

JESUS IS THE MODEL AND THE OBJECT OF (OUR) FAITH: A CRITICAL READING OF HEBREWS 12,2

Justin Devassy Puthenpurackal*

Heilige Geest College, Leuven

Abstract

This paper examines the possibility of considering “Jesus as the model and the object of believers’ faith” based on the divergent interpretations of Heb 12, 2. The paper investigates further whether ‘the faith’, denoted in the text, refers to Christ’s faith in God or believers’ faith in Jesus, considering the absence of personal pronoun before τῆς πίστεως in v. 2. The meaning of the combination of τελειωτής and ἀρχηγός in the context of ἀγών motives and the indication of the faith of ancestors in chapter 11 suggest the unique role of Jesus being, on the one hand, the model and, on the other, the originator and completer of believers’ faith. Even though, the text explicitly denotes Jesus as the object of Christians’ faith, the Christological significance of v. 2 in the context of the ἀγών motives, the discontinuity of the text from the previous chapter and the meaning of the combination of τελειωτής and ἀρχηγός suggests Jesus as the model and the object of believers’ faith. The study proposes a reading without the personal pronoun “our” as a more appropriate translation of the text highlighting both the Christological

* Justin Devassy Puthenpurackal is a final year doctoral student in Biblical Studies at KU Leuven, Belgium. A priest of the religious order Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, Justin obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy from Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India, a Bachelor’s degree in Theology from Njana Deepa Vidhya Peedu, Pune, India, and a Bachelor’s degree in Art from Christ College, Bangalore University, India. He holds a Licentiate in Biblical Theology from Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India, and an abridged Research Master’s degree from KU Leuven, Belgium. Justin’s primary research focus centers on how Paul models after Jesus in achieving perfection, with a particular emphasis on Philippians 3:12-16 and Philippians 2:5-11. The article titled “Jesus is the Model and the Object of (our) Faith: A Critical Reading of Hebrews 12:2” presented at the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense in July 2021. Email: justindpcmi@gmail.com

(the faith life of Jesus) and the ecclesiological (the faith life of believers) notion of Christian faith.

Keywords: Faith, Perfecter, Pioneer, Athletic imagery, Christology

Introduction

Hebrews 12,2 holds a special place among scholars due to its Christological, soteriological, eschatological, and the ecclesiological connotations. The author of Hebrews places Jesus as the forerunner of the race that provides readers of the letter the hope and courage to contest the race. This paper studies the problem of the meaning of the combination of τελειωτής and ἀρχηγός in the context of ἀγών motifs. The problem is reflected in the differences of various English translations τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν of Heb 12,2, which present Jesus as, “the author and finisher of our faith” (KJV, NKJV), “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (RSV, NRSV), “the leader and perfecter of our faith” (NJB) and “the leader and perfecter of faith” (without the possessive pronoun ‘our’ in NAS, NAB). Considering these divergent translations, this paper analyzes the meaning of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής, the continuity and the discontinuity between these terms in the context in which Jesus is presented as a runner in the exhortation on faith in the line of the ancient heroes of faith in chapter 11. Since many scholars suggest that Heb 12,2 is the heart of the Christology of the author we examine the presentation of Jesus as being a role model to invite believers to the goal of faith or as an object, being the embodiment of the Christian faith. We also address the ambiguity among scholars in understanding the text, whether the believers’ faith in Christ or Christ’s faith in God is the primary concern of the author in the context of the presence and absence of the personal pronoun ‘our’ in a given translation of the text.

The meaning of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in Heb 12,2

The study of the meaning of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in Heb 12,2 is significant as it determines the Christological and the ecclesiological concern of the author. Moreover, scholars view the meaning of πίστις as depended on the meaning of the combination of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in v. 2. If πίστις refers to Jesus’ own faith, ἀρχηγός is best translated as ‘leader,’ but if it refers to the hearers, then ‘founder’ is preferred.”¹ The absence of the definite article before τελειωτής

¹ Christopher A. Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus’ Faith as the Climax of Israel’s History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT II/338, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 99.

indicates that τῆς πίστεως is equally applicable to both ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής.² Therefore, the term τελειωτής which is a New Testament *hapaxlegomenon* that appears only in Heb 12,2, which is translated as perfecter or culminater, seems to characterize the theological vision of faith as outlined in the letter to the Hebrews.

