

A SHORT SUMMARY
OF THE
EPISTLE
TO
THE HEBREWS.

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THE Epistle to the Hebrews was written to a professing people already in relationship with God, for they were converted Jews. They had received the truths of Christianity, and, through Christ's death and resurrection, had been separated from the mass of the Jewish nation, who had then rejected Christ, had been put into a new place before God, having a part in His heavenly family. They were brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Christ, who had appeared amongst the Jews as the Divine Prophet whom Moses had prophesied of (Deut. xviii. 15), had been rejected by the nation. He was the true Son of David, the One who ought to have sat on the throne of Jerusalem; but the Jews had rejected Him as King, and crucified Him. The kingdom was therefore put off; the nation, as such, was rejected as God's testimony on the earth, and the Lord Jesus had taken a new place at the right hand of God, as the Heavenly High Priest (still doubtless to intercede for the nation, which will be finally restored), but now for the maintaining of the many sons whom God was bringing to glory.

The true remnant of the Jews who had received the Messiah were put into a new place by His death and resurrection; they were now to break entirely with Judaism, a system which had been owned of God up to that time, but which now, having rejected

Christ, was disowned; and to understand their connection with a Heavenly Christ, the Centre of the new system, Christianity, which had now taken the place of Judaism. Hence the glories of this Christ as Son of God are insisted on in the first chapter (ver. 2-7). He is God (ver. 8), and Jehovah (ver. 10), superior to the angels, who were the ministers of the law (ver. 13, 14), and therefore the testimony was a superior one, and in every way to be heard (chap. ii. 1-4). But the world to come is also to be put into His hands as man, according to Psalm viii., and His manhood glories are introduced in answer to the question, "What is man?" (ver. 5-9). First, He was made a little lower than the angels; secondly, crowned with glory and honour; thirdly, all things put under His feet. In other words, we see the glories of Jesus as Son of man in three positions: First, as humbled; secondly, as exalted; thirdly, as reigning. The last has not taken place yet.

But directly the glories of Jesus as Son of man are introduced, the Hebrew Christians are introduced as His associates. God is bringing many sons to glory (chap. ii. 10); He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one (ver. 11-13). In order that these might have a part with Him, He had to take flesh and blood with them, to deliver them by His death from the power of Satan, and to make propitiation for their sins (ver. 14-18). Thus the children of Abraham were put into the new place. Called with a heavenly calling, they were to consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, going forward as His companions to the heavenly rest, as Israel in the wilderness in company with Moses and Aaron (chap. iii.) This rest was not entered into yet (chap. iv.); there remained a keeping of a Sabbath for the people of God (ver. 1-11). They had, for their maintenance whilst journeying through the wilderness, the Word of God and the Priesthood of Christ (ver. 12-16).

His Priesthood, founded on His Person as Son of

God, is then dwelt upon. He had taken a new place as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (chap. v.), of whom he had many things to say; but he had to interrupt his discourse, seeing these Hebrews were dull of hearing. They ought to have been teachers, but needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. In fact, they were in danger of giving up Christianity and returning to Judaism. Hence the warning against apostasy in chap. vi. (ver. 4-6). This is all simple and plain when we bear in mind that they are addressed as a professing people (chap. iii. 1; iv. 14; x. 23). He exhorts them to diligence, and to lean on the sure promises of God, after the example of Abraham, trusting in the Priest who had gone inside the veil, and who would soon come out again to bless them, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. He then shows the superiority of this order of priesthood to that of Aaron and Levi (chap. vii.), which was now set aside. He was now interceding within the veil, and maintaining His people to the end, whilst they were journeying through the wilderness here below.

This closes the first part of the Epistle, where the Christian is looked at as a pilgrim and stranger; passing through this world as through a wilderness on his way to the heavenly rest, Christ being his heavenly Leader and High Priest on high, to maintain him whilst passing through the dangers here below, and finally coming back again to bless him.

In chapter viii. Christ is looked at as the Centre of this new system, Christianity, but rather in regard to worship. He is the Minister of the heavenly sanctuary, taking the place of the Jewish priesthood, the ministers of the earthly one; and Mediator of the new covenant, taking the place of Moses, the mediator of the old one. In chapter ix. (ver. 1-14) the heavenly sanctuary sets aside the earthly one, and the two testaments are again contrasted (ver. 15-22). We then get out to the altars and sacrifices (chap. ix. 24-28;

x. 1-18). Christ's one sacrifice sets aside the many sacrifices of Judaism, and the Hebrews are led back, as it were, into the sanctuary as purged worshippers, ever having access to God through the rent veil (chap. x. 19-25). Now if they committed the wilful sin of turning their back on Christ and His sacrifice, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, to Jewish altars and its many sacrifices, it was apostasy, and there was no mercy for such. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

The characteristic of Christianity was living by faith on an unseen Christ, in hope of His speedy return, but if any drew back, God had no pleasure in him. The Old Testament saints are brought forward, as an example to them of the life of faith, in chapter xi., ending up with Christ, who was both the Beginner and Finisher of Faith. They are exhorted to look to Him for the race they were running, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and the chastisements that were necessary as a proof of a Father's love; to hold fast grace, knowing that they were not come to Mount Sinai, where the law was given, but to Mount Zion, the Symbol of grace, in fact the full millennial blessing (chap. xii.) The altar of Christianity having set aside the Jewish altars, and Christ having been slain outside Jerusalem the centre of Judaism, they are now exhorted to go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. They were to be separated by His blood, entirely breaking off from the earthly system of Judaism, with its temple, priests, and sacrifices, to the heavenly Christ, the High Priest over the heavenly sanctuary, who by His blood, shed once for all, had put away all their sins (chap. xiii. 10-15).

Such is a brief outline of the truths of this Epistle. May its blessed truths be written on the hearts of God's dear people! But let us go a little closer into detail.

It is to me a mark of God's infinite favour to open

up to us the glories of His Son's Person. Divine affections are high and secret things except to such as by Divine favour are allowed to taste them. The Son ever lying in the bosom of the Father! Such a secret could only be unveiled to a John, who himself had a place on the bosom of Jesus. Ah, dear reader, do you want a higher thing than this? Are you bustling about like Martha, full of the service of Jesus, and forgetting to sit at His feet, there to learn the mysteries about Himself? God's beloved Son is the object of His delight, the Man of His purpose, around whom He purposes to gather all things in heaven and earth. His eternal place is settled. Our blessed privilege is to accept with delight whatever God has to tell us about the Son of His love, giving Him the first place in our hearts, and striving in our feeble way to be the carriers out in some little measure of all God's purposes for His Son's glory.

Our Apostle learnt deeply some of these divine secrets about the Person of God's Son. He dwells on His glories in the first two chapters, as the Divine Centre of Christianity. His divine glories are brought out in the first chapter, in three special ways: First, as the Son of God (ver. 1-7); secondly, as God Himself (ver. 8); thirdly, as Jehovah (ver. 10). God had spoken to the Jewish fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He had spoken in His Son, whom He had appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. Who can mistake here, that this passage speaks of the divine glory of God's Son? He stands alone as the appointed Heir of all things by His own right and title. He was also the Creator of the worlds. Whoever denies Him these glories is an antichrist, one to be known by the youngest child of God by the unction of the Spirit, and to be avoided (see 1 John ii. 18-27). This was what He was in His own divine Person. But then He was the shining forth, as it were, of God's glory, as the sun's rays shine forth from the sun's body; and this was reflected, as it

were, like a photograph image in a perfect man, so that there was seen God manifest in flesh, upholding at the same time all things by the word of His power. But he came lower. When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made as man so much better than angels, as He had by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they.

Now think for one moment, my reader, of this wondrous Being, God's Heir, your Creator, the express image of God's being, becoming a man, and dying for our sins! and then, as the result, man gone into the presence of God in full acceptance! Words cannot express such things. But when I find that my God became a Man, and died for me, all I can do is to fall down and worship and adore, banishing all doubt as to the value and efficacy of the sacrifice, and believing in the full purging and cleansing of my sins once for all. God, in answer, made Him greater than the angels, even as man (comp. chap. ii. 9), as He had by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they, for He was born Son of God!

Not only then was He the Divine Son, the Creator, but born Son of God in this world according to Psalm ii.: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (see also Luke i. 35)—as holy in His manhood as in His Deity, yet truly born of the Virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Psalm ii. speaks of the Messiah, rejected by men, but set up as King in Zion, referring to the millennium; and His right and title to be such declared by decree, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This would be convincing to the mind of any godly Jew of the superiority of Christ to the angels, who were the ministers of the law.

But, besides this, He had a more excellent Name than they by virtue of God's choice, and a new position taken up in resurrection life and glory, as Solomon, to whom the quotation literally refers. Solomon was

not the eldest son, but he was the object of God's choice, after David had committed murder, and adultery with Uriah's wife, and so a witness to the sure mercies of David. After David's death, God was to establish his kingdom, and would be to Solomon a Father, and he should be to Him a son (2 Sam. vii. 12-15). So then after the Jews had committed murder in regard to Christ, God raised up the object of His choice, declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i. 4), finally to establish Him in the kingdom at His second coming.

But thirdly, in Psalm xcvi. 7, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." This Psalm refers to His second coming and reign, and then He is the object of the adoration of angels. Thus in four ways is the Son of God seen:—First, in His divine glory, the Creator and Upholder of all things; secondly, as born Son of God; thirdly, in a new position, as one whom the Father placed there by reason of His own choice; and, fourthly, coming again to set up His kingdom; and in every way seen to be superior to the angels, who were God's ministers for the giving of the law. I may add, too, we see Him here in His threefold official glories as the Messiah, the Christ:—First, as the Prophet come down to reveal the mind of God; secondly, the Priest, as the Divine Purger of our sins, and sitting down afterwards at the right hand of God; thirdly, as the King, with the divine title to reign in Zion.

Thus, from the Jews' own Scriptures, the glories of the Son of God are declared. The angels were spirits, God's ministers, a flame of fire (Psalm civ. 4), but the Son was God Himself, according to the word—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." But as if that Godhead could be inseparable from His manhood, he goes on—"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath

anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions" (*μετοχοι*) (Psalm xlv. 6, 7). This Psalm is another Psalm that refers to Messiah coming again to take the kingdom. He is God, the King, who once obeyed as man, and was in consequence anointed even as man, with the oil of gladness, above His companions: God and Man in one Person! The Son of God is His name of relationship. Here we have Him in His nature, in contrast to angels who are spirits, *i.e.*, God and man in one Person.

