

**Erard on the Epistle to the Hebrews.**



BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS,

IN CONTINUATION OF THE WORK OF OLSHAUSEN.

DR JOHN H. A. EBRARD,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ERLANGEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY THE

REV. JOHN FULTON, A.M.,

GARVALD.

WIPF & STOCK • Eugene, Oregon

Wipf and Stock Publishers  
199 W 8th Ave, Suite 3  
Eugene, OR 97401

Biblical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews  
in Continuation of the Work of Olshausen  
By John H. A. Ebrard  
Copyright©1853 Public Domain  
ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-791-6  
Publication date 1/9/2008

# CONTENTS.

	Page.
INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	1
THE EXORDIUM, . . . . .	9
PART FIRST.	
The Son and the Angels, . . . . .	29
SECTION FIRST.	
The Son is in himself superior to the Angels, . . . . .	32
A practical intermediate Part, . . . . .	63
SECTION SECOND.	
In the Son Man is raised above the Angels, . . . . .	70
PART SECOND.	
The Son and Moses, . . . . .	113
SECTION FIRST.	
The New Testament Messiah is in himself, as Son, superior to Moses, . . . . .	115
Intermediate Passage of a hortatory kind, . . . . .	130
SECTION SECOND.	
In the Son Israel has entered into its true rest, . . . . .	139
PART THIRD.	
Christ and the High Priest, . . . . .	173
SECTION FIRST.	
Christ and Aaron, . . . . .	175
Intermediate Part of a hortatory kind, . . . . .	188

	Page.
SECTION SECOND.	
The Messiah, as a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, is a superior High Priest to Aaron, . . . . .	210
PART FOURTH.	
The Mosaic Tabernacle and the Heavenly Sanctuary, . . . . .	242
SECTION FIRST.	
The two Tabernacles correspond to the two Covenants, . . . . .	243
SECTION SECOND.	
The construction of the Mosaic Tabernacle, . . . . .	257
SECTION THIRD.	
The Service of the Tabernacle. The Blood of the Bullocks and the Blood of Christ, . . . . .	279
PART FIFTH.	
The laying hold on the New Testament Salvation, . . . . .	312
SECTION FIRST.	
Theme of the Exhortation, . . . . .	313
SECTION SECOND.	
First Motive. Danger and consequences of falling away, . . . . .	320
SECTION THIRD.	
Second Motive. Calling to mind their former Faith, . . . . .	323
SECTION FOURTH.	
Third Motive. The historically demonstrated power of Faith, . . . . .	329
SECTION FIFTH.	
Fourth Motive. The blessing of Chastisement, . . . . .	352
SECTION SIXTH.	
Fifth Motive. The choice between Grace and Law; a choice between Salvation and Judgment, . . . . .	362
SECTION SEVENTH.	
Concluding Exhortations, . . . . .	367

## APPENDIX.

## ON THE DATE, DESTINATION, AND AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

CHAPTER FIRST.		
The Circle of Readers, . . . . .		Page. 379
CHAPTER SECOND.		
Time of Composition, . . . . .		383
CHAPTER THIRD.		
Whether written originally in Greek, . . . . .		389
CHAPTER FOURTH.		
The Writer. A) External Testimonies, . . . . .		394
CHAPTER FIFTH.		
Continuation. B) Internal Reasons, . . . . .		407
A) Particular Intimations, . . . . .		408
B) The Doctrinal Import, . . . . .		409
C) Words and Phrases, . . . . .		415
D) The Style, . . . . .		417
CHAPTER SIXTH.		
Conclusion. The particular Hypothesis, . . . . .		420
Literature, . . . . .		430



## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE Lord Jesus Christ has said: *Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me.* The Holy Scriptures of the old covenant testify of Christ, and that not merely because particular prophecies pointing to Christ are to be found here and there in them: The entire history of the revelation of God in the old covenant is one great preintimation of the future Messiah; and this *fact-revelation* and *fact-prophecy* formed the condition and the basis of the particular *word-prophecies* which God gave in a supernatural manner by his special instruments. It is wrong to overlook this unity of basis; but it is equally so to attempt to derive these particular word-revelations as developments from that basis, and to overlook their properly supernatural character. In the garden of Eden immediately after the fall, God directs the hope of the human race to a son of the woman, who is to break the power of the serpent; Eve exults in her first joy as a mother—she has born a man child, and with him she has received Jehovah back again; she regards her child as the promised one who is to win back for men the favour, nearness, and possession of Jehovah. She is mistaken. The human race must first go deep downwards in order to be able to rise upwards—yes, it must pursue an ever downward course, all human greatness must be brought low, until humanity is so humbled as to be capable of placing itself in a purely receptive relation towards the salvation provided; then, and not till then, will the woman's seed be *given* to it; for it cannot *produce* that seed.—This is the fundamental law of all revelation and all prophecy in the Old Testament.

After that judicial visitation by which the degenerate race of man was buried and baptized (immersed, sunk) in the flood, Noah, who came forth from this baptism as the father of a new humanity, the second Adam of the old covenant, lays on Shem's head the blessing that the Lord shall be his God; Canaan shall serve Shem, Japhet shall live with Shem in peace and friendship.<sup>1</sup> And when the families of men, five generations after Noah, are *separated* from each other, the promise is made to the Shemite Abraham on account of his faith, that his posterity shall form the central point of a future *reunion* of mankind in the blessing. But *not until after three generations of affliction* will God put the seed of Abraham in possession of the inheritance promised to him (Gen. xv.)

Here begins the operation of that wonderful *principle of delay*, according to which the last part of a promised epoch is extended anew to a period embracing several epochs, and the last of these is again distributed into several epochs, and so forth. The third generation after Abraham, that of Joseph, with which the affliction properly speaking first begins, lengthens itself out again to three generations. On the expiration of these comes the promised redemption of the seed of Abraham from affliction (Gen. xv.), but in such a manner as that the redemption then first begins, and this too only typically and preliminarily. Israel is redeemed from the Egyptian bondage; as in Noah the human race, so under Moses the seed of Abraham passed through a baptism, and came forth from a baptism in the Red Sea; Israel was emancipated through Moses, but came not through Moses into its rest, into the possession of the promised land. Joshua conducted it into the land, but the land was not yet entirely possessed, Israel continued to be harassed and oppressed by the heathen, and the last forty years previous to the battle at Ebenezer were truly again years of bondage. Being again delivered by Samuel, the people obtained in Saul a king, but not after God's heart, full of carnal timidity and carnal courage, insolent and faint-hearted. The king after God's heart, David, must again himself reproduce the destinies of the whole seed of

<sup>1</sup> To dwell in the tents of any one = to be hospitably received by any one.

Abraham in his own individual life, and, through much tribulation, enter into glory. But yet his reign was one of war and conflict, not of peace, and the triumphing prince of peace, Solomon, was after him.

Doubtless there was given in David a fulfilment of the old promises of salvation, but one that was merely human, therefore lying under the curse of everything human, and liable to pass away. Hence there was opened up to David by means of the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. vii.) a second perspective view of the promised salvation, in the fulfilment of which, however, the same law of delay obtains as in the first. *Not David, but his seed after him shall build a house to the Lord*; for him the Lord will build a house, and will be his father, and he shall reign with God for ever. David immediately perceives, and rightly (2 Sam. vii. 19; comp. chap. xxiii. 1), that this wonderful prophecy "points to the distant future," and represents the form of "a man who is God." And, in like manner, Solomon, when he consecrates the temple of stone (1 Kings viii. 26—27) acknowledges that that prophecy of Nathan's is not yet fulfilled by this act. Therefore, when Solomon sought, by intercourse with the nations, by marriage and philosophy, to break through the limits of the Mosaic law, he wrongly anticipated a freedom which was to become possible only through the new covenant, plunged himself and his people into idolatry, and brought about a deep national decline; and so his proverbs and his song of songs are placed as monuments, not merely of his wisdom, but at the sametime also of his folly, among the Chethubim of the Old Testament canon.

