# *Hebrews 11:17-19*, a Hermeneutical Analysis from the Perspective of *Hebrews*' Author Reference to the Old Testament

**Delia Cristina PETREANU**

*Cet article propose une étude de cas sur un fragment du Nouveau Testament avec le but de construire une analyse herméneutique (par exemple les méthodes et les principes herméneutiques) du point de vue orthodoxe, en observant les manières dans lesquelles l'auteur se réfère à l'Ancien Testament. L'étude se concentre sur trois termes clés, μονογενής, σπέρμα et παραβολή, considérés comme déterminants pour comprendre le fragment nouveau-testamentaire Héb. 11:17-19. Ces termes sont analysés dans leur contexte biblique et ponctuellement dans les écrits des Pères de l'Église, culte de l'Église et dans les commentaires modernes. Un aperçu du texte étudié montre l'accent sur μονογενής (11,17) comme un mot-clé par rapport à quoi 11:18 est explicatif et 11:19 est un effet. La façon créative d'aborder le texte autoritaire de l'Ancien Testament, en prenant la liberté de citation ou allusion, en supprimant le fragment cité ou l'allusion du contexte initial et en le plaçant dans un contexte lié à l'interprétation en clé christologique, en plus, la voie de citation considérant traditions textuelles multiples, le principal problème pour la citation étant la valeur théologique d'un terme, et encore l'unité et la continuité entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament sur des termes spécifiques et l'interprétation d'un texte par un autre représentent quelques principes herméneutiques observés. Theôria comme la méthode herméneutique utilisé par l'auteur nouveau-testamentaire dans l'interprétation de l'événement ancien-testamentaire et la typologie / allégorie / parabole comme des moyens d'expression de cela sont à noter.*

*Mots clés: herméneutique biblique orthodoxe, principe herméneutique, theorie, μονογενής, σπέρμα, παραβολή.*

## Introduction

The need for systematization and giving shape to an orthodox biblical hermeneutics[1] seems to be a today necessity mainly for a dialog with critical-

[1] Prof. Savvas Agouridis discusses premises of an orthodox hermeneutics and Rev. Prof. Constantin Coman refers to them and continues this topic in works like *Erminia Duhului* and *Sfânta Scriptură şi ermineutica biblică ortodoxă*. Among them are: the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, understandable through the divine-human communion, hence hypostatical union of divine and human



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historical method[2] and with contemporaneity in general. An extraordinary pool of information concerning hermeneutical principles and methods can be extracted from studying the ways New Testament authors approach the Old Testament or Fathers of the Church approach the Scriptures. Continuity between the Holy Scriptures, on one hand, and on the other, between them and the Scriptures of the Church Fathers, who show divine inspiration of the same quality[3], is to be stated.

Hence, this article shows a case study on a New Testament fragment with the aim of constructing a hermeneutical analysis from an orthodox perspective by observing the ways the New Testament author refers to the Old Testament (e. g. by citing or alluding with the purpose of giving a new meaning) and extracting hermeneutical principles and methods. The study concentrates on three key terms, *μονογενής*, *σπέρμα* and *παραβολή*, considered determinative for the understanding of the whole fragment, Hebr. 11:17-19. These terms are observed in their Scriptural context and punctually in Fathers of the Church writings, Church cult and modern commentaries.

The letter to the Hebrews as a wider context for the chosen fragment is surrounded by question marks regarding the author[4] or time of writing[5]. However,

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natures in Christ perspective, the experience of Godhead as "an essential gnoseological and hermeneutical concept", the Holy Spirit as "the gnoselogical and hermeneutical key", communitarian-ecclesial and personal-ascetical criterions, the Church as the "final hermeneutical guideline", the Holy Liturgy as "essential premise", "the personal and conscientious human subject" in relation with God such as the Church, Scriptures, Tradition and Liturgy are seen through this relationship perspective and the Saint as "final theological and hermeneutical criterion" (Pr. conf. dr. Constantin Coman, *Erminia Duhului. Texte fundamentale pentru o ermineutică duhovnicească*, Editura Bizantină, 2002, p. 13. 15. 30-32. Pr. prof. dr. Constantin Coman, „Sfânta Scriptură şi ermineutica biblică ortodoxă", *Studii Teologice*, seria III, 5 [2009], nr. 3, p. 52. 48-49).

[2] Some orthodox biblical studies' authors like Prof. Savvas Agouridis or Rev. Prof. John Breck believe there is a complementarity between the critical-historical method and the patristic one (Pr. conf. Dr. Constantin Coman, *Erminia Duhului*, p. 328. Pr. prof. John Breck, *Puterea Cuvântului în Biserica dreptmăritoare*, trad. Monica E. Herghelegiu, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 100-102). Others show rather a moderate view like Rev. Prof. Constantin Coman who states orthodox theology can bring to surface a specific biblical hermeneutics "as an alternative or complementary solution to Western exegetical school" (Pr. conf. Dr. Constantin Coman, *Erminia Duhului*, p. 9).

[3] Rev. Prof. John Breck differentiates qualitatively the inspiration of the Bible's authors from the patristic ones, speaking of *revealing* and *anamnestic* inspiration (Pr. prof. John Breck, *Puterea Cuvântului în Biserica dreptmăritoare*, trad. Monica E. Herghelegiu, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 109-110). However, we align to the position of those who assert one inspiration for both Holy Scripture and patristic writers. As such, Rev. Prof. Constantin Coman claims both the Holy Scripture and Tradition are of equal authority (Pr. prof. dr. Constantin Coman, „Sfânta Scriptură şi ermineutica biblică ortodoxă", p. 42). The same is ascertained by Prof. Georgios Martzelos: "Concordant with orthodox theology, divine inspiration itself, which characterizes the Scripture, characterizes also the writings of the Church Fathers" (Prof. dr. Georgios Martzelos, *Sfinţii Părinţi şi problematica teologică*, trad. pr. Cristian-Emil Chivu, studiu introd. arhid. Gheorghe V. Holbea, Editura Bizantină, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 28).

[4] The different from the common beginning of New Testament epistles in Hebrews letter, which lacks greeting formula, the name of the author and those addressed, as well as the elevated Greek language abundant in rhetorical procedures or Hebr. 2:3 which seems to contradict Gal. 1:11-12 (the Gospel received by St. Ap. Paul through direct revelation) question the Pauline paternity of this



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the modern commentators consideration of a probable Hellenistic Jew author from the second generation of Christians based on the fact "none of his numerous quotations from the Old Testament depend on the Hebrew text" might be inaccurate[6]. Rather such an approach is more equilibrate: "Greek and Hebrew language study showed Hebrews frequently follows [but not in every case – my addition] Septuagint which sometimes differs from the Masoretic text"[7]. Our case study argues on a dependence of Hebrews' author on the Hebrew text rather than Septuagint, although discussion is made over an allusion to, not quoting of an Old Testament text.

At last, but not least is the theological importance of the issue in Hebr. 11:17-19. This fragment stands up as a model of belief in resurrection[8], a cornerstone of Christian belief (cf. 1Co 15:17.20; Matthew 22:31-32//Mark 12:26-27//Luke 20:37-38; Acts 2:24.30-32); the point the author is making here is to be seen through an Christological hermeneutical key, what he actually asserts being the Resurrection of Christ.

