

# GOD'S APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST

BY

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"WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the  
heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High  
Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus."—HEB. iii. 1.

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# **GOD'S APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST**

## P R E F A C E



THE following pages contain the substance of three addresses given by the writer at several places, and which are now put into writing with a view to reaching a larger number than he could reach with his voice. These pages are occupied with the same subject as the book entitled "*God's Pilgrims*,"<sup>1</sup> and they contain an amplification of one part of that general subject. The writer's object is to put before the reader a view of the three-fold work of the Son of God—past, as the Apostle of God; present, as High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary fulfilling the type of the great day of Atonement; and future, as King-Priest of the age to come.

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I

**The Apostle of Our Confession**



# I

## The Apostle of Our Confession

“**F**OR unto angels hath He not put in subjection the world (habitable earth) to come, whereof we speak. 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. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. 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 for every man (or every thing).”

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“For verily He took not hold of angels; but He took hold of the seed of Abraham” (that is, to create for Himself a family of “children” as stated in the preceding verses. For that purpose God passed by the holy angels and laid hold of the seed of Abraham, namely, “they that are of faith,” for they are “the children of Abraham,” Gal. iii. 7). “Wherefore, in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (propitiation) for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. ii. 5–9, 16–18; iii. 1).

Chapters i. and ii. of the Epistle to the Hebrews put before us the **Son of God**, Who is the brightness of God's glory and the express Image of His Person, by Whom He made the worlds, and Who upholds all things by the word of His power.

This passage of Scripture also tells how this

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glorious and mighty One stooped to become the **Son of Man**, being made for a little time lower than the angels (who are His servants) in order that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man (or every thing); and it further tells how He suffered being tempted or tried, in order that He might be able to help those who are tempted.

This Scripture also speaks of those who are to be heirs of salvation, whom the Son of God has sanctified, and whom He is not ashamed to call "brethren." Those "holy (or sanctified) brethren," being they whom He has set apart to be "partakers of the heavenly calling," are therefore exhorted to consider Him; that is, to concentrate their attention upon Him, to stay their minds upon Him, to make Him the subject of their thoughts and meditations. It is, on the one hand, most needful that they should do this, in view of the circumstances of danger, trial and need in which they are now placed; and on the other hand it is not possible for them to be more profitably or happily occupied. We will endeavour, therefore, to follow this exhortation, relying upon God to make our poor endeavours fruitful.

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For our help in the consideration of this great subject the Scripture has divided it for us into two parts, as represented by the words "Apostle" and "High Priest." We are to consider the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, in the office of **Apostle**, and then in that of **High Priest** of our confession. (We should read *confession*, not *profession* here, and also in chaps. iv. 14 and x. 23.) Our confession is that which we own, acknowledge and stand to, as truth. The significance of the word "confess" may be learned from Matt. x. 32, 33. Its opposite is to deny. As the Lord said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Confession, therefore, is the open acknowledgment of what is believed in the heart. So in Rom. x. it is written, "If thou shalt **confess** with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the *mouth* **confession** is made unto salvation." Belief in the heart upon the

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risen Christ, which belief God imputes (or reckons) to the believing sinner for righteousness, should be accompanied by open *confession* of Christ as **Lord** of all, "unto salvation," for which salvation the believer waits (Heb. ix. 28). The confession of Christ Jesus as Lord is voluntary now, and has great recompense of reward. In the coming "day of His power" it will be compulsory; for in that day every knee shall bow at the name Jesus, and *every tongue* shall **confess** that Jesus is **Lord**, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 10, 11).

Jesus, that lowly Son of Man, is the One Whom we confess as the Christ of God and Lord of all; and this same Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

The office of Apostle is very different from that of High Priest. The work of the former is very different from that of the latter. Moreover, the two offices were not held at the same time. The era of the Apostleship of the Lord Jesus was the period of His life on earth as a partaker of flesh and blood. He completed His work as God's Apostle on the Cross; and then, upon entering into heaven, He assumed the

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office and work of High Priest. "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest," seeing that the office of the *earthly* priesthood of men in the flesh was committed to the family of Aaron (Heb. viii. 4), and Jesus Christ sprang from the tribe of Judah, not from that of Levi, Aaron's father (vii. 14).

Moreover, upon reading the entire Epistle to the Hebrews, we find reference made therein to two distinct and very different types of priesthood, namely, that of Aaron and that of Melchisedec; and, of course, both these types must have their fulfilment in Christ, Who is the Substance of all the Old Testament "shadows." Accordingly, the Epistle instructs us that the Lord Jesus is now, during this present age of His rejection on earth, fulfilling the type of the Aaronic Priesthood. Thus it is stated that we **have** (now in the time present) such an High Priest who **is** set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle (viii. 1, 2); and again, that Christ being come, an High Priest of coming good things (*i.e.* things that were yet future in Old Testament times) has entered once for all into the

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holy place (in heaven) by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (ix. 11, 12).

But there remains yet the type of the Melchisedec Priesthood, which, as it existed before that of Aaron, is fulfilled later, and which is permanent. The Aaronic high priest *went into* the holy place out of sight of the people with the evidence of the death of the sin-offering slain on behalf of the sins of God's people. Melchisedec *appeared to* the victor in the fight of faith and *brought forth* bread and wine. Melchisedec, moreover, was a priest who was also a king, having the double title of King of Righteousness and King of Peace (Salem, afterwards Jeru-salem). Therefore, the fulfilment of this type awaits the coming forth of the Lord Jesus, as God's appointed King, to sit upon His holy hill of Zion, to be anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows,<sup>1</sup> and to rule in the midst of His enemies, until He shall have put all enemies under His feet.

Thus we may clearly distinguish three eras in

<sup>1</sup> Christ's "fellows" are the "partakers of the heavenly calling," as will be clearly understood from the fact that "fellows" in Heb. i. 9, quoted from Ps. xlv., is the same word in the original as "partakers" in Heb. iii. 1 and 14.

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the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, in the service which He undertook to accomplish for God His Father as the "Servant" of Jehovah. (1) In the first era now past He was the "Apostle," or One *sent forth* into the world; (2) in the era now present He is High Priest of the type of Aaron, acting as minister (servant) of the Sanctuary and of the true, or heavenly Tabernacle; and (3) in the "age to come" He will be the King-Priest, fulfilling the type of Melchisedec. (He already has the *title* of "Priest after the order of Melchisedec," since His Priesthood is both permanent and intransmissible; but He has not yet entered the *office* of "Priest upon His throne." His present place is upon His Father's throne.)

These three eras or divisions in the ministry of the Son of God, and for which He became the Son of Man, are clearly indicated in several passages in Hebrews. Verse 7 of chap. ii. gives all three: (1) "Thou madest Him a little (for a little while) lower than the angels." This plainly refers to the period of His apostleship, when He was on earth in the days of His flesh. (2) "Thou crownedst Him with glory

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and honour." This speaks of the present age, in which He is exalted to the right hand of God, for verses 8, 9 say, "We see not yet all things put under Him; but we see Jesus, Who was made for a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death **crowned with glory and honour.**" That is to say, because or on account of the suffering of death which He endured for the glory of God in the putting away of sin, God has highly exalted Him, and has crowned Him, as Man, "with glory and honour." (3) "And didst set Him over the works of Thy hands." This remains to be accomplished in the age to come; for it is distinctly stated that "We see *not yet* all things put under Him" (ver. 8).

These three periods are also distinguished in chap. xiii. 8, in which it is set forth that, although the character of His service changes, the Person who fills all these offices is "the same." "Jesus Christ, **the same** yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Yesterday" is the day of His lowly service as God's Apostle, now ended. "To-day" is the day of His service in the heavenly Sanctuary, the period so often referred to in chaps. iii. and iv., "as the

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Holy Ghost saith, **To-day**, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "For ever" is the age to come in which He will fulfil the ministry of High Priest **for ever** after the order of Melchisedec, and according as the Father has said to Him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. i. 8).

The three periods of the Lord's ministry as Son of Man are clearly presented also in the last part of Heb. ix. in what are often referred to as His three "appearings." "Once in the end of the age hath He appeared," that is, as the Apostle of God, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (ver. 26). Having completed that mission He is entered "into heaven itself, *now* to appear in the presence of God for us," in fulfilment of the Aaronic type of priesthood (ver. 24). But His service is not yet completed, for "unto them that look for Him (literally *await* Him) shall He appear the second time for salvation" (ver. 28). That will be as the Priest-King.

Also in Phil. ii. 6-11 the three eras referred to are clearly distinguished. First the Scripture declares Who He is, "Who, **being** in the form of God" (ver. 6). This corresponds with the

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opening words of Hebrews, “Who, **being** the Brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person.” Such is His essential “Being.” His own proper “Form” is that “of God.” But He *made* Himself of no reputation (as said in Hebrews, “was *made* lower than the angels”), and *took* the *form* of a *Servant*, and was *made* in the likeness of men. Thus He became the Apostle of God, the “Servant” of Jehovah; and being so found, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. That ended the era and work of His apostleship.

Thereupon “God highly exalted Him,” taking Him up to the highest heaven, where He now is, crowned with glory and honour, serving as the great High Priest in the true tabernacle.

And, finally, the age to come is indicated when at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We deem it important that the reader should have these three eras of the service of the Son of Man clearly distinguished in his mind.

Man’s “knowledge of the Son of God,” which is the foundation and capstone, the Alpha and

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Omega of all true knowledge, must begin with the knowledge of Him in the office of the Apostle of God. An apostle as the name signifies, is one *sent forth* by another to accomplish a specific mission. The true apostle, therefore, is simply the agent of the one who sent him, having no separate will or aim of his own. In considering the Lord Jesus as the "Apostle of our confession," we view Him as the Sent One of God ; and in so doing we should take into consideration all that He did in the days of His flesh, from His humble birth in the manger at Bethlehem to His shameful death as one cursed of God upon the cross of Calvary. The Spirit of Christ spoke of this office through the prophet Isaiah, saying, "The Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; He hath **sent Me** to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. lxi. 1, 2). The Lord Jesus formally announced Himself as God's Apostle, or sent one, at the beginning of His public ministry, when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, "He opened the Book" and read the above-

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quoted passage, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled" (Luke iv. 17-22). Again, in such passages as John vii. 28, 29, He lays emphasis upon the fact that He came into the world solely to accomplish the will of Another: "I am not come of Myself, but He that **sent Me** is true, Whom ye know not. But I know Him; for I am from Him and He hath **sent Me**." "I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that **sent Me**."

The title "Apostle" directs our attention especially to the Gospel of John, in which the expression "sent one" is used of the Lord (and in nearly all cases by Himself) upwards of forty times. Every recurrence of this expression is a reminder to us to consider Him as the One Who humbled Himself in perfect self-surrender, yielding His own human will at every point, and even to the extreme of the most shameful of all deaths, in order to accomplish the will of Him that **sent Him**.

In considering the mission of the Lord Jesus, as detailed in that Gospel, we find that it may be conveniently arranged under three heads. (1) Revealing the Name of God as Father.

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(2) Doing the works of His Father. (3) Speaking the words given Him by His Father.

### (1) Christ Revealing the Father's Name

God is known as **Father**, and can be so known, *only* through the revealing of the **Son**. The Lord Himself declared, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22). Indeed, it is evident that none *can* know the Father, except the Son: and hence none can make the Father known by revelation, except the Son; for the Son alone truly knows God in the character of Father. The relation of *father* cannot exist except there be a son; and it exists *only* with those who are begotten of the father. Therefore there could not be a greater or more fatal delusion than that which has spread so widely in our day under the title of the "Fatherhood of God," in which it is assumed and implied that the holy relationship of father and son subsists between God and all men. To know God *as Father* is to know Him *by actual experience*

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in all that the Name "Father" means or can mean; for God's "Name" is the expression of what He is. God is the Father only of those who have been begotten of Him through faith in His Son, as it is written, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John v. 1); and God is *known as* Father to those, and to those only, to whom the Son has willed to reveal Him. This truth, which is of vital importance to all men, was stated by the Lord Himself in the plainest language, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John xiv. 6). The way to the Father is by the Son; and there is no other way. Elijah or one of the prophets might turn the hearts of the people to **God**; but none can come to the **Father**, but by the **Son**.

Some have found difficulty in grasping the truth we are now considering because of the fact that the name "Father" is applied to God in the Old Testament, as in Isa. lxiii. 16. But it is one thing to have heard one of the Names of God, and a very different thing to *know* Him in the character which that Name expresses. Thus the Name "Jehovah" was

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known to, and used by, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Nevertheless, God said to Moses, "I am **Jehovah**: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the Name of God Almighty (*El Shaddai*, the All-Bountiful One), but by My Name **Jehovah** was I **not known** unto them" (Ex. vi. 2, 3).

This part of the mission of the Son of God was announced prophetically in Ps. xxii. in the words, "I will declare **Thy Name** unto My brethren"; and those words are quoted in Heb. ii. 12.

The revealing of the Name of the Father involves in the first place the making known of the great fact that there is One Who is **Son**, and that through Him all the mighty works of Creation and Redemption are accomplished. The name "Father" is without meaning apart from the Son. Hence the Son is the very substance and essence of the meaning of the name "Father." Without the *Son* there would not be a *Father*. Therefore, the coming of the Son into the world is the manifestation of the Father. It follows that, before the coming of the Son, the Father was not revealed.

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The truth concerning the Son (and hence that concerning God as "Father") was hidden in Old Testament times. This is the Rock-Foundation truth upon which Christ is building His Church (Matt. xvi. 16-18). There is just a hint of this truth given in the Old Testament Scriptures, but the meaning thereof was not understood before the advent of Jesus Christ. In the second Psalm it is written "Thou art My **Son**, this day have I begotten thee"; and again, in Prov. xxx. 4 stands the remarkable saying, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is **His Name**, and what is **His Son's** Name, if thou canst tell?" There was no answer to this question in the days before Christ. Accordingly, when the fulness of the time was come for God to reveal Himself as the Father, He "**sent forth His Son**" to accomplish that purpose; and also in order that those who had been chosen in Him might receive the "adoption," and might have the Spirit of His Son in their hearts, enabling them to say "Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 4-6). Thus "grace and

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truth came by Jesus Christ"; for "no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 17, 18). The word here rendered "declared" is full of meaning, which is difficult to express. It signifies a full-orbed and complete forth-telling or revealing. The Son makes the Father fully known; for, as stated in Heb. i. 3, He is the brightness (or effulgence) of the Father's glory, and the express image (or exact expression) of His Person.

It follows that those who, through the acceptance of the Gospel, and by the illumination of the Spirit, come to "the knowledge of the **Son** of God," receive through Him the revelation of the Father. Whosoever has seen the Son has seen the Father; and whosoever receives the Son receives the Father Who sent Him. This truth embraces far more than the mere fact that God is "the Father." It includes the knowledge of what is *in the Father's heart* for the glory of His *Son*, and what is the Father's purpose for those who, through faith in Jesus Christ, are made the *children* of God. It includes also the knowledge of the wondrous

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love which “the *Father* hath bestowed upon us” in redeeming us from eternal ruin by the sacrifice of His own Son, in giving us a new birth, and in preparing for us, in the age to come, such good things as pass man’s understanding. It includes, moreover, all the knowledge of His eternal purpose, in pursuance of which He chose us in Christ, having in love predestinated us unto **adoption** by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of grace in the Beloved One (Eph. i. 4–6). All this and much more is included in the knowledge of God as Father.

