



From Hebrews to John: A Common Christic *Credo*?

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Summary: This essay scrutinizes the twenty-three textual parallels between the Letter to the Hebrews and the Gospel of John; all of those correlations are related exclusively to Christ. In fact, they constitute a complete, albeit skeletal, full-circle Christic Creed: commencing with an emphasis on the Creator, it then depicts some aspects of his Incarnation, followed by his Paschal mystery, and closing with his mission as Messianic Savior who will return in eschatological glory. This finding begs the question of any mutual literary and theological influence between these writings: it seems best to assume that the Pauline thought expressed in Hebrews did have an impact on the theology of John prior to the traditionally late divulgation of his Gospel beginning in Ephesus.

Resumen: Este ensayo examina los veintitrés paralelos textuales entre la Carta a los Hebreos y el Evangelio de Juan; todas esas correlaciones están relacionadas exclusivamente con Cristo. De hecho, constituyen un Credo Cristiano completo, aunque esquelético, de círculo completo: comenzando con un énfasis en el Creador, luego describe algunos aspectos de su Encarnación, seguido por su misterio pascual, y cerrando con su misión como Salvador Mesiánico que regresará en gloria escatológica. Este hallazgo plantea la cuestión de la influencia literaria y teológica mutua entre estos escritos: parece mejor

suponer que el pensamiento paulino expresado en Hebreos tuvo un impacto en la teología de Juan antes de la divulgación tradicionalmente tardía de su Evangelio comenzando en Éfeso.

INTRODUCTION

BENEDICT XVI calls the “Letter to the Hebrews theologically akin to the Gospel of John.”¹ The purpose of this present essay is to further explore RATZINGER’s statement. Was the pope *emeritus* perhaps influenced by the detailed comparison found in the classical commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews by Dominican scholar Ceslas SPICQ?² Whatever the case may be, a bibliographical research into the past fifty years comes up rather short regarding any scholarship dedicated to this intriguing question, namely, the theological relationship between those two New Testament writings.³

In order to more readily come to grips with this potentially vast undertaking, this author proposes the following methodological parameters:

- a) We will limit ourselves to the truly uncharted territory of exploring the explicit cross-references or textual parallels between the Epistle and the Fourth Gospel as indicated in the 28th NESTLE-ALAND⁴ edition of the New Testament; there are a total of twenty-three such parallels.⁵
- b) The academic working thesis will be that, even though Hebrews was launched chronologically before the Gospel of John⁶, there would have been a mutual influence in terms of Johannine and Pauline catechesis, especially considering the founding and presiding presence of both apostles, Paul and John, in the church of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Given,

1 Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday: New York – London 2007, p. 254.

2 SPICQ, C., *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 1, Librairie Lecoffre (Gabalda): Paris 1952, pp. 109-138.

3 Cf. bibliographies in MITCHELL, A.C., *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina Series 13, The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 2007, pp. 28-34; and ELLINGWORTH, P., *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans/The Paternoster Press: Grand Rapids, MI 1993, pp. xxiv-xcviii.

4 *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Deutsche Biblegesellschaft: Stuttgart 2013.

5 “Many of the closest links [of Hebrews] to any other NT document are found in 1 Peter, another ‘message of exhortation’ (5:12).” FREEDMAN, D.N., ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, Doubleday: New York 1992, p. 104.

6 See the discussion on the date of composition in MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, pp. 7-11; he reaches this conclusion: “Given the context of suffering or persecution of the recipients seem to be enduring, it may be preferable to consider a time in the early 70s.” p. 11.

however, the late publishing of the Fourth Gospel⁷, one is encouraged to speculate on how the Epistle might have influenced the Gospel?⁸ Thus, with all of John's originality, he has raised his structure upon the foundation already laid in the teachings represented by the earlier New Testament writings, Hebrews being not least among them. Naturally, also the Synoptic tradition, although freshly interpreted, is presupposed. In the main, however, the Johannine doctrine may be said to be a harmonious and even inevitable development of Paulinism. To enable the reader to move from Paul to John, the Epistle will always be quoted before the Gospel.

- c) A necessary degree of autonomy of Hebrew's theological ingenuity will be respected: "It is therefore important for the modern reader neither to assimilate the teaching of Hebrews to that of Paul or of any other New Testament writer, nor to assimilate the letter's creative use of the Old Testament to the original meaning of the Old Testament texts to which he refers. A theology of the New Testament, *a fortiori* of the Bible, must be built up inductively, in such a way as to embrace without levelling down the various elements of which it is composed."⁹ "This homilist [i.e., the author of Hebrews] displays affinities with many of his contemporaries, but as he is not simply a representative of some general religious tradition, neither is he easily classified within the spectrum of the 1st century Church. If the author of Hebrews is indeed in the Pauline circle, he is a very independent member of that circle."¹⁰ "While Hebrews is distinctive within the New Testament, it is clearly rooted in Christian traditions, and particularly the traditions at home in the Roman community."¹¹

7 John is usually dated to A.D. 90-110, cf. LINCOLN, A., *The Gospel According to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary, Bloomsbury Publishing: London 2013, p. 18.

8 In opposition to SPICQ's frequently reiterated opinion that the Gospel had a "preponderant" influence on the epistle (cf. *Hébreux*, p. 104), a "direct inspiration of the theological reflection of Hebrews" (*Hébreux*, p. 106); "Hebrews spiritually and liturgically interprets the Johannine catechesis" (*Hébreux*, p. 108); "Hebrew's theological elaboration is in direct dependence on Johannine catechesis," (*Hébreux*, p. 109); "Hebrew's doctrinal viewpoint is personally influenced by the author of the Fourth Gospel," (*Hébreux*, p. 109); "how can two authors arrive at such analogous theology without mutual dependence?!" (*Hébreux*, p. 122).

9 ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, p. 63.

10 FREEDMAN, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, pp. 103-104.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

“Despite its many enigmas and idiosyncracies and a conceptuality and style of argument which is quite foreign to modern sensibilities, Hebrews is an elegant, sophisticated and indeed powerful presentation of the Christian message. It perhaps the most self-consciously rhetorical discourse of the New Testament and its unknown author one of the most imaginative figures of the early Church.”¹² This article will, therefore, endeavor to further unearth some of the power of presentation by comparing it to the Fourth Gospel.

