

CHIASM AND THE CONCEPT OF FAITH IN HEBREWS 11

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In his book *Der Glaube im Hebraerbrief* Erich Grasser argues that in Hebrews faith is not directed to Christ in any way.¹ Grasser believes that faith in Hebrews is seen ethically, as steadfastness only, and not soteriologically.² However, a careful exegesis of Hebrews 11 shows that faith in this epistle is as Christologically oriented (i.e., it has Christ as the object of faith) as it is in the Pauline Epistles, even though it is not expressed in terms of "faith in Christ." The chiasmic structure of Hebrews 11 supports this contention.

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CHIASM

Many biblical scholars have come to recognize the presence and importance of chiasmic structures in the interpretation of certain passages in the Bible.³ This seems to be especially true of the Book of Hebrews. The term "chiasm" derives from the verb *χιάζω*, which means "to mark with two lines crossing like a *χ* (chi)."⁴ The term *χιασμός* denotes a "placing crosswise, diagonal ar-

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¹ Erich Grasser, *Der Glaube im Hebrderbrief* (Marburg: Elwert, 1965), 65–66, 79,

² *Ibid.*, 63.

³ Some major studies on New Testament chiasms are Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiasmic Structures* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992); Donald R. Miesner, "Chiasmus and the Composition and Message of Paul's Missionary Sermons" (S.T.D. diss., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1974); and John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981).

⁴ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon: A New Edition Revised and Augmented Throughout with Supplement*, rev. and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1991.

rangement, especially of the clauses of a period, so that the first corresponds with the fourth, and the second with the third."⁵ This term is used "in rhetoric to designate an inversion of the order of words or phrases which are repeated or subsequently referred to in the sentence."⁶

A survey of the literature on chiasm indicates, however, that use of the word "chiasm" is not limited to the parallelism of words or phrases; it is also used to refer to an inversion of ideas or concepts in a broad sense. Understanding "chiasm" in this sense, many scholars in recent years claim they have found chiasms in many parts of the Bible. For example Blomberg believes that 2 Corinthians 1:12-7:16 is written chiastically at the conceptual level,⁷ and McClister says Matthew 17:22-20:19 is chiastically arranged.⁸

Moreover, some scholars suggest the entire Book of Hebrews was written chiastically. For example Vanhoye, divides the book into five major parts, excluding the introduction and conclusion, as follows:⁹

- A. Eschatology (1:5-2:18)
 - B. Ecclesiology (3:1-5:10)
 - C. Sacrifice (5:11-10:39)
 - B'. Ecclesiology (11:1-12:13)
- A. Eschatology (12:14-13:19)

In this article the term "chiasm" is used both macroscopically (i.e., of ideas and concepts) and microscopically (i.e., of words and phrases) in identifying chiasms in Hebrews 11:1-40.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 31.

⁷ Craig Blomberg, "The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7," *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1989): 8-9.

⁸ David McClister, "Where Two or Three are Gathered Together": Literary Structure as a Key to Meaning in Matt 17:22-20:19," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 550. Others who apply the term "chiasm" conceptually include A. Boyd Luter and Michelle V. Lee, "Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Question," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 89-101; and Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 46-232. Thomson says the following passages are arranged chiastically: Romans 5:12-21; Galatians 5:13-6:2; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:11-22; and Colossians 2:6-19.

⁹ Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure litteraire de L'Epitre aux Hebreux* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), 59, 240-42. According to Vanhoye, the center of the entire Book of Hebrews is in 9:11-14 (ibid., 237). Welch also believes Hebrews is chiastically arranged. However, he suggests that the center of the book is 8:1-2 (John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the New Testament," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analysis, Exegesis*, 220).

Why were chiasms used in the Bible? Miesner suggests four functions of a chiasmic structure: to promote memory, to elaborate the literary beauty, to clarify meaning, and to aid in recovering the original word.¹⁰ For the purpose of this study in Hebrews 11, clarifying meaning is the most important reason the author of Hebrews employed chiasm. This literary device is more than artistry to impress readers; it is a means toward more effectively communicating the message.¹¹

Scholars generally agree that the main idea (or the central point) is in the middle of a chiasm, with the other thoughts revolving around the center. The center section is important for these reasons: the center is always where the turning point takes place; there is often a shift of thought at the center, after which the original trend of thought is continued to the end of the section; and in many instances identical ideas that occur at the center are distributed in the extremes.¹² Thus in a chiasmic structure the main emphasis of the passage is likely to be in the center section. In Hebrews important words or phrases such as God, Christ, holding fast to one's confidence, or facts about eschatology are placed in the center section of many passages in the book. Detecting these points in the centers of chiasms helps support the view that faith in Hebrews is both Christologically and eschatologically oriented.

HOW CHIASM WAS USED IN HEBREWS 11 TO CLARIFY THE CONCEPT OF FAITH

The chiasmic arrangement of Hebrews 11 may be illustrated as follows.¹³

- A. Introduction (11:1—3)
- B . Abel's example of suffering on account of faith (11:4)
- C. Enoch's example of triumph through faith (11:5)
- D. Principle of faith: Impossible to please God without faith (11:6)

¹⁰ Miesner, "Chiasmus and the Composition and Message of Paul's Missionary Sermons," 444-49; also see Ronald E. Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (April-June 1984): 148-54.

