

APPENDIX H

Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1:1–4

The interpretive notes in this appendix are keyed to the reconstruction and formatting of the Greek text of the book of Hebrews by J.A. Crabtree entitled *Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews: The Reconstructed and Formatted Greek Text* (digital file version 1.0.a-ip, dated September, 2007). The excerpt below is from Hebrews 1:1-4.

INITIAL EXHORTATION

SECTION 1

Unit 1

1

πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ – ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ – φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι’ ἑαυτοῦ. 2•καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, τοσοῦτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

[1:1–4]

The translation below is excerpted from *Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews: An English Translation* translated by J.A. Crabtree (digital file version 1.0.a-ip, dated September, 2007).

1

In past times, in many portions and in many ways, God, having spoken to the fathers through the prophets, has in the last of these days spoken to us through the Son—he is the one whom he appointed heir of all things; he, in fact, is the one with a view to whom he made the ages; he exists as the Glory’s shining forth into the darkness and as the stamp of his particular personal identity—and he supported all that was said by the divinely authoritative command uttered through him. 2•When he had accomplished the cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much greater than the angels as the name he had inherited was more distinguished than theirs.

[1:1–4]

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

The numbering of the interpretive notes below is keyed to the Greek text and formatting of Hebrews reproduced above. The notes are excerpted from *Paul's Letter to the Hebrews: Notes on the Meaning of the Translated Text* by J. A. Crabtree (digital file version 1.0.a-ip, dated July, 2008). The notes cover Hebrews 1:1–4.

¶ 1

- G-1.** Summary of the point of this paragraph: God used many mere ordinary men (prophets) to be his spokesmen and to deliver his message to his chosen people in long ages past. In recent times, God has once again spoken, but this time he has sent his Son to deliver his message. This Son, having assumed his place at the right hand of God himself and, therefore, having assumed his extremely exalted status as ruler over all the cosmos, is vastly more important and greater than any angel. No angel has anything near the status that the Son has; for angels are nothing more than messengers, as their name *angelos* (=messenger) indicates.
- G-2.** In the process of making the above point, Paul makes two significant claims about the role and identity of Jesus: (i) Jesus is the Son; and (ii) Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Both are basically the same claim: Jesus is the embodiment of God's own person. Acknowledging Jesus to be the representation of God himself is not really a different claim from the claim that Jesus is the Son. That is what the Son, by definition, is. The Son is a title that indicates that human being who embodies the personal identity of the sovereign, transcendent creator himself.
- G-3.** It is particularly significant that Paul's argument is not, "Jesus is greater than angels because he is divine in his being while they are not." This is clearly and definitively NOT his argument. Rather, his argument is that Jesus, in his humble humanity, is greater than the angels. He is so, because, in his humble humanity, he has a more exalted role and status than any angel does. Angels are—it can be argued—ontologically superior to human beings. But the Son, even in his ontological inferiority to angels, has a more important and more exalted name than any angel has ever had or ever will have. Jesus is not greater because he is divine. Jesus is greater because he is that human creature who is one and the same with God himself, human being though he is.

1.1

- G-4.** The main assertion in this sentence is the following: ὁ θεὸς ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ. [God spoke to us through his Son, supporting all that that Son taught us by the power of his word spoken through that Son.]
- G-5.** πολυμερῶς > an adverb meaning roughly "in many portions."
- G-6.** πολυτρόπως > an adverb meaning roughly "in many ways."

