing Christ's sacrifice as sanctifying life is Christian Eberhart. He argues that sacrifice is not to be defined in relation to the death of the victim but as the act of burning in which the sacrifice is transferred from the earthly sphere to the ethereal.[553] This definition, he argues, encompasses all of the OT sacrifices, including those which are not living animals.[554] In relation to the sin offering, he does find the sprinkling of blood to be a distinctive and focal point, alongside the burning on the altar.[555] He argues that the blood, rather than symbolising death, is the life of the animal, which, in its application to the sanctuary, has power to cleanse.[556] While

[551] Ina Willi-Plein, "Some Remarks on Hebrews from the Viewpoint of Old Testament Exegesis," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights,* ed. Gabriella Gelardini, Biblical Interpretation Series 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 33. Similarly Kleinig states that, "Slaughter was merely the way by which blood was separated from the flesh of the animal and so prepared for ritual use." (John W. Kleinig, "The Blood for Sprinkling: Atoning Blood in Leviticus and Hebrews," *LTJ* 33.3 (1999): 128; cf. also Walter Edward Brooks, "The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 89.2 [1970]: 208, 212).
[552] Willi-Plein, "Some Remarks," 33.
[553] Christian Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini, Biblical Interpretation 75 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 39-50; *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 10-11, 122; "Lamb of God," 35. Eberhart goes so far as to say that, "the slaughter of animals is rather insignificant." ("Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 44).
[554] Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 45.
[555] Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 47.
[556] Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 58-59.

aware that many of Israel's sacrifices entailed death, he insists that this was simply the means of obtaining the animal's blood.[557]

Eberhart finds these concepts largely unchanged in the presentation of Hebrews, in which Christ's blood is his life which sanctifies the heavenly tabernacle and his people.[558] Although he acknowledges that Hebrews places more emphasis on Christ's death, he maintains that, "Christ's death is not the actual salvific event but the precondition for the availability of his blood."[559]

6.2.6 Christ's Glorified Physical Humanity

The sixth view of how Christ saves in Hebrews could be included within the "sanctifying life" category but is distinctive enough and has attracted enough attention in Hebrews' scholarship to warrant separate consideration. David Moffitt argues that Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews is to be identified with his glorified physical humanity which he takes into God's presence. Like the previous two proposals, he argues that blood is a symbol of life and, as in the previous view, it is that life presented to God which effects atonement. For Moffitt, however, the life presented to God cannot be weak, mortal life but must be perfected, immortal life. For this reason, the resurrection is central to the atonement. It is in the resurrection that Christ's flesh and blood are transformed to a kind of physicality that can approach God.[560]

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[557] While emphasising that blood is a cleansing agent and denying that it is through any kind of vicarious suffering, Eberhart gives little attention to any other mechanism by which blood would cleanse. He suggests that, "The cultic texts of the HB/OT contain no articulation of how a sacrifice 'works.'" (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 39).

[558] Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 63. In a later work Eberhart finds more discontinuity and apparently more focus on death (Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 111-113), though he still placed this in the context of death making blood and thus life available (Eberhart, *The Sacrifice of Jesus*, 122; cf. Christian Eberhart, "'The Lamb of God that Takes Away the Sin of the World:' Reflections on Atonement in the New Testament," *Touchstone* [2013]: 39, which suggests that Jesus is freed from his earthly life to intercede in heaven).

[559] Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 59. Eberhart does recognise that Christ's death brings salvation in 9:15 but this, he argues, does not fit into the dominant cultic themes of Hebrews but is rather a briefly mentioned judicial concept (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 59). Christ's death is also viewed as the means by which he himself gains access to God's presence in heaven. This allows him to become high priest, not because of the sacrificial nature of death itself but because that was the way that Christ approached God (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 62).

[560] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 212-14, 218-220.

> Because Jesus' human body rose to indestructible life, he is able to present his blood (which in a biblically informed, sacrificial context is language for life, not language that symbolizes death), his body, and himself in the very place where the author says he presented these things—before God *in heaven*.[561]

Moffitt downplays the significance of the crucifixion and at times appears to deny that it has any atoning significance: "Jesus' atoning offering occurred precisely where the author depicts it occurring—in heaven, not on the cross."[562] For Moffitt, "the death or slaughter of the victim, while necessary to procure the blood, has no particular atoning significance in and of itself."[563] While he can speak of the positive role of Christ's death, he limits it to an exemplary righteous suffering and a "*preparation* for his high priestly ministry and atoning offering."[564] For Moffitt, the cross is important because Christ's death, "puts into motion the sequence of events that results in the crucial atoning moment—the presentation of his blood/life before God in heaven."[565]

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[561] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 42 (emphasis original). Moffitt says little about how the presence of Christ's glorified physical existence brings about atonement, though he approvingly quotes Eberhart's explanation that, "sacrificial blood purifies on physical contact, which means when it is actually applied to people or the sanctuary and its sacred objects." (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 58. Cited in David M. Moffitt, "Blood, Life, and Atonement: Reassessing Hebrews' Christological Appropriation of Yom Kippur," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretation in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions* ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 15 [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 219; *Atonement*, 272). Elsewhere Moffitt suggests that, "The offering of Jesus' resurrected life … has the power both to redeem and to purify," but again does not specify how (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 284).

[562] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 42.

[563] Moffitt, "Blood, Life and Atonement," 218-219; repeated almost verbatim in *Atonement*, 271; cf. also David M. Moffitt, "Hebrews," in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson, Bloomsbury Companions 5 (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 535. While this phrase appears to be qualified with "in and of itself," Moffitt quotes, apparently with approval, the more absolute expression of Eberhart, "The moment of slaughter as such … has no particular significance." (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 58. Cited in Moffitt, "Blood, Life and Atonement," 219; *Atonement*, 272-273).

[564] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 285. Italics original.

[565] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 277. More recently, "Jesus' death is one element of a larger ritual process that culminates in his entry into the heavenly tabernacle. There he presents himself before God as the offering that makes full atonement for God's people." (David M. Moffitt, "Serving in the Tabernacle in Heaven: Sacred Space, Jesus's High Priestly Sacrifice, and Hebrews' Analogical Theology," in *Hebrews in Contexts,* ed. Gabriella Gelardini and Harold W. Attridge Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 91 [Leiden: Brill, 2016], 277).
Moffitt's recent work does appear to grant slightly more significance to Christ's death, particularly in relation to Hebrews 2:9, 14-15, passages which received little attention in his earlier work (eg. David M. Moffitt, "Hebrews and the General Epistles," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin,* ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber, Bloomsbury Companions [London: Bloomsbury, 2016], 116; David M. Moffitt, "It is Not Finished: Jesus's

6.2.7 Christ the Example

A final view of Christ's salvation ties its efficacy to his exemplary character. Christ is able to lead his people out of their troubles and into the inheritance God has for them by demonstrating the life of obedience which will lead them there.

The most prominent proponent of this view is Harold Attridge.[566] Attridge notes various images of salvation and sacrifice in Hebrews. These, however, are merely the background on which Hebrews draws for its more creative presentation.[567] For Hebrews, images of sacrifice are superseded or reinterpreted by the obedient will of Christ.[568] Salvation is not achieved through what happens in heaven or on the cross but through what happens in human hearts as they follow the obedient example of Christ.[569] Attridge notes the prominence of the language of blood in the letter in relation to atonement but suggests this is, at least in part, an attempt by the author to interact with possible objections to his presentation of Christ's salvation as happening through his example. By the end of

Perpetual Atoning Work as the Heavenly High Priest in Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 [New York: T&T Clark, 2019], 165-166; David M. Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses: Jesus' Death, Passover, and the Defeat of the Devil in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Mosebilder: Gedanken zur Rezeption einer literarischen Figur im Frühjudentum, frühen Christentum und der römisch-hellenistischen Literatur*, ed. Michael Sommer, Erik Eynikel, Veronika Niederhofer and Elizabeth Hernitscheck. WUNT 390 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021], 292-295). As late as 2019, however, he continued to stress that "death is not central to the logic of atonement" (Moffitt, "It is not Finished," 164-165).

[566] Cf. also J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 77-82. Nairne is hard pin down, but at times comes close to this view, suggesting that the most profound language of Hebrews is one in which no gift is required for atonement (A. Nairne, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The Cambridge Greek New Testament for Schools and Colleges [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917], xcv-xcvi) and that a significant part of the work of Christ is found in the influence it has on other men such that his path is re-enacted in their lives (*Hebrews*, xcix-c).

[567] E.g., Cultic images of expiation by which Hebrews is "using traditional language… not developing a theory of atonement" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96), Christ as liberator which was "a fixed part of the underlying tradition" (*Hebrews*, 91-94) or Christ's atoning martyr death drawn from parallel ideas in for instance 4 Maccabees (*Hebrews*, 377).

[568] Harold W. Attridge, "The Church and Atonement in Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews,* ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 (New York: T&T Clark, 2019), 270.

[569] Attridge, "The Church and Atonement," 269; Cf. Harold W. Attridge, "Hebrews and the History of its Interpretation: A Biblical Scholar's Response," in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier, LNTS 423 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 211.

the letter, the author of Hebrews manages to redefine this language such that blood achieves nothing "magical":

> The blood, the life that marks the people of the New Covenant, identifies them as God's own, as people of the covenant. It does no more and no less than that.[570]

Forgiveness of sins then is not through any kind of gift, payment, or ransom but is "gracious divine amnesia pure and simple."[571]

Attridge's argument is drawn from his understanding of a development within Hebrews, such that things said in Hebrews 2 need not genuinely express the author's message. This puts a fair examination of his proposal outside the limited scope of this thesis. We can only state at this point that the present thesis proceeds on the assumption that what Hebrews 2:5-18 says about sacrifice and salvation truly expresses the author's understanding (even if it does not fully express it).

6.3 The Problem Facing Humanity

Having outlined the major interpretations of Christ's death in Hebrews, we turn now to an examination of Hebrews 2:5-18 itself. This investigation will begin with the problem humanity needs saving from. Like Jamieson, we presuppose, "a basic fit between what Hebrews sees as wrong with the world and how Christ's death sets things right."[572] An understanding of the former will therefore be invaluable when it comes to considering the latter.

Some elements of the human plight are spelled out in Hebrews 2:5-18, while others are mentioned or alluded to without elaboration. Because those concepts briefly alluded to are likely to have been assumed knowledge for the audience, we will engage with of the rest of the letter to elucidate how the author understood them and likely expected his audience to understand them. So as not to flatten

[570] Attridge, "The Church and Atonement," 273.
[571] Attridge, "The Church and Atonement," 274.
[572] Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 98.

the distinctives of each part of the letter, however, the present examination will focus only on concepts that are present in Hebrews 2:5-18.[573]

6.3.1 Unfulfilled Promise

Hebrews 2:5-9 begins with the promise of dominion given to humanity in Psalm 8. Almost immediately, however, the author turns to indicate that the present experience of humanity does not correspond to the exalted description of the psalm. The promise is unfulfilled.

On the most basic level, the predicament expressed here is that humans are not experiencing the fullness of the promised blessings. They were created to reign but are not enjoying their prerogatives.

At stake in this promise, however, is more than simply the subjugation of the rest of creation under humanity. In Psalm 8, that subjugation was an outworking of the relationship between God and humanity. It was as humans related rightly to God that they reigned as his vice-regents on the earth. That humanity is not reigning, therefore, indicates that something is fundamentally wrong. This disconnect between the lofty description in the psalm and the present reality not only shows that humans fail to experience their rightful place in relation to creation, but also casts doubt on their relationship with God himself.

The failure of humanity to experience the relationship with God for which they were created and, to a lesser extent, the dominion that they were to enjoy through that relationship remains a major concern throughout the letter. The promised rest in God's presence is no longer enjoyed by humanity generally but only by those who have faith (Heb 3:7-4:13).[574] Access to God's presence is no longer the normal state of humanity, nor can it be achieved through the levitical sacrifices (9:6-9; 13:10).[575]

[573] This approach means that the concept of "sin" for instance will be further explained by reference to the rest of the epistle, but the concept of broken covenant will not be considered as an immediate background to salvation in 2:5-18, even though it is part of the author's larger framework.
[574] For a discussion of rest in Hebrews 3-4 as entailing God's the enjoyment of God's presence as intended at creation see Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 281-303.
[575] Cf. Ribbens, *Levitical Sacrifice*, 163-169.

It is against this backdrop that Hebrews asserts that access to God's presence is available through Christ and the New Covenant (7:19; 12:22).

6.3.2 Death, Fear and Slavery

In 2:14-16, attention turns from what humanity has fallen short of to what they are now subject to—death, the fear of death, and slavery to the devil who has power over death.[576]

While Hebrews never gives focused attention to the topic, the reality of death pervades the letter. Words or phrases describing death are used 28 times and are found in nine of the thirteen chapters of Hebrews.[577] Death is intrinsic to the present human condition and affects everyone from apparently upright priests (7:8, 23) and patriarchs (11:13) to the rebellious wilderness generation (3:17). The frail mortal state of humanity is summarised in 2:14 as sharing in αἵματος καὶ σαρκός, a condition that is common to all the "children" whom Christ came to save.[578]

In Hebrews 2, death is part of the universal human condition, but it does not stand alone. It is connected with fear and slavery. While the fear of death and the resulting slavery was a phenomenon reflected upon by many Hellenistic philosophers, Hebrews employs these themes in a distinctive manner. Johnson cites a number of ancient philosophers who reflected on the fear of death as a force that paralyses people in crisis. He summarises that, "Among these moralists fear leads to slavery because it leads people away from courage and boldness: their liberty is turned to craven cowardice because they seek to go on living."[579] That such a notion may be included in Hebrews cannot be ruled

[576] There is a close connection between the two as humanity goes from having dominion to being under the dominion of another (Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 102).

[577] θάνατος 2:9 (x2), 14 (x2), 15; 5:7; 7:23; 9:15, 16; 11:5; ἀποθνήσκω 7:8; 9:27; 10:28; 11:4, 13, 21, 37; νεκρός 6:1, 2; 9:14, 17; 11:19, 35; 13:20; νεκρόω 11:12; τελευτάω 11:22; τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν 3:17; ζωῆς τέλος 7:3; cf. also related terms καῦσις 6:8; κοπή 7:1; ἀπώλεια 10:39; ὁ ὀλοθρεύων 11:28, λιθαζω 11:37; λιθοβολέω 12:20. Within the NT only Romans has a higher frequency of death language.

[578] Αἵματος καὶ σαρκός most likely refers not simply to physicality but to a physicality that is subject to decay and ultimately to death, a nuance Hebrews makes explicit in claiming that this is what Christ needed to share in order to die (Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:43; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 348; Pink, *Hebrews*, 122; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 43; Maston, "What is Man," 102; Small, *Characterization*, 211· McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 74).

[579] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 100-101.

out, but as Johnson observes, the depiction of the fear of death in Hebrews is more far-reaching. In Hebrews, the fear of death is not only faced in times of crisis but overshadows every part of life (διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν) with the knowledge that the grave is coming.[580] The fear of death is not a momentary intrusion into fallen human existence but has become a pervasive part of it.

The fear of death in Hebrews is also defined by the author's beliefs about what comes after death. Moffatt points out that fear of death took two forms among the philosophers. For some, death was feared because it was the end. For others, death was feared precisely because it was not the end.[581] Hebrews aligns with this second group. The fear of death exerts such compelling force because of the conviction that judgement follows after it (9:27).[582] This means that, in contrast, for instance, to Socrates, the author of Hebrews views the fear of death not as a subjective problem that can be overcome by a positive example of experiencing death but as an objective problem that requires salvation.[583] It is not humanity's view about death that needs fixing, but death itself.

The Devil

Connected to the realities of death, fear, and slavery is the devil who is said to have power over death. Neither the devil nor any other demonic forces are mentioned elsewhere in Hebrews. This leads Johnson to conclude that, "it is safe to suppose that this formulation emerges from the apocalyptic framework widely shared by ancient Jews and Christians, in which the devil stands for the cosmic

[580] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 100-101; cf. Jason A. Whitlark, *Enabling Fidelity to God: Perseverance in Hebrews in Light of the Reciprocity Systems of the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2008), 164-165..

[581] Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 35-36. Cf. also deSilva, *Perseverance*, 118-119; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 75, Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 44. Moffitt suggests that death as the end was characteristic of Epicurean philosophers while disembodied existence after death was more characteristic of Stoic and Middle Platonist thought (David M. Moffitt, "Human Beings and Angels in Hebrews and Philo of Alexandria: Toward an Account of Hebrews' Cosmology," in *Son, Sacrifice, and Great Shepherd: Studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. David M. Moffitt and Eric F. Mason, WUNT II/510 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020], 18-19).

[582] Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 35-36; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 146; Frank J. Matera, "A Study of Two Soteriologies: Romans and Hebrews," *Estudios Bíblicos* 76 (2018): 39; Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 102-103; Whitlark, *Fidelity*, 165..

[583] Cf. deSilva, *Perseverance*, 118-119; Rissi, *Die Theologie*, 76-77; Craig Koester, "God's Purpose and Christ's Saving Work According to Hebrews," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt. NovTSup 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 367.

forces opposed to the righteous and over whom the Messiah will triumph."[584] That tradition closely associated the devil and death such that the destruction of one brought about the destruction of the other.[585]

This description of Jewish apocalyptic thought fits the argument of Hebrews and helpfully elucidates elements of the shared understanding of the author and his audience that go unstated in the epistle itself. The question that remains, however, is why the author would insert such material at this point. While some read this section as an intrusion into the author's argument that has little to do with his wider themes,[586] the evident care with which the author has constructed his work and woven his sections together suggest this reading should only be adopted as a last resort. Before sectioning this theme off as tangential to the author's main presentation, it is worth considering what connections may have led the author to include it here.

A likely solution to this question is, in fact, readily available if the author draws not on apocalyptic Jewish or Christian thought in general but on Psalm 8 as a particular expression of such thought. In that psalm, the original intention for humanity in creation is placed side by side with more ominous forces opposed to God and his people: the foe and the avenger. When Hebrews 2:14-15 speaks of the archenemy of God who opposes and enslaves his people, it may still be working within the framework of the psalm it has just quoted.

Two considerations may seem to cast doubt on this explanation. The first is the distance between the citation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:6-8 and the discussion of the devil in 2:14-15. The second is that this explanation assumes the author draws on the context of the citation as well as the words explicitly quoted. Neither of these considerations, however, is prohibitive.

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[584] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 100; cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 100; Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 44; Peeler, "The Eschatological Son," 165.
[585] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 100; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 92; Koester, *Hebrews*, 231; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:43.
[586] E.g., Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 44.

