

# Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews

*Revised from Notes of Readings*

BY F. W. GRANT

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## NOTES ON

# The EPISTLE to the HEBREWS

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**T**HE epistle is anonymous, and the authorship has been much disputed ; not its canonicity, which never really was. Peter's mention of an epistle of Paul to the circumcision, which he classes among the "other Scriptures," seems sufficiently decisive that the author of it was Paul; spite of which modern commentators generally waver between Apollos and Barnabas. Tertullian in the third century ascribed it to the latter ; none except moderns have ascribed it to the former. Their claim is mainly founded upon its style, the constant quotations from the Septuagint, and an approach in some things to Philo the Alexandrian. A sufficient answer to this is that the Alexandrian church ascribed it to Paul, and not to their countryman Apollos.

But its *doctrinal* relation to Paul has never been doubted ; and it finds its place among his epistles in such a way as would leave a serious gap in them if it were taken away. Paul's epistles in fact, though fourteen in number, form (according to their subjects) a double pentateuch : a first series which develop, characteristically, Christian position before God, and its consequences, *viz.*:

1. Romans.
2. Galatians.
3. Ephesians.
4. Colossians (with Philemon, as a supplement).
5. Philippians.

In the second series are those which develop collective relationship to God :—

1. As His family : Thessalonians.
2. As a fellowship : Corinthians.
3. As worshipers : Hebrews.
4. As walking in the house of God : Timothy.
5. As followers of the truth which is according to godliness : Titus.

Without going further into this now, it will be seen that Hebrews is the Leviticus of this second pentateuch, filling its place in it. It clearly belongs to Paul's epistles, which are themselves, as a whole, the Leviticus of the New Testament as aiming to bring the soul near to God in Christ. or as he states it, " to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus " (Col. 1: 28). Hebrews, by its place among these, exhibits this character in an intensified form. Ephesians, the corresponding epistle in the first series, puts us in the full Christian place—" seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus " ; Hebrews, on the other hand, develops the living activities which belong to the heavenly places, the sphere of service of Christians as the priestly house of God.

Let us seek now to get a nearer and fuller view.

Christianity is characterized for us largely by two things implied for us in the rent veil. God dwells no more in the " thick darkness : " He is " in the light." He is able to come out to man; man is able to go in to Him. In Christ God *has* come out to man ; in Christ man *is* gone in to God. The Gospel of John shows us eminently the first of these ; the epistles of Paul develop the second.

God coming out means more than a theophany. The Son of God in manhood (never to be laid down again) is

the "outshining of His glory." He has not only spoken, but *lived, loved, suffered*, and *died* amongst us, and gone back again—not simply by His personal title, but in the power of such a sacrifice, by which those in whose behalf it has been offered find a "new and living way" into the presence of God. Both things—the coming out and the going in—are found in Hebrews, as they are found also in the beginning of John's first epistle. John and Paul connect with one another—each emphasizing the truth differently, yet each looking along the track of divine glory and recognizing each other's object. Thus Paul here bids us "consider" both "the *Apostle* and the High Priest of our confession"; though he *emphasizes* the High Priest. The full revelation of Christianity is that which is given by the Son, in contrast with all fragmentary communications by the prophets, which had preceded it.

But Christ has effected also by Himself a purification of sins, and thereupon taken His seat at the right hand of God. A necessary and glorious consequence is that He has now "companions," "fellows," "partakers" with Him—yea, those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. These are the "children given" to Him, the "many sons," whom as the First-born, the Kinsman-Redeemer, He as the "Originator of" their "salvation" is "bringing to glory." They are the "sanctified," the "house of God," over whom He as Son is—Son over sons, "Great Priest" over a priestly house to whom He gives entrance into the innermost sanctuary.

Thus there is sharpest contrast between the law with its successional priesthood of sinful and thus mortal men, worshiping afar off—with sacrifices whose constant repetitions proclaimed their inefficacy—and the grace of Christ which by one perfect offering purges the conscience

to serve in His presence the living God. The carnal ordinances of Judaism, mere shadows of the true, have now therefore passed away irrevocably for the Christian. Christ is the glorious Reality, the abiding Priest of a heavenly Sanctuary into which faith freely enters, to find the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

Decision was absolutely to be made now between the shadows and the reality. The weaning-time which God had permitted the Jewish believers, and of which the Acts gives the history, was now at an end. They were called absolutely to leave the camp, the glory of God having for the third time forsaken it; the issue of all that He had done for them being the crucifixion of the Son of God, sent to them in fullest grace, at the predicted time and in the marked-out way.

Thus, as to man, all was over; but, in that which proved it, God had found a way in which He could manifest Himself to the wonder and joy and worship of eternity, and open heaven to those who had hopelessly lost earth. The blood of the sin-offering, burned outside the camp, was that which went inside the veil into the presence of God. The true Sin-offering, bringing all other offerings to an end, has rent the veil and made the permanent way of entrance into the glory of God; and the natural man, even in the highest place of privilege—the camp—is judged, and entrance into glory with God is unveiled.

The epistle has five divisions, which have, as all true divisions in Scripture have, numerical significance.

The first (chaps. 1—2: 4) shows us Christ, the Son of God in manhood—thus the First-born—in His uniqueness and supremacy as the Apostle of our confession; and now enthroned, having laid the foundation of peace. He

is thus supreme above angels through whom the law was given.

The second (chaps. 2: 5—4: 13) shows us Christ in His humiliation to death for His "brethren," become the Originator of salvation for them, annulling the devil's power, and delivering those subject to bondage. He is here far beyond both Moses and Joshua.

The third division (chap. 4: 14—10)—much larger than the others, as giving the main theme of the book—shows us Christ as Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, the way into which He has opened by His accomplished sacrifice. He is here in contrast with both the priests and sacrifices of the law.

The fourth (chap. 11) puts before us, in examples, carefully classified for our instruction, the walk, trial, and experience of faith. The object of the apostle is to show that, if the glorious realities of which he has been speaking are invisible, *faith* laid hold of the invisible by which all those that ever pleased God obtained a good report.

The fifth and last division (chaps. 12 and 13) closes with admonition as to the responsibilities involved in all this: first, of the need of steadfast continuance in their good confession; and secondly, of the need of separation from the Jewish system, which could now be held to only in the rejection of that to which it pointed, and which alone had made it valuable at any time.

## DIVISION I (chaps. 1—2: 4).

The first division, then, speaks of Christ as the Apostle of our confession, in contrast with the prophets of old with their fragmentary and various communications ; as Son of God in the world, and in such sort as to be Heir of all things, of which also He was the Creator ; the Outshining of the divine glory, the exact Image of the divine reality. Sustaining all things by the utterance of His power, He has now by Himself effected the purification of sins, and taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This is the first section, which, in four verses only, carries us at once into the heart of the book. In the second (to the end of the first chapter) the apostle confirms his statement as to Christ by seven quotations from the Old Testament, which show the Name which He thus inherits—a complete settlement of every question that a Jew could ask as to the pre-eminence of Messiah above angels. They might urge that in the giving of the law the angels had been ministrants (Deut. 33: 2; Ps. 68: 17; Acts 7: 53), but to which of the angels did the glory of such a name belong?

The first quotation (from the second psalm) gives the foundation : “Thou art my Son : to-day have I begotten Thee,” are the words of Jehovah to the King of Zion, who claims, upon the warrant of this, the earth as His inheritance. But the powers of earth are combined against Him, and they are warned of wrath to come upon those who do not take refuge in Him in the days of His long-suffering.

Thoroughly does this suit the Christ of Christians, even to the accounting for what was so perplexing to an Israel-



ite (the delay of Israel's blessing) when Messiah was now come. But the point emphasized by the quotation is His being true Son of God in nature, the begotten of Jehovah, though in manhood, and so Heir of all. This is the birthright portion of the "First-born," as in the third quotation He is called, and this prepares us to hear of the "brethren," among whom He is the First-born. Plainly, no angel has a name like this.

The apostle strengthens this by a second quotation, which applied indeed first of all to Solomon, but only typically to him. Even as Builder of God's house, the true Son of David was not Solomon, but a Greater, whose house and kingdom would be both eternal; and we shall find Christ as the Builder further on in Hebrews (chap. 3: 3). But the point for the present is, "I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to Me a Son." These relations shall be on both sides all that they imply.

The third quotation is very full for the apostle's purpose. Here is the First-born brought again into the world. Whatever the force of the "again," it is plainly the appearing of Christ in glory that is referred to; and then all the angels of God are bidden to worship Him.

The fourth quotation shows that these are indeed but creatures of God's hand, made and fashioned by Him for His will. While the fifth, in contrast, shows us God and man united in Him: true God with an eternal throne; and yet true Man, in righteous recompense anointed by God with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Here Emmanuel is found in the full significance of His Name: in Person and by His work joining God and man together.

The sixth quotation (Ps. 102: 25-27), in the application of it by the apostle here, throws a flood of light upon, not that psalm only, but the whole fourth book of the Psalms in which it has a central place. Not only it is a

Man, but a suffering, dying Man, who is owned of God to be the Maker of heaven and earth : these limited and changing, but not He, who gives them their limit, and who, though He seem to be at the limit of His days, is Master here as elsewhere. In fact, it is in the Cross that He manifests Himself most truly, gloriously, Master of all, and evil itself receives its limit from Him and owns Him Lord.

One quotation more completes this series : He rests after His work accomplished, awaiting the action of God to make His foes His footstool, but Himself sitting at the right hand of God.

For those who have learned the significance of numbers, and the part they have in Scripture as in nature, as showing the mind of God impressed on every part, it will be easy to see that the series here is significant in this way, every text in its place, and the whole a seven-fold witness to the Lord in accordance with the doctrine in this epistle.

We have now as the third section of this first division (chap. 2: 1-4), the proclamation of these glad tidings : first, as begun to be spoken by the Lord Himself ; secondly, confirmed by those that heard Him ; thirdly, the witness of God with these in signs and wonders and distributors of the Holy Spirit according to His will.

## DIVISION II (chaps. 2: 5—4: 13).

In the second division of the epistle we have the way in which the Lord becomes the Kinsman-Redeemer, the "Originator of salvation" for His brethren. There are four sections ; the last being supplementary in character, on the necessity of faith—one of the frequent exhortations which we have in Hebrews.

*Section 1* (chap. 2: 5-9). The first section shows us Christ as the Man destined to be set over the world to come, though as yet not seen with all things put under Him as such, but crowned with glory and honor. But it is the "world," or "habitable [earth] to come" to which the apostle, with the psalmist, is looking on. Angels are not set over it, but the Son of Man is; and He is the representative Man for God—not the first man, but the Second. The first man is fallen and the race with him, so that not merely on account of his insignificance as seen under those starry heavens, but much more because of the ruin into which sin has plunged him, the question must be asked, How can God remember or visit such an one? The answer is found in seeing Christ, and in Him God's delight in man is abundantly justified. No angel could take the place of the Son of Man for God, though "made a little lower than the angels," but as One come down in grace here for the suffering of death, because death is the expression of the condition in which man is. The first man got under it through disobedience: the Second Man tasted it in approbation of God's perfect ways in holy government; thus "by the grace of God" toward us, for grace is now free to act, and "on behalf of every thing:" i. e., for the ransom of all creation (I think), wherever sin had blighted it. The first man stood for the whole scene with which he was connected; the

Second Man in the same way, but as Redeemer and Restorer.

The "habitable earth to come" is the sphere of the first man, but in the hands of the Second : it is earth, not heaven, and only takes in part of the scene in chap. 12 ; as, for instance, Zion, but not the New Jerusalem. The eighth psalm may give hints of a wider dominion, but its plain speech does not go beyond the earth.

*Section II* (chap. 2: 10-18). The second section brings us to the heart of the second division. Here we find the Lord's work as Saviour dwelt upon.

And a Saviour from sin must be a sufferer: power alone cannot suffice : there are necessities of the divine nature which condition the forthputting of divine power. So here "*it became* Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things"—to whom in their origin and end all things look—"in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain (the Leader or Originator) of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The moral conditions required a penalty. Divine holiness must be vindicated at personal cost, but divine love is bent upon bringing sons to glory. There could be no perfecting of His blessed *Person* ; but there *must* be the required conditions for becoming a *Saviour*.

Now the Kinsman comes into view. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them 'brethren.'" Here, surely, is the "Firstborn among many brethren," and all the connection assures us that "of One" or "out of One" means "of one Father." Yet there is an infinite difference ; so that indeed it is divine love in Him which makes Him recognize and welcome "brethren" like these. He is the *divine* Son ; they are

only human. He is the Sanctifier ; they are the sanctified ; yet He is not ashamed of them ; by and by He will conform them to His likeness, that they may be the fit companions of His heart forever.

