Scholars in recent decades have recognized the complexity of the theology and the literary design of Hebrews 1:1–14. Some have observed the presence of chiastic structure in this passage. Others have proposed that there are literary and conceptual correlations between 1:1–4 and 1:5–14. For example, Lane suggests that there exists a synthetic parallelism between the two passages. Likewise, Meier argues that there is a general agreement between 1:1–4 and 1:5–14, even though the symmetry lacks one to one correspondence. These scholars have provided helpful insights for a better understanding of the structure and theology of Hebrews 1:1–14. However, they might have overlooked the possibility that the author of Hebrews may well have intended Heb 1:1–4 and 1:5–14 to be in a perfect symmetry with the idea of different stages of Christ's existence (i.e., exaltation, preexistence, and incarnation). I propose that Heb 1:1–14 is a chiastic structure, which may be illustrated as follows:

A. Function of the Son: God’s final spokesman (1:1–2a)
B. Son in his exaltation: heir of all things (1:2b)
C. Son in his preexistence: bearer of God’s nature, creator, and sustainer of the world (1:2c–3b)
D. Son in his incarnation: purifier of sins (1:3c)
E. Son in his exaltation: he has sat down at the right hand of God, with the result that he became superior to the angels (1:3d–4)


2 Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 22.

E'. Son in his exaltation: Because of the Father’s installment in the right hand, he is superior to the angels (1:5)
D'. Son in his incarnation: as the firstborn, he is superior to the angels (1:6)
C'. Son in his preexistence: the Son is superior to angels because he is God (1:7–12)
B'. Son in his exaltation: the Son is superior to the angels because the Father has exalted him in his right hand (1:13)
A'. Function of the angels: the Son is superior to the angels because the angels are the ministering spirits for the sons who will inherit salvation (1:14).

The analysis of 1:1–14 indicates that in 1:5–14 the author repeats and further elaborates the themes he introduced in the exordium (1:1–4) in an inverted order. In this proposed chiastic structure one can see that sections from A to E show why the Son is qualified to be the authority for speaking the final revelation of God. Then in section E' (1:5) there is a shift of thought from “God’s final revelation through the Son” to “the Son’s superiority to the angels,” which continues to end of the passage (A', 1:14). The author emphasizes why the Son is superior to the angels by employing the three stages of the Son, as he did with 1:1–4. In this essay I will demonstrate the validity of this newly proposed structure by comparing the conceptual and theological relationship in each corresponding section of the chiasm.

**Sections A (1:1–2a) and A' (1:14)**

According to the proposed chiastic structure, sections A (1:1–2a) and A' (1:14) are arranged in an inverted manner. These outer sections of the chiasm describe the function of the Son and of the angels.

**Section A (1:1–2a)**

In this beginning section the author sets forth the function of the Son as the final spokesperson for God. A careful examination of this section shows that it comprises of a

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4 I have observed this type of chiastic structure in other parts of the book of Hebrews. See Rhee, *Faith in Hebrews*, 102, 183, 232.

5 Lund asserts that in a chiastic structure the center is where the turning point takes place, and that a shift of thought in the center is continued to the end of the system. See Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in the Form and Function of Chiastic Structures* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1942; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 40–41.
single sentence. The main clause is, “In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son (1:2a),” which is modified by a participial clause “after having spoken to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways in the old” (P o l u m e r w k a i; P o l u t r o p w p a v a i o β ι ο λ a h v a n e τ o i p a t r a s i n e τ o i p r o f η a v i). 6 The phrase “in many portions (p o l u m e r w)” suggests that God’s speaking in the Old Testament was fragmented, coming in multiple segments or portions in different time. The term “in many ways” (p o l u t r o p w) suggests the diverse ways that God spoke through the prophets. 7 Both words speak of the progressive nature of God’s revelation which is completed in his Son. The modifiers, along with the main clause, clearly describe the function of the Son; the Son is the final spokesperson of God’s revelation. The idea of the function of the Son is further enforced by the qualitative use of an anarthrous noun υἱός, which emphasizes quality, nature, or essence of the noun. 8 It draws attention to the essential character of the one who is Son (i.e., by such a one who is the Son). 9 The point is that God has given the Son the authority to deliver the final revelation to us. It speaks of the Son’s role in bringing about God’s full and complete revelation in these last days.

