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Who is the Lord of the World to Come An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 2:5-9

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WHO IS THE LORD OF THE WORLD TO COME?
An
Exegetical Study of Hebrews 2:5-9

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of New Testament

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

By
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May, 1948

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WHO IS THE LORD OF THE WORLD TO COME?
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Exegetical Study of Hebrews 2:5-9

Controlling Purpose: This thesis is to discover the identity of "him" and the "son of man" mentioned in Hebrews 2:6-8.

I. Exegetical Background.

- A. The Epistle to the Hebrews as a whole.
- B. The author's purpose in writing the Epistle.
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- A. Crystallization of the problem.
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- C. Solution of the problem.
 - 1. Presentation of the view of those who hold to the "mankind" interpretation.
 - 2. Arguments against this interpretation.
 - a. The argument from the analogy of Scripture.
 - b. The argument based on the identification of the "world to come".
 - c. The argument based on coherence of context.
- D. Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in this particular portion of Scripture during the fall semester of the school-year 1947-1948. A group of us were reading through the Epistle to the Hebrews under the guidance of Dr. Paul Bretscher. Before we arrived at the second chapter, he asked us to take a look at the word "him" occurring in verse eight. Did it refer directly to Christ or did it refer to mankind in general? Because of the limited time allotted to the course we were unable to reach any final conclusions, and in the course of the discussion Dr. Bretscher remarked that the problem would make a good topic for a Bachelor of Divinity thesis. Although our class discussion was brief, we did manage to see that the interpretation of the whole second chapter depended on the significance of that one little word "him". Since I had not yet chosen a topic for my thesis, and since I was interested in working in the New Testament field, I decided to tackle the problem and attempt to arrive at some conclusion. The result of my efforts is recorded in the following pages and makes up my Bachelor of Divinity thesis.

In treating this problem I have decided to present the subject under two general heads. I shall first carry through an exegetical study of verses five to nine to determine the scope of the words and grammar. In the midst of this exegetical study I shall pause at intervals to discuss various side-lights of the problem at hand. In the second place, I shall try to crystallize the problem and arrive at a solution.

I realize that a paper of this type is not something that will shake the world. My conclusions will not be original and may not be convincing. They will leave many doubts and problems. In many respects this study may seem so far removed from actual life as to call upon itself the stigma of being impractical and of no profit. Yet, though the passage may be obscure and difficult to interpret, I do not regard a study of this type as fruitless. For in digging into lexicons, grammars, and commentaries in an effort to fathom the depths of the Greek text, I believe that I have acquired a certain skill in handling sources which will prove very valuable in interpreting those portions of Scripture which present less of a riddle. It is from this viewpoint that I regard this thesis as worth while.

I. Exegetical Background

The Epistle to the Hebrews has been called the First Apology of the Christian Religion.¹ One of the key words of the Epistle is the word "better". The Christian faith centers in Jesus Christ. It is this Jesus who is better than the angels, better than Moses and Joshua, and better than the Old Testament priests. The same Jesus ushers in a better hope, a better rest, and a better atonement for sin than that which was provided under the Old Covenant. The author's own description of his writing is that it is a "word of exhortation".² By proving the supremacy of the New Covenant embodied in Jesus, the author aims at strengthening his readers in their faith and rooting them deeper in their religion.

The author's aim then is practical. He is not interested in discussing doctrine and ethics merely for the sake of intellectual exercise. Every doctrine and abstract exposition of the Epistle is followed by a practical appeal. The

1. Hugh Thomson Kerr, The Supreme Gospel, p. 1.

2. George Milligan, The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 35.

common belief is that the Hebrew Christians were growing sluggish in their faith. "They were in danger of apostatizing from the faith, because of persecution endured on account of it, and also because of doubts concerning its truth."³ "Their friend who writes to them feels it necessary to make a desperate effort to rescue them from the impending danger by trying to show them what is so clear in his own mind, the incomparable excellence of the Christian religion."⁴

The main theme of the Epistle is Jesus the Supreme High Priest. The author leads into his subject gradually, and hence there is much more in the Epistle than the idea of priesthood. In the first chapter the author portrays Christ's superiority to the angels. The first verses of the second chapter contain an exhortation based on the previous discussion. The last part of chapter 2 treats the humiliation of Christ. The verses under consideration in this thesis lie in between the discussion concerning the angels and the discussion concerning the humiliation.

3. Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, The First Apology for Christianity, p. 7.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

II. Study of Words and Syntax in Hebrews 2:5-9

Verse Five

Ὅ γὰρ ἄγγέλοις ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην
τὴν μέλλουσαν, περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν.

γὰρ: Dana and Mantey's Grammar of the Greek New Testament gives three usages of the word γὰρ. It expresses:
a) a proof or reason, b) an explanation, and c) a confirmation or assurance. The word may be translated: a) for, b) that is, for example, c) indeed, certainly.¹ In this particular verse the true meaning of the word is hard to pin down because the sentence is expressed negatively. Hence we shall withhold judgment until we have discovered what the following thoughts express.

Ὅ ἄγγέλοις: To us it seems strange that the author of Hebrews should dwell so much on the subject of angels. We would not even think of comparing them with Christ, nor would we accord them a very prominent place in a theolo-

1. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 242.

gical discussion. But, we should beware of turning ignorance into a judge. To the Jews the angels meant a great deal, and if we had deeper insight, more knowledge, and greater faith, they would mean more to us also. In ch. 2:2 the angels are regarded as the mediators of the Old Covenant. Both Paul (Gal. 3:19) and Stephen (Acts 7:53) speak of the Law as having been ordained by angels. The Hebrew literature is full of angels. "In our day it is (unfortunately) customary to compare Jesus with Buddha, with Confucius, with Mohammed; to the Hebrews the comparison with angels was doubly important and tenfold more real."² The angels have been in the picture all through the first chapter of Hebrews. Now they come up for thought again. Does this sentence bow them out, so to speak? Or does this sentence continue the comparison started in ch. 1? That is another problem which we shall have to leave unsolved until we have covered the whole general thought. The absence of the article points to class, not to individual.³

ὑπέταξεν : This is a common verb in the New Testament and means "to subordinate". We note the aorist tense, which points to a certain definite action. The subject of the sentence is God, though He is unnamed. Perhaps this is in harmony with Jewish usage to avoid using the divine name

2. Kerr, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

3. Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, the Greek Text with Notes and Essays, p. 41.

wherever possible, as in the book of James. Another example is ch. 2:10.

τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν : οἰκουμένη

is the word used for the world as a seat of settled government. In Greek history it was the term uniformly applied to countries occupied by the Greeks contrasted to those occupied by the "barbarians". In later ages it is a word used for the Roman Empire, as in Luke 2 when "Caesar Augustus decreed that all the οἰκουμένη should be taxed". It always has the connotation of civilization.⁴ Hence by itself it is a purely secular word.

The adjectival limitation τὴν μέλλουσαν, however, immediately changes the word from a secular to a spiritual concept. The word μέλλω plays quite a role in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and is closely linked to what we commonly call the prophetic perspective. From the standpoint of the Old Testament the "world to come" is the Messianic era ushered in by Jesus. The word is used this way in Heb. 10:1, where the Law is described as a shadow τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν. From the viewpoint of the New Testament the "world to come" is comparable to everlasting life in heaven. This thought is expressed in ch. 13:14, where we read: "For we have here no abiding city, but we seek one τὴν μέλλουσαν". Which viewpoint shall we adopt here? In ch. 1:14 the angels

4. Westcott, op. cit., p. 42.

are characterized as ministering to τοὺς μέλλοντας
κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν . In the following verses the
angels are regarded as the mediators of the Old Covenant.
Thus the salvation seems to be regarded as something future
in respect to the giving of the Law. Since the phrase in
which we are now interested is separated from the concept
of salvation in ch. 1:14 by only a brief exhortation, there
is a close relationship between the two, and the "world to
come" of ch. 2:5 may be regarded as identical to the "sal-
vation" mentioned in ch. 1:14. Since "salvation" is spoken
of as future compared to the Old Covenant, the "world to
come" must also be future from the point of view of the Old
Testament. Thus it would correspond to the world of redemp-
tion brought in by Christ. It could be identified with the
Kingdom of God. Just as the Kingdom of God is already a
present thing, but awaits its full consummation in the
future, so also the "world to come" is a present condition
to be fully perfected at the time of the "new heaven and
the new earth".

περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν : The plural form of the verb may
be either the author's plural,⁵ or it may be a communicative
expression including the author and his readers.⁶ A similar
use of the plural occurs in ch. 5:11; 6:9; and 13:13. In
ch. 6:9 the readers and the writer are separated, πεπεύσμεθα

5. Franz Delitzsch, Commentar zum Briefe an die Hebräer,
p. 55.
6. C.F. Keil, Der Brief an die Hebräer, p. 60.

δὲ περὶ ὑμῶν, and thus I would classify this plural here as the author's plural. Just as he conceals his identity at the beginning of the letter, so he lets himself stand in the background also in the body of the Epistle.⁷

The next question is whether the clause points ahead or backward. This is another question which will have to remain unanswered until we have completed discussion of the whole section.

Additional Remarks: In this short verse we have a strange paradox in time. The verb is put into the past tense and the object has a future connotation. On the one hand we have something which has happened, emphasized by ὑπέταξεν. On the other hand, we have something not yet fully realized in its consummation, namely, the "world to come". These paradoxical ideas can be explained if we put ourselves into the position of the author. The actual subordination of the "world to come" took place when God spoke ἐν νῆφί. That was a definite historical event. But the mere fact that God spoke at a certain time and revealed Himself in the Word means that the actual reality of that which was spoken in the Word thru the Son is still a matter of the future. If I give someone a promise, the giving of that promise is a definite historical event; but the actual carrying out of that promise is a matter of the future from the viewpoint of when the promise was

7. Keil, op. cit., p. 60.

given. And so God spoke in a Son, but the fulfilling of His Word was future from the standpoint of its revelation. The Word was revealed in the past and continues in the present, but at the same time we can look into the future and see the fulfillment of that which already exists in the Word.⁸

Dies Nebeneinander von Haben und Hoffen, Gegenwart und Zukunft, wie es dem Christentum im gegenwärtigen Weltbestande besonders charakteristisch ist, kommt im Hebräerbrief mit starker Pointierung zur Geltung. Einmal wird das betont, was die Christen schon ihr eigen nennen, worin sie die Heilsfülle im vollen Umfang besitzen - sie sind des Geistes teilhaft geworden und haben die Kräfte des zukünftigen Aeon geschmeckt (ch. 6:4) - und auf der anderen Seite ist doch der Blick in die Zukunft gerichtet und wird die Sehnsucht nach der πόλις μέλλουσα geweckt und gestärkt (ch. 13:14)⁹

Verses Six to Eight(a)

διεμαρτύρατο δὲ πού τις λέγων: τί ἐστὶν
ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μεμνήσκη αὐτοῦ; ἢ υἱὸς
ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν; ἢ λάττωσας
αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους, δόξα καὶ τιμὴ
ἑσπεράνωσας αὐτόν, πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω
τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ.

δέ: There is some disagreement among commentators whether this particle is adversative or merely continues the thought. The New Testament has examples of both usages. The adversative use is illustrated in ch. 4:13: καὶ οὐκ

8. Julius Kögel, Der Sohn und die Söhne, p. 15.
 9. Ibid.

ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ
χυμνά.

Because of the negative in verse five, I am inclined to adopt the adversative meaning in line with an axiom proposed by Westcott: "When the negative marks a sentence which is complete in itself, and another statement is added as a fresh thought, this, though it does in fact oppose the former, is introduced by δέ"¹⁰ The thought would then be that God did not subordinate the "world to come" to angels; but, etc.

ΔΕΜΑΡΤΥΡΩΔΟ: The same word is used in reference to the testimony of the Holy Spirit when Paul was addressing the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:23, and also of Paul's testimony in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). Kittel says it means "nachdrücklich erklären".¹¹ In English we would say "to expressly declare".

ΠΟΥ ΤΙΣ ΛΕΓΩΝ: This is the only instance in the Epistle to the Hebrews where the author does not allude to God as being the author of an Old Testament quotation. The quotations are always made anonymously. Nowhere is there any mention of the name of the human writer of a given quotation. The words are invariably ascribed to God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. This verse is the only exception. The reason for this single exception might be that God Himself is addressed

10. Westcott, op. cit., p. 43.

11. Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Viertes Band, p. 516.

in the quotation. It would sound odd for God to address Himself.¹² At any rate, the indefinite introduction of ΠΟΥ ΤΙΣ does not mean that the author was ignorant of the original author of the quotation. Nor was he ignorant of the location. He was too well acquainted in the Old Testament for that.¹³

On Old Testament quotations in Hebrews in general: The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews regards the Old Testament as "present, living, always effective, not exhausting itself on its first proclamation, but coming home to each new generation with ever-increasing force in the light of fuller knowledge".¹⁴ To him the Old Testament contains much more than history. To be sure, he does not disregard the historical background and historical facts, but each event contains for him a deeper spiritual meaning. He finds this deeper sense in both personal (ch. 7:1ff.) and national history (ch. 4:1ff.); in the Mosaic ritual (ch. 9:3); in the experience of typical characters (ch. 2:13); and in the general teaching (ch. 2:6). Even the silence of the narrative suggests important thoughts (ch. 7:5).

In Paul the relation between the Old and the New Testament is often one of contrast. The one is the Law; the other is the Promise, and "ne'er the twain shall meet". The author

12. Milligan, op. cit., p. 23.

13. Edgel, op. cit., p. 18.

14. Milligan, op. cit., p. 24.

of Hebrews approaches the relation from a little different angle. To him the Old Testament is a shadow or outline of the New. It contains the suggestions and conceptions of that which was to reach its consummation and peak of reality in the New Testament. Using the outline of Westcott we may summarize the discussion under the following points:¹⁵

1) The author takes it for granted that a divine plan worked out the history of Israel. In God's dealings with Israel we see His plans and intentions for humanity in general. Thus the whole history of Israel is prophetic. It does not only contain prophecy; it is one vast prophecy.

2) Therefore each historical event has a deeper sense that transcends the recorded facts of history. This does not mean that the recorded facts lose their identity in the world of allegory. Melchizedek was still an historical character who received tithes from Abraham. The historical facts are closely guarded, but the author leads his readers to look beyond history and see the fuller meaning working itself out in time. "The records are not changed, but men are changed by gaining deeper insight of nature and history."¹⁶

3) The Old Testament passages are not merely words separated from the body of truth. They represent broad conceptions for the nation, the king, the prophet, the man. The quotations are not introduced as proof so much, as to

15. Westcott, op. cit., p. 69.

16. Ibid., p. 431.

"indicate the correspondence which exists between the several stages in the fulfillment of the divine promise from age to age".¹⁷ As Milligan puts it, the quotations are "pre-intimations of his (the author's) own Christian thoughts".¹⁸

4) The words of the quotations had a perfect meaning when they were first used in their definite historical setting. The meaning is at once the "germ and vehicle" of the later and fuller meaning. The fuller meaning is reached in Christ and the Christian dispensation.¹⁹ An example is the discussion of the Rest in chapter four.

