

CHAPTER 2

The Epistle to the Hebrews

THE GLORIES OF THE SON (Hebrews 1:1-4)

by G. H. Lang

Chapter 1:1-4

1. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners;
2. hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds;
3. who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
4. having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

Yet being given in the manner stated all former revelation required completing, which God did by sending as the afore-promised Prophet (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 7:37). One who was in the special relationship to Himself of Son. See Darby, *New Translation*, note "c" *in loco*: "*en huio*, literally 'in Son,' is not exactly 'as Son,' because that would be the character of the speaking, yet is perhaps the nearest to an adequate expression.... On the whole, I have paraphrased it, 'in [the person of the] Son,'" See also Rotherham. It is upon the Person, offices, glories, and entire supremeness of the Son that the Writer now enlarges. The uplifted Son is God's center of attraction for all creation (John 12:32). To yield to that attraction is to be withdrawn from all that is not of God. This is salvation. To see Him as exalted is to overcome the world, that system of things which lies in the evil one as its all-pervading atmosphere (1 John 5:4, 5, 19). To see Him as the Man in heaven is to have the heart detached from earth and attached to heaven as its native, its eternal realm. Christ is God's Saviour for us from every peril, His supply for every need, His reservoir of every blessing. All is in Him, nothing is apart from Him. To Him the Writer points. Really to know Him will deliver his readers from every danger, and therefore he expatiates upon the glories of the Son of God. A sevenfold description is given.

I. "*Whom God appointed heir of all things*" (ver. 2).

i. The father who appoints his heir is the superior of the heir. Therefore the Son said "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). This superiority is one of position, not of capacity. A son may be fully the equal of his father in ability and energy; but in the sphere of the family, the business, the estates, the father is the senior, and the son acts under, for, by the authority of the father. So the Son of God taught plainly that it is by the gift of the Father that He has inherent life, authority to judge, power to raise the dead, and the right (granted to no other person) to surrender and to resume His human life (John 5:19-29; 10:17, 18). From this follows the place that prayer had in His life on

earth and still has in resurrection (John 14:16; Acts 2:33; Ps. 2:7, 8). See Note A at end of this chapter.

ii. The property devised by this appointment as heir is “all things,” the universe. How can He be less than God who can receive and control so vast an estate? Here is shown the primary reason why the universe was brought into being: it exists that the Father may show His love for the Son and Heir (John 3:35) all other reasons are subordinate to and included in this. The Son explained that the basic ground for the working of the Father is “that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father” (John 5:23); and the basic evil of sin is that it disputes the purpose and donation of the Father; even as the Son added: “The one not honoring [as a permanent practice] the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him.” By consequence, the one who has ceased this rebellion, and entered into harmony with the Father as to the Son, hath eternal life; whereas upon the one who obeys not the Son there abides the wrath of God. How can it be otherwise? (John 3:36).

The syllogism stands thus: All the universe belongs to the Son: I am part of the universe: therefore I belong to the Son. Am I, then, giving to Him His proprietary rights? or am I, with Satan, robbing Him of them? All unitarianism, ancient or modern, oriental or western, of whatever name, Islamic, or Jewish, or “Christian” (falsely so-called), denies to the Son the nature and glory and title which the Father gave to Him before the worlds were. It is of strict consequence that “whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father,” for no person is a father if he have no child. It is foolish to speak of God as Father while denying the Son, and equally so to allow deity to the Father while denying it to the Son, since father and son must be of the same essential nature. It is of equally strict consequence that “he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:23). To “confess” the Son means to give Him by mouth and in practice the rights that the Father has given Him.

The Jews voiced the claim that unregenerate men are by nature sons of God: “we have one Father, even God” (John 8: 41). Jesus cut the notion to pieces by the one terrible sword-thrust: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do” (ver. 44).

iii. This appointment as heir was made before the universe was made. The translation here of the aorist by the perfect (“hath appointed”, A.V.) obscures this, for it does not indicate how great or how brief a time before the Writer’s date the appointment may have been made. The perfect intimates that the appointment was in force when the Writer was writing, but it might have been made only just before that time. The statement here by the aorist tense, taken in its context, puts the appointment back

before time began, for it precedes the next clause as to the creating of the universe, even as this precedes the radiating of the glory of God upon the universe after it had been made.

