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**The Epistle to the Hebrews (7 – 13)**

**Lectures at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome**

**Second semester 2003 / 2004**

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## 1<sup>st</sup> lecture: The origin of the Epistle to the Hebrews

In a certain sense, the Epistle to the Hebrews is like Melchizedek, mentioned in Heb 7,3: without father or mother or genealogy. This Epistle, which belongs to the most fascinating and theologically rich documents of the New Testament, remains mysterious as to the circumstances of its origin.

For the questions of general introduction I may refer to the more recent commentaries. For this lecture see A. VANHOYE, "Hebräerbrief", *TRE* 14 (1985) 494-505.

### 1. The author

Different from most Epistles of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews does not bear the name of the author at the beginning. The only document with similar characteristics is the First Letter of John, which, however, is generally attributed to the "Elder" mentioned at the beginning of the Second and Third Letter of John. The Epistle to the Hebrews insinuates Pauline origin in Heb 13,22-25. These verses have the form of the conclusion of a private letter, very close to the formulas at the end of the letters of the Pauline Corpus. The name of Timothy, mentioned in these verses, points into the same direction. This epistolary conclusion has contributed to the classification of "Hebrews" as a letter and to its attribution to Paul. It is perhaps for this reason that in the Oriental Church from earliest times "Hebrews" has been considered to be an authentic letter of Paul. The text makes part of the Corpus Paulinum in P<sup>46</sup> (Bodmer), around the year 200 A.D., and in the uncial codices Sinaiticus (4<sup>th</sup> cent.), Alexandrinus (5<sup>th</sup> cent.) and Vaticanus (4<sup>th</sup> cent., where, however, the text is fragmentary). In P<sup>46</sup> and in nine minuscule codices, Heb is placed after the Letter to the Romans, in others after the First Letter to the Corinthians, but the majority of the manuscripts places Heb after 2 Thess, after Philemon (at the end of the Corpus Paulinum) or after the Catholic Epistles. The place at the end of the Pauline Letters seems to be the most appropriate one. It has become customary in the more recent text editions.

Although the oriental church generally accepted Pauline origin of Heb, there have been also critical voices. Clement of Alexandria thinks that Heb is a rather free Greek translation of a letter, originally written in Hebrew by Paul, done by Luke (cf. Eusebius, *H. E.* 6, 14, 2); according to Origen, Heb is the work of a disciple of Paul (*ibid.*, 6, 25, 11-13).

In the Western Church, Pauline origin of Heb was more debated. For Tertullian, Heb was written by Barnabas (*pud.*, 20). The rigorism of Heb (lack of a second penance) and some passage which lent itself to the theology of the Arians contributed to the reluctance to accept Heb in the West. The Letter was generally accepted as canonical since the fifth cent. under the influence of Jerome and Augustin, who appreciated its value, although these Church Fathers doubted Pauline authorship of the Letter. During the Middle Ages, also Pauline authorship was mostly accepted until the times of the Reformation, when Pauline origin of the Letter started to be doubted again. Today, the post-Pauline character of Heb is almost universally accepted. The great themes of Heb like the priesthood of Christ are missing in Paul, and on the other side the great subjects of Pauline theology are missing in Heb. In the course of the present sequence of lectures we still shall have occasion to show the many points of contact between these two schools.

To find out more precisely the name of the author of Heb, seems to be a difficult enterprise. Various names have been proposed (cf. Vanhoye, *loc. cit.*, 496), among others also the name of Priscilla (Ruth Hoppins, 1969). The most accepted name is the one of Apollos, the companion of Paul, a man of wide Hellenistic and Jewish culture, gifted with eloquence (Acts 18,24-28; 1 Cor 3,6) and a good knowledge of the Bible. Luther identified with this hypothesis, and it has found its adherents until the present day.

## 2. The addressees

As nothing secure can be known about the author of Heb, also the question of the addressees of the letter remains an open one. Because of the title given "To the Hebrews" one thought of the Jews in Jerusalem or in Judea (cf. already Eusebius, *H. E.* 6, 14, 2) or those of the Qumran Community (Hans Kosmala). The Letter, however, wants to encourage its readers to remain faithful to their Christian faith once adopted (cf. 3,6.16; 4,14; 10,22; 13,7-8). For this reason, one better thinks of a community or a group of communities in one of the centres of Early Christianity as Alexandria, Antioch or Rome. This latter hypothesis appears to various writers of our days (as H. Strathmann, Cl.- März and the present writer) to be the most probable one, for two reasons:

- the final greeting from "those of Italy" (13,24), perhaps companions of the author
- the quotation of Heb by Clement of Rome (I Clem 17,1; 36,2-5).

### 3. Place of composition

The place of composition of Heb remains unknown as well. Some authors think that the greetings from “those of Rome” at the end point to Rome or Italy as the place of origin of Heb. But the opposite thesis seems to be preferable that the greetings come from “Italians” residing abroad. One may think of any centre of Early Christianity in the Diaspora with a mixed population including Christians coming from Italy such as Ephesus, Corinth or Antioch. Personally I would not exclude either Alexandria because of the similarities with Philo.

### 4. Date of composition

Finally also the date of composition of Heb remains subject to debate. The texts quoted from I Clem (see above, p. 2) counsel not to go beyond the probable date of composition of the First Letter of Clement (towards the end of the reign of Domitian, 95-96 A.D.). Some authors, among whom there is also Vanhoye, would consider the date of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. as the final date of the composition of Heb, since Heb 10,1-3 and other texts of the Letter seem to suppose the Temple cult still being in function. The counter argument would be that the description Heb gives of the Temple cult seems to be based exclusively on Scripture, and no concrete reference to the Herodian Temple is given (cf. CL.-P. MÄRZ, *Hebräerbrief*, Neue Echter Bibel, Würzburg 1990, 20). The Epistle supposes a Christian community which has adopted the Christian faith some time ago (cf. 2,3; 5,11f.; 10,32f.; 13,7: *ibid.*). For these reasons, a date between 80 and 90 A.D. seems to be preferable.

### 5. Literary genre

Although we speak of the “Letter to the Hebrews”, this document does not seem to correspond to the literary form of a letter, with the exception of the final verses 13,22-25. This final greeting corresponds perfectly to the literary genre of a letter. The author says never that he “writes” to the addressees, but calls his text a “word of exhortation” (13,22). Modern interpreters agree that we rather have to do with a “sermon” or a “homily”. Generally, two kinds of homilies can be distinguished: didactic and parenetic ones. Our author would have combined both aspects, as does also Paul and his school. This double aspect of our “homily” would also explain the shifting between didactic and parenetic sections in our letter. The only question would be which aspect would be the dominant one: the didactic (Vanhoye) or the parenetic one (Nauck and

others). The definition of Heb as a λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως suggests a third possibility of determining the literary genre of the document. A λόγος is a speech. Already the beginning of Heb (1,1-4) corresponds to the opening of a discourse according to the principles of Ancient Rhetoric, as is generally accepted. We shall see further on (see below, 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture) that also the body of the document corresponds to the literary genre of the discourse. This perspective allows us to integrate the attribution of Heb to the literary genre of a sermon since sermons or homilies are religious speeches delivered in the presence of a community.

The attribution of Heb to the literary genre of a “speech” in written form has been confirmed recently by NELLO CASALINI OFM, *Agli Ebrei. Discorso di esortazione* (SBFA 34), Jerusalem 1992, 57-59. The author points among other aspects to the following observations:

- the designation of the document as a λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως (cf. also Acts 13,15 at the beginning of the sermon / discourse of Paul in the Synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia)
- the fact that the author describes his exposition as “speaking”: 2,5; 5,11; 6,9; 9,5; 11,32
- the lack of an invitation to listen, generally placed at the beginning of an oral speech (cf. Acts 7,2; 13,6b).

For these reasons, it appears to be preferable to see in Heb a discourse in written form, perhaps sent to the addressees with a short accompanying note (cf. 13,22).

## 6. Canonicity

As seen above (n. 2), Heb had problems of acceptance in the Western Church. In the Oriental Church, the Council of Laodicea (about 360 A.D.) recognized Heb as a document of the NT, and Athanasius recognized it in his Easter Letter (cf. Vanhoye, op. cit., 495). In the West, Heb is missing in the Muratorian Fragment (about 200 A.D.) and in the Canon Mommsen (Vanhoye, *ibid.*). Jerome, who came from the Latin Church, but lived and wrote in the East, favoured the canonicity of Heb without regarding the document necessarily as Pauline, and his opinion was shared by Augustine. On this basis, the Latin Church recognized the authority of Heb as canonical. See the Roman Synod of A.D. 382 (DS 180) and the African Synods of Hippo 393 A.D. and of Carthago A.D. 397 (DS 186) and 419 A.D. The canonicity of Heb was confirmed by the Councils of Florence (DS 1335) and Trent (DS 1503). The fact that the Latin Fathers distinguished between the canonicity and the Pauline origin of Heb has certainly contributed to the universal acceptance of this precious document of 1<sup>st</sup> cent. Christianity.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> lecture: The structure of the Epistle to the Hebrews (I)

Cf. A. VANHOYE, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux. Deuxième édition revue e augmentée* (Desclée de Brouwer 1976); ID., *Épître aux Hébreux. Texte grec structuré* (Fano, Typis Paulinis 1966); ID., 'Discussions sur la structure de l'Épître aux Hébreux', *Bibl.* 55 (1974) 349-380 ; ID., 'Hebräerbrief' (above, p. 1).

### 1. Divisions according to content

Until quite recently, divisions of Heb according to content prevailed. The Epistle was divided according to the major subjects, but without a division accepted by all authors. One example of such divisions of the Epistle is the structure proposed by Saint Thomas Aquinas in his commentary of the Letter:

- I. (1,1 – 10,39) *Superiority of Christ*
  - a) 1,1ff. over the angels
  - b) 3,1ff over Moses
  - c) 5,1ff over the priesthood of the OT
- II. (11 – end) *how the members should be united with the head*
  - a) 11,1ff by faith
  - b) 12,1ff by the works of faith (- circa mala: 12; - circa bona: 13)

The proposal shows the great intellectual capacity of the author and has been very influential in the course of the centuries, but does not distinguish sufficiently between doctrinal and parenetic passages of the Letter. The subject of the priesthood of Christ has already been announced in 2,17.

In recent times, a division of Heb into three main parts has become popular, particularly in German language scholarship. We give the example of the structure proposed by O. MICHEL, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966):

- I. (1,1 – 4,13) God's word in the Son and the superiority of the Son over the Old Covenant
- II. (4,14 – 10,39) Jesus the authentic High Priest
- III. (11,1 – 13,25) The way of faith of the People of God in past and present

Also in this case it must be remembered that the subject of the priesthood of Christ is treated already before 4,14. Also the break after 10,39 has to be examined. The author moves to exhortation already in 10,19, as has been seen by many authors and has been observed more recently also by A. VANHOYE.

## 2. Divisions according to (literary) form

In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, various proposals have been made for structuring Heb according to more formal or literary criteria. The result is a structure of Heb with five parts according to key concepts, but also according to structural markers in the text like inclusions or connecting words. The first author to be named (about exactly 100 years ago) is F. THIEN, ‘Analyse de l’Épître aux Hébreux’, *RB* 11 (1902) 74-86. (Cf. Vanhoye, *La structure*, 16, 22f). Along this line follows L. VAGANAY, ‘Le plan de l’Épître aux Hébreux’, *Mémorial Lagrange* (Paris 1940), pp. 269-277 (cf. Vanhoye, *op. cit.*, 24-30), who, however, does not seem to know the article by THIEN.

Vaganay develops in particular the use of “announcements of theme” in Heb through connecting words. A classical example is the transition from “angels” in 1,4 to the subject of “angels” in the following section 1,5 – 2,18. This device is repeated throughout the Letter. Thus, the following parts of the documents may be distinguished:

0. (1,1-4) Introduction
  1. (1,5 – 2,18) Jesus superior to the angels – one section
  2. (3,1 – 5,10) Jesus, merciful and faithful pontiff – two sections (2<sup>nd</sup> = 5,1-10)
  3. (5,11 – 10,39) Jesus, cause of eternal salvation, perfect priest, High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek – three sections (after an invitation 5,11 – 6,20: Jesus High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek 7,1-28; perfect priest 8,1 – 9,28; cause of an eternal salvation 10,1-39)
  4. (11,1 – 12,13) Perseverance in faith – two sections (faith 11,1 – 12,2; perseverance 12,3-13)
  5. (12,14 – 13,21) The great obligation of holiness in peace – one section
- Conclusion: (13,22-25) Last recommendations

A concentric structure can be observed, with an increasing number of sections towards the centre of the Letter.

Vanhoye, *La structure*, submits Vaganay’s proposal to a careful analysis and evaluation. In principle, he declares himself content with the results of Vaganay. His criticism concerns mainly Vaganay’s method, according to which the sections of Heb seem to be connected almost exclusively by way of connecting words (“mots crochet”). These words, according to Vanhoye, are not always found at the end and of the beginning of sections of Heb. In addition, they do not seem to be sufficient for an overall structure of Heb. From the terminological point of view, such “connecting words” must be distinguished from the “announcements of theme”. In two cases, Vanhoye corrects Vaganay’s proposal: in chapter 10, he observes the transition to a new,

parenetic section already in 10,19. In chapters 11-12, the transition is found, according to Vanhoye, already at the end of ch. 11, where the section about the examples of faith ends.

Vanhoye bases his structural proposal on five elements:

- announcements of theme
- connecting words
- literary genre (doctrinal or parenetic)
- characteristic expressions
- inclusions (cf. *op. cit.*, 37)

With these criteria, he arrives at the following

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(according to Vanhoye, *La structure*, 59)

<i>Division</i>	<i>Sujet</i>	<i>Genre dominant</i>	<i>Section homologue</i>
a 1,1-4	Introduction		z
I : 1,5-2,18	Le nom bien autre que celui des anges	Doctr.	V
II : 3,1-4,14	Jésus, grand-prêtre digne de foi	Parén.	IV B.
4,15-5,10	Jésus, grand-prêtre compatissant	Doctr.	IV A.
p. 5,11-6,20	Exhortation préliminaire. Jésus grand-prêtre	Parén.	III f.
III : A. 7,1-28	selon l'ordre de Melchisédech arrivé à l'accomplissement cause d'un salut éternel	Doctr.	III C.
B. 8,1-9,28		Doctr.	Centre
C. 10,1-18		Doctr.	III A.
f. 10,19-39	Exhortation finale	Parén.	III p.
IV : A. 11,1-40	La foi des anciens	Doctr.	II B.
B. 12,1-13	L'endurance nécessaire	Parén.	II A.
V : 12,14-13,19	Des pistes droites	Parén.	I
z 13,20-21	Conclusion		a

Pursuing his approach, Vanhoye arrives at a structure of Heb, which goes beyond this proposal by refinement, be it in the above mentioned book, be it in the structured text (Fano 1966, with a German translation, published in the same year at the same publisher). Cf. also MARC DAL MEDICO, *L'auteur de l'épître aux Hébreux*, Rome 1914, mentioned in Vanhoye's article « Discussions », p. 379f, who arrives at conclusions very similar to the ones of Vanhoye.

In the following years, Vanhoye has found much applause from his colleagues (cf. his article from 1974), but also some criticism. This is why he slightly modified his proposals. A first modification concerns the first chapters. In the section 1,5 – 2,18, the author deals with Christ,

Son of God (1,5-14) and brother of the humans (2,5-16), with a short parenetic section between the two texts. Cf. A. V., *Discussions* (1974), 377; ID., *Hebräerbrief*, 498. With this modification it is taken better account of the fact that in 2,5-16 Christ does not appear in his dignity, but rather in the state of humiliation which allows him to fulfil his work of salvation. A second possible modification is recognized by V. in the second edition of his thesis: linking 4,14 rather with the following context 4,14-16 than with the preceding one from 3,1 onwards (cf. A. V., *La structure* 21976, 264), provided that with 4,14, does not begin a completely new section. We shall sustain this position mainly by syntactical reasons, with the majority of the interpreters. For the section 10,19-39 (sic!), V., in the article “Discussions”, finds a new title: “Jonction exposé – parenèse”, which modifies the attribution of this section to “parénèse” in the earlier edition of the book. Also in this case, syntactical consideration will have influenced the author.

In this course, we shall take the proposals of Vanhoye as a “working hypothesis” which has to be confirmed from case to case. Special attention shall be paid to some more recent aspects of methodology which are not yet fully developed in the contributions by Vanhoye:

- more attention to syntactical-linguistic aspects of the analysis
- more attention to stylistic analysis (with the possibility, that concepts are repeated at the beginning of a section, without forming an inclusion: the technique of *anaphora*)
- more attention to rhetorical analysis; in any case also the final verses 13,22-25 have to be taken account of (see next lecture)
- more attention to pragmatics; this aspect is closely linked with the rhetorical analysis of the Letter
- more attention to hermeneutics: what is the “message” of Heb for the readers of today – in the Western context or read from the perspective of the East or the South?

We recommend the handbook on methodology by W. EGGER, *How to read the New Testament: An introduction to linguistic and historical-critical methodology*. Edited and with an introduction by HENDRICUS BOERS (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson 1996); German original 1987, Italian edition 1989. The list of the methodological steps to be developed given above, follows precisely the methodology of Egger, who in his turn presents a synthesis of the methodological and hermeneutical debate of the last decades, since the publication of A. Vanhoye’s masterful thesis in 1962.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture: The structure of the Epistle to the Hebrews (II)

During the last decades, studies into the structure of Hebrews have developed in various directions. We may classify the more recent contributions according to the methodology proposed by W. EGGER (in the book quoted above on p. 8).

#### 1. Contributions from syntactic analysis

A weak point of the “French School” of structural analysis of Heb was its limited attention for the syntactic dimension of the Epistle (classical example: linking 4,14 with the preceding context rather than with the following one). In the meantime, a number of contributions have been published which start from syntactical and linguistic observations. The most important study is the one by GEORGE H. GUTHRIE, *The structure of Hebrews. A text-linguistic analysis* (NT.S 73, Leiden etc.: Brill 1994).

The author tries to elaborate the structure of Heb on the exclusive basis of linguistic and syntactic observations. The author’s main tool is the identifications of “breaks” in the text, which signal the transition from one section to the next. The results often correspond to the ones proposed by the Semantic School, but not always.

Into the same direction points the study presented by the Swiss author of German language FOLKER SIEGERT, ‘Die Makrosyntax des Hebräerbriefs’, *Texts and Contexts. Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in honor of Lars Hartman*, ed. T. FORNBERG, D. HELLHOLM (Oslo etc.: Scandinavian University Press 1995), 305-316.

The author submits the text of Heb to a rigorous syntactic analysis, distinguishing main and subordinate clauses of different levels. Particular attention is paid to the causal conjunctions οὖν, διό, γάρ, but also to the adversative ones like δέ, ἀλλά κτλ. This way it becomes possible to arrive at a text which is structured according to purely formal aspects. Also in this case, the results correspond in a large measure to those achieved by the Semantic method.

Siegert (315f.) combines this approach with a theory on rhetoric, which tries to find in Heb the elements of a discourse according to the rules of Ancient Rhetoric: ch. 1 *prologue*, ch. 2 after

an initial διὰ τοῦτο *propositio*, chapters 3,1 – 10,18 *argumentatio* (3-5 looking back, 6-7 looking forwards, with 7 = digression, 8,1 – 10,18 principal part of the argument: κεφάλαιον ἐπί). In 10,19 would be taken up again the paraenesis, which in 12,1 leads to the *peroratio*. This result is not too far away from the observations achieved by semantic analysis. The weakness seems to be an analysis based exclusively on grammatical structure (with the consequence of isolating ch. 7) and the too hasty application of rhetorical analysis to the text.

## 2. Contributions from semantic analysis

There was a “home” discussion about Vanhoye’s approach with some articles written by J. SWETNAM and the corresponding replies by A. VANHOYE. In two articles, J. SWETNAM asks for more attention to the content of the sections under study and not only to formal elements like announcements of theme, key words, words of connection or inclusions. Cf. JAMES SWETNAM, ‘Form and Content in Hebrews 1-6’, *Bibl.* 53 (1972) 368-385; ID., ‘Form and Content in Hebrews 7-13’, *Bibl.* 55 (1974) 333-348. A. VANHOYE, in his article ‘Discussions sur la structure de l’Épître aux Hébreux’, *Bibl.* 55 (1974) 3439-380 recognizes the need for paying attention also to the content of the various sections for determining their structure. According to him, this is precisely what he had tried in his structural analysis. The “announcement of subject” in particular respects the content of a key word and relates it to its context (loc. cit., 369f.). The discovery of “inclusions” is for him not just a formal device, but respects as well the content of concepts which “frame” a paragraph. In this perspective, the debate between the two colleagues seems to be more verbal than one of principle. Of course, there are also real differences of view. Among other deficiencies, A.V. reproaches J. S. for not having paid sufficient attention to the difference between doctrinal and exhortative sections (for instance in 2,1-4 or in 5,1-10) and for not remaining faithful to the announcements of theme in a number of cases (as in 1,4 for 1,5 – 2,18 instead of 1,5-14). In addition, he finds rather arbitrary the choice of some key concepts of Heb 1,1 – 4,14 by J. S. (ἀπόστολος, ὑπόστασις, the opposition Jesus – Moses). Apparently, both authors agree in rejecting a structural analysis based exclusively on the formal element of “chiasm” as adopted by the British exegete J. BLIGH, ‘The Structure of Hebrews’, *HeyJ* 5 (1964) 170-177. Only a method which combines various methodological approaches and which also respects the content of the various textual units and of the concepts used seems to be able to discover the structure of a NT text.

In the line of Vanhoye are found also the more recent commentaries by HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1989) = *La Lettera agli Ebrei* (Vaticano 1999); PAUL ELLINGWORTH, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993) and WILLIAM L. LANE, *Hebrews* (Dallas, TX: Word Books 1991). Cf. also the Italian commentaries of NELLO CASALINI, *Agli Ebrei. Discorso di esortazione* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press 1992) and FRANCO MANZI, *Lettera agli Ebrei* (Roma: Città Nuova 2001).

### 3. Contributions from pragmatic and rhetorical analysis

There is a lack of contributions from the pragmatic point of view, but investigations into the rhetoric of Heb abound. Heb has been studied under the aspect of rhetoric already in the times of Humanism and of the Renaissance. CARL JOACHIM CLASSEN has studied the contribution to this field by Philip Melanchton: ‘Melanchton’s rhetorical interpretation of biblical and non-biblical texts’, ID., *Rhetorical criticism of the New Testament* (WUNT 128, Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck 1998/2000) 99-177; cf. ID., ‘Paulus und die antike Rhetorik’, *ZNW* 82 (1991) 1-33.

Since the eighties of the last century, the Pauline Letters have been studied under the aspect of Ancient Rhetoric. The breakthrough came with the commentary of H. D. BETZ, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1979) = *Der Galaterbrief* (Munich: Christian Kaiser 1988). The author sees in Galatians the structure of a discourse of antiquity with *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *argumentatio* and *peroratio*. This commentary has been very influential particularly in North American New Testament exegesis, but also elsewhere. Let us quote two examples of a structure of Heb according to the accepted principles for structuring a discourse in antiquity.

The first example is the book by WALTER ÜBELACKER, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell. 1. Untersuchungen zu exordium, narratio und postscriptum (Hebr 1-2 und 13,22-25)* (CB.NT 21,1, Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International 1989). This book remains precious even if the thesis of the author that Heb is structured according to the partition of an ancient discourse does not seem to be sufficiently proved. With good reasons, the author discovers the elements of an *exordium* in Heb 1,1-4. According to him, in 1,4 is already prepared the transition to the *narratio* which would comprehend the chapters 1-2. At the end of ch. 2 would be found the thesis of the *propositio* (2,17f.), for which the arguments would be given in ch. 3 – 12,29 (*argumentatio* with *probatio* and *confutatio*). 13,1-21 would be the *peroratio*, before the *postscriptum*

13,22-25 which characterizes the document as a λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως (cf. p. 224). This structure appears somewhat artificial, but the interpretation of Heb with the tools of Ancient Rhetoric proves promising. In particular, the pragmatic aspect of the Epistle comes out clearly, as already signalled by the title of the book: “*Der Hebräerbrief als Appell*”.

