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Sermon Study on Heb. 1:1-6

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original writers must have been infallibly informed as to the truth; they must have been able to express it infallibly," is a true statement. But the next statement: "After their death their manuscripts must have been infallibly copied" is not true. It employs the sophisticated generalization discussed above. The mistakes which the copyists made render a few passages doubtful but do not make all the rest fallible. It is simply not true that a message, a teaching, a statement, of the Bible loses its infallibility, its power, its divine character, when a fallible human being copies it, transmits it, preaches it. Will the condemned criminal doubt the validity of the pardon because a lowly messenger, and not the governor himself, brings and reads to him the pardon? And if the messenger mispronounces a word or two, is the pardon invalidated? — Enough has been said on this matter above. We shall add only one more remark. It is conceivable that, when we offer our main proof to Abbott — Christ's promise that He would preserve His infallible Word to the Church — he might reply: How do you know that Christ spoke those words? The original writers may have set them down infallibly, but the faulty copies, etc., etc. Our final remark is this: We go our way rejoicing and thanking God for the precious boon of an infallible Bible; let the others, if they must, wallow in the bog of doubt and uncertainty, a bog of their own making.

The argument under consideration (No. 17) is born of desperation. The case of those who deny the verbal inspiration and reliability of the Bible must be desperate if they have to bring in the unrelated matter of faulty copies. And this desperate argument, if upheld, leads to despair. If there is no reliance on our Bible as we have it, we get religious nihilism. TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

Sermon Study on Heb. 1:1-6

Eisenach Epistle for Second Christmas Day

The Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Second Christmas Day is taken from the first chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews. It comprises the prolog, vv. 1-4, and three of the Scripture-passages cited by the author in proof of his statement that Christ far excels the angels in glory and power. The prolog consists of one long complex sentence grouped around two statements, the first found in the principal complex clause, vv. 1, 2, "God hath spoken"; the second in the complex subordinate clause, v. 3, "Who sat down." Round about these two brief sentences the writer, in majestic language well suited to his sublime subject, brings out his theme, introducing

to his readers Jesus, the God Incarnate, our Teacher and High Priest, by whom in these last days God has spoken to us and who, having by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Heb. 1:1.

At sundry times. "This is only an approximation to the meaning of the expressive but quite inimitable adverb used in the original (literally, 'many-portion-wise')." *Bible Commentary. In divers manner*, in various forms. "Common to both expressions is the notion of changeful diversity; but the former marks the changeful diversity of the times in which, and the persons through whom, God revealed Himself; the latter, the changeful diversity of the divine revelations as regards contents and form." Luene-mann, in *Meyer's Commentary*. At sundry times, sometimes in rapid succession, sometimes centuries intervening, God spake, and spake by various persons. Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant, Jacob on his death-bed, young Samuel, stern Amos, cultured Isaiah, weeping Jeremiah, King David, captive Daniel, what an array of men differing as to age and temperament and culture! And just as varied were the contents and the form of these prophecies. As to the form, there were dreams, Gen. 15; 28:12 ff.; 1 Sam. 28:6; Dan. 1:17; 2:1 ff., 4; 5:7; visions, Is. 6:1 ff.; Ezek. 1:8; Zech. 1-6; symbolic acts, Jer. 13; 19; Ezek. 4; 5; Levitical ordinances, Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; types, Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1 ff.; dark speeches, riddles, Ezek. 17:2; Ps. 49:5; clear, explicit language, Is. 7:14; 9:6, 7. As to contents, again how varied! Jacob speaks of the coming King, Gen. 49:10 ff.; Moses, of the Prophet, Deut. 18:15; David, of the Priest, Ps. 110:4; Isaiah, of the virgin birth and the vicarious suffering and death of the Servant of the Lord; Micah names the city of His birth; Malachi speaks of His fore-runner. So gradually through the millenniums one detail after the other was added to the first Gospel spoken by God Himself in Paradise.

Many different prophets spake, mortal beings, sinful men; yet they did not speak their own views, they did not voice their own opinions, they did not proclaim their own theory of salvation, their own philosophy of life. The utterances of these men of old, of times lying in the dim past, were not the product of human reason and research. In them dwelt another, God Himself, and while the lips of the prophet formed the words, God spake in and by and through these men, using them as His instruments, taking into His employ the natural and acquired physical and mental and spiritual gifts with which He had endowed them. It was God Himself speaking through these prophets at sundry times in divers manners.

