

5. Conclusion

The approach adopted in this study has enabled us to see John's Christology as one element in a spectrum of responses to Jesus, rooted in the Judaism John knew and which, rows and rifts notwithstanding, was no less his own cultural home. Inasmuch as the three positions identified here⁴⁰ are based on Moses and the Law, they are organically linked and come into agreement; inasmuch, however, as each has construed that basis differently in relation to Jesus, then they are seen to conflict and, in the two cases of John and the hostile 'Jews', violently so.

The fourth evangelist emerges from this context as a Christian Jew for whom faith in the one God of Israel has become centred on Jesus. Seen against his particular background, the steps he has taken seem logical enough, for he has plainly worked on the assumption that all that was venerated in Judaism as the means to God must be superlatively true of Jesus. Thus, it follows that just as in the Judaism he knew Moses and the Torah were highly esteemed in relation to God, so also John's Christology, in which those features are taken up, is correspondingly 'high'. It also follows, I suggest, that just as Judaism clearly regarded its own 'high' claims for Torah as consistent with monotheism, so John also is unlikely to have perceived his own position as in breach of that creed. In fact, the real conflict here between John and his hostile opponents seems to lie not in the principle but in its application, for if these 'Jews' were prepared to exalt the Torah as God's life-giving word, it is clear enough from the gospel that they found John's attribution of divine status to Jesus of Nazareth completely unacceptable. To do that, they insist, is blasphemy because it puts a human being on a level with God (5.18; 10.33).

John's reply is that the blasphemy charge is not justified in Jesus' case because his whole life was so open to God that he never made a move or uttered a word except at God's bidding (5.19–30; cf. 7.16–18; 8.26–29; 10.37–38; 12.44–50; 14.10, 24; 17.7–8). Eternal life thus consists in knowing the one God through Jesus, who seeks only the glory of the one who sent him (5.44; 7.18; 17.3). In such a scheme, God is not rivalled and monotheism is not breached.

This brings me to a final thought. What do you do if you are a first-century Jew and your belief in the one God is Jesus-shaped? It seems to me that there is more than one way to come to terms with that: either you safeguard monotheism by presenting Jesus in all his human vulnerability, denying that anyone is good but God, as in Mark's gospel, for example, or you do it another way, which is by showing a human life so surrendered to God's will that to encounter that person is to meet only God in word and action. We tend to think of John's Christology as posing a problem to Jewish monotheism. What if John himself saw it as a solution?

40. There may well be more. The range of speculation among factions in ch. 7, for example, suggests that John was familiar with pious conjecture of various kinds concerning the Messiah and access to heavenly knowledge; see further, Dunn, 'Let John Be John', pp. 311–12; *idem*, 'The Embarrassment of History: Reflections on the Problem of "Anti-Judaism" in the Fourth Gospel', in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 47–67 (here pp. 56–57); Freyne, 'Vilifying', p. 140.

MONOTHEISM AND CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS 1

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1. Christological Monotheism

This study presupposes the general argument for a christology of divine identity that I outlined briefly in my 1996 Didsbury Lectures, published as *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*,¹ and will argue in detail in a forthcoming book.² I shall briefly summarize the argument here insofar as it is relevant to our present purpose. I propose that we should think of the Jewish monotheistic understanding of God in the Second Temple period in terms of the identity of God rather than of divine nature. In other words, for the Jewish monotheistic belief in God what was important was who the one God is, rather than what divinity is. (This is not intended to exclude all concepts of divine nature from the Jewish theology of this period, but I do regard the identity of God as the more comprehensive and important category.) Key features of the identity of the one God which distinguish him from all other reality (and which matter most for our present purpose)³ are:

- God is the sole creator of all things, whereas all other beings are created by him.
- God is the sovereign ruler of all, subject to none, whereas all other beings are subject to his rule.
- God will achieve his eschatological rule, i.e. his uncontested rule over all creation and the acknowledgement of his sole deity by all creatures. The difference implied here between God's providential sovereignty and his eschatological rule defines Second Temple Jewish monotheism as a kind of eschatological monotheism.

1. R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998 and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). See also two essays closely related to this argument: 'The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2.9–11', in R.P. Martin and B.J. Dodd (eds.), *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 128–39; 'The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus', in *JRCM*, pp. 43–69.

2. Provisional title: *Jesus and the Identity of God. I. Jewish Monotheism and New Testament Christology*.

3. That God is the God of his covenant people Israel is also essential to his identity in the Jewish monotheistic understanding, but it does not so clearly distinguish him from all other reality, as the features listed here do, and so was not prominent in Jewish statements of God's uniqueness from this period.

- Frequently God is said to be the only eternal one, 'the first and the last' in the classic monotheistic assertions of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 41.1; 42.8; 48.11), the one who precedes all things as their creator and will achieve his rule over all things for ever. I include this point because God's eternity is the attribute of divine nature most often used to distinguish God from all creation: only God is inherently eternal, living from eternity to eternity. But it is noteworthy that as an attribute of divine nature it is very closely connected with creation and sovereignty, just as divine omnipotence also is.
- God has a personal name, the tetragrammaton (YHWH), which names his unique identity.
- God alone may be worshipped, and God should be worshipped, because worship in the Jewish understanding is precisely recognition of the unique divine identity.

The early Christianity, very consciously using this Jewish theological framework, created a kind of christological monotheism by understanding Jesus to be included in the unique identity of the one God of Israel. Probably the earliest expression of this to which we have access – and it was certainly in use very early in the first Christian community's history – was the understanding of Jesus' exaltation in terms of Ps. 110.1. Jesus, seated on the divine throne in heaven as the one who will achieve the eschatological lordship of God and in whom the unique sovereignty of the one God will be acknowledged by all, is included in the unique rule of God over all things, and thus placed unambiguously on the divine side of the absolute distinction that separates the only sovereign One from all creation. God's rule over all things defines who God is: it cannot be delegated as a mere function to a creature. Thus the earliest christology was already *in nuce* the highest christology. All that remained was to work through consistently what it could mean for Jesus to belong integrally to the unique identity of the one God. Early Christian interest was primarily in soteriology and eschatology, the concerns of the Gospel, and so in the New Testament it is primarily as sharing or implementing God's eschatological lordship that Jesus is understood to belong to the identity of God. But early Christian reflection could not consistently leave it at that. If Jesus was integral to the identity of God, he must have been so eternally. And so the great passages of protological christology, such as the Johannine Prologue and Hebrew 1, include Jesus also in the unique creative activity of God and in the uniquely divine eternity. This was the early Christians' Jewish way of preserving monotheism against the ditheism that any kind of adoptionist Christology was bound to involve.

