

# HEBREWS 11,1 - 13, 24: A SUGGESTED STRUCTURE

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Two previous articles by the present writer have suggested a structure for the Epistle to the Hebrews which takes in the first ten chapters.<sup>1</sup> The present article will attempt to finish the project by suggesting a structure for the remaining portion of the writing.

Perhaps it would not be out of place to emphasize again the tentative nature of this enterprise. And its importance. The Epistle to the Hebrews has been a conundrum from the early days of Christianity, and it would take more optimism (or naïveté) than the present writer can muster to be able to claim a definitive solution to even one of the many problems connected with the ordering of this conundrum. But the project is important: if any real progress is to be made in the understanding of Hebrews it will have to be based on attempts to come to grips with the way in which the writing is organised, either by way of a more persuasive justification of structures already proposed, or by way of justification of structures which are new<sup>2</sup>. For only by focusing on structure will the basic perspectives which underlie the text of the epistle be discovered. Only by focusing on structure will the contexts intrinsic to the epistle be revealed, as a whole and in their several parts. In brief, only through a satisfactory structure will the epistle really make sense.

1. J. Swetnam, "The Structure of Hebrews 1, 1-3, 6", *Melita Theologica* 43 (1992) 58-66; idem, "A Possible Structure of Hebrews 3, 7-10, 39", *Melita Theologica* 45 (1994) 127-141.
2. For excellent introductions in English to the problem of the structure of Hebrew see especially: H.W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia 1989) 13-21; W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Dallas 1991) lxxxiv-xcviii; P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Carlisle 1993) 50-58.

### *The Priority of Content as a Criterion of Structure*

The present attempt to structure the epistle tilts more toward content than to form in the classic form-content spectrum often used to evaluate approaches in understanding the way writings are organised.<sup>3</sup>

After the prologue (Heb 1, 1-4), the present outline sees the *gezerah shawa* linking Ps 110, 1 (at Heb 1, 13) and Ps 8, 5-7 (at Heb 2, 6-8) as crucial for structuring the section Heb 1, 5-3, 6.<sup>4</sup> Through the mutual illumination of these two psalm passages the one Christ is presented as both Son of God and Son of Man.<sup>5</sup> In the former role he is seen as being of a like nature with God himself on the basis of the implications of the semitic idiom involving "son". In the latter role, as Son of Man, he is presented as the new Isaac, like to men and especially like to his father Abraham, and as such heir to the two promises made to Abraham, of land and of progeny. Transformed as heavenly rest and as spiritual offspring - the two are intrinsically related in their Christian fulfilment - these two promises play a central role in the entire epistle.<sup>6</sup>

With Heb 3, 7 a new development takes place: the subject matter centres around entrance into the promised land viewed as God's Rest. In the structure being presented here, this discussion is viewed as culminating in 4,12 with the famous image of the Word of God as a "two edged-sword". Two images are discernible in 4, 12-13, corresponding to the two edges of the "sword" (*machaira* - better translated

3. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 50.

4. On the *gezerah shawa* as an exegetical method see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 128-129, n. 77.

5. More work needs to be done on the two psalm passages in question, in particular with regard to the nature of the enemies mentioned in the psalms. In Ps 110 the enemies have yet to be placed under Christ's feet; in Ps 8 the enemies (presumably not the same enemies) have already been placed under Christ's feet. The distinction would seem to be important, for the chief enemy placed under Christ's feet in Ps 8 is death.

