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Studies
in the
Epistle to the Hebrews.

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Studies in Genesis, Studies in Exodus,
Pearl of Psalms, etc., etc.



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CONTENTS.

Chapter	Page
Introduction 	7
1. Christ : Superior to the Prophets ...	19
2. Christ : Superior to the Angels	26
3. Neglect : The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ 	34
4. Christ and Moses. Unbelief : Wandering : Rest 	45
5. Priesthood : Our Sinless, Compassionate Saviour 	57
6. Qualifications for Priesthood 	67
7. Reproof, Apostasy, Encouragement ...	72
8. Christ and Melchisedec 	82
9. Christ : Minister and Mediator	89
10. The typical meaning of the Day of Atonement	93
11. The Sacrifice of Nobler Name	100
12. Privileges : Responsibilities : Wilful Sin : Patience	103
13. The Cloud of Witnesses : The Peserles Lord	110
14. Chastisement 	116
15. Exhortation and Warning 	118
16. A call to devotedness of Life	122

INTRODUCTION.

I. The Writer.

Like its great central character—Melchisedec—the epistle to the Hebrews is without genealogy; but from internal evidence it seems clear that Paul was the one whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write it. It begins with an unfolding of doctrine (chapters 1 to 10), passes on to very definite applications (chapters 11 and 12), and ends with personal greetings (chapter 13)—a method of writing which is peculiarly Pauline. It refers to the writer's bonds (chap. 13. 18-19), and speaks of Timothy who was Paul's son in the faith (chap. 13. 23). Besides these things there is the direct statement of Peter who, writing to converted Jews, says: "Our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written to you" (2nd Peter 3. 15). Peter goes on to say that in that writing there were some things "hard to be understood" (verse 16): words which seem an echo from one of its readers, of what the writer of Hebrews himself affirms when he says that many of the things which he had to tell them were "hard to be uttered" (chap. 5. 11).

II. The Readers.

From the local references, we gather that the epistle was addressed, not to Jewish Christians generally, but to those in a particular locality (compare 6. 10; 10. 32; 13. 7; 13. 17-24). "It was written," says Dr. Moulton, "to people who lived under the shadow of Jewish power and influence, where opposition to Christianity was most bitter, where the temptation to unfaithfulness was greatest, and where the abjuration required from the apostate

would be most complete." In other words, it was addressed to converted Jews in the city of Jerusalem.

III. Date of Writing.

The argument of the epistle assumes that the Temple was then standing (chap. 10. 11); that the whole sacrificial system was in normal operation (chap. 8. 4); but that that system was waxing old and ready to vanish away (8. 13 and 10. 25). These facts indicate that the epistle was written a little while before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the Roman General in A.D. 70.

IV. The Purpose of the Epistle.

The earliest converts from Judaism attended the Temple daily; failing evidently to see the full import of what was involved in their acceptance of Christ (Acts 2. 46). As the weeks passed on, however, the breach between them and the unconverted Jews gradually widened; and the hour had now arrived when a complete and final severance from Judaism became necessary. That severance involved them in sore and bitter trials. As Jews they suffered at the hands of Rome; as converted Jews they suffered at the hands of their countrymen. In these dire circumstances the writer of this epistle sets before them facts which were calculated to enable them to endure their afflictions joyfully; and which would lead them to take the decisive step that would openly identify them with the rejected Nazarene (chap. 13. 12-13).

Nothing can exceed the wisdom and tenderness by which the apostle seeks to accomplish his end. He does not decry or denounce: on the other hand he dwells on the good things of Judaism, but points out that they are eclipsed by the better things o

Christianity. "No writer has developed with such grace and power the thought that the new dispensation was not the ruinous overthrow, but the glorious fulfilment of the old. In place of the whole system of material things, hallowed by the history of centuries, the Hebrews were called upon to realise the blessedness and glory of the Person who is the antitype of it all. Yet this conclusion was brought home to the Jew and the Jewish Christian so gently, so considerately, so skilfully, so gradually, that the reader was drawn along as by a golden chain of irresistible reasoning without one violent wrench of his prejudices, or one rude shock to his lifelong convictions."

On the other hand Paul makes it equally clear that to abandon Christ would be to abandon the complete for the imperfect, the valid for the invalid, the original for the copy, the eternal for the transient. Here is the explanation of what every reader of this epistle has observed, namely, that "the most awful warnings to be found in the book of God are followed by tenderest remonstrance and encouragement; and skies black with threatened doom are spanned by loveliest rainbows of promise."

V. The Argument of the Epistle.

The main argument of the epistle is to show how transcendently the Mediator of the new covenant excels the mediator of the old. The Lord Jesus excels Aaron in personal fitness, in official greatness, in the sacrifice which He offered, and in the results which He secured. In contrast to the high priest of Israel who remained standing because his work was never finished (chap. 10. 11), this Man—the man Christ Jesus—after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God (chap. 10. 12). In contrast to the Aaronic priests who were not suffered to continue by reason of death, the Lord

Jesu. has an untransferable priesthood and lives for evermore (Hebrews 7. 23-25). Because of these things the writer makes it clear that the relation of Judaism to Christianity is "not that of error to truth but that of the bud to the flower, of the child to the man, of the dawn to the day, of the acorn which perishes when it has germinated, to the oak which it has produced."

VI. Key-words of the Epistle.

We have seen that the key-doctrine of Hebrews is the transcendent glory of the Mediator of the new covenant and the perfection and finality of His redemptive work. I desire now to point out some of the key-words and phrases which clearly indicate these two things.

(a). The first is the word "Better." The Lord Jesus is shown to be better than angels (chap. 1), Moses (chap. 3), Joshua (chap. 4), and Aaron (chap. 7). As a consequence, those to whom this epistle was written had a better hope (7.19), a better covenant (8. 6), better promises (8. 6), a better sacrifice (9. 23), better substance (10. 34), a better country (11. 16), a better resurrection (11. 35), and a better thing (11. 40).

(b). The word "Once" as applied to the finished work of Christ (7. 27 ; 9. 12, 26, 28). The Jewish high priest offered sacrifices once every year (9. 7) ; the Lord Jesus offered Himself once for all (10. 10). The word means, therefore, that the offering of Christ was *one* for all, and *once* for all.

(c). The word "Eternal" which indicates that upon everything that the Redeemer touches He stamps eternity (chap. 5. 9 ; 7. 16, 17 ; 9. 12, 15 ; 13. 20).

(d). The phrase "We have." It shows us that we possess a great high priest (4. 14), strong consolation (6. 18), a sure anchor (6. 19), boldness to enter into the holiest (10. 19), an enduring substance (10. 34), and an altar (13. 10).

(e). The phrase "Let us." The former phrase sets forth our privileges; this one describes our responsibilities. "We have . . . therefore let us"; because we possess let us appropriate (Obadiah 17). Let us therefore fear (4. 1), labour (4. 11), hold fast (4. 14), come boldly (4. 16), go on (6. 1), draw near (10. 22), consider (10. 24), lay aside (12. 1), run (12. 1), have grace (12. 28), go forth (13. 13), offer (13. 15). These injunctions begin with fear and end with praise.

VII. Christ in Hebrews.

Of the scriptures generally and of Hebrews in particular, it may be said that their leaves like one great sunflower turn to Christ the light. "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the two sides of the arched Temple of Truth, and are mutually dependent and complementary; all their glories are unveiled in Christ. Do you know the joy of walking through the Old Testament with Christ? Can you imagine a lover coming from a far country bringing with him pictures of his home and all its surroundings and furnishings; and, more important than all, pictures of his father and many of his friends? With what joy and pride would he exhibit his pictures to his prospective bride in order that she might be able to anticipate the glories of the home awaiting her! The Old Testament is a collection of just such pictures. It is made up of "patterns of things in the heavens"; and when the divine Photographer explains them, we are able through them to realise the glories of "the heavenly things themselves."

“ No temple made with hands, His place of service is ;
In heaven itself He stands, a heavenly priesthood
His :
In Him the shadows of the Law are all fulfilled,
And now withdraw.”

VIII. Its message for modern Christians.

The present enemies of the Church who are seeking to undermine the fundamental truths of Christianity are but first century foes with twentieth century faces ; and for this reason, as Dr. Westcott has pointed out, “ every student of this epistle must feel that it deals in a peculiar degree with the thoughts and trials of our own day.”

(a). It stresses the perfect Deity and perfect Humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a sevenfold proof of His Deity in chapter 1 ; and a sevenfold proof of His Humanity in chapter 2. “ There is no attempt,” says Dr. Pierson, “ to reconcile the apparent paradox ; the two aspects of this duality are put before us, the two natures combined in one personality as they have never been before, constituting Him a wholly unique Person.” John 1 sets forth His co-equality with the Father ; Colossians 1, His pre-eminence in all things ; Hebrews 1, His superiority to earthly prophets and heavenly intelligences.

(b). It emphasises the perfection of the finished work of Christ. Rationalism presents a Christ without a cross ; Ritualism, a cross without a Christ. This epistle has an answer to each of these heresies ; for it declares that the Jesus of history is the Christ of Calvary ; and that the cross takes significance and value only because of the Person who hung upon it.

“Blest cross, blest sepulchre, blest rather be,
The Man who there was put to shame for me.”

The sacrifices of the Levitical system were imperfect (chap. 10. 2-3), and inefficacious (verse 4). In contrast to them stands the one sacrifice of the Redeemer which shall never be repeated, and which perfects forever them that are sanctified (chap. 10. 14).

(c). It illustrates the value of the Old Testament Scriptures. The custodianship of the living oracles of God was the supreme glory of the Jewish nation (Romans 3. 2); and hence, although the writer of Hebrews fears that his readers may reject Christ, he does not fear that they will reject his numerous appeals to the Old Testament. In this epistle, therefore, we have not so much new truth, as new light on old truths; not so much fresh revelation as fuller explanation of the Scriptures which they already possessed. Westcott finely observes that “the writer of the epistle everywhere assumes that there is a spiritual meaning in the whole record of the Old Testament. This deeper sense is recognised in the history, both personal (chap. 7. 1), and national (chap. 4. 1), and in the Mosaic ritual (chap. 9. 8). Every detail in the record is treated as significant; and even the silence of the narrative suggests important thoughts (chap. 7. 3).”

The divine division of the ancient scriptures is threefold: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Our author quotes from each of these sections and ascribes their authorship to the Holy Spirit of God (compare Heb. 9. 8—Exodus 30. 10; Hebrews 10. 15—Jeremiah 31. 33-34; Hebrews 3. 7—Psalm 95. 7-10).

(d). It tells of full provision for the journey home. Taking what is described in chapter 4 alone, we find that:—

- (1). We may enter now into the rest of God (verse 3).
- (2). Our faithful friend and critic is the word of God (verse 12).
- (3). Our great High Priest is the Son of God (verse 14).
- (4). We have unrestricted access to the presence of God (verse 16).

(e). It imparts peace amidst the world's unrest. Dr. Moule says: "It bears the impress of a time of severe sifting; a time when foundations were challenged and individual faith put to even agonising proofs. Such a writing must have a voice articulate and sympathetic for a period like ours." Indeed it has. The siege of Jerusalem, terrible though it was, is as child's play compared with what lies ahead of the world to-day; and as we see the hour rapidly approaching, we are driven once again to the things which are unshakeable (12. 27-28), and to rest 'neath the shadow of God's wing until we enter the heavenly land.

IX. Hebrews and other Scriptures.

Besides being an inspired commentary on the whole of the Levitical system, Hebrews bears very definite relations to other parts of God's word.

(a). It has been called "the fifth gospel." Four describe the Saviour's ministry on earth—His finished work upon the cross; this describes His ministry in heaven—His unfinished work upon the throne (John 19. 30; Hebrews 7. 25). We can thus trace our Lord from the moment He became incarnate, down to the hour of His second coming: Birth (Matthew 1 and 2); Earthly Life (chapters 3 to 26); Death (chapter 27); Resurrection (chapter 28); Ascension (Acts 1); Life in Heaven (Hebrews 7); Return (Hebrews 9).

(b). The epistle to the Romans deals with the question of righteousness, shows how we are justified,

and sets forth the way of God's approach to man (Romans 3. 25; Exodus 25. 21-22). The epistle to the Hebrews deals with the question of holiness, shows how we are sanctified, and describes the way of man's approach to God (Hebrews 10. 19-22). The back-ground of Romans is a Law-court; that of Hebrews, the ancient Tabernacle.

(c). Hebrews describes the priesthood of Christ (chap. 9. 24); and 1 John, His advocacy (chap. 2. 1). The first of these ministries has to do with our infirmities (Hebrews 4. 15); the second, with our failures and transgressions (1 John 1. 7). The former is like a fence at the top of the precipice—it is preventive; the latter is like a hospital at the bottom—it is restorative. In a word, the advocacy of Christ has to do with our liabilities; and the priesthood of Christ, with our disabilities.

(d). Prophecy, Priesthood, Kingship, and the Law, were the four main things in the history of the Israelitish people; and in the New Testament we find four books addressed to Jewish believers especially bearing on these things. 1 Peter speaks of the fulfilment of prophecy (chap. 1. 10-12); Hebrews shows that the shadows of the Levitical priesthood find their substance in Christ (chapters 7 to 10); the Gospel of Matthew tells them that their King has come (chap. 2. 1-2); and the epistle of James, that the ten words of Sinai find their truest fulfilment in those who continue in the perfect law of liberty (1. 25; 2. 8).

(e). Dr. Thomas has pointed out that our epistle is one of four which, if apprehended in living power, will lead the soul into the uninterrupted joy of shadowless communion with the Lord. "Romans tells of coming out of bondage; Ephesians, of entering into the banqueting-house; Hebrews, of going up to the throne; and first John, of abiding in the presence of God."

X. Divisions of the

I. *Exposition* (1 to 10. 18).

1. The superiority of Christ to the Prophets. The finality of His message; the completeness of His work.
Chap. 1. 1-3.
2. His superiority to the angelic hosts.
Chap. 1.4 to 2. 18.
3. Parenthetical: First warning: Neglect and its consequences.
Chap. 2. 1-4.
4. His superiority to Moses and Joshua.
Chap. 3. 1 to 4. 18.
5. Parenthetical: Second warning: Unbelief and its consequences.
Chap. 3. 7 to 4. 18.
6. His superiority to Aaron and Melchisedec.
Chap. 4. 14 to 7. 25.
7. Parenthetical: Third warning: Apostacy and its consequences.
Chap. 5. 11 to 6. 20.
8. The more excellent Ministry, the better Covenant, and the Sacrifice of nobler Name.
Chap. 8. 1 to 10. 18.

“ I must go in again to see my Father’s face,
And taste again the riches of His grace ;”

Epistle to the Hebrews.

II. *Exhortation* (10. 19 to 13. 25).

1. Draw near; hold fast; consider one another; don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together.
Chap. 10. 19-25.
2. Parenthetical: Fourth warning; Wilful sin and its consequences.
Chap. 10. 26-39.
3. The cloud of witnesses: the peerless Lord.
Chap. 11. 1 to 12. 3.
4. Chastisement: its purpose, meaning, and value.
Chap. 12. 4-11.
5. Exhortations based on the foregoing.
Chap. 12. 12-14.
6. Parenthetical: Fifth warning: Indifference and its consequences.
Chap. 12. 15-29.
7. Exhortations to sanctified and sacrificial living.
Chap. 13. 1-17.
8. Concluding words, and prayer for the readers.
Chap. 13. 18-25.

“I must go out again His wondrous power to tell,
Which saves from sin and death and hell.”

XI. Warnings.

The writer describes the epistle as a word of exhortation (Hebrews 13. 22); and in keeping with that we find in its thirteen chapters a fivefold note of warning and alarm. This is most illuminatingly explained in an article, by Dr. Robert Clark, which I read in an American magazine. He says: "There are five sections that come in parenthetically; they do not advance the narrative; the writer pauses to exhort us and to warn us against certain sins. These parentheses are instructive, they are drawn from biblical events, and they are progressive and cumulative in their teaching. Two things are to be noticed in each: the biblical background, and the sin against which we are warned:

<i>Chapters.</i>	<i>Background.</i>	<i>The Sin.</i>
2. 1-4	Sinai and Calvary.	Neglect.
3. 7-4. 13.	Wilderness and Rest of God.	Unbelief.
5. 11-6. 20.	Canaan and Fruits of Land.	Apostasy.
10. 26-39.	Sanctuary and its Entrance.	Wilful sin.
12. 15-29.	New Jerusalem and Mount Zion.	Indifference.

These exhortations illustrate a well-known law of the human mind: Neglect will give place to unbelief, unbelief to apostasy, apostasy to wilful sin, and wilful sin to indifference." While some of these warnings have specific reference to the people to whom, and the circumstances in which, they were originally given, the dangers against which they guard are, in various forms, existent to this day.

12. The epistle has 303 verses which can be read slowly in one hour. Repeated readings of it as a whole will simplify the study of some of its most difficult parts.

CHAPTER I.

Christ: superior to the prophets

(1. 1-3).

“ God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds ; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

THESE great words introduce us to the theme upon which the writer is going to dwell. The noble eloquence of the language is equalled only by the profundity of the thoughts which it expresses ; for in these opening verses we have in brief and in germ all those wonderful unfoldings which the apostle subsequently develops and expands.

Careful examination of the words shows that they contain a sevenfold unveiling of the person of Christ. He is said to be :

(1). Divine Spokesman	verse 2 ;
(2). Universal Heir	„ 2 ;
(3). Creator of the world	„ 2 ;
(4). Revealer of God	„ 3 ;
(5). Upholder of the universe	„ 3 ;
(6). Redeemer of man	„ 3 ;
(7). Enthroned Lord	„ 3.

The words before us describe how the Redeemer stands related to God, to creation, and to His people.

“ His relation to God is described by the words Son, Manifestation, Counterpart ; His relation to creation, by the words Creator, Sustainer, Possessor ; and His relation to His people, by the words Prophet, Priest, and King.”

Divine Spokesman.

Verse 1 assumes two things, namely, that God exists, and that He has revealed Himself to men. The central declaration of the whole passage is made in three of its outstanding words : “ God . . . hath . . . spoken.” What is here tacitly assumed, is in chapter 11. 6 definitely affirmed : “ God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

The words show us also the times at which, the method by which, the persons to whom, and the persons by whom, God spoke :

<i>Occasions.</i>	<i>Method.</i>	<i>Persons.</i>	<i>Agents.</i>
1. In times past.	Multifariously.	Unto the fathers.	By the prophets.
2. These last days.	Finally.	Unto us.	By His Son.

