

Christ and His People ***An Exegetical and Theological Study of*** ***Hebrews 2: 5-18***

Geoffrey W. Grogan

[p.54]

New Testament scholarship, like other areas of study, is subject to changes of fashion. In recent years, it has been fashionable to produce detailed studies of particular New Testament passages. Scholars like B. Gartner,¹ E. Lovestam,² R. P. Martin³ and J. H. Elliott⁴ have given us specialist studies of passages such as Acts 17. 22-31; Acts 13. 32-37, Philippians 2. 5-11 and I Peter 2. 4-10. In the present writer's judgment, this is a healthy trend and it is to be hoped that it has come to stay. This article is a much more modest treatment than any of those referred to above, but its aim is similar, that is to endeavour to exhibit the thought of the passage chosen, especially in relation to its Old Testament background, and thus to show its contribution to New Testament theology.

Why this particular passage? Its selection may call for some justification. Many questions concerning the epistle to the Hebrews remain unanswered. Its authorship, its destination and, to a smaller extent, its date, are all in dispute. Some of these questions may never be answered to the satisfaction of all concerned. One thing, however, is certain. It was written by a man with a great pastoral heart. Moreover, he penned his 'word of exhortation' to a company of people who were in grave spiritual danger, and the chief means he employed to combat that danger was to direct their attention to Christ, and that in His character as High Priest.⁵

Many commentators have recognised the great importance of our selected passage. What A. B. Bruce calls 'this supremely important section of our Epistle'⁶ comes to its climax in the first clear reference to the priestly office of Jesus. The discerning reader, with the Old Testament in his mind, may have picked up hints of this theme in chapter 1, verses 3 and 13. But 2. 17 is quite explicit with its reference to 'a merciful and faithful high priest'. Montefiore declares that this verse 'sums up the whole of the consequent argument of this Epistle.'⁷ Kistemaker also notes its germinal character. 'Heb. 2. 17 offers in a nutshell all the perspectives necessary for the entire Epistle. The first clause... sums up the main issue of chapter 2, i.e. Jesus' humanity. The next clause... reveals those aspects which are treated in chapters 3, 4 and 5. 1-10. The virtue of faithfulness is discussed in chapters 3 and 4, where in the first place the faithfulness of Jesus, the Son, is mentioned, followed by a summons to obedience on the part of believers, the sons. The description of a merciful high priest in things pertaining to God is worked out in the pericope 4. 14-5. 10. The purpose clause... is

¹ *The Areopagus Address and Natural Revelation*, Lund (1955).

² *Son and Saviour*, Lund (1961).

³ R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2. 5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, Cambridge (1967).

⁴ *The Elect and the Holy*, Leiden (1966).

⁵ "The earlier chapters are little more than introductory to the central teaching of the great High Priest." E. F. Scott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance*, Edinburgh (1922), 70; cf. G. Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids (1956), 91; S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Amsterdam (1961), 98.

⁶ A. B. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, Edinburgh (1899), 65.

⁷ H. W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, London (1964), *ad loc.*

elaborated in the passage 9. 1-10. 18.⁸ So the passage is of special interest because it leads up to and includes this key verse.

It is also of interest because of the way it employs a number of Old Testament passages. Since the publication of C. H. Dodd's book, 'According to the Scriptures',⁹ more and more attention has been directed to the Old Testament contexts of passages quoted by the New Testament writers. In this respect the quotations in

[p.55]

this section of the epistle are not without their special interest.

There can be few New Testament passages which show such interest in the significance of Christ's humanity. One common theme emerging from the welter of modern Christologies is a lively antipathy to docetism. Even that historical scepticism, which meets us in Bultmann and his closest followers, but which we may find in less extreme forms in so many modern writers, is not inconsistent with this. Even those who are most insistent on the limited character of our knowledge of the historical Jesus are certain that His humanity was real. The author of this epistle would have sympathised with this interest in Jesus the Man, however much he may have found in the modern treatment of the theme to provoke his strong dissent. In this passage the humanity of Jesus is in focus.

To these considerations add the presence of a number of textual problems and several *cruces interpretum*, and the selection of this passage for special study would seem to require no further apology.

A word needs to be said as to the method adopted in this article. It is divided into two parts. The first is exegetical and the second theological. The end in view is theological and so the first part exists as a means to that end. Its necessity arises from the fact that our understanding of the theology of the passage depends upon our grasp of its argument as a whole. The exegetical nature of this part allows the author to pursue his theological aim in the second part unhindered by the need to turn aside constantly to discuss exegetical points.

1. THE ARGUMENT OF THE PASSAGE

a. Its connection with 1. 1-2. 4 Hebrews chapter 1 declares the greatness of that Son of God, in Whom the God of the prophets has now spoken to His people. The first point made concerning Him is that He is, by God's appointment, 'the heir of all things', for inheritance and Sonship are correlative ideas. His transcendent glory is set forth deftly and briefly. After a reference to His atoning work the spotlight is turned on His exalted position at the right hand of God. At this point the writer declares His superiority to angels and he stays with this thought for some time. His position is superior to theirs, for the Old Testament witness to the Messiah asserts His supremacy. The quotation of Psalm 2. 7 (1. 5) would remind the readers of a context which uses the language of inheritance and promises the King universal dominion.¹⁰ The term 'firstborn' would call to mind Psalm 89 with its stress on the exaltation of the King and its affirmation 'I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the

⁸ *Op. cit.*, 101.

⁹ Nisbet (1952).

¹⁰ Cf. Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, 80; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebraer*, Göttingen (1960), 35f.

earth.' (Ps. 89. 27) Not only in the passage quoted in 1. 8f but elsewhere (notably in vv. 5. 16f) Psalm 45 celebrates the majesty and glory of the King. Appropriately the catena of Old Testament passages ends with a reference to Psalm 110, which is to figure so largely in the remainder of the epistle, for the author of the epistle is concerned not merely with the Kingship of Jesus but with the combination of that Kingship with His High Priesthood. It is not only His exaltation ('having become as much superior to angels') with which he is concerned, however, but the name He bears and which makes that exaltation so intrinsically fitting ('the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs'). The Old Testament calls Him 'Son', 'God'¹¹, 'Lord' and exhorts the angels of God to worship Him. The angels, on the other hand, are simply servants of God, ministering to Him and to His people (1. 6f, 14). The witness of Old Testament

[p.56]

Scripture to Him in all its sevenfold fulness, and moreover to Him as the exalted Son and Heir, makes it essential that men should attend to and cleave to the Gospel, for not only in its substance but in its attestation is it superior to the older revelation, which was given through angels (2. 1-4).