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writing (D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, *Introducere în Noul Testament*, ed. 2, trad. Dinu Moga, Editura Făclia, 2007, p. 686. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36, Doubleday, New York, 1974, p. 43). Beginning with the second century A.D., Hebrews was attributed to St. Ap. Paul (cf. also Hebrews position after Romans in second century manuscript $P^{46}$), but generally in the fourth century A.D. both Eastern and Western Christianity considered Pauline authorship for Hebrews. Although question marks were raised by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the sixteenth, but mostly nineteenth century A.D. authors rejected Pauline authorship for this epistle (Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 42. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990, p. 14-20). Nevertheless, modern orthodox commentators consider the ideas from Hebrews pertain to St. Apostle Paul, but the style of writing designates one of his collaborators (Pr. prof. dr. Constantin Corniţescu, *Studiul biblic al Noului Testament*, partea a II-a, Universitatea din Bucureşti, 1995, curs dactilografiat, p. 113).

[5] Although a range of possible dating of Hebrews is generally given between 60-100 A.D., the time of writing of this epistle seems to gravitate around 70 A.D., with literary reasons for dating it before year 70 (D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, *Introducere în Noul Testament*, p. 697. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 21-22).

[6] The great familiarity of the Hebrews' author with the Jewish-Hellenistic milieu is to be asserted from his elegant style of writing, his usage of rather Septuagint than the Hebrew text, his reference to Hellenistic models of education (5:11-14) (Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 59-60). Nonetheless, the fact he quotes after Septuagint ("The form in which the Old Testament is quoted throughout the epistle is regularly that of the Septuagint" - F.F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 26) does not complete the image on his profile, his way of alluding to the Hebrew text, as considered by this article, bringing supplementary information too.

[7] Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 35.

[8] In Romans, an undisputed Pauline epistle, can be made the connection between the Christians' belief in resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 4:24-25) and the belief of Abraham, *the father of us all* (Rom 4:16 NKJV) *who believe* (Rom 4:11 NKJV) in *God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did* (Rom 4:17 NKJV). Both Romans and Hebrews show Abraham as a model of belief in resurrection, but whereas in Romans the sacrifice issue does not explicitly come up in relation to Abraham and the underlined fact is Abraham's strong belief in God's promise, in Hebrews the connection between sacrifice and resurrection is made clearer. Another issue is to notice the coherence between Romans-Corinthians and Hebrews and supplementary interpretation in Hebrews, showing both an intra-New Testament coherence and a stratified interpretation.



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Hebr. 11:17-19 deals with the Old Testament episode of the sacrifice of Abraham's son of promise, Isaac. Both Romans and Hebrews make reference to the main issue of Abraham's Old Testament cycle of narratives, the divine promise of the son[9]. The fact Abraham is tested by God to offer his only son, the son of the divine promise, and shows no hesitation, fully believing in God, emphasizes exactly this eternal promise or its fulfillment as the fruit of his belief arrived at its climax. In fact it is the divine promise which can be considered the initial, historical sense of Isaac offering. Hence, we will start from this initial Old Testament sense and we will study the interpretation that the Hebrews' author gives us.

**The New Testament text and its context**

[17]Πίστει *προσενήνοχεν* Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ *πειραζόμενος* καὶ **τὸν μονογενῆ** προσέφερεν, ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος [18]πρὸς ὃν ἐλαλήθη ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεταί σοι **σπέρμα** [19]λογισάμενος ὅτι καὶ *ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν δυνατὸς ὁ θεός*, ὅθεν αὐτὸν καὶ **ἐν παραβολῇ** ἐκομίσατο. (NA27)

A first observation would be Greek critical text (NA27)[10] and Byzantine text (BYZ)[11] are identical for this chosen fragment which means at this point no different levels of interpretation are to be discussed inside the Greek text.

Then, when searching for translation of the three key terms, μονογενής, σπέρμα and παραβολή, we find different variants of translation: *his only begotten son*, *seed*, *figure/figurative sense* (KJV, NKJVS), *his only begotten son*, *descendants*, *type* (NAS), *his only son*, *descendants*, *figuratively speaking* (RSV, NRSV), (*son) fils unique*, *postérité*, *symbole* (FBJ, TOB), *cel sîngur născut*, *sămînţă*, *pildă* (1688 Romanian Bible), *cel unul născut*, *sămânţă*, *pildă* (1914 Romanian Bible), *singurul lui fiu*, *o sămînţă*, *ca înviat din morţi* (Cornilescu's Bible), *singurul său născut*,

[9] The promise of the son is the second part of the promise God made to the patriarchs beginning with Abraham, promise that is not immediately fulfilled by God (Gen. 12:1-3, esp. v. 2; Gen. 15: 5-6 cf. 1Co. 15: 40-41. 47-49 – descendants, as many as the stars, which are called to resurrection; Gen. 17: 2. 4-7. 16. 19. 21; Gen. 18: 10. 14; Gen. 21:2; Gen. 22: 17-18 cf. Rom. 4: 18-22 and Hebr. 11:11-12).

[10] Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece Editio XXVII (NA27), eds. Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland (Critical Apparatus is elaborated by Kurt and Barbara Aland), 1993 (c. 1979), Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung. Inside the manuscript tradition some differences could be noted. For Hebr. 11:17 manuscripts show transposition in the fragment προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος and the old Papyrus 46 (cca. 200 A.D.) has only προσενήνοχεν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος. NA27 text is supported among others by ℵ 01 (sec. IV), A 02 (sec. V) and m (Majority text, including koine Byzantine text). The lack of name Ἀβραὰμ in some manuscripts ($p^{46}$ Ψ 330 2005 $sy^{h}$ *Chr*) and its fluctuating position in others conveys to the fact this might be the oldest reading. While Hebr. 11:18 does not show any variance in the manuscript tradition, 11:19 has two words replacement, ἐγείρειν and δυνατὸς reading (NA27) being supported by papirus 46, ℵ, original D (*Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece Editio XXVII (NA27)*, p. 581. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 47B, Word Books Publisher, Dallas, Texas, 1991, p. 343).

[11] Whereas the critical text usually prefers the lection from the earliest manuscripts and is scientifically constructed, the BYZ text is rather functional in Church cult and has sometimes interpretative glosses in the attempt to clarify the text.



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*urmaşii*, *prefigurare* (Bartolomeu Anania's Bible), *fiul său unul născut*, *urmaş*, *pildă* (2008 Synodal Bible). Probably a literal translation solution is preferable (e.g. 1914 Romanian Bible) leaving to exegesis to reveal these terms function.

When first approaching the whole fragment, Hebr. 11:17-19, 11:18 can be seen as an emphatic part[12] referring to the promised son and Abraham's descendants (for some translations) or Descendant which the author places within the core of his discourse. Hence, we may notice that the emphatic aspect of the Old Testament narrative is once more underlined in the New Testament's interpretative text, this fact showing a connection between the two Testaments. Nevertheless, an insight to this text shows an emphasis on μονογενής (11:17) as a key term in rapport to which 11:18 is explicatory[13] and 11:19 is an effect.

Regarding the context for Hebr. 11:17-19, Abraham's belief episode gets the largest space in the whole chapter 11; from v. 8 to v.19 four sections introduced by πίστις refer to Abraham and offer an interpretation of the Old Testament events through a stratified typology quite obvious in what concerns the promised land, last level being an eschatological one, the heavenly land (11:16). However, the apparent sense in the text regarding the promised son is the historical one[14]. It is for us to differentiate between the promises received in a historical sense, as Isaac is the historical promised son, and yet not fully received promises, as the spiritual ones that come with the Incarnation of the Only Begotten Son of God (*μονογενής*), the future goods which are made accessible in earthly lifetime to the believers in Christ through seeing (ὁράω in 11:13). It is in the Son promised by God we reach resurrection and take part to the divine goods in *the city of the living God* (12:22 NKJV).