Section A’ (1:14)

The function of the Son in section A (1:1–2a) is contrasted by that of the angels in the counterpart of the chiasm (Section A’; 1:14). While, on the one hand, the Son has the function of being the spokesman of God’s final revelation (A), the angels, on the other hand,

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6 The phrases “in many portions (p o l u m e r w)” and “in many ways” (p o l u t r o p w) are so closely related to each other that they may be considered synonyms. See David Alan Black, “Literary Artistry in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” Filologia Neotestamentaria 13 (1994): 45. Black suggests that the best equivalent for these two adverbs is “in fragmentary fashion.” See also Paul Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. W. Gasque (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 91.


8 Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 244.

9 Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 5.
merely have the role of ministering to those who will inherit salvation (A’). These two sections also correspond to each other by the concept of eschatology. In section A (1:1–2a) the idea of eschatology is expressed with the phrase “in these last days” (ἐπὶ ἐοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἁμερῶν τῶν). This idiomatic expression is used to designate the messianic age of fulfillment in the Old Testament (Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1 LXX). In Heb 1:2 the author uses it to refer to the period before the golden age, that is, the last age before the Lord Jesus will return (cf. Heb 9:26, 28). In A’ (v. 14) the concept of eschatology is described in terms of “those who will inherit salvation” (τούτων μετέχοντες κληρονομοί σωτηρίαν), which speaks of the final fulfillment that will be consummated at the second coming of Christ. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that sections A and A’ are the counterparts as suggested in the proposed chiastic structure.

Sections B (1:2b) and B’ (1:13)

As illustrated in the proposed chiastic structure, beginning from section B (1:2b) to section B’ (1:13) the counterparts of the chiasm are arranged with various stages of the Son’s existence. The author begins with the exaltation of the Son in sections B (1:2b) and B’ (1:13) The former speaks of the Son’s exalted status as the heir of all things, while the latter depicts the Son’s superiority to the angels in his exaltation.

Section B (1:2b)

Section B (1:2b) describes the idea of exaltation with a relative clause “whom he appointed heir of all things” (ὁ εὗρξεν κληρονομὸν πάντων). The expression is probably an allusion to Psa 2:8. This is evidenced by the author’s quotation of Psa 2:7 in 1:5. An examination of the concept of heir in Hebrews reveals explicitly and implicitly that it has

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11 Psalm 2:8 reads, “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession” (NASB).
something to do with the promise of God (k\l\ronom\g\omega\w, 1:4, 14; 6:12; 12:17; k\l\ronom\omega\-, 1:2; 6:17; 11:7; k\l\ronim\i\a, 9:15; 11:8). Lane considers that there is a literary connection between the statement in this verse and Gen 17:5 (i.e., whom he appointed heir of all things [Heb 1:2b]; I have appointed you the father of many nations [Gen 17:5]). From this he deduces that the appointing of Abraham as heir marks the beginning of redemptive history, and the appointment of the Son as the accomplishment of the work of redemption.\textsuperscript{12} As the finality of God’s revelation, the Son has accomplished the beginning of redemption and become the heir of all things. The inheritance was already inaugurated with the first Advent and will have the final fulfillment at the second coming of Christ (1:13–14; 6:17; 9:15).

Section B’ (1:13)

The aspect of the Son’s exaltation in section B (1:2b) is reiterated in its counterpart section (B’, 1:13) with a slightly different emphasis. In this verse the author brings in Psa 110:1 (109:1 LXX) to conclude the argument for the supremacy of the Son to the angels. In the early church Psa 110:1 was frequently applied to Christ to express the notion that Christ was exalted in the right hand of God.\textsuperscript{13} This verse is also alluded in other parts of Hebrews (1:3; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2) to indicate the enthronement of the Son. The thought of Christ’s exaltation in v. 13 also goes back to v. 2b in the exordium. God’s appointment of the Son as the heir of all things in v. 2b and God’s command to sit at his right hand in v. 13 correspond to each other with the theme of the enthronement and exaltation of the Son. These findings support the suggestion in the proposed chiastic structure that v. 2b (B) is the counterpart of v. 13 (B’) with the idea of Christ’s exaltation.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{12} Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 12.

Sections C (1:2c–3b) and C' (1:7–12)

After describing the Son from the standpoint of his exaltation (B and B'), the author then proceeds to emphasize his preexistent stage in sections C (1:2c–3b) and C' (1:7–12). These two sections are parallel to each other with the idea of the Son’s function as the creator and his attributes as God in his preexistent stage.