¹¹ Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," 154,

¹² Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 40-41.

¹³ To the best of this writer's knowledge, no one has yet proposed a chiasmic structure for Hebrews 11. Vanhoye rightly points out that 11:13-16 is the center of 11:8-22 (Vanhoye, *La Structure littgraire de L'Epitre mix Hebreux*, 189). Lane also recognizes that this section is the center of 11:8-22 (William Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas, TX: Word, 1991], 355). However, this writer finds that 11:13-16 is the center of the entire chiasm of Hebrews 11:1-40. The author of Hebrews seems to have had a broader context in mind.

- E. Example of faith seen through Noah (11:7)
 - F. Abraham's faith (11:8-10)
 - G. Sarah's conception of Isaac by faith (11:11-12)
 - H. Middle section: Interim comment (11:13-16)
 - G'. Abraham's offering up of Isaac by faith (11:17-19)
 - F'. Faith of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (11:20-22)
- E'. Examples of faith seen in the Mosaic era (11:23-29)
 - D'. Examples of faith in conquering Jericho (11:30-31)
 - C'. Examples of those who triumphed through faith (11:32-35a)
 - B'. Examples of others who suffered on account of faith (11:35b-38)
 - A'. Conclusion (11:39-40)

MIDDLE SECTION: INTERIM COMMENT (11:13-16, "H")¹⁴

This middle section of Hebrews 11 has troubled scholars. For example Moxnes states, "The insertion of the author's own comments in 11:13–16 makes it more difficult to see the structure of the underlying source,"¹⁵ and Michel asserts that 11:13–16 is an editorial insertion.¹⁶ However, this difficulty is resolved when one realizes that the author placed it intentionally at the center of the chiasm for a rhetorical purpose.¹⁷

Basis for the center of the chiasm. Verses 13–16 are considered the center of the chiasm in Hebrews 11 because of the author's use of "all these" (οὗτοι πάντες) in verse 13. Swetnam argues that the phrase refers only to those individuals mentioned in verses 8–12 (viz., Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob) because Enoch is exempted from those who died (v. 5).¹⁸ Attridge also says that those who "died in faith" (v. 13) refers primarily to the patriarchs

¹⁴ Since the main point is usually in the center section of the chiastic structure, it seems appropriate to begin the exegesis of the chapter with the center point (11:13-16). Then each corresponding section of the proposed chiasm will be analyzed to ascertain what aspect of faith is emphasized.

¹⁵ H. Moxnes, *God and His Promise to Abraham, Theology in Conflict*, Novum Testamentum Supplements 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 178.

¹⁶ Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebraer* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 401.

¹⁷ This middle section is also arranged chiastically, as are many of the sections in this chapter. Most of the findings on chiasmus at the microscopic level are omitted here because of space limitations. For details see Victor (Sung Yul) Rhee, "The Concept of Faith in the Overall Context of the Book of Hebrews" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1996), 205-52.

¹⁸ James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in Light of the Aqedah*, *Analecta Biblica* 94 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1981), 91.

(Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), although he acknowledges that it may refer to all the exemplars of faith mentioned in verses 4–12.¹⁹ The solutions proposed by these scholars are legitimate because the language of sojourning and looking forward in verses 13–16 clearly parallels verses 9–10. However, it seems that "all these" is broad enough to include all the exemplars of faith mentioned, not only in verses 4–12, but also in verses 17–38.

What evidence supports this suggestion? First, the author's interchangeable use of the present tense and the aorist tense (εἰσιν in v. 13; ἐμφανίζουσιν and ἐπιζητοῦσιν in v. 14; ὀρέγονται and ἐπαισχύνεται in v. 16) suggests that "all these" may encompass more than those individuals mentioned in verses 8–12. The author seems to have chosen the present tenses to identify the readers with the patriarchs. This observation opens up the possibility that οὗτοι πάντες should not be limited to those in the immediate context; it may include all the heroes of faith in chapter 11.

Second, "all these" may refer to all the faith heroes in chapter 11 because of the emphasis on God's promises in the chapter. Verses 13–16 emphasize not death, but the promises of God. In other words the author's main concern in the middle section was to show that the Old Testament characters died while anticipating God's promises by faith.²⁰ This theme is also seen in the introduction (vv. 1–3) and the conclusion (vv. 39–40). In both passages the emphasis is that those whose faith was in the Lord had not yet received His promise. The references to "the men of old" (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) in the introduction (v. 2), "all these" (οὗτοι πάντες) in the center section (v. 13), and "all these" (οὗτοι πάντες) in the conclusion (v. 39) refer to all the Old Testament exemplars of faith mentioned in this chapter.

Aspects of faith in the center of the chiasm. at aspects of faith are emphasized in verses 13–16? First, it seems clear that faith has a future orientation. "Without having received the promises" (v. 13), "having seen them [God's promises] and having welcomed them from a distance" (v. 13) "seeking a country [πατρίδα, 'homeland'] of their own" (v. 14) "reaching out for a better place" (lit. trans., v. 16), "He has prepared a city for them" (v. 16)—all these expressions indicate that their faith had a forward-looking eschatological outlook. Second, the change from

¹⁹ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 329. Attridge also recognizes the problem of including all the individuals in verses 4–12 because of Enoch, who did not taste physical death.