If we look at the whole chapter 11 through a typological key, the chaining of events described in their chronological order but also selectively shows the action of God in history and centrality of Christological event, the Sacrifice and Resurrection being emphasized as the source for believers' reaching of perfection (11:40), *city of the living God* (12:22), unshaken Kingdom (12:28). Hebr. 11:17-19 gets a central position inside chapter 11, being flanked by the pattern Sacrifice, Resurrection, Baptism, Theosis[15] and the term μονογενής is emphatic.

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[12] We may notice that Hebrews' author makes a sort of "emphatic loop" by starting to discuss about Isaac's offering (11:17), then returns to the divine promise of the son (Isaac) (11:18), and lastly, he motivates the divine will's fulfillment by Abraham through his strong belief in God's power to bring dead to life (11:19).

[13] In fact this „translates" a similar relationship between yahid/the only begotten (Gen. 22:2) and the son of divine promise (Gen. 21:12), but also brings a higher level of interpretation.

[14] There is a crescendo in the Hebrews letter from a Son (1:2) to the Son, already apparent in the first chapter; in 11:17-19 there is a veiled saying/parable about the Son, being understood in it the chapters asserting His dignity of High Priest forever and His effective Sacrifice once for all.

[15] The first one mentioned after the world's creation is Abel as a type of Christ, but also as a type the Sacrifice, then Enoch, type of Crist as well as type of Resurrection, Noah, another type of Christ and the salvation through water in the Ark/Church as a type of Baptism; the patriarchs' era mostly represented by Abraham has an emphasis on believers' heavenly city whose maker is God (11:10) and the core of this fragment refers typologically to the promised Son and His Sacrifice and



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**Hebr. 11:17 and Gen. 22:1-2**

Evr. 11:17 (Greek critical text - NA27 = Byz): Πίστει προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν, ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος

Gen. 22:1-2 (LXX): „καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα ὁ θεὸς ἐπείραζεν τὸν Αβρααμ καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν Αβρααμ Αβρααμ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐγώ καὶ εἶπεν λαβὲ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἠγάπησας τὸν Ισαακ καὶ πορεύθητι εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν καὶ ἀνένεγκον αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ εἰς ὁλοκάρπωσιν ἐφ᾽ ἓν τῶν ὀρέων ὧν ἄν σοι εἴπω"

In Hebr. 11:17 we find an allusion to the Old Testament event of Isaac offering. It is probable that Hebrews' author intention with this allusion was preparing the grounds for a new contextualization and reconceptualization that we acknowledge in 11:19. Two terms draw attention in connection with the Gen. 22: 1-18 episode, πειράζω and προσφέρω (with two occurrences)[16]. The verb πειράζω is used in Gen. 22:1 (LXX), with the corresponding Hebrew נסה (MT), a Piel in the third person singular, having the meaning God is testing/tempting Abraham. The second term, προσφέρω, does not appear in Gen. 22:2. It is used a synonymous which may put an accent on the meaning of lifting up of the offering ἀναφέρω (LXX) and in Hebrew עלה (MT), an imperative Hiphil in the third person singular with the same meaning.

The verse 22:1 is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where it is said God has tested a person. Hence, the Hebrew term shows how is that person and the difficulty of the try, but eventually the successful passing of the test[17]. The word "please" is not a usual part from a commandment of God, the aspect showing the heavy burden this try exercises on Abraham. The characterizing of Isaac is summing up the whole wonderful history of the son of promise and shows Isaac as the crowing of Abraham's hopes and the son who receives all the parental love[18].

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Resurrection (11:17-19); then the pattern is retaken: Moses as a type of Christ, Pasha as type of the Sacrifice and Resurrection of Jesus, passing through the Red See of Baptism and the end of the chapter reference to believers' perfection (11:40) explained as the unshaken Kingdom of God (12:28).

[16] Προσφέρειν, to offer, has a sacrificial meaning, and this sacrifice is regarded in 11:17 "from the perspective of Abraham's intention to comply with the solemn command and its effect". The perfect tense προσενήνοχεν, *offered*, shows the sacrifice as it has been accomplished because of Abraham intention to fulfill the command. Nevertheless, the imperfect προσέφερεν, *tried to offer*, in v. 17b, shows the sacrifice did not actually happened, being interrupted by God's intervention. W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (vol.47B), Word Biblical Commentary, Word Books Publisher, Dallas Texas, 1994, p. 361.

[17] Cf. 1 Kings, 10:1; Dan. 1:12.14; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2.16 – when God tests Israel by hunger and thirst in wilderness; Deut. 13:4 – through false prophets; Jud. 2:22; 3:1.14 – through foreign oppression; Exod. 16:4; Deut. 8:2 - for revealing if God's commandments are kept in hearts; Deut. 8:2.16 – for humbleness; Hebr. 12:5.11. G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (vol. 2), Word Biblical Commentary, Word Books Publisher, Dallas Texas, 1994, p. 103-104. Abraham's testing represents a common motif in Akedah tradition. W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*(vol.47B), *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 361.

[18] G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (vol. 2), Word Biblical Commentary, p. 104.



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The touching and repeated formulations are calling for Abraham's fatherly affection in all its deepness "for the right hand of the father to delay in sacrificing the son as long as the memory of love is awake, [and] the whole army of flesh fights against the belief of the spirit", says Origen[19]. St. John Chrysostom underlines that God did not tempt Abraham because He was not aware of what Abraham will do, but took this action also to show a model of belief for those who love God from those days to these ones on. God's calling for Abraham is immediately followed by his answer: *Here I am*, showing the eagerness of his response[20]. Indeed, Abraham's belief as a model seems to be also one of the Hebrews author intentions, by offering the largest space to Abraham in his Hebr. 11 related to belief's crucial importance discourse (11:8-19).

The purpose of the offering Abraham has to bring could also be related to the fact "in his old age he bounded himself so much to *the son of promise*, his Isaac, that his love for God had been losing its fullness. In order to his love for God become *the keystone* of his life, Abraham has had to bring sacrifice: to slay his beloved son. When this act has interiorly been accomplished, then Isaac's death became useless: he could remain with his father"[21].

Origen noticed also that Abraham first receives God's commandment to sacrifice Isaac, then is been told to climb the mountain. Hence the physical climbing becomes an interior one, a fight between the thought of the divine will and that of the only son's love, "between the love for God and the love for flesh, the thanksgiving for the present ones and the waiting for the future ones". Abraham was sent "into a high land", was spiritually "lifted up through belief, to leave the earthly ones and get to the ones from up high" and became ready to receive a theophany.[22] Clement from Alexandria says too: "because of his occupying with high philosophy,… of those moving in heavens, he was named Abraham which is: father who deals with the ones from up high. Later he looked up and saw there, spiritually, the Son…or a glorified angel, or saw God in other way, superior to the creation and the whole order from the world"; this is why he has received a new name which means "knowing the Unique and Only God"[23].

In respect to Gen. 22:2 reference from Hebr. 11:17, two differences are to be noted between the Hebrew and Greek traditions, which reflect themselves in

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[19] Origen, *Omilii, comentarii şi adnotări la Geneză*, stud. introd., trad. şi note Adrian Muraru, Polirom, 2oo6, p. 295.