(a). “ At sundry times.” Take one illustration. The divine testimony regarding the coming of Christ extended over a period of four thousand years. He was to be the Seed of the woman, Genesis 3. 15 ; of the line of Abraham, Genesis 12. 3 ; of the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49, 10 ; and of the family of David, Psalm 132. 11. He would be born of a virgin, Isaiah 7 ; and in Bethlehem of Judea, Micah 5. Daniel foretold the time of His appearance, Daniel 9. 26 ; Zechariah, the manner of His betrayal, Zech. 11. 12 ; Isaiah, that He would intercede for the transgressors and occupy a rich man’s grave, Isaiah 53. 9-12 ; and David, that He would be crucified,

Psalm 22. 16. It was on the principle of here a little, there a little; until, by the time that the Old Testament Scriptures were complete, we have a full length portrait of the Redeemer that was to come.

(b). "In divers manners." These old time revelations were not only fragmentary; they were also multifarious. They were given to Abraham by promise and in vision; to Jacob in dreams; to Moses in the Law; to Aaron at the mercy-seat; to David by the word on the tongue; to Elijah in the still small voice; and to the prophets generally by the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1. 10-11).

(c). God has now spoken by His Son; and comparison of the formula with which the prophets prefaced their messages with that which the Master used, reveals the essential difference between them. The ancient messengers said: "Thus saith the Lord"; the Lord Jesus began with the words: "I say unto you." All Old Testament revelation converged on Him (John 1. 45); all New Testament revelation radiates from Him (John 14. 9).

(d). It was the same God who spoke by the prophets and in the Son. The revelations through the messengers of the past were "incomplete but never inaccurate, progressive but never final." The revelation through the One who fully declared God is characterised by completeness, perfection, and finality.

Heir : Creator : Revealer : Upholder.

Of the next four glories of Christ which these verses unfold—Heir, Creator, Revealer, Upholder—Saphir has said that the apostle leads us "(1) to the *end* of all history: He is appointed heir of all things; (2) to the *beginning* of all history: by Him God made the worlds; (3) *before* all history: He is the brightness

of God's glory and the express image of His person ; (4) *throughout* all history : He upholdeth all things by the word of His power." It was the thought that He who wore the crown of thorns will shortly put on the diadem of universal empire, which drew from Cowper his well-known lines :

" Come then, and, added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy ! It was Thine
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth ;
And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value by Thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim Thee King, and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen,
Dipp'd in the fountain of eternal love."

The visible image of the invisible God.

I call special attention to the words which describe the Lord Jesus as the revealer of God. They affirm that He is " the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance " (verse 3 R.V.). While it is perfectly true that :

" The higher mysteries of His fame the creature's grasp transcend,"

the words before us now explain a great deal. They corroborate the claim which was made by our Lord and which is made by the writers of the New Testament, that He was God in human form. Guided by them, the framers of the Nicene Creed were perfectly justified in affirming Him to be " Light of Light, Very God of Very God."

" Effulgence " implies identity of nature ; " Image," as clearly implies independent personality. From the first we learn that He was a divine person ; from the second, that He was a distinct person. " In the

beginning was the Word"—there is His eternity; "and the Word was with God"—there is His personality; "and the Word was God"—there is His deity. As the light which proceeds from the sun is of the same essence as the sun; so, says the Lord Jesus: "I proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8. 42; 10. 30; 16. 28). As the impression of an engraving on a die or a seal is an exact image of the engraving or seal, so Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. (Colossians 1. 15). And hence His claim: "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (John 14. 9).

"These two images complete each other," says Dr. Meyer. "You might argue from the first, that as the ray is only part of the sun, so Christ is only part of God; but this mistake is corrected by the second, for an impression must be co-extensive with the seal. You might argue from the second, that as the impression might be made on a very inferior material, so Christ's nature was a very unworthy vehicle of the divine glory; but this mistake is corrected by the first, for a beam is of the same texture as the sun. Co-extensive with God, of the same nature as God—thus is Jesus Christ."

Redeemer : Enthroned Lord.

Verse 3 further brings Him before us as Redeemer of man, and as exalted Lord. "When he had by himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

(a). It should be noted that in Hebrews, the finished work of Christ is viewed in its eternal aspects; not so much His death and resurrection, as His ascension and enthronement. There is only one specific reference to the Cross (chapter 12. 2); and only one to the Resurrection (chapter 13. 20). In the verse

before us "the mode and process of redemption are not intimated; the result alone is stated in proof of the sufficiency of Him who undertook the work. The Son had quitted heaven for a purpose. That purpose was to put away His people's sins. The purpose having been effected, He resumed His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high in token of its absolute and everlasting completion."

(b). Enthroned Lord. Our Saviour is now in the place of power (Ephesians 1. 18-20), of reward (Philippians 2. 9), and of intercession (Romans 8. 34); and He desires that we should set our affections there (Colossians 3. 1). An instructive example of how, if we obey that last-named injunction, we can successfully meet the sorrows of life, is found in Acts 7. 55-60. Four times in Hebrews is He said to be at the right hand of God:

- (1). Victorious Lord (chapter 1. 3);
- (2). Heavenly priest (chapter 8. 1);
- (3). Completed sacrifice (chapter 10. 12);
- (4). Perfect example (chapter 12. 2).

Prophet : Priest : King.

Viewed from another angle, these verses bring our Lord before us in His prophetic, mediatorial, and regal offices. He is (1) the Prophet like unto Moses whom God said He would raise up and to whom the people would hearken (Deut. 18. 18; Matt. 17. 5; Heb. 1. 2); (2) the One who made purification for sins and who is thus the anti-type of Aaron, the priest of Israel (Lev. 16; Heb. 1. 3 R.V.); (3) the One who, like Melchisedec, unites the sanctity of priesthood with the dignity of kingship, and who in consequence has sat down on the right hand of God.

We have thus looked at our Lord's Eternal glories (John 17. 5) ; at His Incarnation glories (John 1. 14) ; and at His Redemption glories (Rev. 5. 9-14). From all eternity He wore the insignia of royalty ; as the universal Heir He assumed the crowns of creation and providence ; but, stooping to Calvary with those glittering crowns on His brow He acquired yet another—the crown of redemption ; a crown which is studded with jewels picked up from the mire of earth and which is the brightest of them all. Well may we say with worshipping hearts : “ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”



CHAPTER II.

Christ: Superior to the Angels

(1. 4-14).

HAVING shown the superiority of Christ to the prophets—the earthly messengers of the past, the apostle now proceeds to set forth His superiority to the angels—the heavenly messengers of the present. It was absolutely essential that he should do this; for at the time that this epistle was written there was a strong tendency among the Jews unduly to exalt the angelic hosts. They boasted that the Law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator (Galatians 3. 19; Acts 7. 53); and contemporary history shows that the Jewish sect of the Essenes—to whom doubtless Paul refers in Colossians 2. 18-19—worshipped these heavenly beings. In a superb and masterly way, and on principles with which they would readily agree—appeal to the oracles of God—our author goes on to show that the Jesus of history, the Messiah of Israel, is as far above the angels as the Creator is above the creature; and that by virtue of His humiliation and death and their union with Him in resurrection life, these Hebrew believers were themselves destined to a position which is as far above that of the angels, as the heir of a mansion is above the servants in the mansion.

We are now, therefore, to listen to the testimony of the written word in this matter (1. 4-14); and, after pausing to consider the relative importance of the words spoken by the angels and by the Lord

(2. 1-4), to trace His wondrous descent from Heaven to Bethlehem, and from Golgotha and Calvary to the throne of universal empire (2. 5-10). We shall also be informed of the blessings which come to redeemed humanity because of these things (2. 11-18).

I. The testimony of Scripture.

Christ is better than angels because there are predicated of Him, things which could be said of only God Himself. He is :

- | | | | |
|------|---------------------|-----|-----------|
| (1). | God the Son | ... | verse 5 ; |
| (2). | He receives worship | .. | 6-7 ; |
| (3). | He is righteous | ... | 8-9 ; |
| (4). | He is Jehovah | ... | 10 ; |
| (5). | He is Creator | ... | 10 ; |
| (6). | He is Eternal | ... | 11 ; |
| (7). | He is Immutable | ... | 12 ; |
| (8). | He is Sovereign | ... | 13-14. |

“ He is related to these heavenly intelligences simply as the Author of their being (Col. 1. 16) ; while the appointed duties of the angels are to worship His person and to serve His servants (verses 6 and 14).”

(1). Christ is the Object of angelic worship. Verse 6.

“ Let all the angels of God worship Him.” When idolators sought to worship Barnabas and Paul, these two men of God instantly and sternly forbid them (Acts 14. 8-18) ; and when the seer of Patmos, overwhelmed by what he heard and saw, fell at the feet of one of these celestial messengers to do him homage, he also was restrained. “ I, John, saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto

me : ' See thou do it not ; for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book : worship God ' " (Rev. 22. 8-9).

In contrast with all this we find the Lord Jesus during His earthly sojourn receiving the worship of men and women (Matthew 8. 2 ; 9. 18 ; 15. 25 ; 20. 20 ; 28. 9) ; while, of the heavenly hosts, John tells us that he beheld and " heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice : Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing " (Rev. 5. 11-13).

(2). We are the Objects of angelic care.

Verse 14.

" Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ? " That the people of God in ancient times were the subjects of angelic ministry is one of the clearly stated truths of the Old Testament. The founder of the Jewish nation experienced their protection and care (Gen. 28. 12 ; 32. 1) ; so did Daniel (6. 22) and many others. It is affirmed that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them (Psalm 34. 7) ; and of those that make the Most High their refuge and habitation, it is stated that He gives His angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways (Psalm 91. 10-13).

They were specially active during the earthly life of Christ :

1. They announced His coming, to Mary
(Luke 1. 26-38).
2. They heralded His birth, to the shepherds
(Luke 2. 9-14).
3. They ministered to Him after the Temptation
(Matt. 4. 11).
4. They strengthened Him in the Garden
(Luke 22. 43).
5. They announced His resurrection from the dead
(Matt. 28. 1-7).

When we pass to the book of Acts which records the first thirty years of Christian work and testimony we find seven instances of angelic intervention :

1. Two of them instructed the wondering disciples
Chap. 1. 10-11.
2. Another liberated the imprisoned apostles
Chap. 5. 19.
3. One of them led Philip to an earnest enquirer
Chap. 8. 26.
4. Another came to Cornelius in his perplexity
Chap. 10. 3-7.
5. Another broke Peter's fetters and set him free
Chap. 12. 7-10.
6. One of them executed God's judgment on Herod
Chap. 12. 23.
7. Another assured Paul of deliverance from danger
Chap. 27. 23.

These are practical illustrations of what is affirmed in Hebrews 1. 14. May it not be that in our recoil from the idolatrous system which worships angels, we have gone to the other extreme and ignored their existence altogether? From the Scriptures which we have just examined, however, nothing is more certain than that these holy messengers of God are concerned about our material well-being; just as other scriptures make it clear that the Holy Spirit

is concerned about our spiritual well-being. "It is a marvellous truth, full of sweetness, yet full of solemnity" says Mrs. Needham, "that these innumerable hosts of heaven are enlisted to serve the saints on earth. The prophetic ladder let down from heaven, upon which Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending, has been appropriated by Jesus unto Himself. Communication with heaven, interrupted by sin, has been restored through Him. For Him who is the Lord of angels, these unseen messengers are ever travelling the shining pathway bearing gifts and succour from the distant bridegroom to His bereaved and lonely bride."

It should be noted that since it has pleased God to commit to His redeemed people the ministry of reconciliation, we never find an angel preaching the gospel of the grace of God. When the Ethiopian treasurer needed someone to guide him to the Saviour, the angel of the Lord did not do it, but summoned Philip, the evangelist, to do it (Acts 8. 26-35). When an angel came to Cornelius, he did not announce the glad tidings, but said: "Send men to Joppa and call for one Simon . . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10. 3-6). The reason for this is obvious. Angels have no experience of the power and blessedness of redeeming grace; men and women have.

"Not to angels but men, let us praise Him again,
For the love that gave Jesus to die."

The unchanging Christ. (Verses 10-12)

Before we pass from this wonderful chapter, let us remind ourselves that the One who thus receives the worship of the angelic hosts, and who commissions them to look after us as we journey to meet Him, is our immutable, unchanging Lord. In a day like the

present when everything that can be shaken is being shaken, how unutterably blessed it is to turn to Him of whom it is said : "Thou remainest ; Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail." Compared with Him the firm earth with its age-enduring mountains is as a changing, fading vesture ; the difference between it and Him is the difference between dust and Deity. Never did the vanity and transience of all that is of earth come home to me with such power as it did when, a few years ago, I stood on the ruins of Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt, the oldest city of the world. On the place from which at one time went forth edicts that shook the earth, and on which in bygone ages stood some of the noblest monuments of man's creation, are now to be found merely the outcroppings of the ruined city. Too low they build, who build beneath the sky.

" We turn to dust and all our mightiest works die too ;
 The deep foundations that we lay, time ploughs them up
 And not a speck remains. We build with what we deem
 Eternal rock : a distant age asks where the fabric stood ;
 And in the dust, sifted and searched in vain,
 The undiscoverable secret sleeps."

" The cloud-capped towers of earth, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve ; and like the baseless fabric of a dream, leave not a rack behind."

But "Thou remainest." Matchless, wonderful, comfort-laden words ! "As in childlike faith we look up into His face and utter them, He looks down into our stricken hearts and with tender compassion answers back : 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" Friends and fellow-labourers pass away ; long-loved brethren and fellow-pilgrims, whose company has brightened and cheered the desert pathway, leave us ; but "Thou remainest." Fellowships and helps to spiritual life decline, dry up, and fade away,

like desert wells in time of drought ; but " Thou "—the source, the spring of all—" remainest." O ! my soul, why then should'st thou repine ? Why mourn and lament over that which is gone, when so much remains ? May it not be that He who loves thee, saw that too fondly thou wast clinging to these channels through which He had oft-times ministered of His fulness to thee, and that thou wast unconsciously turning away from Himself to seek thy portion in the creature ? Then it was that He put forth His hand, and withered up thy gourd, that He might draw thee closer to His side to find in Himself more than all. It was thus with the prophet of old, when, in the midst of spoiling and violence, strife and contention, with blasted vines and empty stalls, he was able with chastened joy to sing : " Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation " (Hab. 3. 17-18). The secret was, he had learned—not theoretically, but experimentally, not as a doctrine in the Book, but as a conscious blessed reality in his soul, yielding strength and gladness—that Jehovah, his God, was still the same—that " Thou remainest." Thus may it be with thee O my soul, and with all the pilgrim host, as they journey along the valley of Baca—the vale of weeping—toward the city where God's own hand shall wipe all tears away. May we prove from day to day, amid the wreck, the ruin, and the decay of all earthly things, that " Thou remainest."

" Thou remainest." Oh ! how precious
 Are these words in this dark day ;
 All things here are changing, fleeting,
 Bear the stamp of sad decay :
 Strangers coming, friends departing ; Thou dost
 ever with us stay.

Ah ! how slow our hearts in learning
That with Thee no changes are ;
That no sins of ours, nor failure,
Thy set purposes can mar :
But Thy thoughts than ours are higher as the
heaven from earth is far.

Man's brief days will soon be numbered,
Ended as a tale that's told,
Earth's fair landscapes, heaven's sweet
azure,
Like a scroll together rolled :
' They shall perish, Thou remainest,' whose out-
goings are of old.

We should perish likewise, only
We in Thee have found our part ;
And our names are graven deeply
On Thy changeless loving heart :
Yesterday — to-day — forever ; Jesus ! — still
the same Thou art."



CHAPTER III.

Neglect: The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ 2. 1-18.

THE benefits which accrue to us from the great salvation of which this section speaks are set forth in the second chapter of Hebrews in a three-fold way :

1. Deliverance from satanic power verses 14-15 ;
2. Succour in hours of trial „ 17-18 ;
3. Ultimate arrival in the heavenly
 land „ 10.

It is with the central of these three aspects of salvation that the writer is at present concerned.

Sir Robert Anderson has very ably pointed out that the epistle to the Hebrews begins doctrinally at the point which the Israelites reached typically and actually in the 24th chapter of Exodus. “Moses, the mediator of the covenant, having made purification for the sins of the people, went up to God. This was the type, the shadow, of which we have in Hebrews the fulfilment, the reality ; for when the Son of God had made purification for sins by the blood of the everlasting covenant, He went up to God and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here, then, it is that Hebrews takes up the story of redemption—not at the twelfth chapter of Exodus, but at the twenty-fourth. The Passover has no place in

the doctrine of the epistle. The purpose of Hebrews is to teach how sinners, redeemed from both the penalty and the bondage of sin, and brought into covenant relationship with God, can be kept on their wilderness way as 'holy brethren partakers of a heavenly calling' (chap. 3. 1.).

The people to whom this epistle was written, were in danger of drifting away from these things (verse 1. R.V.). Within their reach were unlimited resources (chap. 7. 25); but the strong current which was running, was carrying them away from the gospel of Christ which provided these resources, to the Dead Sea of Judaism. The two words furnished by the A.V. and R.V. show the greatness of the peril to which they were exposing themselves. They were "neglecting" the great salvation; and he warns them that "in persons grafted with a serious charge, negligence is a crime." They were "drifting," and he seeks to rouse them to effort. For, as Lord Bacon reminds us: "things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they do not alter for the better designedly."

He gives two reasons for his warning and appeal: (1) the greatness of the One by whom the salvation was proclaimed; and (2) the serious consequences which follow neglect. The stirring exhortation which these verses contain, resembles very strongly the one which Paul gave to Timothy (1 Timothy 4. 16).

Of the great salvation itself there are five things which should ever be remembered:

1. The infinite cost at which it was purchased.
2. The greatness of the danger from which it rescues.
3. The simplicity of the method by which it is appropriated.

4. The present happiness of those by whom it is possessed.
5. The permanence of the blessedness to which it leads.

————— ::o: —————

The thread of the argument is now lifted again ; and the writer proceeds to meet a difficulty which was a peculiarly Jewish one ; namely, that by His humiliation, our Lord became inferior to angels. He shows that when the Son of God became the Son of Man, it was in order that the sons of men might become sons of God ; and that the Old Testament disclosures of the dominion with which man was originally invested, and which was temporarily lost through sin, will be given again in the Millennial age to the Man Christ Jesus. The purpose of God in man's creation, the failure of man through sin, and the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer and of redeemed humanity in Him—these, then, are the things which are to engage us now.