²⁰ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 593.

the aorist to the present tense in verses 13 and 16—from ἀπέθανον to εἶσιν (v. 13) and from ὀρέγονται and ἐπαισχύνεται to ἡτοίμασεν (v. 16)—indicates that faith in Hebrews also has a present aspect. This tension between the present and the future can also be found in other parts of the Book of Hebrews. For example God has already crowned Jesus with honor and glory (2:9); yet He is waiting until His enemies will be made a footstool for His feet (10:13). Although believers are entering rest at the present time (4:3), a rest still remains for the future (4:1, 6, 9).²¹

EXAMINATION OF 11:11-12 ("G") AND 11:17-19 (G''')

Basis for the chiasm. These sections are in the context of the exemplars of faith in the patriarchal period. Verses 11–12 and 17–19 relate to each other by the references to Isaac and by mention of the offspring (σπέρματος, v. 11; Ἰσαάκ, v. 17) and power (δύναμιν, v. 11; δυνατὸς, v. 19). Sarah's faith related to the birth of Isaac, and Abraham's faith to the sacrifice of Isaac.

Aspects of faith. These parallel passages emphasize steadfastness of faith while waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises. Verses 11–12 show Sarah's steadfastness of faith in light of God's promise that He would provide a son for Abraham. The forward-looking aspect is certainly present in this passage, but the emphasis is on Sarah's trust in God's ability to bring about conception, even when she was barren. Verses 17–19 speak of Abraham's steadfastness of faith, specifically when faced with the command to offer up his son. As in the case of Sarah, Abraham's faith was also firmly based on God's promises. Abraham's dramatic act of offering up his son was based on believing in God's promise that Isaac would be the heir of the promise.

Both sections also emphasize the concept of resurrection from the dead. In section G this thought is implied in bringing back Abraham's physical deadness. In section G' this idea is more explicitly stated by the fact that God is able to raise up Isaac. The author's use of παραβολῆ (v. 19) seems to suggest that the reference to raising people "from the dead" encompasses more than bringing Isaac back to life. Ellingworth notes that there is no reference to the resurrection of Abraham or Isaac in the Old Testament or other pre-Christian sources.²² This observation leads one

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the present and the future aspects of eschatology in Hebrews, see C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. H. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 363-93; and George Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 572-77.

²² Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 602.

to consider that the idea of resurrection stems from the author's reflection on the Old Testament passage (Gen. 22) in light of new revelation in the New Testament period. Thus it seems reasonable to assert that Abraham's receiving back Isaac pictures the believers' yet-future resurrection.

Moreover, the author's use of "only begotten son" (τὸν μονογενῆ, v. 17) seems to suggest that the reference to Isaac's coming back to life may depict the resurrection of Christ. Thus it is quite possible that the author had in mind the Christological implication of faith. As examples of faith, Sarah and Abraham illustrate the forward-looking aspect of Old Testament faith. In this sense faith in chapter 11 is eschatologically oriented. However, one should keep in mind that this future-oriented faith is inevitably related to Christology, as will be explained later.

EXAMINATION OF 11:8—10 ("F") AND 11:20—22 ("F").

Basis of the chiasm. In what sense can F and F' be considered counterparts in the proposed chiasm? First, the chronological order supports the parallelism. In verses 8–10 the author discussed the forward-looking faith of Abraham. Then after a brief interruption (vv. 11-19) he continued with the forward-looking aspect of faith of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Second, the parallelism between these two sections is seen in the references to "Isaac" and "Jacob" in both sections. Verse 9 briefly mentions the names of these patriarchs, and verses 20–21 provide a more detailed account of their forward-looking faith, in addition to that of Joseph (v. 22).

Aspects of faith. In verses 8–10, the emphasis is on Abraham's forward-looking faith based on God's promise. The expression "the city which has foundations; whose architect and builder is God" (v. 10) refers to Canaan in the immediate context, which the descendants of Abraham would inherit four hundred years later. However, the descriptions of the city seem to speak of more than the Promised Land. Obviously Canaan was not built by God; so Abraham was looking forward to the eschatological heavenly city.²³ Thus it may be said that Abraham's faith was clearly future-oriented.

In verse 20 the future aspect of faith is indicated by Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau "regarding things to come." Also Joseph's mention of the Exodus and the instruction about his burial (v. 22) pertained to the future. As for Jacob, it is not immediately clear whether his blessing was eschatologically oriented.

²³ Moxnes, *God and His Promise to Abraham*, 181.

However, Genesis 47:29–48:22 shows that Jacob's blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh involved a future aspect.

Sections F and F' in the chiasm have in common the theme of forward-looking eschatology. Thus it seems reasonable that Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, as exemplars of faith (vv. 20–22), continued Abraham's faith in verses 8–10. The insertion of section G (vv. 11–12) and G' (vv. 17–19) seems to be intentional, for these sections develop a different aspect of Abraham and Sarah's faith, namely, trusting in God's promise.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH SEEN THROUGH NOAH AND MOSES (11:7, "E"; AND 11:23–29, "E' ")

Basis of the chiasm. The forward-looking aspect of faith, summarized in the center section (vv. 13–16), continues beyond the examples of faith seen in the patriarchs. According to the proposed chiastic diagram, the story of Noah in verse 7 corresponds to that of Moses in verses 23–29. They are related by water experiences. As Noah and his family were saved from the Flood (Gen. 6:5–8:22; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5), so also were Moses and the people of Israel saved through the Red Sea (Exod. 14:10–31; 1 Cor. 10:2).

