

## Item #2 (Second Thoughts on *Hebrews—An Interpretation*)

On this site I would like to reserve space for comments on my book *Hebrews—An Interpretation*. The book was published in Rome by Gregorian & Biblical Press in 2016. The interpretation given, as always, was intended to be plausible. But reflection on what I once thought was plausible sometimes calls for a change. The space that follows is designed to make such second thoughts communicable.

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1) Subsequent modification to be made: The above study distinguishes Jesus as divine from Jesus as human, inferring that Jesus as human could have faith. But given the inference that Jesus as human enjoyed the Beatific Vision Jesus could not have had faith. But this problem can be solved thinking that Jesus had “faithfulness”, i.e., faithfulness to the model given Him by Isaac in Gen 22 and passed on in Jewish tradition. (14 April 2019) In *Hebrews—An Interpretation*, pp. 84-90, Jesus is presented as having “faith-trust” because I was under the erroneous impression that as man He did not have the Beatific Vision. But even with the Beatific Vision the word πίστις can be legitimately applied to him if it is taken in the sense of “faithfulness”.

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2) Subsequent modification to be made: In *Hebrews—An Interpretation*, p. 110, the statement is made that Christ’s priesthood extends to the beginning of time, just as His risen Body extends to the beginning of time. This would seem to be incorrect. The “effects” of Christ’s risen Body are applicable to all those who have existed from the beginning of time: this would seem to be the proper way of handling the Incarnation, Expiation and Resurrection, all of which occurred within time, after the birth of those for whom the fruits of these Christological interventions brought about by the eternal Father are beneficial.

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3) Subsequent modification to be made. In *Hebrews—An Interpretation*, on p. 96 I interpret the “tasting death” of 2,9 as a metaphor for the act of dying, which in turn is involved in the institution of the Eucharist. Dr. Dominic Pedulla, M.D., of Oklahoma, contacted me and offered the suggestion that it is more plausibly interpreted directly as a reference to Jesus instituting the Eucharist. At the last supper Jesus literally tastes his death when he institutes the Eucharist. In view of the emphasis given the Eucharist in Hebrews, especially in Hebrews 6,4 (see p. 153) with reference to drinking, this seems a valuable insight.

The following reconsideration of Hebrews 2,9 is based on the Eucharist but not on its institution, as Dr. Pedulla suggests, but as it exists already instituted by Christ. As I suggest in my original treatment of Hebrews 2,9, the first part has to do with the heavenly Christ as He exists on earth in His Eucharistic Body (and Blood) as Victim. The second part of the verse —“so that by the grace of God He might taste death for all” —portrays Him as He exists in heaven as the High Priest at God’s right hand officiating at every earthly sacrifice of the Mass. He is there because as the new Isaac He begged His Father to allow Him to die (Hebrews 5,7-9) and His Father’s charity in permitting Him to do so, makes it possible for Christ to be a Victim and thus a priest through Whom all the nations of the world are blessed.. The emphasis on “tasting death” alludes to what is to come in Hebrews 2,14-15, where Christ’s death, that is, being Victim, renders the control over death by the devil inoperative. This change depends on the shedding of blood as the basis for the forgiveness of sins, as set forth in Hebrews 9,22. (The result of unforgiven sin is, of course, the basis for the believer’s fear of death.) Thus Dr. Pedulla’s suggestion has been the basis for the above presentation, but in modified form. **(James Swetnam, November 17, 2020)**