But this is again so new and strange-seeming, that the apostle must produce Old Testament Scriptures for it. He has three : the first from the 22d psalm. As soon as sin-offering is accomplished and the Sufferer is heard from the " horns of the aurochs," He is heard, saying, " I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren : in the midst of the assembly will I praise Thee." The Gospel of John gives us the fulfilment of this. The other quotations are side by side in Isaiah (8: 17, 18)—the prophet personating, after the manner of the Psalms, the One to come. " I will put my trust in Him " is from the Septuagint, where in our common version it is, " I will look for Him." In either way it is the expression of that trust in God which in Christ was absolute, and which made Him " the Leader and Finisher of faith "—the One who in His own person was the perfect example of it. This in a practical way made the family of faith His " brethren."

This third quotation is different in its expression of the same truth : indeed it looks, at first, as if it were *not* the same. " Behold, I and the children that God has given Me " seems to refer to the relation of father and children, as in the prophet's case it did. It most certainly refers to Christ as the Last Adam, and supplies here a most important link in the chain of evidence. For it is as this that He is the Representative Head of those for whom He laid down His life. The first Adam was, by the human life which he communicated to his descendants, a real " first-born among brethren ; " and Christ is the same among those to whom as " Life-giving Spirit " He communicates *divine* life.

We are here very near indeed to the Gospel of John, and are listening to the Voice which said, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." But for this the "Corn of Wheat must fall into the ground and die that it may bring forth fruit." The passage here goes back even of this, to His taking flesh to die ; and "since the children have a common share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part in the same, that through death He might annul him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—and deliver those who all their lifetime through fear of death were subject to bondage."

This is not the putting away of sins, but it supposes it. The shadow of death is dispelled by the Light of Life descending into it. As again the Lord says, in John, of the effect of His coming as the Resurrection and the Life: "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"—that as to the past—"and he that liveth and believeth on Me *shall never die.*" Death *was*, in the past: "He has abolished" it for faith, "and brought life and incorruption to light by the gospel" (2 Tim. 1: 10).

"For He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold: therefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

All this is in language which an Israelite would well understand ; but the "seed of Abraham," "the people," are to be seen in the light of Christianity as the company of faith. If Israel nationally answered to this description, then, of course, they could claim as such the old promises ; but the epistle is in fact a "word of exhortation" as to leaving the camp, because of Christ's rejection.

tion by them, and those to whom it is written are immediately addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," which Israel's was not. The "people" and "the seed of Abraham" must be understood, therefore, in the light of this.

The day of atonement is, of course, contemplated, in which the sins of Israel were put upon the head of the scape-goat and taken away. It belonged to the series of feasts of the seventh month which in contrast with the series in the early part of the year (Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Sheaf of First-fruits and Pentecost), are all *national*, and speak of the fulfilment of the promises to the nation in God's due time. Thus in the feast of trumpets at the beginning of the seventh month, the new moon (when the light of divine favor is beginning to shine again on Israel), we have the voice of recall to the people ; on the tenth day, the day of atonement, they come under the value of the work of Christ ; while, beginning with the fifteenth, the feast of tabernacles exhibits them in the joy of their re-establishment in the land. The first series of feasts they lost through their refusal of Christ when He came ; and in the prescient wisdom of God we find the Passover to have been a family feast—the "thou shalt be saved, and thy house," proclaimed in Christianity. The feast of Unleavened Bread took form from the Passover which it accompanied ; and the Sheaf of First-fruits (Christ risen) and Pentecost, are characteristically Christian. Israel's unbelief has delayed the blessing for them.

This explains in the simplest way that mystery of the two goats on the day of atonement, of which much else has been made. For Israel, in consequence of their rejection of the blessing when it was offered, the putting

away of sins (as in the scape-goat) is separated by a gap of time from *the work which actually puts them away*. This is exactly what is pictured in the two goats. When their sins are put upon the scape-goat there is no actual sacrifice, no *real atonement* made at all. The goat is a *scape-goat*, a goat that gets away, not one that is offered. There is positively *no* offering of *this* goat, a thing of which, through not understanding it, much mischief has been made. Atonement is not made *with* it, as in our common version, but "*for it*" (Lev. 16: 10), as *kapper al* elsewhere is constantly and rightly taken to mean. (See Exod. 29: 36 ; 30: 10, 15, 16 ; Lev. 1: 4 ; 4: 20, 26, 31, 35, etc.) To the difficulty, How can propitiation be made, or why does it need to be made *for* the goat ? the answer, is, It is needed because the *two* goats are for a sin-offering (Lev. 16: 5), while in fact only *one* is offered. The "Lord's lot" falls on the one to be offered; the other escapes : the atonement, which ideally he was to make, is in fact made for him by the former one.

The application is simple in view of Israel's history. The first goat is offered and its blood carried into the holiest of all when the high priest enters it. Not till he comes out again are Israel's sins put upon the scape-goat and carried away. The time between our High Priest's going in and coming out of the sanctuary extends through the whole Christian period. The atonement—all of it—was made once for all, before Christ as High Priest entered the heavens ; when Israel's sins are put away, He will have come out again. But then, of course, no fresh sacrifice can be offered. The scape-goat points simply to a former time when the atonement was actually made ; and the two goats are necessary to preserve the connection ; it points out the delay of blessing which the national unbelief occasions.



Another thing, however, must not be overlooked. When the high priest goes in, he takes into the sanctuary not merely the blood of the goat for Israel, but that of the bullock for his own priestly house. Here, assuredly, Christians have their typical representatives. They are as Peter says, "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2: 5) ; and here we find the "sanctified ones," the "companions of Christ" ("partakers"—chap. 2 : 14), for whom the great High Priest offers.

Notice that on the day of atonement the high priest does the whole work. None of the priestly family appear at all, except as remembered in the offering made for them. This has been spoken of by some as exceptional, to throw doubt upon the offering of sacrifice as distinctly *priestly* work. It is said that being so exceptional, we must not argue for its necessity; and even the fact that the high priest entered the holiest, not in his garments of glory and beauty, but in a plain white linen garment, is urged on the same side. We shall have to inquire as to this elsewhere rather than here ; but it is enough here to say that the words will not admit of such a thought as this. He must "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." How could one insist more upon the distinct priestly character of making propitiation, than by saying He was High Priest *to do it* ?

The day of atonement was exceptional in this, that it was by eminence the "day of atonement ;" and therefore all that belongs to this is *emphasized in a special way*. So it is that the ordinary priests disappear. They were but a practical necessity because of the multitude of sacrifices ; but the "priest that is anointed" is the high priest alone, and on this special day of atonement one figure alone is before our eyes. However, all this will be plainer as we proceed.

“The people” for whom our High Priest atones are, of course, wider than Christians, or the priestly house. They are all the *true* “seed of Abraham,” that is, the whole family of faith. And this definition is precise, and wide enough to bid all men welcome to participate in the value of the atonement. The “propitiation for the whole world” of which John speaks (1 John 2: 2) easily accords with “a propitiation, *through faith*, by His blood” (Rom. 3: 25, R. V.), because faith is that to which all men are invited. Let a man believe, then he finds an absolutely efficacious atonement according to divine knowledge of his need and grace to meet it, and the worshiper once purged has no more conscience of sins.

In the last verse of this section, we have the sympathy of the great High Priest with us guaranteed by His human experience: “In that He has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor those that are tempted.” But temptation to Him was *suffering*, and only that.

*Section III* (chap. 3: 1-6). The third section of the second division carries us from the scene of His humiliation to that of His glory. He is over the house of God as the Son of God; His being Son of God is the foundation of His Priesthood, and that is the direct connection here; we are still in the line of the day of atonement, although as ever the substance goes beyond the shadow. The high priest in Israel, with well-known restrictions *was* over the house of God; and in the tenth chapter we have a confirmation of this expressed: “Having a Great Priest over the house of God” (10: 21). This makes it evident that the comparison with Moses which is made here is not the sole one; and to take it as such hinders a clear conception of what is here. Moses is the “apostle,” as Aaron the high priest; and we are exhorted to “con-

sider " both " the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." Moses and Aaron appear together thus often in the history as a double type of the Lord ; and as Moses was (*in a sense*) the builder of the Tabernacle, so having built it, he put it in charge of Aaron.

The house in which Moses was faithful as a servant was then only a " figure of the true " over which Christ is. It was a figure, as is intimated and as is easily recognized, of the universe, the " all things " which " God built." Moses was, even in " the pattern and shadow of heavenly things," merely a servant carrying out instructions. How infinite therefore the contrast between such an one and Christ the actual Builder of all that the Tabernacle figured, the Creator of the universe ! This is in its full largeness the habitation of God ; but, having built it, Christ does not put it in charge of another, but Himself takes charge as " Son over it."

We pass from Moses, then, here, as is plain; but have we reached Aaron? Not yet; but we see beautifully how Aaron is reached. If the Son be thus in supreme charge over the universe of God, and if sin come in as a breach upon its glorious order, it will not make Him renounce His office, but it will display the more His competence for it. In view of sin, the Son becomes the Priest, Mediator and Reconciler; and the moment it is added, as in the passage before us, " Whose house are *we*," Aaron is before us ; the *Priest* is in charge now, if *we* are His house.

The board-structure of the Tabernacle, is the typical explanation of how the redeemed come in here ; and wonderful it is to realize the connection of this with the larger aspect of the Tabernacle which we have been called to remember, as the pattern of the universe at large. Here, at the heart of it, we find a " spiritual house " of sinners redeemed and sanctified by the blood of the Lamb. Be-

ing the fruit of a mightier work than creation itself, we can understand how this should be the very Sanctuary of God—the display of His holiness, of His grace and His manifold wisdom, as nowhere else. Here the glorious principalities and powers of heaven find the sweetest theme of praise.

The *priestly* “house” cannot be excluded from the wider thought of the Universe as God’s house: the “house” is a living house, nay, human; and thus not display alone, but living activities abide in it. That the “Holy One” would “*inhabit the praises of Israel*” is the Lord’s own answer in the twenty-second psalm to the question of the Cross; and the connection with the day of atonement is as obvious; for the main purpose of it is that the dwelling of the Lord in the midst may be continued among them. Here we are in direct connection with all this, though beyond it, as the substance is beyond the shadow. The house is a spiritual house, and the praises are those of a people brought near to Him, a *priestly* house. For these the largest offering of the day of atonement is offered, and for us the High Priest is One who could not offer for *Himself*: thus it is the priestly house *alone* for which the bullock is offered.

It is not strange, then, that they should appear here: it would be strange, rather, if they did *not* appear. Peter thus joins together what might seem at first sight too diverse to be so identified—“a spiritual *house*, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2: 5). “Whose house are we,” as certainly shows the Son over the house to be now the “great *Priest* over the house of *God*,” so does it identify also the Tabernacle with the priestly worshipers. The “if we hold fast” can be best looked at in connection with the fourth section which it introduces.

*Section IV* (chaps. 3: 7—4: 13). This fourth section is of a very different character. It is the shadow following the light ; and in Hebrews we find how the brightest lights can cast the deepest shadows. Yet we may be sure that here, as everywhere in the word of God, we shall find instruction of fullest profit to us.

As a fourth section it reminds us of that wilderness through which the Lord led Israel of old into their rest, and that for us, too, there is a wilderness, a scene of trial, through which we are called to pass on to the rest which, for us also, still lies beyond. We are called, therefore, to persevere—to hold on our way—to “hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.” This, in fact, is the test of the reality of things with us : “Whose house are we, if we hold fast:” continuance is the proof of divine work.

There are four subsections. The first (chap. 3: 7-13) insists upon the spirit of obedience as a condition of blessing. Grace does not alter this : it produces in us such a spirit, and faith is the very principle of fruitfulness, working as it does by love.

The exhortation to God's people of old abides for us as much as for them, “To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” All truth speaks with authority which those that are true recognize; and the more precious the truth is, the sadder the consequences of its practical refusal. To trifle with any truth is perilous, and hardening of heart is the necessary result. How many there are with a conscience locally paralyzed (if one may say so) through refusal of that in which the voice of God was once recognized—perhaps in refusing to listen to that in which it fears God might be speaking ! For it is a wrong thought that responsibility only comes with the conviction that God has spoken : there is ac-

countability easily detected by the question, "Were you willing, truly willing, to have Him speak?" What hearts we have to which such a question should ever need to be put! How sad, above all, that unbelief should in believers produce such a disregard of the One Supreme Voice like which there is no other!

There is no need, for our present purpose, of discussing the "ifs" which come in, in all such warnings as that we are considering. They are the testing of profession, under which the true and the false alike come necessarily; they are needed to distinguish between them; and God uses them to exercise His own also: for we have in us the flesh still, and therefore those tendencies to departure from God, which make His constant grace absolutely needful. But, as has been often said, they are not warnings against *too much faith*, or too simple faith, but the reverse, and to persevere in joyful confidence to the end. All through this epistle (where the substance which is replacing the shadows is yet invisible) *faith* is the great necessity. It is as much emphasized for the *life*, as it is in the Roman and Galatian epistles as the ground of our acceptance.