"God spake." The writer uses the aorist participle; a real aorist, denoting unbounded, undetermined, timeless action, compressing God's speaking through the millenniums into one act, leaving indefinite when and how often He spoke.

God spake *unto the fathers*; this is the honorable title of the ancestors of the Jews living at the time this letter was written. To them God spake by means of prophets. Little by little, by slow degrees, detail upon detail was added. Thousands of years passed before the fathers were told that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin at Bethlehem. Yet from the very beginning this multi-portioned prophecy was able to accomplish whereunto God had spoken it, the salvation of mankind. Eve exclaims joyfully, "I have a man, the Lord," Gen. 4:1; Lamech, Gen. 5:29; Jacob, Gen. 49:18; Job 19:25 ff.; Elihu, Job 33:23-30. And still it was prophesying in part and knowing in part; cp. 1 Cor. 13:9. How little did the fathers know compared with the knowledge of their children living in the time of fulfilment, when a Greater One than all the prophets became the mouthpiece of God, revealing to mankind the divine plan of salvation for the execution of which He Himself had come upon the earth.

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, v. 2. There can be no doubt as to the time when this speaking of God through His Son occurred. The writer clearly distinguishes it from that of the prophets through whom Christ spoke in the Old Testament, prior to His incarnation. And it is a speaking which occurred before Christ, having purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The author is speaking of the incarnate Son, the God-man in His state of humiliation, when He, the humble Rabbi of Nazareth, began to preach throughout the land of Israel, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, Matt. 4:23. He who was sent as the Redeemer of the world was also to be the great Prophet and Revealer of God; cp. John 1:17; 3:11-13; 7:16,17; 8:28. It is of this preaching Christ, the incarnate Son, in His humiliation during His sojourn on earth that the writer predicates the statements vv. 2-4, as mysterious as they are marvelous.

God hath spoken by His Son; the pronoun is omitted in the original as well as the article: God spake by Son. This construction not only emphasizes that this Son has all the characteristic qualities of a son, that he is a son in fact and truth. It stresses at the same time the uniqueness of this Son. There is no other son like Him. The word is therefore practically used as a proper noun, a name properly, in its real sense belonging to Him. What a divine mystery is unfolded in this brief word, Son! Though God is ab-

solutely one, indivisible, yet He has a Son, a true Son, since God Himself, the absolute Truth, calls this relation a relation of father to son. On the other hand, being a relation within God, it surpasses in its closeness and intimacy and in its very nature the relation of father and son in mankind in such a manner as to be absolutely unique. There is no fatherhood and no sonship in all the history of mankind that can be regarded as an exact and full parallel of the relation existing between God the Father and God the Son. Human sonship implies the subordination of the son to the father; yet the Son of God is in no wise inferior to the Father, subordinate to Him, God in a secondary sense of the term. The very fact that the Son is the Son of God renders that supposition impossible and at once shows up its fallacy and folly. A son has the nature of his father; the son of a white man is a white man, etc.; the Son of God, being God's own Son, must have the nature of His Father, must be God, even as the Father who has born Him is God. Yet, while the son of a man is a second man, the Son of God is not a second God, but partakes of the nature of God, which is that of absolute unity, inseparable, indivisible. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord," Jehovah *Echad*, Deut. 6:4. And with this one and indivisible Father the Son is one Being, one Essence, the one and indivisible Jehovah. This is a mystery past human understanding, a mystery so deep that even the wisest of all men, Solomon, confessed himself to be more foolish than any man, because, after having wearied himself to the point of exhaustion with trying to solve this mystery, he could find no answer to his ever recurring question, "What is His name?" Prov. 30:1-6.

Both truths, that the Son of God is a son, and that He is the Son of God, in other words, the sonship and the deity of the Son, are unfolded briefly vv. 2-4, and in ever fuller manner as the author gradually establishes his proposition, the superiority of the New Testament Covenant over that of the Old Testament. We shall see that as we study vv. 2b-4.

Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things. A privilege of sons is the right of inheritance. "If children, then heirs," says Paul, Rom. 8:17. Being born of the Father from eternity, Ps. 2:7, the Son is by virtue of that eternal birth an Heir, a possessor of all His Father possesses. The writer, however, does not say that Christ is an Heir of all things. He purposely uses a different expression. God appointed Him Heir. Of course, he does not mean to infer that the Son, after all, is subordinate to His Father, no matter how highly exalted a person He may be; that He is an Heir by appointment only. The author, as we have seen, is speaking of the incarnate Son. From the moment that the Son of God received a human nature into union with His divine person, God

by virtue of this intimate union appointed, set, placed, established, this human nature to be Heir of all things which belonged to the Son of God from eternity. Cp. Matt. 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35; 13:3. We know that in His state of humiliation Christ did not make full use of His full possession of all things. According to His human nature, though appointed Heir of all things, He voluntarily abstained from the free and constant use of this privilege. He entered into full and uninterrupted use of this inheritance when according to His human nature God set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Eph. 1:20-23. But let us note that there is no room for any time when the Son was not an Heir of all things. A kenosis which robs the incarnate Son of God of His divine power and majesty is unscriptural and anti-Scriptural. He is an Heir while performing His office on earth, while speaking as the mouthpiece of God to His fellow-men, and an Heir of *all things*, πάντων, without limit and without restriction. Any limitation of the heritage given to the human nature of Christ is a violation of this word of God which establishes the incarnate Son of God, even during His life of poverty and suffering, the Heir of all things.

By whom also He made the worlds, the heavens and the earth and all the host of them, Gen. 2:1. God made the universe by His Son. Here the relation of the Son to the Father is described from another viewpoint, that of mediatorship. Father and Son are one, John 10:30, one in essence and therefore one in will. From eternity it was the will of the Father and of the Son that the Son was to be the person through whom God in the time to be created would reveal Himself in word and deed. When, therefore, in the beginning God created heaven and earth, He did so by, through, the Son. There the Son acted as the Mediator, through whom God spoke His creative words, through whom He revealed His creative power and majesty, John 1:1-3. And in "these latter days," in the days of His sojourn on earth, the Son did not cease to be the Creator. The incarnate Son remains what He was from the beginning of time, the Maker of heaven and earth. We do not mean to say that the human nature of Christ was active in creating the world. That came into existence only four thousand years later, Luke 1:26-38. But it is the incarnate Son who four thousand years before His incarnation had created the world according to His divine nature, which existed from eternity, Prov. 8:22-30; Ps. 102:26-28. Since in the Son of Mary dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. 2:9, the human nature of Jesus is the human nature of Him through whom, as God's Workmaster, the worlds were made. (Prov. 8:30, "as one brought up with Him"; literally, builder, architect.) As the Creator and Maker of all things was also from the beginning their Owner and Lord, so the incarnate Son was

the Owner and Lord of the universe even in His deepest humiliation, God Himself having appointed Him also according to His human nature the Heir of all that the Son of God had made.

Subordinationists urge the "by whom" in order to prove the correctness of their view. There is no reason to see in this phrase any subordination:

1. The agent, or mediator, need not be subordinate to him whose mediator he is. Two business partners may agree that the one may build a church, the other a hotel. Neither is subordinate to the other.

2. In v. 10 the creation is directly ascribed to the Son.

3. The Son is not a son by adoption or a God in lesser degree, but the Son is begotten from the Father in eternity, 1:5.

4. If "by" would imply subordination, then God would be subordinate to Himself, Rom. 11:36 — "Of Him and through [by] Him and to Him are all things"; cp. Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:9.

Who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, v. 3.