In reading attentively the inspired records of the Lord’s service on earth as God’s Apostle, we will see that the revealing of the Father’s Name had a very prominent part therein. The first recorded utterance that fell from the lips of Jesus Christ pointedly declared this great fact: “Wist ye not that I must be about **My Father’s** business?” Accordingly, immediately after God had borne testimony to Him as His Son at His baptism, the Lord proceeded to make known the Father’s Name. This revela-

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tion we find in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.). From the teaching of that discourse we learn that what is becoming to children of God is to love even their enemies, to return blessing for cursing, to do good to those who hate them, and to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute them. This teaching of the Lord is given for the express purpose that those who receive it may be "Sons of your **Father**, Who is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This is wholly a new revelation of God, giving His own character as known and shared by the Son, Who is One with the Father, and giving His standard for His own children. By this discourse the children of God learn also that they are God's light-bearers in the darkness of this world, and that their responsibility is to let the light, which is God's testimony, so shine before men that they may see their good works, and glorify **their Father** Who is in heaven. Thus the Son makes the Father known as Love and Light. There is nothing like this in the teaching of the Old Testament; for God Himself is here speaking in His Son. Wherefore, we

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ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard.

In this discourse of the Lord on the mount we have also the children's prayer, setting forth "the manner" after which they ought to pray. The leading petitions of that prayer are for the bringing in of that era in which the Father's Name shall be hallowed, in which the Father's kingdom shall be established in the person of His Son, and in which the Father's will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. We cannot comment in detail upon this great utterance of the Lord Jesus; but the child of God who has spiritual discernment, and who *wills* to hear the voice of Him that speaketh, will find it full of the revelation of the Father by that One Who alone knows and can reveal Him.

In the fourth chapter of John we may see how the Apostle of God makes the revealing of the Father's Name His first business after imparting to a thirsty soul the living water. When faith in Him had been born in the heart of the Samaritan woman, and the desire to worship God according to His will had found expression on her lips, the Lord spoke to her at once of the "Father," stating that there was no

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place on earth for the worship of the **Father**, but that the hour had come in which true worshippers should worship the **Father** in spirit and in truth; and then He imparted to that new-born soul the wondrous and precious revelation that "the **Father** seeketh such to worship Him."

We may truly say that every word and every act of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He went about doing good, constituted a part of the revealing of the **Father**. This must be so, because He and the **Father** are One. Therefore, an exhaustive consideration of this part of His ministry would lead us to the examination of all things that He said and did, "the which," says the Apostle John, "if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." But, for the reason just stated, further revealings of the **Father** by the Lord Jesus Christ will be found under the sub-headings that follow.

### (2) **Doing the Father's Works**

At the pool of Bethesda "lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered,"

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representing aptly the condition of sin-stricken humanity. Among these was one to whom the Lord Jesus put the question, "Wilt thou be made whole"; and then by His word He healed him. It was the Sabbath day; but there could be no Rest for God's Apostle so long as human beings lay in the condition of that multitude, exhibiting in their diseased and impotent state the appalling consequences of sin. But the Jews sought to kill Him for violating the Sabbath, and also for saying that God was His Father, thus making Himself equal with God (John v. 16-18). Thereupon the Lord proceeded to declare His oneness with the Father in His works, and showed that the greatest work of all was *quickenning the dead*. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can **do nothing of Himself**, but what **He seeth the Father do**: for what things soever He (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son. . . . For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the **Son quickeneth whom He will**" (vers. 19, 21).

Following this, the Lord cites the three Divine witnesses that testified of Him as the One sent forth by God. Those witnesses were,

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first, the works that He did (ver. 36); second, the Father Himself (ver. 37); third, the holy Scriptures (vers. 39, 40). We are concerned at present with the first of these: "But I have greater witness than that of John (Baptist); for **the works** which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, **that the Father hath sent Me.**" And again at another time He said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John xiv. 10).

His works, then, are the Father's works. They were wrought in order to accomplish the Father's purpose; and they bear conclusive testimony that He Who did them was the Sent One—the Apostle of God.

There is something more in this healing of the impotent man than the mere showing forth of the compassion upon the victims of sin, and that fact that God has the beneficent works wrought by Jesus Christ are an expression of that Divine compassion. Those works were done in fulfilment of the **Father's purpose**; and the Father's purpose has reference, of course, to His own family. Those who are quickened, or made alive, while dead in trespasses and sins, through the opera-

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tion of the power given to the Son, are the elect of God, chosen for Sonship unto Himself. They are the "many sons" whom He is bringing unto glory, whom Christ is not ashamed to call "brethren."

The general nature of the work for which God sent forth His Son into the world is declared by the Lord to Nicodemus: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." God sent not His Son for the condemnation of the world, though the world was ripe for condemnation, but for its salvation (John iii. 17). The manner in which this salvation was to be accomplished is stated in vers. 14, 15: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." In the same discourse the Lord declared the necessity of the new birth, showing that the new birth, or the quickening of those dead in sins, which is the bestowal of eternal life, is given to all who believe on the Son of God, and is based upon His work when lifted up on the cross, where He was "made sin for us."

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Hence it follows that "he that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already." "And this is the condemnation" — not that men are sinners by nature and deserve to die—but "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." In other words, now that God's Son has suffered for sin on the cross, men do not receive at God's hands what they *deserve*, but what they individually *choose*. The Light is come into the world, and those who choose the Light are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. They once were darkness, but now are light in the Lord. On the other hand, those who choose the darkness have for their portion "the blackness of darkness for ever." It could not be otherwise, since man has a will of his own, and is free to exercise it. *God's* will is that *not any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance (2 Pet. iii. 9; 1 Tim. ii. 4). But human beings have been endowed with the wonderful power of *choice*. They have been endowed also with intelligence and capacity to receive God's testimony; so that they have all needed light for the intelligent exercise of that

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power. God does not coerce the choice of man in this supreme matter of his eternal destiny. The *light* is where the Father and the Son are. The *darkness* is where They are not. The Apostle John, who brought the message that "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all," said, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The revelation of the Father and Son has now been given to the world, and whosoever *will* may come. But God is not unjust to force any human being into a "fellowship" which is distasteful to him. It would be manifestly unfair to one who preferred the darkness to force him to dwell in the light. It is, moreover, exceedingly distressful to the creatures of darkness to be brought into the light. The Lord says concerning those who reject His counsel and despise His reproof, that "Therefore they shall eat the fruit of *their own way*, and be filled with *their own devices*" (Prov. i. 29-31). The penalty incurred by those who reject the grace of God and choose their own way will be that they shall receive just what they have chosen. So the condemnation is that the light is come, and they who will (*i.e.* wish) not to have the light are left to the consequences of their

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own deliberate choice. Darkness is simply the absence of light.

In the fourth chapter of John's gospel the devotion of the Son of God to the work of the Father Who sent Him is strikingly declared in His answer to His disciples when they pressed Him to eat after they had returned from the village with food. The Apostle of God had arrived at the well at the hour of noon, wearied, and surely was in need of physical refreshment; nevertheless He found awaiting Him there one of the "works" the Father had given Him to do, and on account of which "He must needs go through Samaria." That work was to meet the woman of Sychar and to quicken her by means of the living water. Having finished that work, He said to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that **sent Me**, and to finish **His work**" (vers. 31, 34).

In considering the work of God's Apostle we should keep in mind the statement of Eph. i. 5, that those whom God choose in Christ Jesus were predestinated unto adoption (sonship) to **Himself** by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of **His will**. The woman of Samaria

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was one of those chosen ones. God had given her to His Son, and He came to do His Father's "will." On another occasion He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of **Him that sent Me**; and this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John vi. 38, 39).

We see, then, that the Son of God, in His life on earth as Son of Man, was so entirely consecrated to the office of the Apostle of God, doing not His own will but yielding it at every point to make way for His Father's will, that He could say it was meat to Him to do the will of the One Who had sent Him. The climax of this surrender of the human will of the Son of God was reached in the choice made in the Garden of Gethsemane. That choice cost Him an intensity of agony that brought forth bloody sweat; nevertheless, the choice of His heart found expression on His lips in the words, "not My will, but Thine, be done"; and having so said, He gave Himself up to be made the sin-offering, to be lifted up on the cross as accursed and forsaken of His Father.

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We will call attention to one more of the Father's works. The record of it is found in the ninth chapter of John. It was the miracle of giving sight to a man which was born blind. In the prophecy of Isaiah, already quoted, one of the works foretold of the One Whom God should send was "the recovering of sight to the blind"; and in the Lord's reply to the question sent Him by John the Baptist, the first of the signs He mentioned as proof that He was the One "that should come," was that "the blind receive their sight."

In the instance recorded in John ix., which, like the healing of the impotent man, was done on the Sabbath day, the question was asked by the disciples whether the cause of the man's blindness was his own sin or the sin of his parents. "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents: but that **the works of God** should be made manifest. I must work **the works of Him that sent Me**, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." This was recognised by those who saw it as a new work; for, as the man himself said, "Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."

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It thus appears that this man that was born blind was a vessel of mercy specially prepared and appointed by God that the works of the Father might be made manifest in him. Here is a wondrous revelation of the power and goodness of the Father. By nature we all are in the condition spiritually of that blind man—"born blind." But it is the Father's purpose to give sight to such. And one whose eyes have been opened, though perhaps unable to answer all the questions that may be asked as to the way in which the miracle was wrought, yet can positively affirm that, "whereas I was blind, now I see." For the mighty work wrought upon that man consisted not only in the opening of his physical eyes, but in giving him spiritual sight whereby he was enabled to recognise in the lowly Son of Man the Son of God, and to believe on and worship Him (vers. 35-38).

### **(3) Speaking the Father's Words**

One of the clearest and most important prophecies of the Old Testament is that recorded in Deut. xviii. It was given by the Lord to Moses, with whom God spake face to

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face, and of whom it is written, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10). This Moses, in his parting message to the Israelites, said :

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." And further, "And the Lord said unto me. . . . I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and **will put My words in His mouth**; and He shall speak unto them **all that I shall command Him**. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto **My words** which He shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him" (Deut. xviii. 15-19).

It would be impossible to overstate the importance of this prophecy, which was fulfilled by the Son of God in His earthly ministry, or the importance of the consequences that hinge upon the heed that men pay to the Father's words spoken by the Son. "Wherefore, the Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'" The witness of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle

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Peter, is that the Lord Jesus Christ was “that Prophet.” “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which **will not hear that Prophet**, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts iii. 22, 23).

For the proper “hearing,” that is to say, inward reception, of His words, we need hearts that are tender and impressionable. May such be in each one of us.

In the latter part of John iii. is a very important passage concerning the *words* uttered by Jesus Christ as the One “Whom God hath sent.” The passage begins at verse 31. It appears to be part of a saying of John the Baptist, though it may be that the Apostle John himself was the inspired channel through which this word comes. At verse 34 we read, “For He Whom God **hath sent** speaketh **the words of God**; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.”

The Word of God cometh by the Spirit of

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God, and is spirit (John vi. 63). A word is an impalpable thing. Its substance is the *breath* of the one who utters it ; and "breath" is another word for "spirit." The breath of God is His Spirit ; and His *Spirit*, expressed in intelligible form to convey the thought of God, is His *Word*. As the Lord said in another place, "the words that I speak unto you, they are **Spirit**, and they are life" (John vi. 63). For "it is the Spirit that quickeneth" ; hence "the Spirit is life" (Rom. viii. 10). This identity of breath and spirit, and the quickening effect of the Breath or Spirit of God, appear by the prophecy of Ezekiel : "Again He said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the **Word** of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones ; Behold, I will cause **breath** to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezek. xxxvii. 4, 5 ; see also ver. 9). Man's breath is corrupt (Job xvii. 1) ; therefore, his words are corrupt, and pass away. But the Word of the Lord abideth for ever ; and Jesus Christ could declare, "My words shall not pass away."

The Spirit of God had been given to one and another prophet of old time for the purpose of specific utterances of God's Word ; but each one

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of them received the Spirit "by measure," sufficient only for the particular "portion" given him to speak. Such is the significance of Heb. i. 1. "God spake of old in **many parts** (portions or fragments) and in many ways by the prophets." But not all their utterances were "God-breathed." Even Moses "spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. cvi. 33). But to Him whom the Father sent He *gave not His Spirit by measure*. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form. Every one of His utterances was a word of eternal life. He spake "the words of God," *all* the words of God, and *none other* than the words of God. It was of Him the prophet spake when he said, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as they that are taught" (Is. l. 4, R.V.). So perfectly was He taught of God as to all His sayings that He could declare, "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which **sent Me**, He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak" (John xii. 49). It was with Him "morning by

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morning," awakening to hear as one that is taught, sometimes awakening "a great while before day" to seek His Father's presence in prayer. Would that we, and all to whom those words of eternal life have come, might be enabled to gain some measure of understanding of their incalculable value.

There is a very remarkable passage concerning the words of the Lord Jesus in John viii. The entire chapter is of the utmost importance as setting forth the oneness of the Son with the Father. And first, as bearing upon our special subject, we would quote the following passages from that chapter:—

"I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but **He sent Me**" (ver. 42).

"I am not alone, but I and the Father that **sent Me**" (ver. 16).

"And **He that sent Me** is with Me. The Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (ver. 29).

"**He that sent Me** is true; and I speak to the world **those things which I have heard of Him**" (ver. 26).

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“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (ver. 47).

The saying to which we would direct special attention is found in verse 25 :

“Then said they unto Him, Who art Thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.”

This rendering of the Lord's remarkable reply to the demand that He should tell plainly Who He was, does not give a very clear idea of His meaning, though even as the verse stands in the A.V. it appears that He identifies **Himself** with **His words**. “I am,” He declares, “the same that I said.”

Another and more literal rendering reads thus : “I am altogether that which I say to you.” Still another rendering is : “Fundamentally even what I am saying unto you.” (The words rendered in the A.V., “from the beginning,” signify “altogether,” “absolutely,” or “fundamentally.”)

Rotherham renders the passage thus : “First and foremost just what I am even speaking to you,” and in a footnote says, “that is, ‘what I speak, that I am: My speech reveals My

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Person.'” He adds, “It is *laleo*, ‘speak’; not *lego*, ‘say.’ The Lord did not so much *say*, in so many words, Who He was, as speak out all He had to tell, and leave His hearers to gather therefrom Who He was.”

Thus the Lord declares of Himself that He **is** exactly and altogether what His **words** represent Him to be. His utterances correspond exactly to what He is. What His words represent, such He is absolutely. This is a wonderful declaration; but we need to fix our attention on it to see the wonder of it. Here is a Man Who always so spoke as to reveal to others exactly what He is. Other men do not so speak. Others so speak as to represent themselves, not as they *really are*, but as they *wish others to think they are*. None other man would dare to put into words the actual thoughts of his own heart. Every man, except this Man, habitually chooses such words as will conceal what he really is in his heart, and such as will give to other men a good impression of himself. Truly it was said, “Never man spake like this Man.” In His mouth there was found no guile.