Solomon's temple of stone then, was only a first, a provisional fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy. Under him, and after him, the kingdom, power, and glory of Israel fell more and more into decay, and as ungodliness increased, the prophets, and Elias among the number, looked around for the judgments of God. But to him it was revealed that the Lord is not in storm and fire, but in the still small voice; and Joel, too, uttered the same truth. The people deserve indeed even now judgment and destruction; but with the judgment the Lord will grant forgiveness; He will first pour out His Spirit, and then come to judgment. Redeeming grace is to go before judicial severity. The eye of hope was now turned to redeeming grace; the promised des-

endant of David was more and more clearly revealed to the prophets. He is not to be born in palaces; as the first, so the second David must be sought by the daughters of Zion in times of sore travail, of heavy afflictions, by the sheepfolds of Bethlehem (Mic. v. 5.) The daughter of the house of David, so haughty under Ahaz, must, by unheard of sufferings, be brought to conduct herself in a purely receptive manner as a maid (עלמה) in order to bring forth the son, and she will then, no longer trusting in her own strength, call him "GOD WITH US." Israel, appointed as the servant of God to convert the heathen, but altogether unfit for this work (Is. xlvi.), and himself an idolater (Is. xlv.), is to be again brought into bondage by a force coming from the Euphrates (Assyrian, later, from Is. xxxviii. onwards, Babylonian); in the time of his subjugation the true servant of God will come, will first work out by his atoning sacrificial death the inward redemption, the forgiveness of sins (chap. liii.), then convert the heathen (chap. liv.), and finally convert and deliver the still hardened Israel (chap. lxiv.—lxvi., comp. Rom. xi.) But here again comes in a delay. Not 70 years, as Jeremiah has prophesied, is the subjugation of Israel under the heathen to last; but as Daniel has revealed,  $7 \times 70$  years, nay, as is immediately added by way of correction, still longer (inasmuch as from the building of Jerusalem under Nehemiah  $7 \times 62$  years were to elapse.) After 70 years indeed, Israel is to return to their land; but the subjugation under the heathen is to continue over five centuries.—Accordingly, the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel was again but a type of the building of the temple already promised by Nathan, which God himself was to undertake. And so Malachi, the last of the prophets, directed the eye of the people to the *messenger of the Lord*, who was soon to come to his temple, to visit and to sift Israel, and to separate the wheat from the empty chaff (comp. Matth. iii. 12.)

This signification and course of prophecy must of itself have appeared to any one who gave attentive heed to the Old Testament, and who in heart and mind belonged to that covenant; not, however, to the impenitent, not to the mass of the people of Israel. Now the two books of the New Testament in which is represented the insight of the spiritually-minded Israelites into

the Old Testament revelation after it was brought to full maturity by the Holy Spirit, are, the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews, to which, however, the address of Stephen (Acts vii.) is to be added as a very important passage having the same character. Stephen adduces from the collective history of the Old Testament (in which he points throughout with special emphasis to the principle of delay already noticed<sup>1</sup>) rather the negative proof—that the law and the temple, although divine, are not the highest and last form of the revelation and dwelling-place of God. Matthew adduces rather the positive proof—that Jesus is the promised son (seed) of Abraham and David, that in him, therefore, the first prospect disclosed to Abraham (Gen. xv.), as well as the second opened up to David through Nathan (2 Sam. vii.) have found their termination. Matthew, too, refers to the same law of delay, when, in chap. i. 2 ff., he shews, that in place of the three דורות, Gen. xv., there came three great periods, that of typical elevation until the time of David, that of decline until Jeremiah, and that during which the house of David was in a condition of poverty and lowliness until Mary. In conducting this proof, however, the Evangelist does not of course take as the frame-work of his particular reasonings an exposition of the Old Testament prophecy, but a record of the New Testament fulfilment. The Old Testament prophecy is by Matthew taken for granted as already known. The Epistle to the Hebrews, on the contrary, goes out from the Old Testament, formally develops the component parts of that dispensation in a treatise systematically arranged, and shows how, in all its parts, it points to Jesus. The history of Jesus is here taken for granted as known. This method is more remote, more indirect, and more philosophical than the other.—Stephen's *practical aim* was to defend himself from the charge of speaking blasphemy against the law and the temple; that of Matthew was to furnish Jewish Christians with a written substitute for the oral preaching of the twelve. What practical necessity occasioned the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

No book of the New Testament, and, in general, of the Hebrew Scriptures, owes its origin to a mere subjective literary choice,

<sup>1</sup> Comp. my Crit. of the Gospel History, 2 ed. p. 689.

a mere love of writing on the part of the author. The Epistle to the Hebrews, accordingly, however systematic and almost scientific its contents are, was occasioned by a practical necessity. The investigations concerning its author we must refer from the introduction (to which they do not belong, and where they are not as yet even possible) to the close of the commentary; but, for the better understanding of the epistle itself, some preliminary observations respecting the occasion of it must needs be made.

It is evident from Acts ii. 5, and Acts xv., and Gal. ii., that the Jewish Christians, though not resting their justification before God on the Mosaic law, yet *observed that law* (Acts ii. 38, iii. 19, 12.) And this too was quite natural. For that law was not only given by God, and not yet abrogated by him, nay, observed even by Christ himself (Gal. iv. 4 s.), but besides this, being national as well as religious, it had become so entirely a part of the Israelitish customs and manner of life, it was so wrought into the texture of the whole conduct and life of that people, that so long as they were a people, and so long as Jewish Christians were members of the Israelitish state, a renunciation of those national customs was purely inconceivable. It may, indeed, be doubted whether the Israelites who had become Christians, continued to fulfil those legal observances which bore a more optional character. It can scarcely be supposed, for example, that every one who fell into a sin would bring the guilt or the sin-offering into the temple. On the other hand, the manner of preparing meats, the observance of the Sabbath, &c., remained the same.

Indeed, until the destruction of Jerusalem, when God, by the overthrow of the Israelitish state, put an end to Israelitish nationality and customs, the hope of seeing Israel converted as a whole, although it had been ever lessening, was not entirely given up; and this of itself was a reason for the Jewish Christians not separating themselves from the Israelitish community. Thus the Jewish Christians, or to speak more correctly, the Israelites who believed on the Messiah, were in the habit of frequenting the temple for daily prayer. But the hatred of the unbelieving Jews towards them grew more and more intense. Towards the end of the fiftieth year they no longer suffer the presence of the apostle Paul in the temple (Acts xxi. ss.), although they dare not

yet openly cast him out as a Jewish Christian, but avail themselves of the pretext that he has taken a Gentile Christian into the temple along with him. But that the time came when Christians as such, Jewish Christians also, were no longer suffered to appear in the temple, may be inferred from the Epistle to the Hebrews. The persecution of the Christians under Nero may have emboldened the Jews; their courage rose when they saw the Christians sacrificed also by the Romans. This period of affliction for the church in Jerusalem may have begun in the sixtieth year. There were, however, weak ones in whose minds conscientious scruples might be awakened by this exclusion from the Theocracy of the old covenant. They were not yet able to walk without crutches. They were afraid lest with the privilege of access to the temple and of fellowship with the commonwealth of Israel, they should lose at the same time their claim to the common salvation of God. Such weak ones are not to be sought among the older members of the church who had already grown grey in Christianity, but rather among the neophytes and such as were on the point of conversion. Conversion to Christianity threatened to come to a stand. And yet it was the last hour; and whoever was to be saved from the judgments impending over Israel must be saved now. In these circumstances the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, designed for a certain circle of neophytes and catechumens then existing; useful for all in future times who should occupy an analogous position. The aim of this epistle is to prove from the nature and principal elements of the old covenant itself, that the revelation and redemption through the Messiah promised in the old covenant, is represented even in the old covenant as an absolute revelation, as sufficient in itself, by which the Old Testament types become superfluous.



## THE EXORDIUM.

---

(Chap. i. 1—3.)

WHILE all the rest of the New Testament epistles begin by mentioning the name and office of their authors, as also the churches for which they are intended, this form of introduction which was usual in ancient times is wanting in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some have sought to account for this circumstance by saying that the author intended to compensate for the effect of a formal superscription by the solemn and highly oratorical style of the introduction. This supposition, however, will not suffice fully to explain the case. The *impression* that would have been made on the readers and hearers by the name of an apostle or some other authoritative person, might indeed be compensated by the impression which the lofty utterance of the heart and mind of such a person could not fail to produce; they could, so to speak, hear the *man* from the force of the *words*, and forthwith believe that they saw him before them. But the want of the *superscription* itself was not thereby compensated. We can scarcely conceive that any one would have addressed a letter to a church without mentioning his name at all. It only remains therefore to be supposed, that this writing which we hold under the name of the Epistle to the Hebrews was originally accompanied by a shorter epistle properly so called, and therefore that the epistle itself was not one in the proper sense of the term. And this supposition is confirmed by a number of considerations drawn from the substance of the epistle, to which our attention will be directed at the proper time, and of which we will here specify some of the most striking. The hortatory passages are not, as in the most of the

other epistles, closely engrafted on the didactic, so that the doctrinal parts pass naturally into the practical; but the former are wound up in a strictly scientific manner without any hortatory and practical side-glances, and the latter are abruptly placed between the doctrinal sections (chap. ii. 1—3, iii. 1—19, v. 11—6, 12, &c.) The practical parts too, show a systematic form the result of reflexion,—an intended transition to a new doctrinal section is introduced in the form of a short hortatory or personal remark (iii. 1, viii. 1.) The particular sections of the doctrinal parts are, however, marked by a peculiar species of *formal superscriptions*, of which we shall soon have to speak, and the nature of which can be seen from the translation which we have annexed to the commentary. Moreover, the course of the investigation and the reasoning in the doctrinal parts is often so intricate, so many ideas are often compressed into few words, that we can hardly suppose the object of the epistle was fulfilled by a single reading before the assembled church (as we must suppose was the case even with the most didactic of Paul's epistles, that to the Romans, which however might easily be understood on a first reading); but it rather appears, that this Epistle to the Hebrews was designed, after having been read, to serve as a groundwork for a formal course of instruction, very probably of instruction for catechumens. This opinion is confirmed also by the passages chap. v. 11 ss.; vi. 1 ss., where the writer makes some systematic remarks on the *method* of instruction to be pursued in the Christian Church; with which may be compared also the passage viii. 1, where again in a systematic form a recapitulation is given of what has been said on to that place, as the foundation of what is farther to be brought forward.