And this is what is dwelt upon in the second subsection here (chaps. 3: 14—4: 2), in which the Word is seen as needing to be mixed with faith—unbelief being the very root and principle of disobedience. And if we are become the "companions of Christ" (not "partakers," which would give another thought from what is intended, but what in the first chapter is translated "fellows"), He is the complete example of faith, from first to last; we must hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm to the end. Difficulties are supposed, for how could faith show itself if there were none? Difficulties are no hindrance to faith, but the reverse: they are the con-

ditions of its manifestation, and a means of its exercise, and so actually of its growth.

Those whose "carcasses fell in the wilderness" are not types of believers in any sense, but of those who fail of final entrance into the rest of God: for that is what Canaan here typifies, as is obvious. It is important to distinguish between this *final* entrance and that under Joshua which was not *final*, and is the type of our *present* entrance into our heavenly portion by faith. Joshua is not typically a continuation of Numbers or Deuteronomy, but parallel with these. It is *while* we are in the wilderness that we may enter by faith into our heavenly inheritance: the experience of the wilderness and the laying hold of the inheritance in this way go together; the searching of the land by the spies (Num. 13) answers, though but partially, to this, while Deuteronomy ends typically our whole earthly history, with that review of the whole wilderness course which is only fulfilled for us at the judgment-seat of Christ. Joshua added to the books of Moses would make them a "Hexateuch," as the higher critics would have it, but this they are not. Joshua is, in fact, a new beginning, the Genesis of a new Pentateuch—the historical books. We must have God's truth in God's order, or we shall not find it even God's truth.

The third subsection (chap. 4: 3-10) shows us what the actual *rest* is. It is we who have believed who enter—not *have* entered. From the nature of it, as described presently, no one could enter into it in this life. We are *going on* to it; God has been always speaking of it and keeping it before men from the beginning. God rested on the seventh day from all His works, but man violated that rest, which remains for us only as a shadow of what is yet to come. David's words also, in the psalm quoted,

long after Joshua's day, show that Israel's coming into the land was still not rest. Still there remains a true sabbath-keeping for the people of God—a rest which will be God's rest also, or what good could be in it?—a rest too in which they who enter it cease from all the labor which sin has imposed. Such a rest has not yet come for us.

In the fourth subsection (chap. 4: 11-13) the apostle exhorts all, therefore, to use diligence to enter into that rest before us, and again brings forward as a warning Israel's unbelief in the wilderness. Good tidings had come to them of the land to which God was bringing them, but they lacked faith to lay hold of them. The word only exposed the unbelief which goes too surely with a rebellious spirit: though good, it brought out but evil; thus it is characteristic of the word of God to search us out and make manifest to us what we are. If we submit ourselves to this searching, how great will be the blessing in it! It will bathe us in the very light of God, and thus purge from our eyes the film that hinders perception. "For the word of God is living and operative, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there a creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with whom we have to do."

Thus the word of God acts with His power. The aroused conscience brings everything before God for judgment: the mists roll off as before the sun; and if the light shine, as when at God's bidding it first broke out of the darkness upon the yeasty waves of a shoreless and barren sea, still we approve the word which says, "God saw the light that it was good." The beginning of com-



munion with God, whatever may be the matter of it, is the reception of the truth.

“Soul and spirit,” as thus named together, can only be the two parts of the immaterial nature of man, which Scripture clearly distinguishes from one another. The soul is the lower, sensitive, instinctive, emotional part, which, where not (as in man) penetrated with the light of the spirit, is simply animal. The spirit is intelligent and moral, that which knows human things (1 Cor. 2 : 11). In the “*natural* man” (which is really the “*psychic*” or soul-led man, 1 Cor. 2: 14), conscience’s recognition of God is in abeyance, and the mind itself is earthly. Important it is, therefore, to divide between soul and spirit.

“Joints and marrow” convey to us the difference between the external and internal, the outward form and the essence hidden in it. Not that the form is unimportant ; everything in nature forbids such a thought ; but its beauty and effectiveness depend upon its appropriateness to the idea which rules in it.

Thus the word of God is, in the highest sense, the book of science. The highest and deepest knowledge is in it—and that of things naturally inaccessible to man; while everything also is in right relation and proportion, nothing overbalanced. It has indeed none of the pedantry or technicality in which science is apt to shroud its wisdom, but a sweet homely simplicity and familiarity of greeting, welcoming all comers to it, which deceives the would-be wise who cannot understand how God’s light should shine for babe and for philosopher, and God’s learning have so little savor of the schools.

## DIVISION III (chaps. 4: 14—10).

We now come to the third division of the book, which is at once the largest and most characteristic of it. In it we have Christ in the heavens, and the sanctuary opened for us by His priestly work: but again we have, as introduction to it, first, the Priest Himself as called, qualified, perfected by suffering, and then in His resurrection place, Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and so upon the throne. That is the first subdivision (chaps. 4: 14—7). The second, more briefly, speaks of the better covenant and more excellent ministry that this implies (chap. 8). The third occupies the next two chapters.

*Subdivision I* (chaps. 4: 14—7)

We have first, then, the Priest Himself—three chapters; of which more than one, however, is an interruption to the argument, made necessary by the slowness of heart to accept the setting aside of the Levitical priesthood, and all that which was involved in this. No doubt, the apostle uses this parenthesis—which is quite after the Pauline manner—to speak of other things very necessary to his theme; but we are made to feel the intensity of Jewish opposition by the difficulty of speaking out here what is in his mind, vital as it is to Christianity itself. It seems probable to be of this (at least, especially) that Peter speaks, when praising the wisdom of the epistle to the Hebrews, he yet says that in it are “some things hard to be understood.” Paul fully agrees with him; and therefore the earnestness and energy of his language.

*Section I* (chaps. 4: 14—5: 10). The first section, then, identifies for us the true Priest with God. And there are three subsections here, the first of which introduces us to

two fundamental conceptions in what follows : "A great High Priest who is passed through the heavens" and a "throne of grace." I take the latter as characterizing this subsection (vers. 14-16).

"A throne of grace" is now to Christians a happy and familiar thought. It is only here, however, that we have precisely this expression, although we have the thought in Romans: "*Grace reigns* through righteousness unto eternal life" (chap. 5: 21). The blood upon the mercy-seat before God, put there by the high priest once a year when on the day of atonement he entered the holiest, was the typical rendering of such a thought. The mercy-seat was the throne of Jehovah in Israel, where He dwelt between the cherubim. Literally, it was the *kapporeth*, the "propitiatory," where the blood made propitiation for the soul; the blood of atonement meeting divine righteousness, vindicated God's grace in abiding among the people in spite of their sins.

All that was typical, merely—a shadow, and nothing more. For us the true sacrifice has been made, the High Priest has passed through the heavens (the antitype of those holy places), and the throne of God is abidingly a throne of grace, to which we are but giving honor when we "come boldly" to it for our need.

But this implies for us the veil rent ; for the throne of grace is in the holiest of all, and the rending of the veil is what has made for us a "new and living way" of approach there. The verses before us are therefore a real introduction to that which follows.

It is the *sympathy* of the High Priest which we are here encouraged to reckon on; and this is in connection with His being over the house of God. It reminds us of the words of the Lord in teaching us the consequences of His departure out of the world unto the Father : "If ye

shall ask anything in my Name, *I* will do it " (John 14: 14). How great an encouragement to know that upon the throne of God there is One who can be " touched by the feeling of our infirmities," and was " in all things tempted like as we are, sin apart."

Sin was *to Him* no temptation: there was nothing within that answered to it ; it only caused suffering. There was and could be with Him no sinful infirmity; but He was true Man, His divine nature taking nothing from the verity of His manhood ; living a dependant life as we, with no callousness such as the flesh in us produces, in a world racked with the results of sin, the trial of which He knew as no other could. In the garden He faced the awful cup with an agony that required angelic ministry to strengthen Him physically to sustain it. What a world it was for the Son of God to pass through ! Has He forgotten it, or is He altered by being out of it and on the throne ? No; the very throne is characterized now as the throne of the Lamb, and for eternity will be—" the throne of God and of the Lamb." How well furnished for us now as a throne of grace !

The second subsection here (chap. 5: 1-4) is a statement simply as to the high priest in Israel. It is important to keep it distinct as that. How far it applies to Christ we find as we go on ; but in every type there is an element of *dissimilarity* as there is of resemblance, because it is a type. How could there be in Israel a high priest who never offered for himself ? It would have falsified everything. And so with the veil : how could it have been rent under the legal system ? These exceptional contrasts have a purpose, therefore; they do not in the least hinder a careful, spiritual mind from finding Christianity in Leviticus. Of course, it needs that we should have learned Christianity first from the New Test-

ament ; we should not go to Leviticus as a Jew would, and expect to find the unveiling of the truth of Christ. Moses has always a veil over the glory in his face; but the veil for us is done away in Christ.

The third subsection (chap. 5: 5-10) gives us the fulfilment in Christ. Vers. 5, 6 give His calling, in which we find the foundation of His priesthood; then (vers. 7, 8), His suffering, even to death, and His deliverance out of it ; and lastly, (vers. 9, 10), His greeting by God in resurrection as the Royal Priest (Melchizedek).

First, we have the call—the Priest must be called of God : as was Aaron, so was Christ. Moving only in obedience, He who had come only to do the will of God in the already marked-out way, glorified not Himself to be made High Priest, but received His call distinctly to that office. God's recognition of the Son in manhood is quoted in this connection, "Thou art my Son : to-day have I begotten Thee." The same form of citation is used in the seventh chapter, ver. 21 : "But He with an oath, by Him that said unto Him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever." The quotation is again from the second psalm, which puts it in connection with His claim as Heir to the sovereignty of the nations ; for God's Priest and King are one, and the two offices are founded upon the same personal qualification. Godhead and Manhood united in Him constitute Him the true Mediator between God and men. We have seen Him taking flesh and blood for this purpose, that He might be the First-born among many brethren; and as the First-born is the Heir, so has He the right of redemption. Thus He is Priest and King by the same title.

Now if we look at the Gospels, there can be no doubt where His call to the priesthood occurs. It is after His baptism by John that the Lord is first openly recognized

as the Son of God by the Father's voice from heaven, and the Spirit of God coming upon Him makes Him now in full reality the "Christ"—the anointed. It answers to the first anointing of Aaron alone, without blood (Lev. 8: 12). John then recognizes Him as Son of God, and as the sacrificial Lamb (John 1: 29, 34); for this blessed Priest is one with His offering: "He offered up Himself."

This, then, is our Lord's call to the Priesthood; the apostle confirms the fact by a more direct quotation, the force of which he takes up later, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Immediately now we are called to see Him in the white linen robe of the day of atonement. Here, then, though Son of God, He had to learn the reality of that obedience which He had voluntarily undertaken. So intense is it that even He makes supplication with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him—not "from" death, which was impossible, but—*out* of death. That prayer was heard in resurrection; but notice what the answer was based upon: "He was heard for His piety," as in the margin of the common version, or "for His godly fear," as in the revised. Here is the white linen garment with which alone the sanctuary could be entered.

The priest is characterized first of all as the one able to draw near to God. And the first question involved is, Is he such as can really draw near? is he personally and entirely fitted to draw near to God? That is the question as to the priest. Nothing but the white linen garment will do here. Then, Is it a perfect, unblemished offering? That is the question as to the sacrifice.

This is what the burnt-offering most strongly enforces. The offering is flayed and rigidly inspected; then the fire brings out for God nothing but sweet savor. It is what

Christ is, as no other offering—certainly not the sin-offering—develops it. And thus day and night that sweet savor goes up to God.

Here it is the priest ; and it shows us why the garments of glory and beauty are not yet upon him. Not because he is not High Priest, but because atonement is in question; while the garments of glory and beauty show the acceptance of the work. Here he is being “perfected,” and while *personally* nothing could perfect Christ, we have already seen that as “Originator of *salvation*” there *must* be perfecting.

Thus, then, we see Him here. He is in the awful depths from which no other could have emerged—where He alone *could* stand ; and being perfected by bearing the load which was upon Him, “He became to those that obey Him the author of eternal salvation, saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.”

Notice that it is not exactly “called,” as before : it is “saluted.” The Priest has accomplished the fundamental work of His priesthood, and is hailed and acknowledged as having done so. The linen garments are now exchanged for the garments of glory and beauty, His priesthood *now* assuming the Melchizedek character. But we shall have with the apostle to break off here, and take this up more fully in the seventh chapter.

*Section II* (chaps. 5: 11—6). The second section is, as has been said already, a parenthesis. It is to meet the unbelief of the Jews upon a matter vital to Christianity, and affecting the whole system of Judaism in replacing the Levitical by the Melchizedek priesthood. Even for Jewish Christians these things were hard sayings ; and, it may be, had caused the defection from the faith to which the apostle presently refers. The two parts of his

address to them here, however, are very different : the first part only is warning ; the second is pure encouragement. In the gracious ways of God, these two things are never far separated. He is the " God of all encouragement," and all warnings are but, in effect, to draw us from every false ground of hope, that we may find in Him the fulness of unfailing blessing.