The ministry of the Lord Jesus as God's Apostle, as presented in the Gospel of John, is

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divided into two distinct periods. In the first period, which extends to the end of chap. xii., He spoke openly to all the Jews. He taught and wrought in public—in the temple, in the synagogues, in the market places. He cited this fact to Pilate, saying, “I spake openly to the world ; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing” (John xviii. 20).

It is a noticeable and significant fact that the Lord addressed Himself at first to all men alike, drawing no distinction between believers and unbelievers, such as is so clearly made in the Epistles. He came to all, and His message was for all, without distinction. “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.” But His very presence in the world, and His ministry, soon created a division, extending (as He Himself said) even to a separation between members of the same family, —between father and children, between husband and wife. Consequently, when, as the result of His public ministry the believing few were separated from the unbelieving mass, He thenceforth, in the remaining hours of His life,

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devoted Himself to "His own which were in the world" (John xiii. 1). This private ministry to His own began with the washing of the feet of His disciples. There was at first one traitor among the number; but he soon went out, and "when he was gone out," the Lord began His special words to His true disciples (xiii. 30, 31), giving them the New Commandment, announcing His going to the Father to prepare a place for them and His coming again, and telling them of the immediate coming and ministry of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

We would, therefore, direct special attention to the solemn words with which the Lord concluded His public ministry, and which are recorded at the end of chap. xii. :

"Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on **Him that sent Me**" (ver. 44). Here is a strong assertion of His apostleship. So completely had He, in every act and word, been simply the representative of God Who sent Him, that belief on Him was belief on God. Moreover, He declared His oneness with the Father in these words : "And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a light into the world, that

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whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but **to save the world.**”

As already pointed out, the mission of God's “Sent One” was for salvation, not for condemnation. The words God gave Him to speak are “words of eternal life” to every one that receives them. And for that very reason *those words* will condemn all who reject them. This is clearly set forth in what follows: “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him. **The word that I have spoken**, the same shall judge him in the last day.” And then He gives the reason why the rejection of His words necessarily brings judgment upon the rejecter. That reason lies in the fact that the words He spake were the very words of God, as God Himself had long since foretold when He said by Moses, “I will put **My** words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever **will not hearken unto My words** which He shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him”

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(Deut. xviii. 18, 19). The Lord's concluding words (John xii. 49, 50) show that He had this prophecy in mind, and that He was calling it to the minds of His hearers, who knew the Scriptures and were often inquiring about "that Prophet":

"For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father **which sent Me**, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: **whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, SO I SPEAK.**"

Likewise the words which He subsequently spake to "His own" were words given to Him by the Father. Thus, in reply to Philip He said, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of (from) Myself" (xiv. 10). Again He said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me" (vers. 23, 24).

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All this goes to show the immense importance of the fact announced in the first verse of Hebrews, that God has, in these last days, spoken unto us **in His Son**; and to admonish us that we should give the most earnest heed to the things that we have heard, which were spoken by the Lord and confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.

### **The Son gives account to God of His Ministry as the Sent One**

The seventeenth chapter of John admits us to the wondrous privilege of hearing the Son render to His Father an account of the way in which He had discharged the mission entrusted to Him. We have heard His words to the world, and His words to "His own that were in the world"; and now we are permitted to hear His words to the Father; for all the words of this chapter are addressed to the Father. We would, however, only notice briefly some references He here makes to His service as the Apostle of God.

First, He refers to the main object of the work committed to Him, namely, that He should *give eternal life* to as many as God had given Him

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(ver. 2). We have shown that this was the chief *work* of the Father that Christ came to do. As He said in John x., "I am come that they might have life." "And this," He now says, "is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou **hast sent.**" To know Jesus Christ as the **Sent One** is the way to receive eternal life. This must be the first work of God for those who are by nature dead in sins. And, moreover, there is no work that any man can do *for* God until, by believing on God's Apostle, he has received eternal life. For when the people who sought Him for the loaves asked what *they* should do that they might work the works of God, He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He **hath sent**" (John vi. 29).

And now the Son could say to the Father that He had finished the work. "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have **finished the work** which Thou gavest Me to do" (xvii. 4).

This was declared indeed by anticipation; for some hours were yet to pass before He should say "It is finished," and bow His head to the stroke of death. But He regarded it as already

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done, for He says at verse 11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee."

Having announced the finishing of the **work** of God, He next refers to the revealing of **His Name**, saying: "I have manifested **Thy Name** unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (ver. 6). Here again we meet the important truth that the Name which the Son came to reveal is not manifested to all men, but to those only whom the Father has given the Son "out of the world," and to whom the Son has given eternal life. As stated in Ps. xxii., and quoted in Heb. ii., "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren." Those, *and only those*, He commits to the keeping of the "Father": "Holy Father, keep **through Thine own Name** those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are" (ver. 11). The "Father" is the one who "keeps" all the children, the word "keep" signifying all that lies in a father's responsibility; and they who know the Father's Name, know by actual enjoyment thereof, His providing care and His tender love. For the Son says again (and it is His final word), "And I have declared **unto**

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them (not to others) Thy Name, and will declare it, that the love **wherewith Thou hast loved Me** may be in them, and I in them" (ver. 26).

And thirdly, He announces that He has given them the Father's **words**. "For I have given unto them the **words** which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst **send Me**" (ver. 8). Again He says, "I have given them Thy **word**": and He accordingly prays, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy **word** is truth" (vers. 14, 17). His word is to be for the sanctifying of His people, who are "in the world" but who are "not of the world." The more they come under the influence and power of His word (which separates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart), the more will they be "sanctified"; that is to say, separated in heart and walk from this world and its ways and things. That separation from the world and unto God is *sanctification*. It is a matter of the **heart**, and is the result of submission to the **word**. "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost

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saith, To-day, if ye will **hear His voice**, harden not your **heart**."

We would note the Lord's words, "that they **may be one**, even as We are one. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect **in one**" (vers. 22, 23). This is said of those whom the Father has given Him. There is, therefore, a very close connection between this passage and the opening chapters of Hebrews, which give such prominence to what God has *spoken* to us in the Son. Particularly we would call attention to the words of Heb. ii., "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are **all of one**; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." "And again, Behold, I and the children whom **God hath given Me**." The words "all of one" and "whom God has given Me" closely connect Hebrews with John xvii. God's purpose is that He and the children should be made perfect in one. They in Him, restored, quickened, renewed, and accepted of God; and He in each one of them, reproducing in them His own excellences; for all shall be fully conformed to His image and changed to His likeness.

And, finally, we would notice the gracious

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words, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them" (John xvii. 22). The glory which the Lord has received of God as Son of Man, because of the suffering of death whereby He glorified God on the earth, is not the glory He speaks of in verse 5, which He had with the Father "before the world was," and which He laid aside when He "emptied Himself," in order to assume the lowly office of Apostle (Phil. ii. 6-8). *That* glory He does not give to another. But His *acquired* glory, given to Him as the exalted and glorified Man, He *does* share with the sons of God, whom He is not ashamed to call "brethren"; for the present work of God is the bringing of "many sons unto **glory**." And this will be the consummation of the mighty work He undertook when He came forth from God into a ruined world in the likeness of sinful flesh, to become a sacrifice for sin.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of this heavenly calling, consider the Apostle of our confession, Christ Jesus.

II

**The Minister of the True Tabernacle**



## II

### The Minister of the True Tabernacle Atonement, Intercession, Worship

“**F**OR verily He laid not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham did He lay hold. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (not reconciliation as in A.V.) for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His (God’s) house” (Heb. ii. 16–iii. 2).

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“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into (through) the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (iv. 14–16).

“Now of the things which 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; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (viii. 1, 2).

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are (only) figures of the true (holy places); but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (ix. 24).

When the Son of Man finished His work on earth as the Apostle of God, He did not cease to be the Servant of Jehovah; but the character of His service was completely changed. Having,

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by His own death on earth where death's dominion now is, destroyed him who has the power of death, that is the devil (so that he can no longer hold in death's sway those who are Christ's by faith), and having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He took up an entirely different service in a different place. He became, and is now, the "minister (that is, *servant*) of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle" in heaven, whereof the tabernacle pitched by Moses, and in which Aaron ministered in the wilderness, was but a "shadow" or "figure."

As the "Apostle" of our confession He came forth from God. As the "High Priest" of our confession He is gone back to God. As Apostle His ministry took Him to the lowest place on earth. As High Priest His ministry has taken Him to the highest place in heaven. Yet He is "the same Jesus." "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 10). So then "we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." The beginning of this ministry of intercession on behalf of the children of God is indicated by the Lord's words recorded in

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John xvii., "I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine."

We have said that the beginning of all true knowledge is to know the Son of God in His office of Apostle, doing the will of God on earth. That knowledge brings to the sinner justification from his sins, and the free gift of eternal life. But it is needful for our own welfare, and also for the accomplishment of God's purpose for us, that we should *grow* in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. To that end we would now proceed to consider Him as the High Priest of our confession, availing ourselves of the revelation given to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and of the Old Testament types or shadows referred to in that Epistle.

The subject is of the deepest interest to the people of God, especially because it is of immediate importance. For it relates to the time *now present*. It relates to their present circumstances as "in the world," which corresponds spiritually to the wilderness, where the Aaronic priesthood was established. But though *in* the world, God's people are "not *of* the world,"

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being as to God's thought for them, merely passengers *through it* (Hebrews); precisely as the Israelites, though *in* the wilderness, were not *of* the wilderness, being merely passengers through it. The subject relates to the present sins, wanderings, trials, needs and dangers of God's people; and, chiefest of all, it directs their thoughts to what their Lord and Saviour is actually doing at the present moment.

We believe that, in this knowledge of the Son of God as Minister of the heavenly tabernacle, the Lord's people are, as a rule, very deficient—to their own great detriment, and to His dishonour. There are relatively few among them who have aught but the faintest conception of the present ministry of the Son of God, either as to its character, or as to how it affects themselves. Yet such information is readily available, and it is, moreover, most needful for their protection and guidance through the wilderness of this world. This deficiency of the people of God in the knowledge of the Son of God is due partly to their individual neglect of His Word (not giving *earnest heed*, and often not any heed at all, to the special things that *we* have heard); and partly to lack of right teaching.

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It must be sorrowfully admitted that many of those who have the ear of the people are directing their thoughts to the things of this present world, preaching against the evils and extravagances of modern society, the unequal distribution of wealth, the corruption of political life, etc., and urging them to devote their energies to the improvement of the wilderness (so to speak) instead of exhorting them to take heed to the path that leads through and out of it. Yet the Lord has left it on record that He prays not for the world, but for His own that are in the world (John xvii. 9).

We would, therefore, most earnestly urge the saints of God to ponder the lesson so plainly taught in Hebrews iii. and iv. For those chapters contain a very clear statement of the chief danger to which they are exposed; and they contain also the revelation of the provision God has made for their protection and escape from that danger. With warnings so plain, and with provisions of grace so ample as those set forth in those chapters, "How *shall* we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?"

## The Purpose of God

One reason for the present deplorable condition of the mass of God's people in the wilderness of this world is undoubtedly their ignorance of *God's purpose for His Son*, and for those who have been redeemed by Him. Many of them seem not to be aware that God has in view any definite purpose whatever, notwithstanding the clear testimony of many Scriptures to the fact that God has a settled plan which centres in Christ and embraces the entire universe in its scope—things in heaven and things on earth—and that He is steadily working towards the accomplishment of that plan. Most Christians realise, perhaps, that through the death of Christ on the Cross they have justification from their sins, and that they will be delivered from the wrath to come; but beyond that they have very imperfect notions of what is yet to be done in the purpose of God. Indeed, there seem to be but few who give any serious thought to what the Lord has been doing since His ascension into heaven, or to what He will do when He comes forth again.

Surely, if a child of God comes to know what

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his Father's purpose is, he will seek stedfastly to set himself in line with that purpose, and not in opposition to it. Hence it is of the utmost importance for the "children" to have a clear understanding of the purpose for which God has "laid hold" of them. Like Paul, they should follow after (or pursue) if that they might apprehend (lay hold of) that for which they have been apprehended in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 12).

God's great purpose, then, is to glorify His own Son publicly in the eyes of all the universe, and particularly in the very same place where He was publicly put to shame,—that is, the earth. This earth, which was once the scene of the deep dishonour done to the holy One of God, is to be the scene of the display of His glory. At the time appointed of the Father, He is to come forth, in His own glory and in the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory (Matt. xvi. 27 ; xxv. 31). This event is just as surely a matter of the history of this earth, though it is yet to happen, as is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

The first statement made of Him in Hebrews is that God has appointed Him "Heir of all

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things." This puts prominently before us the *Inheritance* of the Son of God, which inheritance He is to share with His co-heirs, and which embraces "all things." The period when He will assume His rightful ownership of His creation is brought to mind in the words quoted in Heb. i. from Ps. xlv., which we are here told are addressed to the Son: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom" (Heb. i. 8). The same period is referred to in verse 13 in the words, "until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." And then the co-heirs are referred to in the last verse, where we read that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister (or serve) for those who shall be heirs of salvation. This "salvation" which is yet future, being still "in hope" or expectation, pertains to "the world (habitable earth) to come whereof we speak" (ii. 5). The significant expression "whereof we speak" tells us that this "world to come" which God has put in subjection under the feet of the Son of Man, Who once was made lower than the angels, is the theme of the Scripture we are considering. It will be the scene of the display of the glory of the Christ of God.

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God's thoughts, then, are towards the age to come. His purposes will have their fulfilment in that age; and He shall then set His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. ii.). That prospect of coming glory was the joy which was set before the Son of God when He endured the Cross; and so wondrous was the prospect that, in view of it, He was able to despise the shame. For that joy He still *waits* (Heb. x. 13; "expecting" is literally "awaiting"). Surely, if those for whom He died on that Cross realise that He is yet awaiting the promised joy that is to reward His sacrifice, they will set their own hearts toward the fulfilment of that event.

But, for the accomplishment of the glory of Christ, it is necessary that "the children whom God has given Him," the "partakers of the heavenly calling," should be brought through this world and brought into the rest that remains for the people of God. God's mansions *must* have occupants fitted therefor. His table *must be* furnished with guests. Seeing that the Rest remaineth, it is necessary that some *must* enter therein (Heb. iv. 6). Consequently, the present ministry of the Son of God has reference to "bringing many sons unto glory,"

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the word "glory" being descriptive of the prominent characteristic of the "world to come."

It should be carefully noted that the first two passages quoted at the head of this chapter are found at the beginning and end respectively of a portion (Heb. iii. and iv.) which refers to the "provocation" of the Israelites in the wilderness. That provocation is here cited as a warning to the redeemed people of God who are now in the wilderness of this present evil world. From this incident we learn that what "provoked" God beyond the limits of His forbearance was the *perversity of His redeemed people in deliberately turning back from His purpose, which He had made known to them.* That purpose was not merely to get them *out of* Egypt, from under the dominion of Pharaoh, and from the hard bondage of the brickyards; but to bring them *into* "the rest and the inheritance" of Canaan, that good land, which drank water of the rain of heaven, a land which the Lord Himself cared for, and upon which His eyes rested from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

All this that happened thousands of years ago

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in the wilderness of Arabia was but a shadow of what is happening in the time now present. For God has now, by a far mightier deliverance, brought a people out from a worse slavery than that of Egypt, and has *spoken to them*, through One infinitely greater than Moses, of a Rest and an Inheritance incomparably more glorious than that of Canaan. And God's declared purpose at this time is, not merely to bring His redeemed people out from the dominion of the prince of this world, the devil, who has the power of death, and from the bitter bondage of sin, but to bring them *into* that scene of "glory" which He has, out of His infinite resources, prepared for His own Son, and in which everything will be suited to Him.