Psalm cii. 25 still further brings out His glory as Jehovah: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Reader, have you ever understood the glories of this wondrous Being, who was the manifested Messiah of Judaism, and yet again will be, and who in the meantime has taken a new place as the divine Centre of a heavenly people? He existed before the beginning, laid the foundations of the earth, built the heavens, and yet, when the eternal state begins, when these works of His hands perish, He remains. As a garment waxes old, so shall it be with the present creation; as a vesture folded up and put away and changed, so shall it be with this present scene. The heavens shall depart like a scroll, the earth shall be burned up, but Jehovah is the same; His years shall not fail. Reader, have you a part with this wondrous Being? If so, your life is as eternal as His, your habitation shall be with Him in the new heavens and new earth, and you shall sing His glories for ever.

But again, His manhood is brought in as inseparable from His Deity; for unto which of the angels said He at any time, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool"? (Psalm cx.) Here He is seen as the exalted man. In a previous quotation,

He was seen as the obedient Man, loving righteousness, and still in another previous one, the born Son of God. In chapter ii. 5, He is seen as Man, set over the world to come. Come, my reader, and trace these fresh glories of thy Lord; bow thy head and worship. His manhood glories are thus traced from His birth up to the millennial state. The angels were ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, but Christ was the Heir of all things—above all; having, as the Divine Son, a more excellent Name than the angels even as born in this world; He was obedient unto death, exalted above the angels in resurrection glory, and under Him the world to come will be brought into subjection.

CHAPTER II.

Wherefore, in every way such a Person was worthy to be heard. If the word spoken *by angels* was steadfast, and every transgression of the law received its due recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken *by the Lord*, and was confirmed to us after His resurrection by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will? Thus the testimony of God's Son had begun a new era in God's ways and dealings with man. He had called out a nation in Abraham's day to be His witness against idolatry; had given to this nation (as represented in Abraham) promises, displayed His government amongst them in the law, sent them prophets to call them back when they sinned, but now that the Son had come they were to listen to Him. He was the Divine Prophet whom Moses had spoken of whom they were to hear; God's Apostle who had come with the good news of God's grace to a ruined world. We must remember that these Hebrews were in danger of going back to the

testimony of Moses and the prophets, and making light of the testimony of God's Son, whereas the former all witnessed to the coming glories of the latter, and He was the one therefore now to be heard; the one with whom they were to be satisfied. The law had fully shown Israel's guilt, and his state of sin, the prophets had vainly called the nation back to repentance, but now the Son of God had come, with the testimony as to what God was for man, telling of His grace, His salvation; and woe betide any if they neglected so great salvation. It was a great salvation because connected with so great a Person.

Thus we have here the Son as the great Apostle, coming into the world to reveal what God was, which the law never did, and His salvation for man. This was the introduction of a new testimony, viz., of God's grace to man, which was continued after His resurrection by his apostles and prophets, by the power of the Spirit, whilst He took a new place in ascension glory as the Heavenly High Priest, to open the way of access to God, and to maintain the people called out, in their journey on to the heavenly Canaan. But we are anticipating what comes after.

The second chapter largely unfolds His manhood glories. "Unto the angels he hath not put into subjection the world to come, but one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet" (Psalm viii.) Thus here we see that it is God's purpose to put Christ above everything in the millennial world. He has not given it into the hands of angels, but into the hands of the Son of man, according to Psalm viii. But is this Psalm wholly fulfilled yet? No; we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of

death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for everything. This is the universal aspect of His death.

Here then, we have God's divine answer as to what man is! Is it Adam that is spoken of? Adam was a man truly upright, but liable to fall. Is it any fallen child of Adam that is spoken of? We are men truly, but fallen beings. But is Adam, fallen or unfallen, God's real type of a man, as He thinks of a man? Nay! *We see Jesus!* There is the answer: First, we see Him humbled; secondly, exalted; thirdly, to have all things put under His feet. Adam was created *upright*, but liable to fall, and he lost everything. The children of Adam were born *fallen*, under the curse, but the last Adam was born *holy*, without a taint of sin, by the miraculous conception of the Holy Ghost, tasted death for everything, is now exalted, and finally will return again, and take this earth out of the hands of the usurper, Satan, and reign supreme over all.*

But now, directly that Jesus as Son of man is introduced, the Hebrew Christians are introduced to have a part with Him. In His divine glory, as pictured in the first chapter, He stands alone, as God's appointed Heir, Himself the Creator of the worlds; but directly His manhood glories have been fully brought out and His death, we are introduced to have a part with Him in all that glory. So what is God doing now to that end? He is bringing many sons to glory. Between the time of Christ's rejection and His return to take the millennial earth into His hands, God is calling out a heavenly family, to share with Christ in all His glory. It became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not

* In chapter i. 3, He is the Divine Purger of our sins, then He is the obedient man crowned with glory, setting aside every other man; the ground of our acceptance.

ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise to thee" (Psalm xxii.) "And again, I will put my trust in him; and again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Isaiah viii.) Thus here we have the blessed Lord associating Himself with others, or rather taking them into association with Himself, to have a part with Him in all His glory. He is here seen as the Captain of their salvation, their Heavenly Leader like Moses: to save them right through, made perfect through sufferings to this end Himself, and for God's glory. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one common stock, of one nature, one family: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Psalm xxii. 1-21, shows His blessed work of atonement, in which He stood alone for His people, bearing their sins: but in answer to His prayer (ver. 21), He is raised from the dead, and appears in the midst of His poor trembling disciples, whom He now owns as His brethren, proclaiming peace to them (John xx. 19), and declaring the Father's Name. So in Isaiah viii. 14, we have Emmanuel's rejection, having first associated Himself in His birth with the returning remnant (comp. vii. 3, 14); in ver. 16, the testimony sealed up amongst the disciples. Emmanuel now is content to wait for His kingdom, which is put off (ver. 17). He says, I will wait for or trust in the Lord who now hides His face from Israel, and then He associates with Himself the children whom God has given Him, viz., the true remnant of Israel, put into a new place by His death and resurrection. And this remnant was to be for signs and wonders to the house of Israel. This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Thus the Hebrew remnant were put into a new place, by the death and resurrection of Christ. They were now owned as brethren, as sanctified by the blood of Christ. The millennial kingdom was put off,

in consequence of the King of the Jews having been rejected, and God was now leading out a heavenly people to be associates with Christ in His Glory.

But in order to have these associates, Jesus must become a man. Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same.* He had to be born amongst the Zachariases, and Elizabeths, and Marys, and Simeons, and Annas of the day, taking flesh and blood with them, in order to deliver and redeem them by dying for them. But forasmuch as the great usurper Satan had come in, and, as holding the power of death, wielded death as a terror to these heirs, as well as held the earth under his power, Christ had to become a man and die. (Man had lost everything, himself and the earth. Man must redeem it.) Therefore He took flesh and blood, and died, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Thus, by dying, Christ as it were took death out of the enemy's hand, and rose the triumphant Victor over it. Those who accept Him find deliverance from a state of sin and death. Death having become Christ's, they find an open way right over, just like Israel over the Red Sea, and thus death, which was the very stronghold of the enemy, who wielded it as his power, became his own destroyer in the hands of Christ, just as Pharaoh at the Red Sea found in it his own destruction.

Oh, how blessed this is ! We are now co-heirs with Christ, having crossed as it were the sea of death, and we sing the song of salvation as associates with the

* Mark, here, it is only with the children that the Lord here associates Himself. To say that in birth He identified Himself with the whole race of Adam, is deadly error ; for He must take a sinful nature to do this. He died for the whole world, that is clear ; but the value of that sacrifice consisted in His being a Perfect Man—God manifest in flesh.

risen Christ. He did not take up angels to be associates with Him, but the true seed of Abraham. But there was another double reason why He should become a man and die, being made thus like unto His brethren, namely, that He might be a faithful and merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God, as also to make propitiation for the sins of His people. He became a man in order to pass through all the circumstances His people were passing through, in order to help them. Thus he was tempted, suffering alone as a holy man could do, without sin, in order to be able to succour them that are tempted. Thus the blessed Lord became a man and died for four reasons: First (ver. 10), for God's glory; secondly, (verses 14, 15), for the destruction of the enemy and deliverance of His people; thirdly, that He might be a faithful and merciful High Priest; and, fourthly, to make atonement for the sins of the people (ver. 17). He has thus not only put away our sins, but has delivered us from the power of the enemy, and having passed into the glory, has associated us with Himself, as sanctified ones, and brethren, and sits there, to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to maintain us in our course here below, and to sympathise with us in all our temptations, trials, and difficulties.

Thus these Hebrew Christians are shown their true place as associates with this glorious Leader and High Priest of their profession, whom they were to consider. He had proved a stumbling-block to the mass of Israel, and God was in consequence now hiding His face from the nation. Christ in glory was waiting for the kingdom, and was now calling out, to be associated with Himself in the heavenly glory, these believers amongst the Jews who were now made partakers of the heavenly calling.

CHAPTER III.

These Hebrew Christians were to consider, then, the Apostle and High Priest of their profession—

Christ Jesus. Their own position is set before them in the terms, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." They were set apart, separated brethren; separated from the mass of the Jewish nation, from whom now Jehovah was hiding His face. They were set apart for heaven now; made partakers, or companions, of the heavenly calling; delivered out of the spiritual Egypt, the world, and from Satan its prince, and journeying, in company with Christ their Heavenly Leader, on to the rest of God; as Israel, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, to the earthly Canaan.

Christ is contrasted with Moses at the beginning of chapter iii., gloriously taking His place as worthy of more honour. In chapter v. He is contrasted with Aaron. Christ was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses in all His house. But Christ builded the house of God, whilst Moses was only part of the house, and so the former was more worthy of honour than Moses; for every house was builded of some person, but He that built all things was God. Moses was verily faithful in all the house of God, as a *servant*, for a testimony of those things which should be spoken after; but Christ, as *Son* over God's house, whose house Christians were, if they held fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. The nation of Israel, then, are in a certain sense looked at here as the house of God. Moses was part of that house, and a servant in it, but Christ was the builder and Son over it. The separated remnant had taken the place of the nation of Israel on earth as the house of God, and Christ was the manifested Son over it now. It was no longer an earthly leader leading a nation across a literal wilderness to the earthly Canaan, but a heavenly Christ leading the house of God across a spiritual wilderness, on to the rest of God. But then really only those belonged to the house who held fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end; that is, of being part-

ners with Christ in all His glory (comp. ver. 14). It is the millennial rest that is spoken of, with which the Hebrews would be familiar from their own prophets, but they were called out from the mass of the nation, which was unfaithful, to have a part with Christ in it, and they would be made partners with Him if they held fast their calling, yea, were made so now by faith.