The first subsection (chaps. 5: 11—6: 8) characterizes Judaism from its divine side, all the more to show its essentially introductory nature to the full light of truth which was to follow. It was " the word of the beginning of Christ "—very wrongly rendered in the text of both the common and the revised versions, as first " principles of the doctrine of Christ " or " first principles of Christ," which assuredly we are never called to " leave." Judaism was only suited to a state of nonage, now passed, and which they must leave to go on to the " perfection " or " maturity " of Christianity.

The Hebrew Christians were in fact not going on. For the time they had been learning, they ought to have been able to teach others ; but instead of that they still needed themselves to be taught, and taught the very elements. They still needed milk, rather than solid food suited for people accustomed to exercise in spiritual things, and thus educated to discern between good and evil. How much of right knowledge lies for us in this kind of discernment! " The man is become as one of us, to discern good and evil." To innocence we cannot go back ; and though we have got into our present condition by a fall from God, He in grace would turn it into blessing. The world, such as it is, is a place well fitted to produce and cultivate such moral discernment. If it does not this, however, it dulls and hardens the soul ; and as the word of God is that which God would use to form us after His mind, the not



going on with it shows this dullness of soul; and light, neglected or refused, becomes darkness.

Judaism in some form has continually been used by the enemy to oppose and corrupt Christianity, and in fact has largely done so. That it is a religion given of God, and therefore owned by Him at one time, is pleaded in its behalf by those who have never understood, or cared to understand, its true nature. The law which God took up, because it was already in man's heart, to show him the folly and impracticability of it, man pleads as *God's* revelation. They ask, "Did not Christ say, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments?' " But we only need to be true to realize our inability to meet the requirements; we are only bidden to put up our ladder to reach heaven with, that we may realize how far above us are the stars.

So when He gave "carnal ordinances," with plenty of signs to show their incapacity, and that they were only fingers pointing on to that which was to come, men always found opportunity to say, These are the very things themselves. And this is the enormous evil of ritualism in all its forms to-day, that it takes these Jewish forms to clothe them with the Christian realities to which they only pointed, and make that which only "sanctified to the purifying of the *flesh*" (as in the case of baptismal water), to cleanse the soul, which water never does.

Thus the word of God itself is abused to seal up men in delusion, and they say, See how Scripture may mislead. But Scripture is given "that the *man of God* may be perfect, thoroughly furnished," and gives no security to any other.

The "word of the beginning of Christ" is given us in the six doctrines stated, which lead on to Christianity; if they were the *Christian* "foundation," it would be a

Christianity without Christ. The apostle says, "not laying *again* a foundation," because he has in view Jews who had accepted the Christian one, and who, if they went back to Judaism would be turning back to what they had given up. There is nothing in this which is distinctively Christian. It is not a question as to the truth of what is stated, but of its being the Christian foundation. Two things come first, which are in fact, fundamental—"repentance from dead works, and faith in *God*," not the Lord Jesus. Two doctrines come last, which concern the future, "resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment"—not "resurrection from the dead," which is Christian truth. Between these two pairs, we have what may be more questioned, but comes to the heart of the matter as characterizing Judaism—"a teaching of baptisms and laying on of hands," which has been claimed as Christian baptism and confirmation (!) or baptism and ordination, almost equally strange associates as a foundation. The truth is of nearer connection with the subject before us than such things would imply.

In the first place, it is not "baptism" but "baptisms," and the baptism of the Spirit would surely not be associated with the baptism of water in such a manner. Moreover Christian baptism is always *baptisma*, while this is *baptismos*, a difference of form which is no doubt connected with the application in each case. *Baptismos* is the word used for the Jewish purifications, as plainly in the case of the "divers baptisms" (not "washings") in the ninth chapter of this very epistle (ver. 10). These are really what is referred to—or mainly referred to here, though we must anticipate somewhat the doctrine of that chapter to make this plain.

The great failure in Judaism, as the apostle shows there, was its failure to really purify the conscience, so as

to set the soul at rest in the presence of God. In the tabernacle of old, he says, "were offered both gifts and sacrifices, which could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the *conscience*." Why? Because they consisted only in "meats and drinks, and divers baptisms," or purifications, "carnal ordinances"—that is, ordinances which could not in their very nature affect the condition of the soul.

He contrasts them then with that which *does* purify: "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer purifying the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh"—here are the *divers* baptisms (of blood or of ashes), ordinances of flesh, purifying only the flesh—"how much rather shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The sacrificial baptisms were an important part of the Jewish service, and in connection with these the "laying on of hands" was that which identified the offerer with the victim, his sacrifice. The two things (the baptisms and laying on of hands) go thus together as fundamental points for consciences wounded by the law. In this way a "teaching" (not "doctrine") "of baptisms" is significant. The point is that what was taught was rather a ritual than a doctrine, and the conscience was not purged. Clearly, it is of Judaism the apostle speaks as "the word of the beginning of Christ."

He goes on now to show the terrible condition of those who went back to this Jewish system, out of the light and blessing of Christianity. It was vain for them to think that they could replace themselves where the saints of old had been. Judaism had passed away for God; and those who went back there would find that they had left the

only ground of peace and salvation. It would be even impossible to renew again to repentance those who, once enlightened, had tasted of the heavenly gift, been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and turned away from it all. In the Israelitish cities of refuge those who had slain another without intending murder might take refuge from the avenger of blood ; and Christ' Himself was the true city of refuge for those who had been partakers in the common guilt of the nation. For such He Himself had pleaded at the cross, " Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do ; " and Peter, by the Holy Ghost had, in view of that ignorance, preached repentance to them. But those who now went back open-eyed, among His rejectors, could no longer plead this. They were crucifying *for themselves* the Son of God afresh, and there was no city of refuge to open its doors to such.

The warning here has been a sore perplexity to many who are as far as possible from the condition which is here contemplated. The description of these apostates, solemn as it is, does not speak of them as children of God, as justified by faith, or in any way which would imply such things as these. And the apostle after describing them, immediately adds as to those whom he is addressing, " But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, *even things that accompany salvation*, though we thus speak." This is the most distinct assurance that he had no thought of one who *had* known salvation incurring the doom of an apostate. What he says of them is, first of all, that they had been enlightened—that they could plead ignorance no longer. Secondly, they had " tasted "—but one may *taste* and, after all, refuse. Thirdly, they had been made " partakers "—and the

word does not mean necessarily more than external participation ; it is the word “ companions ” which we have had before—“ partakers, companions of the Holy Ghost.” They had been brought into that in which the Spirit of God bore witness to Christ and the fruit of His work. The “ powers of the age to come ” are miracles, the mighty works by which the consequences of sin and the destructive power of Satan will be banished from the earth in the millennial reign.

But all this goodness of God had been to them like rain which had brought from the ground of their heart only thorns and briars, as worthless and nigh to cursing. Christ having been rejected, God’s last and best gift had been in vain.

The apostle goes on, however, now to comfort and encourage those he is addressing (chap. 6: 9-20). In them he has seen better things—love to Christ’s name, proved practically and continuously in ministrations to His saints. God would not be unrighteous in forgetting these fruits of His grace. Far from discouraging them, he would have them give diligence so that hope might be in full assurance with them, imitating those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.

Abraham, the father of all them that believe, the one in whom faith as the way of blessing has been openly inaugurated and proclaimed, naturally becomes here a most instructive example. He had to have patience—saw little fulfilment on earth of that which God had promised ; for not elsewhere than in God Himself does faith find its true strength and support. Here God gave all that could be desired—not His word merely, but His oath : precious and wonderful condescension to human weakness—God will give as ample security as we exact from one another! While faith must *be* faith, and there-

fore only in God, yet how tender is He ! How well may we trust Him !

Our hope however has security of another kind than verbal. It is anchored within the veil, in heaven itself, into which our Forerunner has entered, Jesus, made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. There we return to the great theme of the epistle.

*Section III* (chap. 7). We have now before us the subject of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ and there are questions connected with it which require, I believe, more consideration than they have yet obtained. What exactly does this priesthood mean ? Is the whole matter for us that Christ is a priest after that order ? Is He not acting as yet in that character, and is such action purely millennial, and therefore having respect only to Israel and the earth ? This is how most among us understand it, no doubt ; but does Scripture require or warrant this ? And what is the practical value of it for us ? We must take up carefully the chapter before us before we can answer such questions ; but let us keep them in mind all through.

Whatever we may understand as to Melchizedek, it is certain that the section here, in accordance with its numerical place, shows the Priest in the sanctuary : that is, with His propitiation-work accomplished, and in possession of the place resulting from it, " great Priest over the house of God."

There are three subsections here. The first (vers. 1-10) dwells upon Melchizedek himself as presented in the book of Genesis, made typically like the Son of God, having an indissoluble priesthood in the power of an endless life; not only thus higher in character than that of Levi, but its primacy owned, as it were, by Levi himself.

The second subsection (vers. 11-19) shows, as a consequence of Christ being priest of this order, the setting aside of the law.

The third subsection (vers. 20-28) shows us therefore the Priest of Christianity, perfected for ever and made higher than the heavens, in possession of a place to which the Levitical priesthood could lay no possible claim.

The first subsection cites and comments upon the brief story of Melchizedek in that wonderful way which has been to many of us such a revelation of the perfection of the inspiration of Scripture, and such an unfolding of the typical history of the Old Testament. The apostle interprets for us both the speech and the silence of the narrative, the names and the order of the names. Every jot and tittle must be taken into account : and it is surely very much from disregard of this that we fail to get clear and assured knowledge of what Scripture contains. We credit it with idle words, and thus dishonor the Spirit who has given the Word, and we lose the "deep things of God" which the Spirit searches. Let Melchizedek teach us this truth, that no jot or tittle of the Word shall pass away unfulfilled, and let us act as if we believed it.

*First*, his name is Melchizedek, *i. e.*, "King of righteousness," *then* "King of Salem," *i. e.*, "King of Peace:" that is always a principle in the divine ways. In the millennium righteousness must first have its way for peace to be brought in ; and, as the prophet says, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32: 17). This is of course as true for the present as for the future, and fulfilled in the gospel in a far more wondrous way. As the effect of righteousness by the Cross peace has come to us, and our Melchizedek has indeed made good His name.

Next, he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy." So he is presented in the history, alone, without record of any preceding or indeed following him; again, "without beginning of days or end of life," thus "*made like* unto the Son of God"—not actually like Him, but "*made like*;" the type perfectly preserved from any contradiction or anything irrelevant, that we might have the picture of a non-successional, unending priesthood, such as that of the Lord Jesus is, who is also King and Priest in one Person. And so it was prophesied of Him: "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of his place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and He shall be a Priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6: 12, 13).

This is doubtless millennial, and yet very like the line of things which the apostle has been pursuing here, even to the building of the house of God. But here all is higher: here the "house" is the universe, the Throne upon which He sits is the throne of God (chap. 8: 1). He has not yet taken His own throne as Son of Man (Rev. 3: 21), but is on the Father's; and we are "in the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1: 13). Thus He is already King as He is Priest, in both characters as Son of God. His is a priestly rule over the house of God.

If we look back to the book of Genesis, we shall find the life of Abraham, fourth in a series of seven lives which give us the perfect picture of the divine life in man, from the time of its beginning in repentance and faith in Adam, until in Joseph we see the image of Christ fully formed. Following Noah, who is brought through the judgment of the old world into a new scene which



abides in the value of accepted sacrifice, Abraham gives us the practical life of faith which is the result of being in Christ a new creation. By his very call to Canaan, he is a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth. His life divides into two distinct parts; in the first of which (chap. 11: 10-14) we have the call of God and his obedience to it; while in the second (chaps. 15: 21—21) we have the conflicts of faith. Thus the whole—as indeed Genesis as a whole—is an elaborate and perfect type in which most certainly the *Christian* life is set before us—not that Israel is forgotten, for God is dealing with her in a love that cannot forget her, but this only makes more distinct what is our own in the book. Thus Abraham's own call to Canaan, the heavenly country, and his walking in it by faith and a pilgrim, is not and cannot be a type of Israel. And again, in his sons Isaac and Ishmael, Isaac is distinctively the type of the "children of the freewoman."

Now it is in the end of the first part of Abraham's history that the type of Melchizedek appears. It is to Abram the *Hebrew* (*i. e.*, "pilgrim") returning from his conflict with the kings of the East, a Babylonish confederacy, that at the king's dale Melchizedek brings forth the "bread and wine," which speak to us so plainly of our Royal Priest's provision for us, with the *memorial* of a sacrifice which has been offered once for all. True, God is not yet *manifested* as Most High, and men and Satan seem to be joint-possessors of the earth, rather than God. But in the picture here there is also a King of Sodom from whom Abraham refuses to be enriched. Faith, in Abraham, counts God to be "Possessor of heaven and earth;" and faith *now* receives just such ministry from the true Melchizedek, and owns God as Possessor where most He seems to be displaced. How the "bread and wine" help to assure us of that!