Another proposal of dividing Heb according to the parts of a discourse in antiquity has been proposed in the voluminous commentary by CRAIG R. KOESTER, *Hebrews* (AncB 36, New York etc.: Doubleday 2001). According to the author, the “narratio” is missing in Heb. This fact can be justified by reference to the theoreticians of Ancient Rhetoric. The structure proposed by the author is: 1,1 – 2,4 “Exordium”, 2,5-9 “Proposition”, 2,10 – 12,27 “Arguments” in three sequences (2,10 – 6,20; 7,1 – 10,39; 11,1 – 12,27), 12,28 – 13,21 “Peroration” and 13,22-25 “Epistolary Postscript”. With the identification of the “exordium” with 1,1 – 2,4 instead of 1,1-4 the author remains alone. All stylistic arguments speak against this proposal which in addition ignores in large measure the observations and proposals of A. Vanhoye. The proposal to find in 2,5-9 the “propositio” appears in its turn rather arbitrary, as the one of dividing the following “argument” into three sections. During the interpretation of Heb, we shall have in mind the proposals made by Koester, taking recourse as well to his rich bibliography.

A number of authors try to make use of the rules of Ancient Rhetoric for the interpretation of Heb without forcing the text into the bed of Procrustes of the structure of a discourse of antiquity with its five parts according to Quintilian. To these authors belongs BARNABAS LINDARS, ‘The rhetorical structure of Hebrews’, *NTS* 35 (1989) 382-406. The author tries to determine the purpose of Heb on the basis of observations concerning the reconstructed situation of the community of the addressees. According to B. L., the central problem of this community is the danger of giving up the faith once adopted and returning to the Jewish faith which the readers had professed earlier in their lives. Only this way can be explained the strong emphasis on Jesus being the High Priest working atonement for our sins. That we have to do in Heb with ex-Jews who came to believe in Christ becomes evident from the beginning of the Epistle. The subject of atonement from sins is already announced in the prooemium 1,1-4 and prepares from here onwards the detailed treatment in the successive chapters, in particular in 7,1 – 10,18. If the rhetorical dimension of the Letter is taken seriously, the scope of Heb would not be a doctrine about the atoning value of the death of Christ, but the demonstration that this death has its consequences for the readers (cf. 395). The author sees that this thesis is developed by means of the rules of rhetoric since 10,19 with a first synthesis of his teaching in 10,19-39, a series of

examples for remaining faithful to the faith once adopted in ch. 11 and the continuation of the subject of faith in ch. 12 before the final ch. 13. The consequence is a linear structure of Heb rather than a concentric one – a result which appears to have extreme importance for the quest of structure and scope of this enigmatic document.

DAVID ARTHUR DESILVA in his turns makes use of the tools of Ancient Rhetoric for the interpretation of Heb without taking recourse to the structure of a discourse according to the rules of Quintilian or of Ps.-Cicero in his work “Ad Herennium”. See D. A. DESILVA, *Perseverance in Gratitude. A socio-rhetorical commentary on the Epistle ‘to the Hebrews’* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans 2000). Also this author does not try to identify the elements of an ancient discourse in the Epistle. It would be sufficient, according to him, to discover that this document corresponds in large measure to the rules of Ancient Rhetoric. The most important consequence of this observation would be that the Letter has been written in order to move its readers into a certain direction. More precisely one could recognize in Heb a text of the genre of a “deliberative discourse” which wants to prepare the readers to have the courage of being different from their cultural and social context and to remain faithful to their original vocation. Interpreted in this sense, Heb is a valid document also for the readers of today, in particular in those parts of the world where Christianity has ceased to be the dominant cultural system. This perspective appears very promising.

For the present course we renounce to an own proposal of structure and take as starting point the proposals made by A. Vanhoye with some modifications which already have been signalled (see also the first series of lectures on Heb, 1<sup>st</sup> sem. 2002/03). Special attention will be paid to the elements mentioned at the end of the second lecture (see above, p. 8). It is preferred to read Heb as a witness of Ancient Rhetoric, with emphasis rather on the end of the document than on its centre. As a consequence of this, Heb is not regarded as a treatise on the priesthood of Christ but rather as a discourse which encourages a community menaced by the danger of apostasy to remain faithful to their vocation, even under adverse circumstances.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> lecture: The dignity of Melchizedek (Heb 7,1-10)

##### 1. Context

According to most contemporary authors starts in Heb 7,1 a long, coherent section which treats the priesthood of Christ and the atonement worked by his sacrificial action. This section would extend until 10,18, before a paraenetic section which draws the consequences of the preceding exposition.

From his earliest contribution (*La structure*<sup>1</sup>, 1963), ALBERT VANHOYE has maintained that the announcement of the different parts of Heb 7,1 – 10,18 can be found in 5,9-10: “and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek”. The last element – Christ being “high priest after the order of Melchizedek” would be treated first, in ch. 7, “being made perfect – τελειωθείς” would be treated in chapters 8-9, and the consequence of Christ’s atoning sacrifice “source of eternal salvation” would be the subject of ch. 10,1-18. Among the more recent commentaries, only a minority have followed this suggestion of Vanhoye. Cf. among others: PAUL ELLINGWORTH (see above, p. 12) and FRANCO MANZI (ibid.). More reserved remain HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE and NELLO CASALINI (ibid.). Attridge (p.153) states explicitly that “source of eternal salvation” in 5,9 refers to the whole section of 8,1 – 10,18, and not only to 10,1-18, what seems to be reasonable. It would also be forced to put 8,1 – 9,28 under the heading of “being made perfect”, since this vocabulary (although introduced in 7,28) is missing almost completely in this section and only used twice in non-Christological sense (9,9.11).

For this and similar reasons, Vanhoye himself retains until his most recent publications the structural role of Heb 5,9-10 for distinguishing the three main parts of Heb 8,1 – 9,28, but drops the three headings when he presents his text and its interpretation. Cf. ALBERT VANHOYE, ‘Discussions sur la structure de l’Épître aux Hébreux’, *Bibl.* 55 (1974) 349-380 : 377 ; ID., ‘Literarische Struktur und theologische Botschaft des Hebräerbriefs’, *SNTU* 4 (1979) 119-147; 5 (1980) 18-49 (the heading for ch. 8-9 is “Das Opfer, das Vollendung bewirkt” = the sacrifice which works perfection: see 1980, p. 36; perfection is no longer used in a Christological sense); ID., ‘Hebräerbrief’, *TRE* 14 (1985) 494-505: 498; ID., *L’Épître aux Hébreux*, in: E. COTHENET – M. MORGEN – A. VANHOYE, *Les dernières épîtres. Hébreux – Jacques – Pierre – Jean – Jude* (Commentaires, Paris: Bayard 1997), 7-108: p. 10!; ID., *La Lettre aux Hébreux. Jésus-Christ*,

*médiateur d'une nouvelle alliance* (Paris: Desclée 2002). In this most recent publication, V. remains faithful to his division of Heb 7,1 – 10,19 according to the three elements of the ‘propositio’ of 5,9-10 (cf. p. 109-113) and gives new reasons for it, in particular the announcement of the subject of a section at the end of the preceding one (6,20 for 7,1-28; 7,28 for chapters 8-9, and 9,28, last word, for ch. 10,1-18: ‘salvation’). On the other hand, he does not any longer take the three parts of Heb 5,9-10 as headlines for the three sections of Heb 7-10, as he still did in the two editions of his “*Structure*” and in the structured text of Fano. This greater liberty should be respected.

The immediate preceding context of ch. 8 in Heb is of course Heb 5,11 – 6,20. If one regards Heb 5,9-10, with Vanhoye, as the ‘propositio’ of the main part of the Letter, Heb 5,11 – 6,20 would also make part of the central section of the Letter as a “preamble” with ‘paraenesis’ (5,11 – 6,12) and ‘promise and oath of God’ (6,13-20). If this role of Heb 5,9f is not accepted (and this is the case with the majority of authors), one is free to see a stronger coherence of 5,11 – 6,20 with the preceding context or to consider the unit as an interruption of the train of thought. For the former opinion could be argued from the fact that in Heb exhortations normally follow exposition (cf. 2,1-4 after 1,5-10; 3,7 – 4,13 after 2,5-18; 10,19-39 after 7,1 – 10,18), for the latter the custom in discourses of antiquity to allow for “digressions”. This is what we opted for in the preceding lectures on Heb 1-6 (see there, 20<sup>th</sup> lecture, p. 75-78).

The following context of Heb 7 is given with chapters 8-9, as we saw. Chapter 7 itself may be divided according to formal aspects and content into three sections: 7,1-10 comparison Abraham – Melchizedek, vv. 11-19 comparison Levitical priesthood and priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, vv. 20-28 the superiority of a priesthood based on a divine oath in comparison with one without such a form of confirmation (cf. the inclusion of ‘oath’ in vv. 20 and 28). The first section, which is framed by the name of ‘Melchizedek’ (vv. 1 and 10), is based on Gen 14,17-20. The second and third ones take recourse so Ps 110(109),4 – first for the ‘priesthood for ever’, then for the dignity based on an oath. We may see in this procedure the Jewish technique of *gezera shawah*, the interpretation of one text of Scripture with the help of a second text by means of a common key word. This Jewish technique is accompanied in our section as elsewhere in Heb by a Hellenistic one, the use of ‘synkrisis’, of comparison. First, Abraham and Melchizedek are compared with the clear result that Melchizedek has a greater dignity, since he receives tithes from Abraham. At the same time, his superiority is brought out also under the aspect of time and genealogy: he seems to transcend time.

In the second section (vv. 11-19), Levitical priesthood is compared with a priesthood based on Melchizedek, as attributed to Christ. In the third section (vv. 20-28), another privilege of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek in comparison with the Levitical priesthood is brought out: it is based on an oath, something which cannot be said of the Levitical priesthood. From the formal point of view, the author shows himself to be indebted to Jewish as well as Hellenistic art of writing.

## 2. Text and translation

The text of the passage does not present serious difficulties; the variants concern mostly articles or pronouns. In v. 1, a minuscule manuscript (460) has a longer text, adding to Gen 14,17 the content of Gen 14,15f.

The Greek adjectives ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ (v. 3) are also attested elsewhere in Greek literature, while ἀγενεαλόγητος (‘without genealogy’) occurs here for the first time in Greek texts. The ‘tithes’ are represented by a number of expressions in vv. 4-10 for ‘giving tithes’ and ‘taking tithes’ (ἀποδεκατοῦν etc). The translation does not offer difficulties. While in TM and LXX it is not wholly clear, who gave tithes to whom, Heb 7,2 takes away any doubt, naming Abraham explicitly as the one who gives the tithes to Melchizedek.

## 3. Interpretation

*Structure:* From the point of view of grammar and content, Heb 7,1-10 can be divided into two paragraphs. The first paragraph contains vv. 1-3, being only one sentence. The second paragraph extends from v. 4 to v. 10. The main affirmation of the first paragraph is found in the final verb in v. 3: μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές. Melchizedek is shown in his superiority in comparison with Abraham. In the second paragraph, Melchizedek is compared with Levi and his offspring, and the superiority of his priesthood is shown.

*Melchizedek and Abraham (vv. 1-3):* As it was mentioned, vv. 1-3 form one single sentence. The emphasis is, of course, on the main verb (see above): Melchizedek remains priest for ever. This statement is of great importance for our author since he wants to show that Christ, who is priest according to the order of Melchizedek, has an eternal priesthood. The author takes his argument from the OT, concretely from LXX. He does not quote the text of Gen 14,17-20

literally, as he does later with Jer 31,31-34 (in 8,8-12), but takes from this text in Genesis what appears important for him: his name, that he was king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, that he came to encounter Abraham after the victorious battle against the kings, and that Abraham gave him tithes. All these elements are found in the passage referred to in Genesis. From v. 2b onwards, our author expands the information of the Bible, probably based on tradition (see 8<sup>th</sup> lecture). First, the name of Melchizedek is explained. He is “king of justice”, referring the second half of his name to the Hebrew root *šdq*. This would also be a fitting title for Christ, the messianic king (see below the reference to Ps 110). Another interpretation of Melchizedek is one based on the city of which he is king: “Salem”, etymologically brought into connection with the Hebrew root *šlm*, “making whole”, “peace”. Also this fits into the messianic scheme. What is affirmed in v. 3, goes far beyond the biblical text and is based on an “argument from silence”, accepted in Jewish readings of texts. Since the Bible does not give any indication about the genealogy of Melchizedek, about his father or mother, he appears father- and motherless, without genealogy, and since there is no word about his death, it is concluded, that he remained forever. In his eternity, he resembles the Son of God (for this title cf. 4,14; 6,6; 10,29).

*Melchizedek and the offspring of Levi (vv. 4-10)*: Melchizedek does not only have an eternal priesthood. He is also superior to Levitical priesthood. This is shown in an argument based on a reflection about the text taken from Genesis and some texts referring to the privileges of the Levites. The purpose for the readers is to perceive the excellence of the person to whom Abraham gave tithes from the first fruit (ἀκροθίνια, v. 4). This excellence appears as well from the comparison (synkrisis) of Melchizedek with the priests of Levitical priesthood. They were allowed to take tithes from their brethren, since they had no share in the distribution of the Holy Land (Num 18,21). Levi and his sons were younger than Abraham, Levi being the great-grandson of Abraham and in this sense still in his loins, when he contributed tithes to Melchizedek (vv. 5-6a. 9-10). This perspective makes Levi and his offspring appear inferior to Melchizedek. According to the author, the superiority of Melchizedek appears also from the fact that he blessed Abraham (vv. 6b-7), although he was already a man of divine promises. Again the argument from the first paragraph is taken up that Melchizedek is the living one according to divine promise. This makes him superior to the priests of the Levitical order who have to die (v. 8). Melchizedek remains the dominant figure of this whole paragraph. This is confirmed by the fact that with his name the paragraph ends.

*Summary:* According to its form, our section presents a highly original blend of Hellenistic and Jewish forms of argument. Constantly the literary form of “synkrisis” is used, in order to show the superiority of Melchizedek over against Abraham and the Levites. The invitation in v. 4: Θεωρεῖτε δὲ πηλίκος οὗτος “See how great he is!” shows affinities of this section with the rhetorical genre of the epideictic speech which shows the excellence or the perversity of a person. Other elements of the argument are clearly Jewish, in particular the bringing out of elements of a text which are not directly said but implied, but also the use of etymology in the interpretation of the name of Melchizedek, king of Salem.

The content of this paragraph remains strongly limited to the Old Testament. Of course, the intention of the author is to bring out the excellence of the priesthood of Christ in comparison with Levitical priesthood. This is, however, not yet fully brought out. The only direct reference to Jesus Christ is given in v. 3, where a comparison is offered between Melchizedek, the living one, and the Son of God. In the remainder of this chapter, our author will become more explicit in his focus on Christ, the eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

## 5<sup>th</sup> lecture: The insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood (Heb 7,11-19)

Lit.: JAMES KURIANAL, *Jesus our High Priest. Ps 110,4 As The Substructure Of Heb 5,1 – 7,28* (EHS.T 693; Frankfurt a M.: Peter Lang 2000).

### 1. Context

In Heb 7,1-10, the excellence of the priesthood of Christ was demonstrated by a comparison between Melchizedek and Abraham, forefather of Levi and his offspring, the Levitical priests. Already here, Ps 110,4 stood in the background (cf. v. 3), but the Scriptural basis for the argument was mainly Gen 14,17-20. One may argue that Ps 110,4 is the dominant text for the argument of our author in Heb 7, since this psalm is referred to in 6,20, at the beginning of the section (cf. Kurianal). But it is only in 7,11-19, that the psalm is taken up explicitly and used as an argument for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ “according to the order of Melchizedek” over against the one of the Levitical order. Kurianal affirms on the one side: “In Hebrews, Ps 110,4 is fundamental to 5,1 – 7,28. Heb 7,1-25a is a midrash on Ps 110,4b” (47), on the other side, Kurianal modifies his position by saying (106): “To conclude the discussion on 7,1-10, it should be noted that by giving a midrash on Gen 14,17-20, the author of Hebrews has emphatically made his point: he establishes the greatness of Melchizedek, a key word in Ps 110,4.” We have tried to combine both midrashim by reference to the Jewish technique of *gezera shawah*, the interpretation of one passage by help of another one with a common key word, and the question may remain open which text is basic. In 7,1-10, Gen 14 seems to be basic, for the whole section 6,20 – 7,28 Kurianal may be right in saying that Ps 110,4 is basic. Going back as far as 5,1 for the beginning of the section characterized by the use of Ps 110,4 is a bit farfetched because of the long digression of 5,11 – 6,20.

### 2. Text and translation

The missing of  $\eta\nu$  in v. 11 in B and some mss. does not alter the meaning and seems to be a scribal error. The  $\epsilon\pi$   $\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$  in the same verse is better than the dative or the accusative and gives better sense: it is “on the basis” of the Levitical priesthood that the people has received the legislation (cf. BAUER-ARNDT-GINGRICH, Dictionary, meaning 1b $\beta$ ). The  $\nu\epsilon\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\theta\epsilon\tau\eta\tau\omicron$  of D<sup>2</sup>  $\Psi$  and the Majority Text is incorrect Greek because of the missing of the augment. In v. 13, we prefer the much better attested  $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\chi\eta\kappa\epsilon\nu$  and  $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\chi\eta\kappa\epsilon\nu$ . The word order at the end of v. 14

is of little relevance. The *ἱερωσύνης* instead of *ἱερέων*, preferred by the Majority Text, is late and not to be followed. *σαρκικῆς* in v. 16 instead of *σαρκίνης* follows the more usual vocabulary of the NT (7 : 4). *μαρτυρεῖ* in v. 17 instead of the passive does not recognize the reference to Scripture. The insertion of *εἰ* into the psalm quotation in the same verse completes the text according to the LXX. The lacking of *μέν* in v. 18 in P<sup>46</sup> seems to be a scribal error (not rare in the ms.).

Two verbs may merit mentioning: the passive of *νομοθετέω* in v. 11 means: “to have received a legislation” (meaning 1 in BAUER, over against meaning 2 in Heb 8,6: “being regulated by a law”, *ibid.*). The sense is in 7,11: the people (of God) has received a legislation based on it (the Levitical priesthood). *ἀνατέταλκεν* in v. 14 means: “has sprung off” or “risen”. The expression (instead of the more usual: *ἐγεννήθη*) seems to refer to the messianic prophecies of the ‘branch’ (Zech 6,12) or ‘star’ (Num 24,17: Kurianal, 115).

### 3. Linguistic and syntactic analysis

Our textual unit is framed by the concept of “perfection” in v. 11 and 19. At the beginning and at the end is denied that Levitical priesthood enjoys perfection or leads to perfection. The first sentence has the form of a rhetorical question, interrupted by a parenthesis. Here occurs a first *γάρ*. Six others are to follow (in vv. 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19). This fact characterizes our unit as strongly argumentative. The dominant verbal construction is the third person singular. Only twice, the author includes himself with his readers: in the expression “our Lord” in v. 14 and in the verb form of first person plural: *ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ* in v. 19.

### 4. Argument

More strongly than in the precedent paragraph, the Christological intention of the author becomes manifest. The opposition of Levitical priesthood and the one according to the order of Melchizedek supposes the latter realized in Christ. Given the existence of the eternal priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek, the Levitical priesthood proves obsolete. This is already the thesis of v. 11 with its rhetorical question, which use could have the Levitical priesthood if another one is given according to Melchizedek and no longer according to Aaron. The parenthesis is to be interpreted according to the translation given above: the people (of God) has received legislation concerning the priesthood of the Levites.

In the following verses, there is a semantic shift from “order” (τάξις) to “law” (νόμος) and “commandment” (ἐντολή, v. 16, 18). If the ancient order of Levitical priesthood is changed, necessarily also the regulations of the law concerning priesthood and priests do change (v. 12). The reason is that the new Priest according to the order of Melchizedek does not belong to the tribe of Levi, but to another tribe to which never a priestly dignity or activity has been ascribed (v. 13). The textual basis for this affirmation could be the Blessing of Jacob, Gen 49,8-12. Moses in his turn never gave any regulation for a priesthood according to Judah. But it is precisely from this tribe that “our Lord” sprang off (v. 14). This negative statement will be confirmed by the positive one that a priest like Melchizedek has been established (v. 15), who came into being not through a commandment according to the order of the flesh, but through the power of imperishable life (v. 16). The duality of “flesh” and “power of imperishable life” points to the fact that priests according to the order of Levi and Aaron receive their dignity because all priests have to die and necessarily need a successor in their function. According to our text, the priesthood opposed to this ancient order is a priesthood based on the eternity of the priest’s function. That this priesthood has been given to a person is attested by the quotation from Ps 110,4 in v. 17. For the author as for the readers it is evident that this quotation refers to Jesus Christ, since Ps 110 has been used previously (cf. for Ps 110,1 Heb 1,3.13, for 110,4 Heb 5,6.10; 6,20; 7,3.11). For the author, it is evident that the previous order becomes obsolete with the introduction of the new one: it proves weak and useless (v. 18) and unable to lead to perfection. In the remainder of v. 19 is to be supposed the same verb as in v. 18: γίνεται: with the substitution of the old legislation is introduced access to a better hope, by which “we”, the author with the reading community, “can approach God”.

## 5. Conclusion

### - Our text and Psalm 110

The importance of Psalm 110 for our text has been underlined rightly, although the first ten verses of Heb 7 show a stronger influence of Gen 14,17-20. The question remains whether our author starts from the idea that Christ is High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek and uses Ps 110,4 as a proof text or whether things should not be seen the other way round: precisely Ps 110,4 led to the idea of Christ being High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This hypothesis appears more probable. In this case one would ask: who was the first to identify Christ with this priest of Ps 110,4?

As Kurianal shows in his doctoral dissertation, a messianic use of Ps 110 before early Christianity cannot be proved. This holds true even for Ps 110,1, the most frequent quotation from the Old Testament in the New Testament. Early Judaism did not know such a messianic use of the Psalm, unlike for instance 2 Sam 7,14 which is commented and used in 1 Q Flor and which may stand behind Ps 110,1. Perhaps it was precisely the unusual idea of the (messianic) king being at the same time (High) Priest which might have prevented Orthodox Judaism in intertestamentary times to use the psalm for its purposes. The connection of royal and priestly dignity in the time of the Hasmoneans might have contributed to the problem. One additional problem was the poor state of transmission of the text of the psalm, in particular of v. 3 (TM עֲמֹן נִדְבַת בְּיָוִם חֵילֶךָ בְּהַדְרֵי־קֹדֶשׁ מִרְחֹם מִשְׁחָר לְךָ טַל יִלְדֹתֶיךָ

“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth”, King James Version. The LXX text makes more sense and seems to underlie Hebrews: μετὰ σοῦ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς δυνάμεώς σου ἐν ταῖς λαμπρότησιν τῶν ἀγίων ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐξεγέννησά σε).

- The opposition of “flesh” and divine reality in Paul and Hebrews

For Paul, σὰρξ is an anthropological term, opposed to πνεῦμα. Paul uses this double expression in order to characterize life of the ancient order, characterized by the tentative to live according to the Law, by sin and by death, and life in Christ. By this, Paul goes beyond Hellenistic thinking where “body” and “soul” or “spirit” are opposed. Two of the most characteristic texts of Paul in this regard are Rom 8 and Gal 5.

In Hebrews, we find a different perspective. In Heb 7,16-17, the author distinguishes two orders: the one of Levitical priesthood, based on a law with a fleshly commandment, and the one of priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, which is characterized by the power of imperishable life. The opposition is no longer anthropological, but rather of salvation history. The “flesh” is a symbol for a perishable reality: the human existence of the priests of the Levitical order who had to die and just by this way opened a future for their successors. As such, Levitical priesthood is characterized by weakness. Opposed to this weakness is the “force” of “imperishable life” ascribed to the priesthood of Christ, a priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. The “Law” comes in exclusively under the aspect of regulations concerning priesthood and not as the overall regulation of living according to God’s will. Here, we are far from Paul, even if our author shares some elements of terminology with Paul.

## 6<sup>th</sup> lecture: Christ, eternal priest and High Priest (Heb 7,20-28)

Lit.: KURIANAL (see above, 19), pp. 128-160, and the literature quoted there.

### 1. Context

According to most authors, Heb 7 is a unit of its own, even though in a larger context. According to Kurianal, the midrash on Ps 110,4, which began in Heb 7,1, comes to an end with 7,20-25. Heb 7,26-28 would then be an epilogue to Heb 5,1 – 7,28. K. points to the fact that the subjects treated in 7,26-28 take up those of Heb 5,1-10. From here he concludes that the whole of chapters 5-7 is summed up in these three last verses of ch. 7. This goes against our observation that Heb 5,11 – 6,20 seems to be an interruption of thought, technically speaking a “digressio”. If this is accepted, it would be better to see in chapter 7 in general and in 7,26-28 in particular a flash-back to Heb 5,1-10 in the sense of an “anaphora”. Ellingworth in his commentary may be right in assuming that Heb 7,26-28 sums up chapter 7. This could be maintained, with the additional observation, that also chapter 5,1-10 is taken account of.