[20] Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Facere.(II)*, XLVII (Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Omilii la Facere*, PSB 22, traducere, introducere, indici şi note de Pr. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1989, p. 147).

[21] Arhimandritul Sofronie, *Vom vedea pe Dumnezeu precum este*, trad. din limba rusă de Ierom. Rafail (Noica), Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 355.

[22] Origen, *Omilii..*, p. 297.

[23] Clement Alexandrinul, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Stromatele*, Părinţi şi Scriitori Bisericeşti 5, trad., introd., note şi indici Pr. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 315. For Origen, the angel who speaks from heavens to Abraham preventing the sacrifice of Isaac from actually happening is in fact the Son of God before Incarnation. Origen, *Omilii..*, p. 305.403.



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translations[24]. However, the most significant one for the discussion about Hebrews 11, 17-19 refers to *yahid* and *agapetos*: אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ (MT), *the only begotten/only/unique son whom you love*, but τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἠγάπησας (LXX), *the beloved one whom you have loved*[25]. Both terms, μονογενής and ἀγαπητός, represent New Testament and later on, Church Tradition Christological terms, but the important issue here is that in alluding to Gen. 22 episode, the Hebrews' author seems to prefer the Hebrew tradition by using the term μονογενής in Hebr. 11:17. This choice may have to do with the theological context and main stake of Hebrews which stands in both Jesus sacrifice and His priestly office. By so choosing, the Hebrew's author directs the interpretation of v. 17 to the Promised Descendant and His Resurrection (vv. 18, 19). Hence, the unity and continuity of the two Testaments is to be once again noticed. The Hebrews' author takes out from the Old Testament's pool, with respect to the Abraham's sacrifice episode, two ideas, common to both Hebrew and Greek tradition, the testing and the offering, but selects the Hebrew tradition in order to characterize the son of promise and the purpose of this selection seems to be for sustaining a precise hermeneutical point of view.

By its translation, Vulgate seems to sustain μονογενής as a reference to Christ for both John and 1 John's occurrences and Hebrews': for all occurrences of the term in Luke, Vulgate translates by *unicus*, while for those in John, 1 John and Hebrews it translates by *unigenitus*[26].

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[24] Some translations follow the Hebrew text (e.g. KJV, RSV, TOB, FBJ, Synodal Bible, Cornilescu's Bible) while others the Septuagint (1688's Bible, 1914's Bible) or mixe the variants (Bartolomeu Anania's Bible).

[25] The other difference refers to the place meant for the sacrifice אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה, *the land of Moriah*, in the Hebrew text, whereas *εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν ὑψηλὴν*, *the high land*, in the Greek one. Although not alluded to in Hebr. 11:17-19, this aspect also has its prophetic value. The only other occurrence of Moriah in the Hebrew Bible is 2 Chron. 3:1: בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה, though this time it is said *the mountain of Moriah*, signifying the place in Jerusalem where the house of Yahweh, the Temple is built. The place of Jerusalem temple as the place of our Lord Jesus Sacrifice is to be understood in the terms from John 2:19: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν and 2:21: ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔλεγεν περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, with the consequence mentioned in John 2:22*:* ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν*,* ... οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτου... ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς. *The high land* from LXX or terram Visionis, *land of seeing*, from Vulgate (Gen. 22:2) may convey to the fact that, by fulfilling God's will, Abraham is spiritually climbing and eventually is having a theophany. In the biblical thinking, mountain is an appropriate place for encountering God (Gen. 22:14) as Mount Sinai is the place of God's revelation to Israel (Exod. 19) and as the Jerusalem Temple constructed on Mount Zion (Ps. 48:2-3) [or Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1) ] is. (G. J. Wenham, *Genesis*., p. 104-106). Nevertheless, the place of God's revelation to His people is to be understood in His Incarnated Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: ὁ ἑωρακὼς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα (John 14:9) because μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο (John 1:18).

[26] Some commentators do not agree with a translation of μονογενής by *only begotten*, as English versions (e.g. KJV, NKJV, NAS) of the Bible often have, claiming that such translations are based upon the presumed etymology of μονογενής from μονος (only) and γενναω (to beget, father, procreate) instead of the correct γενος (kind, sort, class), as asserted by lexicographers. A probable dependence of these translations on Jerome's Vugate, which has a substitution of unigenitus for the Old Latin's (Old Latin part of manuscript D – Codex Bezae -) unicus in six of the nine New



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When coming to μονογενής, dictionaries and lexicons give two principal meanings, "being the only one of its kind within a specific relationship, one and only, only… of children", being the only son or daughter, and another meaning referring "to being the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind) of something that is the only example of its category". The significance of "only" is considered the most general one, applicable to all occurrences, and the association of υἱός μονογενής is undoubtedly designated for Jesus Christ[27]. Nonetheless, this association is absent in two of John's occurrences of the term in NA27, or in one if referring to BYZ, the Christological meaning still remaining[28]. This aspect makes room for μονογενής in Hebr. 11:17 with such a usage.

The interesting remark that St. Ap. John calls υἱός only Lord Jesus Christ, while Christians are called τέκνα θεοῦ (John 1:12; 11:52; 1John 3:1. 2. 10; 5:2), as "an illuminated and easily remembered formula which was taken up into the baptismal

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Testament occurrences (John, 1John and Hebrews) is postulated. This substitution for the occurrences referring to Christ and to Isaac as typos of Christ is considered etymologically erroneous, being simply based upon theological considerations. Doug Kutilek, *An Inductive Study of the Use of Monogenes in the New Testament*, www.middletownbiblechurch.org/sonship/monogene.htm accessed at 3/30/2013. It is probably the right time to ascertain that at least biblical words such as μονογενής which become what we call "technical terms" cannot be reduced only to a general linguistic meaning. Especially these words, if not all biblical words, are to be seen as part of a biblical language which pertains to shared to men divine realities, overwhelming human capacity of understanding and speaking of them. It is human direct participation to these realities (1Co. 2:9 ἃ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὖς οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἃ ἡτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν), through receiving the Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν 1Co. 2:12) and becoming πνευματικός ἄνθρωπος (1Co. 2:15) and having the mind of Christ (1Co. 2:16), that makes someone able to produce and speak of biblical language (1Co. 2:13). We are speaking of "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) which contain an inexhaustible meaning and perhaps an easier way to refer to them would be to consider these words as icons of realities. Needless to say the belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures, seen as synergic work between God and men, is an essential starting point with respect to any discussion regarding the biblical language.

[27] Nevertheless, in BDAG, Hebr. 11:17 falls into the first category of meaning, as referring to Isaac, the only son of Abraham, together with the occurrences from Luke. There are, rather, the occurrences from John and 1John those who fall into the second category, as pertaining to Jesus Christ, being underlined the "only begotten one", the "uniquely divine as God's Son" aspect. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, third edition (BDAG), revised and edited by Federick William Danker, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2000, item 497. In Kittel's dictionary, the same two main meanings for the term are mentioned and Hebr. 11:17 is considered together with Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38, signifying the only child, in the same category being included also the usage outside the New Testament (e.g. Jdg.11:34; Sol. Ps. 18:4 in LXX). Into the second meaning fall the occurrences from John and 1John. Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds), translator and editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, D. Litt., D.D., WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, p. 737-739.

[28] NA generally prefers the oldest reading, which in John 1:14. 18 does not have υἱός μονογενής. The Christological title seems, though, clear in John 1:14 because of the fatherly origin: μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός (NA27=BYZ=GOC). However, in John 1:18, BYZ and GOC texts feel the need to replace θεὸς from μονογενὴς θεὸς (NA27) with υἱός, resulting the above mentioned μονογενὴς υἱός characteristic for Jesus Christ.