The world to come (chapter 2. 5).

It had been said (chapter 1. 6 R.V.M.) that “ when he again bringeth in the First-born into the inhabited earth he saith : “ And let all the angels of God worship him.” He now says that “ unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the inhabited earth to come whereof we speak ” (2. 5. R.V.). These scriptures clearly indicate that it is to the existing habitable earth that the writer refers, but to that earth at a time still future—“ the world to come.” We shall see presently that he is referring to the Millennial age, when at His second coming to reign, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Rev. 11. 15).

EARTHLY DOMINION GIVEN TO MAN.**(1) Foretold in Holy Scripture of Man.
(verses 6-8).**

The writer shows that the sovereignty of the world was originally given to man, and proves this by a quotation from Psalm 8 which is a lyrical echo of Genesis 1. "But one in a certain place testified, saying: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." From the beginning, God had a very glorious destiny for the human race. He placed the sceptre of dominion in man's hand, and the crown of sovereignty on his brow. He was also "mindful" of him; giving him, as Dr. Meyer eloquently says: "The sun to labour for him as a very Hercules; the moon to light his nights, or lead the waters round the earth in tides, cleansing his coasts; elements of nature to be his slaves and messengers; flowers to scent his path; fruits to please his taste; birds to sing for him; fish to feed him; beasts to toil for him and to carry him. Not a cringing slave, but a king crowned with the glory of rule, and with the honour of universal supremacy. Only a little lower than angels; because they are not, like him, encumbered with flesh and blood. This is man as God made him to be." Here doubtless is the explanation of that "Paradise hunger" which ever and anon possesses the hearts of thoughtful men and women, like the sigh of the sea-shell longing for its ocean home.

(2) Forfeited because of sin by man (verse 8).

"But now we see not yet all things put under him." If the words which we have just considered turn us

to Genesis 1, those now before us just as really recall Genesis 3. The entrance of sin into the world has delayed the purposes of God for man who is to-day characterised by servitude and not by sovereignty, by degradation and not by dignity. The very beasts of the forest dispute his supremacy; while the histories and hieroglyphics of the empires of the past show him prostrating himself in degrading worship before the animals over which he was placed as tributary king (Romans 1. 23). Whilst, therefore, Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 bear witness to the royalty with which he was originally endowed, the facts of life show how tragically he has failed; and every philosophy of humanity which leaves out of account the one or the other is imperfect and incomplete. These things "answer alike to the noblest aspiration and to the saddest experience."

"Not yet." The discoveries of our Newtons, and Edisons, and Marconis, won through patient and long continued toil, are but infinitesimal fractions of those wonderful secrets of Nature which would have been to man as an open book, but for the tragedy of the Fall.

(3) Fulfilled in Israel's Messiah as man (verses 9-10).

"But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death"—which is the penalty of sin—"for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

In these words "transition is made from mankind in general to the man Christ Jesus"; from the first Adam, to the One of whom he was a type (Romans 5. 14). Psalm 8, therefore, is prophetic as well as historical; Christological as well as anthropological. It is quoted four times in the New Testament as applying to Christ (Matt. 21. 16; 1 Cor. 15. 27; Eph. 1. 22; Heb. 2. 8); and it contains for the first time in the Bible, a title which is repeatedly used of the Lord Jesus—"the Son of Man." We are thus led on from the first man by whom earth's sovereignty was lost, to the second Man—the Lord from heaven—by whom it is to be restored (1 Cor. 15. 47).

"O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came."

Incidentally, the words form another illustration of the profundity of Augustine's saying: "The New Testament lies concealed in the Old; and the Old stands revealed in the New."

There are, however, more serious consequences than the mere loss of earthly dominion involved in the Fall of man; for that dire event has separated him from God by the distance of death. Accordingly, we find that the two main things spoken of in verse 9 are: the Incarnation of Christ—"He was made for a little while lower than the angels"; and the Crucifixion of Christ—He tasted death for every man (R.V.). "The death which Christ had to taste was a death without God, a death which from the beginning God has denounced against sin, though now it is not the world of sinners which has to endure this God-forsaken death, but even He on whom the whole world's sin makes its assault, and in accomplishing His death attains its consummation" (Psalm 22. 1).

Exaltation followed that death as inevitably as day follows night; and so we find that verse 9 contains three things:

- (1). Humiliation —He was made lower than the angels.
- (2). Crucifixion —He tasted death for every man.
- (3). Coronation —He is crowned with glory and honour.

“ The Head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor’s brow.”

The apostle now goes on to show that just as the consequences of sin are far more serious than the mere loss of earthly dominion, so the blessings which flow from the death of the Redeemer are infinitely greater than those which were enjoyed in Eden. Indeed we are to see that that death is

- (4) Fraught with endless blessings for man
(verses 11-18).

These may be summarised as: Oneness; Brotherhood; Deliverance; Propitiation; Priesthood.

- (a) Oneness of the Sanctifier and the sanctified (verse 11).

“ Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” Mr. Lincoln finely suggests that the expression “all of one” refers to the type of the cherubim (a symbol of the Church of God) being fashioned out of the same solid piece of gold as was the mercy-seat itself. “They, as you are aware, were beaten out of one piece on the two ends of the

mercy-seat, supported by it, and bending down, as if in adoration over it (Exodus 37. 7). The Holy Ghost in this beautiful way, thus signifying that our new life was derived from Him who is our Mercy-seat, and that with Him in that precious character we are now one."

(b) A brotherhood of redeemed ones
(verses 11-13).

The Corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died (John 12. 24), and from its dissolution has sprung a rich and abundant harvest (John 20. 17). It should be noted that this chapter of Hebrews speaks of three relationships :

- (1). Sons (verse 10)—with which are associated the thoughts of chastening (Heb. 12. 5) and glory (1 John 3. 2).
- (2). Brethren (verses 11-12) : He is not ashamed to call us such.
- (8). Children (verse 13)—which brings us into the family of God (see the first epistle of John).

(c) Deliverance from the fear of death
(verses 14-15).

We learn from verse 14 that in order to accomplish redemption it was necessary that our Lord should become a Man—our "Kinsman." The Hebrew word "Goel" is variously translated "Kinsman," "Redeemer," and "Avenger"; and these three renderings tell the whole story of the Kinsman—Redeemer (Lev. 25; Numbers 35; Ruth 4). In order to reach us our Saviour took flesh and blood (verse 14)—He became our Kinsman; in order to redeem us He tasted death for every man (verse 9); and in resurrection power as our Avenger He triumphed over

our enemy, who up till then had held the power of death (verses 14-15).

**(d) Propitiation for the sins of the people
(verses 16-17).**

There are two main elements in atonement, namely, propitiation, and substitution. Because of the first, the preacher can declare to the world that the Lord Jesus gave Himself a ransom for *all* (1 Timothy 2. 6); because of the second, every man and woman that trusts Him can say: "He gave Himself for *me* (Gal. 2. 20).

(e) Succour for those who are tempted (verse 18).

In verses 17-18 we have the first mention of Priesthood—the subject which occupies so large a place in subsequent chapters of this epistle. It is mentioned now only to show that as Sacrifice and Priest in one, He can deal with our weakness as well as our sinfulness; that He can both cleanse the heart and empower the life.

" He is able "

1. To succour those that are tempted Hebrews 2. 18.
2. To keep us from falling Jude 24.
3. To save us to the uttermost Hebrews 7. 25.
4. To do beyond our asking or thinking
Ephesians 3. 20.
5. To subdue all things unto Himself
Phil. 3. 21.

REVIEW OF HEBREWS 1 AND 2.

The main facts about the Person of Christ which are revealed in these two chapters may now be summarised.

Chapter 1 :

Christ as God—the foundation of His sacrifice
 “ Better than the angels ” verse 4.

Chapter 2 :

Christ as Man—the foundation of His priesthood
 “ Lower than the angels ” verse 9.

This section of the epistle has unfolded to us His :

1. *Pre-existence*—He was associated with God in the creation of the universe (1. 2).
2. *Incarnation* —He became partaker of flesh and blood (2. 14).
3. *Suffering* —He suffered being tempted (2. 18).
4. *Crucifixion* —He tasted death for every man (2. 9).
5. *Ascension* —He sat down at the right hand of God (1. 3).
6. *Coronation* —He is crowned with glory and honour (2. 9).
7. *Reign* —Chapter 2. 8 anticipates the time when the last enemy shall be destroyed, and when He shall reign whose right it is.

“ Perfect through sufferings.”

It should be carefully noted that the perfection spoken of in chapter 2. 10 “ did not consist in the removing of any defects in His character for there were none ; but in gaining an experience in His human nature

that developed a perfect knowledge of all the conditions of life ; a perfect sympathy with men in their trials and temptations, and therefore a more tender and more intimate capacity to help them." Let us remember this when we find ourselves in the place of suffering and discipline.

" Thy Saviour hath passed through its portal before thee,
And the lamp of His love is thy guide through the gloom."



CHAPTER IV.

**Christ and Moses. Unbelief:
Wandering: Rest** (3. 1 to 4. 13).

THE outstanding theocratic privileges of the Jewish people were three in number: (1) the custodianship of the Law—the oracles of God (Romans 3. 1-2); (2) the land of Canaan (Joshua 1. 2); (3) the Levitical priesthood, by means of which they had access to God through a divinely chosen representative (Exodus 28. 1); and connected with which was a sanctuary (Exodus 25. 8) and an elaborate system of sacrifices (Leviticus 1 to 7). The Law was given by Moses; the land was conquered by Joshua; the priesthood was vested in Aaron. In his unfolding of the transcendent glory of Christianity, the writer of the Hebrews devotes the remainder of the expository section of the epistle to showing that the Lord Jesus is greater than Moses (chap. 3); than Joshua (chap. 4); than Aaron (chapters 5-7); and that the worldly sanctuary and ineffective sacrifices of Judaism are displaced by the heavenly sanctuary and the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ (chapters 8-10. 18).

I. Moses 3. 1-6.

The first of these three great names is Moses; and since the apostle has already demonstrated the superiority of Christ to the angels—the heavenly agents employed in the giving of the Law, he proceeds now to show our Lord's superiority to Moses—the human agent who received the Law. For,

although it might be argued that the first of these demonstrations rendered the second unnecessary, the name of the great Lawgiver was held in such veneration by the Jews that the comparison of Moses and Christ required separate and independent treatment. He accomplishes his task—which was both delicate and difficult—with consummate wisdom and tact.

Before instituting the comparison, however, he directs the gaze of his readers to the heavens; and the language which he uses in doing so, reveals how vitally their destiny is linked with that of the ascended Lord (see carefully chapter 3. 1). “Wherefore”—the deduction which he is about to make is based on what he has already taught them; “holy brethren”—these words sum up the twofold statement of chapter 2. 11; “partakers of the heavenly calling”—there is suggested the contrast which exists between their earthly calling as Jews and their heavenly one as Christians; “consider”—attentively survey; for the look which brought them salvation (Isaiah 45. 22) must now be perpetuated into the earnest and lifelong gaze (chap. 12. 2); “the apostle” who represented God to man; “and high priest of our confession” who represents man to God; “Christ”—the now exalted Messiah who was once the man “Jesus” the lowly Nazarene, for the confession of whose name they were in such distress.

First, the writer speaks of the things wherein the founder of the old economy and the Founder of the new were equal—faithfulness (verse 2); and then he goes on to show the immeasurable superiority of Christ to Moses (verses 3–6). The use of the word “house” in these verses should be carefully studied. According to Westcott, it means the organised society in which God dwells. “It is important therefore” says Dr. Morgan “that we should recognise that the

word means far more than a building, even in a spiritual sense. Indeed there is a use of the word which is larger, such as when we speak of a tribe, or a clan; or as in our English history we speak of the House of Plantagenet, or the House of Hanover. Paul goes on to show that the superiority of Christ to Moses was twofold :

(1) He has more honour than Moses, as he that built the house has more honour than the house (verses 3-4); and

(2) He is greater than Moses, as the son in the mansion is greater than the servant in the mansion (verses 5-6).

“ Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end ” (verse 6). In these words we have the first of a number of statements in this epistle which at first sight seem to contradict the words of Ephesians 2. 8 where we are told that we are saved by faith and not by works. “ The exhortations of the epistle may appear to some, difficult to reconcile with the teaching of Scripture, that the grace of God, once received through the power of the Holy Ghost by faith, can never be lost; and that they who are born again, who are once in Christ, are in Christ forever. Let us not blunt the edge of earnest and piercing exhortations. Let us not pass them over, or treat them with inward apathy. “ Again it is written.” We know this does not mean that there is any real contradiction in Scripture, but that various aspects of truth are presented, each with the same fidelity, fulness, and emphasis. Hence we must learn to move freely, and not to be cramped and fixed in one position. We must keep our eyes clear and open, and not look at all things through the light of a favourite doctrine. And while we receive fully and joyously the assurance of our perfect acceptance and peace, and of the

unchanging love of God in Christ, let us with the Apostle consider also our sins and dangers from the lower, yet most real earthly and time point of view.

The earnest counsel of the Apostle in this chapter, "Let us fear," may seem to be incompatible with his frequent and emphatic teaching, that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; that he is persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus; that we are to rejoice in the Lord, and that alway. Yet a most superficial glance at the epistles, and at the Scriptures in general, will show that fear is an essential feature of the Christian."

I have quoted these valuable words from Dr. Saphir because, as we pass from the consideration of the faithfulness of the mediator of the old covenant to the faithlessness of the people with whom it was made, we are met with some of the most solemn warnings to be found within the covers of the Bible; warnings which, while they will lead us to magnify the grace of God in Christ will, if listened to, make us cleave to our God with purpose of heart and serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

II. Unbelief is the cause of failure 3. 7-19.

We have here a page from the nation's history which discloses how lamentably the first generation of Israelites failed; and a solemn warning and appeal lest the first generation of Christians follow their evil example. It will be well for the reader at this point to read 1 Corinthians 10.

(a) The historical illustration 7-11.

In this epistle the three Persons of the Godhead are in turn represented as speaking. God the Father

spake in times past (chap. 1. 1); God the Son, in these last days (1. 2); God the Holy Spirit, to-day (3. 7). The utterance of the Spirit which is here quoted is found in Psalm 95, and is the record from the divine point of view, of what happened during Israel's forty years in the wilderness. They tempted God (Exodus 17. 7); they provoked Him (Numbers 14. 11); they grieved Him (Psalm 78. 40); and the ultimate results of their rebellion and unbelief were that they limited the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78. 41), forfeited the land into which He would have led them (Hebrews 3. 11), and perished in the solitudes of the desert (verse 17). Out of the vast multitude that left Egypt, only two entered Canaan.

(b) The practical application 12-19.

The first word of verse 7 connects with the first words of verse 12. "Wherefore"—keeping before you the historical fact just mentioned—"take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (verses 7. 12). He then proceeds to show how great are the dangers which are inevitable if we fail to hold fast and to take heed. These dangers in the main are four in number:

1. Backsliding 12-14.

There are two "hearts" spoken of in Hebrews: the evil heart of unbelief which leads away from God (3. 12); the true heart, which in faith draws near (10. 22). The departure is from, "the living God"—a title which is used to designate the One into whose service these Hebrew believers had entered (chap. 9. 14); who specially cares for His trustful people (1 Timothy 4. 10); who gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6. 17); and to whose city we are travelling (Hebrews 12. 22). The practical effects in the daily lives of those who thus depart,

are similar to those which happen to the stream when it is cut off from the fountain, to the branch when it is severed from the tree, to the planet when it is detached from the sun.

2. Obduracy, verse 15.

Hardening of the heart is induced by repeated acts of sin (verse 8) and by the working of natural law (verse 13). It is thus "a process and a consequence"; for, on the one hand character is ever tending to permanence, and on the other, "by refusing to listen to the voice of God we come ultimately to the place where we lose the power to recognise it." "Harden not your hearts"; there is no need, they are hard enough already. There is no excuse, for why should you resist love? There can be no good in it—a man is the less a man in proportion to his loss of tenderness of heart."

3. Provocation. Verses 16–17.

"For who, when they heard, did provoke? Nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?" This general statement does not invalidate the faith of Joshua and Caleb; for these two faithful men were among the speakers on that memorable occasion, not the hearers (Numbers 14. 6–9).

4. Disobedience. Verses 18–19. R.V.

"And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief."

We learn, then, that the evil heart of unbelief issues in departure from God; that the deceitfulness of sin gradually petrifies the feelings; that it leads

to deliberate provocation of the Most High; and that it involves the loss of what is noblest and best (8. 19).

It should be observed that faith provides the antidotes to all these things. Instead of departing from the living God, faith draws near (Hebrews 10. 22); instead of hardening the heart it works by love (Gal. 5. 6); instead of provoking God it pleases Him (Heb. 11. 6); instead of disobeying Him it instantly complies with His command (Romans 16. 26). Which considerations lead us to the next part of our theme, namely, that

III. Faith is the condition of blessing 4. 1-13.

In this section the Apostle continues to warn and to appeal, basing both on the historical facts recorded in the previous chapter. The condition of these Hebrews was so grave that instruction and exhortation are interblended throughout. He reminds them that they are the recipients of good tidings just as the Israelites were in the desert (verse 2 R.V.); and he warns them that just as the rebels in the wilderness forfeited the rest of Canaan by their unbelief, so there is the possibility of "unbelieving believers" losing the practical enjoyment of the rest of God to-day. To obviate the last-named possibility he exhorts them in a twofold way: negatively, "Let us fear lest we should miss it" (verse 1); positively, "Let us labour that we may win it" (verse 11). The remainder of the section (3-10) is devoted to showing that faith brings us into the possession of the enjoyment of the rest of God now (verse 3); and that while the rest which was secured by Joshua was partial, imperfect and temporary, that which is open to the believer in Christ is perfect, complete, and final.

This is the third aspect in which the gospel message has been presented in these chapters. It has been set forth as that which deals with the question of guilt (1. 3); as that which delivers from terror (2. 14, 15); and now as that which abolishes unrest (4. 8). It is thus the answer to sin, fear, and restlessness.

The rest of God (verses 4-10).

These verses speak of three phases of rest: Creation rest, verse 4; Canaan rest, verse 8 R.V.; Redemption rest, verse 9. The first of these was marred by the entrance of sin; the second was frequently interrupted by hostile powers; the third—which God's people may enter upon now—is eternal.

