THE PARADOX OF SONSHIP

Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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THE SON WHO BECAME SON

ONE OF MY DAUGHTERS recently wrote down the first name and middle and last initials of herself, her siblings, and her mother and me, then taped the sheet to our living room wall. The entries for herself and her siblings followed the script exactly. Her mother she listed as "Mom," me as "Dad," and our middle initials encountered some difficulty. Do "Mom" and "Dad" belong in a list of names? Of course. That is what she calls us; to her, that is who we are. She knows our proper names, but from where she stands, those matter less. The historical priority of my proper name over the more recently acquired "Dad" is not her concern. Nor does it matter to her that my full proper name is relatively rare, while "Dad," properly a title, belongs also to millions. When she names her parents, "Mom" and "Dad" are nearest to hand, and for good reason.

This book is about a name—or rather, a title, "Son," that at one crucial juncture the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls a "name." The fundamental question this book asks is, What does the author of Hebrews mean by calling Jesus the "Son"? Is "Son" a title given Jesus at his enthronement as Messiah, his session at God's right hand? Or does "Son" denote his eternal inclusion in the identity of the one true God?

In this book I will argue that we should answer "yes" to both questions and that the second is crucial for, not in tension with, the first. More specifically, I will advance three theses about Jesus' sonship in Hebrews. First, "Son" designates Jesus' distinct mode of divine existence. The Son eternally exists as God and as distinct from the Father and the Spirit. Second, "Son" also designates the office of messianic rule to which Jesus is appointed at his enthronement. Jesus is *appointed* Son when he sits down at God's right hand in heaven. Third, Jesus can become the messianic Son only because he is the divine Son incarnate. According to Hebrews, "Messiah" is a theandric office: only one who is both divine and human can do all that Hebrews says the Messiah does.

As often when beginning a book like this, before we begin the argument, there are a few preliminary matters to put in place. These are, first, a sketch of Hebrews' Christology. In this sketch I will outline Hebrews' portrait of Jesus' identity and work—who he is and what he does. This sketch will furnish a backdrop for detailed exegesis to follow. Second, I will summarize three scholarly approaches to Hebrews' Christology, focusing on the title

"Son," and will allege problems with each. And these are not only different problems; all three approaches presuppose that "Son" in Hebrews basically means only one thing. Either Jesus *is* Son or he *becomes* Son; it cannot be both. Third, I will preview the book's argument. In contrast to the prevailing views, in this book I aim to demonstrate that in Hebrews "Son" names both who Jesus is and what he becomes. He is the Son who became Son.

A SKETCH OF HEBREWS' CHRISTOLOGY

Hebrews' story of Jesus' person and work starts at the climax: Jesus' exaltation to the right hand of God in heaven. [1] In one elegant, sweeping sentence, after reminding us how God spoke to his people in time past (Heb 1:1), Hebrews asserts that now, at the hinge of history, God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2). This Son is the one whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom God created all things (1:2). This Son is the radiance of God's glory and impress of his being, and he sustains the universe by his powerful word (1:3). Without pausing for breath, Hebrews proclaims that this Son made purification for sins and then "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (1:3-4). And so Hebrews' first sentence peaks at the peak of the Son's saving mission. It lands us at the pinnacle of the Son's unique achievement.

Thus Hebrews' first sentence, often called its "exordium" or prologue, opens the letter with a striking statement of the Son's exaltation to God's throne in heaven. But its scope is not restricted to this exaltation. Instead, Hebrews' exordium celebrates the Son's work in creation and providence (1:2-3) and glimpses the radiant depths of the Son's divine being (1:3). Further, the compact phrase "after making purification for sins" (1:3) presupposes the Son's entire saving mission, specifically his offering of his body in heaven before he sat down at God's right hand (cf. 9:24-25; 10:12). The one who sustains all things entered human life in order to set aside sin (cf. 9:26). The one who is the radiance of God sat down next to God after offering himself to God (cf. 9:14). [2]

This focus on the Son's enthronement intensifies in the catena of scriptural citations in Hebrews 1:5-14. [3] At the

Son's exaltation, when he sat down at God's right hand on high (1:3-4), God said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Heb 1:5; Ps 2:7), fulfilling his ancient promise to be father to David's heir (Heb 1:5; 2 Sam 7:14). When God led his firstborn into the heavenly world, he said, "Let all God's angels worship him" (Heb 1:6; cf. Deut 32:43). While the angels are fiery, ethereal servants, the Son is king forever. God himself addresses the Son as God, exclaiming, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Heb 1:8-9; Ps 45:6-7). And God himself addresses this Son as the Lord who created everything and will outlive everything: "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain" (Heb 1:10-12; cf. Ps 102:25-27). What God never said to any angel he said to this Son: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Heb 1:13; cf. Ps 110:1). In God's presence, angels, like priests, stand to serve; only the Son sits (Heb 1:13-14; cf. 10:11-13).

This meticulously arranged selection of scriptural texts offers us something like a sandwich. The Son's exaltation to God's right hand is the bread (1:5, 13). In the middle are biblical elaborations of what it means for the Son to reign on God's own throne and why he is qualified so to reign (1:6-12). Some things in this sandwich are hard to digest. For instance, if the "today" of "today I have begotten you" (1:5) is the time when the Son takes his seat at God's right hand, is he not Son before this event? Is Son something he becomes only at his exaltation?

To feel the full force of this question we need to read Hebrews 1:5 in context. In 1:3 the Son sits down at God's right hand, and in 1:4 he is said to have thereby *become* "as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." From these verses two more questions immediately press in on us. First, if the Son is somehow identified with God's very being (1:3) and is the sovereign Creator and sustainer of all things (1:2, 3, 10), how can he *become* superior to the angels? Isn't he always already superior to every created being? Second, what is the name the Son inherits in 1:4? Many scholars argue that this name is in fact "Son." [4] After all, the name is introduced in 1:4—it is actually the last word in the Greek sentence. Then the author immediately asks in 1:5, "For (γάρ, *gar*) to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'?" When we ask, "What is the name the Son inherits?" the author seems immediately to answer, "Son." But how can the one who *is* Son *become* Son? If he becomes Son, surely that means he was not Son already? By contrast, if he already is Son, doesn't that mean his becoming Son only restates or

reveals something that was already true of him?

This paradox at the heart of Hebrews' Christology is the heart of the book you are reading. These are the questions my three theses answer. For now, we let the tension stand, and we can tour the rest of Hebrews' Christology more briskly.

As 1:3 hints, this Son who existed before the ages came to exist as a human. At his incarnation, this Son "for a little while was made lower than the angels," and in his death he tasted death for everyone (2:9). He came to share in flesh-and-blood humanity, so he could disarm by his own death the one who had the power of death (2:14-15). In his death Jesus not only defeated the devil but redeemed his people from their sins against God's first covenant (9:15).

Christ came into the world to do God's will (10:5-9), ultimately offering the body God had prepared for him in order to sanctify and perfect his people (10:10, 14). To become a merciful and faithful high priest, Jesus "had to be made like his brothers in every respect" (2:17), which involved not only becoming human but also sinlessly enduring temptation (2:18; 4:15). This Son lived an unmistakably human life. In anguished suffering he cried out to God and was answered (5:7). "Although he is the Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8, my translation). As the "founder" of his people's salvation, he had to be made "perfect through suffering" (2:10). After suffering faithfully, Jesus was indeed made perfect, and "he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (5:9-10).

The incarnate Son, like the Levitical priests, was mortal (7:8, 23). He lived, suffered, died. But he rose again with life indestructible and so arose as a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek (7:15-16). When he thus arose, the same one who said to Jesus "You are my Son" also said to him "You are a priest forever" (Heb 5:5-6; Ps 2:7; 110:4), and so he now "holds his priesthood permanently" (Heb 7:24) and "always lives" to intercede for his people (7:25).

When this Son arose, he kept rising, passing through the heavens (4:14), being exalted above the heavens (7:26), and finally entering God's dwelling itself, the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in heaven (6:19-20; 8:1-5; 9:11-12, 23-26). Like the Levitical high priests who yearly entered the earthly Holy of Holies with blood, in order to offer it there (9:7), Jesus entered the Holy of Holies in heaven through his own blood, in order to offer to God his own blood, body, and self (7:27; 9:11-14, 24-25; 10:10, 12, 14). After offering to God this singular, sufficient sacrifice, Christ sat down at God's right hand (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), where he reigns over all, and from where he will return to

save his people (9:28).

Like most good stories, this one has flashbacks and flash-forwards. [5] It hints at what's to come, and what comes after transfigures what came before. This story also holds together as a whole. It begins before creation's beginning and continues after creation's end and new beginning (2:5; 12:25-29). This narrative encompasses the Son existing before all things, creating all things, sustaining all things, entering the world as a man, living, dying, rising again, ascending to heaven, offering himself there as high priest and victim, and sitting down at God's right hand as messianic king. Therefore, David Moffitt precisely describes Hebrews' narrative Christology as a "proto-credal sequence." [6]

This narrative also contains carefully placed points of tension and resolution, prerequisites for its progress and conclusion. The Son had to enter human life to transform it from within. He had to be made like his brothers in every respect in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. He had to be perfected through suffering. He had to die to destroy death. He had to obtain indestructible life to be appointed high priest. He had to offer himself to God before he could sit down at God's right hand. When Hebrews' first sentence lands us at its narrative climax, all this is bundled up, waiting to unfurl. The goal of this book is to follow this unfurling as closely as possible and so to offer a satisfying account of who the Son is and how he became Son. [7]

THREE SCHOLARLY APPROACHES, THEIR PROBLEMS, AND AN ALTERNATIVE

The preceding sketch lingered over the apparent tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son. Many scholars have noted this tension and have struggled to resolve it. We can identify three predominant approaches to the

question of Jesus' sonship in Hebrews, which both follow from and lead to divergent construals of Hebrews' Christology as a whole. In Hebrews, "Son" is not just a prominent but a programmatic title for Jesus. What one does with it is an apt litmus test of—and in some cases, a basis for—how one handles Hebrews' entire testimony to who Jesus is.

In what follows I will describe three scholarly answers to the question of whether "Son" in Hebrews designates Jesus' divine identity or his appointment to messianic office at his exaltation. As is the way of such surveys, I will suggest problems with each perspective. Not only that, I will suggest a problem they have in common: each approach treats sonship in Hebrews as a zero-sum game. Each approach treats "Son" as either something Jesus is or something he becomes. All exclude the possibility that the Son became Son.

After surveying these three approaches I will discuss modern scholars who affirm that "Son" relates both to Jesus' identity as God and to his reign as Davidic Messiah. Such scholars, I suggest, point in the right direction, and I intend to extend their insights further. Admittedly, the claim that the Son became Son is counterintuitive, but my whole argument seeks to demonstrate not only that Hebrews propounds to us this paradoxical claim but also that Hebrews offers reasoned scriptural support for it.

Less-than-divine Christology: Son is what Jesus became. The first approach is what we might call, for comparative purposes, a less-than-divine Christology. This approach starts from the given that Jesus was appointed Son at his exaltation and consequently finds his sonship to entail something less than eternal, divine, personal self-existence. On this view, Son is what Jesus became; it is not what he was already. Consequently, though details vary, this view can fairly be called "adoptionist."