We have mainly to take note of the fact that, when the wilderness had been traversed, and the critical moment had come for taking possession of the promised rest, at the moment when God said to the people whom He had brought out of Egypt, "Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess it" (Deut. i. 8), they then disregarded and turned back from His purpose. And it is expressly pointed out for us that the reason underlying their conduct was *unbelief*. Unto

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them was "the gospel preached," that is to say, due announcement was made to them of the good news of the inheritance awaiting them in Canaan; but the word announced *did not profit them*, not being mixed **with faith** in them that heard (Heb. iv. 2). It was entirely a matter of *faith* with them (as it is with us), that is, of believing God's word concerning it; for they had not seen the promised inheritance, and knew of it only by what God had spoken. Such is also the case with us concerning the inheritance of the world to come. We know thereof only by faith, which is the evidence of things *not seen*; and we have heard of God's purpose to put all things under the rule of His Son, but "we see *not yet* all things put under Him."

And because there was, in the mass of the Israelites, "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," they withstood His purpose. "Their heart was not right with Him" (Ps. lxxviii. 37), "They set not their *heart* aright, and their spirit was not stedfast with God" (Ps. lxxviii. 8). "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word"; "they *hearkened* not unto the voice of the Lord" (Ps. cvi. 24, 25). Their *hearts* turned

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back from God's plan for them, and they *hearkened to leaders of their own choice*, instead of paying heed to God's word spoken by Moses, His servant. Therefore, the warning comes clearly and sharply to us : "See that *ye* refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth (Moses), how shall we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven?" (Heb. xii. 25).

How is it then "To-day" with those who are, or profess to be, the people of God on earth? Is not the "provocation" being repeated in our day on a vastly greater scale? Can it be denied that the great mass of professing Christians have turned completely aside from the revealed purpose of God concerning the world to come? Do we not see them everywhere following leaders *of their own choice*, who are preaching to them the betterment of this present evil age, and inciting them to take active part in its political and other cherished institutions? Are not the aim and end of the ministry of these chosen leaders to divert the attention of their hearers wholly from the age to come, wherein the fulfilment of God's purpose lies, and to occupy

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them entirely with the affairs of this present age? Do they not go even to the profane lengths of making the Lord Jesus Christ a "socialist," and the Father's words which He spake a "social message"? Blind leaders of the blind, are they not all heading straight for the ditch?

Let me say, with all earnestness, that I know of *no subject* of greater or more immediate importance to the people of God (I speak of those who have been truly redeemed by the blood of Christ) than that presented in the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews. I know of *no point of doctrine* that is more needful for all Christians to lay hold of at this time than the fact that God's *purpose for this age is but to get His people out of it*. It is no more a part of God's plan for His people to-day that they should engage in projects for bettering the conditions of life in this world, or should form affiliations with the earth-dwellers in schemes of municipal reform, good government, elevating the masses, etc., than it was part of His plan for the Israelites to cultivate flower-gardens in the wilderness, or to form social and religious affiliations with the Amalekites and Moabites.

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On the contrary, the things we have referred to are the most effective of all the Enemy's devices for turning aside the people of God from His purpose. It is, we say, most needful for them to understand that the only rightful possession they have in this world is *a way out of it*. Their rightful possessions—their country, their city, their “better and enduring substance,” their inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away—all lie in “the world to come whereof we speak.” “For ye are *not as yet* come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you” (Deut. xii. 9).<sup>1</sup>

### The Deceitfulness of Sin

The Scripture we are considering mentions specifically two causes that may render a Christian insensitive to the Word of God concerning His purpose in the age to come. One is the hardening of his own heart (Heb. iii. 7, 8, 15), as by lapsing into a habit of reading the Word

<sup>1</sup> We do not here dwell at greater length upon the specific lesson of the “provocation,” but would refer the reader, for a more ample consideration of that subject, to the volume already mentioned, “*God's Pilgrims*.”

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with indifference, or as a mere matter of routine duty, or reading carelessly and without fixed attention, and real exercise of heart. It is easy to lapse into such habits; and one may read many pages with little comprehension of what has been read, and with little or no exercise of heart by reason of what has been read. We know it is possible for people to read the Scriptures quite regularly, and yet to have no conception at all of the purpose of God so plainly set forth therein. The religious leaders at Jerusalem, because they knew not the Lord Jesus, “nor yet the voices of the prophets **which were read every Sabbath day**, have fulfilled them in condemning Him” (Acts xiii. 27).

The other cause is mentioned in Heb. iii. 13, “But exhort one another daily (or encourage yourselves every day) while (so long as) it is called To-day (that is, throughout this age), lest any of you **be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**” In the one case, the cause of unbelief as to God’s purpose is the hardening of one’s own heart. In the other case, it is *being hardened* through the deceitfulness of sin. This is a very common case, and it demands careful

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attention. Sin is deceitful, and though active, and even *dominating* in the world, where sin reigns unto death (Rom. v. 21), it is so carefully disguised by "the god of this world," and he has so well succeeded in blinding the eyes of them that believe not (2 Cor. iv. 4), that its *very presence* is denied by the wise and learned, who see only a human race that is ever progressing upwardly, and a world that is steadily advancing in goodness. The presence of sin, where it is not positively denied is tacitly ignored; and few indeed are they who recognise that sin is the chief factor in making the world the place that it is.

Sin is regarded in Hebrews iii. 13 as that mighty principle of evil which has "entered the world" and taken possession of it. For "by one man sin entered the world" (Rom. v. 12); and so the world became the place of sin's domain. The "works" and "things" of the world are all the outcome of the energies of human beings put forth in the endeavour to make the conditions of life on earth agreeable and even enjoyable in a state of alienation from God. This is the truth, and therefore it is the testimony that the world *hates*. "Me it hateth,"

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the Lord said, "because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil" (John vii. 7); and this saying, of course, was one of the words the Father gave Him to speak. The works of the world are evil because their object is the advantage and pleasure of man, not the glory of God. Whoever stops to ask, when a great project like the Panama Canal is set on foot, whether its consummation will be to God's glory? The man who did so would become a laughing-stock. The only Man Who could say to God, "I have glorified Thee on the earth," had no schemes of world-betterment, and took no part in the world's "good works," but on the contrary pronounced them all "evil."

The things that are in the world, and upon which the world prides itself, are "not of the Father, but are of the world." That is to say, they are derived from the world, and not from the Father. And it is certain that the world's things are specially contrived and displayed in such manner as to conceal, so far as possible, the presence of sin. This is particularly true of the world's great things, its sciences, arts, histories, literature, music, social gatherings, amusements, societies, and "movements" of one sort and

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another, its periodicals, institutions of learning, etc. etc. All these, severally and together, give an utterly false representation of the actual state of human nature and human society. They studiously ignore, conceal, and virtually deny the **fact of sin**, and its potency in human affairs. "The whole world lieth in the Evil One" (1 John v. 19, R.V.), who is also its prince; and since the Evil One is the author of sin, it is not surprising that his utmost endeavours should be constantly put forth to blind the minds of his deceived victims as to the presence of sin in the world, and as to its disastrous effects upon mankind. For all the crimes and cruelties, all the pains and sorrows, all the degradation and diseases in the world are the results of sin. Hence the many and various institutions and activities that go to make up "the world" are so planned and carried out as to present the appearance of *a world and a human race in which is no sin*. This is the "way of Cain," who acknowledged God, but denied *sin*; and Cain was the pioneer of the first civilisation (Gen. iv. 16-24). The civilisation of the twentieth century is after the same model, and derives its existence from

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the same root. Specific misdeeds, and the existence of criminals here and there, are indeed acknowledged; for their existence could not possibly be concealed. But these are treated as but incidental abnormalities, survivals of the "brute nature," from which human beings have sprung, and which they are rapidly leaving behind. That man is *by nature a sinner* is practically denied in all the great institutions of the world which we have named above, and that doubtless is the object of their existence. This is particularly the case with the world's literature, of which an incalculable mass already exists, and to which each day contributes an enormous addition. Whichever line of books one may examine, the same falsehood as to the real character of human society will be found. The books of science, the cyclopedias, the biographies, tell only of the achievements of great and worthy men. The books of travel speak only of a world inhabited by interesting and progressive nations, one and all advancing in the arts of civilisation, and rising in the scale of life. Most of the religious books tell the same false story; and the few that declare the truth as to this world and as to God's judgment upon it, are

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not rated as "literature." Every form of the *lie* has an acknowledged standing as literature, but the *truth* has none.

And of all species of literature, that which is most effective for serving the devil's purpose and deceiving the people, and of which there is consequently the most copious supply, is fiction. In the world's works of fiction the falsification of the state of human nature and human society is set forth in an infinite variety of ways, and with every artistic and literary embellishment. Whatever may be the "plot," and whatever the imaginary characters may say or do, the groundwork of every novel is a world of human beings who are actuated in the main by generous sentiments and high principles, with never a hint of the corruption of the human heart by sin. Books of this character are devoured with avidity. The appetite for them is insatiable. And the inevitable consequence is that the minds of novel readers are thoroughly steeped in falsehood, and completely blinded as to the real state of the world they live in. Not that novels do not contain wicked characters, and describe wicked deeds. These are introduced, however, in order to make the

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books interesting, and not to tell the sad truth of the corruption of the human heart. For the world is invariably depicted as a place where right is rewarded and eventually triumphs, and where wrong is punished. Never does one find in a work of fiction a hint of the fact that the lovely heroine and the brave and the noble hero will certainly pass eternity in the lake of fire except they believe on the crucified and risen Son of God. Such a recognition of the truth would utterly ruin the book and kill its circulation.

This, then, is the character of the world's literature, by which the thoughts of the people of the world are chiefly moulded. The millions of books on the thousands of miles of bookshelves, in the great libraries and in the homes of reading people, including, we fear, the majority of the dwellings of Christians, all tell the same deadly, soul-destroying lie of a progressive humanity, striving after high ideals, and of a world ever advancing in goodness and justice, instead of telling of a humanity utterly corrupted by sin, and a world lying in the Evil One. The effect of all this deceitfulness of sin is to *harden the hearts* of the people, so

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that they *will not hear* the Word of the Lord concerning the real character of the world and its works; so that they *will not believe* that "the whole world lieth in the evil one," and that he is its ruler and god; and so that they become utterly indifferent to the declared purpose of God for the glory of Christ and His co-heirs in the world to come.

The first fact that the individual human being needs to know about himself is that he is by nature a "sinner," "ungodly," and "without strength." Recognition of this humbling fact takes him a long way towards the acceptance of God's salvation. But just here is where the Word of the Living God and the literature of dying man are in direct conflict. The effect of the world's literature on the mass of the unbelieving is to produce utter hardness to the Word of God; and the great danger to Christians is, as we have seen, that they may thereby become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

**A Merciful and Faithful High Priest.  
Making Propitiation for the Sins of  
the People**

The danger we have pointed out is great; but God has provided a great resource. He has entrusted the care of His people to “a merciful and faithful High Priest.” He is “merciful” to us, for He has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, and hence He is able to sympathise with (*i.e.* share) the feeling of our infirmities; and, moreover, He is “faithful to God who appointed Him,” for He does always according to that which is in the Father’s heart and in His mind. God has provided for the succour of His people in this period of trial and danger, a “faithful” Priest, One Who can be depended upon to devote all His tireless energies to the interests of the people of God. He ministers for them “in the power of an endless life,” and “ever lives to make intercession for them.” The Israelites had not such an High Priest. Indeed, that office was frequently occupied by one who, like Eli, neglected God’s people, and of whom God said, “thou honourest thy sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the

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chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people” (1 Sam. ii. 29). And again, God said of the unfaithful priest, “I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. iii. 13). But at that very time God recorded the promise which now has its fulfilment in Christ, “And I will raise Me up a **faithful Priest**, that shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind : and I will build Him a sure house ; and He shall walk before Mine anointed (people) for ever” (1 Sam. ii. 35).

The first point brought to our attention concerning the Priesthood of the Son of God is that, in order to qualify for it, He became a partaker of flesh and blood ; in other words, He became man. We quickly learn that it was necessary for the Lord to become man, in order that He might bear the sins of men in judgment ; but we do not often have our attention called to the important and interesting fact that, in order to be a *Priest*, that is, to represent men in the presence of God, He had to become man.

From verse 10 of Hebrews ii. to the end of the

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chapter the prominent subject is "the children." The Father's care is for His children, and all that He is doing in the world is for their benefit. Inasmuch, therefore, as the children were partakers of flesh and blood (*i.e.* were human beings, not angels) Christ also Himself likewise took part of human nature. This He did for two objects, first that He might, by His own death, annul the devil's power over the children and deliver them from the bondage of death to which they were subject; and second, it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, *in order that "He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God."* For a priest is one who approaches to God *on behalf of men*; and it would seem that none but a man can perform the duty of a priest on behalf of other men. Thus it is stated in chap. v. 1, that "*every high priest (being) taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God.*"

We fear that many Christians do not realise the importance or even the necessity of having the services of a priest. But the Scriptures clearly teach that men, having sin in them, can approach God *only* by a priest *appointed*

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*by God Himself*, and by virtue of a *sin-offering* designated by God Himself. Therefore, the access that Christians have to God is by Jesus Christ, and in virtue of His sacrifice of Himself on their behalf.

It should greatly comfort, assure, and stir the affections of the hearts of Christ's redeemed ones, to lay hold of the great fact that His appearance in God's presence at this time, and His all-prevailing services there, are "for us"; and, moreover, that He is there as a Human Being, fully able as such to sympathise with the feeling of our infirmities. "But **this Man**, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. x. 12).

The nature of His present ministry is stated briefly in chap. ii. 17 as making propitiation<sup>1</sup> for the sins of the people, that is to say, the *people of God*. For the services of a priest are *solely* for the redeemed people of God. There was no tabernacle, no priesthood, no sacrifice, no

<sup>1</sup> The A.V. needs correction here. It is "propitiation," not "reconciliation." The Lord Jesus effected reconciliation by His death on the Cross; and that was not when we were "the people" of God, but were "enemies" (Rom. v. 10; Col. i. 20). *Reconciliation* is for enemies of God; *propitiation* is for the sins of the people of God.

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worship, in Egypt. These were ordained solely for a people redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb, and brought out into the wilderness. In like manner, the Priesthood of the Son of God is solely for those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, and who have died and risen with Christ, as typified by the crossing of the Red Sea. This matter of making propitiation for the sins of God's people is greatly amplified in chaps. ix. and x. But the bare mention of the fact that the Lord Jesus is at the present time occupied in making propitiation for the sins of His people on earth, should afford them great comfort and encouragement. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with **the Father** (it is not said with **God**, but **the Father**; for the advocacy is on behalf of those who have been brought into the holy relation of *children*), Jesus Christ, the righteous; and He is **the propitiation for our sins**" (1 John ii. 1, 2).