Aspects of faith in Noah's example (11:7, "E"). What aspects of faith are seen in Noah? First, Noah's act of building an ark indicates that faith involves obedience to God's word. Second, the phrase "about things not yet seen" (περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων) refers to the Flood, which came about one hundred years after God had told Noah about it (Gen. 5:32; 7:6), and the promise that He would deliver him and his family from it (6:17–18). This forward-looking aspect of Noah's faith is similar to the theme in the center section (Heb. 11:13–16). Noah's faith is also a perfect example of faith described in verse 1 (i.e., "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen") because "his action showed that he was convinced of the substantial reality of things still in the unseen future, still in the realm of unfulfilled hope."²⁴ Moreover, Noah was able to heed the voice of God and build the ark because "he believed that what God had said He would do—save his household from the flood (Gen. 6:18)—He would do. Despite all the appearances to the contrary Noah put his full trust in God."²⁵ Noah's faith, that is, his trust in God, was related to God's promise, which in turn was forward-looking. Another issue related to the concept of faith is the meaning of

²⁴ R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 354. The author used the same verb (βλέπω) in verses 1 and 7 in referring to what will take place in the future.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the statement, he "became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος, Heb. 11:7). Although the phrase seems at first glance to be a Pauline expression, Attridge argues that it needs to be understood in light of the development of common Jewish and Christian themes in Hebrews.²⁶ "What Noah's story exemplifies," Attridge says, "is the reverent reliance upon God's promises and consequent faithful action that enables one—in a quite un-Pauline fashion—to do what is righteous."²⁷ In most cases in Hebrews the word "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη) refers to the character of a person (e.g., 7:2; 12:11), or his or her righteous deeds (e.g., 1:9; 11:4). It is also true that the emphasis of chapter 11 as a whole is on righteous actions carried out by faith. However, the use of δικαιοσύνη in verse 7 seems to have a different sense. It is qualified by the phrase κατὰ πίστιν, which indicates "the way or the condition by which righteousness is actualized: it describes a righteousness bestowed by God according to the norm of faith."²⁸ In addition, the verb γίνομαι may have a passive meaning. Thus the phrase may be rendered, "he was made an heir of righteousness according to faith."²⁹ Understanding δικαιοσύνη in this sense shows that it is close to Paul's concept of justification by faith." Therefore, unlike Attridge's assertion, the phrase "the righteousness according to faith" (τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης) does have a Pauline ring in some sense. If this is correct, then quite possibly the author used Noah to convey truth about Christ. This finding is consistent with the account of Noah in two of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 24:37–38; Luke 17:26–27). This analysis suggests that faith in Hebrews is as Christologically oriented as

²⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 320.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1991), 340,

²⁹ Walter Bauer, William A. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 158, 2.a

³⁰ In many instances Paul used δικαιοσύνη in reference to "the righteousness bestowed by God" (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22; 4:3, 5, 13; 10:4, 6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:6; Phil. 3:9). It is interesting to note that throughout his epistles he combines the three terms κληρονόμος, δικαιοσύνη, and πίστις only once, namely, in Romans 4:13. The same terms are also used together only once in Hebrews, namely, 11:7. Yet Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη is not limited to the righteousness God bestows. As in the case of Hebrews Paul also used the term to refer to the righteous living of believers (Rom. 6:13, 16, 18-20; 14:17; 2 Cor 6:7; 9:10; Eph. 4:24; 5:9; Phil. 1:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16). Thus it may be said that Hebrews' use of δικαιοσύνη differs little from Paul's use.

in the Pauline literature and the Gospels. This Christological implication of faith will become more evident in Moses' example of faith in the following section.

Aspects of faith in Moses' example (11:23-29, "E"). This section touches on three subjects: the faith of Moses' parents (v. 23); Moses' decision to suffer for Christ (vv. 24-26), and Moses' departure from Egypt (vv. 27-29). The first section (v. 23) denotes the faith of Moses' parents. The fact that his parents were not afraid of the king's edict implies that they obeyed God, and their obedience shows their complete trust in Him.

The second section (vv. 24-26) describes the choice Moses made by faith. His faith involved enduring hardship in that he chose to share ill treatment with the people of God. This corresponds to the steadfastness of faith the author of Hebrews emphasized throughout the epistle. In this sense, faith in Hebrews is ethically described. However, this ethical aspect is not completely detached from Christology. The author of Hebrews stated that Moses regarded the abuse of Christ as greater riches than those of Egypt (v. 26a). Why did the author include this reference to Christ? Apparently the intention was to point to similarity between Moses and Christ. As Moses chose to endure hardship with the people of God rather than the fleeting pleasure of sin, so Christ chose to endure the cross in place of³¹ the joy set before Him (12:2). As Moses regarded the abuse of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, so Christ despised the shame of the cross. This comparison indicates that "the choice of Moses is not only a model to be imitated, but also the type of the choice of Christ."³² Thus it may be said that for the author of Hebrews Moses' ethical aspect of endurance is Christologically oriented. Another element in Moses' example of faith is seen in 11:26. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he looked to the reward God had stored up for him. In other words his faith was eschatologically oriented; it involved a forward-looking aspect. This element of faith also corresponds to the theme of verses 13-16, the center section of the chapter.