In relation to the first, it has been argued above that Psalm 8 is the controlling citation for this whole section. A return to the themes of the psalm is therefore not unexpected. In relation to the second, while it remains a point of debate, many affirm that the author imports the context of his citations into his argument.[587] It is, therefore, plausible that Psalm 8 and its depiction of enemies form the background for the opposition from the devil who holds power over death.

What moves this suggestion from being merely plausible to likely is that this exegetical move is very closely mirrored within the writings of the first-century Christian community. Like Hebrews 2, 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 quotes from the latter part of Psalm 8 (Heb 2:5-8 = Ps 8:5-7 [4-6]; 1 Cor 15:27 = Ps 8:7 [6]), and like Hebrews, Paul reads this verse as applying at least in part to Christ, though again, as in Hebrews, the inheritance of Christ is the guarantee of his people's inheritance.[588]

These parallels are intriguing, but what is of particular significance for the present point is that both documents discuss Psalm 8 in the context of the defeat of death. In 1 Corinthians, the subjection of all things applies not only to created beings but to enemies, including death.[589] The word Paul uses for these enemies (ἐχθρός) is admittedly common, but it is notably the word the LXX uses to translate two of the three terms for the opponents in Psalm 8:3 (4).[590] Paul then applies this to death as the final enemy to be placed in subjection to Christ. This victory takes place not only in Christ's own resurrection but most fully when all his people share in his victory.

These parallels lend weight to the suggestion that Hebrews 2 may similarly expound Psalm 8.[591] The introduction of enemies and death into an exposition of the psalm is not an intrusion but arises from

[587] See Beale, *Handbook*, 1-13; Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 21; Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations*, 16-17; Dyer, "In the Midst of the Assembly," 4-5; Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics*, 19-20; Burns, "Hermeneutical Issues," 600-601.
[588] Steyn, "Overview," 334.
[589] Fuhrmann, "The Son," 85-86; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 156; Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 55.
[590] צררים and אויב (מתנקם is translated ἐκδικητής).
[591] The significance of these parallels is not dependent on the relationship of Hebrews to Paul. If Paul himself wrote Hebrews then he could be expected to use of the same OT passage in similar contexts through the same hermeneutical moves. If Hebrews was written by someone other than Paul then this parallel demonstrates

an interpretation of the psalm that takes into account what the quoted verses mean within their context. Hebrews 2 interprets Psalm 8 not just in relation to the subjection of the created order but also in relation to the subjugation of the enemies from earlier in the psalm who are attacking God's people. In the psalm, these two halves are mutually interpreting. Hebrews, therefore, aptly quotes the second part of the psalm but applies it, in line with the first part, to the enemies, now identified more specifically as the devil.

6.3.3 Sin

The third problem facing humanity in Hebrews 2 is sin. Sin was introduced in the opening sentence of the book (1:3), suggesting that it will be a significant theme in what follows. Ἁμαρτία and related words are then used a further 28 times, appearing in every chapter but one and being accompanied by numerous synonyms.[592] The concept pervades the letter as a fundamental reality that the audience was expected to understand.

Hebrews' concept of sin is never explicitly spelled out but appears to have been drawn from its Jewish and OT background without significant modification.[593] While Hebrews never denies Pauline concepts of sin as a power or a nature, the focus in this letter is on acts of disobedience.[594] These simple acts, however, are to be seen within a relational context. Siker summarises this concept within Judaism, noting that, "Sin is not just the violation of a thing, it is also the violation of one's relationship with

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either that this interpretation flows naturally from first-century Christian hermeneutics such that it is reached independently within the limited number of extant works, or that both authors make use of a shared exegetical tradition, either passed from one to the other or inherited by both (this may be suggested by the way both these texts and perhaps also Eph 1:20-23 make another shared interpretive move by bringing Psalm 8 into close proximity with Psalm 110 [cf. Steyn, "Overview," 334-335; Keener, *Canonical Exegesis*, 165; Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZEC 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 683; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 574; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians,* Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 554]).

[592] Ἀνομία (1:9; 10:17), παράβασις (2:2; 9:15), παρακοή (2:2), παραπικρασμός (3:8, 15), παραπικραίνω (3:16), ἀπειθέω (3:18; 11:31), ἀπιστία (3:19), ἀπείθεια (4:6, 11), νεκρά ἔργα (6:1; 9:14), ἀδικία (8:12), ἀγνόημα (9:7)). While these terms contribute different perspectives on the reality of sin, they are used in clear parallel to ἁμαρτία (Cf. also Easter's more extensive list of terms related to sin [Easter, *Faith*, 47-48]). Hagner notes that this frequency is more than for any other NT book except Romans (*Hebrews*, 57)

[593] Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 82.

[594] Matera, "Two Soteriologies," 46; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 82-83; Kasemann, *Wandering People*, 46-48.

God or with people."[595] Moffitt notes this theme within Hebrews: "Thus, sin in Hebrews is primarily conceptualized as the refusal to obey God's voice that follows from a lack of faith in God's ability to make good on his promises."[596]

Within Hebrews 2:5-18, sin is only explicitly mentioned once (2:17). This mention in itself is enough to show that it is part of the complex of problems faced by humanity in 2:5-18, but the importance of sin for understanding the problem of humanity in this passage may be greater than the frequency of the lexeme suggests. The use of ἁμαρτία in 2:17 comes in the conclusion of this section, which likely indicates that the author understood it to be part of the basic framework of the section, even if it remained in the background.[597]

The following examination of the concept of sin throughout Hebrews furthermore confirms not only that sin is closely related to the problems which Hebrews 2:5-18 foregrounds, but even that sin is understood as the underlying cause of these problems.

6.3.3.1 Sin and Unfulfilled Promise

It has been suggested already that one of the key problems humans face in Hebrews 2:5-18 is that they do not experience the dominion God promised them or the fullness of the relationship with God upon which that dominion was based.

As the epistle continues, Hebrews further elaborates the reason for human alienation from God. Hebrews 9:1-14 outlines the structure of the tabernacle and describes it as a tangible expression of

[595] Jeffrey S. Siker, *Sin in the New Testament*, Essentials of Biblical Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 20.
[596] Moffitt, "Hebrews and the General Epistles," 114.
[597] Note particularly that as the author expresses the solution to the problems of death and slavery in 2:17 he transitions seamlessly to a solution to sin as if that is the same problem.
Buchanan's claim that "sins" is one of the "catchwords" of this section overstates the case, but he is justified in giving a significant role to the concept of sin (Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 38).

humanity's inability to access God's presence.[598] Worshippers could not enter the holy of holies (9:7-8). Hebrews insists that this is because the OT sacrifices could not perfect the conscience (συνείδησις) of the worshipper (9:9). The word συνείδησις was sometimes used generally in reference to consciousness, but in Hebrews, it is specifically related to consciousness of sin.[599] Entry into God's presence is only possible if the conscience is perfected or cleansed (9:9, 14; 10:22).[600]

Hebrews 10 furthermore parallels cleansing the συνείδησιν ἁμαρτιῶν (10:2) with the removal of sin (ἀφαιρεῖν ἁμαρτίας, 10:4). This indicates that the sinful conscience is not merely a subjective feeling which requires a change in perception. It is instead a consciousness of the objective problem of sins committed.[601] These sins exclude people from God's presence and thus prevent the fullness of the relationship with God promised at creation.[602] Unfulfilled promise is the result of human sin.[603]

6.3.3.2 Sin, Judgement, and Death

Hebrews also draws a close relationship between sin and death, which are connected through the concept of judgement.

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[598] For questions regarding the meaning of τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα and καιροῦ διορθώσεως see Koester (*Hebrews*, 38) for overlapping time periods or Attridge (*Hebrews*, 241-242) and Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 440-441) for the view that the phrases are synonymous for the time ushered in by Christ. Whatever interpretation is taken however, the point remains that humanity without Christ is presented as unable to enter God's presence.

[599] Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 190-191; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 242; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 442; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 118· Easter, *Faith*, 46-48.

[600] Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 190-191; Koester, *Hebrews*, 399, 437, 449.

[601] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 494. Ellingworth also notes overlap in the apparently interchangeable ideas of cleansing or perfecting the conscience and perfecting the person as a whole (*Hebrews*, 442). Cf. also Koester, *Hebrews*, 437.

[602] Koester, "God's Purposes," 362. This is in accord also with the axiomatic assertion in Hebrews 12:14 that without holiness no one can see God.

Some parts of Hebrews appear to put more emphasis on impurity as the reason for alienation. Impurity, however, is not distinct from sin (contra Siker, *Sin in the New Testament*, 24-25) but part of the same complex of problems (so Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 82-83; Moffitt, "Hebrews and the General Epistles," 116; Koester, *Hebrews*, 119; Carey B. Vinzant, "Preexistence, Konosis, and Exaltation in Hebrews, John, and Paul: Distinctive Explications of a Common Underlying Narrative," in *Listen, Understand, Obey: Essays in Honor of Gareth Lee Cockerill*, ed. Caleb T. Friedeman [Eugene: Pickwick, 2017], 128). To be more precise, even where impurity is in focus, the impurity in view arises from sin and guilt (Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 90; Koester, *Hebrews*, 119).

[603] As Jamieson suggests, "If humanity's original dominion over creation is Point A, and present lack of dominion is Point C, Hebrews' train of thought seems to run through the fall as Point B" (*Jesus' Death*, 102).

In Hebrews, sin has consequences, but these are not understood as the impersonal effects of a person's actions; rather, Hebrews affirms that God judges sin and sinful people. Eternal judgement was an elementary teaching for the audience (6:2), and the reality of judgement can be expressed as a given (9:27). God is described as the judge of all people (12:23), a consuming fire (12:29), and the one who will judge the immoral and the adulterer (13:4), and his word is said to judge people's hearts (4:12-13).

Hebrews' understanding of the relationship between sin and judgement is most vividly presented in the so-called "warning passages." These passages bring their own hermeneutical challenges but are worth considering in brief because they yield insights into the author's understanding of sin.

The warning passages do not primarily describe what the audience has been saved from but what they may be in danger of falling into.[604] They do not directly address the significance of sin prior to a person's salvation, nor do they examine sin in general. They focus, instead, particularly on the sin of apostasy—the clear rejection of God's word that has been revealed to a person.[605] It must be borne in mind also that the resultant state of the apostate differs from that of the unconverted. The apostate is not only unsaved but is unsavable and irredeemably headed towards destruction (6:4-6; 10:26-27). This could not have been true of those whom Christ saved.

While it would be a mistake, therefore, to conflate the sin of apostasy and the sin from which the audience of Hebrews has been saved, the opposite mistake would be to draw too sharp a line between them such that the warning passages have nothing to say about the fundamental nature of sin more

[604] Whether this apostasy is understood to refer to a real situation or a hypothetical one is not important for the present discussion. Either way, the author is describing what he believes would be true in the case of an apostate.

[605] Stephen Motyer, "The Atonement in Hebrews," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement,* ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 146.

broadly. There is good evidence that Hebrews sees considerable overlap between the sin of the apostate and the sin of the unconverted.

The first way this is indicated is in the shared vocabulary. Hebrews uses a range of words to describe sin, many of which occur only once or twice. Despite this, a number of terms describe both apostasy and the sin that precedes conversion. Ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτάνω are used to describe the sin that the OT sacrifices addressed and from which Christ saves (1:3; 2:17; 5:1, 3; 7:27 8:12; 9:26, 28; 10:2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 17; 13:11), and the sin of the apostates (3:13, 17; 10:26). Παράβασις is used both for transgression of the Law that is punished (2:2) and transgression of the Law that is forgiven (9:15).[606] Ἀπειθέω is used both of the disobedient wilderness generation (3:18) and the pagans in Jericho who had never experienced God's salvific revelation to begin with (11:31). The use of the same terms both for apostasy and sin more generally does not prove that they are identical but does suggest considerable overlap.

This overlap is also reflected in how the situation of the apostate is described. When Hebrews describes why apostasy cannot be forgiven, it is not because it differs fundamentally from other sin but because the means by which sin was originally forgiven is no longer available to the apostate. In 6:6, this is described as an impossibility of renewing repentance, implying that repentance would lead to salvation for the apostate, just as it does for others, yet that path is now closed to them.[607] This verse also speaks of the re-crucifixion of the Son of God, which most likely refers to the way people have cut Christ off from themselves, again suggesting that their sin could still be forgiven by Christ, but that they have rejected him and so cannot be forgiven.[608] Hebrews 10:26 again describes the fate of those who persist in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, but here too the problem is not that a different solution would be required to save them but rather that they have turned their backs

[606] In both these verses it is the Old Covenant that is transgressed, and yet it shows the same language applying both in the warnings of Hebrews and it the language of what the recipients have been saved from.
[607] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 323.
[608] Koester, *Hebrews*, 322. For a discussion of other interpretations see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 323-324.

on the sole solution: There is no sacrifice for sin still available to them once they have spurned Christ.[609]

The warning passages are addressed to those in the church and focus particularly on the implications they would face if they chose to return to sin. In their descriptions of sin, however, these passages do not give any evidence that the sin of apostasy differs from other sin in nature, consequences, or solution, but only in degree[610] and in the fact that the solution has now been rejected.[611]

Within the warning passages, then, the significance of sin can be further explored to shed light on the nature of the sin to which Christ is presented as the answer. These passages make clear firstly that sin brings about punishment (2:2; 10:29-30). The ramifications for sin are not a matter of simple cause and effect but are divine responses to the offence of sin.

This is further clarified by the assertions that sin provokes God's wrath and that God's wrath is expressed in his judgement on the sinner (3:10-11, 17; 4:3).[612] It has been noted above that sin has relational dimensions. The warning passages make clear that the ramifications are similarly relational. The punishment for sin is not meted out by an impersonal system but by a God whose goodness has been rejected and whose wrath has been kindled.

The actions God takes against sin are further spelled out. Firstly, the warning passages reiterate that the punishment for sin includes the denial of blessing. It has been noted above that sin cuts humans

[609] Note also Hebrews 12:17 where Esau's sin makes his repentance impossible (Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 456-459).
[610] Cf. esp. 10:29.
[611] Note also that the warning passages draw heavily on the reality of judgement for those who transgressed the first covenant, yet this is the very sin that Hebrews 9:15-22 insists people can now be redeemed from.
[612] This idea of wrath is likely also suggested when Christ is described as hating wickedness (1:9).

off from the dominion for which they were made. The warning passages add to this a denial of rest (3:11, 18, 19; 4:1, 6, 11), and promise (10:36),[613] and blessing expressed in general terms (12:16-17).[614]

Finally, God's punishment on sin goes further than passively withholding good from the sinner. It also extends to active punishment in destruction and death. The wilderness generation died in the desert (3:17); the unfruitful ground will be burned up (6:8); those who rejected the Law were put to death (10:28) and the destruction deserved by those who reject the Son of God will be greater still (10:29); and those who shrink back are destroyed (10:39).

It can be seen then that the warning passages align with what is suggested elsewhere in the epistle;[615] that sin brings God's wrath and his judgement, expressed not only in the denial of his blessings but also in his active destroying of the sinner.[616]

6.3.3.3 Sin and the Devil

The problem of sin is finally related to slavery and to the devil. It has already been noted that the devil's role in the human dilemma is tied to death. The devil is able to enslave because humanity is under the shadow of death. This, however, needs to be further probed. If death is the consequence of God's judgement on sin, then in what sense is the devil ὅ τὸ κράτος ἔχων τοῦ θανάτου (2:14)? To better understand the problem the devil poses and thus how Christ's death defeated him, one must ask how it is that the devil is understood to hold this power.

A possible indication is again found in Psalm 8. There the enemy of God and his people is described not only as the צרר and אויב but also as the מתנקם (8:3 [2]). It was noted above that מתנקם refers to

[613] What this promise entails is not spelled out, but seems to refer generally to the things God's people are waiting to inherit, including, life, rest, an unshakable kingdom, etc. (cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 553; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 303; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 272; Koester, *Hebrews*, 467).
[614] The blessing in view here is the blessing of Esau as the firstborn, which entailed a greater share in the family inheritance. Hebrews however uses Esau as an example to be avoided, extending the image from the specifics of Esau's situation to the broader situation of the audience.
[615] In Hebrews 11:7 Noah condemns the world, no doubt to be understood in relation to the subsequent flood which destroyed the wicked. In Hebrews 11:31 Rahab's faith separated her from the disobedient who perished.
[616] Cf. Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 103-104.

vengeance, an act of repayment of some kind for a wrong (or, at the very least, a perceived wrong). The devil's power, therefore, may be understood not as a general power to bring death to any he chooses but as a specific power over those who are deserving of retribution. It is a power he wields only because humans have sinned and are thus liable to punishment.[617]

If this interpretation is correct, the devil is not an independent agent bringing death and wielding it as he wills. His actions are an expression of retribution that God himself has determined to bring.[618] The devil is thus carrying out God's decree, even if he remains an enemy while he does so.[619]

The significance of this point for considering how Christ saves his people is that the problem humanity faces from the devil is not based on a different death than that which would come from God against sinners, and so it does not require a separate solution. Whether the problem of death is described in relation to God's justice or the devil's agency, it still traces its roots back to sin. Death is downstream of that fundamental dilemma facing humanity.

6.3.4 Summary

This analysis of the problem from which humanity needs saving in Hebrews 2:5-18 has found a complex of issues. These include unfulfilled promise, death, fear, slavery, and sin. These issues, however, are not a disparate list but are tied to one another, with sin being the central and underlying concern.[620]

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[617] While not tracing the same exegetical path to get there, Lane helpfully summarises this concept: "The devil did not possess control over death inherently but gained his power when he seduced humankind to rebel against God" (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 61; cf. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:43; Koester, *Hebrews*, 231; Morris, *Hebrews*, 28-29).

[618] Note that in 10:30, vengeance is the exclusive right of God. Cf. also 9:27 in which the passive ἀπόκειται most likely refers to the action of God (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 485).

[619] Cf. Ringgren, *TDOT* 1:215.

[620] Cf. Matera, "Two Soteriologies," 40-41. Contra Holmes, who finds in Hebrews 2, "not a careful development of a connected soteriology, so much as a quick-fire invocation of a series of potentially-helpful tropes." (Stephen R. Holmes, "Death in the Afternoon: Hebrews, Sacrifice, and Soteriology," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart and Nathan MacDonald [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 237).

