

# THE OLD FAITH OR THE NEW— WHICH?

*TEACHINGS FROM THE EPISTLE  
TO THE HEBREWS.*

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## P R E F A C E .

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**G**OD can bring order out of that where chaos has reigned. Scripture opens with the announcement of this, when the earth was being prepared for man's use (Gen. i.). And Scripture closes with a fresh and final proof of it, when, after the heavens shall have passed away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein be burnt up, God will make new heavens and a new earth wherein will dwell righteousness (2 Pet. iii. ; Rev. xxi.). Similarly can He work in the midst of the confusion wrought by men upon earth. In the early days of Christianity this was manifested, as the mistakes and shortcomings of His people became occasions for a ministry of truth suited for the time in which it was vouchsafed, and suited for our day also. He who brought order out of chaos brings blessing out of the disorders and failures of His saints.

The mistakes of the Galatians in thinking to be circumcised and to put themselves under law for justification called forth that letter written by the Apostle Paul, so fruitful in instruction then, and now. The disorders at

Corinth, the sectarianism rife amongst the Christians in that city, as well as the denial of the Resurrection, furnished the Apostle, led of the Spirit, with the opportunity to correct those evils, and to place the doctrine of the Resurrection on a plain and unassailable basis. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 13, 17). To tell people they are wrong is one thing, but that will not always put them right. A mere protest against evil, however powerfully worded, may be barren of results. Definite teaching is required, which, whilst pointing out the evil, will at the same time furnish the reader with instruction to build him up in the truth. This is the way God worked in apostolic times. It is the way He works still. Not that we are to look for fresh revelations. But, accepting the canon of Scripture as complete, we are to learn how teaching drawn forth by the condition of the early Christians can fortify us against snares of our day, and enable any led away to recover themselves through subjection to the written Word.

We have spoken of mistakes and of disorders. We must also mention another evil developed in those days—viz. the lack of growth in the truth, springing out, it may have been, from a desire to rest in the acknowledgment of doctrines which could be held without engendering strife or opposition. Such was the condition of the Hebrews years after Christianity had been professed by them.



Growth in Christian teaching had not been fostered ; nor, it would seem, had it been even desired (Heb. v. 12, 13). To meet this state of things, and to establish them in the Christian faith, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written.

Its range of truth and its design are different from that of any other apostolic communication. It ministered Christ to those who had been Jews, with the evident purpose of so settling them in the faith, that no inducements of a peaceful life, no blandishments on the part of their friends, no threats of continued persecution or of martyrdom, should cause any to turn aside, and so land them in apostasy. Then, as we note this in perusing its pages, we may note also features of early Christian worship, which, we must all confess, the Church of God has since those days very much forgotten.

And first we would remark that the Epistle knows of *no holy places* on earth for Christians. That upper room, which must ever have been associated in the minds of the Twelve with events of no ordinary interest, is unnoticed ; nor is there any indication that the Christians continued to frequent it. One sanctuary there was, to which they all had access, though then only in spirit—the heavenly tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Of *one sacrifice* for sins, abiding in its efficacy, the Epistle treats, to which nothing could be added, nor could any repetition of it by any on earth be attempted ; for the High Priest, who had offered it, offered it once for all, and then sat down on the righthand of the Majesty on high, and that for a

continuance. It followed, then, that *no altar*, to which the Hebrews were to bring fresh sacrifices, was even thought of. One altar only could they speak of—the cross, on which the Lord has died. A priestly class therefore among them, distinct from all the rest, and appointed to minister at an altar, there was not, there could not be; for each and all had equal access by the blood of Christ into the holiest, and the sacrifices they were permitted to offer as members of the holy priesthood were spiritual sacrifices of praise to God. Then by consequence there was *no part of the sanctuary too holy* for any one of them to tread. The holiest of all they were exhorted to enter in spirit, assured of being there in person by-and-by; for their Forerunner had already entered in, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizelek (vi. 20). Hence they had *a High Priest*. But they had but one, and could never have another. He had no predecessor. He has no successor, for He ever lives to make intercession for His people (vii. 25). But He was not, and could not have been, High Priest upon earth (viii. 4). A pontiff, or high priest, on earth for Christians is foreign to Christianity, and derogatory to Him who is in heaven. Two high priests at once there cannot be. Christians have one in heaven. They cannot have, they do not want, another on earth; for the only sanctuary in which theirs can minister is in that one above. Further, *intercession of saints* with God on their behalf the Hebrews needed not; for every one of them had access to the throne of grace,

and could approach it with boldness, to receive what had already been procured for them by the intercession of their great High Priest. So ready was it all that none were told even to ask for what they wanted, but to come and to receive the grace they needed (iv. 16). Room then for the intercession of saints, whether that of the Virgin Mary, or of Joseph, or of others, there was not. Such a doctrine not only finds no countenance in this Epistle ; the teaching of it negatives the thought of it.

From all this it follows that ritualistic practices, founded on the Jewish form of worship, are foreign to Christianity. A high priest, a sanctuary, a sacrifice, an altar—of these both Jews and Christians could speak. Great, however, were the differences, when they came to dwell on them. A high priest who could not continue by reason of death, a sanctuary on earth, sacrifices which needed repetition, and an altar at which service was daily carried on, on the one hand. On the other, there was a High Priest made such by oath, the sanctuary in heaven which none of them had seen, a sacrifice once offered and that cannot be repeated, and an altar which can never be made use of for sacrifice again. These last are features of true Christianity. Of these our Epistle teaches. Ritualistic practices, as commonly understood and pleaded for, are condemned by the apostolic teaching in the Hebrews.

But another line of things there is, somewhat in vogue in this day. We hear at times about a religion of the future, and that Christianity is played out. Something

better then must take its place. This too our Epistle meets, and of it effectually disposes. We confidently ask, What can supersede Christianity? Who will be the apostle of the new faith? Can he surpass in excellency the Apostle of our confession? Moses, the apostle of Judaism, was great. The Son of God is greater. He superseded Moses. Who will surpass Him? There can be no messenger or apostle greater or more august than the Son who has come. Appointed heir of all things, by whom also the worlds were made, He now sits at the right hand of God. A history such as this, reaching into the distant past and continuing to a yet distant future, what can equal?

Then, too, what could any religion in the future offer to outweigh the blessings connected with Christianity? Present and plenary forgiveness of sins; a purged conscience, which Judaism in the past could never ensure, and no religion devised by man has proposed to its votaries; a heavenly calling; and entrance into the holiest on high now and for ever,—what is there which Christianity does not offer that is of abiding value? What room can there be for a religion of the future to supply, or to perfect, that which can be secured in the present? Now of all the blessings just enumerated the Epistle to the Hebrews treats, and in a way to set at rest any thought of a new faith of Divine appointment to eclipse that which has been already revealed. There can be none. We claim then for this Epistle an important and unique place in the

controversies of the day. It shows up the grievous mistake of ritualistic teaching and practice. It establishes beyond the possibility of doubt that there can be no religion of the future to surpass that of which the Son is the Apostle and High Priest.

But will there be no religion, so called, of the future? There will. And Scripture has characterised it as the "falling away," or apostasy (2 Thess. ii. 3). We read of it in 2 Thess. ii. and in Rev. xiii. Its source and power will be satanic (Rev. xiii. 2). The doom of its two leaders, the political and the ecclesiastical, is to be cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. xix. 20); whilst its supporters, however numerous and energetic, will ultimately be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb (Rev. xiv. 10).

As to the future, then, Scripture is not reticent; nor is it as to the blessings promised in the Christian faith. Of the one sacrifice which has been once for all offered up it tells us. To the abiding efficacy of the precious blood of Christ it bears testimony, stating in language which a child can understand that where remission of sins is there is no more offering for sin (Heb. x. 18). Rejecting the sacrifice of Christ, there remaineth, it is clearly stated, no more a sacrifice for sins (Heb. x. 26). Accepting His sacrifice, and resting on it, we need no other, and no more. With this last thought before us we invite the reader to sit down with us to a study of the Epistle.



# THE OLD FAITH OR THE NEW?

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## INTRODUCTION.

**A**MONGST a people who already possessed a Divine and written revelation, which, hedging them round with ordinances, was designed to keep them apart from all the other nations upon earth, Christianity was first introduced. Nor was that without a long-standing notice on the part of their God. For ere Moses died, he, the mediator of the first covenant, was commissioned to tell Israel of a Prophet that should come like unto him, to whom all were to hearken (Deut. xviii. 15). Clear and distinct was that description of the Coming One, for the likeness would consist in the Lord knowing that Prophet face to face as He had done Moses (Deut. xxxiv. 10). Evidently then the Coming One would be a man, with whom, as with Moses, God would directly hold intercourse. Prophet after prophet arose, and at various times; but no one of them between the days of Moses and those of John the Baptist answered to that description. A Prophet, however, the people were taught to expect who would teach them, as well as a Messiah who would save them; and that expectation had not died out during fifteen hundred years. For John the Baptist was asked if he was the Prophet who was to come (John i. 21). The Prophet then was looked for; and it was shortly to be made apparent, after the word of God had come to John, that the Prophet and the Messiah were one.

In due time—"the fulness of the time" (Gal. iv. 4)—He appeared. And the Jews of His day were especially privileged, in that they ate and drank in His presence, and He taught in their streets (Luke xiii. 26). They heard Him; they saw Him; they witnessed many of His wonderful works. He taught too in their synagogues, being at first glorified of all (Luke iv. 15). Then conducting an itinerant ministry, He moved about from place to place, sending also messengers before Him (Luke viii., ix., x.). New to people must have been that way of working—the Teacher seeking the people, not the people the Teacher. Yet He was sought after, and followed by crowds of His countrymen. For His miraculous cures spread abroad His fame; and though multitudes came to be healed, not one went away disappointed—He healed them all (Matt. iv. 24).

Popularity of no ordinary kind seemed to await Him. His ministry, however, checked it. His own countrymen, they of Nazareth, very early refused Him (Luke iv. 28, 29); and though He taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes (Matt. v.-vii.; Mark i. 22), and gracious words proceeded from His mouth, and the common people heard Him gladly (Mark xii. 37), yet the religious teachers of the day, such as the scribes and the Pharisees, soon manifested their hostility. He came, as He said, not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil (Matt. v. 17). Those recognised sources of Divine instruction He fully owned and upheld. But the classes just named soon discovered that His teaching was condemnatory of theirs, and of their ways; for He healed on the Sabbath (Mark iii. 1-6; John v. 1-11, ix. 14), and insisted on reality before God. Followed at first by crowds, many of whom after a time left Him (John vi. 66), a company of real souls gathered round Him, and continued steadfast to the day of His death.

As for His teaching, He taught men of the Father (Matt. v.-vii.), and taught His disciples to pray to the



Father (Matt. vi.); and intimated that true, acceptable, spiritual worship His disciples were to cultivate, even worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. Very early in His ministry He introduced the teaching of the heavenly calling (Matt. v. 11, 12; Luke vi. 22, 23). He set forth too the way of salvation, unfolding that it now depended on faith in Him, so was open to all who would enter in by Him, the door (John x. 9). Then He spoke, and that frequently, of everlasting life, and presented Himself as the object of faith for men to possess it (John iii. 16), and stood forth as the light of the world, whom, following, men would not walk in darkness, but have the light of life (John viii. 12). To the weary and the heavy-laden He offered rest (Matt. xi. 28). To the hungry, to the thirsty, to the unsatisfied ones, He stood forth as the answer to all their need (John vi. 35, vii. 37). What a ministry indeed it was!

Then in the parables of the kingdom He sketched out, as no prophet had previously done, the character of things on earth between His going away and His return in power in the glory of His Father and with the holy angels. On the sufferings of Christ, and on the glories that should follow, Old Testament prophets had beautifully descanted, though telling us very little of things on earth between these two epochs. This void He filled up in the parables just referred to. Besides which He foretold to His disciples that He would build His Assembly, or Church (Matt. xvi. 18); and though after His death absent in person from earth, He would be really present in the midst of two or three gathered unto His name (Matt. xviii. 20). Of His coming death on the cross He forewarned the Twelve (Matt. xvi. 21, xvii. 22, 23, xx. 18, 19, xxvi. 2), foretelling at the same time His resurrection, having spoken to them likewise of the *two* resurrections (John v. 28, 29), of resurrection also from the dead (Mark ix. 9, 10), as well as of the immunity from death which those alive at His coming

shall experience (John xi. 26). Speaking of the distant future, the resurrection, He also spoke of that which was near at hand—viz, the coming of the Comforter consequent on His departure to His Father (John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7-15). And ere dying on the cross He instituted His Supper, a service unique, being wholly eucharistic, and to be observed by His disciples in the remembrance of their crucified Lord (Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19, 20). Further, He told them that His Father's house would be their heavenly and everlasting home, and that He was going to prepare for them a place therein (John xiv. 1-3).

What a fulness there was in His teaching!—different, how different all can understand, from that of the scribes to which the people were accustomed. Revelations came by Him. These the scribes had not. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets before the Lord, had been cast into prison, and ere long was beheaded. Fresh truth could only come then through the Prophet like unto Moses; and He communicated, as we see, much that was new. And people attested that never man spake like Him (John vii. 46). Still this teaching did not bring its recipients on to Christian ground, nor indeed was it then intended to do that. For whilst the Lord was alive the Mosaic ritual was in force according to the mind of God; and till He died there was no way out of the fold for the sheep who were in it. Nevertheless He foretold the great change that would be brought about. For He spoke of other sheep—*i.e.* converts from heathenism—whom He must bring to hear His voice; and then the two companies, those formerly in the fold of Judaism, and those who had never been in it, should meet outside, and form but one flock, under Him, the one Shepherd (John x. 16).

He died, and He rose, and commissioned His disciples to preach among all nations forgiveness of sins, but beginning at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). For this, however, they were

to await the coming of the Holy Ghost. He came at Pentecost, and baptised all believers into one Body (Acts ii., x.). Henceforth the Christian Assembly, or Church—Christ's Church (Matt. xvi. 18)—existed upon earth, and the Body of Christ was formed. Christian worship too, of which the Lord had foretold the woman at the well, came to be in season, and the abiding efficacy and all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ could now be proclaimed. The Gospel of the kingdom gave place to the Gospel of the grace of God; and justification from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, formed an important part of the proper teaching of the day. Christian standing was thus made known; and Christian condition, as in Christ, was a reality for those who believed the Gospel of their salvation.

Now could be discerned the great difference between Judaism and Christianity. Much had they in common (Heb. vi. 1, 2). But much had the latter which was not belonging to the former. The preaching of the full forgiveness of sins, and of justification likewise by the blood of Christ (Rom. v. 9), must, if understood and upheld, deal a death-blow to attendance with sin or trespass offerings at the brazen altar. The knowledge of the veil being rent, through which believers could now enter in spirit the holiest of all, placed such in a nearness to God to which none under the law could attain. And the recognition that the sanctuary in which they worshipped, though only in spirit, was in heaven, and not upon earth, would call believers to forsake the Temple service for that in the upper room. Then too the acceptance of the truth of the oneness of all believers as members of the Body of Christ, and also of all of them being in Christ, and so with Him, the Head, forming the one new man, was an open declaration of the breaking down of that middle wall of partition formerly erected by God between Jews and Gentiles. Henceforth both had access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. ii. 15-18). And connected with all

this there was a hope, which Christians possessed in common, to which the Jews were necessarily strangers. The latter looked, and rightly, for the kingdom to be restored to Israel upon earth under the personal reign of their Messiah; the former were waiting for God's Son from heaven, to call them up to be with Him for ever on high. The latter had an earthly calling and an earthly hope; the former shared in the heavenly calling and embraced a heavenly hope. Those therefore of the race of Israel who received Christianity were professedly started anew on a pilgrimage journey to a country and a home which they could never reach whilst upon earth.

**The Need for the Epistle.**—How far, however, had Christians from among the Jews really entered into all this, which manifestly called for the surrender of hopes that they had cherished, as well as the abandonment of their position in separation from all other people upon earth? This was a difficulty with them, which nothing short of a ministry, to which in Jerusalem they were strangers, could induce them to accept. How tenaciously they were inclined to maintain their separation from social intercourse with those once Gentiles is shown by their calling Peter to account for entering the house of Cornelius and eating with him (Acts xi. 2, 3). Later on the question of circumcising Gentile converts came up, and was stoutly contended for, first at Antioch, and then at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 1-6). Years later, on the occasion of St. Paul's last recorded visit to the metropolis of Judaism, James and the elders, fearing the effects of his presence among the Jewish converts, who clung so tenaciously to the customs of their fathers, said, "Thou seest, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts xxi. 20). Zealous of the law, contending for the circumcision of Gentile converts to Christianity, and enforcing where possible separation in social intercourse from those who were not of Abraham's seed after the flesh (Gal.

ii. 11-13)—all this the Apostle Paul had in previous years been called upon, and on one occasion all alone, boldly to resist. It was evident that these Hebrews had never rightly apprehended Christian teaching, Christian standing, nor the blessed results of the gift of the Spirit. And as long as the Temple remained standing, and the Mosaic ritual could be in part\* carried out, there was little hope that those resident in the capital would, unless a more distinct ministry of Christ was supplied to them, take definite and open Christian ground. Their spiritual condition, as defined in this Epistle, was that of lacking growth, and not that of full-grown men in the truth (Heb. v. 11-14).

**A Ministry of Christ.**—Such a ministry then was sorely needed. And such a ministry was now supplied. It was Christ in a special way that the writer set before them. His person, Divine and human, first treated of, His superiority to Moses, Joshua, and Aaron is then displayed. In no other Epistle have we such a presentation of Christ. In no other part of the Divine Word have we the priesthood of the Lord Jesus dwelt upon as in its pages. From them we learn of His present priestly service on high for His people, as well as of that analogous to Aaron's on the Day of Atonement. These, the leading features in this letter, when apprehended, would call and encourage believers to go forth to the Lord Jesus without the camp, bearing indeed His reproach, yet by Him offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to (or, confessing) His name (Heb. xiii. 15). Now in the doing that they would have to turn their backs on Mount Zion, the seat of Jewish royalty, and on Mount Moriah, the seat of

\* We say *in part*, because the Day of Atonement could never be rightly observed in the second Temple, there being in it no ark and no mercy-seat, on which, and before which, the high priest was to sprinkle the blood of the sin offerings.

Jewish worship. A ministry of Christ we have called it. And surely not without reason. And in character with the times—the day of grace—believers were not commanded to go forth under pain of disobedience, as if they were under law, but were encouraged to do it by the force of truth, and by the apprehension in the soul of the free grace of God in which they shared. Law compels. Grace attracts.

And here we would call attention to a marked feature in this Epistle—viz. the way the writer takes his place among them. Evidently far more advanced in intelligent apprehension of true Christian teaching than any of those he was addressing, he nevertheless sits down, as it were, in their midst, and would just take them along with himself, till they would find themselves, in spirit at least, outside the camp. “How shall *we* escape,” he writes, “if *we* neglect so great salvation?” (ii. 3). “Let *us* labour therefore to enter into that rest” (iv. 11). “Let *us* hold fast our profession [or, confession]” (iv. 14). “Let *us* come boldly unto the throne of grace” (iv. 16). “Let *us* go on unto perfection” (vi. 1). “Let *us* draw near” (x. 22). “*We* are not of them who draw back” (x. 39). “Let *us* lay aside every weight” (xii. 1). “Let *us* go forth unto Him without the camp” (xiii. 13). This reminds us of the spirit of Paul in writing to the Romans, where he says, “that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me” (i. 12). He would sit in their midst, and he and they mutually comfort one another.

**Canonicity.**—Of the right of the Epistle to be in the sacred canon all in the earliest ages were not agreed. In the East it seems to have been generally received. In the West it had a more checkered history, and not till the fourth century does it seem to have been generally accepted in the Latin part of Christendom. St. Ambrose of the Latins appears to have been the first, and indeed the only

one of his time (he died A.D. 397) who placed it in any respect in the same rank with the other Epistles of Paul. "It was no longer entirely excluded as formerly from public reading in the Church, though it was to be still a long time before it came to equal honour with the other *libri ecclesiastici* in general estimation."\* By the council of Laodicea (A.D. 367) it was reckoned in the sacred canon. Turning to uncial MSS., A, B, C, H, P, and the Codex Sinaiticus place it next after 2 Thessalonians and before the Pastoral Epistles, an indication in their estimation of its Pauline authorship, whilst D, E, K, L, have it as we find it in our English Bible—viz. after the Pastoral Epistles and that to Philemon. Of early versions, it was in the Old Latin as well as in the Vulgate. Of Eastern translations, it is found in the Peshito and in the Harclean or Philoxenian Syriac versions, to which we may add the Memphitic or Coptic, and the Sahidic or Thebaic. Thus in the East and in the West, in Egypt and in North Africa, the Epistle came to be recognised as part of canonical Scripture.

**Authorship.**—But who wrote it? It bears no name. No Apostle has sent it forth as proceeding from his pen. Indeed it would have been scarcely fitting for that last to have been done, seeing the Apostle of the confession of the Hebrews is stated in its pages to be no less a person than the Lord, the Son of God (iii. 1). Still the writer of the letter was well known to the readers in the day that it reached the latter, as xiii. 19 plainly intimates. He had formerly been with them, and looked to be with them again at no distant date. Known then to them all, not only by name, but in person, that knowledge perished, it appears, with their departure from earth, and left the question of authorship open to conjecture. Of this some have availed themselves to start different theories about it.

Clement of Alexandria, according to Eusebius, held that the Epistle was St. Paul's, written by him in Hebrew, and

\* *Delitzsch on the Hebrews*, Introduction, p. 11.

translated into Greek by Luke. Were this correct, we have a version of the Pauline Epistle, but not the original text. Still it is to be held that Paul was the author. Clement died about A.D. 220.

Do we owe it to Barnabas? Was it the solitary literary production, as far as we know, that proceeded from the pen of Apollos? To these it has been attributed as well as directly to Paul. With such different judgments as to its author, what, we may ask, does the Epistle say for itself? Does it afford us any clue as to the writer, and to the probable time of its composition? In default of any salutation at its commencement by which to settle the matter, we must seek for what light we can get on it from its contents.

Now, 1st, it was evidently written to the Hebrews by one of their own nation. The writer mentions the *fathers* (i. 1) as those with whom he and they were connected. 2nd. He intimates that he had not companied with the Lord when He was upon earth (ii. 3). So evidently, if an Apostle, he was not one of the Twelve. 3rd. It was written, we believe, from Italy\* (xiii. 24). 4th. Timothy is mentioned as a companion for whom the writer was waiting to journey with him to revisit them (xiii. 23). Timothy was Paul's companion in travel, and his own son in the faith. But we never read of Timothy travelling with another evidently his superior in Church position. To no one then but Paul, as far as we know, would all these special marks apply. So who can condemn us for drawing the conclusion, that

\* It is questioned whether "They of Italy" (xiii. 24) means those in Ita'y, thus indicating the country in which the writer was when he wrote, or only some Italians who were with the writer, but not in Italy at the time he was writing. Either view might be grammatically correct. But as it cannot be proved that the first of these interpretations is wrong (see *Winer's Grammar of New Testament Diction*), we incline to it. It was, it seems, the judgment of the Fathers.



Paul, whose love for his nation was intense, was the author of the Epistle? And in this we have Athanasius and others for our companions.

Other considerations in favour of the Pauline authorship we would mention. Though the Epistle begins abruptly, so different from all others save that of 1 John, it ends with a salutation to which we shall do well to take heed. "Grace be with you all" (xiii. 25). In the same words the Apostle Paul ends his letter to Titus (iii. 15). And in a very similar way he concludes that to the Colossians (iv. 18). "But what of this?" some may say. A reference to 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18, will elucidate its importance. For very early in the Apostle's labours among the Gentiles, a letter purporting to come from him, it would seem, was received by the saints at Thessalonica (2 Thess. ii. 2), to make them believe that the day of the Lord had come. It was a forgery, but a forgery with a definite intent. So to guard them and others from being deceived in the future, he told them what would be the token of his letters. It was that salutation which, either in a longer form (2 Cor. xiii. 14) or in a shorter, as in Colossians and in the Pastoral Epistles, is found at the close of all his letters. And no other Apostle during Paul's life ever appended that salutation to the close of his. We do not again meet with it till John in Patmos wrote the Revelation, or Apocalypse. It was reserved for Paul whilst he lived. Now Hebrews has the same salutation as Colossians; and if written from Italy, it may well have been written not far from the time when that to the Colossians was penned. We think then that this salutation is almost conclusive of its Pauline authorship. And in support of this conclusion we would call the reader's attention to Peter's reference to his brother Apostle's epistolary labours (2 Pet. iii. 15), reminding his readers who were converts from Judaism of something Paul had written to them, besides what he wrote to others. Now where shall we find anything written by

Paul to his countrymen, assuming that such a communication has survived, but in this Epistle? Are we mistaken then in accepting what so many have believed, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was from the pen of the great Apostle to the Gentiles?

Again, though Paul always, in the other thirteen Epistles, inserted his name at the beginning of each, there might well be a reason, considering the marked hostility evinced towards him by his countrymen, why he should have penned this one anonymously, assured that the Christians would be in no doubt as to its authorship. There was no concealment of the author, though his name does not appear at the beginning of it. Then too, if it be objected that he always wrote to particular Churches or individuals, and never a circular letter like this, it should be remembered that in Eph. i. 1 the two oldest uncials omit the words "at Ephesus." Accepting this omission, that Epistle has the character of being a circular letter to converts from the Gentiles. Why then may he not have written a circular letter to believers from amongst the Jews?

**Objections.**—Objections, however, are urged against that authorship on the ground of style, and on the ground of Heb. ii. 3, 4, which last, we are told, is decisive against the view that we believe to be the correct one. As to style, considering after all that we have no Epistle of Paul save this one addressed to his countrymen, are we in a position to decide positively that its difference of style from those written to converts from heathenism is decisive against its Pauline authorship? A writer's style may vary witness: the two Epistles of Peter, and the Revelation too compared with John's Gospel and Epistles. St. Paul's style might well be altered when writing to his brethren from amongst the Jews, and on such a subject as that treated of—the surpassing excellency and superiority of the Lord Jesus over Moses and over Aaron. We allow the possibility too of difference of style in the case of ordinary writers: witness

Cyprian's Epistle to Donatus, for the genuineness of which St. Augustine vouches. Are we not to allow the same liberty to Paul? Then if we think for a moment of the character of things at Jerusalem in his day, who was better suited to address his countrymen on the importance of going on to definite Christian teaching, and to their taking distinct Christian ground? Clearly none of the Twelve could so well have done it. No one living at Jerusalem, and acquiescing in the state of things there, as all the Christians in the city seemed to have done, could consistently have penned this letter. Peter, who dissembled at Antioch with other Jews, was unfitted thereby for such a service. As however it was one of Jewish extraction who wrote it, who but one, that we know of, could have done that? Barnabas was disqualified equally with Peter. Apollos, for aught we know, was never as a Christian at Jerusalem. Luke, as a Gentile, was out of the question, unless just acting as Paul's amanuensis.\* Who, we ask again, but one could have penned it? And how well qualified to write it we need not here dilate upon: It is certainly Paul's teaching that we have throughout it.

Then as to Heb. ii. 3, 4, the writer states facts of which all his readers were aware, in order to impress on them the danger of neglecting that salvation first spoken by the Lord, and confirmed unto them by those that heard Him. Now the testimony of these latter had special and Divine attestation in the miraculous power and in gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred on them. So their witness was confirmed to the Hebrews, amongst whom the writer classes himself. Does this militate against Gal. i. 11, 12? We

\* Clement of Alexandria, we learn from Eusebius, *II. E.*, vi. 14, distinctly asserts that "it was written by Paul to the Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue; but that it was carefully translated by Luke, and published amongst the Greeks. Whence also one finds the same character of style and of phraseology in the Epistle as in the Acts." Of a Hebrew original, however, there has been found as yet no trace.

do not see it. In the latter passage Paul states whence he received and how he received his Gospel, the good news entrusted to him to deliver. In the former passage the writer speaks of a ministry in exercise amongst the Hebrews by others before his conversion. Now if we mark that the point in Galatians is *Paul's Gospel*, we shall see, we think, that the two passages refer to things which are different.

Paul must certainly have heard through Stephen and others of the grace of God and of free salvation, though then he would not receive it. What the Lord had taught His faithful followers he well knew that they sedulously proclaimed. And may be Paul had joined with those of the Hellenistic Jews who had disputed with Stephen (Acts vi. 9). Refusing the truth then, he in later years could have said that those early labourers confirmed to the Hebrews what the Lord had first taught. Naturally, if writing, he would view the work of those referred to from a Christian point of view, however he had withstood it when first he heard it. He could not then mean, when writing to the Galatians, that he had never heard the Gospel till he was divinely taught it directly from God. But his Gospel was a special one. In common with Peter and others, he preached forgiveness of sins and salvation ; but in addition he announced justification by faith, of which both the Romans and the Galatians treat. Then his Gospel comprised amongst its subjects the teaching of being in Christ, which did away with the distinction between Jews and Gentiles when converted. Then too, as in Christ, believers had died to the law, being indwelt by the Holy Ghost. Now these subjects especially refuted that Judaising teaching which unhappily was getting hold of the Galatian converts, amongst whom some were working to discredit Paul in their eyes. Hence he naturally dwelt on his Gospel, and how he had received it. Bearing then in mind that it is of *his Gospel* he writes in Gal. i.,

and what that Gospel comprised, there is nothing in that passage so contradictory to Heb. ii. 3, 4, as to make it impossible for the same person to have written both.

**Its Date.**—Turning next to the question of the probable date of our Epistle, we can from notices in it approximate that somewhat. Three marks there are indicative of time.

*First*, we learn from v. 12, 13, that Christianity was no new thing among them, yet they had not grasped it. “For,” says the writer, “when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” Their growth had been stunted. They had never really got on in the Christian life and in understanding, as they should have done. As babes in the truth, not as full-grown men, was their actual spiritual condition.

*Second.* The second indication of time appears in that the Jewish ritual was still in practice in the Temple (viii. 4, ix. 6, 25, x. 1, 3, 11, xiii. 11), as a reference to the Revised Version will confirm. Now from the observance of that ritual the Hebrews ought to free themselves, going forth to the Lord Jesus Christ without the camp (xiii. 13). As yet then the Temple had not been destroyed, nor had that invasion by the Roman army commenced, which would menace the continuance of the Jewish polity and worship, and would make the Christians prepare to leave the doomed city. So some time between A.D. 63 and A.D. 67 it must have been written. Hence whoever was the writer the time of its composition must be fixed within the limit of a few years. If Paul was the author, we can approach the date more closely, and fix it near to A.D. 63. For it must in that case have been composed shortly before or just at the close of his first imprisonment at Rome. So it would harmonise with the special feature of

his written ministry when a prisoner there—a ministry of Christ. Its closing salutation would then be in keeping with that to the Colossians, written not long before.

*Third.* There had been time for some of the early teachers to pass away, as Heb. xiii. 7 tells us had been the case.

**Quotations.**—Written to the Hebrews, it abounds, as was natural, with quotations from and allusions also to the Old Testament volume. And a feature in the quotations is the unusual number of references to the Book of Psalms, opening up as the references do the prophetic character of that collection of inspired compositions, and pointing out how the history of the Lord Jesus Christ is in so many points the fulfilment of what had been therein predicted.

Instructive must this have been to the readers of that day, and confirmatory too of their faith, as they learnt how full is the outline of His history set forth in that portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, for which Divine authority is claimed, as much as for the writings of Moses or the books of the prophets. As an outline let us trace it. First His pre-existence and the exercise of creative power before incarnation are asserted in Heb. i. 2, and proved in vers. 10-12 of that chapter by a quotation from Psalm cii. Then His incarnation and relationship to God are declared also in Heb. i. 2, and proved in ver. 5 by a reference to Psalm ii. His real manhood also is asserted in chap. ii., and attested in vers. 6-8 by the words of Psalm viii.; and His association with saints as His brethren we read of in ii. 11, foretold, we are taught, by David in Psalm xxii. Then the sacrifice of Himself was predicted, we learn in x. 5-7, as the writer quotes about it from Psalm xl. As to His priesthood, too, the Book of Psalms is not silent, for our author in chap. vii. refers us in proof of it to Psalm cx. And for the perfectness of the Lord's sacrifice in His own eyes, as well as the place where He now is, x. 12, 13,

i. 13, call our attention to the first verse of that same Psalm. Then of His return in power we read in i. 6, to which truth Psalm xcvii. refers. His future coming, too, we learn from i. 8, 9, was foretold in Psalm xlv. And the certainty of His universal supremacy, put on record in ii. 8, Psalm viii. had, ten centuries previously, announced.

A study then of this Epistle, subject to the teaching of the Spirit, cannot but be refreshing and establishing. And though great differences between Judaism and Christianity are opened up in its pages, the references to Old Testament Scriptures that we meet with show that the latter was no after-thought in the Divine mind.

Now we would briefly set forth its outline, which, like other letters in the sacred volume, is very orderly in its arrangement. First the Person by whom God has in the end of these days spoken to us is traced out as being both Divine and human (see chaps. i., ii.). Then of His official positions as Apostle and High Priest we read—the former treated of in chap. iii., the latter in chaps. iv. 14 to vii. 25. Next of the sanctuary we read, in which He ministers as High Priest, in chaps. vii. 26 to viii. 13. After that we read of His sacrifice in chaps. ix., x. Then of the walk of faith, illustrated by the worthies of old, we read in chap. xi., but learn that the only perfect example of that for us is Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of the faith (chap. xii.). And the Epistle closes with sundry exhortations in chap. xiii. The four great heads, *the Person*, *His official positions*, *the sanctuary*, and *the sacrifice*, together form a defence of Christianity as against Judaism at once conclusive and really masterly, leaving nothing to be desired to furnish the Hebrews with spiritual weapons to meet any Jewish opponent, and to keep them, if observant of this teaching, true to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet there is much Christian teaching on which our Epistle does not dwell. It sets not forth the Gospel, such as we get it in the Romans and in the Ephesians. Indeed the word

“gospel” is not found in it, the only reference made to the good news being in iv. 2, though that on which the Gospel message must rest, the perfectness and acceptance of the sacrifice, is treated of at length and in a manner not met with elsewhere (see chaps. ix., x.). Then on Church truth it does not dilate, though recognising that the Church will be in heaven (xii. 23), and just referring to it on earth as God’s house (iii. 6), and as the assembly to which the Lord declared the Father’s name (ii. 12). Nor, again, of the truth of being in Christ by the Spirit, so largely opened up in Rom. vi.-viii., nor of the membership of the Body of Christ, have we teaching. All this, as well as the hope of the Church to be caught up to meet Christ in the air, lies outside the scope of its special instruction, which was designed to minister to the Hebrews on their wilderness journey.

Let us now look at the Epistle more in detail.



I

THE PERSON OF THE SON.



## *HIS DIVINITY.*

HEBREWS I.—II. 4.

**T**HE Epistle to the Hebrews forms a connecting link between Old and New Testament revelation. God, active in revealing His mind in the Old, is active again in the New. It is the God of Israel, who had vouchsafed communications to His earthly people in the past, who was afresh vouchsafing them “at the end of these days.” To Him therefore, and to those sent by Him, Israel should hearken; and though for God to speak was nothing new, yet the grace displayed in His speaking again at the end of “these days” should arrest the attention of all thoughtful people. God speaking! What a thought! God speaking to sinful creatures! What condescension on His part! Such communications then must be worth listening to, for we may be well assured that He never speaks without a purpose, nor ever out of season.

Of old He had spoken at sundry times (or, by divers portions) and in divers manners, taking His servants at times by surprise, as Moses in the desert when keeping Jethro’s sheep, and Samuel in the darkness of the night in close proximity to Eli the high priest. Then too He communicated His mind by visions, dreams, oral communications, or written ministry, as it pleased Him to speak to the fathers through prophets. Now again had He spoken after centuries of silence, and a new dispensation had been inaugurated by a fresh Messenger, but that Messenger was His Son. Dreams and visions gave way to fresh revelation.

Partial acquaintance the prophets of old possessed of the Divine mind, and that only as revelations were vouchsafed. One now had come—the Son, who, though as a man had His ear awakened morning by morning to hear as the taught ones (Isa. l. 4), yet in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9). By Him Christian revelation began to be unfolded—a man, yet more than a man, and in that relationship to God in which no prophet had ever stood.

**End of these Days.**—To the *time* and to the *Person* by whom God has now spoken the writer immediately introduces us. The *time* was “at the end of these days,” a phrase with which Jews were made familiar by the writings of their prophets. A reference to a parable given in Matt. xxi. 33-37, Mark xii. 1-6, Luke xx. 9-13 may help us to the understanding of it. Servant after servant had been sent by the owner of the vineyard, but without effect. The husbandmen had not rendered to him the fruits to which he was entitled. At last he sent his son. God, the parable taught, had sent prophet after prophet. Now at the close of the dispensation He sent His Son, ere the kingdom should be established in power, which last event is connected with the age to come. Near then the close of the one age, and before the opening of the next, at this time in the world’s history,\* the Son appeared. And that parable further furnishes us with a reason why. The owner of the vineyard would make that last appeal to the husbandmen, ere judgment should overtake them for their contumacy and rebellious spirit.

**The Son.**—Of the relationship of this Messenger to God we are told. God has spoken in *the Son*; i.e. by one in that relationship. Now in a double way is He Son of God. First,

\* The reader should remember that all this time is viewed in prophetic scripture as parenthetical. God is not dealing directly with the world, nor with His earthly people. The seventy weeks of Dan. ix. make this statement plain.

by eternal generation He is the only begotten Son of God. Second, by His birth into this world He is God's Son, being conceived of the Holy Ghost. Sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty Christians are privileged to call themselves, as born of the Spirit and believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. But He as man is Son in a different way, for He was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin, so His very person was holy (Luke i. 35). This gives us at once a special and unique feature of Christianity. God has spoken in the Son.

What can we learn about Him? Like a master-artist, who with a few strokes of the pencil sketches in the figure that he wishes to place before another, so the writer of the Epistle in a few clauses outlines for us the person of this Messenger. First, He is appointed heir of all things. He has therefore a future, and all must have to do with Him in that future. Next, by Him it was that God made the worlds. All creatures therefore owe their being to Him, and all around is proof of His handiwork. The distant past witnessed His power. The distant future will see Him in undiminished authority inheriting all things. No creature existed before Him. None will survive Him. But more. Not only are creative power and future possession attributed to Him; He is also the effulgence (or, brightness) of the Divine glory, and the express image\* of the Divine substance. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). And speak-

\* "*Charactēr*" (translated in A.V. by "express image," and in R.V. by "the very image") conveys "representative traits only, and therefore it is distinguished from *eicōn* (2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15; 1 Cor. xi. 7; Col. iii. 10), which gives a complete representation under the condition of earth of that which it figures; and from *morphē* (Phil. ii. 6), which marks the essential form. There is no word in English which exactly renders it. If there were a sense of 'express' (*i.e.* expressed image) answering to 'impress,' this would be the best equivalent" (*Westcott on the Hebrews*).

ing of Himself He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9).

Yet all is not told. What He does, and where He is, and His very attitude on high, are revealed as subjects of great interest to the Hebrews, and to us. Do any ask what He does? He upholds all things by the word of His power. He speaks. That is enough. Is it asked where He now is? On the right hand of the Majesty on high, is the answer; the highest place in the universe that can be occupied by any being, and where only one who is Divine can sit. Refused by men when here, He has the place of honour on high. Then too, He has there sat down, who on earth had no place where to lay His head. He has sat down, His own act, though, as we shall learn, in full concurrence with Jehovah. But His attitude has more than a passing interest for Christians, since He sat down on high after by Himself making purgation for sins.

What a history is unfolded! Calling originally all things into being by His Divine power, He appeared on earth as a man, lived here, served here, suffered here, and died here; and is now, subsequent to all that, a man on high in the brightest glory, yet God too over all, blessed for evermore. Then too, His high priestly service of atonement He has effected on behalf of those who have need of it, and now waits for the inheritance to be conferred on Him by God. All this briefly stated, these facts we are now to learn will receive full elucidation at the hands of the writer of the Epistle. Was there ever a Divine messenger like this One? Was there ever one who more fully experienced rejection at the hands of creatures? The Son, the Creator of all, was on earth, but despised and rejected of men. He who was the effulgence of the Divine glory was the One from whom men hid their faces. In Him they only saw a man, and did not see that He was God (John x. 33). Blind indeed, how blind had men become, being the only creatures who did not perceive in

Him the presence of their God. The elements obeyed His voice. The demons knew Him. Lower animals, as the ass, could be subservient to Him. Men, only men, did not know who He was. What importance then must God attach to Christian revelation, since He sent His Son first to unfold it! What depth of ruin men were in, hopeless too their state, humanly speaking, since nothing short of the mission and atoning death of the Son could effectually meet it! And here we would remind the reader that the language of i. 3, "when He had by Himself purged sins," takes us back in thought to Lev. xvi. 30. And in passing let it be noted that "our" before "sins" should be omitted. It is not in this passage a question of who those are who benefit by the atonement, but the fact that He by Himself has made it.

**Scripture Testimony.**—Thus far we have had statements about the Son. Now it will be shown how Old Testament Scripture is in accord with them; and the key to prophetic announcements, uttered centuries previous, the Hebrews are to learn is found in the truth about His person and His history. And first as to His person—the Son. Two distinct dispensations there are, both of which were inaugurated by fresh revelations from above. The first, that of the law, was ordained by angels (Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19). The second, that of the ministry of salvation, was commenced by the Son, but in humiliation, a man amongst men, who was ministered to by angels in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 11), and was strengthened by one in the garden (Luke xxii. 43). That first dispensation, ushered in by tokens of Divine majesty, the Jews had tenaciously upheld. The second, commenced by One who was a man, very many were not prepared to accept. Would they contrast the beginning of the former dispensation with that to which they were exhorted to submit, to the disparagement of the latter? These Hebrews were to be fortified against any attempt on that score to draw them back to Judaism.

True it is that angels are creatures greater in power and might than any of Adam's race. But were they, are they, greater than He whom we call the Son? He is the greater we are here taught, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Heb. i. 4). What name is thus referred to? That of Son of course, as the quotation from Psalm ii. implies. But will that exhaust the meaning of the writer here? The Son (2), the First-begotten (6), God (8), Lord (10), by all these is He designated in this chapter. Does the "more excellent name" include them all? Some would have it so. The word, however, "inherited" may guide us, we think, to restrict it to that of "Son," or at the most, if any will, to include the "First-begotten" as well. And with this the Scriptures next quoted, in order to point out His excellency above angels, seem to agree. For God, and Lord in the sense of Jehovah, in which connection this last term is here used, cannot be said to be names which He has inherited.