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

- G-7.** πάλαι > The adverb πάλαι is used here to describe “times of old” or “past times”—that is, in long ages past. Specifically, it is in times of old that God spoke to the fathers through his prophets.
- G-8.** λαλήσας... ἐλάλησεν > The assertion concerns itself with how God has communicated his message to mankind. In the past, he used the prophets of Israel to communicate his message. In more recent years (at the time of Paul’s writing), God has communicated his message through the Son. Paul uses the Greek verb λαλέω to convey the notion of God “communicating” his message. I have translated it as “to speak.”
- G-9.** τοῖς πατράσιν > Dative plural of πατήρ. The “fathers” here denote the previous generations of the Jewish people. These many different generations were periodically “spoken to” by prophets sent from God.
- G-10.** ἐν τοῖς προφήταις... ἐν υἱῷ > “through the prophets...through the Son.” Note the use of the preposition ἐν in these two instances. Clearly, the prophets and the Son are being asserted to be the human instruments that God used to reveal his message. They denote God’s spokesmen. I have translated ἐν as “through” in a sense indicating agency. First the prophets and, finally, the Son were the AGENTS appointed by God to speak for him and declare his message to his people. This usage must arise from the usage of ἐν to indicate instrumentality. The prophets and the Son were the instruments used by God to communicate his revelation to mankind.
- G-11.** ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων > Literally, “upon the last of these days.” Paul is conceiving of the history of God with his people as a sequence of “days” upon which God has spoken to his people. The appearance of Jesus, the Son, was the last of such days whereupon God has spoken to his people. Note that Paul uses ἐπι and not ἐν in this phrase. God spoke through his Son upon the last of these days. I suspect that a thorough study would show that ἐπι typically introduces the “day” upon which something is spoken. However, that is a study I have not yet done.
- G-12.** ἡμῖν > This pronoun “to us” quite simply denotes the readers of this “letter,” primarily as representatives of the chosen people of God, the Jews. It would seem that he is assuming that his readership is Jewish, not Gentile.
- G-13.** ὃν ἔθηκεν > Relative pronoun followed by τίθημι. In this assertion τίθημι is being used to describe the Son (the antecedent of the relative pronoun ὃς) as being “appointed.” It is God who appoints (puts, places) the Son to his position of authority.
- G-14.** κληρονόμον πάντων > A κληρονόμος is an heir. Jesus, the Son, is appointed by God to be the heir of all things (πάντα). This is a reference to the fact that the role of the Messiah is to be that human being who will rule with the authority of God over everything in God’s creation.
- G-15.** δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας > In this second assertion regarding the Son, Paul maintains that God made (ποιέω) the “ages” δι’ αὐτοῦ. [The

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

“Son” is the antecedent of the relative pronoun οὗ.] Paul is conceiving of the whole flow of cosmic history as a series of “ages.” Paul’s point is that ALL of the ages have been made (created) δι’ αὐτοῦ. In other words, all of cosmic history is δι’ αὐτοῦ.

- G-16.** δι’ οὗ > In this assertion διὰ is being used to introduce he who is the very reason why the “ages” were brought into existence. The ages were created FOR the Son, in the sense that all the ages were created with the Son as their *raison d’etre*.
- G-17.** ἀπαύγασμα > This word denotes the shining forth of rays of light into an area of darkness. It is the breaking forth of light to dispel darkness. The word is often used to denote the sunrise. Paul is describing the coming of the Son as a sort of dawning of the glory of God. The glory of God is breaking into the darkness of human history.
- G-18.** τῆς δόξης > The phrase literally means “the glory.” There is no question but that it is the glory of God himself that is in view. Indeed, I think it is an allusion back to Israel’s history. In the time of Moses, God made his glory visible and evident in the form of a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. Then, upon the completion of the tabernacle, God’s glory (some sort of visible manifestation—a bright shining appearance) located itself in the Holy of Holies. This manifestation was what later rabbinic teaching came to call the Shekinah. (This is not a biblical title.) The “glory” simply represents the spectacular reality of the being of God himself.
- G-19.** ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης > In this clause Paul describes the Son (Jesus) as a breaking into human history and experience of the very presence of God himself. Just as the Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in the time of Moses and following (until the Shekinah glory departed) was a concrete representation of the presence of God in the midst of his people, the Son is a recurrence of a similar reality. With the Son, God is representing himself as being present with his people. This assertion is intimately connected with Paul’s assertion in Colossians that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.” Just as the Shekinah glory was an image of God to the people that manifest itself in the midst of them; the Son too is an image of God to his people who dwelt in the midst of them.
- G-20.** χαρακτήρ > This word is used to denote the image left behind by a stamp. This is the sense that underlies Paul’s use of the term here. The Son (Jesus) is the “stamp” of God’s very identity. In other words, Jesus is the “image” or “representation” of the identity of God because the particular identity of Yahweh has left its imprint or mark uniquely on him. As in the last assertion regarding the Son, this assertion is intimately connected with Paul’s assertion in Colossians that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.” It must be noted, however, that Jesus is the “stamp” of God’s unique identity, not the bearer of divine ontological stuff. (See note on ὑποστασις below.) As to ontology,

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

the assumption behind the argument in this opening portion of Hebrews is that Jesus is merely a human being. That is, Jesus is composed of merely human and not divine stuff. Accordingly, how can he be the Messiah? (The cultural expectation at the time of Jesus' coming was that the Messiah would be a super-human, quasi-angelic being.) It is noteworthy that Paul does not respond, "But he is more than human; he's actually divine." Rather, his argument concedes the mere humanity of Jesus, but argues that his mere humanity is a mark in favor of his being the Messiah, not a mark against it. As Paul is describing Jesus here, Jesus is not God in the sense that he contains the ontological being of the transcendent God; rather Jesus is God in the sense that he and he alone, human being though he is, shares the singular personal identity of Yahweh. Jesus just IS Yahweh. He is Yahweh in human form, certainly. But he IS Yahweh, the transcendent creator of all that is.