Section C (1:2c–3b)

What evidence is there to indicate that section C (1:2c–3b) refers to the preexistence of the Son? First, it may be demonstrated from the Son’s role as the mediator of the creation. Heb 1:2c reads, “through whom also he made the world” (diōkou|kai; ejpoivhsen tou; ai|w`na`). The word translated here as “world” is from ai|w`, which has the following range of meaning: (1) eternity, (2) time of the world, and (3) world equivalent to kovsmo~. In Hebrews its primary meaning has a temporal sense of either “age” (6:5; 9:26) or “forever” (1:8; 5:6; 6:5; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 9:26; 11:3; 13:8). However, here in this verse and 11:3, it has a spatial idea of the “world.” Moreover, the plural ai|w`na~ has the meaning of “worlds” or “spheres” (i.e., the entire universe). In this verse the author indicates that the Son is the agent through whom the whole universe came into existence.

Next, the idea of the Son’s preexistence can be shown from his nature. In 1:3a it is portrayed by the participial clause “being the radiance of His glory, the exact representation

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15 Ibid., 204.

16 For argument against this view, see Kenneth Schenck, “Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews,” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 66 (1997): 91–117. Schenck considers that the Son is the agent of the creation of the world, not in a literal, but a metaphorical sense. Recognizing the similarities of language between Hebrews and the Wisdom of Solomon/Philo, he concludes, “It is possible to see 1:2–3 as an implicit equating of the Son with the ultimate creative purpose and wisdom of God. Christ embodies God’s wisdom in all its fullness and is indeed the logos of God for creation, the ultimate reflection of his glory in the light of his wisdom for humanity” (p. 112). However, with this statement, he does not seem to deny the idea of the preexistence of Christ in Hebrews. He states, “It is clear that the author affirmed the pre-existence of Christ. We should probably not assume that this existence was any less real for the author than any other kind of existence. What seems certain is that the preexistent Christ only exists as a function of God.” (p. 115). Although Schenck does not see Jesus as the agent in creation in his preexistent state, he does seem to hold some form of preexistent stage in a metaphorical way. Despite the difference of opinion, Schenck at least supports my contention that section C (1:2c–3b) has to do with the preexistence of the Son.
of His nature” (ὡς απαγαγόμενος δυνατός και χαρακτήρ τῆς ουσίας άυτου).

The term χαρακτήρ has the meaning of a mark or impression on an object such as a coin. The idea is that the Son bears the very mark of God’s nature, “just as the image and superscription on a coin exactly correspond to the device on the die.” It speaks of the essential nature of Christ in his preexistent stage. The word απαγαγόμενος can have a passive meaning of “reflection” or an active meaning of “radiance.” If, on the one hand, the word is understood as meaning “reflection,” the interpretation of the phrase would be the glory of God manifested in the perfection of his manhood (i.e., in his incarnation). If, on the other hand, the word means “radiance,” then it would refer to the Son’s glory in his preexistent stage. It appears that the active sense is more likely to be what the author has in mind in this context because it is more consistent with the meaning of χαρακτήρ. Putting these terms together, it seems best to understand both as referring to the Son’s glorious nature in his preexistent stage, rather than the glory of God revealed in his incarnation.

Third, the Son’s preexistent stage can be seen from the idea that he is the sustainer of the world (1:3b). The verse begins with another participle (φέρων), which has the meaning of “carrying” or “bearing” in the sense of “sustaining.” The Son is not only the direct agent of the creation, but also the one who is holding (φέρων) the world together. While the participle in v. 3a speaks of a timeless preexistence of the Son with God even prior to the creation

**Footnotes:**

17 NASB translation.


22 Wilckens points out that these two statements are placed together intentionally to indicate that they are synonymous. His logic is that since God’s glory is his nature, the function of the Son expressed by απαγαγόμενος and χαρακτήρ must be the same (See U. Wilckens, “χαρακτήρ,” *TDNT*, 9:421. See also P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42 (footnote #13).

of the world, \( \text{θεοῦ} \) in v. 3b indicates that the Son’s function of sustaining the world had a beginning in the past.\(^{24}\) This observation allows one to see that, as with \( \text{γυναικών} \), the participial clause of \( \text{θεοῦ} \) also implies the preexistence of the Son.\(^{25}\)

**Section C’ (1:7–12)**

It is clear from section C that the Son is described as being the creator and sustainer of the world, and the one who possessed the attributes of God in his preexistent stage. In the counterpart of the chiasm (section C’, 1:7–12) these thoughts are further developed, which is accomplished by making a comparison between the Son and the angels.

