Hebrews for non-Hebrews

# Lecture notes

## Introduction

### Exegesis, in general:

Definition of exegesis, its relation to hermeneutics; the exegetical question, the essential steps of an exegetical analysis. Exegetical papers and their place in communicating exegetical analyses.

### The importance of the context

Hebrews as a book for Jews, that is, for hellenistic Jews.

### The author

Very probably the author is a man (cf. the masculine present participle of dihgeomai in με γὰρ διηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος, Heb. 11.32). Also, according to Heb. 2.2-3, the author seems to have had good, yet relatively distant relation to Christ and the first leaders of the Church, thus he belonged either, very possibly, to the first generation of Christians, or, also possibly, to the second generation (more probably so; however, both fit well with Paul’s own life and personality).

He certainly is from Paul’s circle of friends, since he knows something of the testimony and lives of Christ and early Christian leaders and since he knows Timothy, one of Paul’s closest friends (Heb. 13.22). He is mentioning in Heb. 13.24 “greetings from those from Italy”, so there is a certain connection with Christians in Italy (there were a number of Christians who went to Italy, to Rome, for example, while having their primary residence somewhere else, like Aquilas and Priscilla, who were from Ephesus, yet visited and worked in Corinth and in Rome, as well; also the author could speak of Roman believers, as such, as well).

Apart from that the author is quite close to Paul’s theology, as it can be found in the main Pauline epistles (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians). Among the recurring theological themes one could find in Hebrews the theme of faith (pistiv), righteousness (dikaiosunh), perfection or maturity (teleiwthv), discipline (paideia), priesthood (ajrciereuv), sacrifices (qusia) etc.

The list of possible authors includes Apollos (suggested by Luther), Barnabas (suggested by Tertullian, Jerome); Paul (suggested by Pantaenus, via Eusebius of Caesarea, via Clement of Alexandria; also by Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ephraem Syrus; Augustine), a secretary of Paul (Origen). Ellingworth says that the idea of Pauline authorship of Hebrews is now almost universally abandoned, yet this is not quite true.[[1]](#footnote-1) There are authors who would see this differently[[2]](#footnote-2).

The literary style is not Paul’s style (not as direct as his, nor as rude, at times, according to Origen; cf. William Lane), yet the theology is quite close to that of Paul.

However, as Guthrie notes, even its theology is slightly different from Paul’s, although the author of the epistle does not disagrees with him[[3]](#footnote-3)… (Guthrie, Introduction, 673).

Look at Ellingworth’s commentary.

* The author is certainly part of Paul’s circle of friends.
* He knows Timothy.
* He knows the leaders of the church.
* He is close to Paul’s theology… faith, covenant, suffering (although the author might favor different emphases on these concepts, in comparison with Paul).

### The audience

Trotter mentions several possible recipients: a group of converted priests in Jerusalem (Spicq), a group of leaders expelled from Rome (Manson), some believers at Qumran.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Whoever they might have been they were likely a group of believers of Jewish descent, probably meeting in houses, who were severely under pressure to leave Christianity and turn to the Jewish Law.

Q: What are Trotter’s arguments?

See, Trotter’s gentile audience arguments:

1.     reference to families sharing the same flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14) and children’s duty to submit to their parents’ discipline (Heb. 12:5–11);

2.     the analogy of the field (Heb. 6:7–8);

3.     the contrast between milk and solid food (Heb. 5:12–14);

4.     the typological language concerning shadows and realities (Heb. 8:5; 9:23; 10:1);

5.     the use of the word στοιχεῖα (Heb. 5:12); and

6.     the exhortation to be faithful in marriage (Heb. 13:4).[[5]](#footnote-5)

Ellingworth discusses the very title, prov eJbraiouv.

Q: what is the best way to translate this title and why?

According to both Trotter and Ellingworth the readers were a mixed community, of both Jews and Gentile believers (possibly of earlier converts to Judaism, i.e. proselytes).[[6]](#footnote-6)

Q: what argument do you find the most convincing, to this effect, and what argument do you find to be less convincing?

### The historical context

### The cultural context

### Style and Genre

Trotter notes several stylistic, rhetoric elements in Hebrews indicating that the author of Hebrews benefitted from an elevated and thorough education in Greek language and rhetorics[[7]](#footnote-7):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rhetoric feature** | | **Reference** |
| Alliteration | | Heb. 1:1 |
| Anaphora | | Heb. 11 (*passim*) |
| Antithesis | | Heb. 7:18–21, 28; 10:11–12 |
| Assonance | | Heb. 10:26–27 |
| Asyndeton | | Heb. 11:33–34, 37 |
| Brachylogy | | Heb. 12:24 |
| Chiasm | | Heb. 7:23–24; 2:17 |
| **Diatribe** | | Heb. 3:16–18 |
| Ellipsis | | Heb. 12:25 |
| Hendiadys | | Heb. 5:2 |
| Hyperbaton | | Heb. 2:9 |
| Isocolon | | Heb. 1:3 |
| Litotes | | Heb. 4:15 |
| Paranomasia | | Heb. 5:8 |
| **Rhythm** | |  |
|  | **Reverse Paeon** | Heb. 1:1 |
|  | **Anapest** | Heb. 1:6 |
|  | **Iambus** | Heb. 2:1 |
|  | **Trochee** | Heb. 12:8 |

However, a comparison of Hebrews with Paul’s vocabulary from the undebated Pauline epistles (i.e. leaving aside the pastoral epistles that share a vocabulary of their own, specific), would emphasize striking differences as has been shown by Ellingworth[[8]](#footnote-8) (the first figures indicate Pauline use, the second indicate their presence in Hebrews).