Into these designations, the one of relationship to God, the other of His relation to creation, we must now look.

**Son.**—Son He is, and for God's acknowledgment of that Psalm ii. 7 is adduced. To no individual angel is that name ever given by God, though the angelic host as a whole are styled "sons of God" (Job xxxviii. 7), deriving as they do their being from the Almighty. One, and One only, was addressed as "My Son" on the day of His birth. None other will be, and that One is of David's seed\* according to the flesh, as 2 Sam. vii. 14 here reminds us. More excellent than than angels He must be who stands in such a relationship to God—a relationship brought about, as we have already remarked (p. 37), in a way peculiar to Him alone. And more excellent than the angels the whole angelic

\* The Lord, though descended from David, is never said to be descended from Solomon.



host will on a coming day openly acknowledge. For, when He returns in power to reign, they will render Him that homage fitting for His creatures to offer, and for Him to receive. Of this Psalm xcvii. 7 is a witness, as we read, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." It will be no difficulty to them to acknowledge in Him a suited object of worship. Men thought Him but the carpenter's son. Men there are who still refuse to own His divinity. But no elect angel is there, who will not gladly worship Him in the day of His power. How point after point in His history comes out, and scripture after scripture gets opened up! Of His incarnation, and so of His first appearance on earth as a man, the 2nd Psalm speaks. Then that He is David's son 2 Sam. vii. bears witness. And of His second coming the 97th Psalm treats. What a history indeed! Man's history here is ended by death. His place knows him no more. But He whose feet trod the Mount of Olives will stand on that mountain again, and stand there in power (Zech. xiv. 4).

**First-begotten.**—But this quotation from the 97th Psalm calls for more than a cursory notice. In introducing it the sacred writer gives a title to the Lord, not expressed indeed in the Psalm, but one which should be remarked, calling Him the *First-begotten*. Now there is a definiteness in the terms met with in the sacred writings, to which at all times we do well to take heed. In words taught of the Spirit the sacred penmen wrote (1 Cor. ii. 13). Precision and point we may therefore look for in their writings. John the Evangelist introduces the Lord to his readers as the *only begotten Son of God* (John i. 18, iii. 16, 18; 1 John iv. 9).\* No one else so describes Him. In Colossians (i. 15, 18) and here (i. 6), as in Romans (viii. 29) and Revelation (i. 5), we meet with the term

\* Scripture, we believe, never styles the Lord the only Son, for a reason which all can understand, being not the only Son, for all real Christians are sons of God. But He is the only begotten Son of God.

*First-begotten.* The former title speaks of Him as Divine, and in relation to the Father. The latter reminds us of His humanity. By eternal generation He is the only begotten Son of God, and as such stands, and must ever stand, quite alone. *Two* only begotten ones there could not be. By birth into this world, and as heir of all things, He is the *First-begotten*. This title connects Him with others, whether every creature as in Colossians, His brethren as in Romans, or with the dead (Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5), whilst assigning to Him the pre-eminence. For whenever He entered the ranks of creaturehood, because of the excellency of His person He must have the place and dignity belonging to the Firstborn. For that in Col. i. 15, as applied to Him, speaks of pre-eminence and dignity. But we must dwell a little more on this.

To the firstborn belonged the birthright and the pre-eminence, without, however, necessarily marking priority of birth. To Joseph was given the birthright, though Reuben was Jacob's eldest born (1 Chron. v. 1, 2). Solomon had the place of pre-eminence as king and heir, though he was one of David's younger sons. So the Lord, though born comparatively late in the world's history, could have, and has, the place and portion of Firstborn. It is a title of dignity and of pre-eminence in relation to others, and hence it connects the Lord with others, as we have remarked above, whether as Firstborn of all creation, or Firstborn from the dead. Colossians, as we see, presents Him in both these relations. Rev. i. 5 reminds us of Him in the latter of them. Heb. i. 6 recalls Him to us in the former. All the angels therefore will be called on to worship Him as such. His pre-eminence as Firstborn concerns them as well as men. Hence the special suitability in reminding us of this here.

We must next draw attention to the form of the quotation. We have said that Psalm xcvi. 7 is the passage referred to. The form of citation given in the Epistle is,

however, not exactly that in the Psalm. The original runs, "Worship Him, all ye gods," which the Greek Septuagint renders by, "Worship Him, all ye His angels." It may well then be that the writer of the Epistle, as is done in other citations from the Old Testament in the New,\* presents a free translation of the Psalm, the sense of the passage being retained as sufficient for the matter in hand. For that it is to this Psalm that we are turned is confirmed, we believe, by the time to which it clearly refers, viz. the return of the King in power to reign. At that time all the angels will worship Him. On His first advent in humiliation we read not of any homage paid Him by them. At His second, when He returns in power, it will be different. His birth has been already noticed in the quotation from Psalm ii. His reigning is the subject of Psalm xcvi. So we conclude that the sacred writer in his manner of introducing it—viz. "when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world"—referred to an event different from that at His birth. And this conclusion would receive confirmation were we to adopt the rendering of the Revised Version, "and when He again," etc., in place of that of the Authorised Version, "and again when He bringeth," etc. But whichever rendering be preferred—and this is a matter on which there is difference of opinion†—the time referred to is clearly future for the fulfilment of the quotation.

We have dwelt upon this because some have thought that the citation is really from the Septuagint of Deut.

\* It is not the practice of the writer of the Epistle always to quote verbatim from either the Hebrew or from the Septuagint. Compare for this Heb. i. 7 with Psalm ciii. 4 in the Septuagint; ii. 12 with Psalm xxi. 23 in the Septuagint; iii. 10 with Psalm xciv. 10 in the Septuagint, which is xcv. 10 in the Hebrew; etc.

† A long list of authorities can be quoted for each of these views. Of the early versions, the Peshito favours the A.V., whilst the Vulgate supports the R.V.

xxxii. 43, where the words, found exactly as in the Epistle, are nevertheless admitted by all to be an interpolation in the lawgiver's song. There is no authority for them there in the Hebrew, nor can any other ancient version be adduced as exhibiting them. It is then, we think, in the highest degree improbable that the Apostle, desiring to impress on the Hebrews the truth of the surpassing excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, should have quoted in support of his teaching a passage from the Septuagint, which every well-taught Hebrew would have known had nothing to correspond to it in the original Scriptures. Would such a proceeding have carried weight with his readers? Could he with any consistency have introduced such a reference by "He, *i.e.* God, saith," when all would know that the words thus quoted from Deut. xxxii. 43 were not extant in the Hebrew? A free translation of a passage is one thing. An assumption that God had said in a certain place something of which there was no reliable proof is quite another.

The angels introduced as about to worship the *Firstborn*, Scripture is next brought forward to show what they really are, thus marking the great difference between them and Him. A quotation therefore follows from Psalm civ. 4. In it God the Creator is celebrated, and the angels are noticed as purely creatures. "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." God's messengers and God's ministers the angels are, made and sent by the Almighty. Is the Son no more? True He has been born in time. True He is the First-begotten. True that He is a man. But far more. For what of no angel, and to no created angel, could be said, God, we are next to learn, says of Him in Psalms xlv. and cii. And in a very orderly way, it will be seen, does the sacred writer marshal his proofs, keeping in mind three facts he has stated about the Son—*viz.* His *future*, His *past*, and His *present*. Now these statements are to be substantiated by Old Testament

Scriptures, the Book of Psalms being quoted as authority for them.

**Heir.**—"Appointed heir of all things." Such was the statement (i. 2), in proof of which verses from Psalm xlv. are now quoted, that "*Maschil*, A Song of loves," as it is designated, which views the Son returning in power to reign as King on His throne. For He has a throne as Solomon had, but His kingdom is everlasting; and though heir to David's throne, on which He will sit, He has also a sovereignty, a dominion, the bounds of which are coextensive with the universe. Reading the Psalm in the Old Testament we naturally think of Messiah on David's throne, a man indeed, yet also very God. And as the reader peruses the Psalm he would naturally suppose that earth only was to be the sphere of His rule.

Turning, however, to the Hebrews, and reading the quotation culled from the Psalm, we find that the Spirit of God unfolds to us a breadth of meaning in the citation which otherwise we might never have discovered. A King, God's King, Divine yet human, He will reign for ever and ever, and that in righteousness. Fellows too, companions He will have, for He is a man. But all the accompaniments of a bridal procession, prominent in the latter part of that *Maschil*, are left out in the Epistle to the Hebrews. By-and-by all that will be in place, and have its fulfilment at His second advent when He comes to Zion as her King, though in the purpose for which the quotation was made that is not dwelt upon. It is of a dominion not limited to earth of which we are here taught that He is heir, and it is the truth of His person, Divine and human, which is kept before us. So just two verses of the Psalm are brought before the reader (6, 7), focussing thereby the light on His person and on His dominion, whose throne is for ever and ever, a sceptre too of righteousness being the sceptre of His kingdom. Now of His person none are left in doubt who will bow to Divine revelation. "Thy throne, O God,"

addressed to Him, asserts His divinity. "God, Thy God," witnesses to us of His humanity. For whatever may now be averred as to the meaning of the words translated "Thy throne, O God," as read in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is perfectly plain how the Apostle, who quotes for the Hebrews, himself understood them. And of this as the then received understanding of the passage by the Jews the Greek Septuagint is a witness. So much for the *future*; next of His *past* are we taught.

**Maker of the Worlds.**—"By whom also He made the worlds." Such is a statement concerning the Son (2). And now another Psalm is taken up (cii.), which equally witnesses to the truth of His person, whilst carrying us back in the words cited from it to the distant past in proof of the allegation that by Him the worlds were made. And here again are we called to observe the fulness that may be hidden in a passage of God's Word. Reading that Psalm in the original, we should conclude that there was but one speaker throughout, who speaks first of himself, and then of and to God. The speaker is viewed as passing into death, but God abides for ever, so Israel's hope need not fail them. Reading, however, the quotation from it in our Epistle, we discern, through the teaching of the Spirit, that there were *two* speakers. A man in trial with death in prospect first speaks (1-24). An answer then comes to Him, a direct address on the part of the Almighty (25-28). It is the "prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." So runs the heading of it in the original. To Him, after He has fully opened up His trouble, comes the answer from God, and declares that He who is in affliction is the Creator of all! Now it is this last part, the answer from God, that alone is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews. The truth of the Son's Godhead is unmistakably declared, whilst the reality of His manhood the earlier part of the Psalm distinctly sets forth. God and man in one person! Again

is that taught, and in prophetic Scriptures indited centuries before He appeared on earth.

What a history lies before us! If we read Psalm xlv., we mark that it speaks of the King in His beauty (2) going forth to conquer in irresistible might (3-5). When we read Psalm cii., we see the same One in humiliation on earth, not indeed bearing Divine judgment as in Psalm xxii., but a man in affliction, His heart smitten and withered like grass, His bones burned as an hearth, and the object of reproach on the part of His enemies. Nothing is before Him but death, and death in the prime of life (23, 24). Of whom is all this written? Of whom is it true? Of Him who had no beginning. Of Him who is the Creator, and whose power and wisdom we see displayed in His works around us. Created things may pass away, but He remains. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. xxii. 13). Perfect God and perfect man truly He is; the coming conqueror in Psalm xlv., the sufferer unto death in Psalm cii.

**On High.**—But more has been stated—viz. that “He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (i. 3). Can Scripture be quoted in support of this too? Will the storehouse of Old Testament revelation attest the truth of such a statement? Again will the Book of Psalms furnish authority for that which has been written, and to Psalm cx. 1 are the Hebrews next turned, where One is addressed by the Almighty in these terms: “Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” To whom is that said? Who could be thus addressed? To no created angel did God ever thus speak. Ministering spirits they are, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. To serve, not to sit, characterises them, who are occupied with saints, and ministering to them during their passage through life. Then to no mere man could such a place be offered as that Psalm describes. To the Son of God before His incarnation such a word would

have been quite out of place. From all eternity He could, and did, sit on the throne of God. But to Him as incarnate how suitable! He was to be on high at the right hand of Jehovah in a condition in which He was not formerly. Always Divine, but now a man too, there is a reason for such an address from Jehovah of Hosts. To only One then could these words apply—even the Son, but subsequent to His humiliation. And they witness, as do the other quotations, of His divinity, whom men saw dwelling here, and dying on the cross. No place too high for Him Jehovah declares. No place too high for Him shall we not gladly echo, since by Himself He purged sins. Superior to angels then He undoubtedly is, seeing He sits where none of them ever can. But God as well as man He must be—God to be there, and a man who is thus addressed.

Thus far His history from His incarnation to His advent in power to reign lies opened before us. And this is the One by whom God has spoken to us at the end of these days—the Son, the First-begotten, the King, the Creator, and He who now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the place of honour and of pre-eminence over all created intelligences! What interest has God manifested in men, sinful and rebellious creatures indeed! For when messenger after messenger had come, but their errand proving fruitless, as far as Israel as a nation was concerned, God sent His Son with a message of grace and salvation. What too must the heirs of salvation be to God, when angels, an order of creative intelligences far superior to them, are sent forth to minister to those who will dwell for ever on high in the Father's house? And further, has God not shown His interest in us in that He would have us know all this, for which we are, and could only have been, indebted to Divine revelation? Men, unless taught of God, did not discern the Son of God in the Virgin's child; nor could they by themselves have divined



that the elect angels, invisible to us, are appointed ministers to the saints of God.

Here the writer of the Epistle pauses in his subject of the *Person of the Son*. He has told us of His divinity. He has yet to speak more at length of His humanity. But, ere proceeding to dwell on this last, a question intervenes. So we leave this subject for a little with the thought, the last thought expressed about the Messenger still, as it were, ringing in our ears—viz. that He is sitting on the right hand of God; there He sits, and sits by Divine appointment and by express direction. He *sits* we say, for we are to remember that He is on high, and has been continuously for upwards of eighteen centuries. Of the important teaching flowing from His attitude in heaven our author will treat later on (x.). Here (i. 13) only the fact is mentioned, as a proof of the unapproachable distance between the Son of God born in time and the highest archangel in the hierarchy of heaven. The facts, however, of His abiding presence on high, as well as of His attitude there, are such as every believer should intelligently grasp, if he would understand distinctive Christian teaching. It is fitting therefore that at this point the writer should pause in his subject, to let this truth be impressed on the hearts of his readers, and turn to put to each a question of no mere passing interest.

**A Question.**—Heirs of salvation have just been mentioned. Now they, not angels, are addressed. Remembering to whom the Apostle was writing, to those who possessed and were intelligently acquainted with a prior Divine revelation, and on which there was a danger of some falling back to escape a path of trial, of loss, and perhaps a martyr's death, the forcibleness and the urgency of a question, that will be asked, must at once be perceived. Indifference, inattention, heedless neglect would be perilous to any who gave way to them. The more earnest heed should be given to the things they had

heard, lest at any time in the spirit of wayside hearers they should drift (or, slip) away from them, for this is the meaning of the writer, rather than the "let them slip" of the Authorised Version. A Divine communication had been made by a channel far superior to that employed at the giving of the law. Then angels were utilised. Now the Son of God has come, and has spoken. But more. The law told man what he ought to be and to do, and threatened judgments if he did not keep it. The creatures' responsibility was declared, and the penal consequences of failure were foretold. Very different was the communication with which the Son was charged. Sent by Him who gave Israel the law, and therefore from the God of their fathers, He came to offer *salvation* to sinners and to transgressors. A ministry of grace He inaugurated; and though crucified by His creatures, that ministry was not withdrawn. It was continued by messengers not only sent by the Son, but who had heard Him; and the testimony borne by these latter, whilst confirming what the Son had taught, was accompanied by tokens of special Divine approbation. God's seal was set upon it; "God bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (ii. 4). Signs, wonders, and miracles were plentiful in those days (Acts ii. 43, v. 12, vi. 8). What credentials then could this new dispensation produce! The Lord speaking, God working, the Holy Ghost distributing gifts and energising the workers. Signs and wonders Moses did in Egypt (Acts vii. 36), by which his mission was accredited. But credentials, more varied and more excellent than could be produced on his behalf, were claimed and rightly for this, then a new movement on the part of God.

The testimony commenced by the Lord, and accredited in such a way, "how," asks the Apostle, "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How indeed? we may

well echo. Would any desire to shelter themselves from embracing it by professedly keeping to the old path, as they might term it. With displays of Divine majesty had the law been inaugurated, even with lightnings and thunderings, and an earthquake, and with Mount Sinai seen on fire. Above all, that sound of a trumpet exceeding loud had been heard, and the voice of God, so terrifying to the people to whom it was addressed. Awe-inspiring it all was, so that Moses exceedingly feared and quaked (Heb. xii. 21). What had now taken place to equal that? it might be asked. A Man indeed had been here, and had spoken, not in tones of thunder, terrifying to those around, but in a still small voice. And He had been crucified. Yes. But He was a Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, the God of their fathers, who had once spoken amid all those displays of majesty at Sinai. He had now spoken again at the end of these days in the Son. A Messenger therefore more august than any angel had appeared. If then "that which was spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape," pertinently asks the Apostle, "if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" (ii. 2, 3). How shall *we* escape? he writes, classing himself with those of his own nation, desirous to take them along with himself, to learn intelligently truths about the Son, and of the grace all would share in who believed on His name. The dignity of the Messenger should be sufficient to arrest the attention of the readers, and to secure a calm consideration of that which was to follow.

## HIS HUMANITY.

HEBREWS II. 5-11.

WITH what interest must any intelligent Hebrew have followed thus far the writer of our Epistle. Credentials of the Son, fitting to claim not only attention, but submission on the part of the chosen nation, were placed before him—credentials such as none of the great ones of his people, in the palmiest days of the past, could have produced on their own behalf. Messengers of God there had been, worthies whose deeds are recorded, prophets too, the recital of whose services has been rendered imperishable through embalmment in the Scriptures of truth; yet none of them could equal the Son. Nay more; no angel was His equal, not to say His superior.

Moses, David, Elijah, and others had appeared on the scene of this world, and had passed away, each leaving a wonderful record behind him. But here was the One to whom Moses had pointed, and of whom David had sung. These two, and others, were used of God to add to the volume of the Old Testament Scriptures. He, on the other hand, to whom the Hebrews were now pointedly directed, was the subject of those inspired communications. Prophecy, over which many had lingered in previous ages, inquiring what it meant, and into which angels had desired to look (1 Pet. i. 10-12), was now being fulfilled, and portions confessedly future in their *full* application were proved to be in process of fulfilment in the life and in the history of the Son.

**Psalms.**—Several Psalms have already been adduced as predictive and descriptive of Him. Others will receive elucidation further on in the Epistle, as the truth about Him is unfolded by the Spirit of God through the agency of the inspired penmen. The age had now commenced, not so much to swell the prophetic volume, as to open up predictions already delivered by the key provided in His history. Of Psalms we can mention the *second*, the *ninety-seventh*, the *one hundred and fourth*, the *forty-fifth*, the *one hundred and second*, and the *one hundred and tenth*. Others, as the *eighth*, the *twenty-second*, the *ninety-fifth*, and the *fortieth*, will also be pressed into the service of the writer, illustrating at one time truth about the Lord Jesus Christ, or at another pointing out the character of the times in which the Apostle and his first readers were living.

Of those already referred to it is to be remarked that the quotations as to His person and His divinity (Psalms ii., xlv., cii., cx.) are all in the form of God's addresses to Him, and not any of them of utterances on His part addressed to God. Fitting this is. For who, save God, should announce the relationship to Himself? Who, save the Spirit of God, should attest His divinity? The Son, indeed, spoke of these when on earth. He reiterated these truths amongst men, and confessed them before the Sanhedrin. But now, absent from earth, and rejected by the world, the Holy Ghost in the scriptures produced bears testimony to them. For the truth as to His person is never to be forgotten.

**Son of Man.**—God and man we have already seen that He is, and that attested by the Most High. Now of His humanity we are to learn more at length, as scriptures pass before us. To the world, or habitable earth, reference has already been made (i. 6), into which the Son as the First-begotten is yet to be brought by God. Then the angels will worship Him. To Him therefore, and not to angels, will it be subject. For man, not an angel, was, and is to

be, the head of it. Hence it will be put under Him. And the 8th Psalm is now quoted in support of this. Originally placed under Adam as the head of this creation, the Son of Man is finally to be over it, according to the counsels and by the power of God. That Psalm then clearly pointed to One who had not appeared when David penned it.

Now, had David written simply of man, it might have been supposed that Adam was the person intended. The words, however, "the Son of Man" necessarily exclude all reference to our first parent, and turn our thoughts elsewhere; for Adam, though a man, was not a son of man. Of a head the psalmist wrote, under whom creatures would be placed. Now there have been just three heads spoken of in Scripture—Adam, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam had universal sway on earth. Nebuchadnezzar had but a limited sphere of supremacy—men, birds, and beasts were put under him (Dan. ii. 38), but over the waters and their inhabitants he had no dominion. So Nebuchadnezzar, by the mention of the fishes in the Psalm, is excluded from being the one of whom David wrote. There remains, therefore, no one to contest this place with the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost's comment on His own scriptures tells us with precision that Jesus, the crucified One, was the real subject of His revelation, when the royal psalmist had these thoughts in the night. We say *thoughts in the night*, because, when mentioning the heavenly bodies, the works of the Creator, the moon and the stars are specified, but no word is there of the sun. This prophetic composition, then, of the sweet psalmist of Israel furnishes us with reflections made by him perhaps when a shepherd-boy keeping his father's sheep near Bethlehem, or when wandering in the wilderness of Judæa, the object of Saul's persistent hatred.

A man, the Son of Man, lower as a man than angels, is yet destined to wield power never entrusted to them.

Reading the 8th Psalm in the Old Testament, we might suppose that earth was the full extent of His dominion ; that man's place in creation relative to the angelic hierarchy was all that was intended by the clause, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels"; and that supremacy over the lower animals was all that was appointed to him ; "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field [*i.e.* wild animals]; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," being apparently clauses explanatory of, and when taken together the full illustration of, "Thou hast put *all things* under his feet."

Then, too, David very likely did not understand that he was penning in vers. 5 and 6 of that Psalm a history in outline of One whom the world had never seen as a man amongst men, and a history such as man would never have conceived. Men write histories of their fellows or their heroes on earth, describing, it may be, their life from the cradle to the grave. But there such histories stop. Death has claimed the person, and nothing more can be recorded about him. Not so in this case. The history of the One of whom the Psalm speaks begins, we must say, with incarnation, then passes at once to His death, and carries us in thought to a far-distant future, when David penned that composition, and to that which is future still. Death, ascension, and returning in power are subjects wrapped up in these few words. And of whom do they speak? There is but One to whom they could possibly refer ; nor are we left in doubt about His name, for the sacred writer tells us that he was referring to Jesus, and that David was prophetically treating of Him. "We see Jesus," writes the Apostle, thus fixing the attention of the Hebrews on the One whom their countrymen had crucified.

Next, "Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels," includes, we are taught, a reference to His *death* who was made a little lower than these heavenly beings for the

sufferings of death. Then of His *ascension* is there a reminder in the clause that follows: "Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour." For that we here learn is true of Him already. Saints look to be in glory by-and-by; He is there already, and is crowned with glory and honour. Then of His *future supremacy* the Psalm speaks in the clause, "Thou hast put all things under His feet." This the Apostle is careful to point out is wholly future in its application. What a fulness of teaching there is in these few clauses of the Psalm! And the order of thought in them is just the order of events in the history of the Lord—viz. incarnation, death, ascension, and His coming in power. Man by natural intelligence could never have fathomed the depth of meaning that lay in them. No Jew before the cross could have fully understood them. For only subsequent to the Lord's ascension did the time arrive to unfold it. What encouragement, when unfolded, must it have afforded the Hebrews, not to be stumbled by the Lord's humiliation and death! And now two important points will come out. As Son of Man He has of course association with others of the human race; and further He must die. These will be dwelt upon. And first we are to learn of the need of His death for God's far-reaching purposes of blessing to be worked out (ii. 9-18).

**Everything.**—"Thou hast put all things under His feet" was the statement of the psalmist. He has therefore interests wider than those connected simply with humanity. He has to do with created things as well as with His intelligent creatures. By His almighty power all things were created, so we read in Colossians (i. 16). Through Him God made the worlds, is the statement of the writer of our Epistle (i. 2). Now since it was through Adam's fall that this creation became involved (though not willingly, Rom. viii. 20) in dire consequences, the fruits of it; and has groaned under them, and still groans; are men and women, descendants of Adam, to get relief, and



this creation never? Such is not the purpose of our God. Deliverance for it will come. But *how*, *when*, and *why* will that be brought about? Redemption by power will effect it (Eph. i. 14). That is the *how*. When things in heaven and things on earth shall be reconciled to God (Col. i. 20), then will begin the dawn of creation's deliverance, but only to be fully accomplished in the eternal state, sin then being wholly put away from it by virtue of Christ's death. That is the *when*. For this it waits, but waits in hope (Rom. viii. 20, 21). And John in Patmos heard expression given to that hope, as every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and upon the sea, and all that are in them broke forth in praise when the Lamb took the book to open the seven seals thereof (Rev. v. 13). Later on, when the Lord returns in power to reign, creation will array itself in joyous attire, and testify of its gladness (Psalms xevi. 11, 12, xcviii. 7, 8), His return being the prelude, and the sure prelude, to its full and final deliverance.

But *why* can it get deliverance? That is also the subject of Divine revelation. In Col. i. 20, already referred to, we learn that all fulness was pleased to dwell in Christ, and having made peace by the blood of His cross by Him to reconcile all things to itself. Death then had first to take place, the death of God's Son. Men dream of a millennium of peace being ushered in by the gradual improvement of humanity. A delusive dream indeed! No deliverance can there be from the presence of sin for creation, or for us, apart from Christ's death. For "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). Hence it is that we read in ii. 9, that "by the grace of God He should taste death for *everything*."

*Every thing* we say rather than *every one*. For though either might be a good translation of the original, the context, we think, leads here to the thought of the wide-reaching result of His death. This will be apparent as we remember

what the psalmist wrote, and perhaps \* the Apostle quoted, "And didst set Him over the works of Thy hands," followed by the clause of which there is no doubt that he did write, "Thou hast put all things under His feet." Evidently the Spirit, as He inspired the royal singer, was occupied with more than only men. Hence we incline to the belief that the Lord tasting death for *every thing* was really the thought of the Apostle in writing as he did. Creation's coming relief was to be remembered. Nor is such a thought foreign to the Spirit's leading elsewhere. For when John the Baptist first exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God," he added, "which taketh away the sin of the world." Sin, not sins, let it be noted. His words pointed to the wide-reaching and final result in blessing from the Lord's sacrificial death. They were not circumscribed by just man's need. On the next occasion the Baptist's testimony was not so far-reaching, comprising as it did just that which meets our necessity. "Behold the Lamb of God." That last met a want in the heart of John and Andrew, who at once turned to follow the Lord, the Lamb of God. As then was the case with the Baptist, so with our Apostle. And he will now proceed to speak of that which especially concerns men—viz what that death has brought about for men, saints of God; but only after he has first reminded us that the relief for creation from the consequences of man's fall is a fruit of the grace of God, as assuredly deliverance from sin and its results is for us the fruit of Divine grace likewise.

We have said that the writer of the Hebrews will treat of the Lord's association with others of the human race. Now he begins to do that, as he introduces Him in the

\* We have said "*perhaps*," because the clause in the common Greek text of the Epistle, "And didst set Him over the works of Thy hands," is omitted by some of the earliest MSS., and by some textual critics, as Griesbach, Scholz, Tischendorf, and Alford, and is printed in brackets by Lachmann, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort.

character of *Captain of Salvation*. But it is to be remarked, and the reader will do well to bear it in mind, that the Lord's association with men is only here mentioned after His death has been noticed. In perfect character is this with the Lord's own words in John xii. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Till He had died there could be no such association between Him and His people. Always the Master, or Teacher, and calling His disciples His friends (John xv. 15), an association such as Heb. ii. 10 speaks of, could not come about simply by His incarnation. He must first descend to where they were morally. He must die. Thenceforth, having made atonement, His people could be associated with Him, and that in different ways.

**Captain of Salvation.**—Of one of these we now read: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (10). Of His sufferings mention has just been made (9), and of His exaltation in consequence—"crowned with glory and honour." But here (10) a blessed reason for them is given us. God by the arm of power effected of old the redemption of His people (Exod. vi. 6). In another way does He effect deliverance now, associating us and the Lord Jesus in close connection, He the Leader,\* or Captain of the band, the Captain of our salvation. Now to be that, a fitting Captain, He must be made perfect by sufferings. He entered then the ranks of creatures, and died to become this. Who that witnessed His death on the cross, His death as a malefactor and blasphemer, could have for one moment supposed what Divine purposes were

\* This term in the original is only applied in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ. It occurs *twice* in the Acts (iii. 15, v. 31), each time used by Peter; and is met with *twice* in our Epistle (ii. 10, xii. 2), and nowhere else.

to be accomplished by His dying? Sufferings indeed the saints would be called on to endure. Witness the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. xi. 23-33). Witness the Hebrew saints (Heb. x. 32-34). The Captain or Leader of the band must therefore Himself pass through them. A point here should be noticed. David was the captain of his band, and suffered much. But he and his followers suffered *together*, so from time to time they must have had new experiences. Our Captain suffered all first, in doing which He stopped not short of death. Hence no circumstances, however grave, can His people pass through for Him which He Himself has not already experienced. Now to men His death must have seemed to sever all connection between His followers and Himself. He had left earth. They were still here. And doubtless His enemies counted on breaking up the movement if the Leader was executed. We learn, however, that His death only fitted Him the more to be the Captain of His people. That was the crowning step needed to perfect Him for this office. For the being made perfect means His passing through here all that was needful to initiate Him into this office.\*

**Sons.**—Of the Son we have read in chap. i. Of a company associated with Him, of which He is Captain, we have just heard. Now we also learn in what relationship all this company are to God. They are His sons. Of saints, and of them only, is this written. Do any ask how they become sons who once certainly were not in that relationship? Gal. iii. 26 supplies us with the answer. Christians are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For *sons*, not *children*, is the term there employed by the Apostle

\* "To make perfect." The Greek word is the same which is used in the LXX. as the technical term for the consecration of the priests, and is so translated in A.V. in vii. 28. Some would so render it here. It has no reference, we need scarcely say, to any perfecting of His person, who was always holy. Three times in this Epistle is it used of the Lord Jesus (ii. 10, v. 9, vii. 28).

Paul, and advisedly. And the context in Galatians tells us of its special force. A child is one by the birth-tie. Sons in Gal. iv. 7 are contrasted with servants, or slaves. A child under age differs nothing from a servant, as being under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of his father (Gal. iv. 1, 2). A *son* is in direct contrast to a servant. So what never could be said individually of Israel of old is true of every Christian now. This is what may be called Pauline teaching, and so is in character with a Pauline authorship of the Epistle; for he alone of New Testament writers calls Christians sons of God, till we reach Rev. xxi. 7, where the One on the throne proclaims that such a position and relationship will be accorded to overcomers. Sons of God! What a favour! And what is the Divine purpose concerning them? Must we wait for an answer to that question? No. It is revealed. God will bring them to glory, as Israel of old was brought to Canaan. A heavenly calling, therefore, is theirs. Blessing, everlasting blessing, they will share in, but at the cost of the sufferings unto death of God's Son.

**Brethren.**—Reminded of the association between the Lord Jesus and Christians, He—the Captain of the band, and the company—sons of God, we are prepared to hear that the Son regards them as His brethren. He who died on the cross and went on high thereby sanctified Himself, that His own might be sanctified in truth. Of this sanctification the Lord spoke in His prayer on the night before His cross (John xvii. 19). To that we believe reference is now made: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church [or, Assembly] will I sing praise to Thee" (Heb. ii. 11, 12). And here of another passage in the Gospel of John are we reminded—viz. of the Lord's message by Mary Magdalene to His disciples on the day of His resurrection: "Go to My

brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John xx. 17). In the house at Capernaum the Lord had declared who they were that He would regard as His brethren (Mark iii. 31-35). After His resurrection for the first time He definitely so called His disciples. The angel at the tomb had charged the women to tell His *disciples* that He was risen. He on meeting them said, "Go tell My *brethren*" (Matt. xxviii. 10). From His lips, and His alone, did Mary and the other women on that day first hear of the relationship in which He owned them all. Precious indeed was this. Precious to those godly and devout women must have been their recollection of it up to the day of their death. And written for our instruction, what can each true saint say it is to him or to her? For, what no angel has part in, the feeblest saint can say—viz. he is privileged to form one of the company of the Lord's brethren.

His brethren! Who were they? Those who had forsaken Him in the garden, and Peter, who had denied Him in the high priest's house. That woman, known in her city as a sinner, and who had entered unbidden Simon the Pharisee's house (Luke vii. 37-50). Paul, who persecuted the Church of God. Those once dead in trespasses and sins, who needed a sacrifice, and who believed the Divine testimony about the Lord's death and resurrection. What grace the words "My brethren" speak of! And surely, when Mary delivered her message, it should have struck them all. His *friends*, as we have said, the Lord had called them before His death (John xv. 14, 15). His *brethren* He now termed them. Nothing they had done had checked the outflow of His love to them; nor had the desertion of the Eleven in the garden made Him ashamed as such to own them! Men at times have been ashamed of their nationality, or of their kindred. And if one has disgraced his family, his very name may be forbidden to be mentioned in the social circle. But the Lord was not

ashamed to own the tie between Him and them. And we, if believers, can say between Him and us, for, adds the sacred writer, "they are all of one" (11).

**All of One.**—What does this mean? How shall we here understand "of one"? It is not "all are one," but "of one." The form of the expression may throw some light on it, and John xx. 17 will, we think, explain it. The author has spoken of the Son, and has also reminded us that Christians are sons of God. Hence it seems pretty clear that the "One" here referred to must be God. And since, consequent on the Son and Christians being all of One, He is not ashamed to call them brethren, we seem naturally reminded of the Lord's words to Mary Magdalene, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God." For He is really a man. And proofs of that will be next adduced, drawn from the written Word in the hand of the Jews, to the truth of which of course they could take no exception, and to the teaching of which as concerning the Lord they would be unable to bring forward any valid objection. Grace it is, indeed, to be classed thus with Him. Would any presume on that to think of equality with Him? His words in John xx. forbid such a thought, and emphasize the difference between Him and us. Our Father, our God, He did not say; but, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God."

Grace, we repeat, it is indeed in which we share, and the statement which will follow confirms it. He is not ashamed to call Christians brethren. "Not ashamed," wrote the Apostle, thus reminding us all how wholly undeserving we are of such an association with the Lord, and bringing out in bold relief the grace and love of Christ, who could own and thus designate us.

With this last thought before us we may well pause, ere pursuing further the teaching of this chapter.

## *HIS HUMANITY (Continued).*

HEBREWS II. 12-18.

**W**HEN the Lord rose from the dead, He sought to establish the faith of His disciples on the evidence and authority of the written Word. Those two going to Emmaus listened to an exposition of it such as they had never before heard; and manifestly it commended itself to them, their hearts burning within them as He talked with them by the way. The company gathered on that evening in the upper room were taught that the events which had so recently taken place, and which had so grieved them, were really fulfilments of prophetic announcements. This same way of dealing with those who possessed a Divine and written revelation, and owned it, was pursued by the Apostles and early labourers in the Word, as Peter's sermons at Jerusalem, Stephen's defence, and Paul's ministry to his countrymen abundantly evidenced. Apollos too (Acts xviii. 28) wielded the weapon of Old Testament Scripture, mightily convincing, or confuting, the Jews, publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. To the Scriptures they one and all turned, and used the sword of the Spirit with marked and blessed effect.

How interesting would it have been, had we been privileged to hear Saul, the Christian convert, contending with Jews in the synagogues at Damascus, and subsequently with some of his countrymen at Jerusalem. Scripture after scripture was doubtless pressed into the service,



and light cast on the Word, and a meaning, *the* meaning, educes from it which the listeners had never before suspected. For the Holy Ghost was illuminating and guiding His servant to open up treasure that had lain hidden in the storehouse of the sacred volume. In character with this method of dealing, the writer of this Epistle seeks to establish the faith of his readers. He knew where to turn, and what to bring forward. Hitherto, however, with the one exception of 2 Sam. vii. 14, all the scriptures quoted have been from the Book of Psalms. Now Isaiah will furnish him with apt citations, as well as the Book of Psalms, in proof of the Son's humanity. With the latter he will begin.

**Three Quotations.**—As yet the only scripture quoted on this subject has been the 8th Psalm, which speaks *of* Him, but not *to* Him. Now three quotations we shall meet with (to one we have already referred, p. 61), different in character from any we have yet had, seeing they are utterances on the Son's part, and one of which is addressed by Him to God. In the previous chapter we have had quotations of addresses on the part of God to the Son, which attest indubitably His divinity. Fitting surely was this. For who but God is competent to declare the divinity of one found here in fashion as a man? Fitting too is it, all must admit, that He by whom the world was made should Himself assert His humanity. And three passages we now have confessedly teaching that—viz. Psalm xxii. 22, Isa. viii. 17, 18. “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccles. iv. 12).

And first to a Psalm hitherto unnoticed (xxii.) we are to be turned, and to that verse of it (2) which declares what would be the first act on the Sufferer's part when heard by God and raised from the dead. “I do always those things that please Him” (John viii. 29), He had said to the cavilling Jews. His Father's glory and honour He had always sought (John xvii. 1, 4). For the glory of God,

as He told the disciples, would be the sickness of Lazarus (John xi. 4). And His Father's name and kingdom are subjects He made prominent in the prayer which He gave to His disciples (Matt. vi. 9, 10). So now, when risen, His first thought was about His Father, and about the saints on earth: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 12). How that was first exemplified we all know, and treasure in our remembrance that message given to Mary Magdalene to carry to the rest. That told them, and tells us, as we have before remarked, of the light in which He regarded His saints when He was risen from the dead. The Son speaks in that Psalm to His Father, and owns that He has brethren amongst the sons of men. His humanity He thereby declares. Nor will He separate Himself from them. For "in the midst of the Church [or, Assembly] I will sing praise unto Thee" are His words.

The second proof of the same truth now comes before us. "I will put My trust in Him," is the quotation given. Whence is this taken? In three passages of the Greek Septuagint we find the words just quoted in Heb. ii. 13—viz. in 2 Sam. xxii. 3, Isa. viii. 17, xii. 2. The reader should remark that the third quotation is unquestionably from Isa. viii. 18. Now as the second one, that with which we are at present concerned, viz. "I will put My trust in Him," is found in Isa. viii. 17, the verse immediately preceding that from which the third citation is drawn, it would not be surprising, nor, we submit, at all impossible, that the writer of the Epistle culled both the quotations from the same chapter in Isaiah—viz. chap. viii. And this supposition receives, we think, confirmation, when it is remembered that in both the other places, where the same words occur, the speaker is viewed as in the enjoyment of conscious deliverance, whereas in Isa. viii. it is not so. Now the deliverance for the Lord was effected in resurrection. And as we cannot suppose that He would use such

language after that event, we believe that the second citation in Heb. ii. 13 is taken from Isa. viii., in which the speaker is seen, as here, a dependent and confiding man. How true that was of Him in His humiliation! And certainly the declaration "I will put My trust in Him" was eminently fitted to apply whilst He was on earth before His death. He did then put His trust in God. Witness His temptation in the wilderness, when, though hungry, He waited God's time for His want to be met. Nor did He wait in vain. Again in the prospect of death He waited patiently for the Lord, as the Psalm says (xl. 1, 2), and was heard, and was brought out of the pit in resurrection. Truly He did put His trust in God, keeping His place here as a dependent man, and waiting for God to act for Him when He would.

Coming now to the third quotation, taken without doubt from Isa. viii. 18, we learn again the importance of the Holy Spirit's application of His own scriptures. For, apart from His teaching, who would have understood the Messianic character hidden in that chapter under the personal history of the son of Amoz? Of our relationship to and position before God as *sons* we have been reminded (Heb. ii. 10). Of spiritual relationship to Christ as His *brethren* we have just learnt. Now another term, that of *children*, is used, and why? The Old Testament teaches us to answer. The Lord as the Messiah will have relations with the godly remnant of Israel in the future. Of this the Old Testament bears witness (Psalm xxii. 25). In accordance with this Psalm (xxii. 22), He has already struck the keynote of praise for Christians. By-and-by, when the Church is no more upon earth, and God deals directly again with Israel, He will strike the keynote of praise for them, as ver. 25 of that Psalm prophetically declares. So in writing to the Hebrews it was quite consistent with the future of the nation in a coming day to remind the reader that others beside Christians are con-

cerned in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus. And here they are not forgotten. Hence we may readily understand the bearing of this third quotation, connecting the Lord as a man, for He is and always will be a man, with events of a future day. Of His manhood then in the *present*, in the *past*, and in the *future* are we reminded. In the *present* as the risen One, in the *past* as the dependent One, in the *future* in connection with the remnant of Israel, do these passages respectively speak; and it may be noted that what especially concerns us as Christians is first quoted, the order in Psalm xxii. 22, 25 being the same as that followed by the Apostle here in the Hebrews. Three quotations we had in the first chapter attesting His divinity, and referring respectively to His *future*, His *past*, and His *present*. Three citations have we in chap. ii. in attestation of His humanity, referring to His *present*, His *past*, and His *future*.

**Children.**—Of God's sons, and of God's children, the Apostle has made mention, and of the Lord's association as a man with both. A word as to these latter will not be out of place. Of course all God's sons are God's children. In this there is a difference from the practice of men on earth. But the converse is not necessarily true, that all God's children are also His sons. For, as Gal. iv., already referred to, teaches, saints under law, certainly whilst upon earth, were not in the privileged position of sons. Now there will be the godly remnant of Israel on earth in the future who will be under law, though the law will be written in their hearts, and who will worship by sacrifice, but will never get into the immediate presence of God in the sanctuary (Jer. xxxi. 33; Ezek. xlvi.), nor, we may add, will ever be in heaven. These will be children, and so we may see a further reason for the selection of that term here rather than that of *sons*. For *children* can include all saints; *sons*, we take it, might not. So we read: "Forasmuch as the *children* are partakers of blood and flesh, He

also Himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). The children share in blood and flesh, feeble creatures in themselves, and exposed to the temptations of the enemy, who can wield as a weapon the power of death. The Lord therefore became incarnate, partook of flesh and blood, that through death He might bring to nought the devil, who had the power of it, and deliver those who had lived in fear of it.