God works not by afterthoughts. It was not that the universe was made and then He considered what to do with it. No; in advance of the creating it was decided that all that should ever be brought into existence should belong to the Son, He should *inherit* it. Therefore, as He was the *Heir* before time and creation, so was He then the Son, for the universal rule is “if children, then heirs” (Rom: 8:17). One may by will devise his property to what persons he pleases, but if they are not of his family they are legatees, not heirs. The pre-creation heirship requires the pro-creation Sonship. See Note B at end of this chapter.

2. “*Through whom also He made the worlds*” (Gr. *ages*) (ver. 2).

i. The “also” shows that the act of creating was *additional* to the appointment to heirship, and confirms that the latter preceded.

ii. “Through” (R.V.) is accurate; “by” (A.V.) is inadequate. The latter does not so closely link the activity of the Son with the volition of the Father. The Son did not act of Himself, but from and on behalf of the Father. He has Himself said distinctly that “the Son is not able to do anything from Himself [self-originated], except He see the Father doing it” (John 5:19). It is the habit of Scripture to trace all things through the Son up to the Father as the fountain. In reference to creation this is seen in John 1:3: “All things *through* [the Word] came to be”; and in 1 Cor. 8:6: “One God, the Father, *out of* whom are all things . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things.” Here the Source and the Agent are clearly distinguished.

There are other connections where “through” should be given, especially in relation to Divine messages, as Acts 28:25; Rev. 1:1. Thus is the tongue also regarded as the instrument *through* which the man speaks 1 Cor. 14:9. In this place, as in Rev. 1:1, “by” should be “through.”) Or again, in reference to redemption, see Col. 1:20 (three times). The whole paragraph is dependent upon ver. 12, “giving thanks to the Father” Who has done the numerous things next specified, including “*through* Him [the Son] to reconcile all things unto Himself” (ver. 20).

Thus are creation, inspiration, redemption all traced up to the Father, and the Son is shown as the Agent of the Father for effecting all His designs. Hence He said “I am the way . . . no one cometh unto the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). The matter is deeply important. The Son did not *first* become the Mediator between God and

the universe when He became man: it was His office from the beginning of creation. Therefore, when there entered the matter of reconciling to God realms estranged and defiled, this stupendous task devolved upon the Son as part of His office, and not only because "There was none other good enough, To pay the price of sin," nor another powerful enough to crush the rebel prince and host. In resurrection the Son holds the same office and pursues the same purposes, but now as *man*, glorified with the same glory which as Son He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

The understanding of this truth was vital to the purpose of the Epistle. It is the object of the Son "to bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18), to recover the sinner from that legal and moral alienation from Him, and to establish us in His *favour* (Rom. 5:1, 2), yea, in His *fellowship* (1 John 1:3), and finally to set us before the *presence of His glory* in exceeding joy (Jude 24, 25; Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22; Heb. 2:10, etc.). It is the object of our Adversary to prevent this at one or more of its stages. He will prevent faith in the message, so that the heart may never rest in Christ as justified by His blood; or he will hinder the justified from enjoying fellowship with the Father and the Son; or he will deter us from continuing steadfast in faith and hope, and so rob the believer of his crown. It was principally to this last end that he was laboring with the Christians here addressed. In part he would by persecution frighten them from continuing to espouse the rejected and absent Jesus: in part he sought to beguile them by an interposing of angels, of priests, of ceremonies, as having mediational value. The same wiles were tried with the believers at Colossae (Col. 2:8-19) and in Galatia (Gal. 3:1-5). They have ever since been spread before the feet of saints, and they abound to-day.

The safety of the Christian lies wholly in a just apprehension of the Son of God in His office as the Mediator of the Father to the universe, and that since He has now come forth to the earth as such, no other mediator is permissible or possible. We must now adhere to Him alone with full contentment and full determination, or have no mediator at all. Therefore there is this presentation of Him as the original Mediator of the wisdom, will, and power of the Father for the creating of all things, expressed here by the term "through," that is, that by the agency of His Son God created them.

iii. "*the ages.*" The ancient discussion as to whether this means (1) time or (2) the material universe may surely be resolved by including both.

The notion of time is that of period succeeding period, whether a minute or a millennium. This dividing of eternal duration into defined periods, each having a commencement and a conclusion, is indispensable to the finite mind, for without it the creature could not retain any sense of the order of events or accurate remembrance of them, or form any clear anticipations of the future. The mind would be chaotic. The

infinite mind of the Eternal does not need this device, this subdividing of eternity into sections for purposes of thought. Hence, the necessity for time, for period after period, arose only with the creation of finite creatures, and it must exist for ever. For us eternity is “ages of ages.”

