

The Son's Entrance into the Heavenly World: The Soteriological Necessity of the Scriptural Catena in Hebrews 1.5-14

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Hebrews 1.5-14 has proved difficult to integrate within the author's larger literary project. More recent scholarship has emphasized rightly that the catena centers upon the Son of God's royal enthronement, but the question as to *why* the author should begin his argument this way has yet to be answered. In this essay I argue that the event which the catena describes, namely the Son's enthronement to the heavenly world, is critical for the entire logic of the author's argument regarding how humanity's salvation is accomplished. The likelihood of this conclusion is bolstered by the rarely recognized *inclusio* between 1.5-14 and 12.18-29. Finally, I briefly examine four texts which suggest that the author envisions the Son's narrative, particularly his entrance into God's heavenly realm as described in 1.5-14, as a soteriological necessity, and pattern, for humanity.

Keywords: Son of God, enthronement/exaltation, angels, Hebrews, heavenly Zion, catena

The presence of Heb 1.5-14 within Hebrews has continued to baffle scholars, and many have not even attempted to relate the section to the broader argument of the sermon,¹ an odd state of affairs given that many scholars regard Hebrews as the most elegant piece of literature in the NT.² Suggestions that the author was

1 Although it is not a matter of importance for this paper, I assume that the genre of Hebrews is a sermon. On the genre of Hebrews, see Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 80-2.

2 For example, David Hay (*Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* [SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973] 38) suggests that the catena may be a traditional early Christian *testimonium* which explains 'the partial irrelevance of the passage' to the author's broader argument. Likewise, Hugh Montefiore (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1964] 43-4) thinks Heb 1.5-14 is taken over by the author from earlier tradition since the catena 'seems ill-adapted to his purpose, [and] since only one of them in the LXX contains the actual word angels'. Similarly, see Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 50. Paul Ellingworth (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary*

countering angel worship or a form of angel christology are, while prevalent in scholarship, speculative at best as there is no polemic against angels in the speech or anywhere in the rest of the text.³ The argument that the author engages in a *synkrisis* between the angels and Christ in order simultaneously to exalt Christ and to weaken the authority of the old covenant certainly carries much more weight, especially given the relationship between Sinai and the angels in 2.2-3, but this suggestion does not go nearly far enough in explaining all the diverse elements of the entire passage.⁴ While some scholars have rightly recognized that the catena centers upon the Son of God's royal enthronement, the reason as to *why* the author should begin his sermon this way has yet to be answered convincingly. I want to suggest, however, that this catena of verses, which I will argue depicts a hymnic celebration of the Father's declaration of Jesus' sonship and his royal enthronement to the heavenly world, is critical for the entire logic of the author's argument and the symbolic world which the text creates.⁵ At the very least, the Son's exaltation, depicted in Heb 1.5-14, functions as the means whereby God secures his promises to humanity (2.5-18), is the basis for the argument that Jesus is humanity's Melchizedekian high priest (5.5-6; 7.1-

on the Greek Text [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 109-10) has refuted the suggestion that the author has not integrated these verses into his epistle. Likewise, the catena is treated as central for Hebrews by Richard Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1', *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 167-85.

- 3 Many have supposed that the author, or the original source of the catena, was combating some form of angel-worship or angel-christology: Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 70; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995) 119-39; Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 194; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 294-314; L. K. K. Dey, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* (SBLDS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975) 145-9. A dated but impressive list of scholars who see Heb 1.5-14 as polemically motivated is listed by Friedrich Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (BU 4; Regensburg: Pustet, 1968) 75-7.
- 4 That the angel-Christ contrast functions within the author's contrast between the old and new covenants is argued for fruitfully by Kenneth L. Schenk, 'A Celebration of the Enthroned Son', *JBL* 123 (2001) 469-85, here 476, 482-4. See also, Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991) 37-8; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991) 19-33; John P. Meier, 'Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb. 1:5-14', *Bib* 66 (1985) 504-33; L. D. Hurst, 'The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2', *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 156.
- 5 James W. Thompson ('The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb 1:5-13', *CBQ* 38 [1976] 352-63) argues that the purpose of the catena has nothing to do with combating some form of heresy. Likewise, he sees the catena as primarily a celebration of the exalted royal Son.

28), and establishes the narrative goal or pattern which God's children follow (12.1-3). That the catena occupies a critical role in the author's narrative logic is further demonstrated by the author's final argument in Heb 12.18-29, a text which, I will suggest, forms an *inclusio* with Heb 1.5-14. The major task set before me will be to demonstrate the role which these two texts play in the author's argument regarding the Son's heavenly enthronement. I will then conclude by briefly suggesting how this celebration of the enthroned Son is a highly appropriate, even necessary, way for the author to begin his argument of how the Son accomplishes humanity's salvation as its pioneer as he enters into God's own world.⁶

1. Hebrews 1.5-14 and the Firstborn Son's Entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom

In 1.5 the author subordinates the role of the angels by placing direct speech from the LXX on the Father's lips: υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε; καὶ πάλιν, ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν ('You are my son, Today I have begotten you', and again, 'I will be a Father to him, and he will be a Son to me'). It is of utmost significance to note that the primary metaphor which the author uses to refer to Jesus is familial, namely his sonship. The climactic moment of the scene in the catena is the Father's declaration of Jesus' sonship as he enters into God's throne room. Having referred to the Son's purification for sins in 1.3b, the author develops the most important theme of the exordium where he claims that Jesus 'has taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high' (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, 1.3c). This allusion to LXX Ps 109.1, a text which is the final quotation in the catena (Heb 1.13; see also Heb 8.1; 10.12-13; and 12.2), sets the theme for the rest of Heb 1.5-14 as the catena centers upon the Son's enthronement and entrance into the Father's heavenly throne room.⁷ Having taken his seat at the Father's right hand, Jesus subsequently 'inherited a more excellent name than them' (ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ' αὐτοὺς κεκλήρονόμηκεν ὄνομα, 1.4b).⁸ While the similarity of this text to Phil 2.9-11

6 This is argued for by Schenk, 'A Celebration of the Enthroned Son', 469-85. Also see the perceptive essay of Ardel B. Caneday, 'The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The Οἰκουμένη of Hebrews 1.6 and the Son's Enthronement', *The Cloud of Witnesses* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2008) 28-39.