In recent study of Hebrews, this position's trajectory begins with G. B. Caird's 1984 essay "Son by Appointment." [8] Caird argues,

> Here, as in the Fourth Gospel, "the Son" is always a title for the man Jesus. He it is whom God appointed heir to the universe and who has now by his heavenly exaltation entered upon that inheritance. Moreover, in one passage after another where the title is used, the idea of appointment is present in the context. [9]

In Caird's view, there is not "a single one of his dignities which he is said to hold in virtue of his heavenly origin. He had to *become* superior to the angels and to *inherit* the loftier name (1:4)." [10] Thus, "The author of Hebrews has

no place in his thinking for preexistence as an ontological concept. His essentially human Jesus attains to perfection, to preeminence, and even to eternity. Yet it is a high Christology." [11] Whatever Caird means by "high Christology," what he does not mean is clear: the Son does not personally, eternally exist before becoming human. [12] Caird denies that even Hebrews 1:10-12 can be taken to imply that Christ is "divine (and preexistent)." [13] Instead, Christ "is the man in whom the divine Wisdom has been appointed to dwell, so as to make him the bearer of the whole purpose of creation." [14]

In a Festschrift posthumously honoring Caird, his doctoral mentee L. D. Hurst carries forward this interpretive trajectory. [15] For Hurst, "The question needs to be asked, if only to consider whether—and to what extent—chapter one may originally have been read from the point of view of the humanity of Jesus." [16] Indeed Hurst goes on to assert that "the figure in view" throughout Hebrews 1 is "essentially a human one." [17] Given Hurst's earlier charge that it would be difficult to see how Hebrews 1–2 coheres if "chapter one describes the unique prerogatives of a heavenly being who becomes man," [18] his labeling the Jesus of Hebrews 1 "essentially human" seems at least to weigh against, if not outright exclude, the idea of Jesus' personal preexistence. Regarding Hebrews 1:8-9, Hurst feels no need to "enter into elaborate arguments as to whether or not the Son is addressed here as 'God.'" [19] Further, Hurst takes Hebrews 1:10-12 to indicate not that God addresses Jesus as the active agent of creation but that he is "addressing his own wisdom in its earthly receptacle." [20] For Hurst, "To what extent notions of a pre-cosmic figure are *also* present may have to remain a delicate matter of judgment." [21] Yet even if such notions may be present, Hurst avers that they can hold little importance for Hebrews: "It looks, in other words, as though the author's *main* interest was not in a uniquely privileged, divine being who becomes man; it is in a human figure who attains to an exalted status." [22]

In acknowledged dependence on and critical engagement with Caird, Kenneth Schenck has written an article that investigates the nature of Christ's sonship, the time of its beginning, and the manner of his preexistence. [23] One of the primary concerns of Schenck's essay is the tension between Christ being Son and becoming Son. On the one hand, Schenck distinguishes between "Son" as identity and "Son" as role:

> The uniqueness of Christ's Sonship seems to reflect something particular about his identity, something that makes him alone suitable for enthronement. Here a

> distinction between *identity* and *role* can be made. At his enthronement, Christ truly *becomes* Son in the sense that he assumes his royal office and takes his divine 'appointment,' but in his *identity* he has always been the Son, the one whom God had destined to be enthroned from the foundation of the world (cf. 9.26), who bears God's purpose for humanity (cf. 2.9). [24]

For Schenck Christ's identity as Son is strictly proleptic; it marks him out as *destined* to become, at his enthronement, God's appointed ruler. [25] That Christ "is always the Son" means that he is "destined for his throne." [26] Further, Schenck urges "caution when approaching protological language in the epistle," and concludes that "the preexistent Christ only exists as a function of God." [27] Thus,

> When God finally speaks through a Son in the consummation of his creative purpose, he brings about and fulfils the destiny he had planned for creation and humanity, making Christ the bearer of this purpose, the very reflection of God's glory, the representation of his substance, the embodiment of the creative *logos* which sustains all things. [28]

For Schenck, all these are what the Son *becomes*; none names what he is before and apart from his earthly career. Thus, while Schenck formally distinguishes between "Son" as identity and "Son" as role, he reduces the content of the former to the latter. For Schenck, Jesus being Son eternally and becoming Son at his exaltation are on some level incompatible, and he substantially resolves the tension in favor of the latter. [29]

Caird, Hurst, and Schenck all address the apparent tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son, especially when the former is understood to entail divinity, or at least personal preexistence. All three decide the contest between Jesus being Son and becoming Son in favor of becoming. [30] Positively, they all rightly perceive the importance of Christ's enthronement for Hebrews' argument, and they argue, in my view rightly, that in some sense Christ is appointed Son at that enthronement. Yet I would suggest two problems with this "less-than-divine Christology." [31] First—and this is equally the case for the next two views—the presupposition that Jesus' being Son and becoming Son are mutually exclusive is by no means self-evident, though interpreters in this category seem to treat it as such.

Second, as I will argue in chapter two, in Hebrews Jesus is in fact divine in the fullest sense of the word. By contrast, all three interpreters surveyed here offer an account of the Son's agency in creation and providence that

fails to do justice to the assertions of Hebrews 1:2, 1:3, and 1:10-12. All three fail to account for passages that either directly (1:8-9, 10-12) or indirectly (1:3) identify the Son as God. All three rightly identify the Son's exaltation as the focus of Hebrews' first chapter, yet all three wrongly treat that focus as somehow antithetical to the Son's personal preexistence. [32]

Being Son and becoming Son as irreconcilable. A second approach treats Jesus' being Son and becoming Son as fundamentally irreconcilable and refrains from reconciling them. Scholars who take this approach see Hebrews asserting both and treat the resulting Christology as deeply fissured or even incoherent. As we will see, this stance is related to, though not identical with, the question of whether Hebrews' Jesus is both human and divine, and whether that, too, would constitute a contradiction. Harold Attridge exemplifies the irreconcilable approach when he writes,

> Hebrews's reflections on the significance of Jesus are obviously not a carefully considered systematic statement. There are, in fact, several barely or non-resolved antinomies among the affirmations of the text. The exordium (1:1-3), for example, contains a festive celebration of a "high" christological perspective, and affirms clearly the divine character of the Son and his role in the creation. The following catena (1:5-13) focuses on the exaltation of the Son, and even seems to suggest that his status as Son is dependent on that exaltation. [33]

Further, in an excursus on sonship in Hebrews that takes its cue from the citation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5, Attridge argues,

> It may be that he took seriously the language of the psalm about Christ "becoming" Son and set this decisive moment either at the creation or some primordial event, or at his incarnation, his baptism, or his exaltation. While the last understanding accords well with what was probably the original function of the catena and with the focus on the exaltation in Hebrews, it is undermined by later passages that speak of Christ as the Son during his earthly life.

Attridge then explores several scholarly solutions to this tension between Jesus being Son already and becoming Son at, likely, his exaltation. Some hold that "the term 'Son' is properly applied at the point of exaltation, but proleptically in other contexts." Some attempt to "reconcile the two christological perspectives" by seeing the Son's

exaltation as not "the creation of a new status" but "the definitive recognition or revelation of what Christ is and has been." Some, affirming the Son's preexistence, take the citation of Psalm 2:7 to refer to the Son's eternal generation. And, finally, some maintain that the text does not reconcile the tension, which derives from the use of conceptually divergent traditions. [34]

But we should notice what possible solution Attridge does not entertain: that the Son became Son. Attridge takes for granted a zero-sum equation between these two apparently competitive uses of "Son," as do, on some level, all the interpreters he surveys. His entire discussion presupposes that "Son" has a single meaning for Hebrews; it speaks of only one reality; it sings only one part. Neither Attridge nor anyone he surveys raises the possibility that the author of Hebrews deliberately uses "Son" to designate both Jesus' divine identity and the messianic rule to which he accedes at his exaltation.

Attridge himself argues that the author of Hebrews has fused basically incompatible traditions and is "not interested in providing a systematic Christology" that would reconcile these two perspectives. [35] If priority must go to one, Attridge opts for divine Christology: "There are, in fact, several indications later in the text that the high Christology of the exordium is not merely a rhetorical flourish, but a basic constituent of Hebrews's portrait of Christ." [36]

Another scholar who argues that Jesus' being Son and becoming Son stand in irreconcilable tension is James Dunn, who offers an interpretation of Hebrews' apparent divine Christology that is not totally unlike that of Caird and company. On the one hand, Dunn asserts, "There is no doubt about the importance of Jesus' divine sonship for the author of the letter to the *Hebrews*." [37] And Dunn sees Hebrews as the first New Testament writing "*to have embraced the specific thought of a pre-existent divine sonship*." [38] On the other hand, however, Dunn sets this preexistence within the context of Hebrews' "*indebtedness to Platonic idealism*"; he perceives an "impersonal tone" in the references to Jesus as Son in 1:2 and 1:5; and he explicitly denies that Hebrews "*has attained to the understanding of God's Son as having had a real personal pre-existence*." [39]

However, like Attridge, Dunn feels an acute tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son: "How can the writer speak of Jesus both as a 'Son . . . through whom God created the world' and as a son appointed by virtue of his passion and begotten by means of his exaltation?" The solution toward which Dunn leans is similar to that of Attridge: Hebrews juxtaposes incommensurable conceptual frameworks, in Dunn's case "Platonic cosmology and Judaeo-Chris-tian eschatology." [40]

Related though not identical to the perceived tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son is the perceived tension between Jesus being divine and being human. For instance, C. F. D. Moule comments, "But we are still left asking how the individual of the ministry and the post-resurrection glory is related to the pre-existent being." [41] Moule's assumption that these different "states" constitute some fundamental rupture in the identity of the "individual" and "being" in question seems to presuppose logical tension in affirming that Jesus is both divine and human. And, from a rather different perspective, Bart Ehrman points to passages in Hebrews that could be taken to indicate both that Jesus is divine and that he is human, then asks, "How would the author of Hebrews himself have . . . reconciled the divergent views that he appears to have written? Regrettably, we will never know." [42] Again, this presupposes tension, perhaps contradiction, in saying both that Jesus is divine and that he is human. We will return to this issue in chapter one.

The problem I find in Attridge and Dunn's position is one I can only demonstrate to be a problem by making the argument that constitutes this book. That is, this stance seems to assume in advance that Hebrews must use "Son" in only one sense. Therefore, when Hebrews speaks in bracingly high terms of the Son's being and acts, this necessarily stands in tension with "Son" being something this same figure becomes upon exaltation. This seems to me an a priori assumption rather than a conclusion compelled by Hebrews' argument. [43]

Divine Christology: Son already. A third prominent position is one that resolves the tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son in favor of the former. If Jesus is already the divine Son, then there can be no strong sense in which he becomes Son. Either the begetting of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5 is eternal, or his becoming Son at his exaltation is actually a restatement or revelation or reaffirmation of a status he already had.

Richard Bauckham opts for the former solution. In a pair of essays [44] Bauckham argues that "Hebrews portrays Jesus as both truly God and truly human, like his Father in every respect and like humans in every respect." [45] Regarding Jesus' sonship, Bauckham argues, "The most fundamental category is that of the Son of God who shares eternally the unique identity of the Father, the unique identity of the God of Israel and the God of all reality. But sonship to God also characterizes Jesus' human solidarity with his fellow-humans." [46] So for Bauckham there is some kind of duality to Hebrews' Son language, and this duality attaches to Jesus' existence as both divine and human. Nevertheless, while Bauckham recognizes the importance

of Jesus' exaltation for Hebrews' exordium and opening catena, [47] he argues that Jesus did not in any sense become Son at his exaltation. Bauckham treats "Son" as a zero-sum game: "The divine Son in Hebrews is Son of God from all eternity as well as to all eternity: sonship is the eternal truth of his very being, not simply a role or status given him by God at some point." [48] However, "not simply" is not the only way we might link Jesus being eternal Son and being appointed Son "at some point." In keeping with this zero-sum assumption, Bauckham takes Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5 to be spoken not at the exaltation but in the eternal depths of the divine being: "The 'today' of 'Today I have begotten you' would be the eternal today of the divine eternity." [49]

However, there are other scholars who affirm Jesus' fully divine identity in Hebrews and yet see 1:5 as spoken at his exaltation. For instance, Aquila Lee understands "today" in 1:5 as "the day when Jesus was vested with his royal dignity as Son of God, the occasion of his exaltation and enthronement." [50] Yet he also writes, "Assigning the moment of becoming Son to Christ's exaltation seems to fit in well with the original function of the scriptural catena and the emphasis on the exaltation motif of the letter, but this view has also difficulty with later passages which speak of Jesus as the Son during his earthly life." [51] For Lee, "today I have begotten you" is spoken to Jesus at his enthronement, but this does not mean that Jesus became Son at that point, since he was Son already. After Lee affirms that Jesus is acclaimed as God's Son at his exaltation, he immediately qualifies this: "However, it needs to be emphasized that this solution does not undermine Jesus' eternal sonship at all. On the contrary, it indicates that the precise relationship of Jesus' exaltation and his divine sonship is that of a confirmation of his existing position and status, rather than a conferral of a new status." [52]

For Lee, since Jesus is Son, he cannot become Son. Lee defines his position over against those who "have maintained that, while the term 'Son' is applied to Jesus at the point of his exaltation, it is used proleptically in other contexts." [53] If Jesus became Son at his exaltation, before that the title must necessarily have only applied in a proleptic fashion. This displays the zero-sum logic of Lee's reading. [54]

Like Lee, Amy Peeler regards the affirmation that Jesus "became Son upon his exaltation" as necessarily entailing that he "was only proleptically so before this point." [55] Like her diagnosis, Peeler's prescription also aligns with that of Lee:

> Granting that God proclaims this name (Heb. 1.5)—the

> name which makes the Son better than the angels—at Jesus' exaltation, it remains plausible to interpret this announcement not as the establishment of Jesus' status as God's Son but as a restatement of that fact. In this way, these words are a fitting proclamation when one who is already a son inhabits his throne. [56]

For Peeler, to say that Jesus "inhabits" his throne is to say something new of him, but "Son" is not a status newly conferred. Despite its many virtues, Peeler's reading leaves no room for a substantive distinction between Son as identity and Son as office. [57]

Despite their substantial differences, the scholarly approaches surveyed above all treat the title "Son" in Hebrews as finally capable of only one meaning. Given this constraint, the three positions exhaust the range of logical possibilities. Either Jesus became Son at his exaltation, and so his bearing the title or identity of Son before that point is strictly proleptic; or Jesus is eternally the divine Son, and so his becoming Son is simply a restatement or manifestation of what he is already; or Hebrews is fundamentally inconsistent at this point.