This is the point at which our own special passage commences. It is just as Christocentric as that which has gone before. Its opening verse continues many of the threads of thought which have already made their appearance. The eschatological note is sounded in the phrase 'the world to come' (Τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν). Messiahship is itself an eschatological concept, and this finds accentuation in the idea of inheritance (1. 2), possibly the use of 'again' (πάλιν), in 1. 6,¹² the everlasting nature of the Son's kingdom (1. 8), His future victory (1. 13) and salvation conceived as a future possession of the people of God (1. 14; cf. 2. 3). To the author's mind, the great theme of his work is an eschatological one.¹³ The motif of the Son's exaltation also continues, although it is developed in a new direction, for the divine titles disappear from view and He is now seen to be supreme in His—human nature and in suffering, and as a pledge of the glorification of mankind in His people. This affects the theme of the contrast between Him and the angels. This finds mention in 2. 5-9 and in 2. 16 but its exposition is now influenced more clearly by the fact of the incarnation and it eventually passes out of view altogether, as other comparisons and contrasts come up for treatment later on in the epistle. The use of Scripture is also different. Both in 1. 1-2. 4 and in 2. 10-18, his use of the Old Testament assumes the Messianic character of the passages he employs. In the former section, however, the emphasis is upon our Lord's divine transcendence while in the latter it is on His humanity. The quotation and exposition of Psalm 8. 4-6 in 2. 5-9 forms a bridge between these sections, for in it He is seen to be human and yet transcendent and supreme.

¹¹ Commentators differ as to whether or not the LXX of Ps. 45. 6-7 quoted in 1. 8f should be so translated as to make ὁ θεός a title of the King; cf. especially B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, London (1920), *ad loc.*; O. Michel, *ad loc.*; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, London, (1964) *ad loc.*; T. Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, London (1960), *ad loc.*

¹² πάλιν ("again") is in a strange, but not unparalleled position (cf. F. F. Bruce *ad loc.*) if it introduces another quotation here. For this reason, Westcott, amongst others, considers that the words should be rendered "and when he brings the firstborn into the world again", in which case they would refer to the second advent. The noun οἰκουμένη appears only here besides 2. 5 in the epistle, and its eschatological employment in the latter gives some slight support to the eschatological interpretation of 1. 6.

¹³ Cf. C. K. Barrett "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube), Cambridge (1964), 363-393.

b. *Jesus as the Man crowned with glory and honour* (2. 5-9). This section is dominated by Psalm 8. The function of 'for' (γὰρ) in v. 5 is open to dispute. Perhaps it adduces another reason (cf. v. 2) for paying close attention to the Christian message. Again it may refer to the signs of divine power (v. 4) which were already manifested amongst men as a prolepsis or foretaste of the world to come (cf. 6. 4f). It seems more likely, however, that it connects with the whole theme of the supremacy of the Son rather than angels which has dominated the epistle up to this point. The author will now show that our Lord's eschatological (and present) supremacy is human as well as divine. He neither affirms nor denies the notion that the present world as distinct from the world to come, is under the control of angels, for this does not fall within the scope of his discourse.¹⁴

In verse 6 he employs a formula of quotation found also in Philo, but which is thoroughly in keeping with his particularly strong emphasis upon Scripture as the Word of God, and his tendency to keep the inspired agents in the background. Throughout chapter 1 it is God Who speaks in Old Testament Scripture. Even now, when man speaks, he believes that he does so under inspiration and so his name is excluded.¹⁵

Does he treat Psalm 8 as directly or as indirectly Messianic? This is a much more complex issue than might appear at first sight. There is much that can be said on both sides. The Old Testament passage itself reads like a simple description of man's position in God's order for the universe, with an obvious relation to Genesis 1. 26ff with its reference to the creation of man and his divinely-given position as

[p.57]

'king' of the world under God. Moreover, no language unambiguously referring to our Lord is employed until the word 'Jesus' (Ἰησοῦν) in v. 9. This is of course the first instance of the use of this name in the epistle, and also the first of many occasions when it is given a position of great emphasis by its syntactical lateness.¹⁶ Is it possible that here at least and perhaps in some of the later passages where this phenomenon appears there may be the intention of surprise as well as of emphasis? These considerations point in the direction of an indirect application of the Psalm to Christ.

There is, however, much to be said on the other side. We do not need to accept as authentic the variant 'who' (τις) for 'what' (τι) in v. 6.¹⁷ It would give very strong support to the directly Christological understanding of the passage, but this in no way depends upon it. If we were correct in our judgment of the function of γὰρ in v. 5, then the phrase 'for... not to angels' (οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλοις) will not mean 'not to angels but to men' but rather 'not to angels but to the Son'. The use of Psalm 8 elsewhere in the New Testament is, with only one apparent exception, exclusively Christological. The exception is Matthew 21. 16 where our Lord defends the hosannas of the children in the temple from Psalm 8. 3.

¹⁴ Although A. B. Bruce (*op. cit.*, 47f) tends to dismiss the idea of angelic control over the present world rather too easily.

¹⁵ Cf. B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, 476-478.

¹⁶ Cf. B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, 33.

¹⁷ This occurs in a number of MSS, much the most important of which is P46. Cf. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, London (1953), 48f, who supports it, and R. V. G. Tasker in *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954-5), 185, who rejects it.

Given the doctrine of the incarnation, however, the psalm's references to Yahweh,¹⁸ as well as those to ideal man, can be applied to Christ. Lindars has shown¹⁹ that wherever Ps. 8. 6 is employed in the New Testament, it is brought into association with Ps. 110. 1b (1 Cor. 15. 25, 27; Eph. 1. 22; Phil. 3. 21; I Pet. 3. 22). This, he shows, is true also of Hebrews 2. 6-8,²⁰ for this is preceded by a quotation from Psalm 110. 1. in 1. 13 with no other quotation in between. This may well mean that there was a strong mental association between the two passages in the minds of those who quoted them because there was a strong theological connection between them. Now whatever may be said of Psalm 8, the reference here to Psalm 110 is manifestly Christological.

To these considerations must be added another which has not always been sufficiently appreciated. Commentators have pointed out that the use of this psalm Christologically probably stems from its employment of the term 'Son of Man' which our Lord used of Himself. As F. F. Bruce puts it, 'ever since Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, this expression has had for Christians a connotation beyond its etymological force, and it had this connotation for the writer to the Hebrews'.²¹ Now Lindars has noted that Mark 14. 62 and Acts 7. 56 conflate Psalm 110. 1 with Daniel 7. 13.²² It is true that these are the only clear examples of this phenomenon, but their existence at least raises the possibility that Daniel 7. 13 formed the bridge in thought for the New Testament writers between Psalm 110. 1 and Psalm 8. 6.²³ If Paul's Last Adam doctrine is in any way related to Daniel 7, then this passage may well have been in his mind when he linked the language of Psalms 110 and 8 in 1 Cor. 15. 25, 27 because the Adam/Christ comparison and contrast is a leading theme of that chapter. Proceeding further through Lindars' list of passages where the two psalms are conflated, we note the old man/new man contrast in Ephesians,²⁴ probably based on the Last Adam doctrine. Philippians 3. 21 reminds us of Philippians 2. 10f, which concludes the 'Christ-hymn', in which traces of the Last Adam motif have been seen.²⁵ There is, however, no discernable trace of the influence of Daniel 7 in 1 Peter, but such a mental link need not always reveal its presence.

The case for a directly Messianic understanding of Psalm 8 on the part of the

[p.58]

author would appear to be strong. Yet the considerations we advanced on the other side are not without their force. In view of this, it is worth asking if we can find a means of reconciling the two interpretations. The recognition of the influence of Daniel 7 upon the writer's mind should provide us with the clue we need. In that passage, there is good ground

¹⁸ Cf. Westcott's Additional Note on 3. 7. The application to Christ of words spoken in the O.T. of the Lord, *op. cit.* 90-92.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, 50f.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Op. cit.*, 35.