In conclusion, we might add a word about the author's source-book of quotations. He takes all of his quotations directly from the LXX, even where the LXX differs from the original Hebrew. An example of this latter truth is ch. 10:5. This is in contra-distinction to Paul who also uses the LXX, but always with the Hebrew original in mind. Milligan says that the author of Hebrews uses the LXX "in a recension closely resembling the Alexandrine Codex, whereas Paul, when he uses the LXX at all, does so in the form of the Vatican Codex".²⁰

The quotation contained in verses 6-8a: This quotation is taken from Psalm 8:4-6. It is reproduced exactly from the

17. Westcott, op. cit., p. 481.
18. Milligan, op. cit., p. 78.
19. Westcott, op. cit., p. 480.
20. Milligan, op. cit., p. 22. For an excellent discussion of this problem see: E.L. Lueker, "The Author of Hebrews - A Fresh Approach" in Concordia Theological Monthly, July, 1946.

LXX, except that one sentence is omitted, namely: κατέσθης αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα χειρῶν σου. The author's purpose is to show to whom the lordship of the "world to come" belongs. The "world to come" is a spiritual concept; the phrase of the Psalm which has been omitted is a material or physical concept. It speaks of lordship over created things, the "works of thy hands". It may be that this thought does not fit into the metaphorical scheme which the author is following; hence he drops the phrase.²¹ However, it does occur in some texts, such as the Textus Receptus following ACD*E*MP and many minuscules and versions. It is missing in BDe**KL, in more than sixty-five minuscules, various codices and editions of the Syriac version, Chrysostom, etc. Tischendorf already regraded it as a spurious reading. If the author had included the phrase originally, it would be hard to explain why anyone ever omitted it. On the other hand, if it were originally omitted, it is easy to understand why later copyists should introduce it as a "correction",²²

Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise to the Lord for His marvelous condescension toward man. Compared to the universe, especially the heavenly bodies, man is but an infinitesimal speck. Yet the Lord has appointed man to be the ruler of the earth, to have dominion over the sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and "what-

21. Kögel, op. cit., p. 24.

22. Keil, op. cit., 61.

soever passeth through the paths of the sea". The Psalm is very closely connected in thought and word with the Creation Story recorded in Genesis 1:26-28, where we are told that man was made in the image of God, and was given command to subdue the earth and have dominion over it.

Besides the quotation in Hebrews 2 the Psalm is referred to three other times in the New Testament. This has led many commentators to regard it as directly Messianic. These passages are I Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; and Matthew 21:16. Both in I Corinthians and in Ephesians the phrase πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ is used to describe Christ's almighty power over all things, including death. In Matthew Jesus uses the second verse of the Psalm as an answer to the scribes and priests when they rebuked Him for having the children sing hosannas to Him: ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον.

Because of these New Testament references Luther, for example, writes:

Aber wider diese Meinung (that the Psalm is not Messianic) zeugt Paul sehr stark, nicht bloß im Brief an die Hebräer (wenn vielleicht jemand sagen sollte, derselbe sei nicht von Paulus), sondern auch I Cor. 15:27, "Er hat ihm alles (sagt er) unter seine Füße getan." Da aber die Schrift und das Wort Gottes einen, einfältigen und beständigen Verstand haben musz, damit wir der heiligen Schrift nicht (wie man sagt) eine wächserne Nase machen, so ist es billig, dasz wir die Deutung Pauli der Deutung aller anderen Väter vorziehen, möge es auch Ambrosius, Augustinus, Athanasius oder Hieronymus sein.²⁵

²⁵ Martin Luther, Sämtliche Schriften, Viertes Band, St. Louis Edition, p. 555.

Concerning those who do not accept the Psalm as Messianic Luenemann says, "It is nothing else than a controlling of the author of the Epistle by preconceived opinions of one's own, from which, in the face of I Cor. 15:27, one ought to have shrunk."²⁴ On the other hand, Delitzsch says that the Psalm was never classed as Messianic among the Jews.²⁵ This question of the Messianic nature of the Psalm will also receive further attention later.

Leaving the Psalm in general we shall now concentrate our attention upon the words of the Psalm quoted in Hebrews 2.

τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι κληθήσῃ αὐτοῦ ;
ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν ;

In the Hebrew original these words are an expression of surprise over the fact that God should take notice of man who is so insignificant compared to the heavenly bodies. The word ἄνθρωπος is a translation of the Hebrew word נִפְשׁוּת. The phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου is a rendering of the Hebrew נַפְשׁוּת - אָדָם. Luther says that נִפְשׁוּת describes man according to the soul and אָדָם man according to the body.²⁶ Since these words were originally spoken of man in general, many ancient commentators and most modern ones since the time of von Hofmann have held that the words refer

²⁴. Gottlieb Luenemann, "The Epistle to the Hebrews", in Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament, p. 429.

²⁵. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁶. Luther, op. cit., p. 663.

to mankind in general here. Luonemann on the other hand is insistent on saying that the words refer κατ' ἔξοχὴν to Christ.²⁷ Which is the correct interpretation? At this point we shall not yet try to answer the question, but shall merely show that the words themselves could refer either to mankind or the Messiah.

The one side holds that the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου could only mean the Son of Man, Jesus, because He is often described as the Son of Man in the Gospel of John, and already had that title in Dan. 7:13. On the other hand, the phrase "son of man" also occurs very often in the book of Ezekiel, and definitely is not the Messiah.²⁸ Hence no argument can be built up on the mere phrase "son of man".

The second word that comes into consideration is the word ἐπιλοκέπη. Wuest, for instance, says that ἐπιλοκέπη τομα means "to look upon in order to help or to benefit". He says that it always has the idea of "help". Therefore he concludes that the "son of man" can only refer to the human race.²⁹ But let us look into this word ἐπιλοκέπη a bit more closely.

In classic Greek ἐπιλοκέπη was used in a variety of ways. (a) The first meaning is "to watch over" or to "care for". Xenophon uses the word when speaking of watching

27. Luonemann, op. cit., p. 429.

28. Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. V, p. 344.

29. Kenneth Wuest, Hebrews for the English Reader, p. 55.

over weapons. Aristophanes uses it to describe an activity of the gods in caring for mortals. (b) Another meaning is "to examine" or "to test". Epictetus uses it of examining teachings. (c) Finally the classics used the word in the ordinary sense of "to visit". It was used especially of doctors visiting the sick.

In the Septuagint the same meanings occur as in classic Greek, but new connotations also occur. In the Apocrypha it takes on the meaning of "to search", as when searching for something in books. The LXX version of Jeremiah contains the word when speaking of a shepherd watching over his flock; in I Kings 20 the word has the meaning of "to miss", as when Saul missed David's presence at the table. But the real significance of the Septuagint use of ἔπισκεπτομαι is that it takes on a deeper religious sense. Kittel says it means "heimsuchen" and describes it as "das Handeln Gottes, in welchem der Herr durch besonderen Eingriff in den Lebensgang einem einzelnen oder einem Volk, meist seinem Volk Israel, in Zorn oder Gnade seinen Willen kundtut".³⁰ As an example of God reaching down into life and expressing His will in love and grace, we cite the words of Joseph in Genesis 50:24-25, where he tells his brethren that God will some day "visit" them and take them up out of the land of Egypt. As an example of God reaching down and

30. Kittel, op. cit., p. 597.

expressing His will in anger we have Exodus 32:34 where the children of Israel have worshipped the golden calf and God says that He will "visit" the people for their sin. Thus we see that the word ἔπλοκέπτομαι does not always have the connotation of "help". In Psalm 8 the writer no doubt originally referred to God's gracious activity in giving man such great honor in view of his insignificance. But we do not have to take the word in that meaning in Hebrews; it might well mean the visitation of wrath which God showed Jesus. The main point that we want to make is that the word ἔπλοκέπτομαι alone does not solve the question as to the identity of the "son of man". That word in itself is neutral and may mean either a visitation of wrath or a visitation of grace, depending on how the author looks at it.

ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους :

This sentence has probably aroused more discussion concerning the problem of Psalm 8 than any other. The author's interpretation of it is clear proof that he does not apply the Psalm as it was originally meant.

