Monogenes, Christological Term in Heb. 11:17?[1]

Delia Cristina MIHĂILĂ

En conformité avec la herméneutique biblique orthodoxe, en tenant compte des principes herméneutiques comme la continuité et l'unité des termes spécifiques de l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament ou l'interprétation d'un texte biblique par un autre texte biblique ou patristique, μονογενής dans Hebr. 11:17 montre lui-même pour être le tournant du Nouveau Testament où le terme a une valeur technique en référence au Christ. La continuité entre μονογενής et יָחִיד (yahid) de la tradition hébraïque (MT) doit être déclaré, ce que reflète le fait qu'une valence terminologique messianique est devenue christologique. Du point de vue de la logique interne du fragment, Hebr. 11:17-19 représente une unité avec trois termes clés, μονογενής, σπέρμα et παραβολή, et parmi eux l'accent semble être mis sur μονογενής (11:17). Regardé de v. 19 à v. 17, ἐν παραβολῇ crée sémantiquement un double niveau sur μονογενής: d'une part il caractérise Isaac, mais d'autre part il points la relation typologique Isaac - Christ et déclare effectivement que cette référence typologique est faite indistinctement. Cependant, lorsque ce rend μονογενής comme un terme christologique dans Hebr. 11:17, ainsi qu'on le voit en énigme, le terme est utilisé dans John and 1John comme un titre christologique clair. La continuité entre יָחִיד dans Genèse 22 et μονογενής dans Hebr. 11, ainsi que la distinction entre μονογενής et πρωτότοκος, comme différentes références à la même réalité christologique dans Hébreux, sont prouves pour la considération du μονογενής dans Hebr. 11 un terme christologique.

*Keywords: יָחִיד (yahid)***,** *μονογενής*, *ἐν παραβολῇ*, *πρωτότοκος*, *orthodox hermeneutics*.

1. **Introduction**

Hebr. 11:17-19 stands up as a model of belief in resurrection, a cornerstone of Christian belief (cf. 1Cor. 15:17.20; Matt. 22:31-32//Mark 12:26-27//Luke 20:37-38; Facts 2:24.30-32) and the point the author is making here is to be seen through a Christological hermeneutical key, what he actually asserts being the Resurrection of Christ.

[1] This article is connected to Delia Cristina Petreanu, "Hebrews 11:17-19, a Hermeneutical Analysis from the Perspective of Hebrews' Author Reference to the Old Testament", in *Text şi discurs religios*, 5/2013, eds. Alexandru Gafton, Sorin Guia, Ioan Milică, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iaşi, 2013, p. 127-146. Hence, there is some conceptual overlapping between the two articles.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

First, from the internal logic of the fragment point of view, Hebr. 11:17-19 represents a unit with three key terms, μονογενής, σπέρμα and παραβολή. Among them, the emphasis seems to be put on μονογενής (11:17) as a key term in rapport to which 11:18 is explicatory and 11:19 is an effect. Reversely looked at, from v. 19 to v. 17, ἐν παραβολῇ semantically creates a double level on μονογενής: on one hand characterizes Isaac, but on the other points to the typological relationship Isaac-Christ (largely, to the Old - New Testament events typological relationship) and actually states this typological reference is made indistinctly. However, this makes μονογενής a Christological term in Hebr. 11:17, as is seen in enigma, while as a clear Christological title the term is used in Johannine occurrences. In fact, the aim of the present article is to assert μονογενής is a Christological term in Hebr. 11:17 with the above terminological distinction from Johannine occurrences.

Secondly, in what concerns the context for Hebr. 11:17-19, μονογενής seems again to be emphatic. If we look at the whole chapter 11 through a typological key, the chaining of events shows the centrality of Christological event, the Sacrifice and Resurrection being 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 and inside this construction the term μονογενής is at its very core, showing itself as the emphasis that from an essential point of view concludes the discourse of Hebrews.

Thirdly, the differentiation of μονογενής and πρωτότοκος as Christological terms in the Hebrews' author understanding is to be asserted for sustaining our discussion.

At last, but not least, the continuity between μονογενής and יָחִיד Hebrew tradition (MT) is to be stated, reflecting that a terminological messianic valence became a Christological one.

Hence, from an Eastern Orthodox biblical hermeneutics, considering hermeneutical principles such as the continuity and unity on specific terms from the Old to the New Testament or the interpretation of a biblical text by another biblical or patristic text, μονογενής in Hebr. 11:17 shows itself to be the New Testament turning point where the term has a technical value with reference to Christ.

2. **The continuity between μονογενής and יָחִיד and the distinction of μονογενής and πρωτότοκος as Christological terms in the Hebrews' author understanding.**

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

Hebr. 11:17 (Greek critical text - NA27 = Byz[2]): Πίστει προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν, ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος

אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ־לְךָ
וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אַחַד הֶהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ׃

Gen. 22:2 (LXX): „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”

Hebr. 11:17 makes allusion to Gen. 22:2. However, a significant difference for our disscusion between Hebrew and Greek traditions, which reflects itself in translations, is to be noted: while the Hebrew text has אֶת־בִּנְךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ (MT), *the only begotten/only,unique son whom you have loved*, the Greek one has instead τὸν ἀγαπητόν ὃν ἠγάπησας (LXX), *the beloved one whom you have loved*. Both terms, μονογενής and ἀγαπητός, are in the New Testament and later on Church Tradition Christological titles, but the important issue here is that in alluding to the episode of Gen. 22, the Hebrews' author seems to prefer the Hebrew tradition by using the term μονογενής in Hebr. 11:17. The Hebrews' author takes out from the Old Testament's pool, with respect to 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.

In Genesis, *yahid* has three occurrences (Gen. 22:2.12.16). In Gen. 22:2 (MT), bot יְחִידְךָ and אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ, *only/only begotten* and *whom you have loved*, are used. At the next two occurrences, later in the story, only *yahid* is used, in both cases the theological context speaking of the offering indeed ready to happen, the climbing of the action and tension of the narrative reaching its peak of certitude, especially from readers' point of view. At this point in the story there is no more battle between flesh, natural human affection of a father for his only and beloved son, and God's will that seems to be in contradiction with His promise; the decision is finally taken by Abraham, he will sacrifice his only begotten son. Hence, we notice a term selection already inside episode of Gen. 22 and may argue that this related to the accomplished sacrifice term selection is also applied in Hebrews. There, the selective use of μονογενής, *only begotten*, has to do with the Sacrifice of the Great Priest (Hebr. 5-10) who is also the Only Begotten Son of the Father, Incarnated for the beloved world's[3] eternal life (John 3:16; cf. 1John 4:9-10).