²² *Op. cit.*, 48.

²³ Kistemaker refers to Luke 22. 69 and Acts 7. 56, and then says "Thus the logical train of thought has moved from Ps. 110. 1 via Dan. 7. 13 to Ps. 8. 4. In the discourse of the author to the Hebrews the Daniel passage happens to be the missing link. The expression υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου occurs in Dan. 7. 13 and Ps. 8. 5 (LXX) without the definite articles". *Op. cit.* 81f. He does not develop this suggestive thought any further, however.

²⁴ Eph. 2. 15, 4. 22-24.

²⁵ Cf. R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, 116-119.

for believing that the Son of Man is neither a personification of the saints of the Most High nor an isolated individual, but the representative of the saints, perhaps their king.²⁶ If the fourth beast can be viewed now as a king and now as a kingdom (Dan. 7. 17, 23), may not the 'one like a son of man' be so regarded too, even though such a double interpretation is not given explicitly?²⁷ There is a hard core of the sayings of Jesus about the Son of Man which resists the attempts of scholars to treat the term consistently as a collective one.²⁸ The New Testament further uses language, however, which seems to imply that the church is to be identified with 'the people of the saints of the Most High' in Daniel. What is most significant is that this very epistle contains a piece of such evidence in 12. 28.²⁹ The unshakeable kingdom here which we receive is almost certainly based on the everlasting kingdom received by the saints in Daniel 7. Moreover, we Christians have come to "innumerable angels in festal gathering", a phrase itself reminiscent of Daniel 7. 10 (Heb. 12. 22). We shall see further evidence later that the author had a profound conception of the solidarity of Christ with His people. If this was so, it may well be that for him an Old Testament passage which in its own setting was anthropological was understood by him to be both Christological and ecclesiological. It was part of his basic approach that what was written in ideal terms of man could only find fulfilment in the Man, Christ Jesus, and through Him, in the Church which was one with Him. Our original statement of the issue, therefore, implied the putting asunder of what for the author constituted distinguishable but inseparable realities, *viz.* Christ and the new mankind in Christ, the Church.

Certain other matters connected with the quotation have little bearing on our purpose in this article. The use of 'than the angels' (Παρ' ἀγγελοῦς) for 'than God' (*Meëlohim*) in the LXX of the psalm is not as indefensible as it may seem.³⁰ In any case, A. B. Bruce is probably correct in thinking that although 'the contrast between Christ and the angels exercises a certain influence on the form of thought' in 2. 5-18, the centre of interest has moved decisively away from this after 1. 1-2. 4.³¹ The words (βραχύ τι in vv. 7, 9 can mean either 'a little' or 'for a little while'. The Hebrew demands the first sense, however, and the words can be so understood without difficulty in the epistle. It is possible, however, that the author, appreciating the ambiguity of the Greek, realised that it was true in both senses. The shorter text of verse 7 is almost certainly the correct one.³² Why did the author terminate the quotation where he did? Possibly because the words that follow in the psalm are in any case summed up in the phrase, 'putting everything in subjection under his feet'. In addition, it may be due to the fact that he was soon to apply God's subjection of all things to Christ in a new way. Such reference to the animals would serve only to distract his readers unnecessarily.

He now proceeds to underline the absoluteness of his dominion. There might be just a glance here at the idea of angelic control over the world. The angels, as servants of God and of His people (1. 14), do not have any authority in the ideal state pictured in the psalm, for the

²⁶ Cf. H. L. Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea for the Old Testament*, London (1953), 13-15.

²⁷ Ellison notes that a similar linking of king and people in apocalyptic can be found in Daniel 2. 37f, 8. 20f, Rev. 13, *op. cit.*, 13.

²⁸ T. W. Manson treated the Son of Man in the teaching of Jesus collectively (e.g. in *The Teaching of Jesus*, Cambridge (1931), 211ff, 263ff), but the majority of scholars have not followed him here; vide M. D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark*, London (1967), especially 181f.

²⁹ Cf. also Luke 12. 32.

³⁰ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

³¹ *Op. cit.*, 68.

³² P⁴⁶ and B omit the words καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν κειρῶν σου. It is easy to see how they could have been included by assimilation from the LXX.

language is so absolute that it leaves them no sphere over which to exercise such control. It is also possible that he has in mind

[p.59]

that subjugation of Satan which he later sets forth in vv. 14f. We shall take up this point again later. As we shall see he is not unaware of the Fall of man. He is much more concerned with ends than with origins, however, and with eschatology than with pure anthropology, and so he contrasts the present with the future rather than with the past. The Son of Man in Daniel 7, as also the Last Adam in Pauline thought, is basically an eschatological Figure. This emerges most clearly in 1 Cor. 15. 24-28, where some of the language is similar to what is used here. Our author does not need to assure his readers of the certainty of the final denouement in the way that Paul does in that passage, however, for he has made this plain again and again already (e.g. in 1. 2, 13; 2. 5). He implies it, however, in the words 'as it is, we do not yet see' (ὡς ἐστὶν οὐκ ὁρῶμεν). In any case, it was an element in the Kerygma.

What we do see, however, is the central figure of the great drama crowned with that glory and honour of which the psalm speaks. The psalm linked man's glory and honour with the subjection of all things to him. The Christian faith proclaims the great paradox of glory through suffering. Taken out of its context, or read simply in the light of the language of the psalmist, v. 9 does not necessarily imply the doctrine of the incarnation. The author has, however, made his belief in the pre-existence of the Son abundantly clear (1. 2f) and so the humanity of Jesus emerges as the result of incarnation and so of humiliation.

Verse 9 poses a problem for the interpreter. Does it teach that He was crowned with glory and honour as a result of His suffering of death or with a view to it? The majority of commentators hold the latter view. This certainly accords with the teaching of the epistle elsewhere (cf. 12. 2) and with the frequent New Testament theme of 'the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory'. (1 Peter 1. 11).³³ What inclines some commentators against this interpretation is the fact that it is difficult to explain the clause which completes the verse in terms of it. Nairne bluntly declares that the syntax compels us to take the other interpretation.³⁴ But if, with Westcott³⁵ and F. F. Bruce,³⁶ we assume that the clause expresses the purpose, not simply of the crowning, but of the whole sequence of events from the humiliation through the passion to the glory, then the problem disappears. As F. F. Bruce puts it, "because the Son of Man suffered, because His suffering has been crowned by His exaltation, therefore His death avails for all".³⁷ If this does not do violence to the syntax it is nevertheless still open to the protagonists of the minority interpretation to argue that their understanding of the verse is a more natural treatment of it. Westcott's objection that *δια* with the accusative always expresses the ground and not the object does not overturn it. The phrase 'because of the suffering of death' (*δια τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου*) in which this construction appears, may still refer to the ground of the crowning even though the crowning precedes its ground in point of time. The suffering of death was secure in the purpose of God and in the will of Jesus Himself long before it actually found historical realisation. Likewise the author treats the cross as the true ground of forgiveness under the old covenant which preceded it just