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confession and ever since has formed an inalienable part of the creed of the Church", sustains the Christological title designation for υἱός μονογενής viewed in the unique terms of the relationship and closest intimacy between God the Father and God the Son, The Only Begotten[29]. But the unique relationship between the Son and the Father is also reflected by the μονογενής occurrence in Hebr. 11:17.19, which place the ideas of sacrifice of the only begotten son and his resurrection ἐν παραβολῇ to the Christological event. In fact, John's Gospel shows more elaboration, theological deepening of the same concept (especially in John 3:16), but it is for Hebrews to make the turning point.

The plainest meaning for μονογενής seems to be in John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9: being the Only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, through "His sending into the world" is both "the supreme proof of God's love for the world" and the Mediator of "life and salvation from perdition", life being given only in Him (John 5:26)[30].

Nevertheless, Hebrews reflects the same truth through the priestly perspective. The ideas of sacrifice of the only begotten and his resurrection in typos have to be put in junction with the whole discourse of Hebrews about the Great Priest chosen by God the Father among men (Hebr. 5:1.4-5), but Who, at the same time, is the eternal Son of God (cf. Ps. 2: 7 cited in Hebr. 1:5; 5:5). This is the reason for His priesthood being unique and everlasting (Hebr. 7:24; cf. Ps. 110:4 cited in Hebr. 5:6; 7:17) as well as His intercession for us; hence He saves us *to the uttermost* (Hebr. 7:25). He offered up Himself once for all (Hebr. 7:27), being without any blemish, to God the Father (Hebr. 9:14) *to put away sin* (Hebr. 9:26) and appeared for us in the presence of God the Father (Hebr. 9:24), and sat down at His right hand (Hebr. 1:3; 10:12; cf. Ps. 110:1). Through His Incarnation the Son of God became our Mediator in order for us to *receive the promise of the eternal inheritance* (Hebr. 9:15).

Similarly with the understanding of ὁ λόγος in John's Gospel as pertaining to the Lord Christ with reference to His divine nature, μονογενὴς may be understood: "In fact, Λογος, Θεος, Μονογενης at least imply one and the same subject who is to be understood as pre-existent, beyond time and beyond the world"[31]. The Christian writers and Fathers of the Church have used μονογενὴς as an Christological title regarding Christ's divinity beginning punctually with the 2nd and 3rd, but mainly in the 4th century A.D.[32]. The main context for using μονογενὴς is the supreme event

[29] Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 739-740.

[30] Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 740.

[31] Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I (From the Apostolic Age to Calcedon (451)), translated by John Bowden, A.R. Mowbray &Co. Limited, second edition (1975), p. 28.

[32] μονογενὴς is present in some letters of St. Ignatius of Antiochia, however the fragments containing the term are considered interpolations from the 4th cent. A.D. (cf. Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei*, vol. 1: Canonul apostolic al primelor secole, Deisis / Stavropoleos, Sibiu / Bucureşti, 2008, p. 428. 431. 435. 448-449. 452. 460. 466. 468). From the 2nd cent. cf. St. Justin's *Dialog* 98 (*Apologeţi de limbă greacă*, PSB 2, trad., introd., note şi indice de pr. prof. T. Bodogae, pr. prof. Olimp Căciulă, pr. prof. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1980, p. 216). From the 3rd cent. cf.



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of kenosis of the Son and Word of God, the Incarnation. However, the term is also used in relation to other economic events of Lord Jesus, the Cross and Resurrection, the Ascension, the Second Coming and the Final Judgment, and the reference is always made considering the Godhead of the Only Son of God, uniquely born from the Only God the Father[33]. Particularly, the association between μονογενὴς and the Cross and Resurrection is interesting for this study, being found, for example, at St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Cyril of Alexandria and in cult, at the Great Saturday's Vespers. Referring to the Lord Jesus' Sacrifice, St. Gregory speaks of the "blood of the Only Begotten" and of "those [aspects] regarding the First Nature pertaining to the Great Sacrifice…which [expiates] the entire world and forever"[34]. Similarly, St. Cyril of Jerusalem refers to the salvation "the blood of the Only Begotten" brings to the world and of "the Resurrection of the Only Begotten"[35]. St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks of "the Only Begotten", "God by nature and from God the Father" Who after His Incarnation entered once for good in the Holy of Holies offering us an eternal salvation (Hebr. 7:27; 9:12)[36]. Referring to Isaac's sacrifice biblical episode St. Cyril shows "the meanings of history conduct us… to Christ mystery". Abraham was learned "as from a belief in the future things or resurrection from the dead… of the most revered and great mystery of the Only Begotten's Incarnation". Abraham knew from the experience itself "the above nature and unspeakable love of God and Father for us, *Who did not spare His Own Son… but gave Him up for us all* (Rm. 8:32 - RSV), those justified by belief and considered sons of…

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Clement of Alexandria's *The Instructor* and *The Stromata* (Clement Alexandrinul, *Scrieri. Partea întâia*, PSB 4, trad., introd., note şi indici de pr. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 59. 171 and Clement Alexandrinul, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Stromatele*, PSB 5, trad., cuvânt înainte, note şi indici de pr. D. Feicoru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 107. 485. 487) and Origen's *Against Celsus* (Origen, *Scrieri alese. Partea a patra. Contra lui Celsus*, studiu introd., trad. şi note de pr. prof. T. Bodogae, PSB 9, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1984, p. 426. 431. 455. 486. 499. 505. 513. 515-517. 561), his *Commentary to John's Gospel* (Origen, *Comentariu la Evanghelia după Ioan. Cartea I*, trad., note şi studii de Cristian Bădiliţă, Institutul European, Iaşi, 1995, p. 67. 74-75), *Of Prayer* (Origien, *Scrieri alese. Partea a doua. Exegeze la Noul Testament. Despre Rugăciune. Filocalia*, PSB 7, trad. de pr. prof. T. Bodogae, pr. prof. Nicolae Neaga şi Zorica Laţcu, strudiu introd. şi note de pr. prof. T. Bodogae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 245) and *Dialogs with Heraclides* (Origen, *Scrieri alese. Partea a treia. Peri arhon (Despre principii). Convorbiri cu Heraclide. Exortaţie la martiriu*, PSB 8, trad. T. Bodogae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 324. 344). From the 4th cent. the examples become numerous at various Fathers of the Church, among them mentioning St. Gregory of Nazianz, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Cyril of Alexandria etc.

[33] Cf. Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, trad., introd. şi note pr. dr. acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Anastasia, Bucureşti, 1993, p. 88 and Sf. Chiril la Ierusalimului, *Cateheze*, trad. şi note pr. prof. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2003, p. 53. 145. 153.

[34] Sf. Grigorie Teologul, *Cuvânt la naşterea cea după trup a Mântuitorului Iisus Hristos. Cuvânt la Sfintele Paşti. Panegiric (Cuvânt de laudă) la Sfântul Vasile cel Mare*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2009, p. 43. 57.

[35] Sf. Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze*, p. 189. 238.

[36] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, PSB 39, trad., introd. şi note pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 399-400.