7 On the theological importance of the heavenly world to the author's argument, see M. Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser* (WUNT 41; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987) 35-44.

8 On the exordium of 1.1-3 as prefiguring the author's Son of God Christology, see Scott D. Mackie, 'Confession of the Son of God in the Exordium of Hebrews', *JSNT* 30 (2008) 437-53, esp. 448-50. John P. Meier ('Structure and Theology in Heb 1.1-14', *Bib* 66 [1985] 504-

makes it tempting to assume that the unspecified name is κύριος, the inheritance of the name surely must be that of ‘Son given the father/sonship language of 1.5 and the fact that the author begins his sermon by using the metaphor of son in 1.2.’⁹ By using the perfect form of the verb κληρονομέω the author emphasizes and foregrounds the Son’s inheritance.¹⁰ The reader is, therefore, reminded of the fact that the author has just prior claimed that God appointed this Son ‘heir of all things’ (ὄν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, 1.2b). This reality of the Son being described both as ‘heir of all things’ (1.2) and inheriting the name Son (1.4) is not insignificant for humanity, for in 1.14 the author claims that the angels are ministers for ‘those who are about to inherit salvation’ (διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν). While the precise relationship between the Son’s inheritance and humanity’s inheritance is left ambiguous at this point in the author’s argument, the readers are, nevertheless, given a subtle indication that Jesus’ inheritance of sonship will have soteriological ramifications for humanity.

Second, the two LXX citations in 1.5, which are from Ps 2.7 and 2 Sam 7.14 respectively, demand that the reader view the catena of ch. 1 as depicting and celebrating the enthronement of the Son to the heavenly realm.¹¹ Both Ps 2.7 and 2 Sam 7.14 are royal pronouncements which speak of a Davidic son who enters into kingly rule on behalf of God’s people. The tradition history of the use of these verses within the NT and their Septuagintal context strongly confirms that they should be read within Hebrews as referring to the Son’s resurrection/exaltation

33) argues that the characteristics of the Son in 1.2-4 correspond structurally to the Septuagintal quotations in 1.5-14.

9 So, Scott D. Mackie, ‘Confession of the Son of God in Hebrews’, *NTS* 53 (2007) 114–29, here 116–17; Thompson, ‘The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb 1:5–13’, 355. Scott W. Hahn (*Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* [New Haven: Yale University, 2009], 283) similarly argues that the name is given in v. 6—‘the firstborn son’. See, however, Richard Bauckham [‘Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1’, 175] who argues that the one who already exists as the Son inherits the divine name, the tetragrammaton, on parallel with Phil 2.9. Bauckham is clearly concerned to deny the claim that Jesus became the Son at the resurrection/exaltation. See also, Richard Bauckham, ‘The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews’, *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 15–36, esp. 21–2 and 34.

10 That verbal tense forms not only indicate aspect but also function to differentiate planes of discourse is argued by Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992) 22–5.

11 Gabriella Gelardini (‘*Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht’: Der Hebräer, Eine Synagogenhomilie Zu Tischa Be-Aw* [Leiden: Brill, 2007] 207) argues regarding Heb 1.5–14: ‘Die gerechte und ewig währende Sohn-/Herrschaft des in die Welt eingeführten und erhöhten Sohnes wird der Dienerschaft der Engel gegenübergestellt’.

(cf. Mark 1.11; Acts 4.25-27; 13.33; Rom 1.3-4).¹² It is significant, for example, that Psalm 2 refers to a king whom God sets over Zion (βασιλεὺς... ἐπὶ Σιων ὄρος τὸ ἄγιον, 2.6; cf. Heb 12.22-23) who obtains the world as his inheritance (τὴν κληρονομίαν, 2.8). And likewise 2 Samuel 7 depicts God's chosen king as his Son, a kingly Son who is promised an eternal rule and throne (7.13, 16). More important, however, is the fact that the immediate context suggests a scene of enthronement as it declares: 'he sat down at the right of the majesty *in the heavens*' (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, 1.3c). And the next verse refers to him '*becoming* so much better than the angels' (τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων, 1.4a). Thus, it should really not be too controversial to read these verses as depicting Jesus' exaltation to the heavenly realm where he inherits the royal name 'Son'. This reading is confirmed by the author's final citation of the catena in 1.13 where he invokes LXX Ps 109.1: 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'). Psalm 109.1 is, of course, the classic NT proof-text depicting the royal Son's exaltation to the right hand of the Father's throne.¹³ Psalm 109.2 (LXX) establishes a relationship between Zion and God's heavenly throne room as the exalted heavenly figure is said to rule 'from Zion' (ἐκ Σιων). The frequency with which these royal-messianic texts (Pss 2; 109; and 2 Sam 7) are quoted and alluded to within the NT makes it necessary to emphasize that the author uses these texts in order to portray the remarkable reality of the Son's entrance into the life and power of God. The unstated but obvious premise is that the Son has been resurrected and is now alive in a more real, transcendent, and powerful existence.¹⁴

12 On the NT usage of these verses, see: Luke T. Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 2002) 29–35. Probably the most concise and helpful discussion of Pss 2 and 110 is in Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1–6)* (EKK 17; Zürich: Benzinger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990) 74–5.

13 For detailed analyses of the Septuagintal context, tradition-history, and use in the NT of Ps 110:1, see Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*; Martin Hengel, '“Sit at My Right Hand!”: The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1', *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995) 119–225; W. R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes* (WMANT 53; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981); Loader, 'Christ at the Right Hand: Ps cx.1 in the New Testament', *NTS* 24 (1977–78) 199–217.

14 That Hebrews assumes the resurrection of Jesus as necessary for its entire argument is shown convincingly by David M. Moffitt, '“If Another Priest Arises”: Jesus' Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews', *The Cloud of Witnesses* (ed. Bauckham et al.) 68–79. Also, see Gareth E. Cockerill, 'The Better Resurrection (Heb. 11:35): A Key to the Structure and Rhetorical Purpose of Hebrews 11', *TynBul* 51 (2000) 215–34. One should not accept, therefore, the common sentiment articulated here by Georg Strecker (*Theology of the New Testament* [trans. M. Eugene Boring; Louisville: Westminster John Knox; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000] 609): 'The Letter to the Hebrews does not know the idea of the rising or resurrection of Jesus from the dead'.