ἡλάττωσας : This word is a rendering of the Hebrew הִטַּלְתָּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים. The root is הִטַּל, and in the Piel means to "cause to want or to lack".³¹ Its Greek rendition means to "bring from a more exalted to a humbler condition".³²

31. William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 333.

32. Thomas Charles Edwards, "The Epistle to the Hebrews", in The Expositor's Bible, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 35.

βραχύ τι: These two words are the LXX translation of the Hebrew וַיַּב. Both the Greek³³ and the Hebrew³⁴ words mean "a little" of degree, space, or time. An example where the word is used of space is II Sam. 16:1, where David is described as being "a little" past the top of the hill. The time idea is illustrated in Haggai 2:6: "Yet a little while and I will shake the heavens." Finally, the idea of degree is contained in I Sam. 14:29, where Jonathan confesses to his father Saul that he has tasted "a little" honey.

In the original Psalm the expression was no doubt one of degree. The Psalmist has just expressed wonderment over the fact that God has condescended to make man an object of his special concern. The phrase "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" was an expression of honor, and intended to convey the idea of an exalted privilege. Whether the author uses the word βραχύ in a different sense here is debatable. Some say that it is used of time here and in verse nine. Others say that it is used of degree in both places, and still others believe that it is used in the sense of degree in one place and of time in another. Personally, I would be inclined to agree with Dods who says, "There is no reason why the sense of degree should not be kept in both clauses."³⁵ Either interpretation could be understood cor-

33. Preuschen-Bauer, Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments, p. 251.

34. Gesenius, op. cit., p. 596. 493

35. Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews", in The Expositor's Greek Testament, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 252.

rectly.

παρ' ἀγγέλους : The Hebrew original for this phrase is אֱלֹהִים. Consequently, many writers have said that this is a faulty translation. They say that it should be rendered "a little lower than God". The question does not really concern the problem at hand, because the author of Hebrews always follows the LXX text for his thought development, not the Hebrew. Even if it could be proved that אֱלֹהִים should be translated "God", it would not change matters any, for the author assumes that it means "angels". Yet, for the sake of completeness, it might be well to include a few remarks on the word אֱלֹהִים. We follow the discussion of Keil.⁵⁶

The word Elohim, with or without the article, is a common designation for the true God. It is also used of other gods who are far inferior to Jehovah. An example of Elohim being used as a designation for other gods is Exodus 18:13:

אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים - אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים. Another example is

I Sam. 28:13 where the witch of Endor says that she saw "elohim" coming up out of the earth. Jesus accassents to

a more general interpretation of the word when He quotes Ps. 82:6 in John 10:35, rendering אֱלֹהִים with θεαί

and applying it to the people of God. The peculiarity of

אֱלֹהִים is that it never stands in the abstract meaning

56. Keil, op. cit., p. 62.

of "godhead", but more in the concrete meaning of "a divine being". From this turn of sense it also gets the meaning of "angels" as being special supernatural divine beings created by God. Thus the translators of the LXX were justified in their rendition. Additional witness is furnished by the Targum, which translates the word with "messengers"; by the Jewish commentators Rashi, Kimchi, and Aben-Ezra;³⁷ and by other passages in the Old Testament such as Ps. 97:7 and Ps. 138:1.³⁸

Thus the sentence "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" originally was a tribute of honor to man. It showed God's gracious activity in taking an insignificant creature and bestowing on it great honor. The author of Hebrews, however, applies the passage differently.

δόξα καὶ τιμὴ ἑστεφανώσας αὐτόν: This next line of the Psalm is parallel in thought to "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels". δόξα refers to the reflection of God, and τιμὴ has reference to God's recognition of man. In the original Psalm man's position of world-rulership is here extolled. World-rulership is the crown which has been put on man's head. In a spiritual sense the word δόξα was especially associated with the glory of God at His various revelations of Himself.³⁹ Associating the word with man, we get the idea that he was a reflection of

37. Westcott, op. cit., p. 44.

38. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 57.

39. Kögel, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

God's own glory. Westcott summarizes the two terms by saying that they express the "essential dignity and outward splendor which signalizes world rulership".⁴⁰ The foregoing has merely been a description of the words of the Psalm in the original. The way in which the author of the Epistle uses them is entirely different. He applies them to Christ later on in a manner which has evolved much discussion. He does not apply them to world rulership, but to rulership in the "world to come".

πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ :

In the original Psalm these words are a summary statement of all that God has done for man. The significance of the words lies in their connection with verse five. In verse five we are told that the "world to come" was not subjected to angels. The word for "subject" is ὑπέταξας. Now the word occurs again in the last sentence of the Psalm. The obvious conclusion is that the adversative to verse five is given in the Psalm. The Psalm contains the answer to the question to whom the "world to come" was subjected. It was not subjected to angels, but to whom? To whomever is indicated in the Psalm.

40. Westcott, op. cit., p. 44.

Verse Eight(b)

ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξει αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ ἀνυπότακτον.

αὐτῷ: The correct identification of this pronoun would solve the whole problem of the interpretation. Does it refer to mankind or to the Messiah. Then we could tell who the "son of man" in the Psalm is.

τὰ πάντα: The article with πάντα is the article of previous reference.⁴¹ The word πάντα has occurred in the Psalm, and now the author shows how much is meant by it. It means literally everything. In the original Psalm the different things were named. They closely paralleled the sphere of dominion given to man in the Garden of Eden and included mainly zoological creatures: sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, fowl of the air, and fish of the sea. It is plain that the author of Hebrews includes more under the term πάντα than zoological creatures. He means the "world to come" and especially death(v.15). Nothing is excluded.

ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξει: The γὰρ connects this sentence with the Psalm and introduces it as an explanation. The ἐν τῷ with the infinitive often has a temporal sense,

41. R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to Hebrews and of the Epistle of James, p. 74.

and in this case perhaps points to the time when God by an act of His will subjected all things to the "son of man", whoever he may be.⁴²

Verse Eight(c)

Νῦν δὲ οὕτω ὁρῶμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποτέτακμένα.

Νῦν δὲ οὕτω: The δέ is again in the sense of "but". The author has just made the statement that at some historic time all things were subjected to the "son of man". Now he adds a limitation to his own statement. Νῦν because of its position is emphatic!. Νῦν, at this moment, we can't see everything subjected to the "son of man". The acrist ὑπέταξας of the Psalm was a definite appointment or "Bestimmung". But the reality or manifestation of this high appointment as lord of all is not yet evident. The word οὕτω suggests that a full manifestation of this high appointment as lord of the "world to come" will become evident at some future time.

ὁρῶμεν: This word has been contrasted with the word βλέπομεν in verse nine. Some hold that ὁρῶμεν signifies a particular look, while βλέπομεν denotes more of a reflective look.⁴³ It could also be true that the author uses different words merely for the sake of variety in style.

42. Keil, op. cit., p. 63.

43. Milligan, op. cit., p. 97.

ὑποτεταγμένα : The perfect participle is significant.

It shows that the completed action is conceived of as continuing in the present. The fact that we do not yet see all things subjected to the "son of man" is something that holds good now.⁴⁴

VERSE Nine

τὸν δὲ βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον
βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου
δόξης καὶ τιμῆς ἐστεφανωμένον, ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ
ὑπὲρ πάντων χεύσῃται θανάτου.

δέ : The δέ again is adversative. The author has just stated what we do not see. Now he presents what we do see.

τὸν βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον : These words link up the whole discussion with the Psalm. They are really an exegesis of the Psalm, the author's own exegesis. They give the secret to the identity of the "son of man" in the Psalm.

βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν : This is the first time that the name Jesus occurs in the Epistle. In ch. 1 the second person of the Trinity was called the "son" and was pictured in His ideal dignity. Now, however, the author introduces the human name, Jesus, and thus makes clear that he is now speaking of a definite historical character. In ch. 1 we

44. Lenski, op. cit., p. 75.

saw the Son in His divine majesty. Now we see Him as He appears on the stage of history. Since the name has not been mentioned before, many commentators have ventured the opinion that the author could not have been speaking of the Son before. They say that the use of Ἰησοῦν shows that the author was not speaking of Jesus in the verses preceding, but of mankind in general.⁴⁵ But this argument falls flat when we examine the other instances where the human name Jesus occurs in the Epistle. In almost every instance where the name Ἰησοῦς is used, it is in the form of an appositive. We have such an example in ch. 3:1: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, namely Jesus." And in the verses just preceding, the author has been telling about the temptation and suffering of Jesus. This example clearly shows that the emphatic position of the name Jesus at the end of a clause does not mean that the author has not been speaking of Jesus before this. And so if the name Jesus occurs in our ch. 2 rather abruptly, that is no indication that Jesus has not been the subject of previous discussion. The significance of the name is properly given by Lueneemann: "Ἰησοῦν might even have been entirely left out without detriment to the sense and intelligibility of that which the author would imply; it is nevertheless inserted, in order, by the express mention of His name, to

45. Kögel, op. cit., p. 33.

cut off every kind of doubt upon the point that it is no other than Christ, the historic Redeemer, of whom the citation is adduced.⁴⁶

We see then that the author applies the words "made a little lower than the angels" to Jesus. In the original Psalm these words were an expression of great honor. Applied to Jesus they are an expression of humiliation. There is some leeway as to the interpretation of "a little". Some say that the author means "a little" of time, and others of degree. Since the author of the original Psalm had the idea of degree, I see no reason why that concept should not be kept here. Whether Jesus was made lower than the angels for a little while, or whether He was made a little lower, really makes no difference in the interpretation. The point is that it was a humiliation either way.

διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου: These words describe the humiliation. The mere assumption of flesh in itself was no humiliation for the Lord of glory. The humiliation consisted in "the assumption of humanity subject to suffering in various forms, death the supreme suffering included".⁴⁷

The thought has now definitely taken a new direction. It is no more Jesus, the pre-existent exalted Son, but Jesus, the suffering Savior, who now enters into the discussion.

46. Luenomann, op. cit., p. 432.
47. Bruce, op. cit., p. 73.

The word "death" presents that new line of thought in its direct aspects.

ὅθεν καὶ τικῆ ἑστεφανωμένον : Here again we have an application of the Psalm to Jesus. διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου gives the basis for this crowning. Jesus was crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death. The important question is: Wherein did this crowning consist, or when did it happen? This question is closely related to the next clause. Hence we shall discuss the question in connection with the next clause.

ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντων γεύσεται θανάτου .
ὅπως introduces a purpose clause. The main verb of the clause and its object is γεύσεται θανάτου. In classical Greek the word γεύομαι meant (a) to taste (b) to enjoy, partake of food, eat (c) in a derived meaning, to learn to know by experience. The same meanings run through the LXX. The exact phrase "to taste death" does not occur in the Old Testament, but it does occur in the Apocrypha (4 Esd. 3:26) and often in Aramaic and later Rabbinical texts. The same three meanings of the word are found also in the New Testament. Kittel says that γεύεσθαι θανάτου is the same as ἰδεῖν or θεωρεῖν θάνατον as found in Heb. 11:5; Luke 2:26; and John 8:51. In reference to the passage under present observation he says that it means "mit sinnlicher Kraft, die harte, schmerzvolle Wirklichkeit des Todes erfahren". In other words, Jesus

tasted death in its fullest form - with all of its ramifications. The tense is aorist and indicates a definite point action.

ὑπὲρ πάντων: The ὑπὲρ in this place probably means "in behalf" of. The idea of "instead of" comes later in the Epistle.⁴⁸ πάντων is masculine and not neuter. It links up with the "sons" in the following verse, and shows that Jesus' death was not just the ordinary death of the common lot. It had something to do with other people. If this were neuter, the form would have been πάντων, because the author consistently uses the plural form with the neuter.

ἄνευ Θεοῦ: This phrase has drawn much comment, because it has a variant reading which introduces an entirely different idea. The variant reading is χωρὶς Θεοῦ. This reading is found in some Syrian versions, in two manuscripts, the Uffenbach Codex of the 9th or 10th century and Minuscule No. 67 of the 11th or 12th century. It was already known at the time of Origen and was noted by the Greek fathers Theodore and Theodoret and by the Latin fathers, Ambrose and Fulgentius. The Nestorians were especially attracted to this reading because it fitted in with their theology. They used the reading to prove that Jesus died on the cross without the divine nature.⁴⁹ Those who have held χωρὶς Θεοῦ to be

48. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 57.

49. Kögel, op. cit. p. 131.

the correct reading have suggested the following interpretations:

- 1) Christ died apart from His divinity. His divine nature had no share in His death. Nestorians.
- 2) Christ died "apart from God", being left by God, and feeling the completeness of the separation as the penalty of sin. (Matt. 27:46)
- 3) Christ died for all, God only excepted. I Cor. 15:27.
- 4) Christ died to gain all, to bring all under His power, God only excepted.⁵⁰

After the Nestorian controversy the reading disappeared, and later manuscripts contain the familiar χάριτι θεοῦ. The problem is to discover the correct reading. Three arguments have been advanced in favor of χάριτι.

1) We have already seen that there are a great number of interpretations for the other reading. This great variation in thought contrasts to the more unanimous interpretation of χάριτι θεοῦ.

2) It is easier to see how χωρίς θεοῦ could have slipped in by mistake than χάριτι. The χωρίς idea has a parallel in I Cor. 15:27, where we read ὅταν δὲ ἐξῆν ὅτι πάντα ὑποτέτακται, δῆλον ὅτι ἔκτος τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα. It may be that a copyist considered these verses parallel and inserted the Corinthian passage into the margin, substituting χωρίς for ἔκτος, because χωρίς is a favorite word of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, occurring thirteen other times. Gradually the marginal reading came to be re-

50. Westcott, op. cit., p. 46.

garded as the correct one. This is purely conjecture, but it does offer an explanation where one is lacking for χάριτι.

3) Finally, the influence of Origen must be mentioned. Origen favored the χωρίς reading in the interest of his dogmatics. He was much attracted to the idea that Christ's work had value for all the universe. By adopting the reading χωρίς he had proof for the idea that Christ's death was of benefit to the whole universe, God excepted. Below are three quotations taken from the works of Origen. They show that he knows of both readings. However he uses the χωρίς reading because it serves his purpose better; he makes no effort to establish the correct reading.

α) χωρίς γὰρ Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς ἐχέυστο θανάτου (ὅπερ ἐν τισι κεῖται τῆς πρὸς Ἑβραίουσ ἀντιγράφοις) χάριτι Θεοῦ. εἴτε δὲ χωρίς Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς ἐχέυστο θανάτου, οὐ μόνον ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων ἀπέθανεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν λοιπῶν λογικῶν : εἴτε χάριτι Θεοῦ ἐχέυστο τοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς θανάτου, ὑπὲρ πάντων χωρίς Θεοῦ ἀπέθανε. χάριτι γὰρ Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς ἐχέυστο θανάτου.

b) Concerning the speech of Caiaphas, John 11:50:

ὁ βουλόμενος ἀληθεύειν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τὸν Καϊάφαν, λέγω δὲ τῷ φάσκειν· συμφέρες ἡμῖν κ.τ.ε. βαθύτερον ἔξακούσεται τοῦ "συμφέρες ἡμῖν" διὰ τὸν περὶ τέλους λόγον καὶ συχρήσεται τῷ "ὅπως χάριτι (ἢ χωρίς) Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς χεύσεται"

θανάτου " καὶ ἐπιστήσει τῷ "ὕπὲρ παντός" καὶ τῷ "χωρὶς θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντός".

c) Μόνου Ἰησοῦ τὸ πάντων τῆς ἁμαρτίας φόρτιον ἐν τῷ ὑπὲρ τῶν ὅλων χωρὶς θεοῦ σταυρῷ ἀναλαβεῖν εἰς ἑαυτόν. In this quotation the variant is not even

mentioned any more. Hence there is some reasonable ground to assume that Origen's influence gave the impetus to the widespread adoption of χωρὶς. Later, when the Nestorian error arose, the χωρὶς faded from use.⁵¹

Having seen that χάριτι θεοῦ is the more probable reading of the passage, let us see what it means. Some have said that it refers to the manner of Jesus' death. They believe that He did not die a complete death, but a death with God's grace surrounding Him, taking away the pangs and woes. But we have already seen that γεύομαι means to taste death in its fullest degree. Therefore we rule out this meaning of χάριτι θεοῦ.