An alternative: the Son who became Son. However, not all modern scholars share this zero-sum perspective on Jesus' sonship. For instance, Frank Matera writes,

> There is an implicit distinction between identity and role in the Son of God Christology in Hebrews. From the point of view of *identity*, Christ was Son of God. But from the point of view of his *role* in God's plan for salvation, he becomes the enthroned Son of God, an eternal high priest, at his exaltation. Moreover, it is as the enthroned Son of God and eternal high priest that he brings his brothers and sisters to perfection. [58]

Further, Matera endorses the apparent paradox of the Son becoming Son, the Son inheriting the name "Son": "In other words, although the author will not speak of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God until chapter 2, he is already speaking of Jesus as the exalted Son of God in chapter 1. There is a paradoxical sense, then, in which the preexistent Son inherits the name 'Son.'" [59]

D. A. Carson argues the same basic stance, though a touch less explicitly. For Carson, because of the way Hebrews' prologue ascribes divine acts to the Son, its sonship language

> *cannot be restricted to a strictly Davidic-messianic horizon*. The writer to the Hebrews, in other words, is prepared to link, within his first chapter, Jesus' sonship in the Davidic, messianic sense, with his sonship in

> the sense of his thoroughly divine status, embracing his preexistence and his oneness with God in creation. [60]

For Carson, "Son" in Hebrews explicitly designates both Jesus' "thoroughly divine status" and the messianic rule to which he attains. That Carson has no problem with the Son becoming Son seems evident when he writes that Psalm 2:7 "finds its 'today' in the resurrection of Jesus and the dawning of his kingdom." [61]

Finally, among modern scholars I have read, Moises Silva most pointedly expresses Hebrews' apparently paradoxical, too infrequently noted use of "Son" to describe both who Jesus is and what he becomes. In an article that addresses the problem of Hebrews' language of perfection, Silva writes,

> The solution proposed in this article finds its theological basis in the statement at Hebrews 1:4, where we are told that God's *Son* has inherited a name superior to that of the angels. But when we ask what is the name that this Son has inherited, the answer is, oddly enough, *Son* again (verses 5ff.). It is, I think, surprising that very little has been made in the past of the apparent fact that the author uses the word *Son* in two different senses in these verses. In verse 2 it indicates what Jesus is, and always has been, *by divine nature*; in verses 4ff. it is the Messianic title He receives in connection with some type of change *in his human nature*. Surely this temporal distinction—that *after* completing his work Jesus became something he was not before—accords naturally with the context: the participle γενόμενος (rather than ὤν) is used in verse 4 and the Father is quoted as addressing to Him the words, '*Today* I have begotten you' (verse 5). Some commentators in the past have ignored the problem altogether; others have simply asserted that verse four does not affect the truth of Jesus' eternal sonship, but they fail to explain adequately in what sense the name was inherited at the resurrection; still others have resorted to the questionable expedient that verse 4 refers merely to a divine *declaration* of what in fact has always been true. [62]

I cite Silva at length because, first, he articulates precisely the solution to this puzzle that I will elaborate throughout the book. Second, it is noteworthy that incarnational concepts enable Silva to judge Hebrews' twofold use of "Son" coherent. Silva can only make sense of Jesus both being Son and becoming Son by reading Hebrews as an

incarnational narrative in which the divine Son lives a human life, achieves his people's salvation, and as a consequence of all this becomes something he was not before. Many modern scholars balk at ascribing a divine nature to Jesus; many also balk at Hebrews' apparently incoherent twofold use of "Son." This is no coincidence. In order to read Hebrews' narrative Christology coherently it is essential to recognize its fully incarnational logic. We can say coherently that the Son became Son only by saying that God became a man. [63]

As far as I am aware, no modern author has offered a full-dress defense of the thesis that in Hebrews Jesus is the Son who became Son. Yet these three, and a few others like them, articulate in brief what I will develop at length. [64] They have perceived something essential to Hebrews' entire argument, and that essential something merits patient attention.

P

REVIEW

Our final preliminary to put in place is a preview of the book's argument. In chapter one I will introduce six classical christological concepts and strategies of reading and predication that I will employ throughout the book. In the whole book I attempt to demonstrate that this classical christological toolkit enables us to read with the grain of Hebrews' narrative Christology, to say about the Son all that Hebrews says about the Son and, ultimately, to perceive something of why Hebrews asserts that the Son became Son. In chapter two I will argue that Hebrews uses "Son" as a divine designation, more specifically, to designate Jesus' distinct mode of divine existence. "Son" indicates that Jesus both is God and is distinct from the Father and, implicitly, the Spirit.

In chapter three I will narrate (most of) the Son's incarnate mission according to Hebrews, from his entrance into human life to his death, resurrection, and entrance to heaven. I will argue that Hebrews not only characterizes Jesus as fully divine and fully human, but that it manifests a narrative incarnational logic, in two senses. First, *incarnation* names the Son's *entrance* into human life. Second, what some scholars take to be fissures in Hebrews' Christology are in fact deliberately plotted points of development, of tension and resolution. The Son not only had to become human, he had to be perfected through sufferings, pass through death into indestructible life, and thereby become his people's source of salvation.

In chapter four I will argue that Jesus was appointed messianic Son at his enthronement in heaven. Hence my

second thesis is this: "Son" designates the office of messianic rule to which Jesus is appointed at his exaltation. Hence also chapter four follows chapter three because Jesus can only be appointed Son once he has achieved his people's salvation. Priestly sacrifice precedes kingly session; Jesus accomplishes salvation before he rests on the throne. It is not simply within his incarnate mission but at the telos of this mission that the Son became Son.

In chapter five I will argue the third thesis, that Jesus can only become the messianic Son because he is the divine Son incarnate. Jesus' divinity is a necessary though not sufficient condition for his exercise of messianic rule. For Hebrews, "Messiah" is a theandric office; only the God-man can fill it. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize, extend, and apply the book's findings. Specifically, I will briefly compare Hebrews' Christology to that of Chalcedon, suggest that Acts 2:36 and Romans 1:3-4 also use one title in both a divine and a messianic sense, and reflect on the role of Christ's person in Hebrews' pastoral program.

ONE

A Classical Christological Toolkit

I **RECENTLY INSTALLED** a protective, retractable gate in the doorway in front of the stairs to our basement. To bore holes for the gate's wall mounts, I needed to use a two-millimeter drill bit. By chance, I happened to have a bit that size stashed with a few pieces of hardware on a storage shelf. If it were not for that spare bit, I would have had to dig out a full kit of drill bits from underneath half a dozen heavy bins. Sometimes the right tools are near to hand but out of sight. It can take extra work to get at them.

Given the narrative, incarnational shape of Hebrews' Christology and the state of scholarly disagreement over its use of "Son," in this chapter I propose a new yet old set of tools for the task, a cluster of theological possibilities and exegetical strategies borrowed from classical christological writings of the church fathers. My use of these tools does not presuppose that these writers got everything right. Nor will my argument proceed on the assumption that their conclusions are essentially correct. Instead, this chapter will provisionally show how each classical concept and reading strategy fits the text of Hebrews. And I will argue that each helps us to read with the grain of the text and to say coherently all that Hebrews says about who Jesus is.

As we saw in the introduction, scholarly conversation on Jesus' sonship in Hebrews is not at a total impasse; some find ways to affirm that Jesus both is Son and becomes Son. Nevertheless, the three zero-sum approaches surveyed in the introduction can fairly be described as dominant. Given the relative precedence of these approaches and the prevalence of the presupposed zero-sum perspective, it may prove helpful to bring a more theologically calibrated set of tools to the exegetical task. I draw these tools from writers who shaped, refined, and reflect the church's orthodox conciliar tradition—in brief, classical patristic Christology and its later tradents such as John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas.

SIX CLASSICAL CHRISTOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

AND READING STRATEGIES

This chapter will introduce six distinctions, concepts, and reading strategies that I will use as heuristic tools with which to engage Hebrews and its modern interpreters. The first three are christologically unique answers to basic questions: who, what, and when? The second three are strategies of reading and predication that seek to account for the paradoxical fullness of what a text like Hebrews says about Jesus. For each tool, I will show how it responds to some kind of pressure from Hebrews itself, whether from a particular assertion or from its portrait of Jesus as a whole. [1] Much of what this chapter asserts will necessarily precede its full exegetical justification in chapters to follow. At this stage I am simply attempting to show enough of a fit between the tools and the text to warrant bringing them into the operating room. Further, this chapter will show how each tool is employed by classical interpreters, often in their exegesis of Hebrews itself.

After discussing these six tools, the following section will clarify how I understand the relationship between Hebrews' Christology and that of the church's ecumenical creeds, a topic to which we return in the conclusion. [2] Finally, I will both answer modern critics and critique what I am calling classics. That is, I will provisionally answer objections to my use of these tools as resources for reading Hebrews, and I will discuss the two primary respects in which I hope to improve upon these classical readings.

1. Who? A single divine subject. As when we meet anyone, the first question we tend to ask on encountering Jesus naturally is, Who is he? And the answer that conciliar Christology gives, and that I will argue the text of Hebrews gives, is God the Son.

Whether we are talking about the Son's divine activity of creating and sustaining all things (Heb 1:2-3, 10) or his human acts of speaking (2:3), suffering (2:18), dying (2:14), and so on, we are speaking of a single divine subject. The divine Son is Son eternally, and he remains Son when he takes on flesh and blood (2:14-15); else it would not be he—that is, the Son—who becomes incarnate.

The leading, though by no means only, witness in Hebrews to this identification of a single divine subject is the prologue. In 1:2-4, the author of Hebrews describes the Son with a series of seven relative and participial clauses (ὅν . . . δι' οὗ . . . ὅς [*hon . . . di hou . . . hos*], and so on) that range from the distinctively divine to

the necessarily human. [3] In these clauses the Son's agency varies from passive recipient ("whom he [God] appointed," 1:2), to instrumental co-agent ("through whom also he created," 1:2), to active-voice agent ("he upholds . . . he sat down," 1:3), to middle-voice "undergoer" (γενόμενος [*genomenos*], "becoming," 1:4). Yet it is the same Son who acts and undergoes and is acted upon. It is one and the same Son who made all things, sustains all things, made purification for sins, and sat down at God's right hand. The unfathomably different types of activity entailed in creating all things and placing one's body on a throne are performed by the selfsame subject: the Son. [4]

We have now briefly measured the pressure Hebrews puts on its readers to speak of Jesus as not just a single acting subject but as a single divine subject. Classical Christology responds to this pressure by confessing, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381, often simply called the "Nicene Creed"), that there is "one Lord Jesus Christ" who is not only "begotten from the Father before all the ages" and the one "through whom all things came to be," but also "for us humans and for our salvation . . . came down . . . and became incarnate." This same one "suffered and was buried and rose up on the third day . . . and he went up into the heavens and is seated at the Father's right hand." [5] In avowed continuity with this Nicene Creed, the Definition of Chalcedon confesses "one and the same [ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν, *hena kai ton auton*] Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same [τὸν αὐτόν, *ton auton*] perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man." [6] The single subjectivity of Jesus Christ is one of the prime factors in the entire classical tradition of Christology. [7] Cyril of Alexandria in particular made the unity of Christ a keynote of his entire theology and, endorsing Cyril's point, the Chalcedonian Definition confesses "one and the same Son." [8]

This insistence on Christ as a single divine subject has deep roots and wide branches in classical Christology. Irenaeus, for instance, counsels that "we should not imagine that Jesus was one, and Christ another, but should know them to be one and the same," and asserts that the prophets announced "one and the same Son of God, Jesus Christ." [9] Gregory of Nazianzus insists that "we affirm and teach one and the same God and Son, at first not man . . . but finally human being too, assumed for our salvation." [10] And John of Damascus summarizes the conciliar consensus: "And so, we confess that even after the incarnation he is the one Son of God, and we confess that the same is the Son of Man, one Christ, one Lord, the

only-begotten Son and Word of God, Jesus our Lord." [11]

This conviction that Christ is a single divine subject frequently proves crucial in patristic readings of Hebrews. For instance, Athanasius argues that "he did not become other than himself on taking the flesh." This same one who created all things "afterwards was made high priest, by putting on a body which was originate and made." These observations serve Athanasius's exegesis of Hebrews 3:1-2 in the context of 2:14-18:

> And this meaning, and time, and character, the apostle himself, the writer of the words, "Who is faithful to him that made him," will best make plain to us, if we attend to what goes before them. For there is one train of thought, and the passage is all about one and the same [μία γὰρ ἀκολουθία ἐστί, καὶ περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀνάγνωμα τυγχάνει, *mia gar akolouthia esti, kai peri tou autou to anagnōma tunchanei*]. [12]

The linchpin of Athanasius's incarnational reading of the time when and means by which Jesus became priest is the fact that the phrase "he was faithful to him who made him" (Heb 3:2, my translation) is spoken of the same one who was just said to have taken on human nature.