He finds relatively significant overlaps between the two only in the area of expressions of emotion (παρακαλέω 52/4, παράκλησις 20/3), in terms related to life and death (cf. πιστεύω 48/2, πίστις 109/32, πιστός 16/5), power and conflict (ὁρκωμοσία 0/4; ὀμνύω 0/7), related to the people of God (cf. πρεσβύτερος 0/1; see σπέρμα 16/3; κληρονομέω 6/4, κληρονομία 5/2, κληρονομός 7/3, συγκληρονομός 2/1; λαός 11/13), liturgical terms (εἰσέρχομαι 4/17; κατασκευάζω 0/6; ἁγιόω 72/19 (τὸ ἅγιον/τὰ ἅγια 0/5); αἷμα 12/21; θυσία 5/15; καθαρίζω 2/4, καθαρισμός 0/1, καθαρός 1/1, καθαροτής 0/1; λειτουργέω 1/1, λειτουργία 3/2, λειτουργικός 0/1, λειτουργός 3/2; εὐλογέω 7/7, εὐλογία 9/2, προσφορά 2/5; προφήτης 13/2), in the aria of salvation theology (ἀπολύτρωσις 7/2; ἐπαγγελία 24/14; ἐπουράνιος 11/6; μετάνοια 3/3; συνείδησις 14/5; ἄγγελος 12/13; αἰών 29/15; ἁμαρτάνω 15/2, ἀμαρτία 61/25, ἀμαρτωλός 6/2; γή 14/11; εἰρήνη 39/4; ἐλπίς 32/5, ἐλπίζω 15/1; ἔργον 48/9; ἡγέομαι 9/6; καρδία 50/11; κληρονομέω 6/4, κληρονομία 5/2, κληρόνομος 7/3; μαρτυρέω 6/8, μαρτύς 6/2; μένω 13/6; πειράζω 7/5, πειρασμός 3/1; σωτηρία 16/7; υἱός 41/24; ὑπομένω 2/4, ὑπομονή 13/2.

The author of Hebrews has words he likes in particular, such as ἀδύνατος 2/4; ἅπαξ 3/8, ἐφάπαξ 2/3; κρείσσων/κρείττων 4/13, and even words he coined for the purpose of his style and argument, that cannot be found in other Greek writings (cf. ἀγενεαλόγητος 7:3; αἱματεκχυσία 9:22; εὐπερίστατος 12:1; μισθαποδοσία 2:2, 10:35, 11:26; μισθαποδότης 11:6; πρόσχυσις 11:28; συγκακουχέομαι 11:25; τελειωτής 12:2)[[9]](#footnote-9).

Letter or sermon?

Hebrews displays certain signs of a letter: it start with a careful prologue, like 1 John, with a proemium (1.1-4), has a good rhetoric structure.

### The structure

Generally speaking, one can notice a two part structure of this epistle:

I. Theology: 1:1-10:18,

II. Exhortation, 10:19-13:17

As a letter, Hebrews displays a specific format, yet without any *praescriptio*, i.e., letter introduction (which did include the mention of the writer: *superscriptio*, of the addressee: *adscriptio*, and a short greeting, *salutatio*);

*proemium* (short presentation, 1:1–4)

*narratio* (outline of content, 1:5–2:16)[[10]](#footnote-10)

*propositio* (theme, 2:17–18)

*probatio* (arguments, 3:1–12:29)

*peroratio* (conclusions and advice, 13:1–21)

*conclusio, postscriptum* (final words, 13:22–25)

There might be present a certain internal parallelism (chiasmus):

Introduction (1:1-4)

**A.** Eschatology: Jesus and the angels (1:5--2:18)

**B.** Ecclesiology: Jesus is the high priest (3:1--5:10)

**C.** Worship: Jesus is the true sacrifice (5:11--10:39)

**B'.** Ecclesiology: faith and perseverance (11:1--12:13)

**A'.** Eschatology: holiness and eternal inheritance (12:14--13:19)

Conclusion (13:20-25).[[11]](#footnote-11)

However, such parallels might be a little too *eisegetical* in nature.

In terms of main arguments, the letter addresses three main issues:[[12]](#footnote-12)

Introduction (1:1–4)

*Argument 1*,

Jesus is superior to angels and to OT leaders (Moses, Josua, prophets, 1:5–4:13)

*Argument 2*,

Jesus is the real high priest, more important than Aaron and Levi (4:14–10:18).