The author now makes it as clear as human language can make it that, being the Son of God, this Son by His unique sonship is, as the Nicene Creed confesses, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. We read: "Who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." "Ὁς refers still to the incarnate Son, through whom the Father spake, v. 2. The predicate is ἐκάθισε, the aorist describing a past act in its entirety as completed once for all. The subject, the incarnate Son, is more closely defined by three participial clauses, two employing the present participle, durative, denoting continuity of state, ὄν, and of action, φέρον, moreover connected by τε, which is not so much a conjunctive particle like καὶ as an adjunctive particle, adding something to what has been stated and marking it at the same time as having an inner connection with, a close relation to, what precedes. The third participial clause has no connective and is to be referred to the predicate rather than to the subject. The participle is that of the aorist, denoting a historical act which had taken place once for all when this letter was being written and preceded the sitting down, which was also a past action at the time of the writing. Having cleansed for Himself, having finished the work of cleansing the sins, He sat down. The connection indicates that, when He sat down, and during all the time required to finish His cleansing, He, the incarnate Son, was continually the brightness of God's glory, unceasingly the express image of God's being, and

always upholding all things by the word of His power. No room here for either subordination or kenosis. Cf. "Die moderne Kenose im Licht der Schrift," *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 34 (1888), pp. 204, 295, 329. This will become the more evident as we study these participial clauses in detail.

"Who, being the brightness of His glory." From the creation of this visible world, which is a miracle beyond the comprehension of the human mind, which proud reason will not believe although it refers to earthly things, John 3:12, the writer ascends at once to the highest heaven, speaks of matters truly heavenly, of the nature and essence of the invisible God, an unfathomable mystery, and speaks of these inscrutable things in the language of man utterly unable adequately to explain so exalted a subject. The language is clear, the subject remains a profound mystery. The relation of the Son to the Father is described by two phrases, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. The glory of God is that He is the Lord, Jehovah, Is. 42:8, the absolute Being, undetermined and undeterminable by anything outside of Himself, He that is, that was, and that shall come, Rev. 1:3; that He is the Holy, Holy, Holy, Is. 6:3; cp. John 12:41; separate from all and transcending all created beings, particularly all sin and wrong-doing, which is absolutely inconsistent with His nature and impossible for Him. This glory, Ex. 33:18, is identified with Jehovah, Ex. 34:5, 6, 8. The fulness of the glory, the unveiled face of God, no man can see and live. As the glory of the sun will blind every one looking straight into it, so the glory of God is like a blinding, consuming fire, which would immediately destroy sinful man were God to reveal it to him in its fulness, Ex. 33:19, 20.

Of this glory the Son is the "Brightness." Interpreters disagree on the exact import of the Greek term; some translate "reflected light," others "the flashing forth of light from light itself." There is no need of taking the word in the sense of reflection, that which is flashed forth from a body independent and altogether different from the body sending forth the light; e. g., the moon, dark in itself, flashing forth the light of the sun as long as this light strikes the moon. Nothing in the text demands this sense. The entire context discounts it, for the author evidently does not mean to describe the Son of God as one who casts back, reflects, light only as long as God shines upon Him without having light within Himself. The Son is indeed "*Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit, Licht vom unerschöpfen Lichte*," the Morning dawn (cp. Luke 1:78; Mal. 4:2) of Eternity, Light of Inexhaustible Light; cp. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 539. Luther: "He calls Him such a Brightness as proceeds from the glory of the Father; as the rising dawn of the sun, carrying with itself and in itself the entire sun;

being not a part of the glory but the whole glory of the whole sun, shining from the sun and remaining with the sun. Therefore here in one word the birth, the unity of natures, the distinction of persons, is taught. For Christ is continually being born eternally of the Father, always goes forth as the sun in the morning and not at noon or eve. Personally, He is not the Father, as the brightness is not the sun; and still is with the Father and in the Father, neither before nor after Him, but equally eternal with Him and in Him, as the brightness is at the same time with and in and on the sun. Christ is the emanating brightness of the glory of the Father; in other words, He is only-begotten God and not the begetting God, yet perfect and whole God, like and as the Father." St. L., XII:158 f. Read the whole masterly exposition, extending over several pages.

The Son is that because He is at the same time "the express Image of His person." The Greek word translated "person" denotes etymologically, like its Latin equivalent *substantia*, a setting or placing under; the thing placed under; that which stands under the outer form, hence the nature, essence, substantial quality of a person or thing. Bauer-Preuschen: "Essence, reality; often used in contrast to [mere] appearance. It therefore denotes that which makes a person what he really is." Used of God, as here, the term denotes His Godhead, His deity.

