

HEBREWS

Fear to Faith

STUDY 2

Highest ... & Humblest!

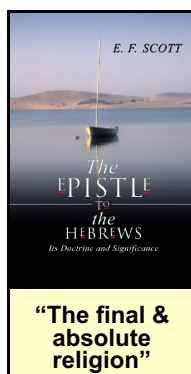
A. Christ's superiority to prophets & angels [1:1-14]

1:1,2 What is the point of claiming Christ's superiority to inspired prophets? (clue: title of A.B. Bruce's exposition)

[1] The long sonorous sentence with which the Epistle opens serves as an introduction to all that is to follow. It is, so to speak, the portico of an august temple, its weighty clauses being a row of stately ornamental pillars supporting the roof. This temple front has an imposing aspect! It fills the mind with awe, and disposes one to enter the sacred edifice in religious silence rather than to undertake the interpreter's task. May a fitting spirit of reverence control and chasten throughout the train of expository thought! **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 26

[2] In other words, Christianity is the final and absolute religion. It has carried to fulfilment the strivings and anticipations of earlier forms of worship. It has lifted us out of the domain of shadows and has brought us face to face with divine realities. This conception of Christianity as the final religion determines the whole thought of the Epistle, and it was one which appealed with a peculiar force to the writer's age. ... The finality of the new religion, as he apprehends it, consists in this – that it has established the perfect worship. All the spiritual endeavour of past ages has at last come to fruition, since in Christ we have obtained a direct and perpetual access to God. **E.F. Scott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance* p. 26

[3] Divine revelation is thus seen to be progressive – but the progression is not from the less true to the more true ... **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.2



1:3,4 What is the force of the v.3 imagery, and the comparison in v.4?

[4] It is preferable, however, to translate the Greek as “he is the radiant light of God's glory” (JB; cf. NEB, “the effulgence of God's splendour”), understanding the author to be speaking here of the essential glory of the Son's eternal person. This is nothing less than the essential glory of God himself, corresponding to the *shekinah* glory which in the Old Testament signified the very presence of God in the midst of his people. **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 42

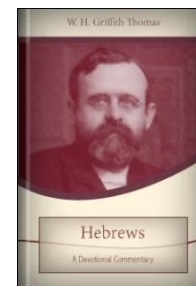
[5] The thought seems to be that as God's being was invisible, Christ, like the *Shekinah* glory, is the manifestation (or the exact expression) of what God is. Nothing could be more impressive as to the essential Deity of our Lord. **W.H. Griffith Thomas** *Let Us Go On: The Secret of Christian Progress in the Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 23

[6] Who so fit to make God known as one who is related to Him as the sun's rays to the sun, and who resembles Him as the image impressed on wax resembles that on the seal? His word must be as the bright light of day, than which nothing can be brighter, and He can say of Himself, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” **A.B. Bruce** *Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 39

[7] The comparative adjective “better” is used thirteen times in Hebrews to contrast Christ and His new order with what went before Him. **F.F. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.9

[8] It will be noticed that the Lord is regarded even in this brief introductory statement in His threefold office as Prophet (*God spake in His Son*), Priest (*having made purification of sins*), and King (*He sat down*). **Brooke Foss Westcott** *Epistle to the Hebrews* p.3

[9] The description begins with that which is eternal. The participles ‘being,’ ‘bearing’ describe the absolute and not simply the present essence and action of the Son. Compare John i. 18; (iii. 13); Col. i. 15, 17. The [*hon*] in particular guards against the idea of mere ‘adoption’ in the Sonship, and affirms the permanence of the divine essence of the Son during His historic work. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p.9



1:5-7 Did not God call the angels ‘sons’, and how did the Jews view angels as to their being and function? (Note: From where is the quote in v.6 taken?)

[10] Sonship being the basis of Christ's claim to supremacy, it was fitting that on the first mention of His filial standing occasion should be taken to unfold the full significance of the august title. This, accordingly, is done in the following clauses of the opening sentence, in a manner which shows how far our author was from understanding the title in a common or attenuated sense. He indeed takes it so much in earnest that the effect of his statement is to make Christ, to all intents and purposes, not the highest of creatures, but absolutely Divine. His Christological position is not less advanced than that of the prologue of the Fourth Gospel. **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 35

“... not the highest of creatures, but absolutely Divine”

[12] The quotation of words not found in the Hebrew text is to be explained by the general character of Deut. 32, which gives a prophetic history of the Course of Israel, issuing in the final and decisive revelation of Jehovah in judgment. When this revelation is made all powers shall recognize His dominion, exercised, as the writer of the Epistle explains, through Christ. The coming of Christ is thus identified with the coming of Jehovah. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 20

[13] Nor is it without the deepest significance that in these fundamental passages, Ps. 2. 7, 2 Sam. 7:14, the speaker is 'the LORD' and not 'GOD'. The unique title of Christ is thus connected with God as He is the God of the Covenant (*Jehovah, the LORD*), the God of Revelation, and not as He is the God of Nature (*Elohim, GOD*).

Brooke Foss Westcott *Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 20

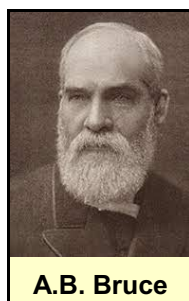
[14] It seems a small thing to say of One who sitteth at the right hand of God that He is higher in dignity than angels. So it is from the view-point of modern Christian thought, in which angels occupy a very subordinate place. But the high rank assigned to angels by Jewish theology at the beginning of our era imposed upon the writer of our Epistle the unwelcome necessity of making what appears to us this superfluous assertion of Christ's superiority. **A.B. Bruce** *Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 44

1:8-14 Why are these OT quotes fatal to the notion that Christ was merely human, or an exalted angel?