In reference to such finite beings, and by virtue of His foreknowledge of His own purposes and of what would develop in the creation to be made, God planned out the ages as spheres of time in which various developments would and should take place. He is “the King of the ages” (1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 15:3); His purpose runs through and controls all the ages (Eph. 3:11), which purpose was all foreordained before time began; and it includes the glory of saints (1 Cor. 2:7).

It was for the fulfillment of this Divine program, embracing all the ages that were to be, that the material universe was required and made; so that the making of the ages includes of necessity the making of all things which are to contribute to the purpose of the ages. And it was by the agency of the Son that time and all things connected with time came to be. This implies that the Son is before time, is eternal, and so Col. 1:17 says of Him unequivocally, “He is before the all things” (*ta panta*), and therefore He cannot be one of the “things,” a creature. This is stated absolutely in John 1:3 “All things through Him came to be, and apart from Him not one thing came to be that has come to be.” Unitarianism is merely a philosophy, a speculation about God, and it never ought to have been claimed that it is according to the Bible. It is the direct contradiction thereof.

iv. “He made.” The universe entire is a *creation*. Once it did not exist; it is not eternal, as some have conceived. Neither is it co-substantial with its Creator, as pantheism alleges. God is not the universe and the universe is not God. He himself in His essential deity, substance, trinity of persons, was what He is before the universe existed. Its creation added nothing to, changed nothing in His essential Being. Had He annihilated it when sin entered He would have remained what He was and is and must ever be: “I Jehovah change not” (Mal. 3:6). He who changes as to his essence is not eternal; he who is not eternal is not God, for with Him to be eternal is an essential attribute. The created universe is a sphere in which is displayed His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1:20), and which is interpenetrated by His universal presence (Acts 17:27, 28; Ps. 139:5-10); but from it He personally is distinct and it from Him: He *made* it. *How* He did this will be stated at 11:3.

3. “*Who being the effulgence of His glory.*” As it is by means of its rays that the sun diffuses its light, heat, and benefits to the region of the universe it affects, so through the Son God displays His glory and dispenses His grace to the whole universe.

The participle “being” states the permanency of the fact. It has always been the case that the Son rayed forth the splendor of the Father; it will always be the case; only now it is His human form that is the focal point of that radiance (2 Cor. 4:3-6; Col. 1:15-19; Acts 22:6, 14; 26:13-15). Therefore the “God of glory” who appeared to Abram (Acts 7:2) was the Son of God, and He is “Jesus” who appeared to Saul of Tarsus. How can He be less than God whose person can endure to be the vehicle of the concentrated glory of God?

4. *“The very image of His substance.”* “Substance” means that which underlies, the substratum, the real existence which gives character to what is displayed. “Image” (here only as the rendering of Gr. *charakter*) means the indelible form taken from and exhibiting the underlying reality, as the moulding exhibits in permanent, changeless form the shape of the mould from which it was cast. Thus, as it has been translated, the Son is “the exact representation of God’s very being,” or by Grimm (Lex.) “precise reproduction in every respect (cf. *facsimile*).” From the moulded article we learn the shape of the die we have not seen; from the Son we learn the truth as to God: “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Philip felt that such knowledge of the Father would “suffice,” would cover all possible needs. This it does. So, then, if these tempted believers shall truly know the Son, they shall forthwith feel no need of those earthly types of Him to which they were being enticed back, for in Him they will know the all-sufficing Father.

“I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied.”

And he who is satisfied is safe.

These two clauses, 3 and 4, are properly one double statement, governed by the one participle “being” and joined by the copulative “and.” It is convenient to consider them separately, but in fact they are inseparable. The one teaches the relationship of the Son to the Father in itself, the other describes this as seen by the creature. The rays correspond to the size, shape, and splendor of the sun and would do so were there no eyes to see it; but to the seeing eye those rays represent the sun in exact visible resemblance.

5. *“Upholding all things by the word of His power.”* On words as the vehicle of energy see the opening paragraphs above. Man searches the universe in vain to discover the force by which it coheres and is orderly. Colossians 1:17 gives the

thoroughly rational account of this. It is “in Him” the Son of God, who is Himself “before the all things” (*ta panta*, the sum total, the whole, but regarded as a vast total of coordinated units), that “the all things [*ta panta*] hold together.” The self-existing almighty Creator who brought all things into existence by commanding them to be, maintains them in existence by commanding them to continue.