It will be remembered that the consequences of sin described in Genesis 3 are threefold: man had an accusing conscience (verse 10); an anxious heart (verses 17-18); and a body subject to decay and death (verse 19). The Redemption rest secured by Christ provides the remedy for all three of these.

(a). *Rest of conscience.* "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest . . . there is no peace saith my God to the wicked (Isa. 57. 20, 21). It is relief from this intolerable burden of guilt that the Saviour offers in Matthew 11. 28 where, in response to our coming to Him, He promises us the gift of rest.

(b). *Rest of heart.* This is the deeper rest to which the Master refers in Matthew 11. 29; and it should be noted that whereas the rest of verse 28 is spoken of as a gift—"I will give you rest"; that in verse 29 is spoken of as a discovery—"ye shall find rest unto your souls." "One is the gift of pardon, single, complete, and covering all the past; the other, constant, continuous, and covering all the present."

This is the rest of God into which the writer of Hebrews would lead us *now*—that deep unbroken rest of spirit which outsoars and transcends the loftiest conceptions of the human mind (Phil. 4. 7), and in possession of which ;

“ We rejoice to think God’s greatness flows around our
incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.”

It was this, I doubt not, that Bunyan had in mind when he described Beulah Land. “ Now I saw in my dream that by this time the pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entered into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land (Can. 2, 10-12). In this country the sun shineth night and day ; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were in sight of the city they were going to, also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof ; for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven.” It is a land in which there is abundance instead of want, victory instead of defeat, joy instead of murmuring, peace instead of unrest. A great preacher describes the rest that is found in it as “ never lessening or stationary, but ever deepening and widening ; flowing on day by day until it reaches the full blessedness of the stormless ocean of eternity. It is the stillness of eternity entering the spirit—a waveless calm, not fitful and transient, but an abiding and ever-increasing reality.”

“ O ! for this choicest blessing of living in Thy love,
And thus on earth possessing the peace of Heaven above :
O ! for the bliss that by it the soul securely knows,
The holy calm and quiet of faith’s serene repose.”

(c). *Rest for evermore.* This looks on to eternity where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest (Job 3. 17). "A Sabbatism, our author calls this rest. It felicitously connects the end of the world with the beginning, the consummation of all things with the primal state of the Creation." In the record of Genesis 1 and 2 there is mention of the evening and the morning every day except the seventh day. The Sabbath rest into which we shall by and by enter is unending, unbroken, eternal. It will be marked by :

(1). "The absence of all those disturbing influences which characterise our present state ; and

(2) the presence of all the harmonious and blessed conditions and circumstances which our nature craves."

"Sweet are the moments which can be stolen from the bustle and noise of the world, to be spent in that presence of God which seems to calm into silence every fibre of our restless brain. But can we conceive how sweet it will be when we shall be delivered from the thought of going back into the world again, which so often intrudes upon us now ; and shall know that, instead of going amid scenes so uncongenial, we shall have but to rise higher and yet higher, and sink lower and still lower, in the knowledge of God which is eternal life ? Yea, this is what eternal life will be—a growing in the knowledge of God (John 17. 3). This is the business of the Christian's life, here and hereafter. Every day is lost which has not given us a deeper insight into the infinite, unsearchable God.

Will not this be rest indeed ? No more surrounded by the works of the devil, by his snares which need such constant watchfulness ; no more encumbered

with this burdensome tabernacle, in which we have so often groaned. Oh, what will it be to be rid of this body! With what a shout of triumph

“This veil of flesh I’ll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize.”

With what a sigh of relief we shall realise it can no more clog our efforts, chain us to earth, and drag down the soul when it seeks to rise into the realm of spirit.”

The thought in verse 10 is, not that we are to cease working for God; but that having entered into His rest, our work is henceforth regarded as His who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2. 13). Two illustrations of this:

- (1). The Lord Jesus—John 5. 36; 8. 28; 9. 4;
10. 25.
- (2). The Apostle Paul—Acts 14. 27; 1 Cor. 15.
10; Col. 1. 29.

The written and the living Word. (Verses 12. 13).

Throughout the section which we have just studied, there is mention of the voice or word of God; but in the illustration which the Apostle adduced, the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (4. 2). It was like a seed falling upon a rock; or like a beautiful musical instrument perfect in mechanism but with no player’s hand to call forth the melodious strains. The fault was not in the Word, but in the hearts which failed to respond to it. The written word of God has five great characteristics: it is living, active, sharp, penetrating, discerning (verse 12); while the Living Word is omniscient and is the One with whom we have to do (verse 13). David Livingstone once said

that the Bechuanas are excellent patients, and that they will sit unwincingly and without uttering a word or cry during the most painful operations. Yet when the word and Spirit of God work on their minds they cry most piteously, screening themselves from the preacher's gaze by hiding under the forms, or covering their heads with their karosses. Reader, let us come to that word and allow it to search, and cut, and penetrate, and criticise everything in us that is contrary to the mind of God. We shall see presently (verses 14-16) that "the two-edged piercing sword is held by the Hand that was pierced at Calvary—the Hand of the Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens."



CHAPTER V.

Priesthood:
Our sinless, compassionate Saviour
(4. 14-16.)

WE now pass to two other great names in Old Testament story: Aaron and Melchisedec. In demonstrating our Lord's superiority to these, the writer first announces the fact and far-reaching values of the priesthood of Christ (4. 14-16); passes to a description of the Aaronic priests (5. 1-10); turns aside to warn and to appeal (5. 11-6-20); and finally, shows that the priesthood of our ascended Lord, while after the pattern of that of Aaron in that it dealt with sin, and after the order of Melchisedec in that it is eternal, transcends these two priesthoods as heaven transcends earth (chapter 7).

Priesthood.

Priesthood true or false, it has been said, is as old as the race of man. When Job thought of his relation to the Almighty, he complained that: "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both" (9. 32, 33); and when missionaries go for the first time into the strongholds of heathendom, they find the same idea deeply engraven in the minds of the people.

“ Priesthood is an institution not of man, but of God. Its basis is the gracious compassion of Divine holiness. Its object is the people with whom God has chosen, in His own good pleasure, to connect His name. Its moving occasion is the condition of that people, in their personal inability to maintain themselves in an acceptable position in the presence of His holiness. Its end is the Divine glory, through the effectual fulfilment in uninterrupted blessedness of all the covenanted promises of truth. God’s consecrated Priest is His own established link between the Blessor and the blessed. He is the chosen Intercessor of the people’s need, and the authentic minister of the grace which meets it. He is, moreover, their only medium of accepted worship. The personal qualities of an acceptable priest must be according to the nature of his appointed ministration. To God and the worshipper he must be equally suitable. The fitness of the Son of God alone to be the High Priest over the house of God, in contrast with His shadowy precursors of Levitical ordinance, and the corresponding difference in the manner of the people’s blessing, are demonstrated with precious richness of detail in succeeding portions of the epistle.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, our never-failing Friend, who effected redemption on earth, is now our Great High Priest in heaven (verse 14). Because He was tested in all points like as we are, sin apart, He is able to sympathise with us in, and to succour us from the sorrows and distresses that ever and anon assail us as we journey to the heavenly land (verse 15). Let us therefore keep coming to the throne of grace that we may avail ourselves of the resources which are there at our disposal; resources which cover every need that can possibly arise, till travelling days are done (verse 16). In these verses we have thus :

A blessed assurance.

A strong consolation.

A stirring appeal.

I. Our Saviour is our Great High Priest (Verse 14).

“ We have a great high Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” Dr. Westcott points out that this word ‘ have ’ does not merely mean the statement of a fact, but that it also implies conscious possession. How comforting that consciousness must have been to these Hebrew Christians who had parted with their earthly all.

“ We have a great high Priest ”—that tells us *what* He is. The sons of Aaron were priests ; Aaron was a high priest ; the Lord Jesus is a Great High Priest.

“ Who is passed into the heavens ”—that tells us *where* He is. Aaron passed beyond the veil once a year to that which was merely the shadow of heavenly things ; Christ passed into heaven itself, and ever abides in the audience chamber of God (9. 24).

“ Jesus the Son of God ”—that tells us *who* He is. These are His human and His divine names, and they reveal the secret of how it is possible for us to come into actual possession of His compassion and power. Because He is human—“ Jesus ”—He understands our need ; because He is divine—“ the Son of God ”—He can meet our needs. By virtue of His earthly experience He is able to sympathise ; by virtue of His heavenly position He is able to succour.

II. He understands us perfectly (verse 15).

In order, however, that He might be able to understand us, He had to gain a sympathy which not love itself, but only experience, could give Him. "And yet, while He had to share man's experience of temptation, it was necessary that sympathy should not be purchased at the cost of sin. Only the sinless Conqueror of temptation could be the captain of salvation; only the morally spotless victim could be an acceptable sacrifice to God."

The words before us now, assure us of these three things. They tell us that He was

(a) Tempted.

Here we must distinguish between the two senses of the word temptation: that of testing, and that of enticement to sin. In the former sense, Abraham was tempted when he was called upon to offer up Isaac—"he was tried" (Heb. 11. 17). In the latter sense "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1. 14). It was in the first of these senses of the word that the Lord Jesus was tempted. He hungered, thirsted, knew the pain of weariness and loneliness, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. "He is the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, all the letters between, and the whole literature that can be made from the entire alphabet of experience."

"In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part."

But although this brings our Saviour very near to us, we must never forget that there is one thing in which He is entirely separate from us. For while we are sinful, He is

(b) Sinless.

“He was tempted like as we are yet without sin.” You will observe that the word “yet” is in italics; it should not be there. The word “without” means “apart from” and is so translated in the R.V. of Heb. 9. 28 and James 2. 26. By retaining the word “yet” the thought is conveyed that through His life of testing the Lord Jesus was *able not to sin*; by taking the true reading we learn that He was *not able to sin*. “The words imply” says Dean Alford “that throughout the temptations, in their origin, in their process, in their result, sin had nothing in Him; He was free and separate from it” (2 Cor. 5. 21; 1 Peter 2. 22; 1 John 3. 5).

It may be argued that because of His dignity and sinlessness, the Lord Jesus is unable to enter into our position or understand our problems; but this is by no means so. Is it necessary that a doctor should himself have had the disease before he can help the man who comes to him seeking deliverance from it? Is it only the reclaimed drunkard that can help one who is a slave to strong drink? Nay: “it is the love that suffers, not the weakness which fails, that is able to help.” Which consideration leads us to the third thing in the verse, namely, that because He was tempted, and throughout the trial was sinless, He is now

(c) Compassionate.

The Greek word which is translated “touched with the feeling of,” is “*sumpathesai*” from which comes our word “sympathy.” It occurs once more in the New Testament—Heb. 10. 34—where it is translated “compassion.” “He is able to sympathise. Do you know the meaning of that word? It is to feel with; a sympathiser is one who comes

near to you and enters intelligently into your distress and shares your feeling about it. But there is even more than that in the sympathy of our Lord Jesus ; it is the most wonderful and only perfect balm for a broken heart, and it has this peculiar quality ; it quietens and soothes the spirit, and it results in the distress or sorrow taking a secondary place in the thoughts, and in Himself taking the first place until the heart clings to Him, because He has become to it what He never was before ; so we believe it was with Mary of Bethany. And such confidence in Him grows out of this experience, that whatever the sorrow may be, it will be left in His hands, and the mind will be stayed on Him, for He will be seen to be greater than the sorrow." "He is the great nerve—centre to which thrill all sensations which touch us who are His members."

"The very form into which the statement is cast makes this assertion of Christ's sympathy all the stronger. We often use a negative shape of sentence to convey the opposite. For instance, if you say, "I am not a man to break my word," you mean you are very much a man to keep your word. And so here, when the writer says, "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched," he means we have an high priest who can be touched, who sympathises, and very deeply so. And what else is there in Christian experience more tender than Christ's sympathy ?"

Carefully note that it is with our infirmities that He sympathises ; not our sins. "If we yield to sin" says Sir Robert Anderson, "we need not look to Him for sympathy, though a penitent confession will bring pardon full and free through His atoning work." What, then, are "infirmities ?" The simplest definition is, that they are the sinless consequences of sin ; and in the main they are three in number : the

sorrows of life ; physical limitations ; bereavement. Job is the outstanding biblical illustration of one who had all three of these infirmities—grief, sickness, bereavement ; but although he was sustained in his trial he had no sense of sympathy, and this was the thing that so greatly distressed him (Job 16. 1, 2). To-day, however, we are assured that our great high Priest now in the heavens is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that He comforts those that mourn. “When we sorrow, suffer, or are bereaved, He is touched—as a mother is touched with the sufferings or sorrows of her child.” The method by which we may experimentally realise the infinite treasure which is thus within our reach is described in the next verse, where we are exhorted to

III. Come to Him (verse 16).

“Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

(a) The congregation of old was commanded to stand afar off. We are now commanded to draw near (verse 16 R.V.). What only the high priest of Israel could do once a year, each christian may do every moment of his or her earthly life.

(b) Israel’s representative was silent in the presence of God ; we are invited to come with “freedom of utterance” ; for that is the meaning of the word translated “boldly.” With humble and unquestioning confidence we are to come just as we are, to state exactly how we feel, to ask precisely what we want. There is “no circumstance too trifling, no petition too insignificant, no case too hard, no beggar too ragged, no debtor too insolvent, for Him not to notice and not to relieve.”

(c) The high priest of old came to a symbolical mercy-seat (Exodus 25); we come to a throne at which mercy and grace are shown in regal majesty: mercy for the failures of the past, and grace for every hour of need.

It is generally admitted that the last phrase in verse 16—"in time of need"—would be more correctly translated "grace for timely help." Mr. Darby translates it "grace for seasonable help"; another translates it "grace in the nick of time." "Help in time of need" may be illustrated thus: "a child is knocked down in the road by a swiftly passing vehicle, the wheel of which passes over it and leaves it crushed and full of pain. A tender-hearted doctor, passing at the time, takes charge of the injured child, and attends to all its needs until at last it is well and strong again.

"Timely help" is a very different matter; it is as though that same doctor, seeing the child in danger of being run over, rushed forward and at the moment saved it out of danger, and placed it beyond the reach of injury. This is the grace of which the verse speaks. We have a High Priest who watches with tender care all who come to God by Him, and with Him there is grace to keep us in the hour of temptation, to keep us from falling, and to preserve us blameless; it is this grace that we obtain at the throne of grace.

There is also, thank God, grace to help in time of need; if, through unwatchfulness and lack of dependence on the Lord, the Christian sins and falls, there is grace to restore such an one; for if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He can bind up the wounds and make the bones that are broken to rejoice, and His grace will never fail; but the

friendly hand at the head of the cliff is better than the doctor at the foot of it. Prevention is better than cure. "Grace for timely help" is preferable to "help in time of need."

"Let there be no want of confidence, then, between your Lord and you. Tell Him of the trouble at home, of your anxiety about your child, your perplexity about the business and work, and the bitterness that only your own heart knows, and that can only be told in sighs and tears. You will not weary Him, for He loves you too well for that. He knows everything about you, but it is not enough that He knows by omniscience; He asks you to tell Him as though He knew nothing. He wants you to wait upon Him. Try this; He will not fail you. And as the truest and strongest friendships are those which are formed in times of trial and sorrow, so will your friendship with the Lord Jesus deepen and strengthen with the passing of the years."

Summary of Hebrews 4. 14-16.

1. *Seven characteristics of our Great High Priest.*

- | | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Human. | 3. Compassionate. | 5. Accessible. |
| 2. Divine. | 4. Sinless. | 6. Merciful. |
| | 7. Gracious. | |

2. *The fourfold blessing which He imparts.*

1. Sympathy; 2. Mercy; 3. Grace; 4. Help.

3. *Twofold exhortation.*

1. Hold fast the confession of our hope, verse 14 R.V.
2. Draw near to the throne of grace, verse 16 R.V.

Dr. J. B. Rotherham says that this little section of Scripture is "a passage of such supreme charm and helpfulness that its like is scarcely to be found among all the most famous of the sayings of God. The triumph of His strength, the tenderness of His sympathy, the sinlessness of His nature, and the sufficiency of His work, together form the basis of an exhortation to come boldly to the throne of grace."



CHAPTER VI.

Qualifications for Priesthood.

(5. 1-10).

ETERNAL truths lay hidden in the transient ritual of Judaism. The tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the ark of the covenant, enshrined and preserved through many generations two concurrent and complementary truths, namely, the manifestation of God to man, the approach of man to God." We are now to examine the Scripture which speaks of the qualifications that were essential in those who would represent others before God; and to see how completely they are realised in Christ.

I. Qualifications for Priesthood. (Verses 1-4).

(1). The high priest of Israel was taken from among men (Exod. 28. 1); that is to say, he was human (verse 1).

(2). He must be not only human; he must be sympathetic. Recognising his own infirmities he would deal gently with the ignorant and the erring; his actions would be characterised and guided by compassion (verses 2, 3).

(3). Not only must he be human and sympathetic; he must also be called to the sacred office by God Himself (verse 4). "He who represents man to God with the efficacy of perfect sympathy, must also represent God to man with the authority of perfect power." The essentials, therefore, were humanity sympathy, and authority.

II. These qualifications were perfectly realised in Christ. (Verses 5-10).

(1). *He was divinely appointed (verses 5-6).* Although, because of His sinlessness, He could at any time approach God for Himself, He waited His Father's appointment that He might do so on behalf of others. Two Messianic psalms are quoted here: Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. The first of them shows the person by whom, and the time at which, the Lord Jesus was appointed priest. He was appointed by God; and, according to the apostolic interpretation of Psalm 2. 7, the appointment was made after He rose from the dead (Acts 13. 33; Rom. 1. 4). That settles the oft-debated question: when did Christ become a priest? He could not have been a priest on earth for the two reasons described in Hebrews 7. 14 and 8. 4.

The second quotation is from Psalm 110, which shows that He is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Unlike the Aaronic priests who were not suffered to continue by reason of death (7. 23), the Lord Jesus, because He is alive for evermore has an untransferable priesthood which shall abide eternally (7. 24).

