

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



*Buy me a coffee*

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

**The Indian Church Commentaries**

**THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

## THE INDIAN CHURCH COMMENTARIES

- St. Matthew, The Gospel according to.**  
By Rev. H. U. Weitbrecht Stanton,  
D.D. 5s. net.
- St. John, The Epistles of.** By H.  
Pakenham-Walsh, D.D. 5s. net.
- Acts of the Apostles, The.** By Laurence  
E. Browne, B.D. 6s. net.
- Corinthians, The First Epistle of Paul  
the Apostle to the.** By Rev. Canon  
E. F. Brown. 6s. net.
- Corinthians, The Second Epistle to  
the.** By Rev. Arthur Crosthwaite.  
5s. net.
- Colossians and to Philemon, The  
Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle  
to the.** By Ven. W. K. Firminger.  
7s. 6d. net.
- Revelation of St. John the Divine, The.**  
By the Rt. Rev. E. H. M. Waller.  
Second edition, revised. 6s. net.

LONDON: S.P.C.K.

*First published 1917*

The Indian Church Commentaries

THE EPISTLE TO THE  
**HEBREWS**

WITH

**Introduction and Notes**

BY

**W. H. G. HOLMES, M.A.**

*Oxford Mission to Calcutta*

LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING  
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1929

TO  
MY MOTHER

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**BISHOP WESTCOTT'S** preface to his commentary on the Hebrews opens with the words that every student of the Epistle must feel that it deals in a peculiar degree with the thoughts and trials of our own time. A student of the Epistle whose home is in India must also feel that it deals in a peculiar degree with the thoughts and trials of the Church in this land, and that it has a direct and special message to those Indians who sincerely desire to combine loyalty to conscience with loyalty to their nation's spiritual past.

Like the Hebrew Christians the Indian Christians are comparatively but a handful in the midst of their fellow-countrymen. Like the Hebrew Christians they are possessed by an ardent love of their country, and yet their allegiance to Christ is mistakenly regarded by many non-Christians as so denationalizing them that they are sometimes reckoned strangers in their own land. Like the Hebrew Christians they are convinced that all pure religious aspirations and rites in their country have their proper satisfaction and fulfilment in the one Priest and Oblation abiding for ever, and yet they have to endure the continual disappointment of seeing those whom they expect to welcome this consummation reject it either with indifference or

scorn. In some, perhaps even many, cases their lot is that of persecution, hidden or unconcealed. The records of the past make us realize with how subtle a descent a Church may leave its 'first love'. When the first enthusiasm has cooled, the temptation even to apostasy may come to Indian Christians as it came to Hebrew Christians. To all who are thus tried the *Epistle to the Hebrews* more than any other book in the New Testament brings warning, consolation and encouragement. It stimulates true patriotism, it checks false expectations, it recalls old enthusiasm.

Again, the *Epistle to the Hebrews* answers the characteristic questionings of the Indian mind. It teaches the genuine doctrine of *karma*. It expounds true *monism*. It solves the difficulty felt by so many enquirers and catechumens in this country as to the status of those who lived before 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' It proclaims a spiritual fellowship between old and new, in that men before the historic Incarnation bore 'the reproach of Christ' as well as those who lived after it. It shews why new incarnations are not needed when the Divine Nature has been united to human nature once for all. It meets the need of the mystic by presenting the conception of a CHRIST who dwells and suffers and reigns in the human spirit. It sets forth the one satisfaction of the instinctive need in man of priest and sacrifice.

It is also by this Epistle that the Church seeking to convert mankind is reminded emphatically that it is not merely by the presentation of CHRIST as He was 'in the days of His flesh' that the world is to be overcome, but by the presentation of CHRIST as He is. Dr. Milligan in his '*Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*' warns us of the danger of the popular catchword 'Back to CHRIST,' if by the phrase is meant, as is apparently the case, concentration on the life of CHRIST solely in its historical aspect. We have to set before the world the heavenly CHRIST in the glorified humanity in which He retains eternally the experience and fruit of His life and passion in Palestine. We are to know Him not after the flesh but after the spirit. If He were only the greatest of the Masters and Martyrs who have trodden earth's surface and passed away, the Gospel would be no gospel. It is because He reigns now as the Eternal Priest, who intercedes, heals and teaches, that there is a Gospel to proclaim to men. The true watchword, so the Epistle teaches us, is not so much 'Back to CHRIST' as 'Up to CHRIST.'<sup>1</sup>

If there are but few direct references to and quotations from other commentaries in this volume it does not mean that the author does not recognize the greatness of his obligations. Should there be

<sup>1</sup> Compare the Collect for *The Ascension* in the Prayer Book.



any value in what is written here it is due to what a long line of commentators on this Epistle have taught. In addition to the well-known commentaries and writings on the *Epistle to the Hebrews* the author of this book has had the advantage of consulting manuscript notes of Dr. Liddon's lectures on the Epistle, delivered many years ago in Oxford. Of published commentaries perhaps none has helped him more than that of Delitzsch.

An Epistle which deals mainly with the transcendent sphere and the worship of the Temple not made with hands must necessarily be a difficult one. No commentary can make it easy for the student. The writer of the Epistle is himself aware that he is dealing with a subject 'hard of interpretation,' and that only 'fullgrown men' in the spiritual sense can be expected to profit by it. The senses have to be exercised, and valuable as study may be in the exercising of the spiritual faculty, it must never be forgotten that truth becomes a man's own rather by meditation than by purely intellectual effort; or perhaps it would be truer to say that what is intellectually apprehended by study is spiritually apprehended by meditation. The *Epistle to the Hebrews* will only yield its treasures to those who meditate on it.

