

ANIMADVERSIONES

ὁ ἀπόστολος in Hebrews 3,1

The designation ὁ ἀπόστολος (“the apostle”) with reference to Jesus at Heb 3,1 remains a source of perplexity. Not only is this the only place in the New Testament that calls Jesus an “apostle”, but also its meaning does not seem to be cultic and hence does not seem to qualify it as a legitimate parallel for the word ἄρχιερέυς (“high priest”).

“Ὁθεν, ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι, κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἄρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν ... (1)

Whence, holy brothers, sharers in a heavenly calling, look closely on the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus ...

Why Hebrews should use the term “apostle” in the context is puzzling (2). Further, it is connected with “high priest” with the one article τὸν serving for both — τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἄρχιερέα. This suggests that the two words form a coherent whole in the mind of the author of the epistle (3). But the basis for the coherency is not at all clear and is much discussed (4).

The present article attempts to present a plausible interpretation of the phrase so that the word ὁ ἀπόστολος is explained in a way which makes it a fitting, cultic parallel to ἄρχιερέυς. Some new suggestions will be made to help increase the plausibility.

1. *The Background of Hebrews 3,1*

As the present writer sees it, the framework in which 3,1 is found is as follows:

- 1,1-4: exordium to the entire epistle and to what immediately follows;
- 1,5-14: an exposition on Jesus as Son [of God];
- 2,1-4: *paraklêsis* (5) based on the preceding exposition;
- 2,5-18: an exposition on Jesus as Son of Man;
- 3,1-6: *paraklêsis* based on the preceding exposition (6).

(1) Greek text here and elsewhere after N-A²⁶. Translations into English are by the present writer.

(2) Ample discussion in: W.L. LANE, *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC 47A; Dallas, TX 1991) 75-76; P. ELLINGWORTH, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGCT; Grand Rapids, MI – Carlisle, PA 1993) 199-200.

(3) “The omission of the article before ἄρχιερέα, ‘high priest,’ suggests that the titles are parallel designations, which view the accomplishment of Jesus in terms of the divine authorization for his word and work” (LANE, *Hebrews 1-8*, 75).

(4) ELLINGWORTH (*Hebrews*, 200) thinks the two words form a hendiadys (“a high priest sent [by God]”). LANE (*Hebrews 1-8*, 75) takes the two words as referring to two different functions of Jesus outlined in 1, 1-2,18 (“the one through whom God proclaimed the definitive word of salvation and made propitiation for the sins of the people”).

(5) For the meaning of παράκλησις cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 343.

(6) Cf. J. SWETNAM, “ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, *Bib* 88 (2007) 518.

The repetition in 3,1-6 of a number of words from 2,5-18 indicates that the section 2,5-18 is probably the basis for the exhortation⁽⁷⁾. Thus the phrase “the apostle and high priest” in 3,1 seems to refer to what immediately precedes, given that the word ἀρχιερεύς in 3,1 seems to refer to the same word in 2,17⁽⁸⁾.

Hebrews 2,5-18 is plausibly interpreted as follows: The whole section is a Jesus-centered commentary on Ps 8,5-7 which is cited at Heb 2,6-8a. The subsequent verses 2,8b-18 are divided into two subsections, 2,8b-12, and 2,13b-18. 2,12 is a citation from Ps 22,22 and refers to what precedes, whereas 2,13b refers to what follows. 2,13a, with its portrayal of Jesus as “trusting”, refers both to what precedes and to what follows. That is to say, the whole section 2,5-18 is about Jesus’ faith-trust in the face of death and what it achieved (2,15-17)⁽⁹⁾.

2. Evaluation of the Word ἀπόστολος in Hebrews 3,1

Against this background of Heb 2,5-18 the use of the word ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1 can plausibly be evaluated. Several factors must be explained in attempting to assess the relevance of the word ἀπόστολος with regard to Ἰησοῦς at 3,1:

- 1) the meaning of the word ἀπόστολος;
- 2) the reason for the parallelism between the word ἀπόστολος and the word ἀρχιερεύς;
- 3) the adjective πιστός in 3,2, which seems to refer to Jesus insofar as he was both ἀπόστολος and ἀρχιερεύς;
- 4) the parallelism between Jesus and Moses which begins in 3,2.