Kurianal distinguishes two parts of Heb 7,20-28: in 7,20-25 the midrash on Ps 110,4 is brought to a conclusion, in 7,26-28 the whole section from 5,1 (see above). There are some reasons in favour of this proposal. One argument against this subdivision would be that there is an inclusion with the concept of “oath” (ὀρκωμοσία) used in vv. 20f. and 28 and binding the whole section together by way of an inclusion (cf. Vanhoye). This would speak against a further subdivision. For the rest the opinion of Kurianal that the midrash on Ps 110,4 ends in v. 25 needs also to be evaluated critically. As he himself sees, the idea of the “eternity” of the High Priest Jesus recurs in v. 28, and this idea comes from Ps 110,4 as he himself has shown previously. These reasons speak in favour of a treatment of vv. 20-28 as a unit of its own.

### 2. Text and translation

There are only a few relevant textual variants. In v. 21, in two cases the quotation from the LXX has been completed – once by the insertion of εἶ (as already in v. 17), once by the addition of κατα την ταξιν Μελχισεδεκ. In both cases, the shorter reading should be preferred. The τοσοῦτον in v. 22 makes little sense and has powerful manuscripts against it. The singular for “High

Priest” in v. 27 seems to be due to correction by the scribe of D, as the one for “sacrifice” in the same verse. The same may be the case with “priests” for “High Priests” in v. 28.

The word ὀρκωμοσία is found four times in our section (vv. 20 twice, v. 21 and v. 28). It means rather the swearing of an oath than the oath itself, but seems to have the meaning of “assurance by an oath” in our text (cf. in the Bible still 1 Esr 8,90; Ez 17,18f.: Bauer). ἔγγυος in v. 22 means a “warrant” rather than a mediator (μεσίτης, 8,6; 9,15).

### 3. Syntax

The first three verses (20-22) are a syntactical unit, with a parenthesis from 20b to 21, not easily to be identified as such in the Greek text of Nestle-Aland. The beginning and the end form together a comparative clause (“as” – “thus”). In the first clause “And as not without oath” as subject has to be added “Jesus” and as a verb something like “he became priest”. In the parenthesis and in vv. 23f we find the opposition of μέν – δέ, contrasting the priests of the old order and the priest of the new one, Jesus. V. 25 brings out the soteriological relevance of the preceding verses after the conjunction ὅθεν “therefore”. Vv. 26-28 are characterized by argument, first in a long nominal clause, beginning in v. 26 and extending towards the end of v. 27, then in two causal clauses, introduced by γάρ. In the latter of them another opposition with μέν – δέ is found: the “Law” is opposed to the “word of oath after the Law”. V. 28 is again elliptic. In the second half of the comparison, the verb is missing. Some authors just fill in the καθίστησιν of the first half of the comparison, but it seems to be recommended to add καθίστησιν ἀρχιερέα in analogy to the expression used for the High Priests of the first half of the comparison (A. VANHOYE, *La Lettre aux Hébreux*, see above, p. 14f., there p. 134).

### 4. Semantics and pragmatics

#### a) Vv. 20-25

In vv. 20-22 is introduced the term which is dominant in the whole section from v. 20 to v. 28: “assuring by an oath”. In order to demonstrate the superiority of the priesthood of Christ in comparison with Levitical priesthood, the author takes up an element of the quotation from Ps 110,4 which has not been used until now and which does not directly make part of the divine promise as such: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind”.

The priests of the Levitical order have come into their function and dignity without the intervention of a divine oath. This is different with Christ, who “not without an oath” has been appointed priest for ever according to Ps 110,4. Thus, he has a higher dignity – a consequence not spelled out by our author – and at the same time he is able to become the warrant of a better covenant. The Greek word *διαθήκη* is taken from the Septuagint, where it often stands for Hebrew *בְּרִית*. The translation “covenant” is not always correct, since both biblical expressions originally rather mean a “commitment”. This “commitment” can be, but must not be mutual as in the case of the “covenant” of God with Noah or Abraham where God alone commits himself. The term will be taken up by our author at length from ch. 8 onwards (see there). Christ being “warrant” of a better covenant and not “mediator” may refer to the fact that in ch. 7 we are still in the “ascending” movement of the High Priest Jesus, who opens the access to the heavenly realm for those who believe in him (Vanhoye).

Vv. 23-25 may be treated together as well. The apparent superiority of the multitude of Levitical priests over against the one and only priest according to the order of Melchizedek proves to be precisely a weakness. Since all Levitical priests had and have to die, they constantly have to be replaced. Christ does not need such a replacement, having a permanent priesthood which “cannot be overcome”. Again, the dignity of Christ is the basis for his work of salvation. Having an eternal priesthood, Jesus can also eternally pave the way of access to God and to salvation for the faithful. Having himself eternal life, he can also eternally intercede for the faithful. Also Paul has the idea of Christ interceding “for us” (Rom 8,34). He seems to deduce this fact from a reference to Ps 110,1 rather than 110,4 (cf. Vanhoye, 131): Christ was invited to sit at the right hand of God from where he can intercede for his own. The author of Hebrews, introducing into his argument Ps 110,4, can explain better how and why Christ should be able to intercede for his own: he has been declared High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and for this reason he also can fulfil the major task of a priest: making intercession for the people.

#### b) Vv. 26-28

We have noticed the connection of these last three verses of the chapter with the immediately preceding ones, in particular because of the concept of “swearing an oath” which is found in vv. 20f. and taken up at the end of the section in v. 28. For this reason, we do not treat the remaining verses of the chapter as a completely independent unit.

The long sentence at the beginning of vv. 26-28 which extends until τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ in v. 27, has as its main verb ἔπρεπεν “it was fitting”. As commentators observe, our author rather avoids the verb δεῖ or ἔδει in the sense of a “heilsgeschichtliches Muss” (a “must” of salvation history). In this, he may also be influenced by Hellenistic search for what is “befitting”. It was “befitting” that “we” (again the author and the readers are included) have such a High Priest who is “holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens”. All the expressions are rather static and express the superiority of Christ being High Priest in ascending order: from blamelessness and holiness to separation from sinners and – positively – being exalted above the heavens, i. e. to the realm of God. In his use of negative attributes, the author shows indebtedness again to Hellenistic thought and language. In the choice of the term “High Priest” instead of “Priest” he moves away from the vocabulary of Ps 110 and prepares the comparison with the High Priests of the ancient order. To these he turns in v. 27.

According to the author, the High Priests of the ancient order had to offer sacrifice of atonement everyday as well for their own sins as for the sins of the people. Commentators try in vain to bring this in agreement with the text of the OT, which foresees such an offering of the High Priest only once a year on the Yom Kippur (Lev 16, with the explicit prescription that the rite of atonement should be celebrated annually: vv. 29-34!). If someone does not think of additional sacrifices offered in Israel by other priests or gives the καθ’ ἡμέραν of v. 27 a softened meaning in the sense of daily need for atoning sacrifice (Kurianal, 150f.), one must admit that the author is not absolutely precise in his opposition of old and new High Priests and thinks from the latter to the former: Jesus as High Priest of the new order has offered himself once and for ever (v. 27). Cf. for these two verses also 5,1-3!

The last opposition is found in v. 28: the one between a priesthood affected with weakness because of the weakness of its bearers and the one of the priesthood based on an oath which is characterized by perfection. The first one has its rules in the Law, the second, after the first (μετά with acc.), in the word of assurance by an oath.

By the introduction of the term of “perfection” the author prepares his readers for the chapters to come, as pointed out repeatedly by Vanhoye. He also brings to an end a section which started in v. 11. At the same time he concludes definitely the midrash on Ps 110 and on Gen 14. Never he loses his readers out of sight. His teaching is not just a treaty on Jesus High Priest, but remains a sermon. For this reason Vanhoye himself calls him “the preacher”.

## 7<sup>th</sup> lecture: Melchizedek in Early Jewish Tradition

Sources: *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, ed. by FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ & ELBERT J. C. TIGCHELAAR (Leiden: Brill 1997-1999).

IDEM & A. S. VAN DER WOUDE ..., *Qumran Cave 11: II. 11Q2-18, 11Q20-31* (DJD 23, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998).

*Die Texte aus Qumran II. Hebräisch / Aramäisch und Deutsch*, hg. von ANNETTE STEUDEL (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2001).

*Die Texte vom Toten Meer. Erste deutsche Gesamtübertragung I-II* (München und Basel: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag 1960).

*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. by JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, I. *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*; II. *Expansions of the "Old Testament" and legends, wisdom and philosophical literature* (Garden City: Doubleday 1983-1985).

In a recent article, CHARLES H. GIESCHEN distinguishes various phases of recent research on the figure of Melchizedek in Qumran and related Early Jewish Literature (ID., 'The Different Functions of a Similar Melchizedek Tradition in 2 *Henoch* and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel. Investigations and Proposals*, ed. by CRAIG A. EVANS AND JAMES A. SAUNDERS, JSNT.S 148 = Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 5, Sheffield: Academic Press 1997, 364-379: 364f):

- studies of the figure of Melchizedek in canonical literature with some use of non-canonical texts for the interpretation of the canonical ones (Wuttke, Horton)
- studies of a common "Melchizedek Tradition" in various canonical and non-canonical texts (Horton, Fitzmyer, de Jonge – van der Woude, Kobelski)
- studies of a variety of Melchizedek traditions (Gianotto; cf. also Manzi, see below)
- studies of the function of the various texts on Melchizedek in the different documents (Gieschen himself; cf. also his book: *Angelomorphic Christology. Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42, Leiden: Brill 1998).

We shall make use in part of a licentiate paper of MICHAEL TAIT on Melchizedek in Hebrews for organizing and evaluating the extra-biblical material, with his kind permission.

### 1. 1QApGen

In II.14-17 there is a paraphrase of Gen 14,17-20. Melchizedek is here the historical Melchizedek whom Abraham met in Salem.

## 2. 4QAmran

There are several fragments of “Visions of Amran” in Qumran, Cave 4. In fragment 2 of 4Q544 occurs the name “Melki-resha” He “rules over all the darkness”, and is opposed to someone who “rules over all that is bright”. On the basis of such observations, Milik (*RB* 1972) concludes that there must have been a “Melki-sedek”, in analogy to “Melki-resha”. As the former would have had the additional names of “Michael, Prince of Light”, the latter would have had the additional names of “Belial, Prince of Darkness”. But this seems to be rather guesswork, concluded from the fact that at the end of fragment 3, there is talk about “three names”. Qumran scholars have identified little with this very hypothetical proposal.

## 3. The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice

These songs, sung by angels, seem to part of a heavenly liturgy. Some short fragments of this text are preserved in 4QShirShabb<sup>b</sup>. In fragment 11, there is talk about “Melchi]zedek, priest in the assem[bly of God ...” He seems to make part of a heavenly assembly, but no details are given. The name is preserved only in part, in part it is reconstructed. The same is the case with a fragment from Cave 11: 11QShirShabb, a text which is more complete. The text supposes again a heavenly choir of angels who praises God, “priesthoods of his inner sanctum”, to which belong “[the chiefs of the princes of the won]derful [priesthood of ] Melch[i]zedek”. Again, the reading is dubious. To build on it a hypothesis about Melchizedek as angelic figure taking part in heavenly liturgy is again hazardous.

## 4. The Curses

In 4Q280 (=4QCurses) is found another reference to “Melki-resha”. Some authors have concluded to the existence of his positive counterpart, “Melchi-zedek”. But this hypothesis is, again, very daring. In addition, it is not clear whether Melki-resha‘ is an angelic figure or rather a human one. If the latter is the case, little help would be found for the theory of a common tradition of the Qumran texts worshipping an angelic Melchi-zedek figure.

## 5. 2 Hen 69-73

On much better ground are we with the last five chapters of the Second or Slavonic Book of Enoch: 2 (*Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch (Late First Century A.D.). Appendix: 2 Henoch in Merilo Pravednoe. A New Translation and Introduction by F. I. ANDERSON, in: CHARLESWORTH I, pp. 91-221. For the interpretation see the two studies by CHARLES H. GIESCHEN (quoted above, p. 27).*

In chapters 1-68, the Second Book of Enoch gives a rather dark summary of the history of humankind, in part based on 1 Enoch. Primeval sin plays an important role, and the divine punishment with the sending of the flood. In the end-times, God will again take revenge for the sins committed. Enoch instructs his audience about the things to come. The chapters 69-73 seem to be an appendix to the preceding chapters, added perhaps by a different author, but remaining in the same line of thought and dating roughly from the same time of composition. Here is introduced Melchizedek. The emphasis is on his priesthood. He is born without participation of a man and after the death of his mother. When he is taken out the womb of his mother, he is already a boy of three years of age, knows to sit and to speak and has the divine name written on his chest. Hypotheses that these traits were invented in dependence from early Christian texts have found little acceptance, and the Jewish origin of such a tradition is more easily accepted. In his priestly dignity and authority, Melchizedek is capable of delivering his people from sin and divine punishment. But before this happens, he is taken away from his family to Paradise in order to be saved from the deluge. This is where the story ends.

Melchizedek may be called “angelomorphic” in this tradition, but he is also human. He is an eschatological figure relevant for salvation and bestowed with a priestly dignity which is not linked with Levitical priesthood. This is what makes him similar also to Melchizedek in 11Q and in a sense even to Christ in Hebrews.

#### 6. 11QMelchizedek

This text is an authentic document of the Qumran community. It expresses clearly their dualistic and eschatological ideology. The fragment about Melchizedek is preserved only in part. It starts with an interpretation of the precepts regarding the Jubilee in Lev 25 and similar texts (Dtn 15, Ps 7 and 82). The interpretation is given in *peshet* style. The “release” prescribed in the Mosaic Law for the Year of the Jubilee is interpreted as an eschatological liberation of the captives of Israel and in particular of the “inheritance of Melchizedek” and their teachers (col. II, 4-6). Melchizedek seems to be the leader of the righteous ones, “the lot of Melchizedek” (II, 8) who will find grace and will be victorious, opposed to “Belial and the spirits of his lot, wh[o ...] turn[ing aside] from the commandments of God to [commit evil]” (II, 12). Melchizedek will take vengeance, and thus peace will be established. Thus far, Melchizedek could be an angelic figure or even a human one. He is presented as an eschatological redeemer to whom salvation is entrusted. Elements of royal or priestly dignity are mentioned, with the words of Daniel (9,25): “Until an anointed, a prince, it is seven weeks” (II, 18).

Things become more complicated with the end of col. II. Isa 52,7 is quoted [“Saying to Zi]on: your God rules.” “[Zi]on” i[s] [the congregation of all the sons of justice, those] who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking [on the pa]th of the people. And “your God” is [... Melchizedek, who will fr]e[e them from the ha]nd of Belial. And as for what he said: “You shall blow the hor[n in] all the [l]and of ..” (Lev 25,9) (II, 23-25).

Again, the reconstruction is very uncertain, but a number of authors are inclined to take the text of the edition of García Martínez literally, which sees in Melchizedek God himself. See for this interpretation the monograph, based on a dissertation of the Pontifical Biblical Institute under the supervision of A. Vanhoye, by FRANCO MANZI, *Melchisedek e l’angelologia nell’Epistola agli Ebrei e a Qumran* (AnBib 136, Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1997) with the summary on pp. 262f. According to the author, Melchi-zedek is less a proper name than an attribute of God, being King of Justice, opposed to the rulers of the wicked. He himself and no one else brings salvation and frees from the hands of Belial. Caution towards this proposal is suggested, again, since its textual basis is weak and the name of Melchizedek himself in line 25 is based on a reconstruction. According to F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ himself (‘Las tradiciones sobre Melquisedec en los manuscritos de Qumran’, *Bibl.* 81, 2000, 70-80), Melchizedek in 11Q is a “celestial Messiah” announced for the salvation of the righteous ones at the end of time, at the beginning of the last Jubilee. It should be noted that ANNETTE STEUDEL in her edition and translation of the Qumran texts reads the word “the prince” (הַשֵּׁר) after “your God” at the end of col. II of 11Q13: “And ‘your G[o]d’ is the [prince (?) Melchisedek, who will fre]e them etc.” This understanding does not identify Melchizedek with God, but with an eschatological prince and saviour, who frees from the hand of Belial, his opponent.

## 7. Melchizedek in Hebrews

Contemporary authors agree that there is hardly a direct connection between the figure of Melchizedek in the Qumran and Apocryphal Literature and in the Letter to the Hebrews. The differences are striking: in the Qumran texts, a straight reference to Gen 14,17-20 is not given. Melchizedek is supposed from OT tradition, but Genesis is not quoted. Even less is there found any reference to Ps 110,4. We have noticed this fact earlier, and it is of extreme importance for the understanding of Heb 7. If the author of Hebrews introduced the use of Ps 110,4 into his argument, there are two possibilities: either he created this “theologoumenon”, or he took recourse to tradition. The latter possibility appears as the more probable one. Cf. now DEBORAH

W. ROOKE, 'Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7', *Bibl.* 81 (2000) 81-94. The author distinguishes two ways of priesthood in the OT: the Levitical one, which she calls 'functional', and a royal one, which she calls 'ontological'. The priests of the Levitical order fulfilled their functions of regular sacrifice in the sanctuaries of Israel. In contrast to them, the King in Israel had a priestly dignity which derived from his divine generation and installment, cf. Ps 2,7 in connection with 110,4. Hebrews would have made use of both priestly traditions of the OT, in contrast to the Qumran texts which also know about non-Levitical priests, but do not make use of the royal tradition, at least the one based on the Psalms.

What the Qumran (and Apocryphal) Texts and Hebrews have in common is the idea of a Melchizedek as an eschatological priestly agent who brings salvation, coming from the heavenly realm and intervening in history to save the people of God.

## 8<sup>th</sup> lecture: Christ, minister of a heavenly cult replacing the one of the Old Covenant (Heb 8)

### 1. Context

In the proposal of A. Vanhoye, chapters 8-9 form the central part of the long doctrinal section Heb 7,1 – 10,18. This proposal, however, is not generally accepted. Many authors consider Heb 7 as a text of its own with its comparison of a cult according to the order of Melchizedek and according to the Levitical order. On the other side, there are good reasons to consider chapters 8,1 – 10,18 as a coherent unit, treating the sacrifice of Christ in its superiority over against the one of the old order. Authors who divide the text in this way are among others J. SWETNAM, 'Form and Content in Hebrews 7 – 13', *Bibl.* 55 (1974) 333-348; HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE, *Hebrews* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress 1989), with an article in FS. K. Stendhal (cf. p. 216).

Authors agree to a large extent as to the minor divisions of these chapters. Until now, the arrangement of the text seems to lack some coherence, and a number of repetitions are not sufficiently explained. We propose here to apply to this long textual unit (8,1 – 10,18) the tools of structural semantics. The shift from unit to unit may be explained at least in part by a change of emphasis on either space or time or persons involved or action:

- 8,1-6 The superiority of the real, heavenly cult in comparison with the earthly one: space
- 8,7-13: The superiority of the New Covenant in comparison with the Old one: time
- 9,1-10.11-14: The sanctuary of the Old Covenant and the insufficiency of its cult; Christ as High Priest of the more perfect sanctuary and a cult which grants perfection: space
- 9,15-22: Christ mediator of the New Covenant: time
- 9,23-28: Christ entering into the heavenly sanctuary: space
- 10,1-4.5-10: The inefficiency of the many annual sacrifices in the old era and the efficiency of the single one of Christ in the new: time, activity
- 10,11.12-18: The inefficiency of the many daily sacrifices in the old era and the efficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ in the New Covenant: time, activity.

The coherence of chapters 8,1 – 10,18 is underlined by the inclusion of the quotation from Jer 31,31-34 in Heb 8,8-12 and (in part) 10,16f. This has been observed also by Attridge.

In his shift from spatial to temporal categories, our author shows indebted to two different areas of cultural influence: Hellenism and Platonism for a dualism in spatial terms and the world of

the Bible and Jewish Apocalypics for a dualism in temporal terms. The biblical imagery of the relation between heavenly and earthly sanctuary will need a special treatment.

2. The superiority of the real, heavenly cult in comparison with the earthly one (vv. 1-6)

The *structure* of these six verses is characterized by a shift from the heavenly cult, offered by the High Priest Jesus, to the earthly one, offered by human priests of the Levitical order:

- vv. 1-2: Jesus seated at the right hand of God, minister of the heavenly sanctuary
- vv. 3-5: Jesus offering a celestial sacrifice, not an earthly one as the priests of the order of Moses who serve the earthly sanctuary, built according to the model of the celestial one
- v. 6: Jesus, servant of the more perfect cult as the mediator of a New Covenant.

*Text and translation:* Some variants, in particular of the Western text, try to help understanding: the καί in v. 2, the γάρ in v. 4 and the addition of τῶν ἱερέων and τόν in the same verse. The unusual τέτυχεν (from τυγχάνω, “to achieve, obtain”, attested also elsewhere) in v. 6 has led to a number of variants, but might have been original.

For the translation see the current exegesis. One of the more debated concepts is the one of κεφάλαιον at the beginning of v. 1. Although the word may mean “capital, sum” (Acts 22,28), here the meaning seems to be “the main point”.

*Interpretation:* vv.1-2 In a sense, the author arrives at the “sum” of the preceding verses about Jesus being the High Priest who did not need to offer sacrifice for his own sins, but arrived at heavenly perfection. On the other side, Jesus being High Priest in heaven, seated at the Right Hand of God, being in charge of the Heavenly Sanctuary, is also the “main point” of the author. It is noteworthy that the grammatical subject of the first two verses (being one single sentence) is “we”. This observation helps to overcome the danger of an exaggerated Christocentrism in Hebrews. The author never loses his audience out of sight, and all doctrinal expositions in chapters 7-10 serve the purpose of preparing the readers to take their decisions of faith, hope and love, as J. SWETNAM rightly observes. From the literary point of view, the whole section prepares the paraenetic sections at the end of the Letter (10,19 – 13,25). The dignity of Christ is deduced again from Ps 110,1, and in this sense the influence of the Psalm is not limited to Heb 7. The verse will be referred to again in 10,12, forming in this way an additional inclusion which

binds together chapters 8,1 – 10,18 (Attridge; Swetnam). Jesus is the cultic minister of the Sanctuary and the true Tent in heaven. Again, our author uses the language attributed to the Sanctuary in the Wilderness rather than the one referred to the Sanctuary in Jerusalem. This confirms again that his basis in tradition is rather Scripture than the experience of the Temple cult in Jerusalem. The heavenly Sanctuary has been built by the “Lord” (God), not by human hands. This opposition is characteristic for Hellenistic Judaism and Hellenistic Jewish Christianity (see below 9,11.24; Acts 7,48 Stephen’s Speech; 17,24 Paul’s Speech on the Aeropagus).

Vv. 3-5: From the building, the author moves to the cult. High Priests have to make offerings. In v. 4, Jesus seems to be the subject: if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there were already priests who offered their sacrifices according to the Law (of Moses). By implication follows that the priesthood of Christ must take place in heaven (*quod erat demonstrandum*). The priests who bring their offerings according to the Law are ministers of “copies” and “shadows”. The scriptural basis for this affirmation is the passage in the Book of Exodus where God instructs Moses about the Sanctuary to be built: it should be built “according to the model shown to you (Moses) on the mountain” (Ex 25,40, cf. 25,9). For this text see: HERMUT LÖHR, ‘>Umriss< und >Schatten<. Bemerkungen zur Zitierung von Ex 25,40 in Hebr 8’, *ZNW* 84 (1993) 218-232. This text seems to be late. It is attributed to the Sacerdotal Code or a redaction of it. This brings us near to Hellenistic times. But notice also the difference: Exodus does not distinguish a heavenly reality and a heavenly cult as the very cult wanted by God and to be imitated by humans down on earth. God reveals to Moses only the “model” (in Hebrew תְּבַנִּית) of the sanctuary to be built on earth and to be the real sanctuary of the cult wanted by God. This is why the “model” is also shown to Moses on the mountain and not in heaven! Philo has a conception nearer to the one found in Hebrews. But, as Löhr notes, in Philo Moses is the real architect of the Sanctuary, and Bezalel the person who has to execute the commands given by Moses (cf. for this collaborator of Moses Ex 31,2; 35,30; 36,1-2, 37,1-2, 38,22 TM). The relevant texts of Philo are: All. 3,102; Plant. 27 and Somn. 1,206 (cf. Quaest. in Ex. 2,82; VitMos 2,74ff: Löhr, 230ff.). In this sense, Philo is nearer to the original of the Bible than the author of Hebrews who seems to have undergone stronger Hellenistic influence than Philo himself in this regard. Further questions of the history of religions cannot be treated here, but see in this regard the commentary by KOESTER ad locum.