*Argument 3*,

Jesus leads the believer to a victorious life of faith and holiness, of perseverance amidst persecutions (10:19–13:19)

Conclusion (13:20–21)

Ending (13:22–25)

Spread within the argument, there are 5 main warning sections:

**1st warning:** do not neglect such a great salvation (2:1-4), Διὰ τοῦτο δεῖ περισσοτέρως προσέχειν... μήποτε παραρυῶμεν.

**2nd warning:** do not harden your hearts, nor be unfaithful (3:12-13), Βλέπετε, ἀδελφοί, μήποτε ἔσται ἔν τινι ὑμῶν καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας

**3rd warning:** you should have been teachers, by now (5:11-6:12), καὶ γὰρ ὀφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον

**4th warning:** beware disobedience (10:18-39), Ἑκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας, οὐκέτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἀπολείπεται θυσία,

**5th warning:** Listen to God (12:15, 18-29, cf. 25): Βλέπετε μὴ παραιτήσησθε τὸν λαλοῦντα

Q: Indentify the verbs in the warning passages. How many verbs are used in the imperative mood?

Another possible structure highlights, in a pauline manner, two main parts, i.e. a theological and a practical one:

I. **Theology**: **Christ is superior** (1:1-10:18)

A. Christ is superior to the OT prophets (1:1-4)

B. Christ is superior to angels (1:5-2:18)

**First warning, 2:1-4**

C. Christ is superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)

**Second warning, 3:7-4:13**

D. Christ is superior to Aaron’s priesthood (4:14-7:28)

**Third warning, 5.11-6:8**

E. Christ is superior to the Law covenant (8:1-10:18)

**II.** **Exhortation**

A. Participate to the new altar, of Jesus (10:19-31)

**Fourth warning, 20.26-31**

B. Suffer persecution (10:32-39)

C. Follow the example of the heroes of faith, (11:1-40)

D. Accept God’s discipline (12:1-29)

**Fifth warning, 12:15, 18-29 (25)**

E. Live up to your confession of faith (13:1-17)

**III. Final teachings, greetings** (*peroratio, salutatio*, 13:18-25)

A. Prayer request (13:18-19)

B. Prayer for readers (13:20-21)

C. Final advice (13:22)

D. News about Timothy (13:23)

E. Final blessings, greetings (13:24-25)

### The theology of Hebrews

As John Calvin wrote “there is … no book in the Holy Scriptures which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which He offered by His death, so abundantly treats of the use of ceremonies as well as of their abrogation, and, in a word, so fully explains that Christ is the end of the law.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

# ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ (UBS-4th)

## Chapter 1-4, Jesus is superior to angels and prophets

### Chapter 1

**Chs.1-2,**

**Introduction of the main themes,**

**Explanation, Exegesis on Psa. 2**

**Warning**

**Exegesis of Psa. 8**

#### 1.1-4, Introduction to the main themes of the letter / sermon.

**The Prophets and the Son**

Ultimately, God has spoken by his Son, after he spoke in many various ways and through many, various persons or beings. Writing in very elegant style, the author composed here a quite classical introduction, well rounded rhetorically, in which he mentions, in a nut-shell, the majore themes of the letter.

Among them one should mention the progressive revelation of God’s plans through prophets, the climactic importance of the Son’s life and message, the difference between the times of the fathers and the last days period, at the present. The Son is heir of the Universe (of everything: the theme of heirs/inheritance this is a human-related theme of utmost importance in the Bible), and he is superior to angels, for his nature – or Name – is higher than theirs (being divine he has created everything and he is the only genuine representation of God’s nature and person in the material world), and for being sitted at the right hand of the heavenly greatness (of God’s glory) as main representative of God. This particular position was obtained after he has performed the cleasing of sins for the whole humanity.

**Exegesis: is this sort of an epistolary proemium?**

1 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς

In many ways and many times [in the] past God

λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις

[having] spoken to the fathers through the prophets.

2 ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν

[now] at the end of these days [he] has spoken to us

ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων,

through [a] Son, whom he made heir of everything,

δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας· 3 ὃς ὢν

through whom also he made the ages, [as] he [was] being

ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ,

the brightness of [his] glory and the genuine mark of his being,

φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ,

[and has] made all through the utterance of his power,

καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν

the cleansing of sins having done [he] sat

ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς,

at the right [hand] of the greatness in the high [things, places]

4 τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ

so much higher becoming than the angels as

διαφορώτερον παρ᾽ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

[a] higher than them has inherited [a] name.

**The exegetical question (ex.q.) and its answer (ex.a.):**

Ex.q.: What is the author trying to say to his primary audience?

Ex.a.:

I, myself being an educated speaker, like you, I am writing to tell you that there is no point in turning back to the Law (usually understood as having given through Moses and through angels) or even to the prophets, as such, because the Son has completed the prophets message, is higher than the angels at Sinai, has created the world, being fully divine, eternal, and fully human and, as human Messiah, he is now glorified sitting on high as God’s right hand.