In order to set forth the superiority of the Son to the angels in his attributes, the author introduces a quotation from Psa 45:6–7 (44:7–8 LXX) in vv. 8–9, and further elaborates it with another quotation from Psa 102:25–27 (101:26–28 LXX) in vv. 10–12. What stage of Christ’s existence do these verses refer to? Does the author have the preexistence or the exaltation in mind? Opinions are divided among scholars.\(^{26}\)

The following evidence suggests that Christ’s preexistence is in view. First, the address by God to his Son in v. 10, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the works of your hands” in v. 10 is a reminiscence of God’s act of creation in Genesis 1. This verse indicates that Christ is the creator as the preexistent Son. Second, the comparison of the permanent nature of the Son with the mutability of the creation in vv. 11–12 further elaborates the preexistence of the Son. In these verses the interchangeable use of


\(^{25}\) The present participle \( \text{θεοῦ} \) suggests that upholding has to do with an ongoing activity of the Son, which suggests that it involves not only support of the universe, but the carrying forward all things toward the fulfillment of God’s purpose (P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 45).

present, aorist, and future tenses implies that the author has the entire history of the creation in mind.\textsuperscript{27} However, the emphasis falls on the eternality and immutability of the Son from his preexistent stage.\textsuperscript{28} Third, the conjunction καὶ γίνοις v. 10 suggests that vv. 10–12 is a continuation of the thoughts that were expressed in vv. 8–9. For this reason it seems logical to regard that the phrase “forever and ever” (v. 8) includes the period of Christ’s preexistence. Although it does not exclude the exaltation of Christ, the emphasis certainly falls on the preexistent stage of Christ. Fourth, the word ἐριῳ (‘to anoint’) in v. 9 is a symbol of joyfulness in timeless eternity rather than anointing at the exaltation.\textsuperscript{29} The expression “oil of gladness” (ἐαἰὼν ἀγαλλιάζω) can be understood metaphorically as “oil, namely joy.”\textsuperscript{30} Meier sheds further insight by pointing out that the author does not describe the exaltation and enthronement in terms of anointing elsewhere in Hebrews.\textsuperscript{31}

A careful scrutiny of the terms and ideas in section C’ (vv. 7–12) reveals that it finds its counterpart in section C (vv. 2c–3b). Section C’ (1:7–12) speaks of the Son as the creator of the universe in his preexistent stage. The counter part (section C) also depicts the Son as the bearer of God’s nature, creator and sustainer of the universe in his preexistent stage. It seems clear that the author intentionally arranged vv. 7–12 (C) to agree with vv. 2c–3b(C’) to reinforce the Son’s eternal nature and his creative activities as the preexistent God.

\textsuperscript{27} Meier, “Symmetry and Theology,” 518. The author uses different tenses as follows: (aorist - ἐγεμείωσα - [v. 10]; present - εἰσίν [v. 10]; future - ἀπολύουσι [v. 10], παλαιώθονται [v. 11], ἐλεύηται; ἂλληγόνται [v. 12]).

\textsuperscript{28} In contrast to this view Schenck sees that in 1:10–12 Christ’s role as creator is not the main point, but the eternality of his throne. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that these verses “undoubtedly express the pre-existence of Christ” (Schenck, “Keeping his Appointment,” 113).

\textsuperscript{29} Meier, “Symmetry and Theology,” 515.

\textsuperscript{30} The genitive ἀγαλλιάζω (of gladness) can be taken as genitive of apposition. Wallace interprets this genitive as “the oil that produces gladness” (genitive of product) or “the oil produced by gladness (genitive of production). See Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 107.