[2] Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, Chilton Book, 2005.

[3] The term *world* has not being used with its negative meaning, related to sins, as in 1John 2:15-16, but as God's creation for which the Incarnation of the Only Son of God took place.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

The New Testament Christological title*,* ὁ ἀγαπητός*, the beloved*[4]*,* as revealed by God the Father during the baptizing and transfiguration episodes of Jesus (Matt. 3:17/Mark 1:11/Luke 3:22 and Matt. 17:5/Mark 9:7/Luke 9:35 – BYZ and GOC[5], not NA 27/2Peter 1:17)[6] does not seem to be underlined when the narrative focuses on the Sacrifice issue[7]; rather, the Christological title μονογενής*, only begotten,* comes now into play and seems more appropriate in this theological context, and the beloved world, God's creation, is to whom the Sacrifice is made by the Only Begotten Son of God.

Even Gen. 22's episode gives an insight that during his testing, Abraham deeply reached the certitude God will conceal His promise with His request, as explicitly said in Gen. 22:5, וְנָשׁוּבָה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, *we shall worship and come back*, and implicitly throughout the entire narrative, in all his firm actions directed to accomplish God's will, culminating with Gen. 22:12. But, it is for Hebr. 11:19 to certify Abraham's belief in God's power to raise someone up from the dead. It is v. 19, which connects the ideas of resurrection and sacrifice, that ultimately motivates the author selection of μονογενής as a Christological term; through the Incarnation of the Only Begotten Eternal Son of God, His priestly office is *according to the power of an endless life* (Hebr. 7:16 NKJV).

The term *yahid* has 12 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, out of which four are translated in LXX by μονογενής (Jdg. 11:34; Psa. 22:21; 25:16; 35:17), but seven are translated by ἀγαπάω (Gen. 22:2.12.16; Prov. 4:3; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech.

---

[4] Beyond its use as a Christological title, the frequent use of the term ἀγαπητός (a total of 86 occurrences), many times in plural, also reflects a quality of Christians on which basis they are addressed as beloved, as St. Apostle John pictures very well: ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατὴρ, ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν (1Jo 3:1 NA27); God the Father has bestowed upon us such a love we are called sons of God. So, the Only Begotten Son of God is the Beloved One and Christians, as sons of God in Christ, are the beloved ones. When searching for participial use of ἀγαπάω, we find some situations where the people of God is called His beloved (Deut. 33:12; Jer. 11:15, although another Hebrew term is used there, *yadid*, translated by LXX with ἠγαπημένος). One participial New Testament's occurrence of ἀγαπάω is a clear Christological title: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ (Eph. 1:6 NA27).

[5] *The New Testament Approved by the Great Church of Christ*, Patriarchal Printing House, Constantinople, 1904. See John Karavidopoulos, "The Ecumenical Patriarchate's 1904 New Testament Edition and Future Perspectives",

https://www.academia.edu/2563944/Textual_criticism_in_the_Orthodox_Church.

[6] When comes to Jesus' baptizing episode, St. Ap. John does not use the ἀγαπητός Christological title, but the verb ἀγαπάω: ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ (John 3:35). Rather, both John and 1John show a preference for the μονογενής Christological title, though the ἀγαπάω language is widely represented (37 occurrences in John and 28 in 1 John).

[7] In Matth. 12:18, which quotes from Isa. 42:1, the suffering servant of God is identified with the beloved son of God; the Hebrew term עַבְדִּי (MT), *my slave/ servant*, is translated by a Greek term which has a larger meaning, παῖς (Isa 42:1 LXX; Matth. 12:18 NA27, BYZ), *servant* or *son*, and also a new qualifying term, ἀγαπητός, appears. Although Matt. 12:18 makes such an identification, the suffering chosen servant of God being in fact the Beloved Son of God revealed in His Glory by God the Father, when speaking of Jesus Christ Sacrifice other texts focus on His μονογενής quality (John 3:16; Hebr. 11:17).

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

12:10)[8]. A good observation would be that six of the lastly mentioned texts have a messianic character (Gen. 22:2. 12. 16; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10)[9] and through its translation, LXX directs to the Christological title ὁ ἀγαπητός. A possible explanation for the different LXX's translations of *yahid* may also lay in the resemblance with *yadid*,[10] *beloved*, translated by ἠγαπημένος or ἀγαπητός. Such an example, interesting for its theological meaning, is Isa. 5:1 which is alluded to in Mark 12:6//Luke 20:13. From the content of the parable, is quite obvious that both these New Testament's texts contain the Christological title ὁ ἀγαπητός. The title *beloved* (yadid) from Isa. 5:1 is correlated with the *Lord of hosts*, (Isa. 5:7 MT) יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת / κυρίου σαβαωθ (LXX), the *Holy God*, וְהָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ (Isa 5:16 MT)/ ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἅγιος (LXX) and the *Holy One of Israel*, קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Isa 5:19 MT) / τοῦ ἁγίου Ισραηλ (LXX), and His *vineyard*[11] with His people (Isa. 5:7) who showed themselves unfruitful (Isa. 5: 2. 4) and unprepared for His coming Judgment (Isa. 5: 7. 24-25). In the two New Testament texts which allude to Isa. 5, the Beloved is the vineyard Owner's Son. Hence, Mark 12 and Luke 20 construct a new theological context that conveys to the Sacrifice of the Beloved Son of God. The parable presents winegrowers to whom the Owner rented His vineyard as those who eventually put to death the Owner's Beloved Son, before that taking place prophets' wounding or killing; in fact, some ideas from the prophetic discourse in Jer. 6, Amos 8, and especially Zech. 12 may be found in the parable of the vineyard workers from Mark 12//Luke 20, contributing to the

[8] Although much later, Vulgate generally translates *yahid* by unigenitus (Gen. 22:2. 12. 16; Jdg. 11:34 – unigenita; Prov. 4:3; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10), namely, texts with a messianic character (except Prov. 4: 3; if considering only masculine gender terms, also Jdg. 11:34 is excepted, as LXX seams to group the messianic texts; but if looking only at the concept, Jdg. 11:34 may be included, as may be reflected by Vulgate's translation). Regarding the texts from Psalms, Vulgate prefers to translate *yahid* by unicus/unica (Psa. 22:21; 25:16; 35:17) and unus in Psa. 68:7 (in this case also the Greek term being different from μονογενής: μονότροπος).