This is an introduction, obviously. A very inteligent and complex introductory statement. Then, there comes the evidence. Maybe it is a bit surprising that the author speaks first of all, so much of angels. However, for the first century Jews it made sense.

**The hermeneutical question (h.q.) and its answer (h.a.):**

What is the text saying to the contemporary reader?

The divine author lets the contemporary reader to see in the text a worthy message and example, pointing out that whenever anyone might feel under pressure to leave Christ aside and turn to the Jewish religion of the Law (cf. rabbinic Christianity, 7th day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses), or being ready to consider Jesus as one among other great religious leaders or priests (like angels or divine men, as in New Age, Mormonism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.), we should remember that Jesus is unique, the ultimate revelation of God, that he is divine and human, as well, being creator of all, eternal God, kingly Son and absolute ruler – both as God and as a human.

#### 1.5-14, The Son is superior to the angels (I)

**Exegesis: why is the Son superior to the angels?**

This topic is discussed in a two wing section, the two parts being 1.5-14 and 2.5-18, and between them being included 2.1-4, a warning section.

Modern Christians find this section, quite usually, difficult to understand because there is difficult to see the point of comparing the Son with angels.

Actually, there is a larger contrast here, one between humankind and angels, and one between the Son (seen as God’s Son and as the Messiah) and the angels. The two parallels have something or rather, better, someone, in common, the Son of God. The context of the parallels has two levels, an earthly one and a heavenly one, and these parallels are seen in wide perspective, including the past, the present and the future of mankind and of the whole Universe.

One major point that usually goes unnoticed is the fact that angels were considered the ones through whom the Law has been given on Mt. Sinai. Demonstrating that they are inferior to Christ, amount to showing that Jesus’ covenant is more important than the Sinai covenant.

The Incarnation is holding an important place, too. The issue here is the nature of the Messiah and his links with humanity. The kind of language used in Bible for Jesus is the God language (Creator language, worshipping language), and the Son language of the Incarnation, and as well the Universal-King language, it is not simply the creature language used to describe the angels.

The angels are being made, or created in order to serve and worship God. Among their duties is to help (or minister to) the humans. Only the Son and the humans are the heirs of the world to come, the Son being King over the entire Universe (there is no heir language used for the angels).

The scripture describes the angels with creature language, whilst the Son – Messiah is described with sonship language, with creator language, and with human king language.

It is important to note, also, that the author of Hebrews uses a Messianic theology based on David’s Psalms in order to clarify and discuss the meanings of the revelations in the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy).

**The Son is Superior to Angels – I: sonship language (is born not made), power language (is exalted by God) and worshipping language (deserves worship).**

5 **\*** Τίνι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων,

To whom, thus, said [he] ever, of the angels,

**Υἱός μου εἶ σύ,**

You are my son, Ps. 2.7-8

**ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε;**

Today I have given birth to you…

καὶ πάλιν,

and further

**Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα,**

I will be to him a father, 2 Sam. 7.14, 2 Cron. 17.12

**καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν;**

and he will be for me a son.

6 **\*** ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν

οἰκουμένην, λέγει,

And when he brings the firstborn into the world [he] says:

**Καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.**

And let worship him all the angels of God.

**1.6** Psalm 97.7, Deut. 32.43 (LXX)

**1,7** Psalm 104,4.

**1,8-9** Psalm 45,7-8.

**1,10-12** Psalm 102,26-28.

**Exegesis: study the use of the OT in the NT:**

**Angels are described through a creation language… (also an exegetical problem)**

7 **\*** καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει,

And [whilst] to the angels says he,

**Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα**

[God] is making his angels [into] spirits / winds

**καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα,**

and his servants [into] flames of fire.

**The Son is described with divine, kingship and sonship language**

8 πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν,

To the Son [he says]

**Ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος,**

Your throne, God, is from eternity to eternity.

**καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου2**.

and the scepter of justice is the sceptre of your kingdom.

9 **\*** **ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν·**

[since] you loved righteousness and hated lawlesness.

**διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σεc** **ὁ θεὸςd** **ὁ θεός σουe**

for this [reason] has annointed you God, your God,

**ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους[[14]](#footnote-14) σου.**

[with] oil of rejoicing above [more than] you companions.

10 καί,

And

**Creator - language for the Son…**

**Σὺ κατ᾽ ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας,**

You from the beginning are, lord, [you] laid the earth

foundations

**καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σού εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί·**

and the work of your hands are the heavens.

11 **αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις,**

They are perishing, [yet] you will last [always]…

**καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται,**

and all like a garment will grow old

12 **\*** **καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἑλίξεις3** **αὐτούς,**

and you will roll them like a mantle,

ὡς ἱμάτιον **καὶ4** **ἀλλαγήσονται·**

like a garment you will change [it].

**σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ**

you are the same [one]

**καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν.**

and your years will not end.

**King-like language for the Son, as the Messiah, i.e. the human leader acknowledged by God…**

13 **\*** πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε,

To whom has he ever said, of angels,

**Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου,**

Be sited at my right side

**ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου;f**

until indeed [I] will place your enemies footstolll under you feet?