After all, then, we shall not be chargeable with undue boldness if we maintain, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was, in respect of its *form*, not an *epistle* in the proper sense, but a *treatise*. That this assertion implies no denial of its having been written with a practical aim is evident from what has been said in the introduction; all that we think and say is, that in respect of its *form*, it goes beyond the nature of an epistle, of a direct effusion in which the writer transfers himself in spirit to his readers, and speaks to them although not without a plan (comp. the Epistle to the Romans), yet always without the consciousness of system and

from the immediate impulse of the heart, and that it therefore thoroughly bears the character of a *systematic treatise*. Hence also we account for the absence of the address which is indispensable to every epistle. A mere verbal salutation by the person who conveyed the writing could not supply the place of this address, not even on the supposition of its being a treatise. It would be too strange to suppose, that the author who had written so much should not write a few additional lines with his own name. These accompanying lines, however, in the case before us, would be addressed not to the church, but rather to some individual *teacher* in it, and we can easily see from this how they might come to be lost.

That the writing was intended for a certain limited circle of readers, not for a circle of churches, not even for one entire church, is very evident from chap. iii. 6, v. 12. The persons there addressed form quite a definite circle of persons represented as undergoing a course of instruction. This, of course, does not imply that the writing was not used for a similar object in all analogous cases beyond this circle, and that, in this way, at a very early period, it may not have obtained a circulation suited to its high importance.

The three first verses, inasmuch as they develop the ground-idea of the epistle, form a sort of introduction to the principal parts which follow from ver. 4 onwards. The structure of the period in these verses has justly been noticed by all commentators as remarkable for its beauty. The period is as perspicuous and clear as it is long, rich, and complicated; a fine succession of thought expressed in a form finished even to the minutest detail, gives it a claim to rank among the finest periods of the Greek authors. The first verse gives forth in a majestic style the ground-theme of the whole treatise. *The revelation of God in his Son is opposed to the revelations of God by the prophets* as the higher, as the one, undivided, absolute revelation. To confirm this the *person* and *work* of the Son are developed in ver. 2—3.

Ver. 1. The *subject* with the clauses in apposition to it forms a series of parallel antitheses to the verbal-predicate with its qualifying clauses. "God who has spoken to the fathers by the prophets." *Ααλειν* is used in the sense of *דָּבַר* to denote the

revealing utterance of God, in which sense it frequently occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 2, ix. 19, &c.), and elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts iii. 24; James v. 10; 2 Pet. i. 21.) By the *πατέρες* here are meant, of course, not merely the patriarchs, but all those former generations of Israel that have preceded the *ἡμεῖς*, those at present living; in a word: the forefathers. The idea implied in *προφήται* is to be understood in a similarly wide sense; even in the Old Testament *נביא* does not always denote merely the prophet with reference to his special office, but sometimes quite generally, every organ of divine revelation. It is so used here. *Προφήται* here, according to the context, comprehends all Old Testament organs of revelation, in so far as they were *mere* organs of God, in opposition to the Son, who, according to ver. 3, was more than a mere organ. It is doubtful, however, in what sense the preposition *ἐν* is to be understood. The interpretation given by those who take *προφήται* to denote the *writings* of the prophets, and refer the *ἐν* to these writings, is, on account of the parallel member *ἐν νῶ*, altogether untenable. Much more may be said in favour of that explanation which we find already given by Thomas Aquinas, and afterwards adopted by Beza, Carpzov, Alberti, Bleek, and others, that *ἐν* is to be taken in the strictest and most proper sense in which it is used in Greek. According to this, *ἐν* cannot be referred immediately to *λαλεῖν* (for the author surely does not intend to say that God has spoken in the prophets—within them,—he rather says that God has spoken to the fathers by the prophets), but *ὧν* must be supplied. God was in the prophets and spoke to the fathers; he was in the Son and spoke to us. But although, in itself considered, it might be proper enough to speak of God being in the prophets (*i.e.* relatively through his Spirit), and in like manner of God being in Christ (by the absolute hypostatic presence of the Logos in him), still it is in the highest degree improbable, that an author whose purpose it was from the outset to mark with the strongest emphasis the *difference* between the Son and the prophets, and the superiority of the former over the latter, should have placed those two entirely different modes of the indwelling of God parallel to each other by means of the same expression. I decidedly agree therefore with the interpretation of Chrysostom, Oecumenius, Luther, Calvin, Grotius, and

Tholuck, that the *ἐν* here in both places has an *instrumental* signification, and is to be understood in the sense of the Heb.  $\text{בְּ}$ , “by.” Granted that this use of the word cannot be shown in the genuine Greek profane literature, there is nothing to prevent our regarding it as a Hebraism. Bleek, indeed, thinks the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews bears a so purely Greek character, that we must hesitate to admit the supposition of a Hebraism; but how easily might such an unconscious Hebraism slip from the pen of a native Israelite, who naturally *thought* in Hebrew what he *wrote* in Greek, however careful he was to construct his periods in genuine Greek! And is not the use of *οἱ αἰῶνες* in ver. 2 likewise a Hebraism? But are not *unconscious* Hebraisms in the use of prepositions much more easily accounted for in an author who in other respects writes good Greek, than *conscious* Hebraisms in the use of nouns for which (as for *οἱ αἰῶνες*) genuine Greek expressions (*ὁ κόσμος, τὰ πάντα*) were quite at hand?

The adverbs *πολυμερῶς* and *πολυτρόπως*, according to Tholuck and others, have no specific intelligible meaning, because no *ἀπλῶς* or *ἐφάπαξ* stands opposed to them, but are used merely for the sake of amplification. But *ἀπλῶς* and *ἐφάπαξ*, as we shall immediately see, would not even have formed a right antithesis. That a writing of which the *tot verba tot pondera* holds so true, begins with an amplification, is a supposition to which recourse will then only be had when every possibility of another interpretation has been cut off. Already several among the Fathers, and then Calvin, Limborch, Capellus, J. Gerhard, Calov, and Bleek, explain *πολυμερῶς* as pointing to the different *times* and *periods*, *πολυτρόπως* to the different *ways* and *forms* of the divine revelation in the Old Testament dispensation. This interpretation, however, does not precisely bring out the idea of the writer. *Πολυμερῶς* does not contain precisely a chronological reference; the antithesis is not that God has spoken *often* by the prophets but only *once* by his Son (according to which less would be attributed to Christ than to them), but the opposition is, between the *distribution* of the Old Testament revelation among the prophets, and the *undivided fulness* of the New Testament revelation by Christ. *Πολυμερῶς* means not “many times,” but “manifoldly,” “in many parts.” In like manner, the Old

Testament revelation is said to be one of *many forms*, in opposition to that *τρόπος* which was not one among the many, but the one which outweighed the many, the absolute, which fully corresponded with the *οὐσία*. Thus we see how a *ἄπαξ* or *ἀπλῶς* could not follow in the opposite member of the sentence. The real antithesis to *πολυμερῶς* and *πολυτρόπως* lies in ver. 2, 3.

The time denoted by *πάλαι* is commonly explained of the time before Malachi, with whom the succession of the prophets ceased. But surely the writer does not mean to say specifically, that God has spoken in times of old, but no more since these times. *Πάλαι* is rather explained simply from the antithesis *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου*, &c., without supposing that a remote and heterogeneous allusion is made to the interval between Malachi and the Baptist.

But the expression *ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων* (that the reading *ἐσχάτων* is false may now be considered as fully established) with which we pass to the second member of the sentence—the predicate,—stands in need of being interpreted itself. Here also, the supposition of a Hebraism is indispensable, not one that can be said to be either involuntary or voluntary, but one that was quite as intended as it was necessary, inasmuch as it relates to a dogmatical conception specifically Jewish. Formally explained according to the Greek grammar, the words would signify “at the end of these days.” But what days are to be understood by these? The aetas of the writer? But the incarnation of Christ took place at the beginning not at the end of the period. Or are we to understand the days of the prophets? But these did not reach down to the time of Christ; and *πάλαι* too would then form no antithesis. With reason, therefore, have Bleek and others explained *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου*, &c., as equivalent to the Hebrew **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים**. Conformably to the Old Testament prophecy, the Israelites distinguished the period of the world which then was as the **הַיָּהוּה** from the period of glorification which was to begin with the resurrection the **הַיָּהוּה**; the advent and work of the Messiah was to form the transition from the one to the other, and this was therefore wont to be viewed and denoted partly as the *end of this time*, partly also as the beginning of the future. That the Messianic or “last”

time would again divide itself into two periods—that of the life of Jesus in his humiliation, and that of his coming again in glory—was as yet not at all known to the Jews, and the Christians of the apostolic age had as yet no intuition at least of the *length* of the intervening period, nay could not have such an intuition, hence they included the whole period from the birth of Christ on to his promised coming again in the *ἔσχαται ἡμέραι* (Acts ii. 17; 1 John ii. 18.) In opposition to it then, *πάλαι* denotes the whole antecedent period, the *time of the promise of the Messianic prophecy* which preceded the time of the fulfilment.