Yet, before plunging *in medias res*, one must acknowledge the depth of insight already provided by SPICQ, who summarily affirms that Hebrews is dependent on the Gospels especially in its Christology. Interestingly, the implicit references to the historical Jesus in Hebrews are more numerous than in the entire corpus Paulinum.¹³ SPICQ carefully points out the following similarities between the Johannine writings and Hebrews¹⁴: (a.) the identical apologetics concerning perseverance in faith; (b.) a similar concept of the Torah; (c.) the underlining of Jesus’ humanity as incarnational realism, insisting on his divinity; (d.) the fact that while Paul and Synoptics are Christocentric, John and Hebrews are Theocentric; (e.) the agnate message of prologues, i.e., Christ’s preexistence, divine Sonship, cosmological role, Revealer, Redeemer; (f.) the portrayal of his supreme dignity as King and Priest, cosmological and eschatological; (g.) he is the bringer of new covenant, Consecrator of all, mediator, guide, shepherd, triumpher; (h.) he is the Intercessor with authority; (i.) Jesus’ innocence and justice; (j.) the analogous eschatology; (k.) a coinciding Harmatiology¹⁵, underscoring actual sins vs. Pauline original sin; (l.) the comparable stylistic features such as antithetical parallelisms¹⁶; (m.) the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle are called the most spiritual and intellectualized writings of the New Testament¹⁷; (n.) also highlighted are key words in both authors, such as “perfection” (*teleiōsis*), “remain stable, unchanged” (*ménein, bébaios*), “better/greater” (*kreítton, méizon*).

12 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

13 *Hébreux*, p. 94.

14 *Ibidem*, pp. 109-38.

15 The branch of Christian theology studying the reality of sin (from Greek ἀμαρτία, “missing the mark, error”, and λογία, “study”).

16 Cf. SPICQ, *Hébreux*, p. 112.

17 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 115.

In differentiation, however, to SPICQ's detailed analysis of John/Hebrews parallels, in which he includes the three Letters of John as well as the Book of Revelation¹⁸, we will now proceed to inquire into the comparability of John and Hebrews only, based on direct textual evidence. As a preliminary finding, one discovers a total of twenty-three textual parallels, all of which – without ever being direct citations one way or another – having the person of Christ as their subject.¹⁹ Let us examine each one of them, attempting to group them into logical stages in the pretemporal, incarnational and eschatological career of the divine Word.

1. THE COSMOLOGICAL *VERBUM*

Two textual parallels can be isolated in Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel, dealing with the status of the Second Divine Person before and after his Incarnation. Let us attempt to determine their mutual theological relationship.

1.1. His “Glory” before and after Creation

Beginning with Heb 1:3a as part of the epistle's hymnic prologue (1:1-4), the Second Divine Person's consubstantiality with the Father is emphasized: “He is the reflection of God's glory (δόξης, *gloriae*) and the exact imprint of God's very being”.

Intimately related to this statement and in complementarity to it, Jn 17:5 employs the identical key term of “glory” and repeats it twice: “So now, Father, glorify me (δόξασόν με, *clarifica me*²⁰) in your own presence with the glory (δόξη, *claritate*) that I had in your presence before the world existed”. In addition to the above-mentioned consubstantiality that embraces the entire existence of the second divine person, both verses accomplish the theological goal of unambiguously illustrating the eternal Word's preexistent “glory” in the Trinity²¹, precisely before everything was created. Both texts take on further vivacity when pondered in light of Wis 7:26, descriptive of divine Wisdom's personified nature, or un-created Wisdom: “For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness”.

18 Cf. SPICQ, *Hébreux*, pp. 109-138.

19 Whereas the textual concordance with 1 John speaks about us, the faithful.

20 Latin quotes in this essay will be in accordance with the ¹⁹⁷⁹*Nova Vulgata*.

21 For a complete history of exegesis regarding this verse, see LAURENTIN, A., *Doxa. Problemes de Christologie. Jean 17.5 et ses commentaires patristiques*, 2 vols., Tournai 1989.

Yet, returning to the passage in Hebrews for further reflection, one realizes that the author avails himself of two metaphors to portray the Son as God: he is “the effulgence of God’s glory” (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, *splendor gloriae*), i.e., the shining forth of the light²² and majesty residing in the Father, as the light streams from the sun. Likewise, he is the “image of God’s substance” (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως, *figura substantiae*), namely, the impress made on a seal by a stamp cut by a die, accurately and permanently reproducing the original in all its perfection: the Son has the identical nature, substance, perfections, and all else, that the Father has, except the relationship of paternity by which he is distinguished from the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Therefore, the Son is described as consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father, and yet distinct from Him; he proceeds from the Father by nature, and not by the Father’s free will; and the Father in generating the Son does not suffer any change or imperfection.

Thus, the divine Son is bespoken in terms of pre-incarnational and incarnational “glory”, the focal points of the ellipsis being the time of Creation and of Incarnation. “Glory” is the principal attribute of the Divinity, and it is owned by the Son before the foundation of the world, just as it will be returned to him in a new way as the God-Man, the *Kýrios*, after his Resurrection. This unobstructed glimpse into the pre-existing Word intertwines the thought of Hebrews and of John’s Gospel. Without further detaining ourselves on possible reasons for the theological harmony or mutual literary influence, let us proceed to the next textual parallel.

1.2. “Through him” all is made

SPICQ lucidly sketches the traits of Jesus, Son of God, as presented in Hebrews, identifying his priesthood, his work of revelation, his being victim, as well as author of a new covenant. Among these features prominently the Second Divine Person’s involvement in the work of Creation.²³ In referring to Heb 1:2, “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 (δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας, *per quem fecit et saecula*)”²⁴, MITCHELL adjoins that “the verse [Heb 1:2] speaks of the process of creation by God’s word (Jn 1:3)”.²⁵ This *exitus* of the Word is alluded to already in Isa 45:23a, “By

22 “Light from light, true God from true God”, *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*.

23 Cf. *Hébreux*, pp. 287-310.

24 Literally “the ages” (τοὺς αἰῶνας), signifying all the things of time and space; equally connoted is the cosmos as the material world considered in its order, beauty and harmony.

25 *Hebrews*, p. 37.

myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return”.²⁶ Hebrews pictures the Son in His incommunicable divine nature, equal to the Father, having the selfsame power and operation.²⁷ Creation, like all the *ad extra* workings of God, is common to all the three Divine Persons; and hence, the Son or the Holy Spirit are just as much the efficient cause of creation as the Father is.²⁸

As a matter of fact, the author of the Fourth Gospel offers the same thought with an identical preposition (διὰ, *per*) in Jn 1:3.10, “All things came into being through him (πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*) and without him not one thing came into being”. This line of reasoning is reiterated in Jn 1:10a, enriched by the word *kósmos*, “and the world came into being through him (καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, *et mundus per ipsum factus est*).” Linguistically, the Johannine *egéneto* echoes the beginning of the first creation account in Gen 1:1.

Taking stock again, we maintain that both authors agree on the Son of God as Creator, as the One “through whom”²⁹ everything was created. Both Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel, therefore, present the interchangeable theological notion of the Sonship as an instrumentality for the Godhead to externalize and prodigalize itself by fashioning *ex nihilo* “all things visible

26 Theologian, Philosopher and Mystic MEISTER ECKHART, O.P. († 1328), famously allegorizes the inner Trinitarian life as *bullitio* (“boiling”) resulting in the *ebullitio* of Creation (“boiling over”).

27 “He was with God as Wisdom; as Word, he contemplated the Father and created the universe, giving it substance, order and beauty.” St. ATHANASIUS, *Oratio contra gentes* 46.