With these factors serving as criteria the following exegesis suggests itself. The parallelism between Jesus and Moses (factor #4) suggests that the author of Hebrews has in mind a situation from the Old Testament which involves Moses. Since this is the most specific among the four factors, it would seem to be the place to start: once a link between Moses and Jesus can be established on the basis of the Old Testament (the theological textbook being used by the author of Hebrews), further factors can be traced.

The word ἀπόστολος is barely found in the Old Testament, let alone with reference to Moses. But the word ἀποστέλλω is found a number of times with regard to the specific mission of Moses. In particular, the verb clusters with Moses in Ex 3, where Moses is pictured as being sent by God to the people God is liberating from Egypt⁽¹⁰⁾. Moses is sent to announce the “name” (ὄνομα) of God to the people (Ex 3,14). This squares with what is said in Heb 2,12, where Jesus is portrayed as one who announces the “name” (ὄνομα) of

⁽⁷⁾ H.-F. WEIB, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KKNT 13; Göttingen 1991) 240, n. 7. Weiß notes that many words in 3,1-6 are repetitions of words in 2,5-18. The repeated words are: πιστός (2,17 and 3,2.5); ἀδελφός (2,11.17 and 3,1); ἅγιος (ἀγιαζόμενος (2,11 and 3,1); καλέω and κλησῖς (2,11 and 3,1); μετέχω and μέτοχος (2,14 and 3,1); δόξα (2,7.9.10 and 3,3); τίμη (2,7.9 and 3,3).

⁽⁸⁾ WEIB, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 244.

⁽⁹⁾ Cf. SWETNAM, “ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 518 (with references to previously published, more extensive treatments).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Cf. Exod 3,10.12.13.14.15 (text after J.W. WEVERS [ed.], *Exodus* [Septuaginta, II.1; Göttingen 1991] 83-84).

God to his brothers. If ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1 is viewed as suggesting that Jesus, like Moses, has been “sent” by God to announce his name to his brothers, the word makes plausible sense⁽¹¹⁾. The noun form ἀπόστολος is used instead of the verb form ἀποστέλλω in order to provide a morphological parallel with ἀρχιερεύς.

The analysis above gives a plausible interpretation of ἀπόστολος involving factors #1 and #4⁽¹²⁾. There remain factors #2 and #3. This relevance of the Exodus texts involving Moses to explain ἀπόστολος is heightened by the commonly-evoked text at Num 12,7 to explain the allusion to πιστός, the first word of 3,2⁽¹³⁾. For in Num 12,7 Moses is presented as God’s θεράπων (“servant”) who is πιστός (“faithful”) ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου (“in the whole of my house”). The coincidences between Num 12,7 and Heb 3,5 are too numerous to be attributed to chance. In 3,5 Moses is the faithful servant in the entirety of God’s house (... Μωσῆς ... πιστὸς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ ᾧ θεράπων ...), just as Christ is faithful as son over God’s house (3,6). In Numbers the text has as its purpose the reaffirmation of Moses’ privileged position with regard to God (Num 12,4-10); in Hebrews this fidelity of Moses is used as the basis for the comparison with the fidelity of Jesus as son⁽¹⁴⁾. Thus factor #3 is accounted for in a way which is plausible in relation to the interpretation given above involving factors #1 and #4. Jesus, like Moses, has been sent by God to announce his name, and in this mission he should enjoy the trust of his brothers (Heb 2,12) for he is faithful as son just as Moses was faithful as servant.

Thus factors #1, #3 and #4 are accounted for. But there remains the standard challenge of seeing how ἀπόστολος can be considered to sufficiently parallel to ἀρχιερεύς to warrant a pairing involving the use of a common article. In this regard the Old Testament context of Ps 22,22, the source of the citation in 2,12, is of interest.

Ἐπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε.

I shall announce your name to my brothers, In the midst of the assembly I shall hymn your praises.

⁽¹¹⁾ This linkage between Moses and ἀπόστολος in Hebrews is has already been suggested, of course. Cf. O. MICHEL, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KKNT 13; Göttingen 1966) 172. For the Exodus text involving both “sending” and “name” cf. Ex 3,15-16: ... ὁ θεὸς ... ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς· τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν ὄνομα ... (text after WEVERS, *Exodus*, 85).

⁽¹²⁾ It bears repetition that no “proof” is being attempted in this analysis. The most which can be hoped for in exegesis of literary texts, including the Bible, is an interpretation which is plausible. Catholic faith is not based on literary proof, it is based on gift, and involves precisely the certitude of faith, not the certitude of reason.