A second possibility is that χάριτι θεοῦ connects with ὕπὲρ παντός. This relation fits in well with the rest of Scripture. It was an act of God's grace that sent Jesus into death for every man. Jesus death was not without wrath; He died the death of man. But it was God's grace that delivered Him into the depth of being forsaken. It was God's grace that He served.⁵²

51. Kögel, op. cit., pp. 131-141.

52. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 67.

Having completed discussion of the purpose clause, we are now ready to go back to "crowned with glory and honor". When did this crowning take place, and what does it refer to? The traditional explanation is that the crowning corresponds with the state of exaltation. The "made lower than the angels" refers to the humiliation and the "crowned with glory and honor" is the exaltation. Although this explanation is in harmony with Philippians 2 and regular dogmatics, it does not harmonize with the words of the text. The text says that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor in order that He might suffer death for every one. The traditional state of exaltation comes after the suffering of death. How then could He be crowned in order to suffer? That would be placing the exaltation before the suffering. In order to get around this problem, some commentators have wrought violence to the final clause, and have said that it must be translated, "in order that He may have tasted death for every one".⁵³ There is no parallel for such a use of the aorist anywhere in the New Testament,⁵⁴ and such a translation clearly constitutes a governing of exegesis by dogmatics.

Others have suggested that the crowning and the suffering are contemporaneous events. It is the idea of glory in suffering, an exaltation in the humiliation.⁵⁵ This seems to be

53. Keil, op. cit., p. 65.

54. Bruce, op. cit., p. 82.

55. Ibid.

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a more plausible solution in keeping with the words as they stand. The crowning then would refer to something during the earthly life of Jesus. It would be something that happened prior to or at the same time as the suffering of death. I believe that Bruce and Strathmann have hit the nail on the head when they say that the crowning refers to Jesus' appointment as High Priest.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that the crowning referred to may be prior, not posterior, to death - an exaltation latent in the humiliation? If I am met with the skeptical question, With what glory and honour can the man Jesus be said to have been crowned on earth? I reply, With just such glory and honour as are spoken of in the third and fifth chapters of this same Epistle: with the glory of a Moses and the honour of an Aaron; the glory of being the leader of the people out of Egypt into the promised land, that is, of being the "Captain of Salvation"; the honour of being the High Priest of men, procuring for them, through the sacrifice of Himself, life and blessedness. The glory and the honour spoken of as conferred on Jesus may quite well be those connected with His appointment to the honourable and glorious office of Apostle and High Priest of our profession.⁵⁶

Evidence for this opinion is given in Genesis 28:2. God is telling Moses about the appointment of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, and among other things God says: καὶ ποιήσεις στολὴν ἁγίαν ἑαυτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου εἰς τεμὴν καὶ δόξαν. Here we see the same words τεμὴν and δόξα. Since the writer of Hebrews was so closely connected with the Old Testament, and since he is gradually

56. Bruce, op. cit., p. 82.

leading over to the main theme of the Epistle, it may very well be that he is already thinking in terms of priesthood.⁵⁷ This interpretation does not do violence to the text and fits in the Epistle as such.

Verses Ten to Eighteen

The rest of chapter 2 does not directly concern the problem which is being treated in this thesis. The remainder of the chapter gives the rationale of the humiliation of Jesus from two viewpoints, from the viewpoint of God and from the viewpoint of man. The former is characterized by ἔπρεπεν in verse ten and introduces a discussion showing the appropriateness of the humiliation from a divine standpoint. The human viewpoint is characterized by ῥεχεν in verse seventeen and shows that the humiliation was humanly necessary so that Christ might become a sympathetic Mediator. The end of chapter 2 marks the first occurrence of the word ἀρχιερεὺς, a concept destined to play a most important role in the rest of the Epistle.

57. Hermann Strathmann, "Der Brief an die Hebräer" in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, p. 80.

*ἡμεῖς ἰσχυροῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι
 ἡμεῖς ἰσχυροῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι
 ἡμεῖς ἰσχυροῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι
 ἡμεῖς ἰσχυροῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι
 ἡμεῖς ἰσχυροῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι*

III The Problem and Its Implications

In the foregoing exegetical study many references have been made to the problem of Hebrews 2. Briefly stated, the problem is this: Does υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in the Old Testament quotation refer to mankind in general or to the Son of Man, Jesus Christ? The quotation is eventually applied to Christ, but the question at hand is whether it refers κατ' ἔξοχὴν to Christ in the place where it is quoted, in Hebrews 2:6-8. Who is the αὐτῷ mentioned in verse eight?

This problem is not new; it was already a debatable question in the ancient church. We have, for example, the testimony of Clement: οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἐκδέχονται τὴν γραφὴν καίτοι κακένοσ σάρκα ἔφερον, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ τελείου καὶ γνωστικῷ, τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἐνδύματι ἐλαττουμένου παρὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους.

Also the witness of Chrysostom: ταῦτα εἰ καὶ εἰς τὴν κοινὴν ἀνθρωπότητα εἴρηται, ἀλλ' ὅμως κυριώτερον ἀρμόσειεν ἂν τῷ Χριστῷ κατὰ σάρκα.

And finally the testimony of Theodoret: τὸ δὲ τί ἐστίν

ἄνθρωπος "· εἴρηται μέν περὶ τῆς κοινῆς
φύσεως , ἀρμόττει δὲ τῇ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀπαρχῇ , ὡς
οἰκουμένης τὰ πάσης τῆς φύσεως , τὰ δὲ ἡμέτερα
οἰκούμενος στόμα τῆς φύσεως χέρονεν . αὐτὸς γὰρ
τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἔλαβε καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασε .¹

Tradition finally established the opinion that the "son of man" referred directly to Jesus. This view was held by Luther, Tholuck and Bleek; and in more recent years was perpetuated by Luenemann and Strathmann. The traditional view suffered a set-back in the person of von Hofmann.²

Von Hofmann went back to the idea that the "son of man" in the Psalm refers first of all to mankind in general, and his arguments carried such weight that almost all later commentators have followed his general trend of thought. To name a few: Delitzsch, Keil, Dods, Milligan, Westcott, Bruce, Kögel, Scott, Edwards, Goodspeed, Moffatt, Ionski, Robertson, Wand, and Wuest.³

The line of thought of those who believe that the "son of man" is first of all mankind in general is briefly this: God did not subject the "world to come" to angels, but to man. The angels are bowed out in verse five, and the way is being prepared for a new trend of thought. The suggestion of man being lord of the "world to come" is contained in

1. Westcott, op. cit., pp. 42-45.

2. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 60.

3. See Bibliography.

Psalm 8. This Psalm gives a picture of man's appointed destiny. God has decreed that everything is to be subject to man; everything also included the "world to come". Man, however, has not attained this destiny. There are still many things which overpower him. Although man himself did not achieve the destiny appointed for him by God, one Man, namely Christ Jesus, did achieve that high goal of honor and glory which was meant for mankind. But Jesus reached the throne in a way that is hard for the human heart to understand. It does not fit in with human aspirations and human ideas of grandeur. Jesus' road to glory was a cross, suffering, and humiliation. But this humiliation had an appropriate purpose. By it men in general are able to attain the goal laid out for them in the Psalm. Through the humiliation of Christ they can achieve lordship in the "world to come". ----- There are variations of this general theme, but the thoughts given are characteristic of those who believe that the Psalm refers first of all to mankind.