6. The promises, of course, are transmitted through Christ as heir. The theme of Christ as heir appears already in the prologue of the epistle (1, 2) and reappears in the discussion of Jesus as Son of Man (2, 5-17 with 3, 1-6 as paraenesis) in which Jesus is portrayed: as the new Moses who acts as the pioneer of salvation and as the apostle announcing the true name of God (2, 10-11; cf. 3, 1) as he sets out, like Moses, to lead his brothers to the Promised Land; and as the high priest who, under God, fathers a new dynasty through his conquest of death (2, 13b-18; cf. 3, 1).

as “knife”): 4, 12 refers to the knife of circumcision which failed to initiate a definitive entrance into the land under Joshua (cf. 4, 8); 4, 13 refers to the knife of sacrifice which remained ineffectually poised over the throat of Isaac but which was not withheld (metaphorically speaking) in the case of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> The first use, in 4,12, looks back and serves as justification for claiming that the people of God under the Word will enter God’s Rest because of the circumcision of the heart which he brings. The second use, in 4,13 looks ahead to the discussion of Jesus as the new Isaac, really sacrificed and really risen from the dead, the embodiment of the definitive perfection of a new priesthood through which the new people (definitive realization of one promise made to Abraham) are finally able to reach the spiritualized fulfilment consonant with the spiritualized land (definitive realization of the other promise made to Abraham).

The discussion of Christ as priest and victim takes up the central part of the epistle. Christ’s priesthood has two stages: the earthly or preliminary (discussed in 5, 1-10 with following paraclesis at 5, 11 - 6, 8 [negative] and 6, 9-19 [positive]); and the fulfilled or definitive, presented under the legitimizing comparison with Melchisedek (discussed in 7, 1-26). The central part of the epistle is concerned with the relation of this second, definitive stage of Christ’s priesthood to the new covenant (8-1 - 10, 18 - cf. the frame created by the citations from the new covenant passage in Jeremiah at 8, 8-12 and 10, 16-17). The second, definitive stage of Christ’s priesthood is achieved through resurrection, a resurrection which transforms his mortal body into a spiritualized body in which his unique sacrificial death at the first stage of his priesthood can be translated into multiple sacrificial deaths at the second stage (cf. 2, 9 and 9, 23). The eucharist, in other words, is an essential complement to the second stage of Christ’s priesthood, for it is the heavenly counterpart to Christ’s earthly body and blood just as Christ’s heavenly priesthood is the complement to his earthly one. It is Christ as victim in the second stage of his priesthood who is the New Covenant, definitively taking away sins i.e., transforming the Old Covenant with its blessings and curses into the New which consists only of

7. If this should be the right interpretation of 4, 12 it would constitute another argument that the death of Christ was viewed as a sacrifice in Hebrews.

blessings.<sup>8</sup> This extended central part of the epistle closes with a paraenesis, 10, 19-30a (negative) and 10, 30b-39 (positive).<sup>9</sup>

The above rehearsal of the postulated structure of the epistle sets the stage for the third and final installment, which will attempt to place Chapters 11-13 in the context of the whole.

### *A Key to the Interpretation of Chapters 11-13*

A key to the interpretation of Chapters 11-13 - possibly **the** key - occurs in the very first verse of the section, 11, 1. There occurs the famous description of faith - *pistis* - as *hypostasis*. Since faith is clearly the theme of Chapter 11, as indicated by the stylized repetition of the word in key places throughout the passage, an attempt to arrive at a plausible solution of faith as *hypostasis* is crucial for the meaning of what follows.<sup>10</sup>

The heart of the crux is the statement that faith (*pistis*) is an *hypostasis*. The meaning of faith is illumined by its use in what follows. But the immediate context specifies that faith is understood as the *hypostasis* "of things hoped for" (*elpizomenon*). Thus, hope is viewed as a goal of faith viewed as *hypostasis*. Furthermore, faith is a "proof" (*elenchos*) "of things not seen" (*ou blepomenon*). Thus, faith as proof of what is not seen is compatible with the view that faith is an *hypostasis*. And faith is that "in which" (literally, "in this", *en taute*) the ancients - those about to be cited in the following verses - "were approved" (*emarturethesan*).<sup>11</sup> Finally - and this is a point which does not always figure significantly in an attempt to settle on an explanation of faith in 11, 1 - the word *hypostasis* occurs in two other

