The distinctive characteristics of the Epistle to the Hebrews in point of style and method of treatment are so pronounced that the bulk of modern expositors concur in ascribing its grand revelation of the priesthood of Christ, with its correlative postulates, to another writer than the Apostle of the Gentiles. In so doing, be it noted, they are not impugning its canonicity, but assessing the internal evidence that it contains indicative of its origin. Many erroneously fancy that the critical judgment is a faculty of modern birth; but Origen long ago felt its weight in the case in hand and Luther and Calvin likewise. There is an Alexandrian tincture in the diction, an elaboration in the phraseology, an expanding, unbroken sequence in the argument, which bespeak a mind steeped indeed in the lore of the Old Testament and profoundly convinced of its unique authority, yet trained in a rhetorical and grammatic school of another order. And if Blass's contention be well founded that the author of Hebrews alone among New Testament writers complies very extensively with the Isocratean usage of avoiding hiatus for the sake of euphony, his idiosyncrasy would seem to be fairly established. We may perhaps agree with Erasmus that the matter is Pauline, but the style unlike his, and then the idea of collaboration, as not incompatible with inspiration, may suggest itself to us; for there were obvious reasons why, if Paul were led to address a special letter to his kinsmen after the flesh, his identity should remain concealed. Yet the heart of the mystery surely consists in the fact that the framer of such a majestic fabric, immortally instinct with grace and power, and, as his greetings evince, well known to his first readers, should ever have become anonymous or sunk into the gulf of oblivion.

But it is not our present purpose to canvass the authorship of the Epistle. All that we design is to pass some of its more notable wordings under review. We begin with a sample which the writer shares with the apostle Peter in Acts (iii. 15, v. 31).

1. ἄγχυτος (ii. 10, xii. 2). This vocable hovers between the two senses of Chieftain and Founder, according as the main stress is laid on the first or the second syllable respectively.
Both Greek literature in general and the papyri lend support to either concept. In the familiar phrase “Captain of our salvation” applied to Christ, the former interpretation clearly predominates, as in the version “Prince and Saviour” from the second passage in Acts. Some may discover therein a reference to Joshua, the Saviour’s namesake, the very type of an invincible leader. The word does not indeed occur in the LXX where we might expect it to render sar in the vision of a divine Commander-in-chief according to Joshua outside Jericho; but elsewhere it is freely used of the princes of the twelve tribes, of Jephthah’s call to rulership and in other connections.

When followed, however, by a possessive case, the notion of a prime agent or factor prevails. That exegesis unquestionably accords best with Peter’s earlier phrase, δὲ ἀρχηγὸς τής ζωῆς and those met with in Hebrews, δὲ ἀρχηγὸς τῆς σωτηρίας and τῆς πλείως ἀρχηγὸς καὶ τελεωτῆς, as well as with the Vulgate auctor. In fact, Plato (Crat. 401) and Polybius (i. 67) conjoin ἀρχηγὸς with αἰτίως and Athenaeus interchanges it with auctor primus. Cf. Philo’s expression (De Mosis Vita, 3, 28), ἀρχηγικότατον αἰτίως. Quotations might be multiplied in which the word bears the meaning of originator or initiator. For example, Aristotle (983) calls Thales the ἀρχηγὸς of philosophy and Josephus (Contra App. i. 19) terms Noah δὲ τὸν γένους ἡμῶν ἀρχηγὸς. Like its cognate ἀρχηγέτης it is especially appropriated to pioneers and founders of states, or such “pathfinders” as the historical Columbus or his mythical progenitor Jason. So Isocrates (53) designates the ancestral Spartans, and Plutarch (Mor. 1135) dubs the Phrygian Olympus ἀρχηγὸς τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς μοναρχῆς, and entitles Dionysus ἄρτον καὶ σῶρον ἀρχηγὸς (ib. 299) and Hephaestus (958) πασῶν τεχνῶν ἀρχηγὸς. The LXX was not unaware of this connotation; for in Mic. i. 13 ἀρχηγὸς τῆς άμαρτίας = a pioneer in sin, much as Menander speaks of night (Fr. 402) as κακῶν ἀρχηγὸς, a precursor of ills. We take it then that Christ is thus set forth as the Source both of life and salvation and the Author and Consummator of our faith. So Chrysostom expounds the appellation.

2. μετριοπάθειαν (v. 2). This striking expression traces its genesis to the Peripatetic philosophy, in contradistinction from the Stoic’s affectation of a marble apathy of demeanour. Within the bounds of self-respect it advocates a tolerant or sympathetic posture of mind in respect of provocations from others or
misfortunes that may have overtaken them. The term μετριωσάθεια
is accordingly coupled with πρατής and ἐπιθεώρει, especially
by Plutarch, with whom it is a favourite location. The noble
portrait of Achilles limned by Euripides in the Iphigeneia in
Aulis (920 f.) presents its prototype:

ἐπισταμαι δε τοις κακοῖς τονόμην μετρίως τε χαράς τοῖσιν ἐξογκυμένοις.