For Athanasius, classical Christology more broadly, and the reading I will pursue in this work, that Jesus is a single subject who is none other than God the Son is crucial to perceiving the narrative continuity of Hebrews' Christology. What Chesterton said of tragedy is equally true of the protagonist of Hebrews' drama: "The basis of all tragedy is that man lives a coherent and continuous life. It is only a worm that you can cut in two and leave the severed parts still alive." [13]

2. What? One person with two natures. It is also natural to ask of Hebrews' Jesus, What is he?

As our narrative sketch above makes clear, Jesus is certainly human, and he is also more than human. As I have suggested above and will argue in chapter two, what he possesses that is more than human is divine in the fullest sense of the word. Richard Bauckham, for instance, concludes that Hebrews affirms "both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus." He continues, "That phrase, patristic-sounding though it is, seems fully justified by the systematic way in which the first two chapters of Hebrews depict the divine identity of Jesus in distinction from the angels and his identification with humanity in distinction from the angels." [14] And again, "Hebrews portrays Jesus as both truly God and truly human, like his Father in every respect

and like humans in every respect." [15]

This use of *nature* to describe Jesus as divine and human does not necessarily carry heavy metaphysical baggage. In fact, as David Yeago argues, even those who in the sixth century refined the Chalcedonian legacy did not use terms equivalent to *person* and *nature* as tools of metaphysical speculation. Instead,

> The christological problem . . . is rightly understood not as a metaphysical puzzle about how the divine and the human might be one, but as the more modest problem of explicating coherently what the Bible and the liturgy say about Jesus. It is said of this single subject that he created the world and died on a cross, that he healed by a word of command and hungered, thirsted, and grew weary. What's going on here? What shall we make of this? How shall we explicate this language? [16]

Therefore,

> I would suggest that the distinction between ousia/physis and hupostasis/prosopon, which is central to the Neo-Chalcedonian Christology, is at bottom a simple, commonsensical distinction, grounded in observation of the way we talk in ordinary language. We talk about things in two different registers, the register of ousia and the register of hupostasis, which might be described roughly as providing answers to the questions, 'What?' and 'Who?' or 'Which one?' respectively. The distinction of these two registers provides the Neo-Chalcedonians with a heuristic axis along which to order and explicate and coordinate the Church's scriptural-litur-gical discourse about Jesus Christ: some kinds of things are appropriately said when we are talking about *who* Jesus Christ is, when we are speaking *kath' hupostasin*, other kinds of things are appropriately said when we are talking about *what* Jesus Christ is, when we are speaking *kat' ousian*. The fact that extremely complex analyses can be developed from this simple starting point does not tell against its basic formal-gram-mat-ical character. [17]

Hence, when I use terms such as *person* or *nature*, I intend them in the metaphysically modest sense described by Yeago. When I argue in chapter two that Jesus is a single divine person, God the Son incarnate, I refer to "the single ascriptive subject" [18] whose career Hebrews narrates, answering the question, "Who is Jesus?" When I argue in chapter three that the pressure of Hebrews requires us, ultimately, to say that Jesus possesses both a divine and a

human nature, I answer the question "What is he?" [19]

3. When? Eternal divine existence and incarnation in time, in the last times. A third simple question to which Hebrews offers christologically unique answers is, When? When we refer to the Son's being and actions announced by Hebrews, when are we talking about? If Hebrews acclaims the Son as Creator of the cosmos, then he exists independently of all created reality. In response to pressure from passages such as 1:2, 1:3, and 1:10-12, as the exegesis of chapter two will demonstrate, we are warranted in ascribing to the Son an existence that is *eternal* in the proper sense of the term. Yet this same agent lived and died on earth at a particular time, in recent enough memory that the author and his audience heard Jesus' message from those who heard it from him (2:3). Thus a coherent exegesis of Hebrews requires us to distinguish, without dividing, the Son's existence in eternity from his incarnation in time.

Hebrews says that the Son became incarnate not just in time but specifically "in these last times" (ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων [*ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*], 1:2; cf. 9:26). In virtually the same terms the Chalcedonian Definition affirms that "in the last days" (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν, *ep' eschatou de tōn hēmerōn*), the Son was begotten of Mary for our salvation. [20] The echo of Hebrews 1:2 is unmistakable. Further, this distinction between the Son's eternal existence and his eschatological appearance on earth does much interpretive work within classical Christology, as we will see in this section and the next. For instance, Ignatius of Antioch heralds "Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time." [21] Similarly, Athanasius affirms that Jesus' being "highly exalted" in Philippians 2:9 "is not said before the Word became flesh," since he is exalted as a man. Then, commenting on Hebrews 9:24, Athanasius underscores the verse's soteriological rationale and temporal setting in Christ's incarnate life: "But if now for us the Christ is entered into heaven itself, though he was even before and always Lord and framer of the heavens, for us therefore is that present exaltation written." [22] Finally, he comments on Hebrews' prologue,

> It appears then that the Apostle's words make mention of that time, when God spoke unto us by his Son, and when a purging of sins took place. Now when did he speak unto us by his Son, and when did purging of sins take place? and when did he become man? when, but subsequently to the prophets in the last days? [23]

Further, Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis of Hebrews' prologue also evidences this eschatologically specific "when." For instance, on 1:2, "For the Word from God the Father, who has been begotten before every age and time, is said to have been born of woman in a physical manner 'in these last days.'" [24] And again, on 1:3-4 he says,

> Therefore we have been cleansed by the holy blood of Christ, the savior of us all, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high. But when? When he made purification through his blood, then he is said to sit, to have become superior to angels, to inherit the name that is more excellent than theirs. [25]

In the course of this book I will sometimes argue for a different "when" than that offered by classical commentators—for instance, regarding the timing of Christ's appointment to high priesthood. Nevertheless, I will gratefully employ the distinction they make—often more clearly than modern scholars—between the Son's eternal existence and pre-incarnate divine activity on the one hand, and his incarnate life in time on the other. [26]

4. Theology and economy, or "partitive exegesis." We now set on the workbench a tool that synthesizes the previous three topics, especially the third, and draws out their implications: the distinction between *theology* and *economy*. The distinction this shorthand encapsulates is widespread in classical Christology and programmatic for its biblical exegesis.

Prompted in part by Eph 1:10, in early Christianity the term *economy* (οἰκονομία, *oikonomia*) quickly came to designate God's plan of salvation. [27] As Michel Barnes writes, "Since the specific means used by God for human salvation was the incarnation of his Son, *oeconomia* often came to mean in certain contexts 'the incarnation.'" [28] Accordingly, exponents of classical Christology frequently use *economy* to denote the incarnation itself. [29] This habit gave rise to a distinction between *theology* and *economy*, according to which certain biblical passages ascribe divinity to Christ—they "theologize" him [30]—while other passages designate Christ as incarnate and describe what pertains to his incarnate state. Consider the following passage from Gregory of Nazianzus:

> In sum: you must predicate the more sublime expressions of the Godhead, of the nature which transcends bodily experiences, and the lowlier ones of the compound, of him who because of you was emptied, became incarnate and (to use equally valid language) was "made man." Then next he was exalted, in order that

> you might have done with the earthbound carnality of your opinions and might learn to be nobler, to ascend with the Godhead and not linger on in things visible but rise up to spiritual realities, and that you might know what belongs to his nature and what to God's plan of salvation [τίς μὲν φύσεως λόγος, τίς δὲ λόγος οἰκονομίας, *tis men physeōs logos, tis de logos oikonomias*]. [31]

Though the opposite term in Gregory's contrast with *economy* is not *theology* but rather "his nature" (that is, Christ's divine nature), the meaning is the same. [32]

This distinction observed by Gregory is repeatedly drawn by Athanasius also, though again without contrasting the terms *theology* and *economy*. For instance, he writes,

> Now the scope and character of the Scripture, as we have often said, is this—that there is in it a double account concerning the Savior: that he was ever God, and is the Son, being the Word and Radiance and Wisdom of the Father; and that afterwards [ὕστερον, *hysteron*], taking flesh from the Virgin, Mary the Godbearer, he became man. [33]

Athanasius's manner of identifying certain scriptural assertions as referring to the Son's eternal divine existence and others as describing what he became in the incarnation, common to pro-Nicene exegesis of the fourth century and after, is given the useful tag "partitive exegesis" by John Behr. [34] Following Athanasius, Cyril programmatically distinguishes between passages that pertain to theology and to the economy:

> Therefore at each time and for each subject matter let that which is fitting be maintained. On the one hand, let the discourse of theology [τῆς θεολογίας ὁ λόγος, *tēs theologias ho logos*] be meditated upon, not at all as having to do with those [passages] in which he appears speaking as a man, but as having to do with the fact that he is from the Father, as Son and as God. On the other hand, it is to be ascribed to the economy with the flesh [τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ τῇ μετὰ σαρκός, *tē oikonomia tē meta sarkos*] when he now and then says something that is not fitting to the bare divinity considered in itself. Therefore when he, as a man, says that he is not good in the way that the Father is good (cf. Matt 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19), this should be referred rather to the economy with the

> flesh, and should have nothing to do with the substance of God the Son. [35]

As Matthew Crawford observes, in this passage the theology-econ-omy distinction "functions primarily as a sort of exegetical rule, providing a way of distinguishing between those passages which speak of Christ as God and those that refer to him only by virtue of his assumption of flesh." [36] Further, as we will see in more detail in chapter two, Cyril points out that passages of both types are predicated of the single incarnate Christ. That is, some passages predicate divinity and divine prerogatives of the human Jesus. [37]

Armed with this distinction embedded in the term *economy*, Athanasius argues that in asserting the Son's superiority to angels in Hebrews 1:4, the author does not compare "the essence of the Word to things originate," but speaks instead of "the Word's visitation in the flesh, and the economy which he then sustained." [38] And again, concerning Christ's faithfulness to the one who "made" him in Hebrews 3:2, Athanasius writes, "Wherefore Paul was writing concerning the Word's human economy . . . and not concerning his essence," that is, his divine nature. [39] Cyril, commenting on "whom he appointed the heir of all things" in Hebrews 1:2, argues, "Therefore, if he should be said to receive, and to have been appointed heir because of his humanity, we will not be ignorant of the economy. For how did he ever become poor, except in becoming like us, that is, a man, while remaining God?" [40] As God, the Son lacks nothing and so receives nothing. The Son being given all things as heir is fitting because, and only because, he became a man in the economy. Further, commenting on Hebrews 1:3, Cyril writes,

> For the Word has become flesh, and yet he is the Word and the radiance of the glory of the Father and the exact representation of his being. He does not enact the economy with the flesh by means of his own nature, in order that I can speak thus with reference to his afflictions; for he endured "the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2) and dishonor and insults and being spat on. [41]

Cyril can speak, as Hebrews speaks, of the one who is the radiance of God enduring afflictions and insults only by virtue of his incarnate economy.

From the preceding it should be clear that the theology-econ-omy distinction is not exactly that between reflecting on God's being and reflecting on his activity in the world. Nor does the distinction map precisely onto the

contemporary theological distinction between the "immanent" and "economic" Trinity. [42] Instead, the distinction between theology and economy allows readers to account both for passages that acclaim Christ as divine and for those that predicate human qualities of him without one clashing with or ruling out the other.

Given that the shorthand of *theology* or *economy* distinguishes between various textual assertions by what they refer to, its relation to Hebrews' pressure is somewhat different from that of the other tools. Since it synthesizes the first three, it is warranted to the extent that they are. And it proves its usefulness by allowing one to explicitly make distinctions that are implicit in the text. Sometimes Hebrews speaks of the Son as he is God; sometimes Hebrews speaks of the Son as he has become human. The theology-economy distinction recognizes this difference and invites us to read accordingly.

5. Twofold or reduplicative predication. The distinction between theology and economy clarifies that some biblical passages speak of the Son simply as divine, while others presuppose his incarnate state. A closely complementary reading strategy, which I will call twofold or reduplicative predication, presupposes the Son's incarnate state and distinguishes between what is true of Christ in virtue of his human nature and what is true of Christ in virtue of his divine nature. While *theology* and *economy* distinguish between the scope of different biblical passages or assertions (simply divine or incarnate), twofold predication distinguishes between the incarnate Christ's divine and human natures as the basis of, or warrant for, particular assertions. Partitive exegesis maintains a conceptual partition between theology and economy, clarifying the target and amplitude of statements that refer to each. Twofold or reduplicative predication treats the same material, sets it, as it were, in two parallel columns, and names the ontological ground for each.

Within the text of Hebrews, warrant for this might be drawn from a number of passages. For instance, if "Son" is a divine designation (1:2-3, 8-12), and the Son remains Son in that sense in his incarnate state (5:8), then it stands to reason that what is true of him as divine Son remains true after the incarnation. To support this conclusion, we might point to the present participle (ὤν, *ōn*) in 1:3: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." As John P. Meier comments, "Amid this string of discrete past actions, the present stative participle ōn stands out like a metaphysical diamond against the black crepe of narrative." [43] This participial phrase asserts something that is true of the Son both apart from and within his incarnate state. On the other hand, the Son's "flesh and

blood" (2:14), his being "like his brothers in every respect" (2:17), his "loud cries and tears" (5:7), and so on are all truly predicated of him by virtue of his humanity.