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Abraham"[37]. St. Cyril shows the same understanding also when commenting upon Jn. 8:56. Abraham has seen the day of Christ, which is the time of His Incarnation and Sacrifice, because Isaac has been shown as a prefiguration of the Only Begotten[38]. Finally, in cult, at the Holy and Great Saturday's Vespers served together with St. Basil's the Great Liturgy is said: "This day has been mysteriously prefigured by the great Moses… God blessed the seventh day, the resting day, when the Only Begotten, the Son of God, rested from all His works through… bodily death resting Himself, and to Whom He was again returning, through Resurrection, He has given to us the eternal life"[39].

Hence, from a history of Church perspective, an Christological designation for the term μονογενὴς was not fully apparent until Christological dogmas, although it is probable that St. Ap. John's texts have constituted the basis for the part of the Church Creed regarding υἱός μονογενὴς and for the related discussions at the first centuries' Ecumenical Councils. Nevertheless, such an understanding could still have been existed at the Hebrews' author and also as part of his intention when using μονογενὴς. The other inference so far would be the Hebrews' author used μονογενὴς in continuity with יָחִיד Hebrew tradition (MT).

Modern commentators rarely discuss μονογενὴς in Hebr. 11:17. However, when discussing it, some admit the term has not as source the Septuagint, but Akedah Jewish tradition that contains the "only son" motif is considered as source[40]. Nonetheless, others assert the source for μονογενὴς is the Hebrew biblical text[41].

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[37] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, p. 95-96. Rev. Prof. Stăniloae also comments Abraham has had "the belief in the Incarnation of the Only Begotten Son of God Who, giving Himself to death will raise from the dead . God was prefiguring the future history in anterior types". Abraham is "the type of God the Father Who actually gives His Son as sacrifice. Abraham learns from experience the strength of the heavenly Father to sacrifice His Own Son out of love for us". (n. 161-162, p. 95-96).

[38] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a patra. Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, PSB 41, trad., introd. şi note pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 649.

[39] *Triodul*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 671. „Τὴν σήμερον μυστικῶς, ὁ μέγας Μωϋσῆς προδιετυποῦτο λέγων· Καὶ εὐλόγησεν ὁ Θεός, τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἑβδόμην· τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ εὐλογημένον Σάββατον· αὕτη ἐστίν ἡ τῆς καταπαύσεως ἡμέρα, ἐν ᾗ κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὁ Μονογενὴς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, διὰ τῆς κατὰ τὸν θάνατον οἰκονομίας, τῇ σαρκὶ σαββατίσας, καὶ εἰς ὃ ἦν, πάλιν ἐπανελθών, διὰ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, ἐδωρήσατο ἡμῖν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον, ὡς μόνος ἀγαθὸς καὶ φιλάνθρωπος." *Τριῴδιον κατανυκτικον*, Εκδόσεις ΦΩΣ, Αθῆναι, 1983, p. 487. Also in the liturgical hymn Ὁ Μονογενὴς, atributed to emperor Justinian (6th cent. A.D.), Μονογενὴς refers to the Godhead of Christ and the term is used in the context of the Incarnation, Sacrifice and Resurrection of the Only Begotten. [39] Pr. prof. dr. Ene Branişte, *Liturgica specială pentru facultăţile de teologie*, ed. 4, Editura Oferta, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 214. Ὁ Μονογενὴς Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀθάνατος ὑπάρχων καὶ καταδεξάμενος διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν σαρκωθῆναι ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας, ἀτρέπτως ἐνανθρωπήσας, σταυρωθείς τε, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός, θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας, εἷς ὢν τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος, συνδοξαζόμενος τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, σῶσον ἡμᾶς.

[40] W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, p. 361.

[41] Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KEC13, Van den Hoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, [12]1966, p. 401.



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**Hebr. 11:18 and Gen. 21:12**

Hebr. 11:18 has an exact, but incomplete quotation from Gen. 21:12, with no difference between the Hebrew and Greek biblical texts. The key term is זֶרַע, a common noun in the absolute state, masculine, singular, but also with a collective meaning, or the Greek equivalent, σπέρμα, a neutral common noun. The term σπέρμα is used 217 times in LXX in most cases translating זֶרַע, half of the occurrences representing the basic meaning. However, σπέρμα has more occurrences than זֶרַע, LXX translating more or less freely at some point[42]. Nevertheless, for this study the interesting meaning of this term is the figurative one. Concerning σπέρμα, a motif regarding salvation and blessing can get contour when observing biblical usages of the term[43]. Expressions like "the seed of Abraham", "seed of Israel", "seed of David" are common, with the meaning of "generations", however, special usage like זֶרַע אֱלֹהִים, *the seed of God* (Mal. 2:15) can be encountered[44]. Qumran texts also mostly have the figurative meaning of the term, "offspring/-s", and the connection with the divine promises and choosing by God. The Rabbinic tradition also presents this usage which sometimes pertains to King Messiah[45]. New Testament occurrences parallel and develop the Old Testament ones. In the Synoptics the term can be found only in Mk. 12:19-22 and in Lk.1:55. Expressions like "seed of Abraham", "seed of David" appear in Acts 3:25; 7:5-6; 13:23. Johannine texts have only the figurative sense and in Jn. 7:42, "the seed of David" is Christ. Special usage is encountered in 1Jn. 3:9, "the seed of God", and Rev. 12:17 uses the term in a context sending to Christian martyrs. With two exceptions, Pauline letters also use σπέρμα in a figurative sense, references being made to "the seed of Abraham", "the seed of Isaac" (Rm. 9:7), "the seed of David" (Rm. 1:3). However, "the seed of Abraham" is most frequently encountered (Rm. 4:13.16.18; 9:7; 11:1; 2Co. 11:22; Gal. 3:29) and typological correlations with Christ (Gal. 3:16.19) and hence with the New Testament community (Rm. 9:8; Gal. 3:29) are to be made. The pastoral letters have one occurrence, "the seed of David" (2Tim. 2:8), while Hebrews have three (an uncommon usage in 11:11 and the common "seed of Abraham" in 2:16 and "seed of Isaac" in 11:18)[46].

However, concerning the hermeneutical analysis of Hebr. 11:18, the continuity betweenזֶרַע and σπέρμα traditions, hence the continuity between Old and New Testament on a specific term is to be noted. The first biblical occurrence of זֶרַע / σπέρμα, Gen. 3:15, associates God's promise for salvation and has been understood by Orthodox Tradition as the first messianic prophecy. As St. Irenaeus

[42] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, p. 538-540.

[43] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, p. 541.

[44] This last usage could be corellated with expressins like „just seed" (Jer. 2:21) or „pure seed" (Lev. 11:37), but a better connection would be with „saint seed" (Ezr. 9:2) in relation with the deuteronomic theology of „choosing" (Deut. 7:6). Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, p. 542.

[45] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, p. 543.

[46] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, p. 545.



