

**THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HEBREWS: A THEOLOGICAL READING**

by

James Adams

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“I, James Adams, declare that the thesis (or interrelated, publishable manuscripts/published articles or mini-thesis) that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree Philosophiae Doctor in the Department of New Testament Studies at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.”

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes up the question of the significance of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. With this in mind, the Spirit was interpreted theologically. Theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS) forms the theoretical foundation of the study. The premise for the TIS interpreter is that the Holy Spirit is shaping the Christian community and is a factor in understanding the Scriptural texts. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit in Hebrews is interpreted thematically (chapter 4), Christologically (chapter 5), and as part of a Trinitarian approach (chapter 6). The thesis presents the Holy Spirit's speaking of Scripture as characteristic feature of Hebrews – God, the Spirit and Christ are said to speak. The author expresses a fundamental conviction held by Christians of all ages – that the community of faith responds to a voice other than its own. It is the voice of God breathed and reproduced through the Holy Spirit. Additionally, the writer introduces the Holy Spirit as the One who distributes gifts and as such confirms the message of Christ. The Holy Spirit, together with Christ, is the apex of the writer's discourse since he is “an active presence in the past, he is present everywhere in Scripture – at least, theoretically” (Motyer 2012:217). Simultaneously with the Holy Spirit as the voice of God, the giving of gifts becomes integral to its overall message. It is confirmed that in Hebrews God is the speaking subject together with Christ and the Holy Spirit. In this thesis it demonstrates how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews functions as the ethos and character of God.

Drawing on the theology of Emmrich (2002, 2003), Motyer (2012), Lichtenwaller (2012) and Levison (2016) it proves the main argument – that there is a distinctive pneumatology in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The seven references to the Holy Spirit were carefully exegeted to delineate the theology of the Spirit in the Epistle. Walter Brueggemann's (2001) “prophetic imagination and energizing” was reworked in a distinctive manner to prove how the Holy Spirit affirms the community's experience and their historical realities. The thesis offers a construal of a Spirit Christology that is constitutive of the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ. Most fundamentally, I submit a Spirit Christology from the broader Christological context of the NT at large (i.e. Spirit

Christology). It is utilised as a hermeneutical filter through which the high Christology of Hebrews might make sense.

This dissertation asserts theologically that the triune economy in Hebrews rests on the presupposition that the Father speaks; he sends forth his Word in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are drawn into this relationship of God's self-communication. The Trinity and Trinitarian life was in the context of the worship experience of the early Fathers and now in the church. In like manner Clarke (2006:94) indicated that for Augustine "the doctrine of the Trinity was the centre of Christian spirituality, intended to affect one's way of life". We worship the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the fullness of truth, his incarnate Son.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is essential to the process of salvation and it is he who prepares for what may be the pivotal passage of the Hebrews 9:11-14, in which Jesus achieves eternal salvation. Likewise, the Spirit is called "eternal Spirit" to bring out the (extraordinary) eschatological significance of the Spirit's assistance in Christ's once-for-all priestly action.

#### **KEY WORDS**

1. HEBREWS
2. HOLY
3. SPIRIT
4. PROPHETIC SPIRIT
5. THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE
6. INCARNATION
7. CHRISTOLOGY
8. SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY
9. TRINITY
10. CHRIST

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my family – to my wife, Christine, whose gentle spirit reminds me constantly of the Spirit of grace. Jamie-Leigh and Caleb-James, thank you so much for allowing me to withdraw and write for hours. You never made demands on time spent writing and contemplating. You believed in me and affectionately supported me throughout my research.

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## LIST OF COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

### Theological journals

<i>BibSacra</i>	Bibliotheca Sacra
<i>BBR</i>	Bulletin for Biblical Research      Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal
<i>EQ</i>	Evangelical Quarterly
<i>ERT</i>	Evangelical Review of Theology
<i>IJST</i>	International Journal of Systematic Theology
<i>JATS</i>	Journal of Adventist Theological Society
<i>JETS</i>	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
<i>JSPS</i>	The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies
<i>JTI</i>	Journal of Theological Interpretation
<i>MJT</i>	Midwest Journal of Theology
<i>NABPR</i>	National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion
<i>SBJT</i>	Southern Baptist Journal of Theology
<i>SJT</i>	Southwestern Journal of Theology/Scottish Journal of Theology
<i>TBT</i>	The Bible Today
<i>TCBQ</i>	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>TRINJ</i>	Trinity Journal
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal

### Other abbreviations

<i>AD</i>	Anno Domini
<i>c./ca.</i>	circa
<i>cf.</i>	compare
<i>CE.</i>	Common era
<i>chap.(s)</i>	chapter (s)
<i>ed (d)</i>	edition(s)
<i>ed. (d)</i>	editor(s)
<i>e.g.</i>	exempli gratia (for example)
<i>et al.</i>	and other
<i>ff.</i>	forward
<i>fn.</i>	footnote
<i>i.e.</i>	that is
<i>ISC</i>	Incarnational Spirit Christology
<i>loc.</i>	loco (places) or locations
<i>n.p.</i>	no page (No.)

*TIS* Theological interpretation of Scripture  
*T-TIS* Textual theological interpretation of Scripture  
*v.(vs)* verse(s)

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLE BOOKS

### The Old Testament (OT)

Gen.	Genesis	Prov.	Proverbs
Ex.	Exodus	Eccl.	Ecclesiastes
Lev.	Leviticus	Song.	Song of Solomon
Num.	Numbers	Isa.	Isaiah
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Jer.	Jeremiah
Josh.	Joshua	Lam.	Lamentations
Judg.	Judges	Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ruth	Ruth	Dan.	Daniel
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Hos.	Hosea
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Joel	Joel
1 Kings	1 Kings	Am.	Amos
2 Kings	2 Kings	Ob.	Obadiah
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles	Jon.	Jonah
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles	Mic.	Micah
Ezra	Ezra	Nah.	Nahum
Neh.	Nehemiah	Hag.	Haggai
Esth.	Esther	Zech.	Zechariah
Job	Job	Mal.	Malachi
Ps. (Pss.)	Psalms		

### The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books

Tob.	Tobit	Bel.	Bel and the Dragon
Jdt.	Judith	1 Macc.	1 Maccabees
Add Esth.	Esther (Greek)	2 Macc.	2 Maccabees
Wis.	The Wisdom of Solomon	1 Esd.	1 Esdras
Sir.	Sirach	Pr. Man.	The Prayer of Manasseh
Bar.	Baruch	Ps. 151	Psalm 151
Let. Jer.	The Letter of Jeremiah	3 Macc.	3 Maccabees
Song of Thr.	Azariah and the Three Jews	2 Esd.	2 Esdras
Sus.	Susanna	4 Macc.	4 Maccabees

### The New Testament (NT)

Matt.	Matthew		
Mark	Mark	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
Luke	Luke	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
John	John	Titus	Titus
Acts	Acts (Acts of the Apostles)	Philem.	Philemon

Rom.	Romans
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Phil.	Philippians
Col.	Colossians
1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians

Heb.	Hebrews
Jas.	James
1 Pet.	1 Peter
2 Pet.	2 Peter
1 John	1 John
2 John	2 John
3 John	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev.	Revelation

### **Versions and sections of the Bible**

#### **Abbreviation version/section**

Apoc. Apocrypha  
 ARV – American Revised Version  
 ASV – American Standard Version  
 KJV – King James Version  
 CEV – Contemporary English Version  
 JB – Jerusalem Bible  
 LXX – Septuagint  
 MT – Masoretic Text  
 NET New English Translation  
 NJB – New Jerusalem Bible  
 NRSV – New Revised Standard Version  
 RSV – Revised Standard Version

### **Jewish literature**

'Abot R. Nat	'Abot de Rabbi Nathan
Tg. Onk.	Targum Onkelos
Kgdms	Kingdoms
Gn. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah

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James Adams

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency in the current research on the book of Hebrews to focus on the Holy Spirit (Allen 2009, Lichtenwalter 2012, Levison 2016 and Motyer 2012). The reference to the Holy Spirit is based upon his person, works, relationship to the Father and Son, and relationship to man. Other areas of interests are the Spirit's ministry of salvation and sanctification, conviction, and indwelling, as opposed to common theological constructs in the book of Hebrews. References to the Holy Spirit throughout the book reveal a pneumatology where the reality of the Holy Spirit is integral to every aspect of Christian thought, life and hope (Lichtenwalter 2012:99). The Spirit is integral to Hebrew's vision of reality (cf. Lichtenwalter 2012:99). The writer asserts how the Holy Spirit brings divine confirming, witnessing to the definitive word spoken through Christ. *"After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will"* (Heb. 2:3,4; cf. Heb. 1:1-2; see also Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12).

The Spirit was an integral part of the teaching of the Apostles and the early Fathers. It is understood that no developed doctrine of the Spirit exists in Hebrews if one should compare it to Paul's or John's well-defined pneumatology. This view spans across the last century – see for instance the observations and work of Swete (1910), Lindars (1991) and Ellingworth (1993), to mention but a few (Allen 2009:53).

The scarcity of material on the Spirit in Hebrews could be the result of its lexical appearance in the book. However, lexical appearances do not necessarily underscore the importance or theological relevance of any theological theme, whether “spirit” (twelve occurrences) or reference to the Holy Spirit (seven occurrences) or any other theme in Hebrews for that matter (cf. Allen 2009:53-54). Motyer (2012:214) indicated that the Spirit in Hebrews is certainly congruent with a “Trinitarian” approach and might even contribute something distinctive to the New Testament (cf. Allen 2009:55-56). The Holy Spirit is ontological – Trinitarian (cf. Heb. 2:3b-4). God speaks through the Son. He confirms the spoken word through the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders and miracles (in continuity with Israel’s tradition, as well as in Luke-Acts with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit).

In Hebrews, I see unity and diversity with the pneumatological concepts of John, Paul and Luke-Acts, particularly in terms of the Spirit as Christological witness. He does not bear witness of himself but of Jesus (cf. John), especially to the pre-existence of Christ but also to his humanity. It is the same Spirit who witnesses to Christ. Through his presence and power Christ was able to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice to God for the atonement of sin.

The Spirit appears in four out of five warning passages in Hebrews, which gives an indication of its importance in the author’s thoughts, since these passages constitute a large portion of the book. Throughout these few references to the Spirit in Hebrews, I understand its function to be consistent with that of Luke-Acts, and even unique with the special reference of Heb. 9:14 (Christ offering himself to God through the eternal Spirit). The Spirit is given as gift to the believer, but also as apportionments of gifts to the believers (cf. Heb. 2:4 and 6:4), performing great works of signs, wonders and miracles. The first believers share in and are partakers of the Spirit of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are primarily vocational in as much as to equip the church for mutual encouragement.

He is perceived as one who speaks or reveals the word of God (Heb. 10:13-17). The Holy Spirit acts as the voice of God or the one that speaks for God in “these last days”. He is the ethos of God, which speaks the scriptures in the present. Peeler (2007:2) suggests that ethos

is the portrayal of the speaker and/or the client in a speech, which is aimed at gaining the trust and favour of the audience. The speaker can highlight different aspects of ethos, including prudence, virtue, goodwill, and gentleness, through different means by observing the person's actions, choices, habits, discourse, achievements, or emotions. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit takes on the character of God. He speaks continually in the hearts of the believers (Heb. 3:7; 10:15) and is making the Old Testament directly relevant to the believers. In Hebrews, the Spirit is also characterised as the "eternal spirit" and "spirit of grace". He also functions as an eschatological spirit – testifying to the redemptive promises in Jesus Christ.

### **1.1 DETAIL OF PRIOR STUDIES**

I understand that research on the Spirit in Hebrews had received little attention in recent studies and it causes a need for a fuller theological treatment on the person, function, and role of the Spirit in Hebrews. According to Guthrie (2004 n.p.) the last quarter century marks major research on the book of Hebrews. The theological issues addressed are Hebrews' primary motif, the significance of the Old Testament, the book's Christology (including the topics "Son of God," the earthly Jesus, and the High Priest motif). The heavenly cult and the New Covenant, creation and eschatology, the Christian life (including faith, apostasy, and life in the community of faith), and finally, evaluation of Hebrews' thought, and logic have become favourite topics of analysis. Considerable research has been devoted to the aforementioned theological themes; rather less attention is given to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. Further investigations are needed in order to promote its broader theological and pneumatological contributions in New Testament studies. Recent research demonstrates that, for all its mysteries and unique features, Hebrews has more systemic connection with the rest of New Testament literature, and, therefore, emergent first-century Christianity, than previously suspected. Stating the above, Hebrews has much to offer to the broader conversations on New Testament thought.

Shults (2007:1) maintains that research in the area of pneumatology began with complaints about the "material scarcity of and methodological poverty of treatment of the third person

of the Trinity in the history of theology since the Enlightenment”. During the last decades, there was resurgence in the studies of the book to the Hebrews, which we divide in three broad categories: authorship, use of Old Testament and theology (Dyer 2013:105). In terms of its theology many monographs and articles have been written. Barnabas Lindars remarks, “the Letter to the Hebrews is so obviously full of theology the main problem is not how to dig it out, but how to present it in a comprehensible form” (cited in Dyer 2013:123). Research areas which Dyer highlights from contributions of conference proceedings on Scripture and theology include: “The Christology of Hebrews”, “The Problem of Hebrews Cosmology”, Hebrews’ Theology of Scripture, etc. (Dyer 2013:124). The Holy Spirit as formative to the theology of Hebrews is not addressed in these papers. This research will seek how to present the data on the Holy Spirit in Hebrews comprehensibly.

The work of Allen (2009), Emmrich (2000, 2002 and 2003) and Motyer (2012) deserves full recognition as endeavours to turn the eyes of scholars to look afresh to the book of Hebrews for its pneumatology. Many commentaries on Hebrews treat the Spirit passages as mere passing remarks without any detail treatment. Emmrich (2003: ix) remarks that the Holy Spirit in Hebrews “has always been treated as a kind of gravely neglected theological stepchild”. Emmrich’s contribution to Hebrews summarises the work of the Spirit in two ways: 1) oration and 2) interpretation. In Emmrich’s longer treatise of the subject, the Spirit is regarded as the prophet, guide and interpreter (cf. Emmrich 2003).

This research will use the results of Emmrich’s treatment of the pneumatological concepts in Hebrews as building blocks to an even more detailed treatment of the Spirit in Hebrews. Throughout the current research the Spirit’s role in Hebrews will be investigated under the following rubrics: Hebrews: Historical-critical matters, the Spirit as revelatory entity, the Spirit and the believer, the Spirit and the Son, the Spirit: A Trinitarian approach, and the Spirit theology in Hebrews *vis-à-vis* the rest of the New Testament. In discussions in chapters 3 and 4, I will make use of the work of Emmrich to substantiate my research.

## **1.2 HYPOTHESIS**

The central theoretical argument of the thesis is that the Spirit in Hebrews plays a significant role in the epistle. This research stands on the fact that the Holy Spirit's work in shaping the Christian church is a factor on how we understand the scriptural text. Interpreting the Spirit in Hebrews theologically will follow the apostolic tradition, which is the foundational revelation in its full integrity as uniquely accessible to us in the witness of those who participated in its original realisation (Schneiders 1999:76). These traditions clearly do not contradict each other in their understanding of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament but complement each other. Following the apostles are the Early Church Fathers and the Reformers. Interpretation of the Spirit happens when the Christian community lives between text and context; revelatory answer and human question (Tillich, cited in Campbell & Bier 2008 n.p.). Whatever tradition in which we do theology, academic or denominational, we are all influenced by that tradition.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

The guiding research question is how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews is utilised and understood. This involves the following specific objectives:

To determine how and where in Hebrews the Spirit is indicated or alluded to.

To determine what role does the indications, quotations, and reference to the Spirit play theologically and as exhortations.

To determine how the Spirit reflects on the Christological understanding of Hebrews.

To determine how the Spirit concept compares to the New Testament teaching on the Spirit.

To determine how the Spirit contributes to the general theology of Hebrews and how to interpret it theologically.

The methods to achieve the proposed objectives will be as follows:

Using biblical exegesis of the relevant Scriptures indicated in 1.3 of this proposal to expound the author's teaching of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews, focussing on the aspects of exegesis as discussed in Fee (New Testament Exegesis 2002) and Smith (Academic Writing and Theological Research: A Guide for Students 2008).

Concerning the reception and classification of the relevant Scriptures as basis for this study, exegetical tools will be used such as Concordances, Commentaries, and Study Bibles in at least five different translations, Lexicons, Bible and Theological Dictionaries and Bible and subject-related Encyclopaedias. The SBL GNT – text and apparatus with e-Sword and other electronic devices shall be used.

A literature study will form the basis to interpret the result of 1 and 2 above. Concerning the Christological interpretation of the Spirit in Hebrews a literature study will contribute to the exegetical study with reference to 1.

### ***1.3.1 Research design***

It is presupposed under the title of the thesis that an exegetical study of the relevant Scriptures is inevitable.

#### ***Exegetical study as scientific investigation***

The presupposition behind the task of exegesis is that biblical books have authors and readers, and the authors intended their readers to understand what they wrote (Fee 2002:1; Smith 2008:170). The task of exegesis would be to answer the question, what the biblical writer means. What and why he said what he said. Fee maintains that the author's intentionality must be understood (Fee 2002:1; Schneiders 1999:111). To this end the thesis

will investigate the appropriate selections of Scriptures that refer to the Holy Spirit through exegesis<sup>1</sup>. Scriptures under enquiry are:

1. Hebrews 2:1-4
2. Hebrews 3: 7-8
3. Hebrews 6:1-4
4. Hebrews 9:8-14
5. Hebrews 10: 15 and 29

First, it shall include a general introduction to the epistle. A historical, literary and general background study will be performed. The historical exegetical method is not primarily associated with the theological interpretation of Scripture. I choose to employ the historical method to gain deeper understanding in the social and theological setting of the first-century audience of Hebrews.

Second, the meaning of the delineated passages shall be determined through a preliminary analysis and an exegetical synthesis will determine what the writer wants to communicate. Numbers one and two above shall be the result of an in-depth literature study and exegesis.

Third, the significance of the study will be communicated in terms of its theological significance of the selected passage regarding the Spirit in Hebrews.

### ***1.3.2 Theological interpretation of Scripture as theoretical orientation***

In this dissertation I will examine how the author of the Hebrews uses the Spirit (i.e. Holy Spirit) to contribute to the theology of the latter by applying theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS). From the outset, I would like to indicate that TIS as hermeneutical method does not come without critique. Harold Attridge (cited in Dyer 2013:126) received the work of Laansma very sceptical when Laansma (in Laansma and Trier [eds.] 2012) explores the reception history of Hebrews to promote a theological interpretation of Scripture. Dyer

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed outline and discussion on the exegetical method see Smith (2008:169-182) and Fee (2002:1-38).

(2013:125) is of opinion that further historical critical methods, while useful for situating the epistle and providing relevant background for its interpretation, intentionally reject the presupposition that is absolutely necessary for understanding Hebrews – that is, that God speaks, in the past and now, through Scripture. Laansma’s point is that one must not abandon historical-critical methods, but rather that they must be used in support of understanding the text theologically.

Attridge perceives (from the work of Laansma and others) a major concern for the interpretation of Hebrews theologically to the neglect of historical methods. He reiterates that “understanding Hebrews as a theological work is dependent upon placing it within its first-century context” (Attridge cited in Dyer 2013:126). The same applies to D. A. Carson in theological interpretation of Scripture “Yes, But...” in which he discusses his prejudices to TIS in his propositions (Carson 2011). Carson explains that TIS is often cast in terms of the conflict between history and theology, where history is the villain (Carson 2011:191)<sup>2</sup>. With a strong credibility to pre-critical exegesis – patristic, medieval, reformation, contemporary exegesis and especially to patristic<sup>3</sup> readings, TIS objects to historical-critical matters of interpretation (Carson 2011:196, 201 and Ortlund 2014 n.p.). For Treier (2013- Kindle) the patristic exegesis held a strong conviction of the present reality of God. TIS operates from the presupposition of a unified narrative from the Bible and is applied to the Bible. Scripture is treated as diverse yet as a unified whole. As opposed to Carson’s critique of TIS, Treier (2013:41) maintains that scriptural texts are treated as having their own “historical” meaning, yet “meant for us”, the contemporary reader.

Hagner maintains, “A theological interpretation of the epistle is necessary because such a method is receptive of the message of the epistle rather than being motivated by suspicion and doubt” (cited in Dyer 2013:127). I am convinced that thematically the Spirit can be

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<sup>2</sup> Trimm regards TIS to downplay historical criticism. He suggests that TIS interpreters went so far as to ignore history altogether – that is the historical context of the text (2010:313). In other words, one should be careful that the love for theology should not blind the historical context of the text.

<sup>3</sup> The theology of the Spirit from the Patristic period will be used to or hinted at in order to make certain theological contributions.

investigated, and some evidence can be excavated from the book to affirm its theological importance, not only to the first-century audience but to the contemporary church as well.

TIS needs to be (re-)defined in order to justify fully its methodological approach to the wider academic world. Allison (2010:29) explains that TIS, or theological “exegesis” of Scripture has come into vogue over the last two decades or so. He tries to define TIS by pointing to various key contributors to this approach such as Vanhoozer (2005) and Fowl (1997)<sup>4</sup>. Kevin Vanhoozer<sup>5</sup> defines TIS by stating what it is not: It is not confessional theology; it stands against reading the Bible “like other books” and insists that it must be read theologically (Vanhoozer et al. 2005:19). TIS is about hearing the word of God in the church today (Vanhoozer et al. 2008: loc.155), what we should say and think about God in our contemporary settings<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, that the reader or interpreter should hear what the word of God says to them and be transformed by its impact, or as the Apostle Paul says, “by the renewing of the mind” (cf. Vanhoozer et al. 2005). TIS is then *understood to be “biblical interpretation orientated to the knowledge of God”*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> For Stephen Fowl, theological interpretation of Scripture is that practice whereby theological concerns and interests inform, and are informed by, a reading of Scripture. He also reminds us that the practice of theological interpretation is, at its core, an activity of Christian communities. It is the church’s activity with a direct correlation to “have communion with God” (see Habets 2013:45-46,51). It is in this communion that the church seeks collectively for the Divine will and the interpretation of that will in our worship and other liturgical forms, but even more so in our daily walk with God. (See a synopsis of The Church as Interpretive community in Treier and Anzior 2010:4-17).

<sup>5</sup> Vanhoozer prefers the term “Theological Interpretation of the Bible.” I will use the term TIS through the thesis for the sake of consistency.

<sup>6</sup> Vanhoozer also indicates that TIS entails the reading of Scripture in and for the community of the faithful (cited in Habets 2013:43).

<sup>7</sup> Vanhoozer’s definition of TIS includes the knowledge of God to be an intellectual, imaginative, and spiritual exercise, steering away from mere academic exercise. Moberly (2009:163) remarks that Karl Barth would argue along the same line that “theological interpretation of Scripture orients the church, in a way that is both profoundly mysterious and very basic, toward seeking God”. He furthermore indicates that TIS is reading the Bible with “a concern for the enduring truth of its witness to the nature of God and humanity, with a view to enabling the transformation of humanity into the likeness of God”. Cf. Treier and Anzior, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture and Evangelical Systematic Theology: Iron Sharpening Iron?* SBTJ 14.2 (2010:4-17), who also describes this definition with a special emphasis on Scripture as “consciously seeking to do justice to their nature as the word of God, embracing the influence of theology on the interpreter’s enquiry, context and methods, not just results.

For the TIS interpreter the Holy Spirit is shaping the Christian community and is a factor in understanding the scriptural texts (cf. Moberly 2009:163 and Vanhoozer et al. 2010:24). The church needs to improve the theological formation of its members (*both local and global*<sup>8</sup>) and their engagement with the Bible (cf. Treier 2013:91). As the primary locus of theological interpretation of Scripture, the church must “not preclude the work of God’s Spirit taking place also outside the church” (Fowl 1997:xix). The Spirit can be interpreted in any context, as Rae wants to refer to it: “the Spirit blows where it wills.” (Rae 2013:21). Additionally, TIS can also be defined as “those readings of biblical texts that consciously seek to do justice to the perceived theological nature of the texts and embrace the influence of theology (corporate and personal; past and present) upon the interpreter’s enquiry, context, and method” (Anizor 2011 n.p.). It is important to note that not all texts have the same theological nature, relevance or inclination. How the interpreter presents their data depends on comprehensive biblical and/or theological exegesis. Three key terms need to be included to disclose fully the heart of TIS. These are “Scripture”, “word of God” and “divine communication”.

In light of understanding TIS in terms of its theoretical constructs I conclude with a last observation from Allison (2010:29):

TIS is not a form of “merely historical, literary, or sociological criticism preoccupied with world ‘behind’, ‘of’, ‘in front of’ the biblical text”. TIS is a family of interpretive approaches that privileges theological readings of the Bible in due recognition of the theological nature of Scripture, its ultimate theological message, and/or the theological interests of the readers. Treier (2013:14) states that TIS seeks to reverse the dominance of historical criticism over churchly reading of the Bible and redefine the role of hermeneutics in theology.

The textual-theological interpretation of Scripture (T-TIS), which according to Allison (2010:29) “consciously seek to do justice to the perceived nature of text”, shall be applied in the theological interpretation of the Spirit in Hebrews. The Spirit is interrelated to the thought and teaching of Hebrews and because of it the interpretation cannot be separated from the general hermeneutical debate on the meaning of human life and only confines

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<sup>8</sup> Italics mine

itself to an inner-Biblical discussion on the matter (cf. Van Zyl 2008:137). Furthermore, van Zyl indicates that a theological reading of the New Testament requires a serious and focused reader. It implies that the reader or contributor to TIS must “simultaneously be engaged by and loyal to, as well as critical of the theological tradition purported to have been generated by the New Testament” (Van Zyl 2008:137). In the language of TIS, van Zyl refers to a “text-orientated view”. This view shall be expressed throughout the study.

### ***1.3.3 Problem of method***

I indicated earlier that TIS had been criticized for having a lack of a consistent methodological approach for interpreting Scripture. TIS proponents maintain that it is not first a question of method but that TIS rather focuses on and includes the role of the reader and their willingness to be “addressees” of Scripture (cf. Meadowcroft 2013:9). It is true that TIS interpreters and theorists steer clear from methodological claims but do refer to TIS in certain ways as a “model”. Meadowcroft (2013:1-10) introduces TIS to be a mind-set or a perspective. Similarly, they refer to TIS as an approach. In his introduction in “Ears that Hear”, Meadowcroft identifies a number of approaches that will form the guidelines for the chapters in this thesis. Here I list a few to indicate along which lines TIS can be practiced: thematic approach (the Holy Spirit in Hebrews), Christological approach (chapter 4), and Trinitarian approach<sup>9</sup> (chapter 5). The Christological and Trinitarian approaches can be a combination of an interpretive strategy. Meadowcroft (2013:6-7) observes, “At the same time, it is necessary to work with an understanding of the Holy Spirit as active in ensuring that such a critique remains rooted in the God revealed in Christ. A Christological reading needs also to be Trinitarian. In this manner, it is able to bring the fresh voice of God to each generation of readers and reading context.”

*The problem with multiple meaning of the text.* There are multiple interpretations and multiple meanings to a text. TIS is not much interested in a biblical interpretation

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<sup>9</sup> In such a reading, the reader is informed by God and expecting God to encounter him. The Holy Spirit is alive and present in Scripture from where they were written until they took up residence as the voice of God (cf. Meadowcroft 2013:6).

whereby the task of the interpreters is to determine the single, original meaning of the text (cf. Rae 2013:24). Rae proposes an underdetermined interpretation of a Scripture (cf. Fowl 1997) where it recognizes a plurality of interpretive practices and results without necessarily granting epistemological priority of any of these. Subsequently, it allows multiple readings of a text but within certain limits, it serves the best theological understandings of Scripture as the word of God (even the *viva vox Dei*). Rae (2013:25) goes so far as to maintain that TIS is better described as a mode of discipleship or set of practices rather than a scholarly method.

*Problem with eisegesis.* John Barton critiques TIS (or theological exegesis) for the risk of sponsoring a program of eisegesis. Barton's credence is unwavering in that exegesis itself is controlled by a theological or religious vision, so that the meaning found in the text in the course of exegesis is determined by prior theological commitments. This prior theological commitment creates room for exegesis which in turn diminished the possibilities of eisegesis (Sarisky 2010:206). Similarly, for Green (2013:253), TIS is incriminated for its departure from the interests and procedures accredited by biblical scholars. It is often said that TIS does not exemplify the *Wissenschaft* expected from the biblical studies which academy offers. The indictment against TIS is problematic on various grounds. Green (2013:254) points out that TIS "is not and never will be a 'method' like source criticism or narratology, but instead a still-emerging set of commitments and practices". In other words, TIS is a hermeneutic that moves from the descriptive work of biblical studies to the application of the work by theologians.

*Problem with the Rule of Faith.* The Rule of Faith<sup>10</sup> as interpretive strategy has become a major stumbling block for many biblical scholars. It serves two functions; first,

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Wall defines the *regula fidei* as "the grammar of theological agreements which Christians confess to be true and by which all scripture is rendered in forming a truly Christian faith and life" (Wall, cited in Habets 2013:47). In Christian theology, it is a principle which evaluates religious life and theological opinions by testing them for consistency against what has been firmly believed. The original rule of faith in the Early Christian Church as Irenaeus knew it, included the following: ... this faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made known

it is a fence for interpretation. If an interpretation falls outside the rule of faith, then it cannot be accepted. Second, it serves as a guide or a key to exegesis. It actively helps to understand the text in a fuller and better way (cf. Trimm 2010:315). Robert Wall defines the *regula fidei* as “the grammar of theological agreements which Christians confess to be true and by which all scripture is rendered in forming a truly Christian faith and life” (cited in Habets 2013:47). For TIS interpreters the *regula fidei* is strongly adhere to in order to test the theological outcome of the interpretation of their research.

Given the problem of method, at present no one model of TIS has dominance in the church. Vanhoozer (2005:19-25) identifies three distinctive emphases within the literature of TIS: 1) a focus on relation between human and divine authorship, 2) a focus on the literary or canonical shape of the text as providing a symbolic world to inhabit, and 3) a focus on the aims of the reading community and the reception of the text in the life of the church. Within these parameters TIS is practised.

#### ***1.3.4 The relationship between TIS and Historical Criticism***

There exists a tension between TIS and historical criticism. This tension arises from the theological claim of Scripture itself that the world is created by God. Bartholomew and Thomas (2016:7) observe that this tension is felt strongly in relation to academic analysis of the Bible, and to historical criticism in particular, and modern exegesis. Historical criticism of the Bible means focusing on the times and places of the texts’ production as well as their historical references and doing so objectively: seeking results to share with everyone, unbiased by personal experience or perspective (Trier 2013:16). It is also focused on the validation and scrutiny of historical facts as to “discern what actually happened in the history to which the text bears witness as well as in the circumstances of the production of the text” (deSilva 2004:370).

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through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father to sum up all things and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race. (see <http://dictionary.sensagent.com>)

TIS seeks to reverse the dominance of historical criticism over churchly reading of the Bible and to redefine the role of hermeneutics in theology (Plummer 2010:315; Trier 2013:16). It also seeks to develop and work within an account of history that is itself determined by the reality of God's involvement in history and seeks to utilize methods of historical inquiry that are alert to the action of God in history (cf. Bartholomew and Thomas (2016:8).

The historical-critical method is accused of being “incapable of discerning where and how God is at work in the world and that it is unable, therefore, to facilitate a faithful reading of biblical texts” (Rae 2016:97). The faithful reading of Scripture would involve granting priority to the theological concerns of the text (cf. Fowl 2009:16).

Rae (2016:97) invokes the fact that Scripture is read from the conceptual world of the text itself. For Rea TIS is the alternative approach to a natural tendency of reading and interpreting Scripture—

first, because adherence to the standard canons of historical inquiry renders a historical-critical method incapable of reading Scripture on its own terms and of hearing through Scripture the Word of God; second, because the biblical account of the divine economy requires us to rethink what history is; and third, because God is wholly Other, which is to say that God's being and action cannot be detected through the same methods of inquiry that we use to investigate created realities.

Having said this, Rae (2016:109) concludes that this does not preclude there being a form of historical inquiry that takes its point of departure from Scripture itself, that is attentive to the divine economy, and that recognizes the work of God in the world by virtue of that work's conformity to Christ. TIS, does not disregard historical criticism or any other form of interpretation. Adam, et al (2006: loc. 179) confirms that advocates of TIS

“refuse to trivialize the theological significance of Scripture; they recognize (and practice) the critical reading of Scripture with the conventional repertoire of textual, historical, analytical methods, but their analyses do not omit mention of, and often highlight, the ways that the Bible informs and is expounded by the church's teaching.”

#### **1.4 ASSUMPTION, LIMIT, AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

The value that this research can add to New Testament theology lies in the fact that it tries to complement the data to the current limited resources available on the interpretation of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. It will serve as vehicle to further the knowledge and understanding of theological interpretation as a movement in Namibia where I currently reside, and in South Africa. This thesis promotes the use of historical exegesis within TIS.

The study will also contribute to an in-depth exegetical investigation of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. The data will be aligned with the broader context of Hebrews and the New Testament pneumatology. The reader will gain a better understanding of how the Spirit functions within Hebrews.

The possible shortcoming is that the term “theological interpretation” is problematic because it implies that historical criticism is not theological. However, this point of view makes it sound as if other modes of interpretation are not theological at all, which is plainly wrong (cf. Poirier 2009:110-111).

#### **1.5 OUTLINE OF STUDY**

The study is organised around seven chapters and will follow a topical outline in the exegetical process.

In chapter 2, I will investigate the Spirit in Hebrews treated in continuity with the Old Testament. The scope focus on the general background and context, historical context, literary context and theological themes and motifs within Hebrews will not be an exhaustive exposition.

In chapter 3, I will focus on the Spirit as a revelatory entity with special regard to 1) the Spirit as the voice and ethos of God, 2) the Spirit inspiring and interpreting Scripture, and 3) the Spirit as illuminator.

Chapter 4 will focus on the Spirit and the believer under the rubrics of 1) the Spirit as comforter and encourager, 2) the Spirit as guide, 3) the Spirit as prophetic voice, and 4) the Spirit as gift and giver of gifts.

Chapter 5 will investigate the Spirit and the Son where the Spirit supports the Son and functions as Messianic and eschatological agent. Lastly it will focus on a Spirit-Christology in the book of Hebrews.

In chapter 6 I will consider the Spirit in Hebrews in proposing a Trinitarian approach.

In chapter 7 I will deal with the theology of the Spirit in Hebrews and the New Testament, specifically on how it relates to New Testament theology and the Spirit's contemporary significance, a theological interpretation of Scripture. The latter part of the chapter will conclude the findings and discussion of possible research extensions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORICAL CRITICAL MATTERS AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN HEBREWS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter serves to investigate and discuss the critical and much-debated issues surrounding the book of Hebrews. These themes include authorship, historical context, first audience and readership, literary context, and genre and theology. I will further discuss the continuation of the Holy Spirit between the Old and New Testaments as it is pivotal for our further discussion.

#### **2.1 AUTHORSHIP**

Hebrews is described as “the more elegant and sophisticated, and the most enigmatic text of first-century Christianity” (Attridge 1989:1). Many authors were suggested to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews, but the authorship remains a mystery. What is gathered from internal evidence is that he was probably a Diaspora Jewish Christian who came to know Jesus, the Christ, and the Messiah – the Son of God. He does not identify himself with any epistolary greetings as found in other New Testament texts; however, he starts with a magnificent elaboration of who Jesus is. He calls his work a “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22) which suggests the format of known synagogue teachings or sermons. The literary form of the book suggests a group of sermons usually used in synagogues in a modified form to constitute a letter. It is clear that the writer was well-known to his original audience as he endeavours to restrain the problem with apostasy, which they faced in the

light of persecution. He has a firm grasp and execution of the Old Testament and expects his hearers to have the same. He was familiar with the religious ideas and worship of the Jews. He claims the inheritance of their sacred history, traditions, and institutions (Heb. 1:1), and dwells on them with an intimate knowledge and enthusiasm that would be improbable, though not impossible, in a proselyte, and still more in a Christian convert from heathenism (McGee 2012 n.p.). We also know that the author of Hebrews was familiar with the Old Testament only in the LXX (Septuagint) translation, which he follows even where it deviates from the Hebrew. He writes Greek with a purity of style and vocabulary to which the writings of Luke alone in the New Testament can be compared. His mind is filled with a combination of Hebrew and Greek thoughts which is best known in the writings of Philo<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, McGee infers that the author's typological mode of thinking, his use of the allegorical method, as well as the adoption of many terms that are most familiar in Alexandrian thought, all reveal the Hellenistic mind. Yet his fundamental conceptions are in full accord with the teaching of Paul and of the Johannine writings. In most cases writers and commentators such as Guthrie (1998:23-26) agree that noteworthy people such as Paul, Barnabas, Luke, or Clement of Rome could have written the book. Other contributions suggest Priscilla, Jude, Apollos, Phillip and Silvanus (Silas). Priscilla is ruled out on the basis of the writer referring to himself in a masculine singular participle in Hebrews 11:32. I will only consider the most prominent candidates for authorship of Hebrews.

### **2.1.1 Paul**

Every proposed writer for the book rest on possibility theories. Hebrew scholarship has almost unanimously argued against Paul as author although external evidence for Pauline authorship is stronger than any other suggested author (Campbell 2015 n.p.). Bruce (1990:14) maintains that the Alexandrian belief that Paul authored Hebrews was greatly influenced by the judgement of the Eastern Church. Eusebius gives the first testimonies of

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<sup>11</sup> The writer of Hebrews is associated with the intellectual culture of Alexandria, which favoured a rhetorical education in the Roman world. The same terminology exists between our writer, Philo of Alexandria, and the Wisdom of Solomon.

the Church of Alexandria in reporting the words of a “blessed presbyter”, as well as those of Clement and Origen (Attridge 1989:1; Knight 2009 n.p.). Clement was not deterred by the difference of style and language between the writer and Paul (Attridge 1989:1). He accounted for his firm belief that Paul authored Hebrews that he concluded that the Epistle was written originally in Hebrew and was then translated by Luke into Greek. Origen, on the other hand, distinguishes between the thoughts of the book and the grammatical form; the former, according to the testimony of “the ancients”, is from Paul (cited in Attridge 1989:1). Hebrews is the work of an unknown writer, Clement of Rome according to some, Luke, or another pupil of the Apostle, according to others, he suggested. In like manner, Hebrews was regarded as Pauline by the various Churches of the East: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Cappadocia, and Mesopotamia, to mention a few. Many modern scholars agree with Origen’s assessment. Regarding diction, Cockerill (2012:loc.556) notes that the epistle to the Hebrews contains 169 *hapax legomena*, or words that appear only once in a corpus text – a number much higher than in the rest of the Pauline epistles combined. It was not until after the appearance of Arius that the Pauline origin of the Epistle to the Hebrews was disputed by some from the East and Greeks.

In Western Europe, the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians shows acquaintance with the text of the writing, apparently also the Shepherd of Hermas. Hippolytus and Irenaeus also knew Hebrews, but they do not seem to have regarded it as a work of the Apostle (Schaff 2003 n.p.; Schaff 2005 n.p.). Eusebius (c. AD 325) also mentions the Roman presbyter Caius as an advocate of the opinion that Hebrews was not the writing of the Apostle Paul (cf. 2007:81). He included Hebrews as the fourteenth letter of Paul. He also recognises that others have followed the lead of Rome to deny its Pauline authorship (France 2006:26). The writer Ambrosius accepts Hebrews as canonical, though anonymous, but never includes it in the Pauline epistles on which he wrote commentaries (Bruce 1990:16).

In fact, Hebrews is not found in the Muratorian Canon (ca. AD 180). Cyprian also mentions only seven letters of Paul to the Churches, and Tertullian did not feel to argue the point that

it was written by Barnabas the author of *Hermas* (France 2006:22-26; Knight, 2009 n.p.<sup>12</sup>). Up to the fourth century, other churches of Western Europe regarded the Pauline origin of the Hebrews as doubtful. Accordingly, Bruce (1990:17) indicates that it is Jerome and Augustine who influenced the opinion of the West in accepting Hebrews as a Pauline epistle. The synodic promulgations in the West for some time reserved a distinction between the thirteen Pauline epistles and Hebrews. Bruce (1990:17) reviews the outcomes as follows:

Both the Synod of Hippo in 393 and the Third Synod of Carthage in 397 enumerate “Of Paul the apostle, thirteen epistles; of the same to the Hebrews, one”. The Sixth Synod of Carthage (AD. 419) assigns “fourteen epistles” in so many words to Paul, in terms which Athanasius of Alexandria had used in his Festal Letter of AD 367.

Cockerill argues that Pauline authorship was defended to sustain Hebrew’s canonical status (Cockerill 2012:loc.555). Scholars repudiated Pauline authorship of the epistle based on internal evidence. One could consider several reasons why Paul could have been the author of the epistle. The circumstances in the closing verses of Hebrews 13 are very similar to those in the accredited Pauline letters. Paul and Timothy were very close companions for many years, which could easily explain the remark in Hebrews 13:23 (I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you). Some scholars have pointed out significant differences between Hebrews and the other epistles of Paul, including phrasing (vocabulary choice) and themes. These differences were not just noted with the rise of modern biblical criticism; scholars in the early church recognised them too. Eusebius (AD 260-339) reported the conclusion of Origen (AD 185-251): “The diction in Hebrews does not have the rough quality the apostle himself admitted having (cf. 2 Cor. 11:6), and its syntax is better Greek. The content of the epistle is excellent, nevertheless, not inferior to the authentic writings of the apostle.” Carson & Moo (2005:601) maintain that consistency of the rhetoric, which the writer employs, is remarkable. The writer has a custom of introducing the OT quotations with terms that denotes speaking and it reflects an immediacy of God’s word which Cockerill believes to be absent in Paul. His hermeneutical thrust, especially verbal analogy, and his

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<sup>12</sup> On Pudicity 20 at [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)

use of “lesser-to-greater” arguments, which he uses throughout his expositions and exhortations, is better maintained than that of the apostle Paul. Paul, however, uses it occasionally (Cockerill 2012: loc.556). The writer and his audience received the good news from “those who heard” the Lord (cf. Heb. 2:3), whereas Paul did not receive the gospel from any human being but from the Lord’s own revelation to him (Gal. 1:12). His reference is to the apostle’s referring to their unique Pentecostal experience. Cockerill (2012: loc.566) concludes that difference in style, vocabulary and theology render both direct and indirect Pauline authorship of Hebrews most unlikely.

### **2.1.2 Barnabas**

Many scholars followed the direction of Tertullian (c.155-220) who suggested Barnabas to be the author of Hebrews. Luke describes him as a Levite (Acts 4:36), therefore a member of the Hellenist party in the Jerusalem church (Carson & Moo 2005:603) and he is the son of encouragement (Acts 4:36). The description of his name would fit with the book being a “word of encouragement” (cf. Heb. 13:22). Being a Levite, he was acquainted with the temple rituals. Barnabas was a close affiliate of Paul’s (Acts 9:27; 11:30; 13:1-14:28) and familiar with Timothy. Campbell (2015 n.p.) suggests that Barnabas’ relationship with the apostle Peter places him in Rome after they left Corinth, following Claudius’ death in AD 54. A further argument in favour of Barnabas as author of Hebrews would be that such a person must have had a proven record of mediation in the early church (cf. Acts 9:26-30; 11:22-30; 15:22-39).

Unfortunately, there are no extant writings of Barnabas to use for comparison. It is complete conjecture. The use of the word “encouragement” (Greek *παράκλησις*) is extremely common in the NT (cf. Carson & Moo 2005:603). Therefore, it should not be surprising that Barnabas should be one of the candidates for the authorship of Hebrews.

### **2.1.3 Luke**

Thomas Aquinas speculated on the Lucan authorship of Hebrews. The thesis was that Luke translated Paul's letter into Greek from Hebrew. Carson & Moo (2005:602) write, "Doubtless because of similarities between the Greek of Hebrews and the Greek of Luke-Acts, Clement supposes that Paul wrote to the Hebrews in Hebrew and suggests that our Greek text is Luke's translation." This view is rendered improbable at least for two reasons; firstly, the Greek text of Hebrews does not look like a transliteration and secondly, Luke-Acts has a distinctive Gentile outlook, while Hebrews has a strong Jewish outlook (cf. Campbell 2015 n.p.).

There are many verbal similarities between Hebrews and Acts, especially some affinities with the Stephen tradition (cf. Cockerill 2012: loc.573). However, it would be unwarranted to claim authorship based on stylistic similarities. Rochford (2014 n.p.) suggests that Luke and Hebrews share forty-nine unique words, but Paul and Hebrews share fifty-six. Thus, if we believe that similarities between writings should count, then this would bring us back to Pauline authorship. Furthermore, there is no sermon for Luke accounted for; however, he records the sermon of others. Nothing indicates that Luke has a significant preaching ministry (cf. Cockerill 2012: loc.582).

### **2.1.4 Clement of Rome**

John Calvin (cited in Bruce 1990:17) suggested that Clement of Rome could be the writer of Hebrews. However, Rochford (2014 n.p.) maintains that Clement wrote too late to have written Hebrews, which must antedate AD 70. The style differences are immense between Clement and Hebrews (see also Guthrie 1998:21). Cockerill notes, "1 Clement and Hebrews differ so vastly in style and content that there is no need to give further attention to the suggestion that Hebrews was written by Clement of Rome" (2012: loc.565). Clement of Rome quotes Hebrews at various occasions. Carson & Moo (2005:602) write, "Clement of Rome ... quotes Hebrews in several places (though doubtless one could argue that he is quoting his own work!)."

### 2.1.5 *Apollos*

Martin Luther first introduced Apollos as author of Hebrews. Since then it had gained tremendous popularity among scholars. Luke describes him: “A Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. Apollos had been born in the city of Alexandria. He was a very good speaker and knew a lot about the Scriptures (*ἀνὴρ λόγιος*, ‘learned or eloquent man’<sup>13</sup>). He also knew much about the Lord’s Way, and he spoke about it with great excitement. What he taught about Jesus was right, but all he knew was John’s message about baptism. Apollos started speaking bravely in the Jewish meeting place. However, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to their home and helped him understand God’s Way even better.” (Act 18:24-26). It is evident that Apollos was closely connected with Paul’s work (cf. 1 Cor. 1-4 and with Timothy). There are no extant writings of Apollos to compare with Hebrews (Campbell 2015 n.p.; Rochford 2014 n.p.).

The case for Apollos as author of Hebrews stems from his background as an Alexandrian Jew, his eloquence and knowledge of Scripture. Luke stated, “what he taught about Jesus was right”. This statement is in harmony with the subject of Hebrews. Although Apollos was from Alexandria, the home of Philo, “his authorship is not dependent on the supposed neo-Platonic character of Hebrews” (Cockerill 2012: loc.582). Again, due to the lack of extant writings, it is impossible to compare style and phraseology to that of the book of Hebrews. Attridge (1989:4) observes:

Apollos might well be the sort of person who could have composed Hebrews, but too little known of his specific teaching to allow a positive identification. Surely his rhetorical and exegetical skills were not unique in the early Christian movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Definition added by this writer

### 2.1.6 Priscilla

Von Harnack first suggested the possibility of dual authorship based on his *hermeneutic of suspicion*. He proposed Priscilla as author of Hebrews, perhaps in collaboration with her husband Aquila. They arrived in Corinth from Italy just before Paul. He found a place with them because they shared the same occupation as tentmakers (Acts 18:2-3). This could account for the greetings sent by “those who come from Italy” (Heb. 13:24). It can perhaps explain the switching of “we” to “I” in the book (because it could be co-authored with her husband, Aquila). They knew the Scriptures well – even instructing a learned man like Apollos (Acts 18:26). They were familiar with Timothy and Paul’s work (Acts 18:5; 19:22; 1 Cor. 16:10, 19). It is plausible that she could not identify herself as the author because of anti-female tendencies in the early church. I also notice that the “we” and “I” switching in Hebrews is a rhetorical device – nothing more (cf. Rochford 2014 n.p.). In most cases, people were familiar with Paul and Timothy’s work, so this is not very strong evidence for authorship. The author’s elegant rhetorical display: “I do not have time to tell about ...” in Heb. 11:32 contains a masculine singular participle (διηγούμενον), which impedes a female author. However, Hoppin (2007:27) argues that this is the “editorial masculine” that von Harnack and others considered plausible. The author speaks for herself, for herself and another person, or for people in general. Priscilla may have been speaking for herself and Aquila, as von Harnack put forward. Alternatively, the “literary masculine” may have been intended. On these principles, Hoppin (2007:27) argues that Priscilla cannot be ruled out as author of Hebrews.

In summary: As far as the authorship of Hebrews is concern, most of the internal and external evidence points against Pauline authorship. However, there are certain overlaps as to its theology on the law and covenant. These two specifically are more elaborated in Hebrews; therefore, I conclude that the differences between the two authors are irreconcilable. Paul could not have been the author. The Jewish emphasis of Hebrews contrasts that of Luke, who has a specific Gentile orientation. The most likely candidate for authorship remains Apollos. As indicated earlier, to nominate an author remains at most

the informed guess of the researcher. Many resorted to the conclusion of Origen: “Who wrote the book? God knows”. However, my conclusion is based on the general guideline for Apollos authorship from Johnson (2006:43).

## 2.2 DATE OF WRITING

Wallace suggests that the *terminus a quo* of this epistle ranges from the death of Paul around 64 CE. The *terminus ad quem* is surely 1 Clement who quotes extensively from the book. Scholars agree 1 Clement is dated c.96 CE. As for Hebrews, New Testament scholars agree on a date c. 64-95 CE (Wallace 2004 n.p.).

The internal evidence of the book suggests that it can be somewhere between 64-70 CE. Throughout the entire book the writer refers to the Levitical sacrificial system in the present tense (cf. 5:1-4; 7:20, 23, 27, 28; 8:3, 4, 13; 9:6, 13; 10:2-3, 11), although he does not mention the temple, but have the wilderness tabernacle in mind. If we look at Hebrews 10:2-3, we could argue that if the sacrifices ceased to continue – like Robinson says: “It is hard to credit that these words could have stood without modification or comment” (Robinson cited in Wallace [2004]; also see Carson & Moo 2005:607).

Schnelle (1998:368) also agrees that the lack of any reference to the temple’s destruction (cf. Heb. 8:13) is often regarded as an argument from silence that suggests that Hebrews was written before 70 CE. We agree that the writer looks back to the Jesus tradition and demonstrates insight into the Christian tradition. The group experiences some persecution. I would concur that the possible time of dating is therefore before 70, no later than 90 CE. Other views suggest the early 90s CE. Based on the historical evidence of 1 Clement, some place Hebrews in the history of early Christianity i.e. 96 CE (Carson & Moo 2005:605).

The argument from silence of the destruction of the temple 70 CE is a good one. Although not conclusive, it provides a strong case for a date before 70 CE for Hebrews. Given the writer’s polemic, Carson & Moo (2005:607) suggests that we suspect the writer to make mention of it (cf. France 2006:23). The strongest argument for a date 70 or pre-70 is the development of the Christology of Hebrews that is parallel to the high Christology of 1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 12:6-11 or Colossians 1:15-30. Many scholars indicate the

high Christology of Hebrews 1:1-3 is certainly not “higher” than the passage mentioned earlier. It all represents a pre-Pauline insight (Attridge 1989:9; Carson & Moo 2005:608).

### 2.3 INITIAL READERSHIP AND AUDIENCE

Equally speculative as the authorship of Hebrews, are the intended audience and destination of the book. From the usage of the OT Jewish cultic life and worship, we can deduce that the audience must have been a group of Jewish believers. Several scholars have different opinions as to whom the book of Hebrews was primarily addressed. Some argued that it was written to Jews, and specifically a particular class of Jew. Bruce (1990:7) refers to Karl Bornhäuser who inferred from Hebrews 5:12 that they were not “rank-and-file” Jewish Christians, but more probably converts from Jewish priesthods – before their expulsion from Hellenistic believers from Jerusalem<sup>14</sup>. Spicq (cited in Bruce 1990:7) submitted that the group was converted priests or “Esseno-Christians” as he called them. The title “Hebrews” rules out the idea that the book could have been intended for a group of Gentile Christians, as well as the numerous OT quotes and its emphasis on rituals.

If I should create a profile of the group, I would suggest this was a group (*‘brethren’*) who received a “word of encouragement” (λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως, Heb. 13:22) from the writer, in the light of the persecution and possible apostasy, which they faced. They are accused of becoming lethargic and dull in understanding the message of salvation in Christ (Schnelle 1998:368). They should hold fast to their Christian confession (Heb. 4:14; 10:23). They are spiritually immature although the writer<sup>15</sup> expected them to be more fruitful (Heb. 5:12 – 6:13). Their constant fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25) is what keeps them encouraged and helps them not to turn from Christ. The audience appears to be a group of Jewish Christians who had never heard or seen Jesus in person but received the message from his apostles (Bruce 1990:9). We infer from the apostle that they were Hellenists because they knew the OT in the Greek version (LXX). Guthrie (1998:20) suggests that the believers were not only Jewish, but one must remember that many Gentiles affiliated

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Acts 6:7

<sup>15</sup> Throughout his commentary, Cockrill (2012) prefers to refer to writer as pastor. In some instances, I will use the same address to keep in line with citations from Cockerill.

themselves with first-century synagogues, either as proselytes or God-fearers. They constituted a house church or group of house churches in or near Rome. Guthrie argued strongly that the large Jewish population in Rome during the mid-first century accounts for these believers to organise themselves around house churches. “They were Roman citizens, spoke Greek, and had Greek names” (Guthrie 1998:20). In Acts 2 we found Jews from Rome. It is likely that some of these converted to Christianity, returned to Rome and established the church there (Guthrie 1998:20). I agree that the church was probably comprised of both Gentile Christians and Hellenistic Jewish Christians. Data from deSilva’s social-rhetorical investigation (2004) put forward that the believers were the victims of society’s attempts to bring them back in line with its values (Heb. 10:32-34), such as society’s understanding that traditional gods upheld the social order, secured political stability and provided good crops. The author recalls no martyrdoms (Heb. 12:4) but paints a picture of “a severe contest of suffering” (Heb. 10:32), including insults, public disgrace, imprisonment, and confiscation of goods.

Commentators agree that the clue in Heb. 13:24 “Those from Italy send you regards” is ambiguous. However, the Greek allows the interpretation that it can be a group of believers who left Italy (such as Priscilla and Aquila), and is sending regards back to Italy (Carson & Moo 2005:604; Guthrie 1998:20-21). In the light of this, Hebrews was sent “to” Italy, but it is not possible to indicate from where it was sent. Rome is the only place we know in which Christians were persecuted to death during the first century under Nero AD 64-65. France (2006:23) further points out that the Jewish Christians in Rome did not experience such persecution because of their Jewish identity within the Roman provision for a “licensed religion”. Unfortunately, the Gentile Christians could not claim such a privilege.

Wallace (2004 n.p.) indicates evidence against Rome or Palestine, for that matter, as destination for Hebrews. After his biblical reconstruction on destination and dating of the book, he argues that:

1. Heb. 13:24 indicates that the author is somewhere in Italy.
2. Timothy was in prison in Rome (Heb. 13:23 and 2 Tim. 2:9-10). He argues that, on the occasion of his release from prison, would Timothy have left Rome, just to

return shortly again? Why would the writer inform the church about information that they probably knew?

3. The West was the last place to accept Hebrews into the canon (Wallace 2004). The above evidence, Wallace admits, is not decisive, but compelling. His conclusion is possibly Corinth or a non-Pauline church in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor as possible destination.

In summation, I will state my assumption which I regard as a working hypothesis for this thesis – Hebrews is unique and share certain affinities with Paul, Luke (Acts and especially Acts 7, the Stephen tradition), John and 1 Peter. The writer develops a strong apostolic teaching which is faithful to the original and carries of the message of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 2:1-3). I uphold Apollos' authorship based on similarity of arguments offered by Johnson 2006. As for the original audience and destination, Rome is considered to be the most plausible destination. The audience was an intercultural group, although the writer never refers to culture in this sense. They were both Jewish and Hellenist or God-fearers who accepted the Lord. It has been noted that they constituted a house church or group of house churches in or near Rome. The available information about the early Christians in Rome is consistent with the internal evidence and character of the audience that received the Hebrews.

## **2.4. STRUCTURE AND LITERARY CONTEXT OF HEBREWS**

### ***2.4.1 Rhetorical character of Hebrews***

Guthrie (2004 n.p.) indicates that the author used various approaches in Hebrews to deliver his homily, such as thematic, literary rhetorical approaches and the extensive use of the OT in the discourse. He refers to Lindars who indicated that the writer of Hebrews used deliberative rhetoric, a species of rhetoric sought to challenge hearers to follow a course of action or to dissuade others from a particular set of actions. Different topics are employed by the author to achieve this result, i.e. virtuous embodiment (it renders to the other party what is his or her due, like gratitude to benefactors; loyalty to family, friends, guests, homeland etc. (cf. Lane 1991: lxxviii). This approach can best be understood by the socio-rhetorical approach by deSilva and others. The author of Hebrews uses different arguments

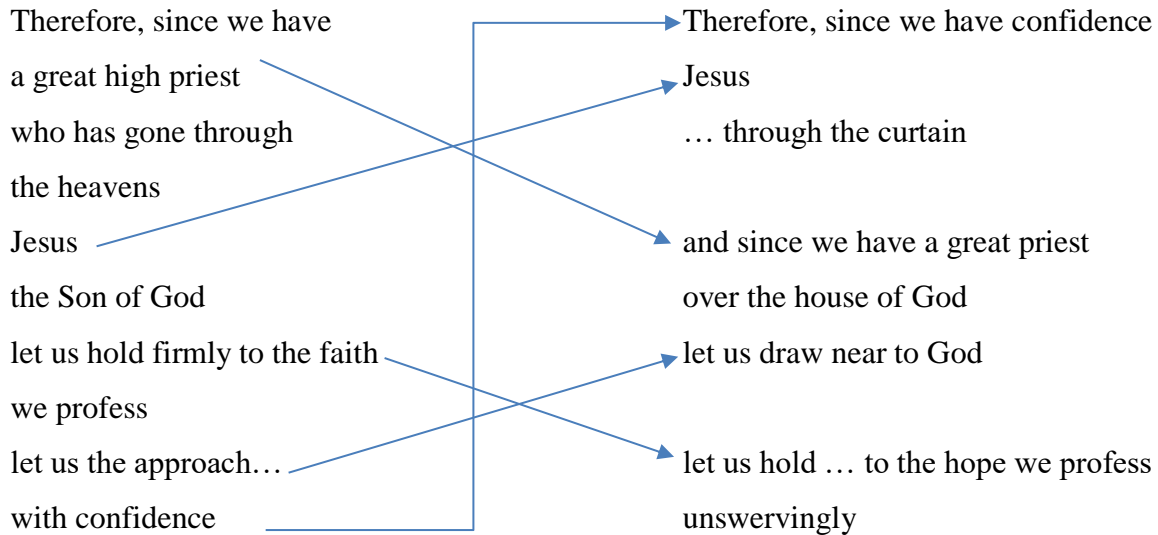
to dissuade or encourage certain behaviours of his readers. These arguments may include from greater to lesser or vice versa, arguments from judgement, similar cases, and analogy (cf. Heb. 2:1-4 arguments from lesser to the greater; 10:26-29: here topics of justice and expedience are used to dissuade believers to break faith with Jesus, deSilva 2004:575).

Epidictic rhetoric refers to shared values of hearers by promoting those characteristics that were worthy of praise and condemning actions that were shameful. Guthrie points out how the author of Hebrews celebrates the significance of Christ and inculcates values that his followers share. This is in line with the pastoral character of many of the exhortations in Hebrews. Lane (1991:lxxvix) maintains that Hebrews cannot be forced into a mould of a classical speech. For Lane, it was the sole purpose of the writer to employ his pastoral task, and therefore could not be bound to set rules of rhetorical conventions. He further concludes that the writer of Hebrews used Greek rhetoric for the sole purpose of encouragement – he was never tied to any forms but was at home with it (1991:lxxx).

Vanhoye (in Guthrie 2004 n.p.) identified at least five literary devices which are significant to understand Hebrews' structure. These are the announcement of the subject, hook words, and change in genre, characteristic terms and use of inclusives (see Guthrie 1996 and Lane 1991). Guthrie challenges Vanhoye's work on several points, especially on the use of *inclusio* and his lack of attention to it in Heb. 4:14-16 and Heb. 10:19-25. The two passages mark the beginning and ending of the discourse of Christ's appointment and work as high priest. Guthrie illustrates this in the following diagram (1998:341):

**Heb. 4:14-6**

**Heb. 10:19-23**



Both their works make it clear that *inclusio* and hook words were widely used in ancient Greek literature.