Without flattening out the distinctive contributions of the various facets of the human dilemma, the concept of sin explains how the other problems mentioned in 2:5-18 fit together with each other and with the themes of the book as a whole. Sin prevents humanity from receiving the promise of dominion over the world because it damages the relationship with God on which that dominion was based and brings his judgement instead of his blessing. That judgement on sin includes death, and death enslaves people to fear and to the devil whose power is only that which is granted to him by God and is dependent on humans having guilt that is to be avenged.[621]

6.4 Christ's Salvation

Having argued that Hebrews presents a complex of issues from which humanity needs saving, the centre of which is sin, attention can turn to the way Hebrews 2:5-18 depicts the salvation achieved by Christ. Just as Hebrews uses diverse images to describe the human predicament, so also it uses diverse images for how salvation is achieved. These images, however, all relate to Christ's death as a human. This thesis will argue that Christ's death is presented as the solution to the human problem because it is the death of a human taking the punishment for human sin in the place of humans.[622]

6.4.1 Suffering Death and Tasting Death Ὑπὲρ Παντός (2:9)

The first explicit description of salvation comes in Hebrews 2:9, where it is tied both to Christ's own glorification and to his death ὑπὲρ παντός.

6.4.1.1 Christ's Work Applied to Himself

Having raised the problem in 2:5-8 of humanity not exercising the dominion God promised them in Psalm 8, the author proceeds, in 2:9, to state that Christ has shared in the human condition and been crowned with the glory and honour intended for humanity. Christ achieved this διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ

[621] Schreiner helpfully notes that this unity of concepts is not the creation of Hebrews but arises from the author's reading of the OT as a unified whole (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 89; cf. also Spicq *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:43).
[622] Cf. similar summary in Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Jesus's Atoning Sacrifice in Hebrews and Atonement of Sin in the Greco-Roman World," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. Jon C. Laansma, George H. Guthrie, and Cynthia Long Westfall LNTS 516 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 65.

θανάτου. Before 2:9 speaks of the effects of Christ's death for others, it refers to his death as necessary for his own glorification. Having entered into the position of mortal humanity in which dominion is not fully expressed, Christ's own person was crowned because of his death.

As 2:9 continues, Christ's death and crowning was ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντός γεύσηται θανάτου.[623] The work begun in Christ's own person is not incidental but is explicitly necessary (ὅπως) to his work for others.[624] For Christ to lead humanity into glory, he himself had to enter glory through death.

Any viable interpretation of how Christ's salvation works in Hebrews must give due weight to the unity between Christ's own glorification as a man and the glorification of his people. While it will be noted below that Hebrews 2:9 locates salvation in Christ's death, that death is only efficacious for all because

[623] A few witnesses read χωρίς in place of χάριτι. While χάριτι appears to be the more likely reading (UBS 5 goes so far as to give it an A rating) there are a minority who dispute it (see discussion in Paul Hartog, "The Text of Hebrews 2:9 in its Patristic Reception," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014): 52-71).
If χάριτι is correct then the author is affirming the sovereign plan of God in the death of Christ in a manner which accords with his affirmation in the following verse that perfecting Christ through suffering was fitting for God (Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:35-36; Koester, *Hebrews*, 218; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 43; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 92-93; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 135; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 76-77; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 71; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 297-299; Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 74, 83). If however χωρίς is original then there are a number of possibilities. Some suggest that the author is insisting that God is not included in the παντὸς for whom Christ died, in a manner similar to Paul's excepting God in 1 Corinthians 15:27 (cf. Harold W. Attridge, "La christologie kénotique et l'Épître aux Hébreux," *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 89.3 (2014): 303-304; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 67-68). Others have suggested that Christ died in his human nature alone, rather than experiencing death also in his divine nature (Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 67). This would be a clear statement concerning the two natures of Christ. This interpretation however may be reading later theological reflection back into Hebrews (cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 156). Some find here an expression of Christ being separated from the Father in his death, finding a parallel in the cry of dereliction in Mark 15:34. This interpretation would also suggest that Christ's death was substitutionary and propitiatory. The Son bearing the separation due to the sin of humans (Massonnet, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 88, 94-95; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 59; Rissi, *Die Theologie*, 77-78; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, updated ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 171-176; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 156; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 297-299; Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 107).
The present thesis has nothing new to contribute to this debate. While it favours reading χάριτι, because of the uncertainty, the subsequent discussion will not place any weight on this phrase.

[624] Some suggest that the antecedent of ὅπως is not δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον but διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου (Thompson, *Hebrews*, 71; Morris, *Hebrews*, 25; Dyer, *Suffering*, 86). While maintaining a thematic link in death, this view involves skipping the nearer antecedent for one that is not only more distant, but also grammatically subordinate to the closer option. Most commentators therefore understand ὅπως to refer either to Christ's glorification (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 293-295; Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 105-106), or to the death and glorification taken as a whole (Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:34; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 76; Massonnet, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 88; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 134; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 25; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 71). The difference between the latter two interpretations need not detain us because, while the degree of emphasis placed on Christ's glorification differs, in either interpretation the death of Christ is necessary for his glorification and his glorification is necessary for the efficacy of his death for all.

it was followed by his crowning with glory and honour.[625] The contributions of Vanhoye and Moffitt have been particularly pointed in providing a critique and corrective on this point. Both Vanhoye and Moffitt, in their own ways, have strongly emphasised that Christ's saving work is dependent not only on what he does but on what he becomes. As a glorified human he is fully equipped as the saviour of humanity.[626]

How Christ's death could be understood as the means to his own glorification and why that glorification was necessary for his death to be effective for all will become clearer as the picture of salvation develops.

6.4.1.2 Death

The second point in 2:9 regarding salvation is that Christ's saving work is his death. While Christ's crowning with glory is not to be overlooked, Hebrews 2:9 insists that his crowning happened because of his death, and what his crowning enables is that his death might be effective for all.[627] It is Christ's death that is presented as the basis of salvation.

A number of views surveyed above ("vicarious life," "sanctifying life," and "glorified physical humanity") understand Christ's saving work to be a function of his life rather than his death. Proponents of these views have sought to incorporate death within their broader understanding and to interpret 2:9 accordingly.

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[625] Fuhrmann's suggestion that crowning preceded death is unnecessary (cf. Fuhrmann, "The Son," 96-97. Christ's crowning is a logical necessity to his death being effective for all, but that doesn't require that it is temporally prior.

[626] See especially Vanhoye's explanation that:

> Les souffrances assuméees dans l'amour, selon le dessein de Dieu, aboutissent au renouvellement de la nature humaine de Jésus. Envahie par la gloire de Dieu et spiritualisée, l'humanité du Christ acquiert la capacité d'attirer tout les hommes et de les accueillir en elle-même. Le Christ devient ainsi l'homme nouveau, seul capable de rassembler dans l'unité de son corps tous les enfants de Dieu disperses (cf. Jn 11,49-52). (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 302-303).

[627] McKnight and Church, *Hebrews–James*, 69.

Johnson, for instance, says little about his broader definition of sacrifice in this part of his commentary, but suggests that Jesus' death was the fullest expression of his entering into his people's position and that he went through that death for them.[628]

David Moffitt has given considerable attention to Hebrews 2:5-9, arguing that it is because of humanity's mortal flesh that they do not experience the reign promised in Psalm 8. Moffitt says surprisingly little about the phrase ὑπὲρ παντός γεύσηται θανάτου in his foundational work, though he does suggest that the death itself is not important but rather the endurance through death.[629] In a later work, he argues that Christ's death is "a key element" in 2:9, though, as Jamieson has pointed out, Moffitt does not explain what that means.[630] If one was to try to interpret this verse more fully in line with Moffitt's overall thesis, it could be suggested that Christ's death was for the sake of his people because it was the preparation for his resurrection and ascension, though Moffitt has not said as much.[631]

While Moffitt and Johnson have demonstrated that views of Christ's sacrifice that emphasise his life as the basis of salvation are not contradicted by 2:9, they only incorporate what 2:9 emphasises as a subordinate idea. While we noted above that a viable interpretation of salvation in Hebrews would need to include Christ's glorification, 2:9 also suggests that it would have to give a central place to his death.

6.4.1.3 Ὑπὲρ Παντός

Indication of the specific significance of Christ's death in relation to salvation and how it relates to his humanity may be found in the phrase ὑπὲρ παντός, to which we now turn.

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[628] Johnson, *Hebrews*, 91-92. Johnson's explanation does sometimes sound close to an affirmation of a substitutionary death view. It is possible that Johnson does, in fact, see a substitutionary death in this verse, in conflict with his overarching understanding of sacrifice. Given his lack of clarity however, his words have been interpreted in agreement with his definition of sacrifice given in the introduction of his commentary.
[629] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 196.
[630] Moffitt, "Hebrews and the General Epistles," 116; Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 14.
[631] Such a view could even find support in the use of ὅπως if it is taken as referring back to Christ's crowning.

A preliminary question regards the referent of παντός. Some have argued that the cosmic scope of Psalm 8 and the use of πάντα three times in 2:5-6 in relation to the whole creation suggests that παντός in 2:9 should also be read as neuter, referring to creation as a whole.[632] Others, however, have pointed out that the shift from the articular plural to the anarthrous singular may indicate that παντός in 2:9 has a different referent from τὰ πάντα in 2:8.[633] Hebrews 2:5-18 emphasises Jesus' acts specifically on behalf of humans. This is most clearly seen in 2:16. While angels are part of the πάντα of 2:5-8, in 2:16 they are explicitly excluded from those for whom Christ died.[634] Christ's death is described firstly not in relation to the cosmos as a whole but to humans in particular.

Some seek further precision regarding the extent of παντός in relation to humanity. Spicq argues that παντός denotes humanity as a whole and is thus broader than the many who are being led to glory.[635] Schreiner, however, points out that as the author continues to explain this point in the rest of the chapter, he repeatedly speaks not of all humanity, but of those who are being led to glory, who are brothers of Christ and children of Abraham.[636] It is, therefore, more likely that 2:9 refers to "everyone without distinction instead of everyone without exception."[637] Jesus' death is to be understood in relation to its effects on his own people.

What then does it mean for Christ to die ὑπέρ all his people? At the heart of this question is whether ὑπέρ only indicates that Christ's death was for the benefit of his people or whether it goes further, describing his death in the place of his people. If it is in the place of his people, this would strongly

[632] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 157.
[633] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 292-293; Koester, *Hebrews*, 218; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 76; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 76-77; Witherington, *Hebrews*, 144. Some go further, claiming that the neuter of πᾶς in Hebrews is always plural (Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 26; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:25), but there are other instances in which the singular is most likely neuter (2:15; 9:6; 13:15, 21).
[634] Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:25; Massonnet, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 88; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 157; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 292-293.
[635] Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:25.
[636] Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 91; cf. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 55.
[637] Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 91. Some have argued that πολλούς shows a great quantity rather than reducing the extent of παντός (e.g., Vanhoye, *Situation*, 310-311). While this is true, it is also clear that the "many" are specifically the sons who are being brought to glory.

indicate that salvation is portrayed as achieved through vicarious death. If, however, ὑπέρ is taken as referring only to benefit, then no view which can adequately explain the significance of Christ's own glorification, and the focus on his death, would be discounted by 2:9.

BDAG notes that ὑπέρ with the genitive often refers to, "a marker indicating that an activity or event is in some entity's interest, *for, in behalf of, for the sake of someone/someth."*[638] Within this broad category, it notes that ὑπέρ can refer to substitution, "in place of, instead of, in the name of."[639] BDAG, however, gives the impression that this is not a common use, listing only four NT examples.[640] It then has a separate category for uses, "after expressions of suffering, dying, devoting oneself, etc." in which it includes Hebrews 2:9.[641]

There is good reason, however, to suggest that substitution is more common than some lexica suggest. Wallace argues that lexicographers have not paid enough attention to the work of Robertson, which demonstrated that ὑπέρ was frequently used in the papyri with reference to substitution, and Wallace himself adds a considerable list of references demonstrating this.[642] Others have clearly demonstrated that the substitutionary meaning is present in some descriptions of Christ's death in the New Testament.[643] It appears that ὑπέρ was beginning to encroach on the semantic domain of ἀντί but may

[638] BDAG, 1030, definition A,1.
[639] BDAG, 1030, definition A,1,c.
[640] A number of other lexica similarly give the impression that the substitutionary meaning is rare, e.g., Thayer, 638-639; William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 460. LSJ, 1856 lists few examples but this appears justified given the greater concern for Classical Greek. For a counter example see J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 651-652.
[641] BDAG, 1030, definition A,1,a,ε. It should be noted, however, that 2 Corinthians 5:15, which clearly describes the substitutionary death of Christ (see discussion in Harald Riesenfeld, "ὑπέρ," *TDNT*. 8:509-510) is included in A,1,c, rather than here, undermining BDAG's division.
[642] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 384-386. The most recent edition of BDAG has noted Wallace's research, yet surprisingly leaves the entry almost unchanged, simply adding a reference to Wallace, two non-canonical references, and a refence to a modern commentator who questions the substitutionary sense in 1 Cor 15:29. The text of the entry remains unchanged and no new biblical references have been added even as possibilities.
[643] See particularly Rupert E. Davies, "Christ in Our Place: The Contribution of the Prepositions," *Tyndale* 21 (1970): 83-90; Murray J. Harris, *Preposition and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 212-216.

have been considered particularly apt for reference to Christ's substitutionary death because it contained both the concepts of substitution and benefit.[644]

An examination of Hebrews' own use of the preposition ὑπέρ yields little. Hebrews uses the preposition ten other times and only nine times with a genitive. Of these nine, four refer to sacrifice for sins. The usage is neither for the benefit of nor as a substitute for. It demonstrates something of the range of functions covered by ὑπέρ, though BDAG rightly distinguishes uses with a genitive of thing from uses with a genitive of person.[645] Another occurrence comes at the end of the letter, referring to the leaders keeping watch over the souls of those in their charge (13:17). This would appear to refer to benefit.

The remaining four uses are more complicated as they are tied to offices held by or foreshadowing Christ. In 5:1a high priests are ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. This verse emphasises the representative role of the high priest, and the need for his humanity suggests that this representation entails more than benefit, though certainly not less. The high priest stands before God in the place of the people.[646] In 6:20, Christ the high priest has gone behind the curtain as the πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. The implication again is that Christ's own entrance is in some sense also the entrance of his people.[647] In 7:25, Christ, again in his priestly capacity, intercedes ὑπέρ his people. Finally, in 9:24, Christ enters into the true holy places ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. In these four instances, the representative nature of the priest is clearly on display,[648] yet it is not clear whether representation is expressed by the preposition or whether the preposition refers simply to benefit, which the wider context defines as the benefit that comes through representation.

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[644] Harris, *Prepositions*, 215-216; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 386-388; Davies, "Christ in our Place," 90; Moisés Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 4:555. Even in classical Greek and the LXX there are a few instances of ὑπέρ used this way (Harris, *Prepositions*, 211; Davies, "Christ in our Place," 82-83).
[645] Meaning 1b.
[646] Healy, *Hebrews*, 103; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 157-158; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 233; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 116
[647] McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest*, 49-50.
[648] Schnabel, "Atoning Sacrifice," 85.

While the sample size is far too small to determine the breadth of ways the author could use ὑπέρ, it does suggest that the concept of substitution cannot be assumed, but nor would it be unlikely if other factors indicated its presence.

In assessing the use of ὑπέρ in 2:9, the absence of any other substitutionary language, or even language for sin, may weigh against a substitutionary reading. This point, however, is mitigated by the fact that Hebrews 2:9 clearly draws on an existing understanding of the human problem and Christ's salvation. In fact, none of the proposed meanings of Christ's salvation surveyed above could be read from this text in isolation.[649] This lack of specificity may favour a more general reading of ὑπέρ. On the other hand, if the shared understanding Hebrews draws on is close to that underlying the other extant early Christian uses of ὑπέρ in reference to Christ's death, then a substitutionary meaning is likely. The most we can say at this juncture is that a substitutionary meaning for ὑπέρ would be likely if this is shown elsewhere to be part of the shared understanding of the author and audience.

6.4.1.4 Implications

The examination of 2:9, while leaving some unanswered questions, has reached two firm conclusions about Christ's saving work:

Firstly, Christ's salvific work includes Christ's own glorification—he is able to save because he has been crowned with glory and honour.

Secondly, at least in 2:9, the primary emphasis is on Christ's death. His glorification is important but is not in and of itself salvific; it is the means by which his death becomes effective for his people. As

[649] Schreiner seeks to make explicit what he sees as the underlying logic of 2:9:

> The author of Hebrews does not provide a full argument here, but it is evident that death is due to sin. Sins can only be cleansed through death. Jesus died in the place of human beings, thus securing their triumph over sin so they can rule with him. (Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 91; cf. also Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 94; Koester, *Hebrews*, 222-223; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 29).

While this imports several concepts, it has been argued above that Hebrews does, in fact, tie the various elements of the human predicament into a cohesive whole, with sin as the root.

Jamieson puts it, "Jesus' exaltation retrospectively qualifies his death as that which delivers others from death."[650]

Any interpretation of Christ's work must give weight to both of these elements.

The first of these conclusions indicates that no interpretation of Christ's saving work in Hebrews that emphasises Christ's death can be considered complete without a recognition also of the necessity of his glorification. The understanding of Christ's death as a cultic death seems to fall on this hurdle. Some presentations of Christ's death as a vicarious sacrifice are also in danger at this point. If descriptions of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice finish with his crucifixion, then they fail to explain the full picture expressed in Hebrews.

The second conclusion—that Hebrews 2:9 emphasises Christ's death—weighs against interpretations of Christ's salvation which locate its efficacy in his life. Interpretations of Christ's sacrifice as a vicarious life or as a sanctifying life are difficult, though not impossible, to reconcile with the emphasis Hebrews 2:9 places on Christ's death.[651] While Moffitt rightly insists that the death and glorification of Christ must be viewed together, for him, the death is the necessary preparation for the real saving act of glorification. Hebrews 2:9 switches the emphasis. Christ's death saves, and it saves because he has been glorified.

Vanhoye is less susceptible to this criticism. While he, like Moffitt, places significant emphasis on Christ's transformed humanity, he understands that transformation to happen, to a significant extent, in the death of Christ itself. If a substitutionary meaning is to be found in the use of ὑπέρ this would be more detrimental to Vanhoye's interpretation, but, while that ambiguity stands, there is nothing in 2:9 to rule his reading out.

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[650] Jamieson, *Jesus' Death*, 106.

[651] Because death is necessary for freeing the life, it would be possible to argue that Christ did taste death for the benefit of all (cf. Brooks, "Christ's Sacrifice," 212). Massonet speaks of Christ's death in 2:9 as "l'instrument de la bienveillance divine" (*L'épître aux Hébreux*, 88).