*Verse 6:* In the last verse of the paragraph, the author moves from spatial to temporal dualism. Christ is not only the minister of a heavenly cult, but also the mediator of a new covenant. With the introduction of this concept, the author initiates a whole section dedicated to the New Covenant and extending until 8,13. The New Covenant is qualified as a “better” one, since it is based on “more valuable promises”. It will not replace the Old one, but bring it close to disappearance (8,13).

### 3. The superiority of the New Covenant in comparison with the Old one (vv. 7-13)

*Grammar and structure:* The paragraph begins with a conditional clause in the *irrealis* of the present: if the first covenant were without blame, no new one was needed (v. 7); this is the *maior* of the syllogism. The *minor* sounds: a new one has been announced in fact, what is proved by the quotation of Jer 31(38),31-34 in vv. 8-12. From this follows the *conclusio*: the old one is in fact superseded and close to disappearance (v. 13).

*Text:* In the introductory verses, there are hardly variants. B\* reads in v. 7 ἐτέρως instead of δευτέρως, but remains alone with this variant, which for the rest does not change the meaning. The quotation of Jer 31(38),31-34 follows faithfully the LXX as we have it. Some deviations from the text found in Rahlfs are attested by major manuscripts: λέγει instead of φησίν in v. 8 or the omission of δώσω after διδούς in v. 10 etc. The variants for the verb expressing “making” a covenant in v. 8 and 9 are stylistic. The verb used by LXX διατίθεμαι comes in v. 10.

*Interpretation:* Basic for the long quotation is the fact that the Covenant from Sinai has no longer power, since the Israelites did not remain faithful to it, and so God had to abandon it (v. 9), replacing it by the announcement of a new one, based on a Law written onto the hearts of the people and no longer on tables of stone (Ez 6,326f.). The double consequence will be knowledge of God and forgiveness of sins. It is important to see that the two covenants are not opposed to each other by the difference of partners of the alliance and the replacement of Israel by a new entity (the Christians), but by their mediator. As Moses was the mediator of the former covenant, Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant in the eyes of our text. This leaves open the question how far Israel still enjoys this partnership. The answer will depend on the response of faith in Jesus, not on provenance. For the Christian use of Jer 31,31-34 in the NT see in particular the tradition of the Eucharist Luke 22,20; Mt 26,28; Mark 14,24; 1 Cor 11,25. Paul and Luke are more explicit in their reference to Jer than Mark and Matthew.

## 9<sup>th</sup> lecture: The sanctuary of the Old Covenant and the insufficiency of its cult; Christ as High Priest of the more perfect sanctuary and a cult which grants perfection (Heb 9,1-14)

Lit.: STANLEY, STEVE, 'Hebrews 9:6-10: The "Parable" of the Tabernacle', *NT 37* (1995) 385-399.

### 1. Text and translation

In v. 1, it is not wholly clear, to which substantive refers ἡ πρώτη. A number of Minuscule manuscripts and Latin texts add σκηνή. This is to be rejected since there is no evidence from Majuscule mss. and from the point of view of grammar, the adjective should be referred to διαθήκη, supposed in the preceding verse 8,13 (Stanley, with the recent commentators). The addition of και το χρυσουν θυμιατηριον in v. 2 (B sa<sup>mss</sup> etc.) seems to come from v. 4. The original reading for the "Holy of Holies" in v. 3 is doubtful. Nestle-Aland prefers the (almost) shortest reading. μελλόντων instead of γενομένων in v. 11 could be a tentative of making the text more understandable. Very old text tradition is against it. πνεύματος ἁγίου in v. 14 instead of αἰωνίου may be influenced by v. 8 and should be secondary.

As to the translation: δικαιώματα λατρείας in v. 1 is not accepted LXX language and seems to mean "legislation concerning cult". κοσμικόν in the same verse means "of this world", "on this earth" (Jerusalem Bible). σκηνή means literally "tent" and may be rendered this way; it stands for the sanctuary of Israel as described and prescribed in Ex 25-31; 35-40. θυμιατήριον in v. 4 stands for a place or instrument of incense offering, but the meaning seems to be "altar of incense". For the problems rising from this usage see below. The expression ἱλαστήριον in v. 5 renders Hebrew מִזְבֵּחַ, English "throne of mercy" (Jerusalem Bible), i. e. the cover of the ark where atonement took place.

### 2. Structure

The textual unit is framed by references to "cult" (λατρεία, λατρεύω) in vv. 1 and 14. Two subsections can be recognized: vv. 1-10, framed by δικαιώματα, and vv. 11-14, framed by Χριστός, Χριστοῦ. In the first subsection, the cult of the outer and of the inner sanctuary are opposed to each other, in the second section subsection both are opposed to the real cult in the real sanctuary, offered by Christ (cf. Stanley).

### 3. Interpretation

#### a) The sanctuary of the Old Covenant and the insufficiency of its cult (vv. 1-10)

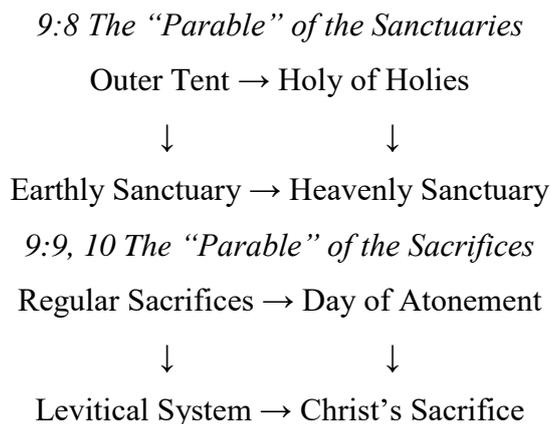
Vv. 1-5 describe the sanctuary of the Old Covenant in a number of short sentences. The description is taken from the Book of Exodus, chapters 25-31 and 35-40. There are, however, some additions and some modifications. For the content of the ark, the author adds two elements not mentioned in the chapters of Exodus quoted above: the Manna, which should be stored in front of the ark according to Ex 16,33, and the branch of Aaron, which grew the buds, from Num 17,25, which should be placed in front of the ark as well. According to our author, these elements would be found in the ark itself. The other element which creates difficulties is the altar of incense offerings. According to Ex 30,6; 40,5.26f this altar should be found in front of the veil which separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies, according to our author, the place of this altar would be inside the Holy of Holies. Again, one might think that he either was not well informed or inattentive, since he later affirms that the High Priest entered the “Second Tent” only once a year in order to work atonement by the rite of Yom Kippur (v. 7). Thus, he could not offer daily incense offerings as prescribed by the Law (Ex 30,6ff).

Our author gives a summary description of the “first” and the “second” tent, as he calls the two sections of the sanctuary of the desert. The grammatical subject of v. 1 is still the “covenant”, but the attention moves to the first and second tent. V. 2 describes the part of the sanctuary in front of the veil, with the menorah, the table and the presentation of loaves, vv. 3-5 describe the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies with the ark and its content and the altar for incenses (see above). This arrangement prepares for the twofold activity of the priests in the sanctuary.

Vv. 6-10 form one long sentence. It is divided into the description of the cult in the outer sanctuary (v. 6) and of the inner sanctuary (v. 7) and then an evaluation in the light of the “Holy Spirit” (vv. 8-10). The difference between the cult in the “Holy” Place and the one in the “Holy of Holies” is in the fact that in the former sanctuary enter the priests on a regular basis for making their sacrifice, while there is access to the second sanctuary only once a year for the High Priest, who brings offerings for his own trespasses and those of the people. In the light of the Spirit, the author sees in this arrangement of place and time a symbolism (in Greek παραβολή, v. 9), insofar as the first tent symbolizes the old covenant and the second one the

new, as the daily sacrifices symbolize the old order and the sacrifice offered once a year symbolizes the new one. In the old order, the offering made of food and drink and the praxis of different washings are unable to grant perfection, since they are of fleshly nature, ordered for the time until the renewal.

Stanley has brought out the argument of the author in a convincing scheme, which shows the sequence of comparisons:



“In this παραβολή, then, there are two areas of correspondence. First, the outer tent is to the Holy of Holies as the earthly tent is to the heavenly tent (according to v. 9 the παραβολή is for the ‘present time’, and v. 11 makes the connection between the ‘good things which are’ and the heavenly tent). Second, the daily sacrifices are to the Day of Atonement as the levitical sacrifices altogether are to the sacrifice of Christ” (Stanley, p. 398).

- b) Christ as High Priest of the more perfect sanctuary and a cult which grants perfection (vv. 11-14)

In vv. 1-10, there was already a comparison between the outer and the inner tent as a “parable” of the relation between the old and the new order of salvation, and the same comparison was established between the sacrifices offered in the outer tent on a daily basis by the priests and the one of the inner tent offered once a year by the High Priest as symbols for the coming order, which should bring definite and efficient salvation. Our author now takes up this double imagery and leads it one step further.

Grammatically, vv. 11-14 consist of two sentences: vv. 11-12 and 13-14. From the semantic point of view, there is a chiasm between the positive statements about Christ and his work of salvation in vv. 11 and 14 and the inefficient old system of atonement described in vv. 12-13,

with v. 12 combining both aspects. While in vv. 11-12 there is a simple opposition of facts, in vv. 13-14 is found an argument *a fortiori* (*qal wahomer*): “if” ... “how much more”.

Vv. 11-12: Five elements are taken up from vv. 7: the “High Priest”, “entering”, “blood”, “once” and “tent”. They all are led one step further. Christ has arrived as a High Priest of “the good things which have come into being”. He has “entered” the tent of the heavenly sanctuary “once and for all” (ἐφάπαξ), “through the better and more perfect tent not made by human hands”, and this not with the blood of animals, but “with his own blood, having won an eternal redemption”. The most debated question is what is meant by “διὰ ... σκηνης”. A survey of the various interpretations is given at length in the commentary by ATTRIDGE. His own proposal seems to be the most simple and the most convincing one: by “tent” our author does not mean the body of Christ, sacramental or not, but the heavenly sanctuary through which Christ passes on his way to the right hand of the Father. In difference with 4,14, where the “heavens” still seem to be a created reality, in our verse (11), a sanctuary “not made by human hands” is intended, being part of the heavenly realm. The allusions to the blood “of goats and bull calves” are again imprecise references to the cult of the Day of Atonement (where one bull, two rams and one he-goat had to be offered, Attridge).

Vv. 13-14: In chiasmic order, these elements of the cult of atonement are taken up again, and the blood of the heifer mentioned in Num 19,9.17 is added, which originally does not make part of the rite of the Yom Kippur, but belongs to the ritual for cleansing after a case of uncleanness, and in the Bible is not connected with the activity of the High Priest. The argument of our text is: if already the rites of atonement and cleansing in the old order worked some kind of purity, how much more would the perfect offering of Christ in his own blood. This offering is or was an offering “through an eternal Spirit”, a much debated expression – at least an argument for the participation of God’s Spirit in the work of salvation. The redemption worked by the offering of Christ is seen not only in the being of the redeemed, but also in their action: they are cleansed from dead works, in order to “serve” the living God. At this important point of the Letter, the author proves again that he is not only interested in instructing the readers about Christ and his role as a mediator and redeemer, but also and before all in moving them towards conversion, “to serve the living God.”

## 10<sup>th</sup> lecture: Christ mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9,15-22)

### 1. Context and delimitation

As we saw, our text moves in chapters 9 and 10 between sections dedicated to the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary and sections dedicated to the Old and the New Covenant. While the preceding verses 9,1-14 treated the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary, the following verses 15-22 will deal with the Old and the New Covenant, before the final section of chapter 9, taking up the subject of the two sanctuaries again in vv. 23-28.

Authors do not wholly agree about v. 23. According to a number of contributors, the verse would round up the section, beginning in v. 15. This is, for instance, the opinion of A. Vanhoye, who sees in vv. 18-22 a concentric structure (built around the “blood of the covenant” in v. 20), with v. 23 being the transition to the following verses 24-28, with the concepts of “heaven” and “heavenly” as “hook words”. But it may be justified as well to consider v. 22 to be the conclusion of vv. 15-22 because of the shift to spatial categories in v. 23. In this case, “heaven” and “heavenly” in vv. 23 and 24 would only be key words characterizing the beginning of the new paragraph.

### 2. Text and translation

Most verses of the text do not present serious difficulties. The *μη τότε* in v. 17 remains isolated. The same holds true for the lack of the articles *της* and *των* in v. 19. More serious is the question of shorter or longer text in the same verse for the animals of sacrifice. The lack of unanimity for the wording of the longer versions raises suspicion. Probably the “he-goats” (*τράγοι*) have been added from v. 12 to the “calves” (*μόσχοι*). Nestle-Aland puts them into square brackets.

The most debated concept, as far as translation is concerned, is the one of *διαθήκη*. Roughly, three opinions can be distinguished: those who try to maintain the meaning “covenant” all through the paragraph; those who try to translate consistently with “testament”; and those who switch from “covenant” or “disposition” in v. 15 to “testament” in vv. 16-17. This seems to be the most reasonable proposal, and it is backed up by most modern commentators. Of course, the text moves back to “covenant” or “disposition” in v. 20.

### 3. Grammatical coherence

It is recommended to consider vv. 15-22 as a unit. This is confirmed by a short syntactic analysis. While the initial διὰ τοῦτο points back to the preceding verses, the remainder of the verses of the paragraph is connected by causal conjunctions: v. 16 follows from v. 15 (γάρ), v. 17 from v. 16 (γάρ), v. 18 from v. 17 (ὅθεν) and v. 19 from v. 18 (γάρ). The following verses are closely connected with v. 19: participles in v. 19 preparing the main verb ἐρράντισεν, a new participle in v. 20 preparing for a second ἐρράντισεν in v. 21. The two indicatives present of v. 22 are logically linked to the preceding verses and describe a rule which places the activity of Moses reported previously into a broader context.

### 4. Interpretation on the semantic level

*Verse 15:* The argument of the author supposes a connection between the shedding of blood in sacrifice and atonement. Jesus has been described in vv. 13-14 as the one who offered his blood in sacrifice, more worthy and powerful than the blood of animal sacrifices. It is for this reason (διὰ τοῦτο) that he is the mediator of a new covenant. (The only διὰ τοῦτο in Hebrews outside our passage: Heb 2,1, points equally back). The readers remember of course the “New Covenant”, since Jesus has already been introduced as the mediator of a better covenant (8,6), and the quotation from Jer 31(38),31-34 had been given at length in 8,8-12. Essential part of the promise of Jer 31 was the remission of sins. This element is now taken up. By the death of Christ, sins are forgiven (the members of the First Covenant are set free). The positive side of the covenant may have been inspired by other covenants, particularly the one offered more than once to Abraham: to receive the “heritage” – even an “eternal” one.

There is a debate about the precise meaning of θανάτου γενομένου at the beginning of our verse. The Revised Standard Version translates: “since a death has occurred”, and a number of commentators, particularly in the English speaking area, follow this proposal. It situates the death of Christ in the past and understands the participle accordingly. There are serious reasons to doubt this proposal since a participle (aorist, perfect) in a final clause normally names a condition under which something should arrive. This is why Blass-Debrunner in their Grammar (§ 339) speak of a “concomitant” use of such participles: an event goes along with another event aimed at in the future. If this understanding of our participle is accepted, the death of Christ is an event of the future.

A doctoral student of our Institute has presented a paper and prepares a thesis (Robert Abeynaike) spelling out the consequences of this reading. The question is, when Christ became the mediator of a New Covenant. According to this line of interpretation (prepared by other authors like B. Weiss and F. Dibelius at the beginning of the last century, but see also M. Luther), this should have been at the Last Supper. It was there, that Christ spoke about his blood as the “blood of the (new) covenant” “for many / the forgiveness of sins” (cf. Mt 26,28; Mk 14,24; Lk 22,20; 1 Cor 11,24).

*Verses 16-17:* The key word διαθήκη allows the author to move to a related concept: the one of the “testament”. While the meaning “covenant” is biblical language, the meaning “testament” is the accepted one in Greek literature and non-literary texts. The use of double meaning in rhetoric is called *reflexio* (see the reference in the commentary by CRAIG R. KOESTER, 425 with note 301). It does not make sense to see the meaning “covenant” continuing in vv. 16-17, since the making of a covenant does not suppose necessarily the death of one of the partners. This is only the case for testaments, where the testator has to die so that the testament might become valid and its effects operative. Paul, in Gal 3,15-18, plays with the double sense of the Greek word, but omits the element of the death of the testator, focussing on the validity of a divine promise.

*Verses 19-22:* In the following verses, one element of the death of the testator (and mediator of the New Covenant) is singled out and developed: the shedding of blood. With this element, the author returns to the understanding of “διαθήκη” as “covenant”. As in v. 15, he speaks of the “first covenant”. As becomes manifest in the following verses, he thinks of the covenant of Sinai. It was there, that Moses sprinkled the people and the book (rather: the altar!) with blood. The text refers explicitly to the making of the covenant according to Ex 24,3-8. It was there, that the book of the Law was read to the people and the whole people agreed to accept its ordinances. It was there, that Moses took the blood of the bullocks he had sacrificed and sprinkled the people and the altar with it. It was there that he said: “This is the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has made with you, containing all these rules” (Jerusalem Bible).

It is worth while, nonetheless, to see also the differences between this Exodus tradition and the version given by the author of Hebrews. According to Hebrews, Moses took the blood of “calves (and goats)”, which does not correspond precisely to the “holocausts and bullocks” in Ex. Alien from the Sinai tradition is the use of “water, scarlet wool and hyssop”. They are taken

at least in part (without “water”) from the ritual of the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14,4) and of a person who had touched a corpse (Num 19,6). Also the sprinkling of the book of the Law by Moses is not reported by Ex. It takes the place of the sprinkling of the altar.

The words of Moses have equally undergone some slight modification. Instead of saying: “Ἴδου τὸ αἶμα τῆς διαθήκης” Moses says in Hebrews: “Τοῦτο τὸ αἶμα τῆς διαθήκης” – a wording closer to the one used in the Eucharist. The verb used is equally modified, and the subject offering the covenant is God (not the Kyrios). Important is that the basis of the covenant “περὶ πάντων τῶν λόγων τούτων” is omitted in Hebrews. The basis of the covenant is no longer the Law but the blood of Christ.

In the remaining two verses (21-22), other rites of “sprinkling” with blood are mentioned: the inauguration of the first altars according to Lev 8,15.19; Ex 40,9 (where in fact Moses only puts some blood on the altar) and possibly the purification of the people on the Day of Atonement (according to Lev 17,11). What is the meaning of all these references? The author of Hebrews sees in the bloody death of Christ at the cross the fulfilment of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant and the basis for a New Covenant for the definite remission of sins. Where there is ritual outpouring of blood, there is atonement and covenant. This is why he takes from various traditions of Israel in order to place his thesis on a broad basis.

## 5. Final reflection

The idea that the salvation of the Christian believer is based on the shedding of the blood of Christ is alien to modern thought. It is for this reason that a reflection about the moment of the offering of Christ merits attention. Christ did not “sacrifice” himself on the cross. He would not even have been able to do such a thing in the given circumstances. What is still possible and what according to the gospels in fact occurred is Christ’s voluntary offering of himself on the eve of his passion in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is there that he took the cup, “and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying: ‘Drink it, all of you; for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Mt 26,27). The “blood” may stand here as a metaphor for Christ’s readiness to bear the consequences of his “existence for others” (“Proexistenz”, as H. Schürmann would say). This blood would be shed by the Roman authorities crucifying Jesus, “King of the Jews”, for his commitment for the poor and the outlaws. This aspect of the Passion should not be forgotten.

## 11<sup>th</sup> lecture: Christ entering into the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9,23-28)

### 1. Context

We had observed in Heb 8-10 a shift from the spatial paradigm to the more temporal one of the two covenants. In Heb 8,1-6 we found the idea of the two sanctuaries, in 8,7-12 the New Covenant, in 9,1-14 again the two sanctuaries and in 9,15-22 again the New Covenant. At the end of the preceding section, the author had mentioned the cleansing of the “Tent” and all the sacred vessels by blood and enlarged this perspective, adding the cleansing of all sacred objects by blood (9,21f). By this way, a return to the idea of the two sanctuaries is already prepared. The “hook word” καθαρίζεσθαι “cleansing” connects 9,15-22 with 9,23-28, linking v. 22 with v. 23. (This is an alternative proposal to the one made by Vanhoye in seeing in “heaven”, “heavenly” in vv. 23 and 24 such a “hook word”). Indeed, the idea of “cleansing” seems to be more central for vv. 23(24)-28 than “heaven”, “heavenly”, since the emphasis is more on activity than on space.

### 2. Text and translation

The textual unit presents relatively few variants. In v. 26, 1908 *pc* sa read ἀποθανεῖν instead of παθεῖν, but this reading is too poorly attested. At the end of this verse, the plural “sins”, attested by D, may be accommodation to more accepted language. The article before the singular is not attested too well, but by serious manuscripts like Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus and should be retained with Nestle-Aland (who puts it into square brackets). Salvation “by faith” in v. 28 sounds Pauline and is better omitted with the older and broader manuscript tradition.

For the translation, it is important to recognize the double instrumental dative in v. 23. The τούτοις at the beginning seems to point back to the preceding verses. In v. 26, the ἔδει is an *irrealis* of the past with the meaning: “it would have been necessary”.

### 3. Syntax and argument

Two different kinds of *sygkrisis* can be recognized in our text: a simple comparison in v. 23, a comparison by opposition in vv. 24-26 and a simple *sygkrisis* in vv. 27-28. In v. 24 the opposition is of local nature, in vv. 25-26 it is of temporal nature (“many times” – “once”).

This “once” leads also to the following verses 27-28. Here, the death of a person which occurs just once is compared to the unique sacrifice of Christ, before his final coming.

#### 4. Interpretation on the semantic level

*Verse 23* is transitional. It is for this reason that it is connected with the preceding context by some authors. From the preceding verses, the idea of “cleansing” is taken up and now applied to the whole world of the earthly sanctuary, which – being only the “copies” of the heavenly things – have to be cleansed by “such things” as mentioned before: sprinkling with water, blood and hyssop. The heavenly things themselves need to be cleansed by better sacrifices. This sentence lacks sense if separated from the argument of the author that Christ has entered into the heavenly sanctuary (see above, vv. 11 and 12, and below, vv. 24-26).

*Verse 24* describes the difference between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary in spatial categories: Christ did not enter the Holy Place made by human hand (down on earth, of this creation, cf. v. 11), which is only “a copy of the true one”, but heaven itself, in order to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (RSV). For the idea of Christ interceding for his own in heaven see Rom 8,34.

*Verses 25-26* move to a comparison between the old and the new cultic order in temporal categories. There are three elements of comparison, which however are incomplete in the application to the old order: “often, once a year” – “once”, “offering blood not his own” – “offering his own blood”, and “remission of sin(s) through the sacrifice”, not mentioned for the old order. The key point of the argument seems to be the opposition between the many sacrifices (which did not achieve abiding atonement) and the one sacrifice of Christ which worked reconciliation. This is underlined by the argument that, if Christ’s offering had been of the nature of the ones of the old order, he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of creation – an absurd idea. To the course of history with ever new sacrifices is opposed “the end of the age” (RSV) in which Christ has become manifest, to the “High Priest” is opposed Jesus, whom the reader remembers to be the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. It is in this context, that our author speaks of the “sacrifice” (θυσία) of Christ. The concept had occurred before, mostly applied to priests or High Priests in general (cf. 5,1; 7,27; 8,3; 9,9), and will be taken up in a Christological sense in 10,1-18. Here in 9,26 it refers back to the “better sacrifices” of v. 23, rounding up this little section of vv. 23-26.