8. Cf. J. Swetnam, "The Old Testament and the New Eternal Covenant", *Melita Theologica* 46 (1995) 65-78.

9. Cf. J. Swetnam, "Hebrews 10, 30-31: A Suggestion", *Biblica* 75 (1994) 388-394. It should be noted that the two famous passages in Hebrews dealing with the impossibility of forgiveness are thus located in the negative paraenesis involving the priesthood of Christ: 6, 4-6 in the negative paraenesis 5, 11-6, 8, and 10, 26-29 in the negative paraenesis 10, 19-30a. The first passage concerns the earthly priesthood of Christ; the second passage, the definitive or heavenly priesthood.

10. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 307-311, for an initial presentation of the role of *hypostasis* in the verse.

11. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 567. Another translation could be "received attestation" (cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 305; W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* [Dallas 1991]325).

places in Hebrews: 1, 3 and 3, 14.<sup>12</sup> The solution will come only when some meaning for *pistis* is elucidated which fits snugly into the contours of all these limiting perspectives.

A number of important insights into the meaning of *pistis* at 11, 1 seem necessary for any attempt at an interpretation of its role in the structure of the epistle. One insight is that the word in some way must be understood in its context: what is being given is a view of faith which is very much a part of the epistle.<sup>13</sup> Hence the criteria for judging an abstract definition of faith which would be appropriate in the context of a treatise on dogma for example, would be out of place.<sup>14</sup> Another insight sees in the equation of *pistis* and *hypostasis* a type of metonymy.<sup>15</sup> Finally, 11, 1 should probably be also viewed as an example of oxymoron: *pistis* as *hypostasis*, something presumed to be safely at hand, is something "underlying" what is being discussed; yet it is the basis for that which not in hand but only hoped for - the *elpizomena*. *Pistis* as *elenchos*, "proof", is something eminently "seen" in the sense that it is intelligibly convincing; yet *pistis* is the proof of things "not seen" (*ou blepomena*).

The varied meanings which have been put forward in the history of exegesis for the word *hypostasis* in Heb 11,1 are well known.<sup>16</sup> The meaning adopted here will be that of "underlying reality".<sup>17</sup> In the context here, faith is viewed as being in

12. Cf. the useful comments of Attridge, *Hebrews*, 308. His point is that whatever the precise meaning of *hypostasis* in 11, 1 it is going to be complex.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 310. But the precise way in which the metonymy is exercised should be carefully discerned.
16. Cf. the survey referred to in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 308-310. And cf. especially the article "*Hypostasis*" by H. Köster in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* VIII (Stuttgart 1969) 571-88. The interpretation given here of the word as used in *Hebrews* will largely follow the latter's lead.
17. For the *hypostasis* with this meaning in non-biblical Greek usage cf. Köster, Ibid., 578. This meaning is found also in Septuagint: "...der Gebrauch von *hypostasis* in der Septuaginta doch ein bestimmtes Verständnis des Wortes voraussetzt, das dem aufgezeigten griechischen Sprachgebrauch der gleichen Zeit recht genau entspricht. Abgesehen von den wenigen Stellen, an denen das Wort in sekundären Sinne etymologisch verstanden wird, ist mit *hypostasis* die *dahinter stehende, grundlegende Wirklichkeit* gemeint: Im Sinne von *Plan, Absicht* und ebenso als Bezeichnung des *Dauerhaften* das in Gott beschlossen liegt, entspricht *hypostasis* dabei oft recht genau verschiedenen hebräischen Äquivalenten" (Köster, Ibid., 581). In the Septuagint the word can be translated in various ways, according to the context. The basic idea can be traced to the etymological "that which stands under", but according to varying contexts it can have the idea of "plan" or that which "endures". In Hebrews