G-21. τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ > The word ὑποστασις refers to that which underlies something else. It can be used in a number of different senses and contexts. Aristotle uses it to describe that which "underlies" an existing thing and makes it that particular thing rather than another thing. It is sometimes translated "substance" in Aristotle (somewhat misleadingly), but it refers to the particular, unique individual identity of that particular thing. For students of Aristotle, a particular chair that I am sitting on could (among other things) be called a ὑποστασις. It is the combined effect of the Form of chairness and of "matter" (not our modern concept of matter). Hence, ὑποστασις can denote a particular, unique, numerically singular instantiation of the form (εἶδον) of chairness. In this example, ὑποστασις does not denote the essence of the chair, the universal form chairness. (Although I believe in some writers, some of the time, the word ὑποστασις is used that way.) It denotes the numerically singular, individual identity of a particular thing. Here, Paul is referring to the ὑποστασις of God. In my judgment, Paul means it to refer to the particular, unique, individual identity of God himself. It indicates his individual personhood. I have translated it "particular identity." Paul does not mean to refer to his divine essence, to his divine nature, nor to the ontological essence of what makes him a transcendent God. Rather, he means to denote the numerically singular, personal identity of the transcendent God. It is that of whom the Son is the "stamp." The unique, singular personal identity of Yahweh is "stamped" onto the person of Jesus, the man.

G-22. χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ > In this phrase, the Son (Jesus) is being described as the impress of the underlying personal identity of Yahweh. That is, Yahweh as an individual person is who is being represented and imaged in the Son. The basis for Paul's metaphor here is the image in ink left behind by a stamp. The stamp is not the same kind of object as the ink image that it creates. But there is a one-to-one correspondence between the particular ink stamp and the particular ink image left behind by that stamp. The image

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

and the stamp correspond to one and the same object, the stamp that creates the image. Similarly, the Son and Yahweh are one and the same individual person—namely, Yahweh. The Son is the image of none other than the unique divine person of Yahweh himself.

- G-23.** ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ >
- This series of relative clauses is parenthetical. They comment on who exactly this Son is who has spoken to us in these last days. They describe his credentials. Accordingly, Paul makes three assertions regarding the Son: (i) God appointed him heir of all things [see G-13 and G-14]; (ii) God created the whole of cosmic history for him, or with him in view [see G-15 and G-16]; and (iii) he, the Son, is God’s glory shining forth into the darkness, even the very stamp of his unique personal identity [see G-17 and G-22]. It would certainly appear that all three assertions are intended to work together to make one coherent point about Jesus, the Son. Namely, Jesus is that one whom, before the creation of the world, God had purposed to make the very embodiment of himself, and to come down into the midst of his people and to rule over them as their God and King. In other words, the Son was the manner that God had devised before the world had even begun to fulfill the promise he would make to the descendents of Abraham, “I will be your God; and you will be my people.” That promise would be fulfilled with God himself literally ruling over his people in the form of their human King. All three of Paul’s assertions here can be meaningfully construed as contributing to exactly that picture; and identifying Jesus as the one who was destined for just such a role. The title “Son” conveys that whole picture. It seems highly likely to me that what I have described is exactly what Paul intends in these three assertions. The reason this conclusion is important is this: if my reading is right, each clause must be understood in such a way that they making a meaningful contribution to that single, coherent picture. Indeed, each of them must be understood in such a way that they make the most compelling contribution to that picture. This will have the most consequence with respect to the second clause—all the ages were made *dia* him, the Son. Traditionally, this has been construed and translated as “the world was made through him” as if it indicated that Jesus, the Son, was some sort of agent in the creation of the world. (It is not exactly clear to me why they translate and construe “the ages” to be “the world.” That is to misunderstand Paul’s intent. I think it is clear that Paul has in mind all that has transpired through cosmic history, not the things that were created—birds, mountains, rivers, and caribou.) But is that Paul’s point? How would the Son being the agent of creation have any necessary implications for him fulfilling the destiny of the Son? It wouldn’t, not directly. His being the primary focus of everything that God has ever made or done in cosmic history, however, is completely in harmony with him

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

being the one destined to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the very embodiment of God himself and his sovereign authority. For this reason, I would argue, my reading makes more sense and is more in keeping with Paul's intent than the traditional reading and translation.