**2.4.2 Homiletic nature of Hebrews**

Hebrews as a “letter”, is based on the closing, greetings, instructions, and other recognizable letter-closing ingredients in Hebrews 13:18-25, but it has more in common with a speech than a written document (deSilva 2004:789, Schnelle 2009:373 and Stanley 1994:248). It does not open with any indicators of being a letter, but a carefully balanced sentence that does precisely what the exordium of a speech (or in this context, a sermon) was expected to do. That is to catch the attention of the hearers, establish the credibility of the speaker and hint at some new topics. The marks of Hebrews as a letter can also be found in the direct communication between the writer and his audience. He is aware of the community’s situation (cf. Heb. 10:32-34; 12:4; 13:10).

Schnelle (2009:373) suggests that the epistolary conclusion does not alter the literary character of Hebrews as a whole – which was not conceived as a letter but a well-thought-out speech. Some argue that the author’s intention was to hear Hebrews as a sermon, “a word of encouragement” (cf. Acts 13:15 and Heb. 13:22). In Acts, the same word is used

for the Christian equivalent for a sermon or homily. The sermon/homily included at least three elements, which the writer engages directly. Most of the time it follows the sequence, but on various occasions it is used out of sequence as he digressed out of pattern to prove further points. These elements, according to Stanley (1994:248), include: 1) an indicative or exemplary section (example), marked with quotations, authoritative example of both past and present, or theological exposition, 2) a conclusion based on the example and showing its relevance, and 3) an exhortation or hortatory subjunctive.

The use of OT witness, reliance on the Pentateuch and Psalms all form part of the use of homiletically devices. The author employs rhetorical devices as indicated and attributions of citations to the Holy Spirit and more (cf. Stanley 1994:250; Heb. 9:8; 10:15 etc.). In the light of the above, Hebrews is regarded as speech or homily through the thesis.

### ***2.4.3 Hebrews as exposition***

The writer calls Hebrews “a word of exhortation”, a designation by the early church used in Acts 13:15 to show an OT scripture in a synagogue homily. The author focuses on one or more OT text through either quotations or allusions and commenting on its various words or phrases (cf. Guthrie 1998:24). Based on these hook words and phrases other discussions are brought into it. As the homily was a “brief” word of exhortation, the author uses messages of encouragement interspersed throughout. In Acts 13:14-15 Paul and Barnabas were invited by the synagogue leader to deliver a message of encouragement (*λόγος τῆς παρακλήσεως*) to the believers. Guthrie (1998:24) maintains that the author constructed his work after the form of a first-century sermon. In fact, he claims, “it may be our earliest and most complete sermon addressed to an established Christian Community”.

Cockerill suggest that the OT is the “bone and marrow” of the author’s treatise (2012: loc.896-897). His quotation contributes to the rhetorical structure of the sermon that forms the bases of not only the teaching on Christ and salvation but also that of the warning passages of Hebrews. Hebrews is also regarded as a sermon prepared to be read aloud to a

group of auditors who will receive its message not primarily through reading and leisure reflection but orally (cf. Bruce 1990:25-26, France 1996:248 and Lane 1991: lxiv-lxxv).

I prefer to include Longenecker's proposed five expositions<sup>16</sup> of Hebrews, which France revised. France suggests seven specific expositions, namely:

(Introduction:	1:1-2:4)	
<i>First Exposition:</i>	2:5-18	<i>on Psalm 8:4-6</i>
(Jesus and Moses:	3:6)	
<i>Second Exposition:</i>	3:6-4:13	<i>on Psalm 95:7-11</i>
(Jesus the High Priest:	4:14-5:4)	
<i>Third Exposition:</i>	5:5-7:28	<i>on Psalm 110:4</i>
<i>Fourth Exposition:</i>	8:1-10:18	<i>on Jeremiah 31:31-34</i>
(Exhortation/ Warning:	10:19-31)	
<i>Fifth Exposition:</i>	10:32-12:3	<i>on Habakkuk 2:3c-4</i>
<i>Sixth Exposition:</i>	12:4-13	<i>on Proverbs 3:11-12</i>
(Further Exhortations:	12:14-17)	
<i>Seventh Exposition:</i>	12:18-29	<i>on Mount Sinai</i>
(Exhortations/Conclusion:	13:1-23)	

The outline of these expositions overlaps and coincide with the thematic approach to the structure of Hebrews, which, I believe, assists in the theological interpretation of the book. We realize that the pastor/author is no novice when it comes to biblical exposition. He presents the OT texts in different and creative ways to his audience to address the specific pastoral situation of his own community.

#### ***2.4.4 Main sections of Hebrews***

##### ***Chapter 1:1-4:13***

Here the writer explores the words that are spoken through the Son. Jesus as the pre-existent word and messenger of God is conceptualised as the Son who is the heir of God. He is the Promise of Salvation, better than angels and Moses, and he is builder of the House of God. The writer offered a stern warning to heed the salvation message of Jesus, announced by God and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>16</sup> The first five expositions are that of Longenecker. France added the last two which give us a total of seven expositions.

### ***Chapters 4:14-10:31***

This is the bulk of the exposition by the writer. He interprets Jesus as the eternal high priest against the background of the Israelite priesthood. Jesus' priesthood is better than Aaron's and patterned after that of Melchizedek. In Jesus, the Old Covenant and sacrificial system is absolutised because his better sacrifice was once for all. Christ introduced a New Covenant by His blood by which readers have access to the throne of God.

### ***Chapters 10:32-12:29***

Faith is insight into the heavenly reality. Jesus is the ultimate example of faith, the Pioneer and Perfecter. God is the loving Father who disciplines his children to respond to the "one who speaks".

### ***Chapter 13***

Here we have special instructions to the community and the epistolary greetings. The exhortations are of an ethical nature: love; hospitality; respect and obedience to leaders. Hebrews concludes as a "word of exhortation", which reflects the synagogue sermon style instead of a true ancient letter.

#### ***2.4.5 Schematic outline of Hebrews***

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>I. God has spoken in His Son</b>            | <b><i>1:1-4:13</i></b>   |
| A. <i>The Deity of Jesus</i>                   | <i>1:1-14</i>            |
| B. <i>Warning not to fall away</i>             | <i>2:1-4</i>             |
| C. <i>The humanity and exaltation of Jesus</i> | <i>2:5-18</i>            |
| D. <i>Response to Jesus' voice</i>             | <i>3:1-4:13</i>          |
| <b>II. Jesus our High Priest</b>               | <b><i>4:14-10:31</i></b> |

- A. *Jesus as Eternal High Priest* 4:14-5:10
- B. *Warning against turning away/  
Exhortation to hope* 5:10-6:20
- C. *Jesus' priesthood is better* 7:1-28
- D. *The nature of the New Covenant* 8:1-13

***Second movement***

- A. *Jesus, the perfect sacrifice*
- B. *Cleansing through the sacrifice  
of Christ* 9:1-28
- C. *The removal of sin* 10:1-18
- D. *Warning to persevere* 10:19-31

**III. Jesus, The Living Way for the Faithful** 10:32-12:29

- A. *Witnesses to faith* 11:1-40
- B. *The discipline of God* 12:1-13
- C. *Warning against refusing God* 12:14-29

**IV. Practical instructions to love/ending** 13:1-25

The historical-critical matters in Hebrews have at least a few benefits for this study: First, we concluded that the best candidate for writing the Hebrews was Apollos in a time where his recipients were most likely to digress from their adherence to Jesus Christ. For this reason, he has written “a word of encouragement”. Second, evidence for apostasy is visible in Hebrews. They faced trial based on their allegiance to the Christian faith. Third, we identified the genre and overall style of Hebrews to help us in the exegetical process and maintain a sensitive feel for the message and theology of the book. Hebrews fit within the corpus of the NT and make significant contributions to the NT as a literary work.

**2.5 THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN HEBREWS**

The theological epicentre of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be summed up in one word: Christology. No biblical document outside of the four Gospels focuses as totally and forcefully on the person and redemptive achievement of Jesus as Hebrews (Walmark 1997n.p.)<sup>17</sup> Jesus is declared the Son through whom God has spoken his ultimate redemptive word. His enthronement is described in the first part of Hebrews 1:3; “he sat

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<sup>17</sup> biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/baker-evangelical-dictionary

down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”. This exalted position is the direct outcome of his priestly ministry: “After he had provided purification for sins”. It is this priestly aspect of Jesus’ person and ministry that takes centre stage as the message of Hebrews unfolds. The Son is the pre-existent son who was made a “little lower” than the angels for a specific time. He became high priest after the order of Melchizedek, sworn with an oath by God. The Christological and theological peak is where Jesus, the eternal high priest, enters the inner sanctum of heaven where he offers up his own body and blood in voluntary submission to God as a sacrifice for sins once, forever, on behalf of all humanity. He is both priest and sacrifice; bringing the believer into the presence of God. Through his death, he mediates a New Covenant and abolishes the old.

In Hebrews 10:19-13:25 the theological emphasis shifts from formal argument to practical application. The theme now takes the form of an urgent call for the readers to place their trust unswervingly in the sufficiency of Jesus as eternal high priest (Walmark 1997 n.p.). The church is now motivated by the supreme example of faith and endurance he demonstrated during the days of his flesh (“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith”). The church is summoned to focus its concentrated attention on Jesus Christ if it is to be successful in running the race of life. The four “warning” sections highlight the intense pastoral concern sustained throughout the entire epistle. Through his ministry as priest, Jesus continues to intercede for the believers. He encourages them to persevere to receive an “eternal inheritance”, the New Jerusalem, which cannot be shaken.

The writer uses Christology of divine identity, anthropological<sup>18</sup> Christology, sacerdotal/High Priestly Christology and a distinctive pneumatological Christology to unpack his theology and subsequent “brief word of exhortation”.

### ***2.5.1 Eschatological dualism***

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<sup>18</sup> The Christology of Heb. 2 is controlled by the predisposition of human beings: that human beings were alienated from God, but through the Ideal Man, Jesus Christ, was brought in a right relationship with God through sacrificing himself. By his death and resurrection, God subjected everything, even the world to come, under his dominion (Adams 2012:14).

Despite the much-debated worldview of Hebrews, one can speak of a twofold dualism being present in Hebrews: a dualism of the above and the below, and an eschatological (end time) dualism – the present age versus the age to come. The spatial symmetry of the two worlds is at the core of the theology of Hebrews. According to Laansma (2008: loc.2313), this spatial duality of earth and the age-to-come is clear, though the nature of it and by what worldview it is controlled, is not so obvious (cf. France 2006:30). We describe Hebrews as fitting within the Christianised “already-not-yet” version of the linear apocalyptic outlook encountered elsewhere in the NT. The writer continuously encourages his audience to press on towards the good things promised by God, but not experienced. The heavenly sphere into which Jesus passed is a distinguished fact for the author. The two worlds are co-existent – the heavenly world and the phenomenal world. According to Ladd (1974:572), the author of the epistle leans profoundly on the Philo-Platonic understanding of the two worlds. For Philo, the former (super sensible world) is heaven, as it is for the author of the Epistle.

Ladd (1974:572) maintains that the author leaves these dualistic presentations side by side and found room for both in a primitive Hellenistic theology (cf. Lane 1991:cxliv), however “... suffers despite its grandeur and suggestiveness, from a lack of inner harmony”. This type of theological reasoning is prevalent in the speech of Stephen in Acts 7. The writer discussed the eschatological dualism in referring to the “world to come” (Heb. 2:5; Attridge 1989:27). The future world will not be subjected to angels but to Christ who sits at the right hand of God and is already crowned with glory. He is Lord over all things and awaits his enemy to be made the footstool of his feet, and this will happen at “the day” (cf. Heb. 10:25), which is the “Day of the Lord” that is drawing near. “For yet a little while and the coming one shall come and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37). It gives us a better understanding of the rest that remains for God’s people, the promised inheritance and promised homeland. To this end, the believers are on pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Ladd points out that the tension between the “already” and the “not yet” is evident at numerous points throughout the epistle. In the eschatological consummation, God’s people will find rest, however, the anticipated blessing is that His people are experiencing the rest

in the present and will in the future. The believer enters the rest and must strive to enter it in obedience. The book shares a paradox with all primitive eschatology (1974:575).

Realized eschatology is taking part in the fact that the eschatological blessing can already be “tasted” (experienced in part). Its context is in the discussion on the heavenly Jerusalem and Mount Zion. The eschatology, although borrowed from Philo, is not strictly futuristic. Ladd explains, “It has broken into history in the person and work of Christ. Thus, believers already experience the heavenly realities; yet they await their fullness at the end of age.” (1974:577). Similarly, France (2006:30) indicates that Hebrews 11 gives a clear picture of the dualism coming together “as faith takes hold both of reality of the invisible world and also of the certainty of God’s promises”. Salvation is part of the fully realised eschatology of Hebrews. Attridge (1989:28) maintains that the eschatological focal point of Hebrews is clearly in the past, at the death and exaltation of Christ.

### ***2.5.2 Christology as theological enterprise***

The writer establishes the basic belief that the God of Israel is still communicating<sup>19</sup> to his children – in the past through the prophets, and in the last days through his Son. The exordium forms a “climatic epoch” in the way God chose to reveal the Son.

*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Hebrews 1:1-4 (NRVS)*

The son is the eschatological heir of all things, the eternal Son of God. Through him, all things were created (Heb. 1:2-3, 10-12). He is honoured above the angels (Heb. 1:4-14) and performed a heavenly ministry. Jesus receives a name that is more excellent than any

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<sup>19</sup> Schnelle (2009) argues that the basis of the theological thought of Hebrews in the sense of theology proper is God is speaking, that God is the God who speaks (see the exordium as quoted above). The “God who speaks” will be recurring in the course of this thesis as part of the continuous theological interpretation of the core message of the Hebrews.

other name. The name and character of the Son was very important to the writer for his theology and Christology: The Son is the reflection of God's glory (Heb. 1:3), the exact imprint (*χαρακτήρ*) of God's very being (Heb. 1:3). The word *χαρακτήρ* can also mean impression, reproduction, and representation (as in the impression on coins). It is also used in other places to indicate the reproduction of God's form. Consequently, it would be right to observe that the Son bears the name of the Father, which he inherited not by means of his function as God's Son but based on his divine identity (*χαρακτήρ*)<sup>20</sup>. Laansma (2008: loc.2350) maintains that the readers seem to be familiar with the expositional material, Psalms 2; 8 and 110, the Wisdom Christology, and the Christological descent and accent pattern are all strongly paralleled elsewhere (cf. Joh. 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20). Consequently, Hebrews develops a unique Christology of "lofty divine exaltation" for it is God himself who addresses the Son as "God" and grants him the divine name (Schnelle 2009:636).<sup>21</sup>

The reader becomes acquainted with the repeated appeals in Hebrews to the earthly life of Jesus: his birth, his humanity, his temptations, his prayers, his obedience, his sufferings, his flesh-and-blood death. Our Lord descended from Judah (Heb. 7:14); he was made like his brothers in all things (Heb. 2:17); he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered (Heb. 2:18), one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). In the days of his flesh he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears (Heb. 5:7); he learned obedience from the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8); Jesus endured the suffering of death (Heb. 2:9); a death to validate the New Covenant (Heb. 5:15). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10); he inaugurated a new and living way for us through the veil, that is, his flesh (cf. Adams 2012 and Corley 1999:17).

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<sup>20</sup> Adams (2012) and Bauckham (2009).

<sup>21</sup> Bauckham (2009:22) goes a step further when he writes, "the name that is so much more excellent than those of the angels *must* be the Hebrew divine name, the Tetragrammaton (YHWH)," (emphasis mine). The Son inherits something that is particularly that which belongs to the Father, which is the Father's name. Angels cannot inherit the name because the Son is so much more than the angels (Adams 2012).

The focus on the humanity of Jesus spills over into the high priesthood of Christ. As the believers' High Priest, Jesus represents and intercedes for them at God's right hand. His position as King is potential in the sense that He is the "heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2) and will rule over the "inhabited earth to come" (Heb. 2:5-9). Christ is not ruling today over this world as King. The Son's ruling functions have been displaced to another age. Currently He is waiting "until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet" (Heb. 10:13; cf. 1:13). Saucy (1993:58) maintains that Christ's *function* in this age resembles an interceding high priest more than a king (relative to the subjection of his enemies during this age). It seems best to say that only the authority and status of "king" is featured in this age, while the kingly function, i.e. ruling and reigning, he exercises in the age to come.

F.F. Bruce notices a chiasmic structure in Hebrews 5:1-10 in which the general qualifications of priesthood are followed by Jesus' fulfilment of those requirements:

A) High Priest must be able to sympathize with the ones whose case he represents (vv. 1-3).

B) High Priest must receive divine appointment to priestly office (v. 4).

B<sup>1</sup>) Jesus is divinely appointed and fulfils requirement B (vs. 5-6, 10).

A<sup>1</sup>) Jesus sympathizes with the ones whom he represents and fulfils requirement A (vv. 7-10).

In light of the above outline (Heb. 5:1-10) the importance of the author's argument is clearly seen in the repetition of the allusion to Psalm 110:4 (cf. Heb. 5:7, 10). The climax of the section is when God affirms Jesus as high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Through His suffering, Jesus certainly understands the "human condition" which qualifies Him to serve as high priest. After his calling, Christ became "author of our salvation" (cf. Heb. 2:9-10 and 12:1-2). It is clear that the distinctive nature of Christ's Priesthood is "according to the order of Melchizedek" (*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."* Ps 110:4). Theologically the statement of Laansma (2008: loc.2362), which he reiterates that the priesthood of Christ becomes a "normative example" for the believers in the First Century context and to church today, resonates with me, especially for the faith community in terms of their faith-walk with the Lord. Christ identifies with the church in our worldly existence as a "sympathetic high priest" who removed our sin "once for all".

### ***2.5.3 Jesus as sacrifice***

Jesus is to the author both High Priest and sacrifice in that the High Priest offers to God, who offered himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14, cf. 7:27). He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26); by his death, he made purification for sins (Heb. 1:3). The author has the historical death of Jesus in mind when he describes his “priestly Christology” (cf. Heb. 2:9 “for suffering death [physical], crowned with glory and honour that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”). He goes further to reiterate his knowledge of the death of Jesus even without a neatly crafted theory of atonement in Hebrews 10:10 “the offering of the body of Christ once for all”.

The sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, served one purpose: “to purify the conscience” of the believer (Heb. 9:14). The Old Covenant was unable to accomplish this end (Ladd 1974:581). The writer re-affirms in Hebrews 10:2 “if the worshippers had once been cleansed (purified), they would no longer have any consciousness of sin.”. It is not only the sinner that is cleansed but also the redeemed (cf. Heb. 10:10). By suffering outside the city gates, Jesus sanctified both saint and sinner (the people) through his own blood (Heb. 13:12). His priestly Christology culminates in the act of sanctification through which we can draw near to God. Ladd affirms that sanctification is not the perception of sinlessness but rather a dedication to God (1974:581). The writer informs us that under the Old Covenant sanctification was primarily the purification of the flesh (Heb. 9:13). The effectiveness of ceremonial holiness was not lasting but recurring, whereas the “single offering (of Christ) has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14).

### ***2.5.4 Jesus surety of the New (better) Covenant***

Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant (cf. Heb. 9:15), as proclaimed by Jeremiah centuries before. Under the Old Covenant, salvation and a right relationship with God came through a faith expressed by obedience to his law and its sacrificial system (Ladd

1974:581). The essence of Jeremiah's prophecy is that God would do the following: God will make a new, better covenant with his people. It is better because it completely forgives sins of the repentant, makes them children of God (cf. Heb. 8:15-16), gives them a new heart and nature so that they may spontaneously love God (cf. Ezekiel 36:26-28; Heb. 8:10 and 11:19-20).

They will enter into an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father (Heb. 8:11) and it will provide a greater experience in the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28; Acts 1:5-8; 2:16-17; Heb. 2:3-4). Jesus instituted this *διαθήκη* (covenant or testament). His position as mediator of the New Covenant is based on his sacrificial death on the cross (cf. Bruce 1991:220). The redemptive death of Christ is eternal. The covenant associated with his death is eternal (Heb. 13:20). To those who obey him he has become the "source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). The Christian believers become now the heirs of promise (Heb. 6:17). *Διαθήκη* signifies a settlement as in a last will and testament, "in which property is bequeathed by the owner to various other persons as the understanding that they have no title to it until he dies" (Bruce 199:221).

His death inaugurated the New Covenant. In his death, Christ abolishes the Old Covenant (Heb. 8:13ff). The Old Covenant has fulfilled its purpose or mission and has no longer place in God's divine economy (cf. Ladd 1974:583). The writer repeats the crux of his argument "he abolishes the first in order to establish the second" (Heb.10:9). The Old Covenant has kept people from the presence of God, whereas the New Covenant has "opened a new and living way for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh" to enter into the "most Holy place", the presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:20). The Old Covenant is obsolete and discontinued in Christ's death, sacrifice and "better resurrection".

The New Covenant can be called the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Holy Spirit who ministers life and power for all who accepts God's covenant. The OT scriptures are not abolished. God still speaks through them, as he uses the writer of Hebrews to speak into our context. There is continuity between the OT and NT in a sense what Hughes calls a "historical" continuity (cited in Guthrie 1998). The text of the OT has inherent

expectations of something in the future that will constitute their fulfilment. In the NT Jesus Christ fulfils these expectations.

Scott Hann (2005:66-88) in *Covenant, Guilt and the Curse-of-death: Διαθήκη* in Heb. 9:15-22 concludes that Christ has the “curse-of-death” on behalf of all (Heb. 2:9; 9:15) and restores to Israel the Abrahamic blessing (cf. Heb. 6:13-20; Gen. 22:15-18). Christ’s death is simultaneously the legal execution of the curse of the Old Covenant and the liturgical ritual of sacrifice, which establishes the new. Through the Spirit God will give a new heart, new spirit, or law on the heart of his people (Stallard 2017:24). A universal outpouring of the Spirit is natural outflow of the New Covenant for believers.

### ***2.5.5 The Holy Spirit in Hebrews: Continuity between two testaments***

The continuity of the Spirit of God (Holy Spirit – *hagios pneumatikos*) between OT and NT is paramount for this thesis. To understand Hebrews’ teaching on the role and function of the Holy Spirit – as will be developed in the subsequent chapters of this thesis – one must look back to the basic OT teaching on the Holy Spirit. Therefore, what is presented below should be seen as forming the backdrop to the way the Spirit is being portrayed in Hebrews. It is my contention that the few instances in Hebrews where the Spirit is explicitly mentioned cannot be properly understood and interpreted unless this broader framework is taken into account. That is the reason why the “development” of the Spirit between OT and NT is described below. There is indeed a line of continuity, as far as the Spirit is concerned. Furthermore, this line of reasoning is also in accordance with our approach of the “theological interpretation of Scripture”, as explained in chapter 1 (1.3.2.2). This approach takes the broader scriptural evidence into account to explain what is going on in a particular biblical writing, without forcing evidence “from outside” on the writing or negating the contribution of the particular writing, in this case Hebrews.

### 2.5.5.1 Continuation of Ezekiel's and Joel's prophecies in the NT

In Ezekiel 36:25-28 the prophet creates a metaphorical image of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, although not clearly stated, it is alluded to. The writer of Hebrews carries the allusion over in Hebrews 10:22, “So let’s come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let’s keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water.”. The metaphor takes the idea of purification of the human body through physical washing with water and extends it to purification of the human spirit through spiritual washing with the Holy Spirit (Averick 2005 n.p.). In Ezekiel 37, the Spirit of God moves the prophet. In yielding to his direction (cf. Ezek. 3:12; 3: 24 etc.), the Spirit enables him to see visions of which the valley of dry bones and the temple is most familiar to the ordinary reader. In Ezekiel 36: 25 and 27, God says to Israel, “I will sprinkle you with pure water and you will be clean from all your impurities. I will purify you from all idols ... I will put my Spirit within you ...” This prophetic word creates the basis for the vision that the prophet will receive. God’s Spirit in his people will cause them to be obedient to God to fulfil the prospects of the New Covenant. A repentant heart is what it takes to be obedient to the new covenant which Christ inaugurated by his blood. In the valley, God inquired of the prophet if the bones can live and instructed him to prophecy to the bones, which represented the house of Israel. God said, “I will cause my breath (*ruach*) to enter you so you will come to life” (Ezek. 37:5). God’s breath came from the four directions of the wind (*ruach*). God’s Spirit is both “breath” and “wind” in the vision.

The metaphor of “wind” and “water” for the spirit is continued in the NT in the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). Jesus said, “Unless a person is born of water and spirit (*πνεύματος*) he cannot enter the kingdom.”. It is translated as “spirit/Spirit” or “wind”. Both water and wind come from “above” therefore Jesus intended the new birth by the Spirit, which is from above<sup>22</sup>. The wind (*πνεῦμα*) blows wherever it wants. “You hear the sound it makes. However, you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ezek. 37:9-10 and Isa. 44:3 are pertinent examples for water and wind as life-giving symbols of the Spirit of God as he works among God’s people. The literary contexts indicate the future restorations of God’s people.

It is the same with everyone who is born through the Spirit (πνεῦμα)” (John 3:8 NIRV). Later in John (20:22) Jesus breathed on his disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. By his breathing on them, Jesus passes the Holy Spirit on them (cf. Averick 2005 n.p.).

There is also a link between the “baptism of water” of John and the baptism with the Holy Spirit from Jesus (cf. Acts 1:5 “*John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*”). It is here in the NT that the baptism of the Spirit shifts the focus of the metaphor from “wind” to “water”. Physical purification becomes the central focus and corresponding reality of the work that the Holy Spirit does to the human spirit (Matt. 3:11 and Heb. 10:17). The idea of baptism is also alluded to in Hebrews 6:1.

The prophecy of Ezekiel describes a day when all the people of God shall be permanently indwelled by the Holy Spirit. This is the age of the Spirit that the OT anticipated.<sup>23</sup> The NT reference to this universal outpouring of the Spirit is in 2 Cor. 3:1-11 and Act. 2:14-21 where the prophecy of Joel becomes apparent. In Acts 2, Luke describes that outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. In Rom. 8: 9, Paul confirms that the believers are indwelled by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit in the NT that glorifies the Spirit Anointed Messiah in his earthly ministry and salvific work (cf. Matt. 1:18, 20, 4: 1; Luke 2:25, 4:1, 14 etc.). It is through the power of the Spirit that Christ cast out demons and offered himself to God as a sacrifice.

The prophet Joel points toward the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28-30:

Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my

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<sup>23</sup> As Ezekiel foresaw a permanent indwelling of the Spirit, so did Isaiah. In Isa. 59:21 The Lord says: “My people, I promise to give you my Spirit and my message. These will be my gifts to you and your families forever. I, the LORD, have spoken.” (cf. Heb. 8:10-18; Jer. 31:31-34). In Luke 4:17-18, Jesus took ownership of this prophetic word, by claiming it to be fulfilled in him.

Both “water” and “wind” are figures (based on the OT references) that Nicodemus must have understood to represent the regenerating work of the Spirit (cf. John 3:6). The Spirit ushers in the New Covenant that will be a lasting agreement of God with his people, based in the perpetuity of his Spirit.

spirit. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

Peter refers to this text as being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). In Acts 2:4, 6-18 the Holy Spirit came as a mighty wind. Peter interpreted this passage of Joel as God's promise fulfilled in its new context of Spirit baptism. The Spirit divinely enables people to see visions, dream dreams and to prophecy. This outpouring of the Spirit inaugurated the Messianic age anticipated by the OT. Ewert (1972) observed:

The early Christian community believed that the last days which, according to the prophets, were to be characterized by an effusion of God's Spirit, had come upon them. The presence of the Spirit in the believers' lives was, however, not only an indication that the messianic age had dawned; it was also the ground of a new eschatological outlook. Although they were experiencing the powers of the age to come (by the work of the Spirit), they realized full well that the new age had not yet been consummated, and that the forces of evil were still active in the interim between the inauguration and the consummation of salvation

#### ***2.5.5.2 Other forms of continuation between the Spirit in the OT and NT***

The term Holy Spirit occurs three times in the OT expressed as "God's Spirit of Holiness". These special incidents are Ps 51:11 (*Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me*) and Isa 63:10 and 11, where it refers to Israel who grieved the Holy Spirit. David at one occasion put his trust in God by "entrusting his spirit to God for deliverance" (cf. Ps. 31:5a; "*Into your hand I commit my spirit ...*"). Jesus drew on the same expression at the point of death on the cross, entrusting his spirit to God (Matt. 27:50; John 19:30 see also "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (πνεῦμα)*" – Luke 23:26). The resemblance between David and Jesus is that both gave up their (human) spirit.

Continuity extends also to "the Spirit of God". Perhaps one of the best places to see this is in 1 Corinthians 2:10b-12:

God's Spirit has shown you everything. His Spirit finds out everything, even what is deep in the mind of God. You are the only one who knows what is in your own mind, and God's Spirit is the only one who knows what is in God's mind. But God has given us his Spirit.

The grammatical structure of the expression “spirit of man” (v11) corresponds with the “spirit of God” later in the same verse (Averick 2005 n.p.). Just as people have a “spirit,” so does God. The argument is confirmed in Rom 8:16 “the Spirit (of God), himself bears witness to our (human) spirit that we are God’s children”. In both the OT and NT God gives his spirit in the midst of his people to guide them and to empower them. Gathering from Isaiah 63:11-12 it makes it possible for us to “grieve the Holy Spirit” of the Lord through various forms of rebellious misbehaviour (Is. 63:10 cf. Eph. 4:30). To this end the writer of Hebrews urges the hearer not to fall away, harden their hearts or disobey God. In any case, they could “insult the Holy Spirit who shows us mercy” (cf. Heb. 10:29 “the Spirit of grace”).

In the OT God played a remarkable role in performing signs, wonders and miracles (cf. Ex. 7:3), whereas the NT emphasis is now on the Spirit’s role that empowers the apostles to perform signs, wonders and miracles. Many NT examples exist but let me briefly focus on Heb. 2:4. This passage does not only tie signs, wonders and miracles to the apostles, but also to the Holy Spirit. Here it refers to the “distributions of the Holy Spirit”, or in other words, the giving of miraculous gifts (cf. Stallard 2017). The very same verse does not only refer to the distribution of gifts (as Stallard surmises), but rather to the distribution of the Holy Spirit as a gift (cf. Yarnell III 2014:491), alluding to the Pentecost experience (cf. Heb. 6:4).

The writer of Hebrews quotes extensively from various parts of the OT demonstrating that the OT books was God-breathed and the Holy Spirit is responsible for it. Hebrews 3:7, 9:8, 10:15 use the introductory formula “The Spirit says” or “testify”, showing again that the OT was authored by the Spirit of God.

## **2.6. CONCLUSION**

To determine who the author or original audience of Hebrews was remains improbable. The external and internal data presented in the chapter form the basis of what we have to work with. To try to identify its author or readers, remains an educated guess. The

theological constructs presented, still represent a broad field of interpretation, and form a solid ground of agreement between scholars and commentators. Various other concepts within the theological parlance of Hebrews were not dealt with, especially in terms of repetitive words and concepts (e.g. perfection and faith). The New Covenant remains a point of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT. The continuity between the two testaments and especially the Gospels aids in understanding that the OT saints were also regenerated just like the saints in the age of the church and that the Spirit also empowered both men and women for specific tasks (cf. Stallard 2017:27). The ministry of the Spirit to provide divine enablement in the NT is foreseen in the Old. It is most clearly reflected in the participation of the Spirit of God with the people of God to produce effective results in the missional and evangelical approach of the church. The Spirit's outpouring is essential for the church to remain the prophetic voice of God as Peter indicated on Pentecost.

The specific theological themes in this chapter will serve as a hermeneutical lens through which the following chapters will be interpreted according to TIS. The Christological presupposition in Hebrews will be re-interpreted to enhance a Spirit pneumatology which I regard to be prevalent in Hebrews. The writer's exegetical program in Hebrews is based on the conviction that the OT Scriptures are the word of God or God's Holy Spirit (Attridge 1989:24), correspondingly I will argue in the following chapter that the Holy Spirit is the voice of God.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AS REVELATORY ENTITY OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the Holy Spirit in Hebrews as the revelatory entity of God with reference to the Spirit as the voice and ethos of God, how he inspires and interprets Scripture and how he plays a role in the process of regeneration of the believers. I will submit that the Spirit acts as God's agent 1) by treating the exegesis of the relevant passages and 2) by indicating how the art of rhetoric aids the writer in convincing his hearers to hold fast to the message of salvation.

Paul teaches that faith comes by hearing, and what is heard comes through the word of God (Rom 10:17 NRSV). The purpose of Hebrews is to spur its hearers on to a greater faith and to exhort them to hold on to that faith. It is of vital importance what the community of saints heard and from whom the message came. In order to help his flock to hold on to the message of salvation and exhortation the writer indicates right from the beginning that the crucial message of God's saving grace comes from God. God has always communicated to his people and wants them to listen, pay attention and heed his teaching (Davis 2011:2). In Hebrews, there are different texts that indicate how God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit speaks forth Scripture. The Holy Spirit in Hebrews acts as an agent<sup>24</sup> of God's power (Allen 2009:54). The Spirit is the speaker of Scripture and the source of its prophetic empowerment. The writer makes extensive use of applying and reinterpreting the Prophets

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<sup>24</sup> Term introduced by Lindars and frequently used by Allen

and Psalms in the new context of the book. According to Allen (2009:54) it is most evident in Heb. 3:7 and 10:15 where the Spirit specifically verbalizes the words of Ps. 94:7-11 LXX and Jer. 31:33-34 respectively.

The Holy Spirit's speaking of Scripture is a distinctive feature of Hebrews. Not only do God and the Spirit speak, but Christ is said to speak as well. He is the pinnacle of the writer's discourse since he is "an active presence in the past", he is present everywhere in Scripture – at least, theoretically – not only as the One spoken about, but also as the One spoken to (by God), and even as the One who speaks (Holladay 2005:452). In its pages Hebrews conveys a multiple set of voices; God, the Spirit, Jesus, Moses, David and even just "someone somewhere testifies". The voices become "living and active" just as the life the word produces (Heb. 4:12). For this reason Holladay (2005:452) insists: "the author of Hebrews experiences Scripture as a chorus of voices bearing testimony about Christ, the Eternal Now".

### **3.1 EXEGETICAL NOTES: HEB. 1:1-4**

The verses in this exordium serve as preface to the entire treatise. There is no preceding context except for the opening sentence in the grandest of Greek writing in the entire NT. It is also here in Heb. 1:1-4 that the writer introduces the theme of the God who speaks. Allen (2009:55) in his understanding of the Spirit in Hebrews indicates that the Spirit does not speak apart from God "but rather speaks in tandem with God<sup>25</sup>". In other words, what the Spirit says explicitly (in Heb. 10:29) God has said prior to the audience in Hebrews 8:8-12 or as early as Hebrews 4:3. Hughes (1977:141) suggests that to the writer of Hebrews the message of Scripture is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>25</sup> Under headings 4 and 5 I will elaborate on the speech of the Holy Spirit. My basic premise for this section is that God's speech is in fact also speech of the Holy Spirit.

### Heb. 1: 1-4

Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως  
πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς  
πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις  
2 ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν  
τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν  
ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι'  
οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

Long ago God spoke to our  
ancestors in many and various  
ways by the prophets,  
2 but in these last days he has  
spoken to us by a Son, whom he  
appointed heir of all things,  
through whom he also created  
the worlds.

Ever since the beginning of creation God has communicated and expressed himself in no uncertain terms. The exordium of Hebrews forms a single mult clause sentence built around the main clause: “God ... has spoken” (Guthrie 1998:45). God’s communication to humanity does not only engage the author’s attention alone but also that of the reader. God has spoken to the fathers through the prophets in various times (*πολυμερῶς* – at various times, by many portions and times), in other words “on different occasions”. The word points to the fragmentary character of the former revelation of God which was essentially progressive (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:516). Attridge (1989:37) observes that “God’s speech of old was disjointed, coming in multiple segments or portions”. *Πολύτροπος* – adverb indicating many parts, portions or separate ways, on different occasions and in different situations. It can also refer to various methods of disclosure – direct revelations, dreams, visions, etc. – thus stressing the diversity of God’s word (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:516 and Guthrie 1998:46). Attridge (1989:37) asserts that:

God’s speech through the prophets comprised commandments and exhortations, oracles and stories ... However, the multiplicity of God’s speech of old is to be conceived, Hebrews’ basic affirmation is that such diversity contrasts with the singularity and finality of God’s eschatological speech in the Son.

The adverbs serve only to contrast the two phases of God's address. The writer continues employs *πάλαι*, which is an adverb of time – indicating something that is completely in the past (something of old).

ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας – the focus is here on the aorist active participle of *λαλέω*, to speak. Rogers III & Rogers Jr (1998:516) and Walker (2014: loc.112) state that the aorist indicates the antecedent time, “after he had spoken” or “having spoken” *τοῖς πατράσιν* (to the fathers or ancestors). It affirms a completed speech act. God finished speaking through the fathers or ancestors. The new revelation is coming through his Son.

*Πατράσιν* dative plural of *πατήρ* – father. The writer indicates that God's former speech was also to the fathers. With the word play on *πατράσιν*, God is referred to as a father – a loving father that sends his Son to speak his final message to humanity. God has also used *ἐν τοῖς προφήταις* (prophet) to carriers of his message. Here God speaks by means of the prophets (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:516). In the NT, the prophet is someone who is moved by the Spirit of God and henceforth acts on behalf of God. He is God's spokesman or organ who solemnly declares to man what he has received by inspiration (cf. Grudem 2000:34; Johnson 2006:66), especially future events and in particular such as related to the cause of the kingdom of God and to human salvation. According to Rogers III & Rogers Jr (1998:516) the preposition could refer to the teaching of inspiration which viewed the prophets as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The revelatory word that came through the prophets was by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the preposition be taken as local, indicating that God has spoken in the prophets as his authorised speakers.

The word *ἐλάλησεν* which is the aorist indicative active of *λαλέω* – to speak, is used both of God speaking through the prophets and also his speaking through and, literally in Christ (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:516). It can also mean that God has finished speaking in both cases. We still hear the message of salvation which God has spoken through Christ who has his character – that he is Son. Guthrie (1998:46) points out that God's climactic communication through the Son may be considered whole, focused in the person and the work of Christ. In the last days (*ἐπ' ἐσχάτου*) God has spoken through a Son.

### 3.2 EXEGETICAL NOTES: HEB. 2:1-3

The pericope forms part of an *a fortiori* argument used to demonstrate the supremacy of the new revelation in Christ (cf. Heb. 2:1-3; 9:13-14; 10:28-29 and 12:9, 25). It forms a literary unit with chapter 1 but continues to emphasise the superiority of Jesus over the OT revelation. The series of string quotations or *catena pivot* into the Son's superiority over the angels through whom the OT covenant was communicated to Moses (Heb.2:1). The chapter continues to emphasise that Christ became like his people (Heb.2:5-19). Jesus identifies with them, with the result that humanity shares in his glory. He restores fallen mankind to their pre-eminent place in creation (cf. Heb. 2:5-8; Ps. 8).

Chapter two unfolds in the first paraenesis which is the first warning passage of Hebrews (cf. Heb.2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29). The author emphasises the danger of apostasy although not explicitly mentioned. He cautioned the believers not to drift away from such a great salvation. The writer introduces the Holy Spirit as the One who distributes gifts and as such confirms the message of Christ. The experience of the Spirit or the experiences attributed to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, were central to the first Christian congregations (Dunn 2009:45). In the light of its importance, the Spirit assumes an important role as agent of the message of the Lord (Christ) and as benefactor to this group of believers. Motyer (2012:216) argues that the writer of the epistle classifies the way he refers to the Holy Spirit in two distinctive ways: 1) as God's active power, giving gifts of grace to his people and 2) as the author of Scripture (Heb. 3:7, 9:8 and 10:15). In the last category, we deduced that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture mediating the divine Word to the contemporary hearers.

### Heb. 2:1-4 GNT / NRSV

1. Διὰ τοῦτο δεῖ περισσοτέρως ἡμᾶς προσέχειν τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσι, μή ποτε παραρυῶμεν.

2. εἰ γὰρ ὁ δι' ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος ἐγένετο βέβαιος, καὶ πᾶσα παράβασις καὶ παρακοὴ ἔλαβεν ἔνδικον μισθαποδοσίαν,

3. πῶς ἡμεῖς ἐκφευξόμεθα τηλικαύτης ἀμελήσαντες σωτηρίας; ἥτις ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐβεβαιώθη,

4. συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ Θεοῦ σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασι καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσι καὶ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν.

Therefore, we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

Before we continue one must understand the meaning and implication of δεῖ - present indicative active (translated as “we must”). The word refers to a logical or moral necessity (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:518). The following modern English translations translate the phrase related to δεῖ as such:

NASB – “we must pay much closer attention”

NIV – “we must pay the most careful attention”

NRSV – “we must pay greater attention”

The writer urges the believers to give special and complete attention to what has been said previously in chapter 1. Christ is superior to angels who conveyed the Old Covenant to Moses and he is the final revelation of God’s New Covenant with his people. Δεῖ is used

in conjunction with *περισσοτέρως* (adverb – more abundantly, earnestly or with extreme care – cf. Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:518). The audience must pay extreme care not to drift away (*παραρυῶμεν*) from the message they heard. It means to “flow by” or “slip away” (Utley 1996 n.p.). The word is used to describe a river that flow by a place or flow from the normal channel (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:518). The passive voice means to get or find oneself in a state of flowing or passing by (an allusion to Proverbs 3:21 is made - My child, *do not let these escape*<sup>26</sup> from your sight: keep sound wisdom and prudence).

*λαληθεις* – aorist passive participle of *λαλέω* (to speak). It refers to the Law of Moses which was communicated (spoken) by angels (cf. Gal 3:19; Acts 7:38, 53 also Exodus 3:2; 14:19). Translators submit it to be unalterable especially to the wilderness generation and now to the Hebrew believers.

NASB – “proved unalterable”

NIV – “was binding”

NRSV – “was valid”

The message of the Old Covenant was binding or “shown to be true” as the TEV translators renders *βέβαιος*. If there is an unwillingness to listen to God’s voice, there are severe consequences (cf. *παράβασις* – transgression and *παρακοή* – disobedience). Both impressions involve the deliberate rejection of God’s will.

*ἐκφευξόμεθα* – future indicative middle (deponent) of *ἐκφευγομαι* – to flee from or escape (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:518). The rhetorical question used in the apodosis involves an *a fortiori* argument<sup>27</sup>: If the earlier message of God is such a serious matter, then how can the readers avoid their just punishment for neglecting what was delivered by the Son. The usage of *ἀμελήσαντες*, active participle of *ἀμελέω* (to be unconcerned about, neglect or to be indifferent to), indicates that the believers did not necessarily neglect the gospel message, but they were unconcerned and indifferent about the influences of the gospel message on their lives (Utley 1996 n.p.). If the rhetorical question is answered in a negative

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<sup>26</sup> Emphasis mine

<sup>27</sup> (Bruce 1990:68)

form, we realise there is no escape for the sin of disobedience or unwillingness to listen to God's voice is sustained (Heb. 2:1-4; 3:7-19 and 12:25).

### 3.3. EXEGETICAL NOTES: HEB. 2:3B- 4

The great salvation was the message of the gospel spoken through the Lord (*ἀκουσάντων* – aorist active participle of *ἀκούω* “to hear”). The message came to the author and believers through those who have heard the message from the Lord. The author uses the Lord which is God's covenant name when referring to Christ. He equates Christ with God. The ear and eye witnesses of the gospel were the apostles. It is observed that this information rules out any possibility of any first-hand apostle or disciple to be the author of Hebrews (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:519 and Utley 1996). The focus in these verses is predominantly on speaking and hearing the divine message. The message was not only heard but confirmed as well (cf. *ἐβεβαιώθη* – aorist passive indicative of *βεβαιώω* – to make firm or generate). It indicates a legal security and validity (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:519).

God's testimony endorsed the witness of the apostles, by attesting to the truth of the gospel through signs, wonders and miracles. The signs (*σημείους*) indicate that the event is not an empty display of power, however, it is significant in pointing beyond itself to the reality of the mighty hand of God in operation (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:519). *Μερισμοῖς* is of particular importance to my argument. It means to divide or distribute. The subjective genitive (*πνεύματος ἁγίου*) refers to “distribution which the Holy Spirit gives” and the objective genitive refers to the various ways in which the Holy Spirit is distributed (cf. Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:519).

*Πνεύματος Ἁγίου μερισμοῖς* is translated as subjective genitive (“gifts of the Holy Spirit”) and in most cases used by many modern translations. A survey of a few translations will reflect as such:

NIV – “... and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

NASB – “... gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

NRSV – “...and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.”

- KJV – “... and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”  
NLT – “... and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose.”  
NET – “... and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

Allen submits that *πνεύμα* in Heb. 2:4 can be said to represent the defining aspect of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews (2009:56). He maintains “that the phrase is better translated objectively, as the gift/distribution (or indeed distributions) of the Spirit himself, repeated Pentecost for the communities who have received the message of salvation” (2009:56). Only the more recent CEV relates the direct reference to the Spirit as that which is “distributed”<sup>28</sup> – “God himself showed that his message was true by working all kinds of powerful miracles and wonders. He also gave his Holy Spirit to anyone he chose to.”. Hughes (1977:8) shared the same thought “the phrase encapsulates apportionments of the Holy Spirit that is the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit through the impartation of gifts” (see also Motyer 2012:217). It is possibly an echo of the verb that Luke uses to describe the “distribution” of the tongues of fire (Acts 2:3, *διαμεριζοσθαι*). Here, Motyer (2012:217) observe that it would imply the special experience of God being present in some new way, because of Jesus. It would be more than just an experience of God’s power, but in fact his presence through the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, Hebrews 2:4 can be translated literally, “God (himself) also bearing (joint) witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his will”. I must point out that interpreters and exegetes are not in complete agreement about the latter interpretation. Emmrich points out that Ellingworth reads the phrase “as an objective genitive, but with a slightly different meaning, namely God causing the Holy Spirit to act as a distribution agent” (cited in Emmrich 2003:66). Emmrich (2003:66) himself concludes that “if the *πνεύματος ἁγίου* is taken as an objective genitive, then the implication would be that the Spirit is distributed in “different ways (or kinds)”. What is really of importance is that through the distribution of the Holy Spirit and his gracious gifts, the New Covenant is put legally in force (cf. Motyer 2012:217). Motyer agrees with Allen who argues that “for the author of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit comes to

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<sup>28</sup> Allen 2008:152

validate the efficacy of the New Covenant” (2012:218). Christ and the Spirit is interconnected with each other, which is the writer’s pneumatological argument; meaning that the believers cannot have the Spirit without Christ. “Μερισμοί” implies that through the reception of the Spirit, the believers started to exercise the “powers” that are the trademark of the Spirit’s presence.

### **3.4. THE HOLY SPIRIT REFLECTING THE CHARACTER AND ETHOS OF GOD**

In her study Peeler (2007:1-19) demonstrates how the writer through his use of rhetoric, portrays God’s character and ἔθος to his first recipients/audience. “In the ancient world, the persuasive power of a speech faltered if it rested on logic alone. The speech also had to convince the audience of the reliable and amenable character of the speaker and work to move them in a certain direction” (Peeler 2007:3). The goal of the speaker is to establish his or the client’s ἔθος through the persuasion of the audience, specifically of his (speaker’s) credibility of trustworthiness.

After Peeler investigated the various definitions and interpretations of ἔθος in the ancient world, she wades out to employ a definition of ethos that is fundamental to the discussion:

Ethos is the portrayal of the speaker and/or the client in a speech, which is aimed at gaining the trust and favour of the audience. The speaker can highlight different aspects of ἔθος, including prudence, virtue, goodwill, and gentleness, through different means by observing the person’s actions, choices, habits, discourse, achievements, or emotions.

I understand that beliefs about God’s character are inherently theological. In other words, to portray God in good light to the Hebrew believers is to allow them to connect to God theologically and devotionally. It is to grant them the opportunity to draw closer to God (cf. Heb. 4:16) in reverent worship and to run the race that is set before them with a sense of urgency. Again, the ethos of God must be correctly portrayed because it influences and “determines a great deal about how the message (λόγος) is read or heard and what response

(πάθος) there is” (Bowald 2010:173). Bowald goes further and define ethos as the character of the speaker as embodied in the act of speaking. Λόγος is the shape of the speech itself, whereas πάθος is the response produced in the hearers.

Peeler points out that in Hebrews chapters 1 and 3 “the first thing the readers learn from Hebrews is that God speaks, then the first words that God speaks define him as a Father. In fact, scholars of Hebrews recognize that Hebrews fundamentally depends on Father-Son complementarity to describe the relationship between God and Jesus” (Peeler 2007:4). The writer applies the same characteristics of the ethos of God in chapter three. God is explicitly characterized as a builder (Heb. 3:4), but his paternal nature is not far from view. Moses and Christ do not just differ in their degrees of faithfulness, but also in their roles. Moses is faithful as a servant, but Christ is a Son (Heb. 3:5-6). It seems then that God in view is not just the builder of a structure, but of a household, as a father. The picture is one of God’s tangible involvements in the household who shares the management of the household with the Son (Peeler 2007:6).

### **3.4.1 HEBREWS 2:1-4: Interpreting the ethos of God**

Thompson (2012:370) suggests the appeal to Scripture appears regularly in the argument of Hebrews to support the *synkrisis* and reinforces the author’s emphasis on the God who speaks. Scripture is the voice of God (Heb. 1:5-13; 7:21; 8:8; 10:37-38; 12:5; 13:5-6), of the Son (Heb. 2:12-13; 10:5-8), and of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7; 10:15). Through it the community now hears the divine voice that addresses the exalted Son (cf. Heb. 5:5-6). After God has finished speaking in chapter 1 we still hear the message of salvation which God has spoken through Christ who has his character. The catena of Scripture quotations reached its climax in the message that was conveyed through angels to Moses, but we received a better revelation of salvation in Christ. The writer makes use of a lesser-greater persuasive argument to introduce his warning message. It is suggested that he makes use of a scaring<sup>29</sup> tactic to dissuade the believers from drifting away from the salvation in

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<sup>29</sup>The appeal to fear is a common mode of argumentation in Hebrews (Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:25-29). Based on the *synkrisis*, the author indicates that the greater salvation bears the greater responsibility and results in

Christ: “For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:2-4). The possibility that the writer could have reached the desired goal by threatening the audience with “a just punishment” is quite plausible. However, I am convinced that he appealed to their reason by alluding to the character of God and Christ (the Lord) and the first apostles. Kenney (1991:37-8, 40 cited in Bowald 2010:174) explains that “Ethos in Aristotle means ‘character’, especially ‘moral character’ and ... is regarded as an attribute of a person, not of a speech.”. In chapter 1 the speech acts of God are centre stage, but here in chapter 2 there is a movement away from the speech as such to the moral character of the One who announced the better revelation and the One who testified<sup>30</sup> to the redemptive work of Christ. Here we see how character becomes the “controlling factor in persuasion” (Bowald 2010:174, referring to Aristotle), not fear that is instilled in the believers.

The parallel text in Heb. 6:4-6 communicates the same importance of character, gift, and the responsibility of the beneficiary towards the benefactor. The writer presents this group of believers as people who have received the gifts of God, who benefitted by God’s generosity (God’s “grace”, meaning God’s favourable disposition to give benefits). For Emmrich (2003:67) the distributions of the Holy Spirit appear to be spiritual gifts that resolve around utterance and guidance. He indicates that such gifts would certainly include

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greater punishment for those who disregard their greater possession. The appeal to fear was also a common means of persuasion in antiquity. It is what the rhetoricians call *deinosis*, the attempt to shock the audience into listening to the speaker’s message (Quintilian, Inst.6.2.24 in Thompson 2012). See also (Nongbri 2003:274-278). The claim which the writer makes on the Hebrews is by way of *Argumenta* (cf. Heb. 3:7). In Heb.2:1 it indicates the relationship between the argument and the claim. Consistent with *synkrisis*, the author makes the *a fortiori* argument to support his claim. The *a fortiori* argument is one of the common features in Hebrews. The author employs the first-class conditional sentence here (cf. Heb. 12:25-27) to speak of the consequences of disobedience.

<sup>30</sup> The Scriptural citations in Hebrews are introduced by words expressing diction. Markus Barth indicates that the author of Hebrews ... refers what “He says,” “is saying”, “said”, or what “is said” (Heb.1:6; 2:12; 1:5; 3:15, etc.); also, verbs “testify”, “swear”, “reveal”, “blame”, “converse”, “command”, “promise” are used (cited in Emmrich 2003: 27).

“prophecy, tongues and guidance and perhaps some form of inner enlightenment (wisdom)”. In their reception of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent gifts they must have reflected somehow on the goodness of the character of the One giving the gifts. deSilva (1999:47) refers to Seneca who explained that accepting a gift means accepting an obligation to the giver at the same time; the giving of a gift (benefit) is a social act, it wins the goodwill of someone, it lays someone under obligation. The audience became “sharers of the Holy Spirit” which refers to one of the principal benefactions of God for the early church. The gift of the Holy Spirit as part of the experience of conversion was prominent in early Christian culture. So, the audience in Heb. 2:1-4 fell under the moral obligations to show love, respect, and adoration to the Giver of gifts. deSilva (1999:232) continues to engage Seneca to explain this social phenomenon that was part of the First Century cultural context both inside the Hebrew church and the Roman public in which they were living:

The purpose of this lengthy inquiry of Seneca is to show that the author of Hebrews moves in a social ethos in which recipients of benefactions are led to act with one set of considerations in view (namely, the importance of maintaining a response of gratitude and avoiding any course which would show ingratitude toward a patron) while benefactors are let to act with another set of considerations in view (with an emphasis on exercising generosity and magnanimity).

The audience of Hebrews listened to the voice of the Spirit who took on the character of God, or as in the case of Ellingworth (cited in Emmrich 2003) who God used as the dispenser of gifts. Their response of faithfulness was not in the fact that they faced possible fear and dread if they drift away and neglect such a great salvation, which to our author is “the deliverance and reward that awaits the faithful at the return of Christ” and in which they can participate now, but in their love and gratitude for God and the Spirit that makes it all possible.

For Seneca, accepting a gift means accepting an obligation to the giver at the same time; the giving of a gift (benefit) is a social act – it wins the goodwill of someone, it lays someone under obligation (deSilva 1999:46). Here the goodwill of the Holy Spirit as giver of gifts is juxtaposed against the obligation of the church to revere God. The writer also indicates that God identifies God self as the patron and benefactor of the wilderness

generation, a benefactor who has fully demonstrated trustworthiness and ability to provide for his people (cf. deSilva 1999:453 and Hebrews 3:9, “they saw my works”). The wilderness generation serves as a reminder to the Hebrew church of a people that were not venerating God for the gifts he gave during their wilderness trek.

They became “sharers of the Holy Spirit” which refers to one of the principal benefactions of God for the early church. In other words, the reception of the Holy Spirit as gift from God as part of the experience of conversion was prominent in early Christian culture. The Spirit continues to distribute this gift (χαρις) to the church and the church venerates him as the Gracious Benefactor. They respond in love to his character. I submit that God the Spirit’s benevolent character as Giver of gifts outweighs his need for retribution. His mercy precedes his judgement.

### **3.5. THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT IN HEBREWS 3:7-11**

#### ***3.5.1 Exegetical notes***

Chapter three starts off with Jesus’ superiority over Moses and Aaron, the two proponents of the Mosaic covenant. Both were brothers from the tribe of Levi. This leads us into the practical discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek in Heb. 4:14-7:28.

The writer makes use of two important rabbinical concepts 1) “the house of God,” in Heb.3:1-6 (cf. Num. 12:7-8; II Samuel 7) and 2) the “rest of God” in Heb. 3:7-4:13 (cf. Ps. 95:7-11) to contrast Moses and Jesus in the following way:

<b>Moses</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
1. Moses was part of God’s house	Jesus was the builder of the house
2. Moses is a servant in the house	Jesus is a family member (Son)
3. Moses failed to bring in God’s rest	Jesus brought the eternal rest

Theologically, this literary unit is a warning to be obedient and faithful. Jesus was obedient and faithful, but the Israelites were not. The Mosaic covenant had consequences for disobedience which were severe. How much more terrible are the consequences of rejecting or violating the New Covenant? (cf. Heb. 2:1-4; Utley 1996 n.p.)

The believers are described as “partakers (μέτοχος) of a heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1) by means of their position in Christ. They are called to an eternal salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). Through this calling we serve the body of Christ through spiritual gifts (cf. Heb. 2:4 and 1 Cor. 12:7,11). The two titles *ἀπόστολος* (one who is commissioned as an authoritative representative) and *ἀρχιερέα* (accusative of *ἀρχιερεύς* – high priest<sup>31</sup>) deal with Jesus’ superiority over Moses as official messenger and Aaron as the Levitical high priest. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with Jesus’ superiority over Aaron. According to Utley (1996 n.p.) *ἀπόστολος* may relate to both angels sent by God to serve those being saved (cf. 1:14) and to Jesus sent by God to redeem those who are being saved (cf. John 3:17). This is the only place in the NT that Jesus is called “the Apostle” although John uses the verb over and over to refer to Him being “sent” from the Father (cf. John 3:17,34; 5:36,38; 6:29,57; see also Utley 1996 n.p.).

Moses served in the house of God as a servant while Jesus was “a son”. God called Moses to serve, but Jesus was sent from heaven. Jesus is called *ἀρχιερεύς* only in Hebrews. The writer takes an extensive rabbinical argumentation to convince first century Jews that Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, really was a priest. The Dead Sea Scrolls community expected two Messiahs, one royal (tribe of Judah) and one priestly (tribe of Levi, cf. Psalm 110; Zechariah 3-4 cf. Utley 1996 n.p.).

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998: 521

### Heb. 3:7 GNT/ NRVS

Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ  
ἅγιον· Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς  
αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε,

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit  
says,  
'Today, if you hear his voice...'

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice ...", verses 7-11ff are a warning passage quoted from the Septuagint of Ps.95:7-11, which is a warning to Israel during the wilderness wandering, against unbelief. Hebrews 3:17 through 4:13 is based on an exposition of this passage. This is a third-class conditional sentence (Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ, κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). They had the opportunity to see and hear (cf. Heb.3:9) but wilfully refused and hardened their hearts (cf. Utley 1996 n.p.). "Hearing his voice" implies that the whole book is the word of God to the pilgrims (cf. Heb.13:22). Emmrich (2003:86) comments the following concerning this passage:

The unfaithfulness of Israel in the wilderness becomes the paradigm that the addressees must seek to avoid or conforming to ... and, by way of analogy, the readers of Hebrews not only failed to hear God's voice and thus were oblivious of his ways (Heb. 3:10b), but also that they are said to have had ample exposure to *τὰ ἔργα θεοῦ* ("the works of God").

The heart of the first three warning passages of Hebrews is built on the pattern of the exodus. For the audience to avoid the same mistake of falling away from God they must avoid three pitfalls: 1) to rebel (*παρεπίκραναν*) Heb. 3:16, 2) "to sin" (*ἁμαρτάνειν*) and 3) "to disobey" (*ἀπειθεῖν*)<sup>32</sup>. Israel refused to enter the rest because of their unbelief (cf. Heb. 3:17). If the church of Hebrews rebels, sins and disobeys God, it will fall to the same fate as the wilderness generation. Therefore, it is extremely important to listen to what the Spirit says.

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<sup>32</sup> See an elaboration of these three pitfalls in Emmrich 2003: 87

The writer regards the words of Scripture in the truest sense as the words of the Holy Spirit. We concluded that these specific texts are contemporary in application to the original audience. The work of Emmrich (2002:57-66) brings more to light. Here it is argued that the Holy Spirit speaks in an ongoing sense. “So as the Holy Spirit says ...” (Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον<sup>33</sup>) – here the conjunction διό (therefore) introducing the quotation looks backward as well as forward (Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:522). Λέγει – is the present indicative active of λέγω, “to say” – the Spirit has a “presentness” in Hebrews (Emmrich 2002:57) through whom God speaks as his agent of speech. The Spirit takes the words of Moses and David who have spoken in the past and present it in the present context of Heb. 3:7-11 as the viva vox (Emmrich 2002:57). Consequently, the Spirit speaks the “new” word in its newer setting that makes it different, i.e., not “to pay attention”. Jupp (2013 n.p.) indicates that the Spirit can take an old text, modify it slightly, communicate it afresh, while at the same time, remain faithful to the original text. In Heb. 10:15 the same apply when the Spirit speaks in the present tense. Schenck (2009:335) puts it as follows: The Holy Spirit speaking is God speaking (or perhaps breathing) through the text in the present time. Treier (2009:337) also refers to the “speech” verbs in Heb. 3:7-4:13. He points out that the verbs for divine speaking in Heb. 3:7-4:13 vary between present, perfect, imperfect, and even aorist in Heb. 3:18. It indicates a divine address through the text: God is speaking (Heb. 12:25) afresh “today”.

Still on the theme of God’s speaking in Hebrews, it is remarkable how the writer uses connection phrases for God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit as subject. He allocates 27 out of 31 introductory formulae to the Trinity. It means that a person of the Trinity in 34 from 38 direct quotations in Hebrews is the subject and subsequently the Speaker (Coetsee & Jordaan 2015:5). Coetsee & Jordaan’s (2015:6) research indicates that all three direct introductory formulas regarding the Holy Spirit as subject in Hebrews originally has God as subject in the OT. It points out that the writer of Hebrews views God and the Spirit as the same Speaker (cf. Schenck 2009:334-335).