(2). *He is perfectly human: verse 7; 2. 14, 16.* Here, however, instead of resembling Aaron, our Lord is contrasted with him. Aaron was a man of like passions with ourselves; the Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Nevertheless He was truly Man: He became incarnate and dwelt among us, experiencing the things which we experience—hunger, thirst, poverty, loneliness, sorrow, and anguish of spirit—in order that He might experimentally know what His people have to endure as they pass through a sinful world. For this reason it can now be affirmed that

(8). *He is boundlessly compassionate (verses 7-8).* The experiences referred to in verse 7 were those which He passed through in Gethsemane. In that lone hour He bore a load of untold and unfathomable pain; it was the last conflict before Calvary. Speaking on Mark 14. 33-35 Dr. Cornelius Woelfkin says: "This is the garden scene. "And He taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." Please notice these words: "He began to be sore amazed and sore troubled and exceeding sorrowful." They are peculiarly strong words in the original tongue. This "sore amazed" is an experience of coming into a condition where all the perspectives alter, and it seemed as though the soul goes into the panic of a great fear. That was what was overwhelming Christ. This word "very heavy" means to be so utterly crushed with depression that one sinks into despair. It is a figure of wax that is melting before the furnace. The words "exceeding sorrowful" mean to be caught in the very cyclone of grief. Those are the three expressions which the Spirit of God has chosen to give us some conception of the emotion that stirred the soul of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane: the panic of a great fear, the crushing of an awful depression, the cyclone of an unutterable grief.'

What is the explanation of these awe-inspiring words? There cannot be any doubt that they refer to the sorrow which our Saviour suffered as He anticipated the dread crisis towards which He was passing—Calvary. "In the garden of Gethsemane" says Mr. William Hoste, "the Lord Jesus saw the Cross in all its dread reality, and there He suffered by anticipation in a way never before experienced.

It was the proper and legitimate shrinking of absolute sinlessness from contact with sin which was manifested in the prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." It was not fear of physical death which so distressed Him, as His own words show (John 12. 27). Multitudes of His devoted followers—tender maidens as well as strong men—have faced martyrdom without a tremor. What He dreaded was the deeper, more terrible reality which is called the second death, the divine judgment upon sin.

"Yea once Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken—

It went up single, echoless: 'My God I am forsaken!'
It went up from the Saviour's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use these words of desolation."

Well might Bengel say of this passage: "Awful cup! Reasonable fear! Unviolated obedience! Mighty prayer! Speedy answer!"

"He prayed unto Him that was able to save Him out of death and was heard" verse 7 R.V. The prayer was, not that He might escape death, for He was going to that of set purpose; but that He might be delivered from the bonds of death by resurrection.

Results—to Him : verses 8, 9.

(a). He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. The One who is the Captain of our salvation has travelled the road which we follow (2. 10); found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.

(b). He was made perfect—in the sense that He was fully qualified as a man for His present position.

Results—to us : verses 9, 10.

- (a). We are the possessors of an eternal salvation.
- (b). We have a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

There is one word in this section to which I would refer before passing on : the word "Metriopatheo" which is translated "compassion" in verse 2, and by which, says Dr. Bruce, at a single stroke the writer photographs the character of the model high priest. "This great Greek word" says Dr. Thomas Goodwin, "is exceedingly emphatical. It means much more than the English rendering 'who can have compassion' means. For, when this great Greek word of the apostle is rightly rendered, and is rightly laid to heart, it reveals to us that Jesus Christ, our great high priest, not only has a great compassion in His heart ; but that He has a special and particular compassion, measured out according to every individual man's measure of need, according to every individual man's speciality, and particularity, and singularity, and secrecy of need."



CHAPTER VII.

Reproof, Apostasy, Encouragement

(5. 11 to 6. 20).

ONCE again the apostle has touched on the question of Priesthood ; but because of the culpable immaturity of his readers and their consequent inability to grasp the deeper truths, he has to pause. It would seem that two things were responsible for their arrested growth : (1) the ever-present spell which the outward splendour of the Temple worship exercised over them ; and (2) the persecution occasioned by the offence of the Cross. Because of the seductiveness of the one, and the terror inspired by the other, they had ceased to advance in the knowledge of God ; and as the principle in things divine is "use or lose," Paul has to turn aside to reprove, to warn, and to appeal. The words which he uses in doing so are among the most solemn that can be found within the covers of the sacred volume.

The warning for us to-day is equally pertinent and exceedingly solemn. In the early days of your christian life, you feared not the face of man and you made rapid progress in the knowledge of God ; but to-day, you are back among the things from which the cross of Christ delivered you, and all spiritual development has ceased. When you were first brought to God, you travelled the path of discipleship with whole-hearted sincerity ; but now the old life has reasserted its supremacy, and the joy that springs from the denial of self has gone. At the time of your first love you had the glad assurance of pardon ; but since then someone has wronged you, and, as you have

never from your heart really forgiven him, you have yourself by the working of inevitable spiritual law, lost all sense of the forgiving love of God. Obedience is ever the principle of blessing; and to us as well as to the early Christians the ringing exhortation comes: "let go and lay hold; forget the things which are behind and with eager step press on to Him who is the mark in time and the prize in eternity."

I. Reproof, 5. 11-14.

The two greatest hindrances to growth in grace are: doctrinal error, and moral evil. Hebrews 5. 11-14 is the illustration of the one, 1 Corinthians 3. 1-3 of the other. The Hebrews had a legal mind, and the Corinthians a carnal spirit. The way to obviate arrested development, therefore, is to hold the faith as well as a good conscience; to take heed to ourselves as well as to the doctrine. For, there is a profound spiritual as well as psychological truth in the words of the poet:

"Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again."

The apostle reproofs them because of the dulness of their spiritual hearing, verse 11; affirms that they were in the nursery when they should be on the platform, verse 12; and frankly tells them that instead of giving them strong meat, he can only give them the sucking bottle, verse 12. Spiritual babes are destitute of knowledge and are unskilful in the use of the Word, verse 13; the fullgrown man carries in his hand the lamp of experience, and possesses spiritual perception and discernment, verse 14.

II. Exhortation, 6. 1-3.

Having rebuked, he now exhorts them. They were to leave certain elementary but fundamental things

and go on to perfection. These foundation truths—some of which underlie all true knowledge of God, and all of which were found in Judaism—are set forth in verses 1-3.

It should be specially noted that they are correctly described in the margin of verse 1 as "the word of the beginning of Christ." Taking them in their reverse order we find that resurrection and judgment were fundamentals in Old Testament doctrine (Job 19. 25; Eccles. 12. 14); that washings and laying on of hands held a prominent place in Old Testament ritual (Hebrews 9. 10; Lev. 1. 4); and that repentance and faith were characteristic of Old Testament life (Job 42. 6; Habakkuk 2. 4).

They were to "leave" these things—not in the sense of forsaking them; but as the bird leaves the shell, as the flower leaves the seed, "as the builder leaves the foundation upon which, storey upon storey, he carries his building to completion."

They were to leave these and pass on to perfection or full growth (R.V.M.). The Greek word for "perfection" expresses the idea of an end, or aim, or goal; and if, as Ridout says, the period of infancy is Judaism and the period of manhood Christianity, then the exhortation before us is one in which the readers are asked to pass from shadow to substance, from type to antitype, from husk to kernel, from the dead forms of the religion of their ancestors to the living realities in Christ.

III. Apostasy, verses 4-8.

It has been said that the "falling away" of which these verses speak is affirmed of true Christians. That I do not believe; and for the following reasons:

(a). It would contradict the words of the Lord Jesus in John 10. 28-29 ; and of the apostle Paul in Romans 8. 38-39. There are no contradictions in the word of God ; and the gifts and calling of God are not repented of (Romans 11. 29. R.V.M. ; Eccles. 3. 14).

(b). It would prove too much ; for the words unequivocally declare of those who fall away, that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Mark : it is not said that it would be difficult to renew them, but that it is impossible to do so. If, therefore, these verses teach that a true believer may be lost, they also teach that he is lost irrecoverably ; that his doom is sealed for ever.

(c). The five items specified in verses 4-5 do not include the new birth, justification, or the indwelling of the Spirit. That extremely careful teacher, Bishop Ryle, says : " The person here described as ' falling away ' has no characteristics which may not be discovered in unconverted men : while it is not said that he possesses saving faith, or charity, or is elect."

Here I pause to say to any timid believer who is terrified by the possibility that these verses may refer to him or her : Foolish indeed are we, dear friend, if we allow words which we do not understand, to rob us of the joy and blessedness of those which we do understand. Our truest wisdom is to accept the teaching which is clear, and humbly wait for further light on that which is obscure. In an able article which appeared in the pages of " The Witness " Mr. Henry Pickering points out that the security of the christian is based on :

(1). The nature of God, of which we have become partakers (John 1. 12-13).

(2). The character of God, which is bound up with the truthfulness of His Word (John 5. 24 ; Heb. 6. 18).

(3). The justice of God, the claims of whose throne have been completely vindicated (Romans 8. 1, 38).

(4). The sovereignty of God, which has predestined us to eternal glory (Romans 8. 29-30).

(5). The love of God which, because of the infinite cost at which we have been redeemed, will not part with one of us (Romans 8. 38-39).

(d). It should be carefully noted that in verses 4-6 the apostle uses the third person plural of those to whom he refers. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if *they* shall away." These believers lived in an age of miracle (2. 4); and it is quite possible that some of their fellow-countrymen had been impressed by the things which they had witnessed during the Pentecostal era, but had resisted and done despite unto the Spirit of grace (Acts 7; Heb. 10). If such men, through cowardice or for any other reason, went back to the shadows when the clear light was shining, their case was hopeless. The apostle does not say to his readers: "If *you* shall fall away, but if *they* shall fall away." Indeed, of his readers he goes on to say: "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of *you*, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," verse 9; words which clearly imply that the teaching of the verses before us does not refer to them at all, and that the things there spoken of do not accompany salvation.

As to how far a man may go in apparent zeal for God and yet be unsaved, Rutherford says: "Many go far on and reform many things, and can find tears as Esau did; and suffer hunger for truth, as Judas did; and wish and desire the end of the righteous, as Balaam did; and profess fair and fight for the Lord, as Saul did; and desire the saints of God to pray for

them, as Pharaoh and Simon Magus did; and prophesy and speak of Christ, as Caiaphas did; and walk softly and mourn for fear of judgments, as Ahab did; and put away gross sins and idolatry, as Jehu did; and hear the word of God gladly, as Herod did: and yet all these are but like gold in clink and colour, and are watered brass and base metal."

The question arises whether a Gentile could be guilty of the sin of apostasy; and in his great historical work Gibbon makes it clear that it is terribly possible. "After Caled had imposed the terms of servitude and tribute, the apostate or convert (Romanus, governor of Bosra), avowed in the assembly of the people his victorious treason. "I renounce your society" said Romanus, "both in this world and the world to come. And I deny Him that was crucified, and whoever worships Him. And I choose God for my Lord, Islam for my faith, Mecca for my temple, the Moslems for my brethren, and Mohamet for my prophet; who was sent to lead us into the true way, and to exalt the true religion, in spite of those who join partner with God.'" When he calls Romanus "the apostate or convert" Gibbon notices the different lights in which he was regarded. By the Christians he was looked on as an apostate; by the Arabs, as a convert. The Jewish apostate was one who followed the example of the rulers of his nation by whom our Lord was crucified; but unlike them, he did it with full knowledge (Acts 3. 17). The case of Romanus is described in 2 Peter 2. 21.

As Delitzsch warns us, however, we must guard as much against making the apostolic warning a pillow of carnal security, as against making it a rack of despair. If, from the heavenly point of view we are described as chosen in Him, born of God, accepted in the Beloved, and destined to be conformed to the image of our Lord, the earthly point of view is equally

presented in the Scriptures of truth. We are commanded to put off the old man with his deeds, to keep under the body, to love not the world, and to run with patience the race that is set before us. Holding the balance of truth in this way, we shall ever remember that God can never treat sin lightly, whether in one of His children or in an unconverted man; but we shall also remember that although He may have to chastise, He will never disinherit us; and that His disciplinary dealings with us are intended to produce holy characters, peaceful hearts, fruitful lives, and behaviour worthy of our God.

“God’s truth is full-orbed; of half-truths beware.”

“The figurative illustration which is appended to this warning—verses 7, 8—shows plainly that the falling away in question is but the natural result of the uncongenial, and therefore fruitless, contact of gospel truth with man in an unregenerate state. Truth may be received by such. It may be absorbed into the mind and become a part of its familiar knowledge. But it does not penetrate the seat of his affections and desires. No acceptable fruit of praise and holy conversation responds to the free ministration of the name of Jesus. The seed sown is not suited to the soil on which it falls.”

IV. Encouragement, verses 9, 10.

He had spoken of the impossibility of renewal; he now speaks of those things which ensure the impossibility of failure (see also 2 Peter 1. 5-11). Salvation, which they received by faith verse 9, manifested itself in deeds of love verse 10, and would lead them to the full assurance of hope verse 11. Good works should invariably accompany, although they

can never constitute, salvation. They are but animate faith and love, as flowers are the animate spring tide.

V. Appeal, verses 11-15.

In the previous section we have the expression of the apostle's confidence in his readers; here we have his desire for them. Three things does he long to see exemplified in their lives: diligence, faith, patience—all of which find illustration in Abraham. The story of the patriarch's faith is recounted in three great chapters in the New Testament: Romans 4, James 2, and Hebrews 6. In the first of these, the strength of his faith is emphasised (verse 20); in the second, its practical character (verses 20-23); and in the third, its patient endurance (verse 15). Faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, is the principle on which the promise is received; diligence as opposed to slothfulness, is the method by which its present blessedness may be enjoyed; and patience in the endurance of trial, the attitude by which it is ultimately possessed.

VI. Consolation, verses 16-18.

Condescending to what men do when they desire to end controversy, God confirmed His promise to Abraham by an oath. He did so to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, and to give them consolation of the very strongest character. Dr. Edwards points out that it was after the victory of faith described in Genesis 22 that God vouchsafed to make oath that He would fulfil His promise. "Up to this final test of Abraham's faith, God's promise is, so to speak, conditional. It will be fulfilled if Abraham will believe. Now at length the promise is given unconditionally. Abraham has gone triumphantly through every trial. He has not withheld his

son. So great is his faith that God can now confirm His promise with a positive declaration, which transforms a promise made to a man, into a prediction that binds Himself. . . . *The condition is transferred from the faith of Abraham to the faithfulness of God.* In this lies the oath. God pledges His own existence on the fulfilment of His promise. He says no longer : " if thou can'st believe," but : " as truly as I live."

Just as really as Abraham's long-enduring faith was rewarded, so would the long-suffering patience of these Hebrews believers be. The days were sorrow-laden and leaden-footed, as are those in which our lot is cast ; but our comfort lies in the fact that although winds may howl and tempests rage, our hope and confidence are in God :

" Our refuge from the stormy blast, and our eternal home."

VII. Hope, verses 19-20.

Closely linked with the patience of faith is the anchor of hope. Patience uncheered by hope is apt to faint and grow weary ; hope unchecked by patience could easily become restless and intolerant ; " the patience of hope " (1 Thess. 1. 3) gives the true balance to them both.

The Anchor is frequently employed by classical writers as the symbol of Hope. Ours is characterised by three things : it is sure, it is stedfast, it enters into that within the veil. Thus, because the anchorage is a place where no storms can rise, the anchor will never drag, and the cable will never snap (John 10. 35).

" Hope as an anchor, sure and firm, holds fast
The Christian vessel, and defies the blast."

And so, as a great expositor has said : “ while in the early part of this chapter we were conducted to the edge of a precipice, and bid look down and behold the appalling fate of apostates (4-6) ; or carried away back to the plain of Sodom, and shown there a land rendered sterile forever by fire and brimstone for the sins of its inhabitants (7-8), we are here privileged to witness the pleasing sight of a ship riding safely at anchor, an emblem of the security of a Christian, who cherishes the hope of eternal life, and is thereby enabled to hold fast his profession of faith in spite of all the stormy tribulations of time ” (19-20).



CHAPTER VIII.

Christ and Melchisedec

(Hebrews 7).

AS one advances in the study of this noble epistle, one becomes increasingly amazed at the divine tact and wisdom which the apostle employs in his efforts to help his bewildered fellow-countrymen. Where there is dilatoriness he rebukes; where there is danger, he warns; where there is evidence of the new life, he encourages; and now, as in faithfulness he has to point out to them the transitional and imperfect character of the ceremonial law which has been the central thing in the nation's life for sixteen centuries, he patiently instructs and explains.

In the chapter there are three outstanding themes: the greatness of the person of Melchisedec; the inferiority and transitoriness of the priesthood of Aaron; the excellence and permanence of the priesthood of Christ. It is the function of the Mediator to reconcile; of the Advocate, to restore; of the Priest, to sustain; and it is to this last great fact that the reasoning of the chapter ultimately leads us (verse 25).

I. Melchisedec—the type: verses 1–10.

This man is spoken of three times in Scripture: in Genesis 14, historically; in Psalm 110, prophetically; in Hebrews 7, doctrinally. The first two mentions form the basis of the teaching given in the third; and if we grasp the true significance of that teaching we shall have an enhanced view of the marvellous

character of the Old Testament. We shall see that the historical, no less than the other portions of the sacred volume are verily inspired of God; that there is significance in what is omitted as well as in what is recorded; and that in consequence we should "not only survey the Bible in its broad landscape of truth, and study its general structure as the literary record of a supernatural revelation, but alongside of that, to subject individual passages to microscopic analysis."

**A. The personal dignity of Melchisedec
verses 1-4.**

The first three of these verses form one unbroken sentence; and their main affirmation is better seen if you connect the first three words of verse 1, with the last four words of verse 3: "For this Melchisedec . . . abideth a priest continually." Between the subject and the predicate lies all that may be known of the king-priest of Salem. (1) He held the double office of king and priest, lived in a palace and officiated in a temple, held the sceptre as well as the censer. These two offices were in Israel kept rigidly apart. (2) He blessed Abraham and was thus the greater man. (3) He received tithes from Abraham who had the promises. (4) He was king of righteousness and king of peace. (5) He was without genealogy: so far as the record is concerned he is "shrouded in the mystery of eternity."

He thus marvellously foreshadows Him who shall one day be a priest upon His throne (Zech. 6. 9-13); who is the source of all blessing for man (Eph. 1. 3); before whom Abraham bowed himself in worship (Gen. 18); who is earth's rightful King and Prince of Peace (Rev. 1; Isa. 9); whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity (Micah 5. 2).

The supreme thing to note, however, is that Melchisedec symbolises One who is eternal. "Made like unto the Son of God." "Wherein does the likeness consist?" asks Chrysostom. "In this, that we know of no beginning and no end of either: in the one case because they have found no record; in the other because they have no existence." "The previous history of Melchisedec is purposely closed against us by God, with the set intention that we may look at Melchisedec only as he stands spoken of in these verses of Genesis. He is so spoken of that he may be a perfect type of the Son of God; and hence his imperfections, which would have come out in regular biography of him, do not appear."