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of Lyon points out (*Against heresies* 3:23:7), the women whose Seed/Christ crushed the head of the snake/devil is Virgin Mary, the New Eve[47]. Other Genesis' occurrences are in continuity with 3:15 delineating a tradition that associates זֶרַע / σπέρμα and the messianic value (4:25; 9:9; 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:5.18; 17:2.4-10.19; 21:12; 22:17-18; 26:3-4. 24; 28:13; 32:12; 35:12; 48:4). The rest of Pentateuch makes reference to Genesis' occurrences as foundation of the belief and expectations of the chosen people. Nm. 24:7 uses the term in the context of a messianic prophecy, while 25:13 adds the dimension of everlasting priesthood. 1Chr. 16:13 clearly states choosing by God association of the term, while 1Chr. 17:11 refers to "the seed of David" and to the messianic prophecy from 2Sam. 7:14. Ezr. 9:2 brings in the dimension of holiness. The messianic line of the "seed of David" or "seed of Abraham", "seed of Jacob/Israel" is developed in Psalms (Pss. 18:51; 89:5.29.36 or 22:23; 105:6). If until now the prophetic messianic line conveys to the human nature of Christ, the occurrence from Mal 2:15[48] could convey to His divine nature or to the theosis of those in Christ. Expressions like "seed of Jacob/Israel" or "seed of Abraham" are encountered in Isa., Jer. and Ezek. Texts like Isa. 44:3[49] continue the messianic direction of the term. Other texts (Isa. 54:3; 65:9; 66:22) add the dimension of inheritance from God. Hence, in the Old Testament occurrences three main directions are formed, one regards the generations and the other two are the prophetic messianic and prophetic for those in Christ. New Testament occurrences continue these three directions. While texts like Acts 13:23, Jn. 7:42; Rm. 1:3; Gal. 3:16.19; 2Tim. 2:8; Hebr. 11:18 refer to Christ, Acts 3:25; Rm. 9:7-8; Gal. 3:29; 1Jn. 3:9; Rev. 12:17 refer to Christians. However, the passages from Gal. 3:16.19 are the turning point texts where the messianic aspect of the term clearly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Regarding how the Tradition understood this aspect, an example would be St. Irenaeus who connects the messianic prophecy from Gen. 3:15 with Gal. 4:4 and 3:19. "The One Who was to be born from the Virgin after Adam resemblance" and Who was to crush that one "who from the beginning made us prisoners in Adam" is the Seed from Gal. 3:19, the Son sent by God at the fulfillment of time and born of a woman (Gal. 4:4).

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[47] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Volume 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus,* Revised and Chronologically arranged with brief prefaces and occasional notes by A. Cleveland Coxe, Christian Literature Publishing Co., New York, 1885, p. 457. Refering to Gal. 3:16 Theodoret asserts that blessing of all gentiles in the given by God Abraham's seed should be understood considering „the seed is Christ the Lord" – cf. M.J. Edwards (ed.), *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT 8, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1999, p. 44.

[48] MT differs from LXX which separates *seed* from *God*. While the Hebrew text has: *What else seeks one than seed of God?* LXX understands *What else than seed seeks God?*

[49] By conferring Isa. 44:3(JPS) *I will pour My spirit upon thy seed* with Isa. 53:10(JPS) *his soul would offer itself in restitution, that he might see his seed* it can be noticed that from the prophetic messianic line of development of the term, a direction regarding those in Christ is formed.



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Besides Hebr. 11:18, Gen. 21:12 is also earlier quoted in Rm. 9:7, σπέρμα being translated either by *seed* (e.g. KJV, 1914's Bible) or by *offspring* (e. g. RSV, Anania's Bible). Although this study pleads for a literal translation, *seed*, in both cases, the context of Rm. 9:7 (Rm. 9:6, the previous assertion from Rm. 9:7, Rm. 9:8) conveys to the collective meaning of the term. Also a clear connection can be noticed between these texts and Gal. 3:29 (cf. 4:28), which brings a supplementary hermeneutical level. However, Hebr. 11:18 occurrence of the term is rather connected with that from Gal. 3:16 which emphasizes a Christological understanding for *the Seed*: τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ **τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ**. **οὐ λέγει**· καὶ **τοῖς σπέρμασιν**, ὡς ἐπὶ **πολλῶν** ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐφ᾽ **ἑνός**· καὶ **τῷ σπέρματί σου**, ὅς ἐστιν **Χριστός** (NA27).

Hence, Hebr. 11:17-18 place into a logical proximity the terms μονογενὴς and σπέρμα, which translates the relationship between the two Old Testament Hebrew terms יָחִיד and זֶרַע, whose common ground is the messianic value referred in the New Testament to Christ. Regarding the hermeneutical analysis, the continuity between the Old and New Testament and the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament text, referred to as authoritative, but in a creative way, are again noticed.

**Hebr. 11:19 and Gen. 22:1-18**

While the Old Testament interpretation has grown in vv. 17 and 18, v. 19 points out the hermeneutical core of Isaac's sacrifice narrative, the climax of Abraham's narrative cycle. V. 19 alludes to the whole fragment, Gen. 22:1-18, and from the hermeneutical principles' point of view, the Hebrews' author uses a reading in Christological key, decontextualizing the Old Testament text and putting it into the context of belief in resurrection. If the beginning of this study referred to the initial, historical sense of the Old Testament fragment, the everlasting divine promise, but also the fulfillment of this promise as fruit of a belief that reaches its climax by the test of losing the most precious son given by God, now we get to the New Testament interpretative sense through resurrection reality perspective.

The hermeneutical key term in Hebr. 11:19 is παραβολή and continuity with the Hebrew term מָשָׁל is to be noticed. LXX generally translates (with only two exceptions) מָשָׁל by παραβολή, and the basic meaning is "resemblance", the term being found in comparisons. From the popular sense in Proverbs, the term evolves in Wisdom literature, a nuance of hidden meaning being found (e.g. Sir. 39:3 αἰνίγματα παραβολῶν or Sir. 47:15 παραβολαὶ αἰνιγμάτων). Then, the term is used in extended comparisons (2Sam. 12:14), and Isa. 5 vineyard parable is not only an extended comparison, but also has a hidden meaning. Especially this type of hidden parable is preferred in prophetic discourse and is continued in the Synoptics' use of the term. Connections between מָשָׁל / παραβολή and forms of allegory can be found in Ezek. 17:2; 24:3 and the term is correlated with divine revelation (cf. Nm. 23:7. 18; 24:3. 15. 20-23 and later on, the appocaliptic literature which uses the term in the context of divine revelation regarding eshathologic aspects - 4Ezr. 4:21. 42. 50;



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5:40). מָשָׁל is used by Rabbinic literature in both parables and allegories[50]. The 48 occurrences of παραβολή in the Synoptics are in continuity with Old Testament and Rabbinic literature usage of the term. However, the 2 occurrences from Hebrews have particularities. In Hebr. 9:9, the first tabernacle was a type of the heavenly sanctuary and in Hebr. 11:19, the receiving of Isaac was a type of the future resurrection[51]. It is considered there is continuity between Hebrews and Pauline allegorical discourse (1Co. 5:6-8; 1Co. 9:8-10; 1Co. 10:1-11; Gal. 4:4-21). The events exposition is from the perspective of someone who lives in the time of Scriptures' fulfillment when the veil which covers the letter is removed (2Co. 3:14) making visible the spiritual sense that shows Christ in the center of the Bible[52]. In the apostolic period too, e.g. in *Barnabas' letter*, παραβολή has a deeper, hidden meaning that is allegorically referred to Christ[53]. However, it seems that in Hebrews' occurrences of the term there is certain overlapping in meaning between παραβολή and τύπος. Continuity between the Hebrew תַּבְנִית and τύπος can be seen in Ex. 25:40 (Ex. 25:40 LXX being cited in Acts 7:44 and Hebr. 8:5); Rm. 5:14; 1Co. 10:6[54]. Hence, continuity between Pauline discourse and Hebrews can be again noticed. While 1Co. 10:6 and Rm. 5:14 have τύπος as a hermeneutical technical term that has been used later on in this sense by the Church, Hebr. 8:5 and Acts 7:44 point out to the continuity with Hebrew tradition[55]. It pertains to the Hebrews' author making the connection between Ex. 25:40 usage of the term and Jesus Christ's work of salvation (Hebr. 9:11; cf. Rm. 8:34)[56]. Hebr. 8:5 also associates τύπος and ὁράω (cf. Ex. 25:40 תַּבְנִית and רָאָה / τύπος and ὁράω), making a biblical connection between typology and contemplation.