In LXX ἀρχηγός occurs 23 times and it is relatively often used by the Chronicler, and in Deuteronomy, Joshua, Numbers, and Judges. When ἀρχηγός is the translation equivalent of the Hebrew word שָׂרָא the latter refers to a political, military leader, and also a head of a family (e.g, Num 25,4; 30,2; 1 Chro 8,6.28; Neh 11,3.16f). The term ἀρχηγός is also used to refer to the elected charismatic leader in time of need (there it is the equivalent of the Hebrew word is יָצָא; Jdg 11,6). The word ἀρχηγός occurs only 4 times in the NT (Acts and Hebrews) and is applied only to Jesus. Acts presents Jesus as ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς (3,15) and ἀρχηγός καὶ σωτήρα (5,31). Hebrews depicts Jesus as a kind of new Moses using Exodus tradition in reference to salvation and faith as ἀρχηγός τῆς σωτηρίας (2,10) and πίστεως ἀρχηγός (12,2). The term ἀρχηγός is generally understood as “ruler, prince, beginner, originator or founder”.³ According to Christopher Richardson, “ἀρχηγός is derived from the noun ἀρχη meaning ‘beginning’ or ‘origin,’ and the verb ἄγω, meaning ‘lead’, therefore, by aligning ἀρχηγός with the aorist participle of ἄγω, the author concentrates on leadership”.⁴ Peter O’Brien considers the leadership role of Jesus (forerunner, example) as primarily important in the context of the athletic imagery.⁵ We have already seen that in LXX, ἀρχηγός refers to the leadership of various kinds. However, most of the scholars tend to see ἀρχηγός in 2:10 and 12,2 with the meaning of the founder or the originator or the beginner of salvation as it refers to Jesus. In this context, scholars such as Richardson and O’Brien see “pioneer” as the better translation for ἀρχηγός since both the function of Jesus, namely leader and originator are included.⁶ Thus, the LXX meaning and the athletic imagery context

² David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'* (SNTS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 171.ii

³ Clayton N. Croy, “A Note on Hebrews 12:2,” *JBL* 114, no. 1 (1995), 117-119, 117. See also BDAG, 112.

⁴ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 98.

⁵ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 453-454.

⁶ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, p. 99. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 454. In the military sense ἀρχηγός is translated as ‘champion’. See Croy, *Endurance in*

suggest 'leader' as the appropriate translation for ἀρχηγός but the Christological reading of Heb 2,10 and 12,2 indicates Jesus' role as the 'initiator' of faith.

The term τελειωτής being the first occurrence in the Bible, stands distinct from ἀρχηγός in understanding the meaning with the reference to the comparative texts. In the writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus we see the term, μήτε τῶν εὐρημένων ἑτέροις τελειωτήν,⁷ with the meaning of "one who perfects, refines, or brings to full flower that which is (in this case) the original work of others".⁸ According to BDAG, τελειωτής refers to "one who brings someth[ing] to a successful conclusion, hence perfecter".⁹ The term τελειωτής means "the One who has brought believing to completion," or "the One who exercises complete faith".¹⁰ The term τελειωτής is "used in apposition to the name of Jesus, and it describes him as the perfecter, fulfiller, completer or finisher, possibly as the end or the goal of faith".¹¹ Τελειωτής means, in Jesus, faith has reached its perfection and enables the believers to follow the example of Jesus.¹² Estella Horning holds that there is a close relationship between the Hebrews concept of τελειωτής and the Johannine concept, and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews uses τελειωτής with the meaning of 'to finish' which we also see in John 19,30.¹³ Craig Koester understands τελειωτής as 'completer' and according to him, in Hebrews "Jesus does not merely follow the faith of others, nor is he a prototype".¹⁴ In his view, Jesus pioneers and completes faith in two ways: as source of faith -inaugurating a new

Suffering, 68. According to EDNT, the meaning of ἀρχηγός in Heb 12:2 is 'author' in the sense of leader of faith. See EDNT, 1:164.

⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Critical Essays, Volume II: On Literary Composition. Dinarchus. Letters to Ammaeus and Pompeius*. Translated by Stephen Usher. Loeb Classical Library 466. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

⁸ Clayton N. Croy, *Endurance in Suffering: Hebrews 12:1-13 in its Rhetorical, Religious and Philosophical Contexts* (SNS 98, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.118. According to him, "Dionysius contrasts two different groups of orators: those who invented or devised an original style of speaking and those who perfected or refined the styles invented by others."

⁹ BDAG, 997. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 454.

¹⁰ Gerhard Dellling, s.v. "τελειωτής" in TDNT 8 (1972), 86-87.

¹¹ Estella B. Horning, "Chiasmus, Creedal Structure, and Christology in Hebrews 12:1-2," *Biblical Research* 23 (1978), 37-48, 43.

¹² David Alan Black, "A Note on the Structure of Hebrews 12, 1-2," *Biblica* 68, no. 4 (1987), 543-551, 546.

¹³ Horning, "Chiasmus," 43. He opines that there is an agreement with Paul concerning the eschatological implications.

¹⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible 36, New York: Doubleday, 2001), 523.

covenant and as model of faith -remaining faithful to God in a way that the listeners are to follow.¹⁵ Here, scholars understand τελειωτής as perfection indicating Jesus as the completer and in him the believers reach the goal of faith.

We analyze the meaning of the terminology in view of the pairing of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής that both refer to τῆς πίστεως in v. 2. Horning holds that the pairing of these terms bring the meaning “of beginning and end comparable to the alpha and omega of Revelation”.¹⁶ Jesus was pioneer (ἀρχηγός) of faith not in the sense that he was the first one who held faith but he has reached the goal (τελειωτής) of faith and made it possible for others.¹⁷ Gereth Cockerill suggests that in this combination, ἀρχηγός includes the meaning of ἀρχή (beginning) and τελειωτής includes of τέλος (end).¹⁸ The ἀρχ and τελ- stems connote ‘founder’ or ‘initiator’ and ‘end’.¹⁹ The terminology ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής describe the redemptive role of Jesus and 12:2 is “the creedal formula in the New Testament”.²⁰ According to David Alan Black, ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής imply, “Jesus, who both designed the race and completed the course”.²¹ However, Richardson opines that even though the ἀρχή and τέλος terminology (2,10; 6,1; 7,3) “evokes spontaneously the sense of beginner and end”, or “starter” and “finisher”, the running race imagery suggests “leader” as the appropriate translation for ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής which is presented as perfection in the context of the imperfect faith exemplified by the ancestors in chapter 11.²² Therefore, despite the pairing of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής ‘the beginning’ and ‘the end’ as the appropriate translation of this terminology. Our study so far suggests the importance of analyzing the immediate context of v. 2, particularly the running race imagery and the continuity with the examples of Israel’s ancestors in chapter 11 when studying the meaning of the text.

A Contextual Analysis of Heb 12,2

We now examine the influence of the ἀγών motive and the references to the faith of ancestors in chapter 11 which is referred to as

¹⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 523.

¹⁶ Horning, “Chiasmus,” 43.

¹⁷ Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (SPS 13, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 265.

¹⁸ Gereth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 607.

¹⁹ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 99.

²⁰ Horning, “Chiasmus,” 40.

²¹ Alan Black, “A Note on the Structure of Hebrews,” 546.

²² Hamm, “Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 287.