Every detail in all this story suits *us* admirably, and we may be confident that our Melchizedek exists for us to-day : not One who *shall be* that in the millennium. though then He will be recognized openly as such; and Sodom will get, not faith's refusal merely but, the judgment of God. Meanwhile we have this ministry of bread and wine, and One with us who blesses us from the Most High God, and who, on our part, blesses the Most High God : " In the midst of the assembly will *I* sing praise unto Thee."

The apostle goes on to prove from the history, brief as it is, the superiority of Melchizedek to Levi. " He was in the loins of his father (Abraham) when Melchizedek met him " ; and in Abraham Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek. Thus the whole Levitical priesthood owned its inferiority, and Melchizedek, as one greater than Abraham, blessed him who had the promises. But this leads us on to consequences of far greater importance.

In the second subsection, therefore (vers. 11-19), the apostle goes on to argue the setting aside of the law itself by the change of the priesthood. It was incontestable that, according to the psalm, a Priest was to arise according to this higher type—a " Priest after the order of Melchizedek," and not of Aaron. We have but to consider a moment to realize how complete a change as to the law this involved. As we see in the day of atonement, all the relation of Israel to God hung upon the priesthood. The blood put upon the mercy-seat by the high priest year by year alone enabled God to dwell in their midst ; and this could only be done by one of the family of Aaron : the law contemplated no other. Yet Christ had sprung out of Judah, and the law said nothing of priesthood in connection with that tribe. But again, why was it necessary thus to define the succession?

Plainly, because it had to do with mortal men who could not continue in the office by reason of death. Thus it was a law of fleshly commandment. He having come, who lives eternally, sets aside the law necessarily by the very "power of an indissoluble life."

All is manifestly upon a higher plane, outside the law. There is a setting aside of the commandment going before, and that because of its weakness and unprofitableness. It perfected nothing: there was under it only a priesthood of dying men, with animal sacrifices unable really to atone, and a closed sanctuary into which timidly the high priest entered once a year, and immediately withdrew—this was plain, but is to be developed presently, in contrast with what is now made good to us in Christ. Now there is the "bringing in of a better hope, by which we do (as they did not) draw nigh to God." This introduces us to what is to be the theme of after-consideration.

The apostle now in this third subsection (vers. 20-28) exhibits, in contrast with the priests of a fleshly and earthly system, the true and heavenly Priest to whom as types they pointed. God had announced with an oath His unrepenting purpose as to Him. As a Priest forever, He is surety of a better covenant than the legal, conditional one, and, in contrast with dying men, abides eternally to care for and bring through to heaven those who draw near to God by Him—always living to intercede for them. We see how different is this view from that in Romans, where position in Christ is contemplated, and also from that in the Gospel of John, we living because He lives (John 14: 19). Here it is the living activity of the Priest to which we are entrusted, as having all power with God; this salvation to the uttermost being to that full final rest, which has been dwelt upon already in the epistle.

Finally, the character of our High Priest is briefly dwelt upon: such an one as "became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and become higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; for this He did once when He offered up Himself: for the law maketh men high priests who have infirmity, but the word of the oath which was since the law maketh the Son, perfected for evermore."

This shows how far the Lord as Antitype transcends the type. The Jewish high priest was but a sinner among sinners: Christ in absolute holiness is One separate from sinners, and yet the apostle can say, "such an One becomes us." For the blood of Christ as before God has perfected in perpetuity those who are sanctified by it, and the "worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins" (chap. 10: 2, 14).

Thus it is not as sinners that Christ as High Priest intercedes for us with God, but as the many sons whom He is bringing to glory: the High Priest is for infirmity, not sin; but "if any one sin, we have an *Advocate with the Father*" (1 John 2: 1). Christ is both Priest and Advocate: but the question of sin is settled for us as toward God; while between the child and the Father it may need frequent settlement.

### *Subdivision II* (chap. 8).

The discussions of what has gone before are now summed up: Our Lord has a better ministry than that of the earthly priesthood, founded as it is upon a better covenant. The first six verses emphasize the fact that it is of the *true* tabernacle He is minister. The last seven verses speak of the change of covenant.

We must remember that it is the *Priest in the Sanc-*

*tuary* the apostle is now showing us—a Priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. In the Lord's case we must separate widely (as with the mere human high priest one could not) between the ministry outside and the ministry inside the tabernacle. The one ceased for Him before the other was entered upon. Yet He was the High Priest when He offered up Himself, and He was High Priest when He passed through the heavens (chap. 4: 14). Upon this there should be no need to insist; yet verse 4 has been interpreted to mean the opposite—that the Lord was *not* Priest upon earth—and other statements of Scripture have been discredited to uphold a mistaken interpretation. The apostle does not say that, *when* Christ was upon earth, He *was not* a priest, but that, "If then indeed He were upon earth, He would not even be a priest." Plainly he is speaking of One *not* on earth, nor is he looking back to the time when He was there. He is speaking of Christ as the glorified High Priest, "the Minister of the true tabernacle," and the reason he gives is conclusive as to this. *Why* would He not even be a priest on earth? Because, he answers, "*There* are those who offer gifts *according to the law*:" the law defined its priests as of the family of Aaron, and Christ has no place in the line of that succession. But that has nothing to do with the Lord's work on earth, as is evident. It is a totally different thing from saying that when Christ offered Himself He was not a priest.

The law, of which the apostle has been speaking, does not govern in relation to the "*new covenant*." It but defined the terms of the old; and the fact of a "*new covenant*" being promised showed that God was not satisfied with the old. Nay, the prophet himself, speaking in Jehovah's name, contrasts the two. The new

covenant, even though contemplating Israel and Judah, is expressly "*not* according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them up out of the land of Egypt." Thus, though the heavenly portion of Christianity is not in it, yet on the other hand God's grace *is*—and all of grace. All is absolute promise of what *God* will do and be. He will give them a spirit of true obedience, writing His laws upon their minds and hearts, and thus He will be their God and they shall be His people. Nor will this be a partial blessing, leaving still the need of personal appeal from brother to brother to know the Lord; for all shall consciously know Him—the small and the great. And in that day, all their unrighteousness will be put away completely, and remembered against them never more.

This is manifestly and statedly not Christianity: it is for Israel and Judah in days to come, and Christ will be the Mediator of it to them. But the grace expressed in it is, of course, the very foundation of Christianity, and is ministered now by One who has absolute right to minister it as He will. A covenant to them that they shall have it, shuts out no one from similar blessing, and Christ being the Mediator of the new covenant shows at once the character of His ministry. But it is only characteristic: Christianity with its "all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places" cannot be measured by it. The apostle's main purpose in quoting it is shown by the way he concludes his appeal to it: "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." He passes on to what is his great theme—the opening of the heavenly places.

*Subdivision III* (chaps. 9, 10).

This third subdivision treats of how the way has been opened. There are four sections ; and the fourth, as we have found elsewhere, is exhortation in view of all that is involved.

The first three give the subject itself : the first (chap. 9: 1-10) speaks of the "first tabernacle" of the first covenant, which showed that the way into the holiest was not made manifest. The second (chap. 9: 11-28) shows the removal of the hindrance to manifestation. The third (chap. 10: 1-25), the sanctification of the worshiper for the opened sanctuary.

*Section I* (chap. 9: 1-10). The first section carries us back to the tabernacle of old, to show briefly the disposition of things there. Here, stress is laid upon the division into two parts—divided from each other by the interior veil. The outermost one was constantly open as the place of priestly service; the inner was (with the exception of the brief visit of the high priest on the day of atonement) as constantly closed. The things which had their place in each are mentioned, but without any purpose to speak particularly of them: the great point is this strict separation of the two: the one shut off being the place in which (when things were right in Israel) the glory of God abode; so that "no access to God" was what the veil proclaimed.

The "first tabernacle" was characteristic of the law when, even to Moses, the mediator, it was said, "Thou canst not see my Face : for there shall no man see Me and live." It was an image for the time (then) present, when gifts and sacrifices of such sort were being offered as could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. In their nature they could not : they were but meats and

drinks and divers baptisms (the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean) sanctifying only to the purifying of the flesh. Such a system plainly could not satisfy God—could not bring man near to God. It must, therefore, pass away.

*Section II* (chap.9: 11-28). The second section shows us now the coming in of redemption, the putting away of sin from before God, which hindered the manifestation of Himself as He desired. For the things to which the Levitical system pointed are now fulfilled—the true day of atonement, the great High Priest of a better tabernacle, who has entered the Sanctuary, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by His own blood; having found, not an atonement which would last a year, but “*eternal* redemption.” Thus the worshiper has at last his conscience purified from dead works, from that which had in it no savor of life—which would not suit, therefore, the living God. The legalism of the old covenant has been replaced in this by the grace of the new. The eternal inheritance is secured to those who are called by the grace of the gospel.

A parenthesis is added here, in which the “covenant” of which Christ is Mediator is identified, as another \* has remarked, with a “testament” of which Christ is the Testator. The word *diatheke* means both these; and the covenant has in fact come to us in the shape of a testament, which His death has made good. But the apostle returns immediately to the former thought of “covenant.”

The first covenant was not inaugurated without blood: the book and all the people were sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice. This seems strange, because the covenant was the legal one, but the blood of atonement did in fact

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\* W. Lincoln: “Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews.”



affirm the *righteousness of the penalty of the law for those under it*. Christ affirmed this decisively when to redeem us He took the curse of the law, and this blood of sacrifice showed what would be the issue of that first covenant.

But not only so, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were in like manner sprinkled with blood, and here the typical meaning is evident. Almost all things according to the law are purified with blood; and for remission of sins there was no other way but this. Thus the mere figurative representations bore witness, but the heavenly things themselves needed a better sacrifice. Christ has entered into heaven itself, with a sacrifice never needing to be repeated. If He offered again, He would have to suffer again, but neither is possible: *once* at the completion of the ages of probation, when man's ungodliness and hopelessness of self-recovery had been perfectly demonstrated, Christ was manifested for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The consequence for faith is a complete deliverance by His work from the common portion of men in death and judgment. As to death, those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord do not die at all. As to judgment, He appears the second time apart from sin for our salvation. *Personally* the believer does not come into judgment, and the reception of reward at the judgment-seat of Christ will be the most triumphant declaration of the supremacy of grace: everything brought fully into the light, and love found free to satisfy itself after this manner: "Then shall each have his praise from God."

*Section III* (chap. 10: 1-25). The third section shows our perfect sanctification for worship in the holiest as the present fruit for us of this glorious work. This, we are reminded, was impossible under the law. It was not even

the perfect image of the good things it typified ; and the yearly repetition of this day of atonement showed the inefficacy of these multiplied sacrifices. For then, asks the apostle, would they not have ceased to be offered ? Because the worshipers once purged would have had no more conscience of sins.

We must remember, in order to realize the completeness of this, that even in Israel no sacrifice was offered twice for the *same sins*, and that in Christendom the putting away of sins as they arise is the common thought—not indeed a fresh sacrifice, but a fresh application of the blood is thought a necessity. But that is just what the apostle would call having “conscience of sins,” instead of the conscience being purged once for all. One who needs a fresh offering or a fresh application of the blood to cleanse him, is not purged once for all. How dreadful the presence of God would be for one who fully accepted the thought of being left but for a moment there an unpurged sinner ! No doubt for the Christian the thought of God’s grace, though contradictory to his system, prevents him from clearly realizing what this would mean. But the apostle plainly says that to need a repetition of such purging would mean never having been purged *according to God*; for He could not leave so great a need less than perfectly met. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins *at all* ; that was what their constant repetition meant. It was not true purging that was accomplished in this way.

Christ therefore comes to substitute for these inefficacious sacrifices His own perfect one. This was what those typical ones foreshadowed : in the volume of the book it was written of Him. This does not refer to eternal counsels, but to the book of the law. *Coming into the world*, He says this : not in eternity. It is, “Lo, I am

come," not "I come." He sees the offerings going on, but with no divine satisfaction in them, and He brings them to an end by the accomplishment of His own work.

Now then we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. It is not the sanctification of the Spirit in Hebrews, but by sacrifice: not the oil, but *the blood* is the foundation of everything, and by which the priestly family is set apart to God. The offering is offered, never to be repeated: He is not busy in continual sacrifice as the legal priesthood were. He has sat down at the right hand of God, not needing to rise any more on this account; sitting perpetually there until the time comes for His enemies to be put under His feet. There is no more to be done as regards offering: "By one offering He has perfected in perpetuity those that are sanctified"—there is never a moment in which they are not in the full value of that work before God.