The application of this to the soul is seen at 12:25: “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” Since it is His word that keeps all things in order, he who refuses that word in any portion of his life lapses into disorder, confusion, misery in that portion of life, and may do so entirely.

6. “*Having made purification of sins.*” Thus far the Son has been contemplated in His essential, eternal Person, glory, and creatorial activity. The thought now advances to His becoming man and His work on this earth. This stupendous change is described in only five words (in Greek by only four), declaring its chief purpose and effect.

In the universe which He had made and maintained there arose a foreign element and energy. This showed its baneful presence by declining to give longer to Him the glory due and to submit to His word. It affected heaven first and later the earth. Its inevitable consequence was disorder, darkness, ruin. In nature it was rebellion, in character treason. It was an outrage not only against the Son, but also against the Father who had appointed the Son to be Heir, for this appointment was now disregarded by the rights of the Son being violated.

There was no one qualified to vindicate the rights of the Father and the title of the Son save the Son. To effect this, as the sole Mediator of God and the universe, He renounced His original form and glory, stepped down into the realm of created things, took into indissoluble union with His divine nature the nature of His creature man, and, thus incarnate, by the sacrifice of Himself even unto death He dealt with this awful situation, and dealt with it to the full glory of God. This work of grace will be elaborated later by the Writer. Here it is the unutterably wondrous fact that is alone mentioned.

The work was a “purification,” for sin is defiling, and the Holy One cannot tolerate defilement. The gloss “our sins (A.V.) is a most regrettable limitation of the scope of the Mediator’s work. Thank God it includes our sins, but the range of the work of the cross is far wider and grander. In Christ God was effecting a world- (*kosmos* universe) reconciling work (2 Cor. 5:19). The heavenly things as well as the earthly, and before these latter, had been defiled by the rebellion and must be cleansed (Heb. 9:23). The

Mediator of the Father to the whole universe grappled with the entire situation and settled it: "He made purification of sins."

The terms upon which each individual sinner may obtain the benefit of this work, the possibility of it being finally rejected by some, and all other subordinate questions, are not here noticed. The sublime work itself is set forth in its solitary sufficiency and glory. The blessed and the solemn implications and applications will arise later in the Epistle. Again, he whose heart feels the power of this perfect and reconciling work is safe from all the perils which beset the Christian.

For it *is* a perfected work, done once for all and of permanent virtue, as the aorist participle shows: "having made purification" He sat down. And that it is solely His work, in which none other shares, is shown by the participle being in the middle voice. This truth occasioned the gloss "by Himself" (A.V.); but the insertion is unnecessary, being expressed by the middle form. These two features will be the basis used by the Writer to urge that the heart should rest on Christ and His sacrifice alone, without the aid of other mediators and victims (chs. 7 to 10).

7. "*He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights.*"

i. "He sat down" for His work as sacrificing priest was completed (ch. 10).

ii. There is a locality described as "in the heights." The fact of locality is inescapable, for the glorified Son of Man retains a body of limited form, and He cannot in that form be everywhere in general but must be somewhere in particular. Therefore there is a spot in the universe where He sits. "In the heights" is the abode of Jehovah: "The Lord is wonderful in the heights" (Ps. 93:4' LXX). In 4:14 it is said that our High Priest has "passed *through* the heavens," where *diaerchomai* may retain its full force of passing right through and beyond a region,¹ as in Matt. 19:24; Luke 4:30; 19:1; 1 Cor. 10:1; 2 Cor. 1:16. In the last passage the idea is emphasized by repetition: "through you to pass through (*dielthein*, fr. *dia-erchomai*) into Macedonia." In my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 4, it is suggested that the location of the supreme dwelling of God is beyond the created universe, whereas the throne described in that chapter is an administrative throne within the universe, the heavenly part thereof. If that supreme throne were not beyond the realm of things created how would it fare when the heavens and the earth are dissolved by fire? (2 Pet. 3:10). Rev. 20:11 pictures the earth and the heaven as fleeing away from before the throne and Him Who sits thereon, which involves the feature that the throne is outside of creation. When writing thus, and

¹ So Isaacs: "We have a mighty High Priest who has passed through all the heavens and beyond them." *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 4:14.

when writing the draft of this present chapter, I was not aware that others had pointed this out, but have since read the remarks of Canon Evans, in the *Speaker's Commentary* on 1 Cor. 15:47. to much the same effect, where Delitzsch is cited in support.