‘a cloud of witnesses’ in Heb 12,1 in determining the meaning of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in v. 2. There is a pastoral tone in v. 1, ‘let us run the race...’ in addressing his listeners.²³ The athletic imagery is used metaphorically with a pastoral purpose to denote the pilgrimage of faith through running the race with endurance.²⁴ Although the general meaning of ἀγών is “a contest or a struggle in athletic, musical, legal, or ethical spheres” in this context of the race, the term has the figurative meaning of ‘foot race’.²⁵ Jesus is presented as agonistic exemplar: “the supreme athlete who (alone) has successfully completed the course and now serves as a model to the readers.”²⁶

According to Clayton Croy, the author adopted the athletic imagery not in the sense of Hellenistic moralists who used it in calling to mind the example to encourage the audience, because Jesus is not the ideal example or model for faith rather “he is the Lord of the believers”. For the author of the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is more than a supreme model of faith, despite the fact that the letter presents the historical Jesus as the supreme model of faith.²⁷ Cockerill observes that the author uses the theme of ‘endurance’ in the athletic imagery not in the sense of contemporary stoic philosophy, rather, with an emphasis of God-orientation in the letter to the Hebrews.²⁸ In this perspective scholars such as Croy and Cockerill opine that running race imagery would support Jesus’ leadership in the race of faith. However, this does not exclude his further work of originating πίστις in others.²⁹ Here, the author adopts athletic imagery different from the NT presentation and the Greek philosophical world in order to present Jesus as the supreme model, “the paradigm of faithful endurance who has completed the course in advance of all others”.³⁰ Therefore, the meaning of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in the context of the athletic imagery suggests that Jesus is ‘the pioneer and perfecter of faith’ not just in the sense of supreme model for us but because of being originator and completer of our faith.

Many scholars are convinced that there is a continuity between chapter 11 and 12,2. The conjunction Ἐπιγαροῦν in Heb 12,1

²³ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 452.

²⁴ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 603.

²⁵ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 452. The race is set before the audience.

²⁶ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 40, 42. Agon is part of Hellenistic moral teaching.

²⁷ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 75.

²⁸ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 605.

²⁹ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 99.

³⁰ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 76.

establishes a relationship between Heb 11,39-40 and 12,1-2.³¹ Jesus is presented as the supreme example of faith in the line of Heb 11,39-40.³² The author presents Heb 12,1-3 as “the rhetorical culmination” of his arguments in chapter 11.³³ The purpose of the author at this point is to show the superiority of Jesus over Jewish exemplars in chapter 11.³⁴ Hebrews 12,1-2 presents the superiority of Christ over the angels, Moses, priests, old covenant, temple sacrifices, and examples of faith.³⁵ In view of Richardson the author includes Jesus in the “cloud of witnesses”, however, with much distinction. All the figures in chapter 11 are presented as a typological anticipation of “Jesus’ perfect faith and finished work”.³⁶ He says, “Jesus does not merely repeat a historical precedent, but rather climactically recapitulates what took place in God’s prior dealing with his people”.³⁷ Therefore, he sees “the unique epithet, ‘pioneer and perfecter of faith,’ conveys his unparalleled status and finally makes explicit what is implied in Hebrews 11.”³⁸

We notice both continuity and discontinuity between chapter 11 and 12,2. There is the endurance, the trial, and the suffering both in Jesus and the heroes of the OT. However, Jesus received what had been promised and completed the course unlike the figures in chapter 11.³⁹ Cockerill identifies the continuity in terms of the faithfulness to God and the endurance, which are common in both. Yet the author does not describe Jesus as the one who “lived by faith”. Furthermore, Jesus did not make a break with the unbelieving world as in the case of the saints of the Bible. In addition to that Jesus’ entrance to heaven is not on “his own behalf but as the representative of God’s people”.⁴⁰ Catherine Playoust argues against Richardson’s view that Jesus is included in the ‘cloud of witnesses’ being the leader and perfecter of faith (the best model of faith). According to Playoust, the discussion on ‘cloud of

³¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 449.

³² O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 450.

³³ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 168.