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<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 3:7

Coetsee and Jordaan (2015:7) confirm the following findings from their study:

- *God praat die meeste van die kere met die Seun;*
- *Die Seun praat uitsluitlik met God; en*
- *Die Heilige Gees praat nie met God óf die Seun nie (36% van sy spraak is aan Hom gerig), maar nie een keer met die Heilige Gees nie;*
- *Dat die Seun glad nie met die Skrywer of die hoorders praat nie;*
- *Die Heilige Gees uitsluitlik met die Skrywer of die hoorders praat; en*
- *Die Skrywer én die hoorders slegs één keer praat, en dan met God.*
- *Dit blyk dat die Gees se monoloog bedoel is om die woorde van God (onder andere die dialoog tussen God en die Seun) dinamies en relevant aan die hoorders in hulle konkrete situasie oor te dra (cf. Hughes 1977:145; Schenck 2009:334 in Coetsee & Jordaan 2015:7).*

Furthermore, Coetsee & Jordaan came to the following conclusion with regard to:

- 1) *Die Drie-Eenheid: Die afwisseling tussen die verskillende Persone van die Drie-Eenheid as onderwerpe vir die Hebreërskrywer se inleidingsformules maak dit moontlik om te bevestig dat hy al drie Persone as God verkondig (2015:9).*
- 2) *Die monoloog van die Heilige Gees met die Skrywer of die hoorders: In die Ou-Testamentiese aanhalings waarby die inleidingsformule die Heilige Gees as Spreker aandui, praat die Heilige Gees uitsluitlik met die Skrywer of die hoorders, en dan uitsluitlik oor hulle verantwoordelikheid om korrek op God se voortreflike openbaring in Christus te reageer. Dit blyk dat die Heilige Gees se monoloog bedoel is om die woorde van God dinamies en relevant aan die hoorders in hulle konkrete situasie oor te dra (2015:10).*

### **3.6 THE SPIRIT INSPIRING AND INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE**

Allen (2009:54) concurs with Lindars that the Spirit speaking Scripture is a characteristic feature of Hebrews. In the texts where the Spirit speaks we can agree that the Spirit voices the text that is expounded by the author (Allan 2009:54). The same scriptures are spoken by God in different contexts in Heb. 8:8-12 and 4:3. Hughes on the other hand maintains

that “the message of scripture is the voice of the Holy Spirit” (Hughes 1977:141). Through the Spirit in Hebrews we receive the revelation of the efficiency of the New Covenant. He reveals meaning to the reader and operates more than just an “agent” of God within the text as some scholars insist (cf. Lindars 1991:57).

In the first few lines of the book we hear how God addresses us and how he initiates the conversation between himself and the Son (Heb.1:1-4). God not only addresses the Son, but all who receive the Son as the final revelation of his love and grace. The writer continues with various interpretive modes such as allegorical interpretation to translate the message/conversation to the original audience and us as the modern readers. Schenck (2009:332) points out how the Holy Spirit becomes the “addresser” (or the voice) behind allegorical meaning such as in Heb. 9:8-9:

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent is still standing. This is a symbol of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper (NRSV).

Here the Holy Spirit teaches that unconstrained access to God’s presence was not possible under the Old Covenant. It is only possible when the inward conscience of a person was cleansed. The writer conceives of the words spoken here as a message in the form of a parable made clear by the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ (Schenck 2009:333). In other words, the Spirit reveals the meaning of the text beyond literal words. Schenck’s argument is that as “addresser” behind the message, the Holy Spirit speaks also a contemporary meaning to the audience (2009:334). An example will demonstrate it perhaps a little better: The words of Psalm 95:7-11 in Heb. 3:7 is presented to us in an innovative way (“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘*Today, if you hear his voice,*’”). Against the backdrop of Ps. 95:7-11: “For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. *O that today you would listen to his voice!*”<sup>34</sup>, the words of God is re-appropriated for the original and modern readers.

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<sup>34</sup> Emphasis mine

Jeremiah 31:33-34 in Hebrews 8:10-13 may serve as another example where the Holy Spirit witnesses to the truth of the New Covenant:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The parallel verse in Heb. 10:16-17 with a shorter citation serves the same function:

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. He also adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” (NRSV)

Hughes (1977:403) submits with foregone conclusion:

The introductory affirmation that the “Holy Spirit also bear witness to us ... saying,” certainly attests his (the writer’s—J. A) belief in the divine inspiration of Jeremiah’s prophecy; indeed, that the Holy Spirit and Yahweh are one is plainly implied by the equation of what the Holy Spirit says with what the Lord (in the Hebrew, Yahweh) says. This teaching coincides with the declaration of 2 Peter 1:21 that the prophets were men moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke from God.

The OT citations become a contemporary revelation of truth for the audience. I agree that the biblical text was not originally written to contemporary readers – that is why the writer of Hebrews allows a non-literal tendency when the Holy Spirit speaks (cf. Schenck 2009:334). I noted earlier that the author’s reference shifts from God being speaker (or addresser) to the Holy Spirit as addresser in the examples above. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit speaks on behalf of God (cf. Jupp 2013 n.p.). Scripture in Hebrews speak of realities and promises that have come to its fullest expression to the work of God in Christ (cf. Achtemeier et al. 2001:473). Through the Holy Spirit Scriptures become present and living testimonies of God’s work. Often it reflects as the direct speech of God. The famous text on the value of God’s word is contained in Heb. 4:12 “Indeed, the word of God is living

and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”. Whether the writer refers to the written or spoken word of God is not clear, however in its ambiguity we find Hebrews’ key presupposition: God speaks through his word (Achtmeier et al. 2001:474, also Holladay Carl 2005:452).

### 3.6.1 *The Spirit as illuminator*

The illuminative work of the Spirit can best be understood when we look at the specific scriptural reference in its context–

Διὸ ἀφέντες τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ  
λόγον ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα, μὴ  
πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι μετανοίας  
ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων, καὶ πίστεως ἐπὶ θεόν,  
2 βαπτισμῶν διδαχὴν ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν,  
ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν καὶ κρίματος αἰωνίου.

3 καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσομεν ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπη ὁ  
θεός.

4 Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας  
γευσασμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου  
καὶ μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου

5 καὶ καλὸν γευσασμένους θεοῦ ῥῆμα  
δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος,

6 καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς  
μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν  
τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

1 Therefore, let us go on toward perfection,  
leaving behind the basic teaching about  
Christ, and not laying again the foundation:  
repentance from dead works and faith  
toward God,

2 instructions about baptisms, laying on of  
hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal  
judgment.

3 And we will do this, if God permits.

4 For it is impossible to restore again to  
repentance those who have once been  
enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly  
gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit,  
5 and have tasted the goodness of the word  
of God and the powers of the age to come,  
6 and then have fallen away, since on their  
own they are crucifying again the Son of  
God and are holding him up to contempt.

#### **Heb. 6:1-4.**

Davis (2008:757) reasons that it is difficult, if not impossible, to come to this passage with a clean slate and not allow other scriptures and one's theological history dictates the interpretation. This specific passage in Hebrews (6:4-6) is one of, if not the most difficult passage in the NT to expound and exegete faithfully without inferring one's theological agenda on the text.

Guthrie summarises the scholarly interpretations using six categories: (1) Hypothetical audience: there is no audience in mind because the sin involved cannot actually be committed. (2) Pre-conversion Jew: these are Jews who have associated themselves with the Christian community but have not made a commitment to Christ. (3) Covenant community: it is the community that God is rejecting, not individuals. (4) True believer under judgment: these are Christians who are facing God's judgment but cannot lose their salvation. (5) Phenomenological true believer: the author is speaking to Christians who can lose, or have lost, their salvation. (6) Phenomenological unbeliever: the audience appears to be Christians but is not.

### **3.6.2 Exegetical notes on Hebrews 6:4-6**

#### **3.6.2.1 *Background and context***

Kistemaker (1984:152) remarks that instead of teaching the elementary truths of God's Word once more (cf. Heb. 5:12), the author urges his readers to go beyond these truths. We understand them not to be ignorant of the elementary teachings of the Christian faith. The readers need to be encouraged to progress in their knowledge of the faith. He is willing to review the basic teaching about Christ so that they are ready to proceed to maturity. The author moves from the explanation in terms of Christ's priesthood and what he learned, "obedience through what he suffered". Christ was made perfect and he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Up to this point when he explained, "God designated him a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek," the author paused himself, indicating, "about this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding" (cf. Heb.5:8-11). His audience did not progress beyond the point of being infants in their relationship with Christ.

The warnings of Heb. 6:1-12 must be connected to the previous warnings passages in Heb. 2:1 where he warns them not to drift away and not giving sufficient attention to the greater salvation that they received through the Son. Hebrews 3:12-19 bespeaks the awful consequences of wilful unbelief and disobedience which Israel suffered in the wilderness. Here in Heb. 5:11-14 they must be careful of remaining immature believers, “for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God” (cf. Heb. 5:12). The writer insists, “Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” It is clear that the list of doctrines relates to issues that were shared by Judaism and Christianity (cf. Bruce 1990:139). However, they are primarily Jewish (i.e., washings and laying on of hands). It is also indicative to the extent that the basic Jewish doctrines were used to establish foundational teaching for Christianity.

### ***3.6.2.2 OT background of Heb. 6:4-6***

The author’s primary “intertextual” vigour is the narrative accounts from Exodus and Numbers 13-14, overlaid with the list from Nehemiah 9 and Psalms which recount what God did on behalf of his people (Mathewson 1999:222). The writer’s language in Heb. 6:4-6 is coloured by OT references by means of allusions and echoes. It also echoes from Heb. 3:7-4:13 into Heb. 6:4-6. Given the importance of the wilderness generation as a model for the writer, Mathewson (1999:215) holds up that the most significant parallel is the light that God provided for the wilderness generation in the desert. Exodus 13:21, God provided them with a pillar of fire to enlighten their way at night. The author’s reference to “enlightenment” here probably corresponds to Heb. 10:26; “we have received knowledge of the truth” (cf. Heb. 10: 32 “But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings ...). Here the believers (spiritually regenerated), in both Heb. 6:4 and Heb. 10:32 are being acted on (passive voice) rather than enlightening themselves. Therefore, it seems best to take the spiritual enlightenment described here as a reference to the regenerating work of the Spirit experienced by all the true believers

(Gleason 1998:76). This parallels the cloud by day and the fire-by-night that marked the beginning of Israel's exodus from Egypt. These luminous guides are consistently listed among the spiritual benefits enjoyed by the Exodus generation.

Hebrews 6:4 sustains the continuous allusion to the experience of God's people in the wilderness. According to Neh. 9:20, part of the experience of the people as they wandered in the wilderness was the reception of the gift of God's Spirit to instruct them. Num. 11:16-29 is also a text which contains several references to God's Spirit which rests upon seventy elders of the covenant people. God assures Moses that he will not have to carry the burden of the people alone (v.17). Accordingly, God will take the Spirit which rests upon Moses and place it upon the seventy elders of Israel who afterward prophesied. In Isa 63:11c, God set his Holy Spirit among the people in the days of Moses, most likely a reminiscence of the incident in Numbers 11. The Holy Spirit in Heb. 6:4, then, has been anchored in the OT concept of God's provision of the Holy Spirit for the wilderness generation (Mathewson 1999:217). The phrase "having tasted the heavenly gift"— which occurs only here in the NT, would have recalled the manna which God provided from heaven for his people during their sojourn in the wilderness. "From heaven," suggests that the bread is a divine gift (Mathewson 1999:216). The usage in the epistle for the word "taste" means more specifically to experience something fully. For example, it is used in Hebrews 2:9 to refer to Jesus' death: "that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone". Jesus did more than merely sample death. He vividly experienced its reality (Gleason 1998:76-77). In the desert, they fully experienced God's promise to sustain their lives by daily eating manna. In a similar manner, Jesus Christ compared himself to manna by referring to himself as the "bread of life".

The readers of Hebrews have experienced the work of the Spirit in their midst, perhaps more specifically with reference to the gift of prophecy (cf. Num.11:26) and the "sign and wonders" which accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel and the in-breaking of the age to come (cf. Heb.2:4; 6:5b).

### **3.6.2.3 *Instruction on baptisms***

The first phase in the believer's instruction is the teaching concerning baptism (Stedman 1992:66). Remarkably enough, the writer uses not the common Greek word for baptism (*βάπτισμα*) but rather the term *βαπτισμός* (washing: Mark 7:4; Heb. 9:10). Furthermore, the word is in the genitive plural *βαπτισμών* which signifies "the act alone," whereas *βάπτισμα* is the "act with the result." Both Bruce (1990:141) and Stedman (1992:66) concur that *βαπτισμών* is a Jewish term (cf. Harvey 2004:697). The expression in the plural probably expresses a contrast between Christian Baptism and all other religious washings known to the readers (cf. France 2006:81). The point the writer wishes to make is that baptism is an initiatory ceremony and must not be regarded as fulfilling all that a Christian is expected to know or do.

### **3.6.2.4 *Laying on of hands***

The laying on of hands was widely practiced in the early church, sometimes for imparting the Holy Spirit (Act 8:17), sometimes for healing (Acts 28:8) and sometimes for ordaining or commissioning (Acts 13:3). In the OT, the laying on of hands marked a blessing or consecration, including commissioning for God's service (Num. 27:18-23), but also on the sacrificial animals as the mark of identification (France 2006:81). The readers were quite familiar with these images. Bruce (1990:142) confirms that the writer has most likely the impartation of the Holy Spirit in mind.

### **3.6.2.5 *Resurrection of the dead***

The resurrection was already known in OT times. In the Gospels, the resurrection was also known to all the Jewish groups. Jesus taught about the resurrection by claiming it for himself: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John. 11:25). However, France (2006:82) confirms that the resurrection that the writer has in mind is not that of Jesus but rather that of dead people in general.

Macky (2012:98) suggests that this passage is occupying a central place in the warnings section of Hebrews, both rhetorically and structurally. It is a string of eschatological experiences the recipients are said to have enjoyed: they have “been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:4-5). Macky (2012:98) further explains enlightenment commonly denotes the initial effect of conversion, representing the bestowal of a heavenly perspective, and/or a heightened understanding of divine purposes. Enlightenment can be constitutive of identity, as those divinely illumined are characterized as “children of light” (Eph. 5:8-14).

### ***3.6.2.6 Those who have once been enlightened***

The list of supernatural experiences in Heb. 6:4-5 is arranged in a string of four participial phrases (φωτισθέντας, γευσάμενους, γενηθέντας, γευσάμενους).

The term “enlightened” is used figuratively in the NT in the sense of “to reveal,” “to instruct”, and “to illuminate”. In the passive voice, as here, it has the force of “to be instructed” or “to be illumined”, principally by God and/or His word (Compton 1996:148). It is often assumed that the expression carries a connotation that is either equivalent to or associated with regeneration. It plainly means an intellectual understanding of God’s redemptive actions. Illumination is not receiving of new revelation, but a work inside of us that qualifies us to hold on to and to love the revelation God through the biblical text has set before us as we hear and read Scriptures in the community of faith. Here in Hebrews we see how the writer explained the OT so that his hearers can come to maturity. The Spirit uses Scripture to deepen our walk with God, to strengthen our obedience, and to conform us more fully to Jesus Christ. The Spirit makes Scripture to come alive, helps us magnify God better, deepens our heart understanding, and challenges us to venture out in faith. The Spirit adapts Scripture to our contemporary needs (cf. Pinncock 1993:496).

From the second century to the present, writers have associated the verb “enlightened” with baptism. In the broader context of the passage, the term *baptisms* do appear in Heb. 6:2. After careful study one observes that the three participles which follow are in apposition to

this first participle, supporting and explaining its meaning: “who have also tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted both the good word of God and the powers to come”. Cockerill (2012:loc.3166) maintains the final participle, at the beginning of v. 6, stands in opposition to the others, “and who have fallen away”. “Those who have once been enlightened” is a reference to conversion or regeneration as indicated above. He additionally points out that Eph. 1:18 speak of spiritual enlightenment, and the term was used in the second century as a description of baptism. The aorist tense and the qualifying “once” affirm the definitive nature of the way those described have experienced divine enlightenment. “Once” anticipates the impossibility of the apostate’s re-conversion by hinting at the unrepeatability of this event (Cockrill 2012:loc.3177). This term echoes in the reading of the participles that follows and highlighting the reality and finality of the experiences described (expounded below).

Wuest (2015 n.p.) explains that “once” is literally “once for all,” and is used of that which is so done as to be of perpetual validity, and never needs repetition. That means that as these believers listened to the message of the NT, the Holy Spirit enlightened their minds and hearts to clearly understand it (Wuest 2015 n.p.). The work of the Spirit regarding their understanding of NT truth had been so detailed that it needed never to be repeated for the purpose of making the truth clear to them. In addition to his argument, Wuest explains ἅπαξ (once) to mean “literally once or one time.” It is used so describe a simple numerical occurrence of once. It can also be used to convey the sense of something done uniquely and thus means once for all (Wuest 2015 n.p.). That which is accomplish is sufficient and need not be repeated (cf. Hebrews 9:28).

The finality of the process of “illumination” brought an array of heavenly blessings to the group of believers. The next three participles can describe nothing less than the blessings experienced by the converted. By recounting what these people have “tasted,” the first and third participle frames the central and most important affirmation: they “have become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Cockerill 2012:loc.3177). The writer has previously confirmed that his hearers experienced the Holy Spirit at their conversion (Heb. 2:4).

Hebrews bears witness to the common NT affirmation that salvation comes to those who are “partakers of Christ” (Heb. 3:14) through the indwelling of the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9).

Illumination<sup>35</sup> is a lifelong ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church which starts before conversion with a growing grasp of the truth about Jesus and a growing sense of being measured and exposed by it. Jesus said that the Spirit would “convict the world” of the sin of not believing in him, of the fact that he was in the right with God the Father and of the reality of judgment both here and hereafter (cf. John 16:8-11).

### ***3.6.2.7 And have tasted the heavenly gift***

Compton (1996:148) put forward that tasting the heavenly gift is similar to the previous construction, this clause and its counterpart in v.5 (“and have tasted the good word of God and the power of the age to come”) are commonly interpreted as synonyms for salvation. Thus, “to taste the heavenly gift” means “to participate in the gospel and its subsequent blessings”. Its only other use in Hebrews is in 2:9, where it describes Christ tasting death for every man. Clearly, the meaning there is “to experience fully” (Compton 1996:150). The metaphor “taste” is important because it demonstrates that those described have not just been taught about these realities but have truly experienced them. The writer highlights the greatness of their spiritual privilege by drawing on both spatial and temporal imagery – “the heavenly gift” and “the powers of the coming age”. In between he affirms that they have tasted “the good word of God” (Cockrill 2012:loc.3177). “The heavenly gift” can be nothing less than God’s gift of “such a great salvation” in Christ and the reception of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 2:3). This gift comes from heaven (cf. Heb. 3:1) and gives God’s people entrance to the divine presence. For Cockrill, the “Gift” underscores the divine generosity. The “good word of God” by which the worlds were created (cf. Heb. 11:3) is the same word that has revealed God’s great gift of salvation (cf. Heb. 1:1-4). Stedman

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<sup>35</sup> Enlightenment can also refer to the Spirit’s anointing. He illumines a believer’s mind, giving understanding and personal experience of God’s Word so that he commits himself wholeheartedly to the truth of the gospel of Christ

The verb enlightened also has other meanings. The author uses the word again in Heb.10:32, where the expression seems to be synonymous with “knowledge of the truth” (cf. Heb10:26).

(1992:73) indicates that the gift can be the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:4) or Jesus himself (John 4:10; 2 Cor. 9:15), since both come from heaven. The observation of Stedman confirms the fact that the Spirit is responsible for preparing the hearts of the audience to become followers and partakers of Christ. The Spirit brought them to light to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus through the apostles' preaching and the testimony of God the Father, Christ, and the Spirit (Heb. 2:3-4). For Allen (2009:58) tasting the heavenly gift (Heb. 6:4), becoming a partaker of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4) and tasting the power of the age to come (Heb. 6:5), all form part of the conversion moment. Subsequently, the heavenly gift (Heb. 6:4) itself is likely a synonym for the Spirit.

In summation, the Spirit according to Allen (2009:58) becomes the evidence that accompanies or even testifies to the community's enlightenment. The designation of the gift as heavenly locates reception of the Spirit in eternal, true, heavenly dimension so loved by Hebrews and so critical to its doctrinal exposition. Those who have received this heavenly Spirit are, eschatologically speaking, now participants in the new age (cf. Heb. 6:5). The believers had learned to listen to the Spirit speaking to them in their context as they are partakers of the new age.

#### ***3.6.2.8 And have become partakers (μέτοχοι) of the Holy Spirit***

Compton (1996:152) suggests as with the previous constructions that many argue that this clause refers to the regenerating or indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The interpretation is based on similar uses in Hebrews of constructions with "partake". The most recurrent example is Heb. 3:14. There the expression "partakers of Christ" is found where the construction clearly refers to those who are saved, those who partake of Christ's saving activity (cf. Compton 1996:152). Consequently, the corresponding phrase "partakers of God's Spirit" in 6:4 must have a similar sense. To partake of the Holy Spirit means to participate in the saving ministry of God's Spirit.

This third characteristic appears practically decisive that these are true Christians. Stedman (1992:66) refers to Paul's admonition "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does

not belong to Christ”, as definite marker of the presence of the Spirit as the seal of a regenerated life. We must remember that the writer of Hebrews never uses the word ἀρραβών when he refers to the Holy Spirit. The translation “shared” implies something done in company with others and may well be linked with the “laying on of hands” referred to in Heb. 6:2 (Kistemaker 1984:159).

Compton (1996:153) maintains that “partakers of a heavenly calling” could refer to those who have heard the gospel, but who have not responded in saving faith. To be partakers of the Holy Spirit could mean to share in his saving activity. But, it could also refer to sharing in some non-salvation activity. This may include a sharing in the general convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, or being the recipient of the Spirit’s miraculous gifts, or purely observing these gifts as practised by others (Compton 1996:153). Tracing the overall message of the NT regarding the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit is unlikely that someone can operate in the gifts of the Spirit without being truly saved. In Acts, we hear Peter rebuking Simon Magus for his intension to “purchase” the gift of God: But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:20-22). Afterward Simon Magus sought repentance. What can be said inevitably is that the believers share in some way in the Spirit’s ministry (cf. Guthrie 1998:225). This phrase also involves sharing with the redeemed community the indwelling Holy Spirit. Reflecting on one’s faith journey takes place within the community. Dunn made the following observation: “not only did they come to experience the gift of salvation – justification which the Spirit brings ... they also received the gift which is the Spirit itself” (in Allen 2009:51-66). Emmrich (2003:85) insists that “partakers of the Holy Spirit” are those who experience Πνεῦμα as the guiding power on their earthly pilgrimage by the way of Spirit-inspired utterances and Spirit-induced wisdom. There is no loose association with the Holy Spirit as others attempt to sustain<sup>36</sup>. They truly became a group of believers whose sharing in the Spirit signifies a

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to footnote on Grudem’s explanation of μετόχους.

genuine experience of God's presence with them on their journey of faith. Emmrich (2003:85) submits this argument as follows:

when we read against the backdrop of the pilgrimage motif, the phrase "partakers of the Holy Spirit" corresponds to God's placing of "Moses' Spirit" on the seventy elders to instruct their contemporaries during the wilderness journey ... these terms in 6:4-5 are "the close relation of these two ideas communicated by the particle τε and their being conditioned by one and the same verb γεύεσθαι ("to taste") is not unintended, and is meant to indicate that the word and works of power goes together in the experience of the readers. Together they signal the breaking-in of the "age to come".

### ***3.6.2.9 And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come***

The expression "tasted" is the same word previously discussed in v.4 "tasted the heavenly gift". Storer (2013:92) suggests that Christ's communicative action in the text is mediated by the Spirit's ongoing inspiration of both the text and reader. Christ's active address in Scripture is described by de Lubac (cited in Storer 2013:92) as a twofold action. On the one hand, the Spirit "expands" Scripture to the reader, and on the other hand, the Spirit "expands" the reader to Scripture. Consequently, the Spirit communicates to the sacred text a limitless potentiality. Hence, we can deduct from this statement that God's word has infallible power and the presence of the Holy Spirit illumines it and therefore allows the believer to taste and partake of the life-changing word of God. Here in Hebrews the Spirit did not merely indicate the word of God. The Spirit immured himself in it, as it were. He lives in it. His breath has always animated it (Storer 2013:93). Christ's presence in the word is powerful (cf. Heb.1:3), it draws the believer to participate in him through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23).

Compton (1996:183) reasons that what must be determined in this verse is the identification of the "word of God" and "the powers of the age to come". In fact, most commentaries see a parallel with Heb. 2:1-4, where a similar sequence is found of hearing the gospel and of witnessing the miracles that accompanied its proclamation. The evidence weighs in favour

of the majority in seeing the same sequence in v.5 as is Heb. 2:1-4 (Compton 1996:183). First, the author of Hebrews uses the phrase “word of God” about God’s activity in creating the universe (Heb. 11:3), also, “He sustains everything by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3), “in giving revelation at Sinai” (Heb.12:19), and “in communicating the gospel through the Son” (cf. Heb. 1:1-2).

### **3.7 CONTEXT AND EXEGESIS OF HEBREWS 9:8, 14-15<sup>37</sup> AND 10: 15-19**

The central section of Hebrews focuses on the high priesthood of Christ (cf. Heb. 7). In Hebrews 8:1, the writer claims: “Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”. We have a high priest that sat down at the “right hand of majesty”, which is again an allusion to Ps.110 which was the core of the exposition of Jesus’ high priestly ministry. The high priest of superior order is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer (cf. Heb. 8:3). The phrase “right hand of majesty” refers to God’s presence in heaven. The sanctuary, the true tabernacle (cf. Heb. 8:2), the place where Jesus performs his high priestly duties is in heaven (cf. τῶν ἁγίων<sup>38</sup>). It is important to observe that for Hebrews serving or ministering is not so much confined to the temple or any era for that matter, but to the OT regulations and rituals of the tabernacle. The writer is indicating the ministerial duties of the high priest by using present tense verbs (Heb. 8: 5; 7:28; 9:6-9, 13, 25; 10:18; 13: 10-11 in Kohlenberger III 2012) to create a “literary presence” that preserved these rituals in written form, and it is therefore true at whatever time someone reads it (cf. Carson 2015:2507). The contrast, according to Ellingworth (1993:399) which the writer produces, is mainly on a place (heaven/earth), and those temporal elements are not prominent in this section. It should be understood that Christ, since his exaltation, is ministering in the immediate presence of

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<sup>37</sup> A thorough exegesis of Hebrews 9:14-15 will be given in chapter 5 of this thesis. Here, I will only indicate its relevance to the context as I elaborate on the passages that deal with Holy Spirit.

<sup>38</sup> The sanctuary of heaven itself (Ellingworth 1993:402)

God (cf. Heb. 8:2). The ministry of the tabernacle was only a type and symbol of the realities of what Jesus accomplished. Consequently, his ministry surpasses that of the Levitical priesthood as substance surpasses shadow (Hayford 2002:1737).

The writer then goes on to quote Jer. 31:31-34. He takes up on the need for a “New Covenant” (Heb. 8:13). In speaking of “a New Covenant”, Christ has made the first one obsolete and what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear. The writer indicates that God found fault with the ministration of the first covenant, implying caringly that human beings cannot keep their side of covenantal condition. Therefore, God has to make the first covenant obsolete through the sacrifice of Jesus. Ellingworth (1993:409) maintains:

The concept of the New Covenant is co-ordinate with that of Christ’s priesthood, and shows that it is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a total re-ordering by God in his dealings with his people. Both here in Hebrews 8:6 ff. and in Hebrews 7:20-22, Jesus’ status in relation to the New Covenant is not arbitrary or accidental; it is divine appointment attested in Scripture.

The section of Hebrews 9:1-10:18 is variously described as the heart of the epistle’s argument<sup>39</sup> (Guthrie 1983:127). The meaning of the ritual (Heb. 9:6-10) reminds readers that there was a special sacredness about the most Holy Place and the Ark of the Covenant. No ordinary Israelite could ever enter the Holy Place where the Menorah, table of showbread and altar of incense stood (Stedman 1992:94). Only the priests went in there daily to perform their duties. Again, not even the priest could enter the most holy place and stand before the Ark of the Covenant. Only the high priest could do so, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The high priest entering the most holy place on Yom Kippur is important for the argument this far because it could take place without blood. The Levitical offerings had to be repeated continually – even the offering of the high priest on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Holy of Holies once a year. This endless

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<sup>39</sup> It is also the thrust of the author’s theological arrangement that focuses on the effectiveness of the Jesus’ sacrifice. Ellingworth (1993:395) also indicates that the author was more concerned with theology of sacrifice, and especially the significance of the Day of Atonement, rather than the liturgy of the daily rites of the annual festivals.

repetition meant that nothing permanent was ever accomplished by the Aaronic priesthood. Bruce (1990:208) mentions at least three reasons why the writer finds it appropriate to state the obvious assumption his readers were alleged to be familiar with:

1. Except for this annual occasion the entrance to the throne room of God was barred for all Israelites, even for the high priest himself. This ritual made it perfectly clear that God could only be approached on his own terms (cf. Carson, et al. 2000:1340).
2. When the high priest gets permission to enter, his entry was safeguarded by sacrificial blood.
3. This sacrificial blood was not finally efficacious, for fresh blood had to be shed and fresh entry made into the holy of holies year by year. Sacrifices were offered that were (literally) “not able to perfect the worshipper’s conscience” (cf. Heb. 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23, see also Carson, et al. 2000:1340 and Guthrie 1998:300). It is only through the blood of Jesus who “provided a superior basis of access by cleansing us from sin, and his offering was ‘once for all’ that access to God was indefinitely opened to us in the future” (cf. Guthrie 1998:301).

These observations by Bruce can only be dealt with if we look at our text of interest in Hebrews 9:8

τοῦτο δηλοῦντος τοῦ πνεύματος  
τοῦ ἁγίου, μήπω πεφανερῶσθαι  
τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν ἔτι τῆς  
πρώτης σκηνῆς ἐχούσης στάσιν,  
SBL GNT

By this the Holy Spirit indicates  
that the way into the sanctuary  
has not yet been disclosed as  
long as the first tent is still  
standing

NRVS

Here the writer puts the Holy Spirit to speech. He is saying that the repeated sacrifices of the Old Covenant were meant by the Holy Spirit to predict a perfect sacrifice that was yet to come, but it could not be apprehended while still relying on the old way of access to God (Stedman 1992:94), or as ἐχούσης στάσιν supposes: “having standing”. Bruce (1990:206) further describes the phrase as “being in existence” or (more appropriately in our context)

“retaining status”. The theological truth is that God desires his people to approach him, but also how we should approach him. The old sacrificial system did not produce the required results. God was and still is a holy God who never changes and we human beings are still morally incapacitated to reach God. Therefore, the whole sacrificial system pointed to a specific time when Christ would come to restore unbroken access to God (cf. Guthrie 1998:302). The old arrangement pictured the new, but the old proved ineffective, for it could not touch the inner, but only the outer life of the believer. The veil that stood before the Most Holy Place constituted a barrier to the presence of God (see also Hagner 1990:130). God is the initial One to determine the basis on which his people will approach him (see point 1 above). The problem was with the permanent effect of the shedded blood of the sacrifice. Only the blood of Jesus was sufficient to bring reconciliation between God and his people (cf. point 3 above).

As far as the tabernacle is concerned, it is not implied that the earthly sanctuary, as material structure, no longer existed; what is implied is that, with Christ’s passing through the heavens (Heb. 4:14) into the presence of God, the earthly structure has lost its sanctuary status (Bruce 1990:206 fn.). The Holy Spirit is preparing something new and something better to come. The old forms and rituals could only cover sins of ignorance. There remains no repentance for wilful, unrepented sin. The Holy Spirit<sup>40</sup> speaks or indicates a new revelation that will enable believers to be cleansed beyond the outer appearances of visible sins but rather deeper in their conscience. The time has come for all God’s people to enter his presence, unrestricted and with confidence (cf. France 2006:114). The present time (*καιρός*) indicates a specific time or event (as in v. 10 “time for the new order”)<sup>41</sup>. France (2006:114) concludes that “the phrase emphasises that the future hope of the OT has now decisively arrived”. With the death (sacrifice) of Christ the veil is torn (maybe a reference to Mark 15:38) “At once the curtain in the temple tore in two from top to bottom”. The

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<sup>40</sup> S. Motyer (2012:226) remarks that some commentators pass over this vital statement blandly with superfluous comments but commends Lane for adding “a claim to a specific insight was not previously available to readers of the Old Testament ... The Holy Spirit disclosed to the writer that, so long as the front compartment of the tabernacle enjoyed cultic status, access to the presence of God was not yet available.”

<sup>41</sup> See R. T France (2006:114) for a detail discussion on “the present time”.

barrier that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies was torn when Christ died. Bruce (1990:209) concludes:

The effective barrier to a man or woman's free access to God is an inward and not a material one; it exists in the conscience. It is only when the conscience is purified that one is set free to approach God without reservation and offer him acceptable service and worship.

Stedman (1992:96) advises to "let the tabernacle and its ritual lose its standing in our eyes. Go on to the reality to which the Holy Spirit is pointing – the full forgiveness of sins of the New Covenant and the resulting intimacy with God".

On the other hand, Allen (2009:60) suggests another way to look at the Spirit's involvement in this text is to look at the linguistic structure of Heb. 9:8. He argues that the Holy Spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου) is set rhetorically alongside the Holy of Holies (τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν) (Allen 2009:60). The Spirit of Holiness is the one who discloses the accessibility or rather inaccessibility of the Way of Holies. Allen (2009:60-61) further remarks that "the one who is holy understands and interprets access to holiness ... the gift of the Holy Spirit is the very means by which the holy "reality" of the former times is made apparent".

### Hebrews 9:14

πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ  
Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ Πνεύματος  
αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν  
ἄμωμον τῷ Θεῷ καθαριεῖ τὴν  
συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν  
ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν Θεῷ  
ζῶντι;

how much more will the blood  
of Christ, who through the  
eternal Spirit offered himself  
without blemish to God, purify  
our conscience from dead works  
to worship the living God

Hebrews 9:11-14 is the "the central thought of the Epistle to the Hebrews", we find a reference to the "eternal Spirit" who enables Christ in His journey (Emmrich 2002:17). The sacrifice of Christ was superior for several reasons: He offered his own blood (Heb. 9:13-22), the offering took place in the heavenly sanctuary rather than in earthly tabernacle (Heb. 9:23-24), and finally, it was an eternal offering (Heb. 9:25-28). Christ did not offer himself to God on his own, but through the Holy Spirit (διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου). Significantly, this

is the only time in the NT that we observe the Holy Spirit's involvement in the atonement (Jupp 2013 n.p. and Emmrich 2002:22-23). Emmrich (2002:32) explains this phrase within its surrounding context and argues that the author of Hebrews draws upon the traditional Jewish view "that linked the office of the high priest with the Holy Spirit". He demonstrates, using the OT and other Jewish literature, how they viewed the Spirit as supporting the high priest "in the execution of his most critical cultic appointment". In other words, it is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus is able to persevere in his task as high priest to secure a better covenant for the people of God.

The author concludes his extended exposition of the superiority and permanence of Christ's high priestly sacrifice by announcing the end of the typological sacrificial system. The NASB translation, "He takes away (*ἀναρῆι*) the first in order to establish the second" (Heb. 10:9), fails to express the destructive force of *ἀναρῆω* (cf. Gleason 2002:109). This word, Gleason maintains, was a technical term in classical Greek, meaning to "kill, do away with, murder, or execute". It shows that the "doing away with" or "losing status or standing" was in effect a deliberate act of God to terminate the former practices.

In Hebrews 10:15-19 the author repeats the citation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 with a shorter variation on the original and the quotation in Hebrews 8. He introduces the citation with "The Holy Spirit also speaks of this by telling us that the Lord said, 'When the time comes, I will make an agreement with them. I will write my laws on their minds and hearts. Then I will forget about their sins and no longer remember their evil deeds.'" (Heb. 10:15-17). Motyer (2012:224) indicates how Grässer explains the impact behind the grammar:

If "the Lord" is the subject of the main verb in the sentence that begins with "For after saying ...," then "the Lord" is also the implied subject of the "saying". "The Lord" is the speaker of this whole scriptural quotation.

The quotation is prophetic in the sense that it started off with an experience of a people that has found forgiveness for the lawlessness and that experience found expression in the Scripture as quoted by the author (cf. Motyer 2012:225). The Spirit directs the whole quotation to witness to the heart of the believers and bring a deep conviction of the

forgiveness of sins (Heb.10:16-17). Motyer (2012:225) confirms that the believers here have come to that assurance that it is by the Holy Spirit's inner witness that they have entered that fulfilment of the promise of forgiveness. They possess the *παρρησία* (confidence) that only people who know that they are forgiven, can have. Their sins are blotted out from God's remembrance as the Old Covenant symbolizes with its annual rituals. Through the witness of the Spirit they entered "perfection" which is inaugurated by the New Covenant (cf. Bruce 1990:248).

The Holy Spirit also testifies (*μαρτυρεῖ*) to us about this. First, he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

**Heb. 10:15-18**

The broader context of Heb. 10:15 can be delineated as follows – when the content of the OT texts which Hebrews attributes to the Holy Spirit is examined, it is found that in Heb. 3:7-19, the context is the first covenant, Moses leading the people out of Egypt and into the promised land; in 9:1-11, the context is the failure of the first covenant; in 10:5-18, the context is the establishment of a New Covenant. Furthermore, in 10:5 it is Christ who speaks through the OT while at 10:15 it is the Holy Spirit; both speak about the need for a New Covenant (cf. Johnson 2006:254; Thomson et al 2013: loc.5208).

The writer repeats the important statement which he made earlier in vv.10-14. The OT sacrificial system has no more standing. It is made obsolete by the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Heb. 8:13 – in speaking of "a New Covenant", he has made the first one obsolete. And

what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.). The Holy Spirit put the words that Jeremiah 31:31–34 in God’s mouth (Burke & Warrington 2014: loc.7108) God will put his laws in the hearts of his people and he will not remember their sins and lawlessness anymore. Our author thereby specifies that the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in both the forgiveness of sins and the institution of the New Covenant between God and his people; in this case, the church in Hebrews. Cockerill (2012:loc.5062) agrees that “by attributing Jeremiah’s New Covenant promise to the Holy Spirit the pastor underscores its divine authority as Spirit-inspired Scripture”. As the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed if the first tent is still standing (Heb. 9:8). The writer emphasises the fact that the Holy Spirit is the one who initiates the Christ- event and there is now free access into God’s presence.

Similarly, in Heb. 3:7, the present tense (λέγω) indicates that the actions are in the “foreground”; the New Covenant and the forgiveness of sin are “current”, not only for the first readers but also whenever and wherever the gospel is declared. Cockrell (2012: loc.5051) asserts that the Holy Spirit “bears witness to us” in the present, through this now-fulfilled Scriptural promise, urgently calling the people of God to faithful action. *Μαρτυρεῖ* stresses the seriousness of the Spirit’s speech. The writer further notes that it was the Holy Spirit who addressed God’s people in Psalm 95 with an urgent warning lest they imitate the disobedient wilderness generation (Heb. 3:7). The Holy Spirit bears “witness” to them now through Jeremiah in anticipation of the following exhortations to join the faithful (Heb. 11:1-12:3) through availing themselves to all Christ has done (Heb. 10:19-39). Jeremiah 31:31-32 recalls the disobedience of the wilderness generation. The benefits of the New Covenant described in Jer. 31:33-34 look forward to a life of Christ-empowered obedience in imitation of those who were faithful (Cockrill 2012: loc.5062).

It is evident in Heb. 3:7-11 and in 10:15-17 that the Holy Spirit’s speaking switches to God. We note that in Hebrews God is the speaking subject together with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the readers “listen in on a dialogue between God and the Son” (Emmrich 2002:32). Here in Heb. 10:15 it remains a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit referencing the benefits of the New Covenant in Christ (cf. Attridge 1989:281, Bruce 1990:247 and Johnson 2012:254). The quotation formula of Heb. 10:15a likewise indicates that what is

following is to be read as a direct address (“to us”, a quotation involving the use of the first person) to the audience (Emmrich 2002:32). The case of Heb. 13:5, Emmrich (2002:32) maintains that we can discern the author’s tendency to have direct speech to the audience delivered by the Holy Spirit (via scriptural quotations). The Holy Spirit as orator and prophetic voice becomes clearer to the readers. The message of Jeremiah becomes relevant to the first audience but also to the church today when the Holy Spirit omits certain words and phrases from the original prophecy. Gundry (2011: loc.1571) indicates some of the most important changes between the two quotations of the Jeremiah text as follows:

The quotation of Jeremiah 31:33-34 repeats in part, and with some changes, the quotation in 8:8-12. This repetition adds emphasis to Jeremiah’s prophecy. In line with “to us” and in comparison, with the earlier quotation, several substitutions and omissions make the prophecy more applicable to Christians:

The substitution of forgiveness in place of propitiation (8:12). By reversing the order of “their mind” and “their hearts” (so 8:10), the author gets their mind as well as their hearts inscribed with the Lord’s laws, and their hearts as well as their mind given the Lord’s laws. The addition of “their lawlessness” to “their sins” as another object of the Lord’s non-remembering balances “giving my laws onto their hearts”, and the substitution of “onto their hearts” for “into their mind” makes “giving” synonymous with “inscribe”.

In the introductory formulae, Hebrews ascribes Psalm 95:7–11 and Jeremiah 31:31–34 to the agency of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere in the NT, when the Spirit is linked to an OT text it is always as the “Spirit of prophecy” speaking through a human agent. It is here in Hebrews that we become familiar with the Holy Spirit citing OT texts.

Burke & Warrington (2014:loc.7135) observe the following:

Given that he (the author- J.A.) was not casual in his use of the OT, it can only be assumed that our author felt comfortable in referring to the Holy Spirit as God. His use of the phrase “Holy Spirit” was distinct from the rabbinic usage current at the time. It was not a circumlocution to avoid any hint of anthropomorphism, since elsewhere Hebrews does not hesitate to say that God speaks directly to his people. For Hebrews, the Holy Spirit – who both authors and interprets Scripture – is God (cf. France 2006:132).

As part of Hebrews' pneumatology, the author demonstrates the Holy Spirit as the one who indicates that the sin of the people has broken the first covenant through their disobedience. It is in an irreparable state. The writer continues to translate the need for a New Covenant which will restore the people of God. The Spirit testifies, and God confirms the New Covenant. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is involved in both the event that establishes this New Covenant and in the creation of the new-covenant people. The words of the Scripture which the Holy Spirit has spoken, changes from a past revelation to a "continuing witness of the Spirit to us in the present" (cf. France 2006:132). Emmrich (2002:37) concludes that Πνεῦμα ἅγιος operates as the divine orator, engaging the audience in a dialogue which originates from the quotation of an oracle (Heb. 3:7-11; 10:15-17). This prophetic speech in the form of a testimony creates a new prophecy that is relevant for the first Hebrew community and the modern reader as if it is heard for the first time.

To summarise, the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture likewise interprets it (cf. Heb. 3:7, 9:8-10 and 10:15). The failure of the earlier covenant was pointed out by the Holy Spirit, but also the need for the establishing of a New Covenant. The New Covenant was procured and sealed by the sacrifice made by the blood of Christ, offered to God through the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14, 10: 29, cf. Burke & Warrington 2014:loc.7281). The Holy Spirit becomes partner with the new-covenant people (cf. Heb. 6:4 and 2:11) who is also partnered by Christ (cf. Heb. 3:14).

### **Heb. 10:29**

πόσῳ δοκεῖτε χείρονος  
ἀξιωθήσεται τιμωρίας ὁ τὸν υἱὸν  
τοῦ θεοῦ καταπατήσας, καὶ τὸ  
αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης κοινὸν  
ἡγῆσάμενος ἐν ᾧ ἡγιασθη, καὶ τὸ  
πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας.

How much severer punishment  
do you think he will deserve  
who has trampled underfoot the  
Son of God and has regarded as  
unclean the blood of the  
covenant by which he was  
sanctified, and has insulted the  
Spirit of grace.

(NASB)

In Hebrews 10:19-25 the author summarises the benefits of Christ's high priestly ministry. He encourages them to enter the blessings as a means of perseverance that would counter apostasy. The passage reinforces the teaching of Hebrews 6:4-8 on the nature of apostasy. However, the writer stresses the adverb *ἐκουσίως* (wilfully) by locating it at the beginning of Hebrews 10:26. The NRSV translates the sentence: "For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins". It is the persistent sin that can or may lead to a final rejection of the believer. Verse 29 indicates the type and force of the sin – "spurned" (trample underfoot) the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace. Gleason (2002:116) indicates that *καταπατέω* (trample) is used elsewhere in the NT to denote treating something of great value as if it were worthless (pearls before swine – Matt. 7:6) or powerless (e.g. unsavoury salt – Matt. 5:13; unproductive seed – Luke. 8:5).

The second warning is "do not to regard as unclean the blood of the covenant". The key term *κοινός* ("unclean") could be used here in the sense of "common" thereby warning them not to treat "the blood of the covenant"<sup>42</sup> as a common sacrifice like the others offered by human priests (Gleason 2007:252). Or it may be understood in the OT sense of "cultic impurity", implying that Christ's sacrifice could not fully provide purification for sins. We can also argue that those who seek further purification through the temple cult are in effect doing the following: they "trample underfoot the Son of God" (cf. Gleason 2007:253).

The last warning in this section is of particular importance – don't insult "the Spirit of grace". In the context of Hebrews, the Spirit is the one who "offered the blood of Christ without blemish to God" (Heb. 9:14) and "bears witness" to the superiority of His revelation (Heb. 2:3-4) and covenant (Heb. 10:15) (Gleason 2002:116). To reduce such things by returning to Judaism would "insult" the Spirit (NRSV), thereby attracting God's wrath. Mark 3:22-30 indicates that people suggested that the power of Christ to perform miracles originated with Satan rather than with the Holy Spirit. Jesus made the following observation: "But if you speak against the Holy Spirit, you can never be forgiven. That sin

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<sup>42</sup> The blood of the covenant refers here to the blood of Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant.

will be held against you forever” (Mark 3:29). It is possible that our writer has the unpardonable sin in mind when he warns those who want to reject the sacrifice of Christ. The gracious Spirit in Hebrews is the “one who is the vehicle of God’s grace whereby we become participants in the saving acts of God. Consequently, to insult the Spirit is to cut-off the very means of experiencing the favour of God” (Hagner 1990:172). If the believer should reject the New Covenant, he would in fact reject the gracious gift (of the Spirit<sup>43</sup>) that is representative of the New Covenant. About the Spirit, possible links can be made between Zechariah 12:10 and most probably Joel 2:28 in an intertextual allusion. In the context of Hebrews, it relates easier to Heb. 2:4 as an intra-textual allusion to the gift of the Spirit. Allen (2009:59) concludes: “The Spirit, New Covenant inauguration and apostasy are all inextricably linked<sup>44</sup>”.

The author of Hebrews argues from the lesser to the greater (cf. Heb. 2:1-4) to warn that a greater sin requires a greater punishment. Since the penalty under the Mosaic Law was physical death (Heb. 10:28; cf. Dt. 17:6,12), some assume that a “much severer punishment” must refer to spiritual death (cf. Guthrie 1998:356). However, the author leaves the nature of the punishment undefined. We are left to the OT examples of fire (Num. 11:1-2; 16:34) and stoning (Num. 15:29-36) to fill in the meaning. Gleason (2007:253) confirms that the severity of the punishment does not require spiritual death for several reasons, I will mention only two. First, the passage gives no indication of eternal condemnation resulting in spiritual death. Second, the OT citations and allusions consistently describe the threat of physical death.

### **3.8 THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THIS SECTION**

God is active among his people through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Emmrich (2003:90) contends that Heb.6:4-6 (including the gift of the Spirit) can be forfeited. The gift of the Spirit, therefore, does not appear to be final in the book of Hebrews. Redemption in

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Allen (2009:58)

<sup>44</sup> Allen (2009:58) indicates that it is not surprising that the Spirit is referred to in four of Hebrews’ five so-called warning passages.

Hebrews is presented as a “to-be-maintained” dialogue. Consequently, if a (former) member of the community has apostatized and thus treated the Spirit of grace with contempt (Heb.10:29), there is no more ground for any continuing saving work of the Spirit. The possession or presence of the divine Spirit was viewed as being conditional on obedience. Like Samson who “lost” the Spirit because of his unfaithfulness (Judges 16:20) or to the charismatic Spirit once bestowed upon Saul departed when the king turned away from Yahweh (1 Sam. 16:14), the same can happen to those believers in the Hebrews church that do not hold on to their faith (cf. Emmrich 2003:90).

### ***3.8.1 The theological implications of the divine word and revelation***

In Heb. 1:1-2a, the writer introduces the difference between God’s revelation in the past and God’s revelation in a Son. As the main article indicates, the central focus is God’s speaking, which is a major theme of the book (cf. Heb. 2:1-4; 4:12-13; 6:13-20; 12:25-28). The emphasis is not on what God has said, but on the fact that God has spoken to us. Indeed, the contrasts indicate the qualitative greatness of God’s word “in a Son”. That is why the writer employs a series of comparisons throughout the sermon. “In many and various ways in the past” (Heb. 1:1a) introduces the contrast to the revelation “in these last days” (Heb. 1:2a), suggesting the incompleteness of the former and the conclusiveness of the latter (cf. Thompson 2013:loc.1413-1514). Indeed, the author’s theology of revelation provides the framework for the Christological reflections, for the main clause of Heb. 1:14 is “God has spoken to us in a Son,” and the warning in Heb. 2:1-4 is to pay attention to “what we have heard” that was “spoken by the Lord” (Thompson 2013: loc.1532). The revelation of God’s word becomes a *leitmotiv* that saturates the book, reminding that God’s word is both a promise of the future (Heb. 6:16-18) and a warning “not to refuse the one who is speaking”. God’s speaking to and through human subjects is often attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit as the divine voice heard through the speakers. The Holy Spirit is the presence of the divine power in the book. Thompson confirms that in his emphasis on the God who speaks “from heaven” (Heb. 12:25), the author expresses a fundamental conviction held by Christians of all ages: that the community of faith responds to a voice other than its own.

This is the voice of God breathed and reproduced through the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

The community of believers are warned not to take God's gracious word for granted and it should not be turned into cheap grace. It remains a powerful voice that beckons the people of God to obedience. Although the word of God is not limited to the actual words of Scripture, God continues to speak in the present through the words of the past (Thompson 2013:loc.1550). Laansma (2008:loc.2335) suggests that "in Christ's work, finally, the voice of God has been heard, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our great high priest. As certainly as Hebrews contemporises the OT Scriptures in the mouth of the Holy Spirit, so also in it the Spirit speaks, as the church has acknowledged" (cf. Thompson 2013:loc.2469).

While the Spirit speaks the word yet again, it reverberates with many possible meanings for the readers. For example, the prophet Jeremiah reports God's words, "Here is the New Covenant that I, the LORD, will make with the people of Israel: I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer. 31:33). In Hebrews 8 its meaning has undergone a subtle change where he speaks of the covenant in obsolete terms. We also learn that the word is "living and active" (*ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργῆς*) which are both attributes for God that are used regarding God's activity in the world as creator and judge. God is the "living God" (cf. Heb.3: 12; 9: 14; 10: 31), who is "active" (*ἐνεργῆς*) insofar as the divine *energeia* (NRSV "power") is at work in the heavens (Eph.1:19; 3:7) and in the church (Eph.1:11; 3:20; Phil 2:13, cf. Thompson 2013: loc.2496). Not only do they encounter the word of God, but the church encounters the Spirit of God through his word. Zwingli remarked: "for a person to truly understand the Word, he must be drawn and taught by the Spirit. The person who receives the Word is regenerated by the Spirit" (cited in Yarnell III 2014:513).

The church was always a community confronted by God's word, considerate of its place only as it hears the word of God. Rightly so, Thompson (2013:loc.2424) indicates that "scripture is not a word locked in the past but a voice that addresses the community in the

present”, saying, “Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb.3:7– 8). While Scripture offers assurance of hope, it also invites the readers to see themselves in the unfaithfulness of the ancestors.”

### ***3.8.2 The Holy Spirit speaking in Hebrews***

We need to reflect on the speech of the Spirit considering the entire NT. With the larger context in mind, it is worth observing that while the Holy Spirit speaks presently, He also speaks with finality (cf. Jupp 2013 n.p.). Hebrews 2:2-4 serves as an example of this, and it also fits with the “sign nature” of the Spirit’s work seen elsewhere in the NT. According to Jupp (2013 n.p.) in Hebrews 2 “the Holy Spirit not only speaks but indicates, yet the author does not foresee the Holy Spirit communicating a new, untested, or foreign message. Quite the contrary, the Holy Spirit confirms the same message that was first declared by Jesus Christ and then passed down by human witnesses”. The Spirit’s present speech does not open the door for an expanding canon or new, contradictory revelation. He (the Spirit) recycles Scripture to bring a new revelation to the audience. In Hebrews speaking matters. When the Holy Spirit speaks God’s words to the Hebrews listeners, including us, they hear and so must we. God’s decisive speech in the Son was present even in the diverse manners God spoke in the prophets and ancestors, and yet he speaks today through pastors and teachers of the word,

Thompson (2013:loc.1910) observes that the salvation in Heb. 2:3b-4 in the first place was spoken by the Lord (Heb. 2:3b) rather than by angels, indicating that the community has heard from the highest authority, for angels do not share in the exalted status of the Lord. The believers have heard a word from heaven, not a word that is temporal (cf. Heb. 12:25). This word was authenticated by those who heard him (Heb. 2:3c) which made them beneficiaries of ancestors who heard him (cf. Heb. 13:7), signifying that it was not only the word to Moses that was “valid” (βέβαιος), for the word spoken by the Lord was “validated” (ἐβεβαιώθη) by the listeners of the first generation (Thompson 2013:loc.1910). The Hebrew believers have received additional testimony: God bearing witness with signs and wonders, and various powers of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Heb. 2:4). In the

same way that “signs and wonders” evidenced God’s revelation in the wilderness (cf. Exod. 7:3; Deut. 4:34; 6:22), they have confirmed God’s revelation to the community of believers through the Holy Spirit, which they have received.

Long (2011:loc.1247 ) argues that God bears witness to God’s Word in two ways: first by “signs and wonders”, and second by “gifts of the Holy Spirit”. He made the observation of Thomas Aquinas who found theological significance in the use of both expressions. Rather than seeing “wonders” as a rhetorical repetition of “signs”, he sees two ways God testifies about Jesus. A “sign” differs from a “wonder” or “miracle”. Signs are ordinary, natural realities that indicate something extraordinary. A wonder, however, is “what is against nature, as birth from a virgin, or the raising of the dead”. God acts both congruent with and against nature to make Jesus the sign. It is to Jesus that the Holy Spirit in Hebrews points. That is why the church is partaker of both Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in Hebrews is not only the Giver of gifts, but also the gift himself. He enables them to stay faithful on their pilgrimage. In doing so he calls the church to holiness (after being enlightened – Heb. 6:4, cf. Heb. 12:14) without which no one will see God. It is through the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that the Holy Spirit sanctifies the church, opening the way to enter the very presence of a Holy God (cf. Heb. 10:8-10).

About the Holy Spirit’s function in terms of salvation, Yarnell III (2014:491) maintains that the Spirit is the agent of salvation as seen in the Lukan concepts of regeneration, baptism with the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of Pentecost. By cleansing the hearts of believers, the Holy Spirit regenerates the church, both Jew and Gentile and make them to become “partakers of Christ”, “partakers of the Spirit” and “partakers of the heavenly calling”. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself (cf. Heb. 2:4), bestowed by the exalted Lord under the Father’s authority whereas the gifts of the Spirit are “those faculties which the Spirit imparts” (Yarnell III 2014:491). Salvation and renewal is the service of the Holy Spirit to pilgrims on their faith journey. In other words, there is both a commencement and continuation of salvation in the believers – they must still come “to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

innumerable angels in festal gathering” (cf. Heb. 12:19-22). The gift of the Spirit is said to be the “power of the coming age”, it is in fact that power that shapes the life of the believer here on earth as preparation of the age to come (cf. Dunn 2006:153). If the Spirit is the mark of the new age, he then brings believers into the new age. Therefore, we rightly agree that the Spirit is solely and particularly the life Giver (cf. Dunn 2006:155). Osborne (2007:113) confirms my argument that “tasting the heavenly gift” deepens the image, picturing the full experience of God’s grace in the gift of salvation ... it comes from above encompasses forgiveness, the Spirit and sanctification. Here the Hebrew church and the contemporary body of Christ partake of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 3: 1, 14 – which is the objective genitive<sup>45</sup>), meaning that they participate fully in the gift of the Spirit and of the distributions of the gifts (Heb. 2:4) which Paul lays out in Roman 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. They had a sincere salvation experience when the Holy Spirit came upon them, of which they faced the possibility to lose it or risking that possibility at least, if they do not hold fast to the confession of their faith.

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<sup>45</sup> See Osborne 2007:113

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will point out how the Hebrews as a post-Pentecostal and charismatic community was under the prophetic guidance of the Holy Spirit to become the New Covenant community. My argument will rest upon two preliminary understandings: 1) a well organised community of believers existed which practised worship in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and 2) They functioned as a restored community where the prophetic spirit and New Covenant formed the basis of community life. I will employ the concept “prophetic imagination” coined by Walter Brueggemann, to explain how the Holy Spirit is a prophetic voice, helper, and guide while utilising Hebrews 3:7ff. In chapter 3 I focused primarily on the Spirit as revelatory entity. The Spirit takes on the character of God, speaking in unison with God and how God’s voice can be heard as the voice of the Spirit in the new context of Hebrews. I employed Scriptures such as Heb. 2:1-4, 6:4-6 and 10:15 to argue this point. In this section, I will focus on how the Spirit functions as “prophet” in this community as Yahweh’s word functioned in the wilderness. To argue this point sufficiently, I see in Hebrews 3:7-11 a paradigm of how the Spirit’s prophetic speech functions within the community. In the course of discussion various definitions of “prophetic spirit” will be clarified. I will explain how the Spirit’s reusing of Scripture in Heb. 3:7-11 (cf. also 10:15-17) can be understood as prophecy (or a prophetic speech act). Secondary to that, the Holy Spirit uses human beings to deliver prophetic speech, but in Hebrews, the writer holds the Spirit up as the channel of such prophetic declaration. In doing so he creates a moment where the community is confronted with the truth about their

possible apostasy through unfaithful living, but also the ability to experience grace to enter the rest of God (cf. Heb. 4:16).

#### **4.1 HEBREWS AS A PENTECOSTAL AND PROPHETIC COMMUNITY<sup>46</sup>**

On the day of Pentecost Jesus' disciples experienced a divine visitation that was accompanied by certain visible and audible manifestations, which convinced them that God had poured out his Holy Spirit upon them (Ladd 1974:343). The prophets awaited a day where the Spirit of God would be poured out on "all flesh". It would enable every believer to share in the messianic blessing which was prophesied by Ezekiel (36:26-27) and the promise of the New Covenant made by Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). Similarly, Peter asserts that Joel's eschatological event has now occurred in history. It results from the fact that God had exalted the crucified Jesus, had enthroned him at his right hand, thus inaugurating his messianic reign, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his people (Ladd 1974:345).

The opening clause of Hebrews creates a prophetic dimension that opens to the community through various allusions and citations. The writer, from the beginning, indicates how God revealed himself through various elements of divine revelation, and especially through prophets, but now in the Son (Heb. 1:1). The community in Hebrews were an authentic Pentecostal community. It is in such a community that Pentecost was experienced as a redemptive historical event where we see more clearly the Spirit's work with respect to God's plan of salvation centred in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 2:1-4 and 6:1-4). The community were exposed to the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit and the distributions of charismatic gifts. Allen (2009:56) indicates that the "Pentecostal" gift of the Spirit among the community has evidence that such a gift for the reception of the new "covenant" is now in place (cf. Dunn 1997:213-214). To confirm Allen's observation, Dunn (cited in Allen 2009:57) confirms "that the community did not only come to experience the gift of salvation-justification which the Spirit brings – they also received the gift which is the Spirit itself". Dunn (1997:212) further confirms that Pentecost means first and foremost

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<sup>46</sup> Community refers to the initial audience and recipients of the letter.

the outpouring of the Spirit promised by God for the end time. Charismatic and ecstatic manifestation attributed to God's Spirit were as distinctive and significant a feature of earliest Palestinian Christianity as of later Hellenistic Christianity (Eph. 4:81 Cor.12:13; Heb. 2:4 and 6:5). The group of believers in Hebrews had become a community who were indebted for their existence to the common yet excessive experience of the Spirit. The early Christian communities formed by the Spirit became a true communion of the Spirit. Consequently, worship within these communities was directed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the agency of the apostles. The Hebrews audience were such a Spirit-filled community of believers (Fee 1994:827).