28 God somehow reveals Himself as *maternal* through the gentle, caring, nourishing and protecting face of nature (cf. the Latin *materia* stemming from *mater*, mother); see allusions in Psalm 110:3 (“from the *womb* of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you.”), Isa 66:13 (“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”), and Gen 49:9 (the patriarchal blessing over Judah prophetically depicts Christ as a lioness, *quasi leaena*).

29 See the distinction made between “*from* the Father” (ἐξ) and “*through* Christ” (διὰ) in 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; incidentally, Pope Francis comments on the deeper meaning of Creation in his 2015 Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*, no. 99: “In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: ‘All things have been created through him and for him’ (Col 1:16). The prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) reveals Christ’s creative work as the Divine Word (*Logos*). But then, unexpectedly, the prologue goes on to say that this same Word ‘became flesh’ (Jn 1:14). One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy.”

and invisible” (cf. *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed*).³⁰ The creative *Logos* silences all conceivable assumption of demiurgic mythologies.³¹ With this let us pass on to the next batch of textual concurrence.

2. THE INCARNATIONAL JESUS

Carrying on with the investigation into the theological relationship between the Epistle and the Gospel, one comes across seven pairs of passages that appear to coincide on the incarnate status of Christ.

2.1. To “see” and to “greet” him, and to “rejoice”

The first pair of those texts accentuates the joyous anticipation of the Redeemer’s coming, longing for him. Heb 11:13 delineates this Messianic yearning by the image of “seeing” and “greeting” him from afar: “All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted (ιδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι, *aspicientes et salutantes*) them.”

Jn 8:56 complements this motif with the sentiment of rejoicing: “Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see (ἠγαλλιάσατο ἵνα ἴδῃ, *exsultavit, ut videret*) my day; he saw it and was glad (εἶδεν καὶ ἐχάρη, *vidit et gavisus est*).” Hence, both sacred writers thematize the Messianic expectation in quasi-identicalness.

Copious testimony from Jewish sources corroborates the idea that Abraham was privileged to “see” the secrets of the messianic age. The Savior’s “day” would be that of the Crucifixion and Resurrection as foreshadowed in the archtype of Isaac’s offering and sparing on mount Moriah. Some commentators claim that Jesus hints at the heavenly Abraham who is observing him during his earthly ministry. There may also be a link to Gen 17:17, “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” Abraham saw Christ’s day, as Isaiah saw his glory (Jn 12:41), but from a distance (Heb 11:13; Num 24:17), because he saw it in the birth of the promised Isaac, which was an event prophetic of Christ. Jesus now claims to be the ultimate fulfilment of this promise, being the new Isaac according to the Spirit. He also saw him

30 Strikingly, the *Proto-Indo-European* root of the word Θεός conveys the meaning of “to do, to place, to put”, expressive of God’s primary recognition as “Maker”.

31 Greek philosophers had amply speculated on the origin(s) of creation: “In the beginning was *water*” (THALES); “in the beginning was the *fire*” (HERACLITUS); “in the beginning was *formlessness*” (ANAXIMANDER).

when he encountered the Blessed Trinity at Gen 18:2 (GREGORY THE GREAT). The genealogical “father in faith” finally perceived the Messiah in the Priest-King Melchizedek (Gen 14:18ff).

Appraising these two passages, one cannot help but allow for another clarion kinship between Hebrews and the Gospel, this time in underscoring the way our forebears anticipated the arrival of the divine Messiah.

2.2. *His mysterious origin*

Both writings show congruity, too, concerning the Messiah’s mysterious and largely unknown origin. Heb 7:3 speculates about the absence of ancestral relatives to the High Priest Melchizedek; his a-progenitorial is, therefore, singularly qualified to foreshadow Jesus: “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων, *sine patre, sine matre, sine genealogia, neque initium dierum neque finem vitae habens*), but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.”³²

In a similar vein, the Fourth Gospel recalls the paradoxical opinion of the crowds commenting on the origination of the Messiah: “Yet we know where this man is from (οἶδαμεν πόθεν ἐστίν, *scimus unde sit*); but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from (οὐδείς γινώσκει πόθεν ἐστίν, *nemo scit unde sit*),” 7:27. Their confident knowledge (οἶδαμεν)³³ repeats earlier responses to Jesus, all of which were mistaken (cf. 1:41.45; 3:2; 4:25; 6:42); in fact, their statement is deeply disappointing, since the prophet Micah already plainly reveals Bethlehem as the Messiah’s place of nativity (5:2). Incidentally, there is an ample Jewish backdrop to the image of a “hidden Messiah”, whose birth will be unknown.³⁴ Generally speaking, this perplexed investigation into the Messianic emergence also mirrors Wisdom traditions.

At this juncture of the research we have yet another association between Hebrews and John, this time focused on the toilsome recognition of the mysterious provenance of the Son of God.

32 Since Genesis offers no information on his parentage or his death, he is understood as a type of Christ, representing a priesthood that is unique and eternal. The Rabbis maintained that anything not mentioned in the Torah does not exist; consequently, since the Old Testament nowhere speaks about Melchizedek’s lineage, birth or death, the conclusion can be drawn that he remains forever.

33 Yet, see also their perplexity: “But some asked, Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?” Jn 7:41.

34 Cf. Isa 7:14-17; Mal 3:1; Dan 7:13; 1 Enoch 46; 48:2-6; Esdras 7:28; 13:32; 2 Baruch 29:3; JUSTIN, *Dial.* 8:4; 110:1.

2.3. He “comes into the world” to “do” his Father’s will

An added aspect of the theological closeness between the Epistle and the Gospel involves the Incarnation as an act of obedience of the Son towards his Father. Heb 10:5-9 discusses the former’s conscious entrance into the world to obey and do the Father’s will: “when Christ came into the world (εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον, *ingrediens mundum*), he said, ‘See, I have come to do your will’ (Ἴδου ἦκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, *Ecce venio, ut faciam voluntatem tuam*).” Heb 10:5a.9a. Moreover, Heb 10:7 restates this fundamental affirmation, this time exclusively in the first person³⁵, “Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will’ (Ἴδου ἦκω [...] τοῦ ποιῆσαι ὁ θεὸς τὸ θέλημά σου, *Ecce venio [...] ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam*).” “The expression ‘came into the world’ has a Johannine ring to it (cf. Jn 1:9; 3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:21.28; 18:37). John uses it mostly to invoke the coming of the preexistent Son into the world, although in 16:21 it refers to the birth of a human child (see 1 Tim 6:7).”³⁶ “‘Coming into the world’ is a Jewish expression for birth, just as ‘going out of the world’ (cf. 1 Cor 5:16) denotes death. To speak of Jesus as ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος is distinctively Johannine language (cf. Jn 1:9; 6:14; cf. 9:39; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37; cf. 1 Tim 1:13); note especially 11:27, where the phrase is used virtually as a title, alongside “Christ” and “Son of God”.³⁷ Christ’s fully conscious and priestly self-oblation, at the very instant of his Incarnation is portrayed here (see also Heb 1:6-12; Phil 2:6; Psa 139:13-16).³⁸

In close proximity to this teaching, John’s Gospel characterizes Christ’s incarnation with the same phrase, namely, “the one coming into the world” (ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος, *qui in mundum venisti*), Jn 11:27. This is complemented by an expression of filial submission in his incarnation in Jn 4:34 (Jesus himself clarifying the nature of the “unkown food” of 4:32), equally parallel to Hebrews: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me (ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με, *ut faciam voluntatem eius, qui misit me*) and to complete his work.” Turning briefly to sapiential language, “drink” (water as symbol of saving wisdom) and “food” (symbol of good works) are not seldomly conjoined (cf. Sir 15:3). Christ’s food is ultimately the salvation of humanity.