³³ Cf. Mk. 8. 31, Lk. 24. 26, Acts 2. 36, Rom. 8. 34, *et al.*

³⁴ A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood: Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Edinburgh (1915), 313.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

as under the new covenant which flowed from it (9. 15). The Gospel of John treats the glorification of Jesus as including His death.³⁸ As A. B. Bruce puts it, 'first lower, then higher, nay a higher in the lower'.³⁹

A few Greek MSS and some of the Fathers read 'apart from God' (Χωρὶς θεοῦ) for 'by the grace of God' (χάριτι θεοῦ). The textual evidence against this is very

[p.60]

strong and seems decisive. Those who accept the variant are not generally agreed as to its meaning.⁴⁰ γεύσεται θανάτου is a semitism⁴¹ and does not necessarily point to a brief experience of death. Certainly our Lord's experience of death was brief but the author probably does not intend to allude to this fact here.

c. Jesus as the Saviour of His Brethren (2. 10-16). Thus far the author has concentrated the attention of his readers upon Christ. Where he has made any reference to them this has been in their capacity as recipients of the Christian message. He has, however, employed the term σωτηρία (1. 14; 2. 3) to sum up the blessings of the gospel. He now proceeds to show how it is that Christ has secured this salvation and in what relationship the Saviour stands to those whom He saves.

The last clause of the previous verse is the starting point for the thought of v. 10. The words 'for it was fitting that he' (ἔπρεπε γὰρ αὐτῷ) answer to the phrase 'by the grace of God' (χάριτι θεοῦ). Here alone in Scripture is the thought to be found explicitly that God does something because it is fitting, although the idea is related to Jesus once (Mt. 3. 15).⁴² W. Manson has drawn attention to the way the Old Testament prophets constantly appeal to God by reference to His own revealed character. He says, 'They judge God by God, so to speak, and insist on the divine consistency.'⁴³ The Father, like the Son,⁴⁴ is the End and Creator of all things, and there is perhaps a suggestion here that the creation plan, expressed in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 does not lack its ultimate fulfilment, because the God of creation is also the God of a salvation which secures His ends in creation. It is in the Son of God that Psalm 8 finds its fulfilment and so those for whom He secures that fulfilment are appropriately called 'sons' also. They are brought by Him to the glory of which the psalmist speaks.

He brings them to that glory as 'the pioneer of their salvation' (τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν). There is general agreement among scholars as to the importance of this expression.⁴⁵ Contextual considerations make it almost certain that the term ἀρχηγός (translated 'pioneer')

³⁸ Jn. 7. 39, 12. 16, 23ff, 13. 31.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, 87.

⁴⁰ All the major commentators discuss the variant. Westcott summarises the possible interpretations of it (*op. cit.*, *ad loc.*) and Hewitt's additional note (*op. cit.*, 72) is *multum in parvo*.

⁴¹ Cf. Mk. 9. 1, Jn. 8. 52.

⁴² Note the use of the verb again in 7. 26.

⁴³ W. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration*, London (1949), 102.

⁴⁴ Cf. 1. 2, where the ideas occur in the same order as they do here, again demonstrating the eschatological orientation of the author's thought.

⁴⁵ Cf. especially E. C. Wickham, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, O. Michel, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, A. B. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 92ff; W. Manson, *op. cit.*, 102ff; E. Kasemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief*, Göttingen (1961), 79ff.

in the R.S.V.) is used here more in the sense of 'Leader' than of 'Author',⁴⁶ although the writer may not have been unaware of the appropriateness of both senses of the word when he employed it here. Moses is soon to feature in the author's argument as also the wilderness wanderings and the entry into Canaan through Joshua (3. 1; 4. 13), and from 2. 10 he begins to use language which would remind his readers of that important period in the life of their nation. Jesus is the New Moses-Joshua who leads the people of God to the promised land,⁴⁷ which now becomes fused in thought with that dominion over all things which God has ordained for man and which Psalm 8 celebrates. It is 'the world to come'.

In what sense was He 'perfected' through sufferings? Here a firm grasp of the purpose of the whole passage and, indeed, of the whole epistle, helps the exegete. The writer's thought in this section is to find its climax in 2. 17-18. How does Christ save us? He does so by acting effectively as our High Priest. It is for that then that He is to be perfected. G. Vos, after examining *τελειοῦν* ('to perfect') and its cognates in the epistle, declares 'The term nowhere designates that Jesus was made ethically or religiously perfect, that His character was developed in either sense; it, always designates that his qualifications for the high-priestly office were perfected, that He received the full-orbed equipment which His priestly ministry requires. The subject of the *τελείωσις* is always the priest, never the man. That the means

[p.61]

through which the *τελείωσις* of the priest takes place, lie in the moral sphere, cannot alter this conclusion in the least.'⁴⁸

The importance of the high-priestly motif in the epistle and in this section of it in particular will also determine our understanding of the use of the verb 'to sanctify' (*αγιαζειν*). The ritual sense of the verb and its cognates is undoubtedly the dominant one in this epistle⁴⁹ rather than the ethical. The NEB translates the verse 'For a consecrating priest and those whom he consecrates are all of one stock.' Calvin takes *ἑνος* ('of one') to be neuter and so understands it to be a reference to a common nature (cf. v. 14).⁵⁰ If it is masculine, then the reference must be to God, as the clause which follows makes clear.⁵¹

A. B. Bruce sums up the contents of 2. 11-18 thus: 'First, the statement of a principle on which the argument proceeds (v. 11); second, illustrations of the principle by citations from the Old Testament (vv. 12, 13); third, applications of the principle to particular facts in the history of Jesus (vv. 14-18).'⁵² The principle itself of course, is that of solidarity between Christ and His people.

The first Old Testament citation in this group is from Psalm 22. 22. The only textual difference from the LXX is the substitution of *ἀπαγγελω* for *διηγήσομαι*, both of which mean 'I will proclaim'. It is conceivable that the author's preoccupation with angels has

⁴⁶ Westcott says, "The preceding *ἀγαγόντα* seems to fix the rendering 'leader' here (as in 12. 2)". *op. cit., ad loc.*

⁴⁷ Cf. A. B. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 93f.

⁴⁸ G. Vos, 'The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews' in *The Princeton Theological Review*, v. 4 (Oct. 1907), 589.