Of the passages of extended christological exposition or reflection in the New Testament, Hebrew 1 is one of the most important for understanding christological monotheism, since it brings all the main components of Jewish definition of the uniqueness of the divine identity into christological service. At the same time it illustrates very well the extent to which early christology was an exegetical enterprise, skilfully deploying accepted current methods of Jewish exegesis of Scripture.

2. *Hebrews 1–2 in Relation to the Whole Epistle*

Although we shall be concentrating on ch. 1 rather than ch. 2 of Hebrews, we need to begin by understanding the role of both these opening chapters in the overall design and purpose of Hebrews. An introduction or exordium (1.1–4) is a compact christological statement, ending with the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God (with allusion to Psalm 110.1) and the superiority of Christ to angels which that exaltation entails. This functions as a statement of theme for the rest of ch. 1, which is a catena of seven scriptural quotations, with a concluding comment in v. 14. Since the last of the seven quotations is of Ps. 110.1, it is clear that the aim of the catena is to demonstrate how the exaltation of Christ to God's right hand entails his transcendence over the angels, who feature prominently in the catena. Chapter 1 is followed by a section of exhortation (2.1–4), which draws a lesson for the readers from the exposition of ch. 1. This is typical of the pattern in Hebrews of passages of exhortation interspersed among passages of exposition. This exhortatory interruption should not obscure the close link between ch. 1 and 2.5–18, which is an exposition of Ps. 8.4–6, a passage frequently linked with Ps. 110.1 in early Christian exegesis.⁴ Whereas ch. 1 concerns Jesus' superiority to the angels, this section of ch. 2 concerns his inferiority to the angels during the period of his human life on earth, of which Ps. 8 is understood to speak. Apart from a brief reference in 1.3, only at the end of ch. 2 does the main theme of Hebrews begin to emerge, i.e. Christ's role as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, whose sacrifice and priesthood supersede the levitical priesthood and sacrifices.

How do these first two chapters function to introduce the rest of the book? An important clue lies in the use of Ps. 110 throughout Hebrews. The first verse of the Psalm is the Old Testament text to which the New Testament most often alludes.⁵ A christological understanding of it must go back behind all the New Testament writings to the earliest period and, with some variation, its Christian interpretation was well-established and well-known. Hebrews not only alludes to and quotes it in ch. 1, but also continues to allude to this first verse of the psalm later (8.1; 10.12–13; 12.2). These later allusions, however, are distinguished by the fact that they interpret the first verse of the psalm in the light of Ps. 110.4, which Hebrews is unique among New Testament writings in quoting and interpreting (it is quoted first in 5.6, and expounded at length in ch. 7). For these later chapters of Hebrews, Jesus is exalted to God's right hand, not only as the one who is to rule all things from the throne of the divine majesty, but also as the Melchizedekian high priest

4. M.C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (NovTSup, 96; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 222–28.

5. Mt. 22.44; 26.64; Mk. 12.36; 14.62; 16.19; Lk. 20.42–43; 22.69; Acts 2.33–35; 5.31; 7.55–56; Rom. 8.34; 1 Cor. 15.25; Eph. 1.20; 2.6; Col. 3.1; Heb. 1.3, 13; 8.1; 10.12–13; 12.2; 1 Pet. 3.22; Rev. 3.21. Cf. D.M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS, 18; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973); M. Hengel, 'Sit at My Right Hand!', in M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), pp. 119–225; Albl, *"And Scripture"*, pp. 216–36.

who intercedes at the throne of the divine grace. This largely novel⁶ christological theme of the high priesthood of Christ is grounded in exegesis of the same psalm as forms the scriptural basis for the much more traditional christological themes of ch. 1. It looks therefore very much as though in ch. 1 Hebrews rehearses the familiar christological themes connected with the exaltation of Christ, along with their familiar exegetical foundations, in order to prepare the way for the novel christological development that follows. Hebrews also takes up the traditional association of Ps. 110 with Ps. 8 in ch. 2 in order also to rehearse a traditional understanding of the humiliation of Christ that will also feed into the new high priestly Christology that we see already at the end of ch. 2.

Martin Albl is the most recent of scholars who have argued that the catena of quotations in ch. 1 is reproduced from an early Christian *testimonia* collection.⁷ This probably goes beyond the evidence, especially if one thinks, as I do, that the rather similar passage in *1 Clem.* 36.2–6 is certainly dependent on Hebrews,⁸ not an independent witness to the same traditional material, as Albl thinks. Nevertheless there is enough evidence elsewhere for christological use of the same or related texts⁹ to show that in ch. 1 the author of Hebrews is working very much in traditional mode, deploying his exegetical skill with already traditional materials, and postponing his freshly creative exegesis for later chapters.

3. Why the Angels?

The first two chapters of Hebrews are peculiarly concerned with angels. In this respect they are not preparing the way for later chapters, which make hardly any reference to angels. Angels appear at 1.4 and after 2.16, the last reference to angels in these two chapters, they reappear only at 12.22 and 13.2. In Heb. 1–2 the angels function christologically in two ways: in ch. 1 Jesus' exaltation is understood as his exaltation over the angels, while in ch. 2 Jesus' humiliation in incarnation and death is understood as the meaning of Ps. 8's statement that God made him for a little while lower than the angels. In both cases Jesus is emphatically distinguished from the angels. In his exaltation he is not one of the angels, but divine. In his incarnation he is not one of the angels, but human, as he had to be if he came to help humans, not, as 2.16 points out, angels. An explanation of the prominence of the angels in these chapters must take account of both christological relationships: the divine Son of God above the angels and the human Son of God below the angels.

The exhortatory section at the beginning of ch. 2 (vv. 1–4) draws out explicitly at least an element of the significance of the superiority of the Son to the angels.

6. Rom. 8.34 may indicate that this christology was not entirely without precedent, but it was substantially novel.

7. Albl, "And Scripture", pp. 201–207; cf. also L.T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology* (WUNT II/70; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), pp. 128–36.

8. G.L. Cockerill, 'Heb 1.1–14, *1 Clem.* 36.1–6 and the High Priest Title', *JBL* 97 (1978), pp. 437–40; W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC, 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), pp. 23–24.