35 ELLINGWORTH points out how the author of Hebrews has Jesus make the Psalm his own, uttering those words in first person, *Hebrews*, p. 499.

36 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 200.

37 ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, p. 500.

38 Cf. an ancient liturgical tradition that identified the 25th of March as both the day of his Conception as well as of his death. By the way, this incredible plunge from divinity to humanity finds reflection in the stirring phrase of the Church’s *Te Deum*, “non horruisti Virginis uterum.”

Assessing again the outcome, there is the realization that Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel are analogous also regarding the soteriological intention of the incarnate Son, namely to execute the Father's will in this world for the redemption of many.

2.4. He is "without sin"

Textual homogeneity is also displayed in illustrating the concept of Christ's sinlessness. While Hebrews couches it in a third person clause, John does so by having Jesus speak in the first person. The directly relevant passage is Heb 4:15: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, *absque peccato*)."³⁹ In his priestly compassion, Christ retains close relationships with us and feels for us, because he has lived our lives, experienced our sorrows and labors, and has allowed himself to be tried in all things, apart from sin.³⁹ This indicates an acquaintance with the tradition of Jesus' temptations, not only at the beginning (Mk 1:13), but throughout his public life (Lk 22:28). He knows how to sympathize with us (συμπαθεῖν, *compati*), and since he is sinless, he is able to powerfully plead for us.

Correlated to this verse is Jn 8:46, "Which of you convicts me of sin (ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας, *arguit me de peccato*)?" There is a subtle connection with Jn 8:7, which closes the narrative on the adulterous woman: "Let anyone among you who is without sin (ἀναμάρτητος, *sine peccato*) be the first to throw a stone at her." In Catholic teaching, of course, there are only two persons on earth who enjoyed being *sine peccato*, and those are Jesus and his Blessed Mother Mary. Furthermore, the concept is developed in Jn 16:8, underlining the convicting role of the divine Spirit: "And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin (ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἁμαρτίας, *arguet mundum de peccato*) and righteousness and judgment."

Reviewing the result, one can again substantiate and endorse the strict affinity between the two authors under scrutiny. With neatly resembling phrases the theological message is made clear: The Son's sinlessness emphasizes, and even proves, one vital aspect of his divine nature and person, even as it assumes the human nature in the hypostatic union.

³⁹ Unlike ourselves, who suffer from the effects of original sin, Jesus' temptations were all from without, because there was always perfect harmony between his body and soul.

2.5. His heavenly calling

Although not a carbon copy in their respective wording, but the Epistle and the Fourth Gospel are again commensurate when it comes to the divine calling of the incarnate Word. Heb 5:4 concretely speaks of Jesus' heavenly priesthood, "And one does not presume to take (ἐαυτῷ τις λαμβάνει, *sumit sibi illum*) this honor, but takes it only when called by God (καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, *qui vocatur a Deo*) just as Aaron was." No man should arrogate and usurp the dignity of the priesthood, unless he has received a supernatural vocation, such as was given to the first priests of the Old Dispensation, i.e., Aaron⁴⁰ and his sons (Ex 28:1ff; 29:4ff; Num 3:10; 17:6.8, etc.).

John 3:27 complements this with a congruous explanation regarding Christ's dependence on his Father, uttered by John the Baptist, but quintessentially applicable to the Incarnate Son, "No one can receive (λαμβάνειν, *accipere*) anything except what has been given from heaven (δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *ei datum de caelo*)." Jesus could not have attracted so many men to himself if God had not empowered him to do so.

In evaluating these two passages, one cannot escape the obvious consensus of theological thought: both Hebrews and John assert at least contextually that Jesus is clothed with a transcendent priesthood.

2.6. We are his "brothers and sisters"

Equivalently, the two writings show that Jesus' coming into this world would signify his perfect oneness with the human race: "For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοὺς, *fratres*), saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you'." Heb 2:11-12.⁴¹

Turning again to the Fourth Gospel, part of Christ's high priestly prayer is this averment: "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me (καί μοι αὐτοὺς

40 MARTYROLOGIUM ROMANUM: "die 1 iulii: Commemoratio sancti Aaron, de tribu Levi, qui a Mōyse frater oleo sacro unctus est sacerdos Veteri Testamenti et in monte Hor depositus."

41 "Whereas other New Testament authors focus on the lamentation [of Psa 22/21] in interpreting Christ's death (Jn 19:24.28), the author of Hebrews quotes from the praise section. It is likely that he does this in view of the word 'glory' [v. 10] and the citation of Psa 8 in the previous section [vv. 5-8]." MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 74.

ἔδωκας, *mihi eos dedisti*) and they have kept your word.” Jn 17:6. After the Resurrection, Christ continues to insist on his union with humankind when he says: “go to my brothers (ἀδελφούς μου, *fratres meos*) and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’.” Jn 20:17. His friends now become His “brethren”, cf. Mt 28:9f. This verse makes a distinction between the divine (connatural) and the human (adoptive) filiation: “mine by nature, yours by grace.”⁴² The process of returning to his Father comes to a completion in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, cf. Jn 3:13; 6:62. The Christian writer CASSIODORUS speculates that Psalm 29 is the Son’s thanksgiving to his Father: “Christus post resurrectionem gloriosam Patri gratias agit”.⁴³ HICKLING, who enunciates this rapport between the two authors in this regard, considers the *syngéneia* between Jesus and the believers as being the fruit of a certain reflexive attention, and element of deliberation, for the Word to accept the human condition (cf. Phil 2:7; Jn 1:14).⁴⁴

Hence, in a like manner Hebrews and John stress the intimate bond of Jesus with us, since the Savior is taken from our race. By using the word “brethren”, the text also articulates the fact that the Church founded by Christ would resemble a family. Which brings us to the seventh and last aspect of exegetico-theological parity between those two scriptural writers, under the caption of the incarnational Christ.