some way an underlying reality which leads to things hoped for: "Now then faith is an underlying reality for things hoped for:..."<sup>18</sup> The things hoped for presuppose faith viewed as an *hypostasis*. With regard to the things hoped for, faith is an objective reality as opposed to a subjective conviction; faith is something which the discourse views as leading to the future things which are hoped for. The second half of the verse can be translated advantageously, "a proof of things not seen". Thus the verse implies that the actualisation of things hoped for is objectively connected with the underlying reality which is faith, just as the existence of unseen things is objectively related to the fact of faith looked on as a proof. The oxymoron should be honoured. The objective fact of faith, of its nature something identifiable at hand and thus tangible; points the way to things hoped for, which, by their nature, are as yet not tangible; the objective fact of faith, of its nature something not proved, is a proof of the reality of things not seen, which are not otherwise provable. The idea is not that hopes are actualized and unseen things are proved just because persons believe, but that the objective fact of faith is its own warrant for the eventual actualization of hopes and the proof of the existence of what is unseen. Faith is being considered as an objective reality which is ordered as proof to things which are hoped for and not seen.

### *The Objective Nature of Faith*

Once the objective nature of faith is recognized, things seem to fit into a coherent configuration in the context of Heb 11, 1-3. For this faith is the means of divine approval for the people from the old dispensation who are about to be named. They were approved by God, and this approval is known from Scripture by the simple, objective fact that they had faith.<sup>19</sup> Thus a key insight into solving the crux of Heb

it seems to be fundamentally patent of the basic, etymologically grounded meaning. But other connotations are also at work, which further study of the word *hypostasis* in the context of Hebrews would undoubtedly reveal.

18. The meaning assigned *pistis* as *hypostasis* here is somewhat different from that given by Köster 584-86. He interprets Heb 11, 1 as being in a dualistic context, which to the present writer does not seem appropriate. Rather, the things "hoped for" are eschatological.
19. On the relation in Hebrews of *martureo* to Scripture cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 368: "*Martureo* in Hebrews (7, 17; 10, 15; 11, 2, 4, 5, 39...) always refers to the witness of scripture".

1, 1-2 is that faith is not being considered primarily from a subjective psychological standpoint of a believer, subject to more or less, but from an objective, constative standpoint of an observer: it is an objective reality, a given in the scheme of things, which has its own intrinsic implications with regard to hope and knowledge. It is a reality used by God to indicate his approval.

But more seems implied by the objective, underlying nature of faith in Heb 11, 1-2: as an underlying reality it is associated in the author's mind with creation. To separate the underlying reality which is faith from creation would be to ignore the context. In v. 3 creation is specifically mentioned in relation to a pragmatic verification involving faith: through the fashioning of the "ages"<sup>20</sup> things apparent have "come to be seen" (*blepomenon* - an allusion to one of the key aspects of faith mentioned in 11, 1). It is by faith that this creation of the various stages of God's "word" (*rhemati*)<sup>21</sup> is known so that as a result the unseen objects of faith can become seen. Again, faith is an underlying reality, but in the context of creation it vindicates itself even apart from its value as a witness. V. 3 thus stands partially outside the pattern of what precedes, because in addition to using the word *pistis* to indicate that which is an underlying, objective reality as in vv. 1-2, it also introduces the element of verification:<sup>22</sup> in the context it is faith in creation which enables the addressees to perceive faith's own validation.

The connection between faith and creation seems important for understanding the nuances associated with *hypostasis* in 11, 1. The faith which is operative all through Heb 11 is an objective reality which is part of the creation of God affected through the Son. Therefore *hypostasis* in 11, 1 is associated with the Son in a special way. It is associated with his creation, and functions as a "given" which enabled not only those of the Old Testament who possessed it to advance in hope, but also the Christian addressees (*nooumen*, v. 3) to be in touch with things unseen on the level of the assurance which goes with proof. And for the addressees, it is also the touchstone which shows that the ancients mentioned in Scripture were approved by God (v. 2).

20. A temporal meaning is called for in the case of *aiōn*, as elsewhere in Hebrews.

21. This, of course, is to be understood in relation to the creative action of God through the Son, as mentioned in 1, 3.