G-24. δι' ἑαυτοῦ > We have a number of interconnected problems with respect to how to take δι' ἑαυτοῦ. (A) There is a corruption in the manuscripts here. Here are the three main options: (i) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν ... –or– (ii) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι' ἑαυτοῦ [or δι' αὐτοῦ] καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν ... –or– (iii) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως δι' αὐτοῦ καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν Option (iii) has little manuscript support, so I rule that out. We have options (i) and (ii) to decide between. (B) If we go with option (ii), then we need to resolve how to punctuate this. Most particularly we need to decide whether δι' ἑαυτοῦ goes with the preceding or following sentence. (C) Finally, if we go with option (ii) we need to decide whether it should read δι' ἑαυτοῦ or δι' αὐτοῦ. We, therefore, have five options of the Greek text to choose from, and several different interpretive options. Hence:

(1) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. καθαρισμὸν

(1.1) "and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [God's] power. ... he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(1.2) "and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son's] power. ... he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. δι' ἑαυτοῦ καθαρισμὸν

(2.1) "and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [God's] power. Through (*dia*) himself (God himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.2) "and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [God's] power. Through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.3) "and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son's] power. Through (*dia*) himself (God himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.4) "and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son's] power. Through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself), having made

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.5) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power. Through (*dia*) himself (God himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.6) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power. Through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.7) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power. Through (*dia*) himself (God himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(2.8) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power. Through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself), having made purification for sins, he (the Son) sat down at the right hand of [God]... .

(3) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι’ ἑαυτοῦ. καθαρισμόν

(3.1) “and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power through (*dia*) himself (God himself).

(3.2) “and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).

(3.3) “and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power through (*dia*) himself (God himself).

(3.4) “and he [God] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).

(3.5) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power through (*dia*) himself (God himself).

(3.6) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [God’s] power through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).

(3.7) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power through (*dia*) himself (God himself).

(3.8) “and he [the Son] is supporting all things by the word of his [the Son’s] power through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).

(4) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. δι’ αὐτοῦ καθαρισμόν

(4.1–4.8) exactly the same options as 2.1–2.8 except that “Through (*dia*) him (the Son)” will be substituted for “Through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).”

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

(5) φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ. καθαρισμόν

(5.1–5.8) exactly the same options as 3.1–3.8 except that “through (*dia*) him (the Son)” will be substituted for “through (*dia*) himself (the Son himself).”

Here is how I evaluate the above options:

- > Options 2.1–2.8 seem highly unlikely. It is very difficult to see what “Through (*dia*) him (God)” would mean and what it would contribute to the point of the last sentence. The same thing is even more true for “Through (*dia*) him (the Son).” These same objections then apply to 4.1–4.8. I think we can rule out 2.1–2.8 and 4.1–4.8.
- > Any of the Options 3.1–3.8 could possibly make sense, depending upon what sense we give to *dia* in the last phrase. We see elsewhere in these notes that it is significantly more likely that this clause (or phrase) is connected to (or modifying) the primary clause (“God has spoken to us in his Son”), than it is connected to the triplet of parenthetical remarks about the Son. Hence, it seems more likely that the subject of this clause is ‘God’ not ‘the Son.’ Accordingly, Options 3.5–3.8 seem unlikely; we can rule them out. For the same reason, Options 5.5–5.8 can be ruled out and Option 1.1 is significantly more likely than Option 1.2.
- > The difference between Options 3.1–3.8 and Options 5.1–5.8 assumes that **ἐαυτοῦ** has its normal sense of being a reflexive pronoun in these options. There is the possibility that **ἐαυτοῦ** is being used in the more obsolete sense of being an alternative form of **αὐτοῦ**. In that case 3.1–3.8 simply become the semantic equivalents of 5.1–5.8. The major problem with options 5.1–5.8 is the lack of manuscript support for **αὐτοῦ** instead of **ἐαυτοῦ**. However, since there is a distinct possibility that it is simply being used as an alternative form of **αὐτοῦ**, then if the sense of any of the options 5.1–5.8 seems more likely than the only other remaining options, I would be inclined to conclude that **ἐαυτοῦ** is either an early corruption of the text (from **αὐτοῦ**), or simply a rare and obsolete use of **ἐαυτοῦ**.
- > Options 5.1 and 5.3 would seem to me to be overly redundant. (“God supported all things by the word of God’s power *dia* God.” -or- “God supported all things by the word of the Son’s power *dia* God.” Do these make sense?) I would rule them out. Out of the options 5.1–5.8, only 5.2 and 5.4 remain.
- > Any of the options 3.1–3.4 could make sense if we take *dia* in the right sense. For example, “...by the word of his [God’s] power *dia* himself (God himself)” could be taken in a sense roughly like “...by the word of God’s power with a view to the interests of God himself.” Similarly, “...by the word of his [the Son’s] power *dia* himself (the Son himself)” could be taken in a sense roughly like “...by the word of the Son’s power with a