In the time of the fulfilment has God spoken to us by his Son. The idea expressed in *υἱός* needs limitation on two sides. Firstly, *υἱός* is not simply synonymous with *λόγος* (John i.), it is nowhere in the Holy Scriptures used to denote the only begotten *qua* eternally pre-existent. And therefore, formally at least, the ecclesiastical terminology goes beyond the biblical usage, when it transfers the name Son to denote also the relation which that person holds in the Trinity; this transference, however, is indeed perfectly justifiable, because he who with respect to his incarnation is called *υἱός* in Scripture, is the same who before his incarnation existed from eternity with the Father. Indeed, the doctrine of Scripture (John i. 14) is not that the eternal Logos *was united* to a son of Mary, to a human nature in the concrete sense; but that the eternal hypostatical Logos *became man*, assumed human nature in the abstract sense, concentrated itself by a free act of self-limitation prompted by love, into an embryo human life a slumbering child-soul, as such formed for itself unconsciously and yet with creative energy a body in the womb of the Virgin, and hence he who in the Scripture is called *υἱός qua* incarnate is one and the same subject with that which with respect to its relation of oneness with the Father is called *ὁ λόγος* or *ὁ μονογενής*. Nay, even *qua* incarnate he can *only therefore* be called the Son of God because in him the eternal *μονογενής* became man. And hence, in the second place, we must guard against explaining the idea involved in the *υἱός* from the relation of the incarnate *as man* to the Father, as if he were called “Son” in the sense in which other pious men are called “children” of God. For it is evident even from the antithesis to the *προφήται*,

chiefly, however, from the second and third verses, that *υἱός* is the designation of the man Jesus *qua* the incarnate eternal *λόγος*.

This is apparent chiefly from the absence of the article. Exactly rendered, we must translate the words thus—"God spake to us by one who was Son," who stood not in the relation of prophet but in the relation of Son to him. If it were *ἐν τῷ υἱῷ*, then Christ would be placed as this individual in opposition to the individuals of the prophets; but as the article is wanting it is the species that is placed in opposition to the species (although of course Christ is the single individual of his species.)

Ver. 2. The description of the person of the *υἱός* begins in the second verse, from which it evidently appears how God hath revealed himself by Christ not *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*, but absolutely and perfectly. Christ was more than a human *instrument*, he was *himself God*.

The principal question in the interpretation of this verse is whether the clause *ὃν ἔθηκεν*, &c., denotes an act which preceded that described in the clause *δι' οὗ*, &c., or one which followed it. The meaning of the second clause is clear; from it therefore we must set out in our investigation.

*Οἱ αἰῶνες* (as in xi. 3) is used in the sense of the Hebrew *עולָם עולָמים* to denote the *worlds*, while in Greek it signifies only the *times*. By the Son has God made the worlds; we find the same in John i. 1 ss.; Col. i. 15—22. The eternal self-revelation of God in himself, through the eternal utterance of his fulness in the eternal personal *word* which God speaks *to himself* (John i. 1) and in the breath of the eternal *spirit*, forms the ground and therewith the eternal (not temporal) *præius* of the revelation of himself proceeding from the will of the Triune in a sphere which is not eternal, but one of time and space, which is not God but creature. And as the will which called creation into being is the will of the one Triune God, the Son and the Spirit were therefore partakers in the work; the world was made by the Father through the Son.

Now, in what relation to this act does the act denoted by the words *ὃν ἔθηκε κληρόνομον πάντων* stand? Were we to regard it as *an act preceding* the creation of the world, we might then

be tempted to explain it of the eternal generation of the Son himself. But how in this case can an *all things* be spoken of which the Son receives as an inheritance? How can it be said: *whom* (the Son) *he made heir*, how can the Son be presupposed as *already existing*, if it be his generation that is intimated in these words? The only sense then that can be affixed to the words on this hypothesis is something to the effect, that God already before the creation of the world destined the Son, who was generated from all eternity, to be its future possessor. But what practical aim could such an idea have in the context,—not to say that a *before* and *after* can have no place in eternity? We are, therefore, compelled to turn to the other view, that of Tholuck, according to which ἔθηκε, &c., is to be understood of an act of God performed in time towards the incarnate Son of God, namely, that *crowning* of the incarnate one following upon his sufferings, which is afterwards more particularly described in chap. ii. ver. 9, and of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Phil. ii. 9—11. The Son of God having, out of eternal compassionating love, laid aside the *glory* which he possessed in eternity (John xvii. 5), and having in his incarnation come under the category of time, and here again having glorified his inner being under the form of a human free will, and under the form of obedience manifested his eternal love (Matth. xxvi. 39; Heb. v. 8; x. 7), forthwith received back again that *glory and honour* (John xvii. 5), received the dominion over heaven and earth from the Father's hand as his crown and his just reward, and received this as the incarnate, who still continues to be man, not divesting himself of the nature which he once assumed (Heb. vii. 26, comp. with ix. 12, 24.) And thus it is shown at length in Heb. ii. 5, that in him as their head and king mankind are exalted above the angels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We must here guard ourselves against a representation of this subject which sprang up in the scholastic period, and passed also into the period of the Reformation, chiefly into the Lutheran theology—a representation which unconsciously leads back to Nestorianism, and from which, if one would escape its consequences without giving up itself, there is no other outlet but Eutychianism. It is this—that the divine and the human nature in Christ were two parts, or portions, or concreta, which were united in the one person of Christ “as fire and iron are united so as to make red-hot iron,” and that the one part, the divine, always remained in possession of the δόξα, while the other part, the

In this then lies the great difference between Christ and the prophets. The prophets were heralds of the promised future *inheritance*; Christ is the *heir* himself, the Lord and King in the Kingdom of God. The inheritance, as it appeared to the prophets, was still more or less limited to the people of Israel; at least the participation of the Gentiles in it appeared as yet under the form of a reception of the Gentiles into the community of Israel; the inheritance as it has appeared in the fulfilment, is that kingdom of Christ which embraces the whole human race (Ephes. ii. 19), nay heaven and earth (Ephes. i. 20 ss.).

human, was only raised to a participation in the *δόξα* at the exaltation of Christ. When Eutyches taught (Mansi, tom. vi, p. 744): *ἐκ δύο φύσεων γεγενῆσθαι τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν πρὸ τῆς ἐνώσεως, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἔνωσιν μίαν φύσιν (εἶναι)*, the acute Leo justly observed at the conclusion of the ep. Flav. that the first clause (Nestorian), was quite as wrong as the second (Monophysite.) *Tam impie duarum naturarum ante incarnationem unigenitus Filius Dei dicitur, quam nefarie, postquam verbum caro factum est, natura in eo singularis asseritur.* The two natures, the Divine and the human, the filius Dei and the filius Mariae, were not first separately existent, so that their union constituted the entire Christ; but the Logos, retaining his *natura divina*, his Divine *nature*, and laying aside the *μορφή θεοῦ*, assumed in place of this the *μορφή δούλου*, *i.e.*, he assumed the *nature of men* (an assemblage of *properties*, not an *existens*), and thus both natures, the Divine and the human, must now be predicated of him. As, if a king's son, in order to free his brother imprisoned in an enemy's country, were to go unknown into that country, and hire himself as servant to the prison-keeper, he would be both a real king's son and a real servant; the nature of a king's son belongs to him (only not the *μορφή* but also the *δόξα* and *τιμή* of such), for he would still be the son of a king; but the nature of a servant also belongs to him, for he really performs a servant's work and endures a servant's sufferings. But such a person could never have arisen through the *union* of a king's son with a servant. Never could it be said of him as is said of Christ in the formula of concord (epit. ep. 8), the *unio personalis* is not a mere *combinatio*, *quia potius hic summa communio est, quam Deus cum assumpto homine vere habet*, or affirm. 6: *Quomodo homo, Mariae filius, Deus aut filius Dei vere appellari posset, aut esset, si ipsius humanitas (this is evidently understood as an existens concretum) cum filio Dei non esset personaliter unita.* If we regard the two natures as two subsistences or parts, constituting together the one person, there remains then no way of escape from the extremest Nestorianism except that to which Eutyches had recourse, namely, that the one part participated in the properties of the other. Nestorianism is therefore by no means the opposite of Eutychanism, but merely what it presupposes. He who has no part in the former needs not the latter to help him out. In "Philippism" lies the saving of our theology from such errors.