The community therefore, are fully partakers of the divine Spirit that proceeds from the heavenly realm which the writer makes explicit in his teaching. Hebrews received the Holy Spirit into themselves as a gift of God, which testifies to the community's enlightenment. Levison (2016:90) cites Friedrich Büchsel ) who confirms that the community was filled with the Holy Spirit:

Wenn also nur wenig vom Geistbesitz der Christen und seinen Folgen die Rede ist, so besagt das nicht, dass der Geistbesitz in der Frömmigkeit des Verfassers nurwenig bedeutet hatte. Der Hebräerbrief redet deutlich davon, dass die Glieder der Gemeinde den heiligen Geist haben.

Steve Motyer (2012:226) building on Allen's insights, argues "that in the background to Hebrews lies a shared charismatic experience, common both to the author and the addressees, a shared experience of the Holy Spirit present to them in power and in revelation" (cf. Dunn 1997:262 – here Dunn refers to Paul's inclusive usage of personal pronouns "us" and "you" in Rom. 5:5; 7:6; 8: 9,10,11 etc., in most cases it refers to and is appealing to a common experience<sup>47</sup>. In Heb. 2:4 and 6:4-6 we have the same phenomenon.). They are not only partakers of the Holy Spirit but also sharers in his divine

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<sup>47</sup> For Dunn 1997:263-264 in Paul's communities or churches, membership means charismatic membership. The church consists of believers through whom the Spirit of Grace may manifest himself in diverse ways at any time. He concludes that "no member lacks a manifestation of grace; no member can refuse the contribution to the worship or the life of the community which the Spirit would make through him without thereby "quenching" the Spirit (cf. I Thess. 5:17) and thereby ceasing to be a member of the body. It is also true of Hebrews 10:29 "... profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?"

gifts, encouragement and guidance. Owen (cited in Knapp 2003:49) rightly observed the spiritual condition of the community:

They “not long before were converted from Judaism unto Christianity,” 2) They were not of common sort, but evidenced special privileges and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, 3) They were firmly convinced of their new faith and position in the church and 4) they experienced the work of light (i.e. illumination<sup>48</sup>) upon their minds and changed their affections and their conversation accordingly.

I understand a prophetic community to be a source of prophetic inspiration. This inspiration is derived from the Spirit who endows special revelation and inspired speech. I do not want to restrict the concept of “prophetic” in Hebrews to only an “alternative” community, but rather apply it to a community in which the Holy Spirit uses Scripture as inspired speech to create new dimensions and opportunities for growth (cf. Heb. 6:1). “Prophetic” can be limited to “special insight”, but here I want it to progress to the point where Scripture becomes alive and active (cf. Heb. 4:12) to attain the intention that God has for it – to encourage the community to hold fast to their faith. The Spirit did not only inspire Scripture in the past; “the Spirit is rather interpreter of Scripture for the community that reads the book” (Levison 2016:93). The Scriptures in Hebrews are “living words” that have the power of God and is empowered by God’s Spirit. It becomes the words of the Spirit speaking in the present: “Just as the Spirit says ...” (Johnson 2006:113). Johnson (2003:241) also infers that it is the voice of the living God who speaks through the text directly and urgently to people in the present. God’s word addresses believers today as much as hearers in the past.

Hebrews 3 introduces another warning passage that flows into a short exhortation piece. The writer divulges the history and appropriateness of the rebellion story in three stages: 1) Heb. 3:7-19 contains the citation of Ps. 95 LXX. He expounds a warning of the rebellion and the dire consequences of unfaithfulness. 2) In Heb. 4:1-11 the writer encourages the community to persevere in faithfulness so that they can enter God’s Sabbath-rest. It is an invitation that is still applicable as long as “today” remains. 3) The writer makes a clear statement about the power of the word of God in Heb. 4:12-13. He includes the reality of

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<sup>48</sup> Added for clarity by author.

judgment in his exhortation. By means of a typology of judgment, the writer uses the rebellion of Israel's wilderness generation as a warning not to turn away from the faith. God was angry with them and swore that they will not enter his rest. Therefore, the readers are encouraged to walk the tight rope of obedience because they became partakers for Christ (vv. 14-18, cf. Allen 2010:270). The urgency of the matter is reinforced with "today, if you hear his voice". Only the believers will enter the rest and as such, God set another day when he spoke later through David (4:7). Therefore, believers must make every effort to enter God's Sabbath-rest. The power and faithfulness of the word of God (Heb.4:12-13) plays a pivotal role in the process of faithful living because it has the power to judge not only the inner thought life of the believer but also outward appearance.

#### **4.2. HOW THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY FUNCTIONS IN HEBREWS**

In the First Century, Judaism had a thorough grasp on the fact that the Spirit is responsible for a transformed life which was plausible only through the Spirit of prophecy (cf. Turner 2004:111). Writing from this milieu, the writer of Hebrews also exhibited a thorough understanding of the prophetic Spirit. In the same vein the "literature of the intertestamental period and beyond (i.e. Rabbinic documents<sup>49</sup>) reveals a strong tendency to depict the Spirit as the source of invasive inspired speech, including prophecy and praise (although the Spirit as the source of wisdom, guidance and special insight is equally [if not even more] common)" (Emmrich 2003:37). To equate the Holy Spirit with prophecy is firmly established by the time of Rabbinic Judaism. Hui (1999:96) indicates that according to the Rabbi Nathan, the Holy Spirit is called by ten names: parable, metaphor, riddle, speech, saying, glory, command, burden, prophecy, vision ('Abot R. Nat. A.34). This text is significant in two ways. On the one hand "prophecy" is one of the ten names given to the

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<sup>49</sup> In Targum Onkelos, Joseph is said to have the Spirit of prophecy in him after he interpreted Pharaoh's dream (Tg. Onk. Gn. 41:38). Similarly, Joshua is said to have the Spirit of prophecy in him (Tg. Onk. Nu. 27:18) (Hui 1999:95). Hui furthermore attested that "the Spirit of prophecy" is not commonly used outside of the rabbinic tradition, the concept of the divine Spirit being the Spirit of prophecy. There are two indicators of this phenomena. First, prophetic figures are identified as such because of the presence of the divine Spirit. Thus, according to the translators of the LXX, the prophets are precisely those who have the divine Spirit (Nu.11:29; 4 Kgdms. 2:9, 15; Ne. 9:20; Zeph. 1:6; 7:12). Second, the divine Spirit is often associated with prophecy or prophesying. Thus, according to the translators of the LXX, prophecy is the direct result of the coming of the Spirit upon the seventy elders (Num. 11:25-27), Saul (1 Kgdms. 10:6, 10; 19:23-24).

Holy Spirit. On the other hand, other rabbinic lists of ten names sometimes replaced “the Holy Spirit” with “prophecy” (see, e.g. ’Abot R. Nat. B.37; Gn. Rab. 44.6; Ct. Rab. 3.4 cited in Hui 1999:97).

Likewise, Emmrich (2003:37) uses similar quotations to demonstrate that the unmediated speaking function of the Holy Spirit, distinctively characterized using Scripture, is well known among the Rabbis:

O Jeshurun, there is none like God, riding through the heavens to help you, through the skies in his majesty. The ancient God is a refuge, supports are the arms everlasting ... And the Holy Spirit says, “happy are you, Israel, who is like you” (Deut. 33:29). And the Israelites say, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4). And the Holy Spirit says, “And who is like your people, Israel, a unique tree among the trees of the wood ...” (Cant. 2:3). And the Holy Spirit says, “As a lily among thorns” (Cant. 2:2).

Unfortunately, the Spirit does not engage the current audience of this specific citations as he does in our passages in Hebrews (cf. Emmrich 2003:37).

Turner (2004:111) asserts that Dunn uses the term “Spirit of prophecy” to include OT promises of the Spirit, not merely Joel 2:28-32<sup>50</sup>. Dunn’s interest in the Spirit of prophecy is relatively the same as that of Luke. His interest in, not exclusively, is the Spirit’s dramatic and concrete workings, especially in various forms of inspired speech (Turner 2004:11). In his summary of Menzies understanding of the “Spirit of prophecy”, Turner (2004:111) states, “it is defining the very essence of the gift – it is simply prophetic *Amtscharisma* of inspired speech, charismatic wisdom, and revelation; neither more nor less”. The office of this extraordinary and revolutionary power rests upon the (s)elected person to perform the task of motivation and encouragement through divine wisdom and revelation. This task is placed exclusively on the lips of the Holy Spirit who encourages them to persevere. Turner (2004:112) himself has used the term “Spirit of prophecy” merely “functionally to designate a pneumatology for which five types of closely associated charismata are proto-

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<sup>50</sup> The LXX Joel 2:28 attributes prophecy, “dreams”, and “visions” to the pouring out of the divine Spirit. These texts demonstrate what the functions and effects of the Spirit of prophecy were thought to be (Hui 1999:97).

typical (i.e. normally associated with the gift): charismatic revelation, charismatic wisdom, invasive prophetic and invasive doxological speech (and certainly) deeds of power. It is fitting to say that Turner's definition is based on his discussion of Jewish interpretation of the OT. He remarks that it "is flexible (allowing many different configurations of the 'Spirit of prophecy') and neutral with respect to whether the gift includes soteriological functions" (Turner 2004:112). The assertion that I am making is that here in Hebrews and in the NT in general, together with other Jewish texts, the "Spirit of prophecy" (here the Holy Spirit) is a transformative power. He inspires and enables a new quality of spiritual life before God. This new life leads to deeper closeness with God (cf. Turner 2004:113, Heb. 2:1-4 and 6:1-4 etc.). The Holy Spirit is the voice of the OT Scripture. He (the Spirit) relates OT citations with wisdom, power and authority as a "prophet" of old. More so, Swete (cited in Levison 2016:94) observed that the Holy Spirit is here, as in the OT, God Himself in operation, God putting a word into the hearts of the legislators, psalmists, and prophets of Israel. He spoke in them, not as He has spoken to us in one who was a Son, yet it was the voice of the Spirit of God which they heard, and that voice is heard by believers still as they read Moses and the Law and the Prophets. It is the same voice that holds up the New Covenant in Hebrews as benefit for a life that perseveres.

#### ***4.2.1 Exegesis and further discussions***

God is a speaking God. The writer of Hebrews uses the language of God as a figure of speech for all the different forms of revelation in the OT and in Christ (Lee 2001:103). Hebrews 3:7-11 (cf. 10:15-17) could be considered a citation "typical" for Hebrews, except that it is the *πνεῦμα ἅγιον* who speaks (Emmrich 2003:28). The same word *λέγω* is now placed in Hebrews 3:15 (and 4:3) where the words are offered as God's speech. It is appropriate to suggest that God speaks through the Spirit as his agent of speech (Emmrich 2003:28). It is not intended to downgrade the Holy Spirit to the status of a human mouthpiece. By using verbs of speech, the writer treats texts as words from the prophets through whom God spoke in the past (Johnson 2003:240). Most of these speech verbs are in the present tense. What God conveyed in the past, it is now active in the present. It is to this fact that the Holy Spirit bears witness through Scripture (cf. Heb. 10:15) – what is said

in the past is now active in the present. Lane (1991:cxvii) indicates that the writer is persuaded that God continues to speak today in the biblical passages that are cited. The writer views the OT as the direct speaking of God (cf. Lane 1991:cxxxii). That is why the writer prefers to make use of the present tense and active voice.

To this end, the Spirit uses the divine speech from Psalm 95 and “reprocesses<sup>51</sup>” it in harmony with the audience’s present needs. Consequently, the insistent *σήμερον* (“today”, Heb. 3:7), the opening to the quotation from the Psalm, wants to be understood as the equivalent of (“In these last days”) (Emmrich 2003:28). Some commentators have seen the introductory formula “as the Holy Spirit is saying” primarily as a reference to the Holy Spirit’s authorship of the biblical text. Nevertheless, for Emmrich (2003:28):

The language of Heb. 3:7 more specifically denotes the role of the Holy Spirit as speaker with a powerful eschatological thrust. Therefore, the text of Psalm 95 provides the background for the Spirit’s creation of a new oracle, and the warning *μὴ σκληρύνητε* (“do not harden [your hearts],” 3:8) can now be heard as though it is issued for the very first time.

As far as divine speech and prophecy is concerned, it rests on the principle of “inspired adaptation of Scripture” (Levison 2016:97). This constitutes three elements: 1) the present tense, 2) altered citations and 3) editorial expansions. To demonstrate his argument, Levison uses Motyer as an example of the present tense use of Heb. 3:7:

Motyer’s first reflection concentrated on the present tense, “today”, in Heb. 3:7, which, he speculated, points to a “charismatic” use of this text. The Holy Spirit has “given” this text and this reading of it to the author, so that he can deliver it to the “Hebrews” as a new word from God – a word made present by new insight and application.

Motyer (2012:223) points out how the writer uses *λέγει* in the present tense in verse 7 (cf. Lane 1991: cxxxii). The writer repeats the same word again when he refers to Ps. 95:7 in

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<sup>51</sup> “Reprocess” or “recycles” are terms that are frequently used by Emmrich to refer to the way the Holy Spirit applies Scripture in the present tense.

Hebrews 4:7. He again fixes a certain day, “Today”, saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”. The writer uses the text, the setting or limiting of a new time in the present in a charismatic way (cf. Motyer 2012:223). The “today” does not necessarily refer to the time of David but stresses the imminence of the word of God to the present generation (v.13). The Holy Spirit has given this text and this reading to the writer “so that he can deliver it to the Hebrews as a ‘new’ word from God – a word made present by new insight and application” (Motyer 2012:223). It creates “presentness” where the Holy Spirit reinforces the message of the Scriptures cited. A theology of the charismatic Spirit is present and shared by both the writer and his community (cf. Motyer 2012:223).

The theology behind the emphasizing of this newness of interpretation in Hebrews is the fact that the Holy Spirit is a charismatic Giver of gifts and as such, new divine meaning to the OT scripture, which is breathed by God, in a prophetic way. For Motyer (2012:224) the fact that the writer quotes Psalm 95:7 three times (Heb. 3:7-8; 3:15 and 4:7) may resemble a group culture in which the members expected to be hearing from God and that’s why the culmination of this prophetically interpreted passage is none other than the familiar Hebrews 4:12: “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword<sup>52</sup>, piercing until it divides soul from spirit (joints from marrow) and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”. These last three instances of the “re-use” of Ps. 95:7-11 qualifies it in Hebrews as an instance of divine speech. I would suggest that it is more than a “group culture” as Motyer observes. It is the awareness of the congregation that the Holy Spirit will speak in their midst (cf. Heb. 3:7; 9:8 and 10:15).

Secondly, is the notion of altered citations of Levison (2016:97). It is generally acknowledged among Hebrew scholarship that Psalm 95 (which is Ps. 94 in the LXX) is the background for our Hebrew text. Psalm 94:9-10LXX reads:

Where your fathers tried me,  
they put me to the proof and saw my works.  
For forty years

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<sup>52</sup> Emphasis mine

I loathed that generation.

We read Hebrews 3:9 as an alternative, “*where your ancestors put me to the test*<sup>53</sup>, though they had seen my works *for forty years*. Therefore, I was angry with that generation.”. In Psalm 94 LXX, God despises Israel for forty years. In Hebrews, the Holy Spirit altered the citation to “Israel tests God for forty years”. Levison (2016:97) concludes, “The author knows Psalm 94 LXX as it now stands, but in Heb. 3:9 the Spirit speaks a modified version, which emphasises the danger of becoming hardened toward God over a span of years. Such resistance, cautions the author, invariably leads to irrevocable unbelief.”.

Emmrich (2003:29) insists that the “Spirit takes the divine speech of Psalm 95 and ‘reprocesses’ it in unity with the audience’s present needs. Consequently, ‘today’ (Heb. 3:7), the opening of the quotation from the Psalm, wants to be understood as the equivalent of ‘in these last days’ (Heb. 1:2), of the programmatic introduction of the epistle”. The introductory formula “the Spirit says” introduces the Holy Spirit as the voice of God. The author viewed the Holy Spirit in his appropriation of Scripture as the prophetic Spirit operating no longer through human instrumentality (i.e. a prophetic figure), but solely based on the use (or updating) of Scripture, concludes Emmrich (2003:32). In the case of the Spirit updating the OT scripture in a new prophetic manner, it ultimately remains God’s speech act. In other words, the Spirit (through the writer) claims that God has spoken in the past<sup>54</sup> and God is presently encountering the reader of the text.

In the third instance, the editorial expansion of the text is taking place to enhance the impact of the prophetic voice of the Holy Spirit. Levison (2016:98-99) maintains that in Hebrews 3:7-8:

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<sup>53</sup> Italics for clarity and emphasis.

<sup>54</sup> For Vanhoozer God has spoken in the past by means of supervening illocutionary stance on the words of the original human author. Storer (2013:89) indicates that Vanhoozer argues that the meaning of Scripture remains closed and determinate as a complete communicative speech-act (composed of locutions and illocutions), while at the same time it does not affect the determinate, canonical meaning of the text. Here in Hebrews the original/canonical meaning of various OT texts is updated or changed by the Holy Spirit to convey a new meaning that is appropriate and relevant for the context of his readers.

We have seen already that the author introduces a citation of Psalm 94 LXX with a clear formula: “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says” (Heb. 3:7). The conclusion, however, contains no equivalent indication that the text is over and the application about to begin. The author simply continues, “Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God” (Heb.3:12).

Furthermore, Levison (2016:99) indicates that:

The shift from text to application, in other words, is seamless. The words “as the Holy Spirit says” in Heb. 3:7 introduce not the quotation of a psalm but a psalm passage and its extended interpretation, which includes further quotations of the psalm, combined with other scriptural texts, such as Gen 2:4.

In brief, the observation of Emmrich (2003:37) is appropriate to our discussion –

Moreover, the pneumatic speech to the wandering people of God is decidedly eschatological in thrust. We noted the author’s tendency to have such direct address mediated by the prophetic Spirit without human instrumentality “in these last days”: The Spirit himself assumes the role of the prophets who used to deliver the divine oracles “to the fathers” (cf. Heb. 1:1). Nevertheless, the author of the epistle also saw *Pneuma* as the revealer of interpretative secrets (Heb. 9:6-10). Again, this use of Scripture is implicitly eschatological, since the impetus for this kind of pneumatic interpretation derives from the *factum* of Christ’s coming.

#### **4.3 BRUEGGEMANN’S CONCEPT OF PROPHETIC IMAGINATION: INTERPRETING**

##### **SCRIPTURE IN A PROPHETIC CONTEXT – HEB. 3:7-4:11**

I specified above what I understand “prophetic” to be, but “prophecy” in turn can be defined as a “spoken or written discourse inspired by the Holy Spirit”, and that of “prophet” as someone who speaks for God as the revealer or interpreter of his will under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Stibbe 2007:84). Prophecy may not only be conceived of as prediction of the future, but we cannot undermine the impact of the futuristic dimensions of prophecy which is “recognised as being a key element in terms of the energising aspect of prophetic imagination” (cf. Stibbe 2007:84). The Holy Spirit recalling the wilderness

event in Heb. 3:7ff was a key factor in linking the prevailing disobedience of Israel to that of the first audience of Hebrews. Like the Hebrew church, the generation in the desert community experienced the tension of an interim existence between salvation and the rest of God. The failure of the desert generation to attain their salvation recalls a pattern of response and adherence to God's voice that the Hebrew community must emulate (cf. Lane 1996:207). What is needed is a new vision of the community's task; they need to be "energized".

Brueggemann (2001:loc.1181) speaks about energising the believing community as follows:

In any case, my governing hypothesis is that the alternative prophetic community is concerned both with criticizing and energizing. On the one hand, it is to show that the dominant consciousness (which I have termed "royal") will indeed end and that it has no final claim upon us. On the other hand, it is the task of the alternative prophetic community to present an alternative consciousness that can energize the community to fresh forms of faithfulness and vitality. Having considered the first of these tasks in the tradition of Jeremiah, I now turn to the second function of prophecy, to energize. I propose this hypothesis: The royal consciousness leads people to despair about the power to move toward new life. It is the task of prophetic imagination and ministry to bring people to engage the promise of newness that is at work in our history with God (cf. Gates 2012 n.p.)

His qualification of the terms "prophetic" and "imagination" is summed up in the following statement:

To qualify "prophetic" by "imagination" is to dig deeper than moral earnestness into the notion of playful, venturesome probing into the unknown that requires poetic utterance and that evokes daring images and metaphors, all in the service of elusiveness out beyond royal totalism. On the other hand, to qualify the term "imagination" by the adjective "prophetic" delivers imagination from sheer fantasy unto a world of covenantal Engagement that features YHWH as the compelling partner of both human prophetic utterer and those also heard the prophetic utterance in serious ways (Brueggemann 2001:loc.1181).

According to Stibbe (2007:91) there is a shift from the dominant consciousness (i.e. *the prevailing*<sup>55</sup> *disobedience and unbelief* – cf. *Heb. 3:8, 12, 15-17; 4:7*) to the alternative “prophetic” consciousness (*the possibility of entering God’s rest* – cf. *Heb. 4:1,11*), by means of the concurrent action, what Brueggemann terms “prophetic criticising” and “prophetic energising”.

Brueggemann (2001:loc.152) insists that some social environments are more hospitable than others to prophets and are more likely to be the locus of their emergence, the natural habitat of the prophet being in “sub-communities that stand in tension with the dominant community in any political economy” which “participate in the public life of the dominant community from a certain perspective and with a certain intention”. He describes a sub-community which is susceptible to the emergence of prophets as having four characteristics, of which I mention only three<sup>56</sup> (cf. Stibbe 2007:106):

1. *A long and available memory that sinks the present generation deep into an identifiable past that is available in story and song.* It is affirmative that the community’s experience and their historical realities are being brought to surface by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s plea, “today ... do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion” (Heb. 3:7, 15 and 4:7) serves as a sober reminder. Their adherence to Christ (Heb. 3:14) depends on their loyalty and faithful obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. In this context, Numbers’ narrative genre, for example, differs from Hebrews’ hortatory tone in Heb. 3:7-4:11, and lacks the rhetorical, heuristic perspective that seeks to make the events of Kadesh-Barnea exemplary for future (mis)conduct (Allen 2007:130). However, the community stands in an analogous situation with respect to their entrance into God’s rest.
2. *An effective mode of discourse that is cherished across generations, that is*

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<sup>55</sup> Italics added by the author.

<sup>56</sup> The fourth characteristic is “an effective mode of discourse”.

*taken as distinctive, and is richly coded in ways that only insiders can know.* Different citations and allusions to Moses<sup>57</sup> and Joshua vivified the rebellion narrative in the Hebrew community (Heb. 3:1-5). Gleason (2000:290-291) maintains that the “author’s focus was clearly on the events of Kadesh-Barnea as evidenced by his repeated reference to God’s oath (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:3) and his warning that their “bodies fell in the wilderness” (Heb. 3:17; 4:11; cf. Num. 14:29, 32-33). Therefore, the sin (Heb. 3:17) of unbelief (Heb. 3:12, 19; 4:2) and disobedience (3:18; 4:6, 11), warned against in Hebrews 3-4, must correspond in meaning to the “rebellion” (Num. 14:9; Deut. 9:23-24) and unbelief (Num. 14:11) of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea”. Käsemann (1984:25) suggests the danger the community faced was their struggle of faith like the struggle of faith of Christians in every age. To stay obedient to their calling of faith became their inherent struggle against the threatening persecution which they faced.

3. *An active practice of hope, a community that knows about promises yet to be kept, promises that stand in judgement on the present.* Through his prophetic speech, the Holy Spirit, through the writer who ultimately puts the warning on God’s lips, urges mutual care and concern for every member of the community to ensure that no one responds inappropriately to the voice of God (cf. Lane 1996:214-218). In the same vein, Wenk (2004:142) observes that “a Spirit-revealed message is equivalent to a God-spoken one”, therefore some references to the Spirit and to God are used interchangeably (cf. Heb. 10:15-17 and Acts 2:26-29).

Loyalty and endurance is much needed to enter God’s rest. The problem was that the desert community failed to believe that God is present among them and is directing them through his voice. The writer warns the community not to lose faith in the presence of God. The refusal of Israel to believe God, excluded them from participating in the realisation of the promise. The prophetic Voice which guided Israel through their wilderness trek is still in their midst (cf. Heb. 13:5-6).

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<sup>57</sup> Gleason (2000:293) confers that the same place name “Kadesh” suggests the author’s intention to link the sin of the people in Numbers 14 to the sin of Moses and Aaron (13:26; 20:1). The writer to the Hebrews also intended to include Moses among those who provoked the Lord by describing “all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses” (Heb. 3:16).

To understand the hope-filled community of the Hebrews the following statements of Brueggemann may shed some light:

The urging to bring hope to public expression is based on a conviction about believing folks. It is premised on the capacity to evoke and bring to expression the hope that is within us (see 1 Pet 3:15). It is there within and among us, for we are ordained of God to be people of hope. It is there by virtue of our being in the image of the promissory God. It is sealed there in the sacrament of baptism. It is dramatized in the Eucharist – “until he comes”. It is the structure of every creed that ends by trusting in God’s promises. Hope is the decision to which God invites Israel, a decision against despair, against permanent consignment to chaos (Isa 45:18), oppression, barrenness, and exile. Hope is the primary prophetic idiom not because of the general dynamic of history or because of the signs of the times but because the prophet speaks to a people who, willy-nilly are God’s people. Hope is what this community must do because it is God’s community invited to be in God’s pilgrimage. And as Israel is invited to grieve God’s grief over the ending, so Israel is now invited to hope in God’s promises. That very act of hope is the confession that we are not children of the royal consciousness (Brueggemann 2001: loc.1293).

Against all the above, the Holy Spirit in Hebrews warns, confirms, testifies and speaks a message of hope in a new and uncompromising way as the prophets of old; holding up the endless possibilities of a new life that adheres to Christ. In Hebrews 4 the new entrance in the eschatological rest is made possible, only if they obey. The paradox is that it is already made possible for all with a believing heart. But it is out of bounds to those hearts that are hardened (cf. Heb. 4:3). Being hard-hearted and stiff-necked will cost them to forfeit the invitation; *ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ* (cf. Heb. 4:9 GNT). The writer further extends the invitation that marks the grace of God (cf. Heb. 4:16). Grace initiates the call for the community to come boldly in worship to a loving God. They have liberty because they received and tasted the heavenly gift which is the Spirit (cf. Heb. 6:4). They become sharers of the Spirit’s enlightenment and shared also in the Spirit (Heb. 6:5). It is to their advantage that the Spirit announced or showed (*δηλώω*) that the way into the Most Holy Place was not yet disclosed if the former tabernacle was still intact (cf. Heb. 9:8). Through the Eternal Spirit Christ offered himself and became the living Way through which they can enter the new heavenly tabernacle in reverent worship of God. To this end the Holy Spirit testifies (*μαρτυρέω*) “... the Lord said, ‘When the time comes, I will make

an agreement with them. I will write my laws on their minds and hearts. Then I will forget about their sins and no longer remember their evil deeds.” (Heb.10:15-17 CEV). The prophetic imagination creates this better reality of the non-remembrance of their lawlessness if they follow suit after the guidance of the Spirit. The New Covenant promises that which Christ and the Spirit initiate (cf. Heb. 9:15) will become the new reality of the community in the presence of the Spirit. In the OT, the prophetic ministry was closely associated with God, his covenant relationship and his people. Their noncompliance to the covenant agreement causes them to experience the brunt for their wilful disobedience. The Spirit summons the community to covenant faithfulness and to nurture hope beyond the experience of God’s judgement (Wenk 2004:121). The process to secure transformation and hope is one of mutual engagement and interaction between the Holy Spirit as prophetic voice and the community of believers. “It is the task of the prophet (the Holy Spirit – J. A.) to bring to expression the new realities against the more visible ones of the old order. Energising is closely linked to hope. We are energised not by that which we already possess but by that which is promised and about to be given” (Brueggeman 2001:13). The community lived in the eschatological tension of “now and not yet”. The promise of the New Covenant (Heb. 10:15-17; Jer. 31:31-34) regulates the relationship between God and the community in this peculiar testimony in a “prophetic way: theologically speaking if it comprises both covenant and eschatology” (Wenk 2004:142). In this case, we have seen it to be true, therefore the Spirit is fully qualified to make or to testify to the covenant renewal and subsequent gifts.

The Spirit still opens the word of God to us as its interpreter. In doing so he creates experience that fills us with hope. Johnson (2003:250) concludes that “Our capacity to hear and see God’s work in our world – in the stories of real women and men – is the way in which the world again becomes as scripture imagines it, as enchanted, as revealing mystery at its heart, and reading scripture in light of such perception is again to read it as more than historical record, as indeed prophetic.”

## 4.4 THE HOLY SPIRIT AS GIVER OF GIFTS

### 4.4.1 *Distribution of the Spirit (Heb. 2:4)*

The discussion of the gift of the Spirit will venture from Hebrews 2:4. In Heb. 2:1-4, the author admonishes his readers not to drift away from the salvation that is theirs – it was declared “through the Lord”, “attested to us by those who heard him”. To this salvation “God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will”. In chapter 3 a quick discussion on the Holy Spirit in Heb. 2:4 was warranted to point out how the writer appeals to the Holy Spirit as benefactor to spur his community on to faithfulness. A summary of that discussion is in order:

Hebrews 2:4 can be translated literally, “God (himself) also bearing (joint) witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his will.” A survey of a few translations will reflect as such:

NIV – “...and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

NET – “... and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

NRSV – “...and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.”

Emmrich (2003:66) points out that Ellingworth reads the phrase “as an objective genitive, but with a slightly different meaning, namely God causing the Holy Spirit to act as a distribution agent” (cited in Emmrich). Alternatively, Hughes (1977:8) shared the same thought (i.e. of Emmrich and Allen), “the phrase encapsulates apportionments of the Holy Spirit that is the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit through the impartation of gifts” (see also Motyer 2012:217). The subjective genitive (πνεύματος ἁγίου) refers to “distributions which the Holy Spirit gives” and the objective genitive refers to the various ways in which the Holy Spirit is distributed.

As previously indicated, translators introduced the English word “gifts” in translations such as NRSV (see above), TNIV, and CEB. It is likely to be misleading, since this word tends

to conflate Heb. 2:4 with the Pauline conception of the Holy Spirit as the distributor of spiritual gifts (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

In Hebrews, the Greek reads more simply and enigmatically, “through distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his will” (πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν). It is not difficult to see why translators introduce the word “gift” in Heb. 2:4. Paul writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Cor. 12:4-6) (see also Montefiore 1964:53-54). Paul also holds firm to his conviction that “All these gifts are activated by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11) (cf. Ellingworth & Nida 1983:31). The Spirit is the one who enables the church to declare the lordship of Jesus. In doing so he is also the distributor of gifts as indicated in the Pauline corpus. To the same effect but with different nuance, the Spirit is also the gift that is made possible to the believers in Hebrews 2:4. Ewert (2004:264) asserts there is always a sovereign element in the distribution of gifts. In 1 Cor. 12:3 the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts of the Spirit. Here in Hebrews 2:4 God apportions the Holy Spirit (according to the Father’s will)<sup>58</sup> who in turn distributes the gifts according to his own will. Montefiore (1964:54) maintains that the phrase the writer of Hebrews uses concerning the Holy Spirit is linked to Pauline reference. He asserts that it “could be a stock phrase rather than original expression of the writer’s thoughts” (cf. Ellingworth 1993:15). Paul uses *χαρίσματα* or *πνευματικά* to teach about the gifts of the Spirit and spiritual matters. Albeit, the language of the Hebrews is not derivative from these words in 1 Corinthians. The writer chooses to describe distributions of the Holy Spirit with the word *μερισμός*, which is reminiscent of Pentecost. In Acts 2:3, this root occurs in *διαμεριζόμεναι*, a passage in which tongues as of fire were distributed to each of those who were filled with (the) Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3-4) (Levison 2016:101). Hebrews goes a long way toward explaining

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<sup>58</sup> See Montefiore 1994: 54-55, who argues that there is a parallel to Gal. 3:5 to this argument (God gives you his Spirit and works miracles in you. But does he do this because you obey the Law of Moses or because you have heard about Christ and have faith in him?) (CEV).

the plural noun *μερισμός* in Heb. 2:4. What occurred at Pentecost was not a one-time experience. It is repeated *mutatis mutandis* in Acts on several occasions, particularly when the Gentiles receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, speak in tongues, and praise God (Acts 4:23-31; 10-11; see also Levison 2016:101). It is repeated, too, in the experience of Hebrews' recipients, and provides a rationale for the question, "How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3; see also Allen 2008, Emmrich 2002, 2003 and Motyer 2012). It would be more accurate for Montefiore to have said that similarity between the reference of the Holy Spirit in Paul and Hebrews lies within the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:2-3), but not the distribution of the Holy Spirit. As pointed out above, the similarity lies within the Pentecostal experience of the believers in Luke-Acts and here in Hebrews. Lane (1991:40) indicates that God has a special concern for this community that he "breaks into with power". Through the Holy Spirit God is present in the community as the witness of the dispenser of power (*μερισμοίς*) of the Holy Spirit. This special involvement of God serves to confirm the message that was proclaimed (Heb. 2:1-3). For Lane (1991:40) it is "the perpetuation of the charisma in the life of the community (cf. 6:4-5) that provide indispensable evidence of God's seal upon the word received by the congregation". In other words, the community has a dynamic quality of experience that rises to the surface of Heb. 2:4 which is manifested in the relationship that the author draws between an experience of the Holy Spirit and a variety of signs, wonders, and miracles<sup>59</sup>. This undisputed evidence of signs, wonders and miracles and spiritual gifts "is anchored in the will of God" (*κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν*) (Lane 1991:40). The writer extrapolates the allusion of signs, wonders and miracles from the Exodus tradition. It is not

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<sup>59</sup> Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:22, has much to reveal about the life of Jesus with the same words in reverse order: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you.". It is explicit that Heb. 2:3-4 draws readers to the story of Pentecost in Acts, the sole other NT passage in which the Holy Spirit, the conception of distribution, and the triad of signs, wonders, and miracles merge (Levison 2016:102).

Levison observes that "how this verse should be subdivided is not immediately apparent. The verse looks as if it should be divided into two: (1) signs, wonders, and various miracles; and (2) distributions of the Holy Spirit. The particle *τε*, however, may lead to a trio: (1) signs and wonders (with the two words associated by *τε*) (2) various miracles; and (3) distributions of the Holy spirit" (2016:101). Klijn (1980:38-39) points out how Paul in various ways appealed to the preaching of his gospel that was performed in "woord en daad" en "wonderen tekenen, door kracht van de Geest" (cf. Mark. 16:20; Rom. 8:16; 15:18-19; 1 Tess. 1:5).

merely “unusual deeds” (cf. Ellingworth & Nida 1983:30) but the demonstration of the “powerful deeds” or deeds that show God’s power<sup>60</sup>.

Although the above arguments are valid, it is still important to emphasise the fact that the writer has the Holy Spirit as gift in mind. In general, there is a steering away from this kind of interpretation but Allen (2008), Emmrich (2002 and 2003), Motyer (2012) and Levison (2016), to name a few, are not easily deterred from this interpretation. Allen (2008:157) asserts “... while clearly not referencing Pentecost, the text implies that it is the Spirit itself that is apportioned, not any spiritual gift; the prophets have received a share and portion of the Holy Spirit, with no suggestion in the text of any associated gifts ... such interpretation also seems to be the most natural way of understanding *μετόχους γεννηθέντας Πνεύματος Ἁγίου* (Heb. 6:4), namely, that those who are faithful experience the Spirit itself and not mere gifts”. Motyer (2012:213-227) affirms that God did not send the angels as witnesses to this New Covenant, but “lavishly distributing his Spirit” as prove of the inauguration of the New Covenant. Montague (2006:317) insists that with the distribution of the Holy Spirit “the charismatic gifts are obviously meant” (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4, 11). He goes so far as to call it “manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit” which is God’s way of witnessing to gospel message. In summation, I underscore Warrington’s (2008:69) observation:

Not only are the gifts of the Spirit bestowed by the Spirit to the believers, but the Spirit manifests himself through those gifts. They are not derived remotely from a distance as a result of divine initiation from heaven so much as resulting from his being present in believers.

#### ***4.4.2 Grace as gift of the Holy Spirit***

Lichtenwalter (2012:104-105) emphasises that the phrase “Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29) draws together for the first time two terms, each which point to the presence and power of God among humans (i.e. Spirit and grace). In Hebrews, the Spirit speaks through Scripture (Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15). In his continuous speaking the sacrifice of Christ is being echoed as

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<sup>60</sup> Montefiore (1964:317) also refers to this triad of signs, wonders and miracles which we frequently encounter in Acts. See also Fensham (1981:19).

means of grace to believers. Hebrews 2:9: “What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels. Because of God’s wonderful kindness, Jesus died for everyone. And now that Jesus has suffered and died, he is crowned with glory and honour.” (cf. John 3:16). It was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death on behalf of all. At conversion, the believer becomes a partaker of the Holy Spirit when he or she accepts Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:4). Here the Holy Spirit and “grace” (χάρις<sup>61</sup>) are connected. The Spirit is an expression of divine grace (Lichtenwaller 2012:105). Grace as a gift reflects God’s care in salvation history which is made effective in the substitutionary death of Christ.

Fee (1994:33) understood grace in similar way:

Χάρις issues in a χάρισμα; and that is what it means in its every instance in Paul – a concrete expression of grace, thus a “gracious bestowment”. In nearly half of its uses, therefore, χάρισμα lacks any reference at all to the Spirit, but simply designates a variety of ways God’s grace is evidenced amid, or in the lives of, his people. That its basic relationship is to “grace”, while at the same time pointing toward the “gifting” that comes from the Spirit. That *χαρίσματα* comes to be understood as “gift of the Spirit”.

In conjunction, Lindars (1991:58) argues that in Heb. 10:29<sup>62</sup> where the Greek includes the article, “the Spirit of grace” refers to the Spirit as the giver of gifts which flow from the grace of God. The throne of God is described as the “throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16), which is open for continual approaching in reverent prayer and worship.

The community is warned not to fall short of the grace of God which is the grace of an unshakable kingdom (Heb. 12:15, 28). Other references to grace are Hebrews 13:9, where the believer’s heart can be strengthened by grace. The sermon concludes with a benediction of grace upon every reader (Heb. 13:25). Lichtenwaller (2012:105) insists that “at the minimum, insulting the ‘Spirit of grace’ would mean insulting everything that has come from God. But on the other hand, welcoming the ‘Spirit of grace’ would mean not just

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<sup>61</sup> According to H.H Esser (1976:123) grace is used eight times in Hebrews. It should also be noted that grace can be made “cheap”. The writer’s appeal to the congregation to be steadfast in Heb. 10:29, not trample on the Son of God (JB) ... and insults the Spirit of grace may have a negative bearing of grace which will not be restored to them if they do insult the Spirit, the salvation (cf. Hebr. 12:15ff).

<sup>62</sup> Levison (2016:107) suggests that this “text roots the Holy Spirit in Israelite Scripture. Unlike “eternal spirit” in Heb. 9:14, the NT *hapax legomenon* “spirit of grace” has an antecedent in Israelite Scripture, especially Zech. 12:10: which reads in both the LXX and the MT, “And I will pour out a spirit of grace...”

receiving all that comes from God”, but actually opening one’s way via the Spirit to the very “throne of grace” where divine helping grace through our great High Priest is anchored, offered, and sure. It is there at the “throne of grace” via “the Spirit of grace” that the interior transformational work in relation to the New Covenant experience is fully realized in the heart (cf. Heb. 10:15; 13:9). Grace, according to Lichtenwaller works a transformation in the spirit of the believer, which he terms “interior”. Albertson (2005:108) refers to Tanner who says that there are two principles which define “gift” according to the divine economy:

First, God gives unconditionally, without regard for the recipient’s merit or gratitude, and without indebting or obligating the recipient in any way. Second, God’s gifts are given (and further circulated) without competition – indeed without transfer in the normal sense – so that God’s giving works for the mutual benefit of both giver and receiver.

It is in the effect of the Spirit giving grace to the Hebrew congregation that they could be able to persevere in their faith. They received grace without merit and were not in a position to repay the gift. Although Tanner stretches the giving of a natural gift over and above the spiritual gift (in earlier observations), the principle is transferable. As argued in chapter 2, the Holy Spirit is now the benefactor and giver of gifts. He opens up the process of salvation, “committed to setting believers apart<sup>63</sup>, affirming them, proactively transforming them ethically<sup>64</sup> and spiritually, inspiring and empowering them” (Warrington 2008:47). As the Spirit of grace, the Holy Spirit supported the Son (in the words of deSilva 1996:99) to become the “Divine Broker”, giving the church familial status (cf. Heb. 2) which in turn gave them access to God (cf. Heb. 10:19ff).

#### ***4.4.3 Hebrews 4:14-16 in the argument for grace***

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Hebr. 3:1 and other related passages

<sup>64</sup> For detailed moral- ethical discussion see Hebrews 12 and 13

is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace (τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος) that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεον καὶ χάριν εὐρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν, 4:14-16; cf. 10:19-22).

The scripture reference becomes deSilva's mainstay in his argument that the church ("beneficiaries of grace") can approach the God of grace. deSilva's definition of grace and patronage with special reference to Heb. 4:14-16, confirms the basis of my assertion:

A term of central importance for discourse about patronage is *χάρις*; equivalent to the Latin *gratia*, which covers a comparable range of meaning. This term dominates an important transitional section of Hebrews, namely, Heb. 4:14-16. Heb. 4:16 twice employs the noun *χάρις* once to describe the "throne" (referring by metonymy to the One seated upon the throne), once to describe the expected result of such an approach. Usually translated as "grace", classical and Hellenistic Greek authors place this word squarely within the social-semantic field of patronage and clientage. Aristotle, for example, defines *χάρις* as the disposition of a benefactor, "the feeling in accordance with which one who has it is said to render a service to one who needs it, not in return for something nor in the interest of him who renders it, but in that of the recipient" (deSilva 1996:100).

Schweizer (cited in deSilva 1996:102) confirms that "the sacrifice on the cross opens to the new High Priest the way to heaven. Strictly speaking the cross is therefore not the saving event itself, but the act that makes the saving event possible." Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant which his death inaugurated. Hence, deSilva (1996:101) concludes:

Jesus' gift of access to God (4:14-16) affords the community access to resources for endurance in faith so that they may receive the benefactions promised for the future, to be awarded before God's court at the end of the age. The believers may draw near to God and expect to "receive mercy and find favour" – that is, the disposition of God to give assistance – "to help in time of need" (4:16). Such access would be expected to engender confidence in the believers, giving them a hopeful orientation toward the world.

Given these arguments, Jesus' gift of access to God is only possible through the eternal Spirit, who is the Spirit of grace. The church fathers Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the exegesis on Heb. 2:4 remarked: "He also showed the New Covenant to be splendid with spiritual gifts: of old the inspired authors alone share in spiritual bounty,

whereas now all believers enjoy this grace. It is very wise of him to say God witness (testifies – J. A.) to the message through miracles, the demonstration is beyond question, and the reality of the witness indisputable.” Theodore observed similarly: “For the first covenant was only a giving of instructions and obligations, whereas in this (new) Covenant there is also the grace of the Spirit and release from sin and the promise of the kingdom of heaven ... while God further testified with signs and wonders and various powers, saying this so that by its increase the fullness of grace might appear beyond that of the law also in this matter” (Heen & Krey 2005:31-35).

In sum, grace is a gift of the Spirit with which the writer of Hebrews was keenly familiar. Schweitzer (2008:30) asserts that the Spirit empowers and enables people to express in their own lives what they have received from Christ. The work of the Spirit thus surrounds the work of Christ, and the two, Christ and the Spirit, always work together, though they do different things (cf. Heb. 9:14-15). Christ makes the new reality of God’s reign present in history. The Holy Spirit works to prepare for its coming, and then to actualize its presence in the lives of those who receive it, Schweitzer (2008:30) maintains.

#### ***4.4.4 Enlightenment and the heavenly gift of Heb. 6:4-6 (again!)***

In chapter 3 we inferred that enlightenment and illumination are being interchangeably used by commentators and both carries the same meaning in Hebrews. Herewith a summary of the discussion in chapter 3:

The term enlightened is used figuratively in the NT in the sense “to reveal”, “to instruct”, and “to illuminate”. In the passive voice, as here, it has the force of “to be instructed” or “to be illumined,” principally by God and/or His word (Compton 1996:148). Illumination is a lifelong ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church which starts before conversion with a growing grasp of the truth about Jesus and a growing sense of being measured and exposed by it.

Guthrie (1985:567) confirms that enlightenment and the experience of the heavenly gift is “the direct work of the Spirit”. The Spirit brings continuous understanding of God’s will to the believer. Montague (2006:319) insists that enlightenment is a gift of the Spirit. If anyone wants to know something of God, the Spirit is the primary agency. He is the

“channel through whom both Father and Son are communicated through men” (Guthrie 1985:556). When he refers to 1 Cor. 2:13, “Every word we speak was taught to us by God’s Spirit, not by human wisdom. And this same Spirit helps us teach spiritual things to spiritual people”, Guthrie insists on the teaching ministry of the Spirit. Here in Hebrews we agree that the Spirit has the same qualities of teaching, testifying and speaking new things to the New Covenant community. For the reason that the believers received the gift of enlightenment and being baptised, they became sharers of the Holy Spirit. Δωρεά in Heb. 6:4 conveys the idea of a gift, in this case “heavenly gift” – in other words, the conveying of the bestowal of God’s spiritual riches, in the first place in his Son (cf. Gal 1:4; Joh. 3:16) (Montague 2006:319) and then on the believer. “Heavenly” can simply mean a foretaste of heaven, however, in Acts this gift is equated with the Holy Spirit (cf. Act. 2:38<sup>65</sup>; 10:45; 11:17).

A short summary of the “heavenly gift” is also warranted at this juncture:

“The heavenly gift” can be nothing less than God’s gift of “such a great salvation” in Christ and the reception of the Holy Spirit (cf. The Spirit brought them to light to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus through the apostles’ preaching and the testimony of God the Father, Christ and the Spirit (Heb. 2:3-4). For Allen (2009:58) tasting the heavenly gift (Heb. 6:4), becoming a partaker of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4) and tasting the power of the age to come (Heb. 6:5), all form part of the conversion moment.

Levison (2016:103-104) draws a parallel between Hebrews 5:13, 6:4-6 and Acts 2:38-39 to show the impact of the metaphor of drinking/tasting and its counterpart in the Pentecost narrative.

They “become partners with the Holy Spirit” (CEB), are legitimate in principle. In Heb. 3:14, for instance, believers are “sharers [μέτοχοι] in Christ.” Hebrews 6:4, however, is preceded by the cognate participle in 5:13, which suggests a metaphor of drinking or ingestion: “for everyone who lives on [μετέχων] milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness” (NRSV). This verb in 6:4 is again bracketed by references to tasting: tasting the heavenly gift and tasting the word of

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<sup>65</sup> Here in Acts 2:38 δωρεαν carries the total gratuity of the giver, which is God. It is virtually equivalent to χάρις.

God and the miracles of the coming age. The metaphorical quality of these words, then, survives in Hebrews 5-6.

Levison (2016:104) further explains in four steps what his intentions are with the metaphor:

First, the story of Pentecost begins in heaven: “And suddenly *from heaven* there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house, where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1-3). In Hebrews, salvation is tasting of the *heavenly* gift. Second, repentance, so vital to Heb. 6:1-4, provides the climax of Peter’s Pentecost sermon: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.” Third, the Spirit is described as a gift. Peter continues, “and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38-39). The author of Hebrews describes salvation in similar terms as tasting “of the heavenly gift”. Fourth, “powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5) provide an apt description of the signs and wonders of Pentecost “in the last days” (Acts 2:17, 19).

While they tasted the heavenly gift (the Holy Spirit), the congregation became sharers of Christ and μέτοχος of the Holy Spirit. Being a sharer of the Holy Spirit is a gift of access and partnership with the Triune God. Μέτοχος implies sharing in the divine Spirit, fellowship with God and also indicates that we are God’s possession (Bromiley 1985:286-289). Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6:14: “Do not harness yourself in an uneven team of unbelievers” (JB). In this instance μετοχή has the meaning of “fellowship” rather than “participation”. However, partnership brings out the meaning more fully. What does this gift really mean? It communicates to the believer a sense of hope and belonging (Heb. 6:18ff). We belong to Christ and share in his Spirit who procured redemption of our souls and gave as a greater reward (Heb. 10:35). It means that the believers of Hebrews partook of the Spirit in their time. We as believers today share in the Spirit in our time. It has come between the aeons (the former days and these last days) (cf. Heb. 1:1). The eschatological gift of the Spirit enables the believers to share in worship: “You have now come to Mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city of the living God, where thousands and thousands of angels have come to celebrate. Here you will find all of God’s dearest children, whose names are written in heaven. And you will find God himself, who judges everyone. Here also are the spirits of those good people who have been made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23 CEV). Emmrich (2003:67) concludes: “the distributions of the Holy Spirit appear

to identify with spiritual gifts that revolve around utterance and guidance. Such gifts would certainly include prophecy, tongues and perhaps some form of inner enlightenment (wisdom).”.

To conclude the section on spiritual gifts, a few general observations about gifts are necessary. Van Wyk (2015:178-186) lists a few indications when it comes to the Spirit and gifts:

1. *Die Heilige Gees voorsien 'n verskeidenheid van gawes in sy vrymag.* (cf. Lacoste 2005:727).
2. *Die Heilige Gees voorsien verskillende gawes aan verskillende gelowiges, met die gevolg dat alle gawes nie by elke gelowige gevind word nie.*
3. *Die Heilige Gees voorsien hierdie gawes as sigbare tekens van sy teenwoordigheid in die kerk (verg. 1Kor. 14:22; Mark. 16:17; Heb. 13:8). Dit besit 'n verwysende karakter – na die Gees en na die Seun.*

Most importantly about van Wyk's indications is that spiritual gifts are a testimony to the Giver. To add to van Wyk's list, Lacoste (2005:727) confirms that the Spirit manifests itself in a perceptible manner: extraordinary physical signs that are irrefutable exterior signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 2:4; Act. 2:38). However, in Galatians 5:22-23 the fruit of the Spirit manifest as “signs of character” which are within the person and is expressed in daily Christ-like Spirit-filled behaviour. In the process of manifestation and “presentness” the prophetic kerygma of the Spirit or human agent of the Spirit is irreplaceable. The Holy Spirit directs the path of the church and guides her into her destiny.

#### ***4.4.5 The Holy Spirit's work in the believer***

The Holy Spirit's function in the Hebrews community should be viewed against the larger context of the author's thoughts and argumentation. Schreiner (2015:447) suggests that there is a vibrant, although limited view of the Holy Spirit's presence in Hebrews. His observation of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews is sensible. He said, “What we find in an occasional letter like Hebrews does not represent the entirety of the author's theology”

(2015:447). Perseverance of the saints is a leitmotiv in Hebrews. Therefore, the Holy Spirit encourages the perseverance of the saints. Hebrews emphasises the importance of persevering faith and to that extent it is no surprise that the Holy Spirit would play a part in encouraging the believers (Jupp 2013 n.p.).

#### ***4.4.5.1 The Spirit transforms believers and warns against apostasy***

To begin with, “the Spirit initiates and calls to repentance” (Heb. 6:1-3). We stressed that the gift of illumination and enlightenment is of the Spirit. Baptisms in Hebrews is linked to the water baptism of the believers (Attridge1989:169; Johnson 2006:159), but also to the baptism in the Spirit<sup>66</sup> in the light of the allusion and similarities of this pericope with Pentecost. The Spirit is the gift of new age that is fulfilled in Christ. With regard to the Spirit’s earlier work, Hebrews 6:4 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit introduces unbelievers to the realm of salvation, empowering the unsaved who came under the hearing of the gospel to have a certain appreciation of the benefits of salvation (cf. Jupp 2013 n.p.; Schreiner 2015:477; and Witherington 2008:47). Bloesch (2000:286) shares the same thoughts when stating; “the Spirit inspires the words of Scripture and he illumines the minds of the readers so that they may come to a saving knowledge of the Word of God.”.

The Spirit continues to warn against apostasy and the dire possibility of falling out of grace. The warning against apostasy is a motif in Hebrews that the writer addresses several times (cf. 2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 10:26-31; 12:14-28) (van Zyl 1990:336). Individual apostasy is only possible for those who have experienced salvation, regeneration, and renewal through the Holy Spirit (Hayford 2002:1918-1919). There are at least two aspects of apostasy:

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<sup>66</sup> Johnson (2006:159) writes that through the laying on of hands of the Apostles the Holy Spirit was bestowed on the believers (cf. Act. 8:17-18; 19:6) in connection with ritual of baptism.

Grosheide (1955:142) also confirms that the Holy Spirit is given at the imposition of hands and baptism; “Dat de schrijver aan den Heiligen Geest denkt, bewijst niet slechts πνεύματος ἁγίου, vs. 6, maar ook het onmiddellijk volgende en door τέ nauw met βαπτισμῶν verbundene ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν. De oplegging der handen geeft den Heiligen Geest, vgl. Hand. 8:17; 9:17; 19:6 (handoplegging volgt op den doop); 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6. De vraag is echter, of het opzettelijk vermelden van de handoplegging niet onmogelijk maakt bij de eerste plaats de gave des Heiligen Geestes”.

- 1) Theological apostasy, i.e. the rejection of all or some of the original teachings of Christ and the apostles, and
- 2) Moral apostasy, i.e. the former believer ceases to remain in Christ and instead become enslaved again to sin and immorality (Hayford et al., 2002).

The Spirit warns against the possibility of a deliberate hardening of hearts to his voice (Heb. 3:7). If it does occur, the person spurns the gift of grace (Heb. 10:26-29). If the situation continues and the believer refuses to repent and return to God, he may reach a point of no return (Heb. 6:4-6). Having said that, the “only safeguard against the danger of ultimate apostasy is found in the admonition: ‘today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts’” (Heb.3:7-8,15; 4:7) (Hayford et al., 2002:1919)<sup>67</sup>. Van Zyl (1990:346) agrees to the same extent saying:

*Die skrywer wil nie soseer allerlei beperkings op God se vermoë tot vergifnis plaas as dat hy sy lesers teen die moontlikheid van afvalligheid wil waarsku en oproep tot volharding nie. Dit kan ons sê omdat die **adúnaton**<sup>68</sup> van 6:4 finaliter ingebed lê in die toelatende wil van God. In 6:3 (ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπη ὁ Θεός) plaas die skrywer byvoorbeeld die voortgaan na die volmaakte onderrig omtrent Jesus binne die wil van God: dus nie vir ons om te besluit of ons wil voortgaan of nie, maar is van God se toestemming afhanklik. Net so is dit ook met die oordeel van God gesteld: op die oppervlak gesien is ‘n tweede bekering vir alle praktiese doeleindes onmoontlik, maar myns insiens is dit vanuit die dieptestruktuur van die verse geregtig om te sê dat ook so ‘n harde uitspraak uiteindelik aan die finale wil van God onderworpe is.*

Friedrich (1990:33-34) emphasises that God’s creative grace makes the impossible possible and God’s grace and permissive will is often emphasised in contrast to our human impotency to forgive. It is in this vein that Schreiner (2015:489) observes that all those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit need the warnings and thus obtain final salvation.

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<sup>67</sup> See also Attridge 170-171 for a similar discussion on the fate of apostasy.

<sup>68</sup> ἀδύνατος – *unable*, that is, *weak* (literally or figuratively); passively *impossible*: - could not do, impossible, impotent, not possible, weak. Friedrich (1990:33-34) indicates that ἀδύνατος occurs four times in Hebrews out of 10 of its appearance in the NT.

#### 4.4.5.2 *God's speech as form of encouragement to the believers*

In chapter 3 we made this observation; “The writer regards the words of scripture in the truest sense as the words of the Holy Spirit. We concluded that these specific texts are contemporary in application to the original audience.”. The act of listening serves as a motif throughout Hebrews, and the Holy Spirit speaks at decisive moments. The Spirit engages believers in an active and present sense (cf. Hebrews 3:7-11). Attridge (1989:170) asserts that *καλὸν ... ῥῆμα* (good word of God) “recalls the motif of God’s speech so prominent in the first four chapters”. This word is reminiscent of the speech of the Holy Spirit in the wilderness, leading and guiding the Israelites. The illumination of the believers is an allusion to the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. It resembles the presence of Yahweh among his people.

It can thus be said that the voice of the Spirit fits within the overall theology of Hebrews. The Holy Spirit speaks by Scripture and directs his speaking to brothers who are receiving this exhortation. In other words, the Spirit speaks from the Scripture in order to help the believers to persevere in the faith (Jupp n.p.). Emmrich (2002:17) makes a similar point when he states the ultimate purpose for the Spirit’s use of Scriptures is to achieve an unmediated impact on the addressees – So let us come near God with pure hearts and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let us keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water (Heb. 10:22 CEV).

This idea of encouraging perseverance has further support when we consider Hebrew 9:11-14 in what is central to the thought of the epistle to the Hebrews. We find a reference to the eternal Spirit who enables Christ in his journey (Emmrich 2002:17). Christ did not offer Himself to God on his own but through the Holy Spirit. This is the only time in the NT that we observe the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the atonement, which is a substantial contribution to NT theology (cf. Emmrich 2002:22-23, Jupp 2013 n.p.). For Levison (2016:109) “the Holy Spirit is the interpreter of Scripture in the three out of seven references to the Spirit in Hebrews. The Spirit interprets a particular text of Scripture

through modification, omission, and addition (Heb. 3:7-8; 10:15) and reveals the true meaning of elements such as the tabernacle (Heb. 9:8). The Spirit, then, is an active participant and guide that communicates the meaning of Scripture to the community of the letter.” Through the witness of the Holy Spirit the believers entered the fulfilment of the promises of the New Covenant. Their sins are forgiven, and they possess the confidence to draw near to God, something that they would have missed out if it was not the Holy Spirit speaking to them “today”.

As mentioned, God and the Son speak elsewhere, but the Spirit is employed when delivering direct speech to the audience, for that reason, the Spirit can be considered as eschatological orator (Emmrich 2002:61).

#### ***4.4.5.3 The Spirit as guide***

The Spirit proceeds to guide the church into the right understanding of the gospel message. The community of Hebrews has been described as a people on pilgrimage (cf. Käsemann 1984). Although the Spirit in Hebrews is chiefly thought of as an “Inspirer of Scripture”, he is also their eschatological guide (cf. Nairne 2014: cxxviii). In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit enables and empowers believers. Emmrich (2003:58) concludes: “Partakers of the Holy Spirit is those who experience Pneuma as the guiding power on their earthly pilgrimage by way of Spirit-inspired utterances and Spirit-induced wisdom”. God’s people have an authentic experience of his presence in their faith journey. As Christ fulfilled his mission in the power of the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), so the person in Christ can only fulfil their mission in the same Spirit (cf. Dunn 2006:158). The basic supposition is: what is true of Jesus (that He was enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit) is also true of believers (cf. Jupp 2013 n.p.). The Holy Spirit works in order to enable believers in their journey.

#### ***4.4.5.4 The Holy Spirit is essential to the process of salvation***

The Spirit prepares for what may be the pivotal passage of the book, Heb. 9:11-14, in which Jesus achieves eternal salvation. Dunn (2006:159) notes that the Spirit is Jesus’ mode of existence. One cannot have Jesus without the Spirit. He emphasises that “the Spirit bears

the character of Christ and impresses that character on those who submit to it.”. This is the salvation to which the believers in Hebrews became familiar with. So, the Holy Spirit emphasises a greater salvation – do not miss it as Esau has missed his. Levison (2016:109) asserts that “Hebrews 10:15-18 depicts, through a modified citation of Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant, with lavish forgiveness of sins. Both aforementioned texts communicate central themes of the book: the inadequacy of the Old Covenant and the unparalleled effectiveness of the new.”