## CONTENTS

					PAGE
INTRODUCTION		...	...	...	1
CHAPTER	I.	...	...	...	69
"	II.	...	...	...	102
"	III.	...			145
"	IV.		...		175
"	V.		...	...	201
"	VI.		...	...	229
"	VII.	...	...	...	269
"	VIII.	...	...	...	304
"	IX.				316
"	X.	...	...		353
"	XI.	...	...		386
"	XII.	...		...	411
"	XIII.			...	431

The extracts from the Revised Version contained in this volume are printed by permission of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but all editorial responsibility rests with the author (or editor) of the present volume.

## INTRODUCTION

### CIRCUMSTANCES

**THE** time of spiritual life which follows the period of youth is always the most difficult age. The first enthusiasm passes, the first love cools, the first brightness of hope fades. It is the young men who see visions ; it is the old men who dream dreams (Joel ii. 28) ; middle age is apt to be too old for visions and too young for dreams. What is true of individual life is true of corporate life. To the second and third generations of Christians comes the time of subtle trial, and what was but a light affliction to a new-born Church becomes a heavy burden to the children's children. In the happiness of conversion, in the gladness of enlightenment, in the sweetness of first 'tasting the heavenly gift,' the loss of goods is borne with cheerfulness, bonds and imprisonment are but a small thing, death itself a welcome sacrifice. But to later generations of Christians the Faith comes not as a glorious surprise of God's love, but as an hereditary creed which is accepted with the fact of parentage. Only by degrees does it become their own possession, the Faith to be lived by and died for.

Such a time of trial evidently came to those to whom the *Epistle to the Hebrews* was addressed. Moreover their trial was the more acute for other reasons. They were comparatively a small body cut off from the mass of their fellow countrymen, deprived of fellowship in a national life which was intimately bound up with the national religion. The religion of the Hebrew was revealed in the history of the nation, and that history had the power to stir all the fervent emotions of patriotism. A small body of Christians regarded as deserters by the main body of their fellow countrymen, objects of suspicion and hatred to most of those among whom they dwelt, needed a rich and vivid faith if they were to be kept from drifting into indifference or even apostasy. Their condition became harder and still more perilous when suspicion and hatred seemed likely to break out into persecution, and persecution of such a kind that they might have to resist 'unto blood' (xii. 4). The main hope of such a community weathering the storm would lie in the strength that comes from unity, but in this community we see signs of disunion and of the weakness which is the child of the factious spirit.

The letter bears witness that the danger was of the gravest. The Christians addressed have not as a body made that progress in Christian knowledge and holiness which might have been expected. Through their own fault they have become 'dull of

hearing' (v. 11-14), and are as babes in understanding. Some, as is always the case with those who will not trouble themselves to have their senses exercised in the faith, are in danger of being carried away with 'diverse and strange teachings' (xiii. 9). Others seem likely to revert to Judaism: perhaps they had expected that the mass of their fellow countrymen would quickly accept JESUS as the Messiah, and lost heart when they found that the expectation was disappointed. Could the handful of converts and their children be right, and the mass of the people be wrong? Some are neglecting the gatherings of Christians for worship and instruction (x. 25). There is a crisis at hand, an impending peril which casts a shadow over the readers of the letter: something draws nearer and nearer, a veritable earthquake in which all that can be removed will be shaken, that that which cannot be shaken may remain (xii. 27). It were impossible to exaggerate the almost fierce sternness of the warnings with which the writer interrupts from time to time the course of his exposition. Yet he ever turns to tenderness (vi. 9): he will not believe it possible that they can be traitors to a faith so beautiful in itself and so satisfying to their patriotism; that they can be false to their own past. It must be that they will persevere.

The letter has neither direction or signature. It begins with almost startling abruptness like the first

Epistle of St. John, but there is no hint as to the writer. It ends with the mention of Timothy's name and gives salutations from Christians of Italy, but there is nothing to say where the letter was written, who wrote it, or to whom it was written. It is true that the oldest manuscripts are headed 'To Hebrews' but this title forms no part of the original writing. It simply testifies to the uniform belief of the early centuries that the letter was addressed to Christians of Hebrew race and to none other. He who wrote it must have had authority and influence among those to whom he wrote, but it was not the authority of an Apostle. He does not claim to be their spiritual father: he himself was one of those who received the Gospel from 'them that heard' (ii. 3). Authoritatively as he writes there is just a shade of doubt as to whether his right to address them thus sternly will be acknowledged, and so he ends by begging them to 'bear with the word of exhortation' (xiii. 22).

#### DESTINATION

One thing seems reasonably certain as to those to whom it was written: they could hardly have been Aramaic speaking or Hebrew understanding Jews. The language of the letter is elegant and polished Greek. The New Testament is for the most part written in the homely language of the day, the popular colloquial language which was the ordinary medium of communication throughout the old world.

Assailants of Christianity sneered at what they called 'the boatman's idiom' of the New Testament. But not so this letter; there is no boatman's idiom here: it is written by a master of dignified and artistic Greek. No one could mistake it for a translation from Aramaic. No one writing to Jews who read their Scriptures in Hebrew only, who used Aramaic as their everyday language, would have ventured to send them such a letter as this. Whenever the Old Testament is used in the Epistle it is the Greek version and not the Hebrew that is quoted. Whenever there is a difference between them it is the Greek rendering that is followed and not the Hebrew original. They may, of course, have been Greek-speaking Jews who were living in Jerusalem or Palestine. Jerusalem had, besides the temple which was the one place of sacrifice,<sup>1</sup> many places of meeting for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. There were regular and distinct congregations in the Holy City as in any considerable Christian town of to-day. It was natural when converts multiplied by thousands that they should be compelled by the necessities of the case to meet in separate congregations and that those who used Greek habitually, and actually did not understand

<sup>1</sup> There was a temple of the Jews at Leontopolis in Egypt, but it never occupied a position in the minds even of Alexandrian Jews remotely approaching that of the temple at Jerusalem. The temple was to all intents and purposes unique.