⁴⁹ But the ethical sense occurs in 12. 10,

⁵⁰ J. Calvin, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids (1949), *ad loc.*

⁵¹ All the major commentators give a conspectus of interpretations. Cf. also A. B. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 106.

determined this on the principle of assonance.⁵³ It is the first express quotation in the epistle after that of Psalm 8. Is there any connection between them? It is difficult to find one unless we take seriously the probable connection which obtained between Psalm 8 and Daniel 7 for our author. In both Daniel 7 and Psalm 22 the enemies are represented as beasts. Moreover, our Lord often spoke of the sufferings of the Son of Man, sometimes with a reference to Scripture.⁵⁴ Not only the Fourth Servant Song but also Psalm 22 is treated in the New Testament as a witness to the sufferings of Christ.⁵⁵ Since his employment of Psalm 8 and, indeed, in close association with his exposition of it, the author has made reference to the sufferings of Jesus, and so his own mind and the minds of his readers are prepared to move on to a quotation from this psalm of Messianic suffering. It was through His suffering of death that He sanctified the people, and was perfected as their High Priest. That part of the psalm in which the psalmist experiences the divine vindication after suffering is therefore highly appropriate here. The Fourth Evangelist quotes Psalm 22. 18 and his comment suggests that he may have seen special significance in the fact that the tunic Jesus wore was not the more usual two-piece, but was a one-piece garment after the style worn by the priests.⁵⁶ The language of this psalm has also influenced our author in 5. 7-10.⁵⁷

Verse 13 adds two more Old Testament quotations. What is their source? The second is indisputably from Isaiah 8. 18 and most commentators have identified the first as Isaiah 8. 17. The two are separated by the words 'and again' (καὶ πάλιν), but this is probably because two distinct points are being made. Other possibilities are Psalm 16. 1, 3; Psalm 19. 2; 2, Samuel 22. 3 and Isaiah 12. 2. The second passage is appropriate because Christ was not only priest and king but also prophet.⁵⁸ Accordingly, language employed of an Old Testament prophet could be appropriately applied to Him. There was of course, a distinct parallel between Isaiah, rejected by the people of his day and yet gathering disciples around him, and Christ.⁵⁹ If he has Isaiah 8. 17 primarily in mind in the first of these two quotations, this is probably only as representative of that whole class of passages in which men of God, foreshadowing Christ in their godliness and also often in their

[p.62]

experience of persecution or rejection, commit themselves in faith to God. Indeed, this idea is not lacking in Psalm 22 itself (vv. 19-21; cf. vv. 4f, 7f). The vindicated sufferer there calls his 'brethren' 'you who fear the Lord'. He does so in the words which immediately follow the quotation from that psalm given in our passage. So he recognises them not only as his brethren but also as fellow-believers.⁶⁰ The author of the epistle has chosen his Old Testament quotations most judiciously and with a keen eye, not only for their appropriateness in reference to Christ, but also for their links with each other.

⁵³ Note the use of alliteration with the initial π in 1. 1; cf. F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁵⁴ As in Mt. 26. 54, Mk. 9. 12, 24. 21, 49, 17. 24f.

⁵⁵ Cf. especially Lindars, *op. cit.*, 89-93.

⁵⁶ Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 3. 7 § 4 and the comment in Lindars, *op. cit.*, 91f. The high-priestly motif is not altogether absent from the Fourth Gospel, cf. Jn. 17. 19. For theological links between Hebrews and John vide C. Spicq, *Épître aux Hébreux*, Paris (1952-3) 109-138.

⁵⁷ Cf. Wickham, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, H. W. Montefiore, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁵⁸ Priest and king motifs are, of course, very prominent in the epistle, but the author has already suggested (1. 1) that Jesus is the Prophet par excellence; cf. also 3. 1; 12. 25.

⁵⁹ Cf. especially F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, and A. Snell, *New and Living Way*, London (1959), 65.

⁶⁰ Cf. Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, 84.

Verses 14 and 15 contain the epistle's only clear reference to the devil, and they relate the death of Christ to the vanquishing of this enemy. Has the writer departed here from his main theme for a moment to return to it again before the end of the chapter? By no means! The intimate connection between these verses and their context and also between the significance of the death of Jesus here and in the rest of the epistle can be demonstrated. But first we must note that the doctrine of the oneness of Christ with His people is now expounded as a doctrine of incarnation. F. F. Bruce is probably correct in asserting that a distinction between the verbs 'to share in' (κοινωνεῖν) and 'to partake of' (μετεχειν) should not be pressed here⁶¹ because of the author's insistence that Christ partook of humanity 'likewise' (παραπλησίως) (cf. 2. 17). Rather, we should note the distinction of tense, the perfect for the 'children' and the aorist for the Christ who partook of their nature 'at a fixed point in time, by His own choice.'⁶²

The purpose of the incarnation was the overthrow of Satan. Is this consistent with his normal understanding of the atonement? His exposition of the cross elsewhere is dominated by the sacrificial concept. Indeed, the extent to which his mind is controlled by this category is probably reflected in the order of the words 'blood and flesh' (αἷματος καὶ σαρκός) here, for the sacrificial ritual gave great prominence to the blood. Perhaps his thought is that the same act which was a sacrifice to God was at the same time the defeat of the devil. The most important relation of any fact is its relation to God (cf. 2. 17). The Godward reference of the cross is the atonement, while the defeat of Satan is one of the leading effects of the atonement.

The author has had much to say about the supremacy of Christ over angels. Thus far there has been no suggestion that any of these angelic beings are evil, but the devil was, of course, regarded as such a being,⁶³ and so the thought here is congruous with the doctrine of the subjection of angels to Christ. Moreover, the idyllic state pictured in Psalm 8 calls to mind Genesis 1-3, which sets forth the entry of sin and death through the serpent,⁶⁴ and the consequent tendency of nature, once completely subservient to man, to bring difficulty and discomfort into man's life (Gen. 3. 16-19). It is quite in accord with the biblical doctrine of the divine sovereignty that the same phenomenon (death) should be viewed either as a divine punishment (Gen. 2. 17) or as the result of the action of an inferior, evil being (Heb. 2. 14). If the sinfully motivated acts of Assyria do not detract from but rather serve the sovereign purpose of God (Isa. 10. 5-19) the same principle may apply to an evil supernatural power, especially when, as with Assyria, God eventually demonstrates His sovereignty by His punishment of the evil power concerned.

The new Exodus theme, already introduced in verse 10, is to be seen again here in the deliverance of men from lifelong bondage to fear of death. Such certainly did not appear to be the 'lords of creation' of which Psalm 8 spoke, but the one

[p.63]

Who fulfilled that psalm in Himself made its realisation in them possible by a death which delivered them from bondage, and so, to put it differently, His act brings many sons to glory.

⁶¹ But contrast Westcott's comment: *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁶² *Op. cit.*, *ad loc.*, n. 55.

⁶³ Cf. Mt. 25. 41, 2 Cor. 11. 14, Rev. 12. 7-9.

⁶⁴ The serpent is identified with the Devil in Rev. 12. 9.

What is the logical relation of verse 16 to verses 14 and 15 which is expressed by 'for' (γὰρ)? δὴ ποῦ, ('surely') as Westcott points out,⁶⁵ occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it implies that the statement made is a familiar truth. Hence, the clause explains the purpose of the incarnation as set forth in vv. 14, 15. As we well know, the author is saying, Christ's concern is with descendants of Abraham and not with angels. Angels neither die nor fear death but descendants of Abraham do, and so He died to deliver them from this fear.