In order to assist our understanding of this important subject, the Scripture directs our attention to certain "types" or "shadows" found in the Old Testament. Two of these shadows are given special prominence in

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Hebrews ix. and x. One is the tabernacle itself, whereof God said to Moses: "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee on the Mount"; and whereof the holy places were "but figures of the true" (holy places) in heaven where Christ is now gone. The other shadow is the ministry of the high priest when he entered the holiest of all, which he did "alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors (sins of ignorance) of the people" (Heb. ix. 7).

So far as the writer recalls, the only service which the high priest performed, and which other priests could not perform, was this unique ceremonial of the great day of Atonement, on which day, the tenth day of the seventh month of each year, a propitiatory sin-offering was made for the sins of the people of God. This outstanding ministration of the high priest, which was carried out yearly with the utmost solemnity, is now seen to have been but a "shadow" of the service of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Minister of the heavenly tabernacle. The striking ceremonial of the great day of Atonement is set forth in detail in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and the several

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features of the service are all instructive and deeply interesting. There are, however, two special things the high priest was required to do on that day to which we would call attention. The sin-offering, which he was required to take of the congregation of the children of Israel, consisted of two kids of the goats (ver. 5). Upon these a lot was to be cast, one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat (ver. 8). The high priest, after making atonement for himself by killing a bullock and taking its blood into the holy place (vers. 11–14), was to kill the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and bring his blood within the veil to make atonement "because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins" (15, 16). Afterwards he was to make reconciliation for the holy place and the tabernacle; and then, as it is directed, "he shall bring the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

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And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited : and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (20, 21, 22).

In this part of the ceremonial we see two leading features : *first*, the bringing of the blood of the slain goat into the holy place ; and *second*, the confessing of the iniquities of the children of Israel over the head of the live goat and sending him off into a land uninhabited, symbolically carrying away the *confessed* iniquities, so that they should not be called to mind again.

In fulfilment of the first of these features, the Lord Jesus Christ has entered in once for all into the holy place of the "greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands," and not by virtue of the blood of bulls and goats (for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should *take away* sins), but "by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix. 11, 12 ; x. 4). It is, therefore, in the incalculable value of "His own blood" that He now makes propitiation for the sins of the people of God ; that is to say, provides a righteous ground whereon God can deal with His people in grace according to the desire of His heart.

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This propitiatory sin-offering is never to be repeated; for the value thereof is infinitely great, and none other is either necessary or possible. "Christ was **once** offered to bear the sins of many." "By His own blood He entered in **once** (for all) into the holy place," "after He had offered **one** sacrifice for sins." "For by **one** offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The second of the two features referred to, namely, the ceremonial of the scapegoat, is a wonderful "shadow" of the work of the Lord Jesus in bearing away into the land of forgetfulness the confessed sins of His people. The directions given to the high priest to confess upon the head of the live goat "all the iniquities of the children of Israel," are recalled in Isaiah liii., "and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all"; and again, "for He shall bear their iniquities." Therefore, God can, in faithfulness and justice, forgive us our *confessed* sins, and can fulfil as to them the promise of the new covenant "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17).

We find both these results of the work of Christ, that is *propitiation* and *remission of*

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*confessed sins*, in the First Epistle of John. In chap. i. 7 is the statement that "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood** of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"; and in chap. ii. 2, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world"; for there is no other propitiatory offering.

The forgiveness of confessed sin is declared in chap. i. 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The sacrifice for our sins is, as already stated, never to be repeated; for the efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ abides. But the confession of our sins as they occur is our continuing duty and responsibility. The cleansing efficacy of the blood avails us while we walk in the light—"if we walk in the light"; (and we would in this connection note the statement of chap. ii. 9, 10, that he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and he that loveth his brother abideth in the light). And forgiveness is granted upon confession of our sins—"if we confess our sins." We should

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not overlook the “if” in the two verses referred to—“*If* we walk in the light,” and “*If* we confess.”

### Worship or Approach to God

“We have **such** an High Priest,” that is to say, One Who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” There is no possibility that He will fail in any responsibility that God has put upon Him, or that He will for one moment lose sight of or neglect the least of the redeemed people of God. But *we*, on the other hand, need constant reminders of *our own* responsibility, such, for example, as the warnings found in the Epistle to the Hebrews; for there is *always* the possibility that, through indifference to God’s Word, carelessness, slothfulness, or positive disobedience, we may “fail of the grace of God,” and may cut ourselves off from some part at least of the blessing that God purposes to bestow, and which He will bestow upon those who hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm to the end. It is specially needful that, inasmuch as God has provided for us a way of

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approach to Himself through His great High Priest, we should diligently avail ourselves of that privilege. The tabernacle and the services of the priests in the wilderness were for all the congregation of Israel. Nevertheless, each Israelite was responsible to avail himself of his privileges. In order to secure the benefits of the service of the priest it was necessary for him to "approach" the appointed place, that is, the door of the tabernacle, bringing the appropriate offering. This matter of "approach to God" is exceedingly important, for thereby a man becomes a worshipper. It should not need to be said that worship, in order to be worship at all, *must be* in the manner and at the place appointed by God. Yet, so far have men, as a whole, departed from even the knowledge of God's ways, that it is well-nigh universally regarded as among the "inalienable rights" of all men to "worship God" (as the phrase is) "according to the dictates of their own consciences." Thus, according to the settled principles of this democratic era, the cauterised consciences of men are substituted in place of the commands of God as the supreme authority in matters of worship.

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God had, in times past, a "place of worship" on earth, "a worldly sanctuary" (Heb. ix. 1). But that was only "until the time of reformation" (ver. 10). It has long since been abolished. The only worship which God now accepts is *in heaven*, within the veil; and worshippers can approach only by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ, by the "new and living way, which He has consecrated for us" (Heb. x. 19, 20). Seeing, then, that the way into the holiest is now manifest, and seeing that we have "an High Priest over the house of God," we should "**draw near** (approach) with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (ver. 22). The word here translated "draw near" is "approach," signifying the solemn act of approaching God as a worshipper. The privilege and duty are clear. The benefits resulting from the constant exercise of that privilege are great. The loss to be incurred by neglecting it is correspondingly great.

We shall not speak here in detail of worship and the offering of "spiritual sacrifices," having spoken of that matter in "*God's Pilgrims*"; but would merely stir up the reader's pure mind by way of remembrance of what is, on the part of many, a much neglected privilege.

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In connection with this subject of approach to God we would also call attention to what is said of the great High Priest in Heb. vii. 24, 25: "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost **who come** (approach) **unto God by Him.**" This "saving to the uttermost," by which we understand bringing the saints to the fulness of the future glory and blessing prepared for them, is for *those who approach God by Him*. So that we have in this passage another emphatic statement of the importance of constant approach to God. The saving power of God is unlimited; but, in order to avail ourselves of its exercise, we must approach God through the intermediation of His High Priest.

Again, in the exhortation of chap. xii. the first of the things as to which we are warned to look diligently is, "lest any man fail of the grace of God" (ver. 15). One can fail of the grace of God only by neglecting to resort to the throne of grace, where the great High Priest ever waits to meet our need. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain *mercy*," for our past sins and failures,

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and also “find *grace* to help in time of need”; and inasmuch as the need is constantly recurring and our infirmities are many and great, our approach to the throne of grace should likewise be constant, day by day. There is no danger that the supply of grace will be exhausted so long as the need of God’s pilgrims continues. But there is *always* danger lest any *fail* of that grace through neglect to seek it at the appointed place.

Finally, and above all things, we would encourage our fellow-pilgrims to the utmost diligence in seeking the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Let us stedfastly set our affections upon things above, not on things on the earth. For ye died, and your life is not now among the things that are on earth, but is, for the time present, hid with Christ in God. The time for its manifestation “in glory” is not yet (Col. iii. 1-4). Moreover, things as they now are on earth can but serve, so far as we have our “life” among them, to draw the affections of our hearts away from Him Who is the proper Object of those affections. The reason why we should avoid the doings of the men of this world is not because their doings,

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and the things they attempt to accomplish, are evil in themselves. What makes those things dangerous to us, and their influence "evil," is the fact that every attempt to improve the conditions of this world and to enhance its attractiveness serves to make the world a more effectual hindrance and obstacle to the purpose of God. Many of the enterprises of men are inaugurated for a purpose that is in itself commendable. But they are nevertheless "evil" because carried on by those who have rejected the unspeakable gift of God, His only-begotten Son, Whom He gave for the life of the world; and because they are undertaken in the endeavour to maintain and embellish that world which God has condemned, and upon which He purposes to execute judgment.

Could those enterprises by any possibility succeed, their success would constitute a vindication of the ways of men in departing from the living God, and would demonstrate the ability of men to create for themselves a system wherein peace and plenty may be enjoyed apart from God. In a word, it would prove that mankind has no need of God, and can get along very happily and prosperously without

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Him. In all such enterprises, however highly esteemed among men, the saints of God can take no part without dishonour to Him and grievous loss to themselves. This should be apparent to all from consideration of the single fact that the world has not given to the Lord Jesus Christ the place that is rightfully His. When the opportunity was offered, when He came to His own (world), He was rejected with hatred, and ignominiously put to death, as one unfit for any place in it. When the choice was offered to His own people, they said, "Not this man, but Barabbas." And the world has never repented of that decision. The rulers of this world crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. ii. 8); and the rulers of the world still reject Him. The attitude of the world toward Christ is the same to-day as it was then, notwithstanding the numerous church buildings, the "public worship" so called, and the many who *say* "Lord, Lord," but *do not* the things that He says. Many indeed shall say in that coming day, "Lord, Lord, have we not in Thy name done **many wonderful works?**" But He will confess to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that **work iniquity**" (Matt. vii. 22, 23).

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Let us then not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin to such solemn warnings as these. The things that are "wonderful works" in the eyes of those who do them, and to which they may even apply the name "Christian," are in His eyes Who searches the hearts and reins, works of iniquity.

Let us be zealous then for the fulfilment of the purpose of God in the world to come; and let us *labour*, not at the "wonderful works" by which men are attempting to convert this present evil world into a place of Rest, but labour to enter into **that Rest**, lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience.

### III

A Priest for ever after the Order of  
Melchisedec. The Priest - King.  
The Intransmissible Priesthood.  
Consecrated with an Oath



### III

## A Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedec. The Priest - King. The Intransmissible Priesthood. Consecrated with an Oath

**W**E come now to the third division of our great theme. We have considered the Lord Jesus as the Apostle of our Confession, in which capacity He came forth into the world, taking the form of a Servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross. We have also considered Him as the great High Priest Who has passed into the heavens and is now appearing in the presence of God for us, fulfilling, as Minister of the heavenly tabernacle, the type of the Aaronic priesthood.

We purpose now to consider Him as the High Priest of the world to come, when He will, in fulfilment of the Melchisedec type, unite in His

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own Person the office and authority of King, with that of Priest. For this purpose we quote, and ask careful attention to, the Scriptures which speak of Melchisedec.

The first is found in Genesis xiv. It relates an incident in the life of Abraham, one of the great incidents in the career of that great man. The incident occurred when Abraham was returning victorious over the five kings who had invaded Palestine, from whom he rescued Lot and his family and goods, and the people of Sodom, whom the five kings had carried off as captives, and their goods. Abraham was met, on his return, by two kings. The first of these was the King of Sodom: "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale."

But another king met him also:

"And Melchisedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.

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And he (Abram) gave him (Melchisedek) tithes of all.

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."

There is no other mention of Melchisedek in Scripture until we come to the 110th Psalm :

"The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion : rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.

Thy people (*i.e.* the Israelites) shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness (or in holy array). From the womb of the morning Thou hast the dew of Thy youth.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek."

These are the only references to Melchisedek in the Old Testament. There is none in the New Testament until we come to the fifth chapter of Hebrews, verse 5 :

"So also Christ glorified not Himself to be

made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee.

As He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared:

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered:

And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him:

Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Of Whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection";

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that is, to full growth, the word for "perfection" here being that rendered in the preceding verse (v. 14), "full age."

We quote further, beginning at chap. vi. 11 :

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end :

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself,

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

For men verily swear by the greater ; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath :

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us :

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ;

Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even

Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him ;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all ; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace ;

Without father; without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ; but made like unto the Son of God ; abideth a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."

We shall not further quote, though the subject of the Melchisedec order of priesthood continues to the end of chap. vii.

**"Of Whom we have Many Things to Say, and hard to be uttered"**

This part of our subject is of the deepest interest and highest importance. When the Holy Spirit introduces the subject of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Author of eternal salvation, Who, having learned obedience by the things

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which He suffered, has been saluted of God an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, He speaks a word which plainly shows us that this is the theme upon which He specially wishes to enlarge, saying, "Of whom we have **many things** to say," literally, "Of whom our discourse (*logos*) is much." But it is difficult for Him to give utterance to these "things of Christ," because those to whom the message is brought are become sluggish of hearing. By this we are again admonished as to the great importance of exercising the sense of *hearing*, that is, of course, spiritual hearing, which is the real *receiving* of the word into the heart. "Be swift to hear," is an admonition we cannot afford to neglect; for it is by hearing that we grow in the knowledge of God, and thereby also the capacity is developed for receiving more advanced knowledge (spoken of in Heb. v. as "strong meat," that is, solid food) concerning the Son of God. As the Lord said, "Take heed what ye hear; and unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark iv. 24).

The things of Christ that were foreshadowed by Melchisedec, and that are yet to be fulfilled, are not among the elementary things spoken of as

“milk for babes,” but are “solid food” for such as are past the stage of spiritual infancy, and who, by reason of *use*, have their sense of hearing, and their other spiritual senses, “exercised.” Those to whom the Epistle was directly addressed were reprovéd because they had *become* sluggish in hearing, and hence their growth had been retarded. Evidently they had, like the Galatians, begun well, but had lost the keenness of appetite for spiritual food. Hence when, for the time that had elapsed since their conversion, they should have become teachers, they had fallen into such a condition that they had need to be taught again the elements of the doctrine of Christ. However, this condition is not hopeless; for the Apostle says to them, “Let us go on to full growth,” and again, “We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence (as formerly) unto the full assurance of the hope unto *the end* ; that ye *be not slothful*” (vi. 11, 12 ; “slothful” here being the same word as that rendered “dull” in chap. v. 11). That is to say, the Spirit desired them to exercise diligence so as to become fully assured of “*the hope*” (the definite article is in the original).

The state of infancy is a very beautiful state ;

but God's purpose for the infant is, not that it should remain such, but that it should "go on to maturity." So that infancy unduly prolonged, until it becomes a case of arrested development, is not beautiful at all, but is pitiable. And this is true of spiritual infancy, as of physical.