Hebrew, should associate together for worship and exhortation, just as they had done before their conversion. There was a Synagogue of the Libertines, that is, of Roman Jews. Pompey had carried thousands of Jewish captives to Rome, and these had afterwards been set at liberty. There was also a synagogue of Alexandrians, and many others (Acts vi. 9). The writer of the Epistle seems to have been familiar with the Alexandrian school of religious philosophy, and there are many verbal affinities with Philo, who born some twenty years before CHRIST spent his whole life at Alexandria. The unknown teacher may have been addressing a congregation of Christian Alexandrian Jews at Jerusalem, or the whole body of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians in the city. There is another reason for the conclusion that this letter is not likely to have been written to any but Greek-speaking Christians. At the probable time when it was written a strong prejudice had arisen among the Palestinian Jews against anything foreign. The power of the foreigner seemed closing in upon them, and the nearer came the doom of Jerusalem the fiercer burned the fires of their nationalism. Rabbis forbade Jewish fathers to have their sons any more instructed in Greek. The Palestinian Christians can hardly have been free from something of the same spirit, nor is it probable that they would have given a welcome to a letter written in a language which their fellow countrymen were trying, how-

ever ineffectively, to boycott. Assuming also that the temple was still standing and the daily ritual of sacrifice still being performed, it seems unlikely that a writer who wanted to win a hearing would have described any other ritual than that which was being performed daily before their eyes in the temple. But the writer is by no means careful thus to picture the ritual. His language seems to imply that it is still going on; there is no hint of any catastrophe by which the temple and its worship have been destroyed, but the description is taken rather from the tabernacle than from the temple, and even here he does not hesitate to depart from a literal description of what was in the Mosaic tabernacle (see ix. 3-5). All this we may suppose would hardly have propitiated the Christian nationalist who clung to his own tongue and his own classical religious language, but it would have seemed natural and proper to a Jew who thought in Greek, and looked not so much to the system of worship actually being realized in the temple as to the ideal set forth in the law.

But the congregation addressed need not necessarily have been in Jerusalem or Palestine. There is much to be said for the opinion that it was in Rome. It is in Rome that the letter is first quoted, and quoted in such a way as though it were 'wholly transfused'<sup>1</sup> into St. Clement's mind. Now St. Clement was the Bishop of Rome, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Westcott.

name of the Church in Rome he wrote a letter to the Christians at Corinth with the object of putting an end to a feud that had broken out there. This letter cannot have been written later than A.D. 95. Some believe that St. Clement was Bishop of Rome as early as the year A.D. 70, and yet the writer is so familiar with the *Epistle to the Hebrews* that it seems 'wholly transfused into his mind.' It is just possible that St. Clement himself was the actual receiver of the letter, and this would account both for his familiarity with it and for the way he uses it. Another Roman writer, Hermas, probably of the same date, apparently knows the Epistle and uses it, but his references are not so unmistakable. The references to past persecutions in the letter may refer to the shocking barbarities which had been perpetrated upon Christians in Rome about the year A.D. 64 under the Emperor Nero. The language of x. 32-4 describes accurately the kind of sufferings which they endured. Now a further disaster seems to be impending; rumours reach them of the growing disaffection in Palestine; there is talk of rebellion, and they know how fierce is the fanaticism of their countrymen. Yet they could have little hope that resistance to the Roman arms would be successful; they could only look on in misery at the approaching ruin. Apart from the gloomy misgivings which they must be feeling at the dangers threatening their fellow countrymen,

could they hope to escape in Rome if the fury of their enemies was poured out on the Jews in Palestine? So the writer bids them be ready for the worst. It is true that he tells them that they have 'not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin' (xii. 4), but this cannot mean that there had been no martyrs among Hebrew Christians, for we know that there had been, and the events after the fire of Rome had been appalling indeed. If the letter was sent to Rome this phrase must mean that so far God had not called upon those who read this letter actually to jeopardize their lives for their faith, though He might yet do so. The message at the end of the letter 'They of Italy salute you' fits the theory that it was to Jewish Christians in Rome that it was written. Who would be so likely to send greetings to their brethren in Italy as those of Italy who were temporarily absent from their homes?

But at the best we can only say that all is uncertain save that the letter was written to Greek speaking Jewish Christians, that they had suffered much, that they were about to suffer more, that some, perhaps many, were in the gravest spiritual danger of falling away altogether from CHRIST.

#### AUTHOR

It is not difficult to pick out some who might have written this letter. Apollos is just the kind of man

we want, an Alexandrian by race, learned and eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures; he powerfully confuted the Jews (Acts xviii. 24-8) but there is not an atom of proof that he wrote the letter. It has been suggested that it is a woman's work, and that the woman was Priscilla. Undoubtedly she was a remarkable woman, and Apollos owed at least some of his instruction to her, but however attractive it may be to hope that one book at least of Holy Scripture was written by a woman there is no evidence whatever to support the conjecture. In North Africa there was a tradition that the Epistle was by Barnabas. Tertullian attributes it without question to him; and again it may be said that he is just the kind of man we want. For he was a Levite, and not only a Levite but a Hellenist, 'a man of Cyprus by race'. A Hebrew by race with a hereditary interest in the details of the Levitical ritual, it was fitting that the 'Son of exhortation' (Acts iv. 36). should give 'the word of exhortation' (xiii. 22). All we know of the character of Barnabas fits the method of the letter, the alternation of tenderness with severity. But, apart from the apparent certainty of the North African Church, there is nothing but conjecture to go upon.