2.7. *He is the Head of the “Household”*

Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel euphoniously portray Jesus as the Son who is the head of the Church: “Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant (θεράπων, *famulus*) to testify to the things that would be spoken later. Christ, however, was faithful over God’s house as a son (υἱός, *Filius*) and we are his house (οἶκος ἔσμεν ἡμεῖς, *domus sumus nos*) if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope.” Heb 3:5-6. These words function like a Midrashic commentary, harking back to Num 12:7. Jesus’ superiority to Moses is detailed by the circumstance that the latter was the faithful *servant* laboring *in* (ἐν) the house founded by God; but Jesus is God’s *Son*, placed *over* (ἐπί) the house (cf. Heb 10:21). Noteworthy here is the sixfold repetition of “house” (οἶκος, *domus*) referring to the house of Israel, the house of the Temple, and with reference to Christ, also the house

42 AUGUSTINE, *Homily* 121.3.

43 *Expositio in Psalterium*, 1.29; 2.56.

44 Cf. HICKLING, C.J., “John and Hebrews: the Background of Hebrews 2.10-18.” *NTS* 29 (1983) 112-116.

of the entire created universe, but especially the house of the Church; all of these meanings are already foreshadowed in the Hebrew *hā-ba'îth* (“house, dwelling place”).

John’s Gospel carries the same reflection in quite reciprocal terms: “The slave (δοῦλος, *servus*) does not have a permanent place in the household (οἰκία, *domo*); the Son (υἱός, *filius*) has a place there forever.” Jn 8:35. The image of the “servant” is relevant because Christ is also the fulfilment of Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant”.

Thus, both sacred authors are in step also when it comes to the depiction of Christ’s headship over God’s house, that is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.⁴⁵

3. THE PASCHAL CHRIST

Continuing the research into parallel texts as found in the Letter to the Hebrews and the Gospel of John, one ought to keep in mind the inquiry into the logic of theological influence: did the thought and teaching of the Epistle leave a mark on the last published book of the New Testament canon, namely the Fourth Gospel, or is it *viceversa*, or mutual? Whatever the case may be, one can identify a third cycle of concordance between both authors: the contemplation of the cosmological *Verbum* and the incarnational Jesus is now augmented by a perspective on the Paschal Christ. Under this umbrella, six corresponding passages demonstrate theological closeness in matters related to Christ’s suffering and death.

3.1. *He prays to the One able “to save” him*

In Heb 5:7, Jesus prays to be preserved from the effects of death, which entails his free-willed acceptance of a redemptive death that in its turn will eventuate in the preservation from the corruption after death. That safeguarding, in last analysis, signifies his Resurrection: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him (τὸν δυνάμενον σῶζειν αὐτὸν, *qui possit salvum illum*) from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” Advertence is given to the total sacrifice of Christ, which began with his agony in Gethsemani (cf. Mk 14:35), and ended with his death on the Cross (cf. Phil 2:5ff). Assuredly, the sacred author tacitly spotlights Jesus’ share in our common experience

45 VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium* 9.2; 48.2; *Gaudium et Spes* 45.1.

of grief, suffering and death. Christ, therefore, was not saved from dying, which he did not pray for, but from the aftermath of death, namely, from the utter desintegration and dominion of physical demise. By the way, the plural of “prayers and supplications” are eloquent reminders of how forceful and passionate the Lord’s petitions were during his earthly life (cf. Mt 26:39-44).

In synchrony with the above stands Jn 12:27, establishing Jesus’ willingness to embrace this salvific death: “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say, ‘Father, save me (σῶσόν με, *salvifica me*) from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.” Even in this Gospel, the Cross has not completely lost its human darkness. This episode and the Synoptic Gethsemani have several *minutiae* in common: the anguish as the hour draws near, the appeal to the Father’s commiseration, the acceptance of death, and the comfort sent from heaven. Dissimilar is the fact that in John, Christ’s prayer for empathy remains unpronounced, nor does he fall to the ground or kneel.

Gauging the outcome of this segment of our comparative study, one can again acknowledge their propinquity of theological rumination: both writings concur on the Messiah’s generous and spontaneous disposition to submit himself to a cruel death in order to attain to the glorious Resurrection.

3.2. He is offered as the “only Son”

Moreover, one spots a correspondence in the way the heavenly Father engages in his personal sacrifice, anthropomorphically speaking. Heb 11:17 proposes Abraham as a model of faith, since he did not refuse to proffer his only son Isaac, “By faith, Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son (τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν, *unigenitum offerebat*).” The aged patriarch did not waver even when his faith was sorely tried (cf. Gen 22:1-18). He felt that He who had granted him this son in the first instance by a miracle, could restore him if necessary by a second miracle. As a reward of his faith Abraham received his son back safely, making Isaac a “parable” (Heb 11:19b, *in parabola*) of the death and Resurrection of Christ.

The reader of the Epistle fathoms how this is an Old Testament prefiguration of God the Father’s own sacrifice, which is touchingly remembered in Jn 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (υἷὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, *Filium suum unigenitum daret*) so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Indeed, the Father “gives” his only-begotten Son to give life to the world. A link between this “gift” of the Son and the Cross is seen in the verb δίδωμι (cf. Isa 53:6.12). Here is a compendium of Christian doctrine

on salvation (cf. Rom 5:8-10; 1 Jn 4:9f). In this Gospel's Paschal Theology, the greatness of God's act is exhibited in the bridging of the chasm between God and the world.⁴⁶ Typical of Johannine narrating is the sharply contrasted dualistic category: life *versus* destruction. The substance of salvation is being developed out of sapiential speculation: "For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome (σωτήριοι, *sanabiles*), and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth."

Without difficulty one arrives also here at the conclusion that Hebrews and John are twinning up in meditating on the heavenly Father's giving of his only-begotten Son for the redemption of the world.

3.3. *He suffers "outside the city"*

Jesus' paschal mystery embraces the suffering and dying outside the city, somehow reflective of the Hebrew *Yom Kippur* liturgy, with the driving out of *Azazel*, the scapegoat, as a sign of purification and atonement for the people's sin: "Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate (ἔξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν, *extra portam passus est*), in order to sanctify the people by his own blood." Heb 13:12. Christ's crucifixion outside the gates of Jerusalem symbolizes his spiritual and physical excommunication from the chosen people that will, nonetheless, bring about their redemption.

In tune with this, the Fourth Gospel declares that Jesus "carrying the cross by himself, he went out (ἐξῆλθεν, *exivit*) to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha." 19:17. The location is recalled in Jn 19:20, "Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city (ἐγγύς ἦν ὁ τόπος τῆς πόλεως, *prope civitatem erat locus*)." Thus, "Gospel tradition places Jesus' death outside the city of Jerusalem."⁴⁷ Parenthetically, Rev 14:20 epitomizes the same situation in its typical apocalyptic language: "And the wine press was trodden outside the city (ἔξωθεν τῆς πόλεως, *extra civitatem*), and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles." Yet, coming back to John, the Son of Man is practically excommunicated from His native religious community, and condemned to die outside of the city, just as he had been born outside the city in Bethlehem (cf. Heb 13:11-13).⁴⁸ It could be argued that this scenario is prefigured by the time after Israel's apostasy

46 "World" as a negative counterpart of "Kingdom of God".