On the right hand of the supreme throne the Son "sits," *i.e.*, has His proper and permanent place: He is only "before" the latter throne, and "comes" and "is brought" there (Dan. 7:13), and is seen as "standing," (Rev. 5:6) with a view to receiving publicly and officially the chief administrative authority. At the supreme throne He is acting as Priest, and all through this age: at the latter throne He is installed as Ruler, and only at the end of this age, for only then comes the time when His enemies are to be made the footstool of His feet (Psa. 110: 1; Heb. 1:13).

For the security and steadfastness of His people, still harassed in the conflicts of earth, it is of much importance that their Representative is at the highest throne, from the decisions of which there lies no appeal and the mandates of which cannot be frustrated. "We have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2: 1, 2). It will be seen shortly (chap 3, 3, iii) that the distinction here shown throws light upon ver. 6.

iii. The Father is here described by the august title "The Majesty"; not simply "Your Majesty" or "His Majesty," as men speak of kings each in his own realm; but "The Majesty," One of solitary, incomparable dignity and glory.

As the Son is distinct from the Father (though inseparable as to deity), so is the Father distinct from the Son; for the one sits at the right hand of the other, which presents the latter as equally distinct and local as the former. The theological denial to the Father of any form and locality would make impossible that One, the Son, having form and locality should sit at His right hand. One formless and unlocalized could have no right hand at which one with local form could sit. That both in their deity are universally present seems no more a barrier to a local manifestation of the Father than of the Son.² "In the heights" is a place: "The Majesty" there is a "Person,"³ displaying inconceivable splendor, a light unapproachable by man as he is. The situation here described is as plain as when Solomon "sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she *sat on his right hand*" (1 Kings 2:19).

The Son himself attributed *form* to the Father, and voice (John 5:37). That the latter is actual is proved by its having been three times heard on earth (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28). He spake also of the Father's *face*, which also must be actual, or finite

² See Note D at end of chapter.

³ See Note E at end of chapter.

beings (angels) could not see it (Matt. 18:10. Comp. 2 Sam. 14:28, 32; Esther 1:14). That His glory has a local manifestation is shown by the fact that glorified men are to be set in its presence (Jude 24: etc.).

The importance of this question lies in (1) The emphasis it places upon the unique position and dignity accorded to the Son in His glorified humanity. This is vital to the argument and the appeal of the Epistle. (2) The consequent emphasis upon the reality and value of His intercession. He is transacting with the Father literal business for the safeguarding of those “who draw near to God through Him” (7:25). The sense of the reality of this advocacy is vital to the Christian finding courage to approach that Majesty. (3) If the Person of the Father be delocalized into one universal diffused Spirit He becomes to our minds virtually undifferentiated from the Holy Spirit, with a consequent loss of vividness and reality in speaking with Him in prayer. Scripture nowhere contemplates men addressing their petitions to the Spirit. If the believer who knows this holy experience of speaking with and listening to God as Father will analyze the state of his mind at such moments he will find that, whatever be his theory on the matter, or if he have no theory, he does actually think of the Father as a local presence into which he enters, and a localized Person to Whom he speaks, by the enabling of the indwelling Spirit of God.⁴

In these few sentences the Writer thus presents to the meditative reader a striking picture of the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, as the central Figure of that wondrous realm above whence the government of the universe proceeds, whence flow all heavenly supplies for the present life, and where lie all the highest eternal prospects which redemption opens for faith to attain. If the believer will only sit long and quietly and contemplate this royal scene; if by serious discipline of mind he will “still and quieten his soul, like a weaned child with his mother” (Ps. 131:2), then will the Spirit of truth gladly fulfil His gracious office to take of these things of Christ and declare them to that heart (John 16:13, 14). He will make them actual, operative, effective; and in such experimental knowledge of the Son of God thus reached shall be found healing for every sickness of the soul, deliverance from every danger, defeat of every foe.

Christ, I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you,
Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed. (Myers, *St. Paul.*)

⁴ See Note C at end of this chapter.

Note A. It may be disputed that the subordination of the Son to the Father inheres in their eternal relationship. It may be asserted that it belongs only to the Son as incarnate. It is highly significant that it is the Son Himself Who gave the fullest statements upon His relations to the Father, and John 5:26, 27 is here specially important.