⁽¹³⁾ οὐχ οὕτως ὁ θεράπων μου Μωσῆς· ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστὸς ἐστὶν (Num 12,7 after J.W. WEVERS [ed.], *Numeri* [Septuaginta, III.1; Göttingen 1982] 171-172). Cf. H.W. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1989) 108-109. The use of ὁ θεράπων and οἶκος, when viewed in the context of their use with regard to Moses in 3,5, strengthens the interpretation being advanced in this note. The inference that the Christians are undergoing an exodus that is parallel to the exodus of the generation of Israelites under Moses squares with the allusions to both exoduses in Heb 2,1-4 where at 2,1 there is the evocation of the giving of the Law with reference to the first exodus and at 2,4 there is mention of the signs and wonders and various acts of power with reference to the second exodus.

⁽¹⁴⁾ This fidelity of Jesus as son has been established in 2,13a-18 (cf. 2,17).

The verse refers to the public praise given God by the recipient of a signal divine favor as part of the Old Testament cultic practice of the *tôdâ*. Under the Sinai dispensation the *tôdâ* ceremony centered on a bloody sacrifice in the temple and involving a ritual consumption of bread accompanied by the public singing of hymns and the recitation of prayers. The purpose of the ritual was to thank God publicly for a signal intervention of divine providence in the life of the one performing the ceremony⁽¹⁵⁾. In the opinion of the present writer Heb 13,1-21 is a detailed adaptation of the Sinai covenant *tôdâ* to Christian reality, and this opinion of Heb 13 is being used here as a warrant for viewing in Heb 2,12 an allusion to the Christi *tôdâ*⁽¹⁶⁾.

In this evocation of the Christian *tôdâ*, i.e., the Eucharist, at Heb 2,12, Christ is pictured as the high priest who presides at the celebration in order to render public thanks/praise to God for God's saving act of resurrection on his behalf. He calls the participating Christians "brothers", using the words of the psalm citation, to indicate that the Christians by the very fact of professing to be followers of Christ, i.e., believers in the claims of Christ on the basis of the resurrection, share in Christ's faith-trust in the face of death. Their participation in the Eucharist shows their faith-trust in believing that God has raised Jesus from the dead and their thanksgiving for his so doing. Their participation also shows their faith-trust in the face of their own future resurrection which they will experience as followers of the risen Christ⁽¹⁷⁾.

What follows from the above line of reasoning is that the pairing of the word ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1 with the word ἀρχιερεύς is justifiable. For Jesus in Heb 2,12 would seem to be acting as high priest when he presides at the Christian *tôdâ*. The tense of the verb ἀπαγγεῖλω is future, possibly because not one act but many are envisioned. In any event, the choice of wording seems determined by the text of Ps 22. It is the risen Jesus who is in question, for 2,9 presents Jesus unambiguously in his risen state (... βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον ... — "... we gaze on Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of his suffering death ...")⁽¹⁸⁾.

But that seems to leave an insurmountable problem: how the risen Jesus, seated at the right hand of the father (cf. Heb 1,13), can be said to officiate at the Christian *tôdâ*. The answer is hinted at by the referents of ἀπόστολος and ἀρχιερεύς. Ἀρχιερεύς refers to the subsection 2,13a-18, i.e., Jesus, earthly high priest by reason of his earthly, mortal body (cf. 2,17); 2,8a-13a refers to Jesus,

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cf. SWETNAM, "ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11", 522 (with references to more extensive treatments). The classic treatment of the *tôdâ* is that of H. GESE, "Der Herkunft des Herrenmahls", *Zur biblischen Theologie Altktestamentliche Vorträge* (Tübingen 1989) 107-127.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Cf.: J. SWETNAM, "A Liturgical Approach to Hebrews 13", *Letter and Spirit* 2 (2006) 159-173; J. SWETNAM, "A Liturgical Approach to Hebrews 13", *The Incarnate Word* 1 (2006) 3-17. Cf. also the following web site: "James Swetnam's Close Readings" <http://web.mac.com/jameshwetnam>. Ps 22,22 in its original context is an allusion to a *tôdâ* ceremony, and this allusion is kept in Heb 2,12 with the refinement that the ceremony is adapted to Christian realities, as seems to be the case in also in Heb 13,1-21.