What does the expression 'he is concerned... with the descendants of Abraham' (σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται) signify? If the ancient rendering of the verb as 'assume' or 'take the nature of' is open to criticism, so is the modern rendering 'help.'⁶⁶ E. K. Simpson has argued cogently that it should be understood as meaning 'to take hold'⁶⁷. This is its consistent meaning elsewhere in the New Testament, including its only other occurrence in this epistle (8. 9, in a quotation from the LXX). This latter is itself very significant for it concerns the exodus from Egypt through the power of God, and such a reference would be completely natural after v. 15. Hence Christ answers not only to Moses and to Joshua but also to God in the Old Testament story of the removal of Israel from Egyptian bondage to the promised land. There is a possible allusion to Isaiah 41. 8-10, which may have led to the reference to 'the seed of Abraham'.⁶⁸ Those who were taken out of Egypt were the natural children of Abraham, but the author's insistence on the necessity for faith, and his reference to Abraham himself as a great example of faith make it probable that he would understand this expression to have reference to Jews who were not simply his natural offspring but who also shared Abraham's faith and spiritual outlook. We are not suggesting that he would have felt the phrase to be inappropriate even in reference to believing Gentiles, but these are not, of course, in view here, unless we accept the theory that this epistle had a Gentile rather than a Jewish group as its first readers.

d. Jesus as the Merciful and Faithful High Priest (2. 17-18). Verse 17 opens with the particle ὅτι. Does this look backwards or forwards? As Michel points out, the word is quite common in Hebrews and is due to the logical tendency of the author. It probably looks backward here, although this is by no means certain. The author's thought seems to be that, given the purpose of God to save the seed of Abraham, it was necessary, for the attainment of that end, and that the Christ should become altogether like these His brethren, for only thus could He become a true high priest with an effective ministry, and only thus could He secure their salvation. So, in terms of the exodus typology, He is not only like Moses and Joshua but also like Aaron. Later, he will show that Christ's high-priestly office is not after the order of Aaron but rather that of Melchizedek, but for the moment he is not concerned with details, even of such importance, but with broad generalities. Until the middle of chapter 5, there is nothing to show that he is not thinking in terms of that high-priesthood with which his readers had been most familiar hitherto.

He had to be made like His brethren κατὰ πάντα. In the context this will apply most particularly, of course, to His sufferings and death (cf. 5. 7-10), but it need not be restricted to these. Everything which marked His humanity as true helped

⁶⁵ *Op. cit., ad loc*

⁶⁶ Cf. Westcott, *op. cit., ad loc.*, F. F. Bruce, *op. cit., ad loc.*

⁶⁷ *Words worth Weighing in the Greek New Testament*, London (1946), 27ff. [now available on-line http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/words_simpson.pdf].

⁶⁸ But the LXX of Isa. 41. 9 has the verb ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι instead of ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι as here. 69 E.g. in 3. 12, 4. 2f and ch. 11.

[p.64]

to fit Him for that priestly work which required not only faithfulness to God but compassion towards men.

The proper translation of ἱλάσκεσθαι has been the subject of dispute. Leon Morris points out that 'to make propitiation' is to be preferred rather than 'to make expiation' because this is the normal sense of this verb and its cognates. Moreover, τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν leads us to think of the Godward rather than the manward aspect of atonement, and the accusative of sin after ἱλάσκομαι or ἐξιλάσκομαι, in the few places where it occurs, seems generally to imply propitiation. The question is very important and merits a lengthy treatment, which cannot be attempted in this article. The reader is referred to Leon Morris's work for a full and balanced treatment of the matter.⁷⁶

Christ's mercy or compassion finds some exposition in verse 18. His ability to succour the tempted is grounded in His own experience of suffering and temptation. A. B. Davidson is surely correct when he says that the simplest interpretation of this verse is also the most natural and the most in harmony with other passages in the epistle (4. 15; 5. 2; 12. 2; etc.). He declares, 'the sufferings are the cause of the temptation'.⁷⁷ His sufferings, whether in prospect or in present experience, were the occasion for the onslaught of fierce temptation. This was just the assurance the Hebrews needed at this time, for they were themselves apparently facing the temptation to turn back and to forsake Christ. They too, were tempted to avoid the way of suffering (12. 1-11), but Christ was well able to help them to overcome as He had.

e. *The connection of the passage with 3. 1ff, 6.* Once introduced, the theme of the high-priesthood of Christ comes more and more to dominate the thought of the epistle. As J. W. Bowman⁷⁸ and others have pointed out, His merciful character finds expression in 4. 14-16 and 5. 1-10 and His faithfulness in 3. 1-6a. Here the new Moses and new Aaron themes are joined together, for Jesus is both apostle and high priest of our confession. Lessons are now drawn from the failure of the Israelites who left Egypt under Moses to enter into that rest of which the Canaan into which Joshua led them was only a shadow. In a great variety of ways the author shows the greatness of that work which Christ effected by His sacrifice and the consequent sufficiency of His high-priestly ministry in the presence of God for us. He warns his readers not to turn back but rather to draw near to God through Him by faith. They are to take their stand decisively for the Christ, Who was crucified outside the gate, and to bear abuse for Him. Every reference to His high-priesthood and all the blessings associated with it for the people of God pre-supposes the teaching about His solidarity with them which is set forth so eloquently in this great passage.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL CONTENT OF THE PASSAGE

a. *The solidarity of Christ with man in general and with His people in particular.* If there is one concept which dominates the whole of our passage it is that of the solidarity of Christ with men. The pre-existent Son enters into the human race and makes its conditions,

⁷⁶ *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, London (1955), chs. IV and V, especially pp. 174-177. Cf. also F. F. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 41, n. 57. The latter provides useful documentation.

⁷⁷ *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Edinburgh, n.d., *ad loc.*

⁷⁸ *Hebrews, James, I and II Peter*, London (1962), *ad loc.*

especially its liability to death, His own, in order that it may be redeemed. But has our statement of the matter thus been too general? Was it with man in general or with a particular group within the human race that He became one?

[p.65]

There are certain facets of the teaching of this passage which would incline us at first to understand His solidarity with man very broadly. Psalm 8 bears no marks of particularism. It is true that God is extolled as 'Yahweh, our Adonai', but His Name is said to be majestic in all the earth, and the dominion He has given to man as such occupies the centre of the picture. Moreover, we see Jesus fulfilling this psalm because He was Himself made lower than the angels. In addition, He is said to have tasted death for everyone. To the close of verse 9, then, there would seem at first sight to be no expression which requires us to restrict the solidarity of Christ with mankind to a particular group.

The scope of this solidarity with men appears to narrow from verse 10 onwards, however. The expression 'many sons' (πολλοὺς υἱοὺς) in v. 10 is defined as those who are sanctified' (οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι) in v. 11, and it is at least arguable that the former phrase itself determines the scope of 'for every one' (ὑπὲρ παντός) in v. 9. Now the verb 'to sanctify' (ἀγιαζεῖν) and its cognates are employed in the New Testament in reference to the church of Christ, and this epistle is no exception in this respect (e.g. cf. 3. 1; 6. 10; 10. 14). The expression ὑπὲρ παντός comes at the close of that section of the passage which is controlled in its thought by the writer's understanding of Psalm 8. The ideal pictured in that psalm is only realisable in men as Jesus tastes death for them. But we have argued that this psalm was probably connected in his mind with Daniel 7, and we must now note the prominence in that passage of 'the saints of the Most High' (Daniel 7. 28, 22, 27). The LXX employs the term 'saints' (ἅγιοι) to describe them, and they are seen taking the kingdom and possessing it for ever. If the Son of Man and the saints are distinct but related in that passage, and if the kingdom of Daniel 7 can be identified with the dominion over the earth of which Psalm 8 speaks, then we may be able to discern what lies behind the author's thought in this passage. He assumes that the ideal picture given in the psalm is only realisable in men if Jesus dies for them. In Himself the ideal may be fulfilled, for He is worthy, but if 'the saints' are to fulfil it they must first be constituted as saints, and the writer knows of no way of doing this but the way of sacrificial death (9. 13f; 10. 10, 14, 29; 13. 12).