(Ver. 7.) "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith (Psalm xcvi. 7), To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works, forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." These professing Christians, therefore, were to take heed, by the example of their forefathers, of an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God; to exhort one another, whilst it was called to-day, lest any should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, for they had been made partners* with Christ, if at least they held fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end. Some of their forefathers did provoke, yet not all who came out of Egypt by Moses. Sin and unbelief were the two great causes of provocation. On account of the former, the sinners' carcasses fell in the wilderness. On account of the latter, they never entered into the rest of Canaan. The example of Israel is held up as a warning to these professing Christians. They were

* *μέτοχος*—a companion, associate (see chap. i. 9; ii. 14; iii. 1, 14; vi. 4; xii. 8). The professing Christian, in the Hebrews, is looked at as an associate, a companion with Christ (chap. iii. 14), as also with the Holy Ghost (chap. vi. 4). This is more than being justified. The proper understanding of this word greatly helps to explain the position of the Christian in this Epistle. The translation, in the authorised version, "partakers," is not so clear.

in danger of leaving their heavenly Leader, and of going back to Moses and the prophets ; hence the warnings and exhortations. To go back to Moses would be to go back to bondage, doubts, and fears ; to cleave to Christ would be to hold fast their confidence. It was the finding Him at first that gave them confidence, it must be cleaving to Him as their heavenly Leader that that confidence could continue.

Unbelief and revolt against their unseen heavenly Leader is what they are specially warned against here, from the example of Israel. Six hundred thousand men or more were delivered from Egypt and led across the wilderness by Moses, but all except Joshua and Caleb refused to enter the land, not believing the promises, and consequently, because of that, and sins committed afterwards, fell in the wilderness. Oh, the terrible nature of unbelief ! Christian, are you standing up for doubts and fears ? Are you saying in your heart, It is presumptuous to be too sure of the glory ? Beware of this evil heart of unbelief. It is departure from the living God. What you are exhorted to do in this chapter, is to hold fast the confidence of the hope firm to the end, which is the very opposite of doubt, and to fear lest, the promise being given of entering into God's rest, any should think* for one moment the thought of coming short of it. The point is not fearing the coming short of the rest, but fearing the thought of coming short of it. The thought of coming short is what they are warned against. It was the evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God. What God had promised He must perform. His promises were unconditional, and therefore to be believed.

CHAPTER IV.

The rest they were to enter into was God's rest, and the Christians were exhorted to hold fast the confidence of the hope firm to the end. Israel's

* $\delta\omicron\kappa\tilde{\eta}$ —should think (chap. iv. 1).

failure of entering into the land of Canaan is set before them as a warning and example, they having failed to believe the glad tidings of rest in the land of Canaan. Believers then were the enterers into God's rest ; but it had not been entered into yet, for He says, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. God has rested in the finished work of creation ; but Adam had lost the rest by his sin, and Israel failed to enter into rest in Canaan because of unbelief ; and so He says, if they shall enter into my rest. That is, God had a rest in purpose as witnessed in the seventh day, and Canaan's rest, but man had not entered into it. Nevertheless, some must enter into it, and so He limits a day, as He said in David, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Joshua had indeed led the people into the land of Canaan, but if they had entered into rest, why did David speak of it as future in his day ? "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." The rest, then, for the people of God is future. God ever rests in His own purpose ; the works are finished, creation will have its rest. God will have the land of Israel as His portion, and Israel as the possessors of it, but man has never entered into it yet. Adam lost it. Israel failed to enter in, and the cause was unbelief and revolt against the promises of God. But still there remains a rest for the people of God, and this remnant, called out from the mass of the unbelieving nation which had rejected Messiah, and put into the Christian place, are exhorted to labour to enter into that rest, lest any fall after the same example of unbelief. The rest was future ; if not, they would have ceased from their own works as God did from His.

What is God's rest, then ? Not paradise when God rested first, nor Joshua and Israel in the land, nor David established on the throne, for the latter spoke of it as still future, at least as to entering into it ; but

(comp. chap. ii. 6, 7) one says, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? . . . Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honour. . . . Thou hast put all things under his feet." Yes, beloved, here is the answer. Though it is not alluded to in chapter iv., yet Christ is to be God's Centre in heaven and earth (see Eph. i.). Creation, which was lost to man by his sin, is to be redeemed, not only by blood, but by power. Israel and the land likewise. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. All things will be put into subjection under His feet. In the meantime, God is calling out the co-heirs, bringing the many sons to glory. These are they who are exhorted to labour to enter into His rest; when they shall have entered, Christ will take His great power and reign, clear creation by judgment, destroy the enemies of Israel, take into His own possession the land of Canaan, and reign over the millennial earth, together with the sons of God who shall then have been brought to glory. This is God's rest, never altered in purpose. The responsible man Adam and Israel lost their share in it, but all shall be made good by the Man of God's purpose, even Christ, who has already purchased all by His blood, and who will yet redeem all by His power when He returns from heaven, in company with those whom He is now leading across the wilderness on to the heavenly glory.

Two blessed helps are brought before the people of God, at the end of the chapter, for their journey through the wilderness. First, the Word of God, exposing and judging everything that would hinder them entering into God's rest; and, secondly, the Priesthood of Christ, for the maintenance of their position before God, and their faith whilst passing through the trials and difficulties of the path through the wilderness. The former would remove the obstacles to their entering in, the latter would hold

them up in their onward path, because of their infirmities and weaknesses.

We see then here the place which the Priesthood of Christ holds in the Word of God. It is not for salvation. Israel were not brought out of Egypt by Aaron *the priest*, but directly they had been redeemed and brought to God at Mount Sinai, Aaron was consecrated as priest, to maintain their relations with Jehovah as the people of God. Likewise, Christ, having redeemed us from the world by His death and resurrection, has now passed into the heavens, to maintain God's heavenly people in their relations to God, to save to the end them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Thus they are preserved through infirmities, difficulties, and trials, saved through them all by this ever-faithful High Priest, who has passed through all the same circumstances for them, who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart. Born in a holy nature outside sin, yet really man, he felt really what it was to be in a world of sin; in it He was tempted, and yet there was not one motion in His holy soul that answered to the temptation like with us. He shrank from it with horror, hated the very thought, and suffered from the very contact with temptation, in a deeper way than we ever can, as born of God, and yet still having a nature within us that answers to the temptation, if not kept by faith in the place of death, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus we have not an High Priest to sympathize with the sinful nature in us, nor with us as yielding to that sinful nature (He died for that; we do not want sympathy with it, but judgment and atonement), but to sympathize with us as Christians born of God, but in conflict with sin, temptation and the world, and to maintain us in victory above it.* As Israel, under Joshua, and Amalek fought

* Jesus is the Advocate in the case of actual sin committed by a child of God for the restoration of communion (1 John I. 1, 2.).

together in the wilderness, and Moses Aaron and Hur went up the hill to maintain them in the conflict; so our great High Priest has ascended up to glory, to maintain us in the fight against the flesh and sin, and to carry us through by His powerful intercession which never fails, and makes us more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

CHAPTER V.

In chapter v., Aaron is contrasted with our blessed Lord in His Priesthood. The latter sets him aside, as He did Moses, in the third chapter. In looking at the first four verses we see at once what an inferior priesthood Aaron's was. He could have compassion on the ignorant truly, and on those out of the way, but it was because he himself was compassed with infirmity. He was himself in the same state as they were, and thus able to sympathize: that is to say, he was in a failing state, and thus he ought for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. Now we have seen that Christ is able to sympathize far better, but it is from the fact of His being outside the state of sin in which we are by nature, and thus able to maintain us outside it, in the position in which His death and resurrection has placed us. Aaron was only for the maintenance of a people in a failing state, but Christ to maintain a people set outside this fallen state in a new creation, and to maintain them in that position, Himself ever having been the Perfect One.

His Priesthood was founded on His glorious, holy Person: He did not glorify Himself to be made a High Priest, but He that said unto Him, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee" (Psalm ii.), as He said also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." We have His Person set before

us (ver. 5), His office (ver. 6), what fitted Him for that office (7, 8), and His consecration to it (ver. 9). His agony in the garden is alluded to (ver. 7), and what enabled Him to gain the victory, is set before us. He could not but shrink from death, as the Holy One of God, specially from drinking that awful cup, the being forsaken of God; but it was the Father's will, and He learnt obedience as the Son by the things which He suffered.

He is able thus to sympathize with His people, passing through suffering even unto death, and even with those who do not know fully their redemption, yet really born again, and dreading the judgment of God due to them for their sins. This will be Israel's experience in the last days, as delineated in the Psalms, and Christ is able in grace to sympathize with them whilst passing through the trial. Of course they anticipate the judgment coming on them for their own sins. Christ anticipated the judgment coming on Him for the sins of others, Himself being without sin, though one of the Jewish nation.

His death was His consecration to the priesthood; He fully entered into it as the Risen Man, the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The Aaronic priesthood utterly failed, as having condemned Him to death, and is consequently set aside, and the risen Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, takes its place.

But the Apostle has to interrupt his discourse about the Melchisedec priesthood, owing to the low state of the Hebrew Christians. When for the time they ought to have been teachers, they had need again to be taught what were the first principles of the oracles of God, and had become such as had need of milk, instead of strong meat. Every one that used milk was unskilful in the word of righteousness, being a babe; whereas strong meat belonged to those of full age, who, by reason of use, had their senses exercised

to discern both good and evil. Thus we see here Christians divided into two classes; some were babes, others were perfect, or in other words of a full age, such who by reason of use had their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. We see also that this is not merely a question of being old or young in the Christian life; many old Christians, like these Hebrews, are mere babes, stunted in growth, whilst many comparatively young have attained to the age of perfection, and are able to feed on the meat of the Word. To understand only the way of the beginning of Christ, as we have in chap. vi. 1, 2, was to be still in the age of baby-hood; to understand about a heavenly Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, was to be of full age. They were in danger of letting go this heavenly Christ, through their want of apprehension about Him.

CHAPTER VI.

Therefore the Apostle would have them press on to this perfection; he would have them leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (or the word of the beginning of Christ), and go on to perfection. Christ was no longer exhibiting His character of Messiah on earth, going to perfect or restore Judaism; He had taken a new position in heaven, as the rejected One of the nation of Israel, from whom now God was hiding His face. These Hebrew Christians had been associated with Him in this new position, His death having broken every link with the world which had rejected Him, and they were now journeying on to a heavenly country, into which their heavenly High Priest had already entered, but was now, as their Leader, conducting them there across the wilderness of this world. What, did they want again and again to lay the foundation of repentance from dead works,

and faith towards God ; of the doctrine, or teachings, of the various washings or baptisms under the law, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment? These were all necessary as foundations, but they were but the beginning of Christ, and not the full revelation of Christianity. Christ had taken a new place in glory, as the Centre of a new system that God had set up, and they now belonged to Him in this position. Besides, the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven, and had taken up His abode in the Assembly or house of God, of which these Christians were a part. They were associates of Christ (chap. iii. 14), and of the Holy Ghost (chap. vi. 4), who were leading them along to the heavenly rest.