**Exegesis: angels and humans: only humans are heirs…**

14 **\*** οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν

Are not all serving spirits for ministering

ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας **κληρονομεῖν** σωτηρίαν;**g**

being sent, for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

### Chapter 2

Warning for obedience to the gospel they heard. Comparison with angels: Jewish tradition said that at the Sinai, Moses and the people were listening not only to God, but also – and mainly, to the words of angels.

#### 2.1-4, Warning: do not neglect this great salvation of Jesus

After a first argument that the Son is greater than angels (implying that his covenant is greater than the covenant of the Law), there comes a first warning section, in 2.1-4. The warning is based on a re-iteration of the punishment received by those who did not obey the first covenant, arguing that in a similar way, if not more, will be punished those who disobey the son.

Christians should, thus, pay attention to they way they listen to God’s new commands, so that they should find themselves drifting away, progressively and unnoticed (2.1).

In the same way those who did not listen to the angels, at the Sinai, were punished, likewise people not listening to Jesus would be angels by not listening to Jesus would be disciplined. Here, the one who gives the revelation is greater, because it was given by the Lord, confirmed by the first hand witnesses, and then by the signs, miracles, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, this is a salvation much greater than the one presented by angels on mount Sinai.

It is interesting to note in what words is presented the certainty of our salvation: it has been taught by the Lord, confirmed by witnesses, further confirmed by God through signs, miracles and gifts imparted by the Spirit, according to his will. This stands somehow in contrast with the fact that the word of the angels at Sinai has been confirmed and made steadfast (or reinforced) by the God’s rightful justice for those who were disobedient.

1 Διὰ τοῦτο δεῖ περισσοτέρως προσέχειν ἡμᾶς τοῖς

For this reason we must even more keep

ἀκουσθεῖσιν, μήποτε παραρυῶμεν.

those things we heard, lest we should go astray (drift away)…

2. εἰ γὰρ ὁ δι᾽ ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος ἐγένετο βέβαιος καὶ

For, if the word through angels was confirmed (made firm) and

πᾶσα παράβασις καὶ παρακοὴ ἔλαβεν ἔνδικον μισθαποδοσίαν,

all tresspass and disobedience received its rightful punishment

3 πῶς ἡμεῖς ἐκφευξόμεθα τηλικαύτης ἀμελήσαντες σωτηρίας,

How will we escape such a great salvation neglecting

ἥτις ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι διὰ τοῦ κυρίου

that from the beginning [is] received, being told by the Lord,

ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐβεβαιώθη,

[and] by those who listened to him, to us [was] confirmed

4 συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ

bringing testimony to God with signs and also miracles and

ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν

various powers and the gifts (imparted) of the Holy Spirit

αὐτοῦ θέλησιν.

according to his willing.

#### 2.5-18, On Jesus’ leadership, on men and angels.[[15]](#footnote-15) Ps.8 and the history of an idea (Iov, Ps.8, Ps.139, Heb.2).

This section represent an exegesis on Psa. 8, another example of the Davidic messianism of the author of Hebrews. It starts with a re-iteration of the issue of eternal or future inheritance: the world of the future will be inherited by mankind.

The argument builds then on the Psa. 8.5-7, a text that allows an interesting study on theme transformation or development in the Bible. The text appears for the first time in Job, 7.17-18.

17 τί γάρ ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι ἐμεγάλυνας αὐτὸν ἢ ὅτι προσέχεις τὸν νοῦν εἰς αὐτὸν 18 ἢ ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ ποιήσῃ ἕως τὸ πρωῒ καὶ εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν αὐτὸν κρινεῖς;

Then, in Psa. 8.5-6, the theme takes this form:

5 τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι μιμνῄσκῃ αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν; 6 ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους, δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν·

And, then, finally, in Heb.2.6b-8. Initially the question thus formulated was rather coming as a protest from Job’s part, in relation to the way God checked his life and carefully verified him, in order to reward or punish his acts, thoughts, and feelings.

For David, this kind of a formula becomes a good opportunity to ask about man’s fate and destiny, compared with that of the angels.

The author of Hebrews is focusing rather on David’s treatment of the theme, but brings further elements of insight and discussion, applying it to Jesus as the Messiah. Also, when discussing the meaning of “a little lower”, the author seems to favor a temporal reading “for a little while”, instead of the equally valid understanding of this as being position related, i.e. “a little bit lower”. Psalm 8 becomes then a short review of Jesus’ whole life: a little while lower than angels, but then, ascended up in glory, after suffering the cross. Christ is seen as the representative of humankind, in which Psa. 8 is already fulfilled, since, he has ascended to glory and waits now to see his enemies being placed at his feet.

The theology of the cross and of Christ’s suffering and death is linked to these verses, as well, as an explanation of the “little lower” formula. Christ was placed a little lower than angels, during his earthly life, and mostly during his suffering on the cross, in order to be given glory and honour afterwards because he has tasted death for all. The reasons of his suffering are given in vss. 9-10: it was fitting or proper for him, the one who will lead many sons to glory, to be perfected through suffering.