[9] Zech. 12:10 is partly cited by St. Ap. John: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (John 19:37 NKJV) and also gathers the ideas of the only son's sacrifice (Gen. 22) and the mourning for the only son (Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10): וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקָרוּ וְסָפְדוּ עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל־הַיָּחִיד (Zech. 12:10 MT). The new element Zech. 12:10 brings to the prophecy is exploited by John 19:37, but the term הַיָּחִיד (Zech. 12:10 MT) has not come into play in this case of New Testament citation from Old Testament.

[10] This aspect was postulated to be due to the fact "different translators were at work". (Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translator and editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, D. Litt., D.D., WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, p. 737).

[11] Some Old Testament passages refer to Israel as wine: Psa. 80:8-16; Isa.5:1-7; Jer.2:21; Eze.15:1-8; Ezek. 17:5-10; Ezek. 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1, although in these texts Israel appears as faithless to God and punished by Him. Nevertheless, John 15:1 describes our Lord Jesus Christ as *the true vine*, as providing the indispensable condition for a fruitful Christian life, as the fulfilled purpose of God regarding humankind. Hence, texts like Psa. 80:15-16, Isa. 5:1 and John 15:1 show themselves connected. This could be why the Christ Pantokrator icon from the churches' central dome is sometimes surrounded by a citing from Psa. 80:15-16: it is God Almighty, the Incarnated Son of God, The One who makes His vineyard to yield fine grapes, although together with every Christian will to remain in Christ and work a fruitful Christian life.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

reconceptualization of Isa. 5. The Christological title of *the Beloved* and the idea of the Sacrifice of God's Son are united in Mark 12:6//Luke 20:13, but when searching for the Hebrew term from Isa. 5:1 to whom allusion is made, we do not find *yahid*, but *yadid*. Now, we are speaking of a Hebrew term with a different root, hence a different linguistic meaning, to which LXX shows itself consistent, always translating it in the same way. Therefore, it seems more importantly for LXX to construct from different theological contexts a messianic term that will become in the New Testament a Christological term/ title, the linguistic issue being at some point secondary. So far we can say that LXX constructed a strong tradition around the term ὁ ἀγαπητός in reference to different theological contexts such as the sacrifice of the only son or the story of the vineyard's Owner, which are expressed by different Hebrew terms. Nevertheless, we can also say the New Testament has not referred itself only to LXX's translation choices regarding the Hebrew Old Testament, but directly to the latter. This aspect, which could be proved, for example, by the election the Hebrew's author makes in Hebr. 11:17, using μονογενής with reference to *yahid*, marks the continuity between the New Testament and not only the Septuagint tradition, but also the Hebrew Bible.

At this point, a useful approach would be to search when the Greek text (LXX, NA27 or BYZ) uses the term μονογενής either with a messianic character or with a Christological one. Such occurrences in LXX could be Solomon's Psalm 18:4 and Wisdom 7:22[12], although none of these is connecting the idea of sacrifice with the term μονογενής, leaving less probable a continuation of these occurrences in Hebrews and John (especially John 3:16). However, a worth to mention occurrence is in Ps. 22:21 (21:21 LXX). Although there μονογενῆ is a feminine adjective in relation to τὴν ψυχήν, in *Dialog 98. 105*, St. Justin the Martyr applies this verse (as the entire psalm) to Christ, considering reference to His divine nature is made by μονογενῆ.[13] Moreover, in this case the connection with the idea of sacrifice is present. Nevertheless, even with this occurrence, we cannot admit LXX creates other than a very loose tradition regarding μονογενής (with rather unclear and unconnected usages of the term), at most a terminological transition "zone", and it seems quite improbable the Hebrews' author relied on

[12] These texts are considered late, ranging from the late third/second to the first century before Christ for Wisdom and from the second century before Christ to the first (but even to the fifth) century after Christ (or a narrower dating:70-45 before Christ) for Solomon Psalms. In Sol. Ps. 18 Israel is ὡς υἱὸν πρωτότοκον μονογενη and in Wisdom 7 personified wisdom conveys to our Lord Jesus Christ, considering also 1Co. 1:30. Between these two, Sol. Ps. 18:4, only if dated earlier, could be a root for a Septuagint tradition on μονογενής; although here, μονογενής is rather bringing an intensification to πρωτότοκος (cf. Exod 4:22), than conveying to a messianic meaning. Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 739. Septuaginta 4/II, *Iov. Înțelepciunea lui Solomon. Înțelepciunea lui Iisus Sirah. Psalmii lui Solomon*, p. 161. 440-441.

[13] The v. 21 is understood by St. Justin as „teaching and prophecy" about Christ, "the Only Begotten of everyone's Father", Who was uniquely born from the Father, and then was born human from the Virgin. *Apologeți de limbă greacă*, PSB 2, trad., introd., note și indice de pr. prof. T. Bodogae, pr. prof. Olimp Căciulă, pr. prof. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, București, 1980, p. 216.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

this one rather than directly on yahid Hebrew tradition. Among the synoptic authors, only St. Luke[14] uses the term μονογενής, with the meaning of "only child", and the theological context refers here to either rising from dead (Luke7:12. 14; 8:42. 54) or healing (by getting out a demon in this case, Luke 9:38-39. 42), those only children by the Lord Jesus Christ. The context of rising from dead or healing conveys to the renewal which is to be and already began in our Lord Jesus Christ, but these events are not types of Christ's Sacrifice and Resurrection. Hence, the usage of μονογενής as a Christological term/ title is absent at the synoptic authors, but appears at the Hebrews' author and, with a general acceptance, in John (1:14.18; 3:16.18) and 1 John (4:9). This aspect is different from the usage of the Christological title ὁ ἀγαπητός by the synoptic authors, the ἀγαπητός title obviously continuing the Septuagint tradition. On the other hand, μονογενής Christological term seems to be shaped later, within the Epistle to the Hebrews' main theological stake, and being already in use, is theologically developed as a Christological title by St. Ap. John's Gospel. Hence, μονογενής as a Christological term/ title is continuing and recovers from the Hebrew tradition the term *yahid*, viewed as messianic, rather than from the much weaker Septuagint tradition on μονογενής.