6.4.2 Bringing to Glory and Sanctifying (2:10-11)

Proceeding from 2:9 to 2:10-11, Hebrews describes the salvation of humanity through two related images: bringing to glory and sanctification. Both of these are tied to the image of the ἀρχηγός examined in chapter 5 of this thesis. Bringing many sons to glory is not the action of the ἀρχηγός but of God himself. This action, however, is closely tied to the ἀρχηγός, suggesting that God achieves it through him. The ἀρχηγός is the one who rules over his people and leads them into their inheritance, and does so as one who stands with them in their difficulties. This is tied together with the concept of sanctification, which is a cultic term describing a cleansing that qualifies people to enter God's presence.

Hebrews 2:5-18 does not explicitly explain how sanctification is achieved, but of note for the present discussion, the author grounds Christ's sanctification in his death through a chain of explanatory conjunctions from 2:11 back to 2:10 and then 2:9.[652] As Hebrews moves to its second description of Christ's saving activity, it does so on the foundation of Christ's death emphasised in 2:5-9. The nature of this death is also further defined. It is not simply that Christ has died that qualifies him to sanctify his people, but specifically that he suffered (2:10).[653] While the reasons remain to be developed, this verse makes explicit that Christ's death was necessarily a painful one, suggesting that sanctification is envisioned not firstly as the achievement of Christ's glorified state but as something achieved in his frail mortality.

While many questions remain unanswered, a few brief observations can be made regarding what the depiction of sanctification contributes to a broader conception of salvation in 2:5-18.

[652] It has been noted above that suffering in 2:10 is likely broader than death in 2:9. It remains however that Christ's death is the central element of his suffering, (cf. D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 68-70).
[653] Hebrews 2:9 already highlighted suffering in the phrase τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου (Peterson, *Hebrews*, 89). In 2:10 suffering is further emphasised.

In so far as this description of Christ's salvation is a further explanation of his death in 2:9, it again sits uncomfortably with views of Christ's saving work which focus on his life. This point is only heightened by the specific focus on suffering. If death were merely preparatory, there is no reason that suffering would be intrinsic.[654] It could be argued, in response, that the suffering is intrinsic more to equip the leadership of the ἀρχηγός than for the sanctification he achieves, but the chain of conjunctions makes separating these awkward.

Vanhoye's depiction of the unity of Christ and those he saves is more tenable. While Vanhoye emphasies a transformed and glorified humanity, he makes equally clear that this glorification was achieved in human suffering. It is specifically suffering, and climactically the suffering of death, that provided the context for Christ's transformative obedience. Christ shares in the suffering of his people in its fullest extent so as to transform death and bring his people out into glory.

The introduction of cultic language may give more weight to interpretations of Christ's death as a purely cultic reality.[655] The insistence on the unity of the sanctifier and the sanctified could be incorporated into the cultic views of Christ's saving work, so long as this unity is expressed in terms of a united nature rather than simply a cultic unity. [656] The necessity of a specific unity of suffering, however, is less readily incorporated, especially in the sanctifying life view.

Finally, the substitutionary death explanation of this passage gives clear reasons why the unity of the sanctified and the sanctifier, and specifically their suffering, would be emphasised. According to this

[654] Johnson's view for instance could readily incorporate language of sanctification into its movement from sacred to profane (cf. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 97), and the need for a shared nature for Christ to fully represent every part of humans in that movement (cf. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 27). When it comes to Christ's suffering however he simply notes how shocking it would be to describe suffering as fitting but fails to explain it beyond restating that it is a means to perfection and pointing to similar descriptions elsewhere in the NT (*Hebrews*, 95, 97; cf. also longer discussion of 5:8-10 which mentions both suffering and salvation but does not explain why they are connected [*Hebrews*, 147-149] and his excursus which develops the idea of suffering as educative but again does not relate it to the efficacy of sacrifice [*Hebrews*, 149-152]).

[655] Kleinig for instance suggests that this language begins to introduce the wider cultic framework, and the importance of blood that will surface more clearly later in the letter (Kleinig, "The Blood," 132).

[656] Note that while Thompson recognises both sacrifice and solidarity in this passage, he does not clearly link the two (*Hebrews*, 74).

reading, Christ's suffering and death were the suffering and death of his people. He needed to share in the fullness of their humanity and its frail mortality so that he could bear their judgement and, in so doing, purify them so that they might be fit for God's presence. While this concept cannot be read out of the text in isolation, it could readily explain the text if other passages suggest the author understood sacrifice in this way.

6.4.3 Destroying the Devil (2:14-16)

In Hebrews 2:14-16, the author turns to the image of Christ defeating the devil. The means by which Christ obtains this victory is through his death, a death for which he was equipped by his sharing in flesh and blood like those whom he sets free.[657] The language of Hebrews is pronounced on this point. It is not merely that Christ needed to save mortal people, though that is part of the issue, nor that Christ himself needed to be mortal, though that too is emphasised. Hebrews 2:14 brings these two concepts together—Christ's mortality is not generic mortality but specifically human mortality, which is his through partaking in the same blood and flesh that is shared by those he saves. Hebrews 2:16 continues to emphasise this point. If Christ were to help angels, he would not have taken on blood and flesh.[658] The form of his saving work needed to match the nature of those whom he saved. He needed human nature in order to be the human saviour.

The imagery of 2:14-16 is clearly that of conflict, and salvation is presented in terms of triumph over a foe. This has led some scholars to read this passage as a distinct image that does not quite fit with the broader portrayals of Christ's salvation in Hebrews. They argue that it is to be understood through the lens of the *Christus Victor* motif.[659] That Christ is the victorious conqueror in this passage can hardly be disputed. This observation, however, does not answer the question of how Christ's salvation is understood to be achieved because, by itself, the *Christus Victor* concept does not explain how Christ's

[657] On διὰ τοῦ θανάτου as expressing means/instrument see Kibbe, "It is Finished," 31; Harris, *Hebrews*, 59.
[658] If ἐπιλαμβάνομαι were understood to refer to assuming a nature this point would be strengthened, but it is almost universally accepted that it not the case (cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 177; Bénétreau, *Hébreux,* 1:131)
[659] See for example Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 172-173; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 92-94; Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, 44.

death is the means by which the devil is conquered, nor why his death is so emphatically human.[660] It remains then to examine how Christ triumphs in Hebrews 2:14-16 and the significance this has for understanding his humanity.

The first point of note is that the author does not address the issue of the devil in isolation. Before he is referred to by name, the devil is referred to as τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου. While the devil can be understood through various lenses, this introduction conditions the audience to think of him particularly in his relation to death. The devil and death are then furthermore connected with fear of death and thus with slavery during life. As has been suggested above, this complex of problems reflects a common understanding in first-century Jewish and Christian thought that the devil held power over death not intrinsically but because of sin.

As Hebrews goes on to describe the defeat of the devil, it emphasises Christ's own sharing in mortality and his death. The author says that because humans share in blood and flesh, with its inherent mortality, Christ took on this same blood and flesh so that he could die like them. This appears paradoxical. The very thing that gave the devil his power over humanity has become the means of his defeat.[661] A number of proposed explanations will be considered.

6.4.3.1 Moffitt – The Devil as Destroying Angel

Moffitt has sought to explain this passage in relation to the Exodus event. In his reading, Christ is depicted as a Moses-like figure leading his people out of bondage into the wilderness. The most distinctive part of Moffitt's reconstruction is that the exodus is understood as a deliverance from the Devil, who is equated with the destroying angel.[662]

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[660] Cf. Henri A. G. Blocher, "Agnus Victor: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment," in *What Does it Mean to be Saved?: Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 78. Montefiore attempts this by suggesting that by dying Christ has passed beyond the power of the devil (Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 65), yet this explanation does not, on its own, give any reason why Christ's personal escape from death would free from fear those who were yet to endure death.
[661] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 352.
[662] Cf. also similar argument in Loader, "Revising High Priesthood," 253.

Moffitt recognises that Exodus usually depicts the slaughter of the firstborn of Egypt as the act of God himself, but he also points to the presence of another character in Exodus 12:23. There, as the Lord passes through the land and he passes by the houses with blood on the lintel and doorposts, לא יתן המשחית לבא אל בתיכם לנגף (LXX *οὐκ ἀφήσει τὸν ὀλεθρεύοντα εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὰς οἰκίας ὑμῶν πατάξαι*). Moffitt takes this to refer to an angelic being who carried out the destruction of the firstborn, which may be echoed in Hebrews 11:28's reference to *ὁ ὀλοθρεύων τὰ πρωτότοκα*.[663]

Moffitt further traces an exegetical tradition that is present in Jubilees in which the destroying angel is a malevolent force, one who is also instrumental in Pharaoh's enslaving of the Israelites. This spirit, both before and after the exodus, is the primary opponent of God and his people.[664]

In Hebrews 2:14-16 then, Moffitt suggests that Christ is depicted in a Moses-like role, delivering God's people from bondage and death, and particularly from "the malevolent angel who wields the power of death," that is, the devil.[665] Jesus' own death takes the place of the slaughter of the lambs and the application of the blood to the lintel and doorposts. Just as the slaughtered lambs defeated the destroyer in the exodus event, so the death of Christ defeats the devil. The death of Christ is thus an important first step in salvation, bringing people out of bondage and setting them on the path to the promised land.[666]

This interpretation creatively connects both the devil and the death of Christ to exodus themes found within the broader context, particularly in Hebrews 3-4. Three problems, however, make this reconstruction unlikely:

Firstly, Moffitt does not indicate how this description fits with his earlier thesis, which downplayed the significance of Christ's death. It is possible that his later work is a mild corrective to his former

[663] Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses," 286. Though note that משחית is earlier in the chapter where it is likely impersonal and is rendered in the LXX *πληγή* (Ex 12:13).
[664] Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses," 286-289.
[665] Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses," 285, 291-292.
[666] Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses," 292-295.

work. It is more likely, however, and perhaps suggested in that former work, that Moffitt would separate the death described here from the central sacrificial work as expressed elsewhere in Hebrews.[667] The death, while important, remains preparatory. While this understanding is still possible, the repeated focus on Christ's death in the descriptions of Christ's saving work, at least in 2:5-16, suggests that the death of Christ is more than a preparatory event in salvation.

Secondly, the death of the firstborn in Exodus is for the purpose of freeing God's people. While the people themselves need protection from destruction, the death of the firstborn is not firstly the barrier to freedom but the catalyst for it. Moffitt has identified a tradition that presents a more negative characterisation of the destroying angel, yet even that tradition gave no hint that the angel's work needed to be stopped or the angel himself destroyed/abolished for the exodus to take place.

Finally, Moffitt provides no reflection on how the blood of the lambs is understood to hold back the destroyer or how the blood of Christ destroys the devil. Moffitt has found what he believes to be a parallel account that may provide the source for Hebrews' depiction, but he does not clarify why death is important in that first account or this later reappropriation. While noting the interplay in the tradition between the acts of the Devil and those of God,[668] Moffitt's theory does not explain why the devil is a problem in the first place, why God was unleashing destruction on the Egyptians and on the sinful people of Hebrews' day, or how the death of the Passover lamb or of Christ prevent this from overtaking his people. It is possible that Moffitt feels that the text does not answer such questions, but this must be registered as a significant gap in his proposal.

6.4.3.2 Vanhoye

Another noteworthy attempt to explain the paradox of Christ's death defeating the one who holds power over death comes from Vanhoye. He argues that death is brought about by sin rupturing

[667] Cf. Moffitt, *Atonement*, 285.
[668] Moffitt, "Modelled on Moses," 286.

humanity's relationship with God and casting humans into darkness and silence, making them unable to approach God.[669] But while death had been a result of disobedience and brought separation, Christ's death was carried out in his obedience as the fullest expression of his solidarity with humans and as the means by which his human nature was brought to complete union with God.[670] In his death then, Christ has transformed the very nature of death. Death is no longer the unchallenged realm of the devil but has become the path for others to join Christ in the perfection of their natures and entrance into the presence of God.[671]

Vanhoye's proposal skilfully brings together the themes of death, sin, and the devil and provides a mechanism whereby the death of Christ could overcome them. This interpretation cannot be ruled out at this point.

6.4.3.3 Vicarious Death

A final promising approach to these verses is that offered by those who understand Hebrews to present Christ's vicarious death as the primary means of his salvation.[672] We argued above that the devil was commonly understood to hold power over death because death came from sin. The vicarious death understanding suggests that to ultimately silence the devil, the problem of sin must be dealt with, and more specifically, the punishment for sin must be justly carried out.

As with the suggestions of Moffitt and Vanhoye, this interpretation involves bringing to the text an assumed background. There is, however, some reason within the context to prefer this background.

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[669] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 352-353.
[670] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 353-354.
[671] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 355-356.
[672] Other views which explain Christ's death in cultic terms, as vicarious life or as example have little to offer in these verse. In fact, even some of their proponents seem to shy away from them. Thompson and Montefiore for instance do not apply cultic terms here but turn instead to images of conflict and triumph (Thompson, *Hebrews*, 75; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 6). Eberhart suggests that in this verse the author has moved from his usual cultic metaphors to legal ones. "This legal metaphor provides a sufficient background to argue that someone's death has a positive effect. Based solely on cultic metaphors, this argument would have been impossible." (Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors," 59). Attridge does see some exemplary ideas here but interprets the text largely through the Christus Victor motif (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 93-94).The failure of these options to account for the whole of 2:5-18 weighs heavily against them.

It has been argued above that the devil's presence in this chapter is likely to be explained by reference to Psalm 8 and the enemies of God's people in Psalm 8:3 [2]. If this is correct, then Psalm 8 may not only explain why the devil is present in Hebrews 2:14-16 but also how he is to be understood in these verses. The opponent of God in Psalm 8 is described as the "avenger." At least part of his work was in response to wrongs or perceived wrongs, most likely wrongs perpetrated by God's people. The devil's power over death was not derived from something in his own nature but was his only in so far as there was a warrant for that death in wrongs that were to be punished. Like an executioner, his power over death existed only over those whose guilt brought the sentence of death.

Vengeance does not feature in the interpretations of either Moffitt or Vanhoye.[673] Interpreting Christ's death as a vicarious substitution, however, brings a consistent answer to this issue. Christ is presented in these verses as emphatically sharing in the very same nature as those whom he saves. His flesh and blood are their flesh and blood, so that his death is the same as theirs.[674] If the devil's power was derived from something in himself, then there is no reason that Christ's death would defeat him; it would only be to place Christ into the same desperate state as the people he sought to save. If, however, the devil's power is based on the sin of the victim, which deserves punishment, then his power only extends as far as the punishment dictates. Once Christ has taken the penalty for human sin, the devil has no further claim.

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[673] Vanhoye does acknowledge sin as part of how the problem of death arose, yet his solution is a future obedience and transformation which would seem not to address the claim of the avenger (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 352-353).
Fuhrmann offers another interpretation that does seek to answer the issue of just punishment. He understands the devil's activity as one of accusation in court and seeks to explain the devil's defeat by reference to the Roman legal concept of *crimen calumniate*. This principle meant that one who had brought false accusations could be prohibited from prosecuting other cases (Sebastian Fuhrmann, "The Devil as (Convicted) Prosecutor: Some Ideas on the Devil in 1 Peter and Hebrews," *In die Skriflig* 50.2 (2016): 1-4). This suggestion however fails to account for the necessity of Christ's death. One could be convicted of *crimen calumniate* on the basis of the accusation but in Hebrews the devil is destroyed not through an accusation against Christ but through the full penalty being enacted in the death of Christ. Fuhrmann's suggestion also downplays the necessity of sharing the same flesh and blood as those who are saved. Under this understanding, any false accusation could put the devil's work in jeopardy, it would not need to be a specific accusation against a mortal human.
[674] Hughes, *Hebrews*, 111.

When Psalm 8 speaks of how the foe and the avenger will be silenced, it points to frail human beings confessing God's name. The one to vanquish God's foes in Psalm 8 will share the position of weakness with humanity and express faith in God. As Hebrews takes up its description of abolishing the devil, it points to Christ in his frail mortality, but Hebrews goes a step further—the victory of the frail human is, in this case, achieved in the death of Christ. Christ silences the avenger by taking vengeance upon himself. He frees his people because he took their punishment—the death of a human.[675]

Christ's people still face the reality of physical death at the end of their lives, and Hebrews exhorts them to faithful endurance through suffering and implies that death is a real prospect for them. Physical death, however, no longer holds the fear of subsequent judgement (9:27).[676] The devil's power is broken because death will not be the seal of condemnation for Christ's people. He has taken that condemnation, and so they will share in his glory. What is abolished at this stage is not death itself but the devil and the enslaving fear of death. In light of the connection between death and judgement, it may be suggested that when sin is dealt with, death no longer holds fear because it no longer entails condemnation.

6.4.3.4 Implications

The description of Christ's death as the means of defeating the devil and freeing those he held in 2:14-16 has again emphasised that salvation is achieved through Christ's humanity, and specifically through his death as a human. Paradoxically, even this description of Christ's triumph is not grounded in expressions of his glory, either that of his deity or even that of his risen humanity. It is instead a further expression of his frailty. The devil is defeated by the human Christ with mortal flesh who dies.

[675] So Marshall, "This is explicable if we can assume that Christ is understood to die representatively and therefore his victory over death is likewise representative" ("Soteriology in Hebrews," 259).
[676] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 146, 148; Koester, *Hebrews*, 131, 140; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:43-44; Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 127.

6.4.4 Propitiating the Sin of the People (2:17)

The final description of Christ's saving work in Hebrews 2:5-18 comes in 2:17. The author says that because Christ was saving not angels but Abraham's descendants, ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ.

Hebrews 2:17-18 has generally been recognised as a conclusion to 2:5-18,[677] and, as such, this description of Christ's saving work is closely tied to the preceding descriptions of the salvation Christ achieved in his death and effective for all because of his exaltation. What is new in 2:17 is that Christ's saving death is further explained by the term ἱλάσκομαι.[678]

The exact meaning of ἱλάσκομαι and related words in the New Testament has been the subject of considerable debate. In relation to the present verse, there are two basic possibilities. One is that ἱλάσκομαι refers to the expiation of sins, that is, an act which is exclusively addressing guilt incurred by wrongdoing. The other possibility is that ἱλάσκομαι refers to the propitiation of God—an act that may entail expiation but is more explicitly relational, turning God's displeasure away and restoring his favour.