Distributions of the Holy Spirit are integral to “so great a salvation” (Heb. 2:4). The Spirit, as the interpreter of Scripture, instructs the community not to harden their hearts in rebellion, to keep them from entering God’s rest (Heb. 3:7-8). Repentance is impossible for those who have left a salvation that consists, among other things, of sharing in – or ingesting – the Holy Spirit (cf. Levison 2016:109; Heb. 6:4). Hebrews 9:14 features the unblemished self-offering of Jesus as priest through the eternal Spirit. As 9:14 relates to the atoning work of Christ it becomes pivotal in the interpretation of the OT in Hebrews (cf. Guthrie 1998:567). Hebrews 10:29, outraging the Spirit of grace – the word “grace” signals salvation – is associated with rejecting the son of God and profaning the sanctifying blood of the covenant. The “Son”, “grace” and the “blood” are a holy salvific trinity that must not be spurned, profaned, or outraged (cf. Levison 2016:109). All seven references to the Holy Spirit offer crucial insight into different dimensions of Hebrews’ concept of salvation.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

In summary, I extended the phrase “prophetic community” to include, 1) a well-organised community of believers which practised worship in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and 2) functioned as a restored community where the prophetic spirit and New Covenant formed the basis of community life. I also used Hebrews 3:7ff as a paradigm on how the Spirit operates within a prophetic community (the wilderness generation vs. the

writer's original audience). In Hebrews there exists a coherent and creative pneumatology (cf. Levison 2016:100). The Holy Spirit says, indicates, reveals, and testifies in present. The Holy Spirit *alters* Scripture to intensify its relevance for the readers of Hebrews. The Spirit uses the divine speech from Psalm 95 and "reprocesses" it in harmony with the audience's present needs. The Holy "Spirit extends the meaning of Scripture seamlessly to the book's recipients. In Hebrews, there is a theology in which the Spirit speaks directly, via Scripture, to the community of faith at the time of the letter" (Levison 2016:100), but still continues to speak prophetically in our modern contexts.

The author of Hebrews ascribed the same new-covenant text (Jer. 31:31) to God (Heb. 8:8) and to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:15) to indicate that, for him, the Holy Spirit is God and it serves as the theological fulfillment of that promise. Burke & Warrington (2014) observes that "Jeremiah's New Covenant, Moses' longing for the Spirit to be upon all God's people (Num. 11:29) and Joel's prophetic vision of God pouring out his Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28) come together in the declaration that the Holy Spirit partners the new-covenant people (Heb. 6:4; 2:11), who are also partnered by Christ (Heb. 3:14)". The author is also comfortable in asserting that Christ and the Spirit are "partners" in the atonement and that God and the Spirit are the co-equal voices behind Scripture (cf. Heb. 9:14). The Spirit in Hebrews serves as illuminator and guide. The prophetic speech of the Spirit encourages the believers to persevere in their faith.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE SPIRIT AND THE SON**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 dealt primarily with the Spirit and the believer in Hebrews. In Chapter 5, I envisage to bring the Spirit and Jesus to the fore. In other words, I will try to explain how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews supports the ministry of the Son with regard to his incarnation, humiliation and exaltation. I will try to expound on how the Son/Logos Christology in Christology proper can be enhanced when it is read together with a Spirit Christology which I deem present in Hebrews. I will be summarising a definition of Spirit Christology, engaging Habets, Pinnock and Ratzinger as dialogue partners. Finally, I will propose an Incarnational Spirit Christology (ISC) in Hebrews which I believe to be functional and a viable complement to the Christology of Hebrews.

#### **THE SPIRIT SUPPORTING THE SON**

##### **(Heb. 9:11-14)**

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit

offered himself without blemish to God (ὅς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ), purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

### 5.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF HEBREWS 9

The writer of Hebrews gives us an overview of what was described in the OT law. Here in chapter 9, he takes time to reflect on what it all means. France (2006:114) indicates that far from regarding the OT accounts as valueless, our author recognizes them as deriving from the Holy Spirit and therefore as a means of divine revelation. The Holy Spirit discloses through these details that it was not something for the time they were originally instituted (except in the negative sense to show that the way was not yet opened), but rather a message for the future, when the “way into the Most Holy Place” would at last be “disclosed” (cf. France 2006:114). All of it is explained against the backdrop of the Day of Atonement. Primarily the Day of Atonement ritual signifies the entrance into the presence of God only on the strictest conditions and for one person alone (i.e. the High Priest). The Holy Spirit indicates that the day was coming when the way would be open for all God’s people to enter in with confidence (cf. Heb. 4:16; 7:19; 10:19-22).

Attridge (1989:244) summarises the context of Hebrews 9:1-14 in the following statement:

Hebrews turns to the sacrifice of the new covenant, that of Christ. Between the sacrifice and the central ritual of the old cult on Yom Kippur there exists a close but antithetical correspondence. Instead of an earthly tabernacle, Christ through his exaltation ministers in its perfect heavenly counterpart (cf. Heb. 9:11). Instead of animal’s blood, he brings into the true inner sanctuary his own (9:12). While the animal’s blood served only for external purification (9:12), his offering, made in the realm of the spirit, provides effective cleansing of the human conscience (9:14).

Similarly, Guthrie (1998:311) indicates that the writer has two prominent Old Testament images in mind as he walks us through this part of his argument: the high priest’s Day of Atonement sacrifice and the sacrifice made by Moses to inaugurate the Sinai covenant. The writer contrasts the sacrifices relating to these two covenants. The New Covenant was inaugurated by Christ through his way into the very presence of God in heaven (Heb. 8:1).

The writer makes it clearer in Hebrews 9:24, “For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one, he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence”. Christ entered heaven to make all things new. He has arrived on the heavenly scene as High Priest. His priesthood involves or is characterised by the “good things which have come into being”. Through Christ’s priestly act the good things that the Law and its cultic system fore-shadowed have become a reality and the promises of the inner renewal in a new covenant are being realized (cf. Attridge 1989:245).

Furthermore, Lane (2004:118) points out that the achievement of our high priest (Heb. 9:11-14) is communicated to us in three distinct processes: he entered the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:12), he obtained eternal salvation (Heb. 9:12), and he has decisively cleansed the conscience (9:13-14ff.). The outline which Lane (2004:122) proposes recognizes that the initial subsection (Heb. 9:11-14) prepares for the conclusion that Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant. The association of the mediatory role of the death of Christ occurred for redemption from sins committed, communicates “continuity and discontinuity with the action of the Levitical high priest on the Day of Atonement. A single point of continuity is emphasised: like the Levitical high priest, Christ passes through the front compartment and entered the Most Holy Place by means of blood to secure atonement for his people”. The emphasis, nevertheless, falls on discontinuity. Lane (2004:122) accentuates four points of discontinuity:

- (1) The location of his priestly ministry was not an earthly tabernacle (cf. Heb. 9:1) but the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:12a).
- (2) How he approached God was not the blood of animals but by means of his own blood (Heb. 9:12b).
- (3) He was obligated to enter the Most Holy Place “year by year”; he entered once for all (9:12a).
- (4) The result of his priestly action was not limited to the recurring cleansing of the annual atonement ritual, but the obtaining of “eternal redemption” (9:12a).

## 5.2 THE σκηνή - ENTRANCE INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The unrestricted way to God is opened through the death of Christ on the cross which includes and fulfils the meaning of both covenants. When it comes to importance and description of the image of the tabernacle, Attridge (1989:246) conceived a major problem. He maintains that “many interpreters from the patristic period onward have found here in vv. 1-9 a profound symbol, and have seen the tent as Christ’s human body, his whole human life, his glorified body, his sacramental body, the liturgy of the New Covenant, or the church”, which he ruled out as allegories. Others, including Westcott and Bruce<sup>69</sup>, have suggested the tabernacle of Hebrews 9:11 refers to the Church, the people of God, as the place of our high priest’s ministry. Attridge (1989:246) then suggests that “the equation of the tabernacle and the body of Christ is simply not made in Hebrews, nor is there any kind of other metaphorical understanding of σκηνή warranted in the immediate context. The major objection to these metaphorical readings of σκηνή is that they ignore or do violence to the basic imagery of the Yom Kippur ritual that Hebrews is exploiting.”

The earthly sanctuary is simply the focal point of the ritual – the high priest passes through the sanctuary to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. The sprinkled blood was accepted by God, and the confessed sins of the people were transferred from the sanctuary to the high priest. The high priest then transferred these confessed sins to the scapegoat, which was led into the wilderness to perish (cf. Lev. 16:16, 20-22). In this manner, the sanctuary<sup>70</sup> was cleansed of the sins of the people, which had been transferred there by the blood sprinkled before the veil and had been accumulating for a year. In a nutshell, this how it worked: “It is not the ritual itself, nor the means by which atonement is accomplished. In the reality of which the Yom Kippur ritual is a shadow, the true High Priest also performs his atoning ritual by passing through a tabernacle, but in this case, it is the ‘true’ tent that

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<sup>69</sup> Cited in Guthrie 1998:314

<sup>70</sup> Cockerill (2001:192) indicates that there exists an OT precedent: the sins of the people polluted the sanctuary (Lev. 16:16; 20:3; 21:23; Num. 19:20-21). The cleansing of the sanctuary indicates the removal of the barrier erected by sin that keeps God’s people from approaching him. It is not necessary to make the heavenly “sanctuary” just another way of speaking about the “conscience” or interiority of God’s people (cf. Attridge 1989:162). The writer of Hebrews believes that heaven is a real place.

God has pitched” (Attridge 1989:246). The true tent of Hebrews is none other than the body of Christ offered to God so that his people can have access to the presence of God.

The “greater and more perfect” (*μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας*) recall the frequent comparatives used for the superior elements of the heavenly order (cf. Attridge 1996:247). Lane (1991:238) comments that *μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας* is used to describe more perfectly the fulfilment of its function; “it actually led Christ, and ultimately his people into the presence of God”. Hebrews admits a distinction between the heavens as celestial spheres and the “true” or transcendent realm where God erects a tent, a distinction between the visible heavens and “heaven itself” (cf. Attridge 1989: 247). The latter could be at risk of “passing away”. The writer of Hebrews observed earlier that Christ passed “through the heavens” (cf. Heb. 4:14) which possibly refers to ascension through the visible heavens. Without doubt, the author has in mind a more abstract “heaven”, embodied in its total by *σκηνή*. *Σκηνή* (whether earthly or heavenly) has everything to do with bringing the worshipper into the presence of God. Lane (1985:238) asserts that the passage through which Christ passed is indicated as the heavens, though “not made with hands, that is to say, not of ordinary building” (cf. Heb. 8:2). The writer asserts that it is not the visible heavens but the heaven as God’s dwelling place. God’s presence (or heaven) is the greater and more perfect one that Christ passes through suffering to enter God’s glory (cf. Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28; 10:14; 11:40; 12:2, 23). Johnson (2006:236) maintains that “passing through the heavens” refers to God’s own life.

The writer contrasts the place of access to God under the Old and the New Covenants in v. 11b. The dissimilarity between the mode of access in v. 12a (“not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood”) is in the “blood” of the sacrifice. The term *αἷμα*, “blood”, is clearly being used in a sacrificial sense and is fundamental to the argument in this section (Lane 1991:238). Hebrews asserts that there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood (9:22; cf. also Eph. 1:7 “... we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”). According to Attridge (1989:248) “blood” could be the life that Christ offers eternally in heaven, or more likely, the sacrificial death that precedes that entry. At the Yom Kippur ritual, the blood

united the death of the sacrificial victim outside the inner sanctuary and the atoning action that takes place within (cf. Attridge 1989:248). Christ completed the atoning ritual of his sacrifice through his own blood. This is exactly what the writer emphasises. In contrast to the priest on Yom Kippur, Christ obtains an eternal redemption.

Kamp (2010:218) emphasises the overarching purpose of both incidents in the salvation history of Israel (Yom Kippur and Christ's entry into the heaven):

*Dit hoofdelement verbint de beide perioden van Gods reddingsgeschiedenis – geen aards, maar een hemelsheilgdom; geen dierenbloed, maar eigen bloed; geen beperkte maar eeuwige verlossing.*

Both positive and negative provisions of the two incidents can be highlighted by the shedding of blood. Chiastically<sup>71</sup> it follows the subsequent pattern –

- A     He went through the greater and more perfect tent.
- B     that is not made with human hands ... that is not part of this creation
- B     He did not enter by means of blood of goats and calves.
- A     by his own blood.

It is implicated that just as the high priest of the Yom Kippur ritual, Christ had to offer something for the forgiveness of sin and that is, His own blood that “takes away the sin of the world” (cf. John 1:29).

Christ's entrance into the heavenly sanctuary is qualified by ἐφάπαξ, “once for all”, a term that excludes both the necessity and the possibility of repetition (cf. Johnson 2006:236). The entry was definitive which achieved final redemption. The context of Christ's death, ascension, and entrance into the heavenly sanctuary are seen retrospectively as a unity (cf. Lane 1991:238; Attridge 1989:249). The sacrifice of Christ requires no replication or renewal. It is his exaltation and entrance into the heavenly (“real”) sanctuary that sanctifies his eternal redemptive ministry. It is also noted in what the Hebrew writer confesses – that the blood of Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and [his] the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24). The blood of Christ procures our

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<sup>71</sup> Compare to Kamp 2010:218

redemption. Christ's blood was effective for the true inward cleansing available for the conscience of the believer (cf. Kamp 2010:217). The writer states through the main clause of verse 14 that this is in effect what Christ's "blood" can do: "cleanse our conscience<sup>72</sup> from dead works to serve the living God". The relative clause indicates why his blood is thus effective: "... through the eternal Spirit offered himself blameless to God." (cf. Cockerill 2001:189 and Johnson 2006:237). Attridge (1989:250) asserts that

"what is involved in the atoning sacrifice of the heavenly high priest is not the blood of animals, but that of Christ. In fact, what Christ offered was, 'himself'. The victim was not something extrinsic to the officiant and that officiant was none other than the eternal Son. Hence, the blood, and by metonymy the sacrifice as a whole, is of immense value."

Johnson (2006:238) puts it in another way:

Hebrews emphasises the distinction in case by elaborating the offering itself. It was "through an eternal spirit" and "blameless" ... It is not merely that Jesus offered his own lifeblood, but that he did so as the eternal Son and as a blameless human being. It is not, in short, Christ's physical lack of blemish, but rather his moral or spiritual disposition that distinguishes his offering of himself.

The writer's exposition in Hebrews 9:1-14 focuses on delineating the basis of entrance into the presence of God for meaningful worship. He concludes that it was procured through Christ in the heavenly sanctuary with his blood and through the eternal Spirit. Interpreters debate as to whether the "eternal Spirit" (v.14) is the Holy Spirit or Christ's divine nature. Cockerill suggests that the clause "often diverted interpreters from the pastor's main point – Christ's sacrifice is based on the power of God" (2012: loc.4465). A thorough discussion on the eternal Spirit is warranted.

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<sup>72</sup>Gundry (2011: loc.1348) maintains that many English translations have "conscience" instead of "consciousness", but "consciousness" may better get across the thought of "dead works" playing on the mind so as to interdict the doing of religious service. The author calls sins "dead works" in that they are deeds which for our eternal redemption necessitated the Christ's self-sacrificial death. The writer contrasts "For the living God" with "dead works" and suggests eternal life as an advantage of eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12) and an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

### 5.3 THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT

The phrase is literally “through eternal spirit”, and some have suggested the reference is to Christ’s own spirit (“in his eternal nature”, Attridge, Hughes, and Westcott<sup>73</sup>, Montefiore, to mention a few), but this would be an unusual usage for Hebrews, and “eternal Spirit” would be a natural term for the Holy Spirit, who belongs to the divine as opposed to the human realm. The role of the Spirit is not elsewhere in the NT mentioned in connection with Christ’s death (cf. Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18 for the Spirit’s role in his resurrection; see also France 2006:118). In the same vein, Cockerill (2012: loc.4465) suggests that the writer to the Hebrews is probably using this term in reference to the Holy Spirit, but without lessening all that he has said about the Son’s eternal being. We noted other references to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; and 9:8 (cf. Heb.10:15). The building up of these references draws the reader to hear “eternal Spirit” as a description of the same reality – that which Christ has accomplished through the power of the Spirit.

It is mentioned that Attridge (1989:250-251) does not support the notion that “eternal Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit. He sternly observes:

The precise import of this phrase is difficult to determine. Like much else in this verse, it probably reflects traditional formulation about Christ’s atoning death and in such formulas extreme precision is not to be expected. Trinitarian<sup>74</sup> speculation, advocated by patristic and some modern interpreters, is not involved. Hebrews’ references to the spirit are too diffuse and ill-focused to support a Trinitarian theology in this context. Nor is the phrase simply a reflection of language of the Old Testament about the “suffering servant”<sup>75</sup> ... Although it would be anachronistic to find here a developed ‘two-nature’ Christology, the spirit here most likely refers

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<sup>73</sup> See Guthrie 1998:314

<sup>74</sup> France (2006:118) attests that the mention of the “Holy Spirit in connection with Christ’s self-offering serves to locate it in the spiritual realm as opposed to that of earthly ritual, and in the process, affords one of those intriguing NT pointers towards the doctrine of the Trinity, in that all three Persons are involved in the work of atonement.” See also later discussion of the Trinity.

<sup>75</sup> For (Bruce 1990:217) this is exactly the opposite. He asserts that “behind our author’s thinking lies the portrayal of the Isaianic Servant of the Lord, who yields up his life to God as a guilt offering for many, bearing their sin, and procuring their justification. When this Servant is introduced for the first time, God says: ‘I have put my spirit upon him’ (Isa. 42:1).” Bruce furthermore asserts that “it is in the power of the Divine Spirit that the Son accomplishes every phase in his life, including the crowning phase in which he accepts death for the transgression of his people, filling the twofold role of priest and victim, as Christ does in this epistle” (1990:217).

to Christ and to the interior or spiritual quality of his sacrificial act. Christ's self-offering was thus made with that portion of his being that was most truly himself."

Similarly, Grosheide (1955:209) deduced that the writer is expressing the majesty of the sacrificial death of Christ extensively. Christ has sacrificed himself. He maintains that the alternative reading of *ἀγίου* in 9:14 (instead of *αἰωνίου*) cannot be accepted in this context. In Christ lived an immortal *πνεῦμα* which cannot be transmitted to sacrificial animals. Grosheide (1955:209) insists:

Hebr. spreekt niet van Goddelijke natuur, maar hij doelt toch op hetgeen Jezus in staat stelde te leven, nadat hij geofferd was ... Deze verwante verzen (Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Kor. 15:45; 2 Kor. 13:4; 3:17 – J.A.) doen zien, dat in verband met het eeuwig leven van Christus meer van *πνεῦμα* sprake is en kunnen daarom verklaren, dat de schrijver hier na *διά* niet als na *κατά*, 7:16, van *ζωή* spreekt, doch van *πνεῦμα*. Ze verklaren ook, dat onder *πνεῦμα* niet kan worden verstaan een bijzonder soort spiritueel leven, zonder meer.

The context of this section is determinative for Grosheide. The Holy Spirit cannot be imported here because of the overarching importance of the sacrifice of Christ which was made through his eternal Spirit. Nevertheless, Christ is more than a human; he is "Gode gelijk". He can live and die (cf. Grosheide 1955:210), because of his spiritual life. Interpreters who argue like Attridge, Grosheide and others, focus on "the eternal Spirit" as the Holy Spirit enabling Christ to act as both priest and sacrifice, but the use of "eternal" rather than "Holy" or "of God" alludes to the eternality of the effected redemption (cf. Gundry 2011: loc.1348; Heb. 9:12).

I do not hold the position of Attridge, Grosheide and others. I will furthermore refer to other scholars' views and expositions on the "eternal Spirit" in Hebrews 9:14 to highlight my hypothesis for this section: the "eternal Spirit" is none other than the Holy Spirit.

The early Fathers had a firm grasp on the notion that *αἰώνιος* refers to the Holy Spirit. A large number of manuscripts<sup>76</sup> actually use the word *ἀγίου* in place of *αἰωνίου*, including

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<sup>76</sup> According to Johnson (2006:234) "a substantial number of MMS, including the original of D and the first corrector of  $\aleph$ , have Holy Spirit (*pneuma hagiou*) rather than 'eternal spirit' (*pneuma aiōniou*) found in the original hand of  $\aleph$ , A, and B, as well as the second hand of D. The change may be due to the presence of 'Holy Spirit' in the preceding 9:8."

the Sinaiticus and Bezae Codices, as well as the source text used by John Chrysostom in his *Homilies* on Hebrews. Two examples are given to indicate how Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom utilise Hebrews 9:14 in their respective commentaries:

Ambrose of Milan (4th c.) cited this verse in Book I of *On the Holy Spirit*:<sup>77</sup>

For how can it be credible that the Spirit should be divided by any parcelling out? John says of God: “Hereby know we that He abides in us by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1 John 3:24). But that which abides always is certainly not changed, therefore if it suffers no change it is eternal. *And so the Holy Spirit is eterna*<sup>78</sup>, but the creature is liable to fault, and therefore subject to change. But that which is subject to change cannot be eternal, and there cannot therefore be anything in common between the Spirit and the creature, because *the Spirit is eternal*, but every creature is temporal.

But the Apostle also shows that *the Holy Spirit is eternal*, for: “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the sprinkling the ashes of an heifer sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God?” (Hebrews 9:13,14). Therefore the Spirit is eternal.

John Chrysostom (also 4th c.) writes in Homily XV on the Epistle to the Hebrews:<sup>79</sup>

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the Holy [*ἀγίου*] Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ...

Nor was he content with the name, but he sets forth also the manner of the offering. “Who” (he says) “through the Holy [*ἀγίου*] Spirit offered Himself without spot to God”, that is, the victim was without blemish, pure from sins. For this is (the meaning of) “through the Holy Spirit”, not through fire, nor through any other things.

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<sup>77</sup> See <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/21080/in-hebrews-914-what-is-the-meaning-of-the-phrase>.

<sup>78</sup> Although Ambrose favours the reading: “Eternal,” he does refer to the Holy Spirit as “eternal”.

<sup>79</sup> See <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/21080/in-hebrews-914-what-is-the-meaning-of-the-phrase>.

The early writers of the apostolic and patristic periods understood that the function of the Holy Spirit is intrinsically linked to that of Christ (an argument to which I will return later). The development of the writer to include the official procedure of the sacrificial system of the tabernacle and temple worship laid the theological foundations of the “superiority” or “better” arguments in the book. If one follows this line of thought it is particularly evident to see how the writer elaborates on the superiority of Christ, (his sacrifice and death), through his use of juxtaposing terms, particularly “present time” and “eternal”. The “manner of offering” – through the eternal Spirit, is what makes it acceptable and pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit is not liable to fault or in the words of Hebrews, he does not belong to the “created” order which is prone to “change” or to that which can “pass away”. The effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ is due to the fact the he was appointed high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, although not categorically stated in this pericope. Snyman (2014:7) maintains that the divine nature of Christ contributed to the success of his sacrifice. He concludes:

Sy goddelike natuur het 'n transendente waarde en effektiwiteit aan sy offer verleen. Hy het Homself deur die ewige Gees aan God sonder smet geoffer (Heb. 9:14). Soos God by die aanstelling van die Aäronitiese priesters betrokke was, so is Hy ook by Christus se priesterdiens betrokke deur die persoon van die Heilige Gees.

Not only does the divine nature of Christ plays a role in his acceptance of offering himself to cleanse the conscience from sin in Snyman’s observation, but it is done through the involvement of the person of the Holy Spirit.

A few decades ago Bruce (1990:217) observed that the earlier sacrifices were symbolic sacrifices – the sacrifice of Christ was a real self-offering, accomplished on the moral and spiritual arena. He further confirms that:

It was “through the eternal spirit” that he offered himself to God. The phrase “through eternal spirit” (as it is literally, whether the substantive be spelled with a capital “S” or not) is extremely difficult to interpret with satisfactory precision. About the variant rendering of the ARV margin, “through his eternal spirit,” it may be said that if our author had meant this, he could have said so quite simply. That our Lord’s self-sacrifice is described as “a spiritual and eternal sacrifice” (NEB) is clear, but perhaps even more is intended.

Cockerill (2012: loc.4475) refers to the Jewish tradition which associated the Holy Spirit with the atoning work of the high priest. It is thus not strange for the writer of Hebrews to refer to the Holy Spirit as “eternal Spirit” in this context. What does it truly entail for the readers to hear of the Holy Spirit as “eternal Spirit?” Cockerill (loc.4475) suggests that:

Omission of the definite article in Greek (literally, “through eternal Spirit”) puts emphasis on the “eternal” quality of the Spirit thus displayed. Furthermore, “eternal” evokes all that the pastor has said about the eternal being of the Son in chapter 1 through 7. Hebrews 7:1-25 has made it clear that the Son’s effective priesthood is based on his eternal sonship, for he has become priest “by the power of an indestructible life”.

It was only through the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ could procure our eternal redemption. The unblemished and final sacrifice of Christ was a free-will offering to the living God. Lane (1991:240) also asserts that,

The sinless high priest was also the spotless victim. The free offering of himself to God was the culmination of a life of perfect obedience. The fact that his offering was made *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*, through the eternal Spirit, implies that he had been divinely empowered and sustained in his office. The formulation does not occur elsewhere in the NT or early Christian literature, but it may be understood as a designation for the Holy Spirit. A reference to the Spirit is appropriate in a section under the influence of Isaiah, where the Servant of the Lord is qualified for his task by the Spirit of God<sup>80</sup>.

Levison (2016:105) indicates that the words *πνεῦμα αἰώνιον* constitute a NT *hapax legomenon*. It is another way the writer could relate to the Holy Spirit other than those he were taught by the apostles. Levison (2016:106) and Emmrich (2002:21) agree that Hebrews 9:14 “is remarkable, because it is the only verse in the NT that affirms the Spirit’s involvement in the atonement”. The *hapax legomenon*, set in the context of the death of Jesus and brought the Holy Spirit in direct relation with Christ (Motyer 2012:227).

Levison (2016:106) supposes that if “eternal spirit” be understood as the spirit within Jesus, then the author has tapped into a long-standing Israelite and early Jewish understanding of

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<sup>80</sup> Here Lane shares the sentiment of Bruce [see footnote 6] that the Spirit’s presence in the life of Christ evokes similarities of the Spirit on the Servant of the Lord.

spirit that all but evaporated in the early church. In this tradition, the spirit within, is the locus of learning, purity, and integrity. He backs it up by inferring that “even the author’s preference for the word ‘eternal’ rather than ‘holy’ may reflect the push of his own argument rather than the pull of tradition” (Levison 2016:106).

The writer uses the word “eternal” three times in the scope of this passage: of redemption (Heb. 9:12), of spirit (Heb. 9:14), and of inheritance (Heb. 9:15) (cf. Levison 2016:107; Motyer 2012:227). Lichtenwaller (2012:106) goes a little further with his observation: “Elsewhere he (the writer J.A.) refers to ‘eternal salvation’ (Heb. 5:9), ‘eternal judgement’ (Heb. 6:2), and ‘eternal covenant’ (Heb. 13:20). Each of these adjectival references however, has personal dimensions in the context of the believers’ experience as well as the one mediating such an experience to individual and corporate life.” Albeit, the context of Hebrews 9:14 becomes apparent for interpreting the “eternal Spirit” as “the Holy Spirit”. Not only the context, but also the understanding of the Jewish perception of the role that the Holy Spirit plays in assisting the high priest in his sacerdotal function. When the writer contemplates in “eternal” dimensions, he is prompted to describe salvation, spirit, and inheritance as eternal. Once again, this description of the Spirit suggests that the author has loosened the bonds of traditional pneumatological language in order to develop his own unique way in which he relates to the Spirit (cf. Levison 2016:10).

The writer of Hebrews’ greatest ambition is here to demarcate the salvation act in theological terms. The best way he could have done it, is to communicate the Christ- event on the cross into human and divine terms. That is why Emmrich (2002:21) maintains that in order to:

determine the precise meaning of *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*, we should also keep in mind how theologically fundamental it is for the author to depict the Christ event as a salvific intervention in which God himself acted: God appointed the Son as high priest (Heb. 5:4-6), perfected the Son through suffering (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9), brought him up from the dead (Heb. 13:20) and finally confirmed his priesthood (Heb. 7:20-25). Correspondingly, ‘eternal Spirit’ in 9:14 is likely to denote God’s Spirit.

Motyer (2012:227) points out that in Paul's pneumatology there is a triumphalist view of the Spirit with specific emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:3; 7:5-6; 8:2) as well as an oversized eschatology which has a result of a "super-confidence in the believers' possession of the Spirit". Here in Hebrews 9 we have the case where both perceptions are present. The writer and us, can expect his audience, are both overconfident of the Spirit supporting Christ in his death and resurrection, although not explicitly mentioned, it stems from their possession of the Spirit (cf. Heb. 6:4).

I pointed out how Attridge and others interpret "eternal Spirit" to mean the disposition of Christ and not necessarily "Holy Spirit". The next argument I want to put forth is the personhood of Jesus. By virtue of the writer's argument in Hebrews' exordium and chapter 2, the eternal personhood of Jesus is integral to the argument of his sacrificial death in the "flesh". No doubt, the trajectory of the author's argument does revolve around Christ's eternal personhood in the context of the power of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16).

The writer juxtaposes the flesh of goats and calves over and against the flesh of Christ. We gathered that purification of the flesh by the blood of goats and calves or the ashes of a heifer does not adequately address the human dilemma of a defiled conscience. It was only the sacrificial act of his flesh and blood that were sufficient for the cleansing of a defiled conscience. The writer insists that "the flesh of Christ is offered by the Spirit to God" (Motyer 2012:227).

Johnson (2006:238) is of the opinion:

"that if the effect of the external ritual enabled Israelites to approach the earthly sanctuary in public worship, the effect of the offering of Christ's own blood should be correspondingly greater. Hebrews emphasizes the distinction in cause by elaborating the offering itself. It was 'through an eternal spirit' and 'blameless'."

Jesus offered his own lifeblood, but he did so as the eternal Son, through the eternal Spirit and as an innocent human being. It is not, in short, Christ's physical lack of blemish, but rather his moral/spiritual disposition that distinguishes his offering of himself (cf. Johnson 2006:238). The unblemished self-offering of Jesus-as-priest is through the eternal Spirit (Levison 2016:109).

To conclude this section, it is prudent to say that the Holy Spirit supported Christ in his sacerdotal ministry. The first believers reading Hebrews were intently aware of the presence of the Spirit in the community, both to guide and to support (Heb. 6:1-4). The writer himself was "passionately convinced, and passionately argues that the Holy Spirit now only comes with Christ the Son of God" (Motyer 2012:227). The Spirit enables them to receive the New Covenant in its fulness. Emmrich (2002:31- 32) suggests:

All in all, data from a variety of documents allow us to conclude tentatively that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews could have drawn on a (more or less) traditional pneumatological concept that linked the office of the high priest with the Holy Spirit. *Διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου* thus indicates the Holy Spirit sustained the high priest (here: Christ entering *εἰς τὰ ἅγια*, 9:12) in the execution of his most critical cultic appointment. The Spirit is called "*eternal Spirit*" to bring out the (extraordinary) eschatological significance of the Spirit's assistance in Christ's once-for-all priestly action.

I agree with the authors mentioned above that chapter 9 becomes the pivotal point of the writer's argument – that Christ came as high Priest and offered his life in the heavenly tabernacle for the cleansing of our defiled conscience. He did this by the support of the Spirit of God. The theological thrust is that the atoning work of Christ is in unison with the Father and the Spirit. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus as high priest for every aspect of his ministry, including his sacrificial death.

## 5.4 HIGH CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS

In this section I will explore the Christology of Hebrews. A special emphasis will be on the high Christology and divine identity of the Son which the writer expounds. The Son's career as high priest will also receive attention. In summation, I will argue for a renewed look at the Christology of Hebrews to include a Spirit Christology.

### *5.4.1. The Exordium: an induction to the high Christology of the Son of God and divine identity*

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Hebrews 1:1-4 (NRVS)

Hurtado (2003:498) suggests that our writer in his Christological material sets forth a series of familiar traditional themes and motives. He uses the examples of Paul in Romans 3:24-25 when he refers to the death of Christ as a sacrificial act, and when Paul uses the idea that the exalted Jesus intercedes before God in heaven (Rom 8:34), as if Paul expects the believers to be familiar with this concept (cf. 1 John 2:1-2). The Hebrews writer establishes the basic belief that the God of Israel is still communicating to his children; in the past through the prophets and in the last days through his Son. In Jesus God has superseded all prior revelations to all previous generations in the OT (Hurtado 2003:499; see also chapter 3 of this thesis). The middle segment, or Christological core, of the exordium is structurally framed by allusions to Ps 2:7 ("spoken to us by a Son") and 110:1 ("Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool").

The emphasis on the Son leads to a series of proposals about him – not only does it unlock a view of the cosmological and protological<sup>81</sup> Christology as it appears in the Pauline corpus and prologue to the Gospel of John, but it also introduces us to a Christology of “divine identity”<sup>82</sup> upon which I prefer to elaborate in this section. The Logos Christology of the exordium creates filters for a specific spiritual Christology which we can characterise in the first half of the book based on the humanity of Christ which is equally important to the writer.

Jesus was integral to the identity of God and he must have been so eternally<sup>83</sup>. In other words, the writer draws on the pre-existence of the Son. The Son shares in the identity of God prior to his incarnation. The Jewish Wisdom tradition is employed to state this glorious relationship that Jesus has with God (cf. e.g., Wis. of Sol. 7:22- 8:1<sup>84</sup>). Jesus is the agent through whom he also created<sup>85</sup> the world. He is the reflection (*ἀπαύγασμα*) of God’s glory and the exact imprint (*χαρακτήρ*) of God’s very being (*ὑπόστασις*), and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Bauckham (2003:4) further concludes that, “when we think in terms of divine identity, rather than of divine essence or nature, (which are not the primary categories for Jewish theology), we can see that the divine functions which Jesus exercises are intrinsic to whom God is. The Christology of divine identity is already a fully divine Christology, maintaining that Jesus Christ is intrinsic to the unique and eternal identity of God.”<sup>86</sup> A Christology of divine identity accordingly offers a way to look beyond the alternative of functional Christology, which I perceive not to be part of the writer’s intent when laying out the pre-eminence of the Son. Ontologically the argument for a functional Christology would not

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<sup>81</sup> Gaebelein & Douglas (1981:13)

<sup>82</sup> A term discussed at length by Bauckham (2009) (Bauckham, Driver, Hart, & MacDonald, 2009:17). Farrar refers to this concept as “narrative identity” (2014:3).

<sup>83</sup> The passages of the Johannine prologue, Col. 1, and Heb. 1 point to it.

<sup>84</sup> See Cockerill (2012); Ellingworth (1993); Johnson (2006); and Farrar (2014: n.p.)

<sup>85</sup> Heb. 2:10; 3:4 and 11:3 *By faith we understand that time was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are invisible.*

<sup>86</sup> Bauckham 2003:4

carry weight because, if Jesus only functions in certain ways to procure eternal redemption for mankind, he would not have been able to do it apart from God (Adams 2012:63). The basic treatise of Hebrews is to establish Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world (cf. Heb. 9). Jesus cannot function as God without God<sup>87</sup>.

The basis of Jesus' identity is the threefold characteristic which the author attributes to him – Son, Lord, and High Priest. The writer establishes the pre-eminent sonship of Jesus by means of intertextuality. The first obvious semantic connection to Psalm 2:7 is found in the term “son”, although this word alone might not warrant hearing an echo if other available evidence proved meagre. The appointment of the Son as the “heir of all things” in Hebrews 1:2 connects with the same image in Psalm 2:8 as the king's universal dominion is declared. The decree of the sonship warrants the notion that a son is entitled to an inheritance. The inheritance of Psalm 2 involves all nations and “the ends of the earth”. The “heir of all things” is a title of dignity and shows that Christ has a supreme place in the entire universe. Having come to the supreme position Jesus inherited the name which is “higher than any other name”<sup>88</sup>. Many scholars argue that the name may simply be “son”. The apostle Paul also testifies that “God also highly exalted Jesus and gave him the name that is above every name”<sup>89</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, the name and character of the Son was very important to the writer for his theology and Christology: The Son is the reflection of God's glory (1:3), the exact imprint of God's very being (1:3). The word *χαρακτήρ* can also mean impression, reproduction, and representation (as in the impression on coins). It is also used in other places to indicate the reproduction of God's form (cf. Adams 2012:63). Consequently, it would be right to observe that the Son bears the name of the Father which he inherited not by means of his function as God's Son but on the basis of his divine identity. In general, it was impossible in biblical culture to separate a person's name and character. The Son inherits something that is particularly that which belongs to the Father, which is the

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<sup>87</sup> Bauckham *et al.* 2009: 17

<sup>88</sup> Gaebelien and Douglas (1981:13)

<sup>89</sup> Philippians 2:9

Father's name. Angels cannot inherit the name because the Son is so much more than the angels. Farrar (2014: n.p.) draws his conclusions on this point:

In Hebrews 1:4, most commentators take the "more excellent name" to be "Son" in light of 1:2(a). Others, however, argue that only the Divine Name can fit such a lofty description ... Evidence for this latter view includes the use of *κύριος* from Old Testament YHWH texts (Ps.102:25-27 -J. A.) for Christ in Hebrews 1:10-12 and the parallel with the "name that is above every name" (surely *κύριος*) in Philippians 2:9-11. This identification would imply a high Christology inasmuch as divinity is presumably a prerequisite for inheriting the Divine Name.

#### ***5.4.2 Christ as Son of God and King***

The son motif is picked up by the very first words of the exordium (cf. also "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess." Heb. 4:14-16). The author uses the quotations in a messianic sense as a proof of the sonship of Jesus, which is confirmed by God himself. The OT passages (2 Sam. 7:14: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me ..." and Ps 2:7: I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have begotten you") which are frequently referred to, provide background<sup>90</sup> to the sonship idea in the NT. The title "Son of God" is employed four times by the author (Heb. 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29) because the divine sonship of Christ is foundational to what the author says about him (Matera 1999:189). Christ could not be high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, if he was not the eternal Son of God.

MacLeod (2005:227), in his article on the "Finality of Christ", cites Warfield with the following observation: "the two views of the title 'Son' in Hebrews are to be rejected". The first view is that the title speaks consistently of Christ's eternal being, that is, His deity (Warfield, cited in MacLeod 2005:227). The other view is the adoptionist<sup>91</sup> view of the

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<sup>90</sup> In addition, the literature of Jewish Mysticism, the Talmud, Wisdom of Solomon, The Prayers of Joseph, and Philo may be helpful in establishing the religious framework within which the Son-ship Christology of Hebrews was understood (Parson 1988:201).

<sup>91</sup> The New Testament teaches that Christ is the eternal Son of God. Yet in his human nature he was adopted or appointed as the messianic Son of God. The eternal Son took a human nature and in that human state as

inheritance of the name, “Son” based on God’s election and adoption of the Davidic king as son. There exists a merging of the two views to conclude that Jesus is the pre-existent son. MacLeod confers that in addition, the citation of Ps 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5, elsewhere with Jesus’ resurrection (Act. 13:33) and human nature (Heb. 5:5), would indicate that the title “Son” was inherited when He was exalted to God’s right hand.

What the writer says about the Son is highly determined by the usage of his god-language (cf. Heb. 7:3: Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever). Bauckham explains that in “Hellenistic philosophical parlance, true deity was unoriginated and un-generated (unbegotten)” (2009:33-34). True deity can also be said to be self-originated or self-begotten.<sup>92</sup> To emphasise Bauckham’s line of reason, I submit that the familiarity with such god-language would allow the author of Hebrews to read Psalm 2:7 against the backdrop of the Hellenistic cultural background and declare Christ’s sonship to the Father as eternal (Adams 2012:66). No idea of a temporal existence of the Son could have existed in the mind of the author. The supremacy of the Son’s sonship was always priority, therefore the “today” of “today I have begotten you”, would be the today of divine eternity (cf. Bauckham 2009:34).

Our writer gives the Son the authority and legitimacy to rule. He is crowned and seated at the right hand of God in the place of power, that he has all the glory and honour of a king. Old Testament enthronement psalms were applied to Christ the Messiah. Consequently, there is little doubt that he is a king (cf. Saucy1993:58). Other New Testament passages also regard Christ as King<sup>93</sup>.

The seven assertions of the *catena* of Hebrews 1:5-13, affirms that the Son “sat down at the right hand of Majesty on High”. As in other Christological hymns the focus is the exaltation of the Son (Adams 2012). The Son of God has now the place of greatest honour

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David’s son, in fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-14; Ps. 89:26-28), He was “adopted” as God’s messianic Son. Jesus is not only eternal Son but also Messianic Son (MacLeod 2005: 228-229).

<sup>92</sup> Bauckham explains that the Apocalypse of Abraham includes in its list of attributes of the one eternal God that he is “self-originated”, “unbegotten” and “unoriginated” (2009:34).

<sup>93</sup> Consult the Christological hymns in the Pauline corpus.

and distinction, the right hand of a king (cf. 1 Kings 2:19). The position of the Son as King is potential in the sense that he is the “heir of all things”(Heb. 1:2) and will rule over the “inhabited earth to come” (Heb. 2:5,9)<sup>94</sup>.

The writer further establishes Jesus’ Lordship and superiority over the angels by “pointing to the Son’s creative activity and eternal rule” (Matera 1999:190). He does so by three Psalm references which he interprets Christologically:

- i) You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers (Ps. 104:4).
- ii) Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. Your royal sceptre is a sceptre of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (Ps. 45:6-7).
- iii) Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. You change them like clothing, and they pass away; but you are the same, and your years have no end (Ps. 102:25-27).

Psalm 45 (44 LXX) contributes to the powerful yet paradoxical Christology of Hebrews because the writer of Hebrews conjoins it with Psalm 102:25-27. The king of the Psalm is thoroughly human, but God sets him over other humans (or sons of man) and blesses him forever. Matera (1999:191) asserts that “in one of the most daring statements of the New Testament, Hebrews employs scripture to identify the Son as God”. And yet, it is not the author of Hebrews who calls the Son “God” but God himself, when he says, “Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever” (Heb. 1:8). Moreover, God himself addresses the son as “Lord”, the one who founded the earth (Heb. 1:10). The king in the Psalm is a “human” king whom God blesses and designates as  $\delta \theta ε \acute{o} \varsigma$ . Johnson (2006:80) observes that the title  $\delta \theta ε \acute{o} \varsigma$  is ascribed to Jesus only in John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 3:4 and 2 Peter 1:1 and in most cases, they are disputed in one way or another. Nowhere outside of John is the intension to designate the “Son” as  $\delta \theta ε \acute{o} \varsigma$  so obvious and deliberate-

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<sup>94</sup> MacLeod (2005:226).

The Greek-speaking Jews were familiar with the clause *κύριος* (Lord). The writer made use of an absolute form of the clause by referring to Jesus as, “our Lord”. Jesus’ kingship was also assumed from the frequent use of this title (five times). The title was not used in a superfluous way. Jews who used the title *κύριος* would identify Jesus as the God of their fathers and placed him in the centre of their historic faith, whereas the Gentiles would confer on Jesus the same honour reserved for the Caesar<sup>95</sup>. Johnson (2006:81) maintains that the “citation from Psalm 102:26 ascribes to the Son what was first said of ‘the Lord’, the God of Israel. The citation works to support the prologue’s assertion that it was through the ‘Son/ Lord’ that God ‘created the universe’ (Heb. 1:2).”

The seventh citation of the *catena* brings us to the climax of Christological core of the book: The Lord says to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Ps. 110:1). It also opens the high priest motive that the writer later explains in the doctrinal section of the Hebrews.

### ***5.4.3 Jesus as sympathetic High Priest***

As the believers’ High Priest, Jesus represents and intercedes for them at God’s right hand. As mentioned above, his position as King is potential in the sense that he is the “heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2) and he will rule over the “inhabited earth to come” (Heb. 2:5-9). Christ is not ruling today over this world as King. The Son’s ruling functions have been displaced to another age. Currently, he is waiting “until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet” (Heb. 10:13; cf. 1:13). Saucy (1993:58) indicates that Christ’s *function* in this age resembles an interceding high priest more than a king (relative to the subjection of his enemies during this age). It seems best to say that only the authority and status of “king” is featured in this age, while the kingly function, i.e. ruling and reigning, will be exercised in the age to come.

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<sup>95</sup> Harvill (1985:341-347)

The reality of the high priest's humanity is reinforced in Hebrews 4:15 in that Jesus was tested in every respect, without yielding to sin (Farrar 2014 n.p.). Jesus could only accomplish the role of a sympathetic high priest on the basis of his suffering. Probably the "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16) anticipates the integration of royal and priestly imagery that characterises the order of Melchizedek (cf. Farrar 2014: n.p.). The writer depicts Jesus as a man of prayer who is dependent on the Father to assist him. Psalm 110:4 (The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"), becomes the most striking feature of the writer's high-priestly Christology in his use of it to show that Christ's high priesthood is not according to the Aaronic order but is superior, according to the order of Melchizedek. This point is elaborated in detail in Hebrews 6:20-7:24.

#### ***5.4.4 Humanity of Christ and the use of Psalm 8***

Adams (2012:68) emphasises that the humanity of the Son has an important role in the Christological development of Hebrews. The reader becomes acquainted with the repeated appeals in Hebrews to the earthly life of Jesus: his birth, his humanity, his temptations, his prayers, his obedience, his sufferings, his flesh, and blood death. Our Lord descended from Judah (Heb. 7:14); he was made like his brothers in all things (Heb. 2:17); he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered (Heb. 2:18), one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). In the days of his flesh he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears (Heb. 5:7); he learned obedience from the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8); Jesus endured the suffering of death (Heb. 2:9); a death to validate the New Covenant (Heb. 5:15). We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10); he inaugurated a new and living way for us through the veil, that is, his flesh (Heb. 10:12); Jesus, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the camp (cf. Corley 1999:17).

Farrar (2014: n.p.) elucidates from the work of Dunn (1980); Ellingworth (1993) and Guthrie (2007) that in its original setting, Psalm 8<sup>96</sup> referred to humanity in general, or more specifically to the archetypal human, Adam. However, the use of this passage in Hebrews 2:6-9 is primarily Christological rather than anthropological. The writer uses Psalm 8 to express an Adam Christology in which Christ fulfils God's original plan for man. According to Farrar (2014 n.p.) many commentators see in the exegesis of the Psalm in Hebrews 2:9 an outline of the Son's career: incarnation, suffering, and exaltation (cf. Cockerill 2012: loc.1790; Matera 1999:193). They recognize βραχύ τι here in a temporal sense ("a little while") although in Psalm 8 MT the sense is spatial ("a little lower"). The Son temporarily assumed a status beneath the angels so that he could suffer death and consequently be crowned with glory and bring others to glory (Heb. 2:9-10).

#### ***5.4.5 Summary of section 5.4***

The Christology of Hebrews presupposes three phases in the Son's career: pre-existence, incarnation, and exaltation (Matera 1999:193). The first two stages of the Son's existence are not overtly developed, whereas the exaltation of the Son is discussed at length. Furthermore, Christ is depicted as the apostle of God and trailblazer who through his obedience and faith leads the children of God to their eschatological hope. As far as the major Christological themes are concerned, these are discussed, and they become the foundation for a supporting Spirit Christology in Hebrews. The overall purpose of the writer's Christology is to enhance the believer's reflection of Christ. "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Heb. 13:15). Hurtado (2003:504) confirms when he concludes: "in any case, it is clear that this author, as characteristic of early Christian texts, sees God as operating uniquely through Jesus". Furthermore, Hebrews sees the worship that Christians direct to God as necessarily offered through Jesus (e.g. Heb. 13:15). Indeed, the

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<sup>96</sup> See also Adams 2012 for a fuller description of the use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews.

ambiguity<sup>97</sup> of the phrasing is itself indicative that Jesus was closely linked with God in earliest Christian devotion and that the glorification of God could not be done properly without reference to Jesus.

## 5.5 TOWARDS A SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS

*The Holy Spirit was Christ's inseparable companion ... all the activity of Christ was unfolded in the presence of The Holy Spirit*<sup>98</sup>.  
*Basil of Caesarea (c.330-379)*

Hebrews' high Christology focuses much more on the exaltation of the Son, which culminates in the Son's instalment as high priest. In the careful handling of the data regarding the incarnation and humiliation of the Son, one could form a proposal for a Spirit Christology in Hebrews. Having said that, I would argue that Spirit Christology can be best appropriated through Christology proper. The seven references to the Holy Spirit are not sufficient enough to directly expound a Spirit Christology. For the purpose of proposing a Spirit Christology, it can only become plausible by utilising the broader Christological context from the NT at large (i.e. Spirit Christology) within which the high Christology of Hebrews might also make sense. Much of what is being presented in the rest of this chapter is not necessarily from Hebrews; however, I propose that utilising Spirit Christology as a broader interpretive framework can only profit the pneumatology of Hebrews.

### 5.5.1 Various definitions and proposals

Under this rubric I want to establish the understanding of and try to bring a well-rounded definition of Spirit Christology to the table. The new direction for Christology is the renewed focus of the Spirit in the life of Christ. The Christological "mine" of the Gospels must then be delved for that purpose. The new direction of Spirit Christology is to be "a

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<sup>97</sup> The ambiguity of Heb. 13:15 lies in the fact that the writer equates Jesus with God. In other words, the Son is equal to the Father, yet it is only in and through the Son that we can direct worship to God.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Ferguson (1996:37)

Christology in which we are able to articulate a role for the Holy Spirit in the person and work of Jesus Christ” (Peppiatt 2014:5). The Spirit Christology in Hebrews which I am proposing can be complementary to its Logos Christology. Advocates of Spirit Christology argue that Logos Christology alone does not do justice to the breadth of the Biblical testimony and account of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. In contemporary theology, the term Spirit Christology varies in meaning from the most comprehensive form, which posits Spirit as the divine element in the person of Jesus Christ, to the narrow sense in which we are using it for the reciprocal relationship between the Spirit and Jesus (Habets 2010:4).

The emphasis is on the representation of Jesus as formed, not only by the Gospel of John but also by the Synoptic Gospels, in which we read of the incarnation, the life, and the ministry of Jesus as shaped and lived out in the power of the Spirit. The power which Jesus possessed to heal, to cast out demons and to perform various kinds of miracles, was the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:1 indicates that after Jesus returned from the Jordan River, the power of the Holy Spirit was with him, and the Spirit led him into the desert. Furthermore, Luke mentioned that Jesus accepted the Messianic task by applying the Isaianic prophesy to himself – the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me ... Then he began to speak to them, “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!” (cf. Luke 4:16-21).

That is why proponents of Spirit Christology argue that a pneumatic Christology not only fulfils a more faithful witness to the biblical account of Jesus as the Saviour but also completes more fully our understanding of the Trinitarian revelation of God. It is Ralph Del Colle who writes, “Spirit Christology addresses directly the charge that something is lacking in the church’s understanding and faith if in theory and praxis the basic Christological confession is not informed by pneumatology” (cited in Habets 2010:3; cf. Peppiatt 2014:5). Therefore, Spirit Christology is a corrective to the tendency either to ignore the work of the Spirit or to subordinate the person of the Spirit to the person of Christ. It is a Christology that works out the implications of Yves Congar’s axiom that there should be “no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without

Christology” (cited in Habets 2010:3)<sup>99</sup>. Webster (2011:329) understands that the Spirit perfects the work of the Son. The emphasis in Spirit Christology is the manner in which the Spirit participates to frame the human nature of the incarnate Son and move and preserve him to fulfil his divine purpose. “Conceived by the Spirit, the incarnate Son is also sanctified by the same Spirit, endowed by the Spirit with all necessary grace, and empowered by the Spirit to enact his human nature and history in fulfilment of his mission” (Webster 2011:332). Hebrews illustrates this two-fold picture of the incarnate Christ. Jesus bears the very stamp of God’s nature. He is the image of the invisible God, upholding the universe by his powerful word (Heb. 1:3). Concurrently, the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the humanity of Jesus – he was like his brothers and sisters in every respect (Heb. 2:17). He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and . . . he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8).

Peppiatt (2014:6) observes a type of Spirit Christology as indicated by many proponents. In the Gospel tradition, we read of Jesus:

He is conceived by the Spirit in the womb. His dedication as a baby was presided over by the Spirit (Luke 1:80; 2:52). He was baptized with water and with the Spirit (Luke 4:1). He was led, or “driven”, as some translations say, by the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4:14). He overcame the temptations of the devil with the word of God and in the power of the Spirit. He returned to Galilee filled with the power of the Spirit. The Spirit anoints Jesus to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour (Luke 4:18-19 cf. Isa. 61:1). Jesus offered himself up on the cross “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14). If we understand Romans 8:14-17 to be an indication that it is through the Spirit that we cry to the Father, then Jesus’ cries to his “Abba Father” while on this earth are by the Spirit.

A series of complex questions that we face with Spirit Christology is asked by Peppiatt (2014:6), which I will endeavour to answer throughout the section:

1. How does this picture of Jesus as the one who is anointed with power by the Spirit to do the works of God conforms to the Christ of Logos Christology? How do we

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<sup>99</sup>cf. also Peppiatt 2014:5

- hold the Spirit-anointed man with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the eternal Son who assumes sinful humanity into his sinless self?” (Peppiatt 2014:6; see especially the Spirit Christology of Ratzinger and the rubric “the anointing of Jesus” later in this chapter.)
2. Was this Son of God not capable of performing the mighty works of God because he was God on earth? What of the divine nature? (See Spirit Christology of Habets and the proposal of an Incarnational Spirit Christology.)
  3. Was Jesus truly dependent upon the Spirit? If so, how did this work and what happens to our claim that we can only work out a Spirit Christology if we hold on firmly to Logos Christology? (See the Spirit-Christology of Pinnock 1996:28-93.)

I concur with Peppiatt (2014:8) and other proponents of Spirit Christology that Jesus is understood as a life lived as a human being in complete and utter dependence on the Spirit. Jesus grew in the power of the Spirit, bore his temptations in the power of the Spirit, was maintained in holiness by the Spirit, and healed the sick, cast out demons, and so on, all under the anointing of the Spirit. Similarly, Colin Gunton<sup>100</sup> writes:

such a conception (that Jesus was dependent on the Spirit – J.A.) creates space for a conception of the humanity of Jesus which gives due emphasis to his freedom, particularity and contingency. They are enabled by the (transcendent) Spirit rather than determined by the (immanent) Word. Jesus Christ was not able to do what he did or maintained in holiness because he was God but because of his dependence on the Spirit. The implications of this Christology for our understanding of what it is to be a human being are highly significant.

My definition of Spirit Christology would include the affirmation of Amos Yong<sup>101</sup> who writes, “Spirit Christology sees Jesus not only as one anointed by the Spirit to do the mighty works of God but as a fully anointed one whose life from beginning to end was of the Spirit.” Moreover, we have a Christological model that can account for the Son of God who performed miracles in the power of the Spirit, cries out to his Father in Gethsemane, and who goes to the cross sustained, comforted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He is then raised to life by the power of that same Spirit, who unites with him all those who put their

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<sup>100</sup> Refers to in Peppiatt (2014:8)

<sup>101</sup> cited in Peppiatt (2014:6)

faith and trust in this crucified Saviour. It is a pneumatological and Christological account of the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ that then forms the basis of both a theological anthropology and a theology of mission. The potential weaknesses of Spirit Christology can be an inability to account for the divine nature (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7). With a broader understanding and definition of SC in mind, I shall engage the dialogue partners and continue towards a SC in Hebrews.

### ***5.5.2 Synopsis of the Spirit Christology of Myk Habets (2010)***

Habets' model of Spirit Christology is to articulate the relationship between the "person" of the Holy Spirit and the "person" of the Son, both in the incarnation and in the work of redemption and including the intra-Trinitarian relations (Habets 2010:4). Holmes (2015: loc.2388) notes that Habets is dissatisfied by what he perceives to be a wide-ranging problem in "classical Christology", namely its championing of a Christology "from above and (its being) concerned with the descent of the eternal Son". Habets defends a "Christology that moves from the functional testimony to ontological implications" – in other words, from below to above (cf. Holmes 2015:loc.2388).

Habets argues, that "the gulf between Jesus' humanity and divinity is bridged by means of the Holy Spirit". The appreciation of the Spirit's role allows for a deeper understanding of Jesus in terms of the pneumatology of the Gospel accounts; that is, "Jesus is who he is because of the Spirit" (Holmes 2015:loc.2388). Habets (2010:5) uses the word "person" to presume fidelity with Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy of three persons in one Trinitarian being, and in the case of Christ, two natures in one person. In order to address the two natures of Jesus of Nazareth in Spirit Christology we would assert the divinity of Jesus, as Lampe says, "adverbially" (cited in Haight 1992:275). At the same time, Lampe explains, "this means that God, and not less than God, is really present to and at work in Jesus, and that this is so in such a manner that Jesus is a manifestation and embodiment of the reality of God. The transition of interpretation moves along a line from a static and abstract ontology of God conceived in terms of a divine nature to a conception of God as personal, dynamic activity who is personally present as Spirit" (Haight 1992:275).

Furthermore, Habets (2010:5) describes Spirit Christology as a:

Christological construction formulated from a Spirit-oriented direction. It is a Christology which recognizes that its dynamism must proceed from a robust pneumatology. Spirit Christology may proceed in a number of directions. Two of these pathways may be broadly identified as either “Trinitarian” or “post-Trinitarian”. The latter option is merely an early heresy reaffirmed in modern times—adoptionism. Because the Spirit and Jesus are intimately related we would do violence to split them apart either in our conception or our theology. I propose Spirit Christology as a complementary Christological model, not a substitute for the dominant Logos Christology of traditional or classical Christological construction.

Habets (2010:5) contends that Spirit Christology focuses theological reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in Christology proper. It tries to make sense of both who Christ is and what Christ has done from the perspective of the Holy Spirit. Del Colle (cited in Habets 2010:5) insists:

What is new and distinctive in Spirit Christology is that, on the level of theological construction and doctrinal interpretation, it proposes that the relationship between Jesus and God and the role of Christ in redemption cannot be fully understood unless there is an explicitly pneumatological dimension. In other words, the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit is as important to conveying the truth of the Christological mystery with its soteriological consequences as that of Jesus and the Word.

The neglect of the Holy Spirit’s role “in all the manifold expressions of his (the Spirit’s) relationship to Jesus and the Father”, is what is of concern for Habets. Holmes maintains that Habets reiterates that “the upshot again is that the Spirit’s work in Christ’s conception, at the cross, and in the resurrection, is not mined for its dogmatic promise. The Christ of the Spirit is functionally transformed into the Spirit of Christ, the result being an either/or rather than a both/and: ‘The Christ of the Spirit’ and ‘the Spirit of Christ’” (Holmes 2015:loc.2415). For Habets (2010:121) Spirit was related to Yahweh in the OT, expressed as “Spirit of the Lord” or “Spirit of God” In the NT, especially in the Pauline Corpus, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit that now proceeds from Christ, as from the Father in the OT. To Paul, therefore, Jesus is the vindicated Messiah. His identity is established beyond doubt

by the Spirit – Jesus is “designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the death” (Holmes 2015: loc.2415).

Habets’ central thesis of his Spirit Christology is that the Gospels all present the identity of Jesus in terms of pneumatic-human relations. He claims that:

The relationship between Jesus and the Spirit thus becomes crucial to understanding Jesus. Each evangelist develops his Gospel in a unique way ... John is thus stating that the presence of God now dwells in Jesus the “Only Begotten,” and from the birth narratives we are led to believe that this presence was experienced in Jesus as the Holy Spirit. While the virginal conception neither proves nor demands an interpretation in terms of incarnation, it is a fitting way to reinforce the Christian conviction that Jesus is both fully God (divine paternity) and fully man (human maternity). It is an important indicator to Jesus’ unique identity. It highlights his relationship to the Father through the Spirit and of God’s presence in Jesus through the Spirit (Habets 2010:128).

We can clearly observe a Trinitarian perspective emerging throughout the Gospel accounts. Divine human identity, largely through Jesus’ relationship to the Father through the Spirit is now prevalent. “Divinity is communicated to humanity via the indwelling Spirit and humanity is communicated to divinity in the exact same way.” Habets (2010:128) refers to Moltmann’s words, “If Christology starts by way of pneumatology; this offers the approach for a Trinitarian Christology, in which the being of Jesus Christ is from the very outset a being-in-relationship.”.

Habets (2010:165-66) argues for a *pneumatologia crucis*. He proceeds from the role which the Spirit plays in the death of Jesus:

Without the Spirit Jesus could not endure the wrath of God. In death, he was cut off in some sense from the experience of the Fatherhood of Yahweh. In death, he threw himself wholly on the Spirit’s power and ministry. In death, the Spirit also underwent a *kenosis* whereby he committed himself totally to the Son. The Spirit accompanies Jesus to the cross and indwells him in his suffering for he is the strength of Jesus, the divine enablement to submission. The Spirit of Christ endures the passion with the crucified one. When we turn to the literature of the early church we see this *pneumatologia crucis* repeated.

To substantiate his position, Habets refers to Hebrews which emphasises this point when it says of Jesus, “who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God” on the cross (cf. Heb. 9:14):

Here Jesus is both the high priest and the sacrifice. The Spirit is that power that makes Jesus Christ ready to surrender and obey and at the same time sustains this surrender. In the “theology of surrender”, Christ is made the determining subject of his suffering and death through the Spirit of God. Hebrews thus declares what the Gospel of Mark narrates: The Spirit of God is the Spirit of self-sacrifice, the power by which Jesus Christ was offered up on the cross. Hebrews testifies that Jesus died with loud cries and tears (Heb. 5:7), confirmed by Mark’s account that he died with a loud cry (Mark. 15:37). Jesus’s death in this way can only be explained in light of his relationship to his God and Father, Abba.