The world to come, the angels and the humans.

The history of a question: Job, Psalms, Hebrews.

5 Οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλοις ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν,

For not to the angels has been subjected the world to come

περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν. 6 διεμαρτύρατο δέ πού τις λέγων,

about which we are speaking; it has been confirmed where it says

**Τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμνῄσκῃ αὐτοῦ,**

what is man to remember him

**ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν;**

the son of man, to be concerned with him

7 **ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους,**

He placed him for a short time lower than angels.

**δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν1**,

with glory and honour did you crown him.

8 **\*\*** **πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ.b**

Everything you subjected under his feet.

ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξαι [αὐτῷ]**2** τὰ πάντα οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ

regarding the subjection to him, this “all” does not leave to him

ἀνυπότακτον. νῦν δὲ οὔπω ὁρῶμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα

[anything] not subject. Yet now we do not see that everything

ὑποτεταγμένα· 9 **\*** τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους

[is] subjected to him. One for a little while lower than angels

ἠλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου

placed, we see [indeed], Jesus – through [his] suffering of death,

δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον, ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ**3** ὑπὲρ

glory and honour receiving, because through God’s grace for all

παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου.**c**

he tasted death.

**A Theology of Blessing the Heroes, the archegos**

10 Ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι᾽ ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα,

It was proper for him, being the one through whom all [came] and for whom all [was created]

πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα **τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας**

many sons to glory leading, the beginer / pioneer of their salvation

αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.**d** 11 **\*** ὅ τε γὰρ ἁγιάζων καὶ

through sufferings to be perfected. Because he who sanctifies

οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες· δι᾽ ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται

and those sanctified are all from one [descending]. For this reason / cause he is not ashamed

[[16]](#footnote-16)

ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν 12 **\*** λέγων,

to call them brothers, saying

[the brother imagery]

**Ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου,**

I will proclaim your name to my brothers

**ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε,**

in the middle of the congregation I will sing hymns to you.

13 **\*** καὶ πάλιν,

And further

**Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ,**

I will be trusting him…

**Exegesis: Jesus, as son – and spiritual father with his human children, the meaning of sarx and haima, of being partakers in flesh and blood, i.e. being beings with a material body.**

καὶ πάλιν,

and further

[The father / mother imagery]

**Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παιδία ἅ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός.e**

Look, here I am, me and the children given to me by God.

14 **\*** ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παιδία κεκοινώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός,

Since, then, children have in common (with parents?) blood and flesh

καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως **μετέσχεν** τῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ

also he likewise has taken part to them, so that by

θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ᾽

death should make ineffective the one having the power of death

ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον, 15 καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους, ὅσοι φόβῳ

that is the Devil and free those who by fear of death

θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας.

for all their life were forced to being slaves.

16 **\*** οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται ἀλλὰ σπέρματος

It’s clear thus that not with angels was he concerned, but with

Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται. 17 **\*** ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς

the offspring of Abraham was he concerned. It was proper to be

ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ

made in the likeness of all his brothers, so that he may have pity

πιστὸς **ἀρχιερεὺς[[17]](#footnote-17)** τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι

and a faithfull great priest in relation to things of God to atone

τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ. 18 **\*** ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς

for the sins of the people. In what he thus suffered himself

πειρασθείς, δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι.**f**

being tested, he is able those [being] tested to help.

### Structured text of Hebrews

**PROS EBRAIOUS**

#### 1.Introduction: the prophets and the son

**P**olumerw=j kai\ polutro/pwj

pa/lai

o**(** Qeo\j lalh/saj toi=j patra/sin e**)**n toi=j profh/taij, **1-2**

e**)**p' e**)**sxa/tou tw=n h**(**merw=n tou/twn

**[o( Qeo\j] e)la/lhsen h(mi=n e)n ui(%=,**

o**(**\n e**)**/qhke klhrono/mon pa/ntwn,

di' ou**(**= kai\ tou\j ai**)**w=naj e**)**poi/hsen:

**1-3** o**(**\j w**)**\n a**)**pau/gasma th=j do/chj

kai\ xarakth\r th=j u**(**posta/sewj au**)**tou=,

fe/rwn te ta\ pa/nta t%= r**(**h/mati th=j duna/mewj au**)**tou=,

di' e**(**autou= kaqarismo\n poihsa/menoj

tw=n a**(**martiw=n h**(**mw=n

e**)**ka/qisen e**)**n deci#= th=j megalwsu/nhj e**)**n u**(**yhloi=j,

**1-4**

tosou/t% krei/ttwn geno/menoj tw=n a**)**gge/lwn,

o**(**/s% diaforw/teron par' au**)**tou\j

keklhrono/mhken o**)**/noma.

From old times to the new “old days”

The prophets and a / the Son

The shining visible glory and the visible inprint/mark/footprint

From the divine creation to the eternal inheritance

Angels – a term of comparison, not superiors, rather deputies.