The confluence of these themes, namely the Father / Son relationship and the Son's inheritance of, and entrance into, the heavenly realm of the Father is continued throughout the chapter. Hebrews 1.6 dramatically depicts the Son's entrance into the heavenly world: ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει· καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ ('and again, when he leads forth the firstborn son into the world, he says, "Let all the angels of God worship him"). While the exact Septuagintal reference is disputed, a possible conflation of LXX Deut 32.43 (προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ) and Deut 32.8 (ἀγγέλων θεοῦ) is the most likely source of the quotation.¹⁵ If Deuteronomy 32 is the source, then the author may have subtly established a relationship between the angels and Sinai.¹⁶ With respect to 1.6a, many interpreters claim that οἰκουμένη should be read as referring to the earthly material world, and that the verse, therefore, depicts the Son's birth or the Incarnation.¹⁷ This interpretation must, however, be rejected. First, the author's only other use of the term οἰκουμένη occurs in 2.5 where the author states that it is the 'world which is to come' (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν) which is the topic under discussion.¹⁸ Here in 2.5 it is stated that this 'world to come' was not subjected to angels, the premise being that *it was, rather, subjected to the Son* (the fuller argument being made in 2.5-9).¹⁹ It makes abundant sense, therefore, to view 1.5-14 as the author's description of the Son's entrance into this heavenly reality. After all, the author has described in 1.5-14: (a) the Son's exaltation above all of his enemies (1.13); (b) his eternal and virtuous rule (1.10-12); (c)

15 It is also possible, however, that Odes 2.43 (LXX) and 4QDt provide evidence of existing textual traditions which already contained the quotation of Heb 1.6. For more on this, see Martin Karrer, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint', *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006) 335-53, esp. 349-53.

16 This is argued for by Kiwoong Son, *Zion Symbolism in Hebrews: Hebrews 12:18-24 as a Hermeneutical Key to the Epistle* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005) 121.

17 Those who read this text in connection with Luke's account of Jesus' baptism include: H. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 55-6; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 45; H. W. Bateman (*Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* [New York: Lang, 1997] 222). Those who have seen the verse as referring to Jesus' second coming include: Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 27; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984) 113; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982) 214; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 117; Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 100-112; Gieschen, *Angelmorphic Christology*, 298-9.

18 So also, Schenk, 'A Celebration of the Enthroned Son', 478; Ardel B. Caneday, 'The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son', 30-6.

19 While the οἰκουμένη is still a future hope from the perspective of humanity, it is a present reality for the Son. So David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle 'to the Hebrews'* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97.

his sharing of God's eternal throne (1.8-9); and (d) his inheritance of the name 'Son' (1.4-5). Thus, 'the subjection of the inhabited world' of which the author speaks in 2.5 must refer in some measure to these elements. Further, one should not view the author's statement in 10.5 (Διὸ εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον) as a legitimate parallel which would confirm that 1.6 depicts Christ's incarnation, for the word κόσμον is used here and not οἰκουμένη.²⁰ Secondly, given that the author has just described the Son's exaltation to the Father's right hand in 1.3c-5, it is logical to interpret 1.6 as continuing this theme. While one could argue that πάλιν functions adverbially, the author frequently uses it in order to connect various quotations (additionally, see 2.13 and 10.30).²¹ Thus, the author's use of πάλιν to modify λέγει (not εἰσαγάγει) indicates that a change of topic is not in view and that his citation of the LXX is continuing the theme of the Son's exaltation from 1.5.²² The familial title of ὁ πρωτότοκος indicates that 1.6 is the third of three explicit Sonship citations. While the language of 'the firstborn son' is abundant throughout the LXX, its usage in Ps 88.28 where it refers to Israel's coming Davidic King is especially pertinent.²³ In this Psalm, the Son cries out: 'You are my Father my God' (πατήρ μου εἶ σύ θεός μου, LXX Ps 88.27), and in the Father's act of appointing the Davidide as his πρωτότοκος, the Father makes him 'exalted above all those who rule the earth' (ὕψηλὸν παρὰ τοῖς βασιλευσίν τῆς γῆς, 88.28). In doing so, the Father makes the Son's throne to endure forever and ever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος... τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, 88.30; note the linguistic similarities with the Son's throne in Heb 1.8). Thus, Heb 1.6 further continues the celebration of 1.4-5 as it depicts the Father leading his royal firstborn Son into the heavenly realm and commanding the angels to worship this firstborn Son.

Hebrews 1.7-12 continues the celebration of the enthroned Son by comparing the eternal and virtuous character of his throne and rule with the fleeting and perishing order of the material world with which the author surprisingly connects the angels. In 1.7 the author refers to God as making the angels as 'winds' or 'spirits' (πνεύματα) and 'flames of fire' (πυρὸς φλόγα). The angels are, in other words,

20 So rightly, Albert Vanhoye, 'L'οικουμένη dans l'Épître aux Hébreux', *Bib* 45 (1964) 248-53. Against, G. B. Caird, 'Son by Appointment', *The New Testament Age* (ed. William C. Weinrich; Macon, GA: Mercer, 1964) 73-81, here 75-6.

21 Caneday, 'The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son', 32.

22 The author of Hebrews uses πάλιν as a connective in his various Septuagintal strings of quotations. See in particular Heb 1.5-6; 2.13; 10.30. On the options and difficulties in deciding where to place πάλιν, see Grässer, *An Die Hebräer (Hebr 1-6)*, 77.