This twofold predication is a mainstay of classical Christology. For instance, Athanasius comments,

> When therefore the theologians [i.e., the evangelists] who speak of him say that he ate and drank and was born, know that the body, as body, was born, and was nourished on suitable food; but that he, God the Word united with the body, orders the universe, and through his actions in the body made known that he himself was not a man but God the Word. But these things are said of him, because the body which ate and was born and suffered was no one else's but the Lord's; and since he became man, it was right for these things to be said [of him] as concerning man, that he might be shown to have a true, not an unreal, body. [44]

Athanasius does not assert that Jesus' body is a separate acting subject alongside the divine Son. Instead, while the Son remains God in his incarnation, truly human acts and experiences can be predicated of him since he made human nature his own. [45]

Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus notes that, in view of biblical assertions about Jesus being perfected (Heb 5:9), learning obedience through suffering (5:8), being high priest (e.g., 8:1), praying for deliverance from death (5:7), and much else, there might well be questions as to his divinity. His response is, "Yes there would, were it not clear to everybody that expressions like these refer to the passible element not to the immutable nature transcending suffering." [46] Like Athanasius, Gregory does not treat Jesus' humanity as an acting subject distinct from his divinity. Instead, as Christopher Beeley explains,

> Gregory's statements that Christ is "twofold" (διπλοῦς, [*Oration*] 30.8; 38.15) need not mean anything other than what he argues in *Oration* 29: that in the economy the Son is now "composite" (σύνθετος), and thus can be said to be and do human things on account of the human form that he has assumed (29.18). [47]

Finally, as one might expect, Thomas Aquinas articulates this principle with notable precision:

> While, accordingly, no distinction is to be made between the various Predicates attributed to Christ, it is necessary to distinguish the two aspects of the subject which justify the predication. For attributes of the

> divine nature are predicated of Christ in virtue of his divine nature, while attributes of the human nature are predicated of him in virtue of his human nature. [48]

As formulated by Thomas this principle is sometimes called a "reduplicative strategy." When one speaks of Christ *as* human or *as* God, the "reduplicative 'as' phrase" indicates "the nature by virtue of which the statement is true of the subject." [49]

6. Paradoxical predication: the communication of idioms. Our final tool is a linguistic strategy warranted by the preceding five tools combined. If Christ is the divine Son who assumed a human nature, then the seemingly incompatible predicates of divinity and humanity not only can but must be ascribed to him, to the single person of the Son. Hence emerges a strategy of paradoxical predication, often called the communication of idioms (or *communicatio idiomatum*). [50] This strategy takes most striking shape in the practice of naming Christ according to his divine nature and predicating of him what is true only by virtue of his human nature. [51] One of the most frequently appealed-to biblical warrants for the practice is 1 Corinthians 2:8, "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (cf. Acts 3:15). While Hebrews does not feature such bracingly paradoxical sentences, I will argue that its whole witness to Jesus warrants them.

To get a feel for this final tool it is worth sampling a number of classical examples. Writing early in the second century, Ignatius of Antioch revels in "the blood of God" and "the suffering of my God." [52] Further, "There is only one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord." [53] Also in the second century, Melito of Sardis writes in *Peri Pascha*, "He who hung the earth is hanging; he who fixed the heavens has been fixed; he who fastened the universe has been fastened to a tree. . . . God has been murdered." [54] Similarly Gregory of Nazianzus says in a sermon on Christ's birth, "I shall cry out the meaning of this day: the fleshless one is made flesh, the Word becomes material, the invisible is seen, the intangible is touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes Son of Man—'Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, the same also for all ages!'" [55] Examples such as these could be multiplied; this mode of speaking began early and was widely used. [56]

These examples, especially the earliest ones, make clear that such bracing statements were not an endpoint of centuries of christological development but rather a

beginning. [57] Such embrace of paradox was not the awkward, logically constrained conclusion of ever more systematic doctrinal refinement. Instead, the authors of these statements perceived such paradoxes to lie at the heart of the faith they confessed. So Thomas Weinandy concludes, "Thus, the whole of orthodox patristic christology, including the conciliar affirmations, can be seen as an attempt to defend the practice and to clarify the use of the communication of idioms." [58] As Aaron Riches puts it, "*Communicatio idiomatum* is nothing other than the traditional safeguard and expression of the apostolic declaration that the Crucified truly is the one Lord." [59]

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEBREWS AND CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY

HRISTOLOGY

In this section and the next I briefly clarify what I do and do not intend to imply or achieve by bringing such tools to the task of New Testament exegesis. First, I need to clarify how I understand the relationship between the Christology of Hebrews and that of the ecumenical creeds, a topic we will revisit in the conclusion. There are a number of carts I have put before their horses in this chapter. Below is yet one more assertion whose plausibility will only be borne out by the whole argument.

That is, I understand the Epistle to the Hebrews to render a judgment about the identity and constitution of Jesus of Nazareth that is substantially identical to that of conciliar Christology. [60] The Jesus of Hebrews is God the Son who has become a man for us and for our salvation. Of course, Hebrews does not use the precise terms and concepts found in the creeds. Nor does Hebrews narrate the being and acts of Jesus in the compact schematic form that constitutes the backbone of the creeds. Hebrews does not say all that the creeds say about Jesus, nor the creeds all that Hebrews says. [61] Nevertheless, I will argue that Hebrews and the early trinitarian and christological creeds say substantially the same thing in different ways. I understand the ecumenical creeds to progressively clarify,

specify, and defend certain ontological and grammatical implications of precisely the soteriological narrative that forms the substructure of Hebrews' theological exposition. [62] The difference in register between Hebrews and the creeds is analogous to the difference between fluent, grammatically correct speech and grammatical analysis of that speech. As Frances Young and David Ford argue, "It is possible for someone to speak perfectly grammatically without ever consciously knowing any grammar." [63] To adapt a point that they make about Paul, Hebrews speaks of Christ in trinitarian and incarnational language; the creeds both speak the language and analyze it. [64]

In other words, I contend that Hebrews and the creeds tell essentially the same story about the same Jesus. The soteriological narrative that Hebrews both presupposes and elaborates is expressed in compact, schematic form in the ecumenical creeds. And in both Hebrews and the creeds, the identity of the Son and the story of salvation are mutually illuminating.

RESPONSE TO CRITICS AND CRITICIZING THE CLASSICS

In the world of modern New Testament scholarship, the six strategies discussed above admittedly constitute a far from customary toolkit for the task of exegesis. Can such theologically freighted tools untie exegetical knots in a historically and contextually satisfying manner? The reader will have to judge whether, after the case is made, the knots have indeed been loosed. Yet here I offer provisional responses to some of the most likely criticisms of my proposed use of these tools. Following that, I will briefly indicate two areas in which I hope to improve upon how some of the patristic authors engaged above read Hebrews.

The first anticipated criticism is that of allowing the classical christological consensus to determine in advance what the text actually says. My response is that I expect these tools not to decide the issue but to keep options open. We have already seen that many scholars appear to simply assume a zero-sum relation between Hebrews' two apparently divergent uses of "Son." This seems to me a

classic case of prematurely ruling out a viable option. We have also seen that some scholars seem to regard divinity and humanity as standing in a competitive or contrastive relationship, such that the more Christ is one the less he must be the other. Against such presuppositions, I will use the reading strategies sketched above not to decide in advance what the text must say but to consider the possibility that Hebrews says more things than are dreamt of in our historical-critical philosophies. I have honed these tools not to replace exegesis but to improve exegesis.

In this respect I intend to follow in the methodological footsteps of Wesley Hill's *Paul and the Trinity*. [65] Anticipating a similar charge of vicious hermeneutical circularity, Hill writes,

> To avoid this pitfall, I will adopt a twofold approach: First, the readings of Paul I will offer in the chapters that follow will be self-consciously *historical* readings, guided by the canons of "critical" modes of exegesis. . . . Second, Trinitarian theologies will be employed as hermeneutical *resources* and, thus, mined for conceptualities which may better *enable* a genuinely historical exegesis to articulate what other equally "historical" approaches may have (unwittingly or not) obscured. [66]

And I will use my classical christological toolkit in the same spirit in which Hill deploys his trinitarian one:

> In other words, if it can be shown that certain critical approaches and constructions leave crucial texts unsatisfactorily accounted for, or that they construct a version of Paul's theology with significant unresolved tensions and internal difficulties, and if trinitarian categories and conceptualities may offer help in achieving solutions to those tensions and difficulties, then my use of those trinitarian conceptualities may carry its own justification. [67]

I have suggested that the perceived tension between Jesus being Son and becoming Son is just such a shortfall of contemporary critical scholarship on Hebrews. And I will employ these classical christological strategies not to circumvent so-called historical-critical exegesis but to contribute to it.

My use of these tools is strictly heuristic; they are hearing aids, not an answer key. As Scott Swain puts it, "Doctrinal preunderstanding enables reading. Nevertheless, doctrinal preunderstanding does not wholly determine the reading of a text before it is read. Such a scenario would actually foreclose the act of reading itself." [68] Instead, as

Heidelberg reformer Zacharias Ursinus commented, the purpose of studying doctrine is "that we may be well prepared for the reading, understanding, and exposition of the holy Scriptures. For as the doctrine of the catechism and Common Places are taken out of the Scriptures, and are directed by them as their rule, so they again lead us, as it were, by the hand to the Scriptures." [69] While lenses may distort vision, the right lenses restore it. The right kind of theology does not lead us away from the text but deeper into the text. It sends us back to the text better equipped to hear what the text actually says. [70] My ultimate goal in this book is to read Hebrews. What the text says is my chief concern; I will employ these tools in search of a firmer grip on the text in all its peculiar, paradoxical detail.

A second potential critique is that what classical, conciliar Christology asserts about Jesus is contradictory or incoherent. If so, strategies drawn from it can only darken, not illumine, a text such as Hebrews. If someone is already convinced that classical Christology is incoherent, I see little reason why they will not find Hebrews incoherent as well. Perhaps my argument can demonstrate to such readers that Hebrews is incoherent in a manner uncannily similar to classical Christology. In any case, the judgment of incoherence is not present in the subject matter itself; it resides in the mind of the reader. The claim that a set of propositions is contradictory is a judgment that invites either demonstration or falsification. And not everyone finds the Christian confession of God incarnate incoherent. [71]

But why do many modern readers of the New Testament have logical scruples about classical Christology? I would submit that a major contributing factor is a competitive or contrastive conception of the relation between God and humanity. If, however inchoately or implicitly, one thinks of divinity and humanity as kinds of being that can be classed together, one will necessarily conclude that the more space one takes up, the less room is left for the other. By contrast, the coherence of classical Christology depends utterly on a noncompetitive account of the relationship between God and creatures, specifically between God and humanity. For instance, Gregory of Nazianzus responds to the charge that Christ "does not have room for two complete things" with the retort that this is "looking at them from a bodily point of view." [72] Similarly, Frederick Bauerschmidt comments on Aquinas, "Indeed, the coherence of almost everything that Thomas, and the Christian faith in general, would want to say about the incarnate Word hangs upon the noncompetitive relationship between God and creatures." [73] Bauerschmidt then draws an apt parallel between controversies in Thomas's day and in contemporary New Testament studies:

> Modern debates over "low" and "high" Christologies fall into the same error of thinking about divinity and humanity in competitive terms. Thomas understood that it is only if we can eliminate the idolatrous notion that God is a kind of thing that we will be able to think in a coherent manner, not only about creation, but about the incarnation. [74]

This book will argue just as much against a zero-sum equation for God and humanity as it will against a zero-sum equation for Jesus being Son and becoming Son. [75]

There are two areas in which I hope to improve upon readings of Hebrews offered by exponents of classical Christology. First, while the theology-economy distinction allows such interpreters to read with the grain of Hebrews' narrative Christology and therefore to argue that Jesus is the divine Son and also becomes something new in the economy, some of these interpreters nevertheless downplay or deny that Jesus became Son. Such readers therefore align with the third scholarly approach surveyed above. For instance, on the name Jesus inherits in 1:4, Chrysostom writes, "For this name God the Word ever had; he did not afterwards 'obtain it by inheritance.'" [76] Even though Chrysostom recognizes that "having become as much superior" refers to the economy, for him, "Son" is only what Jesus always is, not what he then became. And Aquinas argues that, in the citation of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5, "today I have begotten you" describes a generation that "is not temporal but eternal." [77]

Second, while I also agree with these interpreters that the Son becomes high priest only in and by virtue of his incarnate state, [78] I will argue that he is not appointed high priest until after his resurrection. I endorse the overall narrative they plot but put this pin in a slightly different place on the timeline.

Nevertheless, I contend that insights these interpreters offer can materially advance the current state of scholarly study of Hebrews. This is especially true of Cyril. For instance, on Hebrews 1:3-4, in a passage cited above, Cyril's comments continue, "Then he is said to sit, to become superior to angels, to inherit a more excellent name than theirs. For he is called Son." [79] Referring to scriptural passages that speak of the Son being appointed king, Cyril writes, "And he endured such things, in order that, as a man, he would be adopted as Son, although by nature he exists as God, and that he would make a way, through himself, for human nature to participate in adoption, and would call into the kingdom of heaven those tyrannized by sin." [80] For Cyril, Jesus is the divine Son who is also "adopted" as Son as a man, in the economy.