How great can be that fear many can tell. How real the deliverance Stephen (Acts vii. 59) and Paul attest (Phil. i. 23 ; 2 Tim. i. 10, ii. 11, iv. 6-8). And the Lord, knowing what that power is, and knowing that it might terrify His saints so as to make them turn aside from the path of testimony for God, tells all in Rev. i. 18 that He is the living One; alive for evermore, and has the keys of death (which claims the body) as well as of Hades, where the unclothed are. If then Christians die, they depart to be with Christ, and their resurrection to everlasting bliss is assured. The sting of death, which is sin, is removed for them (1 Cor. xv. 56) by the death of Christ on their behalf. The terror of death should be dissipated by the remembrance of the Lord's victory over the enemy.

A man like the children of men, so far as to partake of flesh and blood,\* the Lord became ; that by death—for it is only men of God's intelligent creatures who can die

\* Scripture carefully guards the truth of the holiness of the Lord's person, which the enemy has so often attempted to assail. An instance of this guarding we meet with here (Heb. ii. 14). The children, we read, *jointly* partake of flesh and blood, using a term implying what was common to them, but speaking otherwise of the Lord. This distinction the Revised Version marks in a way that the Authorised Version has not. The children *share* in flesh and blood, He *partook* of it.

(Luke xx. 36).—He might effect this great deliverance. That He has done, as we are here told. But all Christians will not die. For, as we read elsewhere, He has annulled death, and brought life and incorruptibility (not immortality) to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). Life, we believe it is here, for those who shall never die; incorruptibility for those whose bodies in death turn to corruption. This same teaching—viz. that all Christians will not die—the Lord made known in John xi. 25, 26; and Paul in 1 Cor. xv., 1 Thess. iv., 2 Tim. i. reaffirms this doctrine. A victory over the enemy's power the Lord has got indeed, but only by the seed of Abraham will it be enjoyed (Heb. ii. 16). For of them, not of angels, He taketh hold.

**Fallen Angels.**—Of angels we here again read. We have been taught how far above the elect angels was the Son, who entered this scene as a man, and as a man was made lower than them. But other angels there are, those who fell, having left their first estate. For apostasy reared its head among the angelic host, and some were carried away by it. How that began, and who were the leaders in it, is to us wholly unknown. Little indeed do we know about the angelic hierarchy. We know that there are different ranks among them—principalities and powers (Eph. i. 21). We know their number is very great (Rev. v. 11). Yet of names of any of them we only know but two—Michael and Gabriel. Of none others have we knowledge from Scripture. Men may speak of others as Raphael, etc. Doubtless He who calleth all the stars by their names designates each by some personal appellation. From us, however, that is hidden. And of the apostasy just referred to little is it that we know. Gen. vi. 2 mentions it historically. Jude (6) and Peter (2 Pet. ii. 4) acquaint us with the present condition of the apostates, as well as with the awful future before them. Then Paul, to complete our knowledge of this subject, tells the Corinth-

ians that Christians will judge angels (1 Cor. vi. 3). God then can, and will, punish the apostate angels. Had we been like them, awaiting our doom, which of us could have questioned His right and His justice in so acting? And what has made the difference between our future and theirs? Nothing but the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. With what thankfulness, therefore, should we reiterate the sacred writer's statement, "He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham" (Heb. ii. 16). For of no angel is that true.

**Seed of Abraham.**—Here again we meet with that which is corrective of mistaken thoughts. Statements at times are made, as if the Lord, by becoming a man, took up the whole human race, so as to be their elder Brother. He took hold of the seed of Abraham is true Scripture teaching. But who are they of whom this is written? The nation of Israel? No. But those who, like Abraham, are justified by faith; for of all who believe is he the father (Rom. iv. 11). Such are of faith, and are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal. iii. 9). They are his sons (Gal. iii. 7), and all who are in Christ, or Christ's, are reckoned as Abraham's seed (Gal. iii. 29). Hence the Lord takes hold of a class among men—a class from which none are excluded, whatever their nationality, if only they really believe on Him. For them He gave His life as a ransom (Matt. xx. 28). And though we are taught that He gave Himself a ransom for *all* (1 Tim. ii. 6), indicating that none who will receive it will be excluded from its benefits, the Lord declared in the Gospel, speaking of those who would benefit by His death, that His life was the ransom for *many*. He suffered in their stead. Guarded, how guarded, is Scripture in its language! And the more we recognise that, and observe how it speaks, the fewer mistakes as to its teaching shall we make.

Let this chapter in the Hebrews be carefully studied. The Captain of salvation is Captain only over God's sons,

whom He is bringing to glory. Again. The Lord has some whom He calls His brethren. But they are only those who are "of one" with Him—*i.e.* His God and His Father being also their God and their Father. Well then may we thank God that the Lord taketh hold of the seed of Abraham! Members of the privileged nation we, formerly Gentiles, never could be. Members of a privileged class—the seed of Abraham—all true believers undoubtedly are; their cause the Lord has espoused, and their sins He has borne.

**High Priest.**—Here we are led on to learn of another office which He fills, of another designation which is true of Him, and of another association in which Christians are found with Him. He is *High Priest* now and for ever. But a *high priest* presupposes there are those who are priests. Now this Peter tells us is true of all Christians. They form the *holy* priesthood as well as being likewise a royal priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5-9). On this, however, we cannot enter further at present, our immediate subject being the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read of it only in Hebrews. We quote the words of the writer introducing it: "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [not reconciliation] for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 17, 18). In these few words is introduced the subject of the Lord's priesthood in connection with the mention of His incarnation and death. Later on we shall learn more about His priesthood, not only in relation to His sacrificial service, but in connection with His present service of intercession in the sanctuary, subsequent to the completion of His making propitiation for the sins of the people. Two distinct lines of priestly service are these, just noticed briefly at present. Of the



need of His incarnation we have just learnt. How else could He be made like unto His brethren? How else could He die? Of the need of His death too are we taught, and six times over in a few verses of our chapter (9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18) is it referred to. What a place the subject of His death has in Divine revelation! What a place it must hold in God's remembrance! What place has it in ours?

Now to be High Priest He must first have died. He was not, He could not have been, High Priest whilst on earth. On this scripture is precise. "Now if He were on earth" (so runs the Revised Version) "He would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law" (Heb. viii. 4). God never supersedes an order of priesthood. The Aaronic order was for earth, and the house of Aaron, and the line of Zadok will always furnish the priests to minister at God's altar. Then another scripture tells us that the Lord is "Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. vii. 16). And further, as He ministers only in the heavenly sanctuary, we learn in ix. 12 that He entered that *once for all* by His own blood. Clear then is it that His priesthood could only commence subsequent to His having died. Other considerations in support of this could be urged, but scripture testimony should be sufficient to convince the most sceptical. We leave then this point without further comment.

To an Israelite the truth of the Lord's high priesthood, if he believed it, must have been interesting indeed. His nation, and his only of any upon earth, could boast of having a high priest by Divine appointment, who could enter the holiest annually on their behalf. God as the Creator cared for all His creatures, whether Jews or Gentiles (Acts xiv. 17). Israel, however, could say that they had a high priest to represent them before God, and to make atonement for their sins, though typically only

had that been effected previous to the Lord's death upon the cross. But now the quondam Israelite, as a true disciple of Christ, could say that One, not of Aaron's house, nor in any earthly sanctuary, had made once for all propitiation for the sins of the people. Types and shadows give way before Him who is the substance of them all. And surely not without point did the sacred writer here say "for the sins of the people," since later on he will show (ix., x.) that not typically, but actually and finally, has propitiation been made for the sins of all who are willing to accept it, which will include the godly remnant of the earthly people by-and-by. Can we trust to that which the Lord has done? As a man, and because He is a man, He could be and is a *merciful* High Priest, able to enter into the needs and the difficulties by the way of the saints of God. He is also a *faithful* High Priest in things pertaining to God, so that nothing which had to be done was omitted by Him. Fully, then, can we trust to it.

**Propitiation.**—A word here before proceeding. To make propitiation (not reconciliation) the Apostle wrote. Careful was he, guided surely by the Spirit, in the selection of his terms. Reconciliation has to do with men. They, not God, need to be reconciled (Rom. v. 10 ; Col. i. 21, 22). To make propitiation, on the other hand, is an act Godward. Of this then he wrote. Now what are we to understand by the words "to make propitiation"? Often they seem confounded by men with the making atonement. There is, however, a marked difference between them. The making propitiation was an essential part of atonement, but by no means all that is comprised in that compound idea. For atonement is a compound idea, four elements going to make it, as Lev. xvi. teaches us, and this is the only portion of the Divine Word which treats in fulness of it. The four essential elements are: *first* the death of the victim (Lev. xvi. 6); *next* the dealing with the scapegoat, expressive of the bearing away of the sins of the people

(10); *then* the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offerings once on the mercy-seat, and seven times before it (16); and *last* the offering up of the burnt offerings with the inwards of the sin offerings (24) on the brazen altar, typical this of the true sacrifice bearing Divine judgment. Of these four elements, the dealing with the blood inside the veil was the making propitiation. And to make that three things Lev. xvi. shows were requisite: *first* the death of the sin offering, whose blood it was that was taken within the veil; *next* a high priest to take it in; and *third* a sanctuary in which to deal with it aright. These three important requisites are found in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ's high priestly service in the heavenly sanctuary. He entered in by His own blood. Then He must first have died. He entered in as High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people. And it was the heavenly sanctuary into which He thus entered.\*

To make propitiation, we have said, was an act Godward. For though God needed not to be propitiated, seeing that He gave His Son in love to die for us, yet the making propitiation by blood was absolutely necessary, that He might in righteousness arrest the sword of judgment, which would otherwise have deservedly fallen upon us. This truth comes out in the New Testament, and propitiation is spoken of distinctly therein (Heb. ii. 17; 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10). In the Old Testament we meet with the concrete term *atonement* and the verb *to make atonement*. In the New Testament these are never found. But propitiation, never mentioned in the Old, has an important place in the teaching of the New Testament. Now for this service, as we have stated, there was needed a high priest to effect it, and in the holiest only could that be carried out. Aaron and his successors in the sacerdotal office were the only

\* Should the reader desire to look more into this subject, he is referred to a pamphlet by the author entitled *Propitiation by Blood*, on sale at our publishers'

ones authorised even in type to make it upon earth. The Great High Priest is the only One who has really and finally made it. For *sins* too, we must observe, not for *sin*, was propitiation made. How this latter is dealt with we shall learn in chap. ix. of our Epistle.

**Intercession.**—But another service there was rendered by the high priest on behalf of the people. Not only could he alone officiate on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.); but he could also by virtue of his office intercede on their behalf. Now of the former we read in Leviticus, of the latter we learn about from Numbers. This is quite in character. For as Numbers tells us of the people in the wilderness, it was whilst there, and before final settlement in the land, that the high priest's intercession was especially called for.

To make this plain we would ask the reader to turn with us to Num. xvi., xx., xxvii. In chap. xvi. Aaron's intercession saved the congregation from wholesale destruction. He stood with his lighted censer between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed. The lighted censer was typical of the sweet savour of the merits of Christ, brought out in all their perfection by His death, for it was kindled by fire from the brazen altar. And the whole scene was illustrative of the Lord's intercession, which is and must ever be effectual. For let it be observed that Aaron offered no fresh sacrifice, but stood with his lighted censer. That was enough. God understood the deep meaning of that according to His thoughts, and mercy was manifested at once.

Next in chap. xx. the people, we read, had murmured for want of water. How should they get it? God told Moses to take the rod laid up before the Lord, which was Aaron's rod that had budded (Num. xvii. 10, 11), and with it to speak to the rock, and the water would gush forth. He smote the rock in disobedience. The water came forth in grace, but he suffered for his act. What doubtless

Moses had not then understood is now plain to us. Blessing flows to us only on the ground of the Lord's death. But He died but once. So on the first occasion that water was wanted the rock was to be smitten (Exod. xvii.), emblematic of the Lord's death on the cross. But blessing ever after would and does flow from His intercession as our High Priest on high. So Aaron's rod \* was to be taken in Num. xx., and Moses with it in his hand was just to speak to the rock. The rod spoke to God of the future high priesthood of His Son, and the whole scene foreshadowed the blessedness of the Lord's active intercession for the people.

Then in Num. xxvii. 18-21, Joshua, after the death of Moses, was to stand before Eleazar the high priest, who should ask counsel for him and all the congregation. At his, *i.e.* Eleazar's, word they should go out, and at his word come in. In their warfare in the land then, as well as in the wilderness, the high priestly service was called into exercise on their behalf. All this will help us to understand what was the double service of the high priest as seen in the history of Aaron and of his son Eleazar, and why it was needed.

Two distinct lines of service then Aaron had to engage in, at one time officiating alone in the holiest, at another active in his office in the camp. Two distinct lines of service these are still. We think at times of the Lord who entered the holiest as High Priest by His own blood once for all, having found eternal redemption. We think too of Him as carrying on a service in succouring His people. And drawing attention to them both as the sacred writer does, we have this latter ministry expressly mentioned in ver. 18: "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." *The tempted.* Then there is One on high specially interested in them, and

\* We say Aaron's rod, for no other, that we read of, was laid up before the Lord.

ready to help all such. None can say, No one cares for me. If like the psalmist any would exclaim, "Refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul," like the psalmist they must say, as they think of the Lord, "Thou art my refuge" (Psalm cxlii. 4, 5). Now this succour is the fruit of His intercession on high. As then, to get Israel through the wilderness and into rest in the land, the high priest's service was called for, so for us, as long as we are here, we must be indebted to the active ministry of the Lord Jesus. How little is this understood and remembered, must we not all confess? What grace on His part, and what love, to be constantly occupied with such creatures! Marvellous indeed is the thought that His life on earth, and His sufferings unto and including His death, fitted Him to help His people when tempted!

We have said *including* His death, for it is manifest that His sufferings did not stop short of death. He knows, therefore, all that His people need, if martyrdom be in their path. How many have experienced His ministry under such circumstances, and found it sustaining indeed! He suffered, we repeat. He experienced the sufferings of death, met too sufferings on His road here in life, and suffered being tempted. Temptation was suffering to Him, the Holy One. And He would not yield to the tempter. Thank God for that! And now having fully gauged Satan's power in tempting, He knows all that he can bring to bear on any individual saint; and having tested that to the full, He knows well all that is needed to succour the tempted, and He ministers it. And if almighty power is not put forth to shield us from temptation, succour is at hand as each one may have need of it.

An interesting subject is this of the Lord's high priesthood, and a fruitful one to study. Had we never had this Epistle, there would have been a great deal of important Christian teaching lacking. Had we been robbed of the Epistle, how great would have been our loss! God has,

however, provided it, and has preserved it to our day ; and ministers by it to His saints who have real need of it. Now this ministry will unfold itself in a very orderly way in chap. iv. 14 —x. 25, the writer taking up first the *present* service of Christ as *Succourer*, *Sympathiser*, and *Intercessor*, before dwelling at length on His high priestly ministration for atonement, inverting the historic order, but ministering wisely and well. For the trials of the way, and the persecutions that the Hebrews had experienced and were liable to, required prominence to be given, and priority to be allowed, to the theme of the Lord's *present* service in heaven, before dwelling at length on His sacrificial service done once and never to be repeated. And now, ere leaving this chapter of the Epistle, so full of subjects for meditation and encouragement, we would gather up somewhat of that which has been brought before us.

We have been introduced to teaching about the person of the Son. His divinity set forth in chap. i., His humanity, sufferings, and death have been placed before us in chap. ii. What a subject indeed it is ! When the sacred writer would introduce a mere human being as a messenger from God, a few words about such an one are sufficient. But to acquaint us with the truth of the person of the Son, even in its barest outline, how much is required ! For there never was before Him, there never can be again, such a messenger on this side of death. The history of any one of us begins with our birth, and terminates, as far as this world is concerned, with our departure from it. But the Son had a history before His incarnation, and will have one in personal connection with earth in the future. Meanwhile He has, we learn, a history fraught with blessing to His people. The Son, the Heir of all things, the Creator and Upholder of all things, now sits on Jehovah's right hand, a man as well as God. Once suffering even unto death, He is now crowned with glory and honour. Captain of our salvation, He has brought to nought him that had the

power of death—the devil. And as High Priest, having made propitiation by His blood in the heavenly sanctuary, He now lives to intercede on behalf of His tempted, tried, and harassed saints who are upon earth. This is the One concerning whom the Epistle is written.

The Jews looked for a triumphant Messiah. Here was a Messiah who had suffered set before them. Would the unbelievers of the nation taunt the Christians with trusting to a crucified man? With what an answer were these last furnished, as they read sentence after sentence of the first two chapters of this Epistle, and noted point after point as connected with His death. What rabbi before the cross understood the depth and fulness of the scriptures that have already passed before us? Which of them discerned in those words of the 8th Psalm, “made lower than the angels,” a reference, which was really in the mind of the Spirit, to the death of the Son of God? Sufferings He was to endure in His grace, though needful in the counsels of God. To be the fitting Captain of salvation He must suffer. To make propitiation for sins He must suffer. To free this groaning creation from the weight of sin, which pressed on it, He must suffer. To be able to help His people in all circumstances He must first suffer. A triumphant Messiah there surely will be. But to triumph with “fellows” of the human race, to triumph in final deliverance of creation, to triumph over the devil, to effect all this, He had to suffer. As the Hebrews grasped this, what strength would it impart to their faith! And keeping fast hold of these Divine revelations, importunity of friends or threats of persecution and death would be powerless to turn them aside. With this Epistle in their hands, and its teaching engraven on their hearts, like a snare set in the sight of a bird would be the efforts of men or of the devil to upset them. All would be in vain.



## II.

### HIS OFFICIAL POSITIONS.



## THE APOSTLE OF OUR CONFESSION.

HEBREWS III. 1—6.

THE person who has spoken has been set before us — the Son, truly God and perfectly man, who died, who lives, and has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Now on the *second* great subject of the Epistle the sacred writer will instruct us, treating of the official positions in which the Son is presented—viz. the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession. Israel had their apostle in the person of Moses, and their high priest in the person of Aaron. The Hebrews could say they had an Apostle and an High Priest, but these offices united in one person, even in the Son of the Living God.

Now of these offices we are to read in order, our author first presenting Him as the Apostle, and then as the High Priest. Of both we have already been briefly reminded—of Him as Apostle in chap. i., and as the High Priest in chap. ii. But more than just a brief intimation of these was necessary. As the Apostle, the Son has spoken to draw hearts to God and to Himself. As the High Priest, He ministers now for those so drawn, who are His disciples in truth. Besides this, as the High Priest He has procured a perfect standing for all His people within the veil, and before the mercy-seat. Ere, however, entering on the work of His apostleship, and in consequence of the excellency of His person who fills that office, we must call attention to the light in which believers on the Lord Jesus are here viewed.

**Holy Brethren.**—Such are now addressed, as holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling: Considering to whom and of whom these words were first written, they deserve to be pondered over, and the grace therein implied to be acknowledged. It is, we may say, a unique expression. We read of holy apostles (Eph. iii. 5), of holy prophets (Luke i. 70; Eph. iii. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 2), of a holy priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5); but never\* elsewhere of holy brethren, unless the common text of 1 Thess. v. 27 be preferred.† Yet how suited is that appellation here. One who was a Jew by natural birth, addressing those who could boast of the same nationality, reminds his readers of a tie of brotherhood common only to true saints of God. He and they were brethren. But more. For as we have already been taught (ii. 11), the Son, the Apostle of our confession, is not ashamed to call us His brethren. The prophetic words of Psalm xxii. 22, endorsed by the Lord on the day of His resurrection, were not forgotten; nor were the Hebrews ever to forget them. “Holy brethren” then is a designation of Christians in character with teaching already vouchsafed us, reminding all of that spiritual relationship with one another and with the Lord Jesus which He has been pleased openly to proclaim.

**Heavenly Calling.**—Hence follows another designation, connected naturally with the one we have just noticed—viz. “partakers of a heavenly calling.” For if we are His

\* Some might demur to this, pointing to Col. i. 2 in refutation of it. But we prefer there the A.V. and the R.V., supported as they are by *Meyer*, *Ellicott*, and *Alford*.

† “Holy” before “brethren,” exhibited in 1 Thess. v. 27 by the uncial MSS. A, K, L, P, and a corrected reading of the Codex Sinaiticus, is omitted by the uncial MSS. B, D, E, F, G, and originally by the Codex Sinaiticus. With this omission the critical texts of Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, and that of Westcott and Hort agree. It is probable, if Griesbach and Scholz had been acquainted with all the MSS. authorities that we now possess, they would have sanctioned the omission of “holy” from their texts.

brethren, His Father's house must be our home, for it is His home. Heaven then, and not earth, is to be the region in which our abiding dwelling will be found, and we are called out for heaven. Very important of course is this for all Christians, but especially was it for those who had been Jews, but were now children of God. Their fathers had once enjoyed a home, a country provided for them upon earth, and they had marched from Egypt through the wilderness to enter Canaan as their possession and their home. Now these, their descendants, were started afresh on a pilgrimage. Jewish hopes were to give way to Christian expectations. Mount Zion and Mount Moriah they were to regard as behind them, and as strangers and pilgrims they were to go forward to a home above, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. i. 4, 5). Of this, the heavenly calling, the Lord gave the first intimation in the Sermon on the Mount, though only in this one place in the New Testament is the term "*heavenly calling*" to be found. In common then with that of "holy brethren," we have to view it as a unique expression. We read in 2 Tim. i. 9 of a "holy calling," and in Phil. iii. 14 of a "high calling"; here only of a "heavenly calling." *Holy* tells us of the moral character of it; *high* that it can only be enjoyed in its fulness above; whilst *heavenly* reminds us of the contrast between the portion of Jews and that of Christians as provided by God.

We have said that the Lord first spoke of it in the Sermon on the Mount. Beginning that discourse with the beatitudes, He had told His hearers of the meek inheriting the earth (Matt. v. 5), a promise which yet awaits its fulfilment. And the reader may observe that from vers. 3-9 of that chapter we have certain characters mentioned, about each of which the Lord has a word to say—viz. the

poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers, closing with those persecuted for righteousness' sake. Then at ver. 11 He turned and *directly* addressed His disciples, foretelling them of a persecution they might meet with for another cause: "Blessed are *ye*, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil falsely against you, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in the heavens: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Earth was here for them put out of view. Heaven only was set before them. "The meek *shall* inherit the earth," however little that might seem likely then or now. But Christians are called out for heaven. Of this John xiv. 1-3 assures us. What a change must this revelation have wrought in the prospects of Jews! They waited, and still wait, for the appearance of Messiah, in person and in power to cut off their enemies, and to give them peaceable and final possession of their land. Christians are to wait for the Lord's descent into the air, to take them to be for ever with Him on high. To earth the Jew was taught to look to see God's purposes worked out on his behalf. To heaven are we turned, knowing that no events of Divine judicial dealing with the world for its rejection of God's Son can precede the coming of the Lord for His saints (1 Thess. iv. 15-17). We need not then wonder, as we remember the proper Jewish expectation, that both Peter (1 Pet. i. 3, 4) and the writer of our Epistle direct the special attention of their readers to the heavenly calling.

**Heavenly Hope.**—Here it may be helpful to note the difference between a *heavenly hope* and a *heavenly calling*. Abraham was called to go out unto a place which God would show him. He had therefore an earthly calling, a land on earth being the prospect set before him. To inherit that was he called out of Ur of the Chaldees. But

after he reached the land, he was distinctly taught that not till the fourth generation of his offspring should appear would it be really possessed (Gen. xv. 15, 16). He was to die without personally possessing it. Would he be worse off through dying? No. He had a *heavenly hope* given him. He learnt that God had prepared for him a city, and he looked for that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hence he desired a better country than Canaan, that is, a heavenly (Heb. xi. 8-16). Abraham therefore had an *earthly calling*, but a *heavenly hope*. Now Israel in the days of Joshua had an earthly calling and an earthly hope, of both of which they enjoyed the fulfilment, as they possessed the land. Christians, on the contrary, are distinguished by the heavenly calling, and of course with it the heavenly hope, of which last, with Abraham and others, they will enjoy the fulfilment on high.

**Apostle of our Confession.**—Called, out then, for heaven, Divine and therefore suited instruction is provided. This is in character with God's ways on previous occasions. For if He calls, He will guide those called, and furnish them with sufficient directions. This He may do, either directly by word of His mouth, or by any messenger or apostle of His choice. To Abraham He spoke directly, first in Ur of the Chaldees, according to Stephen (Acts vii. 2), which statement receives support from Gen. xv. 7 and Neh. ix. 7, and then afresh in Haran (Gen. xii. 1), directing him to go to a land which He would show him. Abraham obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. xi. 8). God's word was, however, enough. He had no more, till, reaching Sichem, he learnt that the country which he had entered was to be the land of his possession (Gen. xii. 6, 7). Israel, called out of Egypt for Canaan, had sent to them a messenger, or apostle, to be with them and to teach them, even Moses, the man of God, and the special servant for that day. These Hebrews likewise;

called out for heaven, had a Messenger sent to them, an Apostle to teach them. Of this Apostle we have read already (i. 2), and have learnt that He is the Son of God. Over and over again when on earth, as stated in the Gospel of John, the Lord told the Jews that He was sent from God, sent by His Father. He declared it too when addressing His Father (John xvii. 18), and He reaffirmed it to His disciples on the day of His resurrection (xx. 21). Rightly, therefore, is He here called (Heb. iii. 1) the Apostle, *i.e.* sent One, of our confession.

**Confession.**—For *confession*, not *profession*, is the term in the original. The difference will be readily understood. They were real Christians to whom this was written. They *confessed* the Christian faith, not merely *professed* to accept it; and they could, we see, speak of their Apostle and of their High Priest. But Israel, we have said, had what was similar, though the difference was great. Of two persons, Moses and Aaron, they could boast, whilst the Hebrews could say that for them One Person filled the two offices. He who was their Apostle was also their High Priest. Would any ask who this was? The answer was ready. It was Jesus, omitting here as we should His appellation of Christ. To teach them, He was the Apostle. To get them through the wilderness, as well as to make propitiation for their sins, He was the High Priest.

**Jesus.**—Of His personal name, and that connected with His humiliation, the sacred writer has already made mention. Jesus, who had died, made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death, and now crowned with glory and honour (ii. 9); Jesus, who had walked about amongst men, and over whose head when on the cross that name was affixed,—He was their Apostle and their High Priest. To be the Apostle He became a man. To be High Priest He stooped to death. And though He has now ascended, and is made Lord and Christ (Acts ii. 36), the sacred writer several times in this Epistle introduces Him simply



as Jesus (ii. 9, iii. 1, vi. 20, vii. 22, x. 19, xii. 2, 24, xiii. 12). There is a significance, we think, in this. Amongst the Jews He had walked as a man, and had been known as Jesus. Now these believers from among them were to learn that the One, who had been seen of men as a man, was now crowned with glory and honour; and that He had entered the sanctuary on high, and is the Mediator of a better covenant, as well as being the High Priest for His people. This One they were now to consider as their Apostle who was faithful to Him that appointed Him.

Thus then, turning our attention to the Lord as the Apostle, we are invited to consider a comparison between Him and Moses, but to learn as well how marked are the contrasts. The contrasts will appear when truth about their respective persons is elicited, and when their position in relation to God's house is understood. Of both the one and of the other faithfulness is declared. The Lord was faithful to Him that appointed Him. In His ministry in life we see that; witness that one day at Capernaum described for us by Mark (i. 21-37), and His reply to Peter, "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And He went" (as we should probably read) "into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils" (38, 39). His twofold line of service, ministering to the soul and to the body, is thus briefly indicated. Then too see that prophetic statement about His labours in Psalm xl. 9, and His statement to the Jews, and then to His Father (John v. 17, 36, xvii. 4). Faithful in service He certainly was. But if the Hebrews would dwell on that in converse with their unbelieving brethren, these latter might remark that faithfulness had been also predicated of Moses; and they would rightly press that it was not any attestation from the lawgiver's contemporaries, nor any statement of his own, to which they referred, but to the unequivocal announcement by God at the door of the tabernacle of the

congregation, when He came down in the cloud to rebuke Aaron and Miriam (Num. xii.). Aaron was high priest, Miriam was a prophetess, and both averred that they, like Moses, had been recipients of Divine communications, God having spoken by them or with them. Accepting this assertion as true, Moses nevertheless stood out apart from and above them, seeing that he was faithful, as God declared, "in all Mine house," i.e. the tabernacle of the congregation, we presume, for that was called the house of God (Deut. xxiii. 18; Josh. vi. 24, ix. 23; Judg. xix. 18; 1 Sam. i. 7, 24).

**Moses and Christ.**—Faithfulness, then, was predicated of Moses. It was also predicated of the Lord (Heb. iii. 2). Were they therefore to be regarded as on an equality, the Apostle of the Hebrews no better than the lawgiver of old? The differences were great indeed, and that in more ways than one. First, all must admit that he who builds a house has more honour than the house. Moses was not a builder, though according to God's directions he reared up the tabernacle at Sinai. But the Son, the Apostle for the Hebrews, was a builder, and in that none could equal Him. He built all things, as the testimony to Him in chap. i. 10 unhesitatingly asserts. Far, far superior therefore to Moses is the Son. Moses was a creature. He is God. And this superiority shall be demonstrated in yet another way, and none will be able to controvert it who accept the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. Our Apostle is the *Son*. Moses was only a *servant*. Undeniably a son is greater than a servant. We have, however, not yet exhausted the contrasts. For Moses was a servant *in* God's house. The Son is *over* God's house; for God's house, not the Son's house, is the teaching of Heb. iii. 6, as the Revised Version will show. And He is over such a house as Moses never knew. Moses was faithful for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after (Heb. iii. 5). He foretold the advent of the Prophet who was to come,

directing all to expect Him, whom we know as the Son. As a servant in God's house he was, and never rose, or could rise, higher. But Jesus, whom perhaps some then addressed may have seen, or at all events must have been acquainted with some who had—this Jesus was really God's Son, and was over God's house—a relationship to God and a position far above that in which Moses had ever stood.

The champions for Moses were completely put out of court. What was here advanced in reference to him was based on the word of God in the Old Testament Scriptures, to which the Jews tenaciously clung. None, then, could discredit this testimony. The Scripture settled the position of Moses in the house, and demonstrated that he could not equal the Lord Jesus. One little word in the original, "My servant," settled it. A word this which might as to its import have been easily overlooked. When, however, attention is drawn to it, the opponents of Christianity in favour of Judaism must be dumb. Then, too, all that was advanced about the person of the Son was based on the inspired Word, even Old Testament scriptures, which have already passed before us. The Hebrews therefore might rest assured that, forsaking Judaism and embracing Christianity, they were not leaving the greater for the less. The *Son* must be greater than the *servant*. Nor could their friends or acquaintances, who still upheld the Mosaic ritual as that to which they should all conform, overthrow by appeals to the Divine Word the teaching here set forth. This last was scriptural. It was plain. It was unanswerable. It left the opponents without an answer in support of that for which they contended. The word of God had spoken. Any question of the superiority of Moses over the exalted Jesus was definitely decided, and decided, not in favour of the lawgiver, but of the crucified One. To Him then, as the Apostle, all ought to hearken, even to the Son, and not merely to the servant.

How interesting, and how instructive too, was this way of establishing the Hebrews in the faith, teaching them, and teaching us, the importance of the Scriptures, assured that in them we shall find no unnecessary verbiage. In some little word or phrase, hitherto overlooked, we may find the clue to some important matter, or the solution of that which has hitherto been a difficulty. For the claims of Moses some might have argued for ever, and never have been silenced by opponents. One little word shed a light on that point, and was sufficient definitely and finally to conclude the matter.

**God's House.**—The Son is over God's house. But what and where is this house? What are we to understand by the term *God's house*? Of course His house is that in which He dwells. Hence in three different aspects can His house be looked at; and all three are mentioned in this passage of the Epistle. God's first dwelling-place on earth, and of which He took possession by the glory which filled it when the cloud first covered it (Exod. xl. 35), was the tabernacle in the wilderness. In that house Moses was a servant. Besides that, the universe is also God's house, for in it He dwells—a house, as we learn, built by the Son, who is therefore God, "for He that built all things is God." Then there is another house now—the Church or Assembly of God upon earth. In this He dwells by the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15). To this last the Hebrews learnt that they now belonged, as we can say, all true Christians do, as well. Moses of old was *in* God's house, but he did not form part of it. Believers now are God's house—"whose house are we" (Heb. iii. 6), a privilege this in which no saint before the Lord's ascension could share.

Here Church truth is just touched on. But this special line of teaching, as we have remarked (p. 32), is not pursued in the Epistle, though step by step we see how Christian ground is demonstrated as distinct from that

on which God's earthly people were placed by Him before the cross. Who then of the Hebrews would go back to that from which they had come out, great though the temptation to do so might be, when they understood that they through grace formed part of God's dwelling-place upon earth by the Spirit, a privilege wholly unattainable by any, however zealous, who continued to be disciples of Moses?

But to this privilege responsibility attached, and those only could really claim to share in the former, who manifested that they recognised the latter by holding fast the confidence (or, boldness) and the rejoicing (or, glorying) of the hope firm unto the end (Heb. iii. 6).

Any question, then, as to Moses was settled, never to be re-opened. Discipleship to Moses was to be for these Hebrews a thing wholly of the past. An Apostle they had greater than Moses. A High Priest too they had greater and more exalted than Aaron. Ere, however, entering on this latter subject, exhortation comes in. To that we must now turn.

*THE REST THAT REMAINETH.*

HEBREWS III. 7—IV. 13.

OUR author knew well the trying circumstances of converts from among the Jews, and those experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and if he was the former persecutor of the faith, as we believe him to have been, none knew better than he what persecution could effect in shaking the constancy of any not fully established in grace. For had he not in past times made many to blaspheme that holy name by which they were called ? (Acts xxvi. 11). A word of exhortation would come then well from him, and all the more in that now for years he too had suffered, and suffered for Christ, more than they all, though still short of death. Exhortations to submission or to steadfastness from those who have never needed to practise such virtues fall without much weight on the ears of the tried and the tempted. Coming, however, from one who had in a special manner, and that frequently, manifested constancy under persecution, they would have a weight, and would gain a hearing, which otherwise might have been denied to them. Even of the Master Himself we have read that He was made perfect through sufferings to be the Captain of our salvation. We can understand, therefore, how the writer's whole soul could go out in earnest desire that the Christian converts should not shrink from trial, but be kept true and faithful. "Take heed," "Let us fear," "Let us labour" (or, give diligence), he writes, words which at once indicate

his earnestness and express his sense of the danger which beset them.

**Psalm xc.**—And first, in keeping with his practice hitherto developed, he would turn their attention to their own Scriptures, and apply the meaning of Psalm xc. to the people to whom he was writing. Was he justified in so dealing with that scripture? Now to understand the pertinence of the quotation we must remember the character of the times in which he wrote—a character defined at the opening of his letter as “the end of these days” (i. 2), that is, near the close of the age previous to the appearance of Messiah in power to reign. Then turning to the Book of Psalms we observe that in the fourth book of the Psalter (xc.-cvi.) we have predicted the advent in power of the Lord Jesus as actually taking place (xciii.-c.), when the godly will enter into rest and the enemies of the Lord be dealt with. Awful persecution we know will precede the advent in power, enough, unless grace should work, to make the stoutest heart quail and the individual apostatise. To encourage to faithfulness to the end, Psalm xc. comes with a warning drawn from Israel’s past history. The ungodly will certainly be dealt with in judgment (xciv.), whilst the godly remnant of the nation will remain on earth to welcome their King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Decision and faithfulness will therefore be urgently called for, lest at the last moment any should turn aside, and so forfeit the long-looked-for rest under Messiah’s sway.

The warning of the Psalm will have its special place in a coming day. But viewing all this time between the cross and the glory as John (1 John ii. 18) and Peter (1 Pet. iv. 7) do, and not knowing how soon the present day of grace might close—for the Father has put that in His own power (Acts i. 7)—the warning provided for the last days was also in place when the Apostle wrote. So he told his readers of it. And now, whilst we note the care of God for His suffering saints, we would remind the reader of the special

suitability of that Psalm for the purpose for which it is adduced. It is a Psalm directly addressed to Israel, as the following one (xcvi.) is addressed to all the earth. No word therefore in the Old Testament could have been more apposite. Addressing the Hebrews, he quotes that which especially concerned their nation. He applies that portion of the Psalm to the matter in hand. He does not say it is fulfilled, for a future day only, we know, will witness its accomplishment. He quotes it and applies it as suited instruction for the present.

Here let us also note the light in which Old Testament scriptures are presented in this letter, and the attestation of their claim to be the Word of God. In chap. i., as we have already remarked, the quotations are for the most part utterances by God, and addressed to His Son. They must be inspired words. In chap. ii. we have an utterance of the Son of God addressed to Him who is His Father. This also must be inspired. Then the quotation from Psalm xcv. in chap. iii. is introduced with the announcement that the words are the words of the Holy Ghost. These also must be inspired. God the Father speaks, as we learn from chap. i. God the Son speaks, as we have been taught, in chap. ii. And now the third Person of the Trinity, it is affirmed, God the Spirit, speaks in the quotation referred to. What grace all this exhibited! How God would establish the faith of His saints on stable ground, even that of His own words! And if in danger of surrendering the true faith of their day, to follow that which might seem to be an easier path, they were to learn that God had foreseen it all, and centuries previous supplied the very exhortation suited to meet them in their hour of temptation.

“To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted by proving Me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved [or, displeased] with this generation, and said, They do always err



in their heart; and they have not known [or, but they did not know] My ways. So [or, as] I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest" (Heb. iii. 7-11). Israel's past history was to teach lessons for their children. The Psalm in the original would remind all of the incidents at Meribah, as detailed in Num. xx. 1-13, by the word translated *provocation*, and then of those at Massah, related in Exod. xvii. 1-7, by the word translated *temptation*.\* God among them, God's power and care for them, they doubted on these two occasions, but wholly without reason. Let the Hebrews then take care, lest any of them should act in a similar manner.

**The Caution.**—Thus exhorted, a caution is given of a danger to be avoided, if Christian blessing and Christian hope were not to be surrendered. "Take heed, brethren," so we read, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing [or, falling away] from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made [or, become] partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (iii. 12-15). Earnest indeed was the writer. *To-day* he emphasises. The present is the all-important time. None could say when the *To-day* would become *Yesterday*, and the opportunity neglected of holding fast be then lost for ever. Nor is he content with warning. He would press on them important considerations, and bid them look on to the future. With the *living* God they had to do. To be fellows of Christ was a favour within their reach, and the rest of God yet awaits the faithful. Considerations these were, calculated

\* In Exod. xvii. 7 Moses called the place where the water gushed forth both Massah and Meribah. The Psalm, however, plainly refers to two occasions, and not to that one only. So to Num. xx. 1-13 are we turned, as well as to Exod. xvii.

to encourage the weak, and to stimulate the wavering to continued faithfulness and unabated perseverance. Let us look into them.

**The Living God.**—To *the* living God He directed attention. That speaks of one, and only one, Divine Being. There are not two living Gods. Now their fathers had understood the significance of this designation, defining as it did their God, the Lord Jehovah, as wholly different from the idols of the heathen. Such had no life. "They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat" (Psalm cxv. 5-7). Scorn is thus heaped on the idols, on their makers, and on their worshippers. But the Lord, the God of Israel, as Jeremiah (x. 10) writes, "is the true God; He is the living God, an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation." To this One the Thessalonian saints had turned from idols, to serve Him, the living and true God (1 Thess. i. 9). He too was the desire of the saint in earlier days, as the psalmist expresses it, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalm lxxxiv. 2). And again: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm xlii. 2). Nothing short of being in the presence of the true God, who is the living God, could fulfil his desire. Idols could not satisfy him. Heathen mythology afforded no rest for the heart in its trouble. To see the living God he waited, and meanwhile gave expression to his longing wish.

Then too David, when he saw Goliath, and witnessed the terror of the people at his appearance, encouraged himself, and would, if he could, have rallied that craven-spirited host, by the remembrance of this special characteristic of their God. Let the giant be as strong as he looked, and

his armour be impervious to human weapons, what was he in reality but one who defied the armies of the *living* God? Fall then he must. The power of death could not overcome the *living* God (1 Sam. xvii. 26). Thus David in faith reasoned, and surely well. The uncircumcised Philistine should become like the slain lion and the dead bear, because he had defied the armies of the living God. The living God was for David not a formula, an abstraction, a theological expression. He was a reality. And then was the time to count on deliverance, going forward to battle in this confidence.

The people could not have been ignorant of this designation of the God of Israel. Moses had spoken of it (Deut. v. 26). Joshua (iii. 10) had reminded their fathers of it. No one, when David mentioned it, disputed the fact. The truth of it in power, however, they had not grasped. The shepherd-lad had learnt the reality of that which they held but in theory. Can we point the finger at them for that? Are we not at times pulled up, by finding that we have not really grasped for practical use truths we professed to hold? Just one instance will suffice. God has given His Son for us. We own it, we sing of it; but how far have we laid hold of it to give us real sustainment of heart and confidence in God in any time of need? Let the reader ponder over this, and see where *he* is as to it.

If with the revelation of God as the living God Israel were familiar, though David in that day alone evidenced that he had grasped it in power, with the revelation of God as the living God the Hebrews must have been likewise acquainted. And, in addition to Old Testament Scriptures declaring it, there was Peter's confession of Christ as the Son of the living God, and the Lord's immediate answer that on that rock He would build His Church, and the gates of Hades should not prevail against it (Matt. xvi. 16, 18). Of this it is unlikely that they were ignorant. The Gospel which has preserved it for us was

probably already in existence—that Gospel written more especially for the Jews. Against the living God the powers of darkness could never prevail. With what confidence of heart, then, could they go forward, facing difficulties and meeting with persecution. But to return to Judaism would be to turn from the living God. In that He was not to be found. The Temple, once His dwelling-place on earth, was left to Israel desolate (Matt. xxiii. 38). To give up Christianity, then, involved the turning from the living God. A solemn consideration this was for the Hebrews. A solemn consideration it is for any who renounce Christianity in our day. The living God can at His word make the earth to tremble, and the nations then will not be able to abide His indignation. Who with the knowledge of this would risk the outpouring of His wrath? This would be folly indeed.