To return to Judaism and its ordinances was to leave Christ and the Holy Ghost, who were outside it, and so indeed it would be apostasy to do so. Hence the warning of ver. 4-6, which shows the length a mere professor may go, without being really a converted man. The Apostle says to the Hebrews, *We* will go on to perfection, if God permit, for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. Thus he does not directly address the Hebrew Christians in the next verses. He supposes a case which indeed might be true to any mere professor amongst them, but he was persuaded better things of *them* (see ver. 9).

It is impossible, he says, for those who were once enlightened (I may be enlightened in the truth without acting out my enlightenment), and have tasted the heavenly gift (I may taste a good thing and spit it out again afterwards), and were made associates of the Holy Ghost,* and have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come (I may have performed miracles, like Judas), if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put

* See note in chap. ii., on the Greek word *μέτοχος*.

Him to an open shame. The Apostle then illustrates this new system of Christianity which had been set up, and the different hearts of the people that were in it, by comparing it to two kinds of earth, each receiving like privileges, the rain of heaven descending on each, but the one bears good fruit, the other briars and thorns. So professing Christians belong to one or the other of these two classes. Receiving the like privileges from God, the one bears briars and thorns, the other good fruit. There is no difficulty in the passage, if we understand that Christianity is a new system which God has set up, having the glory of Christ shining upon it, so that everyone in it is more or less enlightened, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in the midst, the Word of God preached, and miracles performed, without any question of those who are introduced into it partaking of real life themselves, or being made recipients of the Holy Ghost. It is not the reception of life that is spoken of, but of enlightenment, and tasting the gift of God. Neither is it partaking of the Holy Ghost, but companionship. I am introduced into the place where the Holy Ghost is, and where I enjoy all the outward privileges of Christianity. If, after accepting all this, I go back to Judaism, there is no repentance. The Jew repented of having crucified the Saviour, and gave up his system; he now, by returning to it, crucified, as it were, the Son of God afresh.

But the Apostle now, turning directly to the Hebrew Christians, says, But we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. There were the fruits of real faith manifested, and God was not unrighteous to forget their work, and labour of love, which they had showed towards His name, in that they ministered to the saints. He only exhorts them to continue, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end; not to be slothful, but to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherited the promises. He encourages them

to this full assurance of hope, by referring back to God's dealings with Abraham. For God having made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." First, there was the promise. Then he had patiently to endure, then he obtained the promise. Thus the promise looks on to the end. Faith lays hold of it, and hope expects it, and patience waits for it. But God confirmed the promise by an oath. In Gen. xii. He made the promise; in Gen. xxii. He confirmed it with an oath. But with men an oath is the end of strife. How certainly then are the promises confirmed to the heirs, if God has confirmed them by His oath. Thus there was the promise itself, and the oath confirming it, two things in which it was impossible for God to lie. In this lies our strong consolation, who have laid hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Thus the Hebrews are encouraged to press onward in the knowledge of this heavenly Christ, encouraged by the promises of sure blessing at the end, their hope now entering into that within the veil, anchoring their souls there, their Forerunner having entered, and soon coming out again to bless them, Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

CHAPTER VII.

Thus the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec is brought in connection with their hope, and we shall see from the type in the first few verses of this chapter, why this is. The Apostle now resumes

his discourse about this High Priest, having interrupted it in chapter v., owing to the Hebrews' dulness of apprehension. This Melchisedec, meaning Jesus, he says (ver. 3 end), abideth a Priest continually, and then he refers to the type of Melchisedec, in Genesis. He was king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham after the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him ; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all ; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that King of Salem, which is, King of peace. Without father or mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God ! What a striking type of Jesus the Son of God ! A king-priest coming to bless Abraham after the slaughter of the kings (see Gen. xiv.). This doubtless refers to the deliverance of Israel in the latter day from the confederacy of nations that shall come against them. But at this point the king-priest, Melchisedec, appears and blesses Abraham. We see thus that this priesthood connects itself with the *hope of Israel*, and its character is blessing. Melchisedec did not intercede for Abraham. He blessed him. So will Jesus the remnant of Israel when He returns. In the meantime He sits on the Father's right hand till all His enemies are put under His feet] (see Psalm cx.). He will then return, and be the manifested King of Righteousness, and of Peace.

Now, this Melchisedec was greater than Abraham himself, seeing the latter gave him tithes : greater therefore in office than the Levitical priesthood, who received tithes of the people according to the law, for they came out of the loins of Abraham ; whilst he whose pedigree is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises ; and without doubt the less is blessed of the greater. In another thing too he was greater ; here men who died (*i.e.*, the Levitical priesthood) received tithes, but there he (Melchisedec) received them, of

whom it is witnessed that he liveth ; as it might be said, Levi paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in his father's loins when Melchisedec met him. Therefore in person and office he was superior to the Levitical priesthood. Besides, if perfection came by that priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need for another priest to arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? The Apostle had already pressed Psalm cx. on the Hebrews to this effect (see chap. v. 6, 10), and he keeps this in mind in this chapter. There the blessed Lord is seen in ascension glory ; Jehovah saying to Him, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." He should have the rule in the latter day, and the Jewish people should be willing in that day of His power. In the meantime He was waiting, made by the Lord's oath an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, but not exercising that office till the kings are destroyed. Then He would come forth for the blessing of His people.

It was clear then, according to this Psalm, that the priesthood was to be changed, and that a royal Priest after the order of Melchisedec was to take the place of the sons of Aaron. But if the priesthood was changed, there must be a change also in the law. Besides, He of whom these things were spoken belonged to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For the Lord, whom these Hebrews confessed as Messiah, had sprung from the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing as concerning priesthood. Therefore it was still more evident, not only from the word which told of the coming of this Priest, but from the fulfilment of that word in the coming of the Lord Himself, that after the similitude of Melchisedec there was to arise another priest, not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life, as the word said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Thus the Lord, springing out of the tribe of Judah, of

which the law spake nothing as concerning priesthood, showed clearly that He was made Priest not by the law, whilst His resurrection proved that it was after the power of an endless life, according to the prophecy in Psalm cx. The priesthood then was to be changed.

There is verily then here a disannulling of the commandment going before, owing to the weakness and unprofitableness of it ; for the law made nothing perfect ; but the bringing in of a better hope did, viz., the resurrection of the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, who was soon coming out again to bless His people, by the which hope in the meanwhile we draw near to God. Thus connected with the Melchisedec Priest, there was the power of an endless life, and a better hope, a sure and certain hope of eternal blessing. Blessed assurance for us, and which the Apostle would have these Hebrew Christians understand. The hope of Israel's future blessing as a nation also depended on it. And inasmuch as not without an oath [the law made priests by an oath] was He made Priest, for the Lord sware and will not repent (see Psalm cx. 4, &c.), by so much was Jesus made Surety of a better testament. This is all looking forward to the final blessing, for the new covenant will be made with Israel in the latter day, but Jesus has in the meantime entered on His office on high, and so become Surety, a sure guarantee that the New Testament blessings will be fulfilled on His return. Another advantage was this : the Levitical priesthood were many priests, for by reason of death they could not continue, but this Man, because He lives ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood ; therefore He is able to save to the end them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Thus in every way was this priesthood superior to that under the law. It was made after the power of an endless life ; it was made perfect by bringing in a better hope. It was established by oath, and unchangeable, in contrast to the priests under law, who

needed a carnal commandment for their appointment, made nothing perfect, were established without oath, and were continually changing, owing to death, and needed therefore a continual line of succession. Alas ! alas ! is not Christendom fast going back to this last state of things, with its earthly priesthood established again by carnal commandment, whereas the people who draw near to God through them are never made perfect ? They are in continual fear and dread. Do we not hear over and over again of a succession of priests direct from the Apostles, as almost necessary for the Church ? And who, pray, are these poor apostolic successors ? Why, poor worms that die ! Whereas there at the right hand of God sits the glorious Melchisedec Priest, by whom we draw near to God, and ever living to make intercession. How can any one fail who comes to God by Him ? Yes, dear believer, such an High Priest becomes us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who needs not, as these high priests, to offer sacrifices on earthly altars, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, for this He did once when He offered Himself. For the law made priests who have infirmity, but the word of the oath the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. What folly, then, to think of going back to an earthly priesthood, which made nothing perfect, and depended on poor failing men, which had infirmity, to keep it up. But if they did that, they rejected the Son who was consecrated Priest for ever. It was giving up the certainty of eternal life, the better hope, and all the New Testament blessings.

CHAPTER VIII.

We come now to the summing up, in a few words, of what went before, and then the taking up of one part after another of the Jewish system of worship, showing it all set aside by this heavenly Christ and His sacrifice. For instance, after the summing up as

to the priesthood (ver. 1, 2), He is contrasted, as Mediator, with Moses the mediator of the old covenant, which is set aside (ver. 6-13). But this covenant had also ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary (chap. ix. 1), which is set aside for a heavenly one (ver. 11, 12); and the mediatorship of the New Testament was in connection with the blessings of an eternal inheritance, established on the ground of His blood, which introduces the sacrifices, as we see in chap. x.; the many sacrifices of the Jewish system set aside by the one sacrifice of Christ, which perfects the conscience of the believer, and gives him boldness to enter the heavenly sanctuary for worship. Thus the whole system of Judaism crumbled under the feet of those who laid hold by faith of this heavenly High Priest and Mediator. The believers were introduced by His sacrifice into a heavenly sanctuary, there boldly to draw nigh and worship God and the Father.