9. Albl, "And Scripture", p. 202.

The message from God declared by Jesus, the Son, should be taken even more seriously than that declared by angels, i.e. the Mosaic law. While this looks like a significant anticipation of the supersessionary message of the later chapters of Hebrews, surprisingly the book makes no further use of this particular comparison. Angels are never subsequently connected with the law. It is hard to believe that the whole purpose of ch. 1 is fulfilled in the exhortatory use of this comparison in 2.1–4.¹⁰ In fact, the exhortatory passages of Hebrews do not usually exhaust the significance of the expository passages. We cannot therefore be content to follow those scholars who explain the concern with angels solely in terms of the superiority of the revelation of Christ over the law of Moses.¹¹

Many scholars have suggested that the role of the angels is polemical, i.e. directed either against an angel (or angelomorphic) Christology¹² or against the veneration of angels.¹³ We should be very cautious about detecting implicit polemic in passages which show no explicit concern to counter alternative views or practices.¹⁴ The New Testament writers engage in explicit polemic frequently enough for the question to be appropriate: why should the allegedly implicit polemic not have been made explicit? Moreover, the alleged polemic in this case bears no relation to the concerns of the rest of Hebrews, and, in the case of angel Christology, there is very little evidence of its existence in the period (before *1 Clement*, at least) from which Hebrews must date.¹⁵ If the author was concerned to counteract the attraction of an

10. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 127–28.

11. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, p. 17; J.P. Meier, 'Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1, 5–14', *Bib* 66 (1985), p. 522; others listed in Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 25–26 n. 201.

12. For references to scholars who have taken this view, see Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, p. 8; H.W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 52 n. 33; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 124–25 n. 98; L.K.K. Dey, *Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBLDS, 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975) ch. 4, sees the polemic directed against the assimilation of Christ to intermediaries such as Philo's Logos, whom Philo can call an angel. D.D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (WUNT II/109; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1999), pp. 137–39, acknowledges the force of arguments against the view that Hebrews 1 opposes an angel Christology, and so argues that, while angel Christology 'was not an error that appealed to his readers... it was in the air', and so the author is establishing his credentials with his readers by stressing his agreement with them in opposing any confusion of Christ with angels.

13. For references to scholars who have taken this view, see Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, p. 8; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, p. 124 n. 197.

14. Attridge, *The Epistle*, pp. 50 and 52; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 126–27. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, pp. 128–39, goes on to argue that the source of the catena Hebrews takes over was aimed polemically against veneration of angels and/or angel Christology.

15. Hebrews 1 has often been used as evidence for an angel or angelomorphic Christology, usually in the negative sense that such a Christology must be inferred from the opposition to it in Hebrews. But C.A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology* (AGJU, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), pp. 295–303 and 314, argues, on the basis of angelomorphic motifs in the catena of Hebrews 1 as well as elsewhere in Hebrews, that 'the author embraced Angelomorphic Christology as support for the superiority of Christ' (p. 314). Though he is careful to distinguish angelomorphic Christology (in which angelic features are applied to Christ) from angel Christology (for which Christ is an angel), I am not convinced that the motifs Gieschen highlights (Creator, Name, Firstborn, Glory,

angel Christology for his readers, it is remarkable that he later, without any hint of such a danger, makes innovative christological use of the figure of Melchizedek, whom we know to have been treated as a heavenly being of prime importance in some Jewish circles.¹⁶

However, it is hardly enough to claim that the author treats the angels simply because they occupy the same sacred space (heaven) as the exalted Jesus,¹⁷ though it is a highly relevant fact that they do. Nor is it not enough to point out that Christ's superiority to the angels was a well-established part of the traditional exaltation schema, connected especially with Ps. 110.1, which the catena in Heb. 1 follows,¹⁸ significant though this is (cf. Phil. 2.9–10; Col. 1.15–18; Eph. 1.21; 1 Pet. 3.22). For the author of Hebrews to elaborate this element in the traditional schema to the extent that he does, there must be a theological point to be made by it, no doubt already made in the traditional schema and appearing in the other New Testament texts that reflect this scheme, but significant enough to be treated at considerably greater length in Hebrews 1 than in other New Testament examples of this schema.

If the aim of the first two chapters of Hebrews is the positive one of restating the traditional Christian understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ, as the presupposition for any further christological reflection later in the work, then the angels, in both chapters, have a readily intelligible role as indicators of ontological status in the Jewish monotheistic world view. In Jewish literature the transcendence of God is frequently portrayed by locating God's cosmic throne in the heights of heaven, far above all other heavenly beings, the angels.¹⁹ This imagery of height functions along with other means, which we shall mention in due course, of radically distinguishing God from all creation. The need to distinguish angels, who as radiant heavenly beings often look like God, from God, sometimes no doubt has a polemical edge, especially as Jewish monotheism was always self-consciously alternative to pagan polytheism. But the distinction also functions as a kind of negative theology, defining who God is by demarcating God from what God is not. God is not one among other heavenly beings, but radically different in kind.

That human beings rank below angels is less often stressed, being an element more or less taken for granted in the Jewish cosmological picture, though it does become apparent in those Jewish traditions in which humans who ascend through the heavens are transformed into angels and in the expectation of angelic status or nature after death. It comes to the fore in Hebrews because of the christological aim (in Jewish terms a Christian novelty) of affirming both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. That phrase, patristic-sounding though it is, seems fully justified by the systematic way in which the first two chapters of Hebrews depict the divine identity of Jesus in distinction from the angels and his identification with humanity

and Enthroned Son) should be considered angelomorphic. Gieschen's argument about Heb. 1 expands on the much briefer treatment along the same lines by C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 113.

16. M.E. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup. 73; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), p. 176; Hannah, *Michael*, p. 138.

17. Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, pp. 176–77.

18. Attridge, *The Epistle*, pp. 52–53.

19. Bauckham, 'The Throne of God', pp. 52–53.

in distinction from the angels. As the Son of God his affinity with the Father distinguishes him from the angels, placing him far above them, while his temporary humiliation below the angels is so that, as the Son, he can establish his affinity with his human brothers and sisters. The angels are neither the only-begotten divine son nor the adopted human brothers and sisters, but servants who serve the divine purpose of human salvation, as the transitional last verse of ch. 1 makes clear. Indirectly, they serve very effectively the purpose of theological and christological definition.