Again it has been pointed out that there is a close connexion between the method of St. Stephen's defence and *the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Both

recount the history of the fathers, both draw out the comparison between Moses and the CHRIST, both refer to the tabernacle instead of to the temple, both speak of the tabernacle as made according to the heavenly idea. In both the ministry of Angels is the ground of a special argument, and in both the revelation of God is described as a 'speaking' or 'talking' to men. From these striking similarities it is deduced that the writer of the Epistle must have been one of St. Stephen's circle, and he must have been one who like St. Stephen was great enough to write it. Was there such a one? The answer is, St. Philip the Deacon. The friend and fellow worker of St. Stephen was certainly great and influential enough to write the letter. Prophet, evangelist, worker of miracles, in all probability a Hellenist, one who had evangelized all the cities of South Palestine, and possibly those of Galilee also, few could have spoken with greater authority than he. The following vivid picture has been drawn of what may have been the historic fact. 'Philip is now growing old—not less than sixty, if he was about thirty at the time of his appointment to the diaconate. His work is nearly done, but the life of the Spirit within him, and his heavenly 'wisdom' are at their ripest and fullest. His daughters, in their dedicated life, receive like himself the gift of prophecy. He is surrounded by a constellation of

flourishing Churches, while all look up to him as their spiritual founder and father. Many Christians have been born who cannot remember a time when Philip was not presiding over the Church at Cæsarea. Meanwhile, terrible things are happening at Jerusalem. Persecution has broken out which recalls the memory of that first persecution when Stephen suffered, and Philip himself was driven from the city. In the quieter times which followed there has been constant intercourse between the two Churches; prophets and teachers have come from Judæa to Cæsarea, and disciples from Cæsarea have paid Jerusalem frequent visits (Acts xxi. 10-16). But now James has been removed by a violent death, and panic has seized the Church. Then comes the fearful news that both Peter and Paul, the heads of the Church, have been put to death at Rome. There is danger of widespread apostasy. Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and the Christians at Jerusalem are beginning to ask whether they have not followed cunningly devised fables in believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the CHRIST. At such a time who should throw himself into the gap but Philip of Cæsarea, the father of the Christians? No apostle was at hand; so far as we know there was no other Apostolic man in Palestine. Surely his prophetic gift and 'wisdom' were given him for such a crisis as this. So, rising to the full height of his great theme, he

draws out the doctrine of the eternal high priesthood, purchased through suffering, and shows that none but a crucified Messiah could have satisfied the needs of the human race.'

To those to whom it seems certain that the Epistle was written to Hebrews in Jerusalem, or at any rate in Palestine, there is no more attractive conjecture than this. Almost every detail fits. Even the exhortation to 'let marriage be in honour among all' (xiii. 4) comes with special force from one who had four unmarried daughters, and might have been suspected, though married himself before his conversion and ordination, of regarding the estate of matrimony as on a lower level than virginity. But when all is said we can only confess our ignorance and say with Origen, 'Who wrote this Epistle God only knows certainly.'

#### DATE

The date when it was written is largely determined by one important consideration. Is it possible that a letter like this, describing Levitical ritual and worship, recounting faith's triumphs in the nation in the past, could have been written after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, and yet not make the slightest reference of any kind to a disaster of such magnitude? No such reference can be traced in a single sentence of the Epistle. There is no hint that the sacrifices have ceased; the implication



throughout is that the Levitical worship is still being offered, and that there is a danger of the Hebrew Christians reverting to it. In A.D. 66 the long smouldering revolution broke out at Jerusalem. The Roman garrison was massacred and the insurrection spread rapidly throughout Judæa and the neighbouring countries. Then began a reign of terror. When news of the rebellion reached other cities of the Empire the inhabitants rose and massacred the Jews. It cannot but have been ~~but~~ that the Christian Jews also suffered in the general fury. At any rate it is undoubted that the shock of the events in Palestine was felt throughout the world. At first the war was favourable to the Jews, but finally the Roman arms triumphed. Galilee was the scene of sanguinary battles and the Lake of Tiberias whose shores and waters had been consecrated by the presence of the Messiah was red with the blood of the slain. By degrees the inhabitants of the country were driven into Jerusalem and the city was besieged. It is said that the siege was the most fearful the world has ever known. Without was a relentless enemy, within were fierce and bitter factions contending one against another. Anarchy and massacre prevailed. The high priest was assassinated. 'The Holy City became the antechamber of hell.' More than a million people died within the city walls, whilst almost as many were captured and were either sold as slaves or sent to

the amphitheatres. Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, the temple was burned, and the very site of the city was ploughed up.

Is it conceivable that if an event so appalling, so full of anguish to Jewish patriotism, so widespread in its effects, had taken place, no trace of it would be found in a letter written subsequently to Hebrew Christians whose love for their country became not less but greater when they had found the Messiah? This one consideration compels us to date the letter before the fall of Jerusalem, and even before the breaking out of the war in A.D. 66.