Vulgate sustains μονογενής as a Christological title/ term for both John and 1John's occurrences and Hebrews': for all occurrences of the term in Luke, Vulgate translates by unicus, while for those in John, 1John and Hebrews it translates by unigenitus.

However, it is to be stated a distinction between μονογενής usage in Johannine writings and Hebrews, the Johannine writings showing more elaboration, theological deepening of the same concept, although it is for Hebrews to make the turning point.

The kind of theological presentation of the unique relationship between the Son and the Father as in John's Gospel is not the only defining one for μονογενής as a Christological term/ title. The μονογενής usage in Hebr. 11:17 places the ideas of sacrifice of the only begotten son and his resurrection, ἐν παραβολῇ (Hebr.11:19) to the Christological event, offering the first New Testament's occurrence of the term as a Christological one. The ideas of sacrifice of the only begotten and his resurrection in typos have to be connected to the entire 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

[14] St. Luke, who generally uses a similar terminology and theological content with St. Ap. Paul, employs three times μονογενής, different from St. Paul's no usage of the term, if in accord with modern exegesis who considers Hebrews not St. Paul's. Nevertheless, St. Luke's usage of μονογενής is not as a Christological term/ title. Hence, Hebrews, whose chronological position is generally placed before St. John's Gospel, may be the first occurrence of μονογενής as a Christological term, earlier than the well-known occurrences rather designated as Christological title from John 1:14. 18; 3:16. 18, and 1 John 4:9.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

(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). At this point it has to be noted the Hebrews' author probable understanding of μονογενής includes the aspect of the divine nature of Christ as a semiotic valence of the term.

For St. Ap. John, "ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός is simply a special form of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ".[15] The Son shares the divine glory with His Father forever, before the existence of the world, due to the love God the Father has for His eternal Son (John 17:5.24). The special relationship between Jesus and God, which excludes the same relation to others, is also sustained by the fact St. Ap. John calls God the πατὴρ ἴδιος of Jesus (John 5:18). This gives to μονογενής a designation of Jesus[16], but puts an accent on His divine nature.

In John "μονογενής denotes the origin of Jesus. He is μονογενής as the only-begotten". The concept of the divine sonship is to be understood in terms of eternal begetting from God (1John 5:18: ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)[17]. By receiving Him through belief we too become God's sons (John 1:12.13: ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν), with the mention we are sons by grace, not by nature, being adopted as sons (cf. Rom. 8:23); on the other hand, lack of believing in the Only Begotten Son of God already brings condemnation (John 3:18: ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μονογενοῦς υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). Jesus's glory is "as that of the only-begotten Son"[18] (John 1:14: δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός), hence He is the Only One able to reveal God the Father (John 1:18: μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο), the only path we have to God the Father in order for us to see the divine glory (John 17:24) and share the eternal life (John 14:6).

But the divine sonship in terms of only begotten is also present, right from the beginning, in Hebrews. The quotation from Ps. 2:7 in Hebr. 1:5 (υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε) is applied to Jesus, as one can acknowledge from the first two chapters of Hebrews, and υἱός μου is understood by the Fathers of the Church in reference to the divine nature of Christ, hence in terms of Only-begotten. This sonship quality, reflected by the *more excellent*, unique name He *has inherited* (Hebr. 1:4 RSV)[19], would convey to a title referring to His divine

[15]Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 741.

[16]Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 740. It can also be noticed St. Ap. Paul uses the expression ἴδιος υἱός with reference to Jesus Christ. (Rom. 8:32), undoubtedly with the same meaning μονογενὴς υἱός has in John 3:16.

[17] Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 741.

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

[19] St. John Chrysostom points out in this verse (1:4) is made reference to the human nature of Jesus Christ, since His divine name, the Word of God, He ever had. Nevertheless, the quality of Heir of all things (1:2) "is declaring two things: His proper sonship and indefeasible sovereignty." St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. I.2-3*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First series, vol. IV (Catholic Edition), ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., The Christian Literature Company, New York, 1889, pp. 367-368. In 1:4, *being made* should be understood as "being shown forth" because His Name, more excellent than the angels', declares His true sonship

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

nature, as μονογενὴς υἱός is. Meanwhile, when referring to His sending into the world by God the Father, τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην (Hebr. 1:6 NA27)[20] is used, πρωτότοκος[21] title rather reflecting His human nature (as *today I have*

(the Son is of the Father). In 1:5, *You are My Son, today I have begotten You* "expresses nothing else than from [the time] God is" and *today* seems to be said with respect to the flesh. It might be asserted that in these verses both the divine and the human nature of Christ are referred to. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. II.2*, p. 373. Also when commenting Psa. 2:7 other Fathers of the Church assert that both the divine and the human nature are referred to. In *You are My Son*, the begetting of the Son from the Father before time, in conformity to His Divinity, is pointed out, while *today I have begotten You* is to be understood regarding His Incarnation, hence after God's economy. Cuv. Eftimie Zigabenul, Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinţilor Părinţi*, vol. I, transliterare, diortosire, revizuire după ediţia grecească şi note de Ştefan Voronca, Egumeniţa, p.72. Speaking about *the name above every name* given to the Son (Phil. 2:9), which is a reference to His human nature, Thedorit asserts this name is the Only-Begotten, μονογενὴς υἱός, that God the Word has had since ever as God and also takes it as human. The same understanding is to be applied when referring to Psa. 2:7. Fer. Teodorit al Kirului, *Tîlcuirea celor 150 de Psalmi ai Proorocului Împărat David*, Mănăstirea Sfinţilor Arhangheli Mihail şi Gavriil - Petru Vodă, 2003, p. 10.