Upon this, then, follows that second clause *by whom also, &c.*, simply by way of confirming and at the same also of explaining the preceding. Christ was appointed heir of the universe, nay, this universe has received its being through him. How proper and natural is it, that he through whom the universe was made, after having humbled himself and accomplished the gracious will of the Father, should as his reward be also invested with the dominion over the universe as with a *permanent inheritance*.—The principal idea in *κληρονομία* is not that of a possession which any one receives through the death of another, but a possession which he on his part can transfer as an inheritance to his posterity, consequently, a permanent possession over which he has full authority. (The passage chap. ix. 16 ss. would agree with this interpretation if we were at liberty to translate *διαθήκη* there by “testament.” There too it would be the *κληρόνομος* himself who had heired the inheritance, not through the death of another, but who by his own death had acquired the right to transfer the inheritance to others. Still when we come to that passage we shall find that there is no reason for departing from the usual *biblical* signification of the word *διαθήκη*.)

Ver. 3. The twofold idea which lies in the second verse is in ver. 3 farther explained. These two things were said: that Christ has been appointed *in time* (after the completion of the redemption-work) to the theocratical inheritance of the *Kingdom of God*, and that Christ is the *eternal* ground of the entire universe. The second of these things is here repeated in the apposition which belongs to the *subject* of the third verse: *ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*; the first in the verb *ἐκάθισεν, &c.*, which contains the predicate and the apposition belonging to the predicate-idea *ποιησάμενος, &c.*, consequently, in the words *καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς*. (For that *ποιησάμενος* is in apposition not to the subject *ὅς* but to the predicate-idea contained in the verb, appears not only logically, from the idea itself, but also grammatically, from the want of a *καὶ* before *καθαρισμὸν*.)

With regard to the reading, we may consider it as fully made out after Bleek's searching investigation, that the words “*δι*”

ἐαυτοῦ" before καθαρισμὸν and ἡμῶν after ἁμαρτιῶν are to be cancelled.

We proceed now to the *first member of the sentence*—the subject with its appositions. Chiefly the expressions ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης and χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως require here a thorough investigation. Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, Grotius, Limborch, and others have understood ἀπαύγασμα of the *passive light*, i.e. *reflection* or *reflected image* which a lucid or illuminated body throws on a (smooth reflecting) surface. According to this, Christ would be represented here as an image or reflection of the Father's glory, consequently, his hypostatical separate existence from the Father is considered as *presupposed*, and emphasis laid on his qualitative sameness with the Father. Others again, as Capellus, Gomarus, Gerhard, Calov, Bleek, have understood ἀπαύγασμα rather as denoting the *active light* or the *rays* which continually emanate from a shining body. According to this, the son would be represented rather as a *perpetual life-act of the Father*. But the first signification, as Bleek has shown, is, although etymologically defensible, still against the grammatical usage; the second, on the contrary, appears to me to be not justifiable on etymological grounds, or at least to rest on unprecise expressions, and even the first, I would hesitate to defend on etymological grounds.—Ἀπολάμπω, with reference to any body, signifies to throw out a light from itself, ἀπαστρέπτω to dart forth flashes of lightning from itself, ἀπανγάζω to throw out a lustre *from itself* (not to produce a reflection on another body.) The nouns ending in μα, however, denote, not the *act* as continuing, but the *result* of the act as finished. Thus κήρυγμα is not the act of announcing, but the announced message; in like manner Philo calls his Logos an ἀπόσπασμα ἢ ἀπαύγασμα τῆς μακαρίας φύσεως (ed. Mang. tom. i. p. 35), where ἀπόσπασμα must denote the separated part, and ἀπαύγασμα, consequently, the secondary light radiated from the original light. In the same sense do we take the expression here. It denotes, not the brightness received from another body and thrown back as a reflection or a mirrored image, nor the light continually proceeding from a shining body as a light streaming out and losing itself in space, but it denotes a light, or a bright ray which is radiated from another light *in so far as it is viewed as now become an independent light*.

The expression ray-image (Germ. Strahlbild) best answers to the original; as a ray-image, it is a living image composed of rays not merely one received and reflected, but it is conceived of as independent and permanent, it is more than a mere ray, more than a mere image; a sun produced from the original light. We fully agree therefore with Bleek when following Chrysostom and Theophylact, he finds the best interpretation of ἀπαύγασμα in the expression of the Nicene creed φῶς ἐκ φωτός, but we differ from him when he thinks that this interpretation is sufficiently rendered by the German word "Strahl"—"ray."

The original light from which the manifested ray-image has proceeded, is denoted by the word δόξα (scil. αὐτοῦ, θεοῦ). Many commentators, as Tholuck, wrongly interpret this of the Sche-kinah, that cloud of light under the Old Testament dispensation in which God revealed His presence and glory in a manner perceptible to the outward sense to Moses, then to the High Priest in the holy of holies, and last of all to the shepherds, Luke ii. 9. This would be impossible if for no other reason than this, that, as the original light was then a light perceptible to the sense, much more must the ἀπαύγασμα proceeding from it be a brightness apparent to the bodily eye. But, moreover, according to this explanation, the Son, the absolute, adequate, personal revelation of the Father would be degraded beneath the Old Testament imperfect, typical, form of the Divine manifestation, seeing that he would be represented as an ἀπαύγασμα of the latter, which was not even itself an ἀπαύγασμα, but was a mere reflection. Without doubt, therefore, those are right who understand the expression δόξα in the supersensible meaning in which it was used by John, and explain it of the eternal essential glory of the Father, that *light inaccessible* of which Paul speaks in 1 Tim. vi. 16, and which God himself is (1 John i. 5.) God's own eternal unsearchable essence is light throughout, not a βῆθος, not a dark original basis which must needs first develope itself into brightness, but light clear to itself, and self conscious, and comprehending in itself the fulness of all possible things, an original monad—which bears in itself, and calls forth from itself the possibility and reality of all monads,—full of wisdom and love. This is the original glory of the Father's essence, and this original glory was manifested to itself in eternity, and to the

creature in time, inasmuch as it allows to proceed from itself the Son, a living independent ray-image, in whom all that glory finds itself again, and reproduces itself in an absolute form, and in whose existence and manifestation the love, as in his nature and qualities, the wisdom of the Father represents itself.

This interpretation of the *ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης* is confirmed by the expression which follows in the second member—*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑπόστασεως*. Substantially the same thing is denoted by *ὑπόστασις* as by *δόξα*, only regarded from another point of view. *Δόξα* signifies the essence of the Father with reference to his glory in which he represents himself before the eyes of the suppliant creature; *ὑπόστασις* denotes this essence *as* essence and without regard to its outward manifestation. Originally *ὑπόστασις* signifies *solidity*, then *reality, being, existence*. It is well known, that the term in its philosophical use acquired an ambiguity of meaning which led to mistakes in the Arian controversy. The Alexandrines taking the word in the sense of “subsistence” described to the Son a proper *ὑποστάσις* (an independent existence) along with the Father, which gave great offence to the Western Christians, inasmuch as they took the word in the older sense to mean “essence,” and therefore of course could ascribe no other essence to the Son than to the Father. In the passage before us *ὑπόστασις* is evidently used in the *older* sense. True, Calvin, Beza, Salmeron, Gerhard, Calov, Suicer, and others found a difficulty in the Son’s being represented as a mere reflection of the Father’s essence, seeing that he himself participates in this essence, and were therefore induced to understand *ὑπόστασις* rather in the later sense, so that the person of the Son was designated as an exact image of the person of the Father; this, however, on the one hand, would involve the anachronism of transferring a later speculative theological terminology to the apostolical times, to which the designation of the Father, Son, and Spirit as three *ὑποστάσεις* was as yet so unknown that the author could not possibly have used the word in the sense of “person” without being unintelligible to his readers; on the other hand the whole difficulty which has given rise to this false meaning rests on an unsound interpretation of the word *χαρακτήρ*.