26. For as the Father hath life in Himself,
even so gave (aorist *edoken*) He to the Son also to have life in
Himself;
27. and He gave (aorist *edtoken*) Him authority to execute judgment,
because He is Son of man.

Here is an instructive example of how the aorist tense denotes an act done at one time but leaves open the question of when that time is. This must be learned from the context or from the nature of the subject.

In ver. 27 the gift of authority to judge is connected with the Son of God having become Son of Man; though it was possible that the grant was before His incarnation but made in view of the Divine and certain purpose that He would become Son of man. The aorist would allow this, though the emphatic “is” (*estin*) looks the other way.

But as to ver. 26, the whole preceding argument has dealt only with the status of the Son of *God*, not of the Son of man; and, in the nature of the case, the gift of inherent vitality, of “life in Himself,” must of necessity have been from eternity, being inherent in the begetting of the Son by the Father.

For were the “begetting” not eternal, then the Son must have had a beginning, as all Arians assert; in which case He would not be equal with God, being destitute of an essential quality of God, even eternal existence. But His claim to equality with God, by virtue of relationship, is the very point which the Jews challenged and which the Son is here maintaining.

Further, had the gift of inherent life not been co-existent with the eternal begetting, then there was a period down to the time of this gift during which the Son lacked this other essential quality of God, self-existence, and thus, again, He would not, during that period, have been equal with God. Moreover, this would have involved, at the time of the gift, an *essential change* within the Godhead; but God is unchangeable because eternal. Nor does it seem conceivable that a father *can* beget a son and not impart to him *all* his own *essential* qualities, whether the father be man or God.

So that whereas the gift of authority was granted, or perhaps confirmed, in connection with the incarnation, the gift of inherent life was from eternity, involved in the eternal generation of the Son by the Father.

By most of the early fathers, and by Stier, Olshausen, Alford, Westcott, and Govett, this “gave” in ver. 26 is taken to refer to the pre-incarnate relation. But that the Son derives from the Father His eternal inherent life plainly involves, as to relative status, dependence and subordination. It is part of the reality which He Himself declares in the words, “I can of Myself do nothing . . . the Father is greater than I” (John 5:19, 30; 14:28).

Note B. They who deny the eternal Sonship must deny the eternal generation, since one who is generated by another is son to that other. This denial confuses the whole doctrine of the nature of the Godhead. That the relationship of Father and Son did not commence with the Son becoming man, but preceded creation itself and is therefore inherent in the Deity and eternal, is further involved in the fact considered above that the Son was the Father’s *heir* before anything was created.

That the relationship was certainly prior to Christ’s incarnation He Himself made clear in the parable of the wicked husbandmen: “And the Lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? (Luke 20:13) . . . *He had yet one, a beloved son, He sent him last unto them*” (Mark 12:6). In view of the past tense “*He had yet one,*” this cannot mean that the one sent became son only when sent. He is set in manifest contrast to the “servants” who had been sent earlier. It were equally unreasonable to say that they became servants by being sent as that He became Son by being sent. They were already servants and He already Soil.

J. N. Darby (*Coll. Writ.*, vol. XXX, p. 340) wrote:

It is of immense import, because I have not the Father’s love sending the Son out of heaven, if I have Him not as Son before born into the world. . . . I lose all that the Son is, if He is only so as incarnate, and you have lost all the love of the Father in sending the Son as well.

And on Col. 1 he wrote (*Synopsis*, vol. V. p. 15):

The Son is here presented to us as Creator. . . . Inasmuch as born in this world by the operation of God through the Holy Ghost, He is the Son of God (Psa. 2:7; Luke 1:35). But this is in time. But the Son is also the name of the proper relationship of His glorious Person to the Father before the world was. It is

in this character that He created all things.. .. In the epistle to the Colossians that which is set before us is the proper glory of His Person as the Son before the world was. He is the Creator as Son. It is important to observe this.

On the same chapter, ver. 55, Ellicott, in his Commentary, wrote:

Christian antiquity has ever regarded the expression image of God" as denoting the eternal Son's perfect equality with the Father in respect of His substance, nature, and eternity. [Observe: "the *eternal Son*."].

It were no great theological journey from denying the *relationships* between the three Persons of the Godhead to denying the *distinctions* of personality in the Deity, and so to arrive at the Unitarian⁵ error of Sabellianism (cent. 3), that the terms Father, Son, and Spirit do not import the relationships of three distinct Divine Persons Who yet are one God, but only three different ways in which one Being manifests Himself at different times.