The third section (vv. 27-29) further describes Moses' faith. Each of these three verses points out that faith is complete trust in and obedience to God. Moses departed from Egypt because he was steadfast as if seeing the One who is invisible (v. 27). Moses' instituting the Passover (v. 28) and the Israelites' crossing the Red

³¹ "In place of renders ἀντὶ, which has the idea of exchange or substitution. It can also mean "because" or "for the sake of." See Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 523-24, n. 117.

³² Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 42 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979), 34.

Sea (v. 29) also show that faith involves trust in and obedience to God. Christologically the Passover with its sprinkling of the blood is a type of the suffering Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7).

FAITH SEEN IN THE PRINCIPLE OF PLEASING GOD

(11:6, "D"; AND 11:30-31, "D' ")

Some scholars say that verse 6 is the continuation of the example of faith by Enoch in verse 5. Attridge argues that "the scriptural datum that Enoch pleased God now provides the basis for the claim that it was because of his faith that the patriarch was translated."³³ However, verse 6 may include more than Enoch. Just as verses 13–16 should be considered a summary of the exemplars of faith in chapter 11, so the principle of faith in verse 6 applies to all the exemplars of faith in this chapter. Particularly verse 6 correlates with verses 30-31, as seen in the proposed chiastic scheme.

Principle of faith (11:6, "D"). At least three principles of faith may be observed in this verse. First, one cannot possibly please God without faith. Second, faith involves believing in the existence of God, indicated by the verb ἔστίν ("is"). Bruce asserts that "it is not belief in the existence of a God that is meant, but belief in the existence of the God who once declared His will to the fathers through the prophets and in these last days has spoken in His Son."³⁴ Third, faith entails believing that God rewards those who seek (ἐκζητέω, "to seek out or search for"³⁵) Him. It denotes "a singular determination to devote oneself to the service of God."³⁶ The idea of "reward" implies a forward-looking aspect of faith, which is "a matter of unwavering hope in the God who controls the future. It exhibits the solid faith that is the condition for receiving recompense by God."³⁷ This verse points up the qualities of faith found throughout chapter 11, especially in verses 30–31.

Example of faith in conquering Jericho (11:30-31, "D' "). Why are these verses paired with verse 6? Three observations may be made about faith in this passage. First, verse 30 is significant because this is the story of the second generation of Israel who acted in faith and pleased God, as opposed to the rebellious

³³ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 318. Also see F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 290.

³⁴ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 290.

³⁵ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 240.

³⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 338.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 338-39.

first generation. Thus in the gap between verses 29 and 30, the author of Hebrews implied that while the first generation was not able to enter God's rest because of disobedience (3:7–4:13), the second generation did enter the rest (i.e., the land of promise) by faith under Joshua's leadership. This obedience by the second generation was an act of faith which pleased God, and which corresponds to the first principle of faith in 11:6.

Second, the author's inclusion of Rahab (v. 31) is significant because she, a Gentile, became a member of the covenant people of God by faith. Joshua 2:8–14 suggests she had the kind of faith described in Hebrews 11:6. She came to realize that the God of Israel is the true God, having been informed of the miracles performed by the Lord (e.g., His drying up the water of the Red Sea and His victory over the Amorite kings). This corresponds to the second principle of faith in verse 6, which states that the one who draws near to God must believe in the existence of God.

Third, when Rahab realized who the true God is, she received the two spies in peace and pleaded for her life and the lives of her family members (Josh. 2:12–14). Her act of faith indicates she believed God rewards those who earnestly seek Him out (ἐκζητέω), which corresponds to the third principle of faith in Hebrews 11:6. Rahab clearly exhibits "a faith that was oriented toward the future. She was prepared to assume present peril for the sake of future preservation"³⁸

EXAMPLES OF TRIUMPHS AND SUFFERINGS THROUGH FAITH (11:4, "B"; 11:5, "C"; 11:32–35a, "C'"; 11:35b–38, "B' ")

Basis for the chiasm. Verses 32–38 may be divided into two parts. In the first part (vv. 32–35a), after listing some exemplars of faith from the Old Testament (Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets), the author proceeded to describe, without specifying the names, certain victories accomplished by others through faith. In the second part (11:35b–38), however, the author indicated a change of subject by ἄλλοι δὲ . . . ἕτεροι δὲ (vv. 35–36). From this point on the author was describing those who endured sufferings through faith. Thus the two passages (vv. 32–35a and vv. 35b–38) indicate that the same faith has two effects: on the one hand it manifests God's power and on the other hand it allows God's people to endure trials. The themes of triumphs and sufferings are also found in verses 4–5. Abel illustrates faith through suffering, and Enoch illustrates faith through triumph.