*Verses 27-28* take up the concept of “once (and for all)” and the reference to the fulfilment of time from the preceding v. 26. Whereas in vv. 25-26 the sacrifice of Christ, offered just once was opposed to the annually repeated Levitical sacrifices of atonement, now a common element of the atoning death of Christ and human death as such is elaborated. For human beings, there comes death and then judgment. This our author can suppose as a common conviction of his readers, be them Christian or Jewish. The logical continuation would be, that also for Christ first comes death and then judgment (cf. Koester ad loc.). This, of course, does not make sense. Christ, dying once, does not have to face judgment. He even helps to face judgment by bringing atonement from sin – a clear reference to the atoning death of the Servant of Yahweh according to Isa 53,12. With this death, the power of sin has already been broken in principle, and that is why Christ can be expected to bring salvation on the day of his second coming. For this reason, even those who have died will not have to fear divine judgment, but will be able to meet their saviour. – Albert Vanhoye sees in the final concept of “salvation” the announcement of a new subject: “cause d’un salut éternel”, according to the three elements of 5,9f, which according to V. announce the structure of Heb 5,11 – 10,18: “and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (RSV). We remember, that V. saw the reference to Melchizedek spelled out in ch. 7, “made perfect” in chs. 8-9 and “source of eternal salvation” in Heb 10,1-18. This division appeared to us slightly artificial. The order of the elements is not the one of the following text. Chapters 8-9 work constantly with the opposition of the old and the new order, the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary and the Old and the New Covenant, so that they are Christological by way of constant parallelism. Christ being “made perfect” does not belong to the vocabulary of chapters 8-9. It is more the salvation of the readers which is aimed at. The same problem poses itself with Heb 10,1-18. Again, “salvation” is considered in constant contrast to the old order which was unable to bring lasting salvation. It would be good to take account of this technique of comparison and contrast in the titles given to the sections of Heb 7,1 – 10,18 and to see that the aim of the author is rather Soteriology than Christology. This is confirmed by the final key word of our section: “salvation”.

## 5. Rhetoric and pragmatics

The double technique of *sygkrisis* used in our section (by simple comparison and by contrast) would fit well with the epideictic genre of Ancient Discourse. Such discourses show the excellence and the virtues of the hero or the perversity of his adversary. Comparison is one of the

rhetorical devices which serve this purpose. We have, however, to be careful in the application of this device to our section. It is not directly the person of Christ who is opposed to the High Priests of the old order or other characters. As we said at the end of section 4, above, our author seems to be more interested in Soteriology than in Christology. Thus, salvation brought by Christ is opposed to the tentative of bringing salvation in the old order. The excellence of the new order consists in the better sanctuary and in the better sacrifice, offered once and for all, working lasting atonement.

The lesson for the readers consists precisely in this: they can have confidence that they believe in a Saviour who is able to grant them eternal salvation, now and in the moment of their death and judgment, a salvation which will become manifest at the end of time in the Parousia. They do not need the institutions of atonement of the old order any longer since there is eternal salvation offered by Christ to all who believe in him. Whether our author intends explicitly to discourage Christian readers to return to their previous Jewish belief and practices, as B. Lindars opines (see above, p. 12), is hard to decide, but it remains a possibility.

#### 6. Diachronic perspective

We have given some references already to the Jewish and Early Christian background of the opposition of a sanctuary made by human hands and another sanctuary, not built by human hands. It may be recorded on this occasion, that this distinction already plays a role in the Jewish trial of Jesus according to Mk 14,58 par.: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands’”. Here, we might still see a reflex of a conception based on temporal dualism: the sanctuary made by human hands will be replaced by the one not made by human hands (cf. the resumption of this motif in the trial of Stephen, Acts 6,14 with 7,44-50). In Judaism of the period, there is, however, another form of dualism in spatial categories. Koester in his commentary (428) says: “According to tradition, the outer court represented earth and the inner chamber stood for heaven. Therefore, the Levitical high priest’s entry into the inner chamber symbolized movement toward heaven.” The texts given for this perspective are, however, taken from Hellenistic Judaism: Philo, *QE* 2.68-69; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.123.

## 12<sup>th</sup> lecture: The inefficiency of the many annual sacrifices in the old era and the efficiency of the single one of Christ in the new (Heb 10,1-10)

### 1. Context

The subject of “making sacrifice” has been introduced since 7,27 and developed in chapters 8–9. Is taken up explicitly in 10,1-18 and treated in a double way: the annual sacrifices of the old order are contrasted to the one in the new (vv. 1-10), and the daily sacrifices are contrasted with the one in the New Covenant (vv. 11-18). In both sections, the author starts from a description of the institutions of the old order which are unable to clean from sins: vv. 1-4 and v. 11. To this inefficient old order is opposed the new one: vv. 5-10 and 12-18. In both cases, the argument makes use of a quotation from Scripture: Ps 40(39),7-9(6-8) in the first paragraph, Jer 31,33 in the second, with a recourse as well to Ps 110(109),1 in Heb 10,12f.

Some authors (Koester with Lane) see in 10,1-18 a chiasmic structure:

“(a) Under the Law, repeated sacrifices are a reminder of sins (10:1-4).

- - - (b) Levitical sacrifices are repetitive and have been replaced by Christ’s singular self-sacrifice in obedience to God’s will (10,5-10).

- - - (c) Levitical priests who stand to minister have been replaced by Christ the high priest, who is seated at God’s right hand (10,11-14).

(d) Under the new covenant, God does not remember sins (10,15-18).” (Koester, 436)

This proposal is valid for the correspondence of “remembering sins” in sections a) and d). It is less convincing for vv. 5-10, where the positive aspect prevails.

### 2. Text and translation

The main textual problem is found at the beginning of v. 1. The reading οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα is attested by the vast majority of manuscripts and all translations. The variants οὐκ αὐτῶν and οὐ κατὰ have no early attestation. This is different with the καί before τὴν εἰκόνα, attested by P<sup>46</sup>, probably 2<sup>nd</sup> century. If this reading were true, it would alter the sense of the verse considerably and make it more “Platonic”, because the “images” would still be on the side of the “shadows”. Some authors favour this reading because of its age. See R. CANTALAMESSA in *Aegyptus* 45 (1965) 194-251. His arguments are, however, evaluated critically and refuted by A. VANHOYE, ‘L’ombre et l’image. Discussions sur He 10,1’, in: *Ouvrir les Écritures* (Mél.

Paul Beauchamp), ed. P. BOVATI – R. MEYNET (LD 162), Paris : Cerf 1995, 267-282. The witnesses from the church fathers alleged by Cantalamessa are not direct quotations and do not speak, generally, in favour of Cantalamessa's hypothesis, and the internal evidence favours rather a perspective where "shadows" belong to the transitory world of OT institutions and the "εἰκῶν" in the sense of "expression" to the new one. The rest of the variants may be disregarded here. Many of them concern the scriptural quotation of vv. 5-9, without major impact. For some other variants see below, 3.a.

### 3. Synchronic and diachronic interpretation

#### a) The insufficiency of the many annual sacrifices in the old era (vv. 1-4)

From the *syntactical point of view*, v. 1 exhibits a long sentence with ὁ νόμος as a subject (not seen by many mss. which read δύνανται instead of δύνεται, referring the verb to the sacrifices, but against grammatical logic). V. 2 is a rhetorical question, which is seen by most editors of text editions, translators and commentators. (P<sup>46</sup> does not seem to have grasped this). V. 3 and 4 are nominal clauses without copula. In both cases ἐστίν is supposed.

From the *semantic* perspective, the first four verses are characterized by vocabulary referring to the Law and its sacrificial system with its effects concerning "remembering sin" or not. The first dominant grammatical subject is the "Law". One feels reminded of Pauline theology. The Law has but the "shadow" of the good things to come (eschatological salvation), not the "real appearance" of things, and this is why (γάρ) it is still unable to bring the worshippers to perfection on the basis of the annually made offerings, which repeat themselves without end. Authors refer here to Heb 8,5, the divine instruction to build the sanctuary of Israel. In this verse, the text speaks of a heavenly ὑπόδειγμα or τύπος which should serve as a σκιά, a "model" or "fore-shadow" for the construction to be built. Cantalamessa (see above, # 2) argues from this verse, but it must be observed (with Vanhoye, *ibid.*) that the terminology in 10,1 is different. The εἰκῶν of which the text speaks is the "true form of these realities" (RSV), not a heavenly model. It belongs to the eschatological order, not to the one of the Law.

The argument for the inefficiency of the old sacrificial system under the Law is taken from the fact of regular, annual repetition: would the sacrifices have been offered again and again year for year, if they had been able to cleanse the conscience of the worshippers once and for all?

The following verses show that the author thinks of the annual rite of the Day of Atonement according to Lev 16. The literary form of a “rhetorical question” belongs to the tools of Ancient Rhetoric (cf. the reference by Koester, 437, to *Quintilian*, Inst. 9.2.7). The annual repetition of the rite of atonement is prescribed in Lev 16,34 and implies according to our v. 3 the annual remembrance of sins. The theological reason for this repetition is spelled out by the author in v. 4: it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sins (v. 4). This fact, although inspired by texts of the prophets of Israel (see below, 4), in the last resort is not deduced logically from the old sacrificial system as such, but from Christ’s sacrifice treated in vv. 5-10.

b) The efficiency of the single sacrifice of Christ in the new era (vv. 5-10)

*Syntax:* It is important to notice that the subject of v. 5, leading into the following verses, is missing. It is obviously Christ. He is, thus, opposed to the Law, central concept of the old sacrificial system (v. 1). In a Christian reading of the Psalm quoted from v. 5, Christ seems to remain the subject until v. 9. Only in v. 10, the subject changes, and the “we” reappears which we met repeatedly before (see above for 9,14).

*Content:* V. 5a: the author presents his “rereading” of Ps 40,7-9 (LXX 39,6-8) as a kind of prayer pronounced by Christ in the moment of his “entry into the world” (cf. John 11,27) – his incarnation or, rather, the moment when Jesus affronted his passion as the culminant moment of his mission. The long quotation which extends until v. 9 is taken almost literally from the Septuagint.

There is an ongoing discussion how the differences between the text of LXX and Heb are to be explained. Many authors think of a different tradition of the Greek text of the OT, antedating possibly the LXX. This hypothesis would start with the replacement of “ears” (TM) with “body” in v. 5, although in this particular case the better manuscripts of Ps 39,7 LXX attested in the apparatus of Rahlfs (BSA) have “body”. The LXX has also replaced the unusual “carving” of ears with “preparing” (a “body” or “ears”). The text of Hebrews differs from the LXX mainly in four points, studied by KAREN H. JOBES, ‘Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 “Misquote” of Psalm 40’, *Bibl.* 72 (1991) 387-396:

“1. σώμα (“body”) is found in v. 5c instead of ὠτία (“ears”); 2) ὀλοκαυκώματα (“burnt offerings”, plural) is substituted in v. 6 for the singular form ὀλοκαύτωμα in the Septuagint; 3) εὐδόκησας (“you were pleased”) is substituted for ἤτησας (“you demanded”) in v. 6; 4) ὁ θεός

and τὸ θέλημά σου are transposed in v. 7c and the remainder of the verse as it appears in the LXX is omitted. This final omission in v. 7 makes the infinitive ποιῆσαι the purpose for the coming (“I have come to do ...”) in contrast to its function in the LXX as the object of ἐβουλήθην (“I desire to do ...”).” (388)

According to the author, the changes in the text have been made primarily for the reason of making the text more impressive and memorable for the deliverance before an audience. The οὐκ εὐδόκησας in v. 7 goes now well along with οὐκ ἠθέλησας in v. 5, and ὀλοκαυτώματα in v. 6 goes better along with σῶμα δέ in v. 5c than the singular.

The reasons why the author changed and abbreviated the text of LXX are, of course, not only motivated by stylistic and rhetorical considerations. Christ enters into his passion with his whole bodily existence, and thus, “body” is more fitting than (as *pars pro toto*) the “ears”. The plural of the “whole sacrifices” fits well with the plurality of sacrifices of the old order now to be replaced in Christ. And the shortening of Ps 39,9 LXX in Hebrews is almost necessary, since the continuation in LXX reads: (τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός,) ἐβουλήθην καὶ τὸν νόμον σου ἐν μέσῳ τῆς κοιλίας μου. This reference to the “Law” would have been counterproductive, since according to the author of Hebrews, the “Law” is precisely to be replaced. He characterizes the offerings of the old order explicitly as those αἵτινες κατὰ νόμον προσφέρονται (v. 8). This old order has disappeared since Christ offered himself once and for all times “for us” and not only freed us from sin, but granted us holiness (vv. 9-10).

#### 4. Final reflection

Up to a certain point, our author stands in a tradition which is critical of the offering of animals in cult for making god or the gods propitious. Koester in his commentary (438f.) mentions in this regard a twofold tradition: the biblical tradition and Greek philosophic thought. For the former tradition (God will reject the sacrifices of the disobedient; obedience is better than sacrifice) he refers to Isa 1,10-17; 66,3-4, but also 1 Sam 15,22; Amos 5,22-24; Mic 6,6-8; cf. also Ps 51,18-19; 141,2 (ethical conduct and praise are a kind of sacrifice); for the philosophical tradition he refers to Euripides, Pythagoras and Apollonius of Thyana. On the other side, the author of Hebrews chooses a different alternative to the sacrifices of Israel: the one sacrifice of Christ, consummated on the cross. The consequences of this perspective for the concept of God must be thought of carefully. Only this way it can be avoided that God appears as someone who wants to be made propitious with the shedding of innocent blood.

### 13<sup>th</sup> lecture: The insufficiency of the many daily sacrifices in the old era and the efficiency of the single one of Christ in the New Covenant (Heb 10,11-18)

#### 1. Context

This section stands in close connection with the preceding one and presents the same form of argument: to the multiplicity of sacrifices of the old system is opposed the single sacrifice of Christ in the new. The new order is now qualified as the New Covenant. With this concept, the author flashes back to 8,8-12 and 9,15-22, rounding up the major section since the beginning of chapter 8. It is not advisable, however, to see in 10,11-18 a “Summary: The Result of Christ’s sacrifice” (Attridge, 278), since the opposition from vv. 1-10 is continued, and the efficiency of Christ’s unique sacrifice is shown in both vv. 1-10 and vv. 11-18. We do not follow, either, the repeated suggestion of A. Vanhoye to see in 10,1-18 the development of the announcement of subject in 5,9-10: “... became source of eternal salvation”, for similar reasons. In the centre of the argument is sacrifice, and its efficiency is its most important aspect.

#### 2. Text and translation

In v. 11, ἀρχιερέυς is attested by A C P 0278, but against the evidence of P<sup>46.75vid</sup> ⳨ C D Ψ and many min. mss. The reading appears to be later than its alternative and does not make much sense, since the High Priest as such did not make daily offerings. αὐτός in v. 12 is poorly attested. The same holds true for ἐκ δεξιῶν in the same verse, inspired by Ps 109,1 LXX. The προειρηκέναι of the Byzantine text has no earlier text evidence and seems to be based on reason (“after having said before ..., he says”). The δέ in v. 16 (P<sup>13</sup> D<sup>\*.c</sup> lat) should help understanding. τῶν διανοιῶν in v. 16 is grammatically difficult, but also rather poorly attested. For αὐτῶν in v. 17 there is evidence from all maiuscule mss. except D\*. It also corresponds to LXX. The originality of μνησθήσομαι in the same verse remains dubious, but the reading would be the “lectio difficior”, since it deviates from the LXX. The external evidence is better (five maiuscule mss. in the first reading).

The most difficult expression to translate is εἰς τὸ διηνεκές (vv. 12 and 14), a favourite expression of our author (cf. 7,3; 10,1). Literally it means “uninterruptedly”, but the sense is generally “for ever” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, cf. Ps 109,4 LXX; Heb 8,17.21).

### 3. Syntax

At the beginning of the section, v. 11 and vv. 12-13 are opposed by μέν - δέ. The main verbs stand in the opposition of ἕστηκεν and ἐκάθισεν, with the participial construction of v. 13 following this second main verb. V. 14 gives a reason for the statement made above in the perfect tense, v. 15 another reason (Scripture) in the present. The initial μετὰ δὲ εἰρηκέναι in v. 15 does not find a continuation in a following “he said” outside the following quotation, but inside it (λέγει κύριος), what has caused some discussion about our author “manipulating” his text (see below). V. 18 draws a conclusion from the quotation of vv. 16f, linking the argument of Jer 31(38),34 with the subject of the repeated sacrifices for sin in the grammatical form of a relative clause with the relative pronoun ὅπου, followed by a main clause in the present.

### 4. Content

The text can be divided roughly into two parts: vv. 11-14 and 15-18. In vv. 11-14, the earthly priest “standing” before God with his daily sacrifices is contrasted with Christ, “sitting” at the right hand of God after having made his unique sacrifice (reference to Ps 109,1 LXX). The result of this unique offering (προσφορά) is stated explicitly in v. 14: the “perfection” of those who are “sanctified”. In the second part (vv. 15-18), a “witness” from the “Holy Spirit” (inspired Scripture) is given: Jer 31,33-34. Its relevance is in the fact that it rules out future sacrifices. *Quod erat demonstrandum* (v. 18).

*Vv. 11-14:* This little unit can be studied effectively with the tools of structural semantics:

*old order:*

every priest

standing (before God)

every day worshipping

offering often sacrifices

which are unable to atone for sins

*new order:*

Christ (“this one”)

taking seat at the right hand of God

having offered his sacrifice

once

for the remission of sins for ever,

waiting that all enemies may be put

under his feet.

Once more, our author makes use of the rhetorical device of *sygkrisis*, the comparison, which highlights the excellence of a person or an institution over against another one, who or which lacks such excellence (literary genre of the epideictic speech).

The opposition between the priests “standing” before God and Christ “seated at the right hand of God” is seen among other authors also by HARALD HEGERMANN, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (ThHK 16, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1988), p. 199.

It is the last time that our Letter quotes Ps 110(109). The earlier references to Ps 110(109),1 had been in Heb 1,3.13 and 8,1. Heb 1,3 belonged to the initial prooemium which introduced the reader to the person of Christ as God’s ultimate revelation in the fulfilment of time. Heb 1,13 compared Christ to the angels emphasizing his excellence over against them. Heb 8,1 presented Christ as the eternal High Priest seated at the right hand of God in the initial verse of the doctrinal chapters 8,1 – 10,18. In a sense, this last double quotation may be considered a kind of “inclusion” framing this section since the beginning with the κεφάλαιον in 8,1. The connection of Ps 110(109),1 with 110(109),4, the “Priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek”, developed in ch. 7, belonged to the most characteristic features of our Letter and showed the internal coherence of chapters 7,1 – 10,18, stressed by Vanhoye. As it becomes clear from the comparison of the two columns showed above, the element of Christ “waiting that his enemies may be placed under his feet” goes beyond the comparison and expresses an important element for which in the priesthood and the sacrificial system of the old order there was no parallel. This observation also confirms the strong interest of our author in Christology, but Christology always seen in its connection with Soteriology: the submission of the enemies is a metaphor for the overcoming of the power of sin. This is expressed in v. 14 and will be developed in the following subsection. Vanhoye (*La Lettre aux Hébreux*, quoted above, p. 15, here: p. 203) underlines the difference between the old and the new order in the fact that in the old order the priests had to be “consecrated” for their ministry, while in the new one, Christ, consecrated by God, “brings to perfection” for ever “the sanctified ones”.

Vv. 15-18: What was Ps 110(109),1 for vv. 11-14, will be Jer 31(38),33f for vv. 15-18. In difference from the preceding subsection, our author introduces his scriptural basis explicitly as such. He names it as “witness” of the “Holy Spirit”. A word of Scripture had been introduced before as a word of the “Spirit” in 3,7 (the quotation from Ps 95,7-11). The terminology of “witness” seems to be inspired by Ancient Rhetoric. The gospel tradition knows a slightly different use of the “witness” of the “Spirit”. In John 15,26f, Jesus promises his disciples that the Spirit will be their witness and inspire their witness in the situation of trial and persecution. This idea has its roots in the announcement of Mk 13,11 par. that the Spirit will tell the disciples what to say in a court situation. A “witness” of Scripture for Jesus is found in John 5,39. For

these parallels see JOHANNES BEUTLER, *Martyria. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes* (FTS 10, Frankfurt a. M.: Knecht 1972).

The text of the quotation of Jer 31(38),33f in Heb 10,16f has caused much discussion. It is in any case shorter than the original version and used with great liberty. The assumption that it has been quoted from memory, expressed by H. SCHRÖGER, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (BU 4, Regensburg: Pustet 1968), pp. 177-179, taken up by H. HEGERMANN (see above), p. 201, has a high degree of probability. In general, our author follows the text version used in 8,8-12. A first and important difference over against the version in ch. 8 and in Jer is the fact that he replaces τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραήλ by πρὸς αὐτούς. This way, the reference of the promise of Jer 31 to Israel is played down. This tendency is confirmed by the fact that the “covenant formula” (“I will be their God and they will be my people”) is omitted as well from the quotation. The λέγει κύριος now being part of the construction introduced by the author in v. 15 should not be qualified, together with the other modifications of the text of Jeremiah, as a “manipulation”, as proposed by Attridge (281), but as freedom of an author, who makes a text of a different author his own. That God places his law into the “heart” and not into the “mind” of the Israelites gives more emphasis to the process of interiorization and is another example of such free use of the LXX. To this free use belongs also that our author takes from Jer 31(38),34 only the element of “no longer remembering their sins”, underlining it by the addition of “and their trespasses”. Everything serves the final thesis of v. 18: “where there is remission of such things, no offering for sin is needed any longer”.

##### 5. Final remark

Even if our author drops “the house of Israel” as the addressee of the promise of the New Covenant in Jer 31(38),31-34, this promise belongs to the spiritual heritage of the People of God, Israel. Christians do not replace the Israelites, but join them in making their own the promises given to the People of God in the past. This perspective is maintained and developed in the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Vatican State, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001), pp. 84-95: “Israel continues to be in a covenant relationship with God, because the covenant-promise is definitive and cannot be abolished. But the early Christians were also conscious of living in a new phase of that plan, announced by the prophets and inaugurated by the blood of Jesus, ‘blood of the covenant’, because it was shed out of love (cf. Rv 1:5(b)-6).” (Ibid., p. 95).

## 14<sup>th</sup> lecture: The cult of the Old and of the New Covenant according to Hebrews

### 1. A new sanctuary

The starting point for the theology of Christ being High Priest of a new cult in a new sanctuary and in the New Covenant according to Hebrews is the death of Christ. It is seen in sacrificial terms as the replacement of the cult of Israel which is qualified as insufficient and powerless. Not a reflection on the institutions of Israel leads to the new perspective, but the reflection on an experience: the death of Christ on the cross. The difference between the two systems of cult and atonement is seen and described with the tools an Ancient Rhetoric and in an Alexandrian perspective. To a reality which as such is good and which has been established by God is opposed another one which is better and finally alone capable of bringing salvation.

This perspective can be seen very clearly in the opposition of the old and the new sanctuary. It appears in Hebrews in a characteristic way as an opposition between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary. Although the roots of such a perspective are to be found in the instructions of the Book of Exodus (chapters 25-40) for the building of the first sanctuary or “Tent” according to a heavenly model, the idea in Hebrews rather seems to be influenced by Middle Platonism. The earthly things are but a shadow of the real things in heaven. Cf. for this perspective Heb 8,1-6; 9,1-14.23-28. For the relation of the two kinds of sanctuary is remarkable the formula of Heb 9,11: “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and the more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is not of this creation), he entered ...”. The opposition, according to this text, is not between bad and good, but between good and better. These comparatives are characteristic for Hebrews.

Authors do not agree how to interpret the sanctuary “through” which Christ has passed. Some authors think of his body, but this image would be unusual, some think of some heavenly space. In any case, the heavenly sanctuary supersedes the earthly one and replaces it.

### 2. A new cult

To the new sanctuary corresponds a new cult. One element which recurs repeatedly is the opposition between “again and again”, “daily”, “annually” and “once and for all” (ἀπαξ, ἐφάπαξ 9,26-28; 7,27; 9,12; 10,10). Cf. “one sacrifice” in 10,12.

Another opposition is the one between the offering of various kinds of animals (bulls, he-goats, heifer; cf. 9,12f) in the old institution and Christ offering himself, his “body” in the new (cf. in particular 9,11.14; 10,5-10).

The difference between the two orders is given with the opposition between sacrifices unable to work atonement or cleansing from sins and the sacrifice of Christ which alone is able to work atonement and salvation. This idea is developed in particular in 10,1-18, but prepared in chapters 8 and 9 (see our previous lectures).

### 3. A new priesthood

In chapter 7, the priesthood of Christ is explained with recourse to Ps 110,4: “he is High Priest according to Melchizedek”. This order of priesthood is described in opposition to the sacerdotal system of the Levitical order, where priests are mortal and have to be replaced again and again. Christ, invited by God to take seat at his right hand, has an eternal priesthood. Thus, he is superior to the priests of the Levitical order. This superiority also appears in the comparison between Abraham (the forefather of Levi) and Melchizedek. When Abraham gives tithes to Melchizedek, he recognizes his superiority, and confirms indirectly the superiority of Christ over against the descendants of Levi who are still “in his loins”.