6.4.4.1 Overview of Usage of Ἱλάσκομαι Word Group

The use of this word group in Greek religious writings is widely recognised to denote propitiation. More specifically, Silva explains that it refers to, "human effort to dispose in one's own favour the awful and freq. calamitous power of the dead, demons, and the gods, and to strengthen one's own

[677] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 103; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 76.
[678] Fuhrmann argues that God, not Christ is the subject of ἱλάσκεσθαι (Sebastian Fuhrmann, "Failures Forgotten: The Soteriology in Hebrews Revisited in the Light of Its Quotation of Jeremiah 38:31-34 [LXX]," *Neotestamentica* 41.2 [2007]: 311). This is unlikely since God is not the subject anywhere else in the paragraph.

actions by the assistance of supernatural forces."[679] Within pagan religions, propitiation is generally a human act to bring spiritual entities on-side.

The ἱλάσκομαι word group (though most usually ἐξιλάσκομαι) is frequently used in the LXX in relation to the OT cultic system, most commonly to render the Hebrew כפר.[680] It is widely agreed, however, that the pagan notion of manipulating deities to be propitious is far removed from either the LXX or subsequent developments of its thought, such as in the NT.[681] While some have concluded that "propitiation" is therefore foreign to the Jewish/Christian context, it is better to say that pagan notions of propitiation are not carried across in their totality. This word group was taken up by Jewish writers to refer to something that they understood to have at least significant overlap with what the word referred to in other contexts. A concept of propitiation may still be in view, provided that such propitiation is defined against the wider OT theology—a theology in which God's wrath against sin arises from his own nature, and he is the one who takes initiative in bringing about propitiation.[682] Unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, it seems reasonable to prefer an interpretation of ἱλάσκομαι that maintains both the removal of sin and restoration of relationship, even if the details of that relationship are reframed by Jewish/Christian religious thought.[683]

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[679] Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:532; cf. Schnabel, "Atoning Sacrifice," 73-74; Friedrich Büchsel and Johannes Herrmann, "ἵλεως, ἱλάσκομαι, ἱλασμός, ἱλαστήριον," *TDNT*, 3:310-311, 314; Ribbens, *Levitical Sacrifice*, 206. In less religious contexts it can refer to placating the emperor or to paying bribes (Büchsel and Herrmann, *TDNT*, 3:314).

[680] It occurs 151-153 times, mostly in cultic contexts, though cf. Gen 32:21; 1 Sam 12:3; Prov 16:14 for non-cultic use.

Other potential translations of כפר which are sometimes used in the LXX include: λύτπον (Ex 21:30; Num 30:12; 35:31, 32; Prov 6:35; 13:8), καθαρίζω and cognates (Ex 29:36, 37; Deut 32:43; Prov 15:27; Is 6:7; 47:11), ἀφαιρεω (Isa 27:9; 28:18), ἀλλαγμα (Isa 43:3; Amos 5:12), ἁγιάζω(Ex 29:33), ἀφιημι (Is 22:14), ἀθῳόω (Jer 18:23). While some of these refer more specifically to the taking away of sin, the LXX translators generally chose ἱλάσκομαι as a more suitable rendering of כפר.

[681] See for instance Morris, a strong advocate of reading "propitiation" commending this conclusion in Dodd, a strong opponent of reading "propitiation" (Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd Ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 148, 173; cf. also Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:536; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 79; Büchsel and Herrmann, *TDNT*, 3:317 [though Büchsel notes this only in relation to the NT]).

[682] Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:534, 536-537; Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 177. Silva also helpfully explains this in relation to the concepts of substitutionary death (Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:534).

[683] It is impossible to treat NT uses of this word group in the present constraints but see Silva (*NIDNTTE*, 2:531-541) and Morris (*Apostolic Preaching*, 145-213) for a compelling argument that they often refer to "propitiation."

6.4.4.2 Ἱλάσκεσθαι in 2:17

Many have argued that, in Hebrews 2:17, ἱλάσκομαι does not refer to any change in God's attitude towards people but only to the expiation of sin.[684] There are two main reasons for this, one grammatical and one contextual.

The first reason interpreters reject the concept of propitiation is that the direct object of ἱλάσκομαι is not God but τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ.[685] Büchsel, for instance, suggests that when ἱλάσκομαι means "to propitiate," the accusative refers to the person propitiated and the dative to the person to whom they are propitiated, when ἱλάσκομαι means "to purge from sin," the accusative refers to the object purged, and when ἱλάσκομαι means "to expiate," the accusative is used for the guilt removed, though this guilt may also be expressed with the prepositions περί or ἀπό.[686] This reading accords with the most common uses of Greek cases but is based on surprisingly little evidence for the use of ἱλάσκομαι itself and is not produced before examining Hebrews 2:17 but apparently on the basis of it.[687] In contrast to this view, a number of scholars have argued that the accusative could be one of respect rather than

[684] See for example Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 68; Albert Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," in *A Perfect Priest*, ed. and trans. Nicholas J. Moore and Richard J. Ounsworth. WUNT II/477. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); trans. of "Le Christ, grand prêtre selon Héb. 2,17-18," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 91 (1969): 38; EDNT, 2:185; LSJ, 828; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 39; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 189; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 102-103. BDAG lists it with the meaning, "to eliminate impediments that alienate the deity, *expiate, wipe out*." While this includes the idea that such impediments alienate the idea seems not to include propitiation as such, a meaning BDAG lists separately (BDAG, 473-474). Büchsel gives only two sentences to discussing Hebrews 2:17: "At Hb. 2:17 the task of Jesus as High-priest is ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ, to expiate the sins of His people, to rob them of their validity and significance before God. We are not to think here either of making God gracious or of an ethical conquest of sin in man." (Büchsel and Herrmann, *TDNT*, 3:315-316). The lack of further explanation is surprising in light of their preceding discussion of ἱλάσκομαι which has examined non-Jewish Greek, the LXX and Philo and found ideas of placating and making gracious in all three (Büchsel and Herrmann, *TDNT*, 3:314-315).
Gäbel and Fuhrmann have proposed a distinct reading in which God, not Christ, is the subject of ἱλασκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ, which is read as a non-cultic description of forgiveness. Ribbens, however, has demonstrated numerous weaknesses in this reading (*Levitical Sacrifice*, 209-211) so it will not be further considered here.
[685] Fuhrmann, "Failures Forgotten," 310.
[686] Büchel and Herrmann, "ἵλεως," 316.
[687] Indeed, the use of ἱλάσκομαι with ἁμαρτία in the accusative does not occur in any other extant Greek text until the fourth century.

direct object.[688] While this is a rarer grammatical category, it allows the word to maintain the meaning it consistently has elsewhere.[689]

Similar constructions in the LXX shed light on the grammar in Hebrews 2. The use of the ἱλάσκομαι word group with an accusative for some form of sin or guilt is rare but not unparalleled. Psalm 64:4 uses the accusative ἀσεβείας. There is no clear contextual argument in that passage for God's wrath being turned away, though neither is there reason to deny it if one concludes that ἱλάσκομαι itself carries that connotation.[690] There are also a few instances of ἐξιλάσκομαι with sin in the accusative in the LXX.[691] The first is the Theodotion version of Daniel 9:24 in which the seventy weeks are decreed τοῦ ἐξιλάσασθαι ἀδικίας. The exact meaning is unclear. "Expiation" would fit if that could be demonstrated as a possible meaning for ἐξιλάσκομαι, though the fact that this comes in response to a request for the end of the exile would also make the concept of appeasing wrath and restoring favour suitable.[692]

The other six instances of ἐξιλάσκομαι with sin in the accusative all occur in the book of Sirach. Vanhoye suggests that Sirach demonstrates the use of this word group to refer merely to obtaining forgiveness, yet he gives no evidence for this claim.[693] The concentration of the ἱλάσκομαι word group in Sirach, in

[688] So Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 204-205; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 66; Simon Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews." in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical & Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Roger Nicole*, ed. Charles E. Hill and James A. Frank (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 166-167; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 203-204; Harris, *Hebrews*, 65.

[689] See also Morris' examples in which the accusative replaces prepositional phrases in the NT with no apparent shift in meaning (*Apostolic Preaching*, 204). Kistemaker also notes that the accusative of reference has been used in the immediately preceding clause (Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," 167; see also Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 108 on 5:1).

[690] Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 165. In which case the accusative will be read as one of reference (see below). Belousek again dismisses the idea of propitiation because God is the subject of the verb (Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 248). This however misses the point. Both sides of the debate agree that God is the one who atones, the question is the mechanics of how he does so.

[691] Morris also notes an inscription from the third century using ἐξιλάσκομαι and the accusative for sin as the one instance of such a construction in profane Greek, and argues that it is an accusative of reference (Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 147). Morris further points to the use of the passive verb with sin as the subject in Deut 21:8 (ἐξιλασθήσεται ... τὸ αἷμα) and 1 Sam 3:14 (ἐξιλασθήσεται ἀδικία). In both these cases the idea of propitiation suits the context (Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 163-164, 168-169, 172).

[692] Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 165, 171.

[693] Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 39.

comparison to the relative paucity of evidence elsewhere, and the claims made about the use of ἱλάσκομαι here, make it worthy of particular examination.

Sirach uses the noun ἐξιλασμός six times with nothing to suggest anything other than the normal meaning of "propitiation" (5:5; 16:11; 17:29; 18:12, 20; 35:3). The verb ἐξιλάσκομαι is used three other times without sin as an object. All are compatible with the meaning "propitiation," and at least one has strong contextual indicators that wrath is involved.[694]

Turning specifically to the six uses of ἐξιλάσκομαι with the accusative for sin.

The first two occur in chapter three. In 3:3 ὁ τιμῶν πατέρα ἐξιλάσκεται ἁμαρτίας. Expiation would suit the context, though there is nothing to prohibit the concept of propitiation, unless the grammar itself is found to do so. In 3:30 πῦρ φλογιζόμενον ἀποσβέσει ὕδωρ καὶ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐξιλάσεται ἁμαρτίας. The image of quenching fire suggests the fittingness of propitiation in this context, though it would be possible to read this simply as a reference to expiation.

The third passage is worth quoting at some length:

> καὶ μὴ εἴπῃς τίς με δυναστεύσει ὁ γὰρ κύριος ἐκδικῶν ἐκδικήσει μὴ εἴπῃς ἥμαρτον καὶ τί μοι ἐγένετο ὁ γὰρ κύριός ἐστιν μακρόθυμος περὶ ἐξιλασμοῦ μὴ ἄφοβος γίνου προσθεῖναι ἁμαρτίαν ἐφ᾽ ἁμαρτίαις καὶ μὴ εἴπῃς ὁ οἰκτιρμὸς αὐτοῦ πολύς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν μου ἐξιλάσεται ἔλεος γὰρ καὶ ὀργὴ παρ᾽ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπὶ ἁμαρτωλοὺς καταπαύσει ὁ θυμὸς αὐτοῦ μὴ ἀνάμενε ἐπιστρέψαι

[694] Sirach 45:16 uses ἐξιλάσκεσθαι in reference to priestly sacrifice and 45:23 in reference to Phineas slaying the Israelite Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi and averting judgement on the people (cf. Num 25).
More clearly related to wrath is 16:6-7:

> ἐν συναγωγῇ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐκκαυθήσεται πῦρ καὶ ἐν ἔθνει ἀπειθεῖ ἐξεκαύθη ὀργή οὐκ ἐξιλάσατο περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων γιγάντων οἳ ἀπέστησαν τῇ ἰσχύι αὐτῶν

That this refers to propitiation is further confirmed in 16:11 which reads:

> ἔλεος γὰρ καὶ ὀργὴ παρ᾽ αὐτῷ
> δυνάστης ἐξιλασμῶν καὶ ἐκχέων ὀργήν

The parallelism suggests ἐξιλασμός is closely related to ἔλεος and is antithetical to ὀργὴ/ἐκχέων ὀργήν.

πρὸς κύριον καὶ μὴ ὑπερβάλλου ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ἐξάπινα γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ὀργὴ κυρίου καὶ ἐν καιρῷ ἐκδικήσεως ἐξολῇ (Sir 5:3-7)

While it would be possible to read "expiation" in this passage, this would undermine the unity of ἐξιλασμός in 5:5 and ἐξιλάσκομαι in 5:6. The passage also strongly emphasises the wrath of God against sin and warns against presuming upon his propitiation/expiation, which is connected with his οἰκτιρμός and, in the next clause, his ἔλεος. Those who do not turn back will receive God's wrath and vengeance despite their hope that God would have been compassionate to them. This strongly suggests that propitiation is intended and that the accusative is one of respect.

In 20:28, the one who pleases the great ἐξιλάσεται ἀδικίαν. The following verse says that giving gifts stops reproof, suggesting, though not proving, that propitiation is in view.

In 28:5 ἐξιλάσεται τὰς ἁμαρτίας is contrasted with διατηρεῖ μῆνιν, strongly suggesting propitiation.

Sirach 34:19 says of God, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν προσφοραῖς ἀσεβῶν οὐδὲ ἐν πλήθει θυσιῶν ἐξιλάσκεται ἁμαρτίας. The parallelism of the verse suggests a broad synonymy between εὐδοκεῖ and ἐξιλάσκεται, again suggesting propitiation.

Of the six occurrences of ἐξιλάσκομαι with an accusative for sin, three may be deemed ambiguous (3:3, 30; 20:28),[695] but the other three (5:6; 28:5; 34:19) strongly suggest that ἐξιλάσκομαι with the accusative for sin should be taken to mean "propitiate." This undermines the claim that ἱλάσκομαι and cognates cannot refer to propitiation when followed by an accusative for sin. In fact, it suggests that they often, perhaps always, do.[696] In light of the evidence from the LXX and particularly Sirach for an accusative of respect describing propitiation with regard to sin, the grammatical reason for rejecting the meaning propitiation in Hebrews 2:17 is unpersuasive.

[695] Morris includes 3:30 among passages which are, "certainly referring to the removal of wrath," though he gives no reasons for his conclusion (Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 172).
[696] In light of the clear cases in Sirach, and the normal meaning of ἱλάσκομαι demonstrated elsewhere, the ambiguous examples of ἐξιλάσκομαι with an accusative for sin most likely also refer to propitiation.

The second reason given for reading ἱλάσκομαι in Hebrews 2:17 as "expiate" rather than "propitiate" is its context within Hebrews. Some argue that in Hebrews, God's wrath against sin is not an issue for humans before they come to faith, but only something that confronts the apostate.[697] We have argued above, however, that the condition of the apostate is similar to that of sinful humanity generally, only without possibility of change. Wrath is the lot of both the apostate and the rest of sinful humanity unless and until they receive salvation in Christ.

It is clear that there are fundamental differences between the pagan deities who require propitiation and Hebrews' depiction of God. In Hebrews, God is not unconcerned or purely hostile towards humanity until humans can propitiate him. Silva, however, points out that while God is not appeased like a pagan deity, the reason sin needs to be dealt with still lies in the character of God himself. Thus, while God provides the means of reconciliation, he is also the recipient of that reconciliation.[698] There is, therefore, no reason to deny that Hebrews 2:17 uses ἱλάσκομαι in its normal sense of "propitiate."

This conclusion is further supported by positive reasons why "propitiate" makes better sense in the context of Hebrews 2:17. This verse is still addressing the fundamental concern raised in relation to Psalm 8, and it has been suggested that that concern for dominion is tied to the relationship with God through which humanity was to receive dominion. Sin is not an isolated phenomenon but ruptures the relationship between God and humanity and brings about death and slavery in place of dominion. While the meaning "expiate" would be acceptable in this context, the normal meaning "propitiate" more fully addressed this concern.[699]

It must also be noted that the high priest's ministry in 2:17 is towards God (ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν). While the high priest is solving the problem of human sin, his activity is fundamentally in relation to

[697] Westcott, *Hebrews*, 58; Cf. Büchsel and Herrmann, *TDNT*, 3:317, 320, 322 (though he does not explain much in relation to Hebrews itself and is here referring to Romans and 1 John).
[698] Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:538.
[699] Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 186-187.

God himself.[700] It is possible that expiation could be intended, and the impact of sin on the relationship with God is simply implicit.[701] It seems more likely, however, that this again indicates propitiation. Sin is not dealt with in isolation but in relation to God, whose wrath against sin needs to be placated.

Finally, if the author of Hebrews had simply intended to refer to purification or forgiveness, there is no clear reason why he would select a rare lexeme like ἱλάσκομαι at this point.[702] Ellingworth, having argued that ἱλάσκομαι refers to expiation, can only say that, "It is curious that the author should choose so unusual a term as ἱλάσκομαι, and then apparently fail to develop it."[703] If, however, the need to placate God's wrath against sin and to restore a positive relationship with him is expressed in Hebrews 2 and in the book as a whole, then the choice of this lexeme needs not be seen as a puzzle. The author employs a word that was widely used to refer to propitiation because it is precisely propitiation that he is addressing.

6.4.4.3 The Depiction of Christ's Saving Work in 2:17

The above arguments lead us to conclude that, in Hebrews 2:17, Christ saves his people by providing propitiation in relation to their sins. He not only removes the pollution or guilt of sin but turns away divine wrath and restores divine favour. The combination of Hebrews 2's emphasis on the death of Christ and its description of propitiation indicates that Christ's saving work is understood as a vicarious death.[704] Furthermore, the introduction of this image as the conclusion to the passage suggests that earlier images are to be understood, at least in part, in connection with propitiation. To be clear, that is not to say that the placation of wrath is the only or even the dominating category. Hebrews has

[700] Silva, NIDNTTE, 2:538; Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 202-203; Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," 164.
[701] So Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 189.
[702] Cf. Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 148.
[703] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 189.
[704] Morales seems to include propitiation within a "vicarious life" view of atonement (though curiously he speaks of "wrath" and "propitiation" when describing OT sacrifice but never repeats the language explicitly in regard to Hebrews [Morales, "Atonement," 31-39]), though in viewing the cross merely as one final act of obedience (Morales, "Atonement," 37) he gives less focus to death than Hebrews 2.
It would be theoretically possible to incorporate the idea of propitiation into some of the less defined cultic categories, though this appears not to have been attempted, and these categories have been seen to be less viable in other respects.

chosen a rich variety of expressions to communicate the saving work of Christ. We conclude, however, that propitiation is a central part of that complex, even if, at times, it remains in the background.

While this conclusion leads to the selection of a vicarious death model for understanding Christ's salvation, our discussion has also found genuine elaborations of that concept and even challenges to how it is sometimes portrayed.[705] Hebrews provides far more than a simple affirmation of one view of Christ's saving work. It presents a rich and varied exposition that should not be flattened out. A more expansive presentation will be provided below (6.5). Before that, however, we will further consider how Christ's propitiation in 2:17 is specifically related to his humanity.

6.4.4.4 The Humanity of Christ and his Propitiation

While much space has unavoidably been given to determining the meaning of ἱλάσκομαι, we can now turn to how the concept of propitiation as expressed in Hebrews 2:17 relates to Christ's humanity.