This danger they were to remember, and real care for one another was to be aroused, evinced, as it would be, when in exercise, by exhorting one another, whilst the time was the time of *to-day*. Each one, however, should have no doubt about his own salvation, and so be free to watch over in that respect the interests of his brethren. Evidently to no special class among them was this duty delegated. Elders there were at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 6, xxi. 18). This charge, however, was not entrusted to them. Saints, brethren in Christ, children of the Father, sons of God—these were to care for one another and to exhort one another day by day. The deceitfulness of sin was to be remembered, its hardening process feared. A danger this was to which any might be exposed, and which could only be effectively resisted by watchfulness, and, may we not add? by prayer. Besides, however, the *danger* to be avoided, there was a *favour* to be enjoyed, though in its fulness to be known only in heaven. We refer to that which follows: “For we are made [or, become] partakers [rather, fellows] of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stead-

fast unto the end ; while it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation " (Heb. iii. 14, 15).

**To-day.**—How the present is kept before them (iii. 7, 13, 15), indicative of the age in which they lived, and intimating in no faltering manner that the morrow of that age would witness the close of their opportunity. People talk at times as if the impenitent, who remain so here, may have another opportunity hereafter. Such a dream—for it is one—is vain, being utterly without foundation. "*Now* is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). *To-day*, ere this period closes ; *to-day* is the only opportunity to be counted on for any who hear the Gospel of God's grace to accept its offer of salvation ; *to-day* is the only opportunity that real believers can be sure of for making good their profession. Then, too, there is earnestly pressed on the saints the importance of perseverance "unto the end." So it must be (Heb. iii. 6, 14). To keep on the road, to continue the fight—nothing less were these Hebrews to contemplate. Settling down short of reaching the end of the race was not to be entertained for one moment. For under such circumstances great would be their loss. The becoming companions of Christ they must in that case for ever forego, and to the promised rest they would never attain.

**Partakers of Christ.**—The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to reign. His saints will come with Him, forming His train (Rev. xix. 14). A little time of suffering now, then glory with Him for ever. This is the prospect. Who would barter this away for ease, it might be, for a few short years here ? Who would not value being a partaker (or, as it might be rendered, a fellow) of Christ in that day ? He was the faithful One here. Those faithful through grace will be with Him as His fellows then, and for ever. Of the existence of His companions Psalm xlv. has spoken. Of the characteristics of such Heb. iii. 14 teaches, and tells us that as it was within the reach of the

Hebrews in the Apostle's day to be such, so is it within the reach of every true believer still.

**Unbelief.**—For what can effectually hinder the attainment of it? Worthy of such a favour of course the Hebrews were not. Who could be personally worthy, who owes all blessing to the precious blood of Christ which has made propitiation for his sins? Dull surely we all are, slow of apprehension too, as such a favour is set before us. But dulness of heart in responding to it, slowness of apprehension concerning it, will not hinder our sharing in it in the coming day. What will hinder, and hinder fatally and finally, if allowed to work out its bitter results, is the sin of unbelief. So of this the Hebrews are reminded. And the warning flowing from Israel's history, related in Num. xiv. and re-stated in Deut. i. 35, is kept before them. Unbelief lost their fathers the land. Their carcases fell in the wilderness. Unbelief would prevent for ever any one, who persistently should give way to it, from being a fellow or a companion of Christ, and from entering into the rest that remaineth.

We have said that our author was in earnest in thus writing. How earnest, indeed, as admonition after admonition drops from his pen! (iii. 6, 12-14, iv. 1, 11, 14). He was not content to be sure of his own salvation and blessing; he earnestly desired that of his readers also. What pains were taken to keep them steadfast, and how instructive must have been to the faithful the allusions to their nation's past history! It would remind them of being, like their fathers, started on a wilderness journey, though to reach a better home than the land of Canaan. The history they might often have read, and viewed it, as it was of course, a record of the past. Now they would learn that it had lessons for them, and these solemn ones indeed. The wisdom of God in having all that recorded they would then see, and would observe too how far-reaching must be His thoughts. For what Moses wrote

of in the wilderness, and was recalled to the people in the land in days long antecedent to the cross, was like those poles placed along a mountain road to guide travellers in time of snow, lest they should wander from the track. The history of Meribah and of Massah stands out to warn the Hebrews and other saints, lest they should fall after the same example of unbelief.

Here we would remark on the different dangers noticed in this Epistle. First, the reader is advised of the danger of neglecting so great salvation (ii. 3). Next, in this chapter (iii.), we are reminded of the evil consequence of unbelief. In chap. vi. we learn that the enjoyment outwardly of Christian privileges, etc., will not avail any without also a real work of grace in the soul. Then in chap. x. 26-31 the awful consequences of final apostasy are set forth in plain language.

**A Promise.**—But other means are resorted to besides warnings. Of a promise we now read: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (iv. 1). Encouragement as to the future is set before them. Of a promise of entering into God's rest he speaks. God speaks of the future to Christians, as He did in the past to Israel. He told them of a land (Exod. iii. 8, 17), and of a rest for them, into which, however, they could not enter whilst on their wilderness journey. Yet, ere they began it, as we see, God told them of that land; and from time to time, when on their road, He reminded them of their prospects (Exod. xiii. 5, xxiii. 23; Deut. viii. 7-9, xii. 9). These good tidings they undoubtedly heard, but all in vain. "The word preached [or, of hearing] did not profit them, because they were not united by faith with them that heard" (Heb. iv. 2), for thus we should probably read this last clause. Glad tidings likewise reached the Hebrews—good news of the inheritance, of the glory, and of the everlasting rest to be entered upon. An evangelising

had gone on of old. It goes on still. Yet we must distinguish this from the Gospel commonly so called, though now for us closely connected with it. God—we may say it with reverence—delights to tell His people of the future. Would the Hebrews who heard it follow the example of their fathers, or rather take warning by them and avoid their disastrous mistake? That was the question for them. Is not that the question for people still?

What indeed is man! Promises however plain, prospects however bright, will not keep him right. Nothing but grace working within him can do that. So we read of the widespread defection of Israel in the wilderness: "For who when they heard did provoke? nay did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?" (iii. 16). In this way the verse should be punctuated, it is now generally agreed. For clearly by far the greater bulk of the people were involved in that sin of unbelief, Joshua and Caleb excepted, to whom we must add the tribe of Levi, we believe, for that tribe had nothing to do with the sending of the spies. No one on that mission represented them.\* And this we can quite understand, for they were to have no tribal portion in the land. Looking back then on the past, well indeed might the sacred writer exhort his countrymen, lest any should come short of the inheritance, reminding them that those who have believed enter into rest. Such were on the way to it, and such only (iv. 3).

**God's Rest.**—But what is this rest? He will explain. It is *God's* rest, as the Psalm declares. "My rest." It cannot, then, be rest of conscience. Who could associate that with God? True the sinner needs rest of conscience, and that Christ gives to the weary and heavy-laden who come unto Him. Nor is it rest of heart by the way. That is promised us, if we take Christ's yoke and learn of Him (Matt. xi. 28-30). But God's rest is rest from all toil and

\* The history and service of the tribe of Levi have special instructions for Christians; but we cannot enlarge on that here.



labour. This character of rest we read of in Gen. ii. 1-3. God then rested from all His work which He had created and made. The fall took place, and God's rest was broken in on. Since that, as the Lord has taught us, the Father worketh, and He too works (John v. 17). Hence the resting of God from all that He created and made is not the rest intended in the Psalm for us, though that illustrates the character of it.

In due time the people under Joshua entered the land, and rested after all the wilderness journey, and their wars too in Canaan. In measure of course that was rest for the nation (Deut. xii. 9), but is not the rest held out to us. Nor, it is equally manifest, is it the rest held out to Israel in that Psalm, which was composed centuries after they had entered the land, and which spoke of the rest as still future. And as nothing since David's day had taken place before our Epistle was written that could be viewed as the fulfilment of the Psalm, and nothing certainly since, the rest of God of which it speaks must be future still. "There remaineth therefore a rest [or better, a Sabbath rest] for the people of God. For he that has entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his works, as God did from His" (iv. 9, 10). His rest.\* Whose rest? We think that "His rest" here, as elsewhere (iii. 18, iv. 1), is to be understood of God's rest, which is held out to us in prospect. And hence follows the exhortation: "Let us labour [or, give diligence] therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (iv. 11).

Thus step by step the reasoning proceeds till the conclusion is reached, which none can gainsay. The rest intended was not that of Canaan. It was future in the days of David. It is future still. But the character of it as God's rest was delineated in Gen. ii., when God rested from all His work which He had created and made. How

\* It is questioned to what the pronoun *his* refers—whether to the individual or to God.

interesting, we must again remark, must the teaching of this Epistle have been to the receptive Hebrews! Scripture was opened up in a way they had never before perceived; and passages, we may safely say, appeared in a new light to those who had read them before their conversion. Who would have supposed that the record of Gen. ii. 1-3 had a voice for Christians, and has a voice still? To Israel it showed the ground on which the institution of their Sabbath was based (Exod. xx. 11). To us it foreshadows that sabbatic rest which, once entered upon, will never be interrupted. God will rest when the new heavens and the new earth are made. His people will also rest as they cease from their own works of toil and labour down here.

**The Word of God.**—Meanwhile, in the conflict in which we are called to engage, and in the journey of life here, God has provided by the action of His Word on His people to teach them what they need, and to show them whence come their thoughts and their deeds. Of this we are now to learn. And first what the Word *is*, and then what the Word *does*. It is *quick*, or living. As God's Word, it has His character, and is so called (Acts vii. 38; 1 Pet. i. 23)—a character peculiar to itself, being the Word of the living God. Next, it is *powerful*, or rather, active. It is also *sharp*, sharper than any two-edged sword. Of its dissecting power we next read. It can *pierce*, so as to divide between soul and spirit, joints and marrow. Further, it is a *discerner* of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The whole man, and every part of the man, can be laid bare by it. Body, soul, and spirit, and the workings of his heart, all can be detected by it. Terrible, how terrible, would this be, if grace were not known! But to help those who are partakers of the grace of salvation the Word can thus act.

We have said of body, soul, and spirit, because the mention of *joints* and *marrow*, if not taken in a metaphorical sense (for which from the passage there seems no

warrant), must be held to refer to the workings of the *body*, that vessel which should be kept in due subjection. Then *soul* and *spirit* refer to the other two parts of man, who is in himself a tripartite creature (1 Thess. v. 23)—the former, the animal soul, which we possess as well as the beasts; the latter, the higher part of man, which he derived from the inbreathing of the Divine breath (Gen. ii. 7). All then that constitutes a man is under the discriminating power of the Divine Word. Further, of the *heart* we read, and of the *feelings* and the *thoughts*; the first of these two last referring to “the action of the affections,” the latter, translated *intents*, “to the action of the reason.” So Bishop Westcott on the passage. Full provision thus made for man to discern whence spring his motives and his acts, we learn next of God, that there is no “creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. iv. 13). We cannot deceive Him. He would by the action of His Word prevent us from deceiving ourselves.

Helps by the way were fully provided. Of the Word we have just read. The high priestly service will soon come before us. Nothing that was really needed for the Christians was withheld on the part of God. So the exhortation comes with force: “Let us labour [or, give diligence] to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (iv. 11). Greater than Moses was Jesus, Son of God. Greater too He was than Joshua, the captain of the host; for He will lead His people into a rest which is abiding, and one far better than that of Canaan. Greater too we shall shortly find is the Son than Aaron the high priest. Who then would the Hebrews follow? Who could they follow but the Son? The road, however, was rough, and the opposition to them strong. Hence exhortations were called for. We have seen some of them pass before us, as we shall see yet more. So now, ere closing this section of the Epistle, we would direct attention to the

manner in which the Hebrews were at one moment exhorted and at another warned. And this it may be useful to do, as it clearly shows that the sacred writer gives no countenance to the thought of a true Christian—and by that we mean one who knows that his sins are forgiven (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 John ii. 12)—cherishing any doubt about his salvation. Each one ought to know what he is, and be clear about that. A child knows his father. Should not we know ours? God's word is simple; and, taken simply, there is no room to harbour any such doubts. John iii. 16, v. 24, 25, Acts xvi. 31, with other scriptures, which we need not mention, are sufficient for the soul to rest upon unhesitatingly.

Exhortations, however, we all need, because of that which is within us, the old man, the flesh. We shall need them to the end of the race. It is profitable then to be reminded that we cannot with safety rest, as it were, on our oars. Each one must press forward. No one should settle down in carelessness, if he would enter into God's rest. In view of this, the sacred writer in the section of the Epistle we have been examining exhorts his fellow-Christians in the most earnest way. Having life, everlasting life, action which characterises that life should be displayed by its recipients. But as a wise teacher he knew how to do this. The importance of this impels us here to recur to it. He knew how to encourage. He knew how to warn. Encouraging them, he classes himself with the company. "Whose house are we," he writes, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (iii. 6). Again: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (iii. 14). Again: "Let us labour to enter into that rest" (iv. 11). But, warning them, he writes in a different key: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of *you* an evil heart of unbelief" (iii. 12). Again: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into His rest,

any of *you* should seem to come short of it" (iv. 1). Again : "Lest *any man* fall after the same example of unbelief" (iv. 11). If danger is expressed, he writes of *you*. He could not read their hearts. He knew his own. *We* and *us* have their place, and *you* has its place in these exhortations. A little attention to this may help some to see, as we have already remarked, that the sacred writer gives no encouragement to any to cherish doubts about themselves. Rather, imitating him, they should learn to make sure about themselves, though the heart of another none of us can fully read.

## THE HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.

HEBREWS IV. 14—V. 10.

THE two most important people for Israel on their journey, indispensable indeed each in his special office, were the two brothers Moses and Aaron. One person for us unites in Himself these two offices of Apostle and High Priest, and towers above every other messenger from God that has appeared, or that may appear. Far exceeding Moses He has been shown to be by virtue of His relationship to God as the Son, and likewise as the builder of all things, and therefore God. Far exceeding Aaron will He be demonstrated to be by virtue of His person, the sanctuary in which He ministers, and the order of His priesthood. All that Aaron as high priest could do, He does, or has done; and far more than Aaron could do has He done, for He has entered into the holiest on high by His own blood. He remains there, having found eternal redemption (Heb. ix. 12). One sacrifice on His part was sufficient to settle the question of our sins, and to give us access by His blood into the presence chamber of our God (x. 12-19).

But this, which speaks of His sacrificial service on our behalf, is not the exercise of His high priestly work, to which our attention is now to be drawn. His *present* intercession for Christians who are travelling down here is first treated of (iv. 14—vii. 25), for God's provision for His saints by the way is the special subject of this part of the Epistle. The Apostle to teach, the written Word to search

the individual and to detect the hidden motives of the heart, and the High Priest to intercede for saints—these are provided by God for His people, that they may get through the wilderness of this world. And these three, we may note, are brought forward in their right order. To be taught is the first thing. *The* Apostle inaugurated that service. To see what we are and what are our motives is needful. The Word effects that. Then, lest any one should faint by the way, or be in danger of forsaking the path because of the difficulties which beset him, the intercession of the High Priest is provided, that all the needed grace may be procured by Him and utilised by the believers.

**Where the Son is.**—Recalling to mind what we have already read, that He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (i. 3), He is therefore in heaven, and not upon earth. And no pontifical act of His is viewed as done or carried on anywhere but in heaven. We shall find a reason for this when we come to chap. viii. 4.

Recalling too to mind the double character of His priestly work as taught us in chap. ii. 17, 18, we are prepared for that which we now read: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into [rather, through] the heavens, Jesus, Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [or better, confession]" (iv. 14). The Christian faith was not to be surrendered, as assuredly it was not to be corrupted, by the admixture of Judaising principles. "Our confession," a well-known one, was to be tenaciously maintained. And the very exhortation warns of the danger there was of surrendering it. To hold fast the confidence and rejoicing (or, glorying) of the hope firm unto the end (iii. 6) has been already pressed on these Hebrews, who have also been reminded of the importance of holding the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end (iii. 14). Holding fast became them. Holding fast becomes us. And now we are to learn of the provision to enable us to do that, having free access to the throne of grace to receive there

what the active intercession of the High Priest has procured for us.

But we must not anticipate. A *great* High Priest is ours, well called *great*, seeing He is immensely superior to Aaron. And greatness can be predicated of Him in a way to which no creature can aspire, for He is where no mere creature can ever be. Greater than Aaron, we shall later on read of Him as the *great* Shepherd of the sheep (xiii. 20). For in all things He must have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18). This One the Hebrews were now to consider in His office of High Priest.

And first we read of a road He has traversed. He has passed *through* the heavens, as we should translate, and has gone right up to the throne of God. This the tabernacle will help any to understand, the mercy-seat therein being placed at its extreme west, whilst the priest entered the sanctuary by way of the east. To reach the mercy-seat, therefore, the whole sanctuary had to be traversed—a little picture, as the high priest did it, of the Lord passing through the heavens to reach the throne of God. “Jesus, Son of God,” the sacred writer here calls Him, connecting for us what is said of Him in chaps. i. and ii., in the first of which He is introduced as the Son and in the second as Jesus.

**Able to Sympathise.**—The excellency of His person, who is Jesus, Son of God, and who has passed too through the heavens, and who remains there, would at once point out how far He surpasses Aaron, and assuredly his successors. Who then would follow them, and continue beholden to such for sanctuary ministrations, when there was, and is, such a High Priest as Jesus, Son of God? But more. Great though He is, He is human as well as Divine; so can sympathise with His people in their weaknesses, for “Touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (iv. 15) really means that. What a thought for us! What encouragement! We may find some men anything but sympathetic.



The very mention of weakness may bore them. The Son of God is different. He can and does sympathise with His people in their weaknesses. *Weakness*, let us mark, not *sins*. It is the feebleness of the creature of which He takes note, and for whom in such a condition He can feel. And indeed what are there of difficulties by the way with which He is not conversant? What is there of proper human feeling to which He is a stranger? What power of man, what power of the devil, opposed to God, has He not experienced?

With human weakness He has been acquainted. Witness that time when an angel appeared to Him to strengthen Him. Weariness too from travel and hunger and thirst likewise did He experience. The history of Sychar's well records His weariness and His thirst. The wilderness and the barren fig tree both knew Him as the hungry man. Then rejection by men He was made to feel, and the being forsaken by all His disciples as well. The taunts and jeers of all classes when He was crucified He keenly felt, for He endured them. We know that. For though the Gospels tell us nothing of His feelings in that way at the time, the 22nd Psalm acquaints us by the Spirit of prophecy with the trial all that really would be to Him. Jesus, Son of God, passed through it. He was deeply sensible of it. Hence He can sympathise with His people, if found at any time in similar circumstances. And whether it be the sense of human weakness, or the trials from men, or from the enemy, He knows the full measure of it all. For He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. iv. 15). True He was holy and undefiled. Satan had nothing in Him (John xiv. 30). Peter too tells us He did no sin (1 Pet. ii. 22). And John writes, what is stronger, that in Him is no sin (1 John iii. 5). Does that make Him less able to sympathise with us? Nay, it makes Him better able, we must say with reverence. For He has known the full force of temptation, and resisted it to the

uttermost. He knows then all it can be, and the grace that we need to stand firm against it. We profit by His sinlessness. For all that the enemy could bring against Him to turn Him aside from the cross, which was then appointed Him, was certainly attempted, but signally failed. Many a one may have resisted temptation much and long, though at length succumbing. Such a one could speak from experience of the enemy's power, but could not, through at last yielding, affirm that he had fully tested it to the uttermost. One alone has done that. And that One is our High Priest, Jesus, Son of God.

Now follows the blessed and immediate result of having such a High Priest. Assured of His deep sympathy, and of His constant interest in His own, we are exhorted to draw nigh with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. iv. 16). Ever dependent, and to be consciously that, we have an unfailing resource, of which we are free to make use. With boldness can we draw nigh. True it is that, apart from the knowledge of acceptance on the ground of Christ's atoning sacrifice, we could not thus draw nigh. That is therefore here assumed as already known by the tried and tempted saint, though later on it will be set forth, in order to keep any of the Hebrews or others from the sin of apostasy through reverting to the Temple ritual and conforming afresh to Mosaic ordinances. But in our chapter (iv.) it is the provision for the saint's difficulties and warfare that is the subject, and not the ground of the sinner's acceptance.

Grace for the way is needed. Mercy too in our feebleness is required. For both are we to approach the throne, but for us a throne of grace, and not a throne of judgment. No fear is there of denial, no fear of judgment to hinder us, conscious though we are that as sinners we deserved it. We are to draw nigh with *boldness* to receive mercy, and to find *grace* to help in time of need (iv. 16). *To receive!* Let

us pause for a moment. We are not told even to ask. We are told to come to receive and to find. Why such language? Why this direction? Because our High Priest has asked already for us, and has obtained all the grace and the mercy that we need. It is there already for us. Had we first to ask, we might reasonably think that we must wait for the answer. We are to go to *receive* what we need, and all that we need, and as often as we need. Our God delights to provide. Our High Priest is ever ready to intercede. And we are to understand that the needed grace and mercy are awaiting us. Poor must be human language to convey to others the sense of such grace on the part of the High Priest. Of His sacrifice once for all many have heard, and rest on it. How many really understand that He is ever, as it were, on the watch, to ask on behalf of His suffering, feeble saints the grace, the help they sorely need? What must His saints be to Him and to God!

Here let us mark that we are not told to go and to confess our sins. There are times and seasons when we need to do that. Then we have to remember the *Advocate*. But here it is for mercy and needful help that we are to draw nigh. A provision this is for us, not when we have sinned, but in order that we should not be turned aside from the path in which we are to walk. So of the High Priest we read, and not of the Advocate.

**Advocate.**—Having touched upon this subject, it may be useful to point out the difference between the services of our *Advocate* and the present service of our *High Priest*. The Lord Jesus fills both offices and discharges both services. Of the Lord as Advocate we read only in the writings of John. Of Him as the High Priest we are taught by the Apostle in the Hebrews. For teaching about the Advocate, and the need for the Lord's service in that character, we are turned by the Holy Spirit of God to 1 John ii. 42. where the Christian's possible failure is supposed, and

his consequent restoration to the joy of communion has to be in grace provided for. How can we enjoy afresh communion with our Father after we have sinned? Let us hear the Divine teaching: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." Let us mark that it is here an Advocate with the *Father*, but in Hebrews a High Priest before *God*. Divine grace shines out in this. How often, when failure has pressed on the conscience and the sense of communion has been interrupted—how often, we say, may the saint have sorrowfully questioned the reality of his relationship to God. "Can I be His child after all, since I have so sinned?" Now it is of the Father that we are reminded at such a time, to indicate that the birth relationship remains unsevered, though the sense of communion is interrupted. Gracious, how gracious of our God is this! He knows what the enemy would try to do. He has therefore furnished us in His Word with a clear answer to any suggestions of the kind. A child may sin, and that grievously, yet he remains his father's child still. The birth-tie can never be undone. And though an earthly parent may disown his offspring, our God will never act in that way toward His children. Now what we need under such circumstances is the active service of the Advocate, that communion afresh may be enjoyed. On that 1 John ii. 1, 2 assures us we can count.

For failing saints, then, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Advocate. To help feeble and tempted ones, lest they should turn aside, there is His present service as High Priest. He could not be the Advocate apart from His having made propitiation for our sins. He could not carry on His present high priestly service of intercession had He not first entered the holiest by His own blood. His atoning sacrifice as completed was a necessary prelude to His engaging in either of these services, called for often—and indeed how often!—by His people on earth.

We may note, further, that it is not to Him as High Priest, or as the Advocate, that we are told to go. It is to the Father we are directed when we have sinned. It is to the throne of grace that we are to draw nigh, and by consequence to Him who is on the throne, even God, to receive the grace and mercy that are required. There is no direction or thought in the New Testament of going to the Priest in any case. This is an important point, and the practice of it may serve to show where people really are in this matter. Men would often say, Go and confess to the priest. The written Word teaches that we have to do directly with God, ever our Father, and to Him to confess, remembering that the Advocate has already taken up our cause on the ground of His atoning sacrifice. How full indeed is the provision for us!

Then let the reader mark, if it be weakness or trials that trouble us, having already boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we can approach the throne with boldness indeed, because it is now for us a throne of grace, and there find that nothing is lacking which we need. For He who has sat down, having offered up a sacrifice for sins once for all, carries on His service of intercession above, whilst His people are battling with opposing powers and temptations below. Again we may remark, How little is this understood! How little surely, all must own, have we thought of the constant interest and watchful solicitude shown in the present service for us by the great High Priest, Jesus, Son of God.

**A High Priest's Service.**—Resuming the thread of the Epistle, after the remarks on the service of Advocate as distinct from that of High Priest, and having learnt the character of our High Priest's present service (iv. 14-16), we are ready to hear more about such an office. And first let us mark the goodness of our God in telling us of His gracious provision for our way, ere setting us down to learn more about the duties in general of a high priest in connection

with a sacrificial ritual. Ministering to the saints as they need is a joy, we may surely say, to our God.

Now a high priest was especially appointed for men. They only of God's intelligent creatures needed such an institution; and, needing it, the office was filled on their behalf by one who was himself a man. We say on their behalf, for, appointed in things pertaining to God, when discharging such a service, the high priest's face was turned Godwards, and not manwards. Herein is a difference between ministering in the Word and discharging the office of priesthood. In the former the minister necessarily has his face turned towards men. He ministers to them. In the latter the priest turned to God. He sacrificed for the people, or interceded for them, as the case might be. At the altar the high priest offered both gifts and sacrifices for sins—terms these well understood by the Hebrews. The former—*gifts*—is the rendering by the Septuagint of the Hebrew word *korban*, i.e. oblation. The latter—sacrifices for sins—of course speak for themselves. For a people who had sinned he offered these last. Further, as a man compassed with infirmity, he could have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way, or erring. Sacrificing then for the guilty, in which at times he would have been included (v. 3), was service appointed him; and compassionating the ignorant and erring was to characterise him.

So far then (v. 1-3) we read of the service of the high priests of Aaron's line, as the opening words of the chapter plainly teach. But when we think of the Lord, what a difference between them and Him! Sinners, and encompassed with infirmity, such were they. So any comparison between them and Him must not be drawn without marking the contrasts as well. For Him of course no sin offering was required. And though one turns to the Old Testament ritual for the Day of Atonement to see what then had to be done, it is only in the New Testament that

we learn how the Lord did it, offering up Himself once for all, and entering into the holiest by His own blood. A contrast indeed this was to Aaron's service! And all this speaks, we must ever remember, of His spotlessness, whilst bringing out in the fullest way that could be the depth of ruin in which we all were, and by consequence the greatness of our need, as well as the marvellous proof of His love.

**The Call.**—Comparisons there are as well as contrasts. Now we have another comparison and another contrast. Of the call to the office we are reminded: "No man taketh this honour unto himself; but he that is called [or, when he is called] of God, as was Aaron" (v. 4). The high priest ministered in things pertaining to God, so he needed to be called to that high office by God. As to Aaron's call all Israel were clear. *Exod. xxviii. 1, Lev. viii. 1, 2*, plainly record it. Of the Lord's call to His priesthood there is likewise Scripture proof; and this will now be adduced. "So Christ," we read, great as He was and is, "glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." Addressed by God as Son in that passage from *Psalm ii.* just quoted, He was also addressed by God, as we learn from *Psalm cx. 4*, in another, a new character: "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (*Heb. v. 6*). Here then for the first time in the New Testament do we read of this prophetic announcement. Hence that He was called by God to His office of Priest none with that *Psalm* before them can possibly dispute, unless indeed the application of the *Psalm* to the Lord is denied. Few portions, however, of the Old Testament are better attested as having a Messianic application. In the Gospels, in the Acts, and in the Epistles we meet with it quoted as speaking of the Christ.

The Lord called attention to this *Psalm* (*Matt. xxii. ; Mark xii. ; Luke xx.*), and distinctly asserted its Messianic

character, as He asked the Pharisees whose son was the Christ, and referred to David's words calling the Messiah "My Lord," showing thereby that, though David's son, He must be greater than the son of Jesse, King of Israel. And His sitting at Jehovah's right hand proclaimed in the clearest way that, though a man, He would also be God. Interesting was this reference as an intimation, if the Jews had been willing to learn from it, how Old Testament revelation could cast such a light on the truth of Messiah's person. What the Jews did not understand, this Psalm, it is seen, which all acknowledged was Divine revelation, might have helped to explain. Then Peter quoted it in Acts ii. 34, and Paul in Heb. i. 13, both dwelling on the words of Jehovah, "Sit Thou at My right hand." Who in David's day could have predicated that of David's son, unless divinely guided as the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost? The Lord's ascension then we learn had been foretold, and the authority for such a statement was unimpeachable by any who accepted the Psalm as the inspired Word of God. Then, too, 1 Cor. xv. 25 refers to it, acquainting us with the final consequences of His millennial reign.

Of the Lord's priesthood it also spoke. Of this the writer of the Hebrews is the witness, who adduces the fourth verse of it as proof, and will show how every statement in that verse is to be taken literally in its Messianic application. The oath, the call to the priesthood, its order, as well as its everlasting duration—to these points he directs attention, though as yet he has only quoted it in reference to the Divine call. A short Psalm it is, just seven verses, yet what full teaching comes out of it respecting the Lord's person, His present, and His future. With what delight must any godly Hebrew have seized upon its opening up by apostolic teaching. For the moment, however, it must be remembered that it is in proof of the Lord's call to the high priesthood by God that it is here referred to.



**The Days of His Flesh.**—Aaron and the Lord are alike in this, that God had called them both to fill their pontifical office; if Aaron could have compassion on people in their feeble condition, so could the Lord. Aaron's experience would of course be an increasing one year after year. The Lord, however, had full experience of the path and of the saints' need before ever He entered on His office of High Priest. "In the days of His flesh," we read, "when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from [or, out of] death, and was heard, in that He feared [or, for His godly fear]; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called [or, named] of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 7-10). "He suffered, being tempted," we have read (ii. 18), and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (iv. 15). Now we learn of His crying and tears in the days of His flesh, who had dried the tears of so many, and restored dead ones to life, taking us back in thought to His agony in the garden and to His death upon the cross. Of His thrice-repeated prayer in Gethsemane Matthew has told us (xxvi. 38-44); to His position, falling on the ground, Mark's statement is the plainest testimony (xiv. 35); of His bloody sweat, and of the ministry of an angel to strengthen Him, Luke is our only informant (xxii. 43, 44); here (Heb. v. 7) we read of His tears,—all expressive of the depth of trouble through which He was then passing. The power of darkness in all its might He experienced, so He can now fully enter into the trials of His people. And if Aaron could have compassion on others, being himself compassed with infirmity, far better can He have compassion, who has felt to the uttermost all that the enemy can do.

"He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

We read this; but surely it should be to adore. If then the Son has suffered, what if His people suffer? And now the relief to One in suffering is recorded. He prayed, and He was heard. His resurrection proclaimed that, as Psalm xxii. 21 had prophetically announced, "Thou hast heard Me"; and Psalm xl. 1, 2 reaffirmed it. Here Heb. v. 7, written after His resurrection, states it. He was heard for His fear (or, piety). Then, perfected by all that He went through, He became the author (or, cause) of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

**Author of Eternal Salvation.**—We have marked some comparisons with Aaron; we have also pointed out some contrasts. Here is another. A title is His to which Aaron could lay no claim. Our High Priest is the Author of eternal salvation—a designation not met elsewhere within the boards of the New Testament. It is applied exclusively to the Lord Jesus. Son of God, Maker of the worlds, Upholder of all things, Heir of all things, Captain of salvation, Apostle, and also High Priest; He is besides all these, we now learn, the Author of eternal salvation, and that to all them that obey Him, whether formerly Jews or Gentiles. Here too we first meet with the epithet *eternal* in this Epistle. As we proceed we shall meet with it again. For in blessings not of mere temporal duration, but everlasting in their character, these Hebrews had part. This is kept before them. Their fathers entered Canaan, enjoyed it for a few years, and then passed away. These, their descendants, were to share in everlasting blessing, such as *everlasting salvation* (v. 9), *everlasting redemption* (ix. 12), *everlasting inheritance* (ix. 15), and all that flows from an *everlasting covenant* (xiii. 20). Coming to Christ, they were partakers of that which will never pass away. No failure, no decay, is there in any portion of the blessing. Full, final, and everlasting—such are its characteristics. In what marked contrast is this from that which their fathers had enjoyed! Those who professed still to be

disciples of Moses, what had they got? what could they keep? Those who obeyed the Lord, the Prophet like unto the lawgiver Moses, found themselves heirs of everlasting blessing. And this was sure, for the salvation here mentioned takes in that of the whole person, and not merely salvation of the soul, connected as it is with the Lord Jesus being Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Much trial there might be, as indeed there had been; but an everlasting salvation they would share in, and to it they could confidently look forward. Who then, with such a High Priest, would surrender Christian blessing and Christian hope, for that which, if it gave a little temporal ease, could never procure what is of real value, everlasting salvation and an everlasting inheritance?

## A REBUKE.

HEBREWS V. 11—VI. 20.

TO attract and to lead on, not to repel, were the desire and aim of the writer. So, ere administering the needed and justly deserved rebuke, he set before them the privilege they enjoyed of approaching the throne of grace, and the provision God had made for them on their road by instituting the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every reader, therefore, of the Epistle might see what was at stake, if for the sake of an easier path he did not desire to grasp nor to keep hold of true Christian teaching. There was not to be for any of them a balancing in the mind which they would follow, whether Judaism or Christianity. To follow the former would result in grievous, not to say final, loss. To follow the latter would land them in the future in the rest that remaineth, with the provision of a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek to meet them in all the exigencies and trials of the way. To hold with both was impossible. To the one or to the other they must adhere. And he who knew what was at stake ardently desired that they should be followers out and out of the crucified One, the Saviour of sinners.

**Their State.**—Remembering that the 95th Psalm spoke of *to-day*, and also that they were living in the end of the days of the epoch preceding the Lord's return to reign, there was no time, he would impress on them, for indecision or carelessness in this matter. And the fact, as he will

develop it, that the Lord was High Priest after the order of Melchizedek was calculated to arouse their interest, and to encourage them to take an outside place with reference to their unconverted Jewish brethren. But, alas ! as he has to tell them, their spiritual condition hindered the reception of that teaching, which he was both competent and ready to impart. "Of whom," he writes, referring to the truth just introduced, that the Lord was High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, "we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye have become [not, are] dull of hearing" (v. 11). It was their present, and not their original, state which stood in their way. How they had got into it is not explained, nor was that called for. Their state was the important consideration, and that is described with unhesitating clearness. "Ye have become dull of hearing." Progress in Divine teaching had certainly not characterised them, nor had they, it would seem, desired it. A dulness had crept over them, spiritual growth was checked, and any desire to help on others in truth was conspicuously absent. Long enough had they sat on the scholar's bench, and that a low one, in the school of Christianity. Time it was that sufficient progress had been made to allow of their helping others. Yet they were contented to sit on the form allotted to primary instruction, and to listen to the first principles of the oracles of God.

Was this a harsh judgment, a mistaken conception of their spiritual condition? The words of James to Paul in Acts xxi. 20 confirm it : "Thou seest, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are which believe ; and they are all zealous of the law." Abiding in Jerusalem, the cradle of Christianity, had tended to keep believers in a state of spiritual infancy, instead of leading them on to become mature Christians. And if we may draw the natural conclusion from James's words above quoted, and from his manifested desire to conciliate Jewish prejudices, he and

the elders with him were not in a condition to minister truth that would foster true spiritual growth and a full apprehension of Divine things. So the Hebrews were like babes, desiring milk, not solid food.

A rebuke thus was indeed. Had not some Judaising teachers gone down years previously to Antioch in Syria to set right, as they thought, converts in that city gathered out from the Gentiles, enjoining on them to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses as essential to salvation? (Acts. xv. 1-5). Had not some of that same class visited Antioch a second time, soon after that first controversy had been settled at Jerusalem, and wrought trouble amongst believers from the Jews, as they wanted them to separate socially from those Christians who had been Gentiles? Doubtless such prided themselves on living in the city where the Christian Church was first formed, and by consequence as being better instructed than any not so favoured? Foolish, however, was such a boast. The encouragement of such a feeling really demonstrated that these were babes, and not full grown men, in Christian teaching. Healthy, manly development of Christianity had not its seat and centre at Jerusalem. May not a similar mistake be noticed in our day, in the holding up certain places as centres of light, instead of practically owning dependence on the presence and teaching of the Holy Ghost in the assembly? In Rome we see that mistake; but not there only. How many of the different sections of the Church of God on earth have virtually their Jerusalems likewise!

But to return. Healthy development of Christianity was the sacred writer's desire. We know of but one who was likely to describe Christians in the land, converts from Judaism, as babes. We mean of course the Apostle Paul, who here devoted himself to the task of leading on such. "Therefore leaving [or, ceasing to speak] of the world of the beginning of Christ, let us go on," he writes, "unto

perfection," *i.e.* mature or full growth (vi. 1). There were truths common to Jews and Christians here called "the word of the beginning of Christ," as known and recognised when the Lord was on earth. Of course those must be held; but the Hebrews were not just to rest there. Now we can quite understand the tendency there was for those in the metropolis to rest in such. It would procure for them a smoother path, but at the loss, we are here taught, and can see plainly enough, of rich Christian blessing. Has that tendency ceased to exist? Is it not still advocated by some? "Let us cultivate that on which we are agreed," they would cry. "Why emphasize points of difference? Be peaceful, and not contentious. Points of difference we will leave aside as non-essentials, and cultivate peace." Such principles are often anything but sound; and, what is more, at times certainly are not the fruit of the Holy Spirit's teaching. Such thoughts, we see, the author would not tolerate for one moment. For if the Hebrews should by this time have been fitted to help on others, progress in distinctive Christian teaching is assumed as that which was to be expected and desired, and stagnation was hereby in the plainest manner condemned. There are of course circumstances in which we are exhorted to follow things that make for peace (Rom. xiv. 19), by not pressing non-essential points to the stumbling of weaker brethren who are walking according to their conscience. But that is very different from the matter here in hand, which is *animadverted* upon—*viz.* the remaining in a state of spiritual infancy, instead of going on to Christian manhood in the faith. On milk, to carry out the simile, the Hebrews were feeding, and not on solid food. Growth should progress in those who have life. A thought this is for us all.

**Borderground.**—The rebuke administered, exhortations follow: "Let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine [or, teaching] of baptisms, and

of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permit" (vi. 1-3). To teaching current at Jerusalem he would not confine himself. The futility of such a practice the state of the Hebrews sufficiently attested. To be full-grown men must be their aim. But of some of the doctrines common to Jews and Christians he reminds his readers, and they are enumerated in three pairs. First, repentance from dead works and faith toward God. Next, the doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands. Then comes the third pair, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Conscience work, submission to rites, and the solemn future, under these heads they are summed up.

Repentance from dead works is taught throughout Scripture. John the Baptist preached it (Matt. iii. 2), the Lord also (Mark i. 15), and the Twelve as well sent out by Him (Mark vi. 12). Faith too was recognised as needed. But whilst the Christian teacher, if he did his work aright, would emphasize faith in Christ as well as faith in God, the Jews of course would only insist on the latter. Faith toward God therefore might be inculcated by those who were not Christians at all. It fell short of the Divine revelation for Christian times. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is essential if true blessing is now to be enjoyed.

Next follows the second pair, the doctrine or teaching of baptisms and of the laying on of hands. In what sense are we to take the mention of baptisms? Any thought of its application to Christian baptism must, we believe, be ruled out of court, for that was only instituted by the Lord after His resurrection, so could not be included in "the word of the beginning of Christ." Any reference to John's baptism is equally ruled out of court, since that is only described by the Greek word *baptisma*, and never by *baptismos*, the form met with in our passage. We believe, then, that we are to understand here the practices with which all who had been Jews were familiar, referred to in Mark vii. 4-8 and



Heb. ix. 10. And this is borne out by the noun *baptismos* being here in the plural; whereas when Christian baptism is mentioned\* the word is always in the singular, there being but one baptism of water for Christians (Eph. iv. 5). By the teaching of *baptisms*, therefore, would be understood the importance of cleanliness from all defilement. Then the laying on of hands had also a significance, with which all Jews were acquainted, expressing, as it did, identification with a person, or with the sacrifice, on which hands were laid. With the teaching these expressed there was no doubt the Hebrews were familiar. And remembering the condition of things amongst the Christians at Jerusalem, when Paul had last visited that city, evidencing the continued practice by converts of the ordinances of the law, the reference here to washings and to the laying on of hands was anything but irrelevant.

Coming to the third pair, we have resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Here again we must see, as we look at the first of these, that it comes short of Christian teaching. In resurrection *of* the dead the orthodox Jews believed, as Martha's answer to the Lord proves (John xi. 24). And as often as the Lord spoke in His ministry of resurrection His audience never denied it. Sadducees only refused it. For Christians, however, a new truth was declared, and first by the Lord Himself on the morrow of His transfiguration—viz. resurrection *from* the dead (Mark ix. 9, 10). The three disciples, Peter, James, and John, to whom He was speaking, at once discerned in the Master's words something different from the teaching

\* For Christian baptism with water, like that of John, the Greek term is *baptisma*, not *baptismo*, with one uncertain exception. We refer to C. l. ii. 12, where some of the uncial M<sup>S</sup>s., followed by Tregelles and Alford, have *baptismos*. Others, followed by Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort, exhibit the usual form *baptisma*. Baptisms in the *plural*, we repeat, is never used where the "one baptism" in the name of the Trinity is treated of.

of the scribes, and questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. The Lord did not on that occasion enlighten them. They had not, however, long to wait for a solution of their perplexity. The Lord rose, and the angel at the tomb announced that "He is risen *from* the dead" (Matt. xxviii. 7). He had risen, but all the dead had not. Henceforth resurrection *from* the dead was to be an understood expression and an accepted truth. As the Lord was risen, so will His saints who die share in the resurrection from the dead. Resurrection of the dead is a truth which concerns all who die. Resurrection from the dead is the proper and sure hope of saints who die. It is the first resurrection of Rev. xx. 4, 5. This latter—distinctive Christian teaching—is conspicuous by its absence from "the word of the beginning of Christ." All must understand that it could not be included in that to which not only the Hebrews but their unconverted Jewish brethren could subscribe.