4. *The Exordium: Hebrews 1.1–4*

The sevenfold narrative identity of God's Son (Heb. 1.2b–4)

έν υἱῷ,	by a Son,	
(1) ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων,	whom he appointed heir of all things,	(1) Eschatological rule over all things <i>Ps. 2.8; 8.6</i>
(2) δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·	through whom he also created the worlds.	(2) Agent of creation of all things.
(3) ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ,	Being the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being,	(3) Eternal divine being <i>Wisd. Sol. 7.26</i>
(4) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ	sustaining all things by his powerful word,	(4) Providential sovereignty over all things
(5) καθαρισμὸν πῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος	having made purification for sins,	(5) High priestly atonement
(6) ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς	he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,	(6) Exaltation to God's throne in heaven <i>Ps. 110.1</i>
(7) τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ' αὐτοῦς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.	having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.	(7) Identification (name) as YHWH

The opening contrast between the prophets and the Son introduces Hebrews' overall theme of the difference between the old covenant and the newly inaugurated eschatological age, but also introduces the key term Son (of God), immediately followed by a series of seven christological descriptions, each introduced by either a relative pronoun or a participle.²⁰ Seven, as the number of completeness, is

20. J.P. Meier, 'Structure and Theology in Heb 1, 1–14', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 170–76.

also the number of scriptural texts quoted in the catena that follows (vv. 5–13), and the seven introductory descriptions do anticipate the various christological themes of the catena, but there is no correlation of sequence between the two series of sevens.²¹ The seven christological descriptions (vv. 2b–4) form a statement of the narrative identity of the Son in which his inclusion in the unique divine identity is made very fully clear. Only the fifth statement ('having made purification for sins'), deliberately introduced as a first glimpse of the high priestly Christology original to Hebrews, is alone in being unparalleled elsewhere. Other statements are traditional, in a general sense if not in detail, and accumulate in this way in other extended accounts of divine identity christology, such as Phil. 2.6–11, Col. 1.15–20, Eph. 1.20–23 and the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel.

The biblical allusions, typically of Hebrews, are to the Psalms, but to psalms already prominent in christological interpretation (Pss. 2 and 8 in statement 1, Ps. 110.1 in statement 6) and psalms interpreted to refer to Christ's exaltation and rule from the divine throne. The sequence begins with exaltation in statement 1 and comes back to exaltation in statements 6 and 7, with the theme of heirship and inheritance forming a catchword *inclusio* between statements 1 and 7. But the sequence enshrines the natural movement of early Christian christological reflection back from the exaltation of Christ (statement 1) to his participation in the work of creation (statement 2) and his intrinsic and eternal relationship to God expressed in statement 3 in wisdom language,²² with one image borrowed from Wisdom of Solomon 7.26 and the other creatively improvised. Statement 4 may also follow wisdom traditions, but the closest parallel is perhaps in a neglected Jewish apocalypse, probably of the early second century CE, the *Ladder of Jacob*, which says of God enthroned on the heavenly throne: 'bearing the whole world under your arm, yet not being borne by anyone' (2.9). It belongs to the unique identity of God that he upholds all things and is not himself upheld. Notable in statements 1, 2, and 4 is the universal language: 'the worlds' (2) and 'all things' (1 and 4). This is the standard language used in Jewish tradition to describe God's creation and rule of all things, identifying God's uniqueness by distinguishing him fundamentally from all other reality.²³ As in 1 Cor. 8.6 or Jn 1.3, the same language is used christologically to indicate that the divine Son participates in this uniquely divine relationship to all things.²⁴

The last two statements of the seven emphasize the status of the exalted Christ when he is installed on the divine throne 'on high' to be given his inheritance, i.e. God's eschatological rule over all things. This is new, not in that he only now

21. Meier, 'Symmetry', pp. 504–524, finds only 'a general symmetry between the movement of thought' in the two series (p. 523; cf. p. 529).

22. Cf. Meier, 'Structure', pp. 176–89, for the 'ring structure' of movement from exaltation back to pre-existence in eternity and forward again to exaltation.

23. E.g. Isa. 44.24; Jer. 10.16; 51.19; Sir. 43.33; Wisd. Sol. 9.6; 12.13; Add. Est. 13.9; 2 Macc. 1.24; 3 Macc. 2.3; 1 En. 9.5; 84.3; 2 En. 66.4; Jub. 12.19; Ap. Abr. 7.10; Jos. Asen. 12.1; Sib. Or. 3.20; 8.376; Josephus, *War* 5.218; 1QapGen col. xx, line 13; 4QD^a frg. 11.9.

24. Also Mt. 11.27; Lk. 10.22; Jn 3.35; 13.3; 16.15; Acts 10.36; 1 Cor. 15.27–28; Eph. 1.22; Phil. 3.21; Col. 1.16–17; Heb. 1.2; cf. Eph. 1.23; 4.10.

begins to participate in the divine identity, but in that the new creative activity of God, God's eschatological achievement of his purpose for this whole creation, his kingdom, begins with Jesus' enthronement. This is why he 'inherits' the divine name: it is in his rule from God's throne that the rule of the one God is to be acknowledged by all creation. God is to be known to all by his name when all creation recognize Jesus as the one who exercises God's rule. He is identified for them by the unique divine name. Many commentators, on the other hand, suppose the name here to be 'the Son', because it is as Son that Christ is distinguished from the angels in the following verses. But the Son is *the one* who inherits from his Father, not *what* he inherits. What he inherits should be something that belongs to his Father, not something uniquely the Son's, as the title Son is. The parallel with Phil. 2.9 suggests the much more intelligible idea that the one who sits on the divine throne is given the divine name, the tetragrammaton.²⁵

5. The Structure of the Catena

Catena of seven scriptural texts on Jesus' transcendence over the angels (Heb. 1.5–13)

Τίνι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων,	For to which of the angels did God ever say,	A ¹	1a Son
Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε;	You are my Son today I have begotten you"? (Ps. 2.7)		
καὶ πάλιν,	Or again,	B ¹	2a Son
Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν;	'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? (2 Sam. 7.14)		
ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει,	And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,	C ¹	3a Son and angels
Καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.	'Let all God's angels worship him.' (Deut. 32.43)		
καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει,	Of the angels he says,	D	4 Angels
Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα,	'He makes his angels (messengers) winds, and his ministers flames of fire.' (Ps. 104.4)		4a Servants not Son 4b

25. So also Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, p. 113; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, p. 197.

		Changeable not	
		eternal	
⁸ πρὸς δε τὸν υἱόν,	But of the Son he says,	C ²	5b
		Son	Eternal
		and	
		angels	
‘Ο θρόνος σου ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου. ἡγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν· διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισεν σε ὁ θεός ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου.	‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.’ (Ps. 45.6–7)		
¹⁰ καὶ,	And,	B ²	6b
		Eternal	
Σὺ κατ’ ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χερῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί· ¹¹ αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δε διαμένεις, καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, ¹² καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιν ἐλίξεις αὐτούς, ὡς ἱμάτιον καὶ ἀλλαγῇσονται· σὺ δε ὁ αὐτὸς εἰ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν.	‘In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end (Ps. 102.25–27)		
¹³ πρὸς τίνα δε τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκεν ποτε,	But to which of the angels has he ever said,	C ²	7
		rubric	Sharing God’s rule
Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου;	‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’? (Ps. 110.1)		

In early Jewish and Christian literature, in which theological argument is usually inseparable from skilled and exact exegesis, a catena of texts of this kind, with only a minimal framework of interpretation, can function as the vehicle for a sophisticated theological argument, since much can be said purely by the careful selection and juxtaposition of texts. (A good example from Qumran is 4QTestimonia [4Q175];²⁶ a New Testament example is 1 Pet. 2.4–10.) This makes the structure of the catena an indispensable key to its correct interpretation.