³⁸ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 379.

While verses 4-5 and 32-38 are thematically related, the themes of sufferings and triumphs are discussed in inverted order. Enoch's victory by faith (v. 5) corresponds to the exemplars of faith who experienced victory in their lives (vv. 32-35a), and Abel's martyrdom because of his act of righteousness by faith (v. 4) fits well with those who endured sufferings by faith (vv. 35b-38).

Aspects of faith in 11:4 ("B") and 11:5 ("C"). In what sense was Abel righteous (v. 4)? This depends on the interpretation of the prepositional phrase δι' ἧς ("through which"). Grammatically speaking, it is possible for θυσίαν ("sacrifice") to be the antecedent of this phrase. However, the context seems to indicate that πίστις ("faith") is more likely the antecedents.³⁹ The author repeatedly emphasized the importance of πίστις by using phrases such as δι' ἧς and αὐτῆς (cf. δι' ἧς in v. 7 in reference to Noah). If the phrase δι' ἧς refers to πίστις, then it may be said that Abel's righteousness was bestowed because of his faith. The passive voice (ἐμαρτυρήθη) further supports this idea. Thus, as with Noah's faith in verse 7, the reference to righteousness by faith in verse 4 differs little from the Pauline concept of righteousness by faith. Abel's martyrdom on account of his righteous offering by faith is a type of others who suffer for the sake of righteousness. The significance of this point is discussed later in connection with verses 32-38.

Another issue related to Abel's faith is the meaning of the expression, "through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." Some writers say this refers to Abel's call for vengeance. For example Bruce says the words "he still speaks" refer to "Abel's appealing to God for vindication until he obtains it in full in the judgment to come."⁴⁰ Referring to Hebrews 12:24, which states that Christ's blood speaks better than that of Abel, Bruce contends that the statement "Abel still speaks" refers to Genesis 4:10.⁴¹ However, the context indicates that Abel's speaking was not by his blood, but was by his faith. Moreover, as Lane points out, the verb λαλεῖν is never used in Hebrews of someone addressing God.⁴² For this reason it is more likely that Abel's speaking has a reference to his offering in Genesis 4:4. Because of the sacrifice he offered by faith, he is still speaking to believers through the written Word of

³⁹ C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1952), 2:342; cf. Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 327.

⁴⁰ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 286.

⁴¹ Ibid. Genesis 4:10 says, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."

⁴² Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 335.

God: he is a living witness to all ages.⁴³ Though he died, he still speaks. In a sense his "life from death" typifies those who will be resurrected through Christ in the future.

Enoch was taken to heaven because he pleased God (Heb. 11:5). According to the short account of Enoch's life in Genesis 5:21-24, God took him because he walked with Him for three hundred years. His walk with God for three centuries implies that his faith entailed obedience to God, steadfastness, and a forward-looking aspect. Enoch's translation without tasting death shows the triumphant victory he had through faith.

Aspects of faith in 11:32-35a ("C") and 11:35b-38 ("B'"). Verses 32-38 may be viewed as a chiasm, in which verses 32-35a and 35b-38 complement each other by contrast, looking first at examples of victory through faith and then at examples of sufferings and martyrdom through faith.⁴⁴ Both sections contain the idea of resurrection. Verse 35a speaks of the resurrection of those who had victory by faith, and verse 35b speaks of the hope of resurrection of those who experienced suffering and death by faith.

The subject of the resurrection reveals that faith is directly related to hope, which is mentioned often in Hebrews. This hope of resurrection makes it evident that here faith involved an eschatological, forward-looking aspect. The chiasmic structure of verses 32-38 implies that faith manifested in the outer sections (vv. 32-34, 36-38) was based on the hope of resurrection in the center sections (v. 35). In this sense the characteristics of faith exhibited by the exemplars of faith were eschatologically oriented.

INTRODUCTION (11:1-3, "A") AND CONCLUSION (11:39-40, "A')
Basis for the chiasm. What clues indicate that the introduction (vv. 1-3) and the conclusion (vv. 39-40) are chiastically arranged? First, the context shows that the reference to "the men of old" (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) in verse 2 corresponds to "all these" (οὗτοι πάντες) in verse 39 (also in v. 13). Second, the introduction and conclusion are related by the idea of attestation by faith (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν, v. 2; μαρτυρηθέντες, v. 39). Third, the use of the verb βλέπω (βλεπομένων, v. 1; προβλεψαμένου, v. 40) also suggests these sections are parallel.

Aspects of faith in 11:1-3 ("A"). In this introduction the author presented one aspect of the definition of faith by using the two terms ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος. Ὑπόστασις may be interpreted in at

⁴³ James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1924), 164.

⁴⁴ For a detailed analysis of the chiasm see Rhee, "The Concept of Faith in the Overall Context of the Book of Hebrews," 237-38.

least three ways. First, the term may be understood in the subjective sense as either "assurance" or "confidence." Those who hold this view point out that the word is used in the same way in 3:14.⁴⁵ However, the problem with this view is that this sense has never been found in the contemporary literature." Moreover, the exemplars of faith in chapter 11 had more than a subjective hope; they had an objective hope toward which they were looking.