⁽¹⁷⁾ All of this is rehearsed in SWETNAM, "ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11", 523-524. The author of Hebrews is expressing Christian meaning with Old Testament words.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Cf. A. VANHOYE, *Situation du Christ*. Hébreux 1-2 (LD 58; Paris 1969) 285-286. Understood, of course, is that the "gazing" is done with the eyes of faith. Vanhoye communicates this supposition of faith by translating βλέπομεν as "nous constatons".

heavenly high priest by reason of his heavenly, immortal body (cf. 2,12 in the context of 2,9). But the two priesthoods are interconnected. Jesus the heavenly high priest is Jesus the earthly high priest crowned with honor and glory because of the death he suffered as the culmination of his earthly priesthood. The earthly priest came to do God's will (Heb 10,5-7), and this will to do God's will is subsumed into the actions of the heavenly high priest.

But this still leaves the problem of how Jesus Christ, the heavenly high priest, seated at the right hand of God, can "announce God's name" to his brethren in the Christian *tôdâ* in this world. The solution in terms of Hebrews is found at Heb 13,15, where the Christians, assisting at the Christian *tôdâ* (cf. the expression *θυσία αἰνέσεως* in the verse) are said to be "confessing his name", i.e., the name of God (*ὁμολοῦντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ*)⁽¹⁹⁾. The Christians celebrating the *tôdâ* are doing so in conjunction with their "leaders" (*ἡγούμενοι* — 13,7 and 13,17, the author emphasizes the word by using it as the framing device for the entire section dealing with the *tôdâ*). In other words, the heavenly high priest officiates at the Christian *tôdâ* through his representatives⁽²⁰⁾.

Thus factor #3 is accounted for: Heb 2,12 can plausibly be adduced as the verse in 2,5-18 to which the word *ἀπόστολος* in 3,1 refers, and Heb 2,12 portrays Jesus as heavenly high priest. *Ἀπόστολος* and *ἀρχιερεύς* both refer to Jesus in his cultic function and hence in the mind of the author of Hebrews can be joined by a common article. Further, this interpretation makes sense in the context of the entirety of Heb 3,1-6⁽²¹⁾.

3. *The Function of Jesus as ἀπόστολος: To Announce the Christian Name of God*

Jesus is viewed as *ἀπόστολος* in 3,1 because of his function as heavenly high priest in the Christian *tôdâ* in which he is sent to announce "your name" (*τὸ ὄνομά σου*). But it would seem imperative for an understanding of the word *ἀπόστολος* to try to understand what the phrase "your name" means in the context of 2,12. There are at least three possibilities with regard to identifying the "name" referred to in Heb 2,12.

1) Possibility #1: the meaning of "name" in Ps 22,23, the text cited in Heb 2,12.

2) Possibility #2: the meaning of "name" in Ex 3,14, the text which concerns the "sending" of Moses.

3) Possibility #3: the meaning of "name" which the author of Hebrews has in mind with relation to the function of Jesus in the Christian *tôdâ*.

Possibility #1: In the context of Ps 22 the word "name" refers to the

⁽¹⁹⁾ Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 721.

⁽²⁰⁾ It is tempting at this point to observe that these delegates of the heavenly high priest, these *ἡγούμενοι*, should logically themselves be called *ἀπόστολοι* because of their participation in the "being sent" of the earthly Jesus now subsumed into the presiding role of the heavenly Jesus, high priest. But while this makes good sense in the tradition of the Christian *tôdâ*, i.e., the Catholic Mass (Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1136), it is not the terminology used by the author of Hebrews. (Whether it is involved in the use of *ἀπόστολος* elsewhere in New Testament is well beyond the scope of the present paper to attempt to adjudicate.)

⁽²¹⁾ A detailed study of Heb 3,1-6 is beyond the scope of the present note.

present saving power of the Lord”⁽²²⁾. It is the understood supposition which is the basis for all prayer. Specifically, the name is יהוה, “Lord” (κύριος in the LXX)⁽²³⁾.

Possibility #2: In the context of Ex 3,14 the word “name” refers to the participial phrase ὁ ὢν of the Septuagint⁽²⁴⁾. This participle of εἰμί in the context would seem to have the force of an identification designed to emphasize God’s fidelity. He is the one who “is”, i.e., who does not vary. Beneath this functional designation there may well be implications involving ontology: God’s function is unvarying because by nature he is unvarying. His word is absolutely reliable because his existence is absolute.

Both possibilities #1 and #2 are appropriate for the context of Heb 2,12. The “Lord” as the basis for prayer is certainly a fitting name for Jesus to announce to his brothers (#1). God as one who is faithful is certainly a fitting name for Jesus to announce to his brothers (#2).