To get a clearer picture yet, let us follow the paraphrase of Wand, who is representative of those who hold the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου of the Psalm to be mankind in general.

Angels may have the rule in this world, but it was not to them that God subjected the world to come, which is our point of interest at the moment. You can see evidence of this in the verse:

Is man so great that Thou art to him bound?
 Does human being merit Thy regard?
 Here less than angels: there with glory crowned;
 To rule the universe is his reward.

The words "rule the universe" imply that nothing at all has been left outside the sphere of man's control. Not that we see the whole universe subject to him at the present moment. What we do see is that Jesus, who for a time was put below the rank of angels in order that He might suffer death, has now been crowned with honour and glory so that His participation in death may, by the special favor of God, avail for every man.⁴

A more extreme advocate of the view that υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου refers to man in general is Kerr:

Salvation belongs to humanity. The world to come is to be inherited by man. This truth is clearly set forth in the O.T., and to that authority the author makes his appeal, knowing that it is the court of last resort for the Christians to whom he writes. His exposition of the eighth Psalm is one of the finest interpretations of a portion of the Bible we have. For a little while, the Psalm, asserts, man has been subordinated to the angels. In reality, however, God has crowned humanity with glory and honor, and put all things, nature and law and angels, under his feet. Man is called to supremacy, and redemption demands lordship over the world. It is a fine tribute to the dignity and destiny of humanity, and to the hope that somehow progress is an assured fact.(!)⁵

Concerning verse eight Kerr gives a modern twist to the thought by quoting contemporary literature:

Man is still subject to the powers of this world. Looking upon Millet's painting, "The Man with the Hoe", Edwin Markham gave expression to what we have all thought:

Is this the thing the Lord God made and
gave
To have dominion over land and sea,
To trace the stars, to search the heavens
for power,
To feel the passion of eternity?

4. J.W.C. Wand, The New Testament Letters, pp. 176-177.

5. Kerr, op. cit., p. 58.

Has God's plan for man's salvation, for his coronation, been frustrated?...One man, at least, Jesus, has attained unto the goal... And this is the important thing concerning His attainment - He has attained, not for Himself alone, but for all the race, of which He is a part. "He is the strong swimmer who carries the rope ashore and so not only secures His own position, but makes rescue for all who will follow." (Marcus Dods)⁶

I believe that it must be admitted that these interpretations sound very appealing. They open up new vistas of theological and dogmatical thought, especially in the eschatological field. These verses become parallel to the relation between the created world and man's redemption as portrayed in Romans 8. But my personal opinion is that modern commentators are eager to grasp this interpretation because it puts man on such a high pinnacle. As is clearly witnessed by the quotations from Kerr, the relation which John the Baptist had toward Jesus is entirely reversed. Instead of "He must increase, and I must decrease" we have man increasing and Jesus falling into the background. To be sure, Jesus still plays a prominent part in the theology of those who hold to the "mankind" interpretation of the Psalm, and many of these writers are bold defenders of the Gospel. Yet to ascribe rulership in the "world to come" to man seems to me to be a far cry from Philippians 2, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every

6. Kerr, op. cit., p. 39-40.

tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

My first argument against the "mankind" interpretation of the Psalm would be from the analogy of Scripture. A man like Bruce might accuse me of determining exegesis by dogmatics.⁷ But if Scripture is not one dogmatic unit, then the old principle that Scripture interprets itself would have to go by the board. If Scripture does not present one unified thought pattern, then all of the work which we do with parallel passages would be good for nothing. There would be no basis for explaining difficult passages in the light of clear passages. I agree that grammar and word study must precede any interpretation, and we have carried out that principle in this thesis by making an exegetical study of the words in question. In that study we tried to make clear that the words themselves do not offer any direct clues to interpretation. The words themselves do not tell us if the "son of man" is Jesus or mankind in general. Therefore this passage must be classed under the head of those which are unclear, and must be interpreted in the light of clear passages. My contention is that the idea of man being lord of the "world to come" is foreign to Scripture.

I have already quoted the passage from Philippians 2. There are two other passages which are more definite yet, because they contain the very same words of the Psalm. The

7. Bruce, op. cit., p. 10.

first passage is I Corinthians 15:27. Beginning with verse 25: "For he (Jesus) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet." The second passage is found in Ephesians 1:22: "God set him (Jesus) at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet." Both of these passages contain the expression, "hath put all things under his feet". In the Greek it is πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. These are the very same words which occur in the LXX version of the Psalm, except that the more intensive ὑποκάτω is changed to ὑπό. Nestle has correctly indicated the correspondence by putting the words in heavy black type. A further parallel between these two passages and the one in Hebrews is that the Ephesians passage also has the expression "world to come": οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι. In Hebrews we have the word οἰκουμένην instead of αἰῶνι, but the author of Hebrews also uses the word αἰῶν (ch. 6:5)

In both the Corinthians and the Ephesians passage Jesus is definitely linked up with lordship in the "world to come". Paul uses the exact words of the Psalm to describe this lordship. "What further need have we of witness?" In

clear words Scripture has interpreted the Psalm. The passage in Hebrews is connected to the passages in Paul by two parallels. If the clear passages directly ascribe lordship in the "world to come" to Christ, how can the passage in Hebrews teach anything different? Is not the integrity of Scripture at stake? Was not Luther entirely correct when he said, "Da aber die Schrift und das Wort Gottes einin, einfältigen und beständigen Vorstand haben musz, damit wir der heiligen Schrift nicht (wie man sagt) eine wüchserne Nase machen, so ist es billig, dasz wir die Deutung Pauli der Deutung aller anderen Väter vorziehen, möge es auch Ambrosius, Augustinus, Athanasius oder Hieronymus sein."⁸

Several objections have been raised against this view. The first one is that Psalm 8 was never classified as Messianic among the Jews, and therefore is not to be taken as directly Messianic here.⁹ This argument is weak in two respects. First, if Jesus in Matthew 21:16 and Paul in the two passages noted above could apply the words of the Psalm directly to the Messiah, surely the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be granted that privilege. Secondly, it must be admitted that the author of Hebrews uses the Old Testament in a strange way and gives many other Messianic references which were not held in the past Jewish history. I cite for example the discussion concerning the Rest in chapter 4.

8. Luther, op. cit., p. 665

9. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 57.

Another objection toward interpreting the Psalm in the light of Ephesians 1:22 and I Corinthians 15:27 is that some writers do not regard the passages as parallel. They say that Paul did not regard the Psalm as Messianic, but just happened to use the words of the Psalm to express his thoughts.¹⁰ Again it is a matter of the integrity of Scripture. Even if we grant that Paul did not regard the Psalm as Messianic (which I doubt) the truth still remains that Paul ascribes lordship in the "world to come" to Christ, and not to man. If there is not a parallel of words, at least the thought of Paul must be respected. If he clearly says that the lordship in the "world to come" belongs to Christ, no doubtful passage dare contradict that statement. Rather, the doubtful passage must bow before the clear passage. Thus the analogy of Scripture is a light unto our path, and proves that the Psalm does not refer to man, nor even to man and Christ,¹¹ but to Christ alone.

My second argument against the "mankind" interpretation of the Psalm is related to the identity of the "world to come". In the exegetical portion of this thesis we showed that the "world to come" might be identified with the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not an earthly, but a spiritual concept. Man was appointed lord of the earth in the garden of Eden. His lordship was not a spiritual dominion.

10. Kögel, op. cit., p. 20.
 11. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 59.

It seems to me that many writers have gone off on a tangent in interpreting the Psalm quotation, because they have a secular concept of the Kingdom of God. They virtually identify the Kingdom of God and this earth. Hence it is very easy for them to parallel man's lordship over the earth with his lordship over the "world to come". But if we follow the words of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world", we shall have a two-edged sword which will clarify the issue. Man was appointed ruler of the earth; Christ was ruler of the "world to come", or the Kingdom of God. If we keep these two ideas separate and distinct, we have another argument against the "mankind" interpretation of the Psalm quotation.