This difference between the priest and High Priests of the Levitical order and Christ is developed in chapters 8-10, as we have tried to show. At the origin of the perspective of Hebrews seems to stand the event of Calvary, reflected in Christian terms and in the light of the Last Supper. Once the event of Calvary has been interpreted as the one single sacrifice which was able to work atonement, all other sacrifices of the old order vanish and prove insufficient. As a consequence, the priests and High Priests of the old order have become obsolete as well. Their daily and annual performance was unable to work atonement. Only Christ’s offering of himself could bring cleansing from sin and salvation.

### 4. A New Covenant

Cf. KNUT BACKHAUS, ‘Gottes nicht bereuter Bund. Alter und neuer Bund in der Sicht des Frühchristentums’, *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments. Für Karl Kertelge*, ed. R. KAMPLING, TH. SÖDING (Herder: Freiburg – Basel –Wien 1996), pp. 33-55;

ID., *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche. Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologieggeschichte* (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. NF 029, Aschendorff: Münster 1996).

We follow the article of K. B.

The idea of the “New Covenant” has been used in various ways in New Testament and Early Christian tradition. It seems to be possible to arrange the various concepts historically.

#### a) Jesus

Although authors do not agree about the possibility of reconstructing the words, the deeds and the mind of Jesus at the Last Supper, there are good reasons to assume that Jesus indeed celebrated the meal of his Last Supper with the conscience of entering the era of the “New Covenant”. He seems to foresee the coming of the Kingdom announced by him. Kingdom and Covenant seem to be related concepts, as is seen also by Jewish scholars (M. Weinfeld). The three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 26,28; Mk 14,24; Lk 22,20) and Paul (1 Cor 11,25) speak of the blood of Jesus soon to be shed as the “blood of the covenant”. The idea that this is the “New Covenant” announced by Jeremiah is found only in Paul and Luke, but Jesus might have been conscious of his death being the turning point of salvation history. As the prophets announced a coming salvation even in situations of “zero”, Jesus could have interpreted his violent death in an eschatological situation of zero (“eschatologische Nullpunktsituation”) as a definite offer of salvation by God, a renewal of the covenant by God himself which would bring lasting salvation.

#### b) The paradox of the Last Supper

Authors distinguish two different traditions of the Last Supper in the New Testament: Mk/Mt on the one side, Paul and Luke on the other. The tradition of Mk and Mt refers clearly to Ex 24. The blood of Christ is seen in the perspective of the blood which works atonement and founds a covenant in the sacrifice offered on Mount Sinai. When Paul and Luke add the adjective “new”, the resulting covenant – now interpreted in terms of Jer 31,31-34 – is not a completely new one, but the old covenant between God and Israel brought to eschatological perfection. The difference between the two covenants is not antithetic, but antitypical (Backhaus, 42). “The ‘new covenant’ is the unique covenant, soteriologically deepened and universally expanded” (id., 43).

## c) Hebrews

Hebrews stands in the tradition of the Lord's Supper. The death of Christ is interpreted as the one and unique sacrifice which replaces the sacrifices of the old order and works lasting atonement. By his sacrificial death, Jesus is the mediator or warrant of a new covenant, which is qualified as "better" (7,22; 8,6) and "eternal" (13,20). There is the problem of 8,13, where it is affirmed that the old covenant has become obsolete and is "ready to disappear". From the context appears clearly that this statement of the author does not refer to the ancient covenant of God with Israel as such, but to the cult of Israel which by the death of Christ has found its end. In other words: the judgment about the first covenant being "ready to disappear" does not belong to the order of salvation history, but to the order of cult in a metaphysical sense (Backhaus, 44).

## d) Paul

In Paul, two groups of texts have to be distinguished: controversy inside Christian communities in Galatia and at Corinth, and a reflection of Paul himself as attested in Romans. In the controversies reflected and commented in Galatians and 2 Cor, Paul warns the Christians of his communities not to return to the old institutions of salvation (Gal 3; 2 Cor 3). In Romans, he reflects about Israel's lasting call to salvation and foresees final salvation for all Israel because the "covenants" have been given to Israel once and for all (Rom 9,4; 11,27).

## e) Later tradition

It is only from the Letter of Barnabas and from Justin the Martyr onwards that the Old and the New Covenant are opposed as periods of the history of salvation and the Church replaces Israel. God's covenant has been broken by Israel, and the Church enters instead of Israel into the covenant relationship, Jer 31,31-34 announcing now a new covenant of God no longer with Israel but with the Church. – This "model of substitution" has remained standard until recent times. It was John Paul II who during his visit to Germany in 1980 spoke of God's "never revoked covenant with Israel".

## 15<sup>th</sup> lecture: Exhortation to live according to the standards of Christian vocation (Heb 10,19-31)

### 1. Context

Our section is found at a decisive turning point of the Letter to the Hebrews. Whereas the long section 7,1 – 10,18 was dedicated almost exclusively to the doctrine about Christ being High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek and bringing eternal salvation, the author now returns to exhortation. The remainder of the Letter will be characterized by words of comfort and admonishment.

In the first 6 chapters that was an alternating between instruction and exhortation. We divided these chapters roughly in the following way (see our lectures in Italian, first semester 2002 / 2003):

- Prooemium (1,1-4)
- Jesus being superior to the angels (1,5-14)
- Exhortation to be faithful towards the message the readers heard (2,1-4)
- Jesus, for a short time inferior to the angels (2,5-9), in solidarity with his brothers (2,10-18)
- Jesus faithful (3,1-6)
- Exhortation to listen today to the word of God (3,7-19)
- Invitation not to miss the entry in God's rest (4,1-13)
- Faith in Jesus, the merciful High Priest (4,14-16)
- Jesus, High Priest who had to suffer but reached perfection (5,1-10)
- Digression: a "discourse on perfection" (5,11 – 6,20)

When we interpreted Heb 1-6, we noticed the connection between 2,1-4 and 4,14-16. Both sections, together with the prooemium, seem to frame and to structure in a sense the long section 1,1 – 4,16 with their emphasis on the importance of the word of God and faith.

The beginning of Heb 10,19-39 flashes back in a particular way to 4,14-16. To the *ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν* in 4,14 corresponds the *ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν* in 10,19 and *ιερέα μέγαν* in 10,21. The *προσερχώμεθα* of 4,14 is repeated in 10,22. To the *κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας* in 4,14 corresponds the *κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν* in 10,23. In both cases, Jesus' entry as High Priest into the heavenly Sanctuary is the motif for holding fast to the confession.

The section Heb 10,19-39 could be treated together, and we divide it into two parts (vv. 19-31 and 32-39) more for practical reasons. There is a kind of chiasmic arrangement in vv. 19-39:

- invitation to hold fast to the confession on the basis of the *παρρησία* (vv.19-25)
- argument from a look into the future: no room for a second penance (vv. 26-31)
- argument from a look into the past: remembering previous faithfulness (vv. 32-34)
- invitation not to throw away the *παρρησία* but to hold on to faith (vv. 35-39).

## 2. Text and grammar

The most serious textual problem is given in v. 22 where apparently P<sup>46</sup> and a number of ancient mss. (D K L P) read the indicative *προσερχόμεθα* instead of the conjunctive. This conjunctive, however, is better attested and more in line with the two following conjunctives in v. 23 (*κατέχωμεν*) and v. 24 (*κατανοώμεν*). On the basis of this textual option, vv. 19-25 present a coherent unit. A first clause with a first cohortative extends from v. 19 to v. 22; a second one, with two further cohortatives, extends from v. 23 to v. 25. In vv. 26-28 prevails the third person singular, but the readers are still in view as appears from the *ἡμῶν* in v. 26. V. 29 has a second pers. plural, before the author returns to the first pers. plural in v. 30. From the beginning to the end, the paragraph is argumentative and paraenetic.

## 3. The initial exhortation (vv. 19-25)

According to the three cohortative conjunctives in v. 22, v. 23 and v. 24 we can divide the paragraph into three parts:

- invitation to access to the sanctuary made accessible by Jesus (vv. 19-22)
- invitation to faithfulness to the confession (v. 23)
- invitation to faithfulness to the gatherings of the community (vv. 24-25).

Vv. 19-22: From the grammatical point of view, vv. 19-21 depend from the initial participle *ἔχοντες*, which prepares the main verb *προσερχόμεθα* of v. 22. The brothers (and sisters) have free access to the Holy Place (*τὰ ἅγια*) in the blood of Christ which opened them a fresh and living way right through the curtain, which is the flesh of Christ, and they have a great priest over the House of God. The vocabulary is extremely heavy and rich of allusions. The basic idea is taken from the previous chapters: Christ was the one who entered into the heavenly sanctuary not with the blood of bulls and goats but with his own blood, working eternal salvation, cf. 9,11-14.24-26; 10,12.

Now, the readers are included into this movement of Christ towards the celestial sanctuary. The access is less a given fact (cf. the textual variant in v. 22 with the indicative) than a challenge. For the metaphors used in this section cf. PETER J. LEITHARD, ‘Womb of the world: Baptisms and the priesthood of the new covenant’, *JSNT* 78 (2000) 49-65. On the one hand, the vocabulary clearly alludes to baptism, the moment, when “the body had been washed with clean water”, when “faith” was adopted and when the “confession” was made (v. 23). On the other hand, there are references to the ordination of priests in Ancient Israel. In Israel, only the priests had full access to the sanctuary, and only the High Priest was entitled to enter into the “Holy of Holies” (cf. 9,7). Already in ch. 9 it was mentioned that the access of the faithful to the “second tent” had not yet been opened since the “first tent” was still in use (9,8). The moment has come that, by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, all faithful will be able to enter with Christ into the sanctuary. They have been “sprinkled” according to 10,22. As Leithard points out, this verb does not only remember baptism, but also refers to the rites of the ordination of priests in Israel. The main text is Ex 29,21, where sprinkling with blood belongs to the rite of the ordination of Aaron and his sons. Now, the Christians enter into this privilege.

*Verse 23:* The rite of washing and the confession made in the community constitute together Christian baptism. The readers are exhorted to hold fast to this confession, which is one of hope, based on God’s promises. Cf. again the par. in 4,14. We are confronted here with a very central message, if not the central message of Heb according to our interpretation.

*Vv. 24f:* The reminder to baptism is continued. The readers are exhorted not to miss their communal gatherings, as some members of the community might have started to do (v. 24), but to use these occasions for mutual attention, loving care, good works (v. 23) and, last not least, mutual comfort. The situation supposed is clearly one of the third generation of Christians where the enthusiasm of the first and second generation already started to fade away. This speaks against the hypothesis reported below that our letter supposes the temple being still in function and Jerusalem not yet being destroyed. The last clause of the paragraph already introduces the subject of the next: future judgment – the “day”.

#### 4. A warning before judgment (vv. 26-31)

For the author, after conversion there is no room for a second penance. This thesis is stated in vv. 26f. In vv. 28f, an argument from the Law of Moses is given and used, in vv. 30f a double quotation from Deuteronomy rounds up the argument.

Vv. 26f: The author is convinced that after baptism there is no room for a second penance. The reason for this conviction is less in the rite as such than in the adoption of Christian truth as the principle of one's personal life. In the perspective of Heb, faith means to accept for oneself the cleansing through the blood of Christ. Once this has been done, it cannot be repeated. There is no further sacrifice which could work atonement. The alternative for him or here who commits sin consciously (ἐκουσίως) is judgment (v. 27). A recent author thinks that the judgment mentioned in our paragraph is the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple: RANDALL C. GLEASON, 'The eschatology of the warning in Hebrews 10:26-31', *Tyndale Bulletin* 53 (2002) 97-120. One argument is that in the OT not rarely fire consumes those who oppose God or his agent (Nu 11,1-2; 16,34: Korah's rod; Lev 10,1-2). But the reference of our text is rather to Isa 26,11 as G. himself acknowledges, a text of the "Apocalypse of Isaiah", speaking of the eschatological future.

Vv. 28f: The transgressor of the Law of Moses will have to die on the basis of the testimony of two or three witnesses (Dtn 17, 6 par.). How much more will those have to die (eternally) who spurned the Son of God and profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified and outraged the Spirit of grace? The argument is of the *a fortiori* or *qal wahomer* type. This fact alone excludes the possibility preferred by Gleason to see in the menace of death a reference to physical death as in the cases referred to in the OT.

Vv. 30f: That future, final judgment is envisioned results also from the two following verses. A double quotation from Dtn 32 (the "Song of Moses") is given: v. 35 and v. 36. The author and readers do not only know these texts, but also Him who pronounced them: God himself (οἶδαμεν γὰρ τὸν εἰπόντα). In the first quotation from Dtn 32,25, God as the agent is again emphasized. The double personal pronoun ἐμοί, ἐγώ is not in the text of the LXX, but stresses the personal involvement of God himself who will take revenge. The second quotation has been taken verbally from the LXX, but remarkably shortened: the outlook to God's mercy in the remainder of verse of the LXX has been omitted. The author of Hebrews wants to give a clear message of warning without compromise.

## 5. Hermeneutical questions

The exclusion of a second penance in Heb is a well-known *crux* for theologians. Our text has played an important role in the early Christian controversies, particularly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. (controversy with the Donatists). For a correct understanding of this text it is important to see that it is paraenetic, not doctrinal. It is a call to faithfulness, not an exposition of faith.

## 16<sup>th</sup> lecture: Remembering the past and preparing oneself for the future (Heb 10,32-39)

### 1. Context and structure

As has been shown in the previous lecture, Heb 10,19-39 is a textual unit which should be read as such. We have divided it into two halves only for practical reasons. In vv. 32-34 the readers are reminded of their experience of persecution where they have endured. This is a strong argument for remaining faithful also now. In vv. 35-39 the readers are exhorted not to give up their confidence which they had gained. A double quotation from Scripture serves the purpose to back up this exhortation (vv. 37f). The last verse (39) sums up the argument with concepts taken from the scriptural quotation.

### 2. Text and translation

The unusual *θεατριζόμενοι* (“being publicly exposed to abuse”) of v. 33 is replaced by the more common *ὀνειδιζόμενοι* (“being insulted”) in D\*, but this seems to be a help for the readers as it often occurs in D. If in v. 34 is read *δεσμοῖς* (“chains”) instead of *δεσμίοις* (“prisoners”), the reference would be autobiographical: “Paul” reminds the readers of his chains (cf. Col 4,14; Phil 1,7.13f.17 etc.). But this reading rather contradicts the context, and it is attested among the older witnesses only by P<sup>46</sup> and Ψ. Other mss. have personal pronouns as an addition (“my” chains or “their” chains), but they seem to be secondary. Again, the scriptural quotation has some textual variants, which, anyhow, do not change the sense of the quote. The rare double expression *τοῦτο μὲν – τοῦτο δέ* means “on the one side – on the other side”, or better: “either – or”. The text thinks of two groups of members of the community.

### 3. Remembering the past (vv. 32-34)

Both subsections start with an imperative, followed by a relative clause and a later causal clause (*γάρ*, vv. 34 and 36). From the syntactical point of view, vv. 32 and 33 belong together. The initial imperative in v. 32 is followed by a relative clause explaining the “days” with a participle and a main verb referring to all readers. In v. 33 two different situations of the past are distinguished, dividing in this way the readers into two groups. The causal clause of v. 34 seems to refer to the second group mentioned in v. 33: those among the readers who did not suffer persecution and arrest directly, but who were indirectly involved in such actions.

Vv. 32f: The author now directs the attention of his readers to the past. They should remember everything they have suffered for the sake of faith since the time of the “enlightenment”, an expression used previously for baptism (6,4). Two images occur in this connection: the one of “combat” and the one of “being publicly exposed to abuse”. The first image belongs to Hellenistic Diatribe and is frequently used in early Christian tradition (cf. 12,1-13 and G. DAUTZENBERG, art. ἀγών in EDNT I). The other image comes from public and political life in Roman Society: persons being exposed to public abuse. We may think of the Arch of Titus on the Roman Forum, the Columns of Trajan and Hadrian or Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of such experiences (4,9). The author of Hebrews distinguishes two cases: the one of members of the community who lived such experiences of despise and outrage, and the one of other members of the community who were involved indirectly into such experiences. What this meant, is brought into remembrance in the following verse.

*Verse 34:* The members of the community not directly arrested and abused at least took part in the sufferings of their companions of faith and had to accept the confiscation of their property. They will have a heavenly reward. This idea has a parallel in Luke 12,33f, where Jesus exhorts his audience to sell their goods in hope for a lasting reward in heaven. The message of Heb 10,32-34 is clear: in the present moment of dwindling faith the readers are encouraged to hold fast to their faith and confession on the basis of their decision once taken and the faithfulness to their conversion even in difficult times.

#### 4. Preparing oneself for the future (vv. 35-39)

The syntactical structure of these verses resembles the one of the preceding subsection, as we saw: an initial imperative is followed by a relative clause and then by a causal one (γάρ). The causal conjunction γάρ is taken up in the following scriptural quotation of vv. 37f. Of the two following conjunctions δέ the first one, in v. 38, is not directly adversative, but only introduces a new subject; the second δέ in v. 39 is adversative. It is opposed to the description given at the end of 38 and introduces the new opposition of οὐκ – ἀλλά in the remainder of v. 39.

Vv. 35f: The key word παρρησία is taken up from v. 19 and rounds up the section beginning with that verse. But there is a difference. In v. 19, the imagery of the sanctuary is still used. The readers have “free access” to the sanctuary through the blood of Christ. This cultic connection has been abandoned in our verse 35. What is left is the free access to God in full confidence, and this is precisely what the readers should retain and not throw away. It leads to heavenly

reward, which as such is now no longer specified but just called “μισθαποδοσία”, cf. 2,2; 11,6.26. The “patience” required in v. 36 is a basic virtue of Christians (32 times in the NT, in Heb see 12,1, a context, to which we already referred for the idea of “combat”). “Promise” (ἐπαγγελία) is a key word of Hebrews (52 times in the NT, 14 times in Heb). It can mean either God’s act of promising or the content of the promise. This use is given in v. 36. It has a clear eschatological ring (cf. the connection with the entry into eternal “rest” in 4,1).

Vv. 37f: The two following verses consist of a conflated scriptural quotation. At the beginning stands a temporal indication: ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον which seems to be taken from Isa 26,20 LXX. It is not quite clear why our author uses this expression, before moving to the quotation taken from the prophet Habakkuk. One reason may be that he still had in mind this text from the “Apocalypse of Isaiah”, since he had quoted it earlier in this chapter in v. 27. There he had referred to the fire which should devour those who had opposed themselves to God (Isa 26,11). The rare expression used in v. 37 means in Isaiah 26,20 as in Hebrews a very short time before divine judgment with punishment for the wicked and reward for the just ones will be practised.

The quotation from Hab 2,3f starts in the middle of the sentence and follows the text of the LXX with one modification. Before we come to speak about this one, let us briefly compare the Masoretic text of Hab 2,3 and its translation in the LXX. In the original Hebrew text, the “etymological figure” of אֵלֹהִים יָבִי־אֵל is used: the future of Hebrew Imperfect is reinforced by an absolute Infinitive. This expression is taken up by the LXX. The absolute Infinitive now becomes a Greek Participle: ἐρχόμενος ἔξει. The sense is still the one of the MT: “he will surely come”. The author of Hebrews now alters the sense of this quotation by introducing the article ὁ before ἐρχόμενος. By this way, the participle refers to a “coming one”, no longer identical with the subject of the double expression in TM and LXX (God). For the idea of the Messiah as a or the “coming one” see in the NT Mt 3,11; Joh 4,25, for the coming of the Lord without delay see 2 Pet 3,9; James 5,8.

A Messianic understanding of Hab 2,3 is not found exclusively in Christian texts. O. MICHEL in his commentary (363) refers our attention to Rabbinic authors (R. Jonathan or R. Shemuel b. Najman). Also these authors use the text for not giving up eschatological hope in God and remaining steadfast.

In v. 38, the author of Heb has inverted the order of the corresponding verse Hab 2,4 in order to give more emphasis to the clause “the just one will live because of faith”, now placed at the beginning. This quotation has become famous because its double use in Paul’s great Letters to the Romans (1,17) and to the Galatians (3,11). Particularly in Rom 1,17, the text taken from Habakkuk serves the purpose of Paul to base his doctrine on justification by faith on Scripture. For this reason it may be assumed that he understands the verse from Habakkuk in the sense of “who is just by faith will live”. This understanding would then (according to S. LYONNET) structure Rom 1,18 – 8,39 (1,18 – 4,25: justification by faith, chapters 5 – 8: life).

The original place of the pronoun μου is uncertain in Hebrews. The pronoun is missing in the double use in Paul and in a number of mss. in Hebrews, but attested in others, either in connection with the “just one” or with “faith”. We prefer with Aland the former text, which would differ from the version of the LXX where the pronoun is connected with “faith”.

The beginning of Hab 2,4 in the LXX now comes to stand at the end in Heb 10,38. The original Hebrew text seems to be corrupt. The Revised English Bible understands: “The reckless will lack an assured future”. The Jerusalem Bible reads: “See how he flags, he whose soul is not at rights”. One way or the other, the LXX has a change of subject, taken up in Hebrews. If someone is of little faith, God – speaking in the first person Singular – will not have pleasure in him.

The text of the Peshier of Habakkuk from Qumran, Cave I, referring to our section is corrupt as well (col. VII – VIII). In any case the eschatological understanding of the passage is assured. The emphasis is clearly on judgment upon the transgressors of the Law, and for this reason on Hab 2,5f. (See also MICHEL ad loc.).

*Verse 39* takes from the quotation of Hab 2,3f some characteristic concepts in order to round up the argument. To the “little faith” of the LXX version corresponds the noun ὑποστολή in v. 39: “We”, the author and his readers, “are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who keep faith and keep their souls” (RSV). This “keeping the souls” is equivalent to the promise of “life in the OT text. Cf. Luke 21,19; 1 Pet 1,9. Looking back we may notice that the author has left behind almost completely the metaphorical world of priesthood and sanctuary, still used in 10,19-21. This fact confirms once more that Hebrews is more than just a Treatise on the Priesthood of Christ.

## 17<sup>th</sup> lecture: The examples of faith from Abel to the Patriarchs (Heb 11,1-22)

### 1. Context

With the key word “faith” (10,39), the author has announced the subject of ch. 11. This chapter contains a long series of examples of the attitude of faith in the history of Israel. Not less than 18 times, the author repeats an initial πίστει used as *anaphora*, repeated introduction of a subsection. The subject extends until vv. 39-40. A related concept is the one of ὑπομονή “endurance” which occurs in 10,36 at the beginning of the last subunit of ch. 10 (vv. 35-39) and returns in 12,1-2. Both concepts complement and interpret each other. The “faith” of ch. 11 is understood as hope and readiness for endurance. The element of “hope” is expressed in the definition of 11,1, the element of “endurance” is implied in the examples give from OT history and explicitly mentioned in the framing verses referred to above.

The division of the chapter does not correspond to our break after 11,22. This interruption is only caused by practical reasons. The chapter should be divided in the following way:

- Introduction: definition of faith and summary statement (vv. 1-2)
- Individual examples of faith in the history of Israel I (vv. 3-12)
- Interruption: Reflection about the attitude of faith (vv. 13-16)
- Individual examples of faith in the history of Israel II (vv. 17-31)
- Further examples and generalization (vv. 32-38)
- Final result: faith in hope without receiving the reward (vv. 39-40).

### 2. Brief analysis of the text

- a) Introduction: definition of faith and summary statement (vv. 1-2)

*Verse 1:* The author starts with a definition of faith which does not intend to be exhaustive but remains clearly related to the context. But key concepts of the definition remain vague and matter of debate. Basically, two schools can be distinguished: one which emphasizes the objective side of ὑπόστασις and ἔλεγχος (the Catholic tradition) and one which rather emphasizes the subjective one (the Protestant tradition). Thus, The Jerusalem Bible reads: “Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen.” The RSV reads: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of

things not seen.” While the interpretation of ὑπόστασις is not so different, the translation of ἔλεγχος differs strongly. Here, the “objective” understanding is clearly preferable on the basis of the general meaning of words of this root in Greek texts.