22. This element of verification in v. 3 has clouded the analysis of vv. 1-2. V. 3 stands as a transition verse, linking the introductory verses on faith with the rest of the chapter, which is going to give a long listing of things seen (the word *blepo* in Hebrews seems to refer to what is intellectually or physically present - cf. 2, 9; 10, 25; 11, 17) which have come to be from things not seen.

Given this view of *pistis* in 11, 1 as *hypostasis*, i.e., an objective reality underlying things hoped for and, in addition, implicitly related to the Son as agent in God's creation, it is instructive to see how the other uses of *hypostasis* in Hebrews are related. For it would seem odd if they were unrelated, given the care with which Hebrews is written.

### *God is "Underlying Reality": The Prime Analogate*

In Heb 1, 3 the meaning of *hypostasis* is clear enough: it refers to the underlying reality of God so that the Son is presented as his "imprint" (*charakter*). The verse seems to be related to Wis 7, 26, with its mention of wisdom as God's *apaugasma*.<sup>23</sup> Here again, the word "underlying reality" would not be out of place for *hypostasis*. It is an "inner" reality which corresponds to the Son as "imprint", just as the outer "glory" of God (*doxa*) corresponds to the Son as "radiance" (*apaugasma*).<sup>24</sup> Hebrews begins with Christ as the imprint of the underlying reality which is God. This nuance is appropriate in the context, which has God "speaking" (*laleo*) "in" the Son and creating through him (1, 2). God is the reality which underlies the Son who is related to this reality as an imprint is to a stamping device which gives it its image.<sup>25</sup> God is thus the unquestionable, unequivocal basis, which supports everything else in the epistle, through the Son.

The third occurrence of *hypostasis* is at 3, 14, where the word is found in the sentence: "for we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold firm the beginning of the *hypostasis* until the end." Here the choice of many commentators for the meaning of *hypostasis* is "confidence".<sup>26</sup> Much depends on the interpretation of the similarly-worded 3, 6. Many authors hold for a subjective meaning for the expressions *parresia* and *to kauchema tes elpidos* in this verse.<sup>27</sup> But more appropriate seems the view that they are objective realities in the sense that they

23. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 42.

24. Köster, "Hypostasis", 584, gives too much weight to possible relations with Philo and interprets the use of *hypostasis* in 1, 3 in too dualistic a sense.

25. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 43-44.

26. Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 227.

27. So, for example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 112.

are something to be “held fast to” (*katecho*).<sup>28</sup> This suggests that something more objective than “confidence” is needed at 3, 14 to account for a word used with a meaning so radically different elsewhere in the epistle.<sup>29</sup> Such an objective meaning fits in well with the meaning of *hypostasis* in 1, 3 and 11, 1. Hence the present article will assume that the occurrence of *hypostasis* in 3, 14 is of a piece with its occurrence in 1, 3 and 11, 1 that is, an underlying, objective reality.

In 3, 14, there is question of the addressees being “sharers in Christ” (*metochoi tou Christou*) provided they keep the “beginning of the underlying reality valid until the end” (*ten archen tes hyposteos mechri telous bebaian*). The *hypostasis* is viewed as something allowing of a beginning and being essential until some kind of end - almost certainly the entrance into the Land of God’s Heavenly Rest which is the point of the passage in 3, 7 - 4, 12. The *hypothesis* is closely connected with Christ, but different enough to warrant the observation of the main clause as something which needed to be pointed out. Finally, the *hypostasis* is something which can be lost by an individual through sin (cf. 3, 13).

The immediate context of 3, 14 specifies the boldness and hope of 3, 6 even more: it is faith viewed as an underlying “bold hope” (cf. 11, 1), and specifically, faith connected with Christ. For the passage warns against the failure of entering the Land through faithlessness (3, 19), and it is through faith in Christ as the Word (4, 12) which enables entry into God’s Rest.<sup>30</sup> But unlike 11, 1, the context of 3, 14 is not of the Son and his creation but of the Holy Spirit and his admonition through the inspiration of Ps 95[95] (cited *in extenso* at 3, 7b-11 and all through 3, 7-4, 12).