Note C. A friendly critic writes that "God does not dwell in time or space. . . . To say that Christ must be 'somewhere' not 'everywhere' is correct provided you make it clear that the definition of 'somewhere' is not the physical one. That is what is wrong in your remarks on 'the Majesty on high,' You are doubtless right in insisting on localization, but you do not make it clear that it is a localization outside time and space as we know them."

This makes a demand on thought and definition which surely no finite mind can meet; at least, mine cannot meet it. I believe my friend the writer could offer no clear notion of what he means by God dwelling "outside space." He admits localization, which feature itself demands the idea of space. Very certainly the glorified human body of Christ cannot be "outside time and space," for it had a commencement in time and it occupies space, and is in only one place at a time. It left the earth and is at the right hand of God: it is later to leave the latter and to descend to the earth.

Saying above that the localized presence of God is "beyond the created universe" I have, I think, said as much as seems clear and warranted by Scripture. I do not, and cannot, define that "beyond" in relation to "space" for the latter word is itself indefinable by man.

⁵ Adolf Harnack (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. XIX, **790**): "Sabellianism, in fact, became a collective name for all those Unitarian doctrines in which the divine nature of Christ was acknowledged."

It was a notion of Kant that “Space and time, the two essential conditions of sense-perception, are not data given by things, but universal forms of intellect into which all data of sense must be received” (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. XIII, p. 270). This implies that primarily time and sense are the product of the human mind, which is contrary to the fact of creation as revealed in Scripture. God is eternal and infinite, therefore while He was the only Existence time and space did not exist. But at the moment when He created something time and space began, for that “something” had a beginning and so is not eternal, and it was of limited size and therefore not infinite. Therefore time and space are not a product of human thought but a fact inherent in creation: they so existed before man existed to think about them.

By consequence it is evident that as long as finite objects exist (which will be for ever) time and space must continue, for the finite can never become eternal or infinite. Hence, for angels and men the future is not absolute eternity, as for God, but “ages of ages,” that is, endless succession of periods. When perfected, man may well be able to comprehend vaster stretches of space and time than now, yet finite minds cannot conceive eternity or infinity, but demand time and space. But these are not creations of finite minds, but are facts inseparable from creation, “data given by things,” antecedent to finite minds though objects of thought to be considered by them.

The Holy Spirit not having come into the Epistle thus far I have not spoken of Him above; but for the stimulating of meditation, it may be here remarked that to Him also the Scripture attributes localization, and not only universality. The latter is clear in, for example, Ps. 139:7-12: “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” Here universality is attributed equally to God and His Spirit; what is true of the one is true of the other, for, with the Son, they are one God.

It is thus with localization. In the *Revelation* the Father is shown as seated upon a throne and the Spirit is stated to be “before His throne” (Rev. 1:4, 5; 4:5; 5:6). The term “seven spirits” must be a figurative expression, meaning the one Divine Spirit, for it were blasphemy to conjoin seven created spirits with the Father and the Son as the source of grace and peace to men. Thus the Spirit is given as localized a presence “before the throne” as is given to the Son “in the midst of the throne” (Rev. 5:6) and to the Father “on the throne”; and to this localized presence of the Spirit visibility is attributed, as it is to the Father and the Son, for He is represented by “lamps of fire.”

Into the mystery of this the mind of man cannot penetrate nor can unfold its harmony, but whoever desires to comprehend God as far as He is revealed in His written Word must include these features in his meditation.

Note D. The unity of God is as fundamental an article of the Christian faith as is the tri-unity of Persons: “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29): “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Before creation the Father, the Son, and the Spirit did not need to manifest themselves each to the other; but this need arose with the creation of beings who, though intelligent, could not apprehend God in essence but only through manifestation. Now the manifestation of God in the Son in no way altered the essential unity of the Godhead: why, then, should it be held that a manifestation of the Father or of the Spirit should impair that unity? They *are* Three if unmanifested; they *remain* One when manifested. Manifestation does not alter essence. Therefore there seems no valid objection to taking in their literal sense the statements of Scripture as to a manifestation of the Father. Nor is there any other sense which yields any meaning at all to the statements.