³⁴ Catherine Playoust, “The Location of the Cloud of Witnesses (Heb 12:1): Complexities of Time and Space in Hebrews,” *ABR* 64 (2016), 1-13, 8. Jesus is a better high priest in comparison with Aaronic priesthood (chapters 7-10)

³⁵ Horning, “Chiasmus,” 38.

³⁶ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 7.

³⁷ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 8.

³⁸ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 11.

³⁹ Mitchell, *Hebrews*, p. 269.

⁴⁰ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 608. According to Spicq, “the Scripture does not speak of Christ as one who believes.”

witnesses' concluded in 11,39-40.⁴¹ Jesus becomes the pioneer and perfecter of "the way of faith" through the salvific action.⁴² This continuity creates distraction in presenting the role of Jesus' salvific action as the continuation of the cloud of witnesses in the previous chapter. The author uses the term 'the faith' in the context of the faith of the ancestors in chapter 11.⁴³ The absence of the personal pronoun (τῆς πίστεως), is not to be understood on the same level of those figures in chapter 11 (since Jesus exhibited faith in the highest form). There are not only quantitative but qualitative differences from the ancestors in chapter 11.⁴⁴ Jesus is presented last in the authors list, not for chronological reasons but for *teleological* reasons.⁴⁵ Hence, the author distinguishes Jesus from other ancient heroes by using two qualities, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.⁴⁶ The continuity between chapter 11 and 12,2 highlights Jesus' role as the supreme model of faith in the line of the Biblical heroes, and the discontinuity suggests the soteriological role of Jesus.

Jesus as the Model and the Object of Faith

Considering the above discussion on the meaning and the context of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής terminology, we suggest that when ἀρχηγός is best translated as 'pioneer' because it holds both the connotations, namely Jesus as 'the model' and the 'initiator' of faith. Similarly, the translation of τελειωτής as perfecter again bears the meaning of 'the model', being perfecter as well as the consummator of faith. In view of these different roles of Jesus, we examine how these are related to each other. Hence, this part of our study critically focuses on the two possible translations of v. 2: "Jesus as the model (the perfect example) and perfecter of our faith," and "Jesus as the initiator and the consummator of faith". We also see the role of Jesus as the object of faith in this 'creedal formula' in 12,2.

Jesus is on the one hand, the originator and consummator of faith, and on the other, is the perfect example of faith. The former highlights Jesus as the saviour who opened up the way to God and enabled us to obtain the goal of faith and the latter emphasizes the earthly life of

⁴¹ Playoust, "The Location of the Cloud of Witnesses," 10.

⁴² Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 606.

⁴³ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 11.

⁴⁴ Paul J. DuPlessis, "Teleios: The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament," PhD diss. (Kampen: Kok, 1959), 223.

⁴⁵ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 73. The prize is joy.

⁴⁶ Seth M. Simisi, *Pursuit of Perfection: Significance of the Perfection Motif in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 198.

Jesus.⁴⁷ Here Jesus is presented as the example of soteriological culmination.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the term τελειωτής refers to Jesus alone, as the perfect example of faith does not deny the consummating or the soteriological aspect of faith with regard to the believers. The first enables the second. Since he is perfected and has ascended into heaven, he is able to perfect those who obey him.⁴⁹ Most scholars agree that Jesus is model as well as originator and consummator of faith at the same time. The point of contention is whether Jesus is the model and the object of the faith at the same time in the Christological formula of v. 2. Mary Ann Beavis states that Jesus being the ultimate example of faith presented in chapter 11 is the author and the finisher of our faith, not the object of our faith.⁵⁰ Croy also underlines this argument by stating that “in Hebrews, Jesus is the supreme model of faith; nowhere does the letter explicitly speak of Christ as the object of faith, although he enables the faith of others”.⁵¹ According to Paul DuPlessis, since Jesus is ἀρχη and τέλος (author and consummator, beginning and end) of faith, τῆς πίστεως in v. 2 is to be “interpreted absolutely and not as the subjective act of Christ in the individual, as if He is confessed as the generator of personal faith”.⁵² Therefore, scholars see that both translations; ‘Jesus as the model’ and ‘the author and the finisher’ exclude the possibility of seeing Jesus as the object of our faith.