26. H.W. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1.5–13* (American University

That there are seven quotations is significant, not only because the number indicates the Son’s complete superiority to angels, but also because the number allows the seven quotations to fall into two different, overlapping patterns.

There is a chiastic pattern (see the third column of the diagram above), in which the fourth quotation (D) forms the centre of the chiasm, while the two outer quotations (A¹ and A²) correspond. The formulae introducing these first and seventh quotations clearly correspond, while these and the formula of the central quotation (D) is distinctive and marks out this one quotation as actually about the angels themselves. The other quotations are about the Son, but the two nearest to the centre (C¹ and C²) explicitly compare the angels with the Son, whereas the others refer to the Son in terms that imply a contrast with the angels, but do not explicitly refer to the angels. In C¹ the angels are told to worship the Son (v. 6), while in C² they are the ‘companions’ of the Son above whom he is elevated (v. 9). Thus the chiastic structure serves the purpose of the catena in portraying the contrast between the Son and the angels.

However, while a series of seven can have a chiastic structure with a centre, it can also imply that the seventh item is to be set apart from the other six as the climax and consummation of the others, as the Sabbath is of the week. The last column of the diagram above shows how the chiastic structure is modified by the distinctive role of the seventh quotation as a summarizing climax to the series. The first three quotations (1a, 2a, 3a) all characterize the Son as Son. (The third quotation does not itself describe the Son as Son, but its introductory explanation does [v. 6a].) The fifth and sixth quotations (5b, 6b) both characterize the Son as eternal. These two lengthy quotations are clearly linked together in a way that shows this to be their common purpose: the first line of the fifth quotation (‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’) corresponds to the last line of the sixth quotation (‘your years will never end’). This makes them a self-contained pair, whose theme is not continued by the seventh quotation. Thus, excluding the seventh quotation from the chiastic pattern, the central quotation about the angels is framed, on the one hand, by a triplet of quotations about the Son as Son and, on the other hand, by a pair of quotations about the Son as eternal. The central quotation, as we shall see, is very carefully chosen in that it has two aspects (4a, 4b), one of which (4a) contrasts the angels with the Son as Son, the theme of the preceding quotations (1a, 2a, 3a), while the other aspect (4b) contrasts the angels with the Son as eternal, the theme of the succeeding quotations (5b, 6b).

6. *The Theme of the Catena*

The two verses before the catena (1.3–4) already stated the theme of the catena as the exaltation of the Son according to Ps. 110[LXX 109].¹ and the superiority to angels which both explicates this and is required by it. The catena then returns to

Studies, 7/193; New York, Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), ch. 6, compares the hermeneutical methods of Heb. 1.5–13 with those of 4QFlorilegium (4Q174), which, unlike 4QTestimonia, incorporates explicit exegetical comment on its selection of messianic texts.

Ps. 110[109].1 as its summarizing climax, and the preceding six quotations expound the theme by establishing what qualifies the Son for this status and distinguishes him from the angels. The overall point is that as Son he participates in the exercise of the divine sovereignty, whereas the angels are merely servants. Along with this eschatological christology goes the protological point that the Son is creator of all things, the angels created by him.

All the quotations in fact relate to the Son's messianic rule, though this is not immediately obvious in all cases:

1. The words of the first quotation (Ps. 2.7) are those God speaks to his anointed king to whom he promises universal rule (Ps. 2.2, 6, 8–9), as already picked up in the allusion to this psalm in Heb. 1.2.
2. The second quotation (2 Sam. [2 Kgdms] 7.14) is from the words of God to David, in which God promises to establish the throne of David's offspring's kingdom forever (2 Sam. [2 Kgdms] 7.12–13, 16).
3. The third quotation is introduced with an allusion to Ps. 89[LXX 88].27 ('I will make him my firstborn, exalted over the kings of the earth'), a psalm which also includes the promise of an eternal throne (Ps. 89[88].29, 36–37). The third quotation itself, from the Song of Moses in Deut. 32, belongs to the prophecy of God's eschatological victory over his enemies which concludes the Song.
4. The fourth quotation belongs to a psalm which describes the divine sovereignty over creation, while the actual verse concludes the psalm's opening description of the divine ruler establishing his palace in the heavens and ruling in power.
5. The fifth quotation (Ps. 45[LXX 44].6–7) opens with a reference to the Son's eternal throne as the throne of God ('Your throne, O God, is forever and ever') and continues with reference to his anointing as messianic king.
6. The sixth quotation (Ps. 102[LXX 101].25–27) concerns the divine sovereignty over the whole created world. The heavens, which the Son created, he will roll up and change (Ps. 102[101].26 = Heb. 1.12). But it is probably also relevant that the preceding section of the psalm (Ps. 102[101].13–22) concerns the eschatological action of God to redeem Zion and to establish his kingdom over all the kings of the earth.
7. Ps. 110[109].1 was the most quoted scriptural attestation that the exalted Jesus shares the cosmic throne of God in the heights of heaven and thus participates in the uniquely divine sovereignty over all things.

Even apart from the theme of superiority over the angels, which the quotations are designed to establish and illustrate, it is worth observing that the combination of all seven of these quotations makes it clear that the Son's rule is not merely the earthly rule of the Davidic Messiah established on Mt Zion, but the cosmic rule of one who shares the divine throne above all creation. Hence his rule is not merely over the nations, but even over the angels. Hence also his sovereignty, unlike the Davidic Messiah as traditionally perceived, includes participation in God's creative work of bringing all created things into being.

The general point of the catena – that the Son is included in the exercise of the unique divine sovereignty, whereas the angels are only servants of God (vv. 13–14) – is explicated in two aspects. The first three quotations, in relation to the fourth, show that it is because he is the Son of his Father that the Son participates in the unique divine sovereignty, whereas the angels are ministers to him. The fifth and sixth quotations, in relation to the fourth, show that the angels are created and therefore subject to change, whereas the Son, as sovereign Creator, is eternal and unchanging.