We have seen that the new birth comes to those who receive Christ as the Apostle of God, the One Who came forth from God into the world. To them gave He power to become the children of God (John i. 12). But those who have come to know Him as God's Apostle should press on to know Him in His office and work of High Priest. To know Christ as the Apostle of our confession is to secure the benefit of His work on the cross; that is to say, the forgiveness of our past sins, and the free gift of eternal life. In like manner, to know Christ as the High Priest of our confession is not merely to obtain information concerning His present ministry, but also to secure, day by day, the *actual benefit* of His work in heaven as the Minister of the true tabernacle. This constitutes a great advance in "the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. iv. 13). In order thus to progress in "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" (Phil.

iii. 8), it is necessary to have clearly in mind the *purpose of God*, even as Paul had it fully in view when he stretched forth unto the things that are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the **high calling** of God in Christ Jesus. For, as we have seen and shall now consider further, God has a definite purpose before Him toward which He is shaping all things. The fulfilment of that purpose will take place in "the age to come," when God will glorify His Son visibly in this very earth where once He was put to shame. If we are to advance beyond the stage of infantile knowledge of God, we must "lay hold" of this, His great purpose, which is the hope that is set before us, and which attaches directly to what was foreshadowed by the priesthood of Melchisedec (Heb. vi. 19, 20).

It is the privilege of a son, as he advances toward maturity, to gain knowledge of the work his father is engaged in, of the object which his father purposes to accomplish, and of the plans whereby he means to attain it. Therefore it should be the highest ambition of the children of God to know, and to follow in their hearts and minds, the mighty plan of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

The Father's purpose, then, is **the glory of His Son**, "Whom He hath appointed the Heir of all things." Let that great fact stand clearly before our eyes. And the era of the fulfilment of that purpose is **the age to come**.

The reason why the Spirit of God manifests such deep solicitude in directing the thoughts of God's people to the world to come, and to the Melchisedec Priesthood of Christ, is manifestly because that is the era when He will display His proper glory (of which He "emptied Himself" in order to become God's Apostle), and when He will receive the homage of His creatures. Therefore, the subject of "the King" is one in which the Spirit delights. Thus the 45th Psalm (quoted in Heb. i.) begins with those glowing words: "My heart is inditing (literally, is **bubbling up**) of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching **the King**: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." That Ready Writer is the Spirit of God, who made the Psalmist's tongue His "pen." This is a case where, out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth spake; and the heart was full to overflowing because its theme was "the King."

God has no purpose for "this present evil age" but to destroy it and its works, after He shall have saved out of it all who, of their own free will, accept the gospel of His grace. The betterment of the conditions of life on earth for the rejecters of His Son forms no part of God's programme: and it is most important that His people should understand this, in order that they may be in communion with the Father and with the Son; and that they may advance in knowledge of the truth through the continued "hearing" of the "many things" the Spirit has to say concerning the coming era of the glory of the Son of Man. For the Spirit of Truth is come for this very purpose, namely, to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us. To have communion with God, through the Spirit, is to be in the mind of God as to what He purposes for the glory of His Son. God's thoughts are toward that age to come, when Christ will be publicly displayed in the place of supreme authority over the earth, which rightfully belongs to Him as the Redeemer, the Lamb that was slain for sinners, "Whom in His times He will shew, Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords."

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We cannot be in communion with God if we refuse His thoughts about Christ, and substitute therefor the thoughts of men ; even though the thoughts of the latter run to such seemingly laudable projects as “converting the world,” which God has devoted to judgment. To be in communion with God we must know *His* plans, and must set our hearts in full accord with them.

Now, God has made His purpose perfectly plain. It is written large and clear upon the page of Scripture, so that all may read it. There is no excuse for not knowing what the purpose of God is. A day has been set in the counsels of God when the Son of Man shall come in His own glory, and in the glory of the Father. And His coming will be as conspicuous and startling as the lightning : “For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall also the Son of Man be **in His day**” (Luke xvii. 24). The present day is “man’s day,” the day of man’s proud doings and self-exaltation. The coming age will be the day of the Son of Man, when every proud thing shall be laid low ; for “the **Lord alone** shall be exalted *in that day*” (Isa. ii. 17).

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But the purpose of God, while it centres in Christ, embraces also those whom the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, for "adoption" to Himself by Jesus Christ. The "adoption" signifies the "*placing of sons*" in the posts of dignity and responsibility which it is the Father's pleasure that they should occupy, and investing them with everything that is suitable to their high station, and that the Father's wealth can supply. Those sons are left for a time amid the trials and dangers of the world in order that, through the tribulations experienced there, they may be disciplined and trained for the positions that await them. It is for the benefit of those sons of God that the revelation of the purpose of God is given. That purpose, as we have seen, was formed in the will of God "before the foundation of the world," and many in Old Testament times caught a glimpse of it. Abraham especially had a clear vision of the coming day of the Son of Man, and of the heavenly country and **city**. The Lord Jesus said of him, "Abraham rejoiced to see **My day**: and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56); and again it is recorded of Abraham that he waited

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for the **city** that has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God (Heb. xi. 10).

But there is no one in Old Testament times who has given utterance to a clearer or more concise statement of God's purpose for the objects of His grace than Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Her song, recorded in 1 Sam. ii., contains this remarkable prophecy: "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the **throne of glory**. . . . The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto **His King**, and exalt the horn of His Anointed" (1 Sam. ii. 6-10).

The grace of God that bringeth salvation is wonderfully set forth in the words, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill." For when God's grace met us, we were indeed "beggars" upon the dunghill of this evil world in its foulness and corruption. But God's purpose for those whom He saves by His grace is not merely to lift

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them from the dunghill, but to set them *among princes*, and make them inherit the *throne of glory*. The "throne of glory" is that on which the Son of Man will sit when He comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him; for He has said that "then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt. xxv. 31). Thus Hannah anticipated the reward which the Lord has promised to the overcomer in Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21).

Let it then be noted that God's purpose, as revealed to Hannah, is not to make the lot of the beggar more comfortable *on* the dunghill, but to lift him off from it altogether. God might have set Himself the task of improving the world, and ameliorating the unhappy lot of its denizens. But He has purposed something radically different; and those who have apprehended His purpose count themselves as no longer possessing any status in the world, or any affiliations with those who, by choice, have their portion in this life. They reckon themselves as already "partakers of Christ," having

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died with Him and been raised up together with Him, and as being even now seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. Because He, the Head, is there, they, the members of His body, are likewise there (Eph. ii.).

But what are the many doing who call themselves by His Name? What apprehension have they of the vocation wherewith they were called? Evidently they have turned back from His purpose, and are finding their interests in "this present evil age" from which Christ died to deliver them (Gal. i. 4). Their idea of God's purpose for them appears to be that they should devote their time and strength to schemes for disinfecting the "dunghill" and rendering it a bit more sanitary. Such occupation is quite appropriate and intelligent on the part of those who are content to be denizens of the dunghill; but they are not in accordance with God's revealed plans, and hence are not appropriate for His people.

We would fain believe that the greater number of those who are wasting their energies upon the impossible task of improving the dunghill, are thus occupied through ignorance and not through perversity. Therefore, we find comfort

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in the revelation that God has provided for Himself an High Priest "Who can have compassion on the *ignorant* and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. v. 2). And we pray that, to some who are *out of the way* of God's purpose, the message of this volume may prove to be the fulfilment of the gracious promise: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. xxx. 21).

### **Christ the Centre. All Things New**

The Persian king Ahasuerus asked of Haman, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" What Haman suggested was about all that a mere earthly monarch could do in the way of conferring public honour upon one who had earned his highest favour. But the question we have to consider is what will **God** do, with infinite resources at His command, for that Man who glorified Him on the earth at the expense of His own agony and shame?

It is difficult for us to conceive of that new

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disposition and aspect of "things in heaven and things on earth" which God will bring to pass for the glory of the One whom He delights to honour. But notwithstanding the difficulty, we should turn our minds to the Scriptures that speak of the purpose of God; and as we meditate upon these things it will be found that some beams of light and visions of glory from that coming age will reach us even now. To the same end we should also ask of God that He would give us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of our heart being opened, that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. i. 17-19).

In order, then, that we may have before us another statement of the purpose of God, let us turn to Ephesians. In the third chapter (ver. 11) we find a reference to God's "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's purpose then is "eternal." It is from eternity. Or, as this verse may be rendered literally, it is His "plan of the ages."

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It will be the culmination of a plan requiring ages for its execution.

Ver. 10 of chap. i. tells in few words what that purpose is, namely—

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might **gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

Thus, as stated in the preceding verse, God has now “made known unto us the mystery of His will.” And the next verse tells us that this is “the **purpose** of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

We would observe, in the first place, that the era when this purpose shall be accomplished is not this present age, for (as stated in chap. ii. 2) the course of *this* world is according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. The purpose of God will be carried out in “the dispensation of the fulness of times,” that is, the age to come.

We would observe also that the purpose of God is comprehensive, embracing not only things in heaven, but things on earth also. “All things” are to be united “in one,” with

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Christ as the Centre of all. This accords with the testimony of the Apostle Peter, that God would send Jesus Christ again, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution (or resetting) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts iii. 21).

Things on earth are not now according to the mind of God. This is the era on earth of strife and violence, injustice and universal "unrest," the era of wars of unparalleled destructiveness, of armies, navies, and military engines such as the world has not previously dreamed of. It is the era of corruption in business and politics, as is inevitable in a world whose ruling principles are selfishness and covetousness. It is the era in which murder, suicide, and insanity are increasing, in the most "progressive" of nations, in a ratio many times greater than the increase of the population.<sup>1</sup> All this is "according to the prince of the power of the air," whose rule will be brought to an end at the coming of God's King. Things on earth will be vastly different in that day; for the

<sup>1</sup> The United States of America, as shown by official census reports.

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earth will then be under the rule of One Who not only delights to bless His people, but Who also *knows how* so to order and direct all things as to ensure the continued welfare and happiness of each individual.

God's King, moreover, is He by Whom all things were created. He knows perfectly the properties of matter and the real purposes of every several substance of nature. He understands the action and the right application of all the natural forces. We have even now a hint of the wonders that lie hidden in nature, through the discoveries which ignorant and blundering men have been able thus far to make. But in that day the creation will be in the hands of One from whom nature has no "secrets"; and we can but vaguely conceive the wonders that will be brought to light and turned to the good of mankind when He, Who is the Wisdom of God and the Artificer of the universe, shall come to rejoice in the habitable part of His earth (Prov. viii. 30, 31).

Moreover, the beauty of the earth is now dimmed, and its productiveness is checked by reason of the curse that sin has brought upon it. But in that day, creation itself shall be delivered

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from the bondage of corruption into the *liberty of the glory* of the children of God (Rom. viii. 21). In that day "all the earth" will be called upon to "sing unto the Lord," and it will be said, "Fear before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations (heathen) that the Lord reigneth. . . . Let the **heavens** rejoice, and let **the earth** be glad. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein : then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord : for He cometh to judge the earth" (Ps. xcvi.).

In that day the great difference that now exists between heaven and earth will be done away, and things in earth will be joined with things in heaven into one harmonious system, "in Christ." The entire system will be *heavenly* ; for the word "heavenly" is often used in Scripture to define *character*, rather than geographical *location*. Thus, the country which the patriarchs desired was an "heavenly" country (Heb. xi. 16). The kingdom will be "the kingdom of the heavens," though its sphere will be the earth ; for its "ordinances" will be "of heaven." As the Lord demanded of Job, "Knowest thou the ordinances of **heaven** ? canst thou set **the dominion** there-

of in the earth?" (Job xxxviii. 33). To set the dominion of the ordinances of heaven upon the earth is beyond the power of mortal men. But God will accomplish it through His King in the age to come.

The reason why things on earth are at the present time so different in character from things in heaven, is that God's Will operates as the law in heaven, filling it with joy and blessing; whereas another will operates on the earth, filling it with corruption and violence, with wickedness and misery. But, when the Son of God shall come in His glory, as the Priest upon His throne, then the Kingdom of God will be set up on earth, and God's Will shall then "be done in earth as it is done in heaven." Heaven and earth will then have the same character. All will be heavenly. And we may see a special significance in the mention of heaven and earth together in Scriptures that speak of the purpose of God. Heaven and earth are mentioned together in the first verse of the Bible as component parts of God's creation. But a calamity overwhelmed the earth. "Sin entered the world, and death by sin." Thus a separation occurred. Conse-

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quently when, subsequently to Gen. iii., it is recorded that God looked upon the earth, He did not see that it was "very good," as when the work of the six days was finished. On the contrary, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great *in the earth.*" And again, "*The earth* also was corrupt before God, and *the earth* was filled with violence. And God looked upon *the earth*, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way *upon the earth*" (Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12). The frequent repetition of the words "the earth," "upon the earth," strongly emphasises the great difference in character that had come between heaven and earth.

But when Melchisedec came upon the scene, he was introduced expressly as the priest of the Most High God, the "Possessor of **heaven and earth.**" Thus in this prophetic figure heaven and earth are again brought together, showing that God has not permanently abandoned the earth to the possession of the powers of evil. There is here an implied promise that God would one day resume possession of the earth. Abraham grasped this revelation of God's purpose, for he immediately

speaks of Him as "the Possessor of heaven and earth." Thus, in this wonderful foreshadowing of the Son of God as the Priest Who is also a King, we find a distinct intimation of the purpose of God to unite under one Head, things in heaven and things on earth. This truth also comforted the Lord Jesus in the hour of His rejection by His own people, as shown by the words, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." And He immediately adds, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father," showing that He had in view things in heaven and things in earth (Matt. xi. 25, 27).

Thus God sets before the objects of His grace the great purpose which is to be accomplished in the coming age, even the gathering together into one system, or the heading up into one, of all things in heaven and on earth. All will be brought in Christ into one vast harmonious system whereof He will be the Centre and Head. In that system everything will partake of His character; all its affairs will be administered according to His mind; and every object will reflect His glory.

Additional light on this subject is given in

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Colossians, where we find the revelation of the grace of God in making known through the Gospel “the **hope** which is laid up for us in heaven”; and also of the purpose of God in making us meet to be “partakers of the **inheritance of the saints** in light; Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the **kingdom of the Son of His love**” (Col. i. 5, 12, 13). The extent of this kingdom is set forth as embracing all things; “For by Him were **all things** created, that are **in heaven**, and that are **in earth**, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him” (ver. 16). But the created things had passed from under the rule of God; for the man Adam, to whom God entrusted responsibility in connection with the earth, permitted sin to enter and gain dominion. Hence the created things fell into confusion and disorder. Their relations one with another were disturbed, and the consequence was that strife and pain took the place of peace and harmony. Thereupon God entrusted to Another Man the great work of **Reconciliation**, that is to say, the

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work of restoring all things to their right relations, "making peace." Reconciliation is the result of the work of the Cross, and it extends to and embraces *all things*, both things in heaven and things on earth, as we read: "And having **made peace** through the blood of His Cross, by Him to **reconcile all things** unto Himself; by Him (I say), whether they be things **in earth**, or things **in heaven**" (ver. 20).

Thus the grand "new creation," which the Son of God will introduce to take the place of this present world, will be composed of things which were not only created by Him, but which He has reconciled unto Himself, through the blood of His cross.