Hence, in early Church literature the significance of the Old Testament events for New Testament ones is expressed by τύπος, ἀλληγορέω (Gal. 4:24) and παραβολή (Hebr. 9:9; 11:19) probably with some overlapping in meaning[57].

The Church Fathers and Christians writers mainly referred to Hebr. 11:19 in a typological sense, either by considering Isaac a type of Christ[58] or the meaning of v. 19 a prefiguration of the Cross and Resurrection[59]. Origen considers Abraham

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[50] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, p. 747-751.

[51] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, p. 751-752.

[52] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 263.

[53] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, p. 761.

[54] While a clear similitude in meaning exists between Ex. 25:9, 1Chron. 28:11.18 and Ex. 25:40, LXX translates תַּבְנִית by τύπος only in Ex. 25:40.

[55] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, p. 249-251.

[56] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, p. 257-258.

[57] Gerhard Kittel et al. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, p. 251-253.

[58] Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogue*, 1:5:23:1-2, Erik M Heen, Philip D.W. Krey (ed.), *Hebrews*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT 10, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2005, p. 193.

[59] St. Athanasius, *Festal letters*, 6:8, Erik M Heen, Philip D.W. Krey (ed.), *Hebrews*, p. 192-193. Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, II, 18, p. 36. Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Facere II*, XLVII, III-IV, PSB 22, p. 151-152. St. Augustin, *The city of God*, 16:32, Erik M Heen, Philip D.W. Krey (ed.), *Hebrews*, p. 191.



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believed in resurrection and knew that Isaac prefigured „the image of the future truth", that „Christ will born from his seed", and „had to be offered as the most authentic sacrifice of the whole world and to rise from the dead"[60]. Hence, climbing towards sacrifice was climbing in the light of resurrection because Abraham has seen the day of the Lord (Jn. 8:56). The heart that has seen God, whose thoughts are moved by His voice, is transfigured by His light. Hence, Abraham climbs with unshattered belief into the deepness of God's will and tastes sacrifice in a complete kenotic act. By offering Isaac, Abraham „sacrificed his own heart", says St. Efrem the Syrian[61]. Abraham is considered type of the heavenly Father, while Isaac of our Lord and Savior[62]. ἐν παραβολῇ can be understood in that "Abraham was acting as a type of the Father, a figure and resemblance of Him, while Isaac as a type of the Son" and both of them "as a type of the sacrifice the Father well pleased to be fulfilled in His Son"[63]. However, St. John Chrysostom, although refers to the history of Abraham offering his son Isaac as typology[64], explains ἐν παραβολῇ as "image" but also parable as in Gospels, with a hidden meaning, reflecting a mystery[65].

Hence, overall, it can be asserted usage of typology in Hebr. 11:19. It can be considered that παραβολή in Hebrews takes from the specialized meaning of τύπος, but also that παραβολή can be a parental term for both typology and allegory, both of them reflecting a set of analogies, although typology is rather punctual and allegory dispersed. It is another discussion if typology and allegory should be called hermeneutical principles, or more appropriate would be to call them ways of expression of the same hermeneutical method, contemplation or *theoria*. *Theoria* as well as typology/ allegory/ parable are bridges, but their direction vector is different. While *theoria* is the bridge towards the entire reality seen with mind, typology/ allegory/ parable are bridges from the contemplated reality towards the language about it, hence ways of expression of *theoria*.

Abraham experienced theophany and has been lifted up in the divine council for the life of the world, which distinguishes the Son as "the Angel of the great council" (Gen. 18:1-15; cf. Isa. 9:5 LXX); he climbed into the deepness of God's will and tested the sacrifice in the light of resurrection (Gen. 22:1-18; Hebr. 11:17-

[60] Origen, *Omilii..*, p. 293-295. Cf. p. 309. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon*, 84.5, Mark Sheridan, Thomas C. Oden (ed.), *Genesis 12-50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, OT II, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2002, p. 110.

[61] Sfântul Efrem Sirul, *Cuvânt despre preoție*, in Sfîntul Ioan Gură de Aur, Sfîntul Grigore din Nazianz şi Sfîntul Efrem Sirul, *Despre preoție*, trad., introd., note, cuvânt înainte de pr. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1987, p. 228.

[62] Caesarius of Arles, *Sermon*, 84.2, Mark Sheridan, Thomas C. Oden (ed.), *Genesis 12-50*, p. 102.

[63] St. Fotius, *Fragments to the Hebrews letter*, Erik M Heen, Philip D.W. Krey (ed.), *Hebrews*, p. 194.

[64] Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la epistola către Romani a Sfântului Apostol Pavel*, trad. PS Teodosie Athanasiu, Editura Christiana, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 21.

[65] Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Psalmi*, trad. Laura Enache, Doxologia, Iaşi, 2011, p. 321.



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19) and has seen in shadow the image of the divine economy, the Incarnation, Sacrifice and Resurrection of the Son of God (cf. Jn. 8:56)[66]. Another inference could be made by connecting Hebr. 11:17.19 and Gen. 22:13-14 (יְהוָה יִרְאֶה/ κύριος ὤφθη), that Hebrews' author uses a Yahvistic interpretation, Yahweh who showed Himself to Abraham is Christ.

Besides *theoria* and typology/ allegory/ parable, the Hebrews' author uses the hermeneutical principle of actualization, by calling, through Abraham's model, to a belief from seeing, which is referred to the foundation of Christian belief, Christ's Resurrection, from which Christians' resurrection derives.

The use of ἐν παραβολῇ in Hebr. 11:19 is generally understood by modern commentators as a prefiguration of resurrection either referring to Isaac or to the general resurrection, and less frequently to Christ resurrection. The usage of the term from v.19 is either correlated to the Early Church Creed considering Hebrews' author could not have the typological understanding of Isaac's sacrifice, or to Akedah tradition motif regarding the capacity of God to resurrect dead people, the prefigured by v. 19 event being the general resurrection[67].

**Conclusions**

The hermeneutical analysis of Hebr. 11:17-19 reveals the Hebrews' author used several hermeneutic principles such as referring to the Old Testament as to an authority, but in a creative way, taking the liberty of quoting exactly or less complete or alluding, then of removing the quoted or alluded fragment from the initial context and placing it in a new context related to an interpretation in Christological key; the way of quotation reflects that multiple textual traditions are considered, sometimes the New Testament author using the Hebrew text and not the Septuagint, the primary issue for quotation being the theological value of a term; the unity and continuity between the Old and New Testament on specific terms and interpretation of a text by another one can also be noted; another principle is actualization of the interpreted event in the life of present Christians; finally, *theoria* is the hermeneutical method used by the New Testament author in interpreting the Old Testament event and typology/ allegory/ parable are ways to express of this method.

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[66] If, by a first kenotic act God creates time, by the Incarnation of the Son of God, He unates more completely with time. Hence, the day of the Lord seen by Abraham as an entire reality refers to the Incarnation, Sacrifice, Resurrection, the day of unceasing light, and all these are as a day.

[67] W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, p. 363. Cf. H.W. Attridge, H. Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1989, p. 333-334. Attridge considers improbable a Christological typology in Hebrews.



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