For this the apostle can appeal again after his manner to the inspired writings in the hands of the Jews themselves, and thus brings the testimony of the Holy Ghost to confirm what he is saying. It is no reference to the coming of the Spirit after the ascent of Christ to the right hand of God, as some have made it, but (as should be evident) an appeal to what He had uttered long before. The words of the new covenant itself show fully the cessation of sacrifices for the putting away of sin, for God says in it, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more"—but the repetition of sacrifice would be such a remembrance.

Now the point is reached to which the apostle has been so long coming, and for which he has so carefully prepared the way. We have boldness now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say,

His flesh. There are things here which we need to consider attentively, especially in view of what has lately been said about them.

First of all, let us notice that the word for the holiest of all is really "the holies" or "holy places." J. N. D. has "[holy of] holies" both here and in 9: 8, 12; 13: 11, indicating by the bracket the word introduced, which is really found once and only once, chap. 9: 3. In 9: 24, 25, he translates rightly "holy places," where the Revised Version translates, as elsewhere, "holy place," without any marginal indication of the change they have made. There is absolutely no necessity for any such alterations. In 9: 3, where there is need to distinguish between the "holy place" and the "holy of holies," the apostle uses the correct term for the latter; and where he has *not* done so, we may be sure that he had design in not distinguishing. Scripture is as accurate here as always.

In fact, to read here, as we should, that "we have boldness to enter the holy *places* by the blood of Jesus," destroys at once two statements that have recently been made to the confusion of the interpretation of the epistle: the first, that there is no rending of the veil in Hebrews; the second, that the "first tabernacle," the outer holy place, is now entirely removed in Christianity, and *only* the holiest of all remains. As a consequence of the latter, neither lamp of the sanctuary, nor table of show-bread, nor incense-altar, has anything to do with us. These are wholly Jewish, and to apply them to Christianity is a grave mistake.

Notice how this collapses by simply taking Scripture as it is undeniably given us. We have boldness in this case to enter into the holy places—both of them—by the blood of Jesus; and thus *the outer Sanctuary abides for us* as well as the inner.

No doubt, it will be asked how this consists with chap. 9: 8, in which it is stated that the way into the holy places was not yet manifested, as long as the "first tabernacle" had its standing. But this only leads us to the true statement as to the veil being rent : for the rending of the veil it is which makes *both tabernacles one* : so that, in fact, the first tabernacle has no standing—*no existence as such*. If we have come into the true tabernacle at all, we have come into the holiest. If the veil be *not* rent, then indeed we could come (ideally) into the outer sanctuary first, and worship afar off until we found our way or were admitted into the holiest ; but Hebrews knows nothing of this : there is but *one* entrance, by the blood of Jesus, into the united sanctuaries ; and this is the access given us in the grace of Christianity.

But it is actually contended that if we go "*through* the veil, that shows that the veil is *not* rent ; and we have to go *through* it.\* One would have thought that the "new and living way" made through it was the very thing that enables us to go through it. It may be said, perhaps, that this is not the *rending* of the veil ; which is said to be only in the Gospels for God to come out, and not for any one to go in. The Gospels give us no such comment, and it will assuredly not bear investigation from the side of Scripture. For this "new and living way" is through the "flesh" of Jesus, and we approach the Throne with boldness through His blood. This brings us near to what we have in the Gospels ; and the word "new" here, though used in the sense of "recent," has a better signification which is its primary one. Its strict force of "*newly slain*" harmonizes contrastively with "*and living*," which completes the thought. By death and res-

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\* "Truth for the Time" (1895), p. 174.

urrection the way has been made for us into the heavenly sanctuary through the flesh—the human nature of Jesus; and here the doctrine of the epistle is plainly interpretative of the fact in the Gospels.

The veil is rent in Hebrews; and that is why, as has been said, it is not really “having boldness to enter into the holiest,” but into the “holy places,” because the two are thus united. Yet that does not mean, as it seems often to be taken to mean, that the veil is *removed*. “Rent” and “removed” are different things. If the veil is Christ’s flesh, *that* is not removed, nor do we want it removed, By Him we draw near to God; but He had to die that it might be so. Look at the beautiful veil, and see what it implies !

Again, it is said : “If it were rent on our side as it is on God’s side, we could go in as *men in the flesh*.” Surely if the holiest be for us a heavenly reality, and drawing near be spiritual realization, as it is, the flesh will never be able to draw *near to God*. Why need we try to guard this approach in a way God has not ? Can we put it better than the apostle, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood of Jesus ?*” And he urges and encourages even these Hebrew Christians, immature and slow to learn and backward as they were, to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” God having opened the way, it was their responsibility to draw near. Of course that must be real ; and if *we* are not so, we may sadly deceive ourselves ; but let us keep Scripture as it has been written for us.

Besides the way secured, we have the living Person of the “great Priest over the house of God : ” we have One who in the tenderness of divine grace ministers to our infirmities, and lifts us up above ourselves. On our part therefore “let us approach with a true heart, in full as-

surance of faith." That is the proper answer to the grace that has thus provided for us, the "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," which is the Christian purification of the conscience previously insisted on as necessary for the opening of the sanctuary. The "body washed with pure water" was what was done at the consecration of the priests (Exod. 29: 4), and which answers to the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3: 5), the word of God bringing us out from a world in rampant insubjection to God, into whole-hearted allegiance to the Son of His love, as His true kingdom. This is the spiritual reality of which baptism is the expression outwardly; but the "washing of regeneration" is not baptism.

Immediately as we are brought to the question of responsibilities here, we recognize our weakness, and the general need: we must "hold fast unwaveringly the confession of our hope;" we must "consider one another to provoke to love and to good works;" we must not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together;" we must "encourage one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching." Ah, is it not just the drawing near to God that exposes our essential weakness? The presence of God is the true sanctuary—the place of holiness, the refuge from ourselves, and from the power of things around us: but how feeble are we in the enjoyment of it! And our feebleness, instead of making us draw together for mutual help, tends to disorganize and make us drift asunder; and instead of awakening pity and longing over one another, makes us often the subject of unsparing criticism. Oh, for the ability to provoke to *love* and to good works! If souls have got away from God, nothing but the power of the love of Christ can break down and restore.

It may seem strange to us now to think of Christians

*then* "seeing the day" of Christ "approaching." But the signs of the end to observant eyes began soon to show themselves. The mystery of iniquity was already at work, and when John writes his first epistle, "many antichrists" show it to be the "last time." Disheartening things these, but the apostle would tell us that we have not received a "spirit of cowardice" (2 Tim. 1: 7), and we are not to be disheartened. Nothing more effectively cuts the nerve of all activity than the loss of hope: the devil knows this well. Love itself will be reduced to idleness if assured there is no good in working. God is the "God of all encouragement," and the moment we get to His side of things we are on the winning side. Divine love invites us to draw on it without stint.

*Section IV* (vers. 26-39). The fourth section follows this naturally with the warnings which in Hebrews are so constant. The wilful sin here spoken of supposes, as in the sixth chapter, the "knowledge of the truth" with the will in error. The apostle here speaks of a special class whom he has to warn as those before, against treading under foot the Son of God, going back to a Judaism all the impotence of which has been exposed, and which now has manifestly "no more sacrifice for sins." They are (not failing saints but) adversaries, who as such must expect sorer judgment than under Moses' law, by so much the more as that which they had despised was greater. The blood of the covenant could not avail for one who had given it up as "common"—having no virtue; and grace itself must fail those who insult the Spirit of grace.

"Wherewith he was sanctified" is naturally a difficulty, though the reference to the day of atonement helps us to realize what is intended. The blood put before God then was truly the "blood of the covenant," as being that



in virtue of which the relation between God and Israel was maintained. Thus it sanctified the people, every one among them abiding in the value of it. The Christian assembly now abode under the blood of a better covenant, and of this assembly the person spoken of had formed part. If his profession had not been true, he had still the responsibility of it in giving it up, as all the blessing of it had been open to him to enjoy. He is thus credited with that which on God's part nothing hindered being made good to him, and which he had claimed to be his own.

But again the apostle comforts those he is addressing with the remembrance of what they had endured, and how the Lord's grace had upheld them under it : a right use of experiences in which what had been trial becomes in result abiding blessing. Still they had need of endurance, and would in due time find the recompense. For He who cometh will at last come. Meanwhile the just shall live by faith, and he who draws back, God can have no pleasure in him. The principle always remains true; but these are distinct classes : we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

## DIVISION IV (chap. 11).

We come now to the fourth division of the epistle, in which the apostle shows by the example of the saints of old, how the practical life of those that at any time pleased God had always been a path of faith. We have their trials and experiences put before us, especially of those who lived before the Jewish system had been established—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the very men who had received the promises. The complete setting aside of the Jewish ritual left them immeasurably better off than with it, for it is not of that which is seen and sensible that faith takes hold. Indeed, those who had lived under these types and shadows only found their blessing in looking beyond them. By just so much as they rested in these they lost the reality.

There are four sections here; the first giving (after an introductory statement of principles), in three who lived before the flood, a foreshadowing of the path of faith ever since (vers. 1-7); the second, the gain to it of delaying blessing (vers. 8-16); the third, the prophetic outlooks granted to it (vers. 17-22); while the fourth shows its various trial and experiences (vers. 23-40).

*Section I* again has four parts: the first of which, I think, as an introductory statement, shows the sufficiency of faith as a governing principle of practical life (vers. 1-3). First, the power of it is in this, that it is a “substantiation of things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen.” The heart is drawn out of the world by the attraction of what is beyond it, of what it is convinced of, though unseen. There is independence of the world: its allurements solicit in vain; circumstances do not control us; we are masters of ourselves, clear-sighted and steadfast.

Through it also the men of old obtained a good report—of course in *God's* history of things, not in man's. It is easy to see that in Scripture the thing which made the old worthies what they were was faith : how perfect the contrast between the same men energized by it or when it was at ebb in them !

Then “by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that that which is seen should not have its origin from things which appear.” It would be a good thing if men of science would give heed to such a text as this. Take Darwin's *Origin of Species*, where he never gets indeed to the origin, and owns he cannot prove that any species ever did originate after the fashion he decrees. And think of originating in his manner Eve out of Adam ! Given even the “rib,” she could not have sprung out of it simply: there must have been that which did not appear—the power of God. If it is not perfectly scientific to believe that in her case, we may as well give up Scripture at once, for you cannot expunge the miraculous out of it. If it be only a question of less or more, how unreasonable to measure out the power of God, and how enormous the pretence of being able to say just how much this power, or how or when it shall be fitting for it to be displayed.

God has ordained in His mercy a stable world for man, and we may thank Him that it is so, and see abundant reason for its being so, if we were to be able to reckon aright. But then they turn round and talk learnedly of “laws of nature,” as if God were not the Author of nature and its laws, and would bind Him with them, so that He shall not move except according to them. Whereas, in fact, a stable world is just what is suited as a background for the miraculous ; and the miracles are a reserve of power most fitted to display Him as the living God

amid all this mechanism, not to be confounded with it.

After all Scripture is at once the most scientific and rational of books, and a miracle of the most stupendous kind, always ready to hand, and with its own power of conviction for any one who will examine it. And this, one may say, in the face of all the higher critics in the world, who are simply the Darwinians of theology, and who like them theorize after the most stupendous fashion, and then talk of the credulity of faith !

God manifested in creation ! If we only realized just what this meant, what a suited setting it would make for the brighter manifestation of God in Christ ; and how, day by day, we should walk amid the ministries of all the creatures of His hand. Day to day would utter speech, and night to night tell knowledge. The universe would be indeed the house of God, and in what corner of it could we be without Him ? Here, then, as the basis of a life of faith, we are taught to realize in nature the supernatural—the seen as having its root and origin in the unseen, and which has not given up its work in that primary effort that produced it.

In the second place (ver. 4) we have Abel witnessing and witnessed to, bringing to God his fuller sacrifice than Cain, owning the death which had come in through sin, and in a way contemptible to mere reason—folly if it were not faith—turning that death into acceptable offering to God, so as to obtain witness of God that he is righteous, God testifying of his gifts. But his life exhales from the earth, the world being in opposition to God from its very beginning.

In the third place (vers. 5, 6) we have the heavenward side of this in Enoch, walking with God in a “dedicated” life, upon which no shadow of death comes. Heaven claims him, the type of the heavenly family, which now

waits, not for the judgment of the earth, but for translation at the coming of the Lord.

While in the fourth place (ver. 7) Noah gives us the picture of the heirs of *earth* brought through the judgment, his house saved and the world condemned by that faith of his. Here, then, we have the plain foreshadowing of faith in its various history; the three witnesses together showing us righteousness, communion, heirship, as all found in it.