Hebrews 2:17 begins with the insistence that it was necessary for Christ κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι. This is an encompassing description of full participation in the human condition. Its relation to propitiation, however, is obscured by the intervening description of Christ as a merciful and faithful high priest. That Christ's complete identification with his people is necessary for that merciful and faithful ministry is clear, and that Christ's propitiatory work is part of his merciful and faithful ministry is also clear. It would be possible, however, that the intervening step means there is no direct relationship between being made like the brothers in every way and propitiation.

[705] Treier suggests that, "Protestant accounts focusing on penal substitution can fall into distortions from a surface reading of sacrifice and priesthood: for atonement nothing is necessary except the death of a sinless human, expiating sin and perhaps propitiating God" (Daniel J. Treier, "'Mediator of a New Covenant': Atonement and Christology in Hebrews," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. George H. Guthrie, Jon C. Laansma, and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 [New York: T&T Clark, 2019], 119). So Treier and Atwood positively argue, "The victory Christ wins over death may not be less than propitiatory, but it involves even more than that" (Daniel J. Treier, and Christopher Atwood, "The Living Word versus the Proof Text? Hebrews in Modern Systematic Theology," in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier, LNTS 423 [London: T & T Clark, 2012], 187).

It has been found above, however, that Christ's identification with those he saves has been emphasised in every other image of salvation in 2:5-18: In 2:9, Christ is the one who entered into humanity and died on behalf of, or in the place of, all. In 2:10-11, Christ's ability to sanctify his people is directly predicated on their unity, which is specifically a unity that entails suffering and death. In 2:14-16, Christ had to share specifically in the blood and flesh that his people shared in order to defeat the devil through his human death. This repeated linking suggests a natural connection for the author between Christ being made human, and Christ's saving work, which is likely present in 2:17, connecting Christ being made like his brothers in every way and his being able to propitiate the sins of the people. This connection is not broken by the intervening mention of Christ's priesthood but mediated through it.

If Christ's saving work is understood as a vicarious death, a reason for this repeated emphasis on his identification with humanity is suggested. Christ needed to be a human because he needed to die a human death. The problems that stood against his people are multifaceted and complex, but at the root of this complex is their sins before God and the resultant relational rift. The removal of this barrier comes by the enacting of justice. Human sin needed to be addressed in human death. For this reason, Christ became like the brothers in every way so that he might stand as their perfect representative, fully one with them, and, in their stead, endure the retribution for sin so that they might be free and once again enjoy God's favour in place of his wrath.

6.4.5 Summary

While each of the images for Christ's saving work in 2:5-18 makes distinct contributions, and they should not be collapsed into a monochrome presentation, taken together, they express a consistent theology in which salvation is achieved through the vicarious death of Christ. Human sin had cut people off from the relationship with God for which they were created and the associated position of dominion. It had brought them instead under God's judgement and his wrath, which were expressed

in death, and under slavery to fear and to the devil who through death gained mastery over them. Christ's salvation was achieved through his human death, by which he took on human sin and endured its penalty in full. In so doing, he satisfied the wrath of God and thus disarmed the devil. Having done away with sin, Christ then inherited the promise of humanity and is able to lead others with him into that inheritance because what stood opposed to them has now already been dealt with at the cross.

Previous chapters of this thesis have found that Christ's identification with his people was intrinsic to his inheritance of human glory and to his qualification to lead his people towards that glory. The description of Christ's sacrifice adds that Christ's identification with his people is necessary to his saving work because he saves his people by becoming one of them and taking their punishment upon himself.

6.5 Christ's Salvation and his Humanity

The above examination has revealed a number of points about Christ's humanity in relation to his saving work. We turn now to more specifically restate and develop the fruit of this exegetical work. Three main conclusions can be drawn about Christ's saving work and his humanity: Christ can save because of what his humanity was—mortal. Christ can save because of what his humanity is—glorified. And, Christ the human saves—Christ's humanity does not. These three will now be explored.

6.5.1 Christ Can Save because of what his Humanity Was—Mortal

Christ's humanity was central to his work of salvation because it was through death that he would save his people. Hebrews 1 describes Christ in exalted terms as one who shares in divine nature and who endures through all eternity. It is clear that prior to his incarnation, Christ was not subject to death. Hebrews 2:14 makes this connection more explicit when the author writes that Christ shared in flesh and blood *so that* (ἵνα) he might destroy the devil through his own death. Christ had to become a human because only then could he die.

The argument of Hebrews, however, goes further than simply asserting that Christ needed to assume mortality. It was specifically human mortality that was needed. He needed to share not just any flesh and blood but human flesh and blood, a mortal human nature, such that he could stand in the place of mortal humans and bear their guilt. The humanity of Christ equipped him to die a human death, and it was only in doing so that he could ever save from the problem of sin and judgement and all the effects expressed in Hebrews 2.[706]

This point has considerable implications for understanding Christ's humanity. The work of Albert Vanhoye and David Moffitt have both, in their own ways, emphasised the necessity of Christ having an immortal human nature by which he saves his people. For Vanhoye, this is conceived of in more spiritual terms,[707] while David Moffitt emphasises its physicality.[708] In both presentations, however, the mortality of Christ's earthly human nature is an impediment to his saving work. It is by dispensing with the corruption of his fallen nature or the imperfections of mortality that Christ is equipped to save his people.[709] While there is no doubt that Hebrews sees the glorification of Christ as vital, Hebrews 2:5-18 insists that it was not firstly the immortality of Christ's humanity that equipped him as saviour but its mortality. Christ saves his people because he took on their nature to die in their place.

A related question that is sometimes raised in theological discussions of Christ's humanity is whether he shared in the fallen condition of humanity or whether his human nature was uncorrupted. Vanhoye and Moffitt have both contributed to this by stressing that the humanity of the earthly Christ was unfit to enter the presence of God.[710] This, however, goes beyond the evidence. Hebrews certainly insists that Christ shared in the fullness of human nature and that he did so in a fallen world. Whether this is

[706] Cf. Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 103.
[707] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 302-303, 323.
[708] E.g., Moffitt, *Atonement*, 141.
[709] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 148-181; Vanhoye, *Situation*, 323; *New Commentary*, 62, 76.
[710] Vanhoye, *Situation*, 323, 348; Moffitt, *Atonement*, 148-181.

described as "fallen human nature" may depend on how that concept is defined. If it simply relates to mortality and suffering and the full experience of temptation, Hebrews indicates that Christ shared in these things (2:9, 10, 14, 17, 18). If, however, "fallen human nature" is understood as intrinsically cut off from fellowship with God, Hebrews gives no indication that Christ's humanity is to be defined this way. The important element of Christ's humanity in relation to his sacrifice is that it shares in the same mortality as that which his people share. This accords with the findings earlier in this thesis that human nature is defined by frailty and faith. In a fallen world, Christ's frailty includes mortality but that does not demonstrate that in his earthly life he was alienated from God. Rather, true humanity is defined by its close relationship with God.

The one possible exception to Christ's unbroken relationship with God would be the state of Christ's humanity during his sacrificial act. The above exegesis has concluded that Christ died for sinful people and in their place, bearing their guilt and punishment. Guilt and punishment were not intrinsic to Christ's humanity but, at the time of his death, he did experience them in his humanity. Whether that moment entailed alienation from God, however, is not a matter the author of Hebrews probes.[711]

6.5.2 Christ Can Save because of what his Humanity Is—Glorified

We have noted that Christ's humanity was intrinsically mortal and that mortality was essential to Christ's mission, not an impediment to it. Hebrews, however, also gives a significant place to Christ's glorification. This was seen particularly in 2:9, in which Christ's death was for all but is only salvific because he has been crowned with glory and honour.

Hebrews 2:9 insists that, after his death, Christ the human received the promises God made to humanity, as expressed in Psalm 8. While authors like Moffitt and Vanhoye overemphasise Christ's glorification at the expense of the centrality of his death, they rightly note that in Hebrews, the

[711] If χωρὶς θεοῦ is read in 2:9 then the idea of Christ being temporarily separated from the Father may be intended (cf. Massonnet, *L'épître aux Hébreux*, 88, 94-95).

glorified humanity of Christ is intrinsic to human salvation. Hebrews 2:5-18 holds Christ's death and glorification together. It is Christ's human death that saves, but it only does so because he was subsequently glorified in his humanity.

6.5.3 Christ the Human Saves—Christ's Humanity Does Not

A final point that must be clarified at this juncture is that Christ's humanity is not itself salvific. This conclusion again runs counter to the claims of Vanhoye and Moffitt that it is through the very existence of Christ's glorified humanity that his people are saved.[712] The above exegesis has demonstrated that while Christ's humanity is indispensable for his saving work, it is not his human nature itself that saves but what Christ did in that nature. Christ's human nature was necessary for him to carry out his saving work, but it is only through his death in that nature that salvation was achieved and through his glorification that salvation was made effective for all.[713]

In insisting that salvation is located in the human example of Christ, Attridge shares a problem with those who locate salvation in Christ's human nature. It is beyond dispute that Christ's faithfulness as a human is exemplary in Hebrews (note esp. 12:2).[714] Hebrews, however, presents the humanity of Christ both as an example to follow and as the means by which he achieved something unique, and it is in the unique aspect of Christ's work that Hebrews 2:5-18 most clearly grounds salvation.[715]

[712] It is also counter to those who locate salvation in the union of Christ's divine and human natures (noted in Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 82; Hughes, *Hebrews*, 111).
[713] Cf. Witherington, *Hebrews*, 143-144; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 82; Treier and Atwood, "The Living Word," 187. Jamieson further notes that "The Son's incarnation is the foundational prerequisite for his becoming his people's Savior, but it is not the only prerequisite." (Jamieson, *Sonship*, 97).
[714] Cf. Schnabel, "Atoning Sacrifice," 85-86, who helpfully notes that the way Christ died was both exemplary and substitutionary.
[715] Cf. D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 174-176.

7. Christ the Human High Priest (2:17-18)

7.1 Introduction

Christ's high priesthood is widely recognised as one of, if not the major Christological theme of Hebrews and is first explicitly introduced in 2:17.[716] Here Christ's priestly office is seen to be a further expression of his humanity in its identification with those he saves and leads.

This chapter will begin by situating 2:17-18 within the sweep of Hebrews' argument, in which it functions both as a conclusion to 2:5-16 and as an anticipation of the development of the theme of Christ's high priesthood later in the letter. We argue that by introducing the term ἀρχιερεύς at this juncture, the author has shaped how the term will be understood before he uses it. Specifically, he has cast Christ's high priestly office as an expression of his humanity as outlined in 2:5-16.

After examining the significance of the introduction of the term ἀρχιερεύς at this point of the letter, we will attend to the specific descriptions of Christ's high priestly role. These descriptions will be found to echo the descriptions of Christ's humanity in 2:5-16 while extending them in new directions in anticipation of what is to come later in Hebrews.

The observations concerning Christ's humanity in relation to his high priesthood will then be summarised.

7.2 Hebrews 2:17-18 as Conclusion and Foundation

It has been argued above (section 2.1) that 2:5-18 form a unified section of the epistle. 2:17-18 come at the end of this section and present a conclusion, drawing together the themes of the unit.[717] What

[716] Cf. David J. MacLeod, "The Doctrinal Centre of the Book of Hebrews," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 291-300.
[717] Cf. Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 101, 114. Some have suggested that 2:17-18 acts as a conclusion not only to 2:5-18 but to 1:5-2:18 (e.g., Harris, *Hebrews*, 64; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 87). This seems less likely but, if correct, would not materially change the argument presented here, except to suggest that Christ's exalted Sonship also plays a more significant role alongside his humanity in the introduction of his priestly office in 2:17-18.
Ellingworth has suggested that 2:17 acts as a hinge with 2:17a looking back and 2:17b-c looking forward (*Hebrews*, 179). While this would resolve the issue of how priesthood relates to 2:5-16, the division is overly clean. The concept of propitiation in 2:17c for instance is not foreshadowing something new but expressing what has already been a focal point in 2:5-16.

requires further attention in the present discussion is specifically how Christ's high priesthood in 2:17 relates to 2:5-16 and also to subsequent descriptions of Christ's priesthood in the letter.

While 2:17-18 concludes the section begun at 2:5, it does so with a new description of Christ as ἀρχιερεύς. The author thus introduces the theme of priesthood, which has not yet appeared in the letter but is to dominate much of the following chapters.[718] The first issue to consider is in what sense this new term functions as a conclusion to 2:5-16.

While some have read priesthood back into the earlier passages of Hebrews,[719] it is unlikely that the audience would be expected to interpret what are at best ambiguous references as an exposition on high priesthood before the term had even been introduced. This would be even more improbable if Christ's high priesthood is part of the new teaching of the epistle.[720] It is more likely that Hebrews 2:5-16, in the first instance, is not saying anything about high priesthood. This passage, read on its own terms, describes Christ in relation to the inheritance of humanity, roles of leadership as exemplified in prophets and kings, and his salvific work in defeating the devil through his substitutionary death. None of these need to be understood by reference to priestly categories.

The transition to the image of priesthood in 2:17, however, adds a new layer. The author does not simply introduce high priesthood as the next point in his argument but as the theme he has already been developing—the conclusion to 2:5-18.[721] While 2:5-16 is not a description of priesthood initially,

[718] "Priest" and "high priest" seem to be used interchangeably, depending largely on whether there is specific reference to an OT quote (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 183; Rissi, *Die Theologie*, 55).
[719] Cf. On 1:3 (Loader, "Revising High Priesthood," 278-279), on 2:11 (Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 73) and on 2:12 (Dyer, "In the Midst of the Assembly," 10).
[720] In favour of priesthood being original see: Kenneth Schenck, "Hebrews as the Re-Presentation of a Story: A Narrative Approach to Hebrews," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric Farrel Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 180; Hagner, *Hebrews*, 57; Koester, *Hebrews*, 109; Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 158; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 185; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 455; Dumbrell, *Hebrews*, 41; Thomas G. Long, *Hebrews*, 40. Against see: David M. Moffitt, "The Interpretation of Scripture in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2011), 92; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 95; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 67; Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 83-84; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 65; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 37-38).
[721] Vanhoye points to the use of ὅθεν and to thematic links regarding the likeness of humanity, suffering and salvation (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 360; *Different Priest*, 105).

it becomes a key foundation for the author's claims about Christ's high priesthood through this unexpected turn in the conclusion. As Vanhoye puts it,

> Verses 17-18 really do constitute a conclusion to Part One, but a conclusion which, instead of confining itself to summarising what has been said, expresses it in new categories which will later have to be gone into in the next Part.[722]

The depiction of Christ in 2:5-16 is thus not a priestly one, but it provides the basic categories that will constitute Christ's high priestly office. In the conclusion, then, the picture that has been developed is cast in new terms.[723] The term ἀρχιερεύς is a genuine summary of what has preceded, and in bringing these portraits together, both are illuminated. The depiction from 2:5-16 is accurately summarised in the image of high priesthood but gains new dimensions and greater clarity from the new expression. Likewise, the high priesthood of Christ is, from its first mention, given its basic shape from the preceding depiction of Christ the human—one who shares his people's situation, leads them to glory, and provides a true sacrifice for them. This introduction shapes the depiction of Christ's high priesthood not by forcing foreign categories onto it but by giving expression to what the author understands high priesthood to entail.

The significance of this point is reinforced by the place of 2:17-18 in relation to what follows. 2:17-18 sets up the basic pillars of the epistle's depiction of Christ as high priest.

The next significant exposition of Christ's priestly office comes in 4:14-5:10. That passage has sometimes been considered to be Hebrews' basic exposition of what priesthood entails.[724] Indeed, Bénétreau has gone so far as to suggest that the rest of the epistle adds nothing to what is already

[722] Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 114.
[723] So Nairne says of the introduction of Christ's high priesthood in 2:17: "almost every word of this chapter has been pregnant with an expectation which is now explained" (*Hebrews*, 47).
[724] Cf. Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 87.

present in nuce even within 5:1-4.[725] He suggests that that passage summarises the office of priesthood in four basic points:

- A priest is a human who can represent and understand humans.
- A priest ministers for sinful people dealing with the problem of their relationship with God.
- A priest's ministry is for the benefit of men but is fundamentally oriented toward God.
- A priest's ministry is about sacrifices, specifically, sacrifices for sin.[726]

The significance of 4:14-5:10 for understanding Hebrews' depiction of priesthood is evident, yet we suggest that 4:14-5:10 is, in fact, re-iterating, with slightly more detail, the foundation already laid in 2:17-18. Consider, for example, Bénétreau's four points. Each of them is already expressed in the earlier introduction of Christ as high priest:

- Christ the high priest is a human who can represent and understand humans (ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελθοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι ... ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθείς).
- Christ the high priest ministers for sinful people, dealing with the problem of their relationship with God (ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ... δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι).
- Christ's priestly ministry is for the benefit of men but is fundamentally oriented toward God (τά πρὸς τὸν θεόν).
- Christ's priestly ministry is about sacrifices, specifically, sacrifices for sin (εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ).

Guthrie further points to the linguistic parallels between these passages:

[725] Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:44-45.
[726] Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:44.

> Hebrews 2:17-19 shares no fewer than eight words or phrases with 4:14-5:3: "high priest" (2:17; 4:14; 5:1), "sin" (2:17; 4:15; 5:1, 3), "merciful/mercy" (2:17; 4:16), "tempted" (2:18; 4:15), "help" (2:18; 4:16), "in service (matters related) to God" (2:17; 5:1), "the people (2:17; 5:3), and the obligation to do something (2:17; 5:3).[727]

This overlap of these two passages is not total, particularly if one takes into consideration the whole description of priesthood from 4:14-5:10. One finds in the later passage stronger descriptions of Christ's exalted glory, his sinlessness, and his appointment by God, while Hebrews 2:17-18 places more emphasis on Christ's faithfulness than does 4:14-5:10. It may therefore be the case that 4:14-5:10 is drawing not only from the depiction of Christ's humanity in 2:5-18 but also from material about the exalted Son in 1:1-2:4. These distinctions, however, do not negate the basic correspondence. Hebrews 4:14-5:10 is not the first real exposition of Christ's priesthood, but is close to a recapitulation of the themes raised in 2:17-18 and the beginning of their elaboration. After a short detour in 3:1-4:13,[728] the author returns to focus his attention more explicitly on Christ's priesthood, and he does so in line with the basic categories that were attached to priesthood in 2:17-18.[729]

Westfall describes Hebrews 2:17 as "a 'teaser' that raises more questions than it answers."[730] Yet while it is true that many aspects of Christ's high priesthood are explained and developed in the subsequent chapters, 2:17 does provide foundational answers, even at this early stage, regarding what it means for Christ to be a priest. The author does this, in large part, not through a new exposition but by connecting the high priestly office to the humanity of Christ as expressed in 2:5-16.[731]

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[727] Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 111.
[728] Though 3:1-4:13 is by no means disconnected and bears strong connections with 2:17 (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 180).
[729] Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 87.
[730] Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 109.
[731] So Mitchell, "When the author returns to the exposition of Jesus as High Priest, little will have to be said of the mechanism of mediation, since the author has explained how his intercession works here, on the basis of his having shared the origin and nature of his humanity" (*Hebrews*, 79). Kistemaker goes even further, asserting that, "Heb. 2:17 offers in a nutshell all the perspectives necessary for the entire Epistle." (Kistemaker, *Psalms Citations*, 101).