Most commentators see the different background for the two halves of this definition. For the first half, authors agree about the biblical ring of the definition given (lastly Harold W. Attridge). The underlying semantic field is time. By faith, human persons open themselves for the future and expect their future and future reward or promises from God. The second half of the definition has as underlying semantic field space. Basic is the Hellenistic-Platonic distinction between the seen and the unseen, the world of God. This perspective is found in Philo as well, and we have commented earlier the distinction between the heavenly and the earthly world in Hebrews 8-10.

*Verse 2:* It is predominantly in the first sense, that the Elders (the forefathers and -mothers of the faithful) have found a favourable judgment, a “testimony”. The expression is taken from Greek legal language, but used in Scripture and contemporary Hellenistic Judaism for receiving appraisal from God himself in Scripture (cf. J. BEUTLER, *Martyria*, FTS 10, Knecht: Frankfurt a. M. 1972, 284-306, quoted by Attridge, loc. cit., 314, note 109.)

b) Individual examples of faith in the history of Israel I (vv. 3-12)

*Verse 3:* The series of examples of faith starts with a verse which has found different interpretations. From analogy with the following verses one would be inclined to think that there was some basic faith in creation (the created things) as such. This is the opinion of KLAUS HAACKER (ZNW 1969). Cf. the “sighing” of creation in Rom 8,22. But this seems to be rather far-fetched. Equally improbable is the supposition of some “faith” in God himself. It seems therefore advisable to attribute the “faith” in v. 3 to the subject of νοοῦμεν, the members of the believing community. We, the Christians, realize in faith that the “eons” have been created by the word of God, and have become visible without previous visible matter. Systematic theologians find here a proof text for “creatio ex nihilo”, although this is not the precise wording of Heb. Apparently, our author wanted to start his long series of examples of faith with a reference to creation. The result is not fully convincing, since he has to move in the following verse from the faith of the community to the faith of the ancestors.

*Verse 4:* With this verse starts the series of examples of faith proper. At the beginning of humankind Abel is presented as worshipping God in the right way, even at the risk of his life which he will have to give later on. Already here, first characteristic elements of “faith” in the

perspective of Hebrews emerge: a reference to future, a situation close to death, a divine “witness” from Scripture. We shall come back to those elements in the course of this lecture.

*Verses 5-6:* The next example is the one of Enoch. Twice it is said in Scripture (Gen 5,22.24) that he “walked with God”. It is probably this double “witness” of Scripture which is the basis for the affirmation of the author that he “had pleased God”, an equivalent for having faith. The ensuing definition of faith has in mind rather the members of the community. The minimal elements seem to be that God exists and that he will reward human persons according to their deeds. This definition of faith is, of course, not specifically Christian and has a Jewish ring. Early Christian preaching seems to have started from such minimal positions in controversy with the cults of the Gentiles (cf. 1 Thess 1,9f.).

*Verse 7:* The example of Noah combines hope for the future and belief in (still) “invisible things”. The reward granted to him is not only of physical nature, but of spiritual nature as well. He appears as “heir of the justice according to faith”. Here, we are very close to Paul.

*Verses 8-10:* From the life of Abraham, only his calling from Mesopotamia and his life as a nomad in the Holy Land are highlighted. His departure for the Land of Promise and his life in this country are signs of his hope and faith and waiting for the City, whose foundations will be laid and which will be built and created by God himself. For the limits of this vision see below.

*Verses 11-12:* The example of faith given by Sarah is seen in her readiness to believe that God would still grant her the grace of childbirth in an advanced age and from a husband of advanced age as well. She would not see the fulfilment of God’s promise in full scale: descendents as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea.

### c) Interruption: Reflection about the attitude of faith (vv. 13-16)

In this excursus, the author makes clear again his perspective. “Faith” is related to future, to God’s promises, to the eternal home and city of the believer. The forefathers and –mothers mentioned until now died without having seen the realization of their hope. They were “strangers and nomads on earth” (1 Pet 1,1; 2,11; Eph 2,19), still waiting for their final home. Again, the author combines temporal and spatial vocabulary. For the citizenship of the Christians in heaven see Phil 3,20. For the believers of the time of the Old Covenant, this celestial city would still be a reality of the future.

d) Individual examples of faith in the history of Israel II (vv. 17-22)

*Verses 17-19:* After the digression, the thread of the discourse is taken up again. A second decisive incident of the life of Abraham is interpreted in the light of the importance of faith and hope. The hope-bearer *par excellence* for Abraham was, of course, his only son Isaac who had been granted to him in advanced age, as told before. Abraham was ready to sacrifice him and got him back as a sign of the fulfilment of God's promises.

*Verse 20:* Isaac himself blessed his sons Jacob and Esau in the hope of the graces God would bestow upon them – a hope which would see its fulfilment only in the future.

*Verse 21:* The same hope is implied in Jacob's blessing of his sons. Jacob's death was imminent, and thus his announcement of future blessing of his offspring would be based exclusively on hope and faith.

*Verse 22:* Only one incident is reported as well from the life of the patriarch Joseph: the final benediction of his sons at the moment of his death (Gen 50,24f). It is interpreted again as a sign of faith seeing the fulfilment of God's promises in the future. All these examples lead to the question why our author concentrates so strongly on those finale words and benedictions.

3. The particular perspective of Hebrews 11

Cf. PAMELA EISENBAUM, 'Heroes and History in Hebrews 11', *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel. Investigations and proposals*, ed. by CRAIG A. EVANS and JAMES A. SANDERS (JSNT.S 148 = Studies in Scripture in early Judaism and Christianity 5, JSOT Press: Sheffield 1997), pp. 380-396. The article is a short version of the dissertation of the author at Columbia University, 1995.

The author notices the divergences of the "history of Israel" from parallel texts in OT and Jewish tradition as Sirach 44-50; Wisdom 10, 1 Macc 2,51-60. The most striking features are:

- Alteration of status: In the parallel OT texts, the heroes of Israel are rewarded during their lifetime with God's blessing (Abraham, Joseph, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael, Daniel).
- Marginalization: "The author of Hebrews depicts his heroes as separate from his/her contemporaries" (391). "National leaders become marginal individuals" (394).
- Transvaluation: the persons described do not appear as the leaders of the people.
- The denationalization of Biblical History. The perspective is Christian, not Jewish.

### **18th lecture: The examples of faith from Moses to the present (Heb 11,23-40)**

The text continues with the list of examples of faith from the past of Israel, moving now from the time of the Patriarchs to Moses and the time of the conquest of the Holy Land (vv. 23-31). After this, there is a much more generalized survey of the history of Israel, with still a few proper names at the beginning (v. 32) and then the transition to generalized experiences of the faithful of the people of God in the remainder of the text (vv. 33-38). A final reflection would bring out the meaning of these examples of faith for the Christian readers (vv. 39f.).

#### 1. The examples of faith from Moses to the conquest of the Holy Land (vv. 23-31)

As it has been observed by PAMELA EISENBAUM (see above, last lecture), the events of the life of Moses chosen by our author are not representative from a Jewish perspective, but rather from a Christian one. Situations are chosen where either the faith of Moses himself or the faith of persons of his social environment can be highlighted.

*Verse 23:* The biography of Moses begins with his birth, quite in accordance with biography in antiquity (cf. Acts 7,20-22 ἐγεννήθη - ἀνετράφη - ἐπαιδεύθη). The faith shown on this occasion is the one of his parents who defied the mandate of Pharaoh and hid the child which was beautiful.

*Verses 24-26:* The next occasion of showing faith was used by Moses himself. He preferred to lose his social status as a member of the royal court and family and face discrimination as an Israelite. Not to do so would have been sin. The opposition of “temporary advantage” and lasting reward has its parallel in 4 Macc 15,2.8, as highlighted by Aland (margin). The treasures of Egypt are here opposed to the despise suffered for Christ, with the perspective of receiving heavenly reward. Here, the Christian perspective comes out very clearly. Moses prefers to suffer despise and discrimination for the sake of Christ. This way he becomes the perfect example of the Christian readers of Hebrews.

*Verse 27:* Again, Moses’ flight from Egypt does not belong to the great traditions of the faith of Israel. For the author, Moses shows faith in defying the wrath of Pharaoh, having in front of his eyes the Invisible One, and enduring by faith and trust in Him.

*Verse 28:* With the celebration of the first Passover, we finally join the great traditions of Israel, but again not God’s liberating act, but Moses’ faith stands in the centre. This faith enabled him to rescue the firstborn sons of Israel from the exterminator.

*Verse 29:* The story of Moses ends where it might begin in Jewish perspective: the crossing of the Red Sea. At this point, it is not even any longer the figure of Moses himself, but the people of Israel who show faith in crossing the sea where the Egyptians first try and then fail and are drowned.

*Verse 30:* All the decisive experiences of the birth of Israel are left out: the arrival at Mount Sinai, the gift of the Law and the making of the Covenant. Instead of these fundamental elements of the most ancient history of Israel, our author moves straight to the conquest of the Holy Land. The Israelites have crossed the Jordan and reached the City of Jericho. Its walls “come tumbling down” because of the faith of the Israelites who did nothing else but walking around the City and its fortifications for a whole week according to the order of the Lord.

*Verse 31:* Again, the great heroes of this part of the history of Israel are missing: Joshua, Kaleb or Nun. The only person singled out by our author is Rahab, the harlot, who helped the explorers to find a way into her city. The fact, that she is not only a sinner, but also a person belonging to another nation and another cult does not seem to disturb the narrator. In the contrary, she might be as well a particularly fitting example of faith given by a person who anticipates the coming community called from Jews and Gentiles alike. According to Mt 1,5, Rahab was the great-grandmother of David, but this opinion is not covered by Jewish tradition and not supposed in our text.

## 2. The examples of faith from the time of the judges until the present (vv. 32-38)

From v. 32 onwards, our author changes the style of his speech. The transition is marked by the rhetorical question at the beginning of v. 32: “And what more shall I say?” The question is followed immediately by the naming of six individual persons and one group of persons: the prophets. Their fate is described in vv. 33-34. Other descriptions of experiences of believing members of the people of Israel follow in vv. 35-38. Let us quickly go through these different parts of our section.

The choice of the six persons named in v. 32 seems to be arbitrary to a certain point, and the series of heroes of faith does not strictly follow the chronological order (M. R. Cosby, below). In the Book of Judges, Barak is treated before Gideon (ch. 4-5, then 6-8) and Jephthah (ch. 10-12) before Samson (ch. 13-16). Equally, the story of Samuel belongs before the one of David. Apparently, our author is less interested in chronological order than in rank and recognition. Naming Samuel after David allows moving from this prophet to the later ones.

In which way are these men now heroes of faith? Apparently not all the predicates of vv. 33-34 can be attributed to all of these men. That they overcame kingdoms may be said of the men of the time of the Judges (as P. Eisenbaum remarks, the corresponding women like Deborah or Jael are not mentioned). That they worked justice and saw the fulfilment of God's promises may equally be attributed to all of them. But only one of them stopped the mouth of a lion (like Hercules): Simson (Jdg 14,5f.; cf. also Daniel, Dan 6,23). One group of faithful men could quench the fire which was going to devour them: the three youths in the furnace (Dan 3). Escaping from the sword is attributed to Elijah and Elisha (H. Hegermann in his commentary refers to 1 Kings 19,1-8; 2 Kings 1,9-16 for Elijah and 2 Kings 6,14-23.31-33 for Elisha). For recovering from deathly weakness Hegermann points again to Elijah (1 Kings 19,8), for being filled with divine power to the examples of Gideon (Jdg 9,34), Jephthah (11,29) and Samson (13,25; 14,6). One may also think of David and his fight with Goliath (1 Sam 7). The final clause "they put foreign armies to flight" may precisely think of this situation, when the army of Goliath had to flee after David's victory.

For the following verses 35-38 we must simply refer to the commentaries. Increasingly, our author sees the witness of faith realized in suffering and endurance. First comes the experience of death without persecution: the raising of persons from death by the word of the great prophets of Israel, Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17,17-24; 2 Kings 4,18-37). But then the text moves to experiences of persecution and martyrdom: being tortured (put on a wheel), experiencing outrage and flogging, prison, stoning to death, being sawn into pieces or beheaded etc. Several expressions describe the situation of the faithful of the days of old as marginalization, living in the desert, being clothed with the skins of animals, exposed to hunger and violence. In all this there is, of course, a preparation of the experiences of the community.

The rhetorical shift in v. 32 to a more generalized treatment of the subject has been studied by various authors. Two recent studies merit our attention: MICHAEL R. COSBY, 'The Rhetorical Composition of Hebrews 11', *JBL* 107 (1988) 257-273, and the PhD dissertation of the same author: *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11 in Light of Example-Lists in Antiquity*, Emory University, 1985. According to such recent authors, the transition to a more general treatment of persons belongs to the special rhetoric of such example lists.

"Although the author of Hebrews abandons the use of anaphora at 11:32, he does not swerve from the central rhetorical function of his example list. The rhetorical techniques in 11:32-38,

like the use of anaphora in 11:3-31, continue to enhance the impression that the author has available an immense number of possible examples which demonstrate his viewpoint on faith. The Greek text reveals the use of asyndeton, polysyndeton, paronomasia, isocolon, and anti-thesis. Although diverse in formulation, each of the various subsets in this material is composed to produce a staccato rhythm in oral presentation.” (Cosby, *JBL* 1988, 262).

According to the author, v. 32 is characterized by the use of asyndeton, vv. 33-34 are formulated with recourse to the rhetorical technique of isocolon (presence of a series of clauses with about equal length and structure: Cosby, loc. cit., 263, with reference to Ps.-Cicero, *Ad Herennium* 4.19.27-28). Similar rhetorical techniques can be observed in vv. 37 and 38. As in vv. 33f, there is “sound repetition” in v. 37:

ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπίσθησαν,  
ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρης ἀπέθανον, περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν,  
ὕστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι.

Verse 38 applies similar techniques. After the initial evaluation is described the marginal form of living of the heroes of the past:

ἐπὶ ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι  
καὶ ὄρεσιν  
καὶ σπηλαίοις  
καὶ ταῖς ὀπαῖς τῆς γῆς.

By all this is highlighted the exemplary character of the life of the heroes by means of contemporary rhetoric.

### 3. The importance of the examples of the past for the present community (vv. 39-40)

The last two verses of the chapter sum up the long list of examples of faith and apply them to the present situation of the community. If the heroes of the past endured with such patience and faith the extreme situations of proof and trial how much more should the readers be ready to accept the trial imposed to them. Theologically speaking, the believing heroes of the past did not see the fulfilment of God’s promises, since God had prepared “something better” for the present generation. The wording echoes the “better resurrection” of v. 35, but also the “better covenant” of 8,6; 7,22 (Cosby, 266). Cf. the “better promises”, equally in 8,6. The vocabulary is taken from Greek “analogy”: two entities are compared and the similarity, dissimilarity and superiority of one of them over against the other one is stated.

## 19<sup>th</sup> lecture: Exhortation to endure and to accept divine education (Heb 12,1-13)

### 1. Context

Rhetorically, the text since chapter 11 on the examples of faith can be regarded already as the “peroratio” of the discourse. The listeners or readers are invited to look to the examples of faith given by their forefathers and –mothers and to follow them. For this purpose, the author has gone along the history of Israel, from the Patriarchs and the Kings to the Prophets of old and of more recent days up to the present time.

Now, our author turns to even more direct exhortation. After a short transitional passage, in which he includes himself with his audience (vv. 1-2), he moves to a series of imperatives directed towards his audience which extends until v. 17 and will be resumed in v. 25. It is perhaps for this reason that for instance H. HEGERMANN and CRAIG R. KOESTER extend the next section until v. 17.

Combining syntactic and semantic elements, it seems to be advisable to divide the following paragraphs into vv. 1-3 and 4-13. In vv. 1-3, our author moves to the metaphorical world of competition in the stadium. The listeners are seen as sportsmen competing for victory in a race and other games, surrounded by a cloud of spectators. This imagery is clearly taken from Greco-Roman culture.

In v. 4, the concept of ἀγών, of competition, is taken up once more with the corresponding verb, but it seems to be wise to see in this concept in v. 4 rather the technique of *anaphora* than an inclusion with v. 1. The syntactic connection of v. 4 with v. 5 and the following verses forbids taking this verse together with vv. 1-3 (KOESTER). In vv. 4-12 the author moves from physical exercise in the stadium to education. This is another concept typical for Greco-Roman culture, although it has its antecedents and parallels in biblical texts as well. In any case our author in these chapters shows indebted to the two cultural worlds which characterize his composition also elsewhere (think of temporal and spatial dualism in the chapters about the cult): the world of the Bible and the world of Greco-Roman culture, its institutions and its values. Since in v. 14 the author moves to more general exhortations, it is recommended to limit our section to vv. 1-13. One may notice with VANHOYE inclusions between vv. 1 and 13 (τρέχωμεν, τροχιάς) and vv. 1 and 3 (ὑπομονή, ὑπομένειν). Similar frames vv. 4-8 and 9-13.

## 2. Exhortation to endure (vv. 1-3)

The little subsection serves as an encouragement of the reading community to endure in faith and confession. It stands parallel to the exhortation of 10,32-39 and frames, together with it, chapter 11 about the heroes of faith in the past. To the expression ἀθλήσασθε in 10,32 now corresponds the “running of the race” (τρέχωμν ... ἀγῶνα) in 12,1. The imagery of competition is seen, in 12,1-3, particularly under the aspect of enduring strain and resistance, either from inside (unnecessary burdens), or from outside.

*Verses 1-2:* The first two verses of the subsection form a grammatical unit. The main verb is “let us run” (τρέχωμν) in v. 1. It is preceded by two participles (ἔχοντες ... ἀποθέμενοι) and followed by a third one (ἀφορῶντες), related to “Jesus”, who is characterized in a subsequent relative clause.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses”: With the initial τοιγαροῦν the author relates the exhortation of 12,1ss to the preceding chapter 11. From this observation follows that the expression “witnesses” should not be translated and understood just as “spectators”, but in connection with the subject of “witness” in chapter 11. Those who had received divine witness because of their endurance in the era of Israel, are now able to be witnesses of the bravery of the members of the reading community. The first thing, the future runners have to do, is getting rid of unnecessary burdens: either weight or things to carry. The other thing, now beyond the imagery of sports, which the runners should get rid of is sin. The adjective εὐπερίστατος is a hapax not only in the NT, but in Greek literature until this moment, but already for this reason to be retained instead of the concurring εὐπερίσπαστος (“easy to pull away”); it means “easily clinging”. With this preparation, the writer and the readers can now run the race in front of them.

The look of the runners should be directed not just to the section of race-track ahead of them, but to Jesus, the “pioneer and perfecter” (RSV) of their faith (cf. Acts 3,15; Phil 1,6). Jesus stands at the beginning of their way of faith, and he initiated it with his example of perfect obedience to the Father, and he will also accomplish it, bringing his own to “perfection”. How can Christ give such an example? It consists in his decision to disregard joy lying in front of him and to endure the cross, despising the shame connected with it. It was just this way that he was seated at the right hand of God (another example of the use of Ps 110,1 in Hebrews).

*Verse 3:* Also in this verse, the author moves between the imagery of athletic competition and the struggle of faith. He starts with “plain talk”, still referred to Jesus Christ. He endured opposition from the sinners, and this is precisely in what he should be imitated by the readers – now addressed in the second person plural with an Imperative. Ἀναλογίσασθε means: “consider”, “place in front of your eyes”. The example of Christ should prevent the readers from becoming weak and tired. With this imagery, the author returns to his metaphorical world of athletic competition. The key concept remains “endurance”.

### 3. Exhortation to accept divine education (vv. 4-13)

The basic vocabulary of the following section, vv. 4-13, is taken from education. This does not mean that the imagery of athletics has been abandoned completely. As we saw while we studied the structure of the whole section vv. 1-13 (see above, no. 1), the concept of “race” and “running” frames the whole unit. Verses 4-13 in their turn are framed by the idea of fighting and getting ready for the race. Both metaphorical worlds are not so far from each other than one might think, since in Antiquity athletics are an important means of education (“gymnasia” belong to Hellenistic Cities – think of the one Herod got built in Jerusalem!) and endurance and bravery are primary goals of Greek education.

The style of the following paragraph is the one of *Diatribē*. The author addresses his readers using comparisons and Rhetorical questions in order to convince them. Thus is prepared the final double Imperative of vv. 12-13.

*Verses 4-8:* With Vanhoye, we may take these verses together. The key word “son”, occurring in v. 5 and v. 8, forms a kind of frame and prepares the idea of educating sons. From a grammatical point of view, vv. 4-6 belong together more closely. At the beginning is found a double reminder, expressed in the grammatical tense of Pluperfect: “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” and “You have forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons”. It may be possible to understand the second clause as a Rhetorical question, as proposed by RSV, but the initial καί rather speaks against this option.

The author backs up his exhortation to accept divine education by a quotation from the Book of Proverbs. The quote is taken literally from Prov 3,11s in the version of the Septuagint. In v. 5, the verb ἐκλύω has been prepared in v. 3, the verb παιδεύω gives the tone for the following

verses. The concept of παιδεία belongs to the key concepts of Greek culture, as has been demonstrated decades ago by WERNER JAEGER in his famous monograph (Berlin 1934-47). The corresponding Hebrew word תּוֹכַחַת does not have the same key role and means under other usages “reprimand” (thus here). The exhortation of the two verses from Proverbs invites the “son” not to despise divine education (v. 5) and then gives a reason for this readiness: God’s education and even his chastisements are the expression of his love (v. 6).

In v. 7, our author combines the concept of “education”, taken from the quotation, with his key term of “endurance”: the readers should “hold on” in view of their “education”, since God behaves towards them as their Father (προσφέρωμαι in the Passive, cf. BAGD). Which son has not been educated by his father? – a first example of Rhetorical question in this unit. In v. 8, a mental experiment is made: if the readers were not tested and educated by God, it would follow that they were just bastards and not real sons (and daughters).

*Verses 9-13:* From such a Rhetorical question the author moves to the Rhetorical device of comparison (*sygkrisis*) in the form of an *a fortiori* argument (Hebrew: *qal wahomer*): if the readers accepted the measures of education chosen by their human fathers, how much more should they accept divine education and receive the reward of life from him? (v. 9) The pedagogic measures of the human fathers only lasted a short time and were practised according to the fallible judgment of the parents; divine education on the contrary is a lasting process for the benefit of the Christians and leads to participation in divine holiness (v. 10). Both kinds of – human and divine – education have in common that they first are felt as pain, but later recognized as (source of) joy and peace by those who have received “training”: they enable them to bring “peaceful fruits of justice” (another combination of Greek and biblical terms, v. 11).

In the final verses (12-13) the author returns to the imagery of athletics: the readers should “lift their drooping hands”, “strengthen their weak knees” and “make straight paths for their feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (RSV). We had seen, that the (rare) word τροχιᾶς flashes back to the initial τρέχωμεν of v. 1, rounding up the whole section from there onwards. New is the element of the “hands”, which refers to practical behaviour of the Christians, and the idea of the “healing” of the “lame”. It may remind the readers of the stories about Jesus and the Apostles healing lame persons (Mc 2,1-12 par.; Acts 3,1-10; 14,8-10). The *Passivum Divinum* of our verse points to God as agent of the healing.

## 20<sup>th</sup> lecture: Exhortation to remain in the grace of God (Heb 12,14-29)

### 1. Context and structure

The double imagery of athletic competition and of education determined the previous section of Heb 12,1-13. In 12,14, our author moves to more general paraenesis, exhorting his readers to maintain peace with all and maintain holiness. There is a first reference to the Scripture of the OT and a concrete example of a person who lost God's grace: Esau (vv. 14-17).

The following paragraph (vv. 18-24) is characterized by a reference to the Sinai event and an exhortation of the reading community to remember their dignity: they did not just approach the Holy Mountain of Sinai, but the Eternal Holy City and Mountain, and entered into the community of a new Covenant in Jesus Christ.

In the following verses (25-29), the author takes up the event of God's word directed to his people. As it could not be despised without the loss of life in the old Covenant, it cannot be despised either in the present era. A quotation from the prophet Haggai backs up this affirmation. One verb is taken from this quotation and, slightly modified, used for the argument of the following verses: as heaven and earth shall be shaken, the readers should strive for the kingdom which is unshakable.

As far as verses 14-29 may be seen as a unit, its framing by the concept of "grace" (χάρις) may be noticed. The concept occurs in vv. 15 and 28, in both cases close to either the beginning or the end of the section as a key term (cf. Vanhoye). The transition from v. 24 to 25 is marked by the hook word "speaking" (λαλοῦντι, λαλοῦντα, id.). To the concept of "peace" (v. 14) there will be a flash back in 13,20.