My third argument against the "mankind" interpretation of the Psalm is the argument based on the context. In ch. 1 the author has proved the Son's superiority to the angels. At the end of ch. 2 the author has arrived at his theme of "Jesus the High Priest", though several chapters still follow which do not directly deal with the theme. The greater part of ch. 2 is a discussion of the humiliation of Christ and its rationale. My opinion is this: If the author is speaking of the superiority of the Son and proving that superiority not only in the Son's divine position as the second Person of the Trinity (ch. 1), but also in His human role as the Suffering Servant, then why should he introduce a discussion about the lordship of man? The author is speaking of the superiority of Christ and of His religion,

not of man. The whole idea of man playing such a large role in this exposition strikes me as being foreign to the context. This may seem subjective, but if I can prove that the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm fits better into the context than the "mankind" interpretation, I believe that the argument will lose much of its subjectivity.

Those who hold to the "mankind"-interpretation of the Psalm base their argument principally on the transitional sentence in verse eight(c): Νῦν δὲ οὖτω ὁρώμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποταχμένα. They say that this sentence marks a transition in the thought. It introduces the subject of Christ's humiliation. To that I heartily agree. But when they say that this sentence, especially in reference to the name Ἰησοῦν in verse nine, has no sense and is tautological if it refers to Jesus, then I am compelled to raise a question mark.

The mere fact that the name Jesus does not occur until after this sentence is no proof that the sentence does not refer to Jesus. We have already touched this question in connection with the exegetical study, but there is still something to add. I believe that it can safely be said that the author in the first part of the Epistle is very cautious in directly identifying Christ. In the whole first chapter He is known only as the "Son". In ch. 2:3 we find the designation "Lord". Then follows our Ἰησοῦν in ch. 2:9. In ch. 2:11 He is known only as the ὁ ἀγιάριον. Finally,

at the end of ch. 2 we arrive at the expression ἀρχιερεύς. Does it not seem strange that Christ should be directly identified so infrequently in these two chapters which are almost entirely devoted to a discussion of Him and His work? Throughout ch. 2 His identification hinges mainly on the "he" of the verb. I cite this fact to show that we do not have to think that the author was not speaking of Jesus before ch. 2:9. The whole section is vague in identification, and why should we think it out of place to believe that υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου may not be another of these indefinite terms comparable to "Son", "Sanctifier", and "Apostle and High Priest of our profession"? The absence of Jesus's name until verse nine does not prove a thing. The mere word υἱὸς in the Psalm could be ample proof that the author was speaking of Jesus, especially since Jesus has been designated only as the Son all through ch. 1. The purpose of this discussion is to show that the αὐτῷ in verse eight(c) could very well refer to Jesus, even if He is not definitely named.

My second point in regard to the question of context is this: If the Νῦν δέ of verse eight(c) introduces a new thought and is the basis for a new discussion, why not make it the beginning of a new paragraph? That would throw the whole reference to lordship in the "world to come" back on the exhortation contained in ch. 2:1-4. There would be no new paragraph starting with verse five "Not the angels, etc.", but verses five to eight(b) would be a part of the

paragraph starting with ch. 2:1. They would be part of the exhortation not to despise salvation. This new division of thought does not agree with Nestle or the host of modern commentators. However, I believe that it greatly clarifies the issue and soothes whatever qualms of conscience one might have about the usefulness of the sentence Νῦν δέ οὕτω ὁρῶμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποταχμένα. The thought would then be as follows, beginning with ch. 2:1.

Verse one: The author begins the application flowing from the preceding discussion in ch. 1 of Christ's superiority to the angels. The author of Hebrews never treats doctrine merely for the sake of doctrine, but always as a means toward an end. He is interested in souls, and every theoretical or abstract exposition of doctrine is followed by a practical concrete exhortation.¹²

Verse Two: According to the LXX version of Deut. 33:2 angels accompanied Jehovah when He gave the Law on Mt. Sinai. Angels were the mediators of the Old Covenant. It was a well-known fact to the Jewish people that they suffered disaster whenever they departed from the words of the Law. The greatest debacle in their history was the Captivity, and it was recognized that the Captivity was occasioned by their departure from the word of Jehovah.

Verse three: If the Law had such significance, and if

12. Kdgel, op. cit., p. 112.

contempt of the Law brought such serious consequences, how much more serious a matter is it to despise the message of salvation, the Gospel, mediated through the Son who is far superior to the mediators of the Law, the angels! The message of salvation was made triple firm. First, it was brought by the Lord Himself. Secondly, it was brought by those who heard the Lord.

Verse four: Thirdly, God Himself added His weight to the message by accompanying it with miracles and spiritual signs.

Verse Five: Can anyone despise these powerful witnesses? Then let him be aware of the consequences, for salvation is more than a matter of this life. The angels according to LXX theology had a definite part in the dominion of this present world. In the LXX text of Deut. 32:8 the angels are described as setting the borders of the nations. But the "world to come" is another matter. The angels have no say-so in that. The jurisdiction over the "world to come" belongs to someone else.

Verses six to eight(b): Instead of merely saying that the jurisdiction in the "world to come" belongs to the Son, the author introduces an Old Testament quotation instead. He wants to make sure that his readers know where his doctrine is coming from. This quotation fits the purpose well for two reasons. First, it contains the expression "son of man", and secondly, it has the idea of all things being subjected to

the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου. All things would include the "world to come". The application is obvious. If contempt of the Law mediated by the angels, who have jurisdiction in this present world, led to disaster, how much more careful should we be lest we despise the word of the Son, who has jurisdiction over the world to come!

That thought ends the exhortation. Now the author plunges into another doctrinal discussion. The words of the Psalm clinched his first practical warning. But they are valuable in another respect. They contain the seed for the discussion of the humiliation of Christ which is to follow. The "made lower than the angels" contains the germ for the humiliation thought. The humiliation of Christ was something that bothered the Hebrew readers. In the first chapter the author pictured Jesus' superiority according to His ideal dignity or pre-existent Godhead.¹³ Beginning with ch. 2:8c the author vindicates the earthly appearance of Jesus.

At this point the writer passes from the ideal dignity of the Son, which has hitherto been his theme, to the startlingly contrasted historic reality presented in the life of Jesus - the Son, now a human being with blood and flesh like other men, subject to temptation, suffering death. He cannot avoid the topic, for to his readers the ideal and the historic reality appear irreconcilable, present an absolute, insoluble antimony.¹⁴

13. Bruce, op. cit., p. 65.
 14. Ibid.

The Νῦν δέ of verse eight(c) introduces this new topic. The author has been speaking of the great superiority of Jesus, and then he remembers his readers again. They don't see Jesus in that light. All that they see is the man who died an ignominious death on the cross. Jesus seemed to be far from a lord; He looks more like a helpless creature of circumstance. What about it? The author then tackles the problem and shows why it is necessary for Jesus to appear in such lowly form. It was in harmony with God's grace in saving men, and it produced a sympathetic and merciful High Priest.

Note how smoothly the thought flows along if the paragraphs are divided in the above mentioned manner. There is a steady progression of thought, and there is no long excursus on the position of man. Each sentence falls into its place naturally, and there is a clear-cut distinction between the Son and His relation to the angels of ch. 1 and the Son and His relation to the humiliation portrayed in ch. 2:8c-18. Those who hold to the division of paragraphs as found in the Nestle text have a difficult time explaining why the author again mentions the angels in verse five. By including verses five to eight(b) with the exhortation contained in verses one to four this difficulty is solved, and the exhortation is greatly strengthened.¹⁵

15. For a complete exposition of Hebrews 2 according to the paragraph divisions suggested in this thesis see: Strathmann, op. cit., pp. 75-84.

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