A second consideration is that the letter assumes that the first generation of Christians has passed away. To arrive at the probable date of the letter we must leave enough time for a new generation of Christians to have come into being, say thirty years. This brings us to the very time we want; putting the date as near as possible to the outbreak of the war in Palestine, yet before the actual rebellion, we may reasonably suppose that the letter was written between A.D. 63 and 65. The latter year is the more likely if the fire of Rome and the consequent persecution of Christians took place in A.D. 64.

#### MESSAGE

To men confronted with such a variety of perils, what comfort and counsel shall the writer offer? Perils indeed there were in plenty, perils from fear

of torture and death, perils from the very ardour of their nationalism in the hour of national danger, perils from disappointment at the rejection of the Messiah by the nation as the nation, perils from their lack of progress in Christian knowledge, perils from fantastic teachings, perils from internal dissensions and faction, and, above all, the peril of apostasy, the casting away of their confidence and the great recompense of reward (x. 35), the shrinking back unto perdition, that which in their case could only be described as 'falling away from the living God' (iii. 12). How shall he strengthen their resolution, how shall he avert this most terrible of all disasters, the shipwreck of their faith? Plainly mere exhortation and good advice will not do. Warning, denunciation, even threatening will not do; not at any rate by themselves. He must recall them to the truth, and truth in its most dogmatic form. But to teach dogmatic Truth, always means to take men to the Person of JESUS CHRIST, living and reigning in the eternal Now. So he writes to them. It is a letter indeed that he writes, but far more than a letter, for he has written a good deal before there is a single personal word. It is a theological treatise, and upon the stupendous truths of this theological treatise, he bases his encouragement and warning.

Many are the headings under which the vital message of this Epistle may be summed up. We

might call it the Epistle of the World to come, or the World of Reality in contrast with the World of Shadow, of the Eternal in contrast with the Temporal. It might be described as the Epistle of the Ascension or of the High Priesthood of CHRIST. Studied from another point of view it is the Epistle of CHRIST the Fulfiller, or of the Old and Imperfect fulfilled in the New and Perfect. Perhaps it might even be called the Epistle of the Mystic Life of CHRIST represented externally in history. Again, it is the Epistle of Holy Fear or of the Threatenings of Love, and yet it may rightly be regarded as the Epistle of Perseverance or the Epistle of Hope.

*The Epistle of the Real World.*—It would be difficult to conceive of an outward life more insecure than that which the first generations of Hebrew Christians were called upon to live. This was true of Gentile as well as Jew, but it was especially true of Hebrew Christians. The apparent stability of the Roman Empire with its ordered system and its developed organization, which seemed to promise security to all its inhabitants, did not affect those who were regarded more or less as outlaws. Did they make their home in Rome? A decree of the Emperor might drive them out to-morrow (Acts xviii. 2). Did they possess land and property? A false charge brought against them, and they might have to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods.

Did they live in Jerusalem or Palestine? A fanatical high priest, in a vacancy of the governorship, might determine to extirpate the national renegades, and they were 'scattered abroad.' Did they live in Alexandria or Corinth? Earthquake or plague might serve as an excuse to set loose upon them the more degraded elements of the populace. 'Lewd fellows of the baser sort' were always to be had for work of that kind. Jew or Christian Jew, it made little difference. How should the pagan 'street corner man' distinguish between Jewish sects? Did the Jews riot in Jerusalem? The mob took vengeance on those who lived in Philippi. It mattered not in what part of the world they lived, their outward circumstances combined to assure them that here they had not 'an abiding city' (xiii. 14). All this could be no surprise to Christians. They knew that their earthly lot was to be as insecure as the caprice or cruelty or fanaticism of men could make it. They knew that when they were persecuted in one city they would have to flee to another (St. Matt. x. 23); that the need of haste might be such that far from being able to carry off their household furniture they would not even be able to take a cloak to keep them dry from the rain or to protect them from the cold (St. Matt. xxiv. 17-18). All this they knew, for the Master had warned them beforehand.

Such a time is now impending for those to whom

this letter is written. There will be new hardships to bear, more losses to endure, fresh anguish to suffer, death again to face. They feel, they cannot help feeling, that they and those before them (xiii. 7) the issue of whose life they have seen, have suffered enough and more than enough. Their hands begin to hang down, their knees are palsied (xii. 12).

So their absent friend and teacher points them to the Real World which both is to come for them (xiii. 14) and already is their own (xi. 10). It is the city that hath the foundations, which they seek, and yet they have (xi. 16). It is the better country, that is a heavenly, which they desire, and yet already they are come unto Mount Zion (xii. 22). Already they live in its light, they feed on its food (vi. 4-5), they witness its powers, they enter into its holy places (x. 19; iv. 16) they approach its throne of grace, they worship at its altar. The King of that Real World is their High Priest, and already He is their very own (iv. 14). The present witnesses of their struggles are faith's heroes of the past (xii. 1), their companions are the spirits of just men made perfect (xii. 22-3), their associates and fellow-workers are the holy angels, their city is that of the living God.

The difference of readings in ix. 11 exactly expresses the paradox which runs through the Epistle. It is 'the world to come' and yet it is come. In

the text we read 'CHRIST having come a High Priest of the good things to come;' in the margin we are told 'Some ancient authorities read *the good things that are come.*' Westcott and Hort adopt this reading in their text. The writer is teaching that the Real World, though it is already theirs, is not openly manifested. It is there, but it is hidden beneath the copies and shadows of the world of sense perception. But for them copies and shadows are no more; they have the very image; the 'good things' are sacramentally veiled indeed; they are not openly manifested as yet; the open manifestation waits for the Great Day.