28. Cf. H. Schlier, “*parresia, parresiazomai*”, *TWNT* V, 882 “*Parresia* hat, wie man mit Recht gesagt hat, ‘einen eigenartig gegenständlichen Charakter’. ‘Man “hat” sie nicht bloß als subjektive Haltung, sondern als Aneignung eines Vorgegebenen. Man hält sie fest, indem man nicht nur sich selbst als Glaubenden, sondern indem man die Voraussetzung des Glaubens in der Verheißung festhält.’” (The citations are from E. Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk* [1938], 23.) Cf. the justification for the objective meaning of *parresia* at 10, 19 given by C. Spicq, *L’épître aux Hébreux*, II, *Commentaire* (Études Bibliques; Paris 1953) 315.

29. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 227. 565 finds it unnecessary to try to find the same basic meaning for *hypostasis* in its three occurrences in Hebrews. But the occurrences seem so strategically placed and so weighty that unrelated meanings - equivocations - would be hard to explain in the context of a document so carefully crafted as Hebrews. The reason why the author resorted to such a technical word in such carefully chosen positions would go unanswered if they were not closely related in meaning.

30. Cf. the similar views of several Fathers as expressed in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 119, and 119, n. 85.

Faith here is viewed from the standpoint not of the Son's creation but of the Spirit's inspiration. The fact that the *hypostasis* in 3, 14 can have a beginning, and the fact that it can be lost by an individual, imply that it is a gift, i.e., it is not something intrinsically owed by someone.<sup>31</sup> This is appropriate for an underlying reality which is used for divine purposes, as in 11, 1-2. The point in 3, 14 of the use of the *hypostasis* which is faith is to stress that this bold faith-trust is an objective, underlying reality, to be maintained once it is accepted if its purpose is to be achieved. That purpose, by implication, is entrance into the Land.

### ***Faith in Hebrews: An Objective "Given"***

Thus the word *hypostasis* in Hebrews emerges as an indication of a profound view of faith in Hebrews. The first occurrence sets the stage, in which *hypostasis* is used to indicate the underlying reality of God with relation to the Son: the objective "given" which is God, underlying the Son as creator and therefore underlying all reality, is being used as an analogate for faith. In 3, 14 the first application of the analogy occurs: faith is an underlying reality which is a gift of the Spirit, a gift which can be forfeited through sin. Finally, in 11, 1, *hypostasis* is used to describe faith as the underlying reality leading to things which are hoped for, a reality which is associated with God's creation through the Son.

Thus there would seem to be more to the use of the word *hypostasis* in Hebrews than its relation to God and to faith. The word seems to be used in contexts designed to establish a relation first with the Spirit (as his gift) and then with the Son (as that which is associated with what he creates). And because the relations to God, Spirit, and Son are found at strategic places in the epistle, the word seems to be used as an indication of structure. *Hypostasis* is used towards the beginning of the two major sections covered so far in the present attempt to structure the Epistle to the Hebrews: 1, 1 - 3, 6 and 3, 7 - 10, 39. In the first of these sections the word denotes the underlying reality of God; in the second, the reality of faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit. In 11, 1 it would thus seem to be used to point out the beginning of the third and final section of Hebrews, denoting faith as an underlying, objective reality, an

31. Thus the suggestion by Attridge, *Hebrews*, 119, n. 84 with reference to Heb 6, 4 is not out of place, that the Christian participates in the *hypostasis* mentioned in 3, 14 through a sacramental act related to baptism.

enduring given associated with God's creation through the Son. The implication would seem to be that in the first section of Hebrews (1, 1 -3, 6) God figures in a special way, as the one who speaks in the Son who is, as it were, his imprint (1, 2). In the second section of Hebrews (3, 7 - 10, 39), the implication would seem to be that faith as a gift of the Spirit has an important bearing on what is being discussed.<sup>32</sup> With relation to the section 3, 7 - 10, 39, faith is seen as the underlying reality which must be preserved at all costs if the Spirit's gift is to bear fruit. Finally, the implication would seem to be that faith as an underlying reality associated with God's creation through the Son has an important bearing on the third section of Hebrews 11, 1 - 13, 17. It is this implication which will be taken as the basis for what follows.