\textsuperscript{31} Meier, “Symmetry and Theology,” 515. For the enthronement view see Schenck, “A Celebration of the Enthroned Son,” 474. Schenck argues that the word “anointing” in v. 9 echoes the royal title of “Christ” (i.e., the anointed one), and that it is language of enthronement.
Sections D (1:3c) and D’ (1:6)

In sections D (1:3c) and D’ (1:6) the author shifts the focus from the preexistence of the Son to his incarnate stage. Meier, illustrating the different stages of the Son’s existence with a ring structure, asserts that the reference to the Son’s purification of sin (1:3c) finds no correlation in the catena of the seven Old Testament quotations. However, I contend that its counterpart is in 1:6 as pointed out in the proposed chiastic structure.

Section D (1:3c)

After describing the Son’s preexistent stage by two participial clauses (section C), the author employs another participial clause “after making purification of sins” (κακαρίσμον των αξαματισμένον) in 1:3c to express the idea of Christ’s incarnation. This third participial clause is the summary of the accomplishment of Jesus in his earthly life; he had made purification of sins through the sacrificial death on the cross. In the LXX the verbal form κακαρίσμω and its cognates have to do with the removal of the defilement of sin, either in connection with the altar or the people (cf. Exod 29:37; 30:10; Lev 16:19, 30). After the author introduced this conceptual idea in this verse with “purification” (κακαρίσμον), he further develops it in latter parts of the book (9:13, 14, 22, 23; 10:2, 22). With this term the author also anticipates the theme of Christ’s high priesthood which he explicates throughout Hebrews (e.g., 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:1; 7:26; 8:1).

Section D’ (1:6)

In order to determine whether D’ (1:6) can be considered the counterpart of D (1:3c), one needs to consider the time reference to God’s bringing the firstborn into the world. Does it

32 Meier, “Symmetry and Theology,” 523. For Meier’s ring structure see Meier, “Structure and Theology in Hebrews 1:1–14,” 189. I have made it easier to see the correspondence between 1:1–4 and 1:5–14 by bringing together the points Meier made in these two articles. See Rhee, Faith in Hebrews, 70.

33 Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 15.
refer to the Parousia (second advent), the exaltation, or the incarnation of Christ?

Answering this question requires the consideration of the following issues.

“Again” (p a v i n). Westcott, who holds the Parousia view, believes that it is more natural to connect the adverb “again” (p a v i n) with the verb “bring” (e i s ā g a g h). This allows him to understand v. 6 as “when he again brings the firstborn into the world.” For this reason he maintains that the introduction of the quotation refers to the second coming of Christ.

However, an examination of the term “again” goes against Westcott’s assertion. The Greek word for “again” (p a v i n) is used 10 times in Hebrews. When OT quotations are not used, it always has a temporal sense (5:12, 6:1, 6). But when it is accompanied by quotations, it functions as a formula for introduction (1:5; 2:13 [twice]; 4:5, 7). Thus it seems reasonable to consider the use of the adverb in v. 6 as a connective for introducing an additional quotation. With this interpretation, one can relate p a v i n (again) to the verb l e g e i. In other words, v. 6 is the continuation of what God has said in v. 5 (i.e., again he says, when he brings the firstborn into the world). The use of “again” (p a v i n) militates against the Parousia view.

“Firstborn” (p r w t o v o k o ~). What is the time reference to God’s bringing “the firstborn” in v. 6? Ellingworth argues that just as Christ’s supremacy was expressed with

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36 P. E. Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 58; Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 56. Ellingworth considers that Attridge holds the view of “exaltation.” Apparently, this is a mistake (see Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 117). Although Attridge mentions this view, he has difficulty with it. He specifically states, “warrants for such an interpretation are weak” (p. 56).

37 In v. 6 the author introduces another quotation, the source of which is ambiguous. It is possible that he has Psa 97:7 (96:7 LXX) in mind (MT: worship him, all you gods; LXX: Let all his angels worship him). But it is more likely that he is quoting from Deut 32:43 [LXX] by replacing “sons of God” with “angels of God.” For a more detailed explanation of the source of the quotation see Craig R. Koester, Hebrews, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 193; Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 118–19; F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, rev. ed., 56–57.