We would now consider that One Who is to be displayed in the coming age as the Centre of this reconciled system, Whom God has given to be Head over **all things** to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him Who filleth all in all. His relation to that coming system, in which heaven and earth are to be united, is distinctly foreshadowed by Melchisedec.

“He that shall Come.” “King of Righteousness and King of Peace”

In Old Testament times the Son of God did not come in Person among men to take part in their affairs. But, from time to time, He cast His “shadow” across the surface of human events. We have, in the Old Testament, the record of many of these “shadows” of Him that was eventually to come for the fulfilment of all the purposes of God. These shadows present various aspects of the Person and Work of that “Coming One,” and their study should afford both instruction and delight to His redeemed people.

We are at present concerned mainly with two of the shadows which, in olden times, the Son of God cast upon the surface of human history. One of these is Aaron and his successors in the office of High Priest of the Levitical order down to the time of Christ’s first coming. As we have already seen, we have now the *substance* of that shadow in Christ’s entrance, by His own blood, into the heavenly sanctuary, and in His present ministry there.

The other shadow is Melchisedec. A very

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mysterious shadow was this, which appeared so abruptly and disappeared so completely, after lingering for so short a time upon the scene. The history of Melchisedec is of the briefest. Yet we are bidden to "consider how great this man was" (Heb. vii. 4). And since he was greater than Abraham, who was the greatest of all the patriarchs, for to him God gave the "covenants of promise," we may safely conclude that in Melchisedec we have a type of surpassing importance; and indeed the Epistle to the Hebrews makes it plain that Melchisedec was the chiefest among the shadows of "good things to come."

We have seen that Christ's work as High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary is very different from that which He accomplished as the Apostle of God. So also, His work as High Priest in the coming age will be very different from that in which He is now engaged. Comparison of the two "shadows" brings out this difference clearly. Aaron *went into* the holy place with the blood of the sin-offering that had been slain outside, and whose body was burned "without the camp." Melchisedec, on the other hand, "brought forth" something for the refreshment of the man who

had fought the good fight of faith, and "blessed" him in the name of the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth. Moreover, the name and titles of that great personage constitute important features of the shadow. His name, *Melchisedec*, means "King of Righteousness." And he was, moreover, King of Salem, which means "Peace." Special mention is made in Heb. vii. 2 of the fact that he was "first King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace." His name, Melchisedec, preceded his accession to the throne of Salem; for he was *first* Melchisedec, and *after that* King of Salem. And this order has its significance, inasmuch as the work of Christ was *first* to vindicate and manifest, by His death on the Cross, the righteousness of God; as it is written, "Whom God has set forth a propitiation through faith; in His blood to declare His (God's) **righteousness**," and *after that* to establish peace. Moreover, the work of righteousness must precede that of peace, for there can be no peace except it be based upon righteousness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isa. xxxii. 17). "Therefore, being justified (made righteous), we have

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peace" (Rom. v. 1). "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). (The "joy" added to the "peace" corresponds with the "blessing" bestowed by Melchisedec.) "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace" (Jas. iii. 18).

The coming dominion of the Son of Man is vividly set forth in the 72nd Psalm, where it is declared that "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (ver. 8). The characteristic feature of that dominion will be that "He shall judge thy people with *righteousness*, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring *peace* to the people, and the little hills, by *righteousness*" (vers. 2, 3). And "in His days shall the *righteous* flourish; and abundance of *peace* so long as the moon endureth" (ver. 7). Then will be fulfilled the prophecy of Ps. lxxxv. 10, "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Righteousness, peace, and

blessing will be the characteristics of the reign of God's King-Priest. There is more in this *blessing* than we can possibly conceive. It carries with it "the fulness of joy" and the "pleasures for evermore" that are in the presence of the Lord and at His right hand (Ps. xvi. 11). In the bread and wine that Melchisedec brought forth for the refreshment of the man of faith we have an intimation of the "times of refreshing" that "shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts iii. 19).

The blessing that Melchisedec bestowed was that of "the Most High God," Possessor of heaven and earth. It speaks, therefore, of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, carrying with it the enjoyment of all created things, "both things that are in heaven, and things that are on earth." For "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us **all things**?" (Rom. viii. 32).

Another passage that comes to mind in this connection is found in Matt. xi. The Son of Man had been rejected by that generation, as "a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Nevertheless, He

said that "Wisdom is justified of her children" (ver. 19); and He comforts Himself with the thought of the "babes" to whom the Father had been pleased to reveal things that He had hidden from the wise and prudent. It is significant that at this very point He addresses the Father as "Lord of heaven and earth." Those words link the passage with the Scriptures we are considering, and show that He was even then contemplating the joy set before Him, in view of which He despised the shame of the cross, and for which He still *waits*. Thereupon He declares, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father," thus announcing Himself as the "Heir of all things"; and then He calls to those who have been chosen to be partakers with Him of the inheritance, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Those who take His yoke now, confessing Him as Lord and serving Him, will share His glorious rest. And not only so, but He gives them refreshment now; even as Melchisedec not only "blessed" Abraham

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with future promises from the God of heaven and earth, but "brought forth" for his immediate refreshment bread and wine. The words "will give you rest" are the A.V. rendering of what is in the original a verb, "I will rest or refresh you." The noun *rest* does not occur in that clause.

Not only does Melchisedec bless Abraham, but he adds, "And blessed be the Most High God," thus clearly pointing to the time of God's rest. God Himself will then be "blessed," or happy, when He shall enter into the satisfaction of a creation restored and reconciled, wherein everything is ordered and established according to His own mind. In the vision of the Apostle John when he sees the Lamb, by Whose blood all things in heaven and earth have been reconciled, about to take possession of the inheritance, he hears a mighty chorus, wherein every creature which is in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, join in an ascription of praise to the Lamb, whereof the first item is "blessing."

The effect upon Abraham of meeting with Melchisedec was very striking; and this feature

of the incident conveys a lesson of great importance. We have seen that the King of Sodom was also on the scene, and he too had something to offer Abraham, the "goods" of Sodom. But, having received the blessing of Melchisedec, the Priest of the Most High God, Abraham refused to receive anything whatever, from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, from the King of Sodom. The things which the King of Sodom offered were tangible, and of immediate value. The blessing bestowed by Melchisedec was, on the other hand, merely a promise. Therefore, in choosing between the "goods" of the King of Sodom and the promise implied in the blessing of Melchisedec, Abraham acted wholly "by faith," being influenced by "things not seen."

The King of Sodom, which was the seat of the godless "civilisation" of Palestine, represents, of course, the prince of this world, who is always ready with his "goods"—"the things that are in the world"—offering them to the man of faith as a counter-attraction to the things of Christ, which are matters of promise—"things not seen as yet." It was evident to Abraham that he could not receive and enjoy *both* the

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blessing of the Priest of the Most High God and also the "goods" of the King of Sodom. He had to make choice between them; and his choice was uncompromising.

If such was the effect upon Abraham of meeting Melchisedec, and hearing his words, what should be the effect upon our hearts of knowing and hearing the words of that One of Whom Melchisedec was but a shadow? Surely, when we consider the High Priest of our confession, and the "blessing" that He will bring from the Lord, the Possessor of heaven and earth, we should be strengthened in faith to turn away from all the attractive things of this present age. It is the prince of this world, typified by the King of Sodom, who parades these "goods" before our eyes; for the true heir of the Most High God has not yet come into his inheritance. The effect upon Abraham of God's revelation to him of His future purposes was that he "waited." In like manner we, to whom God has made known the mystery of His will, and who have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of *promise*, should, through the Spirit, *wait* for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal. v. 5).

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Let us pause for a moment to consider the influence which these wonderful revelations of God should have upon our own conduct. Surely it is a most grievous thing in His sight when the heirs of the promise manifest, by their conduct, that they have little or no interest in their glorious inheritance. This is certainly akin to the offence of the Israelites in despising the pleasant land, and is the more serious because the inheritance spoken of to us is far more glorious than the land of Canaan. We do not see how anything is more likely to grieve that Holy Spirit of promise than the conduct of those Christians who show plainly that they have more interest in the things of this world, which, with the lust thereof, is passing away, than in the things of Christ, whereof the Spirit of God is speaking, "Whom *the world cannot receive*, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him" (John xiv. 17). There can be no compromise here; no mixing of the things of the world with the things of the Spirit. As the Apostle Paul says: "Now, we have received, not *the spirit of the world*, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"—which are "the things

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which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 12).

Abraham was, when Melchisedec met him, in the very land which God had promised to give him (Gen. xiii. 17). It is recalled in Hebrews that he went out "into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance" (xi. 8). Yet he would not receive from the King of Sodom any of the goods of that land. This was a shadow of what happened subsequently at the temptation of Christ. The devil took Him to an high mountain, from which he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and offered Him all those things if He would do homage to him. This was the Heir, Who had come "to His own." But He would receive nothing from the hands of the prince of this world. Moreover, the time of the "redemption of the purchased possession" had not yet come. The day is yet future in which "the kingdoms of this world" shall become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15).

Thus the incident of the meeting of Abraham by Melchisedec foreshadowed in a remarkable way the appearing of Christ, when He shall

come forth from the heavenly tabernacle. So long as He remains there He is occupied in making propitiation for the sins of the people; but when He shall appear the second time unto those that *await* Him, it will be "apart from sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). That "salvation" embraces all the "blessing" into which the heirs of the promise will be brought.

We have dwelt thus far upon the responsibilities and honours which the Son of Man will assume when He shall presently come forth as God's King, to sit upon the throne of His glory, and to rule in the midst of His enemies until He shall have put them all under His feet. But we must not lose sight of the fact that He will retain the office of Priest. As foretold by Zechariah, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a **Priest** upon His throne" (Zech. vi. 13).

Thus there will be two sides to the Lord's work in that day, one manward, and the other Godward. As King, He will administer the affairs of men. As Priest, He will represent them before God. Thus, the happy subjects of that kingdom will have not only a King who embodies all wisdom and power, and who will

employ them for the benefit of His people, but they will have also One Who, as Priest of a perpetual and unchanging order, will have uninterrupted access to God on behalf of all who are under His sway. The Priesthood of Melchisedec is far broader in scope than that of Aaron. The latter was confined to the one small nation, "the fewest of all people" (Deut. vii. 7); whereas Melchisedec was outside the family of Abraham. So with the Antitype. The Lord Jesus now, as the High Priest within the Sanctuary, is ministering on behalf of the people of God, truly "the fewest of all people," and the feeblest. But when He comes to fulfil the Melchisedec type, as Priest of the Most High God, His ministry will be on behalf of all who are subject to His rule, in the heavens and on earth.

Well may we exclaim, "And who is sufficient for these things?" No mortal man can command words wherewith to describe that coming scene of glory and blessing—the era of the Priest-King. But we can, at least, and we should, encourage one another to lay hold upon the hope set before us; and so much the more should we do so as we see **the day** approaching. Let our

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hearts be stirred then as we consider what the advent of that day will mean for all who are included in the purpose of God.

For God Himself, the Father of glory, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will mean the rest and satisfaction of His heart in the glory of His only-begotten Son, and in the blessing of those whom He has chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It will be the consummation of His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For the Son it will be the entering into that joy which was set before Him when He endured the cross, despising the shame. Who can say how great will be the joy that was sufficient to sustain Him through such agony and shame?

For the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," who have held the beginning of their confidence firm to the end, it will mean a share in the glory and authority which God has given His own Son.

For the nations of the earth in that age, and for all who have any place whatever under His sway, it will mean blessing beyond all that has ever entered into the mind of man.

And for creation itself it will mean release

from the curse, and deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

That age will be specially the day of the revealing, or public manifestation, of the children of God, as stated in Rom. viii. 19, "The earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the children of God." Christ will then be seen in the midst of the church, leading the praises of the great congregation, as set forth in Heb. ii. 10-12. For now, during this present age, God is "bringing many sons unto glory"; and when that shall have been accomplished, the prophecy of ver. 12 (quoted from Ps. xxii.) will be fulfilled by Christ, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee:"

That will be the time of the "adoption,"<sup>1</sup> that is to say, the *placing* of the sons of God in the positions suited to them as God's children. The idea is that of investing the full-grown sons of the household with the honours and dignities befitting their station. In Eph. i. we read of those whom God chose and marked out beforehand for "adoption" unto Himself by

<sup>1</sup> From two Greek words signifying "a son" and "to place."

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Jesus Christ; and it is said of them, that, having believed the gospel, they were sealed with that Holy Spirit of *promise*, Who is *the earnest* of their *inheritance* unto the *redemption* of the purchased possession. The choice of God was made long ago, but the actual ceremony of "adoption" still awaits the day when Christ will enter into the inheritance, taking actual possession of the purchased possession. Meanwhile the chosen ones receive the Holy Spirit of "promise" as an earnest, that is to say, an instalment, of the inheritance, which yet remains in hope.

This passage is in full agreement in its leading points with Rom. viii. 14-25. Those two passages should be carefully studied together. In Romans, we read of the children of God who are "waiting for **the adoption**, the redemption of our body," showing that the adoption is yet future. But meanwhile they have received "the Spirit of adoption" (an expression of similar import to the "Spirit of promise," for the promise is the adoption), Who is spoken of as "the firstfruits," which signifies much the same thing as "the earnest."

That "adoption" will doubtless be the

grandest and most glorious ceremonial of all time. "Presentation days" in the courts of earthly monarchs are great occasions. Those who are to be "presented" look forward to the event with keenest expectation, and make for it the most elaborate preparations. But no scene of earthly glory can furnish a comparison for the great presentation day of the "many sons" whom God is now bringing "unto glory." The Son of God Himself will present them to the Father as the trophies of His redemptive work and priestly care. Every one of them will be arrayed in the "best robe" of God's righteousness; every one will be fully conformed to the image of His Son; every one will be changed into His likeness; and Christ Himself, bringing to the Father the innumerable multitude, all radiant with His own glory, will say, "**Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me.**" "I and the children"; He and they; He in them, and they in Him, made perfect in one. "For both **He** that sanctifieth and **they** who are sanctified are all **of one**: for which cause **He** is not ashamed to call **them** brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee."

**An Intransmissible Priesthood. Confirmed by an Oath.**

There seem to be three leading points in connection with the Melchisedec Priesthood of the Son of God. The first is that, in addition to being a Priest, Melchisedec was also a King. In this he was unique among the characters of the Old Testament. No other person combined those two great offices; and this makes Melchisedec a very striking type of the Lord Jesus. We have already dwelt at sufficient length upon this first point.

Another point that is strongly emphasised in Hebrews is that the priesthood of Melchisedec was not, like that of Aaron, a transmissible priesthood, descending from father to son through a succession of priests, but was an "unchangeable," that is to say, an intransmissible priesthood (Heb. vii. 24). "For this Melchisedec . . . (being) without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like (assimilated) unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (vii. 1-3). That is to say, in the record given in Genesis, which is

characteristically "the book of the generations" of every personage of any importance who is mentioned therein, and which makes careful mention also of the birth and death of each, Melchisedec, who is by far the most important personage of all, appears as one without ancestry, without posterity, without a birth record, and without mention of his death. This is one of the most remarkable features of the book of Genesis. We now learn, by the revelation of the Spirit given in Hebrews, that those omissions, in the single case of Melchisedec, of matters carefully recorded in all other cases, were intentional, and were for the purpose of making Melchisedec a special type of the Son of God in the possession of an intransmissible priesthood.