23 Those who see an allusion to LXX Ps 88.28 in 1.6 are Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (TNTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006) 78-9; Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1', 178-9; Caird, 'Son by Appointment', 75.

associated with the sensual material world.²⁴ The reference to the angels as λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ confirms this as it looks forward to the author's claim in 1.14 that the angels are λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα whose role is to ensure humanity's salvation.²⁵ Reference to the angels as 'winds' and 'flames of fire' likely evokes a connection between the angels and the Sinai theophany (Exod 3.2; 14.19; 19.9, 16–19; cf. Acts 7.30).²⁶ That an association with Sinai as physical is intended by the author is evident from 12.18, a text we will examine in more detail shortly, where the author associates Sinai with such things as fire and wind (κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ καὶ γνόφῳ καὶ ζόφῳ καὶ θυέλλῃ, 12.18b). The reference to the angels as 'ministers' (λειτουργ-) in both 1.7 and 1.14 may suggest their function to be that of cultic service whereby they perform cultic worship in the heavenly throne room (2 Bar 21.6; 4 Esd 8.20-22).²⁷ In contrast to the angels who are God's servants and are associated with Sinai, note that when the Son is enthroned to the heavenly realm he becomes a sharer of God's *eternal* throne: πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν· ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος ('and to the Son, Your throne O God is forever and ever', 1.8a). The Son not only enters into the sphere of God but also becomes a sharer in the eternal rule and reign of God which, as 1.8b-9 declares, is characterized by the virtues of integrity, righteousness, and a hatred of lawlessness. While the created order associated with the angels will disappear and is even now disappearing, the Son's throne and rule will last forever (1.10-12). The author quotes LXX Ps 101.26-28 in order to establish the Son's rule over all of creation, including the angels (1.10), something hinted at already in 1.3 where the author claimed that the Son was active in creation. The heavens and the earth will perish and be rolled up like a garment but the Son's years will never come to an end (1.11-12). Whereas the angels are associated with the transience of the created world (1.7), the enthroned Son's share in the Father's throne ensures that his years will never cease (1.12b).

We may now ask the question: why has the author singled out the angels as the foil in his comparison between them and the Son? What is it precisely which makes the contrast between the Son and the angels useful to the author's argument? First, the connection between the angels and the giving of the law at Sinai is frequently attested in post-biblical Jewish literature as a means of describing the Law's glory (*Jub.* 1.29; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136; Acts 7.38, 53; Gal 3.19). In one text God's angel is described as 'the mediator between God and men for the peace of Israel' (*Test Dan* 6.2). The author of Hebrews makes this connection between the angels and Sinai explicit in 2.2 where 'the word which was spoken through

24 This point is made in detail by Kenneth L. Schenk, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007) 122–32.

25 See Schenk, 'A Celebration of the Enthroned Son', 474.

26 So also Thompson, 'The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb 1:5-13', 357–8.

27 Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1', 179.

angels' is contrasted with God's new revelation in Christ (2.3). Insofar, then, as the angels are associated with the Torah, they are inferior to the heavenly Zion (1.5-14). Second, the author's establishment of the relationship between the angels and the created order which is temporal, mutable, and ultimately destined to perish functions as a contrast with the heavenly Zion and the Son's throne which is eternal and unchanging. Finally, given that the angels inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem (see 1.6b; 12.22), it is necessary that the author establish that it is humanity—not angels—which occupies the attention of God's salvific purposes. Thus, the author's claim that God 'did not subject the coming world to angels' (Ὁὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλοις ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν, 2.5) establishes that it is humanity which occupies the center of God's purposes.

Three points should be kept in mind as we continue our exploration of the author's Son-of-God-Christology. First, the significance of the filial language should not be underestimated. The author has chosen to begin his argument with a catena of quotations which is dominated by the relationship between the Father and the Son. The first and second of the LXX quotations (1.5) in Hebrews are proclamations of Jesus' Sonship directly proceeding from the Father's mouth. It is precisely because he is the Son of God the Father that Jesus can share in his sovereignty. Second, the catena of Septuagintal quotations focuses upon celebrating Jesus' inheritance of the name Son as he is enthroned upon his Father's throne and enters into the heavenly realm. The author systematically applies royal-messianic texts to the Son and does so in a way that emphasizes this rule as, not the earthly kingdom of the Son of David, but the cosmic reign of the one who has entered into God's own life.²⁸ Third, the author opposes the rule of the Son which is characterized by eternity with that of the angels who are associated with the temporal and even dying created order. I suggest that these three claims function as the indispensable and foundational premises for much of the rest of the author's argument.

2. Hebrews 12.18-29 and the Firstborn Children's Entrance into the Heavenly World

The significance of the catena in Heb 1.5-14 as well as its purpose and importance for the entire sermon become more evident when one compares it with the author's final argument in 12.18-29, a passage which contains many of the same themes.²⁹ Like 1.5-2.4 the author initially establishes the superiority of the Son and the heavenly Jerusalem (1.5-14; 12.18-24) and then sets forth a

²⁸ Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1', 178.

²⁹ Barnabas Lindars ('The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews', *NTS* 35 [1989] 382-406, here 402) refers to Heb 12.18-24 as the 'grand finale' of the author's argument. While ch. 13 is certainly critical to the composition as a whole, the author concludes the actual argument of his exhortation in 12.18-29. On the relation of Heb 13 to the rest of the epistle, see Floyd V. Filson, 'Yesterday': *A Study of Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13* (SBT 2/4; Naperville, IL: Allenson,

warning not to ignore this superior revelation (2.1-4; 12.25-29). There seems to be in fact something of an inclusio between Heb 1.5-14 and 12.18-29.³⁰ Whereas the author begins his composition by celebrating the firstborn Son's inheritance and entrance into the heavenly realm, he concludes by celebrating the proleptic inheritance of the firstborn sons as they enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. Whereas the catena celebrates the eternal and unchanging reign of the Son's kingdom in opposition to the transience of the material world, the author concludes with a contrast between the unshakeable heavenly 'city of the living God' (12.22) and the created order which will come to an end (12.26-27). While this insight is significant in establishing the importance of the themes found in Heb 1.5-14, only a few comments need to be made here in order to make this point.