The catena of quotations from the Old Testament in vv. 12, 13 ties in with the particularist emphasis of our passage. The 'brethren' of the psalmist are the Old Testament 'church', the congregation of the faithful, 'you who fear Yahweh' (Ps. 22. 23). They are those who trust in the Lord, they are the spiritual remnant, concerning whom Isaiah had so much to say, and who were represented in his day by himself, his family and his disciples. Montefiore has pointed out that there are many points of theological resemblance between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of John.⁷⁹ We might notice that Hebrews 2. 5-18 appears especially to have links with John 17. Christ sanctifies Himself that they also may be sanctified in truth (Jn. 17. 19) and those for whom He prays are described as those whom God has given Him and are clearly distinguished from the world (Jn. 17. 2, 6, 9-19). Moreover this Johannine passage moves on to the thought of the oneness of the disciples with each other, with Christ and with God. These points of contact with the Johannine tradition of the teaching of our Lord are of

⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, 4f.

interest as they occur in a passage of the epistle which leads up to the first clear statement of the high-priesthood of Jesus. Perhaps this doctrine, so distinctively his in the literature of the New Testament period was more widespread in the *thought* of the early Church than has sometimes been supposed. He may have been led to his own exposition

[p.66]

of it from a consideration of the sort of teaching we find in John 17.

Blood and flesh belong to human nature as such and death is the common experience of mankind. It was because they were the lot of those already described as His 'children', however, that He partook of them. 'All those who through fear of death were subject to bondage', in the context here, would seem to be identifiable with 'the children'. They are the new people of God delivered from a new Egyptian bondage. Westcott, commenting on 'the descendants of Abraham' (σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ) says, 'the phrase marks both the breadth and the particularity of the divine promise which was fulfilled by Christ. Those of whom Christ takes hold have a spiritual character (faith), and they find their spiritual ancestor in one who answered a personal call (Abraham).'⁸⁰ A high priest acts for a particular religious community, and not for all men without discrimination and those for whom Christ acts as High Priest are referred to as 'the people' (τοῦ λαοῦ). In the LXX this is practically a technical term for the nation of Israel as chosen by God and separated to Him from other nations (e.g. Deut. 7. 6-8; 14. 2; 21. 8; 2 Sam. 14. 13; Isa. 52. 4).

We conclude then, that the writer's conception of the solidarity of Christ with His people in this passage is predominantly, and in all probability consistently, particularist. There is nothing elsewhere in the epistle which would overturn this conclusion. Indeed, the constant repetition of the high-priestly motif serves only to underline it.

b. *The Nature of His solidarity with His people.* In what way or ways was Christ identified with those He came to save? The author declares 'he had to be made like his brethren in every respect' ὄφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι in v. 17. How seriously are we to take the words 'in every respect' (κατὰ πάντα)? That they cannot be understood with unrestricted absoluteness is evident from what the writer himself says elsewhere.⁸¹ Clearly He was not made like them in personal sin (4. 15; 8. 26). The New Testament as a whole, and this epistle in particular, requires us to say that there are three important respects in which His solidarity with His people must be qualified. He is unique in His person, for He is Divine as well as human.⁸² He is unique in His character, for He is sinless. He is unique in at least certain aspects of His work, for He has effected 'one sacrifice for sins for ever.'⁸³ Indeed these three qualifications help us to understand how the New Testament writers, and again our author in particular, are able to apply to Him passage after passage from the Old Testament, passages which in their Old Testament setting do not always appear to be appropriate. That which was written of humanity at large,⁸⁴ of the nation of Israel,⁸⁵ or of a person within the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Cf. T. Hewitt, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁸² Chapter i contains much teaching on this subject.

⁸³ 10. 12; *vide* the whole section, 10. 10-14, also 9. 23-28.

⁸⁴ Ps. 8. 4-6, cited in Heb. 2. 6-8.

⁸⁵ There is no clear example of this in this epistle, but cf. Mt. 2. 15 with its citation of Hos. 11. 1.

nation holding an office under the theocracy,⁸⁶ may be applied to Him, provided that these three qualifications are borne in mind. He is the great Antitype to Whom all these point imperfectly and Who transcends each separately and all in combination.

His solidarity with them involved participation in a common manhood (v. 14). He was no docetic phantom but a true man of blood and flesh (cf. 10. 5-10). In this connection he employs the word *παραπλησίως*, which means 'in precisely like manner'.⁸⁷ F. F. Bruce appears to see in the use of the word here a reference to the birth of Jesus, 'He must partake of flesh and blood "in like manner" with them—that is to say, by the gateway of birth.' For Him, of course, such sharing in human nature involved condescension and humiliation.⁸⁹ The writer has made it clear that the Son is intrinsically superior to angels, but that as the Man Jesus He was made lower than the angels.

[p.67]

This humiliation found its fullest expression, of course, in His sufferings and death,⁹⁰ and it is upon this aspect of His human experience that the writer concentrates his attention. Indeed, in verse 17, his purpose in employing the phrase 'in every respect' (*κατὰ πάντα*) is probably to bring this out. Not only in a general way, but in every respect, and so in suffering and death, He had to be made like His brethren, for only so could He become a merciful and faithful high priest, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. This would seem to be what he is saying. In fact His propitiatory work is nothing if it is not sacrificial, and His sacrifice consisted in the laying down of His life in death. This same concentration upon death is found in verses 14 and 15, where His assumption of human nature is related to His victory over the devil through death. He does not view Incarnation as an end in itself, but rather as the appropriate and necessary means to atonement for sin.

The passage contains three references to His sufferings (vv. 9, 10, 18). In verse 10 the noun is in the singular, while in the following verse it is in the plural. The expression 'the suffering of death' (*τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου*) should probably govern our understanding of the references to suffering which come later in the passage. It is not the afflictions normally associated with human life which he seems to have particularly in mind, but those sufferings which led up to and found their culmination in His death, those which constituted the ground of His temptation because He could have evaded them if He would. These sufferings were vocational. To use Pauline language, they were the result of that 'obedience unto death, even death on a cross', which formed the heart of the vocation of Him who took the servant-form (Phil. 2. 7f). Because the sufferings were vocational, so also were the temptations. They were 'temptation-sufferings'.⁹¹ His sufferings are now over but their memory is not,⁹² and it is in virtue of this experience that He is now able to succour 'those who are in an analogous situation, i.e. tempted to sin by their sufferings'.⁹³ The final verse of this passage therefore implies, as every reference to His high-priesthood as a present fact implies, that His humanity is an abiding and not a transitory aspect of His being, once the incarnation has been effected.

⁸⁶ Ps. 2. 7 and 2 Sam. 7. 14, cited in Heb. 1. 5; Ps. 45. 6f, cited in Heb. 1. 8f; Isa. 8. 18, cited in Heb. 2. 13, etc.