The last subject of this pair is that solemn one of everlasting judgment. This too the Jews held in common with Christians. After death the judgment (Heb. ix. 27). God "has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He raised Him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 31). But here also full Christian teaching marks a difference from that to which Jews would assent. For the saints, we learn, are raised in glory (1 Cor. xv. 43) a thousand years before the ungodly dead will be called out of their graves to stand before the great white throne (Rev. xx. 4, 5). Now though we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to that which we have done in the body, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. v. 10), no question will then be raised as to the everlasting safety of God's people, for they will not come into judgment to be tried, as one might say, for their life; nor can there be any condemna-

tion for those who are in Christ Jesus (John v. 24; Rom. viii. 1). And the heavenly saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years before the resurrection of the ungodly dead—a truth for Christians—found no place in the creed of a Jew. A judgment there will be. The heavenly saints will stand before the judgment seat of Christ at one time; the ungodly will stand before the great white throne at another. And the judgment will be final—everlasting. These six points then show, we must say, without a doubt that “the word of the beginning of Christ,” though embracing teaching with which the Hebrews were familiar, did not convey that which we must call distinctive Christian truth; nor would the confession of it bring the individual on to full Christian ground. Whilst, then, the Jews and Christians held things in common, the latter could speak of faith in Christ, of one baptism for the remission of sins, of resurrection from the dead, and of immunity from condemnation. To all this the former, as Jews, were necessarily strangers.

**Privileges.**—We have called this *borderground*. On it the Apostle declined to dilate. He would carry on his readers to that which could establish them in the true Christian faith. And he gives here a reason for that: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away [or, and have fallen away], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (vi. 4-6). A terrible passage some have thought this. A very solemn one it certainly is. But what does it teach? That a real Christian may after all fall away, and be lost for ever? Not a thought of that is there in it. To the Hebrews, to whom he was writing, he was careful to say he did not apply it (9). No real Christian therefore among the Hebrews was to quail under it. To any mere professors, if

such there were in their company, it was a solemn warning indeed. For the illustration of the ground (7) was plain in its application. Enjoying the rain from heaven, and thus it might be said to partake of a heavenly gift, if fruitful it received blessing from God. If, however, after being watered by the rain it produced thorns and thistles, it would be rejected, and be nigh unto a curse, whose end was to be burned. It had enjoyed every advantage, but did not respond to them. It is not the question of a poor crop, or only of a moderate crop, but of no crop at all—nothing but thorns and thistles. It was evidently a useless piece of ground, on which the rain had descended in vain.

Keeping this illustration before us, it will surely be plain that the writer is describing a mere professor who has never had life, and so has never brought forth fruit at all. Privileges many and great may have been enjoyed; but the individual turns his back on them all by leaving the company of Christians to return to Judaism. For not a word is there in the things enumerated of participation in the new birth, not a word of conversion, not a hint of the possession of everlasting life. Of privileges that could be shared in outwardly by any present in the Christian assembly much is said. Of grace at work in the heart not a word is uttered. Enlightenment there could be. Could we imagine a Jew listening to an Apostle and not being enlightened, unless he shut his ears from hearing? The very opening up of the Divine Word, so different from the addresses in the synagogue, must have cast a flood of light on the sacred page. The company that listened to Paul and Barnabas on that first Sabbath in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia must have felt how light was cast on the pages of inspiration, for the Word on that occasion seemed to be enjoyed. They had tasted the good Word of God, and desired that it should be spoken again on the following Sabbath. Yet how many on the second occasion refused it! Enlightenment there could clearly be without conversion.

Of the heavenly gift we next read. What is meant by it has been much questioned. Left indefinite by the writer, we would leave it indefinite too, viewing the meaning to be, that from heaven was flowing a free bestowal of grace, independent of Mount Moriah, or Mount Zion, or any connection with the Temple services. Next follows "partakers of the Holy Ghost." Is this the same as being indwelt by the Spirit? We must say, No; for of all such we can predicate present salvation and everlasting life, the Spirit being given, we read elsewhere (Acts v. 32), to those who obey God, the sealed ones being those who have believed the gospel of their salvation (Eph. i. 13). All such are members of the Body of Christ, and will be eternally saved. For who could conceive that a member of the Body of Christ could be lost? Who could suppose that His Body could be maimed? But there might be a partaking of the Holy Ghost, we conceive, in an outward manner, by being in the place where He dwelt on earth—the Church of God—and receiving ministry, the fruit of His presence and active working; as well as enjoying the effect of miraculous displays of His power. These two last are now mentioned as tasting the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come. The former could be tasted without abiding results following, as the parable of the Sower had taught (Matt. xiii. 20, 21). The latter were samples of those powers which will characterise the coming age, and so here called *powers of the age to come*. A man might have been the subject of some miraculous power, and yet never be converted.

**Falling Away.**—Useless then would it be to labour with such, if such there were, of whom all this had proved sadly true. We say *if*, for, as said above, the writer, whilst describing such characters, does not name any as having actually fallen away; but brings this in here to justify his going on to that which would minister to full Christian growth. One may see in Simon Magus an instance of one baptised being

after all unchanged, though he had been attracted by Philip, and specially struck by the miracles he witnessed. The characters, however, here supposed were those who had companied with Christians, and then reverted to the synagogue and Temple. With such the Apostle could do nothing. The only thing that could act on the conscience—the Word of God—they had become familiar with in the assembly, but had never felt its power in their soul. If then they went back to Judaism, there was nothing he could bring to bear on them to help them. Christian ministry had proved ineffectual. The setting forth of Divine love exhibited in the cross had failed to win them. Such then he must leave. Sad, awful indeed was their condition. They crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Coming amongst Christians they had thereby professed that He was wrongfully crucified, and confessedly condemned the act of their leaders. Reverting to Judaism they declared that He was rightly crucified as a malefactor and a traitor, and thus put Him to an open shame. Their responsibility in coming among real Christians and being continually numbered with them was great. Their guilt in returning to Judaism was grave and glaring. Clearly then, as we examine the passage, it must be seen that it is not of a Christian falling into a low state morally or spiritually that we read, but of a professor *giving up Christianity* for an easier path here.

**Ground of Confidence.**—And of this he assures his readers, persuaded, as he tells them, of better things of them, and things which accompany salvation (9). Life displays itself in some kind of activity—an activity in character with itself, whatever that may be. Now fruits of spiritual life he saw in them. The Divine nature was working in them—a proof that they were real children of God. And God was not unrighteous to forget their work and the love (not, labour of love) which they showed towards His name, in that they had ministered to the

saints in past times, and ministered still (10). Kindness done to saints is reckoned as kindness done to Christ (Matt. xxv. 40). So here the writer gives an exhortation, suited indeed for them, but flowing forth evidently without any feeling of reserve from him. Rebuke he had been compelled to administer—no pleasing task to him. Now he can exhort, and that in gladness of heart that perseverance unto the end in service should be displayed in them. “Unto the *end*.” It is, it must ever be that for every Christian whilst here. “We desire,” are his words, “that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (11, 12). To walk by faith, not by sight, the Hebrews and we are called. Nor are we alone in this. Those of old had to do the same. Patriarchs did it. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were heirs of promise (Heb. xi. 9), and that all their lives. Prophets likewise were called to it. We in our turn are to practise the walking by faith, having sure promises, which, however, cannot be fulfilled to us whilst on earth. This especially characterised the patriarchs. It is specially to characterise Christians.

**Abraham.**—And now, touching on this, they are reminded of their father Abraham. A lesson has been drawn for them from Israel's failure in the wilderness. A lesson is now to be drawn from Abraham's steadfast endurance, and God's gracious way with that patriarch on Mount Moriah, when, Isaac having been released from the altar, a ram of God's provision was offered up in his stead. Once that day had the angel of the Lord been heard to call out of heaven to Abraham, then to tell him to spare his son. A second time the angel's voice was heard—the angel of the Lord. This time God not only spoke, but engaged Himself by an oath to fulfil that which He would say. Never before had God been said to swear. Now He

did, making promise to Abraham ; and "because He could swear by no greater He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (13-15).

**Encouragement.**—But why turn to that chapter in the patriarch's history? What is that to us? Abraham is dead. Isaac is dead. What can that history at Mount Moriah teach us? Would any ask such a question? True just two human beings, we may believe, heard the words of the angel. They were, however, words of worldwide importance. Of Abraham's seed—the Lord Jesus—that message from heaven spoke. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice," closed that Divine communication. In the fulfilment of this promise we are all concerned. And in the multiplying of Abraham's seed we too have an interest, as Rom. iv. 11, 12 teaches us. As an episode in Abraham's life we may then read that chapter in Genesis. As instruction also for us all are we to read it likewise. This is made plain by the Holy Ghost's comment on His own Scripture, which runs as follows: "For men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife ; wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (16-18). That oath was uttered for Abraham's encouragement. The history recording it, we are taught, was indited for our profit, and to stimulate Christians—nor them only, as a future day will surely manifest—to keep fast hold of the hope set before God's saints—a hope bound up with the Lord Jesus, who has come in humiliation, and with whom in the glory His heavenly saints will appear (Col. iii. 4).



Strong consolation (or, encouragement) our God has thus provided. Specially had the Hebrews need of it, seeing that, whilst enduring persecution of no trivial kind, they had to surrender all hopes of earthly blessing and the earthly inheritance. Hence, whilst Israel's defection in the wilderness could act as a warning, the patriarch's position, sustained by hopes of the future, some of which could never be fulfilled to him on earth, was to act as an encouragement. Like Abraham, they had a hope. He patiently endured here in view of it. So must they likewise.

**A Sure Hope.**—But hopes are with men often so vague, and rest on no real foundation. Was that the case with them? No. Their hope was a definite one, even blessing in and with the Lord Jesus in heaven; and it rested on a sure foundation. "Which hope," the sacred writer states, "we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Whither" (we here quote the Revised Version) "as a Forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (19, 20). God's counsels are immutable. Every one who believes in God will subscribe to that. But He desires to assure His people of it. He did that to Abraham. His word and His oath are immutable. So He turns us here to that history, and bids us learn from it what He then impressed upon him. How encouraging must this have been when first, as here, pointed out! Age after age passes by, generation after generation of men appear, and give place in time to others. This life is a moving scene. Created things form, as it were, the background of a picture, across which a continuous flow of people pass, each one having to own that earth is not the rest; yet sustained, each and all, who are real saints of God, by the sure hope of the future, of which God's word and His oath sworn to Abraham are the guarantees. In blessing He would bless him, in multiplying He would multiply him. Of this Israel after the flesh were

an illustration. And we are illustrations of the spiritual seed. Then, too, in Abraham's seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. To this we can say Amen, whilst waiting for the full development of this promise, never by us to be known in its completeness whilst upon earth.

**A Forerunner.**—For in heaven, not on earth, is our destined home. And now a new title of our Lord confronts us. Varied have His titles been already, for full indeed is the teaching this Epistle contains about Him. He is, we here learn, our *Forerunner*, a title only met with in this place, but the significance of which all can understand. Yet to these Hebrews it must have been of especial interest. To have a high priest entering the holiest was a thought they were all acquainted with. But to learn of *their* High Priest that He had entered in as the Forerunner was something new indeed, and wholly foreign to the teaching of Judaism. Aaron entered into the innermost sanctuary once a year. He entered there for a people, whom indeed he represented before God, but who personally could never tread the floor of that curtained-off enclosure. The sanctuary, however, into which our High Priest has passed will one day resound with the footsteps of a countless throng—His heavenly saints, redeemed by His precious blood. Partakers of the heavenly calling the Hebrews were. In the sanctuary on high will they find themselves, following after their great High Priest. For if He is the Forerunner, His people will certainly follow after Him. What had Judaism to offer compared with this? What loss, if any turned back ere the end was reached!

As an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, firmly fixed where we cannot see it, is the hope set before us. The mariner trusts to his anchor holding the ground in the depths of the sea, though he cannot see it. We are to trust to our hope, that we shall be on high, and shall enjoy the fulfilment of the promises—promises assured us on the word and oath of our God, and an earnest of which we

possess in the knowledge that our High Priest has entered the holiest as our Forerunner. High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek has He become. Of the *perpetuity* of His priesthood, as well as of *the order* of it, the writer reminds them. He had quoted the Psalm with reference to His appointment to this priesthood in chap. v. 6. He had reminded his readers of the order of it in ver. 10 of that chapter. Here he recalls to them the perpetuity of it (vi. 20). All then for Christians is sure. Both these points, however—namely, the *order* and the *perpetuity*—will receive further elucidation in the Epistle.

But ere passing on to that we would say a few words on a statement which has been variously interpreted. "Having patiently endured he [Abraham] obtained the promise" (vi. 15). Now in chap. xi. 13 it is explicitly affirmed that, of the patriarchs, none of them received the promises. And in ver. 39 of that chapter it is equally decided that none in Old Testament times had received the promise. We presume Abraham received something. What then was it that he received? There are promises connected with Christ and the glory which concern all saints. These are clearly future in application. For their fulfilment the Lord waits. So both Paul (2 Thess. iii. 5) and John (Rev. i. 9) remind us of the patience of Christ, He patiently waiting the Father's time for them to be fulfilled.

What then, we ask again, was it that Abraham received? We think ver. 14 of our chapter clears that up. The sacred writer, it will be perceived, quotes only part of the angel's words which were addressed to the patriarch on Mount Moriah, and stops at "multiplying I will multiply thee." Was it simply for brevity's sake that the Apostle stopped there? We think not. Of course, as we recall to mind that incident in Abraham's history, we can never forget the rest of the angelic communication, interested as we all are in it. But may not our author have meant, by stopping at "multiply thee," to draw attention to this one

promise as apart from the rest? Now in measure Abraham did see this promise in process of fulfilment. For when he saw the twin children, Esau and Jacob, Isaac being then sixty years old, he could say that the multiplying had begun. Yet patiently had he to wait for many a year even for that. But those two then born were the earnest, as the prophetic announcement made to Rebekah before their birth declared, that nations would in time appear. Their birth was the earnest of all that was to follow. So he obtained the promise—the *promise*, let us mark, not *promises*. He obtained that after years of patient endurance. And that is written for our admonition. God's people have often to wait, and that patiently. Abraham did wait, but not in vain—an example to the Hebrews, an example also to us. And waiting, as we are to do, for the fulfilment of the promise, the preservative power of the hope is to be experienced. "Fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope;" so writes the Apostle, reminding his readers, it may be, of Lot fleeing to Zoar (Gen. xix. 20), and the manslayer to a city of refuge (Num. xxxv. 25, 26). As Lot found safety in Zoar, and the manslayer in his city of refuge, so the Hebrews would find safety in keeping fast hold of the promise set before them.

*PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.*

HEBREWS VII. 1-25.

**F**ROM Abraham on Mount Moriah, with Isaac as the supposed victim, and the angelic communication there made to him, we are now taken back to an earlier chapter in his life—viz. when as the victorious one he received blessing at the hand of Melchizedek, King of Salem. On the second occasion of the patriarch being in that neighbourhood just referred to, we learn not that he met with that king. Of one meeting, and of one only, has there been any record preserved; and to the history of that meeting are we next turned to learn more about the Lord's priesthood.

**Melchizedek.**—And first of Melchizedek himself. He was a real, not an ideal, personage, a man like any one of us, but a king and a priest together.\* In the Levitical

\* A priest-king at Jerusalem existed in patriarchal days. In the Tel Amarna tablets recently discovered and translated we learn of one Ebed Tob, who was King of Jerusalem, who received his dignity, he himself declared, "by the oracle [or, arm] of the Mighty King," the God evidently whose sanctuary was on Mount Moriah. "Behold," he said, "neither my father nor my mother have exalted me in this place." "Priest of the Most High God," says the written Word. "Exalted by the Mighty King," said Ebed Tob, who distinctly recognised that he had a father, though his dignity was derived from a higher source. Ebed Tob lived, it is thought, about a century before the Exodus. Who would have dreamt a few years back of such confirmation of the sacred history? Scripture stands the test. And in these days how much has been confirmed, which some had

service and in Israel's history these two offices were quite distinct. The high priest was of the tribe of Levi. The king was of the tribe of Judah. And though on two memorable occasions David first and then Solomon blessed the people (1 Chron. xvi. 2 ; 2 Chron. vi. 3), an act repeated by no sovereign of the house of David who succeeded them, for none others were types as kings of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet neither did David nor Solomon ever at any time arrogate to him-self the priestly office. Melchizedek was, however, priest of the Most High God, and is so described in both Testaments (Gen. xiv. 18 ; Heb. vii. 1). God owned him as a priest. He was also King of Salem, the city, we believe, known later as Jerusalem, thus uniting in his person these two offices, true of no one else but of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the parallel between them can be still more drawn out, as the sacred writer notices the absence of any information about the parentage, pedigree, birth, or death of this mysterious personage, who "without father," we read, "without mother, without descent (or, genealogy), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually" (Heb. vii. 3). Of course he had parents, and could probably have told us of the day of his birth, and men surviving him chronicled his death, for he was a man of Adam's race. But these details have been withheld on the part of the Spirit of God, and purposely, we must say—another instance of Divine superintendence over the Scriptures of truth. Some one perhaps might ask, What use would it be to us to know about his parentage? That may be true. But all omission of it was

doubted, by the work of the spade and the industry and learning of scholars. Melchizedek was a real person, and was priest and king. Sargon too and Belsazzar we now learn were real historical personages. What confirmations of the Word may there not yet be in store, as the buried cities of Egypt and the mounds of Canaan are made to deliver up their secrets.

evidently divinely ordered, though the purpose to be served by that was only disclosed years after the crucifixion of the Lord.

For centuries had that history of Gen. xiv. been in the volume of the law, before any fresh reference was made to Melchizedek's existence. No mention of him appears between the days of Abraham, or it might be said those of Moses, who recorded his history, and those of David. Then in the 110th Psalm he is introduced in words already quoted in chap. v. of our Epistle. But that Psalm adds nothing to our knowledge of his history, though it, as well as the reference to him in the Hebrews, attests that the Jews were well acquainted with his existence.

A mysterious personage indeed. He appears for a brief moment, and then vanishes; all record of him seems effaced from human memory till the psalmist mentioned him. Then silence again about him for centuries, till the use to be made of his history could in the counsels of God be declared. That waited the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Ghost to unfold it. A typical personage he is, his name meaning "king of righteousness," and that of his city meaning "peace"; righteousness and peace being characteristics connected with the coming reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Typical of Christ then in his offices, we see the type carried out in the silence as to his personal history. Then too he is suddenly introduced, not when Abraham was going forward to the encounter with the four kings who were under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, King of Elam. Had Melchizedek appeared to encourage Abraham in his expedition, it would have seemed natural. Had he prayed for his success, we should have thought that proper as priest of the Most High God. But his first and last interview with Abraham took place when the latter required no intercessory assistance. He appeared to bless him, *after* he had conquered, and when he returned laden with all

the goods, with Lot too, and his goods, and the women also and the people (Gen. xiv. 16). Then too he does not appear as a sacrificing priest. He ministered not at any altar. He slew no victims. He met the conqueror only to bless him. The character of his priestly service, as far as we read of it, was one purely of blessing. It is evident that such a priestly service could not meet a sinful people in their need, nor a feeble people who required true sympathy in their weakness. It is not a priesthood to get people through the wilderness. It is only suited for those who have already conquered, and who need not any intercession on their behalf. Hence we can understand why throughout Israel's long history of fifteen centuries such a priesthood was never instituted. Only the Aaronic character of priestly service could avail for them. We can then further understand that, though we are taught in the Hebrews of the Lord as High Priest now after the *order* of Melchizedek, He is not presented in that Epistle as at present discharging the special functions of the Melchizedek priesthood—viz. blessing a victorious people. The wilderness journey must be over and all conflict have ceased before that can take place.

**Superiority of his Priesthood.**—We have read of that which Melchizedek was, and of that which he did. We are now to be reminded of Abraham's conduct towards him, and of the proofs as to his superiority over the patriarch, to whom the Hebrews naturally looked up and deeply revered. Of this superiority the short history in Gen. xiv. of three verses is now seen to be full. *First*, as Abraham gave to Melchizedek a tenth of the spoil, he paid tithes, we read, unto him, and Melchizedek received them. They quite understood one another. Levites under the law tithed their brethren of Israel. But Abraham offered and Melchizedek received the tenth, for he was priest of the Most High God. *Second*, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and Abraham received it. Now "without all



contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. vii. 7). By paying tithes and receiving the blessing must not the Hebrews confess that their forefather recognised the superiority of Melchizedek? *Third.* It follows then that Levi, descended from Abraham, viewed as being in the loins of the patriarch, virtually in the act of Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. And *fourth*, whilst men here who receive tithes die, generation succeeding generation, there one received them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. For we see him in that interview with Abraham, but we never read of his death. He virtually ever liveth, exercising a priesthood over which death has no terminating power. Thus the sacred writer reasons. And the way the different points are taken up and worked out betokened one taught of the Spirit, and guided in his ministry by the Spirit likewise; whilst the result for the reader was, and is, that there was indubitable proof of the surpassing excellence of the Melchizedek order of priesthood over that of the Aaronic order. He who is Priest after that order must be greater than Aaron, or than any of Aaron's line.

**A Change of Priesthood.**—Another step in the argument is now taken, and a conclusion stated against which there was no gainsaying. Perfection through the Levitical priesthood could not now be maintained. So here we are led from the history in Genesis to the next and only other reference to the Melchizedek priesthood within the boards of the Old Testament, even that one verse already quoted from the Psalms. Three verses in Genesis and one verse in the Psalms sum up all the history of this priesthood. Centuries after Moses, and still more centuries after Melchizedek, David by the Spirit of God announced the Divine decree about the Lord.

Had that Psalm been penned before the institution of the Aaronic priesthood, it might have been held that the latter necessarily superseded the former. That ground was, however, completely removed from any who might

have taken it. And now the priesthood being changed, a Priest after the order of Melchizedek having been unquestionably appointed by God, there has been made a change also of the law. "For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests [better than priesthood]. And it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a fleshly \* [not, carnal] commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For it is testified, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (for the law made nothing perfect), and the bringing in of a better hope by the which we draw nigh unto God" (vii. 13-19).

Thus completely was the ground being cut away from under the feet of those who would uphold the unbroken observance of the Mosaic institution of priesthood. And the Hebrews were led on to stable ground on which to stand against all threats and opposition through abandoning Judaism, and against all blandishments to win them back to the religion of their fathers.

**Priest by Oath.**—But the writer has not yet exhausted all the teaching that the one verse of the Psalm so frequently quoted really contains. The *order* of the Lord's priesthood has been noticed. He will now call attention to the *oath* of Jehovah when appointing Him to His priesthood, as well as to the *perpetuity* of His priesthood—two features peculiar to our High Priest. Much we have seen came out from those three verses in Gen. xiv. How

\* *Fleshly* is the meaning, not *carnal* in an evil sense, referring to the non-continuance of Aaron or of his successors by reason of death, contrasted here with "the power of an indissoluble life."

much, we may now say, is contained in this one verse of the Psalm! By Jehovah's oath made Priest, He stands out in marked contrast to Aaron and the whole Levitical hierarchy. "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever" (21). There the writer stopped in his quotation; for emphasizing this special manner of the Lord's appointment to His office, and not here treating of the order of His priesthood, he does not now repeat the words of the Psalm "after the order of Melchizedek." He would keep the attention of his readers directed at this point to the oath of Jehovah. Made Priest by oath, He has become (22) "the Surety of a better covenant" (rather than testament). A new designation of the Lord thus meets us in a term not elsewhere met with in the New Testament, and a new subject for the Epistle is introduced to us. The designation is a *Surety*; the subject is a *better covenant*. On this last the Apostle will shortly enlarge. As a Surety the Lord is the pledge of the introduction of that covenant, in blessings connected with which the Hebrews and all believers now have part, though it has not yet been made, and cannot be while the Church is on earth. But we must not anticipate.

**Perpetuity of his Priesthood.**—And here to the words "for ever" in that verse of the Psalm all are asked to give heed: "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but He, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (23, 24). Many priests there were, for "mortal was their race." An unchangeable priesthood is His, seeing He continueth ever. A priesthood of an order wholly different from that of the Aaronic, superior to the priests of the tribe of Levi, after the power of an indissoluble life, instituted by the oath of Jehovah, and perpetual in its existence—such is the priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God. No priesthood was there ever like it; for though after the *order* of Melchizedek, He who is our High

Priest far surpasses that mysterious personage who blessed the patriarch and received tithes from him. The latter in certain things was typical of the former. But the type did not equal the Antitype. More, far more, is there in the Antitype than Melchizedek could ever have said of himself, or that the sacred writer would have ascribed to him.

And now, after all that has passed before us on this most interesting subject, we are ready for the conclusion. "Wherefore also He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (25). Who could have predicated that? Who could have known what He was doing, and is still doing, in heaven, apart from this Divine revelation? How little have we thought in the past of this, surely most must confess. Yet His intercession has not ceased. His watchful interest in His saints remains unabated.

A living Priest, an unchanging Priest, an interceding Priest—this is what He is, and just what His people need. The need of soul salvation most will professedly at least admit. Of the needs for the wilderness journey how few think! How few remember the provisions to meet it—the great High Priest, who intercedes, and the throne of grace, to which the tried, troubled saint can always come! And who intercedes? The One who has trodden the path before us, and knows the difficulties of the way and the power of the enemy who is against us. Of the Lord's death we have in this portion no record. He died, but that was before He entered on His priesthood. He saves now, but as the living One, to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, however great their necessities may be. This, be it remembered, is only spoken of saints, and that is clear, "because," we read, "*He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" It is a service of One on the other side of death, though, had He not made propitiation for the sins of the people, He could not have carried on this intercession. Sinners need a Saviour for the soul now;

saints need a Saviour all their journey through. Able to succour (ii. 18), able to sympathise (iv. 15), able to save to the uttermost (vii. 25)—these three statements present in a few words the value of the intercessory high priestly service of the Lord Jesus Christ carried on exclusively for His saints. Is there then nothing of His high priestly service that avails for sinners? some may anxiously inquire. There surely is much that can meet them. How they can profit by that which as **High Priest** He has effected will be treated of at length very shortly. God would not leave any one in uncertainty on this subject. At present, however, it is the need of saints on their wilderness journey met by His present service on their behalf, which has been especially brought before us.

Here, ere proceeding, it may be well to call attention to some points of importance, such as the *order* and *character* of priesthood, *Priest* and *High Priest*, *Priest* and *King*.

**Order and Character.**—And first of the difference between *order* of priesthood and *character* of priestly service. “Priest after the order of Melchizedek” means, that like that person the Lord is Priest, with no predecessor and with no successor. A Priest He is, so different from the Aaronic order, for His office as such is not and cannot be terminated by death. “An ever-living Priest” is what is meant by “the order of Melchizedek,” who appears in history as the successor, as far as any record goes, of no one, and in turn was followed by no one. Nor of his death is there mention. These then are features of this *order* of priesthood true indeed of the Lord Jesus. Hence a Priest on this side of death the Lord could never have been, the Melchizedekian order forbidding any interruption of it by death. It is helpful to remember that. The Lord being Priest after the order of Melchizedek necessitates His becoming Priest only after He had died. On this point Scripture speaks definitely in chap. viii. 4. Hence too He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary, and

never did in one upon earth. But of this further on. Then as to the *character* of His priestly service, it has been hitherto and is still Aaronic. He has made propitiation by blood. He ever lives to intercede. He has met the question of sins for all who believe in Him. He takes up before God in heaven the cause of tried and tempted saints. Melchizedek, we have already remarked, did nothing like that, yet priestly service which is Aaronic in character is the only service that has met or can meet the need of any one of us whilst on earth.

**Priest and High Priest.**—Unique is the Lord in this, that He is both Priest and High Priest. Now Melchizedek was priest, but not high priest. Aaron was high priest, and not simply a priest. As Melchizedek stood alone in his priestly office, he is called priest; and of the Lord it is predicated that He is Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek being alone in his day in his priesthood, high priest would have been a title of no meaning applied to him; nor would it have meaning for the Lord, if we merely regarded the *order* of His priesthood. But the character of His priestly service being Aaronic, the title of *High Priest* necessarily comes in, and is applied to Him, seeing that, as in relation to Aaron there was all the priestly house, so in relation to the Lord there is a company, innumerable to us, even all the holy priesthood as Peter describes them (1 Pet. ii. 5).

**Priest and King.**—Then priest like Melchizedek, the Lord, like him, is also King. "He shall be a Priest upon his throne." So foretold Zechariah (vi. 13). Aaron was never king, and no king of David's line, save the Lord, was ever a priest unto God. Only one attempted to invade the sacerdotal office, and condign punishment at once overtook him. Uzziah for attempting to burn incense was a leper to the day of his death (2 Chron. xxvi. 21). The regal and sacerdotal offices can in Israel only be united in the person of Christ.

Further, we would emphasize another point. The Lord's *present* high priestly service, though Aaronic in character, is not characterised by attendance at the altar. A present sacrificing Priest is foreign to Christianity. He intercedes by virtue surely of His precious blood. But He is for that at the mercy-seat, and not at the altar. How far astray has Christendom got, when the altar has a more prominent place in people's thoughts than the mercy-seat! How simply is this mistake corrected for those who will study the Epistle to the Hebrews! The place of intercession is the holiest, not the court—the throne, not the altar.

We now pass on to the *third* great subject of the Epistle—viz. the sanctuary in which our High Priest ministers.

III.

THE SANCTUARY.





## THE TRUE TABERNACLE.

HEBREWS VII. 26—VIII. 13.

AT this point in the Epistle the writer turns to treat of the other part of the Lord's high priestly service—namely, that in connection with sacrifice. Hitherto, Heb. ii. 17 excepted, we have read nothing of this, the Apostle being intent on setting forth at some length the Lord's present intercessory service to meet His people's wants on their wilderness way. That was the more pressing matter for Christians, so that, learning of their freedom to go to the throne for grace and mercy as required, they might be kept on the road, and not be tempted to give all up in despair. Now, however, we are to read about the Lord's sacrificial service, wholly indeed of the past, but requisite to be understood by all who would know and enjoy their liberty of being at home in the presence of God.

In pursuance of this subject, our author will tell us first of *characteristics* of our High Priest; then he will refer to His *inauguration* to the office; and afterwards he will point us to the *sanctuary* in which He ministers, as well as speak of the *covenant* of which He is the Mediator.

**Characteristics.**—Five characteristics are now enumerated—true, taken together, of no high priest who has ministered in the earthly sanctuary, whether in the tabernacle or in the Temple—viz. *holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.* Of One only, we repeat, is all this true—viz. of Jesus, Son of God. First, He is *holy*, as the 16th Psalm prophetically declared,

quoted first by Peter (Acts ii. 27), and subsequently by Paul (Acts xiii. 35). This characteristic, we learn elsewhere (Tit. i. 8), should be true of an elder, or bishop; and is applied to God in Rev. xv. 4, and also in xvi. 5, when rightly read. What then should be true of an elder, and is true of God, is characteristic of Him who is both God and man; though here, where His priesthood is the subject, He is viewed of course as a man. Next, He is *harmless*, or without guile. This too Peter confirms when, not using the term, but expressing its meaning, he writes of Him, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. ii. 22). Then too He is *undefiled*.\* Living as He did amongst men, and walking about amid much that was defiling even to the most devoted saint that ever lived, He was ever that holy thing, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. He could touch the leper and be undefiled. He could walk here without the need of that feet-washing, which He now graciously stoops to do to His own (John xiii.). Undefiled He was when on earth. Where, we ask, was a priest like Him known on this side of death? Phineas, Aaron's grandson, for his faithfulness in the matter of the Midianites, received the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (Num. xxv.). Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, walked with his wife Elisabeth in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke i. 6). But of neither Phineas nor of Zacharias, nor of any other of Aaron's sons, could it be said that they were holy, harmless, and undefiled. And of course what follows descriptive of Christ could

\* The high priest under the law was forbidden to defile himself even for his father or his mother (Lev. xxi. 11). Had he touched their dead body he would have been defiled. As a type he was to keep from all defilement, thus foreshadowing Him who is undefiled. Ceremonial undefilement this was; but the Lord was absolutely undefiled. How far do types fall short of fully depicting Him who is the Antitype!

have characterised none of them--viz. the being *separated from sinners* and *made higher than the heavens*. *Separated* we have to say, not *separate*; for this refers to His being no longer on earth. Hence His priesthood dated only from a time subsequent to His death. On earth He was not separated from sinners, who endured their contradiction against Himself, and at last was crucified between two thieves. But now, as Delitzsch writes on the passage, "the Lord is for evermore withdrawn from all perturbing contact with evil men." Lastly, "*made [or rather, become] higher than the heavens*" tells us of His person, who, whilst as a Priest He is a man, is nevertheless far above every creature, and is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being the eternal Son of the eternal Father. What could a Jew have said, if he read this when the Epistle was written, well knowing that the high priests in his day were anything but holy, harmless, and undefiled? Suited then was this One to minister before God as no high priest ever was before Him.

**Inauguration to His Priesthood.**—But more has to be stated. And again the contrast between the Lord and the sons of Aaron appears. We quote the passage: "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the people's; for this He did once when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh a Son, who is consecrated [or, perfected] for evermore" (Heb. vii. 27, 28). Much question has arisen as to what is here referred to, when the sacred writer mentions the high priests offering up of sacrifice for sins *daily*, because at the date of the Epistle it was not the custom for the high priest thus to minister daily. One of the other priests officiated at the altar morning and evening; witness Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke i. 9). Further; as the daily burnt offering was not a sin offering, the

reference clearly cannot be to that. And though there was a daily meat offering for the priests, which by the law the high priest was bound himself to offer (Lev. vi. 19-22), neither was that a sin offering; so it could not be referred to here. As different conjectures have been hazarded about this matter, we feel that without being too bold we may briefly state what we believe was in the writer's thoughts at the moment.

Now, remembering that our author is about to treat of the Lord's sacrificial service, which preceded the intercessory work already set forth, we believe that he had in his mind the week's consecration of the high priest provided for in the Mosaic ritual, ere he could according to the Divine mind discharge the duties of that high and holy office. Exod. xxix. tells us of that week, during which, when Aaron was being consecrated, a sin offering was each day offered up for him and for his sons. In Aaron's case Moses officiated, as we know, for as yet there were no priests who could minister at the altar. But that same chapter of Exodus (xxix. 29, 30) tells us that Aaron's successor, as often as there was one, was to be anointed and consecrated for seven days, during which he daily wore the garments of glory and beauty when ministering in the holy place. We believe then that it is to this the Apostle refers. For of *high priests* he writes, and does not mention Aaron. It is to what was common to all his successors that the reference is made. And bearing in mind that at the close of the quotation given above (Heb. vii. 26, 27) the technical term for consecration, *i.e.* perfected, is introduced in ver. 28, it seems quite in character to suppose that the reference is to the manner of the consecration of high priests under the law, as contrasted with the way that the Lord was inducted into His priesthood.\* Sacrifice

\* There were but two occasions under the law when the high priest offered first for his own sins and then for the people's. On the Day of Atonement was the one, and connected with the high

preceded their full consecration. Sacrifice preceded His. But in His case there was but one, being offered up once for all, and that sacrifice was Himself. Of a sin offering *for* Himself there was and there could have been no need. He offered Himself for others, and then entered on His priestly office. And He was the Son, made Priest by oath—a solemn introduction this. What, we again ask, would the unbelieving part of the nation, clinging still to Judaism, advance to eclipse this? What could they adduce to match it? Entering on His office as High Priest; consequent on the offering of Himself once for all, and perfected, or consecrated, for evermore, Judaism must give way to Christianity, for the latter far outshines it.

**The Sanctuary.**—A High Priest, made (or, become) higher than the heavens, has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. He sits where no mere creature can ever sit, and He sits there as the Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (Heb. viii. 1, 2). A sitting priest was unknown under the law. But more of this by-and-by. Aaron, great as he was as God's high priest, pales, we see, before the Lord in His priesthood. And now something fresh is brought forward. It had been a great day when God, the God of Israel, took possession of the tabernacle reared up by Moses as the cloud of glory filled it. Never before had such a thing been known. In no other tabernacle had God ever dwelt. Yet, after all, that tabernacle was but a copy, an antitype,\* answering to the type or pattern (Heb. viii. 5) which was in heaven.

priest's consecration was the other. "Daily" could not apply to that done only once every year; but it could well apply to the week of consecration, during which, having offered for himself, at the close of it he offered for the people.

\* The heavenly sanctuary is here called in the original, and by Stephen too (Acts vii. 44), the *type*; and the holy places on earth are spoken of in Heb. ix. 24 as *antitypical* of the true.

The true tabernacle had never been on earth; it was always in heaven. Then, too, the structure Moses reared up gave place in time to the Temple of Solomon; but the true tabernacle existed previously, and exists still. It abides. No power can overthrow it. Neither man nor devil can reach it. The work of Bezaleel and Aholiab, beautiful as it doubtless all was, was only after the pattern that Moses had seen in the mount. Moses had pitched the earthly one; Jehovah pitched the true one. Shadows, but shadows, were all the things connected with Judaism. The priests, we read (Heb. viii. 5), served (not under, but) the example and shadow of heavenly things. So its priesthood, its sacrifices, its tabernacle, must all sink into nothingness compared with the Priest, made such by oath; with the one sacrifice, of which He, the Son, was the victim; and with the true tabernacle, which Jehovah pitched, and not man. What remained for the Jews to boast of? In what could they justly take pride? The glory of Judaism was but as tinsel, compared with the surpassing and perennial glory of Christianity.

But was all this true? Carefully does the sacred writer make good his ground. As in the past, so still, he will establish his position by the written Word. A high priest must have something to offer. In that our High Priest, though only officiating in the heavenly sanctuary, has not been deficient. And on His sacrifice our author will shortly dwell, and that at length. For the present he contents himself with reminding his readers of the perpetuity of any priesthood instituted by God. A priesthood for earth has been provided in the family and line of Aaron. In spite of that family's failure in the past, that priesthood has never been superseded. Neither the wickedness of Eli's sons, nor the compliance of Urijah with the proposal of Ahaz (2 Kings xvi.), moved God to transfer the priesthood to some other tribe. And by-and-by, when the Mosaic ritual shall be restored, the sons of Zadok will minister

afresh at God's altar on Mount Moriah (Ezek. xliii. 19, xliv. 15), and so throughout the millennium. God, we repeat it, never supersedes a priesthood that He has established. So the Lord Jesus could never by any possibility have been a Priest upon earth. Had He been a Priest on earth, God's covenant with Phineas would have been broken. But a tabernacle requires a priest. The true, the heavenly one could not be wanting in that. And the Lord Jesus, we are taught (Heb. viii. 2), is its Minister. Nor is He only High Priest. He is a Mediator likewise, uniting in His person, as we have before remarked, the offices of Moses and of Aaron. And if as High Priest He far surpasses Aaron, He also in this too surpasses Moses, being the Mediator of a *better* covenant established on *better* promises (viii. 6). A more excellent ministry indeed is His.

We have said that the sacred writer will make good from the written Word what he advances, in so far as the Old Testament can be brought forward in proof. He has affirmed now (viii. 2) the existence of the true tabernacle in heaven. How did he know that? He tells his readers, quoting from Exod. xxv. 40: "See thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). Very likely this statement had been much overlooked, though Exod. xxvi. 30, xxvii. 8 are much to the same effect, and Stephen in his speech (Acts vii. 44) refers to the same scripture. The Spirit of God, however, would not have it to be forgotten, though between the days of Moses and those of Stephen Scripture is silent about it. But now in the Hebrews the words addressed to Moses are recalled to the remembrance of the reader, and their importance emphasized as they bear on Christian teaching. It would doubtless interest but little a Jew to think of a heavenly sanctuary. He had to do with an earthly one. The existence of the other would be but a matter of fact with which he had no direct concern.



Hence, mentioned as providing the pattern of the tabernacle erected by Moses, we read nothing more about it till Christian times. But now we learn that a High Priest has entered it by His own blood (Heb. ix. 12), and entered too as the forerunner of a company (Heb. vi. 20) to us at present countless in number, who will one day throng it, passing in as members of the holy priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5). The Aaronic priests, high as was the honour put on them, ministered at the altar, but not in the Holiest, and served after all only the example and *shadow* of heavenly things (Heb. viii. 5). Now the shadow can never equal in importance that of which it is the shadow. Would the Jews glory in their ritual and in their sanctuary? There was something far better than that, and the blessing would be to have a place, and right of entry into the true tabernacle, the sanctuary on high. Imposing might be the structure of the Temple, and exhilarating might be the service with the instruments of music in its court. But what must all that have become to one who looked forward to the day when he should enter in person that tabernacle which God had pitched and not man? Taught of its existence from Old Testament Scriptures, he was assured from the teaching of the New of his privilege to enter it in person by-and-by.

**The New Covenant.**—Step by step we proceed, and next learn about the *new covenant*, of which the Lord Jesus is the Mediator. Till the days of Jeremiah, the prophet of Anathoth, God's purpose to make a new covenant with Israel and with Judah was not revealed. But when things in Judah were going from bad to worse, and years after the captivity of the ten tribes, God by Jeremiah first announced the making with them of a new covenant. The resources of Divine grace are varied indeed. At Sinai Israel had entered into covenant with God; but speedily broke it, and so justly forfeited all claim to blessing under it. For, that covenant once broken, no amount of obedience in the future could have wrought for them a recovery of

the blessings they had forfeited. The sins of that first covenant must have weighed, for anything they could have done, like a millstone round their necks. Grace only could come in, but it must be grace in righteousness. A new covenant became therefore a necessity, and the sins under the first must be atoned for by blood, if the nation was not to be finally rejected (Heb. ix. 15).

Century after century passed, and no fresh word was dropped by any prophet or messenger about the new covenant. Had God forgotten it? Had Jeremiah held out delusive hopes? At length, in the upper room in Jerusalem, to just the Twelve the Lord referred to it, and in a way to show it had not been forgotten on high. He spoke of it as that which was to be expected, and which would be realised. But *when*, was still a matter undisclosed. "The days come," Jeremiah had said (xxxi. 31). He spoke of the new covenant as certain; but the time for it was left purposely indefinite. The Lord, as we have said, also spoke of it, but gave no hint how near was the making of it. He added, however, to the revelation of Jeremiah two important particulars: *one*, that it would rest on the blood of a sacrifice; and the *other*, that that blood was to be His own (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24; Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25). Years again rolled by, and not till the Epistle to the Hebrews was written do we learn who would be its Mediator. Of the surety of it, even the Lord Jesus, we have already learnt (Heb. vii. 22). Of the Mediator, and that thrice over, are we now informed (viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24). That covenant to be made, the blood on which it will rest, and the Mediator of it, these important facts revealed, the whole subject awaits its completion, when the time for it to be made is definitely known. It was not made before the cross, that is clear, for the blood on which it will rest was not shed till then. It has not been made since the cross, for God has not been dealing directly with Israel and Judah; nor will He whilst the Church, the Body of Christ,

is on earth. Further, it will not be made with Christians, but with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, though Christians share, and that now, in blessings connected with it—viz. the knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sins.