Heb 11, 1 - 13, 17 seems to be divided into three subdivisions: 1) that which regards the past (11, 1-40); 2) that which regards the future (12, 1-29); 3) that which regards the present (13, 1-17).<sup>33</sup> Specifically, faith seems to be a factor in all three sections. In 11, 1-39 faith is the theme word, found at the beginning (11, 1) and repeated at 11, 3.4.5.6.7 (2x).8.9.11.13.17.20.21.22.23.24.27.29.30.31.33.39. There is no explicit *paraenesis* in this section, which confirms the view that it is treating with something beyond the power of action of the addressees, i.e., it is treating the past.<sup>34</sup>

12, 1-29 is looking toward Christ as originator and perfecter of faith (12,2). The chapter is strongly eschatological in tone at the end, which is appropriate for a section which seems to view faith with especial regard to what is future.<sup>35</sup> The view

32. All the references in Hebrews to "the Holy Spirit" or "a holy spirit" are in this section, except for 2, 4 (cf. 3, 7; 6, 4; 9, 8. 14; 10, 15. 29). It is in this section that the "unforgivable sin" is twice discussed (6, 4-6 and 10, 26-30a), the nature of which would seem to be a deliberate rejection of the gift of faith. Cf. also above, n. 9 (p. 30).

33. This arrangement may be alluded to at 13, 8

34. Chapter 11 of Hebrews seems to be a type of Christian *peshet*, with Heb 11, 3 being the verse introducing the interpretation and serving as a bridge between vv. 1-2 and the examples which follow, which are understood as referring to Christian realities. Cf. J. Swetnam, "Hebrews 11 - An Interpretation", *Melita Theologica* 46 (1990) 97-114, for a preliminary attempt to work out an interpretation along such lines. Cf. R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1975 [second printing, 1977]) 38-45; D. Dimant, "Pesharim, Qumran", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5 (New York 1192) 244-51.

35. Cf. Heb 11, 1 with its emphasis on faith underlying "things hoped for", a strongly eschatological orientation, which is found not only in 11, 1-39, with regard to the ancients, but especially in 12, 1-29, with regard to the addressees. This eschatological orientation is alluded to also in 13, 14.

of Christ as “originator” or “initiator” (*archegos*) recalls the use of the latter word to describe him in 2, 10, a verse which occurs in a section which seems to be linking Jesus with Moses as the one leading the sons of the promise to the definitive possession of the Land.<sup>36</sup> The theme of Moses and the quest for the Land is brought to climax in 12, 24-25 with the approach of the addressees to the Jesus who is mediator of a new covenant, with blood speaking better than that of Abel’s. Here is the Jesus who is the “perfecter” of faith (*teloiotes*), i.e. bringing it to its intrinsic conclusion. Just as Moses was “sent” by God, so Jesus is an “apostle”, assigned to announce the name of God (i.e., “Father”) to his brothers (Heb 2, 12).<sup>37</sup> Now the long exodus which began with that announcement is at an end, and the addressees have reached the “unshakeable kingdom” (12,28) which is theirs as grace, given by the new covenant which is Christ himself. Thus faith is working itself out to its divinely-appointed conclusion for the future, as the “underlying reality of things hoped for” with relation to its creation by the Son.