⁸⁷ C. J. Vaughan, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, London (1890), *ad loc.*

⁸⁹ A. Nairne notes points of contact here between Heb. 2. 5-18 and Phil. 2. 5-11: *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Cambridge (1917), lxxx.

⁹⁰ Cf. Phil. ii. 8.

⁹¹ The phrase is taken from Vos, *art. cit.*, 582.

⁹² Note the force of the perfect tense *Πέπονθεν*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

c. *The Purpose of His solidarity with His People.* Of necessity, we have touched on this already in the last section, but we must now consider it in greater detail. He became one with His people in order to die, and this is expressed very generally and related to the grace of God at the close of verse 9. The words 'he might taste death for every one' (ὕπὲρ πάντων γεῦσθαι θανάτου) simply indicate that His death was for the benefit of others without specifying the nature of the benefit they derive from it, although, as we shall see, we may be able to infer this from the earlier part of the same verse.

In general, we may say that the language of this passage employs three types of imagery to set forth the significance of His work. The first type is the most complex, and it is by no means clear at first that all the elements in it really belong together. The divine order in creation, the world to come, many sons brought to glory, the Captain of salvation—what have these ideas in common? In the purposes of God, origins determine ends, the seed contains the flower, and the 'Genesis' of the divine plan shows the direction to be taken by that plan, so that its consummation is at once a 'Revelation' of its true nature. The dominion of man over creation, which is celebrated in Psalm 8, is seen by the author of the epistle to be secured in one Man, Jesus. Through His death this may be realised in others also who, by grace,

[p.68]

receive His title because they enter His inheritance (cf. 1. 2) and so are called 'sons' of God. Perhaps the author has in mind the fact that death is a result of the disruption of the original order, and so Jesus has to taste it in order to set things right again. If this is so, the author has the past as well as the present and the future in mind in this passage.

Now the imagery changes, and the Exodus theme makes its appearance. He Who was viewed as a kind of last Adam—although the writer does not use the term—leading the many sons to glory, that is, to the ultimate realisation of the creative purpose of God, may also be viewed as a new Moses-Joshua leading them into the promised land. The divine end is pictured by him in a great number of ways in this epistle. Now it is viewed as 'the world to come' (2. 5), now as the city of God (11. 10, 16; 13. 14), now as 'the unshakeable kingdom' (12. 28).⁹⁴ He can pass easily and with no sense of contradiction, for they are really one, from the thought of the 'new creation' to that of the spiritual 'promised land'. Of course, he employs neither term but the idea is there in each case. Just as death stands in the way of the realisation of the new creation, so the devil is the 'Pharaoh' who holds the people in his grasp. In dealing with the one Christ dealt also with the other, for the devil has the power of death. Thus He shows His power to the seed of Abraham.

The imagery changes again. In fact, this change has already been anticipated in the language of verse 11. Christ is now virtually a new Aaron, however inadequate that term will appear later as a description of His high-priesthood. The Law, given to the people after their rescue from bondage in Egypt, had much in it that concerned sin and the Divine provisions for dealing with it. We now feel ourselves to be outside the tabernacle in the wilderness. The people watch the high priest, their brother Israelite (cf. 5. 1; Ex. 28. 1).⁹⁵ He enters the holy of holies in a representative capacity with the atoning blood and on His emergence blesses the people (cf. 9. 23-28).

⁹⁴ Cf. Westcott's note "On the social imagery in the Epistle", *op. cit.*, 386-392.

⁹⁵ It is worth noting that the king also was always to be "one from among your brethren" (Deut. 17. 15).

Death, the devil, sin—they are three related aspects of the same situation, and by his wealth of imagery the author shows his conviction that Christ has dealt with the whole issue. This was the purpose of His entry into humanity and of His solidarity with His own. That the writer, from this point onwards, concentrates attention upon sin and upon the priestly and sacrificial aspects of Christ's work demonstrates his awareness of its seriousness, and of the fact that what matters most about the situation in which man finds himself is its Godward aspect.

d. *The varied expressions of His relationship with His people.* One of the outstanding features of our passage is its great variety of expression. The theme is one—the solidarity of Christ with His people—but what a rich selection of variations on that theme our author presents!

Some of the language he uses finds its basis in the family relationship. Christ and His people are members of the same family, for they all have one origin. They are described as sons and we remember from chapter 1 that υἱός ('son') is the great title of the Christ. Accordingly, He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Certainly He is the 'firstborn' (πρωτότοκος) (1. 6)⁹⁶ and their sonship is by grace (2. 9f), but it is a real membership of the same great family of God. Paradoxically, He is also thought of as their Father.⁹⁷ The basis of this thought is the passage he quotes from Isaiah 8. 18. Can it be that he also called to mind the passage in the next chapter (9. 6) where the Child of the Fourfold Name is described? He is there called 'the everlasting Father'. Far from introducing confusion by this description

[p.69]

of Christ first as Son and Brother and then as Father, the author enriches his readers' grasp of the truth about Christ and themselves. Because of His humanity terms used of Him may be used of them also, but in virtue of His Deity the complementary truth of His uniqueness and supremacy needs to be expressed.

We move on to consider language which views the relationship as a national one. Moses was the leader of the nation on its way out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Indeed, he was its king in all but name.⁹⁸ The high priest was also a figure of national significance, who officiated on behalf of the nation at its central shrine on the Day of Atonement. The one led the people actually through the Red Sea, the other led them symbolically through the great veil into the holy of holies. The term *ἐκκλησία* reminds us that the people of Israel is often viewed in the Old Testament as a worshipping community and its presence in this passage perhaps suggests a special relationship of Christ with those within the nation who truly feared God. The quotation from Isaiah 8. 18 certainly narrows the reference to the spiritual remnant within the nation, and Christ is viewed as the great 'Prophet', whose people are related to Him not only as children but as disciples.

Broader still is the 'Son of Man' theme in the section of the passage controlled by Psalm 8, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and there is perhaps a suggestion that He is the Last Adam, the Head of a new humanity. Even so, the Son of Man in Daniel 7 seems to be not

⁹⁶ It should be noted, however, that 12. 23 makes reference to "the assembly of the first-born" (*ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων*); cf. Westcott, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁹⁷ But Montefiore thinks that the children here are God's children committed to Christ. (*op. cit.*, *ad loc.*)

⁹⁸ It is not impossible that this is the true sense of Deut. 33. 5.

only an international but a national figure, for, on any interpretation, He is intimately related to 'the people of the saints of the Most High', who are clearly Jewish. Hence, it is out of Israel that God's purpose for mankind finds its fulfilment in Him Who was both Israel's Christ and the world's Saviour.⁹⁹

All the language we have surveyed here brings out the solidarity of Christ with His people, but, as is quite evident, much of it also shows His superiority to them. These are, of course, the two facts with which any doctrine of the person of Christ has to seek to do justice.

© 1969 *London School of Theology* (<http://www.lst.ac.uk/>). Reproduced by permission.

Prepared for the Web in February 2007 by Robert I. Bradshaw. Every effort has been made to accurately reproduce the original article. It should be noted, however, that the original article contains numerous errors – missing footnote calls and missing breathings in the Greek text. Let the reader beware.

<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>

⁹⁹ Cf. Jn. 4. 22.