What a subject is that of the ministry of Christ, as set before us in this Epistle! Christians first enjoy it, but not Christians only. Israel also in a coming day will be found to be concerned with it. God's purposes about His Son, the crucified One, will not be accomplished without the house of Israel and the house of Judah basking in the sunshine of Divine favour, and in the conscious enjoyment of the everlasting blessings of the new covenant. They will not, however, be contracting parties to it. And no possibility of it being broken can there be. God is unchangeable in His purposes of grace. So no failure on the people's part will endanger their enjoyment of it, for He will write His laws on their hearts (Heb. viii. 10). Well may we sing

“How far the riches of God's grace  
Our highest thoughts exceed!”

A better covenant, established upon better promises (Heb. viii. 6)—such is our Apostle's statement. And reading of the blessings of it (10-12), we have to say how true is that description. Under the first covenant Israel were promised blessings if they kept it (Exod. xix. 5, 6). Under the new they will enjoy the blessings formerly promised, though by their disobedience justly forfeited; and the law will be written on their hearts that they shall not break it. What creatures must they be, since that will be needful to secure for the earthly people the continued enjoyment of millennial happiness!\* Thus will God provide, that He

\* Of the incorrigibleness of the old man within us we are thus reminded. We shall only get free from its presence by death or the change at the rapture. The earthly saints will not be free from its presence in the millennium, but will then be preserved from its power.

may be able always to bless them, and that in perfect righteousness. What a thought does this present of His desire to bless !

But, as we have said, the time to make this covenant has not arrived. Why then is it mentioned here ? And why is such special attention drawn to it, that the passage from Jeremiah containing it is quoted at length ? To wean the Hebrews from Judaism was the real object. For why make a new covenant if the first was faultless ? (Heb. viii. 7). And if a new one is to be made, God has made the first one old. "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (13). Why then continue in connection with that which is transient and is ready to vanish away ? The folly of continuing on Jewish ground, and the greater folly of returning to it, must be apparent to the dullest comprehension. Apart from Christianity there was no blessing for those Hebrews. Apart from Christ there can be no blessing for the nation in the future. For He is the Mediator of the new covenant. To oppose Him was suicidal folly.

The mention therefore of the new covenant, and of the Lord as its Mediator, would throw light on matters, and be calculated to keep the believers true to the faith which they had embraced. For to turn back to Judaism was to oppose Him through whom the nation will be blessed, and that finally in a coming day. Was no blessing, however, to be looked for till the new covenant shall be made ? Assuredly that was not God's purpose. Some better things are in store for Christians than earthly blessings, great though these will be. So the Apostle would lead on his readers to full Christian teaching, that, grasping the truth of God, they might be able in faith to take and to maintain proper Christian ground.

Ere closing this portion and entering on that about the sacrifice, we would gather up a little of the teaching in this Epistle about the Lord's high priesthood. He must

have been High Priest in order to make propitiation for sins (ii. 17). On earth He was not, and never could have been, High Priest (viii. 4). As filling that office He ministers in a sanctuary, the heavenly one (iv. 14), which He has entered by His own blood, and abides therein (ix. 12), and is there as the forerunner of His heavenly saints (vi. 19, 20). His death was necessary for Him to enter into the Holiest as High Priest. This He has done by His own blood. And further, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek He could not have been had death intervened in the course of His priesthood; but "continuing ever He hath an unchangeable priesthood" (vii. 24).

**Mediatorship.**—Then too of Him as the Mediator have we read. A word on the subject of mediatorship will not therefore be out of place. For the fulfilment of a promise no mediator is required (Gal. iii. 20). For a covenant between two contracting parties a mediator may be needed. It was so with reference to the first covenant at Sinai, of which Moses was the mediator. It will be with reference to the new covenant, of which the Lord Jesus, we learn, is the Mediator. But there is more in Scripture teaching of mediatorship than just the position of one in relation to two contracting parties. And Exod. xxxii.-xxxiv. teaches us about it. Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, was viewed by God as connected with the people of Israel. So when they had made the calf, and whilst Moses was on the mount with God, the lawgiver learnt from God of their sin, and that God connected him with them. "*Thy* people," God said, "which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (xxxii. 7). Moses, clear of the sin of the calf, then intercedes for them. If they were his people, as God had said, he would intercede on their behalf. Again, in xxxiii. 1-3 God speaks in a similar strain, identifying Moses and the people: "*Thou* art a stiffnecked people," and, "Lest I consume *thee* in the way." Moses accepts the position, and again intercedes for the people. "If *Thy*

presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here, that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (xxxiii. 15, 16).

Accepting this position in relation to Israel, Moses was permitted to ascend Mount Sinai a second time, and came back with his face resplendent with Divine glory (xxxiv. 29). He accepted, as evidenced by his return, his face resplendent with Divine glory showing that he had been in the immediate presence of God, all would know and be assured of the acceptance of the people, grievously though they had failed. The acceptance of the mediator involved the acceptance of all those on whose behalf he was mediator. How this history has teaching for us 2 Cor. iii.—iv. 6 shows. And though we have nothing to do with the new covenant, yet the Lord we must remember is the Mediator between God and men as well (1 Tim. ii. 5). So the teaching about mediatorship is for us as well as for Israel, though the truth of it for us lies outside the reference to the new covenant. A further point may interest. Moses as the mediator had access to God in a way Aaron had not. He could enter the Divine presence without a sacrifice (Num. vii. 89) being offered up and incense being burnt. Unique then was, in his case, his position, a foreshadow of that of Christ's. He was as mediator identified with the people. He could intercede for them. He accepted, they were accepted. And He could enter the Divine presence, and be at home there without the need of sacrifice first being offered up.

Now we pass on to the *fourth* great subject of the Epistle—the sacrifice which has been offered up.

IV.

THE SACRIFICE.





## THE EFFICACY OF THE BLOOD.

### HEBREWS IX.

WE now reach the fourth great subject of the Epistle—that of the sacrifice. We have been reminded of the two covenants and of the two sanctuaries. Into the earthly sanctuary the priests went daily, ministering according to the law. Into the heavenly they neither entered nor saw. Now to certain features connected with the first covenant our attention at the outset of this great subject of sacrifice is to be directed.

“Then verily the first.” So we read. The first what? it may be asked. The common Greek text, which has the support of cursive MSS., solves the question by supplying the word *tabernacle*. The better text, supported by all the uncials, supplies no substantive after “first.” So the Authorised Version and the Revised, in accord with this, reject *tabernacle*, and supply in italics *covenant*. This is in keeping with the last verse of chap. viii., where we read, “He hath made the first [*i.e.* covenant] old.” Then it naturally follows that the “first” in ix. 1 has reference to the “first” in viii. 13. So the sacred writer proceeds: “Then verily the first [*i.e.* covenant] had also ordinances of Divine service and a worldly sanctuary” (ix. 1). All was appointed by God. So in connection with the ordinances there were sacred vessels (ix. 2—5), and they were placed inside the sanctuary, which is called “a worldly one.”

Here we must stop to look at a difficulty which arises

from the expression "a worldly one." What are we to understand by it? Now the word thus translated occurs nowhere else in this connection in the New Testament. When, however, it is looked at in relation to the heavenly tabernacle, described lower down in our chapter (11), which was "not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [or, creation]," we understand that the appellation "worldly," given to the earthly one, was meant to express its connection with things down here, "as being by place, material, construction, and usage related to the present transitory world." \* For each sanctuary must of course be in character with the sphere in which it is found.

**Two Chambers.**—Proceeding with the account of the earthly sanctuary as given us in this passage (ix. 2-7), we are told of one special feature characteristic of it. It had two chambers, each called a tabernacle, separated the one from the other by a veil, which effectually shut off and screened the innermost chamber from the gaze of any one only admitted into the outer. This outer chamber was commonly called the holy place (Exod. xxvi. 33), whilst the inner one was designated "the Holy of holies" (Heb. ix. 3). With the first, or outer chamber, there were here reckoned as its furniture, the candlestick, the table, and shewbread. After the second veil was "the tabernacle called the Holiest of all, which had the golden censer [or, perhaps better, the golden altar], and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubim of glory, shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly, *i.e.* in detail" (2-5).

Questions here arise. We must stop to look into them. 1st. Did the sacred writer refer to a *censer* or to an *altar*? Unquestionably the word that he has chosen is never used in the Septuagint of the golden altar. But was there in

\* Delitzsch on the passage.

the tabernacle a golden censer? Nowhere in the Levitical law is such a utensil mentioned. Can then the word be legitimately applied to the golden altar? This question can be answered in the affirmative. Jewish writers, as Philo and Josephus, designated that altar by the same term met with in this passage of the Hebrews. We hold then this to be sufficient justification, if any were needed, for the author of the Epistle thus to write of it, thereby using the current term of the day, which would be understood by all.

2nd. That question settled, another arises of apparently a more serious kind, involving, if the objection raised could be substantiated, a charge of ignorance against the writer of the Hebrews; for neither a golden censer, if there was such a vessel, nor the golden altar, had a permanent abode in the Holiest. Attention, however, to the language here used will clear the writer from such a charge; and a passage in the Old Testament will justify him in the way he has written. Describing the outer chamber, or tabernacle, he writes of certain vessels that were in it. "*Wherein*," he says, "was the candlestick, the table, and the shewbread." All these were located in that chamber. But when he comes to speak of the second chamber, or tabernacle, he changes his language, and instead of writing *wherein*, as before, he says now "*having* a golden altar," etc. —i.e. not distinctly stating what was within that chamber, but what was connected with it. Was he warranted in thus writing? Turning to 1 Kings vi. 22, we must admit that he was; for there we read of the golden altar as belonging to the oracle, i.e. the Holiest. So the Revised Version. Hence there is no mistake in that which he wrote, and no ignorance on his part of the arrangement of the sanctuary. He writes as one who was acquainted with the Old Testament, and the Old Testament fully clears him of the charge of ignorance. So ignorance, if any, must be charged against those who accuse him of it. There was here no clashing

between the Epistle and the Hebrew Scriptures, both indeed being really the product of one mind, even that of the Spirit of God.

Further, we have mention of a golden pot of manna, and of the rod of Aaron which budded, as having been in the ark with the two tables of stone. Now, though in reading *Exod.* xvi. 34 and *Num.* xvii. 10 we might not have understood that, we cannot say that those passages could not imply it; so what our author here affirms we cannot say is contrary to fact. Certainly the golden pot and the rod never entered the Temple; for, when the ark was carried into its final resting-place, we are expressly told that there was nothing in it save the two tables of the Testimony. The mention of this, however, seems to point to the fact that once there had been other things therein as well; and the words of *Exod.* xvi. and of *Num.* xvii., "before the Testimony," may imply that they were placed where the tables were kept. That is all that we can say. Had it been written "before the ark of the Testimony," we should have known that they were never inside it.

With the notice of the mercy-seat the enumeration of things connected with the Holiest comes to an end. The ark with its lid, the mercy-seat, was the only piece of Bezaleel's workmanship that was transferred for use to the Temple of Solomon. Till the Babylonish captivity it existed. When, however, the Temple was destroyed, it disappeared. It never went to Babylon; that we read of. It disappeared. Tradition makes Jeremiah to have transported it to a cave (*2 Macc.* ii. 4-8), and there hid it with the altar of incense. That it disappeared is certain. That he hid it, to come forth at a future day, is we think most unlikely, with the words of his prophecy (*Jer.* iii. 16) before us. It was in the Temple in the days of Josiah (*2 Chron.* xxxv. 3), but is never mentioned in the Old Testament after that citation from Jeremiah. Beyond then the days of that prophet the ark cannot be traced. A stone supplied its place in the

restored Temple, and no mention of it have we in Ezekiel's future one. Jeremiah has told us that it will not be needed, which we can all understand; for being, as it was, the symbol of the Divine presence, it will not be required when God Himself shall be there (Ezek. xliii. 1-8, xlvi. 35).

To proceed. Two tabernacles there were, as here called—the one the holy place, the other the Holiest. Into the *first* all the priests could enter accomplishing the service of God. Into the second only one could enter, the high priest, and that but once a year, and then only with the blood of the sin offerings for atonement. Now these two chambers specially characterised Judaism; whilst one chamber, the veil being rent, characterises Christianity. The existence and the maintaining of the two put the worshipper at a distance from God. It was so under the law of old. It will be the same in the millennium in Ezekiel's Temple. And, as long as according to the mind of God the two were recognised, the way into the Holiest was not made manifest. This is the definite statement in the Word: "The way into the holy place [*i.e.* Holiest] hath not yet been made manifest, whilst as the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a parable [or, figure] for the time *now* present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 8-10). We quote the Revised Version, which here better represents the original, reminding us that the Temple service was still going on when the Epistle was written. So in ver. 6, for "went in always," it should be "go in continually." The priests were daily entering the sanctuary. Now, as we have said, the recognition of the two chambers with the veil unrent made it impossible for the worshipper to enter the Divine presence. But this, which did and will ever characterise the worship of the earthly people, *i.e.* never entering the

Holiest, was not, it is now demonstrated, the mind of God for worshippers at all times. Nor would God have the worshipper remain with an unpurged conscience. Jewish rites could never meet the need of the Hebrews, nor of us. The sacrifice of Christ can, and does.

**Efficacy of Blood.**—A shadow of things to come, but not the very image of the things—such was the law (Heb. x. 1). In accordance with its ritual, sacrifices were offered, and blood taken into the Holiest. For it is an unchangeable principle with God that no sinner can approach Him acceptably apart from a sacrifice offered up on his behalf. And no one who has sinned can ever have a standing before Him unless propitiation by blood has been made for his sins. For this, besides the sacrifice, a sanctuary was requisite, and a high priest likewise.

Under the law God instituted the Aaronic priesthood, and provided a high priest in the person of Aaron and his successors, and once in each year was the high priest to enter the Holiest with blood for himself, his house, and for the people of Israel. On the tenth day of the seventh month that service took place, just prior to the feast of Tabernacles. For this feast foreshadowed, as we may now see, that final rest for the people of God cannot be enjoyed unless atonement has first been made on their behalf. And year by year on the tenth day of the seventh month that sacrificial service was to take place, the earnest indeed of the atonement which should some day be really made, though the witness each year by its repetition that it had not as yet been effected. With the due observance of the rites for that day the work of the high priest in connection with atonement was exhausted. He could do no more; but atonement had never yet really been effected. That propitiation by blood was to be an essential part of it the entry of the high priest into the Holiest with blood clearly portrayed. But how and when would that be accomplished?

**Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary.**—An answer to these questions our Epistle provides. Those who still upheld Judaism were always, and rightly, in the attitude of expectancy. Christians, on the contrary, were taught to look back to that which had been done once and for all. For “Christ being come a High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [or, creation]; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained [or, found] eternal redemption” (Heb. ix. 11, 12). A high priest to enter the Holiest *with* the blood of animals on behalf of Israel was nothing new. But for a High Priest to enter *by* His own blood, that characterising His entrance, was new, and unheard of, till the Holy Ghost opened up the teaching of the accomplishment of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice. *Once each year* was Aaron to enter. *Once for all* has the Lord entered. Aaron entered the Holiest on earth. The Lord has entered the Holiest in heaven. The entrance of each was characterised by blood, the blood of the sin offering. In Aaron’s case it was with the blood of bulls and of goats. In the Lord’s case it was by His own blood, not by virtue of it, as if He could not have entered the Divine presence without it. His entrance was characterised by that. Aaron came out to re-enter in the same way on that day year; for all he did could never make the worshipper perfect as pertaining to the conscience. The Lord, on the other hand, entered in by His own blood *once for all*, never to repeat it, having obtained (or, found) *eternal* redemption. A shadow indeed was the law, but not the very image of that foreshadowed. The blood of the victims, appointed as they were by God and slain according to the Mosaic ritual, foretold clearly the need of blood. But the type fell far short of the Antitype, when it was learnt that our High Priest entered in by His own blood, uniting in Himself

what had never been united before, nor can be again, the offerer, the offering, and the high priest. And now eternal redemption results from it.

*Our High Priest* we say. Who is He? Christ, says the Apostle, the anointed One of God, and Israel's Messiah, who will reign as King of righteousness and King of peace, the great Melchizedek and King of Salem in a full and blessed sense. Once crucified on earth amid the scoffings and derision of men, He will by-and-by be seen sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. This is He who has entered the Holiest on high by His own blood, where no high priest ever was before Him. And so, as of the existence of the heavenly sanctuary we were reminded in viii. 2, we here learn that One, Christ, the High Priest, has entered it to make propitiation for sins. And we know too that He has done that, and it is of everlasting validity, a redemption which is eternal being the result of it.

The high priest of Aaron's race might still be seen, when this Epistle was written, in his white robes on the Day of Atonement officiating at the altar of burnt offering. Then lost from view, as he entered the holy place, and traversed its length in silence till He had entered the Holiest, he would reappear after duly carrying out the ritual appointed inside the sanctuary, and before all confess the sins of the people on the head of the scapegoat. After that, changing his dress, he might be seen officiating again at the brazen altar, till his work for that day was ended. Many might be looking on as interested in the ceremonial. But what must it have been to one who had this Epistle in his hands, and believed its contents? Divested of all interest, and that for ever, must that ceremonial have become for him, as he knew, and this Epistle fortified him in the truth that all he witnessed was ineffective and the whole scene needless. But the crowd, who might be spectators of the ceremony in the court, and kept the day as



a Sabbath of solemn rest afflicting their souls (Lev. xvi. 29), knew not, as they watched the goat going away till lost to sight, that in another sanctuary, hidden from mortal gaze, redemption had been effected once and for all, though not without blood.

What a theme is that of the blood of Christ! Here (ix. 12) is it mentioned for the first time in this Epistle. Are men to think lightly of it? To it they must ever be indebted, if any blessing is to be enjoyed. They need it for redemption. They need it for the purging of the conscience. Israel will need it for deliverance from the consequences of sins under the first covenant. It is needed to make the new covenant. No forgiveness can there be without it. And the heavenly things themselves are cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. So we might call vers. 12-23 a treatise on the efficacy of blood. And, as we ponder over it, we may get more adequate thoughts of this subject, and understand better how great and varied was the need for that precious blood shed once for all, which is productive of such blessed results for believers in all ages, and for those from amongst the Jews in an especial manner.

And first, the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God (ix. 14). Dead works they are called; for they are not acceptable to God, not being the fruit of the new, the Divine nature working in the individual. Of course the creature ought to serve God; but where there is no spiritual life it cannot, and all its efforts then are so many dead works, which He cannot accept. Would any pride themselves on doing their best in order to please Him? If unconverted, such a thought is all a delusion. Life, spiritual life, is needed to bring forth fruit for God. "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10). Would any think that God is too merciful to take note of acts done before conversion?

It needed the death of Christ to meet the claims of a holy God so as to enable Him to act righteously in grace in pardoning the sinner. But more. He desires the willing service of the creature, and for that the conscience must be purged from dead works, which would otherwise lie as a heavy weight on it. Then the individual can serve the living God, for true acceptable service springs from grace consciously received. The woman in Simon the Pharisee's house washed the feet of Christ when she was pardoned, which really was before the Lord publicly declared it. Her love, He declared, in rendering that service showed she was consciously forgiven (Luke vii. 47). For eternal redemption then we need that blood, and for a purged conscience as well.

Then Israel in an especial manner will need it; and these Hebrews had doubtless learnt that. For formerly placed under the first covenant with God, they had failed to keep it. Now, though blessing was promised the nation if they kept it, there was no provision under it for recovery from failure if they broke it. Once broken, all, as far as they were concerned, was lost for ever; unceasing obedience in the future could never make up for one act of failure in the past. Hopeless then must their condition nationally have been, if God could not have dealt with them in grace. Hopeless must it have been, unless He could act thus in righteousness. For He cannot compromise His holiness. If then blessing was ever to be enjoyed by them, a new covenant was a necessity, and by consequence a Mediator for it was required. Now the Lord, as we have already seen, is both the Surety and the Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. vii. 22, viii. 6), *i.e.* the new covenant, that "by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb. ix. 15). A portion far better than an inheritance in Canaan is offered Christians, even an

inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those that are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. i. 4, 5). By-and-by the nation will enjoy their land, never again to be dispossessed of it, all owing to that precious blood. An everlasting inheritance on earth will be theirs, when those Hebrews will be on high in heavenly glory. Who would go on with Judaism, with the weight of the transgressions under the first covenant pressing on him, when redemption by the blood of Christ was offered to meet his need, and an eternal inheritance in heaven was within his reach? What had Judaism to offer to equal this?

**Testament.**—We have read of a covenant, the word for which in the original also bears the meaning of testament. And now, reminded, as we are to be, of the way the first covenant was ratified, viz. by blood, the blood of the sacrifices, the sacred writer, ere speaking of that, recalls to his readers how in common life there is the need of death, even that of the testator, before a testament can have validity. And we may understand the introduction of this thought of a testament in vers. 16, 17, since the Lord had to die for the new covenant to be made. Moses, when the first covenant was to be ratified, shed the blood of victims. The Lord gave His own. And as a covenant does not necessarily demand death in order to its establishment—witness that second one made with Israel (Exod. xxxiv. 27), and that third made with the same people in the plains of Moab (Deut. xxix. 1)—whereas a testament necessarily requires it, it seems quite appropriate that the word in vers. 16, 17, which previously had been rendered by *covenant*, should there be translated *testament*.\*

\* Opinions on this matter are much divided. Some, as the Authorised Version, would uniformly translate by *testament* throughout the passage (Heb. ix. 15-20). Some again would insist on the use of the word *covenant* throughout. Others, as the Revised

Moses, we have said, dedicated the first covenant by blood, sprinkling it on the people and on the book, the token for them that, if they broke it, death was their deserved penalty. But the sacred writer here adds to our knowledge derived from Exod. xxiv. 6-8, mentioning details not given us in that narrative—details most likely handed down amongst the people, so perfectly correct, though not to be verified by any statement in the law. As sprinkling of blood took place when ratifying the covenant, sprinkling of blood was also resorted to in connection with the tabernacle and its vessels. Here again details are supplied, not distinctly mentioned in the law, but testified to by Josephus (*Ant.*, III. viii. 6). Tradition some may say this is. Yes. Not tradition adding to Scripture; but what Scripture teaches in the New Testament is found to be in perfect harmony with that which was the current, and we may add the true, opinion amongst the Jews of that day.

Then too, according to the law, nearly all things were purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission. Is this last statement sufficiently pondered over by many? No sanctuary now exists to which sacrifices for sin can be brought. No altar is there on which the blood of such offerings can be sprinkled in accordance with the Divine mind, so as to be acceptable to God. How are we then shut up to the efficacy of the blood of Christ as the only sacrifice which abides in everlasting validity before God! What need then was there indeed for the shedding of blood in Old Testament times! Now if such was the case under the law, the need for the shedding of the precious blood of Christ it is not difficult to understand. Blood sprinkling of old could accomplish but a ceremonial cleansing, foreshadowing, only foreshadowing, that which

Version, restrict the word *testament* to vers. 16, 17, which then appear, and we think rightly, more in the character of a parenthesis as illustrating the subject from the common affairs of life. A similar instance of illustrating a subject we meet with in Rom. vi. 7.

the blood of Christ can alone, and has effectually, accomplished.

**Three Appearings.**—From the section on the need of blood we pass to a consideration of that which the Lord Jesus has done. If the patterns, or copies, of things in heaven needed cleansing with blood of bulls and goats, the heavenly things needed cleansing also, but with better sacrifices than these. God's holiness must be cared for and fully maintained. As then the sanctuary on earth, into which the people never personally entered, needed cleansing because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins (for therein was the nation's recognised standing before God), it can be no surprise that the heavenly things needed it likewise. Where the standing of God's people is, there we learn in the type that the blood must go to cleanse. And remembering that sin has been manifested in a sphere of wider extent than that in which man moves, these words of our Epistle have great significance. Now for the cleansing of the heavenlies Christ has entered, not the holy places made with hands, which are the figures (or, copies\*) of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (ix. 24). Entering to *appear*, or to be manifested, in the presence of God for us, He is there still. Aaron entered the Holiest on earth for a brief moment year by year. He could not remain there. Our High Priest abides in the presence of God. A high priest who could enter within the veil, though he could not remain there, Israel might boast of before Gentiles. A High Priest who remains within for His people Christians could say was theirs. Again was it patent how different is the substance from the shadow.

In the previous part of the Epistle (chap. i.-vii.) attention was called to the relationship to God of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He is the Son. In this chapter (ix.) we read not of Him as the Son, but as

\* See note on p. 159.

the Christ. It is the Anointed One, the Messiah, who has entered the heavenly sanctuary, and has found eternal redemption. Israel looked for Messiah on earth. He is, the Apostle teaches, now in heaven. On earth He was once, to accomplish something far different from Israel's redemption from their enemies, though that will result from it in due time. Appearing now in heaven, he was *once manifested* upon earth, having come here to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Rejected by the nation, who did not know Him and did not care for Him, they cast Him out, putting Him on the cross. He died, offering up Himself as a sacrifice to put away sin. Enmity to God and to Him on the part of the nation His death openly proclaimed. Now all are to learn that His death, the evidence of man's intense hatred, was a sacrifice of priceless value to God, and fraught with rich blessing to creation as well as to God's saints. What a revelation here comes out! He died to put away sin. Sin, not sins, is the subject in this place. Deeper questions than men dreamt of had to be settled, and by His death alone could they be settled. The heavenly things themselves needed cleansing, and provision had to be made for the putting away of sin. Nothing therefore was left undone, that was called for, to uphold the glory and holiness of God, and to work for the welfare of men, as well as for the deliverance of creation.

**Sin.**—To put away sin, it is said, not sins. We naturally think of our sins, and of the need of atonement for them. Here, however, we have another question, and one that atonement does not settle, though the sacrifice of Christ making atonement does. *Sins* are atoned for that the sinner who believes may be forgiven and may have a perfect standing before the throne of God. Sin, on the other hand, is to *be put away*; for by *sin* as distinct from *sins* is to be understood that evil principle, we may call it, from which sins spring. Atonement for sins we rejoice in, seeing that we, who have sinned, can thereby be

delivered from the penal consequences of our guilt. But atonement for an evil principle there could not be of course in the nature of things. It will be put away. For this He *appeared*, to effect it by the sacrifice of Himself. He appeared in the end of the ages, but not till men had been tested in various ways, and had always failed. Then He came to die, and to die but once, effecting by His death all that was needful to clear creation by-and-by from that which weighs on it, as well as to save us who believe.

Of creation's deliverance, as we have already noticed (p. 58), John the Baptist testified: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Of its coming deliverance Rom. viii. 20-22 bears witness. And of its expectation as to it, and its joy in consequence, Rev. v. 13, 14 teaches. Then of its joy in hope when the Lord comes to reign Psalms xcvi. 11-13, xcviii. 7-9 are sufficient attestation. But its full deliverance awaits the eternal state. Not so with us, who will be delivered from the presence of sin either by death or at the rapture. Hence whilst creation has an interest in the Lord's coming, we have a nearer and a fuller one; for we shall be with Him and shall reign with Him ere that is brought about for it.

This leads on to the *third appearing*. The Jews expected that the Christ should come, and the Samaritans shared that hope with them (John iv. 25). Still do they expect Messiah to *come*. Christians, however, could say, and can still say, they expect the Christ to *return*. It is the same Person that both speak of. But how far back in intelligence is the Jew! He looks for Messiah, as never having been here. We look for the Christ to return, who lived here, who walked here, who worked here, and who died here. He will return, and return for the salvation of His people. Now salvation, we must here understand, is of the whole person, of which Peter speaks (1 Pet. i. 5), and Paul also, and especially in Philippians. Once here to die,

offering Himself as the sacrifice, Christ will return, apart from any question of sin, for He has settled that by His atoning death. And by-and-by the earthly people, the godly remnant, will understand and confess this, as Isa. liii. has foretold. The Hebrews knew it then. And whilst owning that it is the common lot of men as sinners to die (though all will not), and to have the prospect of judgment awaiting them after death, they were to know that the prospect before them, whether they died first or not, was salvation in its fullest and final sense when the Lord shall reappear (Heb. ix. 27, 28).

These three appearances, as we may call them, of what grace to us do they speak! He appeared on earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He appears now in the presence of God for us. He will appear for them that look for Him the second time without sin unto salvation. A *second* appearing of Messiah was a thought foreign to Judaism. For the second appearing Christians look—an important and comforting article of their faith. A Christ who has been here and has died, a Christ who is in heaven, a Christ who will reappear—this is part of the Christian man's faith; and he can look with hope for the reappearing, since he knows that the question of his guilt was settled when atonement was made.

**The Rapture and the Appearing.**—We have spoken of the rapture, which is the Church's proximate hope (John xiv. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 51-54; 1 Thess. iv. 15-18; Rev. xxii. 20). In this Epistle, however, that is not dwelt upon. His coming to reign, of which mention is made in Heb. ix. 28, is the hope set before the saints. We need to remember both these events, for *we* are concerned with both.

The rapture is the special expectation of Christians, though all the sleeping saints will share in it. And it will take place without premonitory signs to arouse the saints then alive. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, figures to express the suddenness of the



event, are the terms used by the Apostle when writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 52) concerning it. Then of the order of the events on that day the same Apostle has enlightened us by his first letter to the Thessalonians (iv. 16, 17): "For the dead in Christ shall rise first." This clearly includes Old Testament saints as well. Then those Christians still alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And all those who have slept and those who have not died will be for ever with the Lord.

Responsibility, however, for service here does not terminate at that moment. The servant is not discharged from that till he renders up his account. Now this last is connected with the Lord's coming to reign, called also His appearing; for then the world will see Him (Rev. i. 7). With both these events, it will be seen, we trust, that we have to do; but where responsibility is treated of this latter truth—viz. the appearing, or the Lord's return to reign—comes to the front. We have these two events referred to in the first of the Thessalonians—the Church's hope (i. 10, iv. 15-18), and the appearing (ii. 19, iii. 13, v. 1-3). In the *Pastoral* Epistles it is this last which is put before Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 1), and before Titus (ii. 13). Needful, how needful is it for all of us to remember this last. The Word teaches that in the Lord's grace we shall be taken out of this scene ere judgment is poured out on the impenitent (2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. iii. 10); for as members of the Body of Christ we could not be left here by Him to suffer punishment with the world for its rejection of the Son. He has borne all our judgment for us, that we should never bear any of it. As members then of His Body we are to look for the rapture; as servants we must remember the appearing.

We next proceed to consider the perfect sacrifice.

## THE ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE.

HEBREWS X. 1-18.

THE sacred writer continues the subject of the *fourth* great point of difference between Judaism and Christianity—viz. that of sacrifice. Now sacrifices formed a prominent feature in Judaism. Daily were they offered up on the altar. No day could begin without the morning burnt offering being placed on the fire rearranged for it on the brazen altar. No evening could draw on to close a day without its appointed burnt offering being placed on that same altar, to be consumed throughout the hours of night by the fire ever burning thereon. No week could close without additional burnt offerings being consumed before the Lord. No month could commence without special offerings being brought to God's altar; and then not only burnt offerings, as on previous occasions, but a sin offering, which as well was enjoined. As the yearly festivals came round burnt offerings were consumed by the fire, and sin offerings also were offered up. For sins too under certain conditions, and for trespasses, offenders had to visit the brazen altar. A mother too, after the birth of a child, and a leper, if cleansed, had each to bring the sacrifices appointed for them. If any people therefore could merit the favour of God by their sacrifices, Israel could. But if such sacrifices had met their need, the death of God's Son would have been superfluous indeed.

**Inefficacy of Sacrifices.**—"Christ was once offered

to bear the sins of many," we have read (ix. 28). "For," adds the sacred writer, "the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offer [rather than, offered] year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (x. 1, 2). To make perfect those that draw nigh, to remove from them all conscience of sins, is plainly stated here to be at once the purpose of our God, as well as the need of the offerer. Under the law, however careful they might be in carrying out the prescribed ceremonial, the perfecting of the one who approached the altar, his cleansing so urgently needed, could never really take place. And this, as the sacred writer points out, was manifest. The man, or the woman, possessed of the feeblest intellect, might grasp this solemn fact; for the repetition of a sacrifice proclaims in the clearest manner possible that it has not done what was wanted in the past, nor can do it by any repetition in the future. There must be of necessity in all such sacrifices an inherent want. Well is it to remember this. For whatever be the nature of the sacrifice, whether bloody, or unbloody as men speak, *its repetition proclaims its inefficacy in the past, and also its inability for the future.* It cannot deal with or settle the question of the offerer's guilt. It cannot ensure him acceptance before God. This is a cardinal truth in connection with sacrifice. To repeat a sacrifice is labour thrown away. But more, it is to despise the one perfect sacrifice that God has provided.

On the other hand, a sacrifice once offered up for sins, which needs no repetition, speaks as loudly of the sinner's want having been met. Under Judaism then that never could be; "for it is not possible," adds the Apostle, "that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." And no other sacrifices were enjoined on the Day of Atone-

ment. What then did those sacrifices effect? They recalled to the people's remembrance their sins each year. They taught that only by sacrifice could those sins be rightly dealt with. They typified in measure the sacrifice that could deal with them; but proclaimed by their repetition, as long as that was done by Divine consent, that the true sacrifice was still to be provided, and still to be offered up. We have said *in measure*, because animal sacrifices could never really avail, nor fully foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ.

**The Willing Sacrifice.**—But where could that sacrifice be found, if earth could not provide it? The blood of one born in sin could not be accepted. That were to insult a holy God. To give one's firstborn for one's transgressions, the fruit of one's body for the sin of one's soul (Mic. vi. 7), might seem to a heathen likely to mollify an offended deity of his conception, but could not meet the holiness and righteousness of the one true God. Was this harsh dealing with His creatures on the part of the Divine Being? He had proclaimed centuries before our Epistle was written the inefficacy of animal sacrifices; but had indicated in that same revelation that a sacrifice well-pleasing to Him would one day be offered, offered up too, and accepted. To the Book of Psalms, so often referred to by the Apostle, are we again turned. That book which foretold Christ's birth, His death, His ascension, and His priesthood, foretold also the sacrifice of Himself. True the quotation now made might take some of the readers by surprise. The importance and precision of it some might never have taken up. When, however, attention was called to it, and the words of the Old Testament quoted, what could a sober Israelite do but admit its teaching, and, if exercised in his conscience, inquire about the true sacrifice therein indicated?

And from Him who was the sacrifice he could learn; for we are privileged by the Spirit of prophecy to hear what

He, when coming into the world, said to God. God's purpose, the Lord's readiness to carry that out, and at the great cost to Himself, are referred to in that Psalm. Before His birth the Virgin learnt that her child, the Messiah, would sit on David's throne, and reign for ever and ever (Luke i. 31-35); but no word was then dropped by the angel to indicate His sacrificial death, though that was foreknown, and long ago foretold. That of which Mary at His birth was ignorant, He well knew, and, as we here learn, spoke of it to God. But more. His language teaches us two important truths. 1st, His words, "I am come to do Thy will," indicate surely that He existed before His incarnation; and 2nd, what is also quoted—"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body \* hast Thou prepared Me; in burnt offerings [or perhaps, whole burnt offerings] and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, *Lo, I am come*" (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God"—is a plain intimation that the sacrificial ritual ordained of God by Moses would have to give place to a sacrifice acceptable to God and efficacious for men. To that these words of the Psalm looked forward. So as in Psalm cx. there was indicated a change in the priesthood, in Psalm xl. there is announced that there would be a complete change in the law of sacrifice. And as the former Psalm (cx.) spoke of a priesthood that would abide—"Thou art a Priest for ever"—this latter Psalm (xl.) speaks of a sacrifice that would need

\* "A body hast Thou prepared Me" is the rendering of the Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm xl. 6, instead of the Hebrew, "Mine ears hast Thou opened" [or, digged]. In no other Greek version do we meet with the term "body" in place of "ears." The old Latin here followed the Septuagint, but the Vulgate on the Psalm corresponds with the Hebrew. Whence arose the rendering of the Greek Septuagint "a body" for "ears" it is not easy to say, unless it was intended as a free interpretation of the Hebrew. This may very probably be the solution of the matter.

no repetition, as it is said (Heb. x. 9, 10), "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He died once. He could not die again. Once was sufficient. And now, whilst Israel under the law could boast of the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer availing for the purifying of the flesh (Heb. ix. 13), we learn, and the Hebrews could say, that by the will of God believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. This was and is a complete and permanent sanctification. Again we may ask, Could Judaism provide anything to surpass or even to equal it?

**The One Offering.**—New indeed might be the thought to many that one sacrifice was enough instead of many. Solomon on the altar at Gibeon had offered a thousand burnt offerings. Before the ark, as it made its way into the Temple, they sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. At the dedication of the Temple he offered peace offerings to the number of two and twenty thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. Our author, however, directs attention in the Epistle to but *one* sacrifice, which far outweighed in value all that had ever been offered on Bezaleel's altar, or on that made by Solomon for the Temple. Daily might there be seen by any one visiting the Temple courts how the Levitical service was being carried on. Each day the priest was found at his post at the altar ministering there, but only to repeat the same service at the altar on the next day, or on the next recurring occasion for which that sacrifice was enjoined. But all was in vain as regards the taking away of sins. *Daily offering.* Then there was no cessation of devotedness of service at the altar. *The same sacrifices.* Then they failed not from any non-observance of the ritual. Wherein then was their inefficacy? It was inherent in them. For the blood of bulls and of goats could

never take away sins (x. 4). How this is kept before the reader! Gifts and sacrifices, we read, were being offered, which could *never* make the worshipper perfect as pertaining to the conscience (ix. 9). Again: "They can *never* with those sacrifices, which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect" (x. 1). And again: "Offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can *never* take away sins" (x. 11).

So there was the want. And those at that time ministering at the altar should have felt it; for of the inefficacy in the day that he wrote did the Apostle speak—an inefficacy which neither time nor repetition could remove. Many indeed of the priests had discovered this, and had become obedient to the faith (Acts vi. 7). Still, the daily sacrifices were being offered up. Evidently the defection from Judaism of that company of priests did not hamper the Temple service, nor cause any paucity in the number of those who would minister at the altar. Hence the special applicability of the Apostle's language in these chapters already referred to. "Can never take away sins," is the short and emphatic reiteration of the truth with reference to the daily and other sacrificial services of the Levitical priesthood. The case, if it rested for eternity on those sacrifices, was hopeless. Where then could any turn for that acceptable sacrifice, to which those so frequently offered up undoubtedly pointed? "Without shedding of blood is no remission" is a statement to which every Jew would subscribe. Blood then must be shed on behalf of sinners. If, however, the blood of bulls and of goats availed not to make the needed atonement, and no other sacrifices could be brought by men for that purpose, what could the sinner do? How completely and decisively is he shut up to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ! It is that, or nothing. But what creed save that of Christianity presents this sacrifice to the sinner's gaze? It becomes then a simple question, but a momentous one—*Christianity or nothing.*

Is that one sacrifice enough? Can it, has it met the need of him who trusts to it? How shall we know this? For to be mistaken on this point would lead to dire consequences. To the Book of Psalms then are we again turned, and this time to the 110th Psalm, which has already been before us in chaps. i., v., vii.: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man [or, He], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 11-14). We have punctuated the clause in ver. 12 "for ever sat down," connecting "for ever" with that which follows, and not with that which precedes. It is questioned with which words "for ever" should be connected. Grammatically they could be taken with either. We believe, however, that when connected with "sat down" the point comes out more forcibly. The priests were daily standing and ministering. There was no provision for them to sit down in the sanctuary. Their work was really never finished. Always doing, but never done, might have been said of it. But the Lord Jesus having offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down. He had finished what He came to do. He sat down in token of it. The priest would be expecting to repeat his service on the morrow. The Lord, satisfied with His sacrificial service, has an expectation of a very different character.

Striking must it have been for any intelligent visitor to Jerusalem to mark this fundamental difference between the teaching of Judaism and that of Christianity. If he entered the Temple courts in the morning, he might have seen the priest at the altar preparing for the daily burnt offering. Entering the upper room, when Christians were assembled for worship, he would have found no altar there, and have seen no victim ready for immolation, but



would have heard the assembled company giving thanks to God for a sacrifice once for all offered up, the sacrifice of His Son. The priest would be doing his work in silence, as far as he was concerned. The company in the upper room with one heart and one voice would be rendering to God the sacrifice of praise.

To return. The Lord has sat down on high after the offering up of Himself, thus telling us that His sacrificial service is concluded. Who would have understood before Pentecost that the first verse of the 110th Psalm proclaims by the Lord's attitude on high the abiding efficacy and the all-sufficiency of His one offering of Himself? He has sat down. Then He is satisfied with that which He has done. In His eyes it is complete, never to be repeated. God too is satisfied with Him, and with it, for He told Him to sit at His right hand. And we know that Christ is really there by the fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit (John xiv. 12). He told His disciples that if He went to His Father He would send the Holy Ghost (John xvi. 7). He did go. And though a cloud received Him out of the sight of the Eleven, so that they could not see Him enter heaven, the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost, the witness *of* the Lord's ascension, and also witnessing *to* it by the mouth of Peter on that eventful day (Acts ii. 14-36).

We have said that His attitude on high tells us that He is satisfied with the efficacy of His sacrifice, and looks for nothing more for Himself to do to perfect the sinner's acceptance before God. Has He then no expectation? He has, and He waits for its fulfilment. But for what? He waits till His enemies be made His footstool. He sits at Jehovah's right hand till that moment shall arrive, His attitude on high and His expectation alike witnessing to the light in which He views His sacrifice. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). How simple is all this! Not a flaw in the chain of reasoning! What sure ground is this for us to

stand upon—ground provided by God, and made known by the Spirit of God!

Ere proceeding further with our chapter we would draw attention to two expressions about Christians just met with—*sanctified* and *perfected*.

**Sanctified.**—Sanctification is looked at in Scripture in two lights. It is viewed as that which is still going on (1 Thess. v. 23). It is also viewed as a settled condition (1 Cor. vi. 11). Of this subject the Lord Jesus was the first Teacher in the New Testament, and that in His prayer to His Father on behalf of His disciples (John xvii. 17-19). "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth," was His petition. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified in truth [not, through the truth]," tells us of His going on high to further this desire for them. In the Hebrews sanctification (chap. xii. 14 excepted) is viewed as a settled condition (ii. 11, x. 10, 14); and we learn in our chapter that it is effected by the will of God through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. By that are we set apart for God, which sanctification in this sense simply means.