Finally, the section 13, 1-17 looks at faith from the standpoint of the present. The section gives indications for comportment in the here and now. The addressees are called on to “recall your leaders, who spoke to you the word of God, to look upon the outcome of their conduct, and to imitate their faith” (13, 7). The verse parallels 12,2,<sup>38</sup> and has the same function for 13, 1-17 as 12,2 has for 12, 1-29: it shows the relevance of faith. In 12, 1-29 it was the relevance of the initiator and perfecter of faith, Jesus, who as the new Moses is to bring faith to its ultimate term; in 13, 1-17 it is the relevance of the leaders of the addressees, whose faith is to be imitated in all things relative to their function of transmitters of God’s word. It is this word, here and now, which must be lived in a variety of ways in the present, as the verses indicate.<sup>39</sup>

36. Cf. Swetnam, “Hebrews 1, 1 - 3, 6”, 65.

37. *Ibid.*, 62-63

38. “The call to ‘contemplate’ (*anatheorountes*) these leaders recalls the advice to look to (*aphorao*) the initiator and perfecter of faith (12, 2). The parallel is hardly accidental. Like the following summons to ‘imitate’ (*mimesthe*) the faith of the leaders, the call to observe them is part of common early Christian advice to follow those who follow Christ”, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 392.

39. At 13, 14 there is an allusion to the eschatological term of faith, the city which is to come.

### *Announcement of Themes and the Three-Fold Division of Hebrews*

The use of *hypostasis* at Heb 1, 2; 3, 14 and 11, 1 has been taken here as a confirmation that the epistle is divided into major sections at 1, 1 - 3, 6 and 3, 7 - 10, 39, and as a guide for the discernment of the beginning of a major division at 11, 1 - 13, 17. But the word *hypostasis* is not the central point being made in these sections. More indicative of the occurrence of major divisions would seem to be the use of key words as announcements of themes to come. The first such key word is *onoma* at 1, 4: the section 1, 5 - 3, 6 discusses the name "son" as applied to Jesus, both as Son of God and as Son of Man. The second such key word is *Christos* at 3, 5-6: the section 3, 7 - 10, 39 discusses Christ precisely as the Christ,<sup>40</sup> in relation to the second and definitive stage of his priesthood and victimhood, alluded to in 3, 5-6 through the phrase *eis marturion ton lalethesomenon*, which, in turn, alludes to the eucharistic connotations of the word *laleo* in Hebrews.<sup>41</sup> The third such key word is *pistis* at 10, 39: the section 11, 1-13, 17 discusses the virtue in relation to the past, future, and present.

This brings to a conclusion the attempt to structure an enigma. As the present series of articles has attempted to argue, the Epistle to the Hebrews is a bold outline of Christian faith. With an audacious adaptation of the word *hypostasis* to Christian realities, the author links the objective reality of faith with the very reality of God. It is the reality of God which underlies the Son and all that the Son achieves as agent of creation (1, 2). Faith is introduced as being analogous to this fundamental underlying reality (3, 14); it comes as a gift of the Spirit, and serves as a guide to understanding Christ as High Priest and Victim in his two stages of priesthood (3, 7 - 10, 39). This gift of the Spirit is a creation of God through the Son (11, 1), and as such it is a guide to seeing God's approval in the past (Ch. 11) in those who lived by it. It is a basic virtue with which all who look on Christ gird themselves for the future (Ch. 12). And it is a basic virtue of those Christians who live in the present, mindful of the example of their leaders (Ch. 13).

40. Jesus becomes fully the Christ in Hebrews at the moment of his resurrection, alluded to through a citation from Ps 45 at Heb 1, 9 by the verb *chrío*. Cf. the discussion in A. Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: épître aux Hébreux 1 et 2* (Lectio Divina 58; Paris 1969) 191-192.

41. Cf. J. Swetnam, "Christology and the Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews", *Biblica* 70 (1989) 84-87.

There remains the task of filling in the details of this structure, seeing how the outline sheds light on all the individual verses of the epistle, and how the individual verses of the epistle shed light on the structure.

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