Here in truth is the real crux as to interpretation. Treat the relevant statements as “metaphorical” and they are etherealized into *nothing* that the mind can grasp. This is virtually admitted by those who so take them, for they say that the realities behind the statements are incomprehensible. In support they will cite Matt. 11:27: “no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son,” but they overlook the accompanying words, “*and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.*” Therefore the statements of Scripture are intended to *reveal* the truth as to God, and they do so reveal it to the “little children.” What intelligent child will take other than literally such a statement as that one is “sitting at the right hand” of another?

Take such statements as they stand, and at once we *learn* something concerning the world above. We learn of a local presence of the universal God, of the intercourse with Him there of the heavenly beings, who “see His face,” and of the administration of His kingdom. He is seen and heard, and the presence there of His Son, and His advocacy for His people, become a reality to their heart.

Granted fully that the *mode* of that reality is heavenly and spiritual, yet it is a reality, actually existing at a given place in the heavens. The angels are real beings; the Son of man glorified is there in His real resurrection body in which He ascended to the Father; and to that place glorified saints are to be just as actually removed in their resurrection bodies and to be “presented” (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22, 28; 2 Cor. 4:14; 11:2), which term means just what is meant by being “presented at court.”

Treated “metaphorically” all this prospect fades into an indistinct blur. The sons are to be in the Father’s house, yet will never see their Father!

Note E. John 14:1: “believe also in Me.” The “also” is emphatic. George Rogers, the first Principal of Spurgeon’s College, pointed out that it is (1) disjunctive; it distinguishes the Son from God as an object of faith: (2) adjunctive; it adds the Son to God as an object of faith: (3) subjunctive; the Son is the second object of faith, the Father the first object: (4) conjunctive; it joins the Son to God as an object of faith, being Himself essentially one with God.

As to the use of the word “Person” of God see Westcott on John 1:1: “The absolute, eternal, immanent relations of the Persons of the Godhead furnish the basis for revelation. Because the Word was personally distinct from ‘God’ and yet essentially ‘God’, He could make Himself known.” So Alford on the same verses: ‘Again this *logos* is undoubtedly in our prologue, *personal*:—not an abstraction merely, nor a personification . . . but a PERSON.’ So the *Concise Oxford Dict.*: “person. Individual human being... *the three persons* (modes of being) *of the Godhead*. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.” And Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, p. 31: “The term Person is also sometimes objected to. Like all human language, it is liable to be accused of inadequacy and even positive error. It certainly must not be pressed too far, or it will lead to Tritheism. While we use the term to denote distinctions in time Godhead, we do not imply distinctions which amount to separateness, but distinctions which are associated with essential mutual coherence or inclusiveness. We intend by the term ‘Person’ to express those real distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which are found amid the oneness of the Godhead, distinctions which are no mere temporary manifestations of the Godhead, but essential and permanent elements within the Divine unity.

“While, therefore, we are compelled to use terms like ‘substance’ and ‘Person’, we are not to think of them as identical with what we understand as human substance and personality. The terms are not explanatory, but only approximately correct, as must necessarily be the case with any attempt to define the nature of God. As already noted, it is a profound spiritual satisfaction to remember that the truth and experience of the Trinity is not dependent upon theological terminology, though it is obviously essential for us to have the most correct terms available.”

Discussion of these high and difficult themes is by no means outside the scope of such a treatise as this. The phrases which tell that the Son of God “passed through the heavens,” is made “higher than the heavens,” entered into “the heaven itself,” and “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights” are in the Epistle and are intimately associated with His priestly work. It is clearly the duty of the expositor to show how he understands them, and to explain them in line with the plain principle of the Epistle that

the heavenly regions are the archetype of which earthly things are Divinely appointed copies. How can there be a literal copy of something purely metaphorical?

If it be urged that the view offered of that heavenly world creates difficulties for such as give themselves to scientific research, as to atomic energy and the like themes, we remark that the understanding of the Word of God is not dependent upon man's inquiries into the works of God. The first readers of this Epistle were surely intended to grasp its meaning, though they knew nothing of modern investigations into nature. Man's understanding of the universe and its laws is still fragmentary, imperfect, and often contradictory, and is no safe guide to the interpreting of Holy Scripture. The word is still very true that the "natural man [man at his best, man intellectual and honest] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). Man may investigate the kingdom of nature: it is only little children who enter into the kingdom of God and to whom its mysteries are revealed (Matt. 18:1-4; 11:25-30; 13:10-17; Jer. 9:23, 24; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

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