B. The priesthood of Melchisedec superior to that of Aaron: verses 5-10.

The apostle gives two proofs of this: (1) "Leading their minds back to the very root and fountain of the nation, he shows them its founder, in whose name was all the nation's boast, in the attitude of homage to the priest of the most High God. By the reception of the blessing as well as in the offered tithing of the spoils, the father of the nation had confessed subjection to this greater priest. For without all controversy the less is blessed of the greater." Thus, although the sons of Levi were divinely commanded to tithe their brethren (verse 5), Melchisedec, who belonged to a different race, tithed Abraham their common father. Therefore "Levi embryonically paid tithes in his great grandfather Abraham, and Melchisedec collected them." (2) The Levitical priests who received tithes were men who died; of Melchisedec it is witnessed that he lives (verse 8). This argument is based on the silence of Scripture. The fact that there is no mention of his birth or death makes his priesthood typical of one that is underived and eternal.

II. Christ—the Antitype : verses 11–28.

Our Author goes on to show that while the priesthood of Christ is after the order of Melchisedec in that it is eternal, it is after the pattern of Aaron in present ministry and function. The verses which we are now to examine, however, reveal that between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ, there are five points of difference.

A. Not of Levi, but of Judah, 11–14.

The end of all priesthood is the perfection of the believer ; but the fact that 500 years after the institution of the Levitical economy another priest of a different order was spoken of (Psalm 110) is a proof that that great system was inherently imperfect (verse 11). And the priesthood being changed there is of necessity a change in the law governing it (verse 12). When on earth our Lord could not be a priest (chap. 8. 4), because He belonged to another tribe of which no man gave attendance at the altar (see verses 13, 14).

B. Another priest : a better hope, 15–19.

The imperfection and transitoriness of the Levitical priesthood having been declared, we are now to see that it is replaced by one of a wholly different type ; that in contrast to Israel's priests who took office according to a law of physical descent, the Melchisedec priest comes after the power of an indissoluble life (15–16 R.V.M.). For, again to quote Psalm 110 : "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" (verse 17). "The sacred writer means, of course, the Lord Jesus, and is thinking, not of His life as commencing with His miraculous conception, but of that which began with His resurrection to glory. The subject here is that priesthood after the

order of Melchisedec with which He is invested now in consequence of His return to God."

The new order demanded a change of the law governing priesthood, and with it was introduced a better hope by which we draw nigh to God (18-19).

C. A divine oath : a better surety, 20-22.

The truth of this section is best seen by connecting verses 20 and 22 (verse 21 is a parenthesis). Hebrews 6. 13-14 is God's first recorded oath; Hebrews 7. 20-22 is His last. Established thus by the oath of God, the Lord Jesus becomes not only a superior priest; He becomes also the Guarantor of a better covenant. "God placed behind Christ's commission the eternal verities of His throne, and the immutable attributes of His nature. If they can change, the new priesthood can change. Otherwise, it cannot."

It should be noted that "Christ is not said here to be a surety for men to God, but a surety of a covenant of God with men" (verse 22). Since both He and the new priesthood are immutable, the permanence of the new order is assured.

D. Dying men : a living Saviour, 23-25.

It has been already shown that the Melchisedec priesthood differs from the Aaronic, in that it was not derived from ancestors, nor transmitted to descendants. We are now to learn that it will never be interrupted by death (see carefully verses 23-24). The priesthood of our Lord was underived, is intransmissible, is eternal.

In the words which follow, we have the summing up practically of the whole of the central portion of the epistle: "Wherefore he is able also to save them

to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (verse 25). I select from these great words, three phrases which show us how we may appropriate some of the infinite wealth which they contain :

1. "He ever liveth" — that is the warrant of faith.
2. "He is able" — " " confidence "
3. "Come unto God" — " " obedience "

The word translated "to the uttermost" is found in only one other passage in the New Testament, namely, Luke 13. 11., where it is translated "In no wise." There it is used to describe one who, because bound to the uttermost, was to the uttermost impotent, and who in consequence was wholly unable to lift herself up. The completeness of her physical bondage contrasts with the completeness of our spiritual liberty. "He saves to the uttermost of human guilt and hopelessness, and to the evermore of human experience and need." The only condition which is attached to our daily experience of this uttermost salvation, is that we keep daily drawing nigh unto God.

"He ever liveth to make intercession for them." If you read from the 10th to the 17th chapters of John, you will encounter the spiritual counterparts of the things which you would have passed if you had walked from the outside of the ancient Tabernacle to the Holiest of all. First, there was the door (John 10. 9), entering which you were confronted with the altar of sin-offering (12. 32-33), and a little further on was the laver at which the hands and feet of the priests were washed (John 13). In the Holy place stood the seven branched Candlestick—emblem of the Spirit (John, chapters 15 and 16); and beyond the Holy place, separated from it by the veil, was the Holiest of all (John 17). That last-named chapter,

therefore, takes us into the Holy of Holies where we listen to our Saviour's high-priestly prayer on our behalf. Let us, with unshod feet, enter this sacred enclosure and listen.

In communion with His Father He speaks of the electing love which chose us in a past eternity (verse 6); of the mission with which He entrusts us during His absence (verse 18); and of the scene of unutterable glory upon which we shall one day enter (verse 24). During our stay on earth there are three things which He especially prays for: our preservation (verse 15), our sanctification (verse 17), our unification (verses 20-23). In the light of that last-named petition, let us study Proverbs 6. 19 and Eph. 4. 3 on our knees.

Reviewing these four little sections of Hebrews 7. 11-25, we learn that the Levitical priesthood was imperfect—11-14, and ineffectual—15-19; and that the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ is immutable—20-22, and eternal—23-25.

E. Infirm priests : the perfect Lord : verses 26-28.

In the opening words of Hebrews 7, our attention was drawn to the greatness of Melchisedec, (verse 4); in its closing verses we are reminded of the glorious One of whom Melchisedec was a type, (verse 26); and by contrast, of the infirmity of the priests of Israel. Five things are said of Christ, and two of the men of Aaron's line. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate, exalted—an absolutely pure and sinless Man (verse 26). They were sinners needing sacrifice for themselves as well as for the people (Lev. 16. 11); and they were infirm (Heb. 7. 27, 28).

CHAPTER IX.

Christ: Minister and Mediator
Hebrews 8.

LOOKING over the past discussion in which it has been shown that our great High Priest is absolutely sympathetic (4. 15), and all powerful (7. 25), the apostle now makes the emphatic announcement which is the summing up of it all: "Now of the things we have spoken this is the sum: we *have* such an High Priest, who is set on the right-hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." To those Hebrew believers who had had to relinquish the ministry of the priest in the earthly sanctuary, this re-assuring word must have come with peculiar comfort and power.

And now a new discussion begins. Having demonstrated the superiority of Christ to all the outstanding *persons* of the old order (chap. 1. 1 to 8. 1), the writer goes on to show how infinitely His ministry excels what was shadowed forth by the *institutions* of the Levitical economy (8. 2 to 9. 28), and how gloriously the finished work of Calvary transcends the value of its *sacrifices* (10. 1-18). The lessons which we learn are: that His name is supreme, that His ministry is more excellent, and that the value of His redemptive work is eternal.

There are two main thoughts in Hebrews 8. The Lord Jesus is the minister of the true tabernacle, and the mediator of the better covenant.

**I. The minister of the true Tabernacle :
verses 1-6a.**

(1). Our great High Priest now seated in the heavens is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. Although the Temple was still standing, the apostle takes his illustration, not from it, but from the Tabernacle of old ; because it is during the wilderness experiences of the Church that the Lord Jesus acts for us according to the Aaronic type of intercessional ministry (verses, 1 2).

(2). The gift and sacrifice which He offered was Himself—(8. 3 ; 9. 13, 14).

(3). Seeing that God had vested the earthly priesthood in the tribe of Levi (Exodus 28. 1), the Lord Jesus who belonged to the tribe of Judah (7. 14) would not violate that order, and consequently could not be a priest on earth (8. 4).

(4). The earthly priests served merely unto the example and shadow of heavenly things ; our Lord serves amidst the heavenly things themselves and has thus a more excellent ministry (5-6a).

**II. The mediator of the new covenant :
verses 6b-13.**

The old covenant is described in Exodus 20 ; the new covenant, in Jeremiah 31. The basis of the first was the promises of man—"we will" (Exodus 24. 7) ; the basis of the second is the promises of God—"I will" (Jer. 31. 34). The new covenant is the better one because of the surety by whom its stability is guaranteed (7. 22), because of the mediator by whom it was established (8. 6), and because of the better promises—God's instead of man's—upon which it

rests (8. 6). "The covenant is better" says Griffith Thomas "because it is absolute not conditional, spiritual not carnal, universal not local, eternal not temporal, internal not external."

In verses 10-12 the blessings of the new covenant are described. Broadly, the difference between them and those of the old covenant is the difference between Grace and Law (see 2 Cor. 3). Taking these blessings in the order of experience, we have: everlasting oblivion of sin, (verse 12); renewal of heart and mind, (verse 10); personal knowledge of God, (verse 11). They indicate that:

1. Forgiveness of sins is the door through which we enter.
2. Holiness of life is the way along which we travel.
3. Knowledge of God is the end at which we arrive.

They stand in complete contrast with what was effected under the first covenant; for in it there was continual remembrance of sin because of the ineffectiveness of the Levitical sacrifices (Heb. 10. 3); the Law was engraven on stones, not on the fleshy tables of the heart (2 Cor. 3. 3); while centuries after it was given we find God Himself declaring: "Israel doth not know" (Isa. 1. 3).

It should be specially noted that the new covenant primarily concerns the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. 31. 31), and that it looks on to millennial days when, under the reign of the true Melchisedec king-priest, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. "It is true, happily for us Gentiles, that, by an extension of the Covenant, we are included in its blessings; but this we know, not from the epistle to the Hebrews, but

from other parts of the holy Scriptures.” “ We Christians have the spiritual reality of this covenant, which while made with Israel, is for our benefit as well, through grace ; and so we distinguish between the primary interpretation to Israel, and the secondary—spiritual—application to the Church to-day. We now enjoy in the power of the Holy Spirit all the blessings of the new covenant ; and yet there will be still further and fuller manifestations in the future for Israel according to God’s promise (Rom. 11. 25-32).”



CHAPTER X.

**The typical meaning of the Day
of Atonement (Hebrews 9).**

THE two great ordinances which lay at the foundation of Israel's national life and which determined their relationship to God, were the Passover and the Day of Atonement. The Passover is described in Exodus 12, and is interpreted in 1 Cor. 5; the Day of Atonement is described in Leviticus 16, and is interpreted in Hebrews 9. If therefore, we are to understand the chapter now before us, it will be necessary carefully to examine the 16th chapter of the book of Leviticus; for the Atonement which is there set forth in detail, is in Hebrews 9 contrasted with that effected by our Lord.

Reverently does the writer describe the ritual of what the Jews called "The Day" (verses 1-10); emphatically does he affirm that the atonement of Christ was effected by an offering of nobler name and richer blood; that in contrast with Aaron who ministered among the shadows (8. 5), our great High Priest appears before the face of God (9. 24 R.V.); and that just as Aaron who, after sprinkling the blood on the mercy-seat, re-appeared to bless the people, so our Lord will shortly re-appear, apart from the question of sin unto salvation.

**I. The ancient Tabernacle : Israel's day
of Atonement : verses 1-10.**

(1). *The furniture of the Tabernacle (verses 1-5).*
To the unanointed eye these details are absolutely meaningless; because, just as "nothing can well

be duller or more dingy than the appearance of a stained-glass cathedral window to one who is looking on it from the outside of the building, but when you enter and gaze at it from within the whole is aglow with beauty; so, when we learn to read Leviticus with the bright gospel sunlight for a background, we discover how rich that ancient scripture is in instruction regarding the way of access to God, and the means of fellowship with Him."

The writer assumes the existence of the court of the Tabernacle which contained the brazen altar, whereon was slain the sacrifice which gave *title* to enter; and the laver, whereat was received the cleansing which gave *fitness* to enter. He speaks of the holy place wherein were found the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense—things which symbolise illumination, sustenance, and intercession. And then he describes the contents of the Holiest of all: the ark of the covenant which contained the tables of the Law—perfect righteousness, Exodus 25. 16–21; the rod that budded—undying priesthood, Numbers 17. 10; the golden pot of manna—wilderness provision, Exodus 16. 33.

It should be noted that when in verses 3–4 the writer describes "the golden censer" as belonging to the Holiest of all, he is speaking of where it was on the day of atonement (Lev. 16. 11–13).

Aaron was commanded to sprinkle the blood of the sin-offering both upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat (Lev. 16. 14–15); why? On the mercy-seat—between God and the law; before the mercy-seat—between God and the worshipper.

(2). *The ministry in the Tabernacle, verses 6–10.* That ministry was ineffective, (6, 7); transitional, (8); and figurative, (9, 10). It was ineffective; for the

people were kept at a distance : the High Priest alone could draw nigh. It was transitional ; for when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—Matt. 27. 51—the old order disappeared and gave place to one under which we are all invited to draw near. It was figurative, as the remainder of Hebrews 9 abundantly proves.

II. The true Tabernacle : the atonement of Christ : verses 11–28.

(1). *Eternal redemption* : verses 11–14. These words speak of the more perfect tabernacle, (11); of the infinitely superior sacrifice, (12); and of the transcendently greater results, (13–14). “His own blood. I know of no word in the Bible or in human speech that contains such mysteries” says Andrew Murray. “In it are concentrated the mysteries of the incarnation . . . of obedience unto death . . . of love that passeth knowledge . . . of victory . . . of everlasting redemption ; of the resurrection and entrance into heaven ; of the atonement and reconciliation and the justification which come through it ; of the cleansing and perfecting of the conscience, of the sprinkling of the heart, and the sanctifying of the people.”

It should be observed that in the effecting of this great redemption the three persons of the sacred Trinity were involved (verse 14); and that all who participate in it are “saved to serve.” “Who can refuse a service so reasonable, fraught with blessedness so transcendent ?” says Dr. Meyer. “Head ! think for Him whose brow was thorn-girt. Hands ! toil for Him whose hands were nailed to the cross. Feet ! speed to do his behests whose feet were pierced. Body of mine ! be His temple whose body was wrung with pains unspeakable. To serve Him—this is the only true attitude and behaviour, for those who are not their own, but His.”

(2). *Testament: covenant: verses 15-23.* Much discussion has taken place over these two words, which are translations of the same Greek word. I give the opinions of two eminent expositors. "To my own mind it seems certain that although the word bears the sense of "covenant" everywhere else in the epistle, and everywhere else in the New Testament, it means here—Hebrews 9. 16, 17—what it means most frequently in ordinary Greek writers—the disposition or arrangement of property by a testament" (Dr. Dale). "Verses 16, 17: the word 'testament' is rightly used in these two verses. It facilitates the understanding of the passage to see this. Excepting these two verses, read always 'covenant'." (Mr. Darby). It thus appears that the word should be rendered "covenant" in verses 15, 18, 20; and "testament" in verses 16 and 17.

Three indispensable things.

- (a). Without shedding of blood there is no remission (9. 22).
- (b). Without faith it is impossible to please God (11. 6).
- (c). Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (12. 14).

Taken with Colossians 1. 20, Romans 8. 22, and Philippians 2. 5-11, Hebrews 9. 23, seems to indicate that the sin of man affects detrimentally, and the death of Christ beneficially, the whole universe of God.

(3). *The three appearances of our Lord: verses 24-28.* This exceedingly choice portion of Scripture presents antitypically what was carried out on the day of atonement. Aaron first appeared at the brazen altar of sacrifice; thence he passed beyond the veil to appear in the presence of God on behalf of the people; and after doing that, he re-appeared to bless the crowd

of expectant worshippers. In beautiful keeping with these things, we read that Christ once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, (verse 26); that He now appears before the face of God for us, (verse 24 R.V.); and that unto them that look for Him He shall re-appear, apart from all questions of sin unto salvation, (verse 28). And so we have:

<i>Hath appeared.</i>	<i>Does appear.</i>	<i>Shall appear.</i>
Past	Present	Future
Calvary	Heaven	The Air
Propitiation	Provision	Prospect
Redemption	Representation	Reward
Humiliation	Exaltation	Manifestation
Atonement	Priesthood	Salvation
Justification	Sanctification	Glorification

In a wider sense these verses epitomise the New Testament. He once appeared to put away sin—the Gospels tell us that. He now appears in the presence of God for us—Acts to Jude tell us that. He shall appear a second time—the book of Revelation tells us that. During the whole of this dispensation, therefore, He is now ceaselessly engaged on behalf of His people (7. 25). Where does He appear? Before the face of God. When? Now. For whom? For us (9. 24).

Like the high priest of old He bears our names upon His shoulders of strength (Exodus 28. 6-10); and on His heart of love (Exodus 28. 29). "There are few Scripture emblems more full of comfort and encouragement for anxious, troubled, doubting souls, than this, the most precious part of Aaron's garments "for beauty and glory." The breastplate was worn upon the heart of the high priest, and was so fastened to the ephod, as never to be separated from it. Twelve stones were set in it, all precious stones, but not two of them were alike. They were altogether different,

in form, hue, character, and also in beauty and value (according to man's estimation); but all of them were gems in the sight of God, one as another. They were each set in gold, and they rested equally upon the heart of Aaron, when he ministered before the Lord.

Doubtless these precious stones were gathered in lands far sundered. Some from the depths of the ocean, it may be, and some from the dark mine. But whatever their variety, or the circumstances of their history, or the distance from which they were carried, they were united in the narrow compass of the high priest's heart; and diamond, and jasper, and emerald were borne there equally and together, for a memorial before the Lord continually.

Truly here are great things for the faith of God's living stones, His jewels, to apprehend, to realise, and triumph in. The breast-plate of the high priest was a picture of the inmost heart of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ—the Holy Spirit thus unfolding it to our eyes, that we may see and know, and believe what is within.

Here we are taught that each believer has his own place in the heart of Christ—his own peculiar place, consecrated to himself. He is "individualized" there; and no other child in all the family of God, or all the other children put together, could fill that place. "For a memorial before the Lord continually!"

And wherefore for a memorial? Doth our Father in heaven need such? Yes, truly. If not to inform His omniscience, yet to satisfy and delight His love; and principally, that His people's faith may be encouraged, and that they might have in heaven, wherewith to comfort their hope and assure their hearts.