First, as the Son's rule is contrasted with the material creation which will perish and fade away (1.10-12), so is the assembly of the sons in heaven contrasted with the sensual phenomena of the Sinai event. This is vividly captured in the author's statement: 'for you have not come to a place which can be touched and a burning fire and to darkness and gloom and a whirlwind' (Ὁὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε ψηλαφωμένῳ καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ καὶ γνόφῳ καὶ ζόφῳ καὶ θυέλλῃ, 12.18).³¹ Note how in Heb 1.7 the author reduces the importance of the angels precisely by comparing them to the transient and sensual elements of 'wind' (πνεύματα) and 'flames of fire' (πυρὸς φλόγα). The author's strategy of associating the angels as the mediators of the Sinai covenant in 2.2-3 is reused again here as the author now associates the Sinai theophany with the sensual and temporal (12.18-19). The entire created order, to which the Sinai covenant belongs, the author warns, will be destroyed for as God has promised, 'Still once more I will shake not only the earth but even the heaven' (12.26b). The author interprets this quote from Hag 2.6 to mean that in a little while God will 'remove the things that are shaken as things that have been made, so that what is not shaken may remain' (12.27b).³² Again, the warning corresponds quite

1967). Koester (*Hebrews*, 201) suggests briefly that a relationship exists between 1.5-14 and 12.22-24. So also, see Schenk, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews*, 125-8.

30 I am sympathetic to Kiwoong Son (*Zion Symbolism in Hebrews*, 84-7) who sees an inclusio between Heb 12.18-29 and 1.1-4 and 2.1-4, but he inexplicably excludes 1.5-14 because he fails to see the overlapping motifs of 1.5-14 and 12.18-29. Albert Vanhoye (*Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* [SB 12; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Istituto Biblico, 1989]) does not comment on the relationship between 1.5-14 and 12.18-29.

31 Note that the author again utilizes the language of 'to come' or 'to enter'. See 4.14-16; 7.25; 10.1; 11.6. Much of the language in 12.18-19 derives from OT accounts of Sinai (Exod 19/Deut 4-5). See deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 464-5.

32 Whether μετᾶθεσις should be translated as 'remove' or 'change' is a difficult exegetical problem to resolve. Those inclining toward 'remove' are Attridge, *Hebrews*, 380-1; Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 687-9; Edward Adams, *The Stars will Fall from*

directly to the first chapter where the Son's throne is referred to as eternal, unending, and unchanging (1.8, 12), but the created order is said to be destined for destruction (1.10), is in the process of being made old (1.11), and is being rolled up like a garment (1.12).

Secondly, the author makes the important claim that his audience has now come to 'Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...' (Σιών ὄρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος, Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐπουρανίῳ, 12.22a). The mention of Mount Zion evokes the royal Davidic dynasty and kingdom, perhaps most emphatically associated with such texts as 2 Samuel 7, Psalms 2, 89, and 110—all of which appear in some sense in Heb 1.5-14 in order to portray the Son's entrance into his heavenly kingdom and reign (respectively: Heb 1.5b, 5a, 6a, and 13b).³³ The author's key move here, a move common to early Christian exegesis, is to associate the fulfillment of these promises, namely of an everlasting royal Davidic kingdom associated with God's kingly rule, with Jesus Christ's resurrection and exaltation.³⁴ This 'city of the living God' (πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος, 12.22) which is 'the heavenly Jerusalem' (Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐπουρανίῳ) is the goal of the pilgrimage of both the ancients and the audience.³⁵ The former, we are told, made no remembrance of their earthly homeland for they were looking for the better heavenly city which God had prepared for them (11.14-16). The same goal is held out for the audience, as we will see later, as they run toward the exalted Son (12.1-2).

Thirdly, the reader should note the parallel between Heb 1.5-14 and the mention of the 'myriads of angels in a festal celebration' (μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει, 12.22b). The mention of the angels not only evokes the hearer's recollection of 1.5-14, but it makes another thematic connection between one of the functions of the angels. In 1.6 the angels are called upon to celebrate and worship the Son as he enters into God's rule, and here in 12.22 the angels are also said to exist in a festal celebration together with the assembly of the firstborn children (12.23).

Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007) 189-91; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 471-2. Scott D. Mackie (*Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews* [WUNT 2.223; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007], 64-72) argues for the translation 'change' by attempting to situate Heb 12.25-29 within a Jewish apocalyptic context.

33 This point is noted by Johnson, *Hebrews*, 330-1. Koester, however (*Hebrews*, 548-53) does not explore the importance of the language of 'Zion', 'firstborn', and other themes which relate back to Heb 1.5-14. On the theological significance of Zion for the author of Hebrews, see Kiwoong Son, *Zion Symbolism in Hebrews*, 29-103.

34 On which, see Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) esp. 59-88, 135-50.

35 On the heavenly Jerusalem, see Gal 4.22-31; Rev 21.1-22.5; 4 *Esd* 7.26; 8.52; 10.26-27; 13.36; 2 *Apoc Bar* 4.1-7; 1 *En* 14.8-25; and *Test Lev* 3.3-6.

Fourthly, the occurrence of the phrase ‘the assembly of firstborn sons enrolled in the heavens’ (ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς) should also remind the audience of the mention of Jesus in 1.6 as ‘the firstborn Son’ (τὸν πρωτότοκον).³⁶ What is remarkable here is that the author begins his composition with the depiction of the royal firstborn Son’s entrance into the heavenly οἰκουμένη and concludes it with the claim that heaven is now enrolled or registered with firstborn *sons*.³⁷ Somehow humanity inherits the role and title of firstborn children of God from the firstborn Son of God.³⁸ The reader should expect, therefore, in view of the beginning and end of the composition, that the author will explain how the exaltation of the Son of God into heaven functions so as to accomplish the entrance of many more sons into heaven.

Finally, note that these firstborn sons in heaven are referred to as ‘spirits of the righteous ones perfected’ (πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων, 12.23b). This final occurrence of τελειο- indicates that humanity has now fully attained the promise for which it was created, and proleptically indicates the goal of humanity.³⁹ Whatever the precise connotations of ‘perfection’ in Hebrews, their entry into God’s heavenly presence where Christ has already gone (4.14; 6.19-20; 7.26; 8.1) is surely essential to our understanding. While Hebrews 1 does not use the language of τελειο- to describe the Son’s enthronement, I suggest that the catena in fact paints a hymnic portrait of the Son entering into this state of perfection and this will be borne out in more detail when we examine Hebrews 2 and 12. This language of perfection, I will suggest, refers both to the process of one’s moral development *and* to the subsequent result of entry into God’s life and promises. That humanity is referred to by the adjective ‘righteous’ here in 12.23 echoes the Son’s own kingly rule which is characterized by ‘a love of righteousness’ (1.8-10, esp. 9a) and further supports the contention that perfection refers, in part, to moral development. Knowing that the work is bookended by the Son’s entrance into heaven (1.5-14) and the proleptic entrance of sons into heaven (12.18-24), the interpreter has good reason to read the middle of the text searching for clues as to the process whereby this takes place.⁴⁰

36 It is important to emphasize that in 12.23 the referent is plural (πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων). Gieschen (*Angelmorphic Christology*, 297-9) wrongly translates and makes observations on 12.23 as though the direct reference was to Jesus as the firstborn Son.