While modern scholars such as Dunn treat seemingly adoptionist language as intrinsically in tension with divine Christology, Cyril's incarnational framework allows him unashamedly to embrace both. On Cyril's reading of Hebrews, Jesus is the divine Son who became messianic Son, as a man, for us and for our salvation. In the next chapter I begin to put these tools to work in an effort to show not only that Hebrews' Jesus is God the Son incarnate, but also that this explicitly incarnational Christology is essential to Hebrews' surprising assertion that the Son became Son.

TWO

"Son" as Divine Designation

THE TITLE "SON" can be derogatory, as when an older man wields age to buttress hierarchy. Think of a coach rebuking a player: "Son, watch your mouth or it will land you on the bench." The title "Son" can be tender, as when a father affectionately consoles his son after some bitter loss. In contrast to both, the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the title "Son" to say of Jesus something that never has been and never could be said to one who is merely a man.

In this chapter I argue the book's first thesis: "Son" designates Jesus' distinct mode of divine existence. This thesis entails two assertions regarding Hebrews' use of "Son." First, the way Hebrews uses and elaborates the title "Son" identifies the Son as God. Everything that makes God God belongs to the Son. Second, the way Hebrews uses and elaborates the title "Son" distinguishes him from the Father and the Spirit. My exposition of this thesis will confirm that Brian Daley's observation of patristic theology holds for Hebrews as well: Christology is by no means neatly separable from trinitarian theology. [1] Hebrews both identifies the "Son" as God and also distinguishes him from, and relates him to, the Father and the Spirit. Hebrews' grammar of divinity is implicitly trinitarian. [2]

This chapter therefore argues the two parts of this thesis in two sections. First, Hebrews uses "Son" as a divine designation. By calling Jesus "Son," Hebrews identifies him as God. All that it means for God to be God is true of the Son. [3] I will present evidence for this conclusion from four sections of Hebrews: the exordium (Heb 1:2b-4); the opening catena (1:5-14); the assertion that "although he is the Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (5:8, my translation); and the assertion that Melchizedek is like the Son in that he has "neither beginning of days nor end of life" (7:3). Second, "Son" designates Jesus' distinct mode of divine existence—that is, his personal distinction from the Father and the Spirit. To argue this I will examine the relational aspect of the essential predicates of Hebrews 1:3a and will briefly revisit Hebrews' implicit trinitarian grammar, examining in particular the manner in which Father, Son, and Spirit each speak the words of Scripture.

This chapter aims to challenge those who, with the first group of modern scholars surveyed in the introduction and some of the second, are skeptical or downright deny that Hebrews has a divine Christology. Regarding the

classical christological tools introduced in chapter one, this chapter will offer exegetical support for the first, that Jesus is a single, divine subject. Supporting this point is crucial to all the rest, since if Jesus is not truly divine, none of the others follow. Further, in order to gain purchase on passages that predicate divine characteristics of the human Jesus, the first section will draw on a version of the theology-economy distinction developed by Cyril in order to distinguish between (1) passages that speak of Christ as God, (2) those that speak of him as a man, and (3) those that speak of him as a man yet attribute to him divine characteristics.

This chapter will argue not only that Jesus is a single divine subject but that Hebrews offers an implicitly trinitarian answer to the question, "Who is Jesus?" That is, answering this question requires us to identify the one true God of Israel in a way that includes the distinct persons of the Son and the Spirit. My point is not that one can impose a trinitarian framework onto Hebrews with only minimal damage to the details of the text. Instead, I argue that Hebrews' grammar of divinity and its answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" are both implicitly trinitarian. [4]

"SON" AS DIVINE DESIGNATION: FOUR PIECES OF EVIDENCE

This section will marshal evidence for "Son" as designating divinity from four sections of Hebrews. The case is cumulative, though I will argue that the exordium and catena suffice to settle the issue.

The Son's divinity in the exordium (Heb 1:2-4). As noted in the introduction, Jesus is introduced in 1:2 as the Son. To this Son the exordium ascribes all of the seven following qualities, acts, and events. [5] As we have seen, the climax of this elegant periodic sentence is the Son's exaltation to God's right hand. However, its focus is not restricted to the exaltation. Instead, the towering peak of the

Son's exaltation becomes a vantage point from which the author surveys not only the Son's prior work of purification but also his initial work of creation, his ongoing work of cosmic preservation, and his timeless possession of God's own being. [6] As John P. Meier has noted, the seven christological designations in Hebrews' exordium (1:2b-4) are structured like a ring. [7] The ring begins with an oblique reference to the Son's exaltation: "whom he appointed the heir of all things" (1:2b). From there it tracks back to the Son's co-agency in creation (1:2c), back farther still to his "eternal, timeless relationship to God" [8] (1:3a), then forward to the Son's preservation of creation (1:3b), forward again to his saving work of purification (1:3c), and forward to his exaltation and its consequence: he sat down at God's right hand and thereby became superior to the angels (1:3d-4). [9] To tweak a different ring-shaped story, we might say that from the Son's exaltation the exordium travels "back and there again."

Given this sweeping movement from exaltation to eternal existence and back, we must ask which of these predicates designate Jesus as divine and which speak of him with reference to his human nature and incarnate mission. Here I think Cyril of Alexandria can offer substantial exegetical help. In his comments on Hebrews 13:8 he writes, "Some sayings [about Jesus] are fitting for God, such as 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 14:10); some are fitting for humanity, such as 'but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth' (John 8:40). And some are in the middle [μέσαι, *mesai*], such as this one." [10] Here Cyril draws out a crucial nuance of the distinction between theology and economy. It is not merely that some passages ascribe divinity to Jesus while others speak of him with reference to his humanity. Instead, Cyril also perceives a third category, passages that explicitly refer to Jesus as a human being but predicate of him what is divine. In other words, Cyril's third category opens up the possibility—which I will argue is realized in Hebrews—that certain things predicated of the man Jesus are nevertheless things that can only be true of God. [11] Cyril's threefold taxonomy offers a resource that is crucial for perceiving the subtlety not only of Hebrews' exordium, but of its entire portrait of Jesus as Son.

What light can Cyril's three categories shed on Hebrews' exordium, with its seven-piece narrative identity of the Son? I would suggest what follows in table 2.1.

My analysis differs slightly from that of Bauckham, who writes, "With the only possible exception of that fifth statement, the statements are designed precisely to include the Son in the unique divine identity of Jewish monotheistic belief." [12] First, I think the fifth predicate,

that the Son made purification for sins (1:3c), is not just a possible exception to Bauckham's point but an actual one. However one might ultimately root the effectiveness of the Son's saving work in his unique divine existence, making purification for sins is something human priests do, not an exclusively divine prerogative, and in the unfolding of Hebrews' argument the Son clearly accomplishes this as a man.

Table 2.1. Seven predicates of Hebrews' exordium (Heb 1:2b-4)

Seven Predicates of Hebrews' Exordium	Divine, Human, or Both?
(1) Appointed heir of all things (1:2b)	Both: inherits as a man; divine prerogative[a]
(2) Co-agent in creation (1:2c)	Divine
(3) Radiance of God's glory and impress of his being (1:3a)	Divine
(4) Upholds the universe by his word (1:3b)	Divine
(5) Made purification for sins (1:3c)	Human
(6) Sat down at God's right hand (1:3d)	Both: sat on throne as a man; divine prerogative
(7) Became superior to angels (1:4)	Human, though ultimately both

[a]By *divine prerogative* I mean something God does that is not delegable to one who is not God.

Second, more substantively, I think Bauckham's persistent focus on divine identity somewhat obscures the human, economic elements of the first and seventh predicates in particular. Regarding the first, I agree with Bauckham that Jesus' inheriting the universe is ultimately a divine prerogative, since it asserts his all-encompassing rule. Yet Jesus obtains his inheritance as a man. It is important not to neglect the incarnational context of this predicate. [13] Regarding the seventh predicate, we must give full weight to "became." What 1:4 explains is the change of status for the man Jesus that resulted from his exaltation to God's right hand. Further, in chapter four I will argue that, contra Bauckham, the name the Son inherits is not YHWH but "Son." Hence Jesus' superiority to the angels is not in itself an index of divinity. However, as I will argue in chapter five, the rule to which the Son is appointed at his exaltation does indeed enact the unique divine sovereignty. The full unfolding of the seventh predicate in

Hebrews' argument entails Jesus' divinity, but in the predicate itself this remains a seed waiting to sprout.

To return to the business of this chapter, in what follows I argue that the second, third, fourth, and sixth predicates all ascribe divinity to the Son. Taken together, these four acclamations attest that the Son is God: all that God is, the Son is. First, the Son is co-agent in creation: "through whom also he created the world" (1:2c). Scholars debate the precise nuance of the object whose creation the Son is said to mediate (τοὺς αἰῶνας, *tous aiōnas*). [14] Some argue that this phrase highlights the temporal aspect of what the Son has co-created, the plural perhaps gesturing toward the Son's creation of both the present age and the age to come. [15] However, the exact repetition of this phrase in 11:3, which is concerned simply with the creation of all that is, suggests that the referent in 1:2c is the entire cosmos with no particular temporal accent. [16] In all the other predicates of the exordium, the Son is a personal agent, patient, and "undergoer": he was appointed heir, he sustains all things, he accomplished purification, he sat down. So while the Son's creative agency in 1:2c is certainly instrumental, it is no less personal and active for that. [17] Hence Simon Gathercole's phrasing is apt: in Hebrews 1:2c, as in John 1:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, and Colossians 1:16, "Christ is an agent with the Father in creation." [18] As such, to borrow Richard Bauckham's phrase, Hebrews 1:2c places Jesus "on the divine side of the line which monotheism must draw between God and creatures." [19]

Second, in 1:3a, the Son "is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." The sense of the word translated "radiance" (ἀπαύγασμα, *apaugasma*) might be either active ("radiance" or "effulgence"), passive ("reflection"), or deliberately ambiguous or polyvalent. [20] I think an active sense is more likely, though deciding between these options is difficult and ultimately of little consequence. Since the two predicates are governed by a single relative pronoun and linked by "and" (καί, *kai*), we should see them as mutually illuminating. If the first clause portrays Christ as merely the reflection of God's glory rather than its active outflow, that reflection should be construed not in finite, creaturely terms, but as a perfect re- presentation of God's intrinsic, essential glory. In the second phrase, the word translated "exact imprint" (χαρακτήρ, *charaktēr*) is derived from a verb for engraving, and "commonly denotes the impression made upon a coin or seal." [21] That Jesus is the impress of God's "nature" (ὑποστάσεως, *hypostaseōs*) indicates that his being derives from and reproduces that of the Father. [22] As Amy Peeler puts it, the

Son "is a picture of his Father's identity in relief. [23] While the first phrase may well borrow language traditionally associated with God's Wisdom (e.g., Wis 7:25-26), what the author ascribes to Jesus is not reducible to what his contemporaries ascribed to Wisdom. [24] The Son instantiates God's utterly unique essence.

Such ontological precision might seem implausible for a first-century Jewish-Christian author. Yet these assertions nestle between the Son's co-creation of all things and his sovereign preservation of all things. That the Son instantiates the Father's essence is a fitting inference from the Son's agency in creating and sustaining all things. [25] Further, the Son's unparalleled ontological relation to the Father undergirds the exordium's opening assertion that "in these last days" God "has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:2). The Son can constitute the Father's full and final revelation because he fully shares the Father's being. As Meier puts it, "He who is eternally the effulgence of God's glory and the image of his substance is alone the adequate revealer and content of revelation." [26] The Son is the peerless eschatological revealer of God because he is God. In classical Christology, the conceptual contribution of Hebrews 1:3a is enshrined and elaborated in Nicaea's language of "light from light" and "true God from true God." [27]

Third, 1:3b declares that the Son "upholds the universe by the word of his power." At minimum, this phrase asserts that the Son sustains all things in being. Just as with the Son's inheriting all things and co-creation of all things, here too the scope of the Son's providential upholding is cosmic, all-embracing: his power holds the universe together. Since the Son is the one doing the upholding (φέρων, *pherōn*), it makes best sense to see "the word of his power" as the Son's own word. But even if the word is taken to be God the Father's, the Son is the one who upholds all things by means of it. The consequences for Jesus' divine identity are clear. As Bauckham concludes, "It belongs to the unique identity of God that he upholds all things and is not himself upheld." [28]

Fourth, 1:3d asserts that the Son "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Similarly, 8:1 and 12:2 say that Christ took his seat at the right hand of the throne (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου, *en dexia tou thronou*). This confirms that the Son sat down on God's own throne. [29] Richard Bauckham has recently argued, to my mind convincingly, that in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature, the divine throne in heaven frequently symbolizes "the sole sovereignty of God over all things." [30] Bauckham highlights three frequently recurring features of this divine throne. First, it is most often

depicted as the only throne in heaven. [31] Second, "in heaven, God alone sits, while the angels who attend him are regularly described as standing." [32] Third, the symbolism of God's throne as designating his absolute sovereignty is often underscored with imagery of height: Enoch is granted a vision of God's "lofty throne" (1 En 14:18); in another text Enoch could see the Lord only "from a distance, sitting on his exceedingly high throne" (2 En 20:3). [33] God's throne being high above not only the earth but also the heavens indicates that God rules not only over the earth and its inhabitants but over the whole cosmos, including heaven and all its angelic ranks.