38 See Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 26.
“firstborn from the dead” (πρωτόκο~ ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν) in Col 1:18 and Rev 1:5, the author of Hebrews also confirms his conviction about Christ’s superiority in his exaltation with this term. Thus his understanding of v. 6a is that God has brought Christ from the dead into the glory of the heavenly assembly.39 Ellingworth sees that the time reference of the firstborn is clearly at the exaltation.40

In response to this view it may be noted that in v. 6 the author uses the term “firstborn” alone without a modifier (i.e., there is no addition like “from the dead” as in Col 1:18 and Rev. 1:5).41 Since the word is used absolutely, it does not necessarily refer to either resurrection or exaltation of Christ. Rather, it appears that the term corresponds to the earlier use of the “Son,” which is used without a modifier (1:2).42 If this observation is correct, then the author may be thinking of the preexistent Son of God with this term, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, who revealed God’s revelation partially in the prophets, and fully in his incarnation.43 The designation of Christ as the “firstborn” may refer to the eternal divine sonship of Christ.44 This leads to the inference that the time line of God’s bringing the Son would probably be the incarnation of Christ.

“Into the world” (εἰς τὸν ὄικουμενον). The word ὄικουμενον occurs only twice in Hebrews (1:6 and 2:5). The proponents of the exaltation view interpret “the world” in v. 6 as the heavenly world. For example, Lane asserts that ὄικουμενον in v. 6 is the heavenly world

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39 Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 118.

40 Koester, also holding this view, asserts that in v. 6 the idea of “firstborn” is associated with Christ’s exaltation because it further develops the idea of divine begetting in v. 5. He states that Jesus, as the firstborn from the dead, is uniquely the heir of all things (Koester, Hebrews, 192; See also Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 26–27).


42 Ibid.


44 Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 57. P. E. Hughes holds a similar view. He states that the designation “firstborn” belongs to Christ both as the eternal Son and also as the incarnate Redeemer, but the primary emphasis is on the incarnation of the Son (P. E. Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 60). F. F. Bruce also holds bringing in the “firstborn” has to do with the preexistence of Christ, but he sees that the event in v. 6 takes place at the enthronement and exaltation. He resolves this apparent difficulty by insisting that “it is not so much a question of his being brought into the world as of his being introduced to it as the Son of God” (See F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, rev. ed., 56–57).
that the Son entered at his ascension because the term is qualified as “the world to come in 2:5. However, the way the author uses the word suggests that the meaning of each occurrence is probably different. It may be noted that oĩkouμενη is used without a modifier in 1:6, while in 2:5 it is followed by a modifier μενλούσαν (i.e., the world which is about to come). With absence of a modifier, oĩkouμενη in v. 6 may not denote the heavenly world, but the earthly one.

In summary, the above evidence suggests that God’s bringing the firstborn is more likely to have taken place at the incarnation of Christ. In the proposed chiastic structure v. 6 (D) corresponds to vv. 3d–4 (D'): as the firstborn Son in his preexistence, he came to the world for the purification of our sins.

Sections E (1:3d–4) and E' (1:5)

Finally, in sections E (1:3d–4) and E' (1:5), the author returns to the discussion of the exalted stage of the Son. According to the proposed structure, these sections are the center of the chiasm, in which the main point of the passage is highlighted. In both sections the exaltation is expressed with the Son’s enthronement and his superiority to the angels.

Section E (1:3d–4)

The incarnation of the Son (i.e., after making the purification of sins, 1:3c) naturally leads to the exaltation (i.e., he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, 1:3d). This verse is an allusion to Psa 110:1, which is specifically quoted in 1:13 and alluded in other parts of the epistle (8:1; 10:12; 12:2). The phrase “sitting at the right hand” stands for the symbol of

45 Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 27. See also Koester, Hebrews, 192; Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 118. Schenck, “A Celebration of the Enthroned Son,” 478–79.

46 Michaelis, “prwtov τοτε~,” 6:880. Schenck’s understanding of oĩkouμενη in 1:6 as “the heavenly world to come” as in 2:5 seems to have difficulty in reconciling with the exaltation view.

47 In this verse the author does not mention the resurrection of Christ. In Hebrews the word “resurrection” (ανάστασι~) occurs only twice (6:2; 11:35), which speak of the resurrection of the believers. The reference to Christ’s resurrection is alluded only once in 13:20 with the expression “bringing again from the dead.” Apparently, the resurrection is implied in exaltation.
power and honor. The author implies that, with the fulfillment of the psalm by Jesus, the messianic age has begun and the Son has a share of the glory and power of the Father.\(^{48}\) The addition of the modifiers “majesty” (megalws uwh) and “on high” (ein uy hj oij~) intensifies the Son’s supreme exaltation without compromising the rank and rule of God the Father.\(^ {49}\)

The exaltation of the Son is further elucidated by another participle genomeno~ (having become) in v. 4. The word genomeno~ is an adverbial participle expressing the idea of result. The outcome of the Son’s exaltation is the inheritance of more excellent name than the angels. The comparison between the Son and the angels is emphasized with terms such as “so much . . . than (or as)” (tosouvtw/. . . o{w), “better” (kreivtw), and “more excellent” (diaforwvnterwn). By employing these words, the author introduces the theme of superiority of the Son to the angels, which he further develops in 1:5–14 and in 2:5–18.