But let us return. Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum, says the Apostle. We have such an High Priest (chap. vii.), who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary which the Lord pitched, and not man. Such an High Priest! in every way superior to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, as we have seen. A heavenly High Priest set down at the right hand of God. A Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle; that is to say, the Centre of a new system of worship which had its sanctuary in the heavenly places (comp. chap. ix. 11, 24), which the Lord pitched, and not man. What a volume in a few words! The Apostle gathers up all that he had said about the High Priest before, and adds, in a few words, what shows Him as the Centre of an entirely new system of divine worship, having its seat in a heavenly sanctuary. This introduces the whole system of the sanctuary and its sacrifices. This was part of the work of the high priest; he had to offer

gifts and sacrifices ; wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat to offer ; for if He were on earth he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law ; who serve unto the example and pattern of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle (Ex. xxv. 40). "For see," saith He, "that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

Thus Christ's priesthood could not go on on earth ; but now He hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. He is thus contrasted, not only with Aaron as the priest, but with Moses the mediator of the old covenant, which is shown as set aside. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there should no place have been found for the second ; but finding fault with them, He said, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt : because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest ; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). In that He saith, a new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Thus the remnant are established on new ground in

connection with the heavenly Mediator of a new covenant. True, this covenant was not actually established with them except in spirit; it would be established with the house of Israel and the house of Judah in the latter day, from whom now Jehovah was hiding His face. But already the blood had been shed, the Mediator had gone on high, and all the blessings, even of earthly Israel, depended on Him who, as High Priest, was such an One after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron, and as Mediator, was such an One of a new covenant, and not of an old one established by Moses. All this would be very convincing to these Hebrew Christians who were still clinging to Judaism, in showing them that, even in regard to all the future earthly blessings of Israel, they depended wholly on Christ, the heavenly High Priest, and the heavenly Mediator. They now belonged to Him, but if to Him, all their earthly connections were broken off.

CHAPTER IX.

The subject of the covenants is continued in chapter ix., but this introduces also the sanctuary and the whole system of divine worship, which is now shown to be set aside to make way for the heavenly one.

The first covenant then had also ordinances of divine service or worship, and a worldly sanctuary, which is then described; and the reader will find it worth while in connection with it to read Ex. xxv.-xxxi., where the whole tabernacle and altar are described. Suffice it to say that there was a tabernacle made, divided into two parts by a veil, the outer one called the sanctuary or holy place, the inner called the holiest of all. In the outer was the candlestick to give light, the table on which lay the priests' food, the

twelve loaves representing the one nation of Israel divided into twelve tribes. Inside the veil was the ark and mercy-seat, Jehovah's throne in the midst of Israel, and the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. Into the first tabernacle the priests entered, accomplishing the worship of God ; but into the second the high priest alone could enter, and that only once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. What did all this show? Why, that the way into the holiest, the presence of God, was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. This first tabernacle was a figure for the time then present in which Judaism existed as a system, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service (*i.e.* worship) perfect as pertaining to the conscience ; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances, until the time of reformation. Thus under the Jewish system there was no approach to God, and the sacrifices could not give a perfect conscience. The priests drew near for the people as far as they could, but God was shut inside the veil, and no one could approach Him but the High Priest once a year. The people were kept afar off.

But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, alluding no doubt to the Melchisedec office, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building ; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. That is to say, He has passed through the heavenly places into the very Presence of God, the veil has been rent, and there is a perfect way of approach to God opened up for us, and an eternal redemption gained. If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ

who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve or worship the living God? Thus the blessed Lord establishes a way of perfect approach to God, and by His blood gives a clean conscience to every worshipper who approaches Him.

Oh, the blessedness of this! God is no longer an unapproachable Being, needing a system of earthly priests or clergy to come between us and Him, and even then to be unable to approach Him. No, dear believers! Christ, by His precious death, resurrection, and ascension, has rent the veil; the vilest can approach through Him with perfect confidence, and the blood applied perfects the conscience for worship. What is it then that marks off Christian from Jewish worship? Why first, perfect approach to God through the heavenly High Priest, who has rent the veil; secondly, eternal redemption; thirdly, a perfect conscience, which fits the worshipper for God's Presence. What then is the meaning of these worldly sanctuaries set up over again? These gorgeous priests arrayed in flowing garments? What is the meaning of the one man doing the service for the people, and no divine worship unless he be there? What is the meaning of the temples full of unconverted worshippers, without a shadow of thought of having a perfect, purged conscience? Why, it is a return to Judaism! It has its very marks in everything that is done. Alas, alas, for the Church! It has departed from its heavenly Centre; it knows not its happy liberty of approaching God without a veil between; it knows nothing about a purged conscience, which alone can fit the worshipper for God's Presence. It remains for the faithful to return to their heavenly Centre, to know their perfect approach to God through Christ, and, as purged worshippers, to draw near inside the veil, where the world cannot enter, for God knows nothing in Christianity of unpurged worshippers drawing near to worship Him.

Thus the first covenant, with its worldly sanctuary, earthly priests, and sacrifices which could give no approach to God, and no perfect conscience for worship, makes way for the heavenly Christ, who has entered into the heavenly sanctuary, giving perfect access to God, and a perfect conscience to its worshippers.

For this cause, too, He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the Old Testament, they that are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. Thus, what blessings are attached to the mediatorship of the New Testament! An eternal redemption, an eternal inheritance, in contrast to what was temporal in Israel. The new covenant here is looked at as a will, or testament. Ordinarily it is an agreement made between two parties on certain conditions—witness Jehovah and Israel and the law. But in the new covenant there are no conditions, its basis is the “I WILL” of Jehovah. In the case of a testament then, there must of necessity be the death of the testator, for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives. The two testaments are then contrasted. The first was not dedicated without blood (see Ex. xxiv.). In fact, under the law everything was sprinkled with blood, and without shedding of blood was no remission of sins. But these were patterns of heavenly things, and Christ was now entered into the heavenly sanctuary with a better sacrifice than that of bulls and of goats, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Not to offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it was appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment,

so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him, should He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Thus all the blessings of the New Testament are founded on the death of the Testator. Christ has shed His blood; by His one sacrifice once offered He died to put away sin (not to speak of its application). For the believer it is put away, their actual sins also have been borne, and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Death and judgment are the portion of men. Sins put away, and final salvation, the portion of believers.

Thus the sacrifices are introduced, and in chapter x. the many sacrifices of the law are contrasted with the one offering of Christ.

CHAPTER X.

We have now come out, as it were, from the inner sanctuary where the High Priest ministers, and have come to the altar of brass outside the tabernacle, where the sacrifices were offered up. Here was the meeting place between God and the people outside. Here was the only way of entrance into the inner sanctuary. But here also the law sacrifices failed. They were but shadows of good things to come, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect. Had it been so, would they not have ceased to be offered, for the one sacrifice would have given a perfect conscience—the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins? But year by year they were offered up, and instead of putting sins away finally, they brought them back to remembrance every year, for there was need of a fresh sacrifice for a fresh year of sins. The Apostle is evidently here alluding to the day of atonement (Lev. xvi.). My reader will do well to refer to it. Thus it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to put away sin.

Wherefore, when Christ came into the world He said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me : in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Psalm xl. 6-8). Verses 8 and 9 are the Apostle's comments on the passage. Above, when He said, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein ; which were offered by the law ; then said He, Lo I come to do thy will, O God"—He takes away the first (*i.e.* the law sacrifices) 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. Thus for the bringing in of the blessings of the New Testament, and the eternal inheritance of believers, sin must be put away. This is *God's will*. The law sacrifices could not do it, but Christ has come as the carrier-out of God's will in a holy body, prepared by Himself, and has thus substituted Himself in the place of the law sacrifices, which were ineffectual.

Under the law the sacrifices classed themselves under two heads. There were the sweet savour offerings, represented by the burnt offering, meat offering, and peace offering (Lev. i., ii., iii.), and the sin offerings or sacrifices for sin, headed under the names of sin and trespass offerings (Lev. iv. v., vi. 1-7). In the former class the perfection of the offerings went up to God ; in the latter, sin was dealt with in judgment. Thus Christ came to do the will of God, and in this aspect He presented Himself as the perfect Man in life, as the meat offering, the obedient Man in death, as the burnt offering ; and all this went up as a sweet savour to God, and we are set apart as worshippers, and brought nigh to God in all the perfection of His offering. This was done once for all, blessed be God ! But He was also the sin offering, and whilst every priest stood daily ministering and

offering the same sacrifices, which could never take away sin, this Man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God ; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. And by one offering He hath perfected continuously them that are sanctified.

Thus Christ came as the carrier-out of the will of God for the putting away of sin. By His obedience unto death, the perfection of His offering, we are sanctified ; and by His one sacrifice for sins, He has taken them away, and that applied to the consciences of these sanctified ones, gives a perfect conscience. There is no more conscience of sins. It is one sacrifice, once applied, and the conscience, as a consequence, perfected. But there is more than this ; the Holy Ghost is a Witness to us of the perfect efficacy of this sacrifice, for after that He said before—This is the covenant that I will make with them, *saith the Lord*, that is, the Lord says, as a present application,—I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, *and your sins and iniquities will I remember no more*. Now where remission of these is there is no more offering of sin.

It is the will of God, then, that sin should be taken away, and that sanctified* worshippers should be in His Presence. That will has been carried out by Christ, who, by His one offering, has not only set us apart, but so taken away our sins that the conscience is perfected, and to this the Holy Ghost witnesses in the words, “Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Blessed contrast to the law sacrifices, which could not take away sins, which could not give a per-

* Sanctification is greatly the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see chap. ii. 11 ; x. 10, 29 ; xiii. 12), as justification that of the Romans. God is not only a just judge, but a holy God, that wants worshippers in His sanctuary. But these worshippers are defiled by sin, and need cleansing and setting apart for the worship of the sanctuary, as the priests in Israel taken as a figure. *ἀγιος*—from which the word is derived—signifies, *separate from common use, consecrated*.

fect conscience, and which brought to remembrance sins every year (ver. 1, 2, 11). Whereas, the sacrifice of Christ has taken away sins once, and in consequence, He has sat down continuously at the right hand of God. This applied once to the conscience purges it, and there is no more remembrance of sins as a consequence, by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Oh, happy believer, why are you ever troubled? I pray you, rest your soul calmly on the will of God, Christ's work, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost to its value.

Now we come to the result of all this (ver. 19-25), and the fearful consequences of rejecting such a testimony (ver. 26-31). Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, etc. The believer now finds a full title to enter into the holiest—the very Presence of God—by the blood of Jesus. The way in is by Jesus himself, through the rent veil, that is to say, His flesh. When he gets in he finds there his glorious Centre, the High Priest over the house of God. The blood of Jesus is the title; Jesus dead, risen, and ascended, the way in; Jesus Himself, the Centre of worship inside. Having these things all prepared for us, the Apostle says, Now let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. But what is our fitness? First, the blood applied gives a perfect conscience; secondly, Jesus Himself applied gives the washing of regeneration—a change of state and nature; having also the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec inside, let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering. Now, my reader, I want you to consider who are the *us*, here. Remember, we have seen that it is God's will to have sanctified worshippers in His Presence (ver. 10). Now, who compose these worshippers? First, they are brethren (ver. 19); secondly, they are blood-sprinkled worshippers (ver. 22); thirdly, body-washed worshippers. This is an allusion, I have no doubt, to the priests, who in their consecration were

(1) washed with water, (2) sprinkled with blood, (3) anointed with oil. (See Lev. viii.) But if priests, why want a man to draw near to God for them? If brethren, why be mixed up with the unconverted? If worshipping in the holiest, why need a splendid gorgeous earthly sanctuary?