Of this nature and being of God's deity the Son is the "express Image." Thayer defines the Greek term, 1) The instrument used in engraving or carving; 2) the mark (figure or letters) stamped upon that instrument or wrought out on it; hence a mark or figure burned in or stamped on, an impression; the exact expression (the image) of any person or thing, . . . precise reproduction in every respect." By the impression of the die a dollar bill is made what it is, a dollar bill. The Son is the "impression" of God's essence, this impression making Him what He is, so that His being is God's being. Yet, since He is the Image of God's essence, this impression does not create two different beings, two separate Gods, of equal authority, or one subordinate to the other, as the dollar bill is different from the die which stamps it. God is essentially one and indivisible. "I am that I am," Ex. 3:15; and being the express Image of this God, the Son is together with the Father the one true God, as Christ says: "I and the Father are one," John 10:30; "Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee," one, John 17:21. Nor was Christ at any one time made what He was not before as a former plain piece of paper was made a dollar bill by the impress of the die. Let us not overlook the present participle, *ὄν*. The Son, as long as He is the Son (and He was that from eternity; cp. Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:5; John 1:1, 2), is One, "being constantly and unceasingly" the express Image of God's essence.

Once more let us call attention to the fact that the author speaks here of the incarnate Son, the God-man. While speaking on this earth, while purging our sins, while in His deepest humiliation, He is always One, "being the express Image of God's essence," as He Himself, on the very eve of His suffering and death, told Philip, John 14:9-11. Isaiah calls the Babe of Bethlehem the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, Is. 9:6; cp. also Acts 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:8.

"And upholding all things by the word of His power." The ancient Greeks invented a fabulous giant, Atlas, a demigod, who supported on his shoulders the pillars on which the sky rested. Here is a true human being, who actually is One carrying, bearing, all things, the all, nothing excluded, the universe, and carrying it, upholding it, preventing it from collapsing, not by working to the point of exhaustion, but without great effort, by the word of His power. That word spoken by the Son, "Let there be light," not only created light, but preserves it so long as it pleases Him to have light. That word which created sun and moon and stars and gave to each one its place in the galaxy of heaven and prescribed to each one its course, keeps them strictly within this course and gives them power to perform their service until He shall order otherwise. That Babe of Bethlehem bears on His shoulder the government, the rule of all things, just because He is the Brightness of God's glory and the express Image of God's essence. Therefore His word is a word of *power*, it is dynamic, a living, never-tiring power, Is. 40:28.

The author has still more to say of this Son. He adds another participle; and while the first two were present participles, describing the ceaselessness of the being and the action, he now adds an aorist participle, denoting action completed once for all, a historic fact that occurred in the past. "When He had by Himself purged our sins." In the Septuagint the Greek term for "purge" is used in a special sense of the purification of persons rendered Levitically unclean because of some disease or eating or touching something unclean, Lev. 11-15. This purification was effected in various ways, by sprinkling or washing or bathing, etc. The term is also used of an ethical, moral purification, of the cleansing from sins committed against the Moral Law. From all these failings and sins and trespasses the Israelite was to be cleansed by having an atonement, a reconciliation, made by the offering of a sacrifice typifying the sacrificial death of Christ.

Christ once for all accomplished a cleansing of the sins when on the cross He cried, "It is finished." Cf. Heb. 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:11-13. Note that "cleansing" has no article, while "sins" has. The absence of the article stresses the qualitative force of the noun; it is a cleansing that is indeed what this word implies,

a cleansing that actually purifies, washes us till not a spot remains, a cleansing that is the basis of a complete justification, a cleansing not only from the filth of the flesh or ceremonial uncleanness, but from "the sins." Thank God for this article, for it points to sins as a class, including everything that is sin. Christ did not only purge us from some sinful things, but from *the* sins, the missings of the mark, sins great or small, sins of omission and commission, sins forgotten and sins weighing heavily on the conscience; from the whole category of sins He has purged us, has made an effective cleansing "by Himself"; Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest, the Son of God, the Creator and Preserver of the universe, offers Himself, the Brightness of God's glory and the express Image of God's being, as a ransom for man, as an atonement for the sins of the world. A marvelous cleansing indeed.