Since the concept of faith can be expressed apart from the usage of πίστις, scholars such as Richardson depreciate the arguments of those scholars who hold that in the Bible Jesus is presented as a believer.⁵³ Harold Attridge opines that it is not the faith that Jesus inaugurated and perfected the content of our belief, but “the fidelity and the trust that he himself exhibited” which the believers are invited to share. Therefore, Jesus is both the embodiment of faith and the model of faith to follow.⁵⁴ According to Dennis Hamm, in this letter “Christ models

⁴⁷ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 454.

⁴⁸ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 168.

⁴⁹ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 100.

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Beavis, *Hebrews* (Wisdom Commentary 54, Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2015), 155.

⁵¹ Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 177.

⁵² DuPlessis, “Teleios,” 225.

⁵³ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 3. Jesus’ faith in God is not to be understood theologically, but as a confidence in Father.

⁵⁴ Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 366.

and enables the faith of Christians".⁵⁵ In his view, even though the letter to the Hebrews does not explicitly present Jesus as the object of faith, as we see in the writings of Paul, we cannot rule out the Christological significance of the letter where "faith is associated with both Jesus and Christians".⁵⁶ Moreover, he sees this text as the link between "the faith of Jesus and the faith of Christians".⁵⁷ He holds that there is a transition "after the death and exaltation of Jesus, faith in God is implicitly faith in Jesus".⁵⁸ Simisi argues that Jesus is not just the perfect example of faith in the sense of "a virtuous person who is embodied with the moral ideal" but being an originator and consummator he is the object of believers' faith. In the letter the faithful are asked to keep their eyes focused on Jesus, the object of faith with endurance.⁵⁹

The role of the athletic imagery in the text not only supports Jesus as the model for believers but being presented as the goal and prize of the contest presents Jesus as the object of faith as well. Furthermore, when the continuity with chapter 11 highlights Jesus as the exemplar of the OT heroes, the discontinuity presents Jesus as the embodiment of faith unlike the figures in chapter 11. This discontinuity is also marked as an argument against those scholars who hold the position that since Jesus is presented as the human God and not the transcendent God, the leadership role of Jesus is highlighted. The pairing of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής in reference to τῆς πίστεως also suggests that the author presents Jesus not just as the supreme model of our faith but also the object of faith being the originator and finisher. Thus, the study reveals that the functions of Jesus the model and the object of the believers' faith, are not contradictory, rather, they are complementary to each other. Therefore, in Heb 12,2, the role of Jesus as the model and perfecter of faith does not weaken the idea of Jesus being the object of the believers' faith.

Faith of Jesus and Faith of Believers

In this final part of the paper, we discuss the impact of the presence and absence of the personal pronoun 'our' in determining the reference point of faith in Heb 12,2. Some scholars consider faith with the definite

⁵⁵ Dennis Hamm, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor," *CBQ* 52, no. 2 (1990), 270-291, 291.

⁵⁶ Hamm, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews," 275.

⁵⁷ Hamm, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews," 286.

⁵⁸ Hamm, "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews," 291. In his understanding Jesus as "perfecter of faith is more than merely a model".

⁵⁹ Simisi, *Pursuit of Perfection*, 202.

article in an absolute sense. We have already seen that the faith of Jesus is the major concern of the text as Jesus is presented as the supreme model of faith. DuPlessis sees AV and RSV translation as erroneous, 'pioneer and perfecter of our faith'. According to him, "the interchange of the objects of belief is freely God and Christ so that there can be no question of obscuring the faith and communion with God by belief in Christ; apart from the fact that faith is always faith in God's act in Christ".⁶⁰ Since he sees this text from the point of view of the redemptive historical consummation the Christological dimension is always highlighted.⁶¹ When the author states that Jesus is ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής the implied meaning is that he is the source and culmination point of the faith of the readers.⁶² Here the priestly ministry of Jesus is highlighted along with the priesthood of all believers.⁶³