[20] While some texts refer to Lord Jesus Christ "coming in the flesh" as to an "exodus or going out" (cf. Matth. 13:3; John 16:28), "for we were out from God", some others (Hebr. 1:6) refer to it as a "Bringing in or taking on Him flesh". "Having gone out to us, that is, having taken flesh", "He brought us in, having purged the sins, and making reconciliation" with God. Hence, the image of "Coming in" (Hebr. 1:6) stands for a "metaphor of those who come to an inheritance and receive any portion or possession". The Bringing in of the First-Begotten into the world has the meaning of putting "the world into His hand", for "when He was made known, then also He obtained possession of the whole thereof", and this has being said "according to the flesh". St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews.III.1*, p. 375.

[21] In the Hebrew Bible, Israel is sometimes referred to as God's first born (Exod 4:22-23; Jer. 38:9). A whole conceptualization is mounted around "first-born", which has over a hundred occurrences in the Old Testament, from Abel's offering pleased to God (the first occurrence of πρωτότοκος is in Gen. 4:4: τῶν πρωτοτόκων τῶν προβάτων αὐτου; cf. Deut. 15:19*3) and the birthrights of the first-born (Gen. 43:33; Deut. 21:17), to the sacrifice of the first-born from Egypt, animals and humans (Exod 11:5*4; 12:12.29*4; Ps. 78:51; 105:36; 135:8; 136:10) and the consecration of every first-born from the sons of Israel (Exod 13:2; 22:29; cf. Num. 3:13*3; 8:17; Neh. 10:37; later on this consecration being transferred to the Levites: Num. 3:12;8:18). Although totally forbidden for Israel, human sacrifice together with first-born quality is considered the most efficacious offering. Such episodes are narrated in Judg. 11:31-34, the offering of judge Jephthah as a vow to God, where μονογενὴς/yahid is used, in 2Kings 3:27, the offering of the Moabite king Mesha which frightens the Isrelites, and in Mic. 6:7, the problematization of the prophet Micah which is offering his first-born for his sin, as the Hebrew text says. These last two cases associate the sacrifice with the quality of first-born, πρωτότοκος/bekhor being used. The occurrence from Zech. 12:10, a messianic text, is interesting because of the association between πρωτότοκος/bekhor and ἀγαπητός/yahid, both of them messianic terms, and the idea of sacrifice, although a differentiation of these terms is not apparent from this text. πρωτότοκος is a messianic term also in Psa. 89:28 (cf. Psa. 2:8; 45:7). The first New Testament occurrence is Luke 2:7 which refers to the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, giving birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, in Luke 2, πρωτότοκος is a Christological title with respect to Lord Jesus human nature. St. Ap. Paul uses πρωτότοκος three times, Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15.18 with the same meaning as in Luke. The ἴδιος Son of God (Rom. 8:32) is the First-Born among many brethren in Christ, συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (Rom. 8:29). ὁ υἱός τῆς ἀγάπης (Col.1:13) of God the Father, εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου (Col.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

begotten You was already suggesting in 1:5). Besides Hebr. 11:28 that remembers the saving from dead of the first-born of Israel as foundation for Passover celebration, the other two occurrences in Hebrews refer to πρωτότοκος as a Christological title pertaining to Jesus Christ's human nature (Hebr. 1:6) and to Christians who form ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς (Hebr. 12:23) on the basis of their σύμμορφος with Christ quality (Rom. 8:29).

The references to the divine and human natures which are united in the same Person of our Lord Jesus Christ are blended along the text[22], "both to establish the economy and the incorruptible nature"[23]. The usage of the citation from Psalms at the Hebrews' author, for the purpose of interweaving the references to the human and divine natures of Christ, shows that his interpretation of these Old Testament texts is in accordance with later interpretations of the Church. Hence, we can assert at the Hebrews' author, right from the beginning of this letter, the existence of conscience of μονογενής concept in terms of the divine nature of Christ. It is also interesting to notice that St. John Chrysostom uses several times the term μονογενής when interpreting the first chapter from Hebrews, although the term does not appear *per se* in it. When St. Chrysostom explains who is the Son by Whom God has spoken to us (Hebr. 1:1), he uses three times the term Only-Begotten: "For to us [God the Father has sent] His own only-begotten Son

---

1:15), is the First-Born of the whole creation (Col. 1:15), the Head of the Church (Col. 1:18), the whole creation being recapitulated (ἀνακεφαλαιόω Eph. 1:10) in Him. He is ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν (Col. 1:18 cf. Rev. 1:5: ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς). These utilizations for πρωτότοκος with respect to Jesus show either the γένεσις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ (Matth. 1:1; cf. Luke 3:38 τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεου) or the idea of creation and recapitulation of the world in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22] The interweaving between the references to the human and divine natures in the Person of Christ is clearly present in the first chapter of Hebrews. Besides the earlier discussion on this matter, through its citation from Ps. 45:7, ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός (אֱלֹהִים) εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, the Hebrews author refers in Hebr. 1:8 to the divine nature of Christ, as ascertained by the Fathers of the Church who comment on the Psalm. God's everlasting throne is a symbol for His Kingdom and Christ is called here God, as St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Nicodemus Hagiorites and Theodoret of Cyr are asserting. Meanwhile, the next verse cited, Psa. 45:8, ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου, refers to the human nature of Christ. After flesh, Christ is the First-Born among many brothers or partakers (Psa. 45:8; Hebr. 1:9; cf. Hebr. 3:14) and has the gifts of the Holy Spirit, says Theodoret. Moreover, Christ has all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, being both God and Man, says St. Nicodemus; it is by the union of the Only-Begotten with flesh, that He received this whole gift. The true anointment is that of Jesus, by the Incarnation the entire Holy Spirit dwelling in Christ's Body, and this has being shown to anyone at His Baptizing, say St. Basil and St. Chrysostom. Everything about Christ is unique, both after His Economy and His Divinity; only Him is the Lamb (John 1:29) among many lambs and the Only-Begotten Son among many sons, says St. Chrysostom. Fer. Teodorit al Kirului, *Tîlcuirea celor 150 de Psalmi ai Prooroculuі Împărat David*, p. 153. Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Psalmi*, trad. din limba greacă veche de Laura Enache, Doxologia, Iaşi, 2011, p. 272.274-275. Sf. Vasile cel Mare, *Tîlcuire duhovnicească la Psalmi*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 173-175. Cuv. Eftimie Zigabenul, Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinţilor Părinţi*, vol. I, p. 526-527 (note 116).