Having accomplished this cleansing, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Greek term for majesty is used in such passages as Deut. 32:3; Ps. 150:2 ("greatness"); 2 Sam. 7:23 ("great things"), of God's sovereign power and majesty on which such passages as Ps. 93 and Is. 40:12-28 are the best commentaries. On sitting on the right hand of some one as denoting the place of honor compare such passages as 1 Kings 2:19; Ps. 45:9; 110:1; Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 12:2. Sitting at the right hand of Supreme Majesty, the incarnate Son now enjoys to the full and uses continually according to His human nature also that divine majesty and glory which was His according to His divine nature from eternity, John 17:5, and which was communicated to His human nature at the moment of His incarnation, John 17:24. He who had come to begin His work of providing a cleansing for the sins of mankind in the womb of a human mother grew up from feeble infancy to the strength of manhood, was made under the Law, was made sin, was made a curse, willingly humbled Himself unto the death of the cross, and after having made a cleansing of the sin, having finished His work, having satisfied the outraged justice of God, has now sat down at the right hand of God, on the seat of glory belonging to His divine nature by virtue of His deity and to His human nature because of its unity with the divine nature and because He as the representative of mankind had gloriously accomplished the mission whereto He was sent. That seat is His because of His person and because of His work.

Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they, v. 4. "Being made so much better." The Greek word is derived from a root meaning to bring to full strength, to perfect. In the Letter to the Hebrews it is used quite frequently in designation of the pre-eminence, the greater excellency, of Christ's person or work.

"Much better than the angels." Angels excel sinful mankind by their holiness and sinlessness, their ever ready willingness to do God's will, Ps. 103:20. Angels excelled in many respects even sinless Adam and Eve. Man's dwelling-place was the earth, the angels' abode was heaven, Matt. 18:10. Man, being material, is bound and limited in his actions by many physical laws which because of their spiritual nature do not affect the angels. Yet, though angels count among their number the highest forms of living beings, creatures that stand round about the throne of God, in closest proximity to God's seat of glory, Is. 6:2; Rev. 4:6-8, the Son is more excellent than they and more excellent not only according to His divine but also according to his human nature.

"*Being made* so much better," writes the author. Again the incarnate Christ is spoken of, the God-man, and here according to His human nature. His divine nature from eternity far excelled by its very essence that of the angels; but His human nature, that nature created out of the flesh and blood of Mary, that Son of David, was made more excellent than even the angels, and this in the same measure or degree in which He has inherited a more excellent name beyond them, above them. The author uses a different word here, one originally meaning different, *i. e.*, of another kind; the comparative, more different or far different. Therefore His name is more excellent because it is of an altogether different and higher kind or nature. In this sense the Greek word is used in every instance where it occurs in the New Testament, Rom. 12:6; Heb. 8:6; 9:10. The difference between the name of angels and that of the Son is not one of degree only, of greater or less honor and dignity, it is different in *kind*. No angel ever was given that kind of name that was given to the God-man when He sat down on the right hand of God.

This name so altogether differing in kind from that of angels Christ has "obtained by inheritance." By virtue of the birth of His human nature as the human nature of the Son of God He inherited as His human birthright what was the right and dignity of the Son of God from eternity. The perfect tense denotes that this name, given to Him as an inheritance at the moment of His conception, was from that moment in His possession as His abiding heritage. Though at times it seemed as though He had lost every trace of this dignity and glory, still through all vicissitudes and sufferings, even in death and in the grave, this name, higher than that of the angels, remained His heritage according to His human nature, which had only temporarily renounced the full and constant use of this inheritance.