With regard to the first aspect, the contrast between the Son (in the first two quotations and in the introduction to the third) and the angels, described as 'ministers' (λειτουργούς) in the fourth quotation, is clear. But the contrast is further explicated in terms of worship. The difference between the Son and the angels requires that they should worship him (v. 6). The point is so important to the author that he has found a rare text (Deut. 32.43 in a Greek version)²⁷ in which explicitly the angels are said to worship, and he has had to apply it to the Son as Son by means of the introductory allusion to Ps. 89, since the text itself does not explicitly specify the object of the angels' worship (though the object has to be other than the speaker, whom Hebrews identifies as God).²⁸ In view of this it is probable that 'ministers' (λειτουργούς) in the fourth quotation should be given its cultic sense, just as 'angels' (ἄγγελους) should be understood in its basic meaning of 'messengers, those who are sent'. Both aspects are taken up in verse 14, which resumes the sense of the fourth quotation: angels are 'all ministering' (λειτουργικὰ) spirits sent

27. At Deut. 32.43a LXX has a fuller text than either the Qumran Hebrew text of this verse (4QDeut^a) or the MT, which differ widely from each other. The standard LXX text has:

Rejoice with him, you heavens,
and worship him all you sons of God (ὁἱοὶ θεοῦ) (cf. מַלְאָכָיו in 4QDeut^a)!
Rejoice with his people, you nations;
and ascribe strength to him, all you angels of God (ἄγγελοι θεοῦ)!

If the author of Hebrews (or the tradition he follows) worked from this text, he has quoted the second line, but substituted ἄγγελοι θεοῦ from line 4 for ὁἱοὶ θεοῦ in line 2. It is easy to see why he should have done this: he is considering 'Son' the unique title of Christ, distinguished from the angels. Moreover, the parallel in Ps. 97.7 could have affected his quotation of Deut. 32.43. However, the matter is complicated by the fact that in the Odes, a Christian collection of biblical canticles that appear in Codex Alexandrinus of the LXX, as well as elsewhere, the verse equivalent to Deut. 32.43 (Odes 2.43), οἱ ἄγγελοι θεοῦ appears in line 2, and ὁἱοὶ θεοῦ in line 4. This form of the text was also known to Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 130). It may be a Christian text form, already in use in a *testimonia* collection used by the author of Hebrews, or influenced by Hebrews.

28. It is not the case, as Attridge, *The Epistle*, p. 57, supposes, that the text can be understood as referring to Christ because 'it has been taken out of its context'. Quite the contrary: it is because the author of Hebrews (or the tradition he uses) knew its context and understood Deut. 32.43 to be part of the divine speech that begins at v. 39 that he knew the 'him' of v. 43a had to be someone distinguishable from God but someone to whom worship is due. It is notable that a divine speech which begins with *the* (final, culminating, most solemn) declaration by God of his divine uniqueness (Deut. 32.39: 'Behold, behold, I am he, and there is no god besides me...') should be understood to include this God's command to the angels to worship someone distinguished from himself.

for service'. But if 'his ministers' in the fourth quotation should be understood in terms of the cultic service of the angels and connected with their worship of the Son in the third quotation, then the Son should be understood as the subject of the fourth quotation. The Son has created the angels to perform cultic worship in the heavenly sanctuary where he himself sits on the divine throne and receives their worship. Jewish exegesis understood Ps. 104.4 to mean that the angels of flame and fire are those who worship around God's throne (2 Bar. 21.6; cf. *Qu. Ezra* A27–28), and sometimes distinguished the fiery angels who worship God in the highest heaven (Ps. 104.4b) from the 'spiritual angels' (Ps. 104.4a) who carry out their orders in the lower heavens (*Ap. Abr.* 19.6).

Jewish exegesis of Ps. 104.4 also explains how the quotation of this verse relates to the fifth and sixth quotations, forming the second aspect of the contrast between the angels and the Son. In Hebrew the verse could be taken to mean either that he 'makes the winds his messengers, flames of fire his ministers' or (as in LXX, followed by Heb. 1.7)²⁹ that he 'makes his angels winds, and his ministers flames of fire'. In either case it was understood to mean that God created the angels (cf. *Jub.* 2.2). But 1QH col. ix, lines 10–11, which reads the first line of the verse according to the former option, also takes it literally ('powerful spirits, according to their laws, before they became holy angels').³⁰ Other exegetes, following the second option, took the verse to mean that God changes the angels at will into wind, when they are sent as messengers, or into fire, when they minister before him (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eleazar* 4; cf. *Exod. Rab.* 25.2). This exegesis is found in late Second Temple literature. For example, 4 Ezra 8.20–22 depicts God who abides forever on his immeasurably exalted throne:

before whom the hosts of angels stand trembling
and at whose command they are changed to wind and fire.

The contrast is deliberate between God in his eternal, unchangeable sovereignty and the angels, his creatures and servants, who are entirely subject to his sovereign command. A similar point is made in 2 Bar. 48.8, where, in the context of reflection on God's eternal transcendence over the times of his creation, which are entirely subject to his command, the fact that even the angels change at his command is cited:

With signs of fear and threat you command the flames
and they change into winds

(cf. 21.6, for the evidence that these are understood as the angels; and cf. also *Ap. Abr.* 15.6–7 for the idea that the fiery angels constantly change shape as they worship God in the highest heaven).

29. In Greek the definite noun is more likely to be the direct object.

30. Cf. also 1 En. 17.1, which probably interprets the second line of the verse in the same way: 'those who were there were like blazing fire, and when they wished, they took on the appearance of men'. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics*, pp. 197–98, is mistaken in thinking this refers to the sinful angels, the Watchers of 1 En. 6–16. The latter are not mentioned in this vision until 19.1, which refers back to 18.11–16, but not to 17.1.

The function, therefore, of the fourth quotation in the Hebrews catena, in relation to the fifth and the sixth, is to depict the angels as created beings, subject to change at the command of their Creator, by contrast with the Son, who in the fifth and sixth quotations is depicted in precisely the terms which the Jewish texts just cited use to depict God in his transcendence over his creatures and servants the angels.³¹ The fifth and sixth quotations are carefully selected to refer to two complementary aspects of the eternity of the Son's participation in the divine sovereignty. The quotation from Ps. 45[LXX 44].6–7 shows that the position on the divine throne to which the Son has been exalted as God's Messiah ('anointed...with the oil of gladness') is a matter of eternal participation in the eternal divine sovereignty. The quotation from Psalm 102[LXX 101].25–27 then takes the Son's participation in the divine sovereignty back to creation. The heavens, including the angels, are the work of his, the Son's hands; they pass away and are changed and renewed at his command; he himself in his transcendence over all creation will endure unchanging forever. This correlation between the Son's *eschatological* participation in the divine sovereignty, which began with his exaltation as the messianic king to his place at the right hand on the divine throne, and the Son's participation in exercise of divine sovereignty *in creation*, had already been made in the exordium (1.1–4) which anticipates most of the theological themes of the catena: 'a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things [Ps. 8.7–8], through whom he also created the worlds' (1.2).