47 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 300.

48 This sad circumstance will soon repeat itself during the *Passio* of the Protomartyr Stephen (cf. Acts 7:58).

at Sinai: “Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out (ἐξεπορεύετο, *egrediebatur*) to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς, *extra castra*).” Exo 33:7. Similarly Adam, created on the very first Friday of the world, will, on the same day, commit his gravest sin and be expelled from the Garden.

At this juncture, one can once again appreciate the analogousness in the thinking of Hebrews and John, this time concerning the tragic image of Messianic eviction from the people of God.

3.4. *He is the divine “Shepherd” who dies for his flock*

Still dealing with the theological theme of the paschal Christ, both Hebrews and the Gospel of John link the Messianic image of the Shepherd with the notion of death: “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep (ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν, *pastorem magnum ovium*), 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. Amen.” Heb 13:20-21.

Likewise, in Jn 10:11 Jesus announces of himself: “I am the good shepherd (ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός, *pastor bonus*). The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (προβάτων, *ovibus*).” “The language is that of early Christian tradition, perhaps liturgical”.⁴⁹ What is pointed out is that the “Great Shepherd” or “Good Shepherd” is giving his life for his flock in self-sacrificial action. Christ’s assertion that He is the Good Shepherd is a claim to Messiahship; it is surprisingly absent from all other Pauline writings. The adjective καλός stands in contrast to a strong biblical tradition presenting unfaithful leaders of Israel as “bad” or “false” shepherds who consign their flock to the wolves (cf. Jer 23:1-8; Eze 34; 22:27; Zeph 3:3; Zech 10:2-3; 11:4-17). It also suggests the shepherd’s handsomeness (cf. 1 Sam 9:2; 1 Kgs 1:3f) and efficaciousness; in contrast to the moral goodness (“to be good”) as described by ἀγαθός, καλός means rather to be skilled and “good at something”. Although there are no direct links between the use of the shepherd imagery and the laying down of one’s life in the Old Testament, there are several passages where the self-gift of the Messiah is possibly present, e.g., Isa 53:12; Zech 13:7.

49 ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, p. 729; cf. 1 Pt 5:4, “And when the chief shepherd (ἀρχιποίμενος, *Princeps pastorum*) appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.”

Hence, here is yet another verifiable aspect of theological togetherness between these two writings, this time reflecting on the voluntary self-oblation of a shepherd who wishes to save his sheep.

3.5. *Passion becomes “Glory” in him*

In a further congruity regarding the paschal mystery of Christ, both authors also have a matching characterization of the Messiah’s crucifixion as an act of exaltation and glory. This view enhances that of the Synoptic Gospels which describe his death as his deepest abandonment in suffering and darkness, preceding the light of the Resurrection. In Heb 2:9, the connection is made between death and “glory”: “but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory (δόξη, *gloria*) and honor because of the suffering of death (διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου, *propter passionem mortis*), so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

In accord with this surprising link between death and glory, the Fourth Gospel carries that same dimension: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (δοξασθῆ, *glorificetur*),” Jn 12:23⁵⁰; and furthermore: “Father, glorify your name (δόξασόν, *glorifica*). Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it (ἐδόξασα, *glorificavi*), and I will glorify (δοξάσω, *glorificabo*) it again,” John 12:28. This voice resonating from heaven – mistaken for a thunder or an angel in v. 29 – is evocative of the giving of the covenant at Mount Sinai, but it also recalls Christ’s Baptism and Transfiguration. The strategic placing of references to the revelation of Christ’s δόξα in the first (2:11) and the last (11:40) of his public signs indicates that the whole of the ministry has been a revelation of his glory. Now he moves on to his Passion. The future tense of δοξάσω relates to Jesus’ glorification and exaltation in His Paschal Mystery. Πάλιν indicates the sameness of the glory of Christ, before and after His Hour.

In this context, glory becomes exaltation: “And I, when I am lifted up (ὑψωθῶ, *exaltatus*) from the earth, will draw all people to myself,” Jn 12:32. The “lifting up” refers to the Cross (cf. Isa 11:10.12; 42:6; 62:10), taking into account John’s comment in 12:33. A parallel to Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness had been drawn already in 3:14, pointing to a physical lifting up on a stake.⁵¹

50 Cf. HICKLING, “John and Hebrews”, p. 113.

51 See SHAKESPEARE’s predilection for having his tragic heroes die ‘upstage’.

Two separate issues are being consolidated: first, the glorification of God in the Son of Man (cf. 7:39; 11:4; 12:23) *through* the Cross; and second, the being lifted up as the way Jesus was to die (cf. 12:32f) *on* the Cross.⁵² Moreover, the ἔλκω, “to draw, to attract” (cf. Jn 6:44) calls to mind the nuptial theology of the Song of Songs, “Trahe me post te”, 1:4.

Clearly, the Epistle and the Gospel are in unison also regarding the glorious nature and outcome of the Passion of the Lord Jesus.

3.6. *In him we will not “taste death”*

A final congruence concerning the Paschal Mystery resides in the treatment of the ultimate victory over death. Heb 11:5 again holds up the biblical antetype of Enoch: “By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death (οὐχ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, *ne videret mortem*); and he was not found, because God had taken him. For it was attested before he was taken away that he had pleased God.” Unambiguously, this forefather adumbrates the deliverance of Christ from the bonds of death, even suggesting eternal life. This would be coextensive with the eschatological reality of eluding the “second death” as proposed in the Book of Revelation (cf. 2:11; 20:6.14; 21:8).

In accord with this, Jn 8:51 then complements the fulfilment of Enoch’s rapture in Christ’s Resurrection, duplicating the choice of words: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death (θάνατον οὐ μὴ θεωρήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, *mortem non videbit in aeternum*).⁵³ The Jews said to him, Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, Whoever keeps my word will never taste death (οὐ μὴ γεύσῃται θανάτου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, *non gustabit mortem in aeternum*).”⁵⁴

Unity, therefore, exists also in this point of comparison between Hebrews and John: not to “see” nor to “taste” death means to share in the Redeemer’s rising to new and eternal life.

52 St. THERÉSIA BENEDICTA A CRUCE (Edith Stein), *Scientia Crucis (Werke I., Freiburg i. Br. 1983, p. 16): “Crux autem not finis est; crux exaltatur, ut caelum ostendet.”*

53 Cf. the exactly antithetical phrasing at Jn 3:36, “whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will *not see life* (οὐκ ὄψεται ζωὴν, *non videbit vitam*), but must endure God’s wrath.”

54 We find the contrary phrase with the same meaning in Heb 2:9c, “so that by the grace of God he might taste death (γεύσῃται θανάτου, *gustaverit mortem*) for everyone.”