What was this name more excellent than that of angels? The apostle does not let us remain in ignorance. He quotes Scripture

to explain this term "name." From these passages we learn that the term in Scriptural usage does not designate a mere title or tag or label. According to Scripture the name of a person or thing is the person himself to whom the name is applied. If Scripture gives the name God, Son of God, Creator, etc., to any being, it means to say that that being is God, etc. This term "name" therefore includes also all the attributes, all the works, in fact, anything whereby the person or object may be known, whereby he reveals himself. This is the manner in which the term "name" is explained in the verses following. The term "name" includes *divine names*, v. 5: My Son, begotten; I am His Father, He is My Son; vv. 8, 9: God, v. 10: Lord, *Κύριος*, the LXX translation for Jehovah; cp. v. 12, "Thou art the same"; *divine honor*, v. 6: angels shall worship Him; v. 13: the sitting at the right hand of God; *divine works*, vv. 10, 11: the creation, preservation, and final destruction of the world; the ruling over all enemies; *divine attributes*, vv. 5, 12: eternity. All this is included in the term "name," which designates the nature, the essence, and being of the second person of the Trinity from eternity. And all this honor and glory, this Deity, was given to the human nature of the Son of God at its origin as an abiding heritage; cp. Col. 2:9.

From vv. 1—3 we have learned that the author's purpose in writing this noble passage was to set forth in language as clear as human language can be the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, the personal union of the human and divine nature in Christ Jesus. To prove His point, He exalts the incarnate Son of God above the angels and from the Old Testament quotes three appropriate passages, the first of which speaks of His birth in eternity, the second of His incarnation, the third of His second advent at the end of time.

For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? V. 5. The first passage quoted by the author is found Ps. 2:7. It has become quite customary to interpret this psalm as referring primarily to David and only typically to Christ and v. 7 as designating "the begetting into a royal existence, which takes place in and by the act of anointing." Delitzsch. This interpretation is a violation of sound hermeneutics; it is charging the New Testament writers and the Holy Ghost, who spoke through them, with not knowing what they are saying. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit Himself clearly refers the entire psalm to Christ directly. Read Acts 4:25-28, where in v. 26 the Lord's Christ of Ps. 2:2 is identified with "Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed." In Acts 13:33 and Heb. 5:5 the words of Ps. 2:7 are said to have been

spoken directly to Christ. And the entire context of our passage leaves no doubt that the author was thinking of these words as being directed to Christ exclusively. The author means to prove that the name given to Jesus is more excellent than that given to the angels. Would Ps. 2:7 prove the greater excellency of Jesus' name if that decree had been addressed to David? Certainly not.

Again, the writer denies that a statement like that of Ps. 2:7 was at any time addressed to an angel, while as a matter of fact angels are called "sons of God" in Holy Scripture, Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. Hence the author, the Holy Spirit who spoke by the writer, could not have had in mind a sonship such as He actually had attributed to angels, a sonship by creation or by adoption or by installation into some office. He had in mind a sonship far exceeding that of any man and of any angel, a sonship altogether unique, an actual being born of the Father, a sonship involving perfect unity of essence and nature with the Father, v. 3 a. It is not the Creator God, the Triune God, who calls Himself here a father, but the first person in the Trinity, who is the Father of the second person. It is not the God of grace who is willing to accept David as His son and establish him as His theocratic king, His representative on earth, and in this sense as His son. This interpretation adds something essential that is not stated by the verb "beget" nor even implied in it. "Beget" throughout the Old and the New Testament invariably means to beget into sonship, never into kingship or into a kingdom. The begetting of Ps. 2:7 is that mystery great beyond controversy and comprehension connected with the distinction of the persons in the Trinity, that the Son is begotten, or born, from the Father in eternity.

"This day." Since the Son is the exact Image of the essence of God, who is the one eternal God, Ps. 90:1, this Son must be like the Father, without beginning. Cp. Heb. 1:10-12. His begetting, therefore, cannot have taken place in time, on any particular "day" in the history of the world. It must be an act taking place in eternity, an eternal act of the everlasting God on account of which the Son is by His very nature the Brightness of God's glory, the express Image of His being.

The second passage is taken from 2 Sam. 7:14, part of the prophecy in which David was told that the promised Messiah was to be a descendant of the house of David. "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." Speaking through the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit assures us that this prophecy given to David referred directly to one greater than Solomon, to great David's greater Son, who was at the same

time David's Lord and God, yet truly according to His human nature David's Seed. It is to this offspring of the house of David that God said: "I will be to Him a Father," etc. Why? Because that Son born of Mary, a virgin of the lineage of David, was the Son of the Most High, God Incarnate, and because that human nature conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit was received from the very moment of its conception into personal union by the Son of God, so that God became the Father of this God-man according to His human nature not only by creation nor by adoption nor only by regarding it as an object of fatherly love and care and protection, but in a unique sense the Father of that human nature which was from its very existence intimately, personally, united with the Son of God.