7.3 Descriptions of Christ's Priesthood in 2:17-18

Having suggested that the depiction of Christ's humanity in 2:5-16 provides the basic parameters for Christ's high priesthood which is introduced in 2:17-18, we turn now to the specific description of Christ as ἀρχιερεύς within 2:17-18 itself. Here it will again be seen that the ways high priesthood is characterised, while going beyond a simple repeat of 2:5-16, follows the basic contours of that passage.

7.3.1 Κατὰ Πάντα τοῖς Ἀδελφοῖς Ὁμοιωθῆναι

In 2:17, as Hebrews moves towards introducing the term ἀρχιερεύς, it begins with a sweeping statement concerning Christ's humanity:

> ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι

This complete identification of Christ with the humans he came to save is strikingly encompassing, yet further attention must be given to what specifically the author meant by the phrase. The present section will examine what can be discerned about the type of likeness the author describes in so far as that can be illuminated by the surrounding context.

7.3.1.1 Physical

The most basic affirmation about Christ's likeness to his brothers concerns his physical nature. Hebrews 2:14 emphatically stated that Christ shared in blood and flesh in the nature of those he came to save.[732] Not only so, but this blood and flesh were subject to the same physical frailties as those which Christ's brothers know. It was a mortal existence in which Christ died. The identification spelled out in 2:14 and now reemphasised in a sweeping manner in 2:17 suggests that there was no difference between the body of Jesus and that which is common to other humans. Not only could Christ die, but

[732] Note the chain of logic between 2:14 and 2:17 through the use of γάρ in 2:16 and ὅθεν in 2:17.

κατὰ πάντα suggests susceptibility to all the same physical afflictions that characterise his brothers, from exhaustion to illness to injury. Christ bore a human body like that borne by his brothers.[733]

7.3.1.2 Psychological

Alongside the affirmation that Christ shared the physical frailty of mortal flesh, Hebrews appears to depict Christ as sharing in something of the psychological reality of being a human. By the term *psychological* we refer to Christ's internal nature as distinct from his body on the one hand and his actions flowing from his nature on the other. It is the reality of desires and emotions and thoughts.[734] That Christ's humanity entailed this internal dimension is suggested most pointedly in the phrase πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθείς (2:18).[735]

One of the key questions here concerns the meaning of πειρασθείς. The term can denote the experience of "testing," in the sense of a hardship that comes upon a person, and/or "temptation," which entails an internal attraction towards another path.[736]

In the present text, the reality of an external hardship or "testing" is suggested by the connection of πειρασθείς with suffering.[737] The suffering of Christ in Hebrews is associated most particularly with his death (5:8; 9:26; 13:12), but we suggested above that it also entails sufferings experienced throughout his mortal life. In either case, this suffering appears in the midst of affliction that is, at least in a significant part, external.

It is unlikely, however, that Hebrews intends to neatly separate testing which comes from without and tempting which is felt within. Christ is depicted as psychologically affected by his ordeal. His testing

[733] Pink suggests that Christ, "passed through all the experiences of men, sin, and sickness excepted" (*Hebrews*, 134). He does not, however, give any reason for the excepting of sickness.
[734] So Hughes, "the assumption not only of flesh and blood but of human feelings and sensibilities" (Hughes, *Hebrews*, 119)
[735] The γάρ of 2:18 ties this back to 2:17.
[736] E.g., Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 42.
[737] Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James*, 47.

brought suffering.[738] The author will later speak of Christ offering loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death (5:7). Hebrews does not cast Christ as a detached stoic whose external afflictions cause no disquiet within him. On the contrary, his suffering appears to have intensely affected his internal composition. While we cannot know how familiar the author and his audience were with gospel traditions about Jesus, such a depiction matches the description of his tears in Gethsemane. He endured mental anguish in the face of his coming death and all that it entailed.[739]

Does Hebrews 2:18 then refer not only to external testing but also to internal temptation? Two indications suggest that it does.

Firstly, there are only two occasions in Hebrews where Christ is described as tested/tempted: 2:18 and 4:15. In 4:15 the author carefully qualifies that such experience did not entail or produce sin. Such a qualification is an important insight into the limits of this experience and will require further examination in the following section. For present purposes, however, it is important to note that πειρασμός appears to be conceptually related to sin such that the qualification should be thought necessary. This strongly suggests that Christ's πειρασμός entailed at least some degree of temptation.[740]

The second indication that Christ was "tempted" as well as "tested" is the degree to which the author connects Christ's experience to that of his people. The fewer the limitations imposed on the apparently sweeping phrase κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, the more easily it can explain the author's language. This is further suggested in the apparent correspondence between the πειρασμός of those Christ helps in the second half of 2:18 with Christ's own πειρασμός. It is possible that the author only intended to refer to the external trials facing his audience, yet in the face of such threats,

[738] While it would be possible to read ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτός as modifying the participle πειρασθείς, Cockerill is likely right that the participle πειρασθείς is instead modifying πέπονθεν. It is not that Christ was tested/tempted by his suffering but that he suffered when tested/tempted (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 152; cf. Harris, *Hebrews*, 66; contra D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 65).
[739] Cf. Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 42. Contra Pink, 139.
[740] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 268.

the audience also appears to be facing a temptation to draw back from the path God has set before them, and in this, the author presents Christ as a source of sympathetic help.[741] It is likely, therefore, that πειρασθείς in 2:18 should be taken to refer not only to external testing but also to the internal reality of temptation.[742]

Christ's being made like his brothers, therefore, appears to entail a psychological dimension. This is in part expressed through the way Christ was internally affected by his afflictions such that he knew genuine suffering and even cried out with tears. It likely also entails temptation, the idea that, as Christ faced suffering and saw alternatives, those alternatives would have in some way been attractive to him in his humanity.[743]

7.3.1.3 Moral

The preceding discussion concerning temptation leads to the question of whether Christ being made like his brothers κατὰ πάντα entails a moral dimension. This subject has occasionally been a flashpoint in Hebrews scholarship. That Christ faced moral choices as a human is not disputed. In that sense, he shared the same moral framework as other humans. Debate has arisen, however, over the further question of whether Christ also participated in moral failure, that is, did Christ sin?

While traditional interpretations of Hebrews have understood Christ's likeness to humanity to encompass temptation as a human but not to include participation in sin, a few scholars have suggested that such an interpretation denies the full dimensions of Christ's humanity.

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[741] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 268; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 151.

[742] So Koester, *Hebrews*, 233; Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:93; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 151-152; Small, *Characterization*, 215-216.

[743] Chee-Chiew Lee, "The Rhetoric of Empathy in Hebrews," *Novum Testamentum* 62 (2020): 212. Some suggest that Christ may have shared in the fear of death as other humans in 2:15 (e.g., Clifford B. Kvidahl, and Dan Lioy, "'You are a Priest Forever': An Exegetical and Biblical Theology of High Priestly Christology," *Conspectus* 29 (2020): 46; Lee, "The Rhetoric of Empathy," 210-212). Fear of death here is particularly applied to humanity enslaved to the devil. While Hebrews does not rule out that Christ experienced it also, that conclusion goes beyond what this chapter affirms.

A foundational work in this regard was the 1972 commentary of Buchanan, which argued that Hebrews does not present Christ as having lived a sinless life. While Buchanan recognises that Christ's sinlessness is claimed in 4:15, he argues that:

> This does not necessarily mean that he had never committed a moral offense in his life. Since the author presented Jesus as a high priest, he may have understood his crucifixion on the Day of Atonement to cleanse his own sins as well as those of the faithful, all of whom would have been made sinless or perfect.[744]

Buchanan finds confirmation of this in 7:27-28. He argues that Christ's single sacrifice achieves what the Aaronic high priests sought to do in their double sacrifice, that is, it cleansed first the offering priest and then those whom he represents. In this manner, Jesus, "offered himself for his own sins as well as for those of the people."[745] He was not sinless before the cross but, "Once purified, he was without sin."[746]

Williamson further developed Buchanan's basic contention but did so more specifically in relation to Christ's humanity. While repeating much of Buchanan's argument that the logic of sacrifice and perfection suggests that Jesus did not live a sinless life, central to Williamson's case is an insistence that to be human is to sin. For Williamson, the basic problem concerning "sinlessness" can be summarised as follows:

> The author of Hebrews, both in the first part of 4^{15} and elsewhere, states emphatically that Jesus' humanity was total and authentic. Yet what seems to be implied by χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας contradicts this emphasis on the unimpaired genuineness of the humanity.[747]

[744] Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 82.
[745] Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 129-131.
[746] Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 8. Buchanan has continued to express this view in his more recent commentary (Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews*, 40).
[747] Williamson, "Sinlessness," 4-5.

Williamson suggests that this apparent contradiction lies not in Hebrews but in foreign understandings of sinlessness imposed by later interpreters. Instead of taking Christ's sinlessness in Hebrews as a defining aspect of his entire human life, Williamson argues that it is an achievement at the culmination of his human struggle with sin, a struggle in which he is most naturally understood as a sinner.[748]

In 1984 Braun again took issue with the sinlessness of Jesus, finding it to be in contradiction with his sympathetic humanity, and particularly his relationship to human ἀσθένεια, a term Braun identifies with sin.[749]

In 1991 Lindars briefly argued that Christ's sinlessness was his being "ceremonially pure to perform his sacrificial function."[750] Lindars asserts that Christ being, "incapable of sin on account of his divine nature," would be, "ruinous to Hebrews' argument."[751] Lindars' language of incapability is ambiguous, and many who hold that, according to Hebrews, Christ did not sin may agree with Lindars that he was nevertheless, in one sense, "capable" of sin. Lindars, however, immediately follows this with a denial that Hebrews teaches that Christ, "never did anything wrong throughout his human life."[752] Lindars

[748] Williamson, "Sinlessness," 6-7. Gareth Cockerill accepts Williamson's suggestion that χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας refers to Christ's final state of sinlessness at the time of his death, but insists that such a state was based on a life of sinlessness (Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 226-227).

[749] Herbert Braun, *An die Hebräer*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 14 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 125-127. What it means for Christ to be able to sympathise with human ἀσθένεια is beyond the scope of the present thesis. It can however be noted that there are more plausible explanations of this text which do not involve attributing sin to Jesus. One is Braun's suggestion that ἀσθένεια includes sin, but Christ, while able to sympathise with human ἀσθένεια, is not defined by it as other humans are (Pryor, "Hebrews and Incarnational Christology," 48; cf. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 225, 235).

Another possibility is that ἀσθένεια does not entail sin. In 5:2-3, the Aaronic high priest has to offer sacrifices for his own sins because he shares in ἀσθένεια. This establishes a close connection between sin and ἀσθένεια but, contrary to Braun's claim, does not necessarily equate them. The lexeme ἀσθένεια more readily refers not to moral transgression but to some form of weakness or inability (cf. BDAG, 142). Within the context of Hebrews 5:1-3, this could refer either to the situation of weakness which gives rise to temptation or to the inability to resist temptation when it comes. The logic of Hebrews 5:1-3 requires that both are true of the Aaronic priest, but it is possible that only one is included in the term ἀσθένεια, the other being taken as an unstated assumption. If ἀσθένεια is the inability to resist temptation, then Jesus sharing both ἀσθένεια and temptation would mean that he sinned. If, however, ἀσθένεια is weak position that gives rise to temptation then Christ could share weakness and thus temptation without sharing the flawed response to it.

[750] Lindars, *Theology*, 63.

[751] Lindars, *Theology*, 63.

[752] Lindars, *Theology*, 63.

does not elaborate further, but these statements themselves put him in conflict with traditional understandings of Christ's sinlessness in Hebrews.

In 2005, Winder took up Williamson's basic contention and argued it at greater length. Like Williamson, Winder's main concern was with the humanity of Jesus. For the author to suggest that Jesus' human life was, "without sin," would, "undermine the humanity of Jesus which he is so insistent on."[753]

> If Hebrews' intention is to be understood as presenting a truly human Jesus, then we have to be able to argue for a Jesus who shares in man's sinful nature.[754]

Winder offers two explanations for how Jesus could be χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας. The first is that he may have refrained from, "conscious and deliberate disobedience," while still participating in, "all those small actions we might call sins."[755]

The second explanation, and the one to which Winder devotes most attention, is a development of Williamson's work. The sinlessness of Jesus is true of his glorified existence as high priest but was not attributed to his earthly life.[756] The man Jesus may have sinned, and thus would not have been sinless, but, in his final act of obedience at the cross, he became the sinless high priest.[757] According to Winder, it is only in maintaining this distinction that Hebrews can maintain, "proper space for a truly human Jesus."[758]

Most recently, in 2017 Bending critiqued assertions that Jesus was sinless, suggesting that: "To be human… is not only to know the reality of temptation, but also to know the reality of failure."[759] In

[753] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 144.
[754] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 79.
[755] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 81, 145; cf. also Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 92.
[756] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 139.
[757] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 82-86; 145-146.
[758] Winder, "Sacrificial Christology," 139-140.
[759] Bending, "Difficult Texts," 35.

response to attempts to understand Jesus as sinless, he writes: "Perversely, however, that sinlessness undermines the argument that Jesus has fully shared our human experience."[760]

7.3.1.3.1 Humanity and Sinlessness

The exegetical weaknesses of taking Christ's sacrifice as being for his own sin have been thoroughly expressed by others and need not be repeated here.[761] What is of particular concern to the present thesis is what it means for Christ to be human and to be in every way like his brothers. Central to the arguments of those who do not find Christ's sinlessness compatible with Hebrews' broader theology is the contention that sinlessness would contradict true humanity. Such claims, however, are based on preconceptions about what true humanity necessarily entails.

Williamson is the most explicit about how exactly he understands sinlessness and human nature to be in conflict:

> It is inconceivable that Jesus was truly a man, but that in his corporeality and behaviour he was not stamped by the universal centredness of animal life that is the basis of the self-centredness of human experience and behaviour, but which becomes sin only in man.[762]

Williamson may be correct in identifying self-centredness at the heart of human sin. That this is intrinsic to human nature, however, is an assumption not shared by Hebrews.[763] It has been argued in this thesis that Hebrews draws its understanding of what it means to be human from Psalm 8. A human, according to Psalm 8, is to be a creature in relationship with God, set apart to praise his name. Humanity is not intrinsically self-centred but was created to be God-centred. It is at precisely this point that Christ differs from other humans. Other humans fall short of the full dimensions of what humanity was created to be as expressed in Psalm 8. They are, at least in part, self-centred. Christ was not.

[760] Bending, "Difficult Texts," 35.
[761] D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 188-190; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 343; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 214.
[762] Williamson, "Sinlessness," 5.
[763] Cf. Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:199-200.

Williamson sees such a claim as detracting from "the unimpaired genuineness of the humanity,"[764] but that is only because he has started with a definition of humanity that entails sin as an intrinsic element. If, however, humanity is first understood from within the categories of Hebrews, as Hebrews itself expounds Psalm 8, then it is faith, not sin, which is the mark of true humanity. Christ's God-centredness—his sinlessness—does not detract from his full humanity but is, in fact, necessary to it.[765]

While the phrase κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι is a comprehensive affirmation of Christ's identification with humanity, it must be read in light of the surrounding material. 2:5-16 emphasises that Christ entered into the position of humanity and experienced the full limitations and suffering that are the lot of frail humans in a fallen world. There is no suggestion that Christ has responded to those circumstances in ways identical to other human beings.[766] The phrase κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι is, therefore, better understood as summarising the author's exposition of the fullness of Christ's humanity displayed in his faith.

That Christ is the truly faithful human is strongly implied also in the specific argument of 2:17. Following the assertion that Christ was made like his brothers in every way, the author gives the purpose: ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. This shows that the author intends κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι to be understood not only as a grounds for Christ's mercy but also as the context for Christ's faithfulness, most likely to be understood as faithfulness to God (see 7.3.2.3 below). Christ has become like his brothers in every struggle and difficulty that they face. He has fully entered into their suffering. But Hebrews never says that he acted the same way as his brothers in his temptation.[767] On the contrary, it affirms that he remains faithful. The frailty of

[764] Williamson, "Sinlessness," 5.
[765] Cf. D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 190; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 140-141.
[766] Cf. Ivor J. Davidson, "Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ: Moral Christologies and the Witness of Scripture," *IJST* 10.4 (2008): 387.
[767] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 114. The very fact that he was tempted, has raised questions for some, particularly in light of traditions found for instance in Mat 5:21-30 in which Jesus equated some forms of temptation with sin (cf. Robinson, *The Human Face of God*, 91-92). For the present thesis it is sufficient to note that the author of

humanity has been fully experienced by Christ but not in such a way that it compromises the faith that was also required for Christ to be a perfect human.[768]

In summary, Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2 does not entail participation in sin. Christ shares in everything intrinsic to humanity, yet his difference from his brothers is just as important. In sinning, fallen humans fail to live up to the true ideal of humanity and so have fallen short of the blessings that should have been theirs. Christ's ability to bring them back into their inheritance requires that he does not, like them, fall short through sin. Christ was a human like his brothers but also a human unlike his brothers. He was a perfect human who could stand with his brothers in their frailty and suffering and who could also show them perfect faith and lead them into their inheritance.

7.3.2 Merciful and Faithful as Developments of Frailty and Faith

Having explored the likely implications of the phrase κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, we will finally attend to the attributes attached to Christ's high priestly ministry. The reason that Christ needed to be made like his brothers in every way is expressed in the next part of the verse:

> ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

Hebrews understands Christ's temptation in a way that does not contradict his sinlessness (4:15). Further exploration of the relationship between sin and temptation belongs to the disciplines of philosophy and systematic theology. In that domain Shuster provides one possible path forward. She argues that there is a natural and right desire for suffering to stop. In such instances, when there are alternative paths of action that avoid suffering, one would expect Christ to be genuinely attracted by the relief they offered to his anguish, However, "there is no sin as along as he does not ever, even for a moment, will the accomplishing of that relief by disobedient, sinful means" (Marguerite Shuster, "The Temptation, Sinlessness, and Sympathy of Jesus: Another Look at the Dilemma of Hebrews 4:15," in *Perspectives on Christology*, ed. Marguerite Shuster and Richard Muller [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991], 197-209; cf. also Davidson, "Sinlessness," 372-398).