But the teaching of the *Real World* in its contrast with the world of shadow is worked out in a special way. The splendour of the temple worship was the glory of the Hebrews. It mattered not whether their earthly abode were Rome or Judæa, Crete or Arabia (Acts ii), they all could claim a share in that worship, in the consolation of the Day of Atonement, in the happiness of the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles. Christian Hebrews continued to frequent the Temple. Now the day was at hand, when even if the menace to the continuation of Levitical worship were removed those who bore the name of CHRIST would have to 'go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach' (xiii. 13). The hour had come for the final separation; the true Israel must come

out and be separate. They must become outcaste for Him who had become outcaste for them. But the wrench could not but be a painful and a bitter one. It is almost at the end of the letter that he calls upon them to make the final irrevocable step. How has he prepared them first? He has taught them that there is no loss. The ritual they have loved, the worship they have offered, the sacred food they have eaten were not real; they were only copies or shadows of the real. The good things they had enjoyed had no substance; they were only copies or shadows of good things (x. 1). 'The law' had 'a shadow of the good things to come,' but the good things themselves the law could not give. They were not false or delusive; they were true, just as a man's shadow is true as far as it goes; but the shadow of a man is not the man, it only points to the real; it testifies to the truth that the man is.

All the transactions of the tabernacle were the shadows of heavenly things; they represented imperfectly but truly the heavenly worship. They were 'according to the pattern shewed' (viii. 5). No man, indeed, however exalted, had power fully to apprehend the heavenly things, the ideal which is the only real; but the seer was given power to apprehend enough of the heavenly relationships to make a true copy, and represent in shadow the glory that had been revealed.



But now God had given them what was immeasurably better. He had given them the things themselves. 'We have an altar' (xiii. 10). The real sacrifice was theirs to present, 'whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.' But the true Israel had the right to eat, and the Food of which they partook was real. They were not even kept outside the Holy Place; they could have 'boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus' (x. 19). Who would regret the shadows when they had the Real? The full manifestation was yet 'to come'. The Real was veiled, even as the Deity was veiled by the manhood in the High Priest, who is the Image of the Invisible God (Col. i. 15), but it was there.

This then was to be their consolation and their strength. True, they lived in a world insecure, with no settled home, no permanent city; let them remember that already they were inhabitants of the world to come, citizens of the 'City that had the foundations.' True, they had no further part in the temple worship, in the divinely revealed system of sacrifice and offering; let them remember that that system was but a shadowy copy of the heavenly worship, and to the actuality of that heavenly worship they even now had access.

It has already been pointed out (see page 6) that the writer of the Epistle seems to have been familiar with the Alexandrian school of religious philosophy, and there are many verbal affinities with Philo, the

greatest of the Hellenist philosophers, whose life extended over the earthly life of our Lord. Philo was an earnest student of Greek philosophy in general, and of Plato in particular. The main purpose of his writings was so to interpret the Law of Moses as to show that all the profoundest thoughts and truths of Greek philosophy were to be found implicitly in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is not surprising then that he should have seized upon Plato's doctrine of 'Ideas' and found it implicitly contained in the directions given to Moses as to the building of the Tabernacle. To Philo as to Plato there were ideal patterns of all things; he taught that God's thoughts were the real existences, and that these existences were types of things created in the sensible world of space and time. It has been said by a Christian writer that the germs even of most Christian ideas are to be found in Plato. In his teaching that there was a pattern of the perfect state laid up in heaven, which ought to be made the rule of men's lives on earth, we find the germ of the teaching of the 'World to come' in this Epistle, and of that heavenly order which is shadowed in the Levitical worship and actually given to us 'imaged' or sacramentally veiled in the Christian dispensation.

In India the Vedanta system of philosophy has made men familiar with the thought of different kinds of existence. The first kind is called 'true', and this existence can only be exclusively predicated

of God. The second kind of existence has the name of 'practical'. By this is meant that the things in this class do not veritably exist, but the ignorant mistake them for existent, and use them to carry on their practical life. Both the things themselves and the use made of them are imagined by ignorance. The third kind of existence is called 'apparent'. It resembles the 'practical' in that it is false, but by mistake seems to be real. It differs from the 'practical' mainly in this respect that there is a kind of added ignorance, an ignorance within ignorance, which causes the mistake. For example, a man dreams he is thirsty and that he drinks water and has his thirst quenched. Both the thirst and the water are imaginary; and they may be compared with the things of 'practical' existence. But should a man see a rope and think it a snake, there we have a case of apparent existence, of ignorance within ignorance. The reason, of course, for these distinctions is the doctrine of an absolute monism. God only exists, and all else is falsity imagined by ignorance. It is not merely the sound doctrine of the transitoriness of all earthly things. To the Vedantist they are not merely transitory, they are false. The doctrine of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* also sets forth three modes of existence, but all are from God, and nothing false or delusive can come from Him. There is the heavenly order, the order of heavenly relations and transactions; for

this order God creates men, and trains them by degrees. First he puts them in a stage where all amongst which they move may be compared with the shadows or copies of the heavenly; they are true copies, not false; but only copies. Next He puts them in the heavenly order, but He veils it from them; they enjoy it in image or sacrament. Finally the veil is to be removed, the real and the eternal are to become manifest. All is to be 'face to face.'

*The Epistle of the Ascension and of the high Priesthood of Christ.*—In no other letter of the New Testament is the doctrine of the Ascension expounded with such fullness as in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. It is the only writing included in the Canon in which CHRIST is called the High Priest, and His High Priestly Ministry explained. In the *Revelation*, indeed, He is shown to us clothed in priestly garments, wearing the golden girdle as priests wore it when engaged in sacrificial ministries (Rev. i. 13). There also He is represented as the eternal sacrifice, 'A Lamb standing as though it had been slain' (Rev. v. 6). There also we read of the heavenly altar (Rev. ix. 13) and of the ritual of heavenly worship (Rev. viii. 3-5). But it is only in the *Hebrews* that He is actually called the High Priest.