Second, *ὑπόστασις* is understood by some scholars as "foundation." This view takes the word in a literal sense as meaning "standing (*στάσις*) under (*ὑπό*)."⁴⁷ Lindars argues that the English translation of "assurance" or "confidence" is derived from the literal meaning of "foundation."⁴⁸ He asserts that "in the present context faith is the foundation of a positive attitude towards the future, which cannot yet be experienced but has to remain a matter of hope."⁴⁹ The word "foundation" emphasizes "the beginning which contains within itself the certainty of completion."⁵⁰ This view sees the term in a somewhat objective sense. However, the problem with this view, again, is that *ὑπόστασις* is never used in this sense in extrabiblical sources. Mathis, for example, surveys both Hellenistic and Greek patristic literature, and concludes that *ὑπόστασις* does not mean "foundation"; rather, it has the sense of reality.⁵¹ Moreover, translating verse 1 as "faith is the foundation of the things hoped for" does not seem to bring out the eschatological hope the author stressed throughout the chapter.

A third view, which also takes *ὑπόστασις* in an objective sense, is that the word means "reality." Koster, for example, after surveying the meaning of the term in Greek literature, the Septuagint, and other Jewish literature, suggests that the word denotes "reality," "substance," or "actualization."⁵² Understanding

⁴⁵ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 280; and Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 439.

⁴⁶ Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 308.

⁴⁷ Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 439. See also Otto Betz, "Firmness in Faith: Hebrews 11:1 and Isaiah 28:16," in *Scripture: Meaning and Method*, ed. Barry R. Thompson (Hull: Hull University Press, 1987), 92-113. Betz argues for the "foundation" view by comparing Hebrews 11:1 with Isaiah 28:16.

⁴⁸ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 110-11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵⁰ Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 439.

⁵¹ M. A. Mathis, "Does 'Substantia' Mean 'Realisation' or 'Foundation' in Hebrews 11,1?" *Biblica* 3 (1922): 79-87.

⁵² H. Koster, "*ὑπόστασις*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 8:572-89.

ὑπόστασις this way in 11:1 makes good sense because "faith lays hold of what is promised and therefore hoped for, as something real and solid, though as yet unseen."⁵³ This objective understanding of the term is also consistent with the forward-looking aspect of faith in chapter 11.⁵⁴ Thus it seems reasonable to understand ὑπόστασις in verse 1a as the reality of what is hoped for, "the reality of the future blessings that constitute the objective content of hope."⁵⁵ The participle ἐλπίζομένων ("hoped for") in verse 1, along with ὑπόστασις, points to the future second advent of Christ.⁵⁶ Thus again faith in Hebrews is seen as eschatologically oriented.

Scholars differ on how to interpret ἔλεγχος. Since the word is used in no other place in the New Testament, its exact meaning is difficult to determine. As with ὑπόστασις, the meaning of ἔλεγχος may be "conviction" in a subjective sense or "proof" in an objective sense.⁵⁷ Among those who take the subjective view, Bruce asserts that ἔλεγχος means "conviction" in much the same sense as "assurance" in the preceding phrase.⁵⁸ Moffatt, arguing against the objective understanding of ἔλεγχος, states that "faith is not the ἔλεγχος of things unseen in the sense of 'proof,' which could only mean that it tests, or rather attests, their reality."⁵⁹ He asserts that the author of Hebrews "wishes to show, not the reality of these unseen ends of God—he assumes these—but the fact and force of believing in them with absolute confidence."⁶⁰

The subjective understanding of the word as "conviction" is possible here; it makes sense in the context of chapter 11. All the exemplars of faith had assurance of the things hoped for, and conviction of the things they had not yet seen. However, since the

⁵³ Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 439.

⁵⁴ The word is used two other times in Hebrews (1:3; 3:14). In both places the objective meaning of "reality" seems to fit the context quite well. In 1:3 Jesus is described as the χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. This suggests that ὑπόστασις may be understood as "reality." Likewise, although it is possible to interpret the word in a subjective sense (i.e., confidence), an objective meaning of "reality" also makes good sense in 3:14 ("if we hold fast to the beginning of the reality until the end," author's trans.).

⁵⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 328–29.

⁵⁶ James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 13 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Society of America, 1982), 73.

⁵⁷ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 249.

⁵⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 279.

⁵⁹ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 159–60.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

phrase "the ἔλεγχος of things not seen" describes what precedes ("faith is the assurance [or reality] of things hoped for"), this writer feels that ἔλεγχος should also be understood in an objective sense as in the case of ὑπόστασις (i.e., "proof" as opposed to "conviction"). Thompson rightly argues that because of the parallelism of ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος, the two must be interpreted alongside each other. Thus interpreting ἔλεγχος as "proof"⁶¹ allows one to see that faith in chapter 11 is "an objective reality, so objective that it can be called a 'proof' (ἔλεγχος) of the things which have been and are hoped for by all those involved."⁶² Adding the phrase παραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων establishes the inner right of resting on the thing hoped for (i.e., ὑπόστασις). Understanding ἔλεγχος in a subjective sense breaks down the necessary parallelism of ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος and obscures the inner right of the ὑπόστασις.⁶³ For this reason the objective understanding of ἔλεγχος seems to be what the author of Hebrews had in mind.