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

view to the interests of the Son himself.” Options 3.2 and 3.4, under this sort of reading would be less likely than 3.1 or 3.3. Option 3.3 is the most likely of all four of these options.

>We have four remaining options, 1.1, 3.3, 5.2, and 5.4. Option 5.4 seems unlikely in that the final δι’ αὐτοῦ would be unnecessary to the point the clause is making. (Furthermore, for theological reasons, it is more likely to be God’s power, not the Son’s, that is understood to be the power that led to the supernatural signs. Jesus himself said as much.). Option 3.3 seems unlikely because, to make sense of it, we have to resort to a much less straightforward reading of the *dia* phrase. Since there is no reason to do that, it seems unlikely that that is what was intended. Option 5.2 is identical in meaning to option 1.1 except for one thing: it adds to its meaning by pointing out that it was “through” the Son that the powerful divine command (the word of God’s power) resulted in the message of the Son being “supported.” Option 1.1 says that the message of the Son was supported by the powerful divine command. Option 5.2 says that the message of the Son was supported by the powerful divine command through the Son; or (presumably) to be understood as, by the powerful divine command given through the Son. The latter seems to be the more likely assertion that Paul was making here. It makes it clear that we are talking about the miracles that Jesus did when “the word of God’s power” is explicitly connected with his agency. That is an addition that is much needed to make this point. In view of the fact that there is some manuscript support for it, I believe this is the right reading.

> The one major problem with 5.2 is the scarcity of manuscript support for δι’ αὐτοῦ as over against δι’ ἑαυτοῦ. Given how much more likely 5.2 is with respect to meaning, I am inclined to take ἑαυτοῦ as the right reading of the original text, but to interpret ἑαυτοῦ as being used as an obsolete alternative form of αὐτοῦ. Hence, it is as if the text read: φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι’ αὐτοῦ. καθαρισμὸν These notes will interpret it accordingly.

G-25. In my judgment, δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, in the sense of δι’ αὐτοῦ, is part of the original text. Its omission in some manuscripts is a corruption. If I am right about the meaning of the assertion, δι’ ἑαυτοῦ is both internally coherent and occurs in the majority of manuscripts. As is evident from my punctuation and formatting, I take δι’ ἑαυτοῦ to be a part of the last participial phrase (or clause) in the first sentence and not the beginning of the second sentence.

G-26. φέρων > The verb φέρω in this assertion describes the reality of a claim being “supported.” If a claim that is being made needs some grounds upon which it can be accepted, the grounds upon which that claim can be accepted is φέρων (supporting, upholding, giving a basis for) the claim. The primary meaning of the word φέρω is to bear, support, or carry something. This is

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

simply a metaphorical use of the word. God was supporting or "holding up" what he was saying to mankind through his Son by performing supernatural works that authenticated the Son's claims and message. I know of no actual occasion where this particular metaphor is used; but I do not consider that a problem. It is a rather obvious and transparent metaphor.

G-27. τὰ πάντα > This describes what is being supported or upheld. The "all things," therefore, must refer back to all that the Son has spoken on behalf of God. God spoke to the fathers through the prophets. In the last of these days, God has spoken to us through his Son. EVERYTHING the Son spoke to us on behalf of God (τὰ πάντα) was, at the same time, supported (φέρω) by "the word of his power."