The author of the Epistle teaches that the supreme purpose of the Incarnation, and of the Passion, was

to provide men with a High Priest and a Sacrifice ; the purpose of the Ascension was that the High Priest thus given might exercise His Ministry and carry the Blood of the Sacrifice into Heaven itself, and thus appear before the Face of God for us. (ix. 24).

Even before the Incarnation in time, there was a bond of union between the eternal Son and human beings. He and they were 'of One' (ii. 11). But that bond of union by itself did not give men the kind of High Priest they needed. The bond must be even closer ; He must take their very flesh and blood. Only by the Incarnation can the union be complete and He become capable of being perfected or consecrated as their High Priest. Men as men share a nature which may be assaulted through its mortality and weakness (ii. 14). Christ voluntarily took to Himself this nature of 'flesh and blood,' and laid Himself open to these assaults, that there might be no human experience, excluding sin, which He did not taste—death, suffering, (ii. 18 ; iv. 15) and above all that particular kind of suffering which comes through the inducements to reject what is known to be the will of God (ii. 17). All this experience perfected Him or consecrated Him as the High Priest of mankind. To become incarnate is to submit to conditions of time, and this implies a process. He could not perfectly exercise His High Priestly Ministry until He had undergone stage by stage all human

experience, but having acquired this experience as His abiding possession He could fulfill the purpose for which He was eternally destined, for which He became incarnate, was tempted, suffered and died.

The Epistle regards His earthly life as the indispensable preparation for His heavenly ministry (ii. 10 ; v. 9 ; vii. 28). Those few years of earthly life draw their eternal significance from the fact that they 'perfected' Him to fulfill His priesthood. The experience of those years has not passed ; it has become His own. Suffering under conditions of time passes, but to have suffered never passes. Temptation passes, but to have been tempted never passes. Death is swallowed up in life, but to have died remains. All this is now in our High Priest, and it is because of this that He can be our High Priest. In His earthly life He fulfilled no priestly ministry. It is carefully remarked that He was of a tribe which gave no attendance at the altar ; that if He was still on earth He would not be a priest at all (viii. 4 ; vii. 13 ; 14). That ministry began when 'with the blood of the eternal covenant (xiii. 20)' He passed into the heavens. (iv. 14) The 'it is finished' of Calvary proclaimed that all had been fulfilled which 'perfected' Him as Priest and Victim, and that He could now appear in the Holy of Holies to minister at that Altar which is 'before the Throne' (Rev. viii. 3) and 'before God' (Rev. ix. 13). It has indeed been

suggested that His priestly ministry began on the Cross: that the Cross was the beginning of the Glorification completed in the Ascension. But in Levitical worship the death of the victim was not the offering of the sacrifice. It was only preparatory. If we seek for the analogy with the different parts of a Jewish sin offering, the surrender of Himself to the death of the Cross was the fulfilment of that act by which the sinner brought a victim as an atonement for his sin. The poor beast was indeed no willing conscious victim, whilst CHRIST not only gave Himself to die, but so identified Himself with sinful men that His surrender of Himself was in their name. Those who actually slew Him were the representatives of the human race, though they knew not what they did. The slaying of the animal was not as a general rule the work of the priest. One marked contrast between Levitical sacrifices and those sacrifices which were offered almost universally throughout the whole world outside Judaism, was that in the Levitical ritual the priest did not kill the victim; it was no part of his priestly work; whilst in other ancient religious institutions of which sacrifice was the centre that which made a priest to be a priest was his power to deal the first blow at the victim; he and no one else must kill. The very act of killing was of the essence of the sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> In Israel this

<sup>1</sup> Jevons' Introduction to History of Religion, Chap. xx., but this is not so in Hinduism, in which the priest never kills the victim.

was not so; the essence of the sacrifice was the presentation of the life to God. Some confusion of thought has been caused by treating the words 'kill' and 'sacrifice' as though they were synonymous. To the Hebrew a priest who sacrificed was not necessarily a priest who killed; the place of killing was not the place of sacrifice, nor was the act of dying strictly the sacrificial act. If the priest were offering for his own transgression or as one of a sinful people, as on the Day of Atonement, he killed the victim himself, but in the daily and other sacrifices the priest did not kill, for the death of the victim was only preparatory to the offering of the sacrifice. In no sense could the surrender of Himself to death upon the Cross be described as a priestly action. He went to Calvary as Victim not as Priest. For this, says the writer of the Epistle in one of his startling turns of thought, He was 'crowned with glory and honour' (ii. 9). The pre-eminent greatness and dignity of the Victim was enhanced in every way. Three times His Glory was attested from heaven before He passed to Calvary. Then came the Resurrection and the Ascension. The Great Shepherd was brought again from the dead; but He came not merely to vindicate the justice and majesty of God. The Cross and death are not to be forgotten in the glory of the Resurrection; He came as one who 'became dead' (Rev. I. 18). He came not empty handed, but 'with the blood



of the eternal covenant' (xiii. 20). He has passed through the heavens, even as the Levitical high priest passed through the veil (iv. 14). Now He ministers in the exaltation of the heavenly Holy of Holies; He has 'somewhat to offer' (viii. 3); He makes 'propitiation for the sins of the people' (ii. 17); 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them' (vii. 25). Heaven not Calvary is the only true place of sacrifice, for there 'for ever' the sacrificing Priest presents His Life for men. In Leviticus ix it seems as if an expiatory or propitiatory value were attached to the actual fact of the slaying as well to the presentation or sprinkling of the blood, but the writer of the *Hebrews* fixes all the attention of his readers not on the place of the killing but on the place of the sprinkling. St. Paul's teaching lays more stress on the death of CHRIST as reconciling men to God, but implicitly his words invariably contain the doctrine of the *Hebrews*. When he tells us that 'CHRIST died for us' he adds at once that we are 'justified by His blood'<sup>1</sup> (Rom. v. 8-9). When he teaches that Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our trespasses he adds that He was raised for our justification. By His death He provided the sacrifice for sins; by His Resurrection with the necessary complement of the Ascension, He presents that sacrifice for the justification of each believing penitent (Rom. iv.