37 The language is political. In 1.6 the Son enters into a royal kingdom or οἰκουμένη. He is, of course, the royal Son and the language of πρωτοτόκων echoes Ps 88 (1.6; 12.23). The language of ἀπογεγραμμένων, likewise, is political or legal and is frequently used to speak of citizenship. See Koester, *Hebrews*, 545.

38 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 375; deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 467.

39 Johnson, *Hebrews*, 332-3; Schenk, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews*, 179.

40 Marie E. Isaacs (*Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of Hebrews* [JSNTSS 73; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992] 86-8) is attentive to what I refer to as the composition’s bookends as well as to the fact that the author views salvation proleptically in 12.18-24 as Jesus is the forerunner of humanity in his entrance into God’s presence.

I have tried to show that the author has created something of an inclusio between the first (1.5-14) and last (12.18-29) major sections of his argument. In the process, I have attempted to demonstrate that the catena of Hebrews 1 is a celebration of the exalted Son who has entered into God's kingdom, a rule which is characterized as heavenly, eternal, pure, and virtuous. While I have not engaged in an exegesis of the passage, I have tried to show that the final section of the sermon (12.18-29) corresponds to the catena in reproducing many of the same themes. What is most striking here is that the heavenly Jerusalem is now filled with not just the Son but an assembly of firstborn children who have been made perfect (12.23). I suggest, therefore, that as the argument begins with the enthronement of God's Son and ends with a proleptic portrait of an assembly of God's children in this heavenly realm, the Son's exaltation may function as a soteriological necessity for humanity. Does the rest of this text support this suggestion?

3. The Soteriological Necessity of the Son's Enthronement

In this section I want to set forth, all too briefly, four texts which suggest that the author of Hebrews envisions the Son's narrative, particularly his enthronement as described in 1.5-14, as a soteriological necessity, and pattern, for humanity.

3.1. *The Firstborn Son Leads his Siblings to Glory: Hebrews 2.5-18*

In Heb 2.5-9 the author turns from the reign of the exalted Son to humanity's failure to attain the state of glory and rule which God had promised it in Ps 8.5-7. The quotation of Psalm 8 ends with the promise 'you have subjected all things under his [i.e. humanity's] feet' (πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ, Heb 2.8a); attentive readers will recognize that the author has, just a mere half-dozen verses before, claimed that God has placed all of the Son's enemies under his feet (ἕως ἄν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου, 1.13b).⁴¹ The Son has entered into God's heavenly οἰκουμένη (Heb 1.6), but humanity's hope of inheriting this world (Heb 2.5) has been frustrated.⁴² The link with the celebration of Hebrews 1 suggests that the Son has experienced the fulfillment of God's promise to humanity. From humanity's present

41 I do not have space to defend my interpretation of the subject of 2.5-8 as anthropological in the first instance. For an incisive critique of exclusively christological interpretations of Ps 8.4-6 in Heb 2.5-9, see Craig L. Blomberg, ' "But We See Jesus": The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implications for English Translations', *The Cloud of Witnesses* (ed. Bauckham et al.) 88-99. There is much to commend in Blomberg's critique, and I am sympathetic to his argument. He goes too far in excluding the fact that the author applies the text to Jesus in 2.9.

42 So Gelardini, *Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht!*, 209-10.

standpoint, God's promise to Adam looks to have been thwarted as 'we do not yet see all things subjected to him' (2.8b).⁴³ The Son has, however, entered into the promise of Psalm 8 as the author describes him as 'having been crowned with glory and honor' (δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον, Heb 2.9b), a direct reference to the promise made in Psalm 8 (δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν, Heb 2.7b). Thus, the argument here depends entirely upon the assumption that the Son has already entered into God's rule—exactly that which we have seen in Heb 1.5-14.

The Son's entrance into God's rule is, however, beneficial for humanity, for it is precisely the Son's obedient suffering and subsequent exaltation which accomplishes humanity's salvation. In 2.10 the author makes the bold claim that it was fitting, or appropriate, for God 'in leading many sons to glory to perfect the pioneer of their salvation through sufferings' (πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι). It is essential to note the parallel between *God leading the firstborn Son into the heavenly world* in 1.6 (εἰσαγάγη τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην) and *God leading the many sons into glory* (πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα). In each instance, God is the subject who leads his children into a state of perfection. This immediately helps one make sense of Jesus' title in 2.10 as τὸν ἀρχηγόν.⁴⁴ Its connotations of source, initiator, and pioneer result from the fact that as 'the firstborn Son' Jesus has proleptically entered into God's rule and heavenly realm in advance of and on behalf of 'the many sons'. We see here that the author's choice of 'firstborn Son' further functions as a means of identifying Jesus as the head of a family, the elder brother as it were, of God's children. Thus, as the Father proclaims that Jesus is his Son (1.5), so the Son directly affirms humanity as his fellow siblings (2.11-13).⁴⁵ His participation in their humanity ensures their salvation and their reconciliation with the Father (Heb 2.14-18).

Finally, we must note that the manner in which humanity is led to glory is accomplished through Jesus being perfected through sufferings (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι). The statement is similar to that of 2.9b where we saw Jesus 'crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death (τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου)'. In 2.9, sufferings are the means whereby the Son is 'crowned with glory and honor', whereas in 2.10 sufferings are the means through which the Son is 'perfected'. Thus, while τελειῶ has a wide semantic

43 Rissi (*Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs*, 54) states it in this way: 'Er, der unter die Engel erniedrigt wurde, hat die Herrschaft über die ganze Schöpfung übernommen. Das wissen wir zwar, sehen es aber noch nicht. Wir sehen nur, was am Christus geschah. Die Weltwirklichkeit ist für menschliche Augen dieselbe geblieben wie vorher'.