G-28. τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι' ἑαυτοῦ > Literally, "by the word of his power through him." The best way to understand this is by first understanding the meaning of the phrase and then proceeding to understand how each word contributes to that meaning. The phrase refers to the fact that Jesus "commanded" and supernatural miracles occurred in connection with his command. For example, Jesus commanded the storm-tossed lake to be still, and the lake became suddenly still. Jesus appeared to have the authority to command nature. Paul is recognizing that the authority to command nature (and anything else) belongs to God. What we see in Jesus is the divine authority to command nature being manifested διὰ Jesus. In other words, it was God who acted to perform spectacular supernatural deeds in connection with the actions and words of Jesus. Why did God do this? He did it in order to provide a basis for the eyewitnesses of such deeds to accept and embrace what Jesus taught as coming from God. Jesus spoke the very words of God. How do we know that? By the miraculous deeds that validated his teaching and his claims. With this in view, τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ refers to the "authority" of God over everything in his creation. Note ῥήμα in the dative. The "word of command" is the means by which "all things" that Jesus taught were upheld or supported. τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ refers to the fact that it is by means of the word of command which arose from God's own authority over his creation that the teaching of Jesus was supported. In other words, the miracles that accompanied Jesus' teaching vindicated it as valid and from God (that is, they "supported" it). The phrase δι' ἑαυτοῦ (in the sense of δι' αὐτοῦ) [See earlier notes.] indicates that the divine word that commanded the supernatural acts were tied to Jesus as the agent of that word of command. God commanded with divine authority by having Jesus issue the command. The word of command of the divine authority δι' ἑαυτοῦ ["through him (the Son)"] was the way in which God supported (φέρω) everything Jesus "spoke." See Matt. 9:6 // Mark 2:10 // Luke 5:24. Jesus claimed to have authority on earth to forgive sins. He "supported" this very claim by saying to the paralytic, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." When the

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

man did so, Jesus’s claim to have authority to forgive sins (as the Messiah) was vindicated. For his word of command [ῥήμα] wherein he told that man to walk proved to possess divine authority [that is, it proved to be τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ] when the man got up and walked. This sentence could be rendered something like this: “by the command of his (God’s) authority working through him (Jesus).”

- G-29.** φέρων τε > The presence of τε raises the question of how to take this participle at the end of the first sentence. Is it simply a participial phrase modifying the verb of the main clause: “God has spoken to us in his Son, *supporting ...* .” ? Or, does the τε introduce a new clause, co-ordinate to the main clause? If so, we would have “God has spoken to us in his Son, *and he is supporting ...* .” I believe the τε makes it likely that Paul intends this to be a co-ordinate clause. That means that the finite verb of this clause is the verb ἐστίν (which is absent, but understood) followed by the participle φέρων.

1.2

- G-30.** καθαρισμόν > 2 Peter 1:9 is the only use of this term in the N.T. that does not clearly find its meaning in the context of ritual, ceremonial cleansing. Even 2 Peter 1:9 is more than likely using a term for ceremonial cleansing as a metaphor for some sort of moral cleansing or forgiveness. The same sort of metaphor is probably in view here. Jesus, as our priest, made an offering akin to that which a priest would offer up when he was “cleansing”—with respect to the cultus and ceremony of the temple worship—the people from their sin. Jesus was not simply accomplishing ceremonial, ritual cleansing for mankind. He was bringing about a morally relevant “cleansing” of the moral guilt of our moral evil. This word—which has its natural home in the context of ritual and ceremonial worship—is being used as a metaphor for a moral reality.
- G-31.** καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν > See note 30 on καθαρισμόν. The “cleansing” or ritual “purification” is with respect to our sins. Ritual purity is required for both moral evil and ritual impurity (for example, coming across a dead body in a field). But Jesus made an offering that related to our moral evil, not our ritual impurity.
- G-32.** καθαρισμόν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος > Jesus made “purification” for sins by dying on the cross and offering up his own blood (rather than the blood of a bull or goat) as a propitiatory offering to God, appealing to God for mercy on our behalf. Specifically, Jesus appealed to God to respond to our guilt and blameworthiness with mercy. When the N. T. speaks of Jesus offering up his blood, it has in mind the temple ritual where the priest would take blood from the sacrificial animal and “offer it up” to God, by—for example—sprinkling it on the “mercy seat.” Jesus did not ever literally “offer up his blood” in this way. But, metaphorically, he did. It is as if he had taken his own blood from himself as the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the mercy seat;

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

for his death was the appeal of our high priest to God for divine mercy to be extended toward the sins of his people. This assertion, "when he had made purification for sins" denotes nothing more than the objective reality of Jesus' death on the cross. Granted, it denotes that death by describing the moral and spiritual significance of it; but it is the death itself that is being denoted. It would be a mistake, therefore, to take Paul's assertion here as implying that the mere fact of Jesus' dying effected "purification." More is required for an individual to be "cleansed" of his sin than Jesus dying for them. Namely, he must respond in belief to the truths embodied in and pointed to by Jesus' death. Using metonymy, Paul uses the potential result of Jesus' death ("purification") to represent and denote the objective, historical reality of that death.