This point is important in that, on the one hand, it adds to the dignity of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is invested with a high office in which He had no predecessor, and will have no successor; and, on the other hand, it ensures to the people of God the continued services of a "merciful and faithful High Priest." It was not so with the Israelites. They were never sure of the fidelity of their

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high priest; and though they might, for a season, enjoy the services of one who was faithful to God in caring for the interests of God's people, he might be taken away by death, and be succeeded by one of another sort. "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 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."

The third point that specially distinguishes the Melchisedec priesthood of the Son of God is that it was established **with an oath**. This oath is recorded in Ps. cx., "The Lord **hath sworn**, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Special attention is called in Heb. vii. to this feature of the oath. Thus in vers. 20-22 it is written, "And inasmuch as **not without an oath** He was made priest (for those priests were made without an oath; but this **with an oath** by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec): by so much was Jesus

made a Surety of a better testament (covenant).” Again, in ver. 28: “For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of **the oath**, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated (lit. *perfected*, that is, for the office of High Priest) for evermore.”

The significance of the oath appears clearly from these Scriptures. It means that that which is established by the oath of God will *never be set aside*. The old covenant of Sinai, with the law and the Aaronic priesthood which was a conspicuous feature of it, was not destined to continue. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (viii. 7). As with the sacrifices appointed by the law it is written, “He taketh away the first, that He may **establish** the second” (x. 9).

The priesthood of Aaron was not made with an oath, and hence was not established on a basis of permanency. On the contrary, in the judgment which God has put on record of the house of Eli we read: “Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from

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Me ; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed " (1 Sam. ii. 30).

In contrast with this, in calling His Son to the priesthood, the Lord **sware** and will not repent, that is, will not change this order of priesthood for another. The new priesthood and the new covenant whereof it is a feature, are established permanently. The Son of God is High Priest for ever. Through Him, and through none other henceforth, will redeemed creatures have access to God.

This *permanency* of the order of the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ is not the same thing as its *intransmissibility*. For manifestly the *character* of the priesthood of Christ might change, as it will change, from that of the Aaronic type to the Melchisedec type, without the passing of the office to another. Again, the *order* or character of the priesthood might be permanently established, and yet the *office* pass from one person to another.

So that Christ has, in fulfilment of the type of Melchisedec, an intransmissible priesthood ; and by the guaranty of the oath of God the order of that priesthood, that is to say, the

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priesthood of One Who is also God's King, shall never be replaced by a different order.

It is a matter of interest that God's oath, in confirmation of a promise, was given three times. The first person to receive this extraordinary assurance was Abraham, to whom God had promised the inheritance. The oath of God, recorded in Gen. xxii. 16-18, covered this promise, "And thy seed shall possess the gate of His enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This "seed" of Abraham was Christ. As Paul writes to the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16). The Seed of Abraham is thus established by the oath of God as the Heir for ever. None other could inherit the promises, and the possession will never pass to another. Such is the significance of the oath.

The next one to whom God made promise and confirmed it by an oath was David. The promise in that case had reference to *the throne*. God has said: "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have **sworn** unto David My servant, **Thy Seed** will I establish for ever,

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and build up thy **throne** to all generations." Again, "Once have I **sworn** by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His **seed** shall endure for ever, and his **throne** as the sun before Me" (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 35, 36). It follows that the occupancy of the throne is confirmed by the oath of God to the Seed of David for ever. And, again, that Seed is Christ.

In the third instance in which God recorded His oath, namely, that relating to the priesthood of the order of Melchisedec, the person to whom the promise was made is not named, except that David designates Him as "my Lord." He is the One Whom David in the Spirit called Lord (Matt. xxii. 43, 44).

Having in mind these three instances of the oath of God, the opening words of the New Testament acquire a deeper significance: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." The three persons named in this verse are the three to whom God has made promises and confirmed them by an oath.

Let us at this point inquire, How do these things affect our hearts? For it will avail nothing to

have these wondrous truths in our minds, if our hearts be not moved by them. He of whom these things are written has spoken to us of the desire of *His* heart that we should be where He is, that we might behold His glory. He says: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John xvii. 24). This is the expressed "will" of the Lord Jesus, and is the more emphatic because it is the only utterance in which He declares His blessed will. Moreover, He has definitely promised to come again and receive us unto Himself. And "that Holy Spirit of promise," Who is the earnest of our inheritance, is pleading with us to "hear His voice." For that purpose it is needful that we guard ourselves from the attractions of the seen things, and keep our hearts warm towards Him Who loves us, so that they may be impressionable to His Word. The purpose to be served by considering the Apostle and High Priest of our confession is that the affections of our hearts may be directed towards Him. And the test of the state of our hearts is whether or not we have a desire for His words, and what value we place upon them. We are always most desirous

to hear from those we love, and we prize their words. And if we find that His words make little impression upon us, and exert little influence upon our conduct, let us, with earnest confession and supplication, resort to the throne of grace, asking that our hearts may be purged from an evil conscience, and from every affection that draws us away from Him, so that the Word of Christ may dwell richly within us.

### The Hope Set Before Us.

In conclusion, we would direct special attention to the *hope* of the children of God, which hope is closely connected with the subject of Melchisedec. Indeed, as the sixth chapter of Hebrews clearly states, our hope attaches directly to Christ in the character of High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, emphasis is placed upon the importance of grasping, and keeping a firm hold upon, the *hope* that is set before us. Hope is first mentioned in chap. iii. 6 : "But Christ as Son over His own house ; whose house are we if we **hold fast** the confidence and the rejoicing of **the hope** firm to the end." Here Christ as Son over God's house

is mentioned as "the hope" to which we are to hold fast.

Again, at chap. iv. 14 we read: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us **hold fast** our confession." The word "hope" does not occur in this verse, but the thought is there. This passage is very like that in chap. x. 21-23, "And having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near. . . . Let us **hold fast** the confession of the **hope** without wavering." (All the texts read "confession of the hope," not "profession of our faith.") The "hope," then, is what we confess; and it connects directly with the subject of the Son of God established as High Priest over the house of God. That is now a matter of "hope," because it is not yet seen, and "hope that is seen is not hope." It rests entirely upon faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Then in chap. vi. 11 we read, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of **the hope** unto the end." (The definite article occurs before "hope.") Here again diligence "unto the end"

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is called for in order to the full assurance of the hope. And at vers. 18, 19, 20 of the same chapter, we read that the hope is something we are to "**lay hold of**"; that it is "as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast," and that it enters within the veil, whither as Forerunner for us Jesus is entered, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Once more, in chap. vii. 19 we read of "the bringing in of a **better hope**,"—better than that based on the law and the Levitical priesthood; and we are told that, by means of this better hope, "**we draw nigh unto God**." Moreover, the succeeding verses (20, 21) connect this hope with the Melchisedec priesthood of the Lord Jesus, as having been established by an oath, thus repeating the thought of chap. vi.

Taking all these passages together, it is evident that the hope that is set before us of the glorious inheritance of the heirs of God is intended to have a very practical and very important effect upon us during the time of our sojourn in the world. We should, therefore, diligently seek the benefit for which God has been pleased to set such a wonderful prospect before the eyes of our

heart. It is not conceivable that God would have revealed to us, His creatures, once enemies and aliens in our minds through wicked works, a purpose which lay in His eternal counsels, except it was intended to exert a powerful influence upon our conduct. This hope, then, is given us that by means of it we might *draw near to God*. This is a nearness of *heart*. It means a drawing near to God in such manner as to be in hearty accord with His purpose. It means to be near Him in thought and desire, not seeking present satisfaction, but consciously, and by an act of the will, *waiting patiently* for that which God has promised to do. It is the opposite of that conduct which God denounced in the Israelites when He said, "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed **their heart far from Me**" (Isa. xxix. 13).

The seen things of the world exert upon our hearts a powerful attraction which is directly contrary to the purpose of God. In order to counteract that influence, God has revealed by His Word and Spirit what He is about to do; and by laying hold of that revealed purpose we may draw near to God, notwithstanding the

counter-attractions of the seen things. This is forcibly presented in the passage about hope in chap. vi. There we find that God's object in giving His oath was to furnish to the heirs of the promise a strong encouragement. It is called to mind that God, after He had made a promise to Abraham, confirmed it by an oath (see Gen. xxii. 16-18). And then the explanation is added, that God, wishing to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise, the immutability (unchangeableness) of His counsel, confirmed it (the promise) with an oath. And the object of this was that, by reason of two unchangeable things (the promise and the oath), we (who have fled for refuge from the dangers and trials around us) might have strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope which these scriptures set before us; and might thereby draw near to God, Who is our only Refuge.

We would lay stress upon the significance of the word rendered "consolation" in Heb. vi. 18, as that word is a most important one in conveying the sense of the passage. It is directly derived from "paraclete," the word which defines the relation of the Holy Spirit to the

saints in this age, and which means one who has come alongside to help—a helper at one's side. The word "Comforter" gives the thought clearly, if we have regard to the primary significance of that word. By "comfort" is now usually meant no more than soothing speech. But the word is *cum* = with, *fortis* = strength. Hence the Comforter is the One Who is come with His Divine and Almighty arm to support the weak pilgrim through all the trials and fatigues of his journey.

Thus the promise and oath of God are given with the object of furnishing to the heirs of salvation a powerful stimulus or *encouragement* to lay hold of the hope set before them. In this connection we may profitably consider Rom. xv. 4, where the same word (*paraklesis*) occurs, being there rendered "comfort." There we read, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning (instruction), that we, through patience, and **comfort** of the Scriptures, might have **hope**." And in the next verse the same word occurs again, being there rendered "consolation." "Now the God of patience and **consolation** grant you to be likeminded one toward another : that ye may

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with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The two things that contribute towards the actual possession of a real hope, are *patience* and the *encouragement of the Scriptures*. God is the Source of both; for He is "the God of *patience* and *consolation* (encouragement)." Therefore, both are to be had at His throne of grace, where every "need" is supplied; and it is distinctly said that we "have *need* of *patience*" in order that, after we have done the will of God, we may "receive **the promise**"<sup>1</sup> (Heb. x. 36). We should, therefore, avail ourselves of "the encouragement of the Scriptures," whereof they are full, in laying hold of the hope that is set before us.

Again, in Rom. v. we are reminded of the part that *patience* has in producing *hope*. There we read that tribulation works out **patience**; and *patience*, *experience*; and *experience*, **hope**. And if we have not as yet had the result of tribulation worked out in ourselves, we surely have seen, in some of our fellow-saints, the

<sup>1</sup> The "promise" is that of "the eternal inheritance" secured by the new covenant, whereof Christ is the Mediator (Heb. ix. 15). See also Heb. viii. 6—"a better covenant established upon better promises."

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excellent virtue of patience wrought out by means of the tribulations through which they have passed.

The warnings of Scripture concerning the dangers that beset us are not given to discourage us, but to put us on guard that we may not fall into those dangers. Those saints are not wise who object to being warned of the danger of incurring loss, and prefer to be left in false security.

The promise and the oath of God set before us a hope that is "both sure and stedfast." There is no uncertainty about the hope of the Christian. It is so absolutely secure that nothing could add to its security. It attaches, indeed, to that which is "within the veil," and therefore is "not seen as yet"; but it attaches to the Melchisedec Priesthood of the Son of God, which is secured by an oath.

Therefore, those who "have hope in Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 19) have expectation of something that is absolutely certain to occur. But the word "hope" in common speech means something that is unlikely, or at best very uncertain. When one, in speaking of something yet future, says, "I hope so," he means, not that it is sure

to happen, but that he fears it will not happen. Such, indeed, is the character of those who are "without God in the world." Their hope is not hope at all. The state of those who are "without Christ" is described as "having no hope" (Eph. ii. 12). It is not so with the believer in Jesus Christ. His hope is attached to that which is sure and stedfast, although it be as yet hidden from view.

The simile here given us to aid our comprehension of the teaching is that of an anchor. This, however, is manifestly not an anchor of the sort we are familiar with, that is to say, a great iron affair with two flukes, that is carried at the bow and stern of our modern ships. That sort of an anchor lays hold of the bottom of the sea, whereas the sure anchor that we have enters into that within the veil. The purpose of that sort of an anchor is to hold the vessel from moving ; whereas, on the contrary, the purpose of the anchor that we have is that thereby we may "draw near unto God."

The figure is taken, of course, from the practice that prevailed in old times in the harbours of the Mediterranean and other inland seas. In every harbour, as may be seen indeed

to this day, was a great stone (and usually there were a number of such) immovably embedded in the ground near the water's edge. That rock, as we understand, was the *anchoria* (Gr. *agkura*). It served ordinarily as a mooring for the little vessels of those days; but it also had another function. Sometimes the little ship could not, by means of its sails, make its way to a secure mooring within the harbour. In such a case a "forerunner" would go ashore in a small boat with a line, which would be made fast to the *anchoria*. That was "sure and stedfast," being of ample strength, and immovably embedded in the ground. Therefore, those on the little ship had only to "hold fast" to the line, and by means of it, and by patient, persistent effort, gradually "draw near" to the shore.

Assuming this to be what was in the mind of the writer of Hebrews, it illustrates forcibly and beautifully the lesson of the passage. The Christian flees for refuge from the storms and dangers of the voyage. He seeks in God a harbour of refuge; but the conditions around him oppose his progress. All about him are hostile influences that "war against **the soul**" (1 Pet. ii. 11). They are the attractions of

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things that offer gratification to men's souls, and which the flesh lusts after. Therefore, God has given us a hope which is "as an anchor of the soul." It attaches to Christ, as the King-Priest established for ever by "the word of the oath." Therefore, it is "sure and stedfast." It cannot give way and cast us adrift. The Lord Jesus Himself is entered as "Forerunner for us." The line which extends out to us is the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which will bear all the strain we can put upon it.

Therefore, it only remains for us to "lay hold" of that hope, and to "hold fast" to the end. By means of that hope we may, in all times of danger, "draw near unto God" and remove our "souls" from the influence of the seen things. And God has supplied to us a "strong encouragement" to do this. For these Scriptures are written for our *encouragement*, not for our *discouragement*, notwithstanding they contain such clear and solemn warnings. The word "encourage" (derived from *paraclete*, as stated above) occurs in several other passages in Hebrews. Thus, in iii. 13 we read, "But exhort one another daily, so long as it is called To-day," the word "exhort" being that *comfort-*

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ing word “encourage.” Also in x. 23–25 we read that we should “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,” and should “consider one another to provoke to love and good works ; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting (**encouraging**) one another ; and so much the more, as ye see **the day** (of fulfilment of the promise) approaching.”

Therefore, the desire of the writer in sending forth these pages is that they may, by the blessing of the Most High God, the Lord of heaven and earth, serve to *encourage* some of the people of God, now in the place of trial and danger, to turn resolutely away from everything in this scene that allures the eye and attracts the heart, to lay *firm hold* of the hope set before us, and to *hold fast* their confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end. And as a further encouragement to do this, we have the assurance that our patience will not be put to a long test. “For yet a *little while*,” and then, “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