[15] The variableness of the angelic nature was dwelt upon by Jewish theologians. Angels were supposed to live only as they ministered. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 25

[16] In the Jewish theory of the universe angelic agency occupied the same place that physical causation holds in ours. Angelology was the animistic philosophy of the later Judaism. It had as many angels in its world as there were things or events. "There is not a thing in the world," says the Talmud, "not even a tiny blade of grass, over which there is not an angel set." **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 16

[17] Passing now from detailed criticism and comment, let us note the broad contrast which runs through the group of quotations. There is only one radical contrast, but it has three aspects: Son and servants, King and subjects, Creator and creatures. ... He brings the whole class under the category of service, not dominion, for the words "all" and "ministering" are emphatic. ... To impute to them dominion were to infringe on the monarchy of God. It were to reinstate Paganism. Angel-worship is nature-worship under another name, not improved by the change of name. **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 57



A.B. Bruce

B. Christ higher even than the Law [2:1-4]

2:1-4 How is the Gospel of even higher authority than the Law?

[18] In accordance moreover with the regular Biblical practice this covenant is regarded not as an agreement entered into between God and man, but rather as a saving provision instituted wholly by God, who further, in keeping with the covenant-idea, is conceived not so much as a King or righteous Ruler, whose law is to be obeyed, but as a God of holiness (12:10) to be worshipped or served (9:14; 12:14). **George Milligan** *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* p.69

2:1,3 Notice the subtle indication of the non-apostolic origin of Hebrews

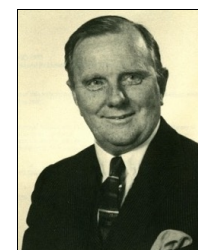
[19] Neither our author nor his readers had heard the liberating message direct from the lips of the Lord, but depended on the sure testimony of those who had listened to Him. Our author, unlike Paul, does not claim any direct revelation from Christ for himself or assert his independence of the apostles; in this respect he puts himself on the same level as his fellow-Christians who heard the gospel from those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2). **F.F. Bruce** *Hebrews* p.29

c. How could the "Most High" be lower than angels? [2:5-9]

2:5-8a What contrast with angels is the point of this Psalm citation?

[20] [Essenes] envisaged the introduction of a hierarchical structure with two messianic figures, of whom the kingly would be subordinate to the priestly messiah, and both of whom would be subordinate to the archangel Michael, thus assigning supremacy to an angelic being in the expected kingdom. Against such a background the necessity for our author to affirm and demonstrate the supremacy of Christ over all angelic beings is obvious ... **Philip Edgcumbe Hughes** *Hebrews* p. 53

[21] The value of the citation for him lies in the fact that *in it the ideas of humiliation and exaltation are combined*. The use of it determines the form under which the state of exaltation – salvation – must be presented, for in the Psalm it is made to consist in lordship over all. **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 67



Philip Hughes

**The Son's
supremacy –
even over
Michael!**

2:8b,9 Despite appearances (i.e. the cross), and the non-appearance (yet) of the *eschaton*, how is the ascension the answer to Jewish objections regarding the lowliness of Jesus of Nazareth?

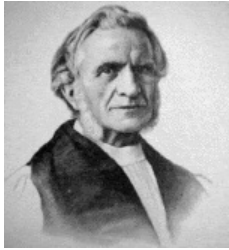
[22] The human nature which Christ assumed He still retains. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* p. 45

[23] What is the great truth of Hebrews 2? Jesus Christ is MAN. He is other than angelic, for He is God. But also He is other than angelic, for He is Man (verse 5,6,7). He is the Brother of Man as truly as He is the Son of God (ver. 11). **H.C.G. Moule** *Studies in Hebrews* p. 4

[24] Satan cannot conceive of Jesus being the Son of God at all unless sonship carry along with it exemption from all arduous tasks and irksome hardships, privations, and pains. God puts a stamp of Divinity on self-sacrifice, Satan associates Divinity with selfishness. **A.B. Bruce** *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity*, p. 85

The title LORD as used for Jehovah and Jesus ... and its connection with the immutable I AM

[11] The insertion of [*kyrie*] therefore emphasises the thought that the majestic picture of divine unchangeableness belongs to God as He has entered into Covenant with man. The Psalm itself is the appeal of an exile to the LORD, in which



out of the depth of distress he confidently looks for the personal intervention of Jehovah for the restoration of Zion. The application to the Incarnate Son of words addressed to Jehovah (see v.6) rests on the essential conception of the relation of Jehovah to His people. The Covenant leads up to the Incarnation. And historically it was through the identification of the coming of Christ with the coming of 'the LORD' that the Apostles were led to the perception of His true Divinity. Compare Acts 2:16ff, 21, 36; 4:10,12; 9:20; c. 3:7 ... It is not however to be supposed that Jehovah was personally identified with Christ. Rather the conception of the God of Israel was enlarged; and the revelation of God as

Jehovah, the God of the Covenant, the God Who enters into fellowship with man, was found to receive its consummation in the mission of the Son. **Brooke Foss Westcott** *The Epistle to the Hebrews* pp. 27,28