44 On this term, see G. Johnston, 'Christ as Archegos', *NTS* 27 (1980-81) 381-5.

45 On the significance of Jesus' public declaration of his identification with humanity, see Mackie, 'Confession of the Son of God in Hebrews', *NTS* 53 (2007) 114-29.

range within Hebrews, here its parallel with 2.9 strongly connotes the sense of exaltation.⁴⁶

3.2. *A High Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek (5.5-10)*

Perhaps most well known about Hebrews' Christology is its novel characterization of Jesus as humanity's high priest. The author is clear, however, that Jesus' priestly status is of another order than the Levitical priesthood, and he plainly admits that Jesus belongs not to the tribe of Levi, but to the tribe of Judah (7.14; cf. 8.4; Num 18.1-7). Jesus' priesthood is based not on the Levitical order of priests, but 'according to the order of Melchizedek' (5.6b, 10b). What is central to my thesis here is the rarely noted fact that the author's argument for Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood is based on the audience's acceptance of the prior claim, made in Heb 1.5-14, that Jesus is God's royal and heavenly enthroned Son. After claiming in 5.4 that no high priest takes the honor on his own initiative, but is rather called by God, the author suggests analogically that the same process took place with Jesus' appointment to high priest. Just as the Father 'spoke to him, "You are my Son, today I have begot you"' (ὁ λαλήσας πρὸς αὐτόν· υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε, 5.5b; quoting Ps 2.7), so also Jesus receives his high priesthood from the one speaking to him: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' (σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ, 5.6). It is important to note that the author intentionally draws the reader back to the royal celebration of the enthroned Son by means of quoting Ps 2.7, one of the central texts quoted in the opening catena to celebrate the Son's exaltation (Heb 1.5).⁴⁷ The author's innovation here is to draw upon the common early Christian strategy of applying texts such as Ps 2.7 (Heb 1.5) and Ps 110.1 (Heb 1.13), which depict the Son's exaltation, as the foundation for extending the claim that the Father has *also spoken* the words of Ps 110.4 to the Son.⁴⁸ Thus, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the author's high priestly christology is founded upon the Son of God's entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

3.3. *An Eternal High Priest with an Indestructible Life (7.1-28)*

What are the characteristics of this Melchizedekian priesthood? In ch. 5, we have seen that the Son's 'having been perfected' (τελειωθείς, 5.9) is parallel to God's 'designating (προσαγορευθείς) him ... a priest according to the order of Melchizedek' (5.10). Thus, it is only after the Son has been perfected that he

46 *Τελειο-* language occurs in philosophical texts to speak of moral maturity, in texts referring to initiations into religious mysteries, and in the Septuagint often to refer to cultic ordination. For a good discussion of the religious background of this word group and its usage in Hebrews, see deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 194-204.

47 Johnson (*Hebrews*, 144) rightly notes that the author's quotation of Ps 2.7 'triggers the hearers' memory of the words of God that certified Jesus as the very Son who had been enthroned at God's right hand (Heb 1:3-4)'.

48 So deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 188-9.

becomes a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.⁴⁹ Why is it that God's act of 'perfecting' the Son is parallel to God's 'designating' him as an eternal priest? I suggest that it is precisely the key attribute of the Melchizedekian priest of 'the power of an indestructible life' (7.16) which is parallel to God's act of perfecting the Son. The author fastens upon the words of Ps 110.4, 'you are a priest forever' (σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα; 5.6; 7.17, 21), and it is precisely this quality of the Son's eternity which qualifies him to be the Melchizedekian priest. In ch. 5, the author claims that the Son prayed to 'the one able to save him out of death (ἐκ θανάτου)' and that 'he was heard because of his piety' (εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας, 5.7).⁵⁰ That the Son 'was heard' by God must be taken to indicate that the Son was saved 'out of death'. Given the fact, however, that the author has made the point that the Son 'tasted death for everyone' (2.9b), attained perfection through sufferings (2.10), and defeated death through his own death (2.14), the author cannot mean that Jesus was spared from the experience of death. Since Jesus was not saved from this experience, in order for the author's claim that God 'heard him' to have any meaningful substance, it must refer to something that happened to Jesus after he died.⁵¹ The description of God in 5.7 is similar to 11.19, ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν δυνατὸς ὁ θεός, which is a clear reference to God's ability to raise Isaac from the dead. Jesus, then, does not escape or avoid death but overcomes it through God's act of resurrection/exaltation.⁵²

This emphasis on life and eternity in opposition to death and temporality is the primary trait of the Melchizedekian priesthood and is confirmed throughout ch. 7. Thus, Melchizedek is like the Son due to his 'having no end of life' (μητε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, 7.3), being testified to as 'living' (ζῆ, 7.8), and having 'the power of an indestructible life' (δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου, 7.16). Whereas many Levites have been high priests due to death (7.23), Jesus holds the priesthood perpetually because 'he remains forever' (ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, 7.24; cf. Ps 110.4) and he 'always lives to intercede on [humanity's] behalf' (πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν, 7.25b). The author's final statement that God's oath (i.e. Ps 110.4) appoints as high priest 'a son made perfect forever' (υἱὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον, 7.28) strongly echoes the event in 5.7-10.⁵³ The relationship between these texts suggests that the Son's perfection refers to the event where he was raised from the dead and

49 Kenneth L. Schenk, 'Keeping his Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews', *JSNT* 66 (1997) 91-117, here 96.

50 I translate ἐκ θανάτου 'out of death' instead of 'from death' in order to avoid a misreading of the passage that would suggest that Jesus prayed that he would be able to avoid death. Such an interpretation would stand in serious contradiction to Heb 2.5-18.