The fact that the sixth quotation begins with the words, 'you in the beginning, Lord' (σὺ κατ' ἀρχάς, κύριε), is not incidental to the catena's purpose; nor is the fact that the word order differs from the Septuagint Greek text (Ps. 101.26: κατ' ἀρχάς σὺ, κύριε). These words link this text with Gen. 1.1 (ἐν ἀρχῇ) and Prov. 8.22–23 (ἀρχὴν; ἐν ἀρχῇ), and refer to the primordial time before the creation of the heavens and the earth (cf. Jn 1.1). The emphatically placed σὺ stresses the Son's presence before creation in the divine eternity. Only as the one who eternally pre-existed all things could he be the Creator of all things. Thus the sixth quotation begins with the Son's eternity before all things and ends with his eternity beyond all things ('your years will never end'). It could hardly be better chosen to describe the transcendent eternity of the one Creator and Ruler of all things, whom the monotheistic divine self-declarations in Deutero-Isaiah call 'the First and the Last' (Isa. 44.6; 48.12). The opening and concluding affirmations of the Son's primordial eternity and his eschatological eternity frame what is said about the creation, which came into being and perishes, decays and is renewed, its existence subject to the will of the only eternal One.

31. J.W. Thompson, 'The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb 1.5–18', *CBQ* 38 (1976), p. 358, comments: 'Whereas the mutability of angels in rabbinic tradition is no sign of inferiority, in Hebrews their changeableness and connection with the material world marks them as inferior. Such a handling of the scripture citation indicates that the author reads his text with his own metaphysical assumptions.' But this is to miss the point that the inferiority of the angels does not lie in their mutability as such, but in the fact that it shows their complete subjection to the will of the Son, as to that of God. This meaning certainly can be found in the Jewish texts cited above. The Son's superiority is in his participation in the divine creativity and sovereignty. This entails his metaphysical eternity, but not immutability. There is no Platonism here.

The third, fifth and sixth texts are all texts which, in their context, could be read as distinguishing another divine person from the one whom Hebrews takes to be God the Father.³² The fact that in the fifth quotation this results in the application of the word 'God' (ὁ θεός) to the Son (v. 8)³³ should not be given too much significance, even though it is one of the mere handful of instances in which the word is applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Exegetically, this phenomenon in the fifth quotation is very similar to the application of Ps. 82.1 to Melchizedek in 11Q*Melchizedek* (col. ii, line 10). In that case exegesis required the identification of the *Elohim* of the text with a figure other than YHWH since the text was regarded as distinguishing between this *Elohim* and the *El* who must be YHWH. Similarly, in the Hebrews catena, Ps. 45(44).6–7 is understood to address someone as 'God' (ὁ θεός) who is also distinguished from 'God, your God' (ὁ θεός, ὁ θεός σου). In 11Q*Melchizedek*, the point is not to include Melchizedek in the unique divine identity, but merely that, in the exegete's views, Scripture here uses the word 'god' (אֱלֹהִים) for a figure other than the one God. It is not the mere application of a scriptural use of the word 'god' to Jesus Christ which makes Heb. 1.8 more significant.³⁴ What makes it of special significance is that this text (Ps. 45[44].6) speaks of the eternal divine throne as 'your throne, O God'. Sitting on the divine throne was the most powerful symbol Jewish monotheism had for the inclusion of a figure in the exercise of the unique divine sovereignty over all things.³⁵ Standing in the divine council, as Melchizedek does, does not carry the meaning which sitting on the divine throne carries. Thus it is not the word 'god' – an ambiguous word in

32. On Ps. 102.25–27 in this respect, see T.F. Glasson, 'Plurality of Divine Persons' and the Quotations in Hebrews 1.6ff., *NTS* 12 (1965–1966), pp. 271–72. In this sense they are 'two powers' texts like those that feature in the rabbinic discussions studied by A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA, 25; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), but these specific texts do not appear in those discussions. In fact, none of the texts that do appear in the rabbinic discussions is given christological significance in the New Testament, while the absence of Ps. 110.1 from the rabbinic discussions is particularly significant for the relationship of the rabbinic discussions to the Christianity of the New Testament period.

33. H.W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1964), p. 47; Attridge, *The Epistles*, pp. 59–60; Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic*, p. 228 (and others listed in M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992], p. 218 n. 59), take ὁ θεός in v. 9 to function like ὁ θεός in v. 8, as a vocative addressed to Christ, but this seems unlikely. In v. 8 it is the most natural way to read the Greek, but not in v. 9: see Harris, *Jesus*, pp. 218–20; D.F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994), pp. 34–35.

34. Aquila's translation of Ps. 45.6 makes the address to God unambiguous by using the vocative θεέ instead of the LXX's nominative with (probable) vocative meaning. But this could be understood to mean that this verse of the psalm is addressed to YHWH, not to the king, as is certainly the case in the Targum to Psalms ('Thy throne of glory, YHWH, endures forever and ever'). See W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998), pp. 148–49, for discussion of two variant targumic versions, which also read at least v. 7a as addressed to God, not the king.

35. Bauckham, 'The Throne of God'.

certain contexts, just as it is unambiguous in others – that is so important christologically. The word itself says nothing that is not adequately said without it, in this catena and elsewhere in the New Testament, about the inclusion of Christ in the divine identity. Hence the rarity of its use for Christ in the New Testament is not of great christological moment.

In view of the fact that Ps. 45[44].6–7 and Ps. 110[109].1 both concern the divine throne and (in this early Christian interpretation) the Messiah's enthronement on it, there is a significant parallel between the way the former text distinguishes 'God' (addressed by the psalmist) from 'God, your God', and the way the latter (in the opening words not quoted in Heb. 1.13) distinguishes 'the Lord' (ὁ κύριος) from 'my Lord' (τῷ κυρίῳ μου). Of course, in the Greek version of Ps. 110[109].1 the first κύριος represents the tetragrammaton, while the second does not. It is probably a mistake to suppose that any New Testament author was unaware of this. Even if they did not read Hebrew (as most did), they are likely to have known tetragrammaton or used a Greek equivalent (ΙΗΘΙ) or a Greek transliteration (ΙΑΩ), as well as those which substituted κύριος for the tetragrammaton.³⁶ They knew κύριος as the oral Greek substitute which they, like other Jews, always used in reading the text either to themselves (since ancient readers normally pronounced words to themselves) or to others, and which they, like many other Jews, therefore also used when they quoted Scripture in their own writings. But they also knew that κύριος was the oral Greek substitute for the divine name which was written in many manuscripts of the Greek Bible. However, this need not have prevented them from finding significance in the correspondence between ὁ κύριος, representing the tetragrammaton, and τῷ κυρίῳ μου in Psalm 110[109].1. They could well find very significant the parallel between this text, where 'the Lord' enthrones the one David calls 'my Lord', and Psalm 45[44].6–7, where 'God, your God' anoints as king the one who sits on the divine throne as 'God'. What the parallel suggests is that both texts speak rather clearly of the enthronement of Jesus Christ in heaven as his inclusion in the unique divine identity.