Section E’ (1:5)

The theme of the Son’s superiority to the angels continues in section E’ (v. 5). In this verse the author quotes two passages from the Old Testament (Psa 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14[1 Chr 17:13]). An important issue in these two quotations is the question as to when the Son was begotten.\(^ {50}\) The following evidence suggests that the quotations in v. 5 are more likely to refer to the exaltation of Christ.\(^ {51}\) First, the conjunction “for” (gavr) in v. 5 is a further elaboration of the idea mentioned in E (vv. 3d–4). For this reason, it seems logical to understand that the author uses the two quotations to confirm the exaltation of Christ. Second, the author’s use of Psa. 2:7 along with Psa 110:4 in 5:5–6 indicates that “today” in v. 5 (E’)


\(^ {49}\) Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 16.

\(^ {50}\) For different views on this issue see Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 113. Ellingworth lists six different views: (1) eternal generation of the Son; (2) birth of Jesus, (3) incarnation of Jesus; (4) baptism of Jesus; (5) resurrection; (6) exaltation.

\(^ {51}\) The following commentators also hold view of Christ’s exaltation. Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 25–26; Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 113–14; F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, rev. ed., 54; G. H. Guthrie, Hebrews, 68–69; P. E. Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 54–55.
should be understood in term of the exaltation. It appears that these two quotations are brought together to imply that the day Christ was begotten as the Son was the same occasion that he was appointed as the high priest. In other words God’s begetting of the Son has to do with the enthronement of the Son at the exaltation. This leads to the inference that the quotation of Psa 2:7 in 1:5 refers to Christ’s exaltation. The quotation of 2 Sam 7:14 is a repetition of the content of Psa 2:7 in different phrases. This is supported by the use of the verb εἶπεν only once in v. 5 in quoting the two Old Testament passages. With the adverb “again” (πάλιν), the author indicates that the second quotation is closer to Psa 2:7 than the one that follows in v. 6. The above evidence shows that the quotations of E’ (1:5) speaks of the exaltation of Christ as with section E (1:3d–4). Both sections of the center of chiasm are parallel to each other with the theme of the Son’s exaltation and his superiority to the angels.

Conclusion

The analysis of the structure and Christology of Hebrews 1:1–14 reveals that the author of Hebrews employed a very carefully designed chiasm to emphasize the three stages of Christ’s existence (i.e., exaltation, preexistence, incarnation). This study shows that the use of chiasm is not limited to 1:1–4, but extends to 1:5–14. The investigation also demonstrates that the agreement between 1:1–4 and 1:5–14 is not just general as some scholars assert, but much more specific. Both passages are designed in a perfect symmetry with each other with Christological implications. These aspects of Christology are crucial for the author because it is the basis for exhorting the readers to continue with faith in God. For this reason he introduces the three stages of Christ’s existence in 1:1–4, repeats the ideas artistically in 1:5–

52 F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, rev. ed., 54.

53 Meier, “Symmetry and Theology,” 506. Meier suggests that 2 Sam 7:14 is included merely to bring the number of quotations in the catena up to the desired seven (p. 507).

54 Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 114.
14 in an inverted order, and further delineates them in other parts of Hebrews (e.g., preexistence: 13:8; incarnation: 2:5–18, 5:7–8; 12:2–3; exaltation: 5:5–6, 9, 8:1, 12:2–3, 13:12) to encourage his audience not to forsake Christ, who is the author and perfecter of their faith. Recognizing the presence of the chiastic structure also enables one to solve the difficult issue of God’s bringing the first-born into the world, as we have observed in Heb 1:6. For the author of Hebrews the literary device of chiasm is a vehicle by which he conveys his teaching to his audience. Therefore, one must pay close attention to various literary devices the author employs to have a better comprehension of the message of Hebrews.