And why were those precious stones with the names of the tribes to be borne 'continually' before the Lord? Just to teach us that as this ordinance was not, and could not, be affected by the circumstances, frames, feelings, sins, inconsistencies, rebellings, or even the captivities of Israel. Even so, however matters may be with the believer here below, his name is written on Christ's heart above, and borne for a memorial before the Lord continually."

That was the type; but when we think of the great Antitype, we can only say with the poet:

"Jesus in Thee our eyes behold, a thousand glories more,
Than the rich gems of polished gold, the sons of Aaron wore.

They first their own sin-offering brought, to cleanse themselves from sin,
Thy life was pure without a spot, and all Thy nature clean.

Fresh blood as constant as the day, was on their altar spilt,
But Thy one offering takes away forever, all our guilt."

But the hour is waxing late, and very soon will be fulfilled the spiritual counterpart of the third great section of the ritual of the day of atonement: our great High Priest will re-appear to His expectant people.

"For though awhile He be, hid from the eyes of men,
His people wait to see, their Great High Priest again;
In brightest glory He will come, and take His waiting people home."



CHAPTER XI.

The Sacrifice of Nobler Name

(10. 1-18).

THE great argument on the Priesthood is now being brought to a close. The apostle has shown the dignity of the person of our Great High Priest (Hebrews 7); has affirmed that He serves in the true Tabernacle, of which the ancient one was a mere copy (chapter 8); has declared that Levitical sacrifice at its highest point—the day of atonement—stands related to the work which Christ is doing to-day, as the shadow to the substance (chapter 9); and now, he sums up by contrasting the innumerable, ineffective sacrifices of Judaism, with the one perfect sacrifice of Christ (chapter 10. 1-13). Thereafter, he sets forth the threefold result which flows to Christian worshippers, from all this (verses 14-18).

The ineffectiveness of the Levitical sacrifices is deduced from two facts: (1) they were continually repeated, (verse 1), which indicated that they never really dealt with the question of sin (verses 1-4); and (2) the high priests of Israel stood while carrying out their ministry, which indicated that their work was never finished (verse 11). In contrast with them is our Lord Jesus who offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and who has sat down (verses 12, 13). "Here we have the attestation of the completeness, the sufficiency, and the perpetuity of Christ's sacrifice."

"It is finished! O what pleasure, do these charming words
afford;
Heavenly blessings without measure, flow to us through
Christ our Lord.
It is finished! Saints, the dying words record.

Finished all the types and shadows, of the ceremonial law :
 Finished all that God hath promised : death and hell no
 more shall awe.
 It is finished ! Saints, from hence your comforts draw."

Verses 5-10, according to Westcott, set forth "the one valid sacrifice of the perfect fulfilment of the will of God, offered by Christ." The words of verse 5 :—"a body hast thou prepared me"—found historical fulfilment at the time spoken of in Matthew 1. 16. The perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus which gave pleasure to God (Matt. 17. 5), is contrasted with Israel's burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin in which He had no pleasure (Heb. 10. 6-9). By virtue of His obedience unto death and by the will of God, we are sanctified forever (verse 10).

Threefold Result.

(1). *The worshipper is sanctified and perfected forever (verse 14).* The sanctification spoken of in Hebrews is positional. Its meaning is well explained by the first occurrence of the word in the Old Testament (Genesis 2. 3). "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ;" that is to say, He set it apart for Himself. The progressive aspect of sanctification, and the instrumental means by which it is accomplished, are described in John 17. 17 : "Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth." Absolute obedience to the known will of God, as that is revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, will enable us to become practically in this world, what we are judicially in the eyes of heaven. "It is as if one called a nobleman, should let it be seen that he is a noble man."

The perfection spoken of, is as to the conscience in respect of the guilt of sin. In contrast with the Levitical worshippers who were constantly reminded of the imperfection of the sacrifices which they offered,

we have a mind at perfect peace with God. The conscience of the worshipper is the reflection of the value of the sacrifice. If the one is perfect, so is the other.

(2). *The Law—the will of God—is written on the heart and in the mind*: in the mind that we might know it; on the heart that we might love it (verses 15, 16). An external ordinance has been replaced by an inward power.

(3). *Sin is forgiven and forgotten (verses 17, 18)*. That includes the consequences of sin which, as Bishop Westcott has pointed out, are threefold: “debt which requires forgiveness, bondage which requires redemption, alienation which requires reconciliation.” Well may the apostle add: “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”



CHAPTER XII.

**Privileges : Responsibilities : Wilful
Sin : Patience (10. 19-39).**

THE climax of the argument has now been reached. The apostle has shown that in every way Christianity is superior to Judaism; and if they have followed his reasoning, it should now be possible for them to separate from the ritual and service of the Temple without the slightest regret. It is, among other things, to lead them to take this decisive step, that the remainder of the epistle is devoted.

Before we look at the various exhortations which follow, however, it may be desirable, here to re-emphasise the two main divisions of the great document which we are studying; for clear apprehensions of these will add weight to the appeals which are to come. They are as follows :

(1). 1 to 10. 18.

Spiritual
Exposition
Privileges
Worshippers
Acceptance
Draw near
In the holiest

(2). 10. 19 to 13. 25.

Practical
Appeal
Responsibilities
Witnesses
Rejection
Go forth
Without the camp.

Scattered throughout the remaining chapters are nine outstanding exhortations; and these summarise what he has yet to say to them.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Let us draw near with true hearts | Chap. 10. 22. |
| 2. „ „ hold fast our confession unwaveringly | „ 10. 23. |
| 3. „ „ consider one another encouragingly | „ 10. 24. |
| 4. „ „ lay aside everything that hinders | „ 12. 1. |
| 5. „ „ run with patience the race before us | „ 12. 1. |
| 6. „ „ have grace to serve God acceptably | „ 12. 28. |
| 7. „ „ not be covetous, but be content | „ 13. 5. |
| 8. „ „ go forth to Him without the camp | „ 13. 13. |
| 9. „ „ offer the sacrifice of praise continually | „ 13. 15. |

Privileges and Responsibilities (Chap. 10. 19-25).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near.” That invitation is given to all the people of God now ; and they may draw near—not merely once a year—but every moment of their lives. Two things enable them to do this : first, the new and living way ; and second, the presence of their great High Priest in heaven.

When the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, the symbolic system of which it was the centre came to an end. For centuries it had stood barring man’s approach ; but now, having served its purpose, God set it aside. Its destruction was as symbolic as its creation. “What the hand-writing on the wall was to Babylon, that the rending of the Veil was to the Temple. The shrine, hidden for ages, now lies bare. The way is open : Enter. What does the path lie through ? “Through the veil, that is to say,

His flesh." An incarnate Christ cannot save: we enter life only through the death-wounds of the Lamb."

And then our High Priest is there :

"The atoning work is done, the precious blood is shed,
And Jesus now has gone, His people's cause to plead ;
He lives in heaven their great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast."

We are commanded to draw near : (1) with a true heart, in contrast with the insincerity which so frequently characterised the worship of the past (Matt. 15. 8) ; (2) in full assurance of faith, in contrast with the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God (3. 12) ; (3) having perfectly cleansed consciences—the reality of what was received by the ancient priests in type (Lev. 8. 30) ; and (4) having our bodies washed with pure water—the cleansing effected by the Word (Eph. 5. 25, 26).

We are to draw nigh in *faith* to God, (verse 22) ; to hold fast the confession of our *hope* among unconverted men, (verse 23 R.V.) ; while, as fellow-christians, we are to consider one another with a view to provoking unto *love* and to good works, to assemble together in the worship of the Lord, and to exhort one another in view of the fast-approaching day.

"Let us draw near, the exhortation heeding,
One Sacrifice was offered for our sins ;
In heaven our great High Priest is interceding,
Whilst here on earth our nobler life begins.

Ours is the faith that spans the weary ages,
Earth's centuries fulfilled and passing by ;
So let them pass, the Written Word presages
Beyond them all, a wondrous destiny.

Let us hold fast our Hope's sincere confession ;
 Let it not waver, let us not backslide :
 We would be clear from small or great trans-
 gression,
 Be God's great purpose in us ratified.

Let us consider—by self-abnegation
 Show love to all the family of grace ;
 Stir others up to holy emulation
 To serve their God, to run the heavenly race.

'Tis ours to stand amid the world's commotions,
 Our purpose steadfast and our hearts sincere,
 Forsaking not our mutual devotions,
 So much the more, as that Day draweth near."

Wilful sin : verses 26–31.

Like Hebrews 6. 4–8, the passage now before us is confessedly a difficult one. Where there is so much difference of opinion, one can only very humbly declare one's conviction as to what it means.

Observe, that two classes are spoken of: **adversaries**, of whom later on it is said that they draw back unto perdition (verses 27 and 39); and the people of God, of whom it is said that He will judge them (verse 30). The siren voice of the Temple worship and ritual exercised a kind of spell over the Jewish people—even over those of them that had believed—Acts 21. 20; and Hebrews 10. 26–31 is a clarion voice warning that if a Jew treats the basic things of the New Covenant with disdain and contempt, he becomes an apostate for whom there is no hope. The passage also affirms that if, after this exposure of the intrinsic worthlessness of the Levitical sacrifices, a Hebrew Christian lingers among the beggarly elements of Judaism, he becomes a backslider who will fall under the chastening hand of God.

“These two classes” says William Hoste—“backsliders and apostates—are in view throughout the passage, as they are in Deuteronomy 32, from which the principal quotations as to God’s people and His adversaries are taken (see Deuteronomy 32. 36 and 41). In this chapter it is a question of God’s people in departure from Him, and the adversaries who have led them astray (verses 26–35). If those who profess the name of Christ tamper with sin and allow themselves to be enticed away from the place where that name is confessed, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin” as the earlier part of the chapter has made plain; for that one sacrifice cannot be repeated. But, one of two things may be expected, according to the character of the withdrawal:

(1). A certain fearful looking for of judgment, if the seceder is a backslider merely. This verse (Hebrews 10. 27) is usually read as though the two things threatened were for the adversaries—“a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” Really they are two distinct things: the fearful looking for of judgment for the backsliding people of God, and a fiery indignation for His adversaries: otherwise the words “which shall devour” would be plural, whereas they are in the singular; showing that the subject is only “the fiery indignation” awaiting the adversaries.

(2). “A fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries” if the seceder proves to be an apostate (verse 28). On this latter case the apostle specially dwells, comparing their graver responsibility with that incurred under Moses’ law. The added privileges of the day of grace only demand a higher penalty on their rejector (see verse 29). “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he

was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ? ” (verse 29). It is clear that these men are apostates of the deepest dye ; for such words denote a deliberate rejection of Christ's Person, Work, and Spirit. But if these are refused, what remains ? ”

As to “ the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified ” : may it not be said in a very real sense that the members of the Hebrew race were set apart officially and nationally by the blood of the covenant, both in type and fulfilment ?

So far as the Christian is concerned, the passage resembles “ the sin unto death ” of which 1. John speaks (chap. 5. 16), and which was so tragically illustrated in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11. 30). Such are chastened of the Lord, and have their life of testimony cut short, that they should not be condemned with the world. How unspeakably solemn !

“ Ye have need of patience ” : verses 32-39.

It will be remembered that in the parable of the sower, the first seed fell on the ground, but went not in ; that the second went in, but not down ; that the third went down, but came not up ; and that the fourth did all of these things (Matt. 13. 3-8). It is with the object of leading these Hebrew Christians on to the fourth stage indicated in the parable that the present section is concerned (Matt. 13. 19-22 ; Heb. 10. 32-34). The verses may be summarised in four phrases.

1. Think back (verses 32-34).

In bygone days they had endured affliction, reproach, loss, and counted it a joy to be the companions of them that were so used. For they had the assurance

in their hearts that they possessed in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

2. Hold fast (verse 35).

The need for this was very urgent ; for Scripture indicates that although salvation can never be forfeited, rewards may (Rev. 3. 11). “ *Look unto Me and be ye saved* ” (Isa. 45. 22) ; “ *look to yourselves . . . that ye receive a full reward* (2 John 8).

3. Be patient (verses 36–37).

Exhortations to do this are found in many portions of God’s word. Patience is developed by trial—(Romans 5, James 1), and is essential if we are to run successfully the race set before us (Heb. 12. 1). Heaven’s power is at our disposal to enable us patiently to endure (Col. 1. 11). Job is the illustration of one who, having endured, received the promise (James 5. 11 ; Heb. 10. 36).

4. Only believe (verses 38, 39).

Faith must be in daily active exercise ; for by faith we walk (2 Cor. 5. 7) and by faith we live (Gal. 2. 20). This is confirmed by the words of Habakkuk 2. 4, which are quoted three times in the New Testament. In Romans they are quoted to show that the just man’s righteousness is from God (1. 17) ; in Galatians, that it is obtained on the principle of faith (3. 11) ; and in Hebrews, that it is the secret of holy living and patient endurance (10.38).

This leads naturally to chapter 11, where the life of faith is exemplified from the Old Testament records.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Cloud of witnesses: the peerless Lord (11. 1 to 12. 3).

THE change from the ancient worship which was bound up with an imposing ritual that they could behold, to Christianity where worship is in spirit and in truth, was for these early Hebrew Christians a very great trial. In addition to that trial, they were being bitterly persecuted by their country-men who regarded them as apostates, renegades, deserters; and this double sorrow well nigh crushed them.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, the apostle shows them that these were precisely the two things which marked the careers of their outstanding national heroes and heroines; that "the golden thread of faith and the scarlet thread of reproach" run through the lives of these ancient worthies from start to finish; that they let go the seen for the unseen, the present for the future; and that in doing so they suffered nameless sorrows. "He proves by incontestable evidence that faith was the vitalising principle of the old dispensation as well as of the new; that its power can make one superior to circumstances, and enable one to triumph over all the hostile forces that may be arrayed against it."

Having quoted from one of the prophets who affirms that faith is the dynamic power by which the righteous man lives (10. 38), our author, in chapter 11, first describes what faith is (verse 1); and then, by illustrations drawn from records which extend back to

the very beginning of time, shows that the greatest deeds in the history of the world were wrought by its means (verses 3-38). He prefaces the recital of these deeds by declaring that it was by faith that the saints of old won God's approval (verse 2 Weymouth) ; and follows it by the glad announcement that they and we together shall one day attain to full blessedness (verses 39, 40).

It should be observed that verses 3 to 22 are a spiritual commentary on the book of Genesis ; that verses 23 to 29 unfold the central truths of the book of Exodus ; and that verses 30 to 38 cover the remainder of the Old Testament and go even beyond that, to the time of the Maccabees.

I. Faith described (verse 1).

“ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The description is two-fold : in relation to the future, faith is the substance of things hoped for ; in relation to the invisible, it is the evidence of things not seen. It gives reality to, and brings us into practical possession of, things which lie beyond physical experience ; for “ it penetrates the veil of sense and makes unseen things real and tangible ; it passes beyond the vicissitudes of time and grasps the blessings and promises of the eternal future.” Every instance of faith in this chapter comes under one of these two headings.

It is a most interesting fact that Egyptologists have discovered papyri on which it is found that the word translated “ substance ” in verse 1 was, in olden days, used in the legal sense of “ title-deed.” How delightful the thought : “ Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.”

II. Faith's achievements (verses 3-38).

This section is in three main divisions : Antediluvian, Patriarchal and Israelitish. In the first of these

we have an outstanding illustration of one who was swayed by things unseen (verse 7); in the second, of one who surrendered the present for the future (verses 9, 10); and in the third, of what those have to suffer who do these things (verses 35-38). How matchless is the skill by which the happenings of by-gone days are thus applied to the circumstances of the first readers of this epistle.

1. Before the Flood (verses 3-7).

“The worlds” of verse 3 include the time worlds as well as the physical worlds. Through faith we understand that the God who created them by His power, guides them by His wisdom (Gen. 1. 1; Romans 1. 20); and that through the dispensations of His providence one increasing purpose runs.

- (a). Abel was accepted by God : he was a worshipper (verse 4).
- (b). Enoch held communion with God : he was a walker (verses 5, 6).
- (c). Noah rendered service to God : he was a worker (verse 7).

2. In Patriarchal Days (verses 8-22).

The outstanding illustration here is Abraham, of whose confidence in God a sevenfold description is given :

The obedience	of faith,	verse 8.
„ pilgrimage	„ „	„ 9.
„ vision	„ „	„ 10.
„ power	„ „	verses 11, 12.
„ patience	„ „	verse 13.
„ declaration	„ „	verses 14-16.
„ surrender	„ „	„ 17-19.

The other outstanding figure in the section is Joseph, whose life may be summed up in two words : suffering, and glory.

3. Since Moses' Time (verses 23-38).

This section is in two parts: illustrations of those who achieved (23-35a); illustrations of those who endured (35b.-38).

The chief example of those who triumphed is Moses; and yet how he had to suffer! It should be very carefully noted that Faith led him to relinquish, all that Providence had placed within his reach. "Providence governs circumstances; faith governs conduct." He renounced the things for which the heart of man craves (verse 24); identified himself with a multitude of slaves (verse 25); esteemed the reproach of Christ, of infinitely greater value than the best that earth could give him (verse 26); and held on his course to the very end because he beheld Him who is invisible (verse 27). What an inspiration his example must have been to these sorely tried Christian Jews.

Those who were tortured and endured martyrdom are described simply as

"Others" (verse 36).

Their names are not recorded in the proud annals of the world's empires; but they are written in the Lamb's book of life. Men deemed them unworthy of a place in the world; God says that the world was not worthy of them (verse 38). Nor is the noble record yet closed. The fertile valleys of the Cottian Alps, the heather hills of Scotland, the rolling plains of China, the inhospitable shores of Russia, have all been favoured with "others" who, for unbending fidelity to principle and to God,

"Hid their heads, amid ignominy, death, and tombs."

Beloved of God: we are now in the rapids of time, and the lawlessness of ungodly men is becoming bolder

every day. Should a similar privilege be offered to us in the days that lie ahead, may we not be found wanting, but quit ourselves like men.

On the tombstones of these patient sufferers and victorious confessors is inscribed this epitaph by the Spirit of God :

“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

III. The Peerless Lord (chap. 12. 1-3).

A young lady who greatly desired to excel as a painter, brought a specimen of her work to a celebrated artist for criticism. “ Don't copy copies ” said the critic. “ You have copied this picture from one which was itself an imperfect copy, with the result that all the imperfections of that copy are reproduced in yours. Go out into Nature for your landscapes ; or if you must copy, do so from a masterpiece.”