Here surely we have a beautiful picture of how Christians should worship God, and their fitness to do it. In verses 5-18, I see the blessed God coming out of His sanctuary right down to where we lay condemned and ruined, to carry out His will and meet our need, and here (ver. 19-25) we see poor redeemed sinners brought right into the Presence of God as happy worshippers, to worship Him. My dear reader, do you now see what Christian worship really is? It is a number of redeemed sinners, with perfect consciences, drawing near with boldness into the very Presence of God, through Christ their High Priest and Centre of worship, heaven being their place of worship, and the sacrifice of Christ their title to go in. This is the company that are to consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as they see the day approaching of the return of the Lord Jesus.

Thus in chap. viii. we began with the Blessed Lord as the heavenly High Priest, taking the place of the earthly priesthood, and ministering in a heavenly sanctuary. The Mediator of a new covenant also, setting aside the old covenant of Sinai. In chapter ix. 1-14, we saw the earthly sanctuary with its ordinances replaced by a heavenly one, into which Christ has entered and opened the way in. This is all included in the subject of the covenants (see ver. 1), but if the blessings of the New Testament are to be dispensed, there must be the death of the Testator, and this introduces us to the sacrifices (ver. 15-26). In chapter x. we saw the one sacrifice of Christ fulfilling and replacing

the many sacrifices of the law, and as a consequence (ver. 19-25) the Hebrew believers are led back in triumph into their heavenly sanctuary, with boldness and liberty to worship their God and Father through Christ. In short, we have the heavenly High Priest, Christ, replacing the earthly Aaronic priesthood, the heavenly Mediator of a new covenant replacing the first covenant of the law and its ordinances, the heavenly sanctuary replacing the earthly tabernacle, and the one sacrifice of Christ replacing the many sacrifices of the law ; and the Holy Ghost the Witness on earth to the value of this sacrifice.

¶ Now to turn their back on all this would be to commit the wilful sin of Christianity ; if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. To turn away from the sacrifice of Christ was to turn away from the only sacrifice for sins. There could only be as a consequence a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation which should devour the adversaries. Under Moses' law, the man who broke it died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; but of how much sorer punishment was he worthy, who had trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and had done despite to the Spirit of grace ? These three things were the great foundation truths of Christianity : (1) the blood of Christ separating from Judaism ; (2) the Person of the Son of God, the Centre of the new system of Christianity ; and (3) the Holy Ghost come down as the Witness of grace. To turn away from this was to commit the wilful sin now. On the one side there was the earthly priesthood, the first covenant promising life on condition of obedience, the earthly sanctuary, the temple at Jerusalem, with its altar and many sacrifices. On the other side, the heavenly High Priest, the heavenly Mediator of a new covenant, the heavenly sanctuary in which He ministered, and the one sacrifice giving

perfect access and title to go in, as well as separating the believers from everything else. Hence there was the choice between the truth and the shadow. To turn back to the shadow, was to give up the truth: hence the warning. There could be no mixture. There must be an entire break from one to the other.

O, my reader, I pray you consider this. Is not the greater part of Christendom more than half gone back to the former state of things? Have we not the many priests and clergy over again? Is not the law again preached in order to get life? Are not gorgeous earthly sanctuaries again set up? And do we not hear of constant sacrifices offered up for the living and the dead, at the mass and eucharist? What is all this, but apostasy from the truth? What is all this, but departure from Christianity? What is all this, but the wilful sin? My reader, do you find yourself in such a circle? Then I pray you be warned. Get out of it as Lot did out of Sodom; and seek a circle—it may be a very narrow one—where you find the blood of Christ owned as the separating line from all this, which is practically a return to Judaism; the Son of God owned as the Centre, and the Holy Ghost owned as the Witnesser of the grace and glory of God. Otherwise, there is nothing but judgment. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Apostle now calls to remembrance the former times, when these Hebrew Christians gave up everything for Christ. Were they now going to cast away their confidence which had great recompense of reward? Were they going to let go this heavenly Christ for the shadows of Judaism? Impossible! Still they had need of patience, that, after they had done the will of God, they might receive the promise; for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. In the meantime, the just should live by faith; but if any drew back, Jehovah could have no pleasure

in such an one. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Thus the Apostle encourages the Hebrews to go on. It was madness to stop after having given up so much. The Lord would assuredly come and fulfil His promise, and give them His recompense. Only they had need of patience to wait, and to live by faith on the unseen Christ, in the meantime.

Now this life of faith was what specially marked Christianity. Judaism was a religion of seen things, Christianity of unseen things. They were to live by faith on an unseen heavenly Christ, with the sure promise of His return. They are put

CHAPTER XI.

in company with the saints in the Old Testament history, but who saw through the types and shadows their real heavenly calling, and who lived by faith in view of it. We must remember the position in which the saints are looked at in the Hebrews. They are not seen *seated* in the heavenly places in Christ as members of His body, as in Ephesians. They are brethren, partakers of the *heavenly calling* (see chap. iii. 1), called to heaven, but not there yet. Consequently, in Hebrews we are put in company with Old Testament saints. In the Ephesians we are not. The great truth in the latter Epistle is our union with Christ as Head members of His body. This was a mystery unknown in Old Testament times, but now revealed through Paul and the other Apostles by the Spirit (Eph. iii.).

To return ; in chapter xi. we have the life of faith set before us in its various actings, as displayed in the Old Testament saints. Their example would be convincing to the Hebrew Christian minds, as being familiar with their history. What is faith? It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By it the elders obtained a good report.

Now Christ, and the heavenly glory, and things above, were all real to God. But faith is our side of it. We do not see these things, but realise them. Faith is thus the substance, the realizing of these hoped-for things. I hope for Christ, and the heavenly glory, and to have a portion there, but faith makes it all real. I have these things now. They are my portion. So it is the evidence of things not seen. God's *Word* tells me of these unseen things. The latter is God's evidence that these things are true. But faith lays hold of the Word, and becomes in itself the evidence of these unseen things.

We shall find these things developed in the examples that follow. There is no doubt an order in them. For instance, in the first four, faith connects itself with creation, redemption, translation to the heavenly glory, and judgment (see ver. 3-7). Then with our life here below waiting in patience for the fulfilment of the promises (ver. 8-22). Then the faith that will surmount every difficulty, as specially shown in Moses (ver. 23-31). Lastly, such as will go through all kinds of suffering, in view of the still future fulfilment of the same promises (ver. 32-40). May we learn our lessons of faith from the examples of these dear saints of God!

Now as to creation (ver. 3) faith is the evidence of unseen things to me. I have never seen how these things I see were created. But God tells me in His Word that they were created by the word of God. I believe, and faith thus becomes the evidence of things not seen, as to the actual creation of the world. The heathen philosophers were always reasoning about this, but never could trace back creation to the first cause. But faith can. It says God created the heavens, and the earth, by His word; the things that do appear were made of nothing.

But sin has come in, and with it death, and thus God is again shut out except as a Judge. What is Abel to do, who lives after the ruin of man by sin?

By faith he offers to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh. He believed what God said as to the ruin of man, the ground cursed, and the promise of the woman's seed, and brought to God a lamb of the flock as a sacrifice, owning himself as a sinner, and that the only way of approach to God now was by a sacrifice. Thus God's righteousness was owned. He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. The value of the Lamb of God was handed over to him, and he was accepted in the gift which he offered.

Now man could walk with God as Enoch. Through the death of the Lamb, God was satisfied ; He had required death, but it had passed now on the Lamb slain. Enoch could stand in the death of the Lamb and say, "Death hath lost its rights over me. I have a title to the heavenly glory without passing through death." And so in fact he was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, for God had translated him ; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Thus he becomes a type of the Church at the end of her history on earth, who indeed will be translated, that she should not see death. Oh, to be so counted worthy of living till that day ! Oh, to be so consciously standing now as dead and risen with Christ, and looking for a coming Christ, as to be translated that we should not see death ! But then, like Enoch, there must be the walk with God, and the consequent testimony that we please God. Companionship with God, and the testimony that we please God, must precede the translation. Otherwise we may have to pass through death first as chastisement. Oh, believers—I speak to myself as well—shall any of us be counted worthy to rise to meet our returning Lord in the air, without dying ? What a ravishing thought ! **But refer to 1 Thessalonians iv., and you will see that**

living saints shall do this, and it is linked with the actings of faith here. Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Noah's faith was the evidence of things not seen in regard to the coming judgment of the antediluvian world. Moved with fear, as a consequence of being warned of God of things not seen as yet, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith. The ark, of course, typified Christ, and the same judgment which destroyed the world was the means of his salvation through the ark. So will it be with Israel in the latter day. They will not be translated like Enoch. Their portion is the earth, like Noah. They will be carried through the judgments which will descend on the apostates amongst themselves and the nations, to inherit the millennial earth, like Noah and his sons—the postdiluvian world. But all through the ark, Christ dead and risen, in whom they have found refuge. But the faith of the Christian now, warned of the coming judgment, finds refuge in Christ, by which he condemns the world; for why flee to Christ, if the world is right? Only he waits for the heavenly glory, like Enoch, and not to be saved through the final judgments that are coming on the earth, like Noah.

Thus the first four examples of faith are all connected with the testimonies of God as to creation, redemption, heavenly glory, and judgment. You may see they give us the examples of the fundamental points with which faith is connected. We now come to the life of the Christian in detail, and the manner in which faith displays itself, either as connected with patience waiting for the promise, or energy overcoming difficulties, or suffering in the sure hope of the promise being fulfilled.

What characterised Abraham's faith (ver. 8) was

this :—first, on the bare promise of God of giving him a better country, and blessing to himself, he left home, father and mother, and all, to go into the country that God told him of (see Gen. xi. end, xii. 1-3). He had only the bare promise of God to rest upon, but he obeyed, not knowing whither he went. Secondly, when he got into the land, he found he was a stranger there, but he waited in patience, trusting in the promise of God, dwelling in a tent—a proof of his strangership, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; looking forward to a city which had foundations, whose Builder and Maker was God. Whether this city was the heavenly New Jerusalem spoken of in Revelation xxi., or the earthly city of Ezekiel xl.-xlviii., is little matter. Faith in the bare promise of God of a better country made him leave all at first; faith in the faithfulness of God as to the fulfilment of the promise, made him content to be a stranger when he got into the land, looking for the future enjoyment of it by the sure promise of God. Yes, and blessed be God, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will sit down with many others who lived as pilgrims and strangers here below in the kingdom of God, whilst many who have had more outward privileges shall go into outer darkness—there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth (Luke xiii. 28, 29).