But possibility #3 would seem to be preferable to the other two possibilities. The reason for this lies primarily in the immediate context of Heb 2,12, for in Heb 2,11 the “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) of 2,12 are constituted by the distinctively Christian faith-trust which characterized Jesus in the face of death as well as the faith-trust of Abraham⁽²⁵⁾. Thus, the “name” (ὄνομα) indicated in 2,12 is an Old Testament word for God but given a Christian meaning. In other words, the citation of Ps 22,22 at Heb 2,12 is yet another example of the use by the author of Hebrews of Old Testament words with New Testament meanings⁽²⁶⁾.

The precise force of the occurrence of the name of the Christian God in Heb 2,12 becomes clear from the use of the word ὄνομα (“name”) in relation to the Christian *tôdâ* at Heb 13,15. There, in a verse which explicitly mentions the Christian *tôdâ* (θυσία αἰνέσεως — “sacrifice of praise”)⁽²⁷⁾, the author speaks of “offering up” (ἀναφέρειν) the sacrifice of praise through the crucified Christ (δι’ αὐτοῦ) in confessing “his”, i.e., God’s, name (τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ). The explicit reference to Christ’s bloody sacrifice (cf. 13,12) situates the invocation of God’s name in a Christian context. The point of the mention

⁽²²⁾ “יהוה is die gegenwärtige Heilsmacht Jahwes ...” (H.-J. KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 1. Teilband, Psalmen 1–59 [HKAT XV/1; Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1979] 330). “Wenn Israel zu den Jahresfesten in Jerusalem versammelt ist (Ps 122,2ff.), dann erheben einzelne Beter ihre Stimme. Sie werden zu Zeugen der großen Taten Gottes in ihrem Leben; sie verkünden den Namen Jahwes (Ps 22,23f), reden also nicht biographisch genau von ihrem ‘eigenen Leben’ sondern von dem, was der Gott Israels vollbrachte” (H.-J. KRAUS, *Theologie der Psalmen* [HKAT, XV/3; Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1979] 171–172).

⁽²³⁾ “... stets ist in den Psalmen die Gegenwart und Gabe des יהוה die Voraussetzung alles Betens und Singens, Vertrauens und Hoffens, Rufens und Fragens. Und dieser Name ist der Name יהוה (KRAUS, *Theologie der Psalmen*, 22). This explanation is to be supplemented by Kraus’s explanation of the relation of יהוה to אלהים: “Die in אלהים angezeigte Fülle göttlicher Macht ist Israel in der Selbstmitteilung des Namens יהוה zugewandt (KRAUS, *Theologie der Psalmen*, 24). In terms of the Septuagint, κύριος and θεός are in question.

⁽²⁴⁾ Text after WEVERS, *Exodus*, 85.

⁽²⁵⁾ Cf. J. SWETNAM, “ἐξ ἐνός”, 522–523.

⁽²⁶⁾ This use of Old Testament words to express New Testament meanings is characteristic of Hebrews. Cf. SWETNAM, “ἐξ ἐνός”, 521–522, with regard to the word τελειώω of 2,10.

⁽²⁷⁾ The Latin form of θυσία αἰνέσεως (*sacrificium laudis*) is found in the Canon of the Latin Mass in the remembrance of the living.

of “confessing” (ὁμολογέω) God’s name⁽²⁸⁾ is to recognize his saving intervention⁽²⁹⁾.

Thus Heb 13,15 supports the interpretation of Heb 2,12 as referring to a Christian interpretation of God’s name. The question now becomes, what is the Christian name of God?

4. *The Christian Name of God: Father*

In the context of Heb 2,12 there is a text which indicates what Christian name for God the author of Hebrews has in mind: Heb 1,5:

Τίτι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων,
 Υἱός μου εἶ σύ,
 ἐγὼ σήμερον γενέννηκά σε•
 Καὶ πάλιν,
 Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα,
 καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν•

The purpose of the verse is to introduce the section 1,5-14 by indicating the “name” (ὄνομα) which the son of the prologue has inherited⁽³⁰⁾. The name is “son” (υἱός), as the artful emphasis of the positioning of the word at the beginning of v. 5a and at the end of v. 5b indicates. The two parts of the verse are constituted by a citation from Ps 2,7 and a citation from 2 Sam 7,14. The exegetical technique being used is the *gezera shawa*, i.e., what is affirmed in Ps 2,7 is applicable to 2 Sam 7,14, and vice versa⁽³¹⁾. As presented in Hebrews the point of the *gezera shawa* is that at the resurrection/enthronement the son of the prologue becomes the son who is the messiah of the Davidic line, and the messiah of the Davidic line becomes the son of the prologue. That is to

⁽²⁸⁾ Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 721.