Thus, there is no point of using the personal pronoun in the translation of τῆς πίστεως ("our faith") to have the implication of believers' faith, since it is evident even in the absence of it. According to Richardson, the text deals with how the faith of Christ is related to the faith of the believers.⁶⁴ He holds that the author "deliberately omitted the possessive pronoun from 12.2 in order to affirm two distinct, yet inseparable truths: Jesus is indeed the perfect embodiment of faith(fullness) among God's covenant people and, consequently, the founder and perfecter of 'our' faith, as the latter is predicated on the former". In his view in Heb 12,2, the author brought together the Christology (Jesus as the perfect example of faith) and ecclesiology (Jesus as the originator and perfecter of our faith) in relation to faith (πίστις). Since the former leads to the latter, both are complementary to each other.⁶⁵ Jesus' perfect faith is the foundation and consummation of our faith.⁶⁶

Simisi opines that the rendering of 'our faith' is also acceptable in the given context.⁶⁷ Considering Horning's chiasmic structure of Heb 12,1-2, Hamm suggests that 'Jesus as the perfecter of faith' (not our faith) is the appropriate translation that highlights the two roles of

⁶⁰ DuPlessis, "Teleios," 227.

⁶¹ DuPlessis, "Teleios," 227.

⁶² Cf. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 366.

⁶³ Horning, "Chiasmus," 46.

⁶⁴ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 2. The discussion is about whether it is subjective genitive reading or the objective genitive reading.

⁶⁵ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 96.

⁶⁶ Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 101.

⁶⁷ Simisi, *Pursuit of Perfection*, 201.

Jesus, namely exemplar and the enabler of faith.⁶⁸ Furthermore, according to him, the formula of the pioneer and perfecter of faith parallels “the faith-life of Christians with the faith-life of Jesus, using the metaphor of a foot-race”.⁶⁹ When we say Jesus is the perfect example, it means “perfect in realization and in effect of that faith we are to imitate, trusting in him”.⁷⁰ The pastoral concern of the letter suggests that Jesus is the model and the object of the faith of believers. Moreover, the presentation of Jesus as the ‘forerunner’ also presupposes the ecclesiological aspect of the text where the believers are asked to ‘run the race that is set before us’. The author presents the text equally as Christological and ecclesiological. Therefore, while it does not sideline the aspect of believers’ faith, the absence of the personal pronoun highlights the ecclesiological dimension of faith.

Conclusion

The analysis of Heb 12,2, which is considered as the summary of the Christology of the author of the letter to the Hebrews, provides a comprehensive picture of faith as it is referred to in the pairing of ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής terminology. While the LXX and the running race imagery in the text suggest ἀρχηγός as ‘leader’ the pairing combination and its reference to Jesus propose the role of originator of faith. We hold that ‘Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of faith’ is the more appropriate translation of v. 2, since it includes various functions of Jesus such as ‘leader,’ ‘originator,’ ‘perfecter,’ ‘completer,’ and ‘model’ of faith. Jesus being the forerunner of faith not only reached the goal of faith but made it possible for others. Jesus’ perfect faith is presented in the context of the imperfect faith of the figures in chapter 11. Since the faith of Jesus leads to the faith of Christians, he is both the model and the object of faith.

The author of the letter to Hebrews sets the Christological formula of faith in the language of a running race. Jesus initiated (ἀρχηγός) and completed (τελειωτής) a new way of faith for the believers to enter God’s presence. Jesus, being the leader (ἀρχηγός) and perfecter (τελειωτής) of faith, both in imitation and redemption are integral aspects of Christian faith. Believers imitate Jesus in the way of their redemption which he initiates and perfects through the work of salvation. The believers run the race not just by looking at Jesus, the perfect example of faith but also by obtaining the effects of Jesus’ salvific action.

⁶⁸ Hamm, “Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 280.

⁶⁹ Hamm, “Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 286. Heb 2:13; 2:17; 5:7-8 and 10:5-18 are other texts that portrays Jesus’ fidelity towards Father as *Pistis*.

⁷⁰ Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 171.