Like other proponents of Spirit Christology, Habets emphasises the humanity of the Son of God in both the incarnation, and importantly, now during his “session”. Hebrews 2:17 affirms that “Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of people.”. However, Jesus’ priesthood did not expire on the cross with his death. As Christ was raised to eternal life so his office of priesthood was raised with him to be exercised perpetually (Heb. 7:3). Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father and interceding on behalf of his people (Heb. 4:14,15). It is here that Spirit Christology has a deep practical application. To acknowledge Jesus as our High Priest, like us in every way and yet without sin, passed through the cross of atonement and now interceding on our behalf, invites those who love him to seek him in prayer (Habets 2010:274).

Holmes (2015:loc.2443) indicates that what is less commendable about Spirit Christology is the notion that one must “start” with the Spirit, as Habets would have it. Holmes (2015:loc.2443) refers to Bruce D. Marshall who observes:

Considerable theological problems of its own (are raised). Perhaps the most far-reaching of these is the disharmony it (starting with the Spirit) would create between the scriptural pattern of divine redemptive action in the world, where the Father sends the Son and the Father and the Son both send the Holy Spirit, and the pattern of eternal divine processions, about which – if the Son in any sense originated from the Holy Spirit – the redemptive mission, following a contrary pattern, would fail to teach us.

In addition, Holmes observes:

To put my concerns somewhat differently, what I think has happened in Habets' case is a confusion of the order of knowing and teaching in relation to the order of being. As regards the non-temporal origination of the persons, the Spirit originates as gift and love. This type of origination or this relation will give us what is basic to the identity of the Holy Spirit. In terms of the Trinity, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son as gift, which is the key to the Spirit's identity. In the economy, the Spirit works, for example, to give rise in Mary's womb to the humanity of the Son, empowers the Son and rests on him throughout his ministry, and is said to raise him from the dead. Such temporal action rests on an irreversible sequence in the immanent life of the Holy Trinity (2015:loc.2470).

Alternatively, Holmes suggest that to "start with the Spirit in terms of the order of teaching or the order of knowing would seem to reverse how the persons of Son and Spirit – by virtue of their processions – are related to one another in God's life." (2015: loc.2470).

In sum, in Spirit Christology one starts with the Holy Spirit whose "identity is other-directed"<sup>102</sup>. In other words, the Holy Spirit focuses and teaches about Christ. In the NT terms, according to Holmes (2015:loc.2496), one starts with the Spirit by starting with the Son, by whom the Spirit is given, and in turn the Father, who sends the Son in the Spirit. The Father sends the Son in the Spirit in order "that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (cf. John 17:26). The crux of the matter is that Christ is empowered and supported by the Spirit to complete his redemptive mission.

### ***5.5.3 Synopsis of the Spirit Christology of Pinnock (1996)***

Pinnock's Spirit Christology starts with how "the Gospel narratives portray the Spirit as working actively in every phase of Jesus' life and mission". Studebaker (2006:6) observes that Pinnock emphasises the Spirit's anointing of Jesus. By anointing Jesus Christ, the Spirit provides him with the power to be faithful to the Father. In a representative statement, Pinnock remarks that "it was the anointing by the Spirit that made Jesus 'Christ', not the hypostatic union, and it was the anointing that made him effective in history as the absolute

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<sup>102</sup> See Holmes 2015:loc. 2496

saviour. Jesus was ontologically Son of God from the moment of conception, but he became Christ by the power of the Spirit.” (Pinnock 1996:78). The Holy Spirit’s role is to empower the Son to accomplish his redemptive purposes. According to Pinnock the title “Christ” itself signifies anointing – in this case by the Spirit. Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One. In Nazareth, Jesus indicated that “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (cf. Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). Jesus was a man of the Spirit. Pinnock (1996:78) furthermore argues that the revelation of Jesus as Anointed One is revealed in various ways: “Peter sums it up: ‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; ... he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him’” (cf. Acts 10:38). The theme is understood by John: God “gives the Spirit without measure” to Jesus (cf. John 3:34).

The problem with Logos Christology is not that it identifies the Son as the divine person united to the humanity of Jesus Christ, but rather that it is too exclusive from a biblical perspective (cf. Studebaker 2006:13). For Pinnock (1996:79), the conceptual foundation of Logos Christology is the Gospel of John. However, he views the incarnation in the prologue of John’s Gospel as constructive in the development of a Spirit Christology. Additionally, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke describe the incarnation as a result of the Spirit. Matthew accredits the conception of Jesus to the Holy Spirit and the effectiveness of his redemptive ministry to his pneumatic conception (Matt. 1:18-21 cf. Pinnock 1996:79). Luke’s account signifies the identity of Jesus as the Son of God as the product of the activity of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; cf. Pinnock 1996:79). The mission of the Spirit is not limited to empowering the ministry of Jesus Christ, but more profoundly it is essential to his identity as the incarnation of the divine Son (Studebaker 2006:13).

Pinnock criticizes the emphasis of the descent of the Logos and how scholars ignore the work of the Spirit in the Son. He furthermore maintains:

Yet it is striking how systematic theologies, in explicating the divine-human person of Christ, forget altogether about the Spirit. It was anointing by the Spirit that made

Jesus “Christ”, not the hypostatic union, and it was the anointing<sup>103</sup> that made him effective in history as the absolute Saviour. Jesus was ontologically Son of God from the moment of conception, but he became Christ by the power of the Spirit. When Satan tempted him to misuse his powers, the Son refused, choosing the path of dependence on the Spirit (1996:80).

Apart from his critique of Logos Christology, Pinnock appeals that one should not:

diminish the importance of the Spirit for Christology. Logos Christology is not the whole story; indeed, if we exaggerate it we may eclipse the mission of the Spirit and effect its subordination to that of the Son. Among other risks, we may strip the self-emptying of the Son of its radicalness and even put his true humanity in jeopardy. At least the early church had an excuse for favouring Logos Christology. There was an apologetic advantage to Logos Christology then, but not today. There is no reason for us to continue to let Logos Christology dominate and marginalize other dimensions. I am not recommending adoptionism. Against the likes of Geoffrey Lampe and John Hick, I hold that Jesus was more than mere man endowed with the Spirit. My point is that Spirit Christology and Logos Christology are complementary, not antithetical. One complements without replacing the other (Pinnock 1996:91).

Logos Christology is ontologically focused, while a Spirit Christology is functionally focused, but the two works together. In general, Logos addresses the Person of Jesus while Spirit addresses his work. The deity of Christ is seen only in his humanity as filled by the Spirit, and the incarnation is viewed only on the redemptive-historical plane. Spirit Christology draws us into the life of Jesus and helps us avoid abstract thinking (cf. Pinnock 1996:91). Pinnock furthermore maintains that:

Spirit is used by liberals to refer to the divine element in Jesus, not to the third Person of the Trinity dwelling in him. “Spirit Christology” as used by them refers to an inspirational, not an incarnational, Christology. When I refer to Spirit Christology, I do so in an orthodox way that preserves the trinitarian distinctions. Spirit Christology enriches but does not replace Logos Christology. It enriches Logos Christology by doing greater justice to the role of Spirit in Christ. It gives

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<sup>103</sup> Jenkins (2014:263) asserts that by the anointing of the Spirit, in this one act, the humanity of Jesus is created, sanctified, and united to the person of the divine Son. There is, therefore, never a time when this humanity existed other than as the very humanity of the divine Son. The anointing at Jesus’ baptism must be considered a revelation retrospective of that anointing at incarnation that was constitutive of the very person of Jesus Christ.

better recognition to the missions of both the Son and the Spirit. It neither exaggerates nor diminishes the role of either Person.

In his emphasis on the Spirit as active participant in every aspect of the messianic mission, Pinnock (1996:91) opens his Christology for a Trinitarian Spirit Christology: The Spirit is not as a substitute for Christ nor as an instrument of Christ, but as the third Person of the Trinity. As the bond of love<sup>104</sup> that binds Father and Son together in eternity, the Spirit also sustains the relationship between the earthly Jesus and his heavenly Father on earth and actualizes it progressively throughout his walk with God.

The point which Pinnock stresses in the development of his Spirit Christology is that the Spirit is more central to the story of Jesus than theology has usually acknowledged. It was in the Spirit that Jesus was conceived, anointed, empowered, commissioned, directed, and raised up. He underscores God's sending of the Son and that we must not lose the balance of a "double sending". God sends both Son and Spirit (1996:82). Pinnock borrows the metaphor for God's hands from Irenaeus. Irenaeus refers to Son and Spirit as God's two hands, implying a joint mission (Against Heresies 4.20.1<sup>105</sup>).

It is important to recognize that Jesus was dependent on the Spirit. He had to rely on the Spirit's resources to overcome temptation. He was weak and human and did not know the life of undiminished deity. He suffered real attack in the temptations and was not roleplaying. It was not through confidence in his own power that he put himself at risk. Victory over temptation was not achieved in his own strength. He overcame sin by the power of God and in so doing modelled the lifestyle of faith for us all. Jesus surrendered himself in trust and conquered the powers of evil by the Spirit, as we all must (cf. Pinnock 1996:87). Pinnock (1996:88) refers to Matthew 12:32 which he states "it actually points to

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<sup>104</sup> Studebaker (2006:15) describes mutual love: The details of the life of Jesus Christ allow interpretation in terms of the structure of the mutual love model. The Holy Spirit creates, sanctifies, and unites the divine Son with the humanity of Jesus Christ. Central to this understanding is that the Spirit's economic work terminates in uniting the Son with the humanity of Christ and that this unifying activity of the Spirit is equivalent with the economic communication of the Father's love. The Spirit's role in the incarnation, then, includes two fundamental facets: The Spirit is the love of the Father expressed *ad extram* and the Spirit unites humanity with the divine Son.

<sup>105</sup> In Pinnock (1996:82).

the importance of Spirit for Christology. It is the verse where Jesus says that every sin can be pardoned and words against him forgiven, but ‘whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come’” (cf. Heb. 10:26<sup>106</sup>). In his answer to the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit, Pinnock concludes that it confirms the central role which the Spirit plays in Christology.

When Pinnock look at Spirit Christology from the book of Hebrews, he explains that Jesus was enabled by the Holy Spirit to offer himself up to God (Heb. 9:14). “Spirit would empower him to confront the powers of darkness and to join the line of murdered prophets. Jesus knew he would have to face death the same way he faced temptation – in the power of the Spirit” (1996:90). Though the Gospels do not say this exactly, Hebrews draws out the valid deduction. The Spirit who was with Jesus from birth would be with him at the culmination. The Spirit would help him to say yes to God at the moment of his greatest trial (Pinnock 1996:90). Additionally, the Spirit would give him words to speak before his adversaries and help him pray the prayer of relinquishment and surrender to the will of God. As a human, Jesus cried out for the cup to pass him by, but as Spirit-filled, he prayed for God’s will to be done. In Gethsemane, he experienced a crucifixion of will before his execution. He said by the Spirit, “I am yours, Lord; I have come to do your will” (see e.g. Heb. 10:7). Pinnock avows (1996:92-93) that the Spirit prepares, constitutes, and communicates the mystery of the incarnation. From birth through baptism and ministry, culminating in death and resurrection, the Son lived in an intimate and reciprocal relationship with the Spirit. His death and resurrection constitute the event in which the Father saves humanity through Son and Spirit. This is a trinitarian event in which the three Persons experience the mutuality and reciprocity characteristic of the triune God (cf. Heb. 9:11-14).

The work of Christ is reinterpreted by Pinnock (1996:93) and is said to be stimulated by the re-appropriation of Spirit Christology. The heart of it is that the Spirit facilitated the Christ event to save humanity by way of recapitulation. This is what atonement looks like

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<sup>106</sup> I indicate this reference for emphasis.

when Christology is placed within the mission of the Spirit. Pinnock refers to Thomas F. Torrance who attempts to name it:

Until he [Jesus] had sanctified himself and perfected in our human nature his own offering for all men, until he had made the once and for all sacrifice to take away sin, until he had vanquished the powers of darkness and overcome the sharpness of death, until he had ascended into heaven to present himself in propitiation before the Father, the kingdom could not be opened to believers, and the blessing of the divine Spirit could not be poured out upon human flesh or be received by sinful men.

Hebrews identifies what it was about the Christ event that triggered the end times: The Son had to partake of flesh and blood, had to be tested as we are, had to experience weakness, had to learn obedience, had to bear the sins of many, had to free us from the power of death, so that he could become the source of eternal salvation (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-10). Jesus is seen as a forerunner who entered the sanctuary, the pioneer and perfecter of faith (Heb. 6:19-20; 12:2, cf. Pinnock 1996:93).

The crux of the matter for Pinnock was the participatory journey of Jesus to realize God's purpose for creation and bring about reconciliation. This would be the means of grace which the Spirit could then apply to sinners to transform them:

The Son came in veiled glory, emptied of divine prerogatives, dependent on the power of the Spirit. As the beloved Son, he surrendered his life to the Father and returned the yes that God longs to hear from the creature. Through Son and Spirit, God is leading humanity to union with himself. He wants us to share the Son's filial relationship with himself. In Christ, God gave himself a human heart, as it were. To Jesus he said, "You are my beloved Son – I am well pleased with you" (see Mark 1: 11). Jesus replied to God, "You are my Father; I have come to do your will" (see Heb. 10:9). We are summoned into this relationship, to become sons and daughters in the Son. The Spirit is calling us to this tender filial love. By his resurrection, Christ pre-actualized the consummation of the world. Its transformation is anticipated, and all things are sure to be made new. The Risen One is the vanguard and embodiment of the new order (Pinnock 1996:94).

In conclusion Pinnock observes:

the important thing for me is that seeing atonement within the framework of the representative journey keeps the Spirit in the picture as a vital component. Few

theories of the atonement manage that. First, the Spirit led Jesus to death – “through the eternal Spirit [he] offered himself without blemish to God” (Heb. 9:14). Second, through the Spirit he was raised from the dead (Rom 8:11). Third, in the aftermath of resurrection, Spirit enables us to share in reconciliation. As our representative, Jesus Christ lived our life as we should but do not live it. He travelled a journey of obedience even unto death. Now, because of the resurrection he has become life-giving Spirit, being in the position to give life to those who follow him. The Spirit’s task in atonement is to form Christ in us and change us into his likeness. The task is to reverse the power of sin in us until death itself is overcome and we can share in the glory of God (1996:105).

In his treatment of Pinnock, Studebaker (2006:13) re-appropriates the Trinitarian theology of Rahner to modify Pinnock’s Spirit Christology in trinitarian terms. He applies it to the mission of the Holy Spirit, mutual love and anointing, and hypostatic union. He argues:

Since God is the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, redemption must reflect the triune structure of God. The unique identities of the divine persons determine their redemptive missions. The Father sends the Son and ultimately the Holy Spirit in redemption (Luke 11:13 and 24:49; Acts 1:4-9 and 2:1; and John 14:16 and 25 and 15:26) because the Son and the Holy Spirit eternally proceed from the Father. The Son comes as the revelation of the Father (John 1:18) because he eternally subsists from the Father as the communication of the Father. The Holy Spirit subsists as the eternal mutual love who binds the Father and the Son in love and, therefore, serves an assimilative role in the incarnation and grace (Eph. 2:18 and 3:16-17).

Secondly, Studebaker (2006:17) points out that Pinnock’s identification of anointing as the Spirit’s primary work in the life of Jesus Christ has two limitations: 1) anointing emphasises the Spirit’s empowerment of Jesus. As such, it does not correlate the work of the Spirit in the incarnation with the personal identity of the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian Godhead, and 2) anointing does not correct the pneumatological deficit in traditional Christology, but rather continues it by seeing the Spirit’s work as one that empowers an already given incarnate divine Son. The Spirit Christology devolving from the mutual love model effectively resolves these two issues.

Lastly, identifying the hypostatic union as the Spirit’s primary work gives the Spirit – what Studebaker calls – a “constitutional” role in the incarnation. This conceptualisation allows a reformulation of Pinnock’s association of Logos Christology with Christ’s ontological or

personal status and Spirit Christology with his function. Studebaker's critique furthermore suggests that Pinnock's notion does not assign a role to the Spirit in the incarnation itself or the ontological status of Jesus as the incarnate divine Son. The hypostatic union is already established and expressed theologically in terms of Logos Christology. According to Pinnock's Spirit Christology, the Spirit facilitates the already incarnate divine Son to accomplish his redemptive mission. The placement of the role of the Spirit in the functional category and not the ontological one which introduces an *extrinsicism*<sup>107</sup> of the Spirit to the theology of the incarnation. It does so because the Spirit plays no role in establishing the incarnation (Studebaker 2006:18).

#### ***5.5.4 Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)***

McGregor (2016:62) asserts that Ratzinger's spiritual Christology has not up till now been investigated in any great depth. Although there have been some perceptive commentaries, they have, with one exception, only touched upon it *en passant*. De Gaál (cited in McGregor 2016) attends to it briefly but gives some important insights. He furthermore contends that, for Ratzinger,

the prayer of Jesus is the basic affirmation of his person, that it is Jesus' filial relationship with his Father which is at the root of the question of human freedom and liberation, that we must participate in the prayer of Jesus if we are to know and understand him, that both the church and the Eucharist have their own origin in the prayer of Jesus, that only in a spiritual Christology will a spirituality of the Eucharist reveal itself, and that theology is ultimately grounded in prayer.

McGregor (2016:63) further indicates that Cong Quy Joseph Lam proposed:

Ratzinger's spiritual Christology is a direct result of his theology of revelation, a theological-practical consequence of his early study of the Bonaventurian concept of revelation. Ratzinger's Christology is situated within the divine dialogue. It is neither a Monophysitic "theology from above," nor a Nestorian "theology from below," but a "theology from within," a *vade mecum* ... the influence of the pastor-

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<sup>107</sup> Extrinsicism, in philosophy or theology or both, is the tendency to place major emphasis on external matters rather than on more profound realities. In terms of morals and ethics, it tends to stress the external observance of laws and precepts, with lesser concern for the ultimate principles underlying moral conduct (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/extrinsicism>).

theologians Augustine and Bonaventure leading Ratzinger to view theology as embedded in proclamation and complemented by prayer, and thus being a performative rather than merely informative undertaking, one which calls its audience (and presumably its practitioner) to conversion. For Ratzinger, it is the prayer of Jesus that reveals his inner reality, a reality of constant dialogue with his Father wherein Jesus is revealed as the Word of the Father. Through his sending of the Holy Spirit, the one who is both Word and Son draws believers into his prayer and thus into communication with God.

Hebrews 10 becomes pivotal in Ratzinger's Spiritual Christology which he thinks especially appropriate in that it addresses only the personal and spiritual side of the descent (of Jesus), not the spatial. Ratzinger sees in the text a theology of the Incarnation where the "descending" and "entering" of Jesus are presented as an act of prayer (cf. Heb. 10:5-7; Ps 40:5-7) (see McGregor 2016:36). "Christ's entry into the cosmos is understood here as a voluntary and verbal event, as the concrete realization of the kind of thinking and believing that emerges in the piety of so many psalms" (McGregor 2016:36). Hebrews is presenting the Incarnation as a dialogue between the Father and the Son, as an event within the Trinity, a spiritual event. The one change in the text between the psalm and this passage is the replacement of "ear" with "body," which Ratzinger interprets as human existence itself. In Jesus, obedience has become incarnate (McGregor 2014:61). One would expect that a concentration upon the prayer of Jesus would contribute to a theology of the Cross, especially as most examples of Jesus' prayers found in the Gospels are in the context of his Passion (cf. Matt. 26:39-44, 27:46; Mark. 14:35-40, 15:34; Luke: 22:31-32, 40-44, 23:34, 46; Joh. 17:1-26) (McGregor 2014:60; 2016:55). The dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Godhead becomes the Son's obedient acceptance of a "body" to do the will of God.

In defence of Ratzinger, McGregor (2014:61) points out that Hebrews seems to present the *kenosis* of the Son as prayer:

Consequently, if one wishes to dispute Ratzinger's interpretation, one must propose a better interpretation. What we have here is a desire to connect a theology of Incarnation with a theology of the Cross. For Ratzinger, the *kenosis* of the Son reveals a profound link between the Incarnation and the Cross. Divine "sonship" is "the release and handing back of himself" to the Father. Within creation, it becomes "obedience unto death" (cf. Phil 2:8).

Thus, the Spiritual Christology of Ratzinger hinges on “eternal conversation” with the Trinity and prayer as conversation between the Father and Jesus of Nazareth.

#### ***5.5.4.1 Ratzinger’s Christological theses***

Ratzinger’s theses can be denominated as follows: filial, soteriological, personal, ecclesial, dogmatic, volitional, and hermeneutical. I will only elaborate on the filial, personal, and dogmatic theses.

*Filial thesis:* Great emphasis is being placed on the filial thesis: “According to the testimony of Holy Scripture, the centre of the life and person of Jesus is his constant communication with the Father.” (McGregor 2016:68). In this first thesis Ratzinger reiterates, in a condensed form, his thinking on the development of the title “Son” as the church’s ultimate confession of who Jesus truly is:

No one knows God except God. The Son is the act of God knowing himself. It is “God’s giving himself as Father and God’s receiving of himself and giving back of himself as Son, the exchange of eternal love, both the eternal gift and the eternal return of this gift. Therefore, the Son can choose to reveal the Father. However, he can only do so to one who has voluntarily accepted to be his, the Son’s, will by living in it. This self-identification flows out of Jesus’ prayer relationship with his Abba, a relationship into which he wishes to incorporate others (cited in McGregor 2016:53).

Hebrews describe the Son’s career in explicit ways: But now at last, God sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son. God’s Son has all the brightness of God’s own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together. After the Son had washed away our sins, he sat down at the right side of the glorious God in heaven (Heb. 1:2-3).

*Personal thesis:* In a closer reading, we can conclude that, except for the filial relationship of Jesus, the actual principle of Ratzinger’s spiritual Christology is, in fact, a combination of the third and fourth theses:

that we can only know and understand who Jesus truly is if we participate in his prayer, and that we do not participate in this prayer as isolated individuals, but as members of his Body, the Church. This is where Ratzinger claims to ground knowledge of Christ – in a personal experience which is also a corporate experience. This is knowledge that is “personally verified” and not simply accepted on the word of another. The difficulty that another person has in accepting this kind of knowledge is that the other person can only be certain that it is true through their own personal verification. They too must discover the real Jesus in prayer (McGregor 2014:85).

In his prayer in John 17:2, Jesus introduced Ratzinger’s notion of an intimate knowledge of the Son through participatory prayer of the disciples: Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent. In other words, to participate in prayer with Christ is to understand who he is. Hebrews emphasises “God had the power to save Jesus from death. And while Jesus was on earth, he begged God with loud crying and tears to save him. He truly worshiped God, and God listened to his prayers (Heb. 5:7)”. God listens to Jesus and to his church because God has ordained Jesus when he says, “You are a priest forever just like Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6)”.

McGregor (2014:86) further explains that for Ratzinger, faith comes through the witness of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Apostles (Act. 2:37; 15:28), or rather, through the witness of the Holy Spirit through the teaching of the Apostles being personally verified by the Holy Spirit in one’s own heart and mind. The Hebrews writer firmly believes that the attestation of the witness of the Gospel of Jesus was God. God himself showed that his message was true by working all kinds of powerful miracles and wonders. He also gave his Holy Spirit to anyone he chose to (Heb. 2:4). The Holy Spirit is not only witness, but also Gift and Giver of gifts (cf. Heb. 6:4).

*Dogmatic thesis:* Ratzinger’s dogmatic thesis occupies further importance in his Spiritual Christology:

The core of the dogma defined in the council of the early Church consists in the statement that Jesus is the true Son of God, of the same essence as the Father and, through the Incarnation, equally of the same essence as us. Ultimately this definition is nothing other than an interpretation of the life and death of Jesus, which

was preordained from the Son's primal conversation with the Father. That is why dogmatic and biblical Christology cannot be divorced from one another or opposed to one another, no more that Christology and soteriology can be separated. In the same way, Christology "from above" and "from below", the theology of the Incarnation and the theology of the Cross, form an indivisible unity (McGregor 2016:75).

Ratzinger's basis for the primal conversation in the Godhead is Hebrews 10:5-6: When Christ came into the world, he said to God, "Sacrifices and offerings are not what you want, but you have given me my body. No, you are not pleased with animal sacrifices and offerings for sin" (Heb. 10:5-6). This is the body that Christ offered to God, not only as physical and spiritual sacrifice, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **AN EXEGETICAL EXCURSUS OF HEB. 10:5-8**

Hebrews 10:5-8 serves as a pivotal point in the Christological thesis of Ratzinger. His defence of Christ's incarnation rests on this text. I also consider it significant for the proposal for an Incarnational Spirit Christology in Hebrews which I am making.

Ratzinger makes extensive use of this text to validate his incarnational theology. The exegesis below will point out the difference between the original Psalm 40 (LXX Ps 39) and the re-appropriation of the text in Hebrews 10:5-8:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,  
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body (*σῶμα*) you have prepared for me;  
in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.  
Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God'  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law).

The literary context of Hebrews 10:5-8 is flowing from a detailed deliberation of the efficacy of the nature of the sacrifice of Christ in the light of the Yom Kippur ritual. Yahweh instructed the people of Israel to observe this ritual. Year after year, the blood of bulls and goats was shed and

sprinkled for the atonement of sins. The writer of Hebrews undoubtedly indicates that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (cf. Heb. 10:4). These sacrifices were not sufficient to remove sin and purge the conscience of the worshippers. It remained repetitive in nature until Christ appeared on Israel’s religious landscape. As High Priest of the good things to come, Jesus did not come into a tabernacle made by men’s hands, repeatedly with the blood of bulls and goats like the high priests of old (Heb. 9:11-12). Instead, he offered himself through the eternal Spirit once and for all to put away sin and entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb. 9:14, 24-26). Hebrews 9:14, in my understanding and exegetical work earlier in this thesis, functions as the key to the whole literary composition from 9:1-10:18. Christ’s sacrifice of his body, through the Spirit, accepted by God, is the major pastoral comfort to all believers.

The ineffectual nature of animal sacrifices necessitated the incarnation of the Son of God (cf. Bruce 1990:241; Dvorak 2007 n.p.). The Hebrews writer in chapter 10 attributes the words of Psalm 40:6-8 to Jesus Christ, placing the Psalm quotation in the mouth of Jesus who only spoke previously indirectly through Scripture. David, the author of Psalm 40, began his psalm with a thanksgiving song for the Lord’s help (vv. 1-3). In the next verses David continues to praise God, for everyone who trusts in him is truly blessed. The Lord has done great things. His thoughts and works are marvellous to his people (cf. vv. 4-5). In Hebrews, the emphasis is on the importance of obedience rather than ritual sacrifice (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22). The difference between the Hebrew text of the Psalm quotation and Hebrews 10:5-7, the latter following the LXX (Attridge 1989:274), is very conspicuous as indicated with italics below.

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, *but a body You have prepared for Me.* In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come – In the volume of the book it is written of Me – To do Your will, O God.’”  
**(Hebrews 10:5-7)**  
**(following LXX)**

Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; *My ears You have opened.* Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.”  
**(Psalm 40:6-8)**  
**(Rendering of Hebrew text)**

The Hebrew text of Ps 40:6, however, literally reads, “ears hast thou dug for me”, which apparently means that God has given man ears to hear that he might obey Him (Attridge 1989:274). The Septuagint translators dealt freely with the text in an interpretive paraphrase for this obscure Hebrew phrase by substituting the “body”<sup>108</sup> for the “ears”, resulting in the meaning that instead of God equipping man with ears, he made or prepared for man a body (cf. Lightfoot n.d.,185 cited in Dvorak). In general, Hebrews uses the term “flesh” to refer to Jesus’s human body (cf. Heb. 2:14; 5:7). The term body<sup>109</sup> in this instance serves as an equivalent to “flesh” to indicate the human body of Jesus which is offered as sacrifice and which is far superior to the offerings presented by the law. When Christ conforms to God’s will, this very act of obedience includes his body (σῶμα) (cf. Heb. 10:10). Christ’s body made him qualify as an acceptable servant for the redemption of mankind. Thus, becoming human was integral to the eternal purposes of God. “See, God, I have come to do your will, O God,” – refers to the psalmist, and in this case Jesus’ willingness to do the will of God. “*In the scroll of the book it is written of me*” (ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται), is literally “the head of the book”. For the writer, the life of Jesus became “the active counterpart of the written law; the will of God which set down in the scroll of the book” (cf. Bruce 1990:241).

“*Your law is within my heart*”<sup>110</sup>, makes reference to the fact that the scroll is the law of God (Heb. 9:19). What is written of the psalmist in the scroll, was manifested in his glad and willing obedience to God: “I have come to do your will. My God.” Here, in the same words, the Hebrew writer recognises the speaker as the transcendent son of God who came in order to fulfil the divine purpose of humanity (cf. Heb. 2:10, 14, 17). Attridge (1989:275) rightly observes that, “although the author does not provide an explanation of the phrase, he may have understood it in a Christological sense, where the book is the whole of the OT’s prophetic work which in many and diverse ways bears testimony to Christ and his mission.”

Then I (the psalmist) said, “*See, God, I have come to do your will,*” (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)<sup>111</sup>– it is almost as if the writer overhears the primordial conversation between the Son and the Father (cf. Ratzinger’s prolegomena to his Spirit Christology), on occasion of entering into

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<sup>108</sup> It should be noted though that the revisions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion corrected σῶμα to ὠτία again (Attridge 1989:274 fn. 70).

<sup>109</sup> The commentaries consulted do not treat σῶμα at length but rather in passing. However, they do refer to the meaning of the phrase as Jesus’ entry into the world.

<sup>110</sup> Psalm 40:8

<sup>111</sup> Shorter version repeated in Heb. 10:9

the world. The explanations of Psalm 40 that follows (in Hebrews – J.A.) is presented as programmatic remarks of Christ himself. It is the second time that the writer uses the compound name Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (10:10) as reference to the one who speaks in 10:5-9. The words which he speaks express the mediatorial work of Jesus as high priest. He continues to speak in these verses. Two important but contrasting issues are highlighted: a) God’s dissatisfaction with the Old Covenant’s sacrificial offerings, b) the willing obedience of Christ the speaker (Attridge 1989:275). Having mentioned these points, it is clear that our writer indicates that animal sacrifices were never God’s heart for his people, as opposed to willing obedience<sup>112</sup> (cf. France 2006:250). Secondly, the writer affirms that the *See, God, I have come to do your will, O God*, is the essential utterance of Christ that is attested in Psalm 40. Christ’s mission was the preoccupation with doing the will of God. Christ’s obedience is the sacrifice that God desired. His obedience effects that which the animal sacrifices in the Old Covenant could not effect. France (2006:151) puts it succinctly: “the offering of Jesus was complete, involving his entire somatic existence. Therefore, the cleansing accomplished by Jesus was complete”.

In summation, the name Χριστός suggests the “anointed one of God” which is the equivalent to Messiah in Hebrew. Therefore, Christ of this passage is the Messiah, the anointed one of God. His willing obedience and bodily sacrifice is a “natural” outflow of his being anointed by the Spirit to do the will of God (cf. Heb. 9:14). Here in Hebrews 10:5-7, Ἰησοῦς, as in other NT literature, refers to the historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Acts 10:38), or Jesus the Nazarene (Mark 1:24; Luke 24:19). It was through the prevailing presence of the Spirit that the Son of God was incarnated, conceived, baptized, carried out his ministry, died and was brought back to life. Hunter (1983:130) makes this keen observation about Jesus as seen as inspired by the Spirit:

There is no problem in identifying the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. On the one hand, Jesus is identified with the prophets, kings, judges, and so on, to demonstrate that there was no supersession of human powers, but their heightening while at the same time he is distinguished from them in his experience with the Spirit in that he was so intimately possessed by the Spirit that what was yielded was a revelation of God, as full and as perfect as can be expressed in a finite human life.

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<sup>112</sup> France (2006:151) remarks that the MT text worked well with the theme of faithful obedience in Hebrews, but our author’s acceptance of the LXX indicates that Jesus’ obedience is not only a matter of hearing; it is his entire bodily existence.

Ἰησοῦς Χριστός of Hebrews 10:5-8 is identified as the Jesus of Nazareth, the one that acts as prophet and king as Psalm 39 LXX indicates. This Christological title implies that Christ is anointed and inspired (or intimately possessed) by the Spirit to become obedient to the will of God.

#### ***5.5.4.2 Anointing and the descent of Jesus***

Ratzinger maintains that Jesus fulfils the hope of Isaiah 11:1-9 for the coming of the true Anointed One, the one on whom the Spirit of God comes down to rest, a hope presented by Luke as fulfilled by Jesus' presentation of himself and his mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:18; Isa 61:1) (McGregor 2016:159). He sees the anointing of Jesus as analogous to that of the kings and priests in Israel. Mark describes the baptism/anointing of Jesus as follows: "As soon as Jesus came out of the water, he saw the sky open and the Holy Spirit coming down to him like a dove. A voice from heaven said, 'You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you'" (Mark. 1:10-11). In the same vein Paul comments that as a human, he (Jesus) was from the family of David. But the Holy Spirit proved that Jesus is the powerful Son of God, because he was raised from death (Rom. 1:3).

McGregor (2016:159) points out that Ratzinger further interprets the temptation of Jesus as a type of descent,

Ratzinger sees the temptations of Jesus as a "descent" into the "perils" faced by mankind. Jesus must penetrate this "drama" to its "utmost depths". It is a descent "into Hell", a descent that accompanied Jesus throughout his whole life. In it, he recapitulates the whole human history. This solidarity with human suffering as Jesus' mission is especially emphasised in the Letter to the Hebrews. "Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted."<sup>113</sup>

For Ratzinger:

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<sup>113</sup> Hebrews 2:17-18

The ultimate goal of Jesus' "ascent" is his self-offering on the Cross, which supplants the old sacrifices, it is the ascent that the Letter to the Hebrews describes as going up, not to a sanctuary made by human hands, but to heaven itself, into the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). This ascent into God's presence leads via the Cross; it is the ascent towards "loving to the end" (cf. John 13:1)<sup>114</sup>, which is the real mountain of God (cited in McGregor 2016:163).

McGregor (2016:163) describes "loving to the end" as the Passion of Jesus. It is "prayer", an act of worship. Jesus "transforms his violent death into the free offering of his life" (cf. Joh. 10:18). His body is the new Temple, the locus of a new worship. He is the new Ark of the Covenant, the place of atonement. He is the *hilastērion*, the seal of the Ark of the Covenant, "the locus of the presence of the living God".

In summation, for Ratzinger's Spiritual Christology to hold sway one needs to comprehend that Jesus of Nazareth is the incarnate Son of God, who in the primal conversation in the Godhead accepted the predicament of human kind and descended to a life of constant prayer to the Father. This life is carried out in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who enables him to sacrifice the "body" which God prepared for him. Christ did this through the power of the "indestructible" life<sup>115</sup>.

## 5.6 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HABETS, PINNOCK AND RATZINGER

In all three dialogue partners, there are at least three things that run as a thread through their interaction with this Christological method: 1) Jesus' humanity, 2) his anointing, and 3) his relationship to the Holy Spirit.

*Jesus' humanity or incarnation* – For Habets, Pinnock and Ratzinger, the incarnation of Jesus is a determinative element in their Spirit Christology. Difficulties arise when the incarnation becomes a decisive point, not on the part of these or other proponents of Spirit Christology, but for their opponents. Spirit Christology is not necessarily about the exact

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<sup>114</sup> (cf. Heb. 9:14)

<sup>115</sup> Hebrews 7:24

appointment of Jesus's sonship, as it is argued in Hebrews. Nevertheless, there was a stage in the narrative of Jesus that he was appointed "Son of God", "whether at incarnation, resurrection or exaltation" (cf. Bauckham 2009:39). As a result, I concur with Bauckham (2009:33) that "the divine Son in Hebrews is Son of God from all eternity as well as to all eternity: sonship is the eternal truth of his being, not simply a role or status given him by God at some point". Undoubtedly, incarnation theology is integral to Hebrews as it is integral to my dialogue partners. Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 is used to show that it is only in the incarnation, humiliation, and everything it means to be mortal humanity that the Son could attain to his eschatological lordship over all things (cf. Bauckham 2009:44).

Habets maintains his argument that although the virginal conception neither proves nor demands an interpretation in terms of incarnation, it is a fitting way to reinforce the Christian conviction that Jesus is both fully God (divine paternity) and fully man (human maternity). He goes to extra lengths to prove from Hebrews that the humanity of Jesus cannot be disconnected from the influence and presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 2; 9:14). When Jesus became incarnate as human he assumed the humble and mortal condition of humanity below the angels (cf. Bauckham 2009:41). In his *pneumatologia crucis*, Habets asserts that the Spirit also underwent a *kenosis* whereby he (the Spirit) committed himself totally to the Son. The Spirit assisted Jesus in his atoning sacrifice to the extent that he strengthened and empowered him. In his resurrection, the Spirit plays a pivotal role to confirm the session of the Son. One truth for Habets is the fact that the Holy Spirit aided the Son to accomplish his redemptive mission. Correspondingly, Wells (1992:487) remarks that following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Spirit that empowered him is poured out upon those who believe in him. He furthermore maintains "that the indwelling Spirit is one with the indwelling Christ" (Rom. 8:9-11; Jon. 14:20; 15:7). The oneness of Christ and Spirit and of each with the Father pushes inexorably toward a trinitarian understanding. But the particularity we have to notice here is this: "The Holy Spirit is the ongoing life, presence, and activity of the risen Jesus".

Similarly, for Pinnock, the Son shared flesh and blood by becoming a representative of humanity through the incarnation. Pinnock depicts a Spirit Christology that is orthodox,

and which preserves the trinitarian distinctions. It enhances the Logos Christology, and he is not replacing it. It does greater justice to the role of the Spirit in Christ. It gives duly recognition to the mission of the Son and the Spirit.

*The anointing of Jesus* – As indicated, Pinnock places inordinate emphasis on the anointing of Jesus, which enabled him to perform miracles. The Christ-life is sanctified by the Holy Spirit and manifested in the NT communities. It took place through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in those communities (cf. e.g., Heb. 2:4; 6:4). Habets is not particularly articulate with regard to the anointing but acknowledges it, especially in the baptism of Christ where it is the event of Jesus becoming the anointed Messiah. Ratzinger also places emphasis on the anointing of Christ.

*Jesus' relationship to the Holy Spirit* — Ratzinger concludes that the *kenosis* of the Son reveals a connection between the Incarnation and the Cross. It is in the theology of the cross that there exists a handing over of Jesus of himself to God. God who exists in God self is none other than the Spirit who is God. But God as Spirit refers to God from a certain point of view; it indicates God at work, as active, and as power, energy, or force that accomplishes many purposes in creation (cf. Haight 1992:266). The metaphor of “God as Spirit” validates the connection which Habets, Pinnock and Ratzinger see between Jesus and the Spirit. Haight (1992:267) insists that:

God as Spirit is God present and at work outside of God's self, in the world of God's creation. God as Spirit is like the wind; one does not see the wind, but one feels its presence; the wind is not tangible but is a force which one sees in its effects. So too, the metaphorical symbol of God as Spirit expresses the experience of God's power and energy in creation; this power is seen in its effects. The verbal or conceptual symbol points to the way God is present in the world.

The “presentness” of God in his church (or world for that matter) can only be experienced in the sense of intimate prayer between the followers of Jesus and his Father. Prayer for Ratzinger is not only the language of incarnation but also the language of intimacy between Jesus of Nazareth and between God and his church. Spirit Christology opens deeper dimensions of prayer and worship of God. As for Ratzinger, Habets also believes that through prayer the exalted Christ draws the believer into deeper dimensions of worship.

Haight (1992:283) cautions the church when he observes:

When this principle is applied to the question of prayer to and worship of Jesus, it results in the following meditative formula: One does not worship or pray to Jesus insofar as Jesus is a human being and creature; rather one worships and prays to God in and through Jesus. This language of prayer through Jesus, of going to the Father through the Son, has a long liturgical tradition. This reflects the dominant pattern of the New Testament. Although Lampe finds some isolated instances of prayer to Jesus in the New Testament, the predominant idea is that worship is through Jesus because Jesus is the medium of our worship of God. Spirit Christology underlines this.

The writer of Hebrews asserts the exact point, that prayer through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is directed to God. That is why we should go outside the camp to Jesus and share in his disgrace. On this earth we don't have a city that lasts forever, but we are waiting for such a city. Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus (Heb. 13:13-15).

## **5.7 AN INCARNATIONAL SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY OF HEBREWS**

Throughout this section I briefly stated the major contributions of Habets (Evangelical), Pinnock (Pentecostal) and Ratzinger (Roman Catholic) which give us a better understanding of Spirit Christology across the theological/denominational divide. All of them lean comprehensively on the three indicators under the previous rubric and all of them apply certain scriptures from Hebrews to substantiate their theses. The compelling principle is the Holy Spirit who existed together with the Son from all eternity, who became evident in the life of the incarnate Son in Jesus of Nazareth through the anointing or intimacy and a prayer life directed to the Father.

I want to propose an Incarnational Spirit Christology<sup>116</sup> which I submit to be present in the book of Hebrews. The metaphor of "God as Spirit" actualised by Haight, makes such a

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<sup>116</sup> Incarnational Spirit Christology shall further on be abbreviated as ISC. Roger Haight (1992:277) observes that there is no reason why God's personal self-communication, presence, and activity in Jesus should not be understood as an ontological Incarnation, so long as Incarnation is not taken to mean that Jesus' humanity is

submission plausible. This Spirit Christology is developed in two stages; thus, having two distinct dimensions. The first stage in ISC sees the pre-existent Son of God who became incarnate in Jesus during his life time as one in whom God as Spirit was at work (see e.g. Haight 1992:270). The second stage or dimension of ISC applies to the exaltation of the risen Jesus, the Jesus alive, with God, and called the Christ. In this stage, there is at times a kind of identity or conflation of Christ risen and the Spirit (see e.g. Haight 1992:270). Jenkins (2014:261) demarcates at least three stages in such a development which broadly corresponds with the previous stages. I include two of them:

There are three general theological issues inherent to the construction of an incarnational Spirit Christology. First, one must account for the hypostatic identity of both the Son and the Spirit. Such a pursuit implies grappling with facets of trinitarian theology. Secondly, one must address the inter-relationship between the Son and the Spirit so that the distinct hypostatic identity of each is maintained in their respective economic missions.

### ***5.7.1 Stage One: The Incarnational Theology of the Son***

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church describes the incarnation as follows:

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation affirms that the eternal Son of God took flesh from His human mother and that the historical Christ is at once both fully God and fully man. It is opposed to all theories of a mere theophany or transitory appearance of God in human form, frequently met within other religions. By contrast, it asserts an abiding union in the Person of Christ of Godhead and manhood without the integrity or permanence of either being impaired. It also assigns the beginning of this union to a definite and known date in human history<sup>117</sup>.

Behr (2015:80) observes that several elements in this definition are striking. I will include three that would help in the discussion of ISC:

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negated. Nor need this Incarnation of God as Spirit be understood in an adoptionist sense, even though one might suspect that there is a legitimate sense in which this could be done since it is a conception with New Testament roots. I concur with Haight's force that incarnation should not negate the humanity of Jesus. However, in Hebrews we only understand His humanity against the backdrop of his pre-existence.

<sup>117</sup> See Behr 2015:80

1. It is presented as a movement from God to us.
2. It resulted in a union that “abides”, yet as an event it is assigned to the past.
3. Any transformation on our part, although a consequence of this “incarnation”, is not embraced within that term as part of its essential meaning and scope.

Jenkins (2014:261) in his unpublished thesis reconstructs the Spirit Christology of David Coffey. Coffey understands incarnation as follows:

incarnation draws the created reality (the humanity of Jesus) into substantial union with the divine Son, and grace draws the created reality (human persons) into accidental union with the Holy Spirit. Coffey is clear that this latter instance is not a depreciation of the person of the Holy Spirit, but rather a statement about how a human person must receive the Holy Spirit. To say that the Holy Spirit works as the “accidental form” in grace is necessary in order to preserve philosophically the distinction between the divine and the human person, and it enables the theological position that human persons in the state of sinfulness may still exist without grace. This is, however, not the case with the instance of formal causality associated with the divine Son.

The incarnation is the “movement” of God towards us, through the humanity of Jesus as divine Son, which draws humans into union with the Holy Spirit. It is this “pivotal” point in history that conjoined the divine and human persons of Son and Jesus. Theologically, the Gospel of Christ is a movement from God in which he sought to reconcile humanity to himself. Jesus is thus God’s mode of communication to fallen mankind.

Hebrews attested that in these last days God has spoken through us in a Son. The term “son” is applied to Christ thirteen times in Hebrews. Jesus as High Priest in Hebrews has received much of the scholarly attention; on the other hand, some have gone so far as to suggest that the idea of the Sonship of Jesus Christ is “the fundamental idea of the whole Epistle”. Certainly, the concept of Jesus as Son is an important one for Hebrews (Parsons1988:201). The opening verses indicate that God at last, sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son (cf. Heb. 1:2). God has spoken through his Son (and by implication through his Spirit or God as Spirit).

The pre-existence of the son is a very significant import to the theology of Hebrews. Parsons (1988:202) observes:

This beginning of pre-existence may be found in the *Sophia* or Wisdom Literature, the *Logos* in Philo, the Son of Man in I Enoch, the Torah of the Rabbis, the *Logos* of the Stoics, and the myths of the Gnostics. Certainly, references to the Son's pre-existence would be an understandable term to the author's readers.

The first reference to Christ's pre-existence in Hebrews is in the *exordium* of the epistle, (Heb. 1:1-4). The Son pre-existed with the Father. This pre-existence is conveyed in terms of the Wisdom myth (Wisd. 7:26) (Parsons 1988:202). According to Parsons, Christ, then, is pre-existent Wisdom, creator, and sustainer of the universe (cf. Heb. 1:3). A *catena* of OT quotations demonstrates the superiority of the pre-existent Jesus over the angels. Furthermore, Hebrews 1:3 states that the incarnate Son of God is the glory of God. MacLeod (2005:220) expounds the verse

(the Son) was and is (present participle *ων*) the "reflection [cf. RSV] of His [Father's] glory" (*ἀπαύγασμα της δόξης . . . αὐτου*). This is the third statement about the Son's superiority over all human spokesmen for God. The thought is not that the glory of the Son's deity shines through His humanity. Rather, the glory of the Father is manifested in the perfection of His manhood.

The pre-existent Son in the incarnation reflected the essence of God. In Jesus Christ there is the perfect, visible expression of the reality of God. In Him people see in human form the love, mercy, justice, holiness, and goodness of God MacLeod (2005:220). In his carnation, the Son made purification for sins (*καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος*). The spiritual cleansing for sinners, rest in the superiority of the sacerdotal ministry of Jesus.

The incarnation is best understood in Hebrews against the background of the Son's pre-existence. Moreover, the Son's eschatological pre-existence is also stressed in book. Parson (1988:203) makes this ardent observation which I include in full:

Here an understanding of hope as the presence of the future is important for the idea of pre-existence (cf. Heb. 3:6, 3:14, 6:11, 11:1). At 6:4<sup>118</sup> salvation is seen as "tasting the heavenly gift" and is paralleled with "the powers of the ages to come".

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<sup>118</sup> I have argued in Chapter 3 that this verse points to the Holy Spirit and his gifts that is available to the church

Herein is the hope of eschatological pre-existence: the age to come is present already in Heaven and may be described as a heavenly gift. This concept is true of Christ as well. The expectation of the *Parousia* in Hebrews (9:28) is sustained by the belief that in the interim, Christ is performing his high-priestly work for us. Here the emphasis is on Christ's heavenly presence pre-existing, not creation, but his own manifestation. Because of Christ's heavenly pre-existence, "things promised for the future are already present in heaven".

Hebrews, with its teaching of the "already present" future, the eternal priest, and heavenly cultus, emphasises not only the protological pre-existence of Christ (i.e. before creation), but also his eschatological pre-existence (before *Parousia*). The argument of the Son's pre-existence is inextricably linked to the emphasis on his humanity (i.e., his incarnation<sup>119</sup>) and exaltation. In fact, "pre-existence for this writer, therefore, serves as the larger context that frees him to explain and to present fully the fact of Jesus" humanity and humility.

The humanity and humility of Jesus rest on his incarnation as the son of God. We gather from the Synoptic tradition that the Spirit came upon (or overshadowed) Mary for the virginal birth. About it, Ferguson (1996:42-43) observes that "the Son of God becomes the man Christ Jesus by incarnation through the power of the Spirit ... the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is the mode by which the Father's sending of the Son is affected. It underlines the principle that, in the work of redemption which Christ spearheads, each person of the Trinity is engaged." Hebrews 2: 9-7 give as the first extensive treatment of his humanity which has strong affinities with the Synoptic tradition. Jesus is "for a little while lower than the angels" in order that "by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone". The textual variations indicate that Jesus tasted death apart from God (cf. Parson 1988:204). Jesus led a life of "flesh and blood" (Heb. 2:13), which is a humiliating experience for the Son. This humiliation is also stressed in the Synoptics. Yet, it was precisely because Christ "himself partook of the same nature" and suffered death that he was able to conquer death and "deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15; Parson 1988:204). The reality of Jesus' humanity expressed his solidarity with us humans and now that Jesus has suffered and was tempted, he can help anyone else who is tempted (Heb. 2:18), he understands all our weakness, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin! (cf. Heb. 4:15). To

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<sup>119</sup> Emphasis mine

repeat for further validation of an ISC that understands the human predicament, the writer in Hebrews 5:7-9 speaks of “the days of his flesh” and of Jesus offering up “prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears”. Indeed, this passage recalls the struggle of Gethsemane (cf. Pinnock 1996:76,90).

In addition, the concept of *God as Spirit* is again applied to ISC which seeks to present a consistent interpretation of Jesus in a way analogous to the Logos Christology that has ruled Christian consciousness since the second century (cf. Haight 1992:227). ISC can be understood as a basis for considering, interpreting, and appropriating other NT Christologies. The first stage of ISC is not finished unless we apply the redemptive work of Christ in terms of the Holy Spirit. Sin is guilt which erects a barrier to one’s approach to God. This barrier must be removed in order for us to “approach” God. It is the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14, 22), shed on the cross, which cleanses sins. MacLeod (2005:225) remarks that “the verb form (*καθαρίζω*) of the term ‘purification’ or ‘cleansing’ (*καθαρισμός*) is used in the Septuagint of the priestly act of pronouncing a person ritually clean. To be declared cleansed from sin was the result of the priest’s sacrificial work on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:30; cf. Exod. 30:10).”

At the cross<sup>120</sup> Jesus made provision for removal of the guilt of sin. The word “made” (*ποιησάμενος*) is an aorist participle, suggesting that the purification or cleansing was accomplished by a single act in the past (cf. MacLeod 2005:225). MacLeod argues that the middle voice of the Greek verb suggests that it was Christ himself who made purification. He had no assistance from others; He made it by himself, offering himself as the cleansing offering (Heb. 9:14). However, MacLeod is missing the pivotal point in verse 14, “through the eternal Spirit”. I argued extensively at the beginning of this chapter that Christ was supported by the Holy Spirit to render his offering pleasing and acceptable to God. Haight (1992:270) is thoroughly convinced that God is the mediator of salvation; the Spirit is experienced in a new way as being poured forth in the abundance of eschatological

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<sup>120</sup> Behr (2015:84) infers that Athanasius connected the incarnation and manifestation of the Word to the cross. In this way, he emphasised that “it is only in the one who ascended the cross that we know the Word of God.”

salvation through Jesus. In this context God as Spirit is thus thoroughly reinterpreted. He says:

The saving Spirit of God is as it were let loose in a final, climactic, and saving way through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and is vividly experienced in the communities of the Jesus movement that became “Christian”. The Spirit is experienced; the Spirit is grace; the Spirit is salvation. The effects of the Spirit in the community and the individual lives of its members can be named: they are faith, love, forgiveness, redemption, justification, sanctification, adoption by God, reconciliation, freedom from sin, illumination, liberation, empowerment, and charismatic gifts of service to the community (Haight 1992:270).

All of the elements for identifying such a robust Spirit-filled community are present in Hebrews. The characteristics of the manifestations of the Spirit is scattered throughout Hebrews from chapters 2-13. Correspondingly, the Logos in ISC is never disputed. The Logos became human, “the eternal divine being of the Son of God must be conceived of as eternal being – toward his human incarnation, suffering and death, as a human being who is susceptible to human suffering and death” (Swain 2013:211). The *Logos asarkos* never exists in abstraction from his human nature but is always *ensarkos*. When we reflect on the *exordium*, again: The Son has all the brightness of God’s own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together (Heb. 1:3a-b). The theological predisposition of these opening verses is well-addressed by Athanasius<sup>121</sup>, “his own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ that the Father acts to govern and order the universe. The creative and providential work of God cannot be separated from the salvific work of Christ.” Athanasius is further speaking of “the living and powerful Word<sup>122</sup>” of the good God of the universe ... who is the Father’s one and only Word, who ordered this entire universe and illuminates it by his providence (Behr 2015:88). The Logos acts in accordance to the Father.

Another theological consequence in this verse indicates a continuous reflection of God’s likeness and being. The Son actively reflects the radiance of the being of God (cf. Webster 2009:85). The writer continues to affirm the relationship between God and the Son ...

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<sup>121</sup> See Behr 2015:88

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Heb. 4:12

“after the Son had washed away our sins, he sat down at the right side of the glorious God in heaven” (Heb. 1:3c). There exists between God and his son a relationship that is deeper than that of person and morality. In this context, the Patristic exegetes had a firm grasp on the soteriology of Hebrews. They connect the purification of sins to the human nature of the divine, exalted Son (cf. Webster 2009:90).

### ***5.7.2 Stage 2: The Exaltation of the Son***

The second leg of ISC in Hebrews must focus on the exaltation of the Son. I will develop it under 5.7.2. Here the introduction will introduce the suffering and exaltation of Jesus Christ (5.7.2.1), Christ’s priesthood and sacrifice (5.7.2.2), and Christ and the Spirit (5.7.2.3). In the *catena* (Heb. 1:5-12) of Scripture, the writer of Hebrews describes the superiority of the Son to angels. The following chapters elaborate his superiority over and against Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the priestly cult of Israel. The writer elaborates also on the significance of the superior covenant and sacrifice. Parsons (1988:206) places emphasis on the following observation about the *catena*:

While some have understood the *catena* as referring primarily to Christ’s pre-existence, it is more likely that the verses (1:5-11) should be understood, “as a Christological hymn which traces the entire Christ event, including the pre-existence, earthly life, and exaltation of Christ”. The overall structure of the *catena* seems to point to exaltation as the underlying motif. The first three citations (of which the first two refer to the Son and the third to the angels) are used as scriptural validation of the claim in 1:4 that Christ is better. The next section (1:7-12) (of which the first quotation refers to angels and the next two to the Son) provides the grounds on which the author argues that Christ is “better”. The argument climaxes with the citation of Ps. 110:1, the *locus classicus* to which the early church turned again and again to shape its Christology.

The superiority of the Son to angels is taken up again in Hebrews 2. It is the humanity of Jesus that lifts him to an exalted position in the heavenly succession. Jesus will rule not only over angels, but also over the world to come (cf. Heb. 2:5), and through him humanity will be crowned with glory and honour. “By virtue of having been made for a little while lower than the angels, Christ will have everything put into subjection to him” (cf. Parsons

1988:206). Jesus is the prototype and representative of humanity and became their leader or forerunner. He finished his journey and brought God's story of Israel to its climax. The eschatological pilgrimage is going on for the church who has become partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4-6) and sharers of Christ (Heb. 3:1).

### ***5.7.2.1 The suffering and exaltation of Christ (a few more observations)***

Hebrews 2:5 builds on the previous exhortation in 2:1-4 that the believers should continue to pay attention to the encouragement in order to lay hold to the world to come, but only through the humiliation of the Son of God. The writer introduces Christ as the "ideal man", the Son of God, whom God has exalted above angels but also made him lower than angels for a little while. The reference to Psalm 8:4-6 (cf. Heb. 2:6-7) indicates that Christ is exalted because he is both divine ("the Son") and human (lower than the angels in rank, not ability). At least it may be concluded that the superiority of the Son is demonstrated by this comparison/contrast with angels (cf. Parsons 1988:208). Everything is now under the power and authority of the Son. In his incarnation Jesus did not lose power and authority, however he gave it up for a little while (cf. Phil. 2:5; Ps 8:4-6). The writer succinctly puts it: "What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels". Because of God's wonderful kindness, Jesus died for everyone. And now that Jesus has suffered and died, he is crowned with glory and honour! (Heb. 2:9). The Son achieved "glory and honour" for humanity by accepting the lower status. The "world to come" is of specific importance for the writer. Human beings are not placed in authority, but Jesus fulfils that destiny on behalf of us (cf. France 2006:50). Furthermore, the "world to come" indicates the "new world-order inaugurated by the enthronement of Christ at the right hand of God" (Bruce 1990:33; France 2006:50). Jesus by virtue of his temporary humiliation and exaltation is fully capable to be humanity's "representative". It is not particularly through the incarnation that Jesus was made lower than angels, but rather "due to his suffering of death" (cf. Johnson 2006:91). Jesus tasted death on behalf of all of us. Johnson affirms that the theme of suffering is key to the writer's conception of Jesus's priesthood and to his understanding of discipleship (cf. Johnson 2006:91; Heb. 2:10,18; 5:8; 9:26; 10:32 etc.).

The concept of Sonship was a “ready tool” for the early Christians to use in understanding who Jesus was; in fact, Jesus as “Son” became a basic assumption for the NT writers interpreting Jesus of Nazareth (Johnson 2006:90; Parsons 1988:208). Hebrews 2:5-9 set the table for the inauguration of the son as high priest —He had to be one of us, so that he could serve God as our merciful and faithful high priest and sacrifice himself for the forgiveness of our sins (Heb. 2:17).

Jesus was the first-born of God, who has already reached the world to come by his exaltation (Heb. 1:6, cf. Fitvedt 2015:63). The mission of Jesus is bringing people (brothers and sisters) to God. In this context, Fitvedt (2015:63) describes Jesus as the designated forerunner (Heb. 6:20), the one who reached the sacred space behind the veil, which again, opened the way for his followers. Jesus’ journey becomes a paradigm for his followers and hinged on two stages: 1) Temporal abasement, suffering, death, followed by, 2) glory, honour and perfection. In fact, it is through his abasement and suffering, glory, and perfection that believers can be “in Christ”, the “sons (and daughters) in the Son.” The union, ontological and psychological, that they have with the Father is the work of the Holy Spirit (see e.g. Rom 8:14-16 and Gal 4:6-7). At every level, the work of uniting men and women with the Father is that of the Holy Spirit. Further, this is an immediate union, in the sense that no person or thing can stand between the individual human person and the Father. The Holy Spirit is therefore the bond rather than the medium between us and the Father (Coffey 1984:475).

The life of obedience unto God becomes also a paradigm as it finds expression in the faithful obedience of the Son. Jesus is God’s own Son, but still he had to suffer before he could learn what it really means to obey God. Suffering made Jesus perfect, and now he can save forever all who obey him (Heb. 5:8-9). The plan of God for the church is obedience unto him. Through his exaltation we can emulate the life of Jesus Christ, the leader of salvation. “Jesus has gone there ahead of us, and he is our high priest forever, just like Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20), therefore, we follow him. To sum up the observation with regard to Hebrews 5, I confirm what Allen (2010:175) suggests about the exaltation of the

Son: 1) the Son has been inaugurated as the Davidic king by the Father at the Son's exaltation (Heb. 1:5) and 2) this new position is a permanent position or dynasty (Heb. 1:6a) as a result of the exaltation all the angels are called by God to worship the Son, thus he has complete authority over them.

### ***5.7.2.2 Christ's priesthood and sacrifice***

The priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews rests on the sequence: 1) that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service of God, and 2) that he might make atonement for the sins of the people of God. The Aaronic priests were specifically anointed for their office, whereas the Son's priesthood is eternal. In other words, the anointing by means of the Spirit is eternally on the Son. The Son's exaltation enabled him to be high priest, with a superior covenant and sacrifice. Three offices are distinguished through the exaltation: (a) the prophetic office includes teaching and the miracles of Christ, (b) the priestly office consists of the fulfilment made for the sins of the world by the death on the cross, and in the continued intercession of the exalted Saviour for his people, and (c) the kingly office whereby Christ founded his kingdom, defends his Church against all enemies, and rules all things in heaven and on earth. The priestly office is of importance to us.

In Hebrews 7 an inquiry into the identity of the enigmatic Melchizedek is made. While the use of Ps. 110:1 to affirm the exalted state of the Son was a common device employed by the early church, the author takes up Ps. 110:4 and applies it to Jesus in such a way as seems "unprecedented in the early church" (Parsons 1988:212). In Hebrews 8:7-13 the second covenant is coming to the fore. The covenant is announced by the Holy Spirit. The priestly ministry (office) of Christ is "more excellent", much more excellent as the covenant of which he is the mediator, is "better" because it is based on the "better promises" found in Jeremiah 31:31-34, quoted in vv. 7-13,23 (cf. Cockerill 2001:184). Thus, in Hebrews 8:7-13 the New Covenant is of a different quality. It is used to substantiate the fact that the sacrifice appropriate for the covenant must be of a proportionately different quality. The writer of the epistle states: "When the Lord talks about a new agreement, he means that the first one is out of date. And anything that is old and useless will soon disappear" (Heb. 8:13).