- G-33.** ἐν δεξιᾷ > Note the use of ἐν here. Jesus (the Son) is being described as sitting down "at" the right hand of God. ἐν is being used where we in English would use "at" or "on." It indicates which "side" of a thing something is located. In English, the verb seems to determine which preposition we would use. One sits "at" the right of X, or "on" the right of X. One is "on" the right of X. One goes "to" the right of X. One finds something "on" the right of X. The same is likely true in Greek. When one speaks of sitting down in the vicinity of X, apparently the Greek speaker would use ἐν. The Son takes his seat ἐν (at) the right hand of God.
- G-34.** ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς > Literally, the Son is described as taking his place at the right hand of "the Majesty on High." This is clearly a phrase describing the transcendent creator God himself. The Son is taking his place at the right hand of the Creator of the cosmos, the Judge of all the earth, the King over all. τῆς μεγαλωσύνης denotes that being of whom it is the right hand (where Jesus takes his place). It is the right hand of "the Greatness," for μεγαλωσύνη literally means greatness. It is used as a title for the sovereign, the King. It appears to be used much like we in English use "Your Majesty" as a title of respect for the role and authority of a monarch. The title, therefore, is highlighting God's authority as Sovereign King over all of creation. ἐν ὑψηλοῖς is describing the realm in which God exists. He exists in the "high realms." This is another way of describing "the heavens," the abode of the gods, the realm of the divine. From the philosophical worldview of the apostles, the realm of the divine is the transcendent realm. God does not exist in the same plane of reality as we do. He exists outside the creation. It is this transcendence of God that is being described by ἐν ὑψηλοῖς.
- G-35.** ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς > Paul is not describing a literal event. Jesus did not literally sit down on the right hand of the transcendent creator. Jesus never can join God in his transcendence. As a human being, Jesus is ontologically incapable of being transcendent in the

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

way that the creator God is. As the transcendent creator, God is not located in a physical locale such that there is a right hand of him in which Jesus could sit. This clearly has to be a metaphor for the sovereign authority of Jesus (the Son). It is a metaphor for Jesus’ role as King over the whole of creation. Jesus is not, and never has been, destined to have authority over creation that is as high as the authority of the transcendent creator. But, as that human being who embodies the very authority of the transcendent creator himself, there is no creature more exalted than the Son. This is what is being depicted by his “taking his seat at the right hand of” the Transcendent Sovereign—he is assuming his authority, under God, as the sovereign King over all creation. The metaphor derives its meaning from the fact that the symbolic place for an ancient near eastern monarch’s highest, most authoritative advisor was at his right hand.

- G-36.** τοσοῦτω > This is a pronoun with demonstrative force that is correlated with the following ὅσος. See note G-41. It means something like “just this much” greater. (Its meaning is completed by the following κρείττων.)
- G-37.** τῶν ἀγγέλων > In the genitive here, τῶν ἀγγέλων is indicating what it is that the Son is “greater than.” It is a genitive of comparison. He is κρείττων (greater) τῶν ἀγγέλων (than the angels). The most challenging exegetical question in this paragraph and throughout the first Unit is what the word ἄγγελος denotes. Since ἄγγελος means “messenger”, it is entirely possible that it is a reference back to the prophets who spoke to the fathers in days of old. See 1.1. In this case, Paul would be insisting that the Son has a much more exalted role and “name” than the prophets. For the prophets were mere messengers of God. The Son is “the Son.” This would make perfectly good sense in the context and would even be the most likely way to take ἄγγελος here if it were not for 4.3–4.5. There Paul refers to these ἄγγελοι as λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα (spirits devoted to the service of God). If there is some reasonable way to construe λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα as referring to human prophets, rather than to “angels,” then that would be the preferred reading of ἄγγελος in this passage. In my present state of understanding with respect to Paul’s use of language, it doesn’t seem likely to me that Paul would refer to human prophets as λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα. Therefore, I must assume that by ἄγγελος Paul means to denote angels—spiritual beings that function as God’s messengers. Presumably, in the background of this whole argument, is the cultural assumption that no mere human being could be as great and important as an angel. That is what this whole argument is seeking to show: Jesus—though he is merely a human being and not as great, with respect to his ontological status, as an angel—is nevertheless greater than any angel in so far as he has a greater name (role and status) than any of them.
- G-38.** κρείττων > This is the comparative form of the adjective κρατύς, meaning powerful or strong. Hence, it means stronger or more powerful. It is not being

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

used here literally, indicating physical strength. Rather, it is being used figuratively, to describe being stronger in import or significance. Hence, it means “greater.”