These three features of God's throne are relevant to Hebrews 1:3d (and 1:13, 8:1, 10:12-13, and 12:2) because Hebrews invokes each of them to characterize Jesus' session. First, in Hebrews' depiction of heaven, there is clearly only one throne in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in heaven. [34] The throne Jesus sits on is the "throne of grace" believers draw near to (4:16). Second, Hebrews repeatedly asserts that Jesus sat down on God's throne. This session Hebrews contrasts explicitly with the standing posture of priests. The Levitical priests stand as they minister (λειτουργῶν [*leitourgōn*], 10:11), repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, whereas Jesus offered a single sacrifice and then sat down (10:12). Hebrews also implicitly contrasts Jesus' seated position with the posture of angels. In 1:7 the angels are designated "ministers" (λειτουργούς, *leitourgous*), and 1:14 calls them "ministering spirits" (λειτρουγικὰ πνεύματα, *leitourgika pneumata*). Both verses use a form of the word that Hebrews uses for priests' ministry in 10:11. Further, in 1:14, angels are "sent out to serve" those who will inherit salvation. This adds up to a picture of angels as priestly servants, standing at attention in God's presence, ready to do his will. While even angels must stand in God's presence, attesting their subservience, the Son sits as sovereign. Third, 4:14 asserts that Jesus "passed through the heavens," and 7:26 that he is "exalted above the heavens." Together these two passages locate Jesus' throne in the highest heaven. [35] These three features of Hebrews' session discourse confirm that Jesus sat down on God's throne to enact the unique divine sovereignty. The Son's session is a definitively divine prerogative. [36]

We have by no means exhausted the relevance of Hebrews' exordium for its divine Christology, and for its Christology more broadly. Instead, we will return to the first, sixth, and seventh predicates in chapters three through five. Nevertheless the four predicates we have explored demonstrate that in its opening verses, Hebrews

acclaims the Son as divine in the fullest sense of the word. This Son is co-Creator with the Father, instantiates the Father's being, holds the cosmos in being, and rules on God's throne.

The Son as God in the Catena (Heb 1:5-14). The catena of scriptural citations in Hebrews 1:5-14 supports and develops the claim that the Son reigns as God on God's throne. Each of its three contrasts between the Son and the angels substantiates this central claim. We can display the catena's structure as follows. [37]

1:5	To the Son: Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 (Address: "Son")
1:6	About the angels: Deuteronomy 32:43
1:7	About the angels: Psalm 104:4
1:8-12	To the Son: Psalm 45:6-7 (Address: "God") and Psalm 102:25-27 (Address: "Lord")
1:13	To the Son: Psalm 110:1 (Implied address: "Lord")
1:14	About the angels: rhetorical question about their status

This threefold structure derives from the three times the author asks whether, or asserts that, God has said something about the angels, each contrasting with what he has said to the Son (1:5, 7, 13). Since "Son" is how Hebrews designates the recipient of each of God's scriptural speeches, the entire catena elaborates Jesus' sonship. The first two sections each consist of one citation spoken about the angels and two spoken to the Son. In both cases the juxtaposition should inform how we read all three citations. The third section concludes the contrast, though with the author's own question instead of God speaking Scripture. Further, as noted in the introduction, the catena is framed by references to the Son's enthronement. That the Son's installation on the divine throne both opens and closes the catena confirms that each citation somehow supports the claim that the Son now sits where only God may. In this section I will read all three contrasts, asking how they support and expound the Son's enthronement. [38]

In the three citations in 1:5-6 God speaks twice to the Son then once about the angels. The author has just asserted in 1:4 that Jesus became "as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." In 1:5 he asks, "For to which of the angels did God ever say . . . ?" As many have observed, this logical link renders the two subsequent citations—and the whole catena—the exposition of the thesis stated in 1:4. [39] Verse 4 prompts the question, On what basis is the Son now

superior to the angels? Verse 5 answers. Now, seated on God's throne, he is installed as Messiah, the Son of God. Hence 1:5 presents these two texts as spoken by God to the Son when the Son was enthroned in heaven, a point I will argue in detail in chapter four. The first, Psalm 2:7, announces God's appointment of his "anointed" (Ps 2:2), the "king" he has set on Zion (Ps 2:6). In the second, 2 Samuel 7:14, God pledges loyalty to the heir of David who will reign on David's throne. These two passages were read together messianically by at least some Jews before the time of Jesus. [40] By offering these passages as confirmation of the Son's enthronement at his exaltation to heaven, the author of Hebrews indicates that when the Son sat down on God's throne, he began his reign as Messiah. This is a dignity God never conferred on any angel.

While 1:5 reports God's speech to the Son at the latter's enthronement, 1:6 supplies what he said to the angels on this occasion. [41] In the words of Deuteronomy 32:43, God commands the angels to worship his Son, whom he now ushers into the inhabited heavenly realm. [42] What kind of worship is this and why is it fitting on this occasion? It is crucial to read with the grain of the argument from 1:3d forward: Jesus sat down on God's throne, becoming thereby the angels' exalted superior (1:3d-4). The first two citations, in 1:5, confirm that this session is messianic enthronement; the citation in 1:6 reveals the angels' mandated adoration of the one so enthroned. What kind of superiority does the Son possess over the angels? The kind of superiority that the supreme sovereign has over his subjects, which calls for the worship due to God alone. [43] The angelic worship due the Son is not merely the obeisance of recognizing the now-restored human vicegerency over creation. [44] Instead, God commands the angels to offer the Son what may only be given to God because the Son reigns as only God does. In order to understand 1:6 we must read it in light of 1:5 (which elaborates 1:3d-4) and vice versa. And the consequence for 1:5 is that the rule of the Son it announces is not delegated but properly divine.

The next contrast stretches from 1:7 to 1:12. It opens with a clear quotation of Psalm 104:4 regarding what God says about angels, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire" (Heb 1:7). With the aid of the Septuagint translation's syntax, Hebrews asserts that God changes the constitution of his heavenly servants: he makes them air and fire. This assertion sets up two contrasts between the angels and the Son that the next two citations complete. First, their status or office; second, their being. Regarding status, the angels are servants but the Son rules as God. And regarding being, the angels are changeable creatures but the Son is the unchangeable

Creator. [45] That God "makes" (ποιῶν, *poiōn*) his angels winds indicates their changeability under his sovereignty. As the angels' maker, God can remake them as he pleases. [46] And the angels' subordinate status as servants of God is underscored both by their plasticity in his hands and also by their title "ministers" (λειτουργούς, *leitourgous*), which we noted above. Angels are God's ministers; they serve at the pleasure of the almighty.

The two citations God speaks to the Son in 1:8-12 contrast him with the angels on both counts: status and substance, office and ontology. The first citation foregrounds the Son's divine rule and explicitly identifies him as God. In Hebrews 1:8, quoting Psalm 45:6, God says to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." Whatever the possible complications of the Hebrew or Greek syntax of Psalm 45:6, Hebrews has made its reading perfectly clear by making God the speaker and the Son the addressee of the entire citation. [47] God calls the Son "God" and praises his permanent reign as God on God's throne. As Kavin Rowe comments on this passage, "God does not, that is, declare the superiority of something other than God but speaks of himself as *theos* in the figure of Jesus the Son. As the text of Hebrews would have it, 'Son' is thus internal to the meaning of 'God.'" [48] Even though God speaks Psalm 45:6-7 to the human Jesus, this is intra-divine speech. Hebrews reports a conversation within God, not between God and one who is not God. While the direct designation of Jesus as God is relatively rare in the New Testament, the author of Hebrews has prepared us well for its occurrence in 1:8, with the divine acclamations of the exordium, the Son's session on the divine throne, and the enjoined angelic worship. [49] If Hebrews 1:8 calling the Son "God" surprises, that is because we have failed to follow the author's clearly marked path to this point.

Yet God the Father not only names the Son "God" but also reports his interaction with God: the Son has "loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions" (Heb 1:9; Ps 45:7). Rowe explains,

> In the theology of Hebrews "God" is not collapsed into "Son" or "Jesus" any more than it excludes them. That is to say, "God" is sufficiently relational in its meaning to require of the reader nimbleness in thought, a movement between selfsameness and difference. To put it in terms of Hebrews, the Son can both be called *theos* and "have" a *theos*. [50]

The second citation of God speaking to the Son, Psalm 102:25-27 in Hebrews 1:10-12, foregrounds the Son's eternal, unchangeable divine being, which implies his divine rule. The simple "and" linking the two citations indicates that here too God speaks Scripture to the Son. After calling the Son "God" he now names him "Lord" (κύριε, *kyrie*), the Lord who created all: "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands" (Heb 1:10; cf. Ps 102:25). Unlike the cosmos that "will perish," the Son remains. The whole creation will roll up and be changed like a garment, "But you are the same, and your years will have no end" (Heb 1:11-12; cf. Ps 102:26-27). Unlike the angels whose being God can change, the Son is the God who gives being to all that is—and is himself not subject to change. As Bauckham observes, the citation in Hebrews 1:10-12 ascribes to the Son the eternal being of God: "Only as one who eternally pre-existed all things could he be the Creator of all things. Thus the sixth quotation begins with the Son's eternity before all things and ends with his eternity beyond all things." [51] The Son precedes, creates, and outlives the universe. Transcending the transience and change endemic to creatures, even angels, the Son is the eternal, immutable God. [52]

The third contrast, in 1:13-14, returns us to the event of the Son's enthronement. In 1:13 God extends an invitation to the Son that he never gave to any angel: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (cf. Ps 110:1). We have already seen that this scriptural address invites the Son, the incarnate Jesus, to sit on God's own throne, to enact the unique divine sovereignty over all things. In citing this passage here, the author concludes the catena's running contrast between the status of the Son and that of the angels. The author signals this contrast in both the introductory formula in Hebrews 1:13 ("And to which of the angels has he ever said") and the rhetorical question of 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" Since Psalm 110:1 opens with "The LORD says to my Lord," and in Hebrews 1:10 God has already addressed the Son as "Lord," we should understand God's address to the Son in 1:13 to assume and confirm his title "Lord." [53] In contrast to the Son's sovereignty, the angels are sent to serve those who are being saved. Thus 1:13-14 closes the catena on the note it opened with, the Son's enthronement in heaven.

In 1:5-6 God addresses the Son as the newly appointed universal Lord, and he orders the angels not merely to honor him but to worship him. In 1:7-12 God attests the mutability and servitude of the angels, and he acclaims the

permanence and sovereignty of the Son who is God and Lord. In 1:13-14 God invites the Son's kingly repose on the divine throne, a repose that sets the angels' status as servants in stark relief. Whatever else we might say about the role of angels in Hebrews 1:5-14, their status as servants offers a foil to the installation of the Son as supreme sovereign. Hence the "bread" of the catena asserts the Son's enthronement, and the "meat" both identifies this throne as God's own and identifies the Son as God himself. The first and last citations announce enthronement, and the middle comparison expounds the throne, as well as the being and acts of the one who alone may reign on it. [54]

It is also worth reiterating that the Son is repeatedly addressed *as Son* in this selection of scriptural speeches. In 1:5, Jesus' title "Son" receives twofold scriptural support. Then, in 1:7-8, the author contrasts God's speech about the angels with his speech to the Son. The progression of titles charted in the structure above does not seem haphazard. Just as the Son was already introduced as Son in 1:2-4, so he is twice designated Son at the beginning of the catena (1:5), and then God speaks to him as Son (1:8). In the two citations that follow, God designates the Son first "God," then "Lord" (1:8, 10). As James Swetnam observes, "This is of crucial significance. The two principal Old Testament designations for the divinity are here applied to the Son without qualification." [55] Further, we should conclude not merely that these scriptural addresses identify Jesus as divine, but that they do so as and because he is Son. [56] In the catena of 1:5-14, "Son" is a divine designation. By what right may the Son sit on the unique divine throne? By right of his being the one God and Lord, the one who made all things and endures beyond them, who rules forever, whom angels praise.

The Son's exaltation is indeed the vantage point of the catena, just as of the exordium. But from this vantage point the author surveys the Son's act of creation, transcendence of creation, rule over creation, and endless divine existence past this creation's end. [57] Jesus does indeed *become* superior to the angels, but this becoming depends on who and what he already is. The Son takes the divine throne as a man, but he may take it only because it belongs to him by—literally—divine right.

The divine Son's surprising discipline (Heb 5:8). In Hebrews 5:8 we read, "Although he is the Son [καίπερ ὢν υἱός, *kaiper ōn huios*], he learned obedience through what he suffered" (my translation). We should first note that Jesus is here designated "Son" during his earthly career. In this sense, Son is something Jesus is already, before his enthronement. [58] Further, this opening

concessive clause indicates it is surprising that this Son should learn obedience through suffering.