In Hebrews 9:3-14, the writer explains the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice in contrast to the limitation of the Aaronic high priest's sacrifice, as described in vv. 8-10. Cockerill (2001:189) suggests that although there is an inherent contrast between the two sacrifices, the author still uses an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the blood of animals could provide for "the cleansing of the flesh", how much more can Christ's sacrifice of himself cleanse "our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Heb. 9:14). This final statement in verse 14 about the "blood of Christ" contrasts sharply with the statement at the end of verse 9 about the "gifts and sacrifices" of the earthly Tabernacle that could not "make the worshiper perfect in conscience".

Lichtenwaller (2012:102) observes:

Here the Holy Spirit reveals the limitations of the ministry of the Israel's sacrificial system as well as its deeper meaning in relation to fulfilment in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who unlocks how the earthly sanctuary accomplished the purpose for which God created it, but even more so how only the sacrifice and ministry of Christ would eliminate once for all the problem related to sin and condemnation. As one who so speaks and interprets the Word of God in relation to Jesus' sacrifice and priestly ministry, the Holy Spirit is clearly involved in the work of life-transforming redemption on a very practical, interior level (heart, thought, motive, and conscience).

The Holy Spirit in Hebrews is actively involved in the life and high priestly ministry of Jesus. Atonement is made effective through power of the eternal Spirit.

With regard to Hebrews 9:13-14, I pointed out in the beginning of the chapter that many suggest that the word "spirit" describes not the Holy Spirit, but the selfhood or person of Jesus, who, by virtue of His resurrection, is eternal (cf. Heb. 7:16). Lichtenwaller (2012:06) suggests that the trajectory of the author's argument does revolve around Christ's eternal personhood in the context of the power of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Jesus lives forever, therefore his priesthood is enduring (Heb. 7:23). The believers experienced the cleansing of their conscience and spiritual awareness on a profoundly deeper level, "both because the eternal Christ who died for their sins lives forever, and because the Holy Spirit (or 'eternal Spirit') brings the effective power of Christ's crucifixion and ascension (i.e. his

mediatorial work at the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens) to one's inner most being" (cf. Lichtenwalter 2012:107).

### ***5.7.2.3 The Spirit of Christ***

In ISC one cannot underestimate the Spirit phenomenon that was prevalent in the life of Christ (cf. e.g. Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35). The Spirit's work in, especially, atonement becomes similar to that of Christ. In his mission, the Spirit and Christ carry the same burden, which is to call people to God<sup>123</sup>. In the Synoptics, we read that Christ's baptism was a Holy Spirit anointing (Matt. 3:16, 17; Mark. 1:9-11). In Acts 10:38, Luke maintains that "God gave the Holy Spirit and power to Jesus from Nazareth. He was with Jesus, as he went around doing good and healing everyone who was under the power of the devil.

Christ's ascension and coronation as High Priest was a Holy Spirit experience as per Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-39; also Heb.1-2). Lichtenwalter (2012:107) emphasises that:

Christ's entire ministry was Holy Spirit driven, Holy Spirit engaged, and Holy Spirit bathed (Luke 4:1-2, 18; cf. Isa 61:1; 42:1; John 3:34). While the four Gospels say nothing about the Holy Spirit's role in the sufferings of Christ, John's first epistle asserts that the Spirit gives testimony of each of the significant turning points of Christ's life – baptism, death, and ascension (1 John 5:7). As the Holy Spirit was at work during each of these Christ events (baptism, crucifixion, and ascension as per 1 John 5:7), it is very likely that He played a profound role in the moments of Christ's offering Himself without blemish to God on the Cross. If so, the phrase "eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14 – J.A..) would hint of the spiritual mystery of how divinity could both die and come to life as well as to how Christ's offering would be both unblemished and bring in eternal redemption.

Roger (2008:89) maintains that "it falls to the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, to transgress the bounds of the incarnation that is death and reunite Father and Son in the Resurrection.". The Christ event could not have occurred without the Spirit coming alongside Christ to secure his offering and bring eternal redemption. The Holy Spirit is in

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<sup>123</sup> Rogers (2008:89) insists that the Holy Spirit makes community in the Trinity, so it gathers human beings also in the economy.

close proximity to the Son— an all encompassing presence to the Son in his human as in his divine nature. In this sense, the Spirit is one with the incarnate Son. He never works against the mission of the Son. Rogers (2008:87) unequivocally asserts that:

The Spirit rests on the Son paraphysical: alongside, in excess of, and in addition to the physical. It rests on the Son paraphysically because the Son became physical, incarnate. It rests on the Son paraphysically as a gift to the son, to the one who took on a body and a human nature, or *phusis*. The Son does not need the Spirit to obtain a body or remain divine: but, counting neither body nor divinity to be grasped, the Son may choose to receive from the Spirit what he enjoys by right.

The Son has free access to the life of the Spirit in the economy of the Trinity. He was never forsaken by the Father and the Spirit. In death, he gave up the S/spirit who rested on him. The crucifixion of Jesus with its pneumatic sequel is the final liberation of desire into the divine union that all desire is groping toward (cf. Rogers 2008:93).

## 5.8 CONCLUSION

In summary, Hebrews illustrates this two-fold picture of the incarnate Christ. Jesus bears the very stamp of God's nature. He is the image of the invisible God, upholding the universe by his powerful word (Heb. 1:3). Concurrently, the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the humanity of Jesus – he was like his brothers and sisters in every respect (Heb. 2:17). He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and . . . he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8). The incarnation remains a mystery and, in many respects, will remain a mystery – and therefore I choose to work with the conventional statement regarding the incarnation: “the Son assumed the human nature. It was a voluntary assumption or taking on of the limiting human nature that subjected the Son to human weaknesses, not the ‘giving up’ of his ‘divinity’” (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7). I underscored in this chapter a Spirit Christology that is constitutive of the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ. I tried to argue that the Spirit functions in collaboration with

Christ in mission and atonement (cf. Heb. 9:14). In Hebrews, we saw that the humanity and divinity of Christ is a perfect equilibrium which was fully “mutual, reciprocal, co-inherent with the Holy Spirit” (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7). As we have seen, the author of Hebrews can speak of Jesus in all but divine terms, he can have Jesus addressed as “God” at one point, and he can evidently think in terms of Jesus as pre-existent. But alongside this, he can present Jesus as a supremely human figure, one who was – and must be – similar in every respect to other human beings if he is to be their true helper (cf. Tuckett 2001:101).

Moreover, ISC is a Christological model that can account for the Son of God who performed miracles in the power of the Spirit, cries out to his Father in Gethsemane (cf. Heb. 5:7), and who goes to the cross sustained, comforted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is a pneumatological and Christological account of the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ that formed the basis of both a theological anthropology and a theology of mission (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7).

## CHAPTER 6

### THE TRINITY IN HEBREWS: A THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

#### INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Trinity<sup>124</sup> is the ancient Christian teaching that there is only one God and that the one God has eternally existed in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit<sup>125</sup>. While there are a variety of texts that point to this truth in many different ways, on its most basic level the claim is derived from three basic biblical principles:

1. The Bible clearly establishes that there is one and only one God, YHWH (variously rendered as “Yahweh”, “Jehovah,” or “the LORD”).
2. The Bible speaks of three distinct and interactive divine persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. The Bible identifies each of these persons as YHWH<sup>126</sup> (cf. Wayne 2017).

Basic to Trinitarian theology, is that God has identified himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Only by following this self-identification do we truly speak of God. Theology is not to be construed as a merely human endeavour. It is a mode of participation, enabled by the

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<sup>124</sup> Kärkkäinen (2007:8) confirms that “there is no mention of the word ‘Trinity’ in the New Testament. What we do discover from the New Testament writers, though, is a consistent argument for the filial uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relationship to the Father of the covenant ... for the simple reason that the God of the New Testament is that of the Old Testament.” He further relies on Wolfhart Pannenberg’s words, the “God of Jesus is none other than the God of the Jewish faith ... He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 12:26-27), the God whom Israel confesses in the *shema* of Deut.6:4” (cf. Mark 12:29). To emphasise this fact, compare also Carson 2006.

<sup>125</sup> See Horrell (2014:126).

<sup>126</sup> In sections 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter I will elaborate on the distinction of the Persons of the Trinity in more detail.

Spirit, in the Triune God's identification of himself. Whoever speaks of God does so only as God himself makes eloquent the stuttering and hesitant speech of those who bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Witness to the gospel is the calling of a particular community, the ecclesia, gathered by Christ and constituted by the Spirit as his body. Theology belongs within the community as part of its responsibility to make the gospel known (Rae 2005:19).

The theological import of the Triune God in Hebrews is based on the preceding actions of the triune God. The Father gives his Word to humanity and sees to it through the Spirit that humanity is able to hear and understand, and thus to be reconciled with himself. This reconciling action of God is an activity that follows the utterance of God's own Word (Heb.1; cf. Rae 2005:11). Just as theology, as a human endeavour, is following the Word, in the sense that it "*comes after the Word – it is a posteriori – and that it attends to the Word given in Jesus Christ*" (Rae 2005:11), in the same way the reconciling action of God can be better understood in terms of a diligent observation by us of the character, identity, and function of each member of the Trinity. In Hebrews, there is a certain particularity with regard to its worldview because our author draws from his immaculate knowledge of the Hebrew scripture which he applies to the revelation of God in Christ in "these last days".

The triune economy in Hebrews rests on the presupposition that the Father speaks; he sends forth his Word in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are drawn into this relationship of God's self-communication. Theology, therefore, is a form of participation in the trinitarian life made possible in and through Christ. As sons and daughters from the household of God (cf. Heb. 3), we share in this new life in "which our thinking and speaking is transformed so that we no longer think in terms of what seems theologically real and true to us but in terms of what has been accomplished by God in Christ." (Rae 2005:15). It would be correct to infer that theology proper is nothing else than participation in the triune economy of God. One of the features of this economy is that a community is formed by it, a community called the people of God, encompassing both Israel and the church. It best takes place within the parameters of the church or faith community in which we are confessing our faith. The confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and proclamation of the gospel is fundamental, and this fact distinguished the Christian faith in

a triune God from other faith communities (cf. Rae 2005:15).

Trinitarian theology would then be termed the church's thinking (and speaking) of the Godhead, both in "Oneness" and "Threeness" as it finds articulation in this robust faith community. Previously described as a form of participation in the triune economy of God, theology is necessarily located within the koinonia fellowship to which that economy gives rise (cf. Rae 2005:17). Rae (2005:18) indicates that (*trinitarian*) theology is also, therefore, an act of trust that God is faithful to the community within which theological discourse takes place and allows his Word to be preserved in earthen vessels. It is an act of trust that the church's Scriptures and dogmatic pronouncements (such as the Nicene Creed), along with its institutional forms and practices, are instruments of the Spirit's work. The trust is succinctly captured by the writer of Hebrews "Jesus Christ never changes! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

The praxis of trinitarian theology would follow at least the three corollaries which Sanders (2017:83-84) identified as markers:

Firstly, the authors of the New Testament seem to be already in possession of a trinitarian understanding of God, one that they serenely decline to bring to full articulation. The clearest trinitarian statements in the New Testament do not occur in the context of teachings about God or Christ, but as almost casual allusions or brief digressions in the middle of discourse about other things.

The second corollary is that we should not seek to construct the doctrine of the Trinity from the words of the New Testament alone, where it is not properly revealed so much as presupposed. Instead, we must develop hermeneutical approaches and exegetical skills that let us read the New Testament in the spirit of its own composition: with constant reference, back to the revelation in Christ and the Spirit. Our Trinitarian theology should be demonstrated from Scripture, but in a way, that recognizes the priority of the actual revelation in events, and the dependent character of the inspired texts.

The third corollary is that we should expect the strongest arguments for the doctrine of the Trinity to be found along those seams where the Old Testament's prospective witness and the New Testament's retrospective witness are both present in overlap. That is, the doctrine of the Trinity is best established in an extended thematic study of the way the New Testament uses the Old Testament in its talk of God and salvation (Sanders (2017:83-84).

## SECTION 1

### 1. A CONDENSED ACCOUNT OF THE TRINITARIAN THOUGHT OF SELECTED ANTE-NICENE AND NICENE FATHERS

*“Shall we not then highly exalt Him who is in His nature divine, in His greatness infinite, in His operations powerful, in the blessings He confers, good? Shall we not give Him glory?”<sup>127</sup>*

I would rather caution that this preliminary investigation will not offer any comprehensive survey of the themes, doctrines, or theologies represented by the church fathers. It only seeks to identify any development of understanding regarding the Trinity among the works these Fathers produced (cf. Carpenter 2005:293). Their thoughts and dictums will be assessed in order to advance towards a biblical/theological interpretation of the Trinity which I envisage to be present in Hebrews.

TIS embraces the hermeneutical lenses that came to be known as the Rule of Faith<sup>128</sup>. The church fathers used this codification of the Biblical norms to guide the parameters of the church against heresy. It also came to be expressed in creedal statements such as Nicaea. Theology of the Trinity in Hebrews can best be appropriated against the backdrop of the fathers that used the Rule of Faith as interpretive methods to delineate their understanding

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<sup>127</sup> Basil (c. 329- c. 379d) cited in Larson 2005. Basil's exaltation of God confirms my belief that Trinitarian theology draws the church closer in worship of the one true God.

<sup>128</sup> For a detailed discussion on the Rule of Faith in Theological Interpretation of Scripture see J. B. Green, Practicing Theological interpretation 2012.

of the Trinity. TIS can help us inquire if the readings of the NT theology in Hebrews is in direct correlation with the fathers we are about to engaged. Their theology of trinity is historically closer to the Apostolic Age which assists us to test if our theological assumptions are congruent with their statements and the later creeds. Finally, the theology of the fathers on the Trinity and my presupposition that a Trinitarian theology in Hebrews, are not in tension. For this reason, I selected a few church fathers to lay a foundation in the discussion of the Trinity in Hebrews. Much of their work is drawn from Hebrews and other NT representative texts.

Giles (2008:326) observes that:

In the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity a number of words used of God as one and three gradually became technical terms and agreed synonyms in differing languages (Greek, Latin, and English) were recognised. In speaking of God as one, the terms “being”, “substance”, “essence”, and “nature” were accepted as synonyms. In speaking of anyone of the divine three the words “person”, *hypostasis* and “subsistence” were taken as synonyms.

Although these technical terms will not be expounded in this discussion, it is unavoidable for some of them to emerge in the material. These Fathers had only the biblical data (OT and NT) with which they worked and extrapolate their theological positions and reflections on the Trinity, in the context of heresies which were the order of their day. These dissenting views challenged the orthodox faith and belief in the personhood and works of the Triune God. Their persistence in theologising about the Trinity was rewarded in the Nicene-Constantinople Council when the orthodoxy of trinitarian faith were firmly established in creedal form.

### **6.1 IRENAEUS OF LYON (C. 120-C. 200)**

Carpenter (2005:293) asserts that Irenaeus’ main focus was to defend against heresy: “It was not to establish a systematic theology for the Trinity. Still, there are enough references to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to extrapolate, with confidence, where Irenaeus stood

with regard to the Godhead.” Even though Irenaeus is not inclined to speculate about God, he clearly attributes pre-existence to the Son and the Spirit. Like Theophilus before him, Irenaeus considered the Son and the Spirit the hands of God<sup>129</sup> (*To Autolycus* 2, 18, cf. Her. 4, 20, 1 cited in Lashier 2011:17).

Irenaeus has a more mature pneumatology than his predecessors. There is no confusion of the Spirit with the Word, as the Spirit is assigned a distinct role in the economy of salvation. The Spirit is the Wisdom in whom God freely and spontaneously made all things. He ministers to the Father along with the Son, but angels are subject to the both. Lashier (2011:17) indicates that for Irenaeus,

the Spirit is limited to a prophetic role. Irenaeus enlarges this limited role by attributing the work of creation to the Spirit and calling the Spirit “Sophia”. Not only does “Sophia” correspond with “Logos”, implying that the Sophia is present along with the Logos with and in God eternally, but it also describes a role of the Spirit in the economy of salvation, namely that of binding, together or completing the creation.

For Irenaeus, the Spirit’s activity is both inseparable and distinct from that of the Father and the Son. “Those who bear the Spirit of God,” he writes in his *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, “are led to the Word that is to the Son, while the Son presents [them] to the Father, and the Father furnishes incorruptibility” (Hildebrand 2011:102). It is understood that Irenaeus speaks a lot about the divinity of the Son, but with the same vigour he attributes divinity to the Spirit. Carpenter (2005:312) asserts that:

he (Irenaeus – J.A.) does have much to say about the Holy Spirit. Though he never calls the Holy Spirit God, he certainly considers him divine. He states that one must not be “deprived of the Divine Spirit (else) they fail to attain to the kingdom of

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<sup>129</sup> Sanders (2017:73-76) explains the metaphor which Irenaeus uses: By hand, Irenaeus means agency, personal presence, and effective power. By calling the Son and Holy Spirit the Father’s two hands, Irenaeus draws our attention to the differentiated unity of God’s work. In doctrinal terms, this Irenaeus’ two-handedness can be described as the constant correlation to Christology and pneumatology.

heaven”. After Jesus was baptized “did the Spirit of God rest upon Him and anoint Him to preach the Gospel”. This same Spirit was with him before all creation.

The word Trinity was never articulated in the teachings and apologetics of Irenaeus. Carpenter (2005:314) suggests that “there is no doubt he believes in the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He declares that all believers must have ‘faith in one God, the Father Almighty ... and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God ... and in the Holy Spirit.’ He also states, ‘I have also largely demonstrated, that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation’”.

### **6.2 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (C. 150-C. 215)**

Clement preceded the days of the trinitarian controversies. He taught that there were three “Terms” (or relationships) in the Godhead. Havey (n.d.) says that some critics doubt whether Clement distinguished them as Persons, but a careful reading of him proves that he did. The Second Term of the Trinity is the incarnate Word. According to Clement the Son is eternally begotten and has the very attributes of the Father. They are but one God (cf. Havey n.d.). The Spirit is often called by Clement the “prophetic Spirit” working in the Old Testament (*e.g.* Clement *Paedagogus* 1; Hildebrand 2011:102). Beyond this role, the Spirit plays a part in the new dispensation by drawing us to a life of virtue (*e.g.* Clement 2001). The Father and the Son are primary, but the Spirit participates in the work of the Son.

### **6.3 ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA (C. 185-C. 232)**

Origen’s *On First Principles* opens with an extensive explication of the Trinity which is recapped at the end of the work. There are three first principles in one Godhead, according to Origen, the Holy Spirit being also a first principle of salvation, like the Father and the Son (Kannengiesser 1988:246 cited by Hildebrand 2011:103).

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not considered apart from the economy of creation and redemption. The Trinity, for Origen, is the “blessed and ruling power ... that exercises control of all things” (Hildebrand 2011:103). He furthermore conceives of God as the creative and beneficent power, and, so, it is “absurd and impious to suppose that these powers of God have been at any time in abeyance for a single moment” (cf. Hildebrand 2011:103). Origen wrote of the Son: “the Son is begotten of the Father’s will. He is the ‘image of the invisible God’” (Col. 1:15), “the effulgence of his glory and the impress of his substance” (Heb. 1:3), the “firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15). He is a creature in a qualified sense, Wisdom, as Proverbs 8:22 has it.

Origen’s intimation that hierarchy exists in God was flawed to say the least. In his later writings, he had the chance to rectify it. Hildebrand (2011:103) observes:

(as per Origen– J.A.) As the Father is superior to the Son, so the Son is to the Spirit. The Spirit is less than the Son, for his sphere of providence is limited to the saints; the working of the power of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saint alone.

Kärkkäinen (2007:25) explains it in another way;

Origen’s idea of the differentiation of the three members of the Godhead based on their distinctive operations is famous. According to him, while the Father works in all things, the Son works only in rational creatures and the Spirit only in the church. The differentiation in the works of members of the Trinity could not establish their distinct identities. Soon attempts to account for the distinct nature of Son and Spirit as well as their relation to the Father took a different route.

Hildebrand (2011:103) indicates that in his commentary on John, Origen explains John 1:3 (“all things were made through him”) - that the Holy Spirit came to existence through the Word because the Word is “older than he” (Origen 1989:113). The “Holy Spirit is the most honoured of all things which came to be through the Word” and is the first in rank “of all the things which came to existence by the Father through Christ”.

#### 6.4 ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA (C. 296-C. 373)

In the middle of the Arian crisis Athanasius primarily speaks of the trinity in doxological terms. A few examples are mentioned by Weinandy (2007:105):

To the God and Father (τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ) is due the glory, honour and worship, with his co-existent Son and Word, together with the All-holy and Life-giving Spirit, now and to the endless ages of ages. Amen.

Or again:

Athanasius serves not a creature but the God who “created all things through thy Word, the only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom to thee the Father, together with the same Word, in the Holy Spirit, be glory and power for ever and ever”.

It is in this doxological setting that Athanasius builds the foundation for distinguishing between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It furthermore attests to their equality as the one God. In worshipping the Triune God, Athanasius explores four affirmations on the divine nature of the persons of the Trinity: Firstly, the mere act of worship attests that all who are worshiped are truly divine; otherwise such worship would be idolatrous. Secondly, since all who are worshiped are truly divine, it must be so from all eternity and, therefore, all are “unoriginately” perfect and unchangeable. Thirdly, the triadic nature of the worship affirms that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit eternally possess distinct and so non-interchangeable identities as their discrete names imply. Fourthly, the very act by which they are worshiped together, while possessing their distinct identities, itself equally affirms that they are all unvaryingly the one God. Thus, this doxological affirmation contains within itself the divine and eternal unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as well as their distinct identities (Weinandy 2007:105).

Athanasius' inclination to the worship of the one God filtered his theology through this hermeneutical focus. It is observed for example in his theology of baptism. Baptism has a direct bearing on his trinitarian understanding of God. Weinandy (2007:106) indicates that:

It is important to note that Athanasius' theology of baptism is not simply the expression that one is baptized into the divine life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit since all three are the one God. It also expresses a sequence of distinct individual divine action that form the one rite of Baptism and so the one collaborative act of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... Baptism then culminates in the action of the divine Holy Spirit, who consecrates and so sanctifies the believer such that he or she is subsumed within the divine life of the Father and the Son. Thus, baptism becomes a hermeneutical principle for discerning the inner life of the Triad, especially the position of the Holy Spirit.

In the act of baptism, one lives in communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For Athanasius, this communion first arises from within the Sacrament of Baptism for one is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Weinandy 2007:106). When subsumed in the divine life, the believer participates in the true worship of the Trinity. "True worshipers, therefore, worship the Father, but in Spirit and Truth, confessing the Son and in him the Spirit. For the Spirit is inseparable from the Son, as the Son is inseparable from the Father" (cf. Weinandy 2007:118).

Another key point for Athanasius is that if one "denies the divinity of the Son, one denies the divinity of the Father for the Father can only be God the Father if the Son is God the Son" (cf. Horrell 2014:128). The implication, again as seen above, is that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is predicated and is, in some manner, dependent on the divinity of the Son for the "Son gives all that is his to the Holy Spirit like the Father giving to him all that is his." (Weinandy 2007:108). The Holy Spirit is truly divine (cf. e.g. Heb.10:29). The Spirit renews and recreates all whom the Son draws to the Father. Moreover, it is the sanctification and renewal of the Spirit that is the salvific fruit of the Son's redemptive work (cf. Heb. 6:4; Weinandy 2007:114). Weinandy (2007:119) concludes:

The heart of Athanasius' theology is the biblical proclamation that there is one God and that the one God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This profession of

faith demanded, for Athanasius, that he unite not only the Father and the Son in the one Godhead, but also the Holy Spirit. As the eternal Father must be eternally Father of the Son, and thus the Son Eternally Son of the Father, so the Holy Spirit must be eternally the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Moreover, throughout his defence and affirmation of the Spirit's divinity, primarily because he was guided almost entirely by Scripture, Athanasius set forth an understanding of the Spirit, and thus of the Father and the Son as well, that is wholly soteriological. If the Spirit is not God, then he cannot sanctify and vivify and so cannot transform human beings into the likeness of the Son and so make them children of the Father.

Kelly (cited in Kärkkäinen 2007:36) summarises Athanasius's contribution in similar manner:

In response to Arians and others who denied the deity of the Spirit, Athanasius's teaching is that the Spirit is fully divine, consubstantial with the Father and the Son ... The Spirit "belongs to and is one with the Godhead which is the Triad. ... The Spirit comes from God, bestows sanctification and life, and is immutable, omnipresent, and unique. ... The Triad is eternal, homogenous, and indivisible, and ... since the Spirit is a member of it He must therefore be consubstantial with Father and Son. ... He belongs in essence to the Son exactly as the Son does to the Father".

In the Nicene-Constantinople Creed (381) the consubstantiality of the Spirit was officially confirmed: The Holy Spirit is to be "worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son." (Kärkkäinen 2007:36).

## 6.5 THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS

The Cappadocian Fathers consisted of Basil the Great (c. 329-c. 379) who was bishop of Caesarea. Basil was supported in his mission to counter the Arian controversy by Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330- c. 389) and his own brother Gregory at Nyssa (c. 335- c. 394).

In the *De Spiritu Sancto* Basil explains that the Spirit's names, activities, and blessings indicate "its greatness of nature and unapproachable power", concluding that the Spirit is "divine in nature", infinite in greatness, mighty in works, and good in blessings. Basil's primary way of explicating the status of the Holy Spirit is to speak of the "communion with respect to nature" that the Spirit shares with the Father and the Son. Various scholars

indicated that in *De Spiritu Sancto*, Basil does not call the Holy Spirit explicitly God. But it is not adequate merely to say that Basil never explicitly called the Spirit “God” without any kind of qualification. It must be recognised that Basil does cite the apostle Peter explicitly identifying the Holy Spirit as God in Acts 5:3-4. In the context, Basil challenges the Pneumatomachians: Let our opponents determine what place they will give to the Holy Spirit. Will they rank Him with God, or will they push Him down to a creature’s place? Peter said to Sapphira, “How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? You have not lied to men but to God,” and this shows that to sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God<sup>130</sup>. It is against this background that Haykin insists that “the Spirit, moreover, ranked alongside, not below, the Father and the Son, participates with the Father and the Son in the entirety of divine activity, from creation of the angelic beings to the last judgement” (Haykin 2003:76). Basil’s response to Epiphanius contains the essential Nicene affirmation that the Holy Spirit “is to be glorified together with Father and the Son”. His resolve is “We are unable to add anything to the Nicene Creed, not even the smallest addition, except the glorification of the Holy Spirit, because our fathers made mention of this part (of the faith) cursorily, since at that time no controversial question concerning it had yet arisen” (cf. Haykin 2003:77).

Beeley (2010:99) notes: “In his first set of *Orationes*, given at Easter 362, the second Cappadocian father, Gregory of Nazianzus, exhorts his congregation in Nazianzus to rally behind ‘the sound faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one Divinity and power,’ which is the primary and blessed Trinity.” This simple, yet profound statement drives Gregory to expound on his trinitarian program throughout his life-time. Beeley (2010:99 [cf. Haykin 2003:77]) is of opinion that:

This Trinitarian approach means that Gregory asserts the Spirit’s divinity in the same terms that he speaks of the Son’s. While Basil treats the Son and the Holy Spirit for the most part separately, and, as we have seen, with unequal terms and arguments, Gregory confesses the Spirit’s divinity with equally strong terms, and

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<sup>130</sup> citation from Haykin 2003:76

he understands the fundamental issue to be faith in the Trinity as a whole.

At his appointment as bishop, Gregory offers himself to the Holy Spirit with the following statement: “to the almighty Father, the only-begotten Word, and the Holy Spirit, who is God”. It is said to be the “Trinitarian statement that was the strongest confession of the Spirit’s divinity to date in extant patristic literature. This full confession of the Spirit and the Trinity Gregory calls ‘the most perfect exposition of theology’ and ‘the light of the complete Divinity,’ which must no longer be hid under a bushel, but placed on the lampstand to illuminate the church” (Beeley 2010:100). For Gregory, the Father eternally conveys his Divinity to the Son and the Spirit in generating them. Here he can affirm that the Spirit is “consubstantial” (*homoousion*<sup>131</sup>) with the Father – that it is not merely *a* divine nature but shares *the same* nature as God the Father (cf. Basil 2005 Letter 38:5; Beeley 2010:101; Haykin 2003:78). Gregory’s Trinitarian works were written after Basil’s death. Beeley (2010:106) maintains that “Gregory goes well beyond his brother in confessing that the Spirit is ‘God’ and consubstantial with the Father. Yet he does so in a way that merely echoes the Theodosian settlement and locks the theological in sight of Gregory Nazianzen.”

The third Cappadocian father, Gregory of Nyssa, argues for the Spirit’s divinity on the basis of three main points:

- (1) the Spirit is descriptively similar to the Father and the Son in biblical and traditional expressions;
- (2) the Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son – these two points being similar to Basil’s work; and
- (3) the Spirit is co-creative with the Father and the Son.

Kärkkäinen’s (2007:36) critique of the Cappadocians is as follows:

Having rejected the idea of Origen concerning different spheres of operation in the outward works of the Trinity, the Cappadocians focused on the unity of works *ad*

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<sup>131</sup> Catherine LaCugna (cited in Kärkkäinen 2007:39) is on to something when she suggests that in the Cappadocian theology each divine person “is the divine *ousia*; the divine *ousia* exists hypostatically, and there is no *ousia* apart from the *hypostaseis*. To exist as God is to be the Father who begets the Son and breathes forth the Spirit. Therefore, Trinitarian persons cannot be thought of as disconnected from each other; in other words, “It is impossible to think of the divine essence in itself or by itself”.

*extra*. As noted, the weakness of this approach is that it still falls short of the establishment of distinctions among the Trinitarian persons in general and the role of the Spirit in particular.

## **6.6 TERTULLIAN OF CARTHAGE (C. 155- C. 220) AND THE CREEDS**

Hildebrand (2007:106) describes the achievements of Tertullian in the following manner: He handed on a form of discourse, which opened the way for further development, and above all a formula, “one substance in three persons” (citing Osborn). Beyond this he was the first to use the word “Trinity”, the first to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were of one substance, and the first to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons.

According to Kärkkäinen (2007:30), the North African theologian surmised that the Johannine Jesus’ saying, “I and the Father are one” means that Father and Son are of “one substance”; it is a matter of identity of substance rather than numerical unity. By extension, Son and Spirit are of the same substance with the Father. Thus, we can speak of God is one “substance” and three distinct yet undivided “persons”. He further explains substance as “common fundamental reality shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”; Tertullian understood person as “the principle of operative individuality”. Tertullian taught that there is an ordering of persons in the Godhead (Father being the first, Son the second, and Spirit the third). For Origen, the Father and Son share a unity of nature and substance; there is no unlikeness between them. Yet another way to affirm the eternal generation of the Son was to use the expression “light from light” that found its way into the creeds (Kärkkäinen 2007:31).

To conclude this section, I quote Robert Letham in full, in order to indicate the direction, the Trinitarian theology went: from the church Fathers to the creeds:

To outline the “implications of the Trinitarian settlement” based on Constantinople and the traditions so far, especially that of the Eastern theologians, first, the concept of one being with three persons is the guiding principle. It could be said either that God is one being who exists as three persons (this proved to be the preferred route in the West) or, alternatively, that he is three persons who are simultaneously one

undivided being (which tended to be the approach favoured in the East). Second, consubstantiality is strongly affirmed even when the very term *homoousion* is not applied to the Spirit. “There is only one essence or being of God, which all three persons share completely. Furthermore, each person is God in himself.” Third, while not present explicitly in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed itself, there is the growing tradition of *perichoresis* advocated by the Eastern theologians (Robert Latham in Kärkkäinen 2007:41).

In summary, the trinitarian reasoning of the church fathers will enable us to make theological sense of the way the Hebrew writer sees and understand the salvific act in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rowe 2011:53). In the minds of the Fathers there was no confusion of the Spirit with the Word, as the Spirit is assigned a distinct role in the economy of salvation. The Spirit we said is the Wisdom in whom God freely and spontaneously made all things. We conclude that at the heart of Athanasius’ theology is the biblical proclamation that there is one God and that the one God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Athanasius set forth an understanding of the Spirit, and thus of the Father and the Son as well, that is wholly soteriological. If the Spirit is not God, then he cannot sanctify and vivify and so cannot transform human beings into the likeness of the Son and so make them children of the Father. Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews foresees the filial relationship between the Father, the Son and the children God has given him (cf. Heb. 2:5-18).

Basil on the other hand responded to Epiphanius with the essential Nicene affirmation that the Holy Spirit “is to be glorified together with Father and the Son”. For Gregory, the Father eternally conveys his Divinity to the Son and the Spirit in generating them. Here, he affirmed that the Spirit is “consubstantial” (*homoousion*) with the Father – that it is not merely a divine nature but shares *the same* nature as God the Father. We construed that Gregory of Nyssa, argued for the Spirit’s divinity on the basis of three main points: 1) the Spirit is descriptively similar to the Father and the Son in biblical and traditional expressions, 2) the Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son – these two points being similar to Basil’s work; and 3) the Spirit is co-creative with the Father and the Son.

Tertullian handed over a formula that could be used in later discussion on the Trinity – that God is one being (substance) who exists as three persons (cf. Hildebrand 2007:106). This proved to be the preferred route in the West. Alternatively, God is seen in three persons who are simultaneously one undivided being (which tended to be the approach favoured in the East). Second, consubstantiality is strongly affirmed even when the very term *homoousion* is not applied to the Spirit. Lastly, we concluded that Tertullian indicated that there is only one essence or being of God, which all three persons share completely. Furthermore, each person is God in himself.

This background in the development of Trinitarian theology will be appropriated in the discussion of the subsequent perceived Trinitarian theology of Hebrews.

## SECTION 2: THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE TRINITY IN HEBREWS

### 6.7 HEBREWS: A TRINITARIAN ARRANGEMENT

Hebrews 1-12 signifies a triadic substructure, or to say the least, one can expect it to be prevalent because of the detailed discussion of the salvific role of Christ and God's affirmation of eternal sacrifice. Cockerill (2012: loc.62ff) and Malcolm (2012 n.p.) are correct in determining the overall flow of Hebrews as follows:

- **1:1-4:13:** God's revelation in the Son as a warning against disobedience

**God has spoken ... (1:1-4)**

*God:* "Sit at my right hand ..." (1:5-2:4)

*Son:* "Here am I and the children ..." (2:5-18)

*Holy Spirit:* "Today if you hear his voice ..." (3:1-19)

My observation in Chapter 2 of this thesis remains the same: In Chapter 1:1-4: 13, the writer explores the words that are spoken through the Son. Jesus as the pre-existent word and messenger of God, is conceptualised as the Son who is the heir of God. He is the Promise of Salvation, better than angels and Moses, and he is the builder of the House of God. The writer offered a stern warning to heed the salvation message of Jesus, announced by God and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. The above diagram points out how and when the Trinity is present in the first main section of Hebrews. The divine sonship of the first section is the pastor's foundation (Cockerill 2012: loc.62).

- **4:14-10:18:** Christ's priesthood as content of God's self-disclosure

**We Have a Great High Priest ... (4:14-16)**

*God: "You are my Son" (5:1-9:28)*

*Son: "See, God, I have come to do your will" (10:1-14)*

*Holy Spirit: "I will put my laws in their hearts" (10:15-18)*

Hebrews 4:14-10:18 forms the bulk of the exposition by the writer. He interprets Jesus as the eternal high priest against the background of the Israelite priesthood. Jesus' priesthood is better than Aaron's and patterned after that of Melchizedek. In Jesus, the Old Covenant and sacrificial system is absolutised because his better sacrifice was once for all. Christ introduced a New Covenant by His blood through the Eternal Spirit. Through the blood sacrifice of Christ readers have access to the throne of God. Again, the diagram shows when the writer of Hebrews put the Persons of the Trinity at word. The high priesthood of the Son in the second is his main theme (Cockerill 2012: loc.62).

- **10:19-12:29:** The need for faithful endurance until Christ's return

In chapter 2, I indicated that last portion where the Holy Spirit operates is the faith section and ethical- moral teachings. Faith is insight into the heavenly reality. Jesus is the ultimate example of faith, the Pioneer and Perfecter. God is the loving Father who disciplines his children to respond to the "one who speaks". The perseverance of the people of God in the

third is his ultimate goal (Cockerill 2012:62).

In the previous chapters (2-3) of this thesis it is argued that in the first two major sections (1:1-4:13 and 4:14-10:18), Scripture is said to be spoken by God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in turn. In addition, Malcolm (2012 n.p.) points out that in each section, the action of each of these persons is equivalent: God is the initiator who appoints and summons; the Son is the obedient executor of salvation; and the Holy Spirit adds “testimony” that confirms and applies the Son’s achievement.

Concurrently, the broader structure of the Hebrews and its overall message also affirms a Trinitarian perspective. Holsteen (2011:346) maintains that while not always as explicit as one may wish, the implicit assertions in Hebrews about the divine persons and their works make a Trinitarian perspective indispensable to the coherence of the book. In this respect then the Hebrews is in its very essence a Trinitarian work. Holsteen (2011:345) pointed out that Lane upholds the idea that the argument of Hebrews also supports the same demand for a Trinitarian affirmation.

### **6.8 GOD, THE FATHER, AND THE SON IN HEBREWS**

Hebrews is a complex text whose theological grammar exhibits many and various substantive connections to the doctrine of the Trinity (Rowe 2011:45). The necessary components of Trinitarianism are both oneness and “three-ness”. Though Hebrews does not include explicit Trinitarian statements, one may assert that the author of Hebrews portrayed God as triune if one finds clear evidence of the oneness of God and evidence of three distinct persons (Holsteen 2011:334). The “oneness” of God is implied throughout the book because of its OT background (e.g. see especially point 3 of the corollaries by Sanders [2017:83-84] mentioned above). Taking seriously the force of a Jewish audience for Hebrews, Blackham (2005:36) submits the following observation:

The first chapter of Hebrews is a compilation of Hebrew Scriptures indicating the relationship of the Son to the Father, particularly his contrast to the angels. If this book is

written to a Hebrew audience and the writer is attempting to prove the character of Jesus to them, it might strike some modern readers as strange that all these Scripture quotations are listed as *manifestly* showing those relations between the Son and the Father that we now label Trinitarian. They are not intricately explained, nor are they seen as having acquired “a new meaning” (whatever *that* might mean!), but they are simply quoted as if the reader was expected easily to see the Trinitarian import of each Scripture. The Scriptures quoted interweave Ps. 2:7, 2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 104:4 and Ps. 45:7-7.

In these opening verses, the writer identifies the God of which Hebrews speaks as Israel’s God, the one who “spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1). In other words, the God of Hebrews is none other than the Old Testament God. He furthermore asserts: “But in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed as the heir of all things, and through whom he also made the ages” (Heb. 1:2). The pluriform modes of divine disclosure in the Old Testament are all gathered, fulfilled, and surpassed in the coming of the one who antedates creation itself, yet whose personal identity as the all-inheriting Son of the Father has only been unveiled eschatologically (Sanders 2017:88). Rowe (2011:45) submits that against the notion that the Son is a divine figure to be contrasted with God, Hebrews immediately speaks of their interrelation. The writer of Hebrews further indicates that the Son is the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his nature” (Heb. 1:3). To put it in contemporary language, the Son is no other than God but is in fact God expressed or externalised – embodied in relation to the world (Rowe 2011:45).

The citation of Psalm 44 in Hebrews 1:8-9,

“But of the Son he says,  
‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,  
and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom.  
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
therefore God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions,’”

suggests that the address to God (*ho theos*) includes the Son. Therefore, the Son is regarded as God, but of the Son he (God) says, “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever”. Similarly, when the writer employs Psalm 2:7 (or Psalm 110), Seitz (2011:38) indicates:

that we get direct speech from God to David; or when in Proverbs 8 we hear of God’s “Beginning of ways”; in all cases it is the Spirit with the divine warrant to reveal the inner life of God’s own self, who says to his beloved Son “today I have begotten you”; or “sit at my right hand”; or “the Lord made me Beginning of his ways”. This spirit who spoke by the prophets is the Holy Spirit of Christian Trinitarian conviction, proceeding from God, alongside the Word, “who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified”.

Similarly, Blackham (2005:39) resolutely emphasises that “the New Testament never struggles to speak of Jesus as divine. It never indicates a tension between a Hebrew doctrine of Yahweh and any affirmations of the full divinity of Jesus. In fact, the constant and repeated assumption of the New Testament is that the Hebrew doctrine of God includes and demands a whole-hearted confession of the divinity of the Father, Son and Spirit.”

In Hebrew’s Incarnational Spirit Christology (see Chapter 5) the humanity of the Son of God was expounded in detail. In like manner, it is also important for the Trinitarian theology of Hebrews. The Son we hear of as *theos* in Hebrews 1:8 is none other than the Jesus we hear of in Hebrews 2:9 (Rowe 2011:46). But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:14). The same idea is carried forward in Hebrews 2:18 and 4:14. And in Heb. 1:5-6 it says that He rules superior over the angels:

For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”.

Reflecting on Hebrews 1:5-6, Rowe (2011:46) explains that:

Heb. 1:5-6 does not deny, that is, that the Son is eternally *theos* but instead speaks from the perspective of post-resurrection knowledge about the entrance of the Son into the life of the world in the person of Jesus. Jesus' baptism, it speaks of the beginning of Jesus' ministry... Even in his earthly life the "Firstborn" – a reference to Jesus' resurrection from the dead, not his creation (cf. Rom.8:29; Col. 1:15, 18, Rev.1:5) – can be worshipped by angels. In short, the figure of Jesus is the Son whom God is – both in himself and in his creating and redeeming relation to the world.

That the Son is eternal to the identity of God is at bottom of what differentiates him from the angels. Angels are ministering spirits to the saints. As God is superior to angels, so is the Son (cf. Heb. 1:4). Rowe (2011:48) supports my position when he summarises it in the following manner,

Thus, it is no less than God himself who declares through Scripture the Son's superiority to the angels. And yet – in view of the use of Ps.44:7 in Heb. 1:8 – it would be more precise to say that God declares his own superiority to the angels in the person of the Son. God does not, that is, declare the superiority of something other than God but speaks of himself as *theos* in the future of Jesus the Son. As the text of Hebrews would have it, "Son" is thus internal to the meaning of "God".

Intra-trinitarian<sup>132</sup> relationships between the Father and the Son are also visible in Hebrews. The Father loves the Son and makes him the source of creation and revelation (Heb. 1:2-3). It is the Father who commands the angels to worship the Son (Heb. 1:6). Holsteen (2011:339) clarifies this point with various Scriptures:

The acts of fatherly devotion portrayed in the text include the Father commanding the angels to worship the Son (Heb. 1:6), the Father anointing the Son with the oil of gladness (v. 9), and the Father subjugating all things to the Son (v. 13). These

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<sup>132</sup>Letham (2002:97) infers that Hebrews 5 points to Christ not taking on himself the honour of becoming high priest but instead following the appointment of the Father. His high priestly work began with his becoming man (cf.4:14f., 5:7-8, 10:5f.) and thus his appointment as high priest must refer to intra-trinitarian realities antecedent to his incarnation in space and time.

acts illustrate the nature of the relationship that is summarized in the Father's words, "I will be his Father and he will be my Son" (v. 5b).

In another aspect of the relationship between the Father and the Son the Father is said to have given children to the Son. Citing Isaiah 8:18, Hebrews 2:13b applies this concept to the Father-Son relationship by setting the gift of children in a new context, namely, that of the Son's humiliation.

Bruce (1990:48) and Attridge (1989:90) assert that Isa. 8 as cited by Christ indicates that two different points are being made: 1) The solidarity of Christ with other children of God, and 2) the speaker's undertaking that he will be obedient to God. God's children live in faithful obedience before God. In Isaiah 8:18 – "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion" – Isaiah had hoped that his own children would be a sign in Israel. The writer of Hebrews only quotes the first part of the Isaiah quotation. Attridge (1989:91) observes that the term children are rather "a weak proof of solidarity between Christ and his brothers and sisters". It is important to note that Christ's "brother and sisters" are God's children whom he has given to Christ in the community of faith. In the NT, sonship is not "a matter determined by nature, but by God's salvific act and human response to it" (Attridge 1989:91). Christ's suffering has bearing on his "brothers and sisters", and the "children you have given me" – it communicates obedience and willing submission to the will of the Father. Similarly, Guthrie (1998:110) explains that with the citation the writer holds up the prophecy as indication of the trust that Jesus has in God (cf. France 2006:99). In other words, the One that trusts "is in a familial relationship with other 'children of God'" (cf. Guthrie 1998:110). Bruce (1990:48) indicates that the closest parallel to this citation is found in John 17:6: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

On the other hand, Hebrews suggests a deep love and devotion from the Son to the Father in the fact that Son became obedient to the will of the Father. The relationship between Father and Son also becomes apparent when the Son is posed as superior to Moses who

was a servant of God's house, while the Son is the builder of the house. Holsteen (2011:340) suggests that:

The two foremost examples of the Son's intra-Trinitarian<sup>133</sup> relatedness to the Father are the Son's faithfulness and His obedience to the Father. Hebrews 3:1-6 articulates Jesus' faithfulness in comparison with that of Moses. In showing Jesus' superiority over Moses the author compared their faithfulness to God. Moses was faithful (πιστός) in God's house as a servant (θεράπων, v. 5), but Jesus is faithful over God's house as a Son (Χριστός δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ v. 6). Obviously one of the major differences between Moses and Christ is the nature of their relationship with God the Father. The Son honours that relationship by being "faithful to the one who appointed him" (v. 2).

Jesus learned obedience to the Father through the things he suffered. The essence of this obedience is in the Son's submission to the Father. This does not mean He has a lower rank; instead it suggests the willing submission of one person to another equal person in what might be called an "order" (cf. Holsteen 2011:341).

### **6.8.1 *The Son addressed as Kyrios***

The NT writers make use of the OT's concept of *Kyrios* to explain the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. The writer of Hebrews uses the Psalm citations to convey this crucial point. In a similar fashion, it is also used by Paul to identify the Spirit Lordship of the Father and the Son (cf. Gal. 4:4-6; Seitz 2011:38). Moreover, Seitz explains that when we read the concept of *Kyrios* canonically,

then, the full unity of God as expressed through his name *Kyrios* is that of the Father, Son, and Spirit: the *Kyrios heis* (one Lord) of Deut.6:4 is in the New Testament differentiated into *Kyrios pater* (Father), *Kyrios iesous* (Son), and *Kyrios pneuma* (Spirit). Thus, the oneness and unity of God is not impaired but dynamically upheld through the use of his name *Kyrios* for the Father, Son and

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<sup>133</sup> Hebrews 5 points to Christ not taking on himself the honour of becoming high priest but instead following the appointment of the Father. His high priestly work began with his becoming man (cf. 4:14f., 5:7-8, 10:5f.) and thus his appointment as high priest must refer to intra-trinitarian realities antecedent to his incarnation in space and time (cf. Letham 2002:96).

Spirit, the One Lord God' (Seitz 2011:38; cf. Rowe 2002:304).

The *Kyrios* in Hebrews, “the Lord”, is both Jesus the human being and the God of the Old Testament. In Hebrews 1:10-12 it is no less than God himself who addresses the Son as “Lord” through the Old Testament text in which *Kyrios* originally referred to the God of Israel (see above). The force of the citation was effective to help the Jewish audience to understand the effect of the Lordship of Christ in the church. The writer indicates that “the person we are talking about is our Lord, who came from a tribe that had never had anyone to serve as a priest at the altar” (Heb. 7:13). Hebrews 7:13-14 speaks of Jesus clearly as the Lord who was a descendant of Judah, and Hebrews 13:20-21 states: “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever”. Rowe (2011:47) indicates that in the citation of Psalm 110:4 in Hebrews 7:21 and elsewhere “the Lord” is clearly the God of Israel. In Hebrews 8:8, for example, Jeremiah 31 is cited with the characteristic “says the Lord”, which plainly refers to God. Similarly, Kärkkäinen (2007:11) avows that NT writers’ “affirmation of full deity of the Son, was the critical stage in the emerging Trinitarian faith (albeit often in its binitarian form), namely the applying of the title *Kyrios* to the risen and exalted Son. This is the title *Lord* reserved for the God in the Old Testament.” In summation, were we to attempt to assign one meaning of *Kyrios* to Jesus and another to God, we would have already dismantled the language through which Hebrews presents God/the Lord and, therefore, moved away from the theological pattern created by Hebrews’ continuous attempt to speak of the Old Testament God and of Jesus together (Rowe 2002:301; 2011:47).

Equally important is the “Father/Son language” in Hebrews (cf. Heb. 2:12-18). The term “Abba” does not appear in Hebrews as it does frequently in the Gospels. Paul refers to the “Spirit of adoption” or the Spirit through whom we call out “Abba”, who testifies with the believers of their “sonship” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). The term Abba is clearly enough an intimate way of addressing God using family language, whether by a child or an adult, and

as such is less formal than addressing God simply as God or Lord. “[The] main point is that Jesus’ choice of this term reveals Jesus’ awareness of his special relationship with God” (Kärkkäinen 2007:13). Hebrews 2 stresses the filial relationship between the Father and Jesus, although the writer does not apply the term “Abba”. God has children (Israel) and now the Father gives children (the church) to his Son. Kärkkäinen (2007:14) confirms this notion by saying:

In the working of the Spirit, God himself is present. This means that the inclusion of believers in the filial relationship between the Father and Son is also mediated by the Spirit, similarly to the mediation of God’s presence by the Spirit in all creation. The Spirit is thus given to believers, and by receiving the Spirit they have a share in the divine sonship of Jesus.

To confirm the deity of the Son, Holsteen (2011:340) furthermore maintains that:

This delicate interplay affirms once again that Jesus possesses deity. He is the living God (and humanity comprises His “children”), but He is also the paradigmatic Man, with whom other humans (believers) share a fraternal bond. This passage also includes a unique portrayal of the Father’s relationship with the Son in which the Father bestows honour on the Son because of the Son’s obedience, even to death (Heb. 2:9).

In Hebrews, as in other NT writings, Kärkkäinen (2007:15) confirms that there is an “explicit binitarianism and implicit trinitarianism”. He further points out that

even a cursory look at the New Testament shows that there are a number of binitarian passages about Father and Son and well as triadic ones in various forms, in statements where the Spirit is mentioned alongside Father and Son. It has been rightly suggested that even in binitarian passages, there is already a basic Trinitarian consciousness even when the Spirit is not explicitly mentioned.

## 6.9 THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE TRINITY IN HEBREWS

### 6.9.1 *The role of the Holy Spirit in revelation and salvation*

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only seven times in Hebrews explicitly (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29). Yet the Holy Spirit is mentioned in such a way that the relational determination of the Spirit's identity regarding the Father and the Son is made clear. For example, in the first section of the substructure of Hebrews we encounter the Holy Spirit in the pericope starting with "God has spoken ..." (Heb. 1:2). Since in Hebrews 2:1-4, which is included in this section, the Holy Spirit is mentioned as gift and attestation of the divine revelation of the Son. Speaking of the nature of salvation, the author of Hebrews says: "It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will" (Heb. 2:3-4). Rowe (2011:48) indicates that "here the Spirit is explicitly described as God's Spirit – the Spirit's gifts are distributed according to God's will – and tied to the salvific life of Jesus (the Lord). To speak of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is also to speak of God and of the Lord Jesus (cf. the context in Heb. 6:4 and 10:29)." The writer uses the above Scripture to demonstrate the Spirit's role in divine self-revelation. Holsteen (2011:343) suggests that the authority of the apostles, and by extension the authority of their message, was confirmed by signs, wonders, and the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit's activity serves as the confirming evidence – the authentication – of God's revelation mediated by the apostles. Having made the argument that, the Spirit is both gift and Giver of gifts in Hebrews, we can rightly apply Augustine's notion:

the Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father "not in the manner of one born, but in the manner of one given". "Being given" suggests a way of receiving the divine nature discrete from "being born", and thus points to a positive way we might distinguish the Spirit's manner of originating from the Father (procession) from the Son's (generation) (cited in Marshall 2011:404).

In this Scripture (Heb. 2:1-4) our writer presupposes the divinity of the Holy Spirit by placing him on a par with the revelation and the mediation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the second place, we “hear” the Holy Spirit: *“Today if you hear his voice...”* (3:1-19). The Spirit becomes the voice of God in Hebrews. Rowe (2011:48) observes that “the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to a simple metaphorical way to speak about God’s presence, as if using Spirit language were but another way to speak of God’s immanence.” Rowe (2011:48) further suggests:

that Hebrews clearly portrays God as the one who provides the voice of Scripture, but no less do we find the Spirit performing the same task – indeed, with the same basic scriptural text: Hebrews speaks of God in ways that simultaneously maintain and extend the discourse of the Old Testament. “God” is none other than the God of the Old Testament, and yet this God is described also in relation to a human Son, Jesus the Christ – and in relation to the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Hebrews takes the words of YHWH and quotes them by saying: “The Holy Spirit says ...” He does not say that God says through the Holy Spirit. He does not claim that the Lord utilised the means of His Spirit to reveal these words. He says that the Holy Spirit said those words which are plainly the words of YHWH (Wayne 2017 n.p.). France (2006:113) confirms this notion: “the words of the psalms are attributed to the Holy Spirit ... Hebrews understands such text<sup>134</sup> as ‘living words’ that have ‘power’ because they are inspired by God’s own Spirit”.

In addition to the Spirit’s revelation of God, the Spirit in Hebrews is the one through whom Christ offered himself to God.

Wayne (2017 n.p.) furthermore suggests that:

Such passages not only equate the Holy Spirit with YHWH, but they do so in a way which shows the Holy Spirit as personal and interactive. The Holy Spirit is not an abstract aspect of YHWH’s nature. He speaks, testifies, displays anger and wrath, makes covenants with people, and forgives sins. The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He is YHWH. Yet, again, He is not the Father or the Son. Each of the divine persons

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<sup>134</sup> See Psalm 95: 7-11 Heb. 3:7-11

is distinct from and interacts with the others, as we elsewhere read: “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

In Hebrews, the Spirit is linked to God’s accomplishment of salvation. In Hebrews 6:4 the believers are referred to as those who had “become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου). For Holsteen (2011:344) the same applies to Hebrews 10:29: “again Hebrews ties the Spirit’s work to the Son’s saving work so intimately that man’s rejection of the divine work of salvation is depicted as insulting the Spirit of grace”. Clearly then the Holy Spirit is involved in the divine work of salvation.

Given these points, Rowe (2011:48) insists that “later doctrinal language – Trinitarian reasoning, to be precise – develops the interconnection between the relation of the terms that Hebrews presupposes for its theological grammar. Hebrews’ grammar, that is, becomes intelligible in light of a larger linguistic range that allows one to say God and Jesus and Spirit together.”

### ***6.9.2 The Spirit of Yahweh and the Holy Spirit***

There is consensus that Yahweh in the OT is the title of a deity. The title of Yahweh is given to the Holy Spirit. A comparison between Isaiah 6:8-9 and Acts 28:25 reveals that Yahweh of Isaiah is the Holy Spirit of Acts. The identification of Yahweh with the Holy Spirit is not necessarily that of Person but of Essence. By the same token, Yahweh of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:15 is another occurrence of identification of Yahweh and the Holy Spirit. Yahweh is used of all three Persons of the Trinity in Hebrews separately, and corporately of the Trinity. The shorter citation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is announced as a witness of the Spirit and it is the third time that the Holy Spirit is said to speak (cf. Heb. 3:7; 9:8 and 10:15; France 2006:254). Here in 10:15 the Spirit bears witness to the covenant which the Lord (Yahweh) has made back in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Smith 1984:125). The speaking of the Spirit is reaffirming the presence of God in the community.

Attridge (1989:281) observes the Holy Spirit speaks through Jeremiah to bear witness to the covenant and likewise Cockerill (2012: loc.5059) sums it up as follow:

First, by attributing Jeremiah's New Covenant promise to the Holy Spirit the pastor underscores its divine authority as Spirit-inspired Scripture. These are indeed words the "the Lord" himself "says" (v.16a; cf. 8:8). Second, however, the Holy Spirit "bears witness to us" in the present through this now-fulfilled Scriptural promise urgently calling the people of God to faithful action. "Bear witness" underscores the solemnity of the Spirit's address. It was the Holy Spirit who addressed God's people in Psalm 95 with urgent warning lest they imitate the disobedient wilderness generation (Heb. 3:7). It is the Holy Spirit who bears "witness" to them now through Jeremiah in anticipation of the following exhortations to join the faithful (11:1-12:3) through availing themselves of all Christ has done (10:19-39).

It was only in later centuries that the church in its deliberations on the nature and essence of God came to make this "identification" between Yahweh and Spirit. At most the latter is implicitly present in Hebrews and it is our interpretation of these verses that makes this identification.

Barret (2012:39) submits that perhaps the most obvious divine attribute of the Spirit can be found in the traditional label itself, the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4). Over one hundred times in Scripture the Spirit is said to be "holy" (e.g. Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10-11; Matt 1:18-20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19). And rightly so since the Spirit is the very presence of God manifested within the believer, working within the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14; cf. 2 Cor. 7:1). Hence, Christians are called temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20).

Hebrews makes it clear that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the atoning work that stands behind our salvation (Heb. 9:14; 10:29-31). Hebrew's "Spirit" is the "Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15) and the writer is further linking the Spirit with the essential nature of God and all that God seeks to bring into the lives of His people – holiness (Lichtenwalter 2012:108).

### ***6.9.3 The indwelling Spirit of the Father and the Son***

Following numerous Scriptural pointers, Christian theology has long tended to see a basic pattern in the saving work of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, who dwells within the faithful through Spirit-baptism, can lead human beings to the knowledge and love of the Son, just as the incarnate Son alone can lead us to the knowledge and love of the Father who is life-giver and source of all.

The deepest acquaintance we have with the person of the Spirit comes not through visible signs, but through the Spirit's personal indwelling, which, though invisible, is immediate and aims to be permanent (Marshall 2011:411). The Spirit first leads us to Christ rather than teaching us about himself, yet this intimate indwelling is also primarily the chief way he instructs us concerning who he is (cf. Marshall 2011:411). The writer of Hebrews so aptly reminds us that we are partakers of the Holy Spirit. The Old Covenant chiefly manifested the Father, and the New Covenant the Son, but for the present day, St Augustine argues, "the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before" (cited in Marshall 2011:4011).

There are enough Scriptural indications to assume that the believers in Hebrews were indwelled by the Spirit. Given the fact they are partakers of Christ (Heb. 3:1) and of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 6:4) it is safe to say that they were indwelled by the Spirit. Marshall (2011:412) observes:

The Holy Spirit's indwelling is fully personal. The Spirit brings about in us an intimacy with himself which, while inseparable from that which we enjoy with the Son and the Father, is unique to the Spirit himself. More than simply the agent of our union with the Son and the Father, the Spirit impresses his own personal character upon us, so that we rejoice, with Jesus in him (cf. Luke 10:21). At the same time, the Spirit himself takes possession of us, making us the temple in which he dwells.

The believers "tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit". The enlightened community received the heavenly blessing which Cockerill (2012: loc.3174)

and others observed to be salvation. The gift could fittingly be the reception of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion (cf. Heb. 2:4). After having received the Holy Spirit they “have become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 6:4). Cockerill (2012: loc.3174) asserts that “Hebrews bears witness to the common NT affirmation that salvation comes to those who are partakers of Christ (cf. 3:14) through the indwelling of the Spirit” (cf. Rom. 8:9). Μέτοχος is here translated as participant, or it is, a sharer (as noun). By implication μετοχος is someone who is an associate. Burke & Warrington (2014: loc.7278) observe that:

[for] Hebrews, the implication that lies behind this “sharing in the Spirit” (6.4) is not one of the Christian receiving “power to witness” (Acts 1.8) but of entering into a “partnership for life” with the Holy Spirit. As a result, anyone who rejects this partnership rejects all the new-covenant provisions won by the death of Christ and thereby holds the Son of God, the blood of the covenant and the Spirit of grace in contempt (10.29). Hebrews 2.4 and 6.4 make it clear that the presence of the Holy Spirit with a people authenticates them as new-covenant people.

It is precarious to argue that it is not the personal Holy Spirit that is intended here (cf. Bruce 1990:146). The believers were indwelt by the Spirit and share in the fulness of the divine gifts. This Gift (the Spirit<sup>135</sup>) proceeds from the Father and the Son eternally as love in person, the fruit and seal of the Father’s infinite donation of himself to the Son, infinitely returned by the Son. By coming to dwell personally in us, being shed abundantly in our hearts, the Holy Spirit makes us also selfless lovers of God. In this way Trinitarian pneumatology understands the prayer of Jesus to be verified in the very being of Christians: “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26; Marshall 2011:412).