*Χαρακτήρ* does not any more than *ἀπαύγασμα* denote a mere

reflection, a copy. Derived from *χαράσσω* it denotes not, as Wahl and Bretschneider assert, “an instrument for engraving,” a style or chisel, but the mark made by a stamp, the *features carved* on the stone, or the gem, or the seal-ring. It thus comes to signify metaphorically, the features of a countenance, the features of character,—and, thirdly and finally, in a weakened signification, it is also used for a “characteristic mark,” a token by which anything is known (like *τύπος*) (thus we speak of the *character* of a species of plants.) But *χαρακτήρ* never denotes the *copy* of one body left by a seal or signet on another, it never signifies the *image* or the *copy* of the features of a countenance; Lucien speaks rather of *εἰκονες τῶν ἀντιμόρφων χαρακτήρων* (de Amor. p. 1061). The third of the above significations is evidently not suitable here; the Son can in no intelligible sense be called a distinguishing mark or sign of the nature of God; not less unsuitable is the second, *viz.*, *stamp* in the sense of expression, characteristic quality, which, besides being a figurative and abstract signification, is inadmissible partly, because the Son cannot possibly be merely a quality of the Father, and partly because the parallelism with *ἀπαύγασμα* requires a concrete term. We must therefore take *χαρακτήρ* as meaning *stamp* in the sense of a form cut out or engraven. As it belongs to the *δόξα* to concentrate and reproduce itself in a form composed of rays, a sun, so it is proper to the *οὐσία* or *ὑπόστασις* to stamp itself out (or according to the ancient mode of viewing it: to engrave) in a manifest form or figure. This form or figure is not, however, to be viewed as a *copy* (as if the *ὑπόστασις* itself had already a form which was now copied in a second form) but as an immediate and substantial rendering visible and corporeal, of the *ὑπόστασις*. The idea is therefore substantially the same as that which is expressed in the words *ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης*.

If it be asked, who is the *ὅς* to whom these appositions belong, whether the Logos *qua* eternally pre-existent, or the Logos *qua* incarnate in time, it follows from what has been already remarked on the relation of the third verse to the second, that in general they belong more properly to the former. By means of the *ὅν* is represented the *permanent nature* not the *temporal acting* of the Son. This, however, must not be so

regarded, as if that *eternal relation of the Son to the Father* had been *altered* by his coming into the sphere of time. Even when he walked in lowliness on the earth, as Zuingle has already remarked, he could speak of himself as "the Son who is in heaven" (John iii. 13).<sup>1</sup> Even when he had exchanged the form of the world-governing world-embracing eternity, for the form of life *in* the world, and *under* earthly historical relations, he was in the kernel of his being still ever one with the Father, still the brightness of his glory and the stamp of his nature, only that he now revealed this nature more in historically human relations, so to speak, as *practical* love and holiness and wisdom. Thus also the second apposition explains itself: *φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*. First of all, it is evident, that by *ῥήμα* cannot be meant, as the Socinians explain it, the preaching of the gospel, but only the creative Omnipotent word which lies at the foundation of the world's existence; then, that *φέρων*, in like manner as *ἀπαύγασμα* and *χαρακτήρ* is to be rendered not abstractly, but concretely (sustinere, comp. Num. xi. 4; Is. ix. 6); finally that *αὐτοῦ* applies in a reflexive sense to the Son, and not to the Father.<sup>2</sup> The meaning then is, that the Son sustains the universe by the

1 This, of course, again is not so to be viewed, as if the Son of God had remained in heaven as a *part* or *portion* of Christ, and taken part in the *world-governing* omniscience and omnipotence, while the human nature as another *part* upon earth was without omnipotence and omniscience. This would land us in a more than Nestorian separation of the person of Christ into two persons. But the eternal Son of God, entering into the category of time and the creature, emptied himself, during the period of his humiliation, of the *μορφή θεοῦ*, i.e. the participation in the *government of the world* and the world-governing omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, and manifested his divine attributes and powers in *temporal human form*, in the form of *particular miracles*. But his oneness of *being* with the Father, although assuming another *form*, remained unaltered.

2 As the older manuscripts have no spiritus, *αὐτοῦ* also might be written, without thereby changing the reading as Calov thought "with godless temerity." But Bleek has shown, that in the hellenistic literature *αὐτοῦ* only stands where in the first person *ἐμαντοῦ* would stand, i.e. where an emphasis lies on the "self;" on the other hand, that *αὐτοῦ* stands where in the first person *ἐμοῦ* would stand. *Τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ* would have to be translated "with the word of his *own* power." There is no occasion for this emphasis here. And just as little occasion is there for departing from the reflexive signification of *αὐτοῦ*, here the only natural one,

omnipotent word of his power. Here too, it is the eternal relation of the son qua *eternal* to the universe that is spoken of, that relation, the ground of which was given in the words of verse 2 *οὐ καὶ ἐποίησε τοὺς αἰῶνας*. Only it must not be forgotten here also, that this eternal relation of the Son to the universe was not in the least altered by this,—that the Son becoming man was the sustainer of the world in another sense, namely, the centre of the world's *history*, and the redeemer of humanity and reconciler of heaven and earth.

The subject of the sentence denoted by *ὁς* (*υἱός*) is therefore neither the Logos qua eternal *exclusive* of his incarnation, much less is it the incarnate as such; but the subject is Jesus Christ the *incarnate*, in so far as he is the eternal Son of God, who, as the Logos, has an eternal being with the Father, and whose doings in time could *therefore* form the centre-point and the angle of all that is done in time.

This action in time of him who is the eternal ray-image and exact stamp of the Divine nature, is now described in the *predicate* of the sentence, in the words *καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς*. The genitive *τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν* which we cannot well translate otherwise than “purification *from* sins” is explained by this, that in the Greek it can also be said *αἱ ἁμαρτίαι καθαρίζονται*. *Καθαρίζειν* corresponds to the Hebrew *קָדַשׁ*, and finds an intelligible explanation in the significance which belonged to the Levitical purification in the Old Testament cultus. Those, therefore, would greatly err, who should understand *καθαρίζειν* of moral improvement, and so interpret *καθαρισμὸν ποιεῖν* as if the author meant to represent Christ here as a teacher of virtue, who sought by word and example the improvement of men. And even those might be said to be in error who explain *καθαρισμός* of the taking away of guilt by atonement, but do this only on account of passages which occur further on in the epistle,—as if the idea of the biblical *καθαρισμός* were not already sufficient to confirm this the only true explanation. The entire law of purification, as it was given by God to Moses, rested on the presupposition that man, as sinful and laden with guilt, was not capable of entering into immediate contact with the holy God. The mediation between

man and God, who was *present* in the holiest of all, and in the holiest of all *separated* from the people, appeared in three things; 1, in the sacrifices; 2, in the priesthood; and 3, in the Levitical laws of purification. The sacrifices were, (typical) acts, or means of atoning for guilt; the priests were the instruments for accomplishing these acts, but were by no means reckoned as more pure than the rest. Hence they had to bring an offering for their own sin before they offered for the sins of the people. The being Levitically clean, finally, was the *state* which was reached positively, by sacrifices and ordinances, negatively, by avoiding Levitical uncleanness, the state in which the people were rendered qualified for entering into converse with God (through the priests) "without death" (comp. Deut. v. 26); the result, therefore, of observances performed, and the presupposed condition of faith and worship. The *sacrifices* were what purified; the purification was the taking away of *guilt*. This is most clearly set forth in the law respecting the great festival of atonement (Lev. xvi.) There we find these three principal elements in the closest reciprocal relation. Firstly, the sacrifice must be prepared (ver. 1—10), then the high priest must offer for his own sins (ver. 11—14); finally, he must "slay the sin-offering of the people" (ver. 15), and sprinkle the mercy-seat and the whole sanctuary with its blood, and "purify it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (ver. 19), and then, lay the sins of the people symbolically on the head of a second beast of sacrifice and drive it laden with the curse into the wilderness (ver. 20—28.) For,—ver. 30—"on that day your *atonement* is made that ye may be *cleansed*; from all your sins before the Lord are ye cleansed." The purification in the biblical sense, consists in the atonement, the gracious covering (כַּפֵּר, ver. 30) of guilt. (In like manner, were those who had become Levitically unclean, for example the lepers Lev. xiv., cleansed by atoning sacrifices.) An Israelitish or Jewish-Christian reader, therefore, would never associate with the expression *καθαρισμὸν ποιῆν* what is wont to be called "moral improvement," which, so long as it grows not on the living soil of a heart reconciled to God, is empty self-delusion and a mere outward avoiding of glaring faults; but the *καθαρισμὸς* which Christ has provided, could in the mind of the

author and his readers be understood only of that gracious atonement for the whole guilt of the whole human race, which Christ, our Lord and Saviour, has accomplished through his sinless sufferings and death, and from which flows all power of reciprocal love, all love to him our heavenly pattern, and all hatred towards sin on account of which he had to die. It is easy to repeat these words of the scriptural author with the mouth; but he alone can say yea and amen to them with the heart, who with the eye of true self-knowledge has looked down into the darkest depths of his natural, and by numberless actual sins aggravated, corruption, and who despairing of all help in himself, stretches forth his hand to receive the offer of salvation from heaven.

For his faithful obedience unto death on the cross the incarnate was crowned, inasmuch as, without his having to give up the form of existence which he then had,—the human nature, therefore as man and continuing to be man—he was exalted to a participation in the divine government of the world. This participation is expressed by the words *sitting at the right hand of God*. Never, and nowhere, does the Holy Scripture apply this expression to denote that form of world-government which the Logos exercised as eternally pre-existent; the sitting at the right hand of God rather denotes everywhere, only that participation in the divine majesty, dominion, and glory, to which the Messiah was exalted after his work was finished, therefore *in time*, and which is consequently exercised by him as the glorified Son of Man *under the category of time*. Already in Psalm cx. 1, where the expression for the first time occurs, it applies to the future; the *second David*, at a future time to be exalted.