⁽²⁹⁾ “Ὁμολογεῖν steht hier dem biblischen ἐξομολογεῖσθαι entsprechend im Sinne des Lobpreises Gottes als Antwort auf erfahrene Güte und Barmherzigkeit Gottes” (WEIB, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 240). Weiß goes on to link the ὁμολογεῖν of 13,15 with the ὁμολογία of Heb 3,1; 1,14; and 10,23, which seems obvious enough. But he so doing he asserts that the equally obvious “cultic-liturgical dimension” (“kultisch-liturgische Dimension”) of ὁμολογία in Hebrews does not apply to ὁμολογεῖν in Heb 13,15, even though he admits that the use of ὁμολογεῖν in 13,15 is Christologically based and Christologically transmitted. (“Das christologisch akzentuierte Gemeindebekenntnis ist hier — in V. 15 — nicht im Blick, sondern — unter Aufnahme des genannten biblischen Motivzusammenhangs — der Lobpreis Gottes durch genannten biblischen Motivzusammenhangs — der Lobpreis Gottes durch die christliche Gemeinde, der nun freilich im Heb im Unterschied zur entsprechenden biblischen-jüdischen Tradition christologisch begründet und vermittelt ist: Δι’ αὐτοῦ [οὖν] ἀναφέρομεν” (WEIB, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 240). Weiß even strengthens the case against himself by noting the chiasmic structuring of the verbs in 13,15 and 13,16 (WEIB, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 240, n. 128). The reason for these exegetical evasions is, of course, to safeguard the “spiritualized” nature of the θυσία αἰνέσεως of Heb 13,15. But the effect is just the opposite.

⁽³⁰⁾ Cf. J. SWETNAM, “Hebrews 1,5-14: A New Look”, *Melita Theologica* 51 (2000) 56-59.

⁽³¹⁾ “Verbal analogy from one verse to another: where the same words are applied to two separate cases, it follows that the same considerations apply to both” (H.W. BATEMAN IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13. The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (American University Studies. Series VII. Theology and Religion 193; New York 1997) 220.

say, the earthly son of the Davidic line, i.e., Jesus (cf. Heb 2,9) “becomes” the son of the prologue⁽³²⁾. This is the “name” which the “son” of the prologue has, paradoxically, “inherited”: the name of “son” who is the eternal son as risen/exalted⁽³³⁾.

The above interpretation is much contested, of course. But every interpretation of this difficult material is much contested. It is sufficient for the purpose of the present note that what is given above is plausible in the context of the Christian tradition in which this note is written. The “son” who is the imprint of God’s inner being inherits the name of the one who as enthroned at the resurrection is the Messiah, i.e., the definitive “son” of the royal line of David. But the act of inheriting involves the eternal son’s⁽³⁴⁾ going through the earthly process of death and resurrection/enthronement. And in so doing the eternal son “inherited” the Christian meaning of “son”, i.e., the eternal son as dead and risen/enthroned. The matter is never presented in Hebrews using the term “Christian”, but in the context of what has preceded in this note, the use of the term “Christian” to define the son’s name which he has “inherited” is quite defensible.

The way is now open to assessing the Christian name for God alluded to in Heb 2,12. It is, of course, the co-relative of “son”, i.e., “father”. And it is stated as such at Heb 1,5b⁽³⁵⁾. God “becomes” the Christian father at the moment when the eternal son “becomes” the Christian son (Heb 1,5a).

All of this would be of no little interest in itself. But when placed in the context of the entire New Testament this interpretation of the “name” of God in Heb 2,12 assumes enhanced plausibility. For a case can be made that the center of New Testament theology is Jesus’ revelation of God as father⁽³⁶⁾.

It would be well beyond the scope of the present note to rehearse in detail the arguments given for considering the center of New Testament theology as

⁽³²⁾ Cf. SWETNAM, “Hebrews 1,5-14”, 56-57, especially 56, n. 21.