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<sup>135</sup> See Heb. 2:4

## 6.10 TRINITARIAN REPRESENTATIVE TEXTS IN HEBREWS

### 6.10.1 *Hebrews 2:1-4*

The writer of Hebrews understood the Holy Spirit to be equal to God and the eternal Son. The Son is true God because he receives the one divine nature from the Father. If the Holy Spirit is also true God, as the Son, then he too must receive the divine nature from the Father, as the Son does (cf. Campbell 1974:415; Marshall 2011:403). The Spirit is also referred to as the “mutual love” between the Father and the Son. Augustine puts it as a matter of fact that the Spirit in some deep sense seems to be – as a person – love, and therefore himself to be, in this very distinction from the two, the mutual love or communion between the Father and the Son (Carpenter 2005:92,96). Campbell (1974:415) asserts that for Athanasius that Word explicitly give the Spirit to his disciples. He (Athanasius) furthermore states that “the Word is the Giver of the Spirit”. In other words, the Spirit proceeds from the Word/the Son in the economy of salvation and creation. The Spirit is described as being given and sent from the Son, the vital activity and gift whereby the Word sanctifies and enlightens us (cf. Campbell 1974:415). The Father is the source of all activity of the Godhead: “the gifts which the Spirit divides to each are bestowed from the Father through the Word. For all things that are of the Father are of the Son also; therefore, those things that are given from the Son in the Spirit are gifts of the Father” (Athanasius in Campbell 1974:422). Athanasius’ maxim that Holy Spirit is both Gift and Giver of gifts allows him to see “the Spirit as effective principle in the Godhead that apportions to us what the Father accomplishes through the Son – the point simply stated is that whenever God acts, the Holy Spirit acts, there God acts, from the Father, through the Son” (cf. Campbell 1974:427). My theory is: when the Holy Spirit proceeds from God as Gift, he manifests in various gifts in the church. That is why the gift of love is easily observable, however, the Spirit manifest in at least nine different charismatic gifts (cf. Heb. 2:4; 1 Cor. 12-14).

The idea of the Holy Spirit as “gift” is not foreign to Hebrews (cf. Heb. 2:1-4)<sup>136</sup>. In trinitarian theology there is an understanding that the –

Spirit is the “one who comes forth as gift ... love in person gives some purpose on what is distinctive about the Spirit’s procession, and to that extent on the Spirit’s unique personal identity. And this distinctive feature of the Spirit’s identity, that only he originates as gift, helps explain why the Spirit alone, among the persons of the Trinity, is spoken of in Scripture as “gift”, just as the Son alone is spoken of as “word”. Among the three only he is spoken of as “gift” to *us* because to him alone does it personally belong to be gift (cf. Marshall 2011:404).

Hebrews 2: 3b-4 has a Trinitarian cast to it: After it was at the first spoken through the 1) Lord (Jesus Christ), it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 2) God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of 3) the Holy Spirit according to His own will. This pericope serves as a warning to those who might be tempted to “drift away” from the message they have heard. In so doing they would be rejecting that which originated with Christ, was affirmed by God and was authenticated as individually they received a share in the Holy Spirit (cf. Burke & Warrington 2014: loc.7255).

The charismatic community of Hebrews received the Holy Spirit as gift with the attestation of signs, wonders and miracles, recalling to us the Pentecostal outpouring of the eschatological Spirit. To these dramatic events of the unfolding of the gospel of Christ, the Father himself showed that his message was true.

### **6.10.2 Hebrews 9:14**

Previously it was said that the entire ministry of Christ is characterised by the presence of the Holy Spirit. But in Hebrews 9 Christ is spoken of as our great high priest who has entered the holy place once for all by means of his own blood and in doing so has secured an eternal redemption (cf. Barret 2012:41). And then the author goes on to specify that Christ offered up himself on the cross as a blood sacrifice without blemish “through the

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<sup>136</sup> See discussion in Chapter 3 of this verse.

eternal Spirit” (9:14). Consequently, believers have a conscience that is purified from dead works and liberated to serve the living God. Barret (2012:41) makes two significant observations in this regard: (1) Hebrews 9 is explicit in affirming that the Spirit is eternal, not created at some point in time (contra Arianism); and (2) Christ’s sacrifice secures an eternal redemption but this eternal redemption is only possible through an eternal Spirit. Wayne (2017 n.p.) deduces that in this Scripture “we see the beautiful interaction of Father, Son, and Spirit in the divine work of redemption. YHWH, the one true God, is a Trinity, and His gospel is a Trinitarian message. One God in three persons carrying out the redemption of sinners to His own eternal glory.” (cf. Holsteen 2011:336).

### **6.10.3 *Hebrews 10:29***

In this warning passage, the writer cautions the church not to dishonour the Son of God: “How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace.”. The biblical texts ascertain that the Spirit can be insulted by Christians. The parallel text in Acts 7:51, in relation to unbelievers, Stephen is clear in his martyrdom testimony that the Spirit is resisted by those who reject the Son of God (cf. Barret 2012:34). He expressed the admonition as follows: “You stubborn and hard-headed people! You are always fighting against the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors did.” The most serious offence against the Spirit is blasphemy (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29). The sin of blasphemy against the Son is pardonable (Matt. 12:32a). Here in Matthew, with its parallel in Hebrews 10:29, God and the Holy Spirit is equated by the fact that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is declared by Christ to be unpardonable. Blasphemy in its nature is an act against deity. If the Holy Spirit were not God, it would not be possible to commit this sin. Again, Barret (2012:37) maintains that the Son and Spirit are mentioned together as equal partners. The punishment which the believer or unbeliever will receive for scorning the Son applies inevitably to the Spirit, because the Son is equal to God, and so the Spirit.

Holsteen (2011:341) observes:

The nature of the Spirit's relationship with the Father is subtly articulated in 10:29. In that passage the Father is seen defending the honour of the Son. But the verse seems to indicate that in the same way the Father defends the honour of the Spirit (who is referred to as "the Spirit of grace"). This may not be the strongest evidence for the Spirit's relationship with the Father, but the Father's defence of the Spirit's honour in this context relates to the fact that the Spirit is vitally involved in applying divine blessing to the recipients of the covenant. The phrase most evocative of the Spirit's role is "receiving the knowledge of the truth" (10:26). He "bears witness" to believers concerning the benefits they enjoy (vv. 15-18).

If the Spirit's role in the context of Hebrews 10 is linked to the delivery of divine truth, it seems reasonable that the Spirit's perspective with respect to the Father is one of messenger, prophet, or "Sent One". Thus, the traditional formulation of "procession" finds a degree of support in Hebrews (cf. Holsteen 2011:341).

## 6.11 CONCLUSION

Scriptural evidence for God as Trinity includes Christ commissioning the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). The Trinity is also manifested at the baptism of Christ. Only the Son became man; only the Father declared: "You are my Son" (Mark 1:10); only the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and later at Pentecost in strong winds and tongues of fire (Clarke 2006:92). To this basic advancement of salvation, the writer of Hebrews is not ignorant – he received "this message from the Lord himself who was the first to tell about it, and people who heard the message proved to us that it was true" (Heb. 2:4).

From the substructure of Hebrews, we gathered that the Spirit is presented as the person whose "voice" was heard in the text of the OT and now also in the NT. The voice of Yahweh is now the same voice of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 3:7, 9:7-8, 10-15-17). The theological point that the writer makes is that the spiritual implication of the rituals referred to in Hebrews, is in direct correlation with the Holy Spirit. If then the rituals are divinely inspired by God, and the writer attributes it to the Holy Spirit, then one can say that the

writer of Hebrews was suggesting that the Spirit is divine (cf. Holsteen 2011:337). Lichtenwalter (2012:108) maintains that:

the person and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the Book of Hebrews' explanation of what the exalted Jesus has been doing for believers since His ascension, and why that matters now. Its mere seven references to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29) place (trinitarian– J.A.)<sup>137</sup> pneumatology at the very heart of the Christocentric reality (worldview), which the book advances. Through the Spirit the written Word still speaks (“Today”) to heart, mind, and conscience – encompassing the interior work every believer must experience. The Spirit partners with Christ in realizing the hope of a cleansed conscience in the believer.

Trinitarian theology, especially in Hebrews, emphasises the movement of the revelation<sup>138</sup> of God's love, revealed in Christ in these last days to bring eschatological hope to a pilgrimage people through the work of the Spirit. The first route of Trinitarian theology in Hebrews leads us to a true eschatological vision of reality. The theological task is to help understand how “divine revelation [is] to overcome the distance between God and humanity, a distance caused by sin. Sin refers not first to the disorder of the world, though that is one of the dimensions of sin, but primarily to the alienation of humanity from God” (cf. Rae 2005:13). The trinitarian understanding of God and contextual theologising plays a vital role in mending the rift between a loving God and hostile humanity<sup>139</sup>. It includes the purpose and plan of God whereby, through the Son and Spirit, the Father brings about eschatological work of reconciliation and ultimate consummation. The direction and end are as determinative as the beginning (Kapic 2005:193). The rift between God and humanity is overcome by the self-sacrifice of the “indestructible” life of Christ through

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<sup>137</sup> Lichtenwalter strictly focuses on pneumatology; I suggest here that we continue to think in terms of Trinitarian theology to fit the broader context of the discussion. I believe the Trinitarian theology, how implicitly it may be, lies at the centre of Hebrews' world view.

<sup>138</sup> Carson (2006:94) admits that revelation itself is tied to the doctrine of the Trinity. Although God has spoken words, his final “Word” is the incarnated Son, who perfectly reflects him and displays the effulgence of his glory (John 1:1-18; Heb. 1:1-4).

<sup>139</sup> Rae (2005:11) asserts that the Father gives his Word to humanity and sees to it through the Spirit that humanity is able to hear and understand, and thus to be reconciled with himself. He also refers to Calvin who stated that this one Word of God, given to the world in Christ, “should have been fully sufficient”.

power of the Holy Spirit. The revelation of Jesus in Hebrews helps us to understand him as the “eschatological man”, the incarnate Christ, in whom we find the full self-revelation of God, and in this way, we move from the panoramic to the particular; in other words, Jesus is the ultimate case study of our Trinitarian eschatology (cf. Kopic 2005:196). Christ is the centre of God’s redemptive work which is in essence an eschatological endeavour. In Hebrews, so often we encounter both the realized and the yet-to-be realized, which again points to the importance of the unity of divine movement. Both for Paul and the writer of Hebrews the great “eschatological gift” is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ (cf. Heb. 2:4; 6:4; Rom. 8:9-12), “who ‘is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it’ (Eph.1:14). Here, our Christology and pneumatology come together” (cf. Kopic 2005:198).

Hebrews announces a “favourable time” – we are living in the last days (Heb. 1:1-3), which began with the Christ event, and we are told that “now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6.2). “Today” we hear the voice of God, who calls us not to harden our hearts, but to enter into “God’s rest” (Heb. 4.7-14). Just as God found the first creation good and complete, so now he rests in the finished work of his risen Son, our great high priest (Kopic 2005:200).

Another route of Trinitarian theology leads us to true Christian worship. Truman (2006:95) shows that the linking of the Son and the Spirit to the Father in the baptismal formula provided the essential dynamic for Christological and, ultimately, Trinitarian thinking in the first four centuries. Thus, the doctrine is, in origin, intimately connected to the most basic practical acts of Christian worship, acts in which all believers are involved. The ultimate goal of the writer of Hebrews is to bring the pilgrims “home” to God. The Trinity in Hebrews plays the significant role to bring believers to salvation, enable them to progress in faithful worship until they reach the “better resurrection”. Reviewing the Fathers earlier, we derived at the conclusion that the most profound theologising about the Trinity and Trinitarian life, was in the context of their worship experience. In like manner Clarke (2006:94) indicates that for Augustine “the doctrine of the Trinity was the centre of Christian spirituality”, intended to affect one’s way of life. He found the divine missions manifesting a Trinitarian “God for us ... and for our salvation”. In their divinity, the Persons

remain always transcendent, but their missions reveal the eternal generation of the Son, the procession of the Holy Spirit, and their love for humankind. The new covenantal worship is Trinitarian (cf. Letham 2002:94). To put it another way, we worship the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the fullness of truth, his incarnate Son. Subsequently he further maintains that:

The author of Hebrews refers to Christ offering up himself unblemished to the Father “in or by eternal spirit”. Since our salvation is received in union with Christ, what is his by nature is made ours by grace. Thus, in his self-offering to the Father, he offers us in him. We are thereby enabled to share in the relation he has with the Father (our Father in heaven, our Father by grace because he is firstly Jesus’ Father by nature). Christ is, in reality, the one true worshiper, our worship being a participation in his (Letham 2002:94).

Sanders (2017:65) observes that the secret of praise is “The Lord moves mightily, the creature responds verbally, magnifying not just the deeds of the Lord, but the Lord of the deeds. This is the secret of praise, and praise is the secret of Trinitarian theology.” It is said that Trinitarian theology directs the church to meaning and life-changing acts of worship. Trinitarianism, for Sanders (2017:66) is a “big deal”. It is a response to God’s self-revelation in the Father’s sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian “mission” in Hebrews is to bring believers to the “mountain” of the Lord. The Holy Spirit invites us to live at peace with everyone! To live a clean life in holiness. If we do not, we will never see the Lord (cf. Heb. 12:14). The Father draws his children to “Mount Zion” and to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city of the living God, where thousands and thousands of angels have come to celebrate or worship, where believers meet in this eschatological act of worship. However, the children of God in this current dispensation are not there yet, but still you will find “the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,” (cf. Heb. 12:22-23). Here also are the spirits of those good people who have been made perfect. Jesus the forerunner of our faith is there. He is the one who makes God’s New Covenant with us, and his sprinkled blood says much better things than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24).

In *De Spiritu Sanctu*, Basil remarks:

It is an extraordinary statement, but it is nonetheless true, that the Spirit is frequently spoken of as the place of them that are being sanctified ... This is the special and peculiar place of true worship ... In what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit ... It follows that the Spirit is truly the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit, offering himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and called God's temple<sup>140</sup>.

In the final analysis, true worship of God in Hebrews is nothing else than “access” to God through the new and living way that Christ through the eternal Spirit procured for us. Worship in the NT in general always takes place *by the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father*. This encompasses the entirety of our response to, and relationship with, God – from worship through the whole field of Christian experience (cf. Letham 2002:93).

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<sup>140</sup> In Letham 2002:94

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Paul Tillich (cited in Campbell & Bier 2008 n.p.) has noted that interpretation of the Spirit happens when the Christian community lives between text and context, revelatory answer and human question. The immediate question would be, “what has been achieved through this thesis?” Hebrews is such an enigmatic experience for readers to interpret the work of the Holy Spirit between “text and context”. The greater part of this thesis focused on the “revelatory” part of Tillich’s assumption, juxtaposing the conventional interpretation of Hebrews over and against the newer interpretation of the pneumatology of Hebrews. Can the Spirit be interpreted as “prophetic voice”? Is an Incarnational Spirit Christology really plausible? And what about the emphasis on a Trinitarian theology of the Spirit in Hebrews? Through Biblical theological exegesis and the theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS) the relevant scriptures indicated in 1.3 of this study were expounded to determine the writer of Hebrews’ teaching on the Holy Spirit. The literature study proved how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews is utilised and understood as part of a New Testament document.

The overall study sought to communicate the role which the Holy Spirit plays in Hebrews. In order to avoid the error of past scholarship on Hebrews which maintained that there is little to no effective pneumatology in Hebrews, I worked with TIS to delineate the unique contribution that the writer of Hebrews made in NT theology. This research meant to engage the book of Hebrews both in its verifiable (OT adherence and NT context) and its contemporary effect on readers to demonstrate that our view of the Holy Spirit in the book uncovers a pneumatology where the truth of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to each part of Christian ideas, life and expectation (Lichtenwalter 2012:99). The Spirit as Christological

witness opened roads through which I see solidarity and continuity with the pneumatological ideas of the OT, John, Paul and Luke-Acts.

The main proposed argument of the thesis was that the Spirit in Hebrews assumes a significant role in the epistle. With this in mind, the Spirit was interpreted theologically along the precepts of the apostolic tradition. In its disclosure we partake as witnesses to this realisation of the Holy Spirit as communicated by the apostolic tradition (cf. Schneiders 1999:76). The apostolic witness and the Early Church Fathers were used to establish pertinent theological tenets. I observed that construal of the Spirit happens when the Christian community lives amongst content and setting – dramatic answer and human inquiry (Tillich, referred to in Campbell and Bier 2008 n.p.). Whatever tradition we do theology in, scholarly or denominational, we are altogether affected by that convention.

Gathered from the theoretical contributions, it was pointed out that TIS could best be described in terms of what it is not. Stephen Fowl maintained that theological interpretation of Scripture is that habit whereby theological concerns and interests inform, and are informed by, a reading of Scripture. He also reminded us that the practice of theological interpretation is, at its core, an activity of Christian communities. It is the church's activity with a direct correlation to "have communion with God" (cited in Habets 2013:45-46,51). Kevin Vanhoozer defined TIS as follows: It is not confessional theology, but it stands against reading the Bible "like other books" and insists that it must be read theologically (Vanhoozer et al. 2005:19). TIS is about hearing the word of God in the church today (Vanhoozer et al. 2008: loc.155).

The premise from which we departed is that for the TIS interpreter the Holy Spirit is shaping the Christian community and is a factor in understanding the Scriptural texts (cf. Moberly 2009:163). The Scriptural references to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews were presented within its historical and literary context within the book. Gathered from the presentation and exegesis, we drew certain theological assumptions of how the Holy Spirit functions in Hebrews, which will be highlighted during the summary of the different chapters below. A point often overlooked by critics of TIS is that it introduces a mind-set or a perspective.

Meadowcroft (2013:1-10) identified a few approaches that formed the guidelines for the chapters in this thesis. Subsequently the Holy Spirit in Hebrews was interpreted thematically (chapter 4), Christologically (chapter 5), and as part of a Trinitarian approach (chapter 6). Furthermore, the Christological and Trinitarian approaches need to be combined as an interpretive strategy. As Meadowcroft (2013:6-7) rightly observes, “At the same time, it is necessary to work with an understanding of the Holy Spirit as active in ensuring that such a critique remains rooted in the God revealed in Christ.”

We now turn to summarising and discussing the various chapters of the thesis.

## 7.1 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The conclusions from all the chapters will first be discussed in detail, and then summarised by answering the overarching research question. Finally, some shortcomings of these studies are discussed with some recommendations for future research.

In *chapter 2* I investigated the authorship of Hebrews, date of writing, original audience, and certain theological themes. Most of the internal and external evidence points against Pauline authorship. Law and covenant as theological concepts are present in both authors. The two themes of law and covenant are more elaborated in Hebrews; therefore, I concluded that the dissimilarities between the two authors are irreconcilable. As far as Luke as possible author is concerned, the Jewish emphasis of Hebrews contrasts that of Luke, who has a specific Gentile orientation. The most likely candidate for authorship remains Apollos, but to nominate an author remains at most the informed guess of the researcher. Many resorted to the conclusion of Origen: “Who wrote the book? God knows.” However, my conclusion – Apollos as possible author – is based on the general guidelines for Apollosian authorship as suggested by Johnson (2006:43).

As far as the dating of Hebrews goes, it is concluded that the possible time is before 70, no later than 90 CE. Other views suggest the early 90s CE. Based on the historical evidence of 1 Clement, some place Hebrews in the history of early Christianity, i.e. 96 CE (Carson & Moo 2005:605). There is an argument from silence concerning the destruction of the

temple in 70 CE not being mentioned by Hebrews. Although not conclusive, it provides a strong case for a date before 70 CE for Hebrews. Given the writer's polemic, Carson & Moo (2005:607) suggests that we expect the writer to make mention of it, but he kept silent on the matter (cf. France 2006:23).

About the theological constructs presented in chapter 2, they represent a comprehensive discipline of interpretation. Various other concepts within the theological parlance of Hebrews were not dealt with, especially in terms of repetitive words and concepts (e.g. perfection and faith). Various theological themes had been dealt with. However, the New Covenant remains an important theological theme in Hebrews and may function as a point of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT, in conjunction with the role of the Holy Spirit. The continuity between the two testaments supports an understanding that the OT saints were also regenerated just like the saints in the age of the church and that the Spirit also empowered both men and women for specific tasks (cf. Stallard 2017:27). The continuity of the Spirit of God between the OT and NT was confirmed to be paramount for this thesis. I looked back to the basic OT teaching of the Holy Spirit in order to comprehend Hebrews' teaching on the role and function of the Holy Spirit. The OT beholds the coming of the Holy Spirit, because his work was not yet complete. In the OT, the term *ruach* is used to refer to the "spirit" in general. When *ruach* is used in the OT one usually thinks of the Spirit as a strong power that proceeds from God and which is used by God to touch people and change them (Tolmie 2014:205). The reference to *ruach* is often to the human spirit. The spirit of God is the person of God that invites the spirit of people to God (cf. Ezek. 37; Rom. 8:26). He came upon many Judges in the OT and empowered them to perform special services to God such as Othniel (Jud. 3:10), Gideon, Barach, Samson (Jud. 13:25; 14:6 etc.), Jephthah (Jud. 11:29) and others (cf. Heb. 11:32-34). Although the writer of Hebrews lists these Judges as heroes of faith, their faith and exploits for God could only be possible by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as the Chronicler suggests. There was also awareness in the OT that the Spirit leads people into righteousness but there was no universal outpouring of the Spirit in Israel. In addition, the Holy Spirit, the person of God vivifies the human spirit to God (Ezek. 37; Rom. 8:16).

The metaphor of “wind” and “water” for the spirit is continued in the NT in the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). Jesus said, “Unless a person is born of water and spirit (πνεύματος) he cannot enter the kingdom” (3:5). Both water and wind come from “above” therefore Jesus intended the new birth by the Spirit, which is from above<sup>141</sup>. The wind (πνεῦμα) blows wherever it wants. “You hear the sound it makes. However, you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone who is born through the Spirit (πνεῦμα)” (Joh. 3:8). Later in John (20:22) Jesus breath on his disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. By his breathing on them, Jesus passes the Holy Spirit on them (cf. Averick 2005 n.p.).

There is also a link between the “baptism of water” of John and the baptism with the Holy Spirit from Jesus (cf. Acts 1:5 “*John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*”). It is here in the NT that the baptism of the Spirit shifts the focus of the metaphor from “wind” to “water”. Physical purification becomes the central focus and corresponding reality of the work that the Holy Spirit does to the human spirit (Matt. 3:11 and Heb. 10:17). The idea of baptism is alluded to in Hebrews 6:1.

In the OT God played a remarkable role in performing signs, wonders and miracles (cf. Ex. 7:3), whereas the NT emphasis is now on the Spirit’s role that empowers the apostles to perform signs, wonders and miracles. Many NT examples exist but Heb. 2:4 in the thesis serves to be indicative of the point made. This passage does not only tie signs, wonders and miracles to the apostles, but also to the Holy Spirit. Here it refers to the “distributions of the Holy Spirit”, or in other words, the giving of miraculous gifts (cf. Stallard). The very same verse does not only refer to the distribution of gifts (as Stallard surmises), but also to the distribution of the Holy Spirit as a gift, alluding to the Pentecost experience (cf. Heb. 6:4).

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Ezek. 37:9-10 and Isa. 44:3 as pertinent examples for water and wind as life-giving symbols of the Spirit of God as he works among God’s people. The literary contexts indicate the future restorations of God’s people.

The ministry of the Spirit to provide divine enablement in the NT is foreseen in the Old. It is most clearly reflected in the participation of the Spirit of God with the people of God to produce effective results in the missional and evangelical approach of the church. The Spirit's outpouring is essential for the church to remain the prophetic voice of God as Peter indicated on Pentecost.

In *chapter 3*, through an exegetical study of the relevant Scriptures pertaining to the Holy Spirit, I came to some preliminary conclusions. The Holy Spirit's speaking of Scripture is a characteristic feature of Hebrews – God, the Spirit and Christ are said to speak. The Holy Spirit together with Christ, is the apex of the writer's discourse since he is "an active presence in the past, he is present everywhere in Scripture" – at least, theoretically. Holladay (2005:452) confirms that the Holy Spirit is not only the One spoken about, but also the One spoken to (by God), and even as the One who speaks. Additionally, the writer introduces the Holy Spirit as the One who distributes gifts and as such confirms the message of Christ. The experiences of the Spirit were central to the first Christian congregations (Dunn 2009:45). In the light of its importance, the Spirit adopts an important role as agent of the message of the Lord (Christ) and as benefactor to this group of believers. I referred to Motyer (2012:216) who argues that the writer of the epistle categorises the way he refers to the Holy Spirit in two distinctive ways: 1) as God's active power, giving gifts of grace to his people, and 2) as the author of Scripture (Heb. 3:7, 9:8 and 10:15). In the last category, we deduced that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks in Scripture mediating the divine Word to the contemporary hearers.

Μερισμοῖς in Hebrews 2:4 was of particular importance to my argument – it means to divide or distribute. The subjective genitive (πνεύματος ἁγίου) refers to "distribution which the Holy Spirit gives" and the objective genitive refers to the various ways in which Holy Spirit Himself is distributed (cf. Rogers III & Rogers Jr 1998:519). Πνεύματος Ἁγίου μερισμοῖς is translated as subjective genitive ("gifts of the Holy Spirit") and in most cases used by many modern translations. Only the more recent CEV follows the objective genitive

interpretation and relates the direct reference to the Spirit as that which is “distributed”<sup>142</sup> – “God himself showed that his message was true by working all kinds of powerful miracles and wonders. He also gave his Holy Spirit to anyone he chose to.” Hughes (1977:8) shared the same thought: “the phrase captures distributions of the Holy Spirit that is the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit through the impartation of gifts” (see also Motyer 2012:217). It is clear from the exegesis that *μερισμός* implies that through the reception of the Spirit, the believers started to exercise the “powers” that are the trademark of the Spirit’s presence.

In a unique contribution I demonstrated how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews functions as the ethos and character of God. Peeler (2007:1-19) demonstrated how the writer through his use of rhetoric, portrays God’s character and ethos to his first recipients. She maintained that “In the ancient world, the persuasive power of a speech faltered if it rested on logic alone. The speech also had to convince the audience of the reliable and amenable character of the speaker and work to move them in a certain direction” (Peeler 2007:3).

Beliefs about God’s character are inherently theological. In other words, to portray God in good light to the Hebrew believers is to allow them to connect to God theologically and devotionally. They are granted the opportunity to draw closer to God (cf. Heb. 4:16) in reverent worship and to run the race that is set before them with a sense of urgency. God’s ethos must be correctly portrayed because it influences and “determines a great deal about how the message (*λόγος*) is read or heard and what response (*πάθος*) there is” (Bowald 2010:173). I contrasted the definition of Peeler (2007:3) and that of Bowald, who maintained and define ethos as the character of the speaker as embodied in the act of speaking. I emphasised *λόγος*, as the shape of the speech itself.

I pointed to Thompson (2012:370) who drew attention to the appeal of Scripture which appears regularly in the argument of Hebrews to support the *synkrisis* and underpins the author’s emphasis on the God who speaks. Scripture is the voice of God (Heb. 1:5-13; 7:21;

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<sup>142</sup> Allen 2008:152

8:8; 10:37-38; 12:5; 13:5-6), of the Son (Heb. 2:12-13;10:5-8), and of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7;10:15). Through it the community now hears the divine voice that addresses the exalted Son (cf. Heb. 5:5-6). Simultaneously with the Holy Spirit as the voice of God, the giving of gifts becomes integral to its overall message. The benevolence of the Holy Spirit as giver of gifts was juxtaposed against the obligation of the church to revere God. The words of Scripture in the truest sense are the words of the Holy Spirit. We concluded that these specific texts are contemporary in application to the original audience. The work of Emmrich (2002:57-66) brought more to light – here it is argued that the Holy Spirit speaks in an ongoing sense. “So as the Holy Spirit says ...” (Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον Heb. 3:7) – here διό (therefore), the conjunction introducing the quotation, looks backward as well as forward (Rogers III & Rogers Jr.1998:522). Λέγει (the present indicative active of λέγω, “to say”) points to the fact that the Spirit has a “presentness” in Hebrews (Emmrich 2002:57) through whom God is speaking as his agent of speech.

It is confirmed that in Hebrews God is the speaking subject together with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the readers “listen in on a dialogue between God and the Son” (Emmrich 2002:32). Here in Heb. 10:15 it remains a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit referencing the benefits of the New Covenant in Christ (cf. Attridge 1989:281, Bruce 1990:247 and Johnson 2012:254). Thompson confirms that “in his emphasis on the God who speaks ‘from heaven’ (Heb. 12:25), the author expresses a fundamental conviction held by Christians of all ages: that the community of faith responds to a voice other than its own.” This is the voice of God breathed and reproduced through the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

The speech of the Spirit is occurring in unison with the entire NT. With the larger context in mind, I observed that the Holy Spirit speaks presently; He also speaks with finality (cf. Jupp 2013 n.p.). Hebrews 2:2-4 serves as an example of this, and it also fits with the “sign nature” of the Spirit’s work seen elsewhere in the NT.

The Holy Spirit correspondingly functions in terms of salvation as the agent of salvation as seen in the Lukan concepts of regeneration, baptism with the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of Pentecost (Yarnell III 2014:491). The Holy Spirit

regenerated the church, both Jew and Gentile and made them to become “partakers of Christ”, “partakers of the Spirit” and “partakers of the “heavenly calling”. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself. Osborne (2007:113) confirms my view that “tasting the heavenly gift” (Heb. 6:4) “deepens the image, picturing the full experience of God’s grace in the gift of salvation ... it comes from above encompasses forgiveness, the Spirit and sanctification”. Gifts of the Spirit is said to be the “power of the coming age”, it is in fact that power that shapes the life of the believer here on earth as preparation of the age to come, and the Hebrew church and the contemporary body of Christ partake of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:4).

*Chapter 4* dealt primarily with the Holy Spirit and the believer. In this chapter I observed that a prophetic community is to be a source of prophetic inspiration. This inspiration is derived from the Spirit who endows special revelation and inspired speech. I did not restrict the concept of “prophetic” in Hebrews to only an “alternative” community, but rather applied it to a community in which the Holy Spirit uses Scripture as inspired speech to create new dimensions and opportunities for growth (cf. Heb. 6:1). Growth necessarily implies transformation. In the first century Judaism had a thorough grasp on the fact that the Spirit is responsible for a transformed life which was plausible only through the Spirit of prophecy (cf. Turner 2004:111). Hebrews, a literary text, composed in that time also exhibited a thorough understanding of the prophetic Spirit. In the same vein the “literature of the intertestamental period and beyond (i.e. Rabbinic documents) reveals a strong tendency to depict the Spirit as the source of invasive inspired speech, including prophecy and praise (although the Spirit as the source of wisdom, guidance and special insight is equally [if not even more] common)” (Emmrich 2003:37). The assertion which I made was that here in Hebrews and in the NT in general, together with other Jewish texts, the “Spirit of prophecy” (here the Holy Spirit) is a transformative power. He inspires and enables a new quality of spiritual life before God. This new life leads to deeper closeness with God (cf. Turner 2004:113, Heb. 2:1-4 and 6:1-4 etc.). The Holy Spirit is the voice of the OT Scripture. He (the Spirit) relates OT citations with wisdom, power, and authority as a “prophet” of old. I used the statement of Swete (in Levison 2016:94) who observed that

the Holy Spirit is here, as in the OT, God Himself in operation, God putting a word into the hearts of the legislators, psalmists, and prophets of Israel, to corroborate my assertion.

The theology behind the emphasising of this newness of interpretation in Hebrews is the fact that the Holy Spirit is a charismatic Giver of gifts and as such gives new divine meaning to the OT scripture, which is breathed by God, in a prophetic way. Motyer (2012:224) avows to the fact that the writer quotes Psalm 95:7 three times (Heb. 3:7-8; 3:15 and 4:7), which may resemble a group culture in which the members expected to be hearing from God and that's why the culmination of this prophetically interpreted passage is none other than the familiar Hebrews 4:12: "Indeed, the word of God is *living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword*<sup>143</sup>, piercing until it divides soul from spirit (joints from marrow) and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." These last three instances of the "re-use" of Ps. 95:7-11 qualifies it in Hebrews as an instance of divine speech. I proposed that it is more than a "group culture" as Motyer observed. It is the awareness of the congregation that the Holy Spirit will speak in their midst (cf. Heb. 3:7; 9:8 and 10:15). Hebrews 3:7ff, was used as a paradigm to show how the Spirit operates within a prophetic community (the wilderness generation vs. the writer's original audience). In Hebrews there exists a coherent and creative pneumatology (cf. Levison 2016:100) – the Holy Spirit says, indicates, reveals, and testifies in present. The Holy Spirit amends Scripture to intensify its relevance for the original audience and modern readers of Hebrews. Consequently, the writer ascribed the same new covenant text (Jer. 31:31) to God (Heb. 8:8) and to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:15) to indicate that, for him, the Holy Spirit is God and it serves as the theological fulfilment of that promise. Burke & Warrington (2014) observes that "Jeremiah's new covenant, Moses' longing for the Spirit to be upon all God's people (Num. 11:29) and Joel's prophetic vision of God pouring out his Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28) come together in the declaration that the Holy Spirit partners the new-covenant people (Heb. 6:4; 2:11), who are also partnered by Christ (Heb. 3:14)." The author is also comfortable in asserting that Christ and the Spirit are "partners" in the atonement and that God and the Spirit are the co-equal voices behind Scripture (cf. Heb. 9:14).

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<sup>143</sup> Italics – Emphasis mine

Hebrews 6:1-4 was carefully exegeted and theologically interpreted to point out the Spirit's role in the life of believers. The community tasted the heavenly gift (the Holy Spirit). They became sharers of Christ and μέτοχοι of the Holy Spirit. Being a sharer of the Holy Spirit is a gift of access and partnership with the Triune God. Μέτοχος implies sharing in the divine Spirit, fellowshiping with God, and also indicates that we are God's possession (Bromiley 1985:286-289). Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6:14: "Do not harness yourself in an uneven team of unbelievers" (JB). In this instance μετοχή has the meaning of "fellowship" rather than "participation". However, partnership brings out the meaning more fully.

Special emphasis was made to the Spirit continuing to warn against apostasy and the dire possibility of falling out of grace. The warning against apostasy is a motif in Hebrews that the writer addresses several times (cf. 2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 10:26-31; 12:14-28) (van Zyl 1990:336). Individual apostasy is regarded as very serious and is only possible for those who have experienced salvation, regeneration, and renewal through the Holy Spirit (cf. Hayford 2002:1918-1919). I drew attention to two aspects of apostasy: 1) theological apostasy, i.e. the rejection of all or some of the original teachings of Christ and the apostles, and 2) moral apostasy, i.e. the former believer ceases to remain in Christ and instead become enslaved again to sin and immorality (Hayford et al., 2002).

Walter Brueggemann's (2001) "prophetic imagination and energizing" was reworked in a distinctive manner to prove how the Holy Spirit affirms the community's experience and their historical realities. Through his prophetic speech, the Holy Spirit, through the writer who ultimately puts the warning on God's lips, urges mutual care and concern for every member of the community to ensure that no one responds inappropriately to the voice of God (cf. Lane 1996:214-218). "We are energized not by that which we already possess but by that which is promised and about to be given" (Brueggemann 2001:13). The community lived in the eschatological tension of "already and not yet". The promise of the New Covenant (Heb. 10:15-17; Jer. 31:31-34) regulates the relationship between God and the community in this peculiar testimony in a "prophetic way – theologically speaking, as though it comprises both covenant and eschatology" (Wenk 2004:142).

In chapter 4, I returned for a second time to Hebrews 2:4 to demonstrate the importance of the Holy Spirit in giving gifts to the believers. In Hebrews 2:4 the Greek reads more simply and enigmatically, “through distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his will” (πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν). I indicated why it is not difficult to see why translators introduce the word “gift” in Hebrews 2:4, especially if one is prone to read through Pauline lenses (1 Cor. 12:4-6): “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (see also Montefiore 1964:53-54). Paul also holds firm to his conviction that “All these gifts are activated by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11) (cf. Ellingworth & Nida 1983:31). Paul uses *χαρίσματα* or *πνευματικά* to teach about the gifts of the Spirit and spiritual matters. Albeit, the language of the book of Hebrews is not derived from these words in 1 Corinthians. The writer has chosen to describe distributions of the Holy Spirit with the word *μερισμός*, which is reminiscent of Pentecost. In Acts 2:3, this root occurs in *διαμεριζόμεναι*, a passage in which tongues as of fire were distributed to each of those who were filled with (the) Holy spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3-4) (Levison 2016:101). Specific gifts were highlighted and elaborated upon, such as grace, enlightenment and the heavenly gift in Heb. 6:4-6, and salvation. The specific role of the Holy Spirit was discussed along the following lines: warning against apostasy, guidance of the believer, and the Spirit’s voice as form of encouragement to the believer.

*Chapter 5* is about the relationship between the Spirit and the Son in Hebrews. I pointed out how the writer’s exposition in Hebrews 9:1-14 focuses on delineating the basis of entrance into the presence of God for meaningful worship. He concludes that it was obtained through Christ in the heavenly sanctuary with his blood and through the eternal Spirit. Through an exegesis on the said pericope I argued how interpreters debated as to whether the “eternal Spirit” (v.14) is the Holy Spirit or Christ’s divine nature. Cockerill submits that the clause “often diverted interpreters from the pastor’s main point – Christ’s sacrifice is based on the power of God” (2012: loc.4465).

Some scholars hold that “through eternal spirit” suggests the reference is to Christ’s own spirit (“in his eternal nature”). I indicated scholars such as Attridge, Hughes, and Westcott<sup>144</sup>, as well as Montefiore, to mention a few. To view the Spirit in this regard is uncommon for Hebrews. The “eternal Spirit” is a natural term for the Holy Spirit, who belongs to the divine as opposed to the human realm. The role of the Spirit is not elsewhere in the NT mentioned in connection with Christ’s death (cf. Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18 for the Spirit’s role in his resurrection). Christ died, offering himself through the eternal Spirit. The manner of offering – “through the eternal Spirit” – is what makes it acceptable and pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit is not liable to fault, or, in the words of Hebrews, he does not belong to the “created” order which is prone to “change” or to that which can “pass away”. The effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ was due to the fact the he was appointed high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, although not categorically stated in this pericope.

It was only through the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ could procure our eternal redemption. The unblemished and final sacrifice of Christ was a free-will offering to the living God. Lane (1991:240) also asserts that, “the sinless high priest was also the spotless victim. The free offering of himself to God was the culmination of a life of perfect obedience. The fact that his offering was made *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*, through the eternal Spirit, implies that he had been divinely empowered and sustained in his office.” To further sustain this argument, the context of Hebrews 9:14 becomes apparent for interpreting the “eternal Spirit” as “the Holy Spirit”. Not only the context, but also the understanding of the Jewish perception of the role that the Holy Spirit plays in assisting the high priest, is a sacerdotal function. When the writer contemplates in “eternal” dimensions, he is prompted to describe salvation, spirit, and inheritance as eternal. Hebrews 9 becomes the pivotal point of the writer’s argument – that Christ came as high Priest and offered his life in the heavenly tabernacle for the cleansing of our defiled conscience. He did this by the support of the Spirit of God. The theological thrust is that the atoning work of Christ is in unison with the

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<sup>144</sup> See Guthrie 1998:314

Father and the Spirit. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus as high priest for every aspect of his ministry, including his sacrificial death.

Further to the relationship of Holy Spirit and Son in Hebrews the writer placed emphasis on the Son which leads to a series of proposals about Him – not only does it unlock a view of the cosmological and protological<sup>145</sup> Christology as it appears in the Pauline corpus and prologue to the Gospel of John, but it also introduces us to a Christology of “divine identity” in Hebrews. The Logos Christology of the exordium creates filters for a specific spiritual Christology which is characterised in the first half of the book based on the humanity of Christ, which is equally important to the writer. Jesus was integral to the identity of God and he must have been so eternally<sup>146</sup>. I argued that the Christology of Hebrews presupposes three phases in the Son’s career: pre-existence, incarnation, and exaltation (cf. Matera 1999:193). The first two stages of the Son’s existence are not overtly developed, whereas the exaltation of the Son is discussed at length. The major Christological themes were discussed, and they become the foundation for a supporting Spirit Christology in Hebrews. The overall purpose of the writer’s Christology is to enhance the believer’s reflection of Christ. Hurtado (2003:504) confirms that when he concludes: “in any case, it is clear that this author, as characteristic of early Christian texts, sees God as operating uniquely through Jesus”.

The careful handling of the data regarding the incarnation and humiliation of the Son lead me to propose a Spirit Christology in Hebrews. Having said that, I argued that Spirit Christology can be best appropriated only through Christology proper. The seven references to the Holy Spirit is not sufficient to directly expound a Spirit Christology. For the purpose of proposing a Spirit Christology, I utilised the broader Christological context from the NT at large (i.e. Spirit Christology) as a hermeneutical filter through which the high Christology of Hebrews might make sense. Therefore, Spirit Christology is remedial to the tendency either to ignore the work of the Spirit or to subordinate the person of the Spirit to the person of Christ. Spirit Christology is a Christology that works out the

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<sup>145</sup> (Gaebelien & Douglas 1981:13)

<sup>146</sup> The passages of the Johannine prologue, Col. 1, and Heb. 1 point to it.

implications of Yves Congar's axiom that there should be "no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology" (cited in Habets 2010:3; and in Peppiatt 2014:5). My definition of Spirit Christology included the affirmation of Amos Yong<sup>147</sup> who writes, "Spirit Christology sees Jesus not only as one anointed by the Spirit to do the mighty works of God but as a fully anointed one whose life from beginning to end was of the Spirit". Moreover, it is a Christological model that can account for the Son of God who performed miracles in the power of the Spirit. The probable weaknesses of Spirit Christology are the inability to account for the divine nature of Christ (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7).

Together with my proposal of Spirit Christology in Hebrews I engaged three dialogue partners, Pinnock, Habets and Ratzinger to underscore my initial proposal. At least three points of convergence between these proponents were identifiable: Jesus' humanity or incarnation, the anointing of Jesus and Jesus' relationship to the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 10:5-9 was employed in an excursus to demonstrate its overall importance in the Spiritual Christology of Ratzinger. Spirit Christology opens deeper dimensions of prayer and worship of God. As for Ratzinger, Habets also believes that through prayer the exalted Christ draws the believer into deeper dimensions of worship. The compelling principle for Habets, Pinnock and Ratzinger are the Holy Spirit who existed together with the Son from all eternity, who became evident in the life of the incarnate Son in Jesus of Nazareth through the anointing and a prayer life directed to the Father.

I also proposed an Incarnational Spirit Christology (ISC) which I submit to be present in the book of Hebrews. The metaphor of "God as Spirit" actualised by Haight, made such a submission plausible. Roger Haight (1992:277) observes that "there is no reason why God's personal self-communication, presence, and activity in Jesus should not be understood as an ontological Incarnation, so long as Incarnation is not taken to mean that Jesus' humanity is negated. Nor need this Incarnation of God as Spirit be understood in an adoptionist sense, even though one might suspect that there is a legitimate sense in which this could be done since it is a conception with New Testament roots." I concur with

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<sup>147</sup> In Peppiatt (2014:6)

Haight's force that incarnation should not negate the humanity of Jesus. However, in Hebrews we only understand his humanity against the backdrop of his pre-existence. ISC is developed in two stages and thus having two distinct dimensions. The first stage in ISC sees the pre-existent Son of God who became incarnate in Jesus during his life time as one in whom God as Spirit was at work (see e.g. Haight 1992:270). The second stage or dimension of ISC applies to the exaltation of the risen Jesus, the Jesus alive with God, and called the Christ. In this stage, there is at times a kind of identity or conflation of Christ risen and the Spirit (see e.g. Haight 1992:270). Many scholars were engaged in expounding on ISC but Roger (2008:89) sums it up more expressively when he maintains that "it falls to the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, to transgress the bounds of the incarnation that is death and reunite Father and Son in the Resurrection". The Christ-event could not have occurred without the Spirit coming alongside Christ to secure his offering and bring eternal redemption. The Spirit is one with the incarnate Son. He never works against the mission of the Son.

I surmised that the incarnation remains a mystery and many respects will remain a mystery – and therefore I choose to work with the conventional statement regarding the incarnation: "the Son assumed the human nature. It was a voluntary assumption or taking on of the limiting human nature that subjected the Son to human weaknesses, not the 'giving up' of his 'divinity'" (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7). I construed a Spirit Christology that is constitutive of the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ. I argued that the Spirit functions in collaboration with Christ in mission and atonement (cf. Heb. 9:14). In Hebrews, we saw that the humanity and divinity of Christ is in a perfect equilibrium which was fully "mutual, reciprocal, co-inherent with the Holy Spirit" (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7). ISC is a pneumatological and Christological account of the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ that formed the basis of both a theological anthropology and a theology of mission (cf. Peppiatt 2014:7).

In *chapter 6* I engaged the Holy Spirit in Hebrews on a Trinitarian level by extracting its theology from the broad structure of Hebrews. The doctrine of the Trinity is the ancient Christian teaching that there is only one God and that the one God has eternally existed in

three distinct persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I have noted that Kärkkäinen (2007:8) confirms that “there is no mention of the word ‘Trinity’ in the New Testament. What we do discover from the New Testament writers, though, is a consistent argument for the filial uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relationship to the Father of the covenant ... for the simple reason that the God of the New Testament is that of the Old Testament.” Kärkkäinen further relies on Wolfhart Pannenberg’s words, the “God of Jesus is none other than the God of the Jewish faith ... He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 12:26-27), the God whom Israel confesses in the *shema* of Deut. 6:4” (cf. Mark 12:29). The theological significance of the Triune God in Hebrews is based on the preceding actions of the triune God. The Father gives his Word to humanity and sees to it through the Spirit that humanity can hear and understand, and thus to be reconciled with himself. This reconciling action of God is an activity that follows the utterance of God’s own Word (Heb.1; cf. Rae 2005:11). Furthermore, the triune economy in Hebrews rests on the presupposition that the Father speaks; he sends forth his Word in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are drawn into this relationship of God’s self-communication. Theology, therefore, is a form of participation in the trinitarian life made possible in and through Christ. As sons and daughters from the household of God (cf. Heb. 3), we share in this new life in “which our thinking and speaking is transformed so that we no longer think in terms of what seems theologically real and true to us but in terms of what has been accomplished by God in Christ.” (Rae 2005:15). I confirmed what Rae (2005:17) suggested – that Trinitarian theology would then be termed the church’s thinking (and speaking) of the Godhead, both in “Oneness” and “Threeness” as it finds articulation in this robust faith community.

Through the theological interpretation of Scripture and patristic exegesis I investigated if the readings of the NT theology in Hebrews correlate with the views of the fathers. Their trinitarian theology is historically closer to the Apostolic Age which assists in testing if our theological assumptions are consistent with their statements and the later creeds. The theology of the fathers on the Trinity and my proposition that a Trinitarian theology does appear in Hebrews, are not in tension. To underscore this fact, I selected a few church fathers to lay a foundation in the discussion of the Trinity in Hebrews. The broader structure

of Hebrews and its overall message also affirms a Trinitarian perspective. Holsteen (2011:346) maintains that while not always as explicit as one may wish, the implicit assertions in Hebrews about the divine persons and their actions make a Trinitarian perspective indispensable to the coherence of Hebrews. In this respect, Hebrews is in its very essence a Trinitarian work.

It cannot be over-emphasised that though Hebrews does not include explicit Trinitarian statements, one may assert that the author of Hebrews portrayed God as triune – albeit in “first century language” – if one finds clear evidence of the oneness of God and evidence of three distinct persons (cf. Holsteen 2011:334). The “oneness” of God is implied throughout the book because of its OT background. This “oneness” first and foremost finds expression in the intimate “intra-dyadic” relationship between Father and Son.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned only seven times in Hebrews (Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29). Notwithstanding, it does so in a way that makes clear the relational determination of the Spirit’s identity regarding the Father and the Son. I indicated that the Spirit is both gift and Giver of gifts in Hebrews. Additionally, I applied Augustine’s notion that the Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father; “not in the manner of one born, but in the manner of one given”. “Being given” suggests a way of receiving the divine nature discrete from “being born”, and thus points to a positive way we might distinguish the Spirit’s manner of originating from the Father (procession) from the Son’s (generation) (cited in Marshall 2011:404). Furthermore, in Hebrews 2:1-4 our writer presupposes the divinity of the Holy Spirit by placing him on a par with the revelation and the mediation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Marshall (2011:401) submitted that “a Trinitarian theology of the Spirit faces two primary tasks; we need an account of the Spirit’s mysterious personal being, and of his immediate personal action. Differently put, Trinitarian pneumatology must get a fix on the Spirit’s identity, on who the Spirit is, especially as his own identity distinguishes him from, and relates him to, the Father and the Son.” It simply means that every discussion of any portion

of either the Person or work of the Holy Spirit has a bearing on the doctrine of his personality.

Hebrews' affirmation of the oneness of God, allowed us to infer that the three distinct persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are also discerned in the Godhead. Here we should admit that the evidence for the personality of the Holy Spirit is relatively scarce in Hebrews (cf. Holsteen 2011:338). The divine personhood or identity of the Spirit can only be understood against the Son's personhood. I stated that Hebrews' recognition of the two divine persons (Father and Son) makes it more probable that seemingly oblique descriptions of the Spirit's personality should be construed in that way (cf. e.g. Holsteen 2011:338). Numerous Scriptures point to a Christian theology that has long tended to see a basic pattern in the saving work of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, who dwells within the faithful through Spirit-baptism, can lead human beings to the knowledge and love of the Son, just as the incarnate Son alone can lead us to the knowledge and love of the Father who is the life-giver and source of all.

The Hebrew believers “tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 6:4). The enlightened community received the heavenly blessing which Cockerill (2012:loc.3174) and others observed to be salvation. The gift could fittingly be the reception of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion (cf. Heb. 2:4). After having received the Holy Spirit they “have become partakers of the Holy Spirit”. Cockerill (2012:loc.3174) asserts that “Hebrews bears witness to the common NT affirmation that salvation comes to those who are ‘partakers of Christ’ (cf. 3:14) through the indwelling of the Spirit” (cf. Rom. 8:9).

Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity, in origin, intimately connected to the most basic practical acts of Christian worship, acts in which all believers are involved. The ultimate goal of the writer of Hebrews is to bring the pilgrims “home” to God. The Trinity in Hebrews plays the significant role to bring believers to salvation, enable them to progress in faithful worship until they reach the “better resurrection”. I reviewed the fathers earlier in chapter 6. We arrived at the conclusion that the most profound theologising about the Trinity and

Trinitarian life was in the context of their worship experience. In like manner Clarke (2006:94) indicated that for Augustine “the doctrine of the Trinity was the centre of Christian spirituality, intended to affect one’s way of life”. To put it another way, we worship the Father in the Holy Spirit and in the fullness of truth, his incarnate Son.

Now that I have summarised the main tenets of the six chapters of the thesis, I conclude by returning to the research questions of this thesis (see Chapter 1, 1.3.1).

Although only seven explicit references to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews are present, it was determined what role the Spirit plays theologically in Hebrews and how the Spirit shaped the overall exhortations of the book. These aforementioned conclusions can be summarised by explicitly answering the overarching research questions<sup>148</sup>:

1. To determine how the Spirit reflects on the Christological understanding of Hebrews.

The exordium (Heb. 1:1-4) introduces a Christology which is equivalent to Paul (Phil. 2, Col.1 etc.) and to the prologue of John (cf. John 1). The writer of Hebrews unlocked a series of Christological proposals about the Son of God. It is both cosmological and protological. I observed that the initial Logos Christology of the exordium creates filters for a specific spiritual Christology which we can characterise in the first half of the book based on the humanity of Christ which is equally important to the writer. The Son existed in the identity of God and he must have been so eternally<sup>149</sup>. I also understood divine identity as already a fully divine Christology, maintaining that Jesus Christ is intrinsic to the unique and eternal identity of God<sup>150</sup>. A Christology of divine identity accordingly offers a way to look beyond the alternative of functional Christology, which I perceived not to be part of the writer’s intent when laying out the pre-eminence of the Son.

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<sup>148</sup> The following research questions have been alluded to in the conclusions drawn from the chapters – to determine how and where in Hebrews the Spirit is indicated or alluded to, and to determine what role the indications, quotations, and reference to the Spirit, play theologically and as exhortations.

<sup>149</sup> The passages of the Johannine prologue, Col. 1, and Heb. 1 point to it.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Bauckham 2003:4

It is against this Christological tapestry that I argued for a Spirit Christology and more so for an Incarnational Spirit Christology. Spirit Christology as an approach is faithful to the Biblical witness and is consistent with orthodoxy of the church's creeds and councils, the Fathers and Reformers (Dorries 2006: loc.104). The experiential component of our theologising becomes necessitated by a dynamic Spirit Christology. In other words, every believer experiences the Holy Spirit's influence in their life.

Hebrews 9:14 gives us a clear indication of how the writer of Hebrews ruminated on the Holy Spirit's involvement in the ministry of Christ. The role of the Spirit is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT in connection with Christ's death (cf. Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18 for the Spirit's role in his resurrection; see also France 2006:118), but here in Hebrews it becomes perceptible.

The Holy Spirit is essential to the process of salvation and it is the Holy Spirit who prepares for what may be the pivotal passage of the Hebrews, 9:11-14, in which Jesus achieves eternal salvation (cf. Levison 2016:109-110). It would be pragmatic, to say the least, that the Christological role of the Spirit in Hebrews is to support the Son in his sacerdotal function. Likewise, the Spirit is called "*eternal Spirit*" to bring out the (extraordinary) eschatological significance of the Spirit's assistance in Christ's once-for-all priestly action (cf. Emmrich 2002:32).

2. To determine how the Spirit concept, compare to the New Testament teaching on the Spirit

In Hebrews there are a few allusions to Pentecost (Luke-Acts) and other NT witnesses. I strongly reasoned that in the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels we read of the incarnation, the life, and the ministry of Jesus as shaped and lived out in the power of the Spirit. The power which Jesus possessed to heal, to cast out demons and to perform various kinds of miracles, was the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:1 indicates that after Jesus returned from the Jordan River, the power of the Holy Spirit was with him, and the Spirit led him into the desert (cf. Luke 4:16ff.). Amos Yong indicates that access to the personal reality of the person and work of Jesus Christ as Lord and Son of God comes only through

the Holy Spirit (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:3), whose outpouring and gift to the people of God is recounted in Acts 2 (Yong 2016:177). The pneumatological force of Acts is to reflect on as many personal encounters with Christ through the Holy Spirit as possible. The very outpouring of the Spirit in Acts is an encounter with the risen Christ. I observed that Webster (2011:329) understood that the Spirit perfected the work of the Son. He says (2011:332), “Conceived by the Spirit, the incarnate Son is also sanctified by the same Spirit, endowed by the Spirit with all necessary grace, and empowered by the Spirit to enact his human nature and history in fulfilment of his mission.” Hebrews illustrates this two-fold picture of the incarnate Christ – Jesus bears the very stamp of God’s nature and He is the image of the invisible God, upholding the universe by his powerful word (Heb. 1:3). It is clear that Paul defines Christianity in terms of “having the Spirit” (cf. Rom. 8:9; Dunn 2009:33). The Spirit coming or descending upon Jesus became the paradigm for the Spirit’s outpouring, reception and experience for the believers. Together with Dunn (2009:33) I concur that “in Hebrews the Spirit is the foretaste of the powers of the age to come”. Likewise, in 1 John, the test for discipleship and Christ abiding in them was the Spirit given to them<sup>151</sup>.

Paul distinctively introduced *pneuma* as the experiential and encountered reality of God. He encountered the risen Christ personally on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9). He experienced the *pneuma* of God as God’s power and as the presence of the risen Christ. In Ephesians 5:18 “filled” with the Spirit recalls the experience of baptism in the Spirit. In baptism by the Spirit, a believer is plunged in the Spirit. Paul refers to the unity in the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13) by indicating that we all drank of the Spirit. In other words, we received the Spirit inside. The believer now dwells in and is indwelt by the Spirit.” Hebrews’ Spirit “indwells” believers in the sense that they are partakers of the Spirit. This encounter of *pneuma* finds expression in the *charismata* as Paul explains it in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Here in Hebrews 2:4 believers share in the gifts as partners of the Holy Spirit. Laansma (2017:68) correctly observes that “though Hebrews does not feature the Spirit on the scale of Acts and 1 Corinthians the Spirit’s presence in the community and role in the

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. 1 John 2:20, 27; 3:24 and 4:2. The anointing in John can be interpreted to mean the Holy Spirit. In 4:2 he explicitly states the “Spirit of God”.

history of salvation is vital. At this point the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in language that relates to the distributions of Israel's inheritance (Josh. 11: 23); we are recipients of the true inheritance." For Laansma Hebrews 2:1-4 is not so much a Trinitarian theology as it is an assumption in the salvific co-acting of God (Father), Lord (Son), and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that Hebrews 2:1-4 serves as a representative text to delineate a Trinitarian theology.

Lichtenwaller (2012:109) observes that from the standpoint of God in the General Epistles, there is "triune atonement, triune invitation, triune witness, and triune assurance; from the standpoint of the believer – triune understanding of spiritual things, triune abiding, triune growing in faith, triune experience of prayer, discipleship, spiritual gifts, ministry, and worship.". In Hebrews' Trinitarian theology, every aspect of what Lichtenwaller distinguished to be present in the General Epistles, forms part of the believer's worship experience. This thesis reiterates the conclusion of Levison (2016:110) – there is a theology of the Spirit in Hebrews, which offers a crucial witness to the experience and belief of the early church.

3. To determine how the Spirit contributes to the general theology of Hebrews and how to interpret it theologically.

During the course of this thesis I included sections that dealt primarily with theological issues and contributions. Theological imports and underpinning were carefully pointed out and discussed. Such instances were the theological meaning of various exegetical sections and especially the seven references to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews, the theological meaning of the Spirit as Interpreter of Scripture and the voice of God, the role of the Spirit in the warning sections, the role of the Spirit Christology and theological implications for a Trinitarian reading in Hebrews.

## **7.2 POSSIBLE WEAKNESSES**

During the course of the thesis a few limitations were experienced:

1. The mainstream opinion of Hebrews scholarship that there is no sufficient pneumatology in Hebrews was challenged. The work of Emmrich (2000, 2002, 2003), Motyer (2012), Allen (2009), Lichtenwalter (2012) and Levison (2016) proved to be helpful in writing up the data and to draw certain conclusions with regard to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. The resurgence in the pneumatology of Hebrews at times seems “exhausted” because of the insufficient peer reviewed sources on the Spirit in Hebrews. Be it as it may, the contributions from this thesis can help to fill that gap in the scholarly literature.
2. What all chapters in this study have in common is that I worked with a thematic approach to the theology of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. If such an approach is not followed, the mere seven references to the Spirit become a challenge. As a consequence, all these chapters share the strengths and weaknesses associated with a thematic or even titular approach to the theology of Hebrews.
3. Another potential weakness is the way the theoretical component of the thesis came together in the different chapters. From the outset I made the observation that I am convinced that thematically the Spirit can be investigated, and some evidence can be excavated from the book to affirm the theological importance of the Spirit, not only to the first-century audience but to the contemporary church as well. In the ensuing chapters it was done through exegesis and theological application. The potential weakness lies in the lack of a clear methodology within the theological interpretation of Scripture. As a Pentecostal believer, doing theological interpretation of the theology of the Spirit in Hebrews within the demarcations of New Testament studies was a major challenge. I was constantly reminded that although my approach makes provision to interpret Scripture from my Pentecostal tradition, I was still engaged in a NT study with all the constraints and challenges it imposes on the researcher. My hope is though, that I have sufficiently demonstrated that the pneumatology of Hebrews is not as meagre as some scholars would make it out to be.

### 7.3 FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

As envisioned in the introduction, the outcome of the study will inevitably fill the gap in the research on the Holy Spirit. It will add to the growing interest among scholars to revisit the pneumatology of Hebrews and could be a helpful aid in, not only NT theology, but also systematic/dogmatic approaches to the Holy Spirit, liturgical and missional theology and especially in developing the Incarnational Spirit Christology which I proposed in the study. Trinitarian theology in Hebrews can also become of greater interest to Hebrew scholarship. Future research could make real progress if it were to explore the thematic approach to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. The observations presented here combine to offer scholarship a new direction for the study of NT pneumatology.

All things considered, I reiterate the unique contribution to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit in Hebrews functions as the ethos and character of God, functioning on the same plane as Christ being the believer's Benefactor. Similarly, Walter Brueggemann's (2001) "prophetic imagination and energizing" was reworked in a distinctive manner to prove how the Holy Spirit affirms the community's experience and their historical realities. Through his prophetic speech, the Holy Spirit, through the writer who ultimately puts the warning on God's lips, urges mutual care and concern for every member of the community to ensure that no one responds inappropriately to the voice of God. The careful handling of the data regarding the incarnation and humiliation of the Son leads me to propose a Spirit Christology in Hebrews. Subsequently, I argued that a Spirit Christology can be best appropriated only through Christology proper. Granted this affirmation of a Spirit Christology in Hebrews, I also proposed an Incarnational Spirit Christology which I submit to be present in the book of Hebrews. The metaphor of "God as Spirit", actualised by Haight, made such a submission plausible.

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