**Perfected.**—Then as to *perfected*. Used as we have already seen (p. 60) with reference to the Lord Jesus in the earlier chapters of the Epistle, it is used of believers in the later ones. We meet with it in connection with the future (xi. 40, xii. 23); and in ix., x., where the sacrifice of Christ is the theme, we read of our being now perfected by the one offering of the Lord Jesus. All question of guilt settled, and that for ever, by the precious blood of Christ, the believer is as to his conscience made perfect (ix. 9), to which he never could attain under Judaism. He knows that all his sins are forgiven (x. 14, 17). He has reached the end that was in view. In this light he is perfected, though still he has sin in him, and, if unwatchful, may fall into it. He is not perfected yet as to his *person*, but he is as to his

*condition* before God, as one pardoned, and that for ever, by virtue of the offering of God's Son.

**A Sure Witness.**—Sanctified by the will of God, perfected for ever by the one sacrifice, we are next reminded of God's provision for us to know it. All doubt about it is to be for ever removed from the heart by the witness of the Holy Ghost. Where shall we find this? Did it come by any fresh revelation, to which the Jew was necessarily a stranger? It comes to us from the Old Testament, that armoury from which weapons have been already drawn to establish point after point as to the surpassing excellency of the Lord over Moses and over Aaron, and by consequence also of Christianity over Judaism. The passage already quoted in full in chap. viii. with reference to the new covenant is now but partially requoted and commented upon by the Apostle: "For after that He hath said, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and on their minds will I write them."\* Then follows the important result: "And their sins and iniquities [rather, lawlessnesses] will I remember no more" (x. 16, 17). This blessing for Israel is associated with the making of the new covenant. Now on what will that covenant rest? It will rest wholly, as we have learnt, on the blood of Christ (ix. 15-22). That blood we know *has already been shed*. In that covenant, however, we have not, nor were the Hebrews to have, any part. So these Hebrews to whom the Epistle was addressed were not directly concerned with it. Something better, even heavenly blessing, and, we may add,

\* We have here (x. 16) an example of the Apostle quoting, we must say, from memory. The prophet, according to the Septuagint, which has been cited in viii. 10, wrote, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts." Here the sacred writer inverts *mind* and *hearts*, and adds too "and lawlessnesses" after "sins," which in viii. 12 is omitted by Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, and Westcott and Hort, on the authority of the Vatican MS. and the original reading of the Sinaitic.

Church association with Christ, was for them. Why then is that covenant referred to here? The answer is simple. Since forgiveness of sins for the house of Israel and for the house of Judah will rest on the efficacy of the blood of Christ, which has been already shed on Calvary, forgiveness of sins could then be known and enjoyed by believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and will throughout the Christian dispensation, by virtue of that precious blood. That which will flow from it by-and-by can and does flow from it now. So the promise of sins and iniquities being remembered by God no more we can take up who believe on the Lord, assured that it is for us as much as it will be for Israel in the future.

Are we presumptuous in saying this? The next words of the Epistle, the comment on the prophetic revelation just quoted, is to embolden us to say it: "Now where remission of these is there is no more offering for sin" (18). Why are Christians never told to go to the altar with animal sacrifices to offer up? How is it that such an injunction finds no place in apostolic preaching, whether in that of Peter or of Paul? How is it that the word *altar*, as a centre for worshippers now, finds no place in the Acts or in the Epistles, and that it is only in Heb. xiii. 10 that we read of an altar with which we as Christians have in any way to do? The early labourers, Apostles and others, had been nurtured in Judaism, and must have been seen at times at the altar. Great indeed was the change for them, as they found in the upper room that which satisfied the feelings of their heart, which the Temple worship now failed to do. And though at first they were found in the Temple courts at the hour of prayer, not a word is dropped by any of them that the altar was to continue to be the centre for worship, and that to it all true saints must still bring sacrifices. Whatever their practice may have been at the first from old associations and the custom of years, their teaching never directed the hearer to the altar or to the Temple. In a coming day, as Revelation teaches us, the altar will again

come into prominence. But why not now? Because "where remission of sins is there is no more offering for sin" (x. 18). Now plenary forgiveness of sins as a present blessing is a cardinal truth of Christianity.

From the days of Abel to the cross of Christ an altar was an essential element in true worship. Men then worshipped God acceptably by sacrifices. With the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that way of worship fell into abeyance, and will continue in abeyance, for all who take God at His word, as long as the Church remains upon earth. For, if by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and forgiveness of sins follows for the believer consequent on that one sacrifice having been offered up and accepted by God, it is plain that there need be no more offering for sins. They have been already pardoned for the believer. Now the pardon is plenary, as Jeremiah attests, and must be, as is declared, everlasting in its application. What the law then could never ensure grace has provided, even free, full, everlasting forgiveness for all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No more offering for sins can there be now. No altar, to which sin offerings are to be brought, exists now. There never was, since Israel became a people and had a ritual appointed for them, but one altar on which sin offerings could be offered up with acceptance. First it was the altar in the court of the tabernacle, then that one in the court of the Temple. Nor will there again be an altar, to which such sacrifices can be brought to meet with Divine acceptance, till the restoration of the Mosaic ritual, when God shall afresh have taken up His earthly people for blessing.

A change in the order of priesthood, a change of sanctuary in which high priestly ministrations are carried on, a change in the way of worship for saints who are now upon earth from that instituted by God of old—of all this our Epistle teaches us. Verily Christianity is not just a development of Judaism. While they have much in common

there are great differences, and the subjects just mentioned are characteristic features of the two systems forming essential elements of each.

Here the teaching about the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus comes to an end. Its two lines of service, briefly touched on in Heb. ii. 17, 18, have been expanded,—the latter, that of His present high priestly service of intercession, in chaps. iv. 14—vii. 25; the former, that of His sacrificial service, in chaps. vii. 26—x. 18. Exhortations, as is the practice of the writer, will now follow to the end of the Epistle.

V.

EXHORTATIONS.





## INVITATION, WARNING, AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

### HEBREWS X. 19-39.

**T**ILL now, since the commencement of the subject of the Lord's sacrificial service (vii. 26), we have met with no exhortations, the object of the writer under the guidance of the Spirit being evidently to establish the souls of his readers in the all-sufficiency of the atonement effected by the Son of God. In pursuance of this subject reference has been made to the ritual appointed of old for the Day of Atonement, the fast as it was pre-eminently called (Acts. xxvii. 9), which was kept on the tenth day of the seventh month just previous to the feast of Tabernacles. An intimation this was from the Jewish calendar, as we have already remarked, that the final rest for God's earthly people, of which the feast of Tabernacles was typical, must be preceded by the making atonement for the nation. And now we learn, as we peruse the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the service appointed to be carried on by Aaron on that solemn day was a foreshadow of the real atonement made by our High Priest who has passed through the heavens.

But, though turning our thoughts to that chapter of the Pentateuch (Lev. xvi.), the sacred writer fixes our attention only on the *sin offerings* appointed for that ceremonial, and omits all reference to the special *burnt offerings* which formed part of the ritual of that day likewise. To what Aaron did when dressed in the holy linen garments our

attention is directed. Of what he did after he resumed his ordinary pontifical attire no notice is taken by the Apostle. So of the bullock for Aaron and his house and of the goats for Israel we are reminded (ix. 12, x. 4); but to the rams for the burnt offering there is no reference. With the blood of the sin offerings—viz. that of the bullock and that of one goat—Aaron entered in due order the Holiest, and sprinkled of their blood, once on the mercy-seat and seven times before it, to make propitiation for sins. On the head of the live goat, which with its fellow, already slain, made but one sin offering (Lev. xvi. 5), Aaron confessed all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, to be carried away by that goat into a land of forgetfulness. But why direct attention to that which went on when the high priest was inside the veil? The answer is at hand. Our author would first remind his readers of the Lord's atoning work in the heavenly sanctuary in making propitiation by His blood; and then he intimates how the scape-goat part of the day's ceremonial has been fulfilled in the Lord bearing the sins of many. (ix. 28). The conscience could then be consciously purged. So that, put simply and clearly before the reader, the apostle contrasts in chap. x. the inefficacy of the sacrifices under the law, the repetition of which was enjoined, with this one perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered up Himself. After that his task on this head of sacrifice is done, and the pre-eminence of our High Priest's sacrificial service over that of Aaron's and of his successors in their priesthood stands out in undeniable clearness. Nothing therefore remains, ere proceeding to the next topic of the Epistle, but to give exhortations suited to the subject. These follow in the form, *first of an invitation* (x. 19-25), *next of a warning* (26-31), and *lastly of an encouragement* (32-38).

**Invitation.**—And first we must consider the *invitation*, which is such a one as no Jew could ever have supposed,

for it goes right against the Mosaic ritual, being an invitation to enter the Holiest, and addressed to every true believer. Now, according to the law, it would have been death for any priest to have attempted to pass into the Holiest. God would have resented such an act, for it would really have been an *attempt* of a sinner to be at home in the Divine presence without true effective atonement having first been made for him. That could never be. But here, instead of a prohibition to draw nigh, there comes an invitation to enter, and that the Holiest, the very presence chamber of the Almighty. Now that invitation is from God Himself, by the Holy Ghost, and written by the pen of inspiration : " Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place [*i.e.* the Holiest, ix. 25] by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated [or, dedicated] for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh ; and having an High Priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance [or, fulness] of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our hope [not, faith] without wavering ; (for He is faithful that promised ;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and unto good works ; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching " (x. 19-25).

We have said this is the first exhortation founded on the teaching as to the sacrificial service of our High Priest, and it is a most significant one. For we have read nothing of what Christians have done, or could do, to entitle them to such an invitation. The whole teaching of the section (vii. 26—x. 18) has been about the Lord Jesus, and that which He has done and has suffered. Now the blessed consequence to believers is, that they have boldness to enter the Holiest by His blood. They have done nothing towards

this. They could do nothing. The sacrifice of the Lord and the abiding efficacy of His precious blood, ever in remembrance before God, are the *whole* and *sole* grounds for the boldness of which we read, and of the privilege conferred on us to enter and to abide where Aaron could never remain. Further, it is the Holy Ghost by the Word who thus invites us, witnessing thereby to the blessed results of that one perfect sacrifice, and telling us of the desire of our God, the Holy One, to have such as we are, if believers, in His presence. Who is the sinner's friend but the Saviour? Who is for us? Is it not our God who desires to make us at home before Him? Shall we boast in ourselves because of such a favour? All boasting for ever is silenced as we read that we have this boldness only by (or, in virtue of) the blood of Jesus. Had that blood not been shed, no way for us could there have been into the presence of God. That blood shed, propitiation by it made, and the sacrifice accepted, there was needed nothing more to open the way. And God would not have any believers now to be kept out, nor to be ignorant of His gracious desire to welcome all such into the innermost part of the sanctuary.

**The Veil.**—But what is the road for us into the Divine presence? On this the word of revelation is not reticent. The character of the way as well as the way itself are noted for our instruction. It is a *new* way, such as never was opened up before. It is a *living* way, for death will never touch the one who travels along it. A new and a living way! What words to hear and to read! Nothing in the law was like it. For this is spoken to every one of the holy priesthood, whoever and wherever he may be, whether once a Jew or once a Gentile. A new way, opened up too by God, not by man, who will never allow Himself to be intruded upon in an unauthorised manner. This new, this living way we are to make use of, consequent on the Lord's atoning death; and it is through the veil, His flesh, that we draw nigh into the Holiest.

In the tabernacle a veil was put up by Divine command, which screened off the innermost chamber, called the Holiest, from the outer one called the holy place. In the Temple a veil was likewise put up for the same purpose, though doors were then added to the Holiest, or oracle. We read of the doors in 1 Kings vi. 31, 32, and of the veil in 2 Chron. iii. 14. No one, we presume, then knew of what the veil was typical. Its colours and the order of them were prescribed by God, and were the same in the Temple as in the tabernacle. For, typical of the Lord Jesus, there could be no change in them or in their order. The colours (Num. iv.) typified the history of the Lord in connection with earth—the history of One, the like of whom had never been seen in the days of Moses, nor in those of David nor of Solomon his son. The blue—the colour of the heavens as we see them—spoke of Him as the heavenly One, who came from above; purple—with which colour the brazen altar was associated, being covered on the march with a purple cloth—had reference to His sufferings and death; whilst scarlet—in a cloth of which colour the golden table and the shewbread were enveloped—prefigured that He who came from heaven, and would suffer to make atonement, should yet wield the government of this earth and inherit its glory. To have changed then the order of the colours would have been a great mistake. Divinely directed was Moses as to this. Divinely directed was Solomon as well. Then the fine linen, also mentioned, indicated the spotlessness of the One who would die and subsequently reign. Till we reach the Hebrews the meaning of the veil remained undisclosed. At the Lord's death we read that it was rent from the top to the bottom, rent by a Divine act, to indicate that the way into the Holiest was at length made manifest. But that which it typified yet awaited the unfolding by the Spirit. Now we know. And putting together its rending, the manner of it, and the time of it, with the teaching about it in this place, we see God's

design in causing it to be put up, and His purpose in rending it in twain. There could be no way opened for us by which to draw nigh to God except on the ground of the death of His Son.

A way then has been opened, but it is *through* the veil, the flesh of Christ. Had the veil been removed when He died, any one could have rushed in *because* of His death. But the entrance is *through* the veil. We can only enter the Holiest as we confess that death to be the ground of our approach. No entrance is there, or can there be, for any who refuse to avail themselves of Christ's atoning sacrifice. So, drawing nigh through the veil, there is the recognition and confession that we are wholly indebted to atonement effected by His precious blood.

The *place* we are to enter, even the Holiest, called here in the original the holy place, as in ix. 12; the way of entrance—through the veil; the ground of entrance—the blood of Christ,—all indicated: we next read of the One who represents us in the sanctuary before God—a great Priest,\* as He is called; for He is Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and hence far exceeds in excellency Aaron or any of his line. Learning of Him, who has preceded us into the Holiest and abides there, we have now the exhortation to draw near with a true heart in full assurance (or, fulness) of faith. Striking must this have sounded in the ears of any who recalled to mind the injunction given to Israel at

\* "Over the house of God." What is the house here referred to? In iii. 6 we have learnt that Christians are God's house on earth, in which we are elsewhere taught (Ep'. ii. 22) God dwells by the Holy Ghost. Here, however, the context would rather suggest the sanctuary on high as that which is intended, though perhaps not to the exclusion of the truth just referred to. In any case the Epistle to the Hebrews knows of no material, earthly structure as God's house. He owned one once. He will again. In Christian times, however, His house on earth is the company of the redeemed, and no structure erected in any locality, whether in Jerusalem, Rome, or elsewhere.

Sinai neither to go up into the mountain nor to touch the border of it on pain of death (Exod. xix. 12); for believers are now exhorted to draw near to God, into His very presence. Why this difference in Divine directions? Men are no better. God is unchanged. But Christ has died for sinners. Hence the difference. And as priests—for such only could enter the sanctuary—we members of the holy priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5) are to enter, and to draw nigh in perfect confidence of heart, in fulness of faith as to our acceptance; and like the priests of old, who at their consecration were sprinkled with blood, having been washed all over with water, we are to enter, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. This last refers, we believe, to the washing of regeneration (Tit. iii. 5), the washing in connection with the new order of things,\* of which the washing of the priests at their consecration was typical.

No place too holy—we say it with reverence and deep thankfulness—for believers to be in! What a light this sheds on the efficacy of that perfect sacrifice! By the Lord's resurrection God testified of His acceptance of the sacrifice. By this word of exhortation we learn of the value of Christ's precious blood. All that God is as the holy One and the righteous One fully maintained, His justice is perfectly vindicated and His mercy and grace are able to have free course. And do we not see the wisdom of our God in furnishing us, as it were, with a background to the picture by the types and shadows and ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, the better to portray the fulness and freeness of Divine

\* *Regeneration*—found in the New Testament only in Matt. xix. 28, Tit. iii. 5—speaks of the new order of things to be brought about when the Lord comes back in power, as Matt. xix. 28 teaches; and into connection with that believers are now morally brought through the new birth. But regeneration is never used for the new birth in Scripture, nor is it spoken of in connection with baptism, this last being figurative of burial, not of birth.

grace to those born in sin, but who have come to believe on the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and Redeemer?

Encouraged to *draw near* (22), we are next exhorted to *hold fast* the confession of our hope without wavering (23). Of the hope we have already read. To be in glory with the Captain of our salvation is part of it (ii. 10). To enter into God's rest is also a feature of it (iv. 5-11). To tread in person the floor of the Holiest in heaven is embraced by it (vi. 19, 20). To be personally on high, forming part of the assembly of the firstborn ones, and therefore being near to God, the Judge of all (xii. 23), is also included in it. Such a hope then—a hope which will not fail those who are faithful—the Hebrews were exhorted to hold fast. For hope plays no unimportant part in a saint's history. It can nerve him for conflict. It can brace him up to face difficulties. It can keep him patiently waiting for its fulfilment. What indeed should we do without it? And "He is faithful that promised." So we have that which is sure to rely on, even the faithfulness of our God.

And now having learnt what we should each do as respects ourselves, we are reminded by a third exhortation that *we should consider one another*. For though the exercise of faith and the grasping of the hope are called for by each individually, supposing there was no other saint upon earth, we are to remember that we form part of a company, all of whom are sons of God (ii. 10), fellows, or companions, too of the Lord Jesus Christ (i. 9, iii. 14), His brethren also, and brethren one of another (ii. 11, iii. 1). Hence care for one another should be in exercise, "provoking," as we here read, "to love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," so identifying ourselves openly with the company of God's saints. A danger this was to which some had succumbed (25), a danger too against which Paul exhorted Timothy (2 Tim. i. 8); and shall we not confess a danger to be guarded against in this day? True Christianity can never be popular. Its pro-



fessors must expect that to follow it, to follow Christ, will cost them something. If Christ has been cast out here, what must His people look for? But a day is coming when things will appear in their true light, and to have been faithful to Christ whilst on earth will meet with its reward. To that day the Hebrew saints were pointed, and so were to exhort one another. That day has yet to come; so the exhortation should not by any be unheeded.

"Shall we of the way be weary when we see the Master's face?

No; e'en now anticipating, in this hope our souls rejoice;

And His promised advent waiting, soon shall hear His welcome voice."

**A Warning.**—Hence follows the solemn warning: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (x. 26-31). We quote the passage in full. Solemn words indeed they are, foretelling Divine judgment, with no hope of escape, if the condition here described becomes true of an individual. For it should be remarked that, whilst referring to some professed believers (25) who were not assembling themselves with the Christian community, the writer does not style them apostates. They might yet be recovered, though to all appearance they were in great danger of apostatising. God

is patient. He desires not the perdition of the sinner, and would recover any such if possible (2 Tim. ii. 25, 26; Jude 22, 23; Rev. iii. 14-21). But if the course was a persistent one—*sinning* wilfully, the term implying the habit, not a temporary relapse, after the individual had received the knowledge of the truth (and by knowledge is here meant clear apprehension of the truth)—there was no sacrifice available. The truth—and by this Christian revelation is here described—had been before the individual, who had professed to accept it, and who now wilfully, persistently, and finally surrendered it by a relapse to Judaism. There was no sacrifice for sins for such a one. The only real one he had wilfully turned from, and had gone back to that which, by his profession of Christianity, he had once declared, and rightly, could never meet his case; for the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins. If Judaism could not meet his need, and if the sacrifice of Christ he had repudiated, where and how was he to get forgiveness of his sins? A sacrifice for sins was required. Those in Judaism owned that. Where could it be found if that of Christ on the cross was wilfully spurned? Again are we reminded that it is a question for the guilty creature of the perfect sacrifice of Christ or nothing.

And was it a small, an unimportant matter, apostatising from Christianity? For of that the Apostle is here writing. Was it just a matter of opinion, to be left to the individual to settle as he liked, whether he would revert to Judaism or continue a Christian? Wilful apostates deserve punishment, and they will receive it. Would a Jew demur to that? What was to be meted out to one who despised Moses' law? Death without pity was the penalty appointed therein (Deut. xiii. 1-11, xvii. 2-13). What could an apostate expect, since in renouncing Christianity he had trodden under foot the Son of God by taking part with those who blasphemed and rejected Him? The Son of God the Apostle writes, reminding his hearers of the person of

the One to whom they were to be faithful. The Son trodden under foot ! What could be meted out to any who did that but condign punishment ? Nor could it be a matter of opinion, whether the individual went back to Judaism or not, when the relapse was the treading under foot of God's Son. To that clearly God would not be indifferent, and to do that necessarily put the apostate in open opposition to God. So in the case of one who forsook Christianity for Judaism the sin committed was no light one. Further, it was accounting the blood wherewith he had been professedly sanctified—*i.e.* set apart by it for the service of God—as an unholy thing. It was also doing despite to the Spirit of grace, in refusing salvation by faith, and attempting to procure a standing before God by his own righteousness and his zealous observance of the law. In what a solemn light is apostasy here presented ! A desire for an easier path, a seeking of relief from trouble, into what a dreadful position might that lead a person if, renouncing association with the Christian assembly, he turned back to the synagogue and the Temple. Little probably had any of the Hebrews thought of the consequences of such a step. Now Scripture will be quoted in support of what has been stated. "Vengeance belongeth unto Me," God had said, "I will recompense." And again : "The Lord shall judge His people." Two statements these, culled from Deut. xxxii. 35, 36, which none of the race of Israel could refute ; nor should the Hebrews ignore their fulfilment. For these quotations, as the lawgiver declared, establish two facts. On the ungodly will come Divine vengeance, whilst the Lord will espouse the cause of His tried and harassed people. In due time He will manifest Himself on behalf of His own.\*

With the solemn announcement, "It is a fearful thing

\* "The first quotation declares that God is a just Judge—the second, on whose behalf, and only indirectly against whom, His judgment will be executed."—*Delitzsch*.

to fall into the hands of the living God," the words of *warning* close. "The living God!" A thought this is which has encouraged saints in their walk of faith in Old Testament times. Death cannot overcome the living God. A thought it is, on the other hand, to make one in danger of apostatising pause and quail. For who can outlive Him, in whose hands apostates must find themselves, to be dealt with in unsparing judgment? To meet the living God in judgment must be awful indeed. But the writer will not close with that thought. He would speak words to strengthen the faith of his readers.

**Encouragement.**—Already has he expressed his confidence in the faithfulness of the Hebrews to whom he addressed himself (vi. 9, 10), though earnestly exhorting them, as he has done, not to give up the conflict. And now he would encourage them to persevere, and not to cast away their confidence (or, boldness), which has great recompense of reward (35). Tried they had been, and in the past had "endured a great fight of afflictions; partly," he adds, "whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion on them that were in bonds [not, on me in my bonds], and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye yourselves have\* a better and an enduring substance [or, possession]." He spoke of their early days of faithfulness under persecution. Spoiled of their goods, a gazing-stock to the crowd, identifying themselves with others in sufferings, and having compassion on those that were in bonds—all this showed their faith and boldness in confessing themselves disciples of the crucified One. Now who was there so competent thus to speak of their early faith and constancy as the former persecutor of the Church, who had entered many a house, and hailing those therein

\* This is the better reading, instead of "in yourselves that ye have in heaven."

without distinction of sex had cast them into prison? Neither Clement, nor Apollos, to whom this Epistle has by some been ascribed, could so well have written of the former faithfulness and sufferings of the Hebrews as Paul. No one, not even Barnabas, was so fitted for this task as he whose memory could recall many a scene in connection with the persecution at Jerusalem, and who likewise must have had fixed indelibly in his mind the bearing and the unflinching constancy of confessors and martyrs for Christ. And certainly their conduct was not forgotten on high. God was not an unconcerned spectator of all that had taken place. In a coming day how fully will that be manifested!

Was their past then to be with them as nothing? Had their conduct in those days been all wrong? Had they been under a delusion, from which at length they were to be delivered? They knew better. So, recalling their past to mind, he could exhort them to hold on in order to receive the promise. And now, as he had quoted scripture with reference to the apostates, he will quote from the Old Testament also to encourage those tried ones to pursue with steadfastness the path of public confession of Christ. Indignation which shall devour the adversaries, apostates must expect. What can he say of the prospect for those who continue faithful? An abiding inheritance will be theirs, better, far better, than any on earth (34), and the promised rest and glory they shall share in. Worth waiting for was this. So he exhorts them to patience in doing God's will whilst waiting to receive the promise (36). We are saved in hope, we learn in the Romans (viii. 24). But hope needs sustainment. So scripture is now quoted to that end. And as Deut. xxxii. furnished the warning for apostates, Hab. ii. 3, 4 will provide what is suited for the faithful. "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one shall live by faith: and if he shrink back, my soul hath

no pleasure in him" (37, 38). In this quotation from the Septuagint the last two clauses are by the Apostle inverted,\* which gives point to what follows, and so may account for the inversion. "But we are not of them who draw [or, shrink] back unto perdition; but of them that believe [or better, have faith] unto the saving of the soul" (39).

Thereupon will follow a history of the worthies of old who acted and walked by faith—a goodly company to find oneself with, whilst enjoying Christian revelation and sharing in Christian blessing.

\* We see the writer's independence in his quotations. At times, as in Heb. x. 30, he renders more nearly the original Hebrew than the Septuagint translation has done. At times, as in x. 38, he adopts more closely a translation of the Septuagint, whilst inverting the last two clauses of his quotation from Habakkuk. We have given in the text the better reading of the passage, as may be seen in the Revised Version.

## *THE WALK OF FAITH.*

### HEBREWS XI.

**T**HE surpassing excellency of Christianity settled, proved by the greatness of our Apostle and High Priest, as well as by the abiding value of His one perfect sacrifice, the condition of those from among the Jews who embraced the new faith became necessarily very different from that in which they had found themselves from their birth and upwards. Earthly hopes and the earthly inheritance were surrendered in view of heavenly blessing and an everlasting inheritance. These therefore were started afresh on a pilgrimage which could never end on this side of death. Hence faith was specially called into exercise in a manner they had not required it before, and encouragement was provided to sustain them in their trials along the way. But whence could the encouragement be drawn? The Old Testament was to furnish it, and that throughout its history, which, here opened up, disclosed an order in God's arrangement of the past hitherto, we may well believe, not even so much as suspected. God has not left things on earth to come and go just as men might please. He has been at all times since the days of Adam ordering things here below, and bringing on the scene of this world individuals to play, as it were, their part in the great drama of this life; but to play it just at the right moment, and in accordance with His previously conceived plan.

Nothing new was it for saints to be called to walk by

faith. Witnesses of such a walk were numerous. Men well known in the history of the past, and honoured now as worthies of the olden time, had to tread that path under circumstances often anything but pleasant. In the pages of the Old Testament we may read the account of some of these, and must own them to have been heroes indeed. The important question, however, is, In what light did God regard them? This chapter (xi.) of our Epistle puts that beyond doubt, and would show the Hebrews how God viewed those who, called to the surrender of associations here, or led by the Spirit of God into conflict, could suffer the loss perhaps of reputation, possessions, and even of life, in faithfulness to the testimony of their day.

**Faith.**—Now what did nerve such for the fight? It was faith, which is “the substance [or, assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [or, proving] of things not seen” (xi. 1). By faith we lay hold of unseen things, and grasp them as substantial realities. To “hold fast the beginning of our confidence [or, assurance] firm unto the end” is the word given us in iii. 14. Through faith in exercise we are enabled to do that. By faith it was, not by sight, that the elders obtained a good report (xi. 2). Was that just the judgment of the writer? He will carry his readers fully along with him as to this as he unrolls the record of acts, heroic deeds, and patient suffering for the testimony entrusted to them. Faith has been and is the principle on which saints in all ages have acted. It takes God at His word, whether in the reception of a revelation He has vouchsafed, or in obeying commands which He has given.

And first as to creation. We are reminded that through faith it is “we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear” (xi. 3). Theories had been conceived by men to account for the origin of creation. But all were astray. We know nothing, and can know nothing, about the origin of creation save what Divine revelation



discloses. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." "He spake, and it was done." So wrote the psalmist (xxxiii. 6, 9). "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). So wrote the law-giver. With these witnesses our writer of the Hebrews agrees. God spake, and brought things into existence. By the fiat of the Almighty created things appeared, but not evolved out of things which existed. Matter is not eternal. For it is of the origin of the universe the sacred writer here treats, and not of the earth emerging subsequently out of chaos, prepared for man's abode. We are to believe what God has told us. Surely this is rational. What creature witnessed the act of creating? What could we know, what could we conceive of the origin of created things, if left to the light of mere human reason, or were dependent on philosophic deduction? The devout mind believes that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Philosophic or scientific research could tell us nothing better, and nothing certain. At best with philosophy, or science, it could be but a "may be," a "perhaps." On revelation we must therefore rest as to the distant past. There is that then which we must take wholly on the Divine record. Will it be irrational to take God's word about the future? At this point we are reminded of the faith of those of old. In them it is seen how it was in exercise all along the line.

**Antediluvian Saints.**—So of those who lived before the flood we are first to read—Abel, Enoch, Noah. In Abel we learn of the exercise of faith, and of the obedience of it in the important matter of acceptance before God for one born in sin. No earlier example of that could there be. None born in sin can please God without faith (xi. 6). So "by faith," we read, "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by [or, through] which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (4).

With his history in Genesis most readers of the Bible are familiar. And these Hebrews were to understand how important was the teaching of it for those who embraced Christianity. For them the Old Testament might almost seem a new book, and the light now cast on it was shining brightly and steadily. Now in our Epistle we learn, what the original record did not tell us, that it was *by faith* that he offered, intimating, as we understand thereby, that some Divine communication had been made to the two brothers as to the character of the offering which God would accept at their hands. Abel offered that, and was accepted. He believed God. He took Him at His word. He obtained witness that he was righteous. *By faith* therefore he offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. God accepted it, and accepted him with it. Henceforth all might learn that one born in sin could approach God acceptably only by sacrifice. And further, that if the sacrifice, with which the offerer was identified, was accepted, so was the individual who thus drew nigh. All doubt as to this was to be dispelled. The offerer stood or fell in connection with his offering. All depended for him on that. This is a cardinal principle in connection with sacrifice.

Now the Hebrews took the ground of being identified with the sacrifice of Christ. Had God accepted that? He had, and had shown it by raising His Son from the dead. Then they were accepted, and that for ever. Abel's history could teach them. Abel's faith was of interest to them. By it too he yet speaketh. Loudly and clearly it proclaims that which every sinner has need to learn, that the one who takes God at His word, and does what He tells him for acceptance—i.e. rests now on the sacrifice of Christ once for all offered up—is accepted, and that for ever. Those officiating at the altar and those attending the services of the Temple were occupied with recurring sacrifices, which could never take away sins. The Hebrews

had learnt of the one sacrifice which had perfected them for ever (x. 14). With an interest, hitherto probably to them unknown, must they now have read the history of the two brothers, and of God's acceptance of Abel and of his offering. No longer would it be merely a narrative of facts relative to the distant past. It would ever after stand forth on the sacred page as embodying cardinal principles of vital consequence to every responsible creature of the human race. Gospel teaching was found in the fourth chapter of Genesis.

Next, if accepted by sacrifice, what is the future before the saint? Here too in the Book of Genesis suited teaching could be found—first in the history of Enoch, and then in that of Noah. For in one of two conditions will each true saint be found—either like Enoch to be caught away ere judgment overtakes the world, or, like Noah, to be preserved on earth through that awful time which the Book of Revelation graphically depicts. Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 15-17) before He comes in power. The godly remnant of Israel with believing Gentiles will pass through those judgments, which must precede the day of the Lord, some being martyred after the rapture of Christians (Rev. vi. 9-11, xv. 2-4), whilst a goodly number will await the appearing of Christ (Rev. vii. 1-17, xiv. 2-5). On this subject we can but just touch. To resume. Of this last class Noah is the illustration, who was preserved alive on earth through the flood. Of Enoch's faith then we are reminded, and of Noah's likewise.

Enoch by faith was translated that he should not see death. Noah by faith prepared an ark for the saving of himself and of his house. Each believed the testimony for his day, and found in believing it deliverance as God had promised. Enoch walked well. Noah acted aright. Enoch had testimony that he pleased God before he was translated. A word surely this is of admonition for

Christians to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col. i. 10), and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called (Eph. iv. 1). Noah by building the ark condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. It centred in him. For "Noah," we read, "was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Such is the description of this patriarch when first he appeared prominently in the pages of history at a ripe age, being five hundred years old. He then made the ark as divinely directed, and God said to him, "Thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" (Gen. vii. 1). He proved that he was righteous. He illustrated the obedience of faith. Believing the flood would come, moved by godly fear he prepared the ark, and was saved through the flood with all his family.

But why does the Apostle direct attention to Noah and the ark? Christians will never be in a similar position. The Epistle, however, as we have already seen, can embrace within its scope the godly remnant of the future (ii. 13, ix. 28), as well as the faithful amongst Israel in the Apostle's day. To Enoch and Noah therefore he draws attention. And we thus learn that God, when these saints were on earth, was looking on to a far-distant future. And little as Moses may have understood it, as he penned the brief record about Enoch, and dwelt more fully on the history of Noah, the order in which these saints appeared on the scene and the special features of their histories were foreshadows of events which *are* still in the womb of the future, and were to furnish instructions for saints age after age between Pentecost and the appearing of Christ in glory to reign.

**Postdiluvian Patriarchs.**—Much, however, might go on in the lifetime of a Christian between his conversion and his death or the rapture. Would the Old Testament volume have any word of instruction for intermediate

events? No longer under the law, as these Hebrews had learnt, since they had received the Holy Ghost, was the Old Testament with its teaching to be viewed as obsolete, or could it furnish encouragement for those who were led of the Spirit? That question is next taken up, and answered in the affirmative.

Partakers of the heavenly calling these believers were. Hence the earthly inheritance was no longer their expectation. Strangers and pilgrims Christianity had made them. So the history of the postdiluvian patriarchs had a voice for them. To be strangers on earth might be a new experience for any born and bred in the holy land; but with that condition their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were well acquainted. They were to prove it also. To patriarchal history are we then again turned (xi. 8-22). And first of Abraham's faith are we reminded, who left home, country, kinsfolk, and acquaintances at the call of God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (8). Here we begin with the record of the father of the faithful. Abel by faith offered up the proper sacrifice. Enoch by faith waited for the fulfilment of God's promise. Noah by faith busied himself with preparing an ark for the saving of his house. Abraham by faith left home and country at the call of God, and went out, not knowing whither he went. God had made a communication to each of these, differing indeed one from another, no two being in any measure alike; obedience of faith, however, characterised them all. So Abraham started forth on his long journey. "To a land that I will show thee," God had said. But what that land was, till he reached Shechem, we have to say that he knew not.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (xi. 6). True

indeed. Abraham must have recognised this, and have acted on it, surrendering everything here at the call of God, to find he lost nothing by that sacrifice, but gained much—how much! By faith he obeyed. The father of the Hebrews after the flesh thus set an example to his descendants even in Christian times. Again his faith is set forth, as we see him sojourning in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise (9). He could wait God's time for its fulfilment. Nay, more. He had a heavenly hope, though an earthly calling, as we have already remarked (p. 86). He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (10). On the burgess roll of the heavenly Jerusalem is his name inscribed; nor his only, but that of Isaac and Jacob as well. He waited long. Seventy and five years old was he when he left Haran after the death of Terah his father. For a whole *century* he dwelt in tents in Canaan as in a strange land. What faith! What patience! What a rebuke to impatience on the part of any of his seed!

God reads the heart, and He delights—we say it with all reverence—to take note of faith in any of His saints. So of Sarah we next read, and of her faith as to the birth of Isaac. Who when reading Genesis would have gathered the existence of it from the lawgiver's account? But here, centuries after Moses wrote, the Spirit of God put on record what He saw in her—viz. faith as to that which naturally would have seemed impossible: "She judged [or, counted] Him faithful that had promised" (xi. 11). A fine reason this for the exercise of faith. With her it was not, Can it be? but, He had said it, so it shall be. She rested as to this solely on the word of her God. For who before her had become a mother at ninety? (Gen. xvii. 17). "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii. 14) was the word of God to Abraham. For a fellow-creature to have said that would be one thing; for God to say it is quite

another. All power He has, and He would certainly fulfil His promise that Sarah should have a son. What results ensued! "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable." Then, too, faith was in exercise with the patriarchs to the end of their life here. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,\* and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 12, 13). Death may come in ere the promise is fulfilled. Of this the Hebrews were reminded. For whilst on earth the full blessing cannot be enjoyed. But it can never rob us of our hope.

Living as they did centuries after the patriarchs, they could see how God's promises had been fulfilled to the nation. The inheritance had been enjoyed. The seed had indeed been multiplied. But for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob those hopes were unfulfilled. They died in expectation of their fulfilment. They died in faith, having seen them afar off, and they embraced them; and desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16). What encouragement for the partakers of the heavenly calling! Had any thought their lot as Christians a hard one? What could they think of it when reminded that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob trod as pilgrims a similar path, walked too by faith, turned not back for an inheritance in the country that Abraham had left, and died in expectation only of the fulfilment of the promises. How patriarchal history in point after point furnishes instruction for Christians! Instruction only shall we say? Must we not add encouragement of a very high order? For God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who put their trust in the fulfilment of His word. Could the Hebrews possibly turn back?

\* "Were persuaded of them" should be omitted.

Of faith in common of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we have read. Now the sacred writer will call attention to the faith of each, shown in an especial manner, but all bearing on the history of the future; so confirming the faith of those who live in Christian times. Calling attention, however, to special instances of their faith, the Apostle will leave his readers to gather the teaching they furnish as in season for their day. Abraham offered up Isaac, and received him as it were back from the dead, a foreshadowing that the promises are to be made sure only in resurrection (Acts xiii. 34). So the Lord, now raised from the dead, all God's promises in connection with Him will be fulfilled. Then Isaac by faith blessed Jacob and Esau, the younger first, teaching that the blessing according to the mind of God does not run in the order of nature. Many of their countrymen the Hebrews knew were resting on being Abraham's children after the flesh. What would that avail if they refused salvation by Christ? Isaac blessing Jacob had a voice for such, and for all. "They which be of faith, the same are the sons \* of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 7). Next, Jacob by faith blessed both the sons of Joseph. The double blessing was bestowed on the one rejected by his brethren. So Christ, who has been cast out by the Jews, His brethren after the flesh, will inherit all things in heaven and on earth, and Christians will share in that in the day of His glory (Eph. i. 10-14). What loss it would be to return to Judaism! And valuing the inheritance, Jacob desired burial in Canaan, and worshipped when Joseph promised him that. Next, Joseph, who had everything here that a natural man could value, wealth, honour, reputation, power, openly declared that these could not satisfy him. He could not rest outside of the land God had promised to His people. To their deliverance from Egypt he looked forward, and his coffin, which accompanied them in all their wilderness journey, was

\* *Sons*, not *children*, is the right reading here.



a standing witness of his faith, and a constant reminder of the promised inheritance. What lessons for the pilgrimage are educed from patriarchal history—lessons we may surely say never brought out in the ordinary teaching of the synagogue.

**Conflict.**—Further, if pilgrims, conflict may be in the path, seeing that the great enemy of souls attempts to thwart God's purposes from being carried out, and opposes, it may be, the progress of the truth by the arm of the secular power. Here again will the Old Testament furnish examples to encourage the saints to fight the good fight of faith. The parents of Moses by faith hid their child three months, not fearing the king's commandment. How well were Amram and Jochebed rewarded, when the child, taken out of the ark of bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter, was carried back by its mother to be nursed and reared by her. Who would have surmised the turn of events in this case? We may have to wait. Where, however, faith is in exercise, what surprises may there be in store!

Then Moses, who had a career of promise before him of position, dignities, and wealth, such as few native-born Egyptians could have thought of, surrendered all to suffer affliction with the people of God. Which path was the better one—to have continued as son of Pharaoh's daughter, or to be the honoured instrument under God of leading Israel out of slavery? Moses' choice was a good one, though at the time faith only could have sustained him in making it and keeping to it. Forty years of exile it cost him. Then his time came, and God's time arrived for the exodus of the people. Would the Hebrews follow his example, suffering affliction with the people of God; or, forgetting that, make the disastrous choice which he had refused? One there was, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who had not read that history in vain. He too had surrendered worldly advantages, and prospects of preferment and of distinction amongst his countrymen of no mean order—surrendered it

all to win Christ, and be found in Him. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ (xi. 26), *i.e.* rejection here,\* of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. The future was before him, and he acted in view of it. That Hebrew of the Hebrews suffered the loss of all things here, and never repented of his choice. Was he the writer of the Epistle? How well, if that were the case, was it that he should thus remind his readers of Moses' renunciation of great worldly prospects! Who save Paul of the apostolic company so fully exemplified this in the early days of Christianity?

The Apostle had dwelt on Abraham's faith, instancing more than one proof of it. He will now dwell a little on that evidenced by Moses. These two most honoured ones in the history of the nation both exhibited, but in very different ways, because under different circumstances, that faith which is well pleasing to God. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (27, 28). Two distinct examples of his faith. The wrath of man he could brave, and leading an untrained host, encumbered with women and children, and flocks and herds, he started forth out of Egypt. No one knew better what the power of Egypt was, and humanly speaking what risk he and the people ran. But he recoiled not from it. Pharaoh's anger did not move him, it did not daunt him; "for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." With God for them, what were the serried ranks of the Egyptian infantry, with all the chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh! The Spirit brings this feature of the future lawgiver's faith into prominence, which men in after ages might easily

\* The quotation from Psalm lxix. 9 in Rom xv. 3 may explain the phrase "the reproach of Christ," which has been so variously understood.

have overlooked, as they knew the success which attended Israel's departure.\* But what must it have been to Moses, when he started from Rameses to Succoth, and then proceeded with the host under his guidance to Pi-hahiroth, turning, it would seem, out of the usual track at the command of God! That brought them apparently into a hopeless position (Exod. xiv. 2 ; Num. xxxiii. 7). A venture, man would have said, for which there was no precedent, and a venture to human thoughts doomed to discomfiture, when they turned back to Pi-hahiroth. God, however, sustained him. Man's wrath he braved. Would he brave God's? No. How wise! So "by faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (28). To the appointed way of escape from a visit of the angel of death to his house he resorted, and was safe. What lessons these for the readers of the Epistle! The wrath of man they might encounter. How many of them had done that! Like Moses, they were still to brave it, however great might be the powers against them. But the wrath of God was not to be risked by any who would be wise; and the way of escape from that they knew, and were to cleave to, taking shelter in the blood of the Lamb. Has, we ask, any one from Stephen downwards acted like Moses and not experienced the wisdom of it?

Next of the faith of the nation the Hebrews were to read. And the illustration given is one which is not seen on the face of the narrative. Through the Red Sea they went, as the path was opened up for them. In that we learn they manifested faith in God and in His word.