⁽³³⁾ “Was Christus als Gottes Ebenbild besitzt und bezeugt, wird durch sein Erdendasein bewährt und bestätigt, durch seine Erhöhung dagegen vollendet und verwirklicht” (MICHEL, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 106, n. 1. “Eigenartig ist die Verbindung: ‘einen Namen ererben’. Es ist allein Gottes Wille, Gottes Gnade, die dem Sohn diese Stellung zuweist (‘Erbe’), die ihn über alle Mächte erhebt. Es geht hier im Hebr um den Sohnesbegriff, der nach 12 Jesus Christus immer zusteht (57f.), der aber in 14 im Vollsinn dem Erhöhten zugesprochen wird ...” (MICHEL, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 105).

⁽³⁴⁾ “... le participe present ὄν [Heb 1,3], succédant aux aoristes ἔθηκεν et ἐποίησεν, ne marque pas seulement, comme ceux-ci, un acte, mais une relation permanente, éternelle, et exclut par suite l’idée d’une filiation adoptive du Christ par rapport à Dieu (C. SPICQ, *L’épître aux Hébreux*. II. Commentaire [EB; Paris 1953] 9). This is not to say that Hebrews is using the language of Nicaea I. But Hebrews is using language which can be interpreted as being fully compatible with Nicaea I.

⁽³⁵⁾ “In the light of 1:5 one might suppose that God’s ‘name’ was ‘Father,’ but God’s fatherhood is assumed, not discussed, in Hebrews” (ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 168, with reference to God’s “name” in Heb 2,12). Exactly so. In Hebrews the father is known in and through the son who is the one who speaks (Heb 1,2). The father reveals himself in what the son “says” (λαλέω), i.e., reveals in his speech. The name of “father” is held in suspense in Heb 1,1 where he is first introduced. The “son” is presented in such a way that his being mirrors the inner being of God (Heb 1,3) and thus his being serves as an understandable basis for his revelation of who God is. It is the son’s function to “reveal” this Christian name of God (θεός) by his “speaking” (λαλέω). This is the setting for Heb 2,12.

⁽³⁶⁾ Cf. D. FARKASFALKVY, “Jesus Reveals the Father: The Center of New Testament Theology”, *Communio* 26 (1999) 235-257.

Jesus' revelation of God as father. But some summary indications may be suggested.

In Matthew the classic text is 11,27-30. Properly understood, this text is not something foreign to the rest of Matthew's gospel, but something of a piece with it by reason of its place in the revelation made in the son⁽³⁷⁾. Further, 11,27-30 is crucial as a link with the development of the theme of divine sonship as presented in the baptism of Jesus, the confession of Peter, the transfiguration, and Jesus' solemn oath in answer to the high priest⁽³⁸⁾.

Paul's message in Romans stresses the result of Christ's redemptive work as the gift of the spirit in which God is addressed as father. Christ is the center of Paul's gospel, for he enables the spirit's presence in whom fear and servitude are replaced by confidence and intimacy. God becomes truly father of all mankind in the son⁽³⁹⁾.

In John's gospel talk of the son's relation to the father is frequent (1,18; 3,35; 5,19; 10,14; 14,9-10; 17,21; etc.). All men are called to share in this privileged and unique relationship. This call is built on the revelatory link between father and son and through the spirit who continues the mission of the son by accompanying and validating the mission of the son's disciples⁽⁴⁰⁾.

All of these suggestions about Jesus' revealing the distinctively Christian name of God, "father", however valid they may be in their individual contexts, lack a plausible explanation as to the unity of their perceived mutual relevance. One is entitled to ask what the common point of reference was. *Wie ist es eigentlich geschehen?* How did these Christians come to know and, more importantly, come to live, the revelation of the father by Jesus if this revelation really occupied a central position — possibly *the* central position — in the way they thought of God? How were the traditions which underlie the written versions of Matthew's Gospel, of John's Gospel, and of Paul known and assimilated before Matthew, John and Paul wrote?

Here Hebrews can be of significant help. For the thesis of this note on the meaning and significance of ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1 has led to the positing of an essential relation in Hebrews of Jesus with his role of heavenly high priest who officiates at the Christian *tôdâ*. That is to say, the way the first Christians who constituted the addressees of the epistle thought of the revelation of the name "father" in the context of the Eucharist. And it was in the Eucharist that they attempted to appropriate this knowledge by re-enacting in their cult the central act of their faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus. They appropriated this central act by their faith-trust in Jesus in imitation of his faith-trust. This was

⁽³⁷⁾ "The Gospel of Matthew as a whole is simply a commentary on the crucially important passage 11:27-30. The Father has revealed his secrets to the Son. The Son in turn reveals them to his disciples. He thus invites men to come and learn from him, and if they do, they will find rest for their souls. The Son is the World's teacher and savior" (E. BLAIR, *Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* [New York 1960] 108). Cited by Farkasfalvy ("Jesus Reveals the Father", 242).