The expression finds its explanation in the old oriental practice, according to which the king's son, *who was himself clothed with royal authority*, had the liberty of sitting on the king's throne, at his right hand. This signification lies at the foundation of the figure already in Psalm cx.; that Jehovah is there represented as contending in behalf of the Son, while the Son rests himself, has nothing to do with the figure as such, and is not inherent in the expression "to sit at the right hand of God" as such, (although of course that feature in Psalm cx. also finds its counterpart in the exalted Christ.)

That explanation which arose amid the tumult of confessional controversy rests on an entire misapprehension of the figurative expression, namely, that as God is everywhere, the right hand of God is also everywhere; to sit at the right hand of God means therefore to be everywhere present. This interpretation is quite as mistaken as if one were to understand by *δεξιὰ θεοῦ*, a particular place where God sits on a throne (a mistake which Luther falsely attributed to Oecolompadius.) In the expression *ἐκάθισε ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης* there lies solely the *idea of participation* in the divine dominion, and majesty (*μεγαλωσύνη*, *majestas* denotes here God himself), without any local reference whatever.

On the contrary, the expression *ἐν ὑψηλοῖς* that is added, contains a distinct determination of locality; whether we connect it with the verb *ἐκάθισεν*, or (which is better, as, otherwise, *ἐν ὑψ.* would have to stand before *ἐν δεξιᾷ*) with the noun *μεγαλωσύνη*. *Ἐν ὑψηλοῖς* is the Hebrew *בְּמַרְוֵם*, equivalent to *בְּשָׁמַיִם*. But the “heaven” never in the holy Scriptures denotes the absence of space or omnipresence (see on this my scientific crit. of the ev. history, 2 ed. p. 601 s.),—it always denotes either the firmament, or that sphere of the created world in time and space where the union of God with the personal creature is not disturbed by sin, where no death reigns, where the glorification of the body does not need to be looked forward to as something future. Into that sphere has the first-fruits of risen and glorified humanity entered, as into a place, with a visible glorified body to come again from thence in a visible manner.

Thus is described the *inheritance* (ver. 2) which the incarnate Son has received, and the author, after these introductory words in which he lays the foundation, now passes to the first principal inference which follows from them; namely, that that Son, the organ of the New Testament revelation, is superior to the angels, the organs of the Old Testament revelation. The carrying out of this inference forms the first part of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. 4—ii. 18.

## PART FIRST.

(Chap. i. 4—ii. 18.)

### THE SON AND THE ANGELS.

WE encounter here the first instance of a phenomenon peculiar to the Epistle to the Hebrews, namely, that the announcement of a new theme is closely interwoven with the end of the last period of a foregoing part. The author passes forthwith from that which he has brought to a conclusion, to a new idea flowing from it, with which an entirely new perspective opens itself out. It follows *prima facie* and in general from the *inheritance* of the Son described in ver. 3, that the Son must be higher than the angels. This then opens up a new theme, which is, to show that it is and must be so, and that this superiority of the Son to the angels will admit of being demonstrated in particulars. But this theme at which the author has arrived is a *principal* one, and one to which he has purposely come. It possesses in his view not merely the importance of a collateral idea, but of one with which, from regard to the practical aim of his epistle, he has especially to concern himself.

It is only from a complete misapprehension of the phenomenon to which we have referred, and which recurs in chap. ii. 5, iii. 2, iv. 3—4 and 14, &c., that we can explain why Bleek should deny, in opposition to De Wette, that a new section begins at ver. 4, and why Tholuck should understand ver. 4 as a “collateral idea,” which, however, the author would specially impress upon his readers. Even in relation to ver. 3, ver. 4 is not a “collateral idea,” but rather a conclusion to which the author has directed

his course in ver. 1—3. But *why* was it of so much importance to him to carry out the comparison of the Son with the angels? Tholuck is certainly right when he says, that his object could not be to combat a party like that at Colosse who occupied themselves with the worship of angels, for the author, who usually draws his practical applications very closely, and, in order to do so, breaks without hesitation the connection of the theoretical reasoning, gives no admonition whatever against the worship of angels. The only practical inference which he draws is in chap. ii. 2—that the word spoken by the Son is still more holy than the law which was given by angels.—Bleek is therefore of opinion, that the belief of the Israelites in the co-operation of the angels in the giving of the Sinaitic law, led the author to speak of angels; but thus outwardly apprehended, this serves as little for explanation as the strange remark that the thought of God's throne reminded the author of the angels who are around his throne.

The true motive of the author lies deeper. *The entire Old Testament is related to the New as the angels are related to the Son*; this is his (first) principal idea, an idea of wondrous depth, which throws a surprising light on the whole doctrine of angels. In the old covenant, mankind, and as part thereof also Israel, is represented as far separated from the holy God by sin, and the angels stand as mediators between them. The mediation in the Old Testament is a double one, a chain consisting of two members, of *Moses*, and the *angel of the Lord*. *There* stands a man who, by his vocation, by his position, by his commission, is raised above other men with whom he stands on the same level as a sinner, and brought nearer to God, yet without being nearer to the divine nature or partaking in it. *Here* stands the form of an angel, in which God reveals himself to his people, brings himself nearer to the people's capacity of apprehension, becomes *like* to men yet without *becoming* man. God and man certainly approach nearer to each other; a *man* is commissioned and qualified to hear the words of God; *God* appears in a form in which men can see him, but there is as yet no real union of God with man. But in *the Son*, God and man have become personally one, they have not merely approached outwardly near to each other. God has here not merely accommodated himself to man's capacity of apprehension in an angelophany, a theophany, but he

has personally revealed the fulness of his being in the man Jesus, inasmuch as that ἀπαύγασμα of his glory was man. And in the person of this incarnate one, not merely a member of humanity has come near to God, but as he who was born of a virgin is himself eternal God, in him as first-fruits of the new humanity has mankind been exalted to the *inheritance of all things*.

It was necessary that the author should show how the two mediators of the Old Testament, the angel of the covenant and Moses, find their higher unity in Christ. To show this of the angel of the covenant is the problem of the first part, to show it of Moses, that of the second part (comp. chap. iii.—iv. chiefly chap. iii. ver. 3: *for this man was thought worthy of more glory than Moses*.)

The question may still be asked, however, why the author speaks of the *angels* in the plural, why he does not place the individual *angel of the Lord* side by side with the individual Moses? The answer is very simple; because the *angel of the Lord* was not a particular individual from among the angels. He was not a person distinct from God, not one of the number of created angels whom God used only as an instrument; but the *angel of the Lord* (מלאך יהוה) was God himself as he appeared in the form of an angel.<sup>1</sup> (Comp. chiefly Jud. xiii. ver. 21 with ver. 22.) The author speaks of angels, therefore, because it was not a certain individual angel who was to be placed by the side of Moses as the second member in the chain of mediation, but because, when God would manifest himself to Moses and to the high priests, he borrowed the form and figure of his appearance from the sphere of the angels, of those angels whom he also usually employed when it was necessary under the old dispensation to make Divine revelations manifest to the eyes of men.

The comparison of the Son with the angels, divides itself again

<sup>1</sup> The theocratical מלאך יהוה the Jehovah-who was enthroned above the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, is not to be confounded with the *angel* Michael (Dan. x. 13), who, after the temple and ark of the covenant had ceased to exist, and the nation of Israel was scattered among other nations, was chosen of God to be the guardian angel of this people. This angel was certainly distinguished from God and his Son (according to Rev. xii. 7); was a creature, one of the created angels.

into two sections, which are also outwardly separated from each other by a practical part inserted between them. In the first of these sections the author shows, that the Son is superior to the angels already in virtue of *his eternal existence* as the Son of God (chap. i. 4—14, upon which is engrafted in chap. ii. 1—4. the practical suggestion, that the New Testament revelation is still holier than that of the Old Testament); in the second he shows, that in the Son *man* also has been exalted above the angels (chap. ii. 5—18.)

---

## SECTION FIRST.

(Chap. i. 4—14.)

### THE SON IS IN HIMSELF SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS.

Ver. 4. In the words *κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων* lies, as has been already observed, the theme of the whole part, while in the words *ὄσφ διαφορώτερον*, &c., the special theme of the first section is expressed. The participle *κρείττων γενόμενος* stands in apposition with the *subject* of ver. 3 *ὅς i.e. υἱός*. The subject of whom it is affirmed that he is superior to the angels, is therefore not the Logos as pre-existent but still *the incarnate Son of God as the organ of the New Testament revelation*; this appears partly, from the context and the train of thought, inasmuch as it was the business of the author to demonstrate the pre-eminence of the new dispensation over the old, partly, from the *γενόμενος* “become” (by no means = *ᾶν*), partly, from the *κεκληρονόμηκεν*.