[23]St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. I.3*, p. 368.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

Himself".[24] A crescendo in the description of the Son of God can be noticed in Hebrews. At first, the text pertains to a Son by Whom God the Father has spoken to us ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν (Hebr. 1:2; cf. Gal 4:4: τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός), then is said about this Son: ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας (Hebr. 1:2). Moreover, this Son, being *the brightness* of the glory of God the Father and *the express image* of *His person* (NKJV)/*nature* (RSV) (ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτου - Hebr. 1:3 NA27),[25] and *upholding all things by the word of His power*[26], is also the One who cleans our sins *by Himself*[27], through His Sacrifice (Hebr. 1:3 NKJV). Then the distinction between the two natures of Christ is made more apparent, although, in relation to His human nature, only the term πρωτότοκος is expressed, μονογενής, related to His divine nature, being yet unexpressed. By citing Ps. 45:7, Hebr. 1:8 speaks of the Son from the perspective of His divinity, as in St. Basil's interpretation of this psalm: through this verse the Psalmist conveys his word "to the heights of the Only-Begotten"[28]. However, the Hebrews' author gets to the expression of μονογενής only after the chapters speaking of the Son of God from a human priestly perspective, but Whose Sacrifice is made once for all and priesthood is everlasting.

The sacrifice issue, implicit in NA27 and made clearer by BYZ (Hebr. 1:3), has the result the human nature in Christ is sitting *at right hand of the Majesty on*

[24]St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. I.1,* p. 366.

[25]As the Father "is personally subsisting, being in need of nothing, so also the Son", the Son "is in subsistence by Himself"; to the Son is assigned by the Father "absolute authority" in "governing all things". He is "the express image", "[substantive existence]", which means "similarity in all respects" and that He is "of equal honor with the Father". By "the brightness" is to be understood that the Son is of the Father and "the nearness of the Being [of the Father and the Son]". Thus, this verse is leading "to the unapproachable light, to the very brightness itself", telling about the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. II.1-2*, pp. 370-372. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. I.3*, p. 367.

[26] In the whole part of this verse is applied "to the Son which is proper to the Father". From *upholding all things by the word of His power* is to be understood that the Son is "both a Creator and before all ages"; as in John 1:1.3 is said He is God and the Maker of all things, so in Hebrews, of Him is said: the Word (1:3) by Whom also God made the worlds (1:2). St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. II.1-2*, p. 370-372.

[27]In Hebr. 1:3, NA27 has καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος, without the BYZ addition, δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ: δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. St. John Chrysostom too cites this verse with the addition of "by Himself". He explains that about the Son are asserted "two very great proofs of His care: first *purifying us from our sins*, then the doing it *by Himself*. Not only our reconciliation with God issue is to be seen here, but also that this truly great gift for us is accomplished through the Son. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. II.2*, p. 373.

[28] Sf. Vasile cel Mare, *Tîlcuire duhovnicească la Psalmi*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 173-175.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

high (Hebr. 1:3 NKJV)[29]. Hebr. 2:9 (NA27): Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον, ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου, retakes into consideration Jesus' offering up aspect (cf. Hebr. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10. 20) and the glory of the human nature in Him (cf. Hebr. 1:13; 10:12-13; Hebr. 12:2: τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν, ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσας ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ κεκάθικεν). Hence, the offering and glorifying of Jesus, *the Apostle and High Priest of our confession* (Hebr. 3:1 NKJV), pertain to His human nature and

[29] The Cross is connected with the Resurrection and the Ascension. Sitting *on the right hand of the Majesty on high* signifies the Son's "equal dignity with the Father"; on the other hand, this verse makes reference to the Incarnation and to the fact in Christ human nature has "ascended up above all things" because of His divine "being higher than all things". St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. II.2*, p. 373. This text makes allusion to Ps. 110, 1, also cited in Hebrews (1:13), the Old Testament fragment most frequently cited or alluded to in the New Testament. The novelty which the New Testament interpretation brings to this text is that the place of Jesus' sitting at the right hand of God is ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Mark 16:9; Acts 2:34; 7:55-56; Col. 3:1; Efes. 1:20; Hebr. 1:3; 8:1; 1Peter 3:22), which is in accord with Jesus' entering for us the Heavenly Sanctuary as a Forerunner (Hebr. 6:20). Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150, revised* (vol. 21), in Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), Word Books, Publisher, Dallas, Texas, 2002, pp. 118-119. Ps. 110:1 has been referred to by many Fathers of the Church. Among them, Jerome observes the difference between the two textual traditions, Hebrew (MT), נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאדֹנִי, *the saying of Yahweh to Adonay*, and Greek (LXX), εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου, *Kyrios said to my Kyrios*, and ascertains that the calling to seat on the right hand of God pertains to Jesus' Ascension, hence this was said according to flesh. Septuaginta 4/I, *Psalmii. Odele. Proverbele. Ecleziastul. Cântarea Cântărilor*, vol. coordonat de Cristian Bădiliţă, Francisca Băltăceanu, Monica Broşteanu în colaborare cu pr. Ioan-Florin Florescu, Polirom 2006, p. 276 (note). Ps.110:1 is to be understood as such: God the Father said to my God and His Son after His Ascension, assert also St. Nicodemus. One of the two Lords of David, Who is also referred to in Hebrews' citations, is the Only-Begotten Son after His divine nature (cf. Ps. 109:3 LXX in most Parents' interpretation; cf. Ps. 2:7 cited in Hebr. 1:5; 5:5; cf. Ps. 45:7, the only place from the Old Testament where a king has been called God, cited in Hebr. 1:8), and the *Priest for ever* (cf. Ps.110:4 cited in Hebr. 5:6; 7:17.21) after His human nature, hence our Lord Jesus Christ, both Man and God. By the sitting on the right side is shown the equal dignity of those whose sitting and Kingdom are common, God the Father and God the Son Who have common attributes and works. Cuv. Eftimie Zigabenul, Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinţilor Părinţi*, vol. II, p. 459-460. 465 (nota 10). Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Psalmi*, p. 390. The saying about the two Lords conveys to the same divine nature of God the Father and the Son, asserts also Theodoret, but this verse is also said according to flesh because the Only-Begotten Son did not get this honor "after Cross and Passion as God, but as man He has got what has had as God". Fer. Teodorit al Kirului, *Tîlcuirea celor 150 de Psalmi ai Proorocului Împărat David*, p. 409-410. Everything the Father has the Son has and vice versa (John 17:10) and for ruling over the enemies (Ps. 110:1; cf. 1Co15:25) They are both responsible, but all the Father's victory is through the Only-Begotten, says St. Chrysostom. Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Psalmi*, p. 394. The rod of Christ's strength that Lord has sent to Him out of Zion (Psa. 110:2) can be understood as the Cross of Salvation, as Theodoret asserts. Fer. Teodorit al Kirului, *Tîlcuirea celor 150 de Psalmi ai Proorocului Împărat David*, p. 410. That the Cross can be considered a rod because it beats the demons, also Hesychia says, and this rod was sent out of Zion, the place where the Only-Begotten has offered Himself. Cuv. Eftimie Zigabenul, Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinţilor Părinţi*, vol. II, p. 463 (nota6).