\* It has been questioned as to what event in Moses' life ver. 27 refers, mentioned as it is before the passover, which preceded the departure out of Egypt. We believe the verse refers to the exodus, the events being taken up in a moral order, first those which spoke of earthly advantages and human power, and then those which refer to the intervention of God. Hence the historical order is not maintained.

Exod. xiv. 10-22 tells us of their forward movement, but says nothing of their faith in obeying the word of command. But God, who reads hearts, knows, and remembers when faith has been in exercise. He took note of Sarah's. He has taken note of that of the children of Israel. As the people looked at the host of Egypt advancing behind them and at the waters in front of them, they were afraid. When, however, God opened up the way, they went forward. Again we have to say it was a movement with no precedent to encourage them. God, however, had spoken, Moses directed them, and they marched through the bed of the sea, with the waters a wall unto them on the right and on the left. To take one step, where they cannot see two, are God's people at times called. To proceed on the path evidently marked out is wise, and becomes such, trusting in time to see the reason of it and the end of it. This is what some have to do. Israel went forward on a road never traversed by human feet before. We know the result. Full deliverance was theirs in a manner unheard of. For the Hebrews and for us such a lesson may be needed. For all such encouragement is here provided.

Then in the land, with the enemies' bulwarks as yet intact, the walls of Jericho fell down before the ark of the Lord of Hosts. Never before had a stronghold yielded in that way. Never since was such a victory achieved. By faith the walls fell down after they had been encompassed seven days. Powers we cannot cope with in our own strength are arrayed against us, and the Hebrews must at times have keenly felt that. To men Jericho may have seemed an impregnable fortress. Before the ark of the Lord of Hosts the walls became a heap of ruins. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). Easy enough it is to repeat such words. But is faith always in exercise to rely upon them?

The last instance of faith in times of conflict is that of

Rahab the harlot, who without hesitation took the side of God and of His people ere the judgment was executed on her land and her city; and putting the scarlet line in her window, with all her family gathered into her house, she awaited the promised deliverance. The walls of Jericho fell down; but her house, which was on the wall, remained, it seems, erect, till she and her kindred were brought out of it by the two spies. A word this last example must have specially been for any inclined to halt and to waver in their determination to be openly on the Lord's side. Judgment was impending over Jerusalem. The Jewish polity and worship would soon be overthrown. The present moment was the important one. Decision was called for. Delay might be fatal.

The confidence of Amram and Jochebed, the unflinching boldness of Moses, the march through the sea of the people, the faith of Rahab, with the remembrance of the melting away of the bulwarks of Jericho—these incidents in Old Testament history afforded lessons to set before Christians not to shrink from conflict if called to it, trusting in the power and faithfulness of God when obedient to His word, and counting on Him to open the way for His people. For the marvellous manner in which He had done that before was to be evidence that all resources were with Him, and no one was to draw conclusions from the ordinary course of nature, so as to fear that He could not minister needed help in ways hitherto unexpected.

**Times of Declension.**—Times of conflict are testing times; yet there may be something in them to nerve the saint for the war. Times of declension, on the other hand, have a paralysing effect, and tend to make people settle down, acquiescing in the general failure. Such times were then setting in on the Church of God. Ere Paul left earth he could speak of them as already manifested (2 Tim.); and intimated plainly, in common with Peter and John, that things would grow worse and degeneration would

increase. Could Scripture history be adduced to minister to Christians if such a condition of things was around them? Again would the Old Testament be drawn upon. So of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, of Samuel, and of the prophets are we reminded. These names here stand out as lights in the roll of men of faith. And though at one time or another in the history of each we may have had to notice failure more or less pronounced, yet their faith is remembered on high, and here recorded for our admonition and encouragement. At times God's people may find themselves almost alone. Steadfastness, nevertheless, and it may be an onward movement, becomes them. Faith in exercise, others may gather with them; or if alone like Samson, God will sustain them.

**Persecutions.**—This leads on to the last condition to which attention was to be directed—viz. faith in times of persecution. And whilst Old Testament history illustrates this also, persecution, we must remember, attended God's people after the close of the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures. Hence the faith of some referred to (33-38) may well be set down to Maccabæan times. And now names are unrecorded, but the acts of faith were never to be forgotten. So, though we cannot identify all those referred to, we are well assured that their names are had in remembrance in heaven. Of their faith we read; and we quote the passage, it being a wonderful record of sufferings endured by men and by women, of whom the world was not worthy: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection"—i.e. resurrection unto life, not restoration to this world, as was the case with the Shunammite's son,

and that of the widow of Sarepta. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Gideon with his three hundred fought against the Midianites and Amalekites, who were as grasshoppers for multitude, and in the end Midian was subdued, and never again did they oppress Israel. Barak broke the power of Jabin, king of Hazor, and that Canaanitish kingdom was heard of no more. Samson began single-handed that dealing with the Philistines which Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 13), and after him David, so successfully carried on (1 Sam. xvii. ; 2 Sam. viii. 1). Jephthah refused to surrender any of Israel's territory at the summons of the king of the children of Ammon (Judg. xi.). Then of Daniel in the lions' den are we reminded, as well as of the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who were cast into the burning fiery furnace. Elijah and Elisha escaped the edge of the sword (1 Kings xix. 2 ; 2 Kings vi. 31). Jeremiah was an instance of one out of weakness made strong. The *Shunammite* and the widow of Sarepta naturally occur as those who received their dead to life. But for the names of those tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection (*i.e.* unto everlasting life), we must wait till we reach the other world. The same must be said of the rest whose faith is remembered, and of whom the world was not worthy.

What a record of the trial of faith endured for God! Some, like the postdiluvian patriarchs, waiting, others suffering, each one evidently brought on the scene in his proper order. And now we see from this chapter something of the Divine plan in the world's history to illustrate

for Christians different conditions in which faith might be displayed : pilgrims, as the patriarchs in the land ; those engaged in conflict, as Moses, etc. ; or living in times of declension, or in those of persecution at a later date. Each and all lived for God, but are also examples for us, on whom the ends of the ages are come (1 Cor. x. 11).

And now this history ends : "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. xi. 39, 40). The promise is, we take it, blessing under the Lord Jesus in the rest that remaineth. The better thing for us is the proper portion of Christians in connection with Christ. The city which hath foundations God has prepared for His people, and the patriarchs will enjoy it, even the heavenly Jerusalem, to which we Christians belong (Gal. iv. 26). Unclothed, as the Old Testament saints are still, they will hear the summoning shout to meet the Lord in the air, will come forth with all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, and then come with the Lord in the day of His greatness and power. For that they wait. For that we are to wait. They resting, we have still to be working and serving. So exhortation to encourage to continued faithfulness will now follow.



## INDUCEMENTS TO CONTINUED FAITHFULNESS.

### HEBREWS XII.

**E**NCOURAGEMENT to walk by faith provided in abundance, a great cloud of witnesses to it—not indeed looking down on us, as is sometimes thought, like spectators around an arena—*four* inducements to keep on the road are now set before us. Such a ministry on the part of our God indicates of course our need, and the danger there was and is of any giving up, disheartened by the difficulties of the way.

**The Example.**—The *first* inducement is the example, to which we are pointed. There is but One, who is here styled the *Leader* and *Perfecter* of faith. No Old Testament saint could claim this appellation. Neither the father of the faithful, the friend of God, nor the meekest man in all the earth, nor the man after God's own heart, could thus be described. To no child of Adam born in sin is this applied. To One, and One only, does the designation rightly belong, even the second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Already introduced to us as the Leader, or Captain of salvation (ii. 10), He comes before us now as the Leader and Perfecter of faith, having run the whole course of it here without any wavering or the least deviation.

Encouraged by so great a cloud of witnesses, every weight laid aside, and the sin which does so easily beset us, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of faith." Patience will be needed, for the goal can never be reached on earth.

Patriarchs, prophets, and others had patience ; so must we, and that whilst looking at the Example set before us. Of His Sonship we have been taught (i.). Of the excellency and greatness of His person we have been reminded (i., ii.). Of His official position as Apostle and High Priest we have read (iii.-vii.). Of His death too we have learnt (ix., x.). Now we are again called to remember His life on earth in humiliation. Why He can sympathise with His people in their trials the Apostle wrote of in v. 7, 8. What sustained Him in the endurance of His sufferings we here read : " Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God " (xii. 2). Suffering, shame, reproach, all this He bore, and that for the joy set before Him, who is now seated so high in glory. Suffering, shame, reproach for Him His people may be called to bear, but with a bright prospect in the future. Such experiences are not to surprise them, nor lead any to doubt if their path can be the right one. In what circumstances was He once who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God ? This question answered should encourage His followers in their faith here. What must the world be when the Son of God had to meet with shame, sufferings, and the cross ? It is wonderful to think that He should have endured them. It is strengthening to faith to remember it. The end of the walk of faith, we learn in His history, is in the glory on high.

To consider Him are we called. But He had almighty power which we have not. He could command the winds and the waves, and they obeyed Him. He cast out demons by His word, and they could not stir one step without His permission (Mark v. 12). Then men were to Him as creatures that can be crushed before (or, like) the moth, *i.e.* as easily. Yet with all this plenitude of almighty power, He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He *endured* it. Of what value to us becomes

the record of His life on earth ! So with that before them the Hebrews were not to grow weary, nor to faint in their minds. He who is the perfect example was their life, and is our life. Of Him they and we are therefore to learn.

**At School.**—Now at this point we are reminded that we, even all Christians, are at school. What light must the remembrance of this have cast on the trying path of the Hebrews. They had not yet suffered all they might. They had not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. Stephen and others had done that. But not one of them had. And they had forgotten the exhortation which reasoned with them as with, not children, but sons. “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” The words of the Preacher, whose writings are so seldom quoted in the New Testament, here come as a suitable admonition, reminding the Hebrews of the relationship in which they stood to God, and His motive for chastening them—the love of His heart.

Why did they suffer ? Because they were God's sons. Men, the instruments for their sufferings, might seem to be dealing with them as they chose. It was not so. God indeed allowed it. He had His own purposes in it all for the rich blessing of His saints. He can even use Satan to carry out His ends on behalf of His people. He then was above it all, and was really by their trials training His children. Behind the hand that smote them was the Father, permitting it in His love to them and for their profit. “It is for chastening that ye endure,” so wrote the Apostle ; “God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom his father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, where of all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (xii. 7, 8). It is of the training up of children that we here read. How stimulating was such ministry ! To have ease in the midst of their countrymen, who were

bitterly opposed to God and His Son, would indicate for them a state of spiritual bastardy. Which of them would desire that?

Then the end in view in it all is disclosed—to be partakers of His holiness. Many a schoolmaster deals with those under his charge without explaining his purposes to them. Not so our God. He here graciously tells His children the end He has in view for them. And knowing that the dealing cannot be joyous, but grievous, He tells us too He fully recognises that. But to the after effects we are pointed, that peaceable fruit of righteousness should be produced in those who are exercised thereby. Hope is ever kept before His people. God's purposes about them is the *second* inducement held out. A parent chastens his child to keep him from wrong, or because he has done wrong. God chastens His children to partake of His holiness (9, 10). How different!

**A Beacon.**—Discouragement banished by learning God's end in the chastening, activity on the part of each and watchfulness over weak ones were to be cultivated. Peace with all men was to be followed, and that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. How needful are these injunctions! Some professing Christians might fall short of the grace of God. A root of bitterness too might spring up in their midst, and thereby many be defiled. Or a fornicator, or a profane person as Esau, might display himself. Here then we reach the *third* inducement to continued faithfulness. The evils just mentioned concerned all. What is man's heart! What a nature do we all possess as children of Adam! And now the mention of Esau comes as a beacon, to warn any against the danger of bartering future blessedness for present ease and momentary enjoyment. Many in these days in places or countries where there is no persecution may not understand the great danger this was to the Hebrews. Any who have dwelt in times of persecution would of course appreciate

the Divine wisdom in the reference to that Old Testament history.

Esau sold his birthright for the mess of pottage. He despised it. Present ease and relief were to him at that moment everything. Present ease and relief persecuted ones might sorely be tempted to desire. But Esau lost his birthright, and never regained it. He lost it. He bartered it away; and though ardently desiring his father's blessing, seeking that indeed with tears, as the sacred writer here tells us, he never could regain what he had lost. He had forfeited it; Isaac acknowledged that, as he said to him of Jacob, "Yea, and he shall be blessed." Esau's desire for a blessing comes out as with a great and bitter cry he said, "Bless me, even me, O my father" (Gen. xxvii. 33, 34). But no word was there of confession of that which he had done. A penitent spirit was not manifested. A place for repentance was not found. What had been done he could not undo. He stands out therefore as the illustration of an apostate, and like one in spirit there is no evidence of self-judgment, no manifestation of contrition. A beacon indeed he was to the Hebrews; a beacon he is also to us.

**The Last Warning.**—And now we reach the *fourth* inducement to be faithful. As Christians, prospects are set before them which never could be expected by those who refused Christianity. A millennial scene is introduced, to be verified in the future, but in spirit to be known now. We quote the passage: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the

living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, a general assembly, and to the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 18-24). Christian blessing far transcends that which Jews on earth could expect, or will enjoy.

But we must look a little at all this. And first as to the division of the different clauses. Each subject will be found marked off from, though connected with the others, by the conjunction *and*. Then too any explanatory remark about a subject comes each time just after the subject. For instance, the heavenly Jerusalem explains to us what is the city of the living God. So "a general assembly," commonly connected with "the Church of the firstborn," really belongs to that which has just preceded it—"an innumerable company of angels." Connecting "a general assembly" with the angelic host, the structure of the whole passage preserves its symmetry, and the conjunction *and* has in each case the same service—viz. to point out a fresh subject.

Then, to understand the arrangement of the whole, we must view it all as a triangle, of which the base line is the earth, and at the apex is God. On the one side we mount up from earth to God, and on the other come down again to earth from God. The reader seizing this will better understand the figure as presented. The passage, introduced in ver. 18 by the conjunction *for*, connects it directly with the previous subject—viz. that of Esau's profane conduct. Were Christians, Esau-like, to barter all blessing for a little ease and freedom from persecution here? To what had they in spirit come? What would they lose if they renounced Christianity for the synagogue and the Temple? A millennial scene is then unfolded, connecting earth and heaven, and which specially concerns all true

saints in Christian times. Each and all of us have an interest in this now in spirit, and by-and-by in person.

The Jews looked for the kingdom to be established on earth on Mount Zion by-and-by. To Christians, reading aright the past, Mount Zion reminded them of royalty in grace, David's kingdom having been there established firmly after the great failure of Israel as depicted in the history of the Judges. But a Jew had not and has not an expectation higher than earth. Christians, on the other hand, are connected with heaven, and with the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, for which Abraham looked, and for whom and others it was prepared.

Then, mounting up from earth in anticipation, Christians in spirit reached that city ; and, ascending still higher, they passed through all the ranks of the angelic hosts, and reached that special company of which each of them formed part, the Church of the firstborn ones, whose names are written in heaven, called firstborn as the sharers in the birthright. Who is above this? God, the Judge of all. No one higher to reach, and none closer to Him than Christians. Then on the other side of God we read of the Old Testament saints, described as " the spirits of just men made perfect." Would Christians think much of themselves? Let them remember that the Old Testament saints are equally near to God. Christians are the Body of Christ, which those were not, and never will be. We have therefore a nearness to *Christ*, true only for us. But as regards *God*, both companies, here distinguished, are seen equally near. In Rev. iv., v. both companies are united under the one symbol of the twenty-four elders. Here they are separated. Then coming down we have mention of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, which will concern Israel on earth ; and the blood of sprinkling which, speaking better than that of Abel, will secure blessing to earth, and those on earth.

We have said that we have come to all this in *spirit*.

This is plain, both from the mention of the Mediator of the new covenant, that covenant not yet having been made, and also from the statement as to Old Testament saints—*spirits*, etc., so not yet clothed with their bodies of glory. Would the Hebrews think for one moment of turning back to Judaism and the law? Let them remember that which their fathers felt at Sinai (xii. 18-21), and grasp by faith now that to which they will in person be brought some day. For all this was here told them, and is told us, that none should refuse Him that speaketh. Privileges, great though they may be, have a responsibility connected with them. If those escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, as He did when He descended on Mount Sinai, what will be the fate of those who refuse Him that speaketh from heaven! Woe be to any who turn away now from Him! He will one day shake, not the earth only, as of old, but the heavens also, as was foretold by the prophet Haggai (ii. 6, 21). But far more than that which the prophet indicated will that shaking effect—nothing less than the dissolution of which Peter writes (2 Pet. iii.), the prelude to the introduction of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein will dwell righteousness. Then the things which cannot be shaken will remain. "Wherefore," adds the Apostle, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 28, 29). God unchangeable in His nature, we need grace to serve Him acceptably, but grace procured for us by the active intercession of the High Priest, and which is ready for all who come to the throne of grace to receive it.

Some exhortations of a general character follow. Then the Epistle ends.



## CLOSING EXHORTATIONS.

### HEBREWS XIII.

**T**O those who are to tread the floor of the heavenly sanctuary, called with a heavenly calling, the Apostle has been writing. Who and what such are by nature we must never whilst on earth forget. We have a nature which is not subject to the law of God. We have sin within us, prompting desires which are contrary to God and to holiness. Selfishness naturally in one form or another may dominate the individual, unless grace is working within him. Hence practical exhortations for walk in the ordinary ways of life are not only seasonable, but needful. To such a ministry the sacred writer will for a few minutes devote himself, first inciting his readers to brotherly love, and next warning them against covetousness, the opposite to it, with the evils of which the tenth commandment must have made his readers familiar.

**Brotherly Love.**—There are two manifestations of the activity of the Divine nature—*love*, or charity, as the Authorised Version in places calls it (1 Cor. xiii ; 2 Pet. i. 7), and *brotherly love*, which the last reference distinguishes from the former. The former of course has a wider range than the latter. There is a community on earth the members of which are indissolubly connected by a birth-tie, as well as by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and that which results from it—viz. the formation of the Body of Christ. Viewed in this last character, we should speak of

membership one of another. Viewed in the former, we speak of brotherhood. To this clearly the Apostle refers, as he here writes, "Let brotherly love continue" (xiii. 1). Illustrations connected with this will follow.

Possibly—shall we use too strong a word if we say *probably*?—there was more danger of those coming short in this who had been Jews than those who had been Gentiles. The hearty love of the Thessalonian saints St. Paul could commend. "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. iv. 9). In the enjoyment each one of Divine grace, their hearts went out to every member of the Christian community, not at Thessalonica only, but to all the brethren which were in all Macedonia. We learn too of the readiness of Christians from the Gentiles to contribute to the need of the poor saints at Jerusalem. How willing and hearty in that service were the Churches of Macedonia ! (2 Cor. viii. 1-4). Very early, however, a sectarian spirit was manifested at Jerusalem, which caused the Grecian or foreign Jews in the capital to complain that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration (Acts vi. 1). Now if Jews had to complain of Jews, what might those once Gentiles have received at the hand of pure Hebrews? Racial prejudices and antagonism are, except grace works powerfully, slow of correction. It is not then without significance that it is only in an Epistle addressed to those once Jews that we read of an exhortation to love the brotherhood (1 Pet. ii. 17). To have exhorted Thessalonian saints to that would have been evidently superfluous except to remind them to increase in it. To exhort those once Jews to do that was evidently called for. Again Peter writing to his countrymen reminds them of it (1 Pet. i. 22 ; 2 Pet. i. 7). And nowhere else is the term "brotherly love" met with in the Epistles, save in Rom. xii. 10. The old enmity, fostered by ordinances, evidently took time to subside, as indeed the full recognition of the

middle wall of partition having been broken down was of slow growth (Gal. ii. 12). Hence the importance attached both in our Epistle and in Peter's letters to the maintenance of brotherly love.

In two ways we now read it coul'd be shown—first in extending hospitality to strangers, and next in remembering those suffering for the truth's sake.

**Hospitality.**—Hospitality now inculcated, a feature, as we read elsewhere, which should characterise the elders in the different assemblies (1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 8), encouragement to cultivate it is here furnished the Hebrews by references to their past history. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2). To whom are we referred? Again we go back to patriarchal history, and find two examples of it. Three men appeared to Abraham as he sat at his tent door in the heat of the day (Gen. xviii. 2). Their presence aroused him into activity at a time when ordinarily he might have desired quiet repose. He first *ran* to meet them. Next he *hastened* to Sarah's tent to order preparations for their entertainment. Then he himself *ran* to the herd, and fetched a calf to be killed for the repast. After that, when ready he waited on them. Readiness to show hospitality characterised him that day. And though three men had appeared, in the sequel it came out that two were angels, and One was the Lord Himself. Richly was the patriarch rewarded. God made known to him what He was about to do, having first confirmed the promise of a son by Sarah, fixing now the date of his birth (Gen. xviii. 10). And telling Abraham of the impending overthrow of Sodom, He allowed the patriarch to intercede with Him to spare it if only ten righteous were found in it.

Nor was Abraham the solitary instance of His grace. that day. Lot showed his readiness to entertain the two angels who appeared as men at the gate of the city of Sodom. He urged them greatly to enter into his house.

They accepted his pressing invitation. He feasted them, and then learnt that his visitors were angels, and was indebted to them under God for his deliverance on the morrow (Gen. xix.). Neither Abraham nor Lot had cause to regret his hospitality. Then in Christian times such a spirit manifested, as occasion required, was of real service in the Church of God. Christians are exhorted to it by Paul (Rom. xii. 13), and Peter writes to the strangers scattered abroad to the same effect (1 Pet. iv. 9). And two there were specially, it would seem, distinguished in this service—Gaius of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23), and Gaius who lived, we conclude, somewhere in Asia Minor (3 John). Like the different Marys who were characterised by personal ministry, the two Gaiuses were noted for hospitality.

**Care for Suffering Ones.**—In another line of service could brotherly love display itself, and in one for which there was ample scope in those days, when persecution was rife and suffering for the truth was by no means the exception. Imprisonment was the lot of some. How well Paul knew what that was! "In prisons more frequent" tells us in a few words (2 Cor. xi. 23) of his many experiences in that trial, of which but little is recorded in the Acts. Well too did he know what suffering adversity (or, evil) was, as that same chapter of the Corinthians sets forth. And surely he by experience knew the comfort of sympathy, and the support of being borne on the hearts of saints in prayer. So if he wrote these words, they would come well indeed from him: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body," *i.e.* in life down here (Heb. xiii. 3). Fellow-feeling for the suffering ones others should evince. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. iv. 9) was Cain's bold answer to God. On the other hand, kindness done to saints the Lord Jesus will remember, and regard as done to Himself. "I was an hungred, and ye

gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 35-40). How useful then the reminder of such service must have been!

**Covetousness.**—Proceeding with his subject, he next warns against covetousness. And as he has given two illustrations of brotherly love, he will furnish his readers with two of covetousness. *First*, he warns against unchastity, whilst reminding all of the honourable estate of matrimony, which is God's institution for His creatures. It is honourable in all. No class of Christians are forbidden to enter into such estate. Asceticism is foreign to Christianity; and to decry marriage is part of the doctrine of demons (1 Tim. iv. 3). But "fornicators [or, whoremongers] and adulterers God will judge." We have read (xii. 16) of care to be taken against allowing any fornicator in the company of the saints; here it is of that solemn dealing with such on the part of God that we learn. Elsewhere (Eph. v. 3; Col. iii. 5), we see, and especially in the former passage, that covetousness and fornication are spoken of in close connection, the latter really springing out of the former, as the tenth commandment had already taught.

*Then* of the love of money he warns saints. It is the root of all evil (1 Tim. vi. 10). And its baneful effects were already seen in the assemblies in Crete, as we learn from Tit. i. 11, and were to be still more developed in the conduct of the false teachers of whom Peter warns his readers (2 Pet. ii. 3), who through covetousness with feigned words would make merchandise of Christians. A corrective of this is now administered in the exhortation to contentment with such things as they had, coupled with the remembrance of the Lord's care and thought for His own. "He hath

said," so we read, "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." Whence is this taken? With the statement doubtless the readers of the Epistle were familiar, and the nearest approach to these words in Scripture is found in Deut. xxxi. 6; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20. In the former passage Moses was addressing Israel before his death. In the latter David was giving an earnest charge to Solomon. We may believe, then, that Deut. xxxi. 6, as the first place where both *fail* and *forsake* occur, was in the Apostle's mind, the expression of the assurance on the part of Moses of the Lord's continued watchful care of the people. The Apostle recognised that the lawgiver was giving utterance to the truth of God; so what the latter mentions as a fact of which he was sure, the writer of the Hebrews adduces as God's promise to His people, for Moses was inspired to utter what he did. "He will not fail thee," etc., were the exact words of the lawgiver. "I will not fail thee," etc., is the form in which they are now presented. With this promise in remembrance, each heart was to be encouraged, and in the language of Psalm cxviii. 6 each one could boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?" We punctuate the last clause with the general concurrence of textual critics in an interrogative form. This is the last direct quotation from the Old Testament met with in our Epistle. As the writer began with quoting from the Psalms (i. 5), so he ends from the same book. What use has he made of it! How much has he drawn from it!

**Leaders.**—Another line of thought here comes in (7-17). There were leaders or chief men among them, labourers evidently in the Word. The term here met with we find in Acts xv. 22 used to describe Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, who, belonging to the Christian company at Jerusalem, are designated as chiefs or leading men among the brethren. Of this class of persons the

Apostle now writes.\* Some such had passed away (7); others still remained (17, 24). They had spoken to them the word of God, watching for their souls. Clearly of ministering brethren we read, and not of elders as such, entrusted with a local charge; though of course, as 1 Tim. v. 17 teaches us, some elders, or bishops, laboured in the Word as well as ruled in the assembly. But of ministers of the Word the Apostle writes. Some, as Stephen, James the Great, and others, had passed away faithful to the end. Of these the Hebrews were to have good remembrance; and considering the end of their conversation, or life here, they were to imitate their faith. The voice no longer heard, the example might speak, and become an abiding lesson for those still alive. Steadfastness, therefore, in the faith became the saints. Leaders indeed might pass away. But He on whom they had believed, and to whom they had entrusted all their interests for eternity, remained, and remained unchanged. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Faith, therefore, and faithfulness were not to die down because leaders had departed. Jesus Christ remained the same, and that for ever.

**An Altar.**—Needful was this reminder, for busy was the enemy, desirous if possible to draw back some from the faith by carrying them away with divers and strange doctrines. Jewish teaching he refers to, which cannot really establish the heart. Meats will not do that; grace alone will. And all such teaching as he here deprecates profited not them that were occupied with it. In the nature of things, in the presence of Christianity, and as opposed to it, such teaching could not profit. And would any seek to

\* With Acts xv. 22 before us, we see the propriety of thus describing the leaders amongst the Hebrews. And though the word *hegoumenoi* might be translated "*have the rule*," as in A.V.; yet, considering that Judas and Silas were of that very class at Jerusalem, *leaders*, or *chief men* seems more likely to have been the thought here intended.

draw away the Hebrews by taunting them with having forsaken the altar before which they once stood, and with worshipping without one? The patriarchs had their altars. The law recognised one. The Christians seemingly had none. Now they were taught to answer all such taunts and to meet any objection of that kind with the bold declaration that they had an altar, but one whereof they had no right to eat which served the tabernacle. A privilege was theirs as Christians, debarred the priests under the law. Again Judaism pales before Christianity.

What was the privilege? Under the law the sin offering, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin, was burned without the camp, carried forth by the priests to a clean place, and there consumed by fire (Lev. iv. 11, 12, vi. 30, xvi. 27). Of those sin offerings, however, whose blood was not brought into the sanctuary the priests were commanded to eat. It was part of their portion as ministering at the altar, being partakers of, or in communion with the altar. The former sin offering was expressly withheld from them. Now it is of that sin offering whose blood was carried into the heavenly sanctuary (ix. 12) we can and do partake. We feed on Christ, and our altar is the cross on which He died. Here is the only place where an altar for Christians on earth is mentioned.\* And the use we make of it is plainly stated. We stand not at it. We offer not on it. We eat that which has been offered upon it. But we eat not *at* it. No priest under the law made the brazen altar his table. It was Jehovah's table (Mal. i. 7, 12), for there was His portion consumed by the fire which came from heaven. It was not the priest's table, though he ate of certain things which had been offered upon it; but he did

\* The altar of course was prominent in Old Testament times. It had its place up to the cross. The Lord recognised for saints in His day (Matt. v. 23, 24) attendance at the altar. In the Revelation, describing events after Christian times have ended, the altar is again made prominent (Rev. vi. 9, viii. 3, xiv. 18).



not eat *at* it. A visible altar, then, we Christians have not; nor had these Hebrews. Their altar and ours ever remains in remembrance—the cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for us. Any altar men may now erect would not be the cross on which He died. It would be another altar, and a needless one, because the Lord cannot die again. He lives to die no more (Rom. vi. 9, 10). One altar we have, and in the nature of things it cannot be multiplied.

**Without the Gate.**—Little of course could the priests of old have surmised, as they carried forth the carcase of the sin offering to a clean place outside the camp, what that act really prefigured, even the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ without the gate. Now we learn that the priests' act was typical of circumstances connected with the death of the true sacrifice. Here only (Heb. xiii. 12) is this fact definitely stated. Of course at the time of His death, and till Jerusalem was destroyed, all there knew well where was Golgotha or Calvary. So the different Evangelists mentioning the place do not directly say that it was outside the gate. To mention Golgotha was enough for readers then (Matt. xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22; Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 17). John, however (xix. 17), if not Matthew also (xxvii. 32), and Mark (xv. 20), seem to indicate that it was outside the city. In the fact of His suffering outside the gate typical teaching then had its fulfilment. But God had another purpose in the Lord's death at Golgotha, little as the enemy could have divined it. Christ suffered there that His people might be sanctified, or set apart, for God by His blood. A crowd followed the procession to Golgotha, the Lord bearing His cross, and Simon bearing it after Him. Who then thought to what use the locality of the Lord's death would be turned by the Holy Ghost? To eat of the sin offering the Hebrews must follow it. Outside the gate He suffered. Their privilege then to partake of the true sacrifice carried them outside of Judaism, and away from it.

What if some who followed the procession to Golgotha were subsequently converted! With what interest would this deduction from it have been read by them!

**Without the Camp.**—Hence comes the exhortation: "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." A reference we have now to the time of Israel's first apostasy, when they had made the golden calf in the wilderness. Moses in those days, divinely led, pitched his tent outside the camp, far off from it, and called it the tent of meeting (Exod. xxxiii.). God honoured that act by appearing in the cloud of glory at that tent door, and talking with him. God's presence then, it was seen, was not in the camp, but outside of it. Hence any one who sought the Lord went out to that tent outside the camp. Now a similar step was called for on the part of the Hebrews, if they would be faithful. God had dwelt in the Temple before the captivity, but had not dwelt in it since. And the Lord, rejected by Israel, told them that their house was left unto them desolate (Matt. xxiii. 38). In the building actually existing God had never dwelt. All were aware that the Shechinah, the cloud of glory, had never entered it. Was God's presence then not to be found on earth? He was dwelling on earth when the Epistle was written, and dwells here still, by the Holy Ghost in the Assembly, or Church, of the living God, called also the "house of God" (1 Tim. iii. 15). To enjoy then His presence, to be where that could be known, Judaism must be left, and like those of old the Hebrews must go forth unto Him without the camp, here meaning that company which called themselves God's people, but in the midst of whom He was not. To go forth to the Lord Jesus became the Hebrews, and bearing His reproach was the prospect before them.

Reading Israel's history in Exod. xxxiii. all must own who on that occasion acted right, and who those were who then must have had the Divine approval; not certainly

those who stayed in the camp, as the unconverted Jews were doing when the Epistle was written, but those who sought the Lord, and could not rest where He was not. So that chapter could afford instruction and encouragement too to the Hebrews in their day. Of course the going forth outside the camp implied the surrendering of all Jewish hopes, and all connection with Jewish ordinances and the Temple ritual. Could they do that? To whom would they go forth? To Christ. Would that be enough? Yes. And God would cheer them in such a course. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek the one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14). They had broken with Jerusalem, but had a city in prospect, the heavenly Jerusalem. Things here were transient. The Jewish polity would soon be overthrown, and Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke xxi. 24). The heavenly Jerusalem was their city, to be there in the company of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the heavenly saints. With that were they now and evermore associated. To give up, to go forth, to bear reproach for Christ were they called. Were discouragements, as they viewed such a path, to possess them? No. "By Him [*i.e.* Christ] let us offer," says the writer, "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks [*or, confessing*] to His name" (15). With joyful hearts like the Apostles (Acts v. 41) were they to suffer shame for the name.

**Christian Sacrifices.**—We have read of the one perfect sacrifice (ix., x.) offered up once for all, so never to be repeated. No more sacrifice for sins can there be. No repetition of that sacrifice in any form is required. No altar have we on which to immolate a victim. No bloody or unbloody sacrifice for sins are we called to offer to our God. Yet have Christians no sacrifices to offer? Assuredly they have, and those which God will accept. All of them members of the holy priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5),

sacrifice becomes them; but as Peter in that passage takes care to state—spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. In harmony with this we read here in the Hebrews (xiii. 15) of the sacrifice of praise to God to be offered continually. So, whether we learn of Peter or from the writer of our Epistle, the teaching is the same. Peter would have been as much shocked, if those amongst whom he specially laboured had altars erected in their place of meeting in Asia Minor, as certainly Paul would have been.\* Christian sacrifices, however, there are, and of another class of them are we also reminded (16): “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” To care for others, ministering to them in their need, is a feature, and that an acceptable one, of Christian sacrifice. The Philippians understood that when sending to minister to Paul in his prison at Rome. And Paul accepted this service as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God (Phil. iv. 18). To offer these of course neither a priest, nor an altar, nor the death of some fresh victim is required. Such sacrifices as praises to God are the outflow of the heart in worship; and doing good, etc., is the activity of the Divine nature displayed in the saint—the practical manifestation of Christian love.

Now follows a word as to their leaders who remained among them. Remembering those who had died, and imitating their faith, there were those still provided by the Lord to minister to His saints. Such were to be obeyed in their ministry; and a reason is assigned, for “they watch for your souls as those that must give account.” Account of what? Of the sheep? No; but of their own service, and that to the Master—the Lord Jesus Christ. If their

\* An altar or altars in the different provinces of Asia Minor a Jew would have declaimed against. One altar had the Jews for sin offerings—the altar of burnt offering at Jerusalem. One altar have Christians, only one, even the cross on which the Lord Jesus died.

work stood, they would have a reward (1 Cor. iii. 14). For the saints then to stand firm was their desire; as John expresses it: "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, if He should appear, we [*i.e.* the labourers] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28). So Paul: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). So for the leaders amongst the Hebrews. Watching with joy, caused by the faithful walk of the saints, and not with grief, was their desire. This latter would be unprofitable to the Hebrews, even those amongst whom they worked.

**Two Desires.**—Now ere closing there were two desires which pressed on the Apostle's heart. He desired the prayers of the saints on his own behalf. He desired too the perfecting in every good work of the Hebrews to whom he wrote.

Whoever was the writer of the Epistle, it is plain that he had a grasp of Christian teaching far beyond what those had to whom he was writing, and doubtless far beyond the teaching current among them. We know no one better able than Paul to set forth Christian ministry. And here the writer desires the prayers of his readers on his behalf. Often had Paul done that (Rom. xv. 30-32; Eph. vi. 19; Phil. i. 19; Col. iv. 3; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1; Philem. 22). It would be quite in character, if he wrote this Epistle, to ask for the prayers of the saints. And the mention of a good conscience, which may indicate that depreciatory or calumnious remarks had been made against the writer by his enemies, is also quite in keeping with Paul's address at Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin (Acts xxiii. 1). We cannot conceive James the Just or others at Jerusalem needing to assert this of themselves. Who questioned it? Nor why should Luke, or Barnabas, or Apollos,

or Clement of Rome have had any reason to make such a statement. But Paul, the opponent of Moses and the people, and the profaner of the Temple as was averred (Acts xxi. 28), had reason thus to speak of himself as possessing in all that he had done and taught that which is of inestimable value to its possessor—a good conscience. Often must the Hebrews have heard Paul maligned by his countrymen. Many too, if not most of them, must have remembered the day when he, standing on the stairs of the castle of Antonia, was assailed with cries by the infuriated mob, who threw dust into the air and declared that he was unfit to live. Paul's character amongst his countrymen at Jerusalem, and even among Judaising Christians in the capital (Acts xxi. 20, 21), was notoriously none of the best. A pestilent fellow, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoræans, an inciter to sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, a profaner too of the Temple—such was the description given of him by Tertullus (Acts xxiv. 5, 6). What a monster of iniquity was he depicted! How suited were these words, if they came from him, "We are persuaded we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. xiii. 18). Why any one else to whom this Epistle has been ascribed should have needed thus to write of himself we have no idea; nor we believe can any suggest one.

Who the writer was the Hebrews evidently knew. To them it was no mystery. His name, though unmentioned in the Epistle, all surely could have told us. He had formerly had personal intercourse with them, for he hoped by their prayers to be the sooner restored to them (19). This remark rules out of court the names of Luke, Clement, if not also of Apollos; for who knows whether Apollos was ever at Jerusalem, or looked to revisit it? But Paul's ministry at Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit had been hindered. He had kept very quiet (Acts xxiv. 11, 12). Not a week had he been in the

metropolis ere he became a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. How natural that he should have desired to resume intercourse with the Hebrews! And how suited was it that before revisiting them he should write a letter so full of Christian teaching, and so completely refuting all Jewish pretension as against the then new faith! If he never was allowed to revisit them, this letter, assuming that he was the writer, was precious ministry, and just suited to them all.

**Desires for them.**—Desiring their prayers for his restoration to them, the writer had special desires for their welfare (20, 21): “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Of the God of peace he writes. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of their fathers, he here calls the God of peace—a designation in the New Testament found elsewhere only in the writings of St. Paul, and there by no means infrequently (Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23). Then too of God as the God of resurrection he reminds them, whose power has been manifested in raising His Son from the dead. God, as the God of peace, could minister that to the Hebrews, as they might sorely need it. God, as the God of resurrection, was a thought to encourage them to face death for Christ. He had been raised from the dead. They too, if they died, would be raised from it likewise. The great Shepherd of the sheep, who had died, was risen again. His Shepherd care was still, and would for a continuance be in exercise for them.

Now of this relation to His people—*i.e.* the Shepherd—the Lord had spoken in John x., designating Himself there the good Shepherd, who would make that appellation true

indeed by dying for His sheep. Then Peter presents Him as the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. v. 4), in contradistinction to those who were called to shepherd the flock whilst He is on high. Here in our Epistle (Heb. xiii. 20) He is called the great Shepherd, marking surely His excellency as surpassing Moses and Aaron. God of old had led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Psalm lxxvii. 20). Would their countrymen remind them of that? The Hebrews could tell of a Shepherd who far surpassed them, even the Lord Jesus Christ, at once the *great*, the *good*, and the *chief* Shepherd. A *great* High Priest He is, a *great* Shepherd too. In all things He must have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18).

Ministry of the Word is a great blessing if rightly valued. But after all God must work in the heart by the Word, else no good results will be obtained. In character with this the writer expresses the desire that God would perfect them in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom—the Son, as we have seen, and the Heir of all things, and by whom the worlds were made—be glory for ever and ever. Of His person as Divine we have read at the commencement of the letter (Heb. i.). Of this same truth are we reminded at its close.\* For to what mere creature would the Spirit of God ascribe glory for ever and ever, and emphasize it by the word Amen?

**Last Words.**—A few words follow. *First*, he would

\* It is questioned whether this ascription of glory is addressed to God or to the Lord Jesus. Delitzsch and Westcott, whilst admitting the possibility of its reference to the latter, prefer the reference to the former. Either is admissible. Considering to whom the Apostle was writing, it would have been fitting surely to remind his readers of the divinity of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Elsewhere Paul (2 Tim. iv. 18), Peter (2 Pet. iii. 18), and John (Rev. i. 6) so write of Him.



bespeak attention on their part to that which he has written. If Paul was the writer, very natural was this. For his special sphere was amongst the Gentiles, whilst that of the Twelve was amongst the circumcision. *Second*, he hoped to revisit them accompanied by Timothy. We know of no one whom Timothy accompanied during the lifetime of Paul in a subordinate position, as here, except the Apostle, whose son in the faith he was. For the writer says, "With whom, if he come shortly, *I* [not, *we*] will see you." Then, *thirdly*, he salutes all the leaders and the rest, and sends greetings from those of Italy.\* And, *fourthly*, the letter ends characteristically, if Paul was the writer, with, "Grace be with you all." None other of New Testament writers, whilst Paul was alive, used this form at the conclusion of their letters. It was part of that special authentication of the Pauline writings which in early days he had been led to adopt (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18). A short form of it granted, but not shorter than that at the close of the First Epistle to Timothy,† nor quite so short as that at the end of the Colossians and the end of the Second of Timothy; but just the same as that which closes Paul's letter to Titus. Shall we be mistaken, then, if we regard these words at the end of the Hebrews as proof that the writer of the Epistles just named was also the writer of the Hebrews? May we not justly view the words as the great Apostle's signet, as it were, to set at rest for all time the authorship of the Hebrews?

The letter has ended, at once a plain, a masterly apology, or defence, as we may call it, of Christianity with reference to Judaism. We say *plain*, because the different points elucidated in favour of the former the most simple intellect could seize. *Masterly* we call it, because it grapples

\* For the possible meanings of "they of Italy," see Introduction, p. 24.

† We would remind our readers that the better text in 1 Tim. vi. 21 has "you," not "thee."

thoroughly with the question, and leaves the upholders of Judaism with nothing to say in vindication of their position. The Old Testament Scriptures are quoted in support of Christianity in a way none can gainsay, the revelation to which the Jew would appeal being thus turned completely against him. Timely indeed was its production; for soon would the Jewish polity be swept away and the Temple be laid low, when in consequence the Mosaic ritual would fall into abeyance. But the Hebrews, as here taught, would be able to say that nothing which happened to Jerusalem had deprived them of any Christian privilege. The Jew by Jerusalem's fall had lost much. The altar of which Christians could speak, the cross, was unaffected by the capture of the city. The sacrifice on which they rested remained unchanged and unchangeable. Their sanctuary too no earthly power could touch, nor any political convulsion overturn. Their High Priest ever lived, and was continually ministering on their behalf. Well indeed, then, could they answer the question which we have placed on the title-page of this volume, *THE OLD FAITH OR THE NEW—WHICH?* A great company of the priests had become obedient to the latter (Acts vi. 7). To keep to it was the way of blessing then, and is now.

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