And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him, v. 6. Literally translated: And when again He shall lead the First-born into the inhabited world, He says, And all angels of God shall worship Him. When the Father sent His Son into the world the first time, He came in utmost lowliness. In quiet little Bethlehem He was born, a helpless infant, of a humble virgin, an unknown, poor stranger, whom nobody welcomed. At His second advent God Himself will lead Him. The word used always implies the actual presence of the leader. Again Christ will come to the inhabited world, to that vast teeming mass of human beings whom He has redeemed. This time there will be no possibility of mistaking His true nature. God Himself shall lead His Son, the God-man, and then shall all the tribes of the earth see the Son of Man, who is the Son of God, coming in the heavens with power and great glory, Matt. 24:30. With Him shall come all the heavenly host, the innumerable company of angels. And then the command of God shall be fulfilled, "All the angels of God shall worship Him." Not as though that was to be the first time such homage should be given Him by these exalted spirits. They worshiped Him already at the creation of the world, Job 38:7; John saw the ten thousands times ten thousands worship the Lamb upon the throne, Rev. 5:8-14. But oh, how will the heavens and the earth resound with the jubilant adoration, the worshipful praise, of all the host of heaven, when at last shall be fulfilled the word spoken to friends and foes, Luke 22:27, 28; Rev. 22:20; Matt. 26:64; when the Son of God will come to judge the earth, to lead His own in triumph into the Father's home above, John 17:24! That other-worldly glory flashing forth from, and surrounding, Jesus, the Brightness of God's glory and the express Image of God's essence, will be the source of inexpressible joy to His believing followers, will overwhelm even His enemies, so that they will have to confess

that Jesus is indeed the Lord, Phil. 2:9-11. So will the virgin-born Infant be led back into the world whose sin He purged away, where but a few acknowledged Him as their God and Savior, John 1:9-13.

This text is admirably suited for the Christmas season. It throws a brilliant light into the darkness of the lowly stable at Bethlehem. It brings out the hidden glory of that humble Child in the manger. That is a lesson of special importance in our day of so general denial of the deity of our Redeemer. The preacher will urge his audience to profess boldly the deity of the Christ-child. That alone gives us the assurance that His Word is truth, that our sins are purged, that He will safely lead us to glory, protecting both soul and body which He has created. The preacher may point out: *Our Precious Christmas-gift as to His Person and His Work*. Or he may show that *Mary's Son is God's own Son*, as proved by His names, His works, His honor and glory. — *Behold in the Manger Your Heavenly King!* The King of the universe (things visible, vv. 2 b, 3 a; things invisible, vv. 4-6); the King of Grace, vv. 1, 2 a, 3 b; the King of Glory, v. 6. — *Unto Us a Child is Given!* The Mighty God; the Everlasting Father (Creator and Preserver); the Prince of Peace. (Purges our sin, rules His Church, leads it to glory.) — *The Miracle of Christmas*. The Son of God becomes the Purger of our sin; the Creator and Preserver becomes our Brother; the Heir of all things makes us heirs of heaven.

THEO. LAETSCH

Outlines on the Wuerttemberg Epistle Selections

First Sunday in Advent

Rom. 14:17-19

(NOTE. — In order to understand this text, the preacher must read the entire chapter. Paul is speaking of such as refrain from eating and drinking certain things, v. 2, and as observe certain days, v. 5, of whom he says that they are "weak in the faith." He does not indicate that he has the same kind of people in mind of whom he speaks in 1 Cor. 8. Among the Christians at Rome there were such as thought they could serve the Lord best by setting aside now and then a special day to Him and by abstaining from certain food and drink. They did not do this in a self-righteous spirit. Yet they were in danger of looking upon others who did not do likewise as not being as sincere and zealous in their Christianity as they were. Their *hesitancy* to "esteem every day alike," v. 5, and to "eat all things," v. 2, was a weakness on their part. Over against these the apostle says: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," v. 17. — For a detailed exposition see Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief*.)