[768] Several commentators note that Christ's solidarity with humans is not compromised through this distinction but is rather strengthened by it. Vanhoye for instance writes: "Far from diminishing Christ's solidarity with us, the absence of all sin in his life reinforces that solidarity, because sin undermines solidarity. Every sin is an act of selfishness which creates division." (Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 159; cf. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux,* 2:94 ; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 116 ; Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 157).

The two adjectives ἐλεήμων and πιστός have generally been understood as the two core attributes of Christ's priestly ministry.[769] The present thesis suggests that those two attributes roughly correspond to the two core attributes of Christ's humanity developed in 2:5-16—frailty and faith.

7.3.2.1 Merciful

Christ's high priesthood is firstly defined by his being merciful. Several scholars have pointed out that such an attribute does not in and of itself presuppose Christ's humanity. Indeed, in the OT, it is God himself who is most frequently described as merciful.[770] The exact nature of the mercy envisioned in the present passage, however, must be defined by its context.

The first thing to note is that this assertion of Christ's mercy comes immediately after the insistence that it was necessary for Christ κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι and is at least part of the reason (ἵνα) that such identification was required. Christ's mercy also appears to be elaborated in the following verse. There, Christ's ability to help his people is grounded in his participation in the situation in which he helps them, namely that of testing/tempting. While Christ's help in 2:18 is likely to be understood partially in relation to the objective reality of propitiation,[771] the author also insists on Christ's subjective understanding of the human situation. It is as the one who has faced a comparable experience of testing as a human that Christ is held up as the one whom his people can turn to for help in their testing, confident that he understands their needs.

[769] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 149; Vanhoye, *New Commentary*, 81; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 76. Ellingworth notes a historical debate over whether ἐλεήμων stands alone or whether it, along with πιστός is to be taken as qualifying ἀρχιερεύς. He is however unable to find any proponents of the first view among modern commentators. That the adjectives are separated by γένηται suggests that they are to be taken as two separate attributes, but both qualifying Christ's priestly office (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 181).
[770] Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter*, 46-47.
[771] Schreiner, *Hebrews*, 110; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 40. Loader has argued against this, insisting that Christ's help is help not to sin rather than help for those who have sinned (Loader, "Revising High Priesthood," 268-269). If he is correct, the necessity of Christ's identification with his people is in no way impaired but perhaps more clearly emphasised.

It appears, therefore, that the concept of mercy, as it is developed in Hebrews 2:17-18, entails overtones of the empathy that the author of Hebrews will later make explicit (4:15).[772] Christ is merciful because he has experienced frail human life in a fallen world.[773]

7.3.2.2 Mercy and Priesthood

That an affirmation of Christ's identification and mercy would be tied to his high priestly office appears to run contrary to much of the emphasis in ancient Jewish thought regarding the high priest. The OT itself never makes commonality or compassion requisites for priesthood. Indeed, at times it explicitly depicts priests as different from their brothers, and not ruled by their compassion.[774] This is on display most forcefully in the two accounts that particularly set apart firstly the Levites and then the line of Aaron through Phineas.

Following the incident of the golden calf, Moses summons those who are לִיהוה (Ex 32:26). The Levites rally to him, and he commands them to slaughter the disobedient without regard to their relationship with them. When they have finished, Moses declares that their actions have consecrated them (מלאו ידכם/ἐπληρώσατε τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν) to the Lord (Ex 32:29). The significance of this event is again underlined in Deuteronomy 33, in which Moses' blessing of Levi includes:

> … who said of his father and mother,
>
> 'I regard them not';
>
> he disowned his brothers
>
> and ignored his children.
>
> For they [Levi] observed your [the Lord's] word
>
> and kept your covenant. (Deut 33:9, ESV)

[772] Such a correspondence accords with the common suggestion that 4:14-5:10 picks up and develops the significance of the term ἐλεήμων (see 7.3.2.3).
[773] Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:132.
[774] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 181; Morris, *Hebrews*, 29; Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 29..

For Levites, consecration to God's service came through their willingness to serve the Lord in defiance of their natural familial affections.

Specific promises of priesthood are similarly tied to Phinehas' slaughter of his fellow-Israelite, Zimri, and the Midianitess, Cozbi. While the relationship is not as close as parents or siblings, Phinehas is depicted as being jealous for God and so striking down sinful people. In response God bestows upon him a ברית כהנת עולם/διαθήκη ἱερατείας αἰωνία (Num 25:6-13).

According to these accounts, one of the defining marks of the levitical priesthood was precisely their refusal to be hindered by compassion and their fervour to carry out the Lord's will against sinful rebellion.

This insistence on the distinction of the high priest persists is strengthened in later Jewish writers.[775] Philo most clearly expresses this tendency, writing of the high priest that:

> And otherwise too, besides this consideration, the man who has been assigned to God, and who has become the leader of his sacred band of worshippers, ought to be disconnected with, and alienated from, all things of creation, not being so much the slave of the love of either parents, or children, or brothers, as either to omit or to delay any one of those holy actions, which it is by all means better should be done at once; and God commands the high priest neither to rend his clothes over his very nearest relations when they die, nor to take from his head the ensign of the priesthood, nor in short to depart from the holy place on any plea of mourning, that, showing proper respect to the place, and to the sacred ornaments with which he himself is crowned, he may show himself superior to pity, and pass the whole of his life exempt from all sorrow. (*Spec. Leg.* 1:114-115 [Yonge translation])[776]

[775] Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 116.
[776] C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo Judaeus, the Contemporary of Josephus*, trans. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854-55).

This exposition of the Levitical restrictions (cf. Lev 21:10-12) goes beyond prohibiting the outward expressions of mourning and insists that the high priest is to be "superior to pity" (κρείττων οἴκτου).

While this depiction of priesthood might differ substantially from that found in Hebrews, the reason Philo gives for the elevation of the high priest is illuminating:

> For the law designs that he should be the partaker of a nature superior to that of man; inasmuch as he approaches more nearly to that of the Deity; being, if one must say the plain truth, on the borders between the two, in order that men may propitiate God by some mediator, and that God may have some subordinate minister by whom he may offer and give his mercies and kindnesses to mankind. (*Spec. Leg.* 1:114-115 [Yonge translation])

This concept of the high priest as a mediator may explain both the common Jewish emphasis on his elevation, and Hebrews' emphasis on his identification with his brothers.[777] In regard to the OT priests, it was taken for granted that they were human. While Philo's language elevates the high priest to a super-human level, this is the elevation of one who was human prior to his consecration as high priest. Hebrews, likewise, takes for granted that Aaronic priests were taken from among men, sharing in their nature (5:1).

The starting point for Christ's priesthood is different. Hebrews emphasised in chapter 1, that Christ is the divine Son. From this starting point, what prevented Christ from being a priest was the very thing that other priests took for granted—a life of human nature and experience. While Hebrews is no less clear on the exalted status of Christ as high priest (see esp. 7:26-28), it emphasises Christ's sharing in humanity that he might be not only holy and glorious but also merciful. For the glorious Son to be a

[777] Bénétreau suggests that Christ as mediator is the central theme of Hebrews (Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:41). Neyrey takes a similar vein, though seeks to identify Christ more specifically in terms of a broker in a patron-client relationship (Jerome H. Neyrey, "Jesus the Broker in Hebrews: Insights from the Social Sciences," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students*, ed. Eric Farrel Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011], 145-146).

mediating high priest, he needed to know human frailty so that he might be one who truly understood his people's plight and through whom they could confidently approach God.[778]

7.3.2.3 Faithful

The second attribute of Christ as high priest is that he is πιστός. The significance of this term is better understood once its place in the structure of Hebrews' argument is appreciated. Since Vanhoye's foundational treatment of the structure of Hebrews, it has often been recognised that Hebrews can introduce two themes that will subsequently be developed in reverse order. That appears to be the case in the present verse. The significance of ἐλεήμων will be taken up in more detail from 4:14, but the author turns first to the theme of Christ as πιστός in 3:1-4:13, of which 3:1-6 form the foundational exhortation and 3:7-4:13 give an accompanying warning.[779]

The significance of this point for understanding 2:17 is first that Christ's faithfulness, as it is expounded in the following section, is not primarily faithfulness towards his people, but to the one who appointed him, that is, to God (3:2).[780] Ellingworth justifiably defines πιστός here as, "faithful in discharging an office entrusted to one by God."[781] Hebrews 3:1-6 compares Moses and Jesus as leaders appointed by God. While their roles and status are contrasted, both are commended as faithfully carrying out their respective tasks.[782]

Within the context of Hebrews 2:5-18, it has been argued that Hebrews is expounding Psalm 8, in which humanity was created by God and appointed to serve as his vice-regents over earth. This

[778] Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 29-32.
[779] David Peterson, "The Incarnation and Christian Living," in *The Word Became Flesh: Evangelicals and the Incarnation*, ed. David Peterson (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 96; Small, *Characterization*, 278; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 54, 64-65; Roderigues, "Thinking Systematically," 53; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 76.
[780] Vanhoye, "Christ as High Priest," 35-36. Contra Bénétreau, *Hébreux*, 1:133-134. A number of commentators have suggested that both faithfulness to God and to people are in view (Bruce, *Hebrews*, 88; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 104; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 150; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 64). While it is possible that the unqualified term has broader reference, at least the primary significance in 2:17 is likely faithfulness to God.
[781] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 182.
[782] There may be an allusion also to 1 Sam 2:35 in which the faithful priest ministers before God doing his will (Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 65; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 182).

ministry, however, was only theirs in so far as they continued in relationship with the one who gave it. Humanity only had power to rule when they looked to God in faith.

The language of "faithfulness" in 2:17 is distinct from the concept of faith as it has thus far been expressed.[783] The faith humanity was called to have in Psalm 8 was about trusting in and calling upon God. Christ's faithfulness does not make him the subject of faith; rather, it expresses that he is reliable, the one in whom God can place faith/confidence.[784] Just as Christ's mercy, however, was a further development of his frailty, it is possible that Christ's faithfulness should here be understood as a development of his faith. As the one who has taken Psalm 8 as his own and fully inherited its blessing, who submitted to suffering, and who declared, "I will trust in him," Christ is here the one whose faith is expressed in faithfulness.[785] His trust in God makes him fully reliable to God as the perfect man, and now the perfect high priest. While certainty is impossible, the way Hebrews 2:17 concludes the discussion on Christ's humanity in 2:5-16 suggests that Christ's faithfulness is first to be understood in relation to his identity as a human who has trusted his father and done his father's will.

7.3.2.4 Summary

While it would go beyond the evidence to push for a rigid equivalence between frailty and faith and merciful and faithful, the above examination suggests that there is a general correspondence between the attributes of Christ's humanity as developed from Psalm 8 and the attributes of priesthood expressed in 2:17. As a human, Christ has entered into frailty in a way that facilitates genuine mercy, allowing him to come alongside his people as their high priest. He has also expressed true faith in God through that frailty and, in so doing, is recognised as faithful and so qualified to draw near to God's

[783] While πιστός can sometimes be used of someone who exercises faith rather than someone worthy of faith, (cf. Easter, *Faith*, 6-7; Rudolf Bultmann, "πιστεύω, κτλ.," *TDNT*, 204, 214-215, LSJ, definition B), this meaning is less common (for NT examples see John 20:27; 1 Pet 1:21; Acts 16:15) and the development of the idea in 3:1-6 clarifies that here it means "faithful" rather than the "exercising faith."

[784] Vanhoye has suggested that clarity could be achieved by translating "trustworthy" rather than "faithful" (Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 113).

[785] Cf. Koester, "To live by faith is to be faithful" (Koester, *Hebrews*, 126).

throne as his approved high priest. The office of high priest has been described as one of mediation between God and man; as such, the high priest needs to be acceptable to both parties. Hebrews 2 suggests that Christ's humanity equips him in both directions of his mediation. Such a claim is not to undermine the importance of Christ's divinity expounded in Hebrews 1 but only to suggest that Christ, as one who has known frailty and, in that frailty, expressed faith, can readily relate to both his brothers and God. This depiction of the human high priest lays the foundation for Hebrews' ongoing exposition of priesthood in subsequent chapters.

7.4 Conclusion

Hebrews 2:17-18 anchors the theme of Christ's high priesthood in 2:5-16, and thus in the full dimensions of Christ's humanity. It reiterates that Christ is the one who has entered into the state of fallen humans, and it expresses in sweeping terms the totality of that identification. While it does not suggest any moral corruption within Christ, it strongly asserts that he shared in the fullness of physical and psychological human life. This reality is then applied in his priesthood. The one who knew the frailty of mortal, fleshly humanity and who expressed faith in that context is the one who is capable of genuine mercy and who has proven faithfulness, and so the one who can be the perfect high priest, mediating between God and humanity. This assurance is to give the audience confidence in Christ by showing that he can both perfectly understand and genuinely help them in their own trials.

8. Conclusions: What Defines Christ's Humanity in Hebrews 2:5-18?

The book of Hebrews is unique among New Testament writings in its sustained and explicit teaching concerning the humanity of Christ, and 2:5-18 is the foundational exposition on this theme. This thesis has therefore examined Hebrews 2:5-18 in an attempt to better understand how the author defines Christ's humanity, and how it is related to other themes in the passage.

We have observed that Hebrews 2:5-18 offers an exposition of Psalm 8, drawing on its depiction of humanity. In that psalm, humanity was defined both by their seemingly insignificant status in this world and by the position of glory granted to them in their relationship with YHWH—a relationship in which they trusted and praised him and served as his vice-regents, maintaining order on the earth.

Hebrews 2:5-9 declares that Christ has entered into the position of humanity. While 1:1-2:4 proclaimed Christ's glory as the divine Son, 2:5-9 speaks of a specifically human position of glory. It is a glory for which humanity was created, but from which, Hebrews says, they have fallen short. Christ is presented as having entered into human frailty as a mortal human lower than the angels. While Christ remained human, however, he did not remain weak. As a human, Christ was able to inherit not only the position of glory given to pre-fall humanity and reflected in Psalm 8 but even the eschatological heightening of that glory. Christ the human reigns higher than angels over the world to come.

According to Hebrews 2:5-9, Psalm 8 is thus abundantly fulfilled in Christ. Hebrews declares this fulfilment not to the exclusion of the inheritance of other humans but as the means to it. Christ's exaltation affirms that God's promise is being realised and is now made available to other humans through him.

Hebrews 2:10-13 continues to speak about the human journey towards glory, a journey in which Christ is depicted as the perfect human leader. Christ's leadership as the ἀρχηγός is still a position of

authority, but it is also presented as one defined by identification with his people. Christ is the leader who was perfected through suffering, who is one with his people, and who calls them “brothers.”

As a leader who identifies with his people, Christ is the fulfilment of types of leadership in the OT, most specifically seen in the prophetic and kingly offices, as expressed in the OT citations in 2:12-13. This model of leadership was ideally defined not only by authority over others but as a model of faithfully responding to God in the same circumstances as those who were led. Hebrews presents Christ as a leader who suffers like his people, but in that suffering has set them an example of a faithful response to God. He declares his faith in God and his praise in the midst of the congregation, modelling for them the truest expression of humanity. He is, therefore, one who not only reigns over his people but who has gone before them as a perfect example to follow on the path to glory.

Throughout Hebrews 2:5-18, the author gives various depictions of salvation, and these too are grounded in the humanity of Christ. The problems facing humanity are described in diverse ways, as are the images used for salvation. There is, however, a unity to these depictions. The human need for salvation flows from the reality of human sin and divine judgement. Human sin cut humanity off from God and from the dominion they were to enjoy in him. Human sin brings God’s judgement in death and wrath. Human sin, and the divine judgement against it, therefore places humanity in fear under the power of the devil, the avenger who holds power over death.

To answer this problem of human sin and divine judgement, Hebrews declares that Christ became a human. His humanity was emphatically mortal—the same blood and flesh shared by his brothers, capable of the same suffering and the same death. While Christ did not sin, as a mortal human, he was qualified to take the place of humanity under judgement. Christ endured in his own human flesh the punishment due to his brothers, and because of this, he is able to set them free from sin, death, wrath, and fear of the devil and to bring them into their inheritance in glory.

Christ's humanity is central to human salvation in Hebrews, yet this thesis finds that it is not intrinsically salvific; rather, Christ's acts of salvation were necessarily human. Furthermore, contrary to those who have emphasised the glorification of Christ's humanity as the centre of his salvific work, we find that, while Christ's glorification was a necessary part of his work, Hebrews 2:5-18 emphasises Christ's human death as the basis for salvation. Christ's weakness was not an impediment to his work—it was a central part of his humanity and his mission.

Finally, Hebrews 2:17-18 bring together the concepts of Christ's humanity expounded in 2:5-16 but does so in connection with a new concept—that of priesthood. His humanity as it has been developed from Psalm 8, and in relation to themes of human leadership and substitutionary sacrifice, becomes foundational to the concept of priesthood from its introduction and lays the parameters for the further elaboration of that theme within the letter.

Hebrews 2:17-18's introduction of priesthood furthermore brings new angles to some of the facets of Christ's humanity already found in 2:5-16. Christ's human nature had already explicitly been characterised by identification, but in 2:17-18, this identification is seen to encompass not just physical frailty but an internal nature that understands firsthand the reality of temptation. Similarly, while Christ's humanity had been described in terms of frailty and faith, his priesthood is defined by mercy and faithfulness. While these are not exact parallels, they further develop the connection of Christ in his humanity both with the humans to whom he can sympathise and with God in whose service he is faithful.

While recognising Christ's humanity as a dominant theme in Hebrews 2:5-18 is nothing novel, this thesis has sought to progress from that basic acknowledgement to a clearer understanding of what the humanity of Christ is within the argument of Hebrews 2:5-18.

A firmer grasp of Christ's humanity within the framework that Hebrews itself presents avoids some of the difficulties that have arisen from applications of pre-formed concepts of humanity to Hebrews. If humanity is defined in Hebrews' own terms, then it does not contradict Hebrews' depiction of Christ's sinlessness, nor is there anything in this portrait that would rule out his pre-existence. Christ's humanity is first and foremost defined by his having experienced human weakness, expressed human faith, died a human death, and now living as the human leader over his people, who follow on the path to the human glory he has already inherited.

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