But, for the fulfilment of the promise, Sarah must have a son, and here her faith is brought in as an example (ver. 11, 12). Delivered from her unbelief (Gen. xvi.) in anticipating God's time, who had promised Abram an heir (Gen. xv.), she receives strength to conceive, and is delivered of a child, when past age (Gen. xxi.), because she judged Him faithful that had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven for multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and

embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Now if I am in a strange country, and confess that I am a stranger there, I declare plainly that I seek a country; so with these men; and if they had been mindful of the country which they had left, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly. God had promised it to them. He must be faithful; and because they own this, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city. Here then we have the patience of faith set before these Hebrew Christians. Like Abraham, they had left everything for a heavenly Christ, and an inheritance laid up in heaven for them (comp. 1 Pet. i. 4), but they had not yet come into possession; they were called to wait in patience, like Abraham, for the fulfilment of God's promise, and they would surely get it on the Lord's return (chap. x. 32-37), being, in the meantime, strangers and pilgrims here below.

But Abraham's faith was still further tried. God told him (Gen. xxii.) to offer up as a sacrifice the heir of the promises—Isaac, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called (Gen. xxi. 12). He was the only heir; if he was killed, the promises were gone. But faith rose above this; it said, God can raise the heir from the dead; and so, in figure, he was received back as from the dead. So with Christ, the true Heir. With His death all the promises seemed gone; but, blessed be God, He was raised from the dead, and now all the promises are made good, on the righteous foundation of death and resurrection. Yes, blessed be God, faith can trust God under all circumstances, however dark things may appear; and even should death stare you in the very face to prevent the fulfilment of God's promises, there is the God of resurrection to come in who must be faithful to His word.

Ver. 20.—Isaac's faith (Gen. xxvii. 33) recalled the

promise of God (Gen. xxv. 23). He had grievously failed through natural love coming in, but when he had found that, notwithstanding all, the younger son had been blessed, he evidently recalled to mind what God had said before the birth of the two sons, and said, Yea, and he shall be blessed. He discerned between the choice of God in election, and nature's claims (comp. Rom. ix.).

Ver. 21.—By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff (Gen. xlviii.). He thus announced the double portion of the heir of Israel, the one whom his brethren had rejected; himself having nothing but his staff, but, in view of the promise, he worships. His staff was the mark of his pilgrim character.

Ver. 22.—By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones (Gen. l. 24, 25). Thus faith can trust God for the fulfilment of His promises still future, and can patiently wait in the present for their fulfilment.

In Moses' history we see the energy of faith, surmounting all kinds of difficulties in its road. We would think that Joseph's saying would be handed down to every Israelitish household, and in the faith of it every godly soul would look for a promised Deliverer to be raised up, to take Israel back to their land. Moses' parents evidently rested on this, when they hid Moses for three months, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment (Ex. i., ii.).

Ver. 24.—By faith likewise Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He knew that, as a son of the despised Israelites, he had a higher destiny; he knew likewise that that despised people under bondage were the people of God who had the promises; and he chose rather to suffer affliction with them than to

enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It was this made him visit his brethren (Ex. ii. 11-15), seeking to deliver them by carnal means, but the spring of his actions was faith, and this was what was owned. Egypt's riches, stores, and position, were forsaken to identify himself with the poor despised people of God, but really rich, for God was their God. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Ver. 27.—The same faith in Jehovah who had revealed Himself to him (Exodus iii., iv.) and His promises, made him forsake Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. If Jehovah was the Deliverer, he could well endure the wrath of a man. Faith saw Him who was invisible.

Ver. 28.—But Israel was a guilty people, like the Egyptians, and deserving judgment. By faith, therefore, he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest judgment should descend on Israel's first-born, as on the Egyptians'. The lamb must be slain, the blood must be sprinkled on the door-posts of the houses, and the roasted lamb eaten inside, under the shelter of the blood, because he discerned Jehovah's claims (Ex. xii.).

Ver. 29.—By faith Israel trusted Jehovah as a Deliverer, and so passed through the Red Sea, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned. If Jehovah's claims were met by the blood of the lamb, he could act now for them, and with them, to break the power of the enemy. Pharaoh's Red Sea might seem to shut them in, but Jehovah was for them, and a way clean through was opened to them. And so it is with us. The blood of Christ having satisfied the demands of the Judge, God can act righteously for us, and bring us clean out of the world through that very death which, without Christ, was the very instrument of the enemy's power. Faith makes it good in our souls, and we stand in spirit in a risen Christ, as

Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, singing the song of salvation (Ex. xiv., xv.).

And now by faith the promised land was entered, and high before them the walls of Jericho stood ; but seven priests blowing the rams' horns, and marching round the city seven days, according to Jehovah's command, were sufficient to make the walls tumble down flat (Joshua vi.). Jehovah had said, I have given you the city, and that was enough for Joshua and his hosts.

Ver. 31.—By faith likewise the harlot Rahab perished not with the unbelievers, when she had received the spies with peace. She believed in the God of Israel, she knew He had given them the land, she therefore hid the spies, and upon their word hung the scarlet line upon her window, and brought all her family into her house, and was saved (see Joshua ii., vi. 22-25).

Then there was Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephtha ; David also, and Samuel, and the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, going through all kinds of suffering and torture, in view of the promise. And these all, having received 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.

In many of these last examples we have the sufferings of faith ; and we are called to go through them all in the certainty of obtaining the promises ; otherwise, Paul says (1 Cor. xv.), " If there is no resurrection, we are of all men most miserable. Why do I fight with beasts at Ephesus, if the dead rise not ? " At the same time, ours is a better portion than any Old Testament saint's. God has reserved it for us, and their spirits are resting in paradise till God has called out the heavenly Bride of Christ. However blessed a path Abraham's was, he was never united to the glorified Man in heaven, Christ not being there

in that character. Nor was He there as Priest, nor had Abraham access into the holiest through a rent veil. Though all Old Testament saints have a part in the heavenly calling, yet without us they cannot be perfected. We have a higher portion, as the body and Bride of Christ, rejected by this world; and this is the better thing, which, however, is not developed in this Epistle.

CHAPTER XII.

Exhortations now follow. The saints being encompassed with this cloud of witnesses are exhorted to lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset them; looking unto Jesus, who began at the beginning, and walked right through to the end of this same path of faith. He was the chief Leader in this path, and it was all summed up in Him. We must remember the position in which Christians are looked at in this Epistle. Christ had taken a new place in heaven, having been rejected of the Jewish nation, who had put Him to death. The Hebrew remnant, by faith in Him dead and risen, and by the communication of His risen life to them, had been associated with Him in this new place. They were holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling (chap. ii. end, iii. 1). Now Christ was their heavenly Leader—leading them on to the heavenly glory. They were to live the life of faith on Him, “Looking unto Jesus;” at the same time laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset them. They were running a race. Everything that hindered their getting on to the heavenly glory was a weight. Sin would strive to entangle their feet. All that belonged to the flesh therefore, and which pampered it, was to be laid aside as what hindered; the heavenly glory was the goal, the heavenly Christ the present object of faith, His path the example. He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. The joy of seeing again His Father's face; the joy of the heavenly glory; the joy of receiving the many sons to glory; the joy of receiving the kingdom, and all the fruits of His work, nerved Him to go forward. He endured the hatred of the world, the forsaking of His own, the wrath of God on account of sin, the betrayal of Judas, all on account of this; and, oh, what love to us! Surely we can say,

“Our Jesus hath done all things well!”

The Hebrews were suffering from the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and were in danger of giving way; they had not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. But this the blessed Lord did, giving up His life unto death in obedience to His Father's will. They were to consider Him then who did this, lest they should be weary and faint in their minds.

Then through this failure, this love of ease, there was danger of their settling down; consequently, the Father's rod had to be laid upon them in chastisement. The eye being off Jesus, they were now fainting under this; and apparently beginning to doubt whether after all they were the sons of God. First fainting under the opposition, then fainting under the chastisement which was necessary for their restoration. And is not this all over the history of Christendom?—shrinking from persecution, seeking a home down here, settling down in a religion of ordinances, with the eye off Jesus, and then chastisement having come on the children of God in consequence, they still further depart, and doubt their relationship with the Father.

Surely these Hebrew Christians had forgotten the exhortation which spoke to them *as children*: “My son, despise not 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” (Prov. iii. 11). Enduring chastisement was the very proof that God was dealing with them as

with sons, for what son is he whom the father does not chasten? If then they were without chastisement whereof all are partakers, they were bastards, not sons, He would have them then, instead of fainting, endure the chastening; subjecting themselves to the Father of spirits and live, taking an example from the way earthly parents deal with their children. They, indeed, often did it for their own pleasure, but the Father for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. These governmental dealings of a Father had an object, viz., to separate these Hebrew Christians from everything that did not partake of the Father's holiness. Grace had saved them for the heavenly glory; government was in exercise that they might become partakers of the Father's holy character. True these dealings were not pleasant. It was not pleasant to be sick; to have a child taken away because we make it an idol; to have our property stolen because we lay up treasure in this world; to lose our enjoyment of the Father's love because we mix up with a Judaized church: nevertheless, afterwards it would yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that were exercised thereby.

Therefore, seeing these things were so, that chastisements were the very marks of sonship, with the object of making the sons partakers of the Father's holiness, they were to lift up the hands that hung down, and the feeble knees, and to make straight paths for their feet, lest that which was lame should be turned out of the way, instead of being healed. He exhorts them to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man should see the Lord. Above all, taking heed lest any should fall from the Grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up should trouble them, and so many be defiled; lest there should be any fornicator, or profane person, like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; for they knew how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found

no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

We see here how that the moment Christians lose the sense in any measure of their standing in *grace*, they are in danger of falling into sin. Roots of bitterness come in, even fornication, and profaneness, though we must remember that the whole profession of Christianity is taken into account. We are not come to Mount Sinai, the Apostle says, but to Mount Zion. At the former God gave the *law*; at the latter, God established the King of his own choice, after the people had utterly failed in their responsibility, and Ichabod had been written on the priesthood. Therefore it is a picture of God's sovereign *grace* to the earth, of which Israel was to be the centre. At Mount Sinai, God tested the people to show them what they were, guilty and lost. At Mount Zion Jehovah rested. "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I delight therein" (Psalm cxxxii. 14: comp. with Ex. xix., xx.).