### 2. Syntactic analysis

The first section (vv. 14-17) is characterized by the initial Imperative (v. 14) and its expansions by a relative clause, a participial construction (v. 15) and a repeated μή τις, introduced in v. 15 by the expression μή τις ὑστερῶν which lacks a verb and where εἴη may be added, followed by a quotation from Deut 29,17 LXX and a third μή τις with the example of Esau. V. 17 draws a conclusion from the example of Esau for the community (ἵστε γάρ).

The following section (vv. 18-24) is structured by the opposition: “οὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε ... ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε” of vv. 18 and 22. The access of the children of Israel to Mount Sinai is compared to the access of the members of the community to the new Holy Mountain and Holy City. In both cases, a long Dative construction explains the type of mountain to which either people came close. In the first case, further explanations follow in the form of relative clauses and asides.

The third and last subsection starts, as the first one, with an Imperative, but remains closely linked to the preceding one, as we saw. The example of the forefathers in the desert who could not escape divine punishment if they disregarded the divine voice, helps the present generation not to disregard God’s voice either. The argument is of the form of *a fortiori* or *qal wahomer* (v. 25): εἰ ... πολὺ μᾶλλον. As we mentioned above, from the quotation from Haggai 2,6.21 is taken the verb “to shake” (σειώ) in modified form (σαλεύω) in v. 27 and the Adjective ἀσάλευτος in v. 28, in v. 27 also the Adverb ἅπαξ from the Scriptural quotation. Thus the author structures his text with accepted rhetorical devices taken as well from Biblical as Greco-Roman tradition.

### 3. Semantic analysis

#### a) The general exhortation (vv. 14-17)

In v. 14, our author starts with a rather general exhortation of the reading community. They should keep peace “with all”, probably all members of the community, but possibly beyond this realm, and they should maintain holiness. An exhortation to strive for peace belongs to OT and Jewish tradition. Attridge, whom we have consulted in particular, points to Ps 34,15; T. Sim 5,2; ’Abot 1,12 and in the NT Matt 5,9 and 1 Pet 3,11 which quotes Ps 34,15. A parallel and antecedent to the exhortation to keep peace with “all” is found in Rom 12,18, for peace to be maintained in the community see also Mark 9,50; 1 Thess 5,13; 2 Cor 13,11; Herm. Vis. 3.9.2. The expression “seeing the Lord” is probably referred to the eschatological vision of God at the end of life or of history. See for this promise Matt 5,8. In Matthew, the pure heart is the precondition for seeing God, in our text “holiness” (the word occurs 10 times in the NT, in Hebrews only here; it may be determined by the cultic language of our Letter). By uniting “peace” and “holiness”, our author combines social and individual virtues as the basis for eschatological reward, the vision of God.

After this first, more positive exhortation, our author continues with a warning in vv. 15-16. The key concept of “grace” is introduced (cf. v. 28, which rounds up the section). In this grace nobody should falter. No “root of bitterness” should spring up, cause trouble and defile many. Apparently, the author uses Deut 29,17, but in a text form which deviates from the traditional one. In LXX, we read: μή τις ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν ρίζα ἄνω φύουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίᾳ. It is possible that our author dropped the ἐν ὑμῖν and it is probable that he depended for ἐνοχλῆ from a reading attested also by B\* A. The reading resulted from a shift of letters: metathesis. In a second recourse to Scripture, the author refers to the example of Esau who lost his birthright for a single meal. That he was “wicked” is attested by Scripture, that he was addicted to licence is not, but Jewish tradition knew this reproach on the basis of his marriage with the Hittites Judith and Basemath (Gen 26,34, cf. Attridge, 369). As Esau could not gain again his birthright, also the Christians, once they have lost their privilege, cannot regain it according to v. 17. This is the clear opinion of our author, already expressed in 10,26-29.

b) Exhortation to approach the Holy Mountain and City with awe (vv. 18-24)

As we saw in our syntactic analysis (above, 2), the whole paragraph consists of a comparison between two mountains to which the readers might have approached: Mount Sinai or the new Sinai, place of the sanctuary of the new era. Vv. 18-21 describe the Holy Mountain to which the readers did not approach. The description is taken from the Book of Exodus, 19,12-19. The whole imagery is meant to create the impression of a divinity which is above the powers of nature and at the same time expresses itself in these powers: blazing fire, darkness, gloom, a tempest (v. 18). Successively, the text moves to concepts taken from culture: trumpets and a voice from heaven (v. 19) which inspired awe to the Israelites. As the Israelites could not endure the sound of the voices they heard (v. 20), they could not endure either the sight of what they saw (v. 21). It was even Moses, their spokesman, who expressed this impression – he, to whom was granted in particular the vision of the world of God on Mount Sinai.

The difference of the new order, the world of the new Holy Mountain is already prepared at the beginning of v. 18, where our author says: “You have not come to what may be touched”. The two Adjectives used seem to lack an appropriate Substantive, since fire is not the ideal object to be touched. This is why some old manuscripts read in v. 18 after the two Adjectives ὄρει “mountain”. The external basis for this reading is not strong enough, but its existence makes clear that the real opposition in the paragraph is between the two Holy Mountains.

To Mount Sinai in the old order corresponds a new Mount Sinai according to vv. 22-24. That it is to be understood in a metaphorical way becomes clear from the beginning. It is identified immediately with the “City of the Living God, Heavenly Jerusalem”. The last two chapters of Revelation come into mind: the Holy City of God descending from heaven to the humans. Our author has already spoken of this city founded by God, cf. 11,10.16. He will do again in 13,14: “We have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come”. Other parallels to the Book of Revelation are found in the myriads of angels in the heavenly realm (cf. Rev 5,11) and in the idea that the names of the Saints (here the “firstborn”) are written in a heavenly book (cf. Rev. 17,8). That God is the judge of the living and the dead is common Jewish and Christian conviction at the time our Letter was written. That the readers approached Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant is the particular conviction of our Letter (cf. 7,22; 9,15). The atoning value of Christ’s blood belongs to the conviction of our author (cf. 9,12-25; 10,19.29). All these elements which describe the value and excellence of the Holy City of the new order should serve the faithfulness of the believers to their decision once taken to approach this city and become its citizens. This citizenship should never be endangered or abandoned again.

c) Exhortation no to disregard God’s word (vv. 25-29)

In the following verses, the imagery of the theophany at Mount Sinai is taken up. The element of the voice of God is used for a comparison: if those who disregarded God’s word in the old order, were punished on earth, how much more would the readers be punished who disregarded a word directed towards them not from a mountain, but from heaven itself – a voice which once shook the earth and once will shake heaven and earth. Here our author quotes Haggai 2,6.21 in a free form, adding “not only .. but” and thus emphasizing the cosmic dimension of God’s coming intervention. For our author, this shaking of the universe is not an ultimate reality, but points to an unshakable world (v. 27). He reads this preparatory character of the shaking of the universe out of his favourite Adverb ἄπαξ. This unshakable world is identified with an unshakable kingdom, of which the readers have received the grace (v. 28) – a grace which enables them to worship God in a way pleasing to him, in reverence and awe (again, cultic language appears). With the concept of “fire”, the text returns to v. 18, forming an inclusion of the whole paragraph since the beginning of the imagery of Mount Sinai. Here, in v. 29, the concept is taken from a quotation of Deut 4,24. In opposition to the text from Deuteronomy, our author includes himself with the addressees: “Our God is a consuming fire”. With the use of first Pers. Plural, he returns to the beginning of the chapter (12,1f, cf. 9).

## 21<sup>st</sup> lecture: Final exhortations to Christian life (Heb 13,1-17)

### 1. Context and structure

The letter is coming to its end. In the first 17 verses, the author continues his exhortations. In v. 18, he moves to a request of prayer for himself, together with a wish to see the addressees again, and to a final benediction (vv. 20f). Personal wishes and greetings conclude the document (vv. 22-25). For this reason, it may be appropriate to treat vv. 1-17 together.

In a first preliminary tentative of finding the structure of the unit, we can distinguish a group of four exhortations in vv. 1-6, each consisting of a parallelism and backed up by a reason. The first two exhortations of vv. 1 and 2 and of v. 3 concern community life, the third one in v. 4 concerns family life. The fourth exhortation in vv. 5-6 is about personal conduct (being free from greed). Vv. 7-17 form a new paragraph, framed by the exhortation to respect the leaders of the community (ἡγούμενοι) in vv. 7 and 17. After an exhortation to be on guard before unorthodox doctrines, probably inspired by Judaism, follows the invitation to remain faithful to Christian worship and to follow Christ outside the camp. At the end, in v. 16, the author returns to the subject of community life, rounding up the context from vv. 1-2 onwards. In v. 17 he closes the shorter unit of vv. 7-17, as mentioned above. It does not seem to be recommendable to extend the section vv. 7ff until v. 18, as proposed by A. Vanhoye. The reason he gives is the inclusion of the concept of ἀναστρέφειν / ἀναστροφή in vv. 7 and 18. But this concept does not seem to be central for the section in question, and it is not recommended to separate vv. 18 and 19, which form a close unit from the point of view of content and grammar (cf. the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο in v. 19). Thus, the use of the word ἀναστρέφειν seems to be determined by the technique of *anaphora*, known by our author (think of chapter 11).

### 2. Exhortations concerning community life, family life and personal conduct (vv. 1-6)

#### a) Formal structure of the unit

As we saw, the unit is composed by four exhortations with two members each. At the beginning are found the two Imperatives of vv. 1 and 2. For the second one a reason is given and introduced by the conjunction γάρ. The formal structure of the Imperatives is very similar. The subject is followed by the Imperative in positive or negative form. Both nouns have the same first part:

φιλο-, which characterizes this beginning of the unit by alliteration. The second double Imperative is found in v. 3. The verb form “do not forget” is referred to two objects in the Genitive: those in prison and those who are mistreated. In both cases, an argument is given by reference to a condition of the readers, introduced by ὡς “as”. In the third double Imperative the verb form ἔστω must be added mentally. Substantive and noun are arranged in a chiasmic manner. Again, with use of the conjunction γάρ, a reason is given. The last double exhortation is found in v. 5. Introduced by the letter α, conduct despising greed and happiness with the necessary things for the day are connected (alliteration!). Again, the reason is introduced by the conjunction γάρ, leading to a double quotation from Scripture. The arrangement of these exhortations in parallelisms and the continuous recourse to reasons given bring this section close to other texts of Wisdom literature. We shall have to study, from where the reasons given are taken. It will come out that they generally come from faith and not from natural insight.

#### b) Content

*Verses 1-2:* At the beginning, a double exhortation to “brotherly” conduct is found: “brotherly love” and hospitality. Φιλαδελφία occurs 6 times in the NT. Cf. the corresponding article by E. Plümacher in EDNT. In difference from usage outside Early Christian literature, the word in NT texts is always used metaphorically for love towards “brothers” and “sisters” in faith. In Greek literature this usage is practically unknown and the word understood as love of physical brothers and sisters. Our author becomes concrete right away and illustrates this attitude towards the fellow Christians by the readiness to receive one’s fellows in one’s home. The noun φιλοξενία is found in the NT besides our text only once: Rom 12,13, in a parenetic context; for the Adjective see 1 Tim 3,2 (catalogue of virtues of a bishop), Tit 1,8 (the same for a Presbyter); 1 Pet 4,9 (virtues to be practised in community). The ideal of hospitality was widespread in antiquity: by hospitality the “alien” becomes part of one’s world and ceases to be felt as a menace (cf. the contributions by H. J. Fiedler on this word family in EDNT). For the Christians of the first generations, hospitality was particularly needed in receiving missionaries and offering refuge for migrants. The reason given by our author for the benediction connected with hospitality is taken from the Book of Genesis, chapter 18: the example of Abraham, who received the three visitors and recognized in them the Angel of the Lord.

*Verse 3:* “Remembering” is a key concept of biblical tradition and also important for our author: he will take it up in v. 7 (for μνησκόμαι cf. the use in quotations in Heb 2,6; 8,12; 10,17, for

μνημονεύω see also 11,15.22). The readers should remember those members of the community who are in prison. They had been mentioned before in 10,34. As in chapter 10, it is supposed that the readers still enjoy freedom, but they are reminded that in their fellow Christians they also suffer and take part in their destiny. In the same way, the readers should feel close to those members of the community who have to suffer injuries since they themselves live in a human body, always exposed to outrage (for the word see 11,36).

*Verse 4:* The two parallel expressions for “marriage” and “matrimonial bed” hardly occur in NT parenetic texts. The first word is missing outside the gospels, the second one occurs only rarely (in Luke 11,7 for the nuptial chamber, in Rom 9,10 for “intercourse”, in Rom 13,13 for “licence”). By the Adjective ἀμίαντος the noun receives the clear meaning of “matrimonial bed” for “marriage”. The Christians should have an immaculate sexual life. The argument is taken from Jewish-Christian eschatology: the immoral and adulterous will be judged by God.

*Verses 5-6:* The double expression at the beginning of this last exhortation has its parallels in the First Letter to Timothy, a document written under strong influence of Hellenistic ethics. That the conduct of the readers should be free from greed finds its parallel in 1 Tim 3,3 where this virtue is required for the bishop (ἀφιλάργυρος), that Christians should be self-sufficient with limited resources corresponds to the virtue of ἀυτάρκεια required in 1 Tim 6,8. This virtue belongs to Stoic thinking and is not necessarily inspired by the Bible. But two biblical quotations follow nevertheless: Deut 31,6.8: God’s promise not to abandon his people, and Ps 117,6 LXX as a prayer of the believer who places all his trust in God.

### 3. Exhortations concerning respect for church leaders and faithfulness to belief (vv. 7-17)

#### a) Formal structure of the unit

There seems to be a chiasmic structure in vv. 7-17:

- exhortation to remember leaders of community (vv. 7f)
  - o exhortation not to follow strange doctrines (vv. 9-15)
  - o exhortation not to forget solidarity and fellowship (v. 16)
- exhortation to respect leaders of community (v. 17)

All four subsections start with an Imperative of 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Plural. Within vv. 9-15 there are two Imperatives 1<sup>st</sup> Person Plural (vv. 13 and 15).

The two central subsections are united by the concept of “sacrifice” (θυσία, vv. 15 and 16): praising God is the right way of sacrifice (15); the same holds true for the practice of solidarity and fellowship (16).

#### b) Content

*Verses 7-8:* The exhortation to remember the ἡγούμενοι takes up an expression used by Paul in his first letter, 1 Thess 5,13. There he admonishes the readers to “have in esteem” those who “labour among them” (κοπιῶντας). In Heb 13,7, the author may think of leaders of the community who already have passed away and should be remembered. The readers should look at the end of the lives of their leaders and imitate their faith. The reference to Christ, being the same yesterday, today and tomorrow may encourage the readers to have trust in him, also in the moment when they are bereaved of their leaders and examples of faith (v. 8).

*Verses 9-15:* The warning over against manifold and strange doctrines makes best sense if understood as a warning against Judaizing tendencies. Such warning is not rarely found in Deutero-Pauline letters (cf. Eph 4,14; Col 2,7f). To worthless food is compared the spiritual strengthening by God’s grace (whether our author has in mind Jewish or pagan sacrificial meals is uncertain). In any case is opposed to the “tent” of the old order in Israel the new altar to which the worshippers of the old one have no access (v. 10). The practice of sacrifice in Israel helps to bring out another comparison. As after the offering of blood in the old sacrificial system the corpses of the animals on certain occasions were brought out of the camp, also Christ, having offered his blood, died outside the city gates (vv. 11f). This idea serves to invite the readers to follow him outside the camp (v. 13). The deeper reason for the home of the Christian readers outside the camp or city is the fact that they have an abiding city in heaven to which they are on the road (cf. E. Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*). Through Christ, the readers will offer to God the offering which pleases him: the confession of lips (v. 15).

*Verse 16:* The exhortation not to forget solidarity and fellowship stands parallel to the one of vv. 9-15 as far as authentic sacrifice is concerned. But this exhortation also flashes back to the beginning of the section, when the readers were exhorted to maintain “brotherly” relations and to practice hospitality (vv. 1-2). Here, the perspective is broadened: not only hospitality is required, but all kinds of solidarity and doing well to the fellow members of the community.

*Verse 17:* Instead of “remembering” the leaders of the community in past days the readers are finally exhorted to follow the present ones and to be subject to them. The reason lies in the responsibility the leaders have taken for them and for which they will have to give account.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> lecture: The epistolary conclusion of the letter (Heb 13,18-25). Summary

### 1. Structure and form

The final eight verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews have much in common with the closing of private letters in antiquity and other early Christian letters, particularly from the Corpus Paulinum. In vv. 18 and 19, the author asks for the prayers of the community for him that he may be given back to them soon. In vv. 20-21 the author himself expresses his wishes for the community in a kind of *berakah*. In vv. 22 and 23, he asks his readers to accept his – short – word of exhortation and encouragement and to receive well Timothy, his messenger. Close to the end comes in v. 24 the request to greet the persons responsible for the community and all its members together with a greeting from the brothers of Italy. At the end stands in v. 25 a final blessing.

Many of the elements of this concluding section of the Letter to the Hebrews have their parallels in Greco-Roman private letters of the period. This holds true in particular for the hope and wish to see the addressees soon, for a formula recommending the bringer of the letter, for the excuse of having been short and for the final greetings. The other elements are attested in Pauline or Deutero-Pauline Letters as well as in other letters of the New Testament.

The problem why the Epistle to the Hebrews, which lacks an epistolary introduction and other typical elements of a letter up to this point, now closes like a private letter and the known letters of Paul, has been dealt with in the introductory lectures of this course as well as of the one on Hebrews 1-6. We remember that we joined the group of those interpreters who see in Hebrews a homily in letter form. The author himself calls his text a λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως (v. 22), a word of exhortation and encouragement. This excludes any interpretation of the document as a treatise, for instance a treatise on the priesthood of Christ. We shall come back to this question at the end of this lecture.

### 2. Interpretation

*The request to pray for the author (vv. 18f):* This request has its antecedents in Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Letters. The closest parallel is found towards the end of Rom 15, possibly the original closing of this letter before ch. 16 which may have been added at a later period.

In Rom 15,30-32, Paul asks the Romans to share his battle in prayer that he may be preserved from the opposition of the Jews in Judea and his encounter with the brothers in Jerusalem may be fruitful and that he then might meet the Romans in joy. Other texts which speak about prayers for Paul are Col 4,3; 1 Thess 5,25; 2 Thess 3,1. Paul's prayer for the communities is mentioned in Phil 1,9; Col 1,3,9; 2 Thess 1,11. That the writer has a clear conscience corresponds to what Paul writes in 2 Cor 1,12; 1 Tim 3,9. For "Paul's" wish to be given back to the community, see Philemon 22. The intention of the author of Heb 13,18f is clear: he presents himself as "Paul", writing to his communities and united in prayer with them.

*The blessing (vv. 20f):* In this blessing, the author accommodates himself again to Pauline usage and vocabulary. "The God of peace", with whom the paragraph starts, is taken verbally from Rom 15,33 – a text which had already shown affinity to our section. That God had "risen Jesus from the dead" (ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν) is another element attested in the Letter to the Romans (10,7). Jesus as shepherd of his flock has a parallel in John 10,11, the blood of his covenant takes up earlier passages of this Letter (cf. 7,22). The wish of our author is expressed in v. 21: God may strengthen the readers in every good (work) that they may do God's will and what is pleasing to him in Jesus Christ. For this element see 2 Cor 5,9. The final doxology reminds of Rom 16,27, the secondary closing formula of the actual closing chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Again, our author vests himself with the garments of the Apostle.

*Exhortation to accept the letter and its bringer (vv. 22f):* The importance of the request to accept the "word of exhortation and comfort" has been stressed repeatedly. The first element: "word" distinguishes Hebrews from written treatises or dissertations and presents the Letter as a discourse, subject to the rules of rhetoric, of efficient oral performance. The second element: "exhortation and encouragement" (RSV has only "exhortation") classifies the text as hortatory and not doctrinal. The continued emphasis on the subject of faith in our letter confirms this view. The word παράκλησις has been used by our author twice before: in 6,18 it is used in order to express the confidence which the readers can have in God and his promises since the times of Abraham, in 12,5 the readers hear the reproach that they have forgotten God's exhortation and encouragement which has been directed to them as sons. By this way, the double expression of v. 22 has been prepared in the preceding context. The excuse for being short corresponds to letter style (cf. 1 Pet 5,12; 2 John 12; 3 John 13f) and has been used by our author before (cf. 11,32).

The recommendation to receive well Timothy in v. 24 may refer to him as the letter bearer. The text may have been influenced by 1 Cor 16,10f. Here, Paul recommends Timothy to the Corinthians in connection with his intention and hope of seeing them soon. A similar passage, referring to Tychikos, is found in Eph 6,21f. Timothy was known to the Christian communities as a companion of Paul not only according to his letters, but also according to Acts 16,1-3 (a text which is probably to be dated later than Hebrews).

*The final greetings (v. 24):* Greetings belong to the concluding elements of private letters as well. We find them in NT texts and also in our text in the double form that the author asks the addressees to greet their community or some particular persons and that he forwards greetings from the community from where he writes. This double form is attested also here. The particular greeting to the leaders of the community (ἡγούμενοι) is not required by this form and seems to be a particular element of this particular letter. See above for vv. 7 and 17, where the role of these leaders is described and the right attitude towards them is claimed.

*The final benediction (v. 25):* The final benediction is conventional as well and follows Pauline examples. See 1 Cor 16,23; 2 Cor 13,13; Gal 6,18; Eph 6,24; Phil 4,23; 1 Thess 5,28; 2 Thess 3,18; Phlm 25; 1 Tim 6,17; 2 Tim 4,22; Tit 3,15 where we have exactly the same wording as in Heb 13,25. In the Catholic Epistles, this element is missing. For this reason, the formula seems to be a particular feature of Pauline letters. One may see in this element a form of inclusion with the introductory formula of Pauline Letters (after naming the author and the addressees): “Grace and peace with you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. This function is not present in the concluding blessing formula of Hebrews, but the concept of the “grace” of God is (χάρις) is found earlier in the letter (cf. 2,9; 4,16; 10,29; 12,15.28; 13,9). The most relevant verse was 4,16, where the term occurs twice: “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.” This verse could well sum up the whole of the Letter to the Hebrews.

### 3. Summary

The Letter to the Hebrews, and also the second half of it, shows a permanent shift between Indicative and Imperative. Due to the central role of the chapters 7-10, where exhortation is almost completely absent, some authors are inclined to think that Hebrews is a treatise on the priesthood of Christ. The elaboration of a basically concentric structure of the Letter serves to

back up such an interpretation. It is supposed in this perspective that the main emphasis of the letter lies in its centre (cf. the expression κεφάλαιον δέ in 8,1).

This perspective might, however, be contested. From the formal point of view, the rules of Rhetoric in Antiquity require that the emphasis of a discourse lies on the end of this discourse. “Semper crescat oratio”. Not without reason the introduction of the discourse, the narration, the *propositio* and the argument are followed by the *peroratio*, in which the speaker uses his rhetorical power in order to convince his audience. We have proposed to recognize this section in Hebrews from chapter 11 onwards, where the author gives a list of impressive examples of faith, before moving to his final exhortations in chapter 12-13.

Right through the Letter, the expositional parts serve the exhortatory ones. Regularly, the exhortations are based on the doctrinal expositions, since the first example of 2,1-4 where the author interrupts his exposition about the excellence of Christ with a direct appeal to his readers, inviting them to believe. The initial διὰ τοῦτο makes clear the argument of the author: the exposition serves the exhortation. The Indicative serves the Imperative. A similar transition was found in the section which was treated in this series of lectures in 10,19. This is the decisive verse where the author moves from instruction about the priesthood of Christ to exhortation: Ἐχόντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί ...”. Again, conclusions from the exposition are drawn for Christian life in faith, hope and love. In particular, the subject of faith revealed itself to be central in the Letter to the Hebrews. Instead of naming it “A treatise on the priesthood of Christ”, one may call it “A Homily on faith in Christ”. The orientation of the document is basically practical, not theoretical. It wants to move hearts, not to instruct heads.

Read from this perspective, the Letter to the Hebrews retains its fascination and its actuality until nowadays. It appeals in particular to those churches where the first fervour of faith has vanished and Christians are tempted to assimilate again to their non-Christian environment. It may appeal in particular to communities which have to face persecution. Here, the exhortations of the last chapter of Hebrews appear particularly appropriate. 10,23-25 seems to sum up the purpose of the Letter: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

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