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

a title like πρωτότοκος seems more appropriate in these contexts[30]. However, when showing the Sacrifice of the Son of God from the perspective of the unique divine relationship of love and sonship between God the Father and God the Son and from the perspective of resurrection, the μονογενὴς term/ title seems the most suitable.

Although not *per se* expressed, μονογενὴς υἱός as a concept is present at the Hebrews' author. Moreover, a conceptual differentiation between μονογενής and πρωτότοκος can be found in Hebrews. Hence, this conceptual shaping and delimitation identifiable throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves room for the consideration μονογενὴς in Hebr. 11:17 functions as a Christological term expressing the unique divine relationship between God the Father and God the Son because of the ἐν παραβολῇ reference to the Old Testament relationship of Abraham and Isaac during the episode of Isaac's offering.

For Philo, the term μονογενὴς has no significance. He calls the λόγος, πρωτόγονος. When referring to Hebrews' usage of μονογενής, Philo describes it "τὸ ἀγαπητὸν καὶ μόνον … ἔγγονον (the beloved and only progeny, used of Isaac as the son of Abraham)". Meanwhile, Josephus uses μονογενής in the common sense of "only born", but not with the meaning of "unique"[31]. Although these aspects correlated with data regarding lifetime of Philo and Josephus usually lead to the idea that the usage of μονογενής with Christological meaning begins only with St. Ap. John's Gospel, it still can be inferred that μονογενὴς can be understood as a Christological term in Hebrews, though not present in Philo's and Josephus' thinking; on one hand they were not part of a close to Church exegetical milieu and on the other, from a history of Church perspective, a Christological designation for the term μονογενής at large scale was not yet apparent since Christological dogmas, although it is very probable that St. Ap. John's texts had constituted the basis for that part of the Church Creed regarding υἱὸς μονογενής and for the related discussions at the first centuries' Ecumenical Councils. Nevertheless, as sustained above, such an understanding still could have been existed at the Hebrews' author and also as part of his intention when using μονογενής.

The Christian writers and Fathers of the Church have used μονογενής as a Christological title regarding Christ's divinity beginning punctually with the 2nd and 3rd, but mainly in the 4th century A.D. The main context for using μονογενής is the supreme event of kenosis of the Son of God, the Incarnation. However, the

[30]With respect to His human nature (Hebr. 2:14-16), Jesus is τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας (Hebr. 2:10) of his brethren (Hebr. 2:11-12), sons of God (Hebr. 12:13) by adoption and by Father's will and calling (cf. Rom. 8:23.29-30), which pertains to πρωτότοκος title.

[31] Büchsel, "μονογενής" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 739. Josephus Flavius lived between 37 and approximately 100 A.D., while concerning Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher of 1st-century Alexandria, the only certain date from his life is around 38 A.D. Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3, Doubleday, 1992, p. 981. Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 333.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

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[32]. Particularly, the association between μονογενής and the Cross and Resurrection is interesting for this study, being found, for example, at St. Gregory of Nazianzus[33], St. Cyril of Jerusalem[34], St. Cyril of Alexandria[35] and in cult, at the Great Saturday's Vespers[36].

A differentiation between μονογενής and πρωτότοκος is encountered at the 4th century Fathers of the Church, for example St. Cyril of Alexandria distinguishes between these two Christological titles understanding the first one in relation to Christ divinity and the second, to His human nature. As such, the believers "inherited also the glory of the first born children because of the First Born Who is in them and is also the Only Begotten" on the basis of their σύμμορφος with Christ quality by their second birth in the Holy Spirit, in holiness[37]. The First Born title for Christ has to do with the Incarnation of the Only Begotten, God by nature[38]. Christ is "the Only Begotten as God and the First Born for humanity"[39].

---

[32] Cf. Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, trad., introd. şi note pr. dr. acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, Ed. 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.

[33] 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.

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

[35] 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. Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, pp. 95-96 and notes 161-162, p. 95-96. 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.

[36] *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." *Τριώδιον κατανυκτικον*, Εκδόσεις ΦΩΣ, Αθῆναι, 1983, p. 487. The same kind of μονογενής usage as basis for union of sacrifice and resurrection is also encountered in Hebr. 11:17-19 which emphasizes μονογενής as an Christological term.

[37] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, Iarăşi despre Iacob (IV) 3, p. 171. Rev. Prof. D. Stăniloae considers „Christ is the First Born as the new resurrected Man", as God being the Only Begotten. „If he hadn't been the Only Begotten as God, He couldn't have been the First Born as Man either, because He wouldn't have raised from the dead the first one". „As Creator He didn't make Himself the First Born among men because He remained above us after being". But for our salvation "He made Himself also the First Born of mankind" (note 287, p. 171).

[38] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, Despre oferirea celor întâi născuţi 1, p. 295.

[39] Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, Despre oferirea celor întâi născuţi 2, p. 298. Rev. Prof. D. Stăniloae considers the Son of God Who is the Only Begotten as God is also "the First Born among us and for us who are born out of His power to a new life… because He dwells in us". This indirectly gives us some of His quality of Only Begotten and we are loved by

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

Referring to St. Apostle John comment that Abraham has seen the day of Christ (John 8:56), St. Cyril asserts God gave to Abraham to see Lord Sacrifice showing Isaac as a type of His Only Begotten and First Born Son. Hence, in this context, St. Cyril uses the two Christological titles, μονογενής and πρωτότοκος[40].