4. THE SOTERIOLOGICAL MESSIAH

After discovering the correlation between the Epistle to the Hebrews and John's Gospel in those three fundamental areas of the Second Divine Person and the Incarnate Word, we can now turn to the second last facet of comparability, namely, that of the Messiah's work of justification and sanctification of his brothers and sisters. Four passages are indicated as manifesting equivalence of teaching.

4.1. The "gift" of salvation

Heb 6:4 speaks of divine salvation as a "heavenly gift": "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift (τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου, *donum caeleste*) and have shared in the Holy Spirit." Although this "gift" may mystagogically also refer to the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, it certainly encompasses the entire reality of human salvation.

The latter is what Jesus suggests to the Samaritan woman at Jn 4:10, "If you knew the gift of God (τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ, *donum Dei*) and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The encounter between the Savior and the woman progresses along the axes of 4:7-15 ("the gift of God"⁵⁵) and 4:16-26 ("who it is that is saying to you"). The gift consists in the persons of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, sacramentally mediating salvation that will flourish in eternal life. "Water" (just as "fire", cf. Rom 5:5; 12:11; Eze 36:25; Sir 3:33) stands for the grace of the Holy Spirit: refreshing relief from temptation, cleansing from sins, satisfying our desires (cf. Isa 55:1). "Living water" is water connected with the source from which it springs (cf. Rev 22:1; 1 Cor 12:11). Christ appears to teach three things: the *gift* of living water, *asking* for this gift, and the *Giver* Himself.⁵⁶

Once again, we see a demonstrable identicalness and indubitably some sort of mutual influence of teaching between Hebrews and John concerning redemption as an unmerited gift of God to humanity.

55 "Gift of God" was already a Rabbinic appellation for the Torah.

56 On the parabolic character of water, see Isa 44:3; Zech 13:1; Sir 15:3, and PHILO, *On Flight* 97.

4.2. We are “sanctified” in Him

Likeness of theological reasoning and terminology in the Epistle and the Fourth Gospel can also be maintained regarding the reality of our sanctification through Christ. Two passages in Hebrews appear to illustrate this point: “For the one who sanctifies (ὁ τε γὰρ ἀγιάζων, *qui sanctificat*) and those who are sanctified (οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι, *qui sanctificantur*) all have one Father,” Heb 2:11a; “and it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified (ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμεν, *sanctificati sumus*) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Heb 10:10.

This soteriological effect on the lives of the Christian believer is stated in Jesus’ high priestly prayer on Holy Thursday: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself (ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν, *ego sanctifico meipsum*), so that they also may be sanctified (ἡγιασμένοι, *sanctificati*) in truth,” Jn 17:19. What is peculiar to this verse is the fact that Jesus speaks of his own previous sanctification that will redound to that of the many. HICKLING explains: “*Hagiázo* expresses in sacrificial language the traditional soteriology centring on Christ’s vicarious death, while the thought of the Hebrews verse is less precise”.⁵⁷

In a related parallelism, Hebrews and the First Epistle of John expound on the message of the divine blood purifying us: “How much more will the blood of Christ (τὸ αἶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, *sanguis Christi*), who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works (καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων, *emundabit conscientiam nostram ab operibus mortuis*) to worship the living God!” Heb 9:14; “but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus (τὸ αἶμα Ἰησοῦ, *sanguis Iesu*) his Son cleanses us from all sin (καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας, *mundat nos ab omni peccato*),” 1 Jn 1:7.

Sanctification, too, as a central theme of Christian dogma finds an agnate exposition in the Epistle and John; the respective passages are both in theological concord and complementarity.

4.3. He leads to “perfection”

Symmetry of theological vocabulary between Hebrews and John also exists regarding Christian perfection: “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect (τελειωθεῖς,

⁵⁷ “John and Hebrews”, p. 113.

consummatus), he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,” Heb 5:8-9. Christ’s sacrifice of obedience as man had a twofold effect: (a.) in himself, it brought to completion and perfection (τελείωσις, cf. 7:11) his experiential training as a High Priest, resulting in his Resurrection and glorification (Phil 2:8ff); and (b.) in humanity, it becomes the principle of perfection and cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. His transformation constitutes Christ’s priestly consecration.

In accordance with this teaching, Jesus pronounces this high priestly prayer in the cenacle: “I glorified you on earth by finishing (τελειώσας, *consummavi*) the work that you gave me to do,” Jn 17:4. One of the conclusions that can be drawn effortlessly from both sources is that divine salvation means perfection of all human life. Paul’s Kenotic Hymn in Phil 2:6-11 forms a backdrop for Jn 17:1-5; two dissimilar Christological nuances are involved, however: it is as a consequence of the humiliation of the Crucifixion that the Pauline Jesus is lifted up (*hyperypsosis*) into glory (cf. Phil 2:9), whereas the Johannine exaltation (*hypsosis*) takes place on the Cross (cf. Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32f).

4.4. He is “unchangeable Truth”

Divine truthfulness, confirmed by oath and witness, is the subject of another resemblance between the Epistle and the Gospel. Ultimately, God is trustworthy because his truth is unchangeable: “In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable (τὸ ἀμετάθετον, *immobilitatem*) character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath (ὄρκῳ, *iure iurando*), so that through two unchangeable things⁵⁸, in which it is impossible that God would prove false (ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι, *impossibile est mentiri*), we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us,” Heb 6:17-18. From this supernatural credibility of the soteriological work of Christ stems our boldness in accepting the sacred teachings. This factor is reinforced again at Heb 4:16: “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” “Every document in the New Testament, with the possible exception of 1 John, emphasizes the truth that the Old Testament Scriptures contain a record of

58 “I.e., the promise and the oath of God who ‘does not lie’, Ti 1:2”, *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Company: Garden City, NY 1966, p. 377, footnote f.

the purposes of God spoken to the Fathers and the prophets of the Jewish race, which found their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus the Christ. No New Testament writer states this more clearly than the author of our Epistle.”⁵⁹

That solidity of redeeming faith is also guaranteed by the Father and the Son’s very own testimony, as declared in Jn 8:17-18, “In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid (ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθῆς ἐστίν, *testimonium verum est*). I testify on my own behalf (μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἑμαυτοῦ, *testimonium perhibeo de meipso*), and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf (μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ, *testimonium perhibet de me*).”

Thus, the divine veracity is yet another aspect of the tapestry of kinship between the two authors. In closing one becomes more cognizant of “Paul’s Christocentric Soteriology”⁶⁰ being in synchrony with that of John. Moving on now to the last area of correlation between the two sacred authors; let us scrutinize the texts that have the eschatological Lord as their subject.

5. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL LORD

5.1. His Word is “Judge”

A first correspondence concerns the power of the divine Word to judge. Heb 4:12-13 reads: “Indeed, the word of God (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, *Dei sermo*) 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 (κριτικῶς, *discretor*) the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account (ὁ λόγος, *sermo*).” Meant as a continuation of the warning in 4:11, the Word of God is said to bring judgment as well as salvation. Some would capitalize the “Word of God” and see it as a personal title of Jesus, comparable to that of Jn 1:1-18. This consideration is certainly prepared by the representation of Wisdom in Wis 7:22-27.