The plot thickens when we consider the close thematic parallels in Hebrews 2:10 and Hebrews 12:5-11. In the former, we read that "it was fitting" for God to "make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." In other words, Jesus' earthly sufferings were God's means of qualifying Jesus for saving office. In the latter, the author reminds us of "the exhortation that addresses you as sons" (12:5). In 12:5-6 he cites God's encouragement in Proverbs not to "regard lightly the discipline of the Lord" or "be weary when reproved by him," because "the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (cf. Prov 3:11-12). The following comment explains that in the discipline they are undergoing, God is treating the readers as sons: "For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Heb 12:7). Further, those who do not experience discipline "are illegitimate children and not sons" (12:8).

The background to this whole discussion is the persecution and other trials the readers have endured, and apparently are enduring (cf. 10:32-36). The author interprets these trials as God's fatherly training. Through their suffering and struggles they are learning to resist sin (12:4) and to persevere in faith and faithfulness (10:39). By analogy with human fatherhood, the author asserts that this discipline is not only necessary for their lasting good (12:9-11) but is intrinsic to what it means for them to be sons. All sons endure their fathers' discipline: no discipline, no sonship.

Why then would it be contrary to expectation in 5:8 for this Son, Jesus, to learn obedience through what he suffered? I submit that the parallel with 12:5-11 reveals a deeper divergence: the presuppositions of human sonship and Jesus' sonship are precisely opposite. What is definitive for them is unexpected for him. As such, 5:8 reasons *from* Jesus' divine sonship *to* the conditions and progression of the human life he assumed in the incarnation. The best explanation of why it is surprising that the Son learns obedience through divine discipline is that "Son" is a divine designation. [59]

The Son's eternality, which Melchizedek is made to resemble (Heb 7:3). In 7:1, after a pointed delay, the author launches his exposition of Melchizedek's priesthood. In 7:1-2 he summarizes some of the account of Melchizedek and Abraham's meeting in Gen 14:17-24 and reflects on Melchizedek's royal name and role. Then in 7:3 we read, "He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever." This verse and

its neighborhood provoke an ever-flowing stream of scholarly questions. My interest is chiefly in one: by saying that Melchizedek resembles the Son in that he has "neither beginning of days nor end of life," what does the author imply about the being of the Son? [60]

My answer begins with the word translated "resembling." We might more fully render this perfect middle-passive participle (ἀφωμοιωμένος, *aphōmoiōmenos*) as "made like" the Son or "having been made to resemble" the Son. Hebrews' point is not that Melchizedek just happens to resemble the Son of God, but that this commented-on feature of his existence has been patterned in advance, as it were, on the lately appearing Son. What is this feature? Properly eternal life, endless in both directions. I take this to refer to Melchizedek's literary profile rather than his personal ontology. [61] The author apparently reasons from Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, as well as from Scripture's silence regarding his birth and death, to the scriptural appearance of beginningless and endless existence, and hence abiding priesthood. But why does the author go so far out of his way to ascribe to Melchizedek a properly eternal existence, especially if this is true on a literary rather than an ontological plane? Because Melchizedek has been "made to resemble" the Son of God, and the Son possesses in fact what Melchizedek possesses only on paper. The Son is the model from which Melchizedek, the scriptural anticipation, derives. [62] Here in 7:3 it is not that the Son became like Melchizedek but that Melchizedek was made like the Son. [63]

If the author had intended merely to assert that Melchizedek, like Jesus, lacked Levitical descent, or even that Melchizedek's priesthood, like the Son's, is permanent, he could have saved himself much ink and papyrus. Instead, he hammers the point that Melchizedek's existence is like the Son's precisely in being properly eternal, a kind of life that only God has. [64] Here in 7:3, therefore, "Son of God" is a divine designation.

THE SON AS ONE OF

THE TRINITY

My thesis in this chapter is not merely that Hebrews uses "Son" to designate Jesus as God, but that the term designates his distinct mode of divine existence. "Son" not only identifies Jesus as divine but, as we will see below, distinguishes him from the Father and the Spirit. In other words, "Son" both identifies Jesus as God and implies something unique about his life as God. The evidence for this is twofold, arising both from how Hebrews elaborates Jesus' identity as Son and how it identifies the Father and Spirit as God.

First, regarding the Son, we briefly return to the two "essential predicates" of Hebrews 1:3a: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." In the previous section I accented the element of identification in these two assertions. The one who subsists as the outflow of God's glory and impress of his essence is himself God by nature. However, both predicates also imply derivation, "from-ness": light shines from a source; an impress derives from its mold. Hence these predicates assert both identity with God and relation to God, both sameness and distinction. [65] As many have argued, this is precisely the dialectic that, read with the Old Testament insistence on the oneness of God, gave rise to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. [66] It is not merely that trinitarian doctrine happens to coincide with such expressions as these. Instead, trinitarian doctrine is the consistent elaboration of the identity and relation, the sameness and distinction, that a passage like Hebrews 1:3a inscribes in the being of God.

The relation, distinction, and derivation side of this dialectic is reflected in the way the Son relates to the Father throughout Hebrews. While the Son is the self-revelation of God, it is "God" who has spoken "by his Son" (1:1-2). It is God who invites the incarnate Son to share his rule (1:3, 5, 13). It is God who prepares a body for the Son; God's is the will the Son came to do (10:5-10). In view of the way Hebrews identifies the Son as God, the primacy or ultimacy of the Father implied both in the essential predicates of 1:3 and in the Son's filial obedience in the economy should not be taken as distinguishing Jesus from God, but rather as reflecting a distinction within God: the personal differentiation of Father and Son. [67] The essential predicates of 1:3 require a relative or relational elaboration; the Son shares the essence of the Father as one distinct from the Father because he exists from the Father. Hebrews does not itself elaborate the grammatical and theological

implications of how it speaks of the Son as God and in relation to God. However, if we are to allow both elements in its theological discourse their full say, we must find a place for both unity and distinction, essence and relation, in our exegetical description. [68] In Hebrews, the Son's existence as God also includes relation to the Father.

Second, Hebrews also identifies the Father and Spirit as God. The most striking evidence for this is the way Father, Son, and Spirit all speak Scripture. [69] In its opening sentence, Hebrews identifies the writings we call the Old Testament as the speech of God: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets" (1:1). Yet in Hebrews, Father, Son, and Spirit all speak the words of Scripture, and that in a repeated triadic pattern. Many scholars recognize in Hebrews a large-scale tripartite structure with overlapping transitions, roughly 1:1–4:16, 4:14–10:25, and 10:19–13:25. [70] In the first two of these sections, "one finds a repeated rhythm in which God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are said to speak portions of Scripture in turn." [71] In the first section, God speaks to the Son the addresses cited in the catena: "You are my Son"; "I will be to him a Father"; "Your throne, O God"; and so on (1:5-13). The next specified speaker of Scripture is Jesus, who addresses God, his Father: "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise"; "I will put my trust in him"; and finally, perhaps broadening his audience, "Behold, I and the children God has given me" (Heb 2:12-13, citing Ps 22:22; Is 8:17, 18). Following this, the Holy Spirit speaks Psalm 95 to God's people: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts'" (Heb 3:7-11; Ps 95:7-11).

In the second section, God declares to Jesus not just Psalm 2:7 but also Psalm 110:4, "You are a priest forever" (see Heb 5:5-6). [72] Toward the climax of Hebrews' exposition of the Son's high-priestly sacrifice, the Son speaks Scripture to the Father: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me" (Heb 10:5-10; cf. Ps 40:6-8). Shortly afterward, the author reintroduces Jeremiah's new covenant promise as the speech of the Spirit, "and the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us," after which portions of Jeremiah 31:31-34 are cited (Heb 10:15-18).

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each speak Scripture as God. Even the words the Son speaks at his incarnation in 10:5-10 belong to that deposit of God's manifold, varied speech to his people. What God then spoke to his people through the psalmist is fulfilled, in the Son's incarnate economy, as the Son's speech to the Father. Further, it is theologically significant not only that the Father, Son, and

Spirit each speak the words of Scripture, but that they do so in a certain order, with a certain pattern of address. In each section, the Father speaks to the Son (1:5-13; 5:5-6), then the Son to the Father (2:12-13; 10:5-9), then the Spirit to God's people (3:7-11; 10:15-18). First are expounded the intra-divine, paternal and filial addresses of the Father and Son and the saving work that follows, then the Spirit propounds to God's people the pressing practical import of both. [73] From this pattern emerges not only the divine identity of Father, Son, and Spirit alike, but also the differentiated unity of the divine agency that accomplishes and applies salvation. [74]

Another confirmation of Hebrews' proto-trinitarian theology is found in its treatment of who believers fall away from. Just as apostates scorn the word of God (6:5) and re-crucify the Son (6:6), so they repudiate the gift of the Spirit in which they shared (6:4). Just as apostates face vengeance from the living God for trampling his Son underfoot, so also they outrage the Spirit of grace (10:29-31).

Therefore it is neither arbitrary nor unwarranted to identify either the God of Hebrews as the Trinity or this Son as one of the Trinity. Nor does either judgment presuppose that the author of Hebrews had an elaborate, conceptually developed doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, as Kavin Rowe points out, to speak of the Trinity here is "to reason inside the theological patterns required to understand the language used to speak about God" in Hebrews. [75]

One point I have presupposed in this section may profit from brief support before we conclude: naming God the Father in Hebrews. God is only explicitly referred to as Father twice in Hebrews, in 1:5 and 12:9. In 1:5, God declares that he will be Father to the Son in the words of 2 Samuel 7:14. I have asserted above—and will argue more fully in chapter four—that in Hebrews' account, God speaks these words to the Son at the Son's heavenly enthronement, and that they primarily function as the effectual speech-act that enthrones the Son. That is, when God speaks Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 to the Son, he instates the Son as Messiah, conferring on him the exercise of that office. But is that all that these statements entail for the relation between Father and Son? A firm answer awaits the conclusion of our argument. Here I simply suggest in advance that as the office of Messiah entails the exercise of divine prerogatives and presupposes Jesus' divine identity, so the Father-Son relationship enacted in the Son's enthronement reveals something intrinsic to the divine identity. In other words, "Father" and "Son" are not only roles adopted in time, but identities lived in eternity.

Further, it is arguable that "Father" is the name of God that Jesus confesses when he says, "I will tell of your name to my brothers" (Heb 2:12; Ps 22:22). An implicit reference to God as Father makes good sense in light of the programmatic familial language throughout 2: 10-18. The one who is Son enacts solidarity with his human siblings by becoming incarnate to save them. He becomes their "brother" (2:11, 17), gains them as his "children" (2:13), and welcomes them into his filial relationship with the Father (2:10, 12). In other words, the unique Son's conferral of sonship on the "many sons" (2:10) presupposes that the Son's Father becomes their Father. [76]

Moreover, the reference to God as "the Father of spirits" in 12:9 corroborates that "Father" designates one of the Trinity; the one who is Father of the Son is also, by creation, the Father not only of believers but of heavenly beings. Finally, it is arguable that Hebrews' use of "Son" as a divine designation virtually requires that "Father" be more than merely a relationship or role adopted in the economy. As Scott Mackie suggests concerning the essential predicates of 1:3a, "The Father's impress of his being upon the Son is also determinative for his own identity, as Jesus' Father." [77]

IDENTITY AND DISTINCTION

In the first section of this chapter we saw that, at many times and in many ways, Hebrews uses "Son" to identify Jesus as the God confessed in Israel's Scriptures: what God does, Jesus does; what God is, Jesus is. Hebrews introduces Jesus as Son in Hebrews 1:2 and immediately explicates his identity as Son in terms of his possessing God's unique divine being and unique divine rule (1:2b-4). In the following catena (1:5-14), Hebrews grounds this latter claim by calling on scriptural testimony to his receiving the worship due to God alone (1:6); his reign as God on God's throne (1:8-9); his divinely creative agency and eternal, unchanging life (1:10-12); and his invitation to rule on God's throne (1:13). All this God speaks in Scripture to the Son, calling the Son "God" and "Lord." The other two passages confirm this use of "Son" as a divine designation. As the divine Son, he surprisingly learned obedience through the educative discipline he endured (5:8). And, as the properly eternal one, the Son of God is the archetype on which Melchizedek's apparently unoriginate, unending existence is patterned (7:3).

"Son" not only designates Jesus as divine, it also distinguishes him from the Father and the Spirit, whom Hebrews also identifies as divine persons within the unity of the one God. The chief means by which Hebrews identifies Father, Son, and Spirit as three distinct divine subjects is by assigning to each a role as speaker of Scripture, as Scripture's promises and foreshadowings find embodied fulfillment in the incarnate economy of the Son. The Father addresses the Son, the Son responds to the Father, and the Spirit calls the believing community to hold fast the saving effects of the Son's incarnate acts. That "Son" designates a mode of divine existence distinct from that of the Father and Spirit is also implicit in the two essential predicates of 1:3a. Both not only identify the Son as possessor of the divine essence but also suggest that the Son exists from the Father as radiance from light and impress from original. Such conceptualities deposit us on trinitarian territory. While Hebrews does not articulate an explicit, conceptually ordered doctrine of the Trinity, its theological grammar is implicitly trinitarian: Hebrews both identifies the Son as God and distinguishes the Son from the Father and the Spirit.