Later on, St. John from Damascus will synthetize about these two Christological titles. Christ is "the first born from the entire creation (Col. 1:15) because Him too is from God, but also the creation is from God; but because He is the only born, beyond time, from the being of God and the Father, He is justly called the Only Begotten, First Born and not first created… He is called the First Born among many brothers (Rom. 8:29) because He is the only born also from mother" by the Incarnation, and through Him we too became sons of God[41].

3. **Conclusions**

Out of those studied regarding yahid and monogenes, we can compose the probable biblical trajectory which the term *only begotten* has from the messianic valence already existent in Gen. 22, to Hebr. 11:17 where it shows its Christological valence, continuing with getting contour as a Christological title in John, a more hermeneutically elaborated level of the term than in Hebrews. It is in John where the more commonly up to then used Christological title agapetos suffers a terminological quality transfer; hence, from *the Beloved* title, the term is used in reference with those beloved, the beloved world by God, and *the Only Begotten* gets its undoubtedly place as Christological title. However, it is the Hebrews' author the one who selects out of the Hebrew textual tradition the bearing messianic value term yahid and indicates its Christological valence; then, inside the Church Tradition, monogenes makes another vault in time having to be put in its whole light only in the 4th century with the dogmatic formulations regarding Christ. Even if the Creed most probably takes its formulation regarding the Son of God from John, the writings of the Church Fathers show, nevertheless, liberty in using monogenes, including in reference to Hebr. 11:17-19. The context of the first two Ecumenical Councils which dogmatically establish the Christological problem represents the background for the full development of *the Only Begotten* Christological title and from here, reverberation in the later writings of the Church Fathers and in cult took place. The differentiation between monogenes and prototokos seems to show a similar course being probable at the Hebrews' author and crystalized in the 4th century Fathers of the Church thinking. The continuity between yahid in Gen. 22 and monogenes in Hebr. 11, as well as the distinction between monogenes and prototokos as different references to the

---

God the Father as first born, but also as having something from the quality of the Only Begotten Son (note 539, p. 301).

[40] 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.

[41] Sf. Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, 4:8 (În ce sens Se numeşte Prim Născut Fiul Unul Născut al lui Dumnezeu?), ed. 3, trad. pr. D. Fecioru, Ed. Scripta, Bucureşti, 1993, p. 154.

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

same Christological reality in Hebrews, are proves for considering monogenes in Hebr. 11 a Christological term.

Last but not least, it should be noticed orthodox biblical hermeneutics has to be impregnated by the liturgical rhythm which sees the developing of salvation events from an above time perspective, as reflected by the liturgical anamnesis[42]. As a consequence, the same reality can be present in different degrees of expression at several persons, contexts or moments in time. Hence, the text and its reception convey to the reality and are on the same axis. This course that firstly looks for the reality by taking part to it admits the words on their way to express it attain in picturing the truth a moment of minimal essential which can be reflected in a technical value of a term or a dogmatic formulation. Nevertheless, this expression of the essential remains open to more elaborated forms and meanings and jointed to the mystery and dynamism of the reality. Hence, from the perspective of orthodox hermeneutics, the translation of yahid in Gen. 22, respectively monogenes in Hebr. 11 is *only begotten* because it refers to the same Christological reality recognized in different degrees by Genesis or Hebrews. While in Genesis we have a messianic term, in Hebrews, by the effect of parabole on monogenes, which is a double reality that is referred to, we have a Christological one.

Selective bibliography

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

Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură, tipărită cu binecuvântarea Preafericitului Daniel, Patriarhul BOR, cu aprobarea Sfântului Sinod, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2008

Borgen, Peder, "Philo of Alexandria", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 5, Doubleday, 1992

Chiril al Alexandriei, Sf. *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Glafire*, PSB 39, trad., introd. şi note pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1992

Chiril al Alexandriei, Sf., *Scrieri. Partea a patra. Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, PSB 41, trad., introd. şi note pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000Chiril la Ierusalimului, Sf., *Cateheze*, trad. şi note pr. prof. D. Fecioru, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2003

Feldman, Louis H., "Josephus", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3, Doubleday, 1992

Grigorie de Nazianz, Sf., *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, trad., introd. şi note pr. dr. acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, Ed. Anastasia, Bucureşti, 1993

[42] ...remembering this salvation's commandment and everything that has been made for us: the cross, the death and the third day resurrection, the ascension, the sitting at the right hand and the second and glorified coming…

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)

Grigorie Teologul, Sf., *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

Ioan Damaschin, Sf., *Dogmatica*, ed. 3, trad. pr. D. Fecioru, Ed. Scripta, Bucureşti, 1993

Ioan Gură de Aur, Sf., *Omilii la Psalmi*, trad. Laura Enache, Doxologia, Iaşi, 2011

John Chrysostom, St., *Homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews. I.2-3*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First series, vol. IV (Catholic Edition), ed. Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., The Christian Literature Company, New York, 1889

Kittel, Gerhard, Gerhard Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, translator and editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 10 vol., 1964-1976

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), Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, 1993 (c. 1979)

Roberts, Alexander, 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

Septuaginta 4/I, *Psalmii. Odele. Proverbele. Ecleziastul. Cântarea Cântărilor*, vol. coordonat de Cristian Bădiliţă, Francisca Băltăceanu, Monica Broşteanu în colaborare cu pr. Ioan-Florin Florescu, Polirom, 2006

Septuaginta 4/II, *Iov. Înţelepciunea lui Solomon. Înţelepciunea lui Iisus Sirah. Psalmii lui Solomon*, vol. coordonat de Cristian Bădiliţă, Francisca Băltăceanu, Monica Broşteanu în colaborare cu pr. Ioan-Florin Florescu, Polirom, 2007

Teodorit al Kirului, Fer., *Tîlcuirea celor 150 de Psalmi ai Proorocului Împărat David*, Mănăstirea Sfinţilor Arhangheli Mihail şi Gavriil - Petru Vodă, 2003

Triodul, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000

Vasile cel Mare, Sf., *Tîlcuire duhovnicească la Psalmi*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000

Zigabenul, Eftimie şi Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinţilor Părinţi*, vol. I, transliterare, diortosire, revizuire după ediţia grecească şi note de Ştefan Voronca, Egumeniţa

BDD-A3921 © 2014 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:36:18 UTC)