- G-39.** γενόμενος > In my judgment, Paul means to suggest by this aorist participle that Jesus (the Son)—upon his taking his place at the right hand of God—had become greater than the angels. Though Jesus had been destined to this status as most sovereign King over the cosmos from before the creation of the world, he didn’t begin to enjoy that status until after his resurrection. (The apostles elsewhere seem to connect Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to his being enthroned as the Son of God. “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you” is claimed, by the apostles, to refer to his resurrection.) Paul seems to be saying here that, after his death and resurrection, Jesus took his place at the right hand of God, *having become* (γενόμενος) as much greater than the angels as the name he inherited was greater than theirs.
- G-40.** τοσοῦτω κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων > having become just this much greater than the angels. See G–39 with regard to the tense of the participle and its significance.
- G-41.** ὅσῳ > This is a particle or adverb correlative with τοσοῦτω. See G-36. Working together, their sense is “*just this much* (greater than the angels) *as* (his name is greater than theirs)”. The particle ὅσος is playing the role of the “as” in English.
- G-42.** ὄνομα > This means “name.” The question here is what exactly it means for a “name” to be great. What exactly does a “name” represent? It is clear from the larger context that a comparison of the relative greatness of the name “Son” *vis à vis* the name “angel (messenger)” is ultimately a reflection of the relative greatness of their roles in the divine scheme of things. Hence, it is reflective of the relative greatness of the status that accrues to them by virtue of their roles. In other words, the name “Son” depicts the role and function of Jesus. The name “messenger” depicts the role and function of an angel. The role and function of the Son (King) is greatly superior to that of a mere messenger. Hence, the Son is more important and privileged than any angel.
- G-43.** κληρονόμηκεν > Following the pattern of usage in the Septuagint, κληρονομέω does not have to mean “inherit” in the narrow sense of “gaining as an inheritance.” It is sometimes used in the broader sense of simply “gaining possession of something” without reference to how one gained possession of it. Paul is using it here in the broader sense. Paul is noting the fact that correlated with the reality of his taking his place at the right hand of God is the further reality that Jesus is “taking possession” or “laying claim” to his name as “Son.” In other words, upon taking his place at God’s right hand, Jesus is entering into (“inheriting” / κληρονομέω) the full and complete authority implicit in the title ‘Son.’ The perfect tense is used for the same reason that Paul uses the aorist participle γενόμενος. See G-39. In a

APPENDIX H: Exegetical Notes on the Greek Text of Hebrews 1 :1-4

significant sense, Jesus “inherited” or “took possession of” the name “Son” upon his being resurrected from the dead and then ascending to his role as King over all. In another sense, of course, Jesus was the Son before the foundation of the world. But he did not enter into his final, complete authority as the Son until he had been obedient to his Father, even to the point of death on the cross. Paul has in view that more final and complete sense of “inheriting” the name. Hence, he did not enter into a full right to the name until he had qualified himself for it by obediently dying on the cross and being resurrected.

- G-44.** διαφορώτερον > basically, διάφορος means “different.” In this context, it means “different” with a positive connotation. Hence, it is used like we might, in English, use “set apart,” or “distinctive.” This particular use of the adjective is in the comparative degree. So it refers to being “more different” or “more distinctive.” It is being used to suggest being more different in a positive sense. Hence, “more superior” or “better.” The point he is making in this context is that the Son has a more distinguished name—a name that is more “set apart”—than the name given to the angels.
- G-45.** παρ’ αὐτοῦς > παρα followed by αὐτοῦς in the accusative plural. This phrase is used to describe what the more distinguished name that Jesus has inherited is being compared to. The preposition παρα followed by the genitive is often used to denote the pole of a comparison. It is more distinguished than (παρα) them (αὐτοῦς = the angels). It is used in the sense of “he had inherited a more distinguished name **than they had been given.**”
- G-46.** ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοῦς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα > by just as much as he had inherited a more distinguished name than they had (been given).