The Apostle then says, Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, &c., but ye are come unto Mount Zion, to the full millennial blessing. As the passage in our Bibles has not the right punctuation, I divide the subjects properly. The little word *and* divides each subject. First, there is Mount Zion, the picture of God's establishment of His King of Grace in Jerusalem; secondly, God's heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem, where He and the Lamb shall dwell, the centre of His government of heaven and earth (see Rev. xxi. 10-27); thirdly, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of these holy spirits; fourthly, the Church of God, here called the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; fifthly, to God the Judge of all in heaven and earth; sixthly, to the spirits of just men made perfect—the Old Testament saints; seventhly, to Jesus the Mediator of the new

covenant of grace to Israel ; eighthly, to the blood of sprinkling, which no longer speaks of vengeance to the earth but of blessing. There is the whole millennial blessing, which believers have come to in spirit now. Here the better thing reserved for us is brought out,—the Church of God having a distinct place in the heavenly glory,—whereas we see also the spirits of the just men made perfect, at the same time. They have a portion in the heavenly glory, but they have not a place in the Church of God (comp. chap. xi. 40).

But if this was the Hebrew Christians' portion, why cling to Judaism and the law, which could only tell of judgment? Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, was in heaven. The God of *grace* was speaking through Him, not from the fiery mount on earth, but from the heavenly glory. What they were to take heed of doing was turning away from *grace* speaking to them from heaven. His voice then shook the earth, but now He was not only going to shake the earth, but heaven (Haggai ii. 6); but only in view that those things that could not be shaken might remain. Thus we have to do with a Father dealing in government, but founded on eternal counsels of grace. We have a part in the kingdom that cannot be moved ; yet dwelling in a scene that is fading away, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire, burning up what cannot stand His holy eye ; that only those things that abide—that is, the new creation—might remain. Blessed be God, our portion is in this. Eternal grace has set us there. The great sin now is not holding fast the grace of God, and when this comes in, there must be the governmental dealings of God (for the flesh then is in action), to drive us back to our refuge. All things here below are to be burnt up (comp. 2 Peter iii.), the heavens also ; our part is in the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, established on the principle of God's eternal counsels of grace,

working through Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. To this we are to cling, in this is our portion.

CHAPTER XIII.

finishes the Epistle; it is principally filled with exhortations founded on the Hebrew Christians' position. Brotherly love, founded on their place as brethren, members of the Father's family, was to continue. This is not the highest place we have, still the highest place given in this Epistle. They were not to be forgetful to entertain strangers, seeing some had entertained—as Lot and Abraham—angels unawares. Prisoners in bonds were to be remembered, as bound with them; those also in adversity, the Hebrew Christians themselves being in the body. We are apt to forget this sometimes, if we have good health. Marriage was honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God would judge.

Their general behaviour was to be without covetousness, being content with such things as they had, for He had said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," so that we can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me." Oh, the many troubles Christians would save themselves from if they only carried out this rule, having faith in the promise! There would be no grasping after things which they have not the power to get without running into debt, if this were so. What is the secret of more than half these efforts?—COVETOUSNESS. A man lusts for something not his own, and which he has no power to get but by running into debt, using unlawful means to do it. He is not content with what he has. He takes himself out, as it were, of the Father's care, and therefore loses the enjoyment of the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." God never leaves His people, as we see in the case of Jacob, the poor wanderer, as an example; but He lets them learn the bitterness of

their own self-will, if they take their affairs out of His hands. May God heal His people from this festering sore, which is eating out the very life of His assemblies; and fast hastening on the Church to judgment.

The Christians were to remember those who had the rule over them—their leaders, who had spoken to them the word of God; following their faith, considering their conversation; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Yesterday, as the Eternal Son who had become a man to accomplish redemption; to-day, as sitting at the right hand of God and calling out His heavenly people their heavenly Captain and High Priest; for ever, as the Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec coming again to bless them and for eternity. They might die, He was the same for ever. Everything outside Him were divers and strange doctrines. Christ was all, and in all! Saviour, Priest, Leader, Head; they were complete in Him. Meats and drinks and ordinances, with which the Jews were occupied, were not Him, nor grace, and they never profited any one.

Christianity had an altar also of which *they* had no right to eat who served the tabernacle, any more than the Jew had right to eat of the bodies of those beasts whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin: they were burnt outside the camp (see Lev. iv. 1-21; vi. 30; viii. 14-17). But this was a type of Christ, He was cast out of Jerusalem—the camp—that He might separate the people with His own blood; and bring them inside the veil. The altar, then, of Christianity was set up outside Judaism. This being so, the Apostle would have the Hebrew Christians separate from the earthly priesthood, the earthly sanctuary, the earthly covenant, indeed everything of Judaism, to a Christ crucified, cast outside the camp, bearing His reproach. This was their altar. Here they had no continuing city, for Jerusalem, having put Christ outside, must be handed over to judgment, but we seek that which is to come.

But Christ not only died outside Jerusalem, and Judaism, but He rose again, and went up on high; they were, then, by Him to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of their lips, giving praise to His name; being separated, as worshippers, to a heavenly Christ. Let us recapitulate some of His glories: He was Son of God, Son of man, their heavenly Leader, leading them to the heavenly glory (chap. i., ii., iii.); their heavenly High Priest, to sympathise with them, and intercede for them whilst passing through the wilderness, Who was also going to return to bless them (chap. vii., viii.); their heavenly Centre of worship, ministering to them in a heavenly sanctuary, presenting their praises to God; the Mediator, too, of a better covenant, established on better promises than the old one (chap. viii.), and sealed by the blood of Christ, which on the one hand gave them a full title to the very presence of God, and on the other hand purged their conscience from every taint of sin (chap. ix., x.). The Hebrew Christians must now decide between one system or the other. God had long been bearing with the Jewish nation, but now, having rejected the Messiah, and resisted the Holy Ghost, the mass was handed over to judgment, and the Hebrew remnant, separated from the mass of the Jewish nation to a heavenly Christ, was now really the only hope of the Jewish nation (comp. Rom. xi.). God was now calling out a heavenly people; they were to be the exhibitors of His grace and goodness and blessing to a poor world. To do good, therefore, communicating to the wants of others, they were not to forget, for with such sacrifices God was well pleased. Practical separation to a Christ rejected of the world and received up into glory, worship through Him of God, and doing good to others, were the three chief marks that the Apostle would have on these believers.

Now, my dear reader, I pray you consider these

things. I feel God by His Son speaks to us solemnly from this Epistle. In this day, when Christendom is fast apostatizing from the truth, real Christians should have their eyes wide open, and this Epistle becomes of more and more importance to them. On the one side, there was the system of Judaism, which God here calls the camp; on the other side there was Christianity. In the one there was the earthly priesthood, the earthly sanctuary, the law ministered,—the many sacrifices which could not take away sins; on the other side a heavenly Priest, a heavenly sanctuary, the ministry of grace, and the perfect efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. The Apostle insists on an entire break with this earthly system that had crucified the Lord (chap. xiii. 10-14), and a separation to these. And yet, with all this staring Christians in the face, we find an earthly set-apart clergy raised up again, like the Jewish priesthood, without whom the assembly cannot draw near to God for worship. These men minister in gorgeous earthly sanctuaries, which are called the house of God, in defiance of what Stephen says (Acts vii. 48), often offering many sacrifices on a table which they call the altar, and so setting aside the perfect value of the one sacrifice of Christ. The law is also preached there instead of Christ. I know there are modifications of all this in the various sects, but I ask every sober-minded reader to consider whether the law, the set-apart clergyman, and the earthly house of God, does not constitute largely the religion of Christendom, instead of Christ, the heavenly sanctuary, and the covenant of grace.

What is sanctification in the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is separation from the one to the other. It is separation from the earthly to the heavenly, of which Christ is the Centre. It is no longer Messiah on earth accomplishing the promises made to the fathers, and setting up a glorious earthly kingdom, but the same Person, rejected of Judaism, and crowned with glory and honour, in heaven. A heavenly people are

called out, sanctified by His blood from Judaism and associated with Him in glory as His brethren, and going in company with Him and the Holy Ghost to the heavenly glory. Christ truly is coming again to make good the promises made to the Jewish nation, upon repentance ; but at present He is rejected, and our place is now to be outside the camp with Him. As pilgrims and strangers in this world, we are called to follow Him through the wilderness ; and as heavenly worshippers, we are called to gather round Him in the holy place. The world is a wilderness ; the holiest of all (heaven), our sanctuary ; God's rest, our hope. May God open the eyes of many by this Epistle to see their right position, as separate from everything that pertains to Judaism in the professing Church.

Obedience to their leaders was also to characterize these Hebrew Christians. These leaders watched for their souls as those that must give account. Such men, raised up by God Himself in the assemblies, are of the highest value, and the saints should seek that such should be manifested. If so, they were to submit themselves to such. This is not a rule in the flesh like Saul, but a rule in conjunction with Him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter ii. end).

In the sense of this responsibility, which he himself largely felt, he asks the saints to pray for him : he was able to tell them that he trusted he had a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. If we, as labourers, lack these things, we cannot claim the prayers of the saints of God. He prays them also the rather to do this, in order that he might be restored to them the sooner.

In ver. 20, 21, he commends them to the God of Peace : his anxiety for them, their own restlessness and instability, would well commend such a title to them. He brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. What is more peaceful-looking than a flock lying down in green pastures,

under the eye of a kind, powerful shepherd? Here the "God of Peace" is joined to the "Great Shepherd." Under the eye of Him who had gained the victory over death and the whole power of the enemy, the flock ought to lie down free from anxiety and care. What could be more calculated to calm the fears of these poor trembling Hebrew Christians? What can be a more blessed picture for the poor, distracted, divided Christians of Christendom, with the eye off the Shepherd and the God of Peace, and occupied with the law and ordinances, biting and devouring one another? Oh, believers, for shame! Hush your murmurs, your bickerings, your fightings. Behold the God of Peace raising the great Shepherd of the flock, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and gathering His poor, scattered, silly sheep round His own Centre! Fix your eye on that heavenly Shepherd, who displayed His goodness once in laying down His life for the sheep (John x.), who is now the great Shepherd in the glory gathering and tending the flock, and is soon coming again to give His rewards to the faithful carers of His flock (1 Peter v.): and may the God of Peace perfect you 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.

The Apostle prays the brethren to suffer this word of exhortation, for he had written to them a letter in a few words. He gives them to know that Timothy had been set at liberty; with whom, if he came shortly, he would see them.

Salutations to those who had the rule over them, and the saints, and conveyance of the salutations of those in Italy, finish the Epistle. Let only Grace be with them all. Blessed be God, it is an Epistle of grace. May the reader profit by it! Amen.

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