⁽³⁸⁾ FARKASFALVY, "Jesus Reveals the Father", 244.

⁽³⁹⁾ FARKASFALVY, "Jesus Reveals the Father", 246-249. In the context of the present note it is worth remarking how often in key places in Paul the word θεός is specified by the word πατήρ in texts which mention the son (Rom 1,7; 1 Cor 1,3; 2 Cor 1,2; Gal 1,1; Eph 1,2; Phil, 1,2; Col 1,2-3; 1 Thes 1,1; 2 Thes 1,2; 1 Tim 1,2; 2 Tim 1,2; Tit 1,4; Phil, 1,3). This is a standardized Pauline formula chosen because of its signature importance.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ FARKASFALVY, "Jesus Reveals the Father", 250-251.

the basic orientation of Jesus towards his father as presented in Hebrews, and it was the basic orientation which the Christians were called on to share: precisely on this basis they were of “one faith”, they were Jesus’ “brothers”⁽⁴¹⁾.

The liturgy, in other words, was the common source of the orientation of the very first Christians to a central, perhaps the central, aspect of their relation with God. Jesus as man shows the way. His courage in asking to die in the face of the challenge posed by his vocation is balanced by the generosity of God in raising him to a life which is presented as something Jesus “learned”, i.e., it is presented as being beyond his expectations of salvation⁽⁴²⁾. In other words, it was the way Jesus is presented as learning the nature of the Christian God, “father”, which corresponds to his role in the resurrection/exaltation as the Christian “son”.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The present note investigated the meaning of the word ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1. Four factors in the text were used to come to a plausible interpretation of why the author used this word for Christ: 1) the meaning ἀπόστολος; 2) the link between ἀπόστολος and ἀρχιερεύς 3) the relevance of πιστός in 3,2; 4) the parallelism between Jesus and Moses. On the basis of these four factors and on the supposition that the word referred to some text in 2,5-18, the conclusion was reached that the word refers to Heb 2,12 where the risen Christ is presented as one who, like Moses, was “sent” to announce the name of God to those who have given themselves in faith-trust to the risen Christ. Christ is parallel as “one sent” to Moses because he, like Moses, is worthy of trust, and the announcing of God’s name is to be done in a cultic context, i.e., the Christian *tôdâ*, so that in this respect his function is parallel to his role as ἀρχιερεύς.

The name of God which Jesus is sent to announce is the Christian name “father”, on the basis of the correlation with the Christian meaning of “son” that is solemnly announced in Heb 1,5. In Hebrews the emphasis is on the son as revealer, so that the fatherly role of God is not explicitly developed: God as father is distinctively revealed in the speaking of Jesus as son.

This interpretation makes plausible sense of Heb 3,1 in its context, and is plausibly inserted into a larger view of New Testament theology which sees Christ as son in a distinctively Christian sense who reveals the father.

The word ἀπόστολος clearly cannot support the above interpretation entirely on its own. But viewed as it is used in Hebrews it supplies the key to unlocking the interplay of other words which together trace out a plausible view of what it means to be the Christ, and what it means to be a Christian.

Pontificio Istituto Biblico
Via della Pilotta, 25
I-00187 Roma

James SWETNAM

⁽⁴¹⁾ In this context it is instructive to note how the author of Hebrews motivates the addressees in the face of the challenges he mentions in Chapter 12 of his epistle. His motivation is based on the evocation of the meaning which the word πατήρ has in their lives (cf. Heb 12,7.9).

⁽⁴²⁾ Cf. Heb 5,8, ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑποκοίην and J. SWETNAM, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7-8”, *Bib* 81 (2000) 359-360.

SUMMARY

The word ἀπόστολος in Heb 3,1 is seen as a reference to the risen Jesus in Heb 2,12 who has been “sent” by God to reveal God’s name as Moses was “sent” to reveal God’s name. Since Heb 2,12 is an allusion to the Christian *tôdâ* known as the Eucharist, the parallel with the word ἀρχιερεύς is appropriate. The risen Christ is the son who reveals his father to those who have faith-trust as Jesus had faith-trust in the face of death. This revelation of a piece with a central theological theme of the New Testament, and is an invitation to enter liturgically into the death of Jesus so as to enter into his relation of son with his father.