If the objective understanding of ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος is correct, then the definition of faith in verse 1 may be stated in this way: Faith is the reality (or substance) of the things hoped for, the proof of the things not seen. These two terms clearly indicate that what the author intends to emphasize in chapter 11 is a forward-looking aspect of faith; with this type of faith the men of old have been attested by God (v. 2).

Aspects of faith in 11:39-40 ("A, "). To appreciate how the author summarized the forward-looking aspect of faith, several issues need to be discussed in this concluding section. The first has to do with the phrase they "did not receive what was promised" (οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, v. 39).⁶⁴ Some men and women mentioned in chapter 11 did receive in their lifetime what God promised (e.g., Noah, v. 7; Abraham and Sarah, vv. 11-12; the people of Israel, v. 30; Rahab, v. 31; some women, v. 35). However, verse 39a states that they all (οὗτοι πάντες) did not receive the promise. In what sense did they not receive the promise? What

⁶¹ Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, 70.

⁶² James Swetnam, "Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13," *Biblica* 55 (1974): 334.

⁶³ Friedrich Bilchsel "ἔλεγχος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2 (1964): 476.

⁶⁴ D'Angelo suggests that the phrase διὰ τῆς πίστεως can be related to either μαρτυρηθέντες or ἐκομίσαντο. She asserts that this multiplicity of meanings is intentional (*Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*, 23). However, it seems to be more natural to connect it to μαρτυρηθέντες because of the word order. Moreover, a comparison with verse 2 indicates that this interpretation is more plausible (i.e., the phrase ἐν ταύτῃ refers to πίστις which is used along with μαρτυρέω).

does the promise refer to in this verse? The middle section (vv. 13-16) indicates they did not receive the promise of the heavenly place (ἐπουρανίου), the city God had prepared for them (v. 16). In 12:14-29 the author gave further insight on the heavenly city. It is Mount Zion, the city of the living God, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem (v. 22). Believers in the New Covenant have already entered this heavenly city, as indicated by the perfect tense (προσεληλύθατε, "have come to"). In other words the promise mentioned in 11:39a is an eternal inheritance available through Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant (9:15).⁶⁵ The exemplars of faith saw this heavenly city, without having received the final fulfillment. There the exemplars of faith in the Old Testament did not receive the promise in the ultimate sense, as 11:39 states.

Another issue is the meaning of the phrase ("something better," κρείττον τι, v. 40). "The κρείττον τι is our inclusion in this people of God for whom the τελείωσις of Christ was destined."⁶⁶ The ultimate promise, in the sense of messianic bliss with eternal life (10:36-37; cf. 6:17-18), was not granted to the exemplars of faith in chapter 11.⁶⁷ Their perfection awaited and depended on the sacrificial death of Christ. In this sense their faith was eschatological in that it had a forward-looking orientation. At the same time the author of Hebrews connected this eschatological outlook of faith to Christ's sacrificial death. Thus it may be said that the heroes and heroines of faith in the Old Testament had a Christological orientation.

However, the faith of those in the New Covenant is both eschatologically and Christologically oriented. On the one hand believers under the New Covenant "have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" and "to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (12:22, 24). In this sense the eschatological fulfillment has already taken place. On the other hand the ultimate eschatological fulfillment has not yet taken place because believers are still looking to the city that is to come (13:14). Thus it may be said that the faith of those under the New Covenant is eschatologically oriented just as was the faith of those in the Old Covenant. This forward-looking aspect of faith of those in the New Covenant is also closely related to Christology: believers must run the race which lies ahead of them by looking to Jesus (12:1-3).

⁶⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 392.

⁶⁶ Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 191.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Analyses of all the corresponding sections in Hebrews 11, including the center of the chapter in verses 13-16, support the argument that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote chapter 11 chiasmatically to set forth the importance of the eschatological nature of faith. For him faith involves both present and future aspects. However, the primary emphasis in Hebrews 11 is on the future (i.e., the forward-looking aspect). This eschatological orientation of faith is introduced in verses 1-3, restated in verses 13-16, and summarized in verses 39-40. In between these summary statements, the author cited examples of faith from the Old Testament to illustrate this forward-looking aspect of faith. Faith in Hebrews, then, involves the present and the future.

Also chapter 11 reveals that the Christological aspect of faith is present. True, faith in Hebrews is not expressed as "faith in Christ." However, this does not mean that faith in Hebrews is merely a de-Christologized ethical element, as Grasser contends. Several points in chapter 11 suggest that this aspect of faith is implied by the author (e.g., the reference to "heir of righteousness which is according to faith" for Noah in v. 7; "reproach of Christ" in describing Moses' faith in v. 26; the institution of the Passover in v. 28; and others). In other words the ethical aspect of steadfastness must always be interpreted in the context of Christology. In Hebrews Jesus is the object of faith. Moreover, the references to "God preparing for something better concerning us" and "their denial of perfection without us" (v. 40, author's trans.) clearly point ahead to the institution of the New Covenant based on Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. The futuristic outlook of faith (i.e., the forward-looking aspect) by the exemplars of faith in the Old Covenant is ultimately related to Christ in the New Covenant. In this sense it may be concluded that the concept of faith in Hebrews is both eschatologically and Christologically oriented.

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