*Section II* (vers. 8-16). The second section gives us next the gain to faith in the delay of blessing; and here Abraham is the great example for us. It is striking the difference that we find between Abraham in the Old Testament, and as he is presented to us in this account in Hebrews. In the Old Testament you have the circumstances of his life, and his faith in God is manifested and blessed; but of the heavenly country that he looked for you find nothing. Typically, of course, there is no difficulty: wherever we read of Canaan we rightly think of it; but suppose we had no New Testament, how much should we know? Even now that we have Paul's comment here, it has been sought by some to show that Canaan, both in the Old Testament and the New, was the sole inheritance promised to him, and that it is all he is ever to have. It is impossible to maintain this, if we take the statements fairly here; but the attempt to maintain it shows how little the Old Testament by itself reveals to us what Abraham had in view. The difference is of interest in other ways; but here we may take it, I believe as illustrating the gain of deferred blessing. He did not in his life-time receive the things promised as to Canaan: to the end he was a mere stranger in it; but it was thus for him made the shadow of a better and heav-

only inheritance. How largely then God taught men by means of pictures of this kind, should be plain to all who will consider it : and while to us it would be dreadful to have to go back to such things only for ourselves, yet, when it was the large part of what men had, they might be expected to look into it in a way that now with our fuller light we scarcely think of doing. Look at the promise of the woman's Seed at the beginning, which even the perversions of it among the heathen show to have been accepted as speaking of the spiritual deliverance. Look at God clothing Adam and Eve with the skins of beasts, the fruit of death. And so everywhere at that time. Things were under a veil ; but we may be sure that God did not allow the veil to be so thick as to hide altogether from faith the glory beneath it.

There are four subsections here: the first of which (ver. 8) gives us simply and beautifully the obedience of faith in Abraham, going out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, not knowing at first where he was going. It seems, although his steps had been directed to Canaan, that it was only after he got there that he learned that that was the inheritance. Alas, even with God's people how they allow the question of where a thing will lead to divert them from the simple, all-necessary question : Is it *God* that is leading ? Not such a man was Abraham ; and the Lord give us to be as simple and childlike as he.

The second subsection (vers 9, 10) gives us more the character of the whole section : for here we find him, after the births, themselves long delayed, of Isaac and then Jacob, still a stranger in the land of his inheritance. But what was his compensation ? “ He looked for a city having the foundations, whose architect and builder ”—devising the plan and carrying it out—“ is God.”

This mention of a "city" is very striking, if it means that this was actually (as such) before Abraham's sight. It *may* mean that this it is in which Abraham's faith will find its consummation ; or it may be that God had revealed to him much more than we have knowledge of : for even the earthly Jerusalem was not then existent as a city of God, except it were as Melchizedek's Salem ; but *this* is certainly the heavenly one. The mention of "the foundations" brings before us the very city of the Apocalypse, with its twelve jewel foundations, like the high priest's breastplate, the glorious "lights and perfections" of the divine character, a city built upon which must indeed abide. Abraham's hope had surely then been lifted to a higher plane than that of earth, in the meantime of the delay of that earthly expectation.

Thirdly (vers. 11, 12), we come to Sarah—certainly a sort of resurrection of the dead for her ; and a child so born, what a pledge it was of other fulfilments ! Here again it cannot be questioned how largely the very delay increased the blessing.

Fourthly (vers. 13-16), it is emphasized for us how long the trial of faith lasted. They died in faith, not having received the promises ; and thus upon earth, during their whole time on it, were strangers and sojourners. The land, too, which they had left, lay all this time in sight, inviting their return ; but they persisted, desiring a better country. Here, once more, how great the gain ! God openly linking Himself with them as their God, as with these three especially—"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob," being His specifically declared memorial name. And He has prepared for them a city.

*Section III* (vers. 17-22). The third section shows us faith in its prophetic realizations, which spring, as al-

ways, from the apprehension of God in the sanctuary, where everything is seen in reference to Him alone. Here again there are four subsections.

First we see Abraham at the word of God, offering up the son in whom the promises were to be fulfilled to him. It is *God* who has promised, He is faithful and almighty: Isaac shall be brought back, therefore, even from the dead : from which he is indeed in a figure received.

Next in Isaac, though at first obscured by fleshly impulses, faith manifests itself in the recognition of God's rights as against nature, the ruin of nature being implied in it, and His separation of His people from the world.

Thirdly, Jacob rehearses, as it were, in the blessing of the sons of Joseph, his own history ; but now at the end of human strength the struggler becomes a worshiper, and the eyes dulling to earthly things are lighted up with far-off glories. It is again a sort of resurrection story, with the issues, as always thus, in God's hand alone.

Fourthly, in Joseph's case, the departure of Israel out of Egypt is anticipated by him, and he ordains his bones to be for them a continual admonition of the change awaiting them.

*Section IV.* The chapter closes with a more varied, yet slighter sketch of the generations following these early patriarchs. As we come to the establishment of the legal system, the record is scanty, and even Moses himself does not appear after the Red Sea deliverance. As a fourth section, trials and experiences may characterize it generally. There are, I think, seven subsections.

In the first (ver. 23) we have a remarkable simplicity of faith in Moses' parents which acts upon grounds which to most would appear slight enough—the beauty of the child. God answers it, for it was faith in Him, and how



largely: for this is Moses the deliverer. Is there not here one of the *natural* indications of the mind of God, which we are so unskilled in finding—which the poor, perhaps, read best, and which are apt to be confounded with mere superstition—separated from it by a line too indefinite for general appreciation. But wherever faith is, God will honor it.

In the second place (vers. 24-26) we come to Moses himself, with whom faith argues, as it might seem, in the very teeth of a most wonderful providence. He will not be a patron to the people of God, but a sharer in their humiliation, which He esteems as “the reproach of Christ,” and values it above all the treasures of Egypt.

Then (vers. 27, 28) we find the sanctuary in which he abides, the unseen Presence of God, which upon his return to Egypt delivers him from even fearing the wrath of the king, which is powerless against him. While in the passover and sprinkling of blood he draws Israel also into the same sanctuary, delivered from a greater fear than that of the king of Egypt, by that which has always been a sign of the recognition of the judgment upon man—in that which puts it away forever. In this way, I think, the two illustrations of faith given here are linked together.

The fourth subsection (ver. 29) gives us in contrast the experience of faith and the “assayal” of unbelief at the Red Sea. To faith God opened the way; unbelief, seeing it open, sought to walk in, and perished.

In the fifth (vers. 30, 31) the fall of Jericho furnishes again two contrasted examples of the weakness of man and the power of God. The walls of the city fall at the mere blast of trumpets, while Rahab, whose house is on the wall that falls, is preserved amid the destruction which comes upon the unbelieving.

We have then in a sixth subsection (vers. 32-38) the time following Israel's entrance into the land. Only six names are mentioned, and of these nothing specific is recorded, though their history is familiar to us. But there follows a long catalogue of various and contrasted forms, in whom faith overcame—most often in the way of the cross—by what seemed mere defeat.

Lastly (vers. 39, 40) we are carried on in thought to the time of perfect fruition for which they wait until we too receive it—we for whom something better than they enjoyed has been reserved. So, in his way of constant encouragement and admonition, he reminds these Hebrews.

#### DIVISION V (chaps. 12, 13).

The last two chapters form together the fifth and final division of the epistle, which presses the responsibilities resulting from all that has been before us. And these divide, nearly with the chapters, into two parts: first (chaps. 12—13: 6), that of steadfast continuance in the confession of their faith, through whatever difficulties; and lastly, of decisive separation from the "camp" of Judaism.

#### *Subdivision I* (chaps. 12—13: 6).

The first subdivision seems again to divide into seven sections: the first of which urges concentration of energy in following One who (whatever may be the encouragement from that of others) is the unique Example, the Leader and Perfecter of faith. We have, surrounding us, all these witnesses to what is the principle of the path: let us then lay aside every weight and sin which so easily besets us, and run with patience the race set before us.

For the runner in a race, to drop all unnecessary weights is imperative. The weight and the sin are quite different things, although so closely connected as undoubtedly they are. A weight is something I take up and need not ; not a duty, for what is really a duty never is a weight. People of course may take up a weight and miscall it duty; and this misnomer will not hinder their finding it what it really is. But it would be impossible for God to impose upon us as duty what would be in itself necessarily hurtful to us. On the other hand, the artificial life lived at the present day, and the supposed responsibility of living up to one's position among men—such like things do indeed often burden the back and make running well-nigh impossible. A racer's heart is at the end of the road, and his motto is : " Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching on to that which is before." Just in proportion as he has this spirit, will he measure things by his one desire to make progress in the race.

The connection with sin too here is most important. It is sin in the abstract, although no doubt there are sins which beset each of us in a special way. If we thought of it as a pack of wolves at our heels, we should easily realize the connection of a " weight " with sin : you *must* drop the weights to distance the wolves. Amalek smote the " hindmost " of Israel. To get on in the road is the way to escape entanglement and the need of a battle.

Christ is the goal, and if our eyes are upon Him, we find at once the perfect Example and energy for the way. " Author " is the same word as we have had before in Hebrews, both " Leader " and " Originator." The path for us is what He has made it; and He has completed it—gone through it Himself all the way.

" The joy set before Him " was all that which was to be the issue of His work—" the fruit of the travail of His

soul." For this He endured the cross, despising the *shame* : the *cross* He could not despise. In result He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, and the full compensation is at hand for Him.

This introduces the second subsection (vers. 3, 4): it is not merely a race we have to run, but to endure the contradiction of sinners, as He endured. The Hebrews had suffered a good deal, but they must not be weary yet. They had not yet (as Christ Himself had) resisted unto blood, wrestling against sin—of course, the sin outside and around. It is a different conflict from that in Galatians 5, and of course also from that in Eph. 6; here it is persecution, and not standing against the wiles of the devil as there. Christ went on to death, and His followers must be prepared to do as He did, suffering with Him as far as men are concerned. The suffering *from God*, that which made the Cross what it was for Him, *He* has endured; and there is no cup of that kind for us at all—no forsaking of God, but the very contrary: "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

On the other hand, as we find in the third subsection (vers. 5-11), there is a character of suffering on our part which was not and could not be in His. For us there is discipline, because of what we are : the trials by the way being overruled of God so that we should be thus made "partakers of His holiness." As it is put in Romans, "tribulation worketh patience"—the subduing of our wills to God; "and patience experience"—the experience of what His will is; "and experience hope."

It may not be any positive failure that is here in view: the thorn in the flesh for the apostle was needed by him "because of the abundance of the revelations" which had been made to him, but of course also in view of the ten-

dency in him to be lifted up : it was preventive, therefore—a conclusive argument against those views of perfection which would imply the removal of such tendencies from any one while here. This was a man who had been in the third heavens, hearing unspeakable things which it was not lawful (or possible) for one to utter ; yet even he needed such a preventive ; and needed it, too, to be continued, for his prayer for its removal was not answered in the way expected, but grace made him triumph over it.

We must take care, moreover, of the argument of Job's friends (which is now being elaborately put forth as wholesome Christian doctrine in some quarters), that one's spiritual condition can be argued from the bodily one. " Beloved," says the apostle to Gaius, " I wish that in all things that thou prosper and be in health, even as thy soul *does* prosper." People would tell him now, he need have no trouble about that.

" The Lord," in the quotation, is really Jehovah, according to the usual rendering of the Septuagint and of our common version in the Old Testament. In 1 Cor. 11 " judged of the Lord " refers to the Lord Jesus. In Peter also, " Judgment must begin at the house of God " is chastening : the " house " in Peter is of " living stones " (1 Pet. 2).

Thus, in governmental dealings, it is much with us as with Moses on the mount. In governmental ways, clouds and darkness are round about Him. Like Moses we cannot meet Him face to face, but after He has passed, see the glory of the back parts : "*Afterwards* it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who"—in the darkness—"have been exercised thereby." The Law was just such government of God, but without the revelation of His face as it has been given us in Christ. Now, if as to special dealing the cloud is there, we yet know

Him who is behind the cloud. Exercise is right as to what His ways mean, and we must not deem it a strange thing if we are left to the exercise.

It is not intended that we should float lightly over every thing. That which is from a Father's hand has purpose in it, and is not to be treated lightly; but then, because it is a Father's hand, the purpose is blessing and we must not faint under it.

And so he exhorts in the next subsection (vers. 12-17) which, as a fourth, presses the practical ways that please God, and warns against departure from Him according to the constant style of the epistle. There need be no discouragement: they must lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees; but withal make straight paths for the feet so that the lame even may not be turned out of the way, but rather be healed of their lameness. It is only in God's path for us that power is found whatever be the difficulties: the weaker we are, the more urgent should be our desire to walk where alone He can be with us; for what are all the difficulties then?

Peace with all men was to be sought also, not at the expense of holiness, but in holiness which, with the Lord, is a first necessity: without it none shall see Him. And therefore they must look diligently to see that no one among them really lacked the grace of God, and so a root of bitterness spring up in their midst by which many might be defiled. For alas, we have in us all that which makes us susceptible to such infection; and the presence of the evil shows already a lax condition which has allowed it to spring up.