51 So, David M. Moffitt, 'If Another Priest Arises', 71.

52 So also, Johnson, *Hebrews*, 146-7.

53 See Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 153-4.

entered into the enduring quality of God's life—something depicted in Heb 1.10-12 (LXX Ps 101.26-28) where it is said to the Son that his throne 'is forever' (1.8), that creation will perish but 'you will remain' (1.11), and 'your years will not be erased' (1.12).⁵⁴

3.4. 'Looking Away to Jesus' (12.1-3)

The argument of Heb 12.1-3 also depends upon the opening salvo of 1.5-14 as the author's command to finish the race depends upon the audience granting *both* the claim that Jesus has entered into God's own life (Heb 1.5-13) *and* that he is their elder human brother (Heb 2.10-14). Specifically, the runners are to 'look away to Jesus the author and perfecter of the faith' (ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν). The injunction commands them to look ahead to Jesus who has already finished the race—the same contest in which they are now competing (10.32-33). The mentioning of the proper name 'Jesus' emphasizes the Son of God's human nature and thereby his solidarity with humanity (cf. 2.5-18; 5.7-9). The description of Jesus as both ἀρχηγός καὶ τελειωτής carries the connotations of the originator/beginner and finisher.⁵⁵ That Jesus is the ἀρχηγός of humanity's faith recalls 2.10 where the author declared that God 'perfected the ἀρχηγός of their salvation through sufferings'. Jesus is the originator of both 'faith' (12.2) and 'salvation' (2.10) in that he is the first one, and thereby humanity's prototype, to have entered into God's promises for humanity.

Likewise, Jesus is the τελειωτής of faith in that he brings to completion the faith of the OT heroes—a faith which had yet to attain perfection and inherit the promises (11.39-40). Already we have seen this language of perfection applied to Jesus. In 2.10 God perfects Jesus through sufferings; in 5.9 Jesus is perfected through his learning obedience through what he suffered; and in 7.28 the author speaks, on the basis of his entrance into a resurrected life, of a Son made perfect forever. I suggest that in 12.2 these same resonances are at work. Jesus has, through endurance and fidelity to God, finished the race and thereby entered into a perfect form of existence. The author indicates as much in 12.2b where he says of Jesus that 'for the joy set before him (ὄς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης ἀντὶ χαρᾶς), he endured the cross, while thinking lightly of the shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God (ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ κεκάθικεν)'. The author again holds up Jesus' endurance of suffering as a model for his audience (2.10, 14; 4.15; 5.7-9). While it is possible to translate the preposition ἀντί as 'instead of', it makes much better sense to read it as 'for' and as indicating the reason for which Jesus endured the cross (cf.

54 So Bauckham, 'The Divinity of Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews', 31.

55 So Dennis Hamm, 'Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor', *CBQ* 52 (1990) 270-91, here 286-7.

12.16).⁵⁶ The joy which Jesus enters into is described in 12.2b with the familiar words of Ps 110.1: 'he has taken his seat (κεκώθεικεν) at the right hand of the throne of God'. The author foregrounds Jesus' exaltation through his use of the perfect tense and further emphasizes the event *and* continuing state of Jesus' exaltation. The joy that was set before the earthly Jesus was, therefore, his promised exaltation to the right hand of God—a promised state which he has now entered into.⁵⁷ When the author calls upon the audience to consider (12.3) and fix their gaze (12.2) upon this one who endured such hardship, he sets before their eyes the perfected Son who has entered into God's life. And because he is the 'author and perfecter of faith', Jesus' experience functions as the paradigm for humanity's narrative. The joy which Jesus has entered into, depicted so powerfully in Heb 1.5-14, is the goal which lies before the audience.

4. The Literary and Theological Function of Hebrews 1.5-14

In this essay I have argued three basic points. First, Heb 1.5-14 depicts the celebration of the final stage of the Son's narrative as he enters into God's own life, is exalted to the Father's right hand, takes up his throne, and inherits the name 'Son'. The entire theme of the opening argument and each quotation from the LXX, which can be easily sidetracked by the undue focus on the angels, centers upon the Son's enthronement and the nature of his rule. Secondly, I have demonstrated that there is a literary connection between this text and the author's final argument in Heb 12.18-29 which is a proleptic portrait of the heavenly Zion. This text forms an *inclusio* with Heb 1.5-13 as both texts portray the heavenly Zion (12.22), the presence of festive angels (1.6; 12.22), an emphasis on the heavenly kingdom as eternal in contrast to the temporal/tangible (1.8, 10-12; 12.18-19), and the presence of the firstborn Son (1.6) and firstborn children who have been perfected (12.23). Thirdly, I have demonstrated that the opening depiction of the enthroned Son is soteriologically necessary for the author's entire argument.

The argument of Hebrews begins, one might say, with the end in that it depicts the final aspect of the Son's narrative—the Son's entrance into the heavenly realm. Thus, I suggest that when applied to the Son, at least one of the connotations of the stem *τελειο-* is the perfection of his existence as he inherits God's promises.

⁵⁶ See N. Clayton Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12:1-3 in Its Rhetorical Religious and Philosophical Context* (SNTSMS 98; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998) 177-86; Koester, *Hebrews*, 523-4.

⁵⁷ One of the problems for those who would wish to interpret *ἀντί* as 'instead of' is the fact that the author uses the language of joy in a positive sense (10.34; 13.7). It becomes problematic, therefore, to interpret the joy set before Jesus in 12.2 as a reference to the fleeting pleasures of sin (such as in 11.24-26).

While the author refrains from applying explicit resurrection language to the Son (except 13.20), one sees the author frequently emphasize the perfected quality of his life. So, for example, he is 'heard' because of his piety by 'the one able to save him from death' (5.7-10). He is qualified to be humanity's priest according to the order of Melchizedek because he has been enthroned to God's right hand (5.5), as a result of the power of his indestructible life (7.16), and because he is a 'Son who has been made eternally perfect' (7.28). This aspect of the Son's narrative is foundational for the rest of humanity also. Just as the Father leads the Son into the heavenly realm (1.6), so the Father leads humanity into glory through the Son (2.10). The Son's attainment of the promises functions so as to release these promises to humanity (2.5-9). Jesus functions, therefore, as the firstborn Son of God (1.5-14), as humanity's forerunner (6.19-20), as the source of salvation (5.9), and as providing both the pattern and goal for humanity (12.1-3).