The argument for the superior dignity of the organ of the New Testament revelation is derived from this—that God already under the old dispensation assigned to the future Messiah whom he there promised, a *name* which plainly enough declared, that this promised future Messiah should be at the same time the eternal Son of the same nature with the Father. In this light, and from this point of view, then, are to be understood also the

particular proofs adduced from the Old Testament ver. 5—14, and so understood they present no difficulty. They can only then appear difficult and obscure when it is supposed that the author meant them to prove, that a dignity superior to the angels was ascribed in the Old Testament either to the *Logos as such*, or to the historical individual *Jesus as such*. Nothing of this; however, is said even in the remotest degree. The author lays down the thesis that the *Son* in his quality as *organ of the New Testament revelation* is exalted above the angels, and in proof of this he appeals to the fact, that the Old Testament ascribes to the Messiah this dignity, namely his being the Son of God in a manner which is not affirmed of the angels. As a middle member between that thesis and this proof, nothing farther needs to be supplied than the *presupposition* that the *υίός* ver. 1—3 *is identical with the Messiah promised in the Old Testament*. But that the readers of the Epistle did presuppose this, that by the *υίός* ver. 1—3 in whom God has revealed himself “at the end of this time” (consequently in the “Messianic time;” see above) they understood Jesus Christ, and again that they held Christ to be the Messiah, will surely not require to be proven here.

*Κρείττων*—the author uses the same expression, in itself quite relative and indefinite, also in the analogous comparisons chap. vii. 19 and 22, viii. 6 and ix. 23, x. 34, &c. The Son is superior to the angels, because (in as far as) “he has obtained as an inheritance a more distinguished name than they.” On the idea of the inheritance see the remarks on ver. 2. The act of the *κληρονομεῖν* is one performed *in time*; nothing is said of the *Logos* as eternally pre-existent. But neither is it anything that took place in the time of Jesus that is spoken of; the author does not refer to those events recorded in Matth. iii. 17, xvii. 5, in which the voice of the Father from heaven to Jesus said: This is my beloved Son. The author *could not* in consistency with his plan refer to these events; for his object was to prove his particular theses and doctrines from the records of the Old Testament itself, for the sake of his readers, who were afraid of doing what might involve a separation from the writings and the ordinances of the old holy covenant of God with the people of Israel. Accordingly, his object here is to show, that already in the Messianic prophecies the Messiah was represented not as a mere

man, but received a name such as was given to no angel, a name which indicates an altogether exclusive and essential relation of oneness with God. The perfect *κεκληρονόμηκεν* points to the time of the Old Testament prophecy.

“Ὅσῳ διαφωρότερον παρ’ αὐτοῦς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα. It is evident that *ὄνομα* here, where the author treats (ver. 5 ss.) precisely of the name *υἱός*, is not (with Beza, Calov, and others) to be translated by “dignity.”—*Παρά* c. Acc. instead of the genitive, is no Hebraism, but a genuine Greek construction, formed to avoid unsuitable applications of the genitive (such as would occur here.) *Διαφωρότερον*, not more excellent, higher, but *more distinguished, more singular*. Critics in their wisdom have indeed doubted the accuracy of the fact here stated, affirming that the name “sons of God” is given not merely to men—Ps. lxxxix. 27; 2 Sam. vii. 14—but also precisely to angels—Job i. 6, ii. 1; xxxviii. 6; Dan. iii. 25.<sup>1</sup> Those make shortest work of it, who deny to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews a thorough acquaintance with the Bible; Bleek deals more modestly, when he supposes that the author was not versed at least in the Hebrew original, and explains his overlooking those passages by the circumstance, that the LXX., which he made use of exclusively in his citations, and the knowledge and use of which he presupposes in his readers, who were acquainted with Aramaic, but not with Hebrew—has in those passages *ἄγγελοι θεοῦ* in place of *בני אלהים*. This would indeed ward off the moral charge of carelessness and inconsiderateness from the author’s person, but not that of falseness, and groundlessness from his reasoning. On a more thorough and impartial investigation, however, it will appear here again, how much the foolishness of the Scriptures, and of their writers enlightened by the holy spirit, is superior to the pretended wisdom of the children of men. If, in these days, a preacher were to say in a sermon, or in a book designed for edification, that Christ receives in the

<sup>1</sup> The passages Gen. vi. 2, where it is the descendants of Seth that are spoken of and alone *can* be spoken of (comp. my “Weltanschauung der Bibel und Naturwissenschaft” in the “Zukunft der Kirche,” 1847, p. 369 s.) and Ps. xxix. and lxxxix. where *בני אלהים* are spoken of, have no connection at all with this subject.

New Testament a name which is applied exclusively to him, for to whom of all that are born of woman has the Father said: This is my *Son*?—would any one have a right to object to such a preacher, that he must be unacquainted with those passages of the New Testament in which Christians are called *sons of God*, and besides that he must be ignorant of the passage Heb. ii. 10, where the author speaks of “many sons of God?” Is it not then quite a different thing to apply a common name in the *plural* to a *class*, from what it is to apply the same as an individual name in the *singular* to an individual. Even where the New Testament speaks of *υιός θεού* instead of *τέκνον θεού*, as in that very passage Heb. ii. 10, even there this difference still obtains, as no one assuredly will deny. And in like manner our author, in reference to the Old Testament, would be quite right, even if there were no other difference (which is not the case) than that between the plural as applied to the class, and the singular as applied to the individual. He himself, indeed, in ver. 5, makes the distinction between the *name* of Christ and that of the angels to consist in this—that God has said to no individual among the angels: “Thou art my Son; I have begotten thee.” It makes already even an *essential* difference, whether the idea of son comes to its full manifestation in an individual, or in a class.—As, however, in the New Testament, the difference between the predicates “Son of God” and “children of God,” is not merely one of number, but as, in addition to this, there is a *qualitative* difference in the *kind* of designation, so is it also in the Old Testament. When JEHOVAH in Ps. ii. 2 and 7, declares his anointed to be his son whom he has *begotten*, this is something different from what is said, when the angels as a class are called sons of the ELOHIM, who has *created* them. Nay, this difference is, in respect of the expression, even greater and more marked than that in the New Testament between *υιός* and *τέκνον*. The angels are called sons of God in so far as God is the Elohim, the all-governing Creator of all things, and they have come forth from his creating hand, and have lost by no fall this their primitive relation to God as his children;<sup>1</sup> the Mes-

<sup>1</sup> In Job ii. 2 Satan is not reckoned among the “children of God;” but *distinguished* from them. That he should come בְּתוֹכָם (locally) is something extraordinary.

siah, on the other hand, is called the Son of God, in so far as God is JEHOVAH the free, self-sufficient one, proceeding from himself, and independent of all creatures.<sup>1</sup> In reality then, the Son has received a *διαφορώτερον ὄνομα παρὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους*, and the form of ver. 5, *for to whom, &c.*, shows plainly enough, that the author was clearly conscious of that difference. Bleek's view is correct, however, so far, that the author would feel less concern in omitting all *express* reference to the passages in Job and Daniel, as the readers in their Septuagint could not be misled by those passages.

At ver. 5 then, begins the proof that the Old Testament already assigns to the future Messiah a name, such as is never given to an angel. We shall without prejudice explain these particular passages in their original connection; from which it will appear, whether our author has invested them with a meaning which they do not bear.

*Τίνι γὰρ εἶπέ ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων*—at *εἶπε* is to be supplied from ver. 1 *θεός* as the subject. *Ποτέ* does not serve to strengthen the *τίνι* (Kuinoel, Bretschneider, Wahl) but is independent, signifying “at any time,” and thus forms a marked antithesis with *πάλιν*. This *καὶ πάλιν* is to be extended in the following way (Bleek and others): *καὶ τίνι τῶν ἀγγέλων πάλιν εἶπε*; “to which of the angels has he *at any time* said: Thou art my Son? and to which has he *again* said: I will be to him a Father.”<sup>2</sup> This contains clearly the two ideas: God has used such expressions to an angel *not even a single time*; but to the Son *not merely once but again and again*.

The words cited are to be found in Ps. ii. 7. Not much that is really of importance depends on the usual question, whether this Psalm contains a direct prophecy of the Messiah, or an indirect one, or none at all. Let us enquire chiefly, who was its author, when it was written, and what occasioned it. Assuredly, this sublime lyrical effusion had a *historical* occasion, which

<sup>1</sup> See this correct interpretation of the *אֱלֹהִים אֱשֶׁר אֱלֹהִים* in Drechsler: *Einheit und Aechtheit der Genesis* p. 10, with which is to be compared my treatise *ueber das Alter des Jehovahnamens* in *Niedner's Zeitschr. für hist. Theol.* 1849 p. 506.

<sup>2</sup> It would be much harsher to extend the phrase thus: *καὶ πάλιν ἐρωτῶ τίνι τῶν ἀγγέλων εἶπε*.