Something like this is what our author tells us here. He has massed the witnesses of the past and has shown how splendidly they testified to what they knew ; but now he says in effect : “ They were but imperfect copies ; you are to behold the faultless original. Therefore run the race looking, not unto them, but unto Jesus.” The lesson is, if I may alter a word in Cowper's line : “ Judge not the Lord by feeble saints ” ; the best of men are but men at the best ; find your inspiration and your model in Him whose earthly life was one of unbroken confidence in God from beginning to end.

The word “ witnesses ” in verse 1 is “ *martus*, which means a judicial witness ; one who testifies

with his lips: from it comes our word "martyr." The word "author" in verse 2 means, the one who stands at the head of the long procession of those that believe. The word rendered "finisher" (verse 2) means, the one who has manifested faith in its complete form. The word "our" in verse 2 being in italics should be omitted. It is of the principle of faith in general that our Lord is leader and perfecter.

We are in the stadium. To nerve us for the race set before us, we have the testimonies of those who have already travelled over the course, and the inspiration which comes from contemplation of Him who is the supreme Exemplar of all runners. If, with these incentives, we heed the injunctions to lay aside every weight and the easily besetting sin, we shall finish our course with joy and be successful competitors in the arena of life.

1. The Race.

The figure is a favourite one with Paul, and to get the various aspects of the metaphor it will be necessary to examine the three chapters in which it is used: Hebrews 12; 1 Corinthians 9; and Philippians 3. The first of these maps out the course over which we travel; the second describes the training by which we are equipped (verses 24-28); the third places before us the goal toward which we press (verse 14).

2. The Hindrances.

These are two in number: weights, which hinder our progress; and sin, which paralyses our energies (verse 1).

3. The sustaining Power.

This is experienced as we keep looking unto Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God (verses 2-3).

CHAPTER XIV.

Chastisement :

12. 4-11.

THE problem of suffering from the point of view of the believer is dealt with in three great portions of the Bible: the book of Job, Psalm 73; Hebrews 12; and in each of them the result of suffering is described as blessed. In the first, it is shown that chastisement leads to the vision of God (42. 5); in the second, that it guides into the sanctuary of God (verse 17); and in the third, that it is intended to make us partakers of the holiness of God (verse 10).

Speaking generally, it may be said that all the chastisement which we receive, comes to us for one of three reasons: it is either (1) Retributive—as was the case with David (2 Samuel 12. 10); (2) Preventive—as was the case with Paul (2 Cor. 12. 7); (3) Educative—as was the case with Job. If it is borne in mind that the word which in Hebrews 12. 6 is translated “chasteneth,” is in 1 Timothy 1. 20 rendered “may learn”; in 2 Timothy 2. 25 “instructing”; and in Titus 2. 12 “teaching”—it will be seen that the aspect of chastisement described in the story of Job, is the one which is emphasised in Hebrews. 12. The word means to discipline, or to train as a child; a training, a discipline, in which the heart must keep pace with the mind, the affections with the intellect. Read in this light, passages such as Job 5. 17, Psalm 94. 12, and Proverbs 3. 11-12 are lit up with new meaning; and whether the chastening takes the form of suffering at the hand of man, or endurance of the buffetings of the messenger of satan, it will be regarded as a gift from heaven (Phil. 1. 29; 2 Cor. 12. 7).

The recipients of this epistle had forgotten these things (verses 4. 5); and so, had misunderstood the

meaning of the trials which had come upon them. They were judging God by the pressure of His hand, instead of by the words of His lips; and the apostle goes on to show that, far from being a token of divine displeasure, chastisement is the proof of God's love and our sonship (verses 6-8). He then contrasts earthly and heavenly child training; "an earthly father chastens his son as seems fit to his imperfect judgment, but our heavenly Father disciplines with infallible wisdom and perfect love" (verses 9, 10).

Although the divine purpose in chastisement is always for our profit, however, the issue of the discipline depends entirely upon the spirit in which it is received. On the one hand, it is possible to despise it, or to faint under it (verse 5); on the other, God's desire is that we should receive it with submissive wills (verse 9); and exercised minds (verse 11). To surrendered hearts the results are fourfold: holy characters, peaceful minds, fruitful lives, righteous conduct (verses 10, 11).

But, just as you cannot get the results of a process without the process, so neither can you possess these precious fruits without the necessary discipline. "As the ground is first ruthlessly broken up and disturbed by the plough, and its depths laid open to the wind and the rain and the cold, and is then tormented by the harrow; so are our hearts bruised and wounded by chastisement, and we think that nothing can compensate for the suffering; but, by and bye, there come calm autumn days, and the golden corn waves peacefully in the sun." God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without suffering. Always remember, however, that chastisement is not necessarily punishment for sin: it may be for the culture of the inner life. There is as much difference between the sufferings of the saints and those of the ungodly, as there is between the cords by which an executioner binds a condemned malefactor, and the bandages wherewith a tender physician binds his patient.

CHAPTER XV.

Exhortation and Warning :

(12. 12-29).

Cheer up : Follow peace : Pursue holiness :
(verses 12-14).

(1). *Cheer up* (12, 13). Recognition of the beneficent purposes of chastisement will keep us from being dispirited, and will enable us to bound along the path of undeviating loyalty to Christ with gladness of heart. Quoting from Isaiah 35—the whole of which should be read here—the apostle shows that the best way to overcome persecution is to face it manfully and with a brave heart (Isa. 35. 3, 4). In doing this they, equally with those other ransomed ones, will come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This is our duty self-ward ; and in fulfilling it we earn the beatitude of Matthew 5. 10-12.

(2). *Follow peace* (14a). God is the God of peace ; the Lord Jesus is the Prince of peace ; we are to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is our duty man-ward ; and in doing it we earn the beatitude of Matthew 5. 9.

(3). *Pursue holiness* (14b.). That which comes as the result of chastisement properly received (verse 10) is here presented as an object which should draw us in whole-hearted pursuit ; for it is the supreme end which He has in view in all His dealings with us. This is our duty God-ward ; and as we press on to

it we enter into possession of the beatitude of Matthew 5. 8.

We come now to the fifth great warning which, like most of the others, is interwoven with encouragement and appeal.

Warning (verses 15-17).

The writer leaves the general idea of sonship and its discipline, and passes to speak of the rights and privileges of the first-born. He points out that just as the purpose of chastisement may be misunderstood, so, what corresponds to the blessings of the first-born, may be forfeited. The danger is threefold: (1) we may fail to receive the grace of God. "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." The word "fail" in verse 15, is in Luke 15. 14 translated "to be in want," indicating the possibility of failure to appropriate what is so freely offered to us (2 Cor. 9. 8; Hebrews 4. 16).

(2). Where grace is lacking, roots of bitterness spring up (verse 15). Paul quotes from Deut. 29. 18, where it is said that the gall and wormwood-bearing root is found among those whose hearts turn away from the Lord their God. In hankering after the Temple services, this is exactly what these Hebrew Christians were doing. (3). That two-fold condition issues in profanity of life (verses 16, 17). The outstanding illustration of this is Esau who, for the momentary gratification of appetite, bartered spiritual privileges and prerogatives of the very highest order. The word "profane," says Griffith Thomas, "has its old meaning of 'secular,' not its modern specific idea of the use of blasphemous speech . . . Esau had no sacred enclosure in his life, and in this sense was a purely secular man."

Satan, who can use Scripture for his purpose, has used this one to harass tender hearts. It should be very carefully noted, however, that Jacob's brother wept, not because he was a sinner, but because he was a loser; not because of the sin which brought the evil, but because of the evil which sin brought. The meaning of verse 17 is that "Esau with tears tried to get his father to repent—that is, to change his mind—and give him the inheritance; but in vain."

"These three verses," says John Anderson, "show the strong inherent tendency to declension that persists in the soul through all stages of spiritual experience, and is a perpetual menace to its true prosperity."

Mount Sinai : Mount Zion (verses 18–24).

Here we have the last of the contrasts which the writer draws between the old and the new economies. The first was characterised by terror and majesty (verses 18 to 21); the second, by tenderness and mercy (verses 22 to 24). The difference between them is the difference between earthly and heavenly, between legality and graciousness, between the natural and the spiritual, between pitiless judgment and pardoning love.

<i>Mount Sinai</i> , verse 18.	<i>Mount Zion</i> , verse 22.
Fire " 18.	The City " 22.
Blackness " 18.	Angels " 22.
Darkness " 18.	Firstborn " 23.
Tempest " 18.	Judge " 22.
Trumpet " 19.	Righteous " 22.
Decalogue " 19.	Mediator " 24.
Awe-inspiring verses 20, 21	Blood " 24.

In the first, we see the Law with all its claims ; and no man can be happy in viewing that. In the second, we see the Blood, by which the claims of law have been vindicated ; and Jesus, who calms the troubled breast.

The effect on the readers, of this marvellous unveiling, must have been profound and immediate. To turn back from that to which they had now come (verse 22) would be like turning back from light to darkness, freedom to bondage, life to death. These verses form the final link in the chain of argument which eventually drew them away from the whole of that divinely forsaken system whose representatives had crucified their Lord (chap. 13. 13).

Verses 25-29 show the greater responsibility which is theirs who listen to Him that speaks from heaven ; and affirms that the local shaking which took place at Sinai, will be succeeded by convulsions in the physical universe : the aim being the removal of those things that can be shaken, in order that the unshakable things may remain. But since we have received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.



CHAPTER XVI.

A call to devotedness of life

(Hebrews 13).

THIS chapter is in three sections. The first deals with matters which arise out of our relation to our fellow-believers and our fellow-men (verses 1-6); the second, with matters connected with our spiritual life (verses 7-17); the third, with things which are more particularly personal (verses 18-25).

I. Social (verses 1-6).

In these few words is condensed the secret of a gracious, pure, happy, and courageous life.

(1) *Love*. "Let brotherly love continue" (verse 1). It already existed (chap. 6. 10); but he desired that it should flow on uninterruptedly. By means of it, assurance comes to our own hearts (1 John 3. 14); by means of it also, our discipleship is most effectively declared (John 13. 35).

(2). *Hospitality*. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers" (verse 2; Romans 12. 13; 1. Timothy 5 10; Titus 1. 8; 1. Peter 4. 9). The God whom they worshipped is a lover of the stranger (Deut. 10. 18. 19); it was He who out of His kindness and love had saved them (Titus 3. 4). Their past history showed that sometimes He sent His angels in the disguise of wayfarers (Gen. 18; Gen. 19; Judges 13). Service rendered to the saints He never forgets (chap. 6. 10); it is regarded as rendered unto Christ Himself (Matt. 25. 40).

(3). *Sympathy*. They were to remember those who were in bonds as bound with them (verse 3): a word which makes direct appeal to us to-day when many of our loved sisters and brothers are languishing in the gaols of some of the countries of the world where the name of God is blasphemed. "And those who suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body." They had identified themselves with such in the past (10. 33); and although perhaps unable to render much practical assistance, their sympathy was

"Like moonlight on the troubled sea,
Brightening the storm it could not calm."

(4). *Purity* (verse 4). Marriage, the only bliss of Paradise that has survived the Fall, is declared to be an honourable thing. This defence of God's primal institution seems to have been occasioned by reason of the teaching of the school of Hillel which made divorce easy. "The ethics of the New Testament magnify family life."

(5). *Contentment* (verse 5). Negatively: don't be covetous. A millionaire recently said: "The things best worth possessing are the things which money cannot buy." "Money is a universal provider of everything but happiness, and a passport everywhere but to heaven." It has been said that a man's habit of life and thought in connection with money, is one of the tests of character. "A right measure and manner in getting, saving, spending, giving, taking, lending, borrowing, and bequeathing money, would almost argue a perfect man." Beware! Jacob so easily develops into Shylock.

Positively: be content; and we may well be so. For the word which is translated "content" in Phil. 4. 11 is a word which the ancients used when they wanted to describe a country that had no need

of imports; which had within its own borders all that was necessary for the life of its people (compare John 4. 14). Contentment, which softens our privations and sweetens our provisions, "will make a cottage look as fair as a palace. He is not a poor man that hath little, but he is a poor man that wants much."

(6). *Companionship.* Besides this all-sufficing gift we have with us the Giver Himself who says: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Of the past He says: "I took you by the hand" (Heb. 8. 9); of the present: "I the Lord . . . will hold thine hand" (Isaiah 42. 6); of the future: "I will never, never let go your hand" (Heb. 13. 5 Weymouth). "The words in the original contain no fewer than five negatives—a fivefold assurance of divine support. Never is a long word."

(7). *Courage.* "What shall man do unto me" (verse 6 R.V.). In verse 5, we listen to what He hath said; in verse 6, to what we may say. Since He has said that, we may say this; since He assures us of upholding grace, we can face a hostile world fearlessly, assured that no weapon that is formed against us can prosper. "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what shall man do unto me."

II. Ecclesiastical (verses 7-17).

This section begins and ends with reference to past and present leaders. We are to remember, with a view to imitating, those who had the rule over us, but who are now with the Lord (verse 7 R.V.); we are to obey—and pray for, (verses 18, 19)—those who are our present guides (verse 17 margin). If we have the grateful heart we shall gladly do these things; for these pastors and ministers of the Word "watch for our souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief."

Such men, indeed, are worthy of double honour (1 Timothy 5. 17). They preach the truth with their lips, and exemplify it in their lives. They are like the village pastor described in Goldsmith's exquisite lines, of whom it is said that :

“ As the bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds and led the way.”

While leaders may pass away, however, our incomparable Lord abides : “ The swirling waters of change may severely challenge Christian faith, but yonder looms the Eternal Rock, the Rock of all the Ages, Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday in the past, to-day in the present, and who assuredly will be the same for ever and ever ” (verse 8).

The remaining verses of this section (9-16) lead up to the final appeal of the writer, and to a description of the forms of service which were henceforth to occupy those who respond to it.

(1). God's method of establishing the heart is with grace, not with meats—those outward carnal ordinances which the writer has shown to be valueless (verse 9). They were therefore finished with Judaism as regards *doctrine*.

(2). The Lord Jesus perfectly fulfilled the ordinance of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16. 27), settling the sin-question once for all and suffering without the gate. There was, therefore, no alternative left to those Christian Jews, but to withdraw from a system which continued to offer sacrifices for sin ; and to openly identify themselves with their rejected Master in the place of reproach without the camp (verses 10-13). They were thus finished with Judaism as regards *priesthood*.

(3). In renouncing Judaism they became, like their spiritual forefathers, strangers and pilgrims on the earth (11. 13); but they also became free-men of a nobler commonwealth (11. 10; 13. 14). They were thus finished with Judaism as regards *citizenship*.

(4). Even the eucharistic sacrifices of the ancient economy had ceased to give any pleasure to God (Isa. 1. 11-15); and these converted Jews were in future to express their gratitude by lives of praise Godward, and by kindly deeds manward (verses 15, 16). They were thus finished with Judaism as regards *service*.

III. Personal (verses 18-25).

After asking for intercession on his behalf (verses 18, 19), he goes on to plead for them (verses 20, 21). Delitsch speaks of the majestic words of verses 20, 21 as a comprehensive benedictory prayer; one of which it may be said: "How brief, yet how comprehensive; how exquisitely simple, yet how deeply sublime." In verse 20 you have, stated or implied, the great fundamental doctrines with which the didactic portion of Hebrews deals—1. 1 to 10. 18; in verse 21 you have epitomised all that God desires for us now as set forth in chapter 10. 19 to 13. 25.

"The blood of the everlasting covenant"—the central thing spoken of in the prayer—is like a watershed: on the one side, you have what God does *for* us; on the other side, you have what God does *in* us. Thus:

4. The everlasting covenant.

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|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The God of peace. | 5. The re-adjusted life. |
| 2. The risen Lord. | 6. The obedient mind. |
| 3. The shepherd Saviour. | 7. The praiseful heart. |

(1). "The God of peace" is a favourite expression of Paul: Romans 15. 33; 16. 20; 2 Cor. 13. 11; Phil. 4. 9; 1 Thess. 5. 23. It is always used to impart hope and encouragement.

(2). "The risen Lord." "Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." In the symbolism of the Tabernacle there was nothing that indicated resurrection; and hence, with this exception, the writer invariably passes from the lowest point in our Lord's humiliation to the highest pinnacle of His exaltation (compare chap. 1. 3; 10. 12).

(3). The shepherd Saviour. Our Lord is presented to us in this character, in a threefold way in the New Testament Scriptures:

- (a) He is the good shepherd in death—
John 10. 11.
- (b) He is the great shepherd in resurrection—
Heb. 13. 20.
- (c) He is the chief shepherd in glory—
1 Peter 5. 4.

He will be our shepherd in life (Psalm 23. 1-3); in death (verse 4); through eternity (verse 6).

(4). "The everlasting covenant." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54. 10). What an anchor-hold for trusting souls amidst the seething waters of change.

(5). The readjusted life. "Make you perfect in every good work to do His will." The word translated "perfect" says Dr. Dale, is sometimes, and perhaps most accurately, used to denote the repairing

and putting in order of what has been injured or broken—the mending of nets, for instance, and the re-setting of a fractured limb. In Matthew 4. 21, it is rendered “mending”; in 1 Cor. 1. 10, “perfectly joined together”; and in Gal. 6. 1, “restore.” It is a word which means to adjust, to equip, to fit a thing for its position. The corresponding verb denotes, to bring a thing to the fulness of its designed development. This readjustment is in order that, in every good work we may do His will. “If we are taught of the Spirit” says John Anderson, “we shall pray for perfection; if we pray for it, we shall earnestly seek it. So doing, we shall not speak disparagingly of it, nor boast of our attainments. “Perfection” means complete development of all the graces of the Christian character; and among these, meekness and lowliness of mind have a conspicuous place.”

(6). The obedient mind. “Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” Some Scriptures speak as if everything depended on God; others, as if everything depended on us. The one set of Scriptures asks us to “trust”; the other, to “obey.” God works in; we work out (Phil. 2. 12, 13). “To be well-pleasing in His sight.” Higher than that, ambition cannot rise.

(7). The praiseful heart. “To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” This will ever be the song and the desire of the heart that enjoys daily experience of His readjusting and wonder-working power. “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; and let such as love thy salvation say continually: Let God be magnified” (Psalm 70. 4).

He closes his great message by asking the readers to suffer the word of exhortation which it contains (verse 22); with a reference to his friend Timothy (verse 23); and with words of greeting and benediction (verses 24, 25). May that benediction be with us all. Amen.