#### 2.Argument: the Son and the angels

**1-5** ti/ni ga\r ei**)**=pe/ pote tw=n a**)**gge/lwn: ui**(**o/j mou ei**)**= su/, e**)**gw\ sh/meron gege/nnhka/ se; kai\ pa/lin: e**)**gw\ e**)**/somai au**)**t%= ei**)**j pate/ra, kai\ au**)**to\j e**)**/stai moi ei**)**j ui**(**o/n; **1-6** o**(**/tan de\ pa/lin ei**)**saga/g$ to\n prwto/tokon ei**)**j th\n oi**)**koume/nhn, le/gei: kai\ proskunhsa/twsan au**)**t%= pa/ntej a**)**/ggeloi Qeou=. **1-7** kai\ pro\j me\n tou\j a**)**gge/louj le/gei: o**(** poiw=n tou\j a**)**gge/louj au**)**tou= pneu/mata, kai\ tou\j leitourgou\j au**)**tou= puro\j flo/ga: **1-8** pro\j de\ to\n ui**(**o/n: o**(** qro/noj sou, o**(** Qeo/j, ei**)**j to\n ai**)**w=na tou= ai**)**w=noj: r**(**a/bdoj eu**)**qu/thtoj, h**(** r**(**a/bdoj th=j basilei/aj sou: **1-9** h**)**ga/phsaj dikaiosu/nhn kai\ e**)**mi/shsaj a**)**nomi/an: dia\ tou=to e**)**/xrise/ se, o**(** Qeo/j, o**(** Qeo/j sou e**)**/laion a**)**gallia/sewj para\ tou\j meto/xouj sou: **1-10** kai/: su\ kat' a**)**rxa/j, Ku/rie, th\n gh=n e**)**qemeli/wsaj, kai\ e**)**/rga tw=n xeirw=n sou/ ei**)**sin oi**(** ou**)**ranoi/: **1-11** au**)**toi\ a**)**polou=ntai, su\ de\ diame/neij: kai\ pa/ntej w**(**j i**(**ma/tion palaiwqh/sontai, **1-12** kai\ w**(**sei\ peribo/laion e**(**li/ceij au**)**tou/j, kai\ a**)**llagh/sontai: su\ de\ o**(** au**)**to\j ei**)**=, kai\ ta\ e**)**/th sou ou**)**k e**)**klei/yousi. **1-13** pro\j ti/na de\ tw=n a**)**gge/lwn ei**)**/rhke/ pote: ka/qou e**)**k deciw=n mou e**(**/wj a**)**\n qw= tou\j e**)**xqrou/j sou u**(**popo/dion tw=n podw=n sou; **1-14** ou**)**xi\ pa/ntej ei**)**si\ leitourgika\ pneu/mata ei**)**j diakoni/an a**)**postello/mena dia\ tou\j me/llontaj klhronomei=n swthri/an;

The difference between the angels and the son

The son is the creator, the angels are created servants

The son is the king

The son is a human exalted, the kingly and divine messiah

The son is being served by angels, both as a creator and a king of humans

The son is invited to the right hand of God, to see his enemies fully subjected to him

#### 3.Warnings: do not neglect living out this great salvation

**2-1** **D**ia\ tou=to dei= perissote/rwj h**(**ma=j prose/xein toi=j a**)**kousqei=si, mh/ pote pararruw=men. **2-2** ei**)** ga\r o**(** di' a**)**gge/lwn lalhqei\j lo/goj e**)**ge/neto be/baioj, kai\ pa=sa para/basij kai\ parakoh\ e**)**/laben e**)**/ndikon misqapodosi/an, **2-3** pw=j h**(**mei=j e**)**kfeuco/meqa thlikau/thj a**)**melh/santej swthri/aj; h**(**/tij a**)**rxh\n labou=sa lalei=sqai dia\ tou= Kuri/ou, u**(**po\ tw=n a**)**kousa/ntwn ei**)**j h**(**ma=j e**)**bebaiw/qh, **2-4** sunepimarturou=ntoj tou= Qeou= shmei/oij te kai\ te/rasi kai\ poiki/laij duna/mesi kai\ Pneu/matoj **(**Agi/ou merismoi=j kata\ th\n au**)**tou= qe/lhsin.