How a single act may discover a man's character, as with Esau here. For a bit of food he sold his birthright; and the act characterized him as a profane person, one who habitually left God out of his thoughts. Yet he could

desire the blessing, and sought it earnestly after he had lost it: just as Balaam could desire to *die the death* of the righteous, while he had no thought of living their life, thus he found no place for repentance; for it had only respect to the lost blessing, and involved no judgment of his ways before God. He valued the gain of godliness, without the godliness; and the nature of God would have had to be changed to gratify him in that which was his sole desire.

Now (subsection five, vers. 18-24) we come to the contemplation of that to which faith brings the Christian, and sets it in contrast with that which characterized Judaism; not however as faith, but in experience. Faith, as has been shown us, might have put before the Jew also something of that which lies before the Christian; but the point is, what did the law do to help or hinder a soul in this glorious prospect? And here the apostle carries them back to the record of its beginning, that all might judge themselves by the facts given.

Israel came to Mount Sinai, and there the nation had in spirit remained—a palpable mount indeed, and that burned with fire from the presence of God; with this an awful darkness, out of which the sound of a trumpet summoned attention; and then a Voice more dreadful than all, though with a distinct utterance of words, but not a gospel. For what had been the effect upon those that heard and saw? Touch they could not, for even the beast that touched was to be stoned; and their terror was so great that they begged the word might be spoken to them no more. Nay, even Moses the mediator said: “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Such was the character of that dispensation: darkness over the face of God; obscurity over the future; God when He drew nigh inspiring terror!

Now what a contrast ! Of the opened sanctuary, of the ability to draw nigh, of promise securing everything, the apostle has already spoken. He has only now, therefore, to put before them the prospect for heaven and for earth now which lies unobscured on the horizon of faith—Jewish hope as well as Christian, pictured in a few touches only, but which can be extended indefinitely from a multitude of scriptures. His object is not description, but to point out some of the features of this glorious scene.

Upon earth, first, Mount Zion, the place of God's choice in grace, when everything had broken down in Israel (Ps. 78: 67-70); and thus His abiding rest (Ps. 132: 13, 14).

From this he rises to the "city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem," the corresponding centre of heavenly glory ; which we must not confound, as some do, with the Church itself, which is mentioned apart almost directly afterwards. It is the *home* of the saints—the common thought, and the more correct one.

Next we find "myriads of angels, the universal gathering"—taking in, I suppose, all ranks and orders of these heavenly beings.

And next, the "assembly of the first-born ones, whose names are enrolled in heaven," in contrast with Israel, who are God's first-born people on earth. These are the heirs, the "brethren" among whom Christ is the "First-born" in necessary pre-eminence. These, then, are distinguished plainly from the "city of God" already spoken of.

Next, we rise to "God the Judge of all"—the Sovereign Awarder to every one of place and service and recompense. This is why, in the holy city, the sevens which we could expect to characterize it are expanded



into twelves, the number of manifest divine government. Seven is  $4 + 3$  as twelve is  $4 \times 3$ : the twelve is an expanded seven ; and where can perfection be more secured than by God being in absolute supremacy, His will being the settlement of every thing for His creatures ?

We have then “ the spirits of just men made perfect,” which certainly are Old Testament saints distinguished as a company from the assembly of the first-born. “ Just ” men is the natural title of the Old Testament saints ; and the “ *spirits* of just men ” show them to be a company that has come under death, which will not be true of the *Christian* assembly as a whole, which remains here till the coming of the Lord. “ Made perfect ” is for these by resurrection and will be accomplished at the same time for them as for us, as the last verse of the eleventh chapter shows : “ That they without us should not be made perfect.”

We are then reminded of the foundation of all blessing, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which has been already fully spoken of.

These things we have as Christians “ come to.” That is, nothing lies (that we can see) between us and them. As heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, they all have to do with us, and are of full personal interest to us.

The sixth subsection reaches to the end of the chapter. It is another of the many warnings of this epistle, and reminds all that there is a limit to the divine patience. How great the responsibility of refusing this divine Voice, now speaking in such marvelous grace from heaven ! The Voice at Sinai shook the earth ; but now, once more, He is going to shake, not the earth only, but also heaven. If “ once more,” that must imply the removal of every thing that can be shaken, that all afterwards may remain absolutely unmoved. How blessed to know, then, that

the kingdom that we have received is among the things that cannot be shaken ! But let us have grace therefore to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear . for our God is a consuming fire. All that is not according to His mind is destined to that fire.

In subsection seven (chap. 13: 1-6), the apostle adds some words of exhortation as to the filling out of this acceptable service as those upon the earth, created of God, though disordered by sin, and that which is attendant upon it. They are of very simple character, and need no interpretation to make them understood.

*Subdivision II (chap. 13: 7-25).*

We have now the final word which is to separate the Christian from Judaism absolutely. Isaac's weaning-time is at an end, and the bondwoman and her son are to be cast out of the house.

He begins by speaking to them of the leaders now passed away, who had spoken to them the word of God, and considering the issue of their conversation, they were to imitate their faith. Leaders there will always be, and rightly when it is their *faith* that carries them ahead of others. But faith must be in the word of God, and must have this to justify itself to others. Thus true guidance is always by the Word, and this is what preserves it from being merely following of men. Apart from this, we may go easily astray in the path of very good men. Peter led Barnabas astray after this fashion. Paul says, " Follow me " ; but he adds, " as I follow Christ."

Christ is the fulness of this Word; and the effect of true ministry is necessarily always to exalt Him. Christ is He also who, as we saw at the beginning of the epistle, has brought us the full revelation of God in contrast with all former fragmentary communications. Thus there can

be nothing to come afterwards—no addition to Him. He is Israel's Jehovah, the unchangeable God : always at one with Himself ; " The Same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

Christ is thus the measure of all that is true riches for His people, the test of all true doctrine, the object of all real faith. But being so, He is the object of Satan's constant enmity, whose unwearied labor it is to weave those divers and strange doctrines which, however contradictory of one another they may be, present to the natural taste a variety of roads by which men may wander from the one true Way. And of all these ways undoubtedly the most successful are those which would reintroduce, now that is has been authoritatively set aside forever, what has been man's way from the beginning. Judaism was the trial of that way ; but a trial in which the true issue was plainly indicated, and the finger pointed unmistakably beyond itself to Christ—to a new covenant replacing the old, and a time of reconstruction of all things at His hands. What Satanic skill thus to take out of Judaism just that mere human element which had been on trial and condemned, ignoring the condemnation, to make the finger point in fact to this as the God-commended way of blessing, making the shadow to be the substance, and stamping the name of Christ upon the woof of Antichrist!

This bastard Judaism, as we see it in Romanism and kindred systems to-day, is evidence of the need of such decisive separation from the Jewish " camp," as the apostle presses here. In his warning against " divers and strange doctrines," it is plain that he has this almost wholly in mind, as it is indeed in some form the one religious scheme that men naturally accept and approve. " For it is good," he says, " that the heart be established with *grace*, not with meats, which have not profited those

that have been occupied therewith." The adoption of the legal system means the substitution of law for grace, earthly for heavenly, carnal for spiritual, the degradation of the assembly "called out" of the world into a mere heterogenous "gathering together"—"the synagogue of Satan." For the believer entangled in it, it means uncertainty for certainty, doubt for peace, bondage for liberty, instead of communion with God, the hiss of the serpent. *Grace* is the only thing that can dismiss fear, conquer sin, establish the sovereignty of God over the human heart. No wonder then that every kind of travesty should be made of it, every form of opposition exhausted against it. But the appeal which the apostle makes here to experience will be justified by every honest and exercised soul.

The apostle at once proceeds to his point. "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." He is opposing now the substance to the shadow, and he naturally uses the language of the tabernacle in his insistence that the reality is not in the shadow. We have an altar, he says, which the tabernacle cannot furnish; and an offering of which they who serve it have no right to partake. It is the peace-offering of which he is speaking, as that was the only offering in which all Israel could have "communion with the altar." But the peace-offering at once suggests all the difference for which he has been contending. "Peace," was it ever made by these continual sacrifices? Communion with God, how far could it be enjoyed by those for whom God was behind the unrent veil, dwelling in thick darkness?

The altar itself—the "altar that sanctifieth the gift"—was the figure of Christ in Person: what else could sanctify *His* gift, but what He was who offered it? Where, then, had the men of the tabernacle put Christ? And

how could they have communion with the altar which they had refused ?

True, they had done what their types had indicated. For every sin-offering whose blood was carried into the holy places by the high priest was burned without the camp ; and so Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate of the holy city. It was one of those signs of a deeper reality which united to proclaim the true character of the Cross. Outside the gate, in that mysterious darkness, hanging upon a tree, proclaimed the true sin-offering—forsaken of God, as under the curse for sin ! and this was the deepest necessity for atonement. But if this were needed for the sanctification of the people, the failure of the legal system was manifest. The law was “ weak, through the flesh.” Nothing could improve the man in the flesh so as to make him acceptable with God : put him under the most favorable conditions, the “ mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be ; ” nay more, it is “ enmity against God.” For this nothing but judgment can avail with Him. That judgment is what the Cross expresses, but with this therefore the whole legal system is of necessity set aside. The “ camp ” (which is just the people upon that legal footing) is given up. All the grace of God for man is found in the Cross, and so outside the camp, and the glory of God outside it also.

The glory of God had been outside before : after the golden calf, when the legal covenant in its first form of pure law had come to an end with the first tables, Moses had taken the tabernacle and pitched it “ outside the camp, afar off from the camp,” and there the cloud of ministrant glory descended, and the Lord talked with Moses.

After far longer trial, when the legal covenant in its

form of mingled law and mercy had only manifested man to be without strength as well as ungodly, at the time of the Bablonian captivity the glory was seen by the prophet Ezekiel again taking its departure from the midst of the people; and city and temple were given up to destruction.

Now, for a third time, the glory, embodied in Jesus, the Son of God, is outside, and under reproach. "Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp," says the apostle, "bearing His reproach: for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek one to come." Our faces are not even towards the Zion of the future, but towards "Jerusalem which is above, which is our mother."

We are priests of the sanctuary, but it is a heavenly one, and the offerings on the brazen altar have ceased, by virtue of the true Sacrifice abiding once for all. Our altar is now the golden altar of the sanctuary, which is still Christ; and "by Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips, confessing His name." And with this is another form of sacrifice: "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." How beautiful is this as the expression of a Christian life! How perfectly does it show the value of Christ's one work for us, while giving to our practical life its highest character. Our work is with praise—a thank-offering: and this is the sacrifice with which God is pleased.

Thus "inside the veil" and "outside the camp" go together—necessarily, for the true heavenly tabernacle has been always outside. While Judaism in the strict sense is what is here, every legal system comes under it in principle. There can be no real going back to Judaism. No one can reinstate it, or go back where prophets and holy men of old once were: that is impossible. To bring it back into Christianity is, as the Lord Himself has taught

us, to make a synagogue of Satan. Of course, we have to remember that people now are brought up in systems partaking of such a character, and that many of the Lord's people are entangled in them. They are like those who in Thyatira suffered the "woman Jezebel," while they were not Jezebel's "children ;" and we must make the same distinction that the Lord does there. The *system*, of course, is no less evil for the lapse of centuries : rather the reverse.

The epistle closes now with some brief exhortations mingled with prayer, and to which are added a few words of salutation.

Their guides or leaders are again referred to—now the living ones ; and they are exhorted to obey them, as those watching for their souls. This is plainly not official, but something to which love would prompt, and which ought to be found among us, if the true-heartedness of a remnant characterizes us, whatever the broken condition of things may be. "As those that shall give account " means of course, the leaders, of their own conduct as caring for the souls of others ; but it involves those for whom they watch, who may hinder what might be profitable to themselves. How many of us recognize responsibility as to the souls of others ?

The apostle then seeks their prayers, as one having a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honestly : words of wonderful lowliness, considering the man who speaks. And then he breaks out into a prayer for them, quite in the line of his thoughts in this epistle, that they may be perfected in every good work to do the will of God. It is the " blood of the covenant " which he speaks of in it as the foundation of everything. By this we have, brought again from the dead for us, a " great Shepherd of the sheep," and it is the God of peace, of whose

“counsel of peace” this is the fruit, who has raised Him up. Peace is the fruit, wrought out for us by Him upon the cross; a peace of conscience, the moral effect of which is peace in heart and life; a peace which is a true reconciliation of man to God, a taking of Christ’s gentle yoke, and learning of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, so as to find rest to the soul.

For this the God of peace has been working, the glorious harmony in which He is in that relation to His creatures which alone can satisfy Him. It is a peace in which the heart and life go up in worship; and thus the natural completion of this epistle to the Hebrews is found in such a prayer.

He beseeches them to suffer the word of exhortation—the epistle itself—which, if it smite upon Jewish prejudice, has in it such compensation of blessing.

The epistle closes with Christian salutations.



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