Jn 12:48 insists on the matching reality of being judged by the Word: “The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge (τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν, *qui iudicet eum*); on the last day, the word that I have spoken (ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα, *sermo, quem locutus sum*) will serve as judge (κρινεῖ, *iudicabit*).” Emblematic of this juridical clout and authority is also

59 TASKER, R.V., *The Gospel in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, London 1950, p. 9 (accessed online in July 2017, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/hebrews_tasker.pdf).

60 BROWN, R.E. – FITZMYER, J.A. – MURPHY, R.E., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Prentice Hall : Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1990, pp. 1388ff.

Rev 19:15.21, “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.”

Both writings, Hebrews and John, are intimately in conformity when portraying the plenipotentary effectiveness of the Word of God. It can discern the interior of the human soul, as well as judge the entirety of human life in the end of days.

5.2. *He is the “Way”*

Equally akin are the thoughts that the two writings assert regarding Jesus being the only Way to the heavenly Father. “Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζώσαν, *viam novam et viventem*) that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Heb 10:19-22.

Quite reciprocal to this is Jn 14:6, “Jesus said to him, I am the way (ὁδὸς, *via*), and the truth, and the life (ζωή, *vita*). No one comes to (πρὸς, *ad*) the Father except through me.” What is being taught by these texts is Christ as the new Way of Life to the Father. “Jesus is not himself identified as the way [in Hebrews], though the Johannine expression may have developed from language such as that of the present verse.”⁶¹

5.3. *He prepares a “place” for us*

To further round out the picture of resemblances between these two New Testament writers, there is the assurance of the Son of God preparing a place for us in the realm of eternity. In Heb 11:13-16, Paul interrupts his argument to reflect on the faith of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The vision which faith disclosed to them was too glorious to find its realization during their lifetime on earth. The object of their quest was a heavenly country. And thus, Heb 11:16 uses the image of a city to respond to this hope: “But

61 ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, p. 518; cf. MICHAELIS, W., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, KITTEL, G., ed., Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI 1968, pp. 75-78.

as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them (ἠτοιμάσεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς πόλιν, *paravit enim illis civitatem*).”

John, on his part, ostends the same verity through the metaphor of a house: “In my Father’s house (οἰκία, *domo*) there are many dwelling places (μοναὶ, *mansiones*). If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you (ἔτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν, *parare vobis locum*)?” Jn 14:2. The Greek noun μονή, “dwelling place”⁶², stems from μένειν “to abide”: believers already dwell in Christ and await His final coming. The nouns οἰκία and τόπος also evoke the Temple, whose reality is being transcended and thus universalized in Jesus’ passage to His Father (cf. Jn 2:21; 4:20-24). The innumerable *mansiones multae* are foretold in the plural Hebrew noun of Psa 116:9, “lands of the living” (בְּאַרְצוֹת הַחַיִּים).

Tied into the above prospect is the hope that we will one day see the Lord again: Heb 12:14 “Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον, *nemo videbit Dominum*).” “What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is (ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν, *videbimus eum, sicuti est*),” 1 Jn 3:2d.

5.4. He will return after a “little while”

Yet another expression is coextensive between Hebrews and John in its theological tenor, namely, Heb 10:37 “For yet in a very little while (ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, *adhuc enim modicum quantulum*), the one who is coming will come and will not delay.” This is matched by Jn 14:19, “In a little while (ἔτι μικρὸν, *adhuc modicum*) the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.” (cf. Jn 12:35; 13:33). “‘The one who comes’ is used of the Messiah in the New Testament (Jn 1:15.27; 11:27).”⁶³ In both verses, the “little while” seems to speak of the Church’s eschatological time, coinciding with global human History until the glorious return of the *Pantocrator*. With this his *Parousía* we have come full circle in terms of the Son of God’s pre-temporal and temporal career.

62 See also ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA’s “seven mansions” in the “Interior Castle” that house the seven degrees of love, interpreted as the journey of faith through seven stages, ending in nuptial union with God.

63 MITCHELL, *Hebrews*, p. 224.

CONCLUSION

Looking back over the research accomplished, the first, most obvious, and quite compelling conclusion is that all the twenty-three verifiable parallel passages that connect the Epistle to the Hebrews with the Fourth Gospel are without exception related to Christ.

Flowing from this is the insight that these parallels constitute a complete, albeit skeletal, full-circle Christic Creed.⁶⁴ This inference to some extent contradicts the statement that “with Johannine Christianity Hebrews shares only the most general features.”⁶⁵, since there is such a quantity of details that elucidate the *mysterium Christi* in both authors. Moreover, in the vast majority of those, the choice of key vocabulary turns out to be coterminous.

Thus, the contemplation commences with an emphasis on the Creator before depicting some aspects of his Incarnation, followed by his Paschal mystery, and closing with his mission as Messianic Savior who will return in eschatologico-parousiacal glory. Broadly speaking, the ancient *exitus – reditus* schema of all creation is being described here as relived in Christological tenets.

More elusive remains the assessment of any mutual influence between these writings, although we can confidently assume that the Pauline thought expressed in Hebrews did have an impact on the theology of John prior to the traditionally late divulcation of his Gospel beginning in Ephesus.

At this stage of the investigation, one is also in a position to refute this arbitrament: “Attempts have been made to find the sources of Hebrews’ Christology in the Fourth Gospel’s overall conception of Christ, as the mysterious revealer is far removed from Hebrew’s High Priest.”⁶⁶ For one inconsistency, the few “attempts” that may have been made were ill-construed, since one has to assume mutual impact at the minimum, and not primarily Johannine influence over Pauline. Yet, much more likely, given the above-assumed timeline of publications, John would have much more likely been moved and molded by the Epistle at the other end of the spectrum of possibilities. It is equally hard to subscribe to the declaration that the Johannine “mysterious revealer is far removed from Hebrew’s High Priest”, since we were able to single out no less than twenty-three correlations centered on the person of the God Man Jesus Christ.

64 Cf. the hymnic rendition: “O sator rerum, reparátor aevi, Christe, rex regum, metuénde censor, tu preces nostras paritérque laudes súscipe Clemens”, LITURGIA HORARUM, Hebdomada II, Feria IV, Officium Lectionis, Hymn.

65 FREEDMAN, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 104.

66 FREEDMAN, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 104.

Which brings us to a final attestation: keeping in mind the brilliant avowal by SPICQ, “Hebrews is to the *corpus Paulinum* what John is to the Synoptics in terms of theological elaboration”⁶⁷, we arrive at the culminating upshot that the *crème de la crème*, as it were, of Paul’s Christological intuition wound up inspiring the summit of Gospel wisdom in John, bequeathing to the sub-apostolic Church a common Christic Credo.

67 *Hébreux*, p. 134.