#### 4.Destiny of man and angels: Jesus, men and angels

**2-5** Ou**)** ga\r a**)**gge/loij u**(**pe/tace th\n oi**)**koume/nhn th\n me/llousan, peri\ h**(**=j lalou=men, **2-6** diemartu/rato de/ pou/ tij le/gwn: ti/ e**)**stin a**)**/nqrwpoj o**(**/ti mimnh/sk$ au**)**tou=, h**)**\ ui**(**o\j a**)**nqrw/pou o**(**/ti e**)**piske/pt$ au**)**to/n; **2-7** h**)**la/ttwsaj au**)**to\n braxu/ ti par' a**)**gge/louj, do/c$ kai\ tim$= e**)**stefa/nwsaj au**)**to/n, **2-8** pa/nta u**(**pe/tacaj u**(**poka/tw tw=n podw=n au**)**tou=: e**)**n ga\r t%= u**(**pota/cai au**)**t%= ta\ pa/nta ou**)**de\n a**)**fh=ken au**)**t%= a**)**nupo/takton. nu=n de\ ou**)**/pw o**(**rw=men au**)**t%= ta\ pa/nta u**(**potetagme/na: **2-9** to\n de\ braxu/ ti par' a**)**gge/louj h**)**lattwme/non ble/pomen 'Ihsou=n dia\ to\ pa/qhma tou= qana/tou do/c$ kai\ tim$= e**)**stefanwme/non, o**(**/pwj xa/riti Qeou= u**(**pe\r panto\j geu/shtai qana/tou.

#### 5.Salvation and leadership: made perfect through suffering:

**2-10** e**)**/prepe ga\r au**)**t%=,

di' o**(**\n ta\ pa/nta kai\ di' ou**(**= ta\ pa/nta,

pollou\j ui**(**ou\j ei**)**j do/can a**)**gago/nta,

to\n a**)**rxhgo\n th=j swthri/aj au**)**tw=n dia\ paqhma/twn

teleiw=sai.

**2-11** o**(**/ te ga\r a**(**gia/zwn kai\ oi**(** a**(**giazo/menoi e**)**c e**(**no\j pa/ntej:

di' h**(**\n ai**)**ti/an ou**)**k e**)**paisxu/netai a**)**delfou\j au**)**tou\j kalei=n, **2-12** le/gwn: a**)**paggelw= to\ o**)**/noma/ sou toi=j a**)**delfoi=j mou, e**)**n me/s% e**)**kklhsi/aj u**(**mnh/sw se:

**2-13** kai\ pa/lin: e**)**gw\ e**)**/somai pepoiqw\j e**)**p' au**)**t%=: kai\ pa/lin: i**)**dou\ e**)**gw\ kai\ ta\ paidi/a a**(**/ moi e**)**/dwken o**(** Qeo/j.

**2-14** e**)**pei\ ou**)**=n ta\ paidi/a kekoinw/nhke sarko\j kai\ ai**(**/matoj, kai\ au**)**to\j paraplhsi/wj **mete/sxe** tw=n au**)**tw=n,

i**(**/na dia\ tou= qana/tou katargh/s$

to\n to\ kra/toj e**)**/xonta tou= qana/tou,

tou=t' e**)**/sti to\n dia/bolon,

**2-15** kai\ a**)**palla/c$ tou/touj, o**(**/soi fo/b% qana/tou dia\ panto\j tou= zh=n e**)**/noxoi h**)**=san doulei/aj.

**2-16** ou**)** ga\r dh/pou a**)**gge/lwn e**)**pilamba/netai, a**)**lla\ spe/rmatoj 'Abraa\m e**)**pilamba/netai.

Closes the argument about angels

**2-17** o**(**/qen w**)**/feile kata\ pa/nta toi=j a**)**delfoi=j o**(**moiwqh=nai, i**(**/na e**)**leh/mwn ge/nhtai kai\ pisto\j a**)**rxiereu\j ta\ pro\j to\n Qeo/n, ei**)**j to\ i**(**la/skesqai ta\j a**(**marti/aj tou= laou=. **2-18** e**)**n %**(**= ga\r pe/ponqen au**)**to\j peirasqei/j, du/natai toi=j peirazome/noij bohqh=sai.

Prepares the argument about Jesus’ priesthood

1. P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews : A commentary on the Greek text*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle [England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993, 2. He mentions Leonard, 1939 and Nichols, 1980, 7.387f. However, see S. C. Voulgaris, „Hebrews: Paul’s Fifth Epistle From Prison”, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review  44* (1999) 199–206. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See, F.D. Nichols (﻿ed.﻿), *The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary.* 7 vols., Washington, D.C., 1957, 21980; W. Leonard, “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” in B. Orchard (ed), *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture,* 1153–1171. London, 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Guthrie, *Introduction*, 673. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Trotter, *Interpreting Hebrews*. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Trotter, *Interpreting Hebrews,* 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews : A commentary on the Greek text*. Spine title: Commentary on Hebrews. (25). Grand Rapids, MI: Carlisle, England, W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Trotter, *Interpreting Hebrews*. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ellingworth, *Hebrews,* 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Trotter, *Interpreting Hebrews*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This *narratio* and *propositio* (1:5-2:18) could be easily included in the argument of the epistle (*probatio*). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A. Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. W. Lane, *Hebrews*, DLNTD. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:xxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Who are partakers or companions? The angels in heaven or his human brothers, on earth? [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The suggested title, About Men and Angels makes a subtle reference to John Steinbeck’s, *About Men and Mice*, 1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Here we have a Davidic type of theology. David is seen as a major Messianic prophet, imagining God speaks about the birth of a Son, about an international universal priest, Melchisedek, about lasting resting day of salvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This is the introduction to the theme of “priesthood”. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)