Such a blend of forbearance and condolence was ideally
requisite in God's high-priest under the old dispensation, both
in his sacerdotal and judicial functions. But human infirmity
marred the fair vision, till the Eternal Priest, Perfection's
real Counterpart, trod the scene. For (and this renders the
word almost untranslateable) μετριωσάθεια is the golden mean
between indifference and mawkish sentimentality. Aaron's
fond compliance with Israel's masked idolatry and Eli's lax
indulgence of his profligate sons were gross abuses of their
lofty office. The true high-priest's long-suffering will be duly
measured, proportionate to the case in hand and the ignorance
or waywardness he has to deal with; it will be adjusted to an
equitable standard and free from extravagance no less than
insensibility; not gushing, yet, unfeignedly gracious.1 And
who save Immanuel meets these requisitions entirely? To treat
considerately is an inadequate rendering, yet we can devise no
better.

3. κατικός (iv. 12). This adjective with its objective
genitive, often wrongly construed as a noun, also reverts to
Aristotelian phraseology. KRI, as a Sanskrit root=to sift,
and the whole group of classical words, of which the Latin
cernere and the Greek κολεύειν and κυλεῖς are samples, repro-
duce more or less their etymological signification. The divine
Word is here affirmed to be κατικός ἐνθυμησάτων καὶ ἐνοιῶν
μαθήματος, discriminative of the heart's thoughts and intents. This
construction is somewhat rare; but the Stagirite supplies an
instance of it in his Nicomachean Ethics (vi. 11), where treating
συγγράμμη as a species of forbearance he styles it γράμμη κατική
τοῦ ἐπισκόπου ὁρθή, a judgment correct in its appreciation of
the equitable. Elsewhere he calls γεώσις τῶν σχημάτων (proper-
ties) κατικοτάτη. Plutarch also borrows from Aristotle the
assumption of a κοινῆ αἰσθήσεως ἤ τῶν συνθετών εἰδῶν κριτικῆ

1 Cf. Aristeas, 256: τὰ πρὸς τὸν καρόν πράσσειν δεότως μετροπαθῇ καθεστά.
(Mor. 900), and we read in Vettius Valens of certain dispositions (7) as καμῖν καὶ θανατὸν κρυπτικόν. In all these examples it is a sifting process that is at work; and what winnowing-fan can vie with the gales of the Spirit blowing through the Word?

4. ἔκτροχνιζέων (iv. 13). In pursuance of his vivid photography of that Word in its penetrative and unmasking potency, already half-personified, the writer proceeds to fasten our gaze on the omniscient Searcher of hearts Himself, and employs the foregoing vocable to rivet the truth he is inculcating. The general bearing of his metaphor is obvious, but much difference of opinion has arisen as regards the precise allusion intended. The perf.part. τετραχνισμένος coupled with γυμνός clearly expresses a state of exposure to the divine scrutiny under which the whole field of being is laid bare. The surveillance predicated is absolutely exhaustive; nothing escapes its ken. But the image conveying this solemnising thought is by no means equally transparent. It puzzled the Greek Fathers themselves. Chrysostom’s elucidation has its attractions, but lacks linguistic confirmation. He interprets it as depicting a flayed and suspended carcase hung up by the neck and stripped of all integuments or disguises. There would certainly seem to be a reference to the ritual of animal sacrifices, so familiarised to Jewish readers. From a passage in the Characters of Theophrastus (xxvii) it appears that the verb was used of bending back the neck of the victim for the fatal stroke; in which case the laid open of the R.V. would be a commendable version. Yet Philo makes use repeatedly of the word in a somewhat different application and of the strengthened form ἔκτροχνιζεί too. His meaning is rather obscure, but in the passive voice its signification with him may be construed exhausted; for in the wrestler’s art τραχηλόμαχος was a grip of the antagonist’s throat akin to the bandit’s garrote, rendering him limp and powerless. Thus he writes, ὅπερ ἄπορος τραχηλίζεται (ii. 470); ἀδυνατεὶ ὑπὸ ῥώμης δυνατωτῆς ἔκτροχνιζόμενος (ii. 413); and similarly Josephus (B. J. iv. 6), ἐμφολίω πολέμω τραχηλιζόμενοι. This characteristic figure then may be held to represent either the denuded or helpless plight of all created persons or forces when brought face to face with their Creator and Lord.

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1 Plutarch’s vivid snapshot (Mor. 998) of the sacrificial victim combines both ideas.