The way that the fifth quotation attributes to the Son participation in the divine work of creation is one of the more direct and remarkable instances of this theme in the New Testament literature. Evidently the writer connected this theme closely to that of Christ's participation in the unique divine sovereignty, just as these two aspects of the unique divine identity were linked in Jewish monotheistic assertions that the one Creator of all things is also the one Ruler of all things. The distinction from the angels in both cases also follows standard Jewish monotheistic precedent. In this exercise of the divine sovereignty, the angels are merely servants, whereas the Son exercises the sovereignty himself, sitting on the divine throne. In the work of creation, the angels play no part whatsoever, being themselves created, whereas the Son carries out this activity which was understood to be God's alone. If the eternity of the Son's rule, demonstrated by the fifth quotation, distinguishes him

36. A. Pietersma, 'Kyrios or Tetragram: A Renewed Quest for the Original Septuagint', in A. Pietersma and C. Cox (eds.), *De Septuaginta* (Mississauga, ON: Benben Publications, 1984), pp. 86–101; P.W. Skehan, 'The Divine Name at Qumran, in the Masada Scroll and in the Septuagint', *BIOCS* 13 (1980), pp. 28–33.

from the angels, his eternity as Creator, established by the sixth quotation, distinguishes him even more decisively. He is eternal in the full sense of the Jewish monotheistic assertion that God alone is the eternal One, preceding and therefore also transcending all creaturely existence, not subject to the transience, change and decay of creaturely life, in which the angels, despite their superiority to earthly creatures, do participate.

Finally, we should note that what is said about angels in the catena would be uncontroversially accepted in Second Temple Judaism. That angels are created, mutable and only servants of the unique eternal sovereignty of God was not controversial. All Jews would have agreed to it. Conversely, what is said of the Son here would never have been said of an angel. Angels, even so-called principal angels, only stand in God's presence, in the attitude of servants and worshippers of God. No such angel is portrayed as seated on the divine throne, or as worshipped by other angels, still less as participating in the work of creation. All these features unambiguously and unequivocally distinguish angels, even the most exalted, from God in the literature of Second Temple Judaism. The catena places the Son above all the angels ('all' explicitly in v. 14) by placing him in the position of God in relation to the angels.

7. *The Pre-Existence of the Son*

Does Hebrews 1 then envisage the personal pre-existence of the Son? James Dunn doubts it, suggesting that the language used need only assert the continuity of God's creative and revelatory activity that reaches its climax in Jesus Christ.³⁷ But in my view the evidence is strongly in favour of a positive answer.³⁸ (1) The text clearly speaks of the same person, the Son, as both the agent of creation and the Jesus Christ who took his seat at the right hand of God. The fifth and sixth quotations in the catena are particularly instructive: they both address a person, called God in one quotation, Lord in the other, who is not God the Father. Indeed, God is in both cases understood to be the speaker. In this personal address there is no difference between the fifth quotation which addresses the enthroned Messiah and the sixth which addresses the one who created the heavens and the earth. (2) Both these quotations, the fifth and sixth, and also the third, use the same exegetical technique of finding in their texts a second divine person addressed by God. The use of this technique in the sixth quotation, just as in the third and fifth, seems a very odd way of talking merely about the continuity of the divine purpose that came to fullest expression in Jesus. It is important to note that in Hebrews 1 the pre-existence of the Son is expressed not only in the Wisdom language of vv. 2–3, but also in the quotation of Ps. 102.25–27 as addressed to the Son. The latter is certainly not to be dismissed as a kind of proof-texting that needs not be taken very seriously. The quotations in the catena are, as we have seen, chosen and arranged with great care. In the early Christian milieu this kind of exegesis is very serious theology,

perhaps even the most serious form of theology. (3) To see pre-existence here as no more than an ideal pre-existence in the mind of God is surely to miss the point of the catena, which is not merely that God acts through Jesus, even climactically. In that case the difference between Jesus and the angels, who act as God's servants in the work of salvation (1.14), would be merely one of degree. The whole catena is designed to establish a difference in kind between, on the one hand, Jesus who participates in the unique divine sovereignty and unique divine eternity, and, on the other hand, the angels who are servants and creatures. That Jesus sits on the divine throne and they do not is explicated by means of the whole array of Jewish monotheistic distinctions between the unique identity of the one God and all other reality. This would not be needed in order to say that God's activity culminates in Jesus. It says that Jesus himself is intrinsic to the divine identity.

8. *A Two-Natures Christology?*

Although we have given detailed attention in this essay to ch. 1 of Hebrews, a final comment concerns the christology of chs. 1 and 2 taken together. These chapters are perhaps the closest the New Testament texts come to the conceptuality of the Chalcedonian Christology that emerged in the fifth century from the patristic christological controversies. Jesus is identified both with God (ch. 1) and with humanity (ch. 2). In the one case he is in every respect like God ('the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's being': 1.3), in the other case he is in every respect like us ('he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect': 2.17). In him, as Chalcedon insisted, true divinity and true humanity are both to be recognized. One might even speak of two natures in these two chapters: the divine nature which is unchangeably eternal (1.10–12) and the flesh-and-blood mortal nature of humanity (2.14). But to call the Christology of these chapters a two-natures Christology would not be adequate. Nature is here subordinate to narrative identity. Just as the God of Israel is who he is in the story the Hebrew Bible tells, so Jesus Christ is who he is in the narrative that includes him in the unique divine identity (notably, creation and exaltation to divine rule) and in the narrative that tells of his human experience of identifying with his human brothers and sisters, learning obedience through suffering, tested but without sin, dying and being exalted to heaven. It is that divine and human narrative identity of Jesus that the rest of Hebrews goes on to retell in terms of his high priesthood, acquiring a fresh angle on who God is and who Jesus is by a scripturally based new reading of the narrative.

37. J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1980), pp. 208–209.

38. Cf. the partially similar critique of Dunn in Meier, 'Symmetry', pp. 531–533.