<sup>1</sup> 'Blood' in Holy Scripture always means life, never death.

25). Still more emphatically in Rom. viii. 34 does He dwell on the work of CHRIST in heaven. 'It is CHRIST Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' He does not call Him priest, but he describes the work of His priesthood. The greatest stress is laid in the *Hebrews* upon the abiding character of this priesthood. It is not an office which He assumed and resigns. He is the High Priest 'for ever' (vi. 19-20). It is because 'He abideth for ever' that He 'hath His priesthood unchangeable' vii. 24). All through the seventh chapter the writer makes it clear that the true priest 'abideth a priest continually' (vii. 3). The conception of a High Priest within the Veil, that is at the very place where sacrifice was presented, who did not minister, would have been unintelligible to the Hebrews. For what purpose did He pass through the Veil 'with the blood' but to offer it? 'He ever liveth,' but He ever liveth 'to make intercession' (vii. 25). Not numerous sacrifices does He offer, one succeeding another because none were finally effective, (ix. 25) nor does He offer Himself 'often', alternating intervals of sacrifice with intervals of rest, but one sacrifice once for all and for ever, the sacrifice which in the eternal sphere continually abides.

The Author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* does not shrink from apparent contradictions; there are

classes of texts which seem superficially to contradict one another.<sup>1</sup> He is not, for instance, afraid of speaking of 'the world to come' and yet telling his fellow Christians that they have already come to it. The Son is glorified, ascended 'on the Right Hand of the Majesty on High' (i. 3) and yet he does not shrink from warning them that He may be crucified afresh. It is 'solid food for full grown men' (v. 14) that he gives, and he warns them that he has many things to say which are 'hard of interpretation'. It cannot be doubted that he represents CHRIST as High Priest ministering in the 'Holy of Holies' (i. 3) of the heavenly sanctuary, but it is equally certain that He also represents Him as seated and at rest (viii. 1). The Priest standing at the heavenly altar is also the King seated on the heavenly throne (x. 12). As Priest He represents man to God, but as King He represents God to man (xii. 2). We have the two conceptions united even in the same passages. 'We have such a high priest'; (viii. 1) for the force of 'such' we have to read Chapter vii. He is 'such a High Priest' as abides unchangeable and for ever. The verse goes on 'Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens,' that is, He is enthroned as King. But enthroned as King as He is, He discharges His liturgical ministry; the writer says at once 'a minister of the sanctuary and

<sup>1</sup> See Milligan Baird Lecture, 1891, p. 74

of the true tabernacle.' This is the only place in the New Testament where CHRIST is described as 'a liturgical minister.' A liturgical minister in the sanctuary who does not minister is an impossible conception, but yet He is King enthroned. The truth is that in the description of heavenly transactions and realities by earthly images verbal consistency is impossible. To represent a Royal Priest reigning and ministering in the transcendent sphere, in which limitations of time and space do not exist, is beyond the capacity of human language or earthly symbol. Logical consistency of words would hinder our perception of the truth. The King reigns, the Priest ministers; He sits on the throne, He stands at the altar. In the verbal contradiction there is the profoundest truth. In Chapter x. the two actions are represented as simultaneous (x. 12) He offered; He sat down. The verbs are in the same tense. In the heavenly sphere there is no 'before' or 'after'; there is the eternal 'now'. With the exquisite skill of a master of the Greek language the writer has so placed the words translated 'for ever' that they can be connected equally well either with the 'offering' or 'with the session'. It is 'offering one sacrifice for ever He sat.' There is no intermission in the work of the Priest and no intermission in the work of the King.

In all our study of Holy Scripture it is well to remember that pictures or symbols can rarely if ever

be combined into a harmonious whole. Each symbol or picture sets forth one religious idea, but if several such symbols be combined even in thought, each of which is in itself true, the result may be grotesque and even monstrous. For instance, any combined representation to the mind of the symbols by which Christ is described in Revelation (i. 13-16) will produce a figure on which reverence will not care to dwell, but each separate symbol is full of dignity, and proclaims a truth of our Lord's nature and work. In the study of the *Hebrews* and its use of local symbols and Levitical types it is necessary to bear this in mind. We cannot avoid using the language and signs of time and space, but we must never forget how inadequate they are to represent the transcendent.

*The Epistle of Christ the Fulfiller.*—There is a deep strain of conservatism in human nature. Men have an innate tendency to believe that 'the old is better.' They cannot see the old order pass without a sense of pain and loss. To the bitterness of this pain and the heaviness of this loss among the Hebrew Christians the *Epistle to the Hebrews* bears vivid witness. Nor was it merely the pain which is the inevitable accompaniment of any age of transition. It was much more than that. The unquestioned traditional interpretation of their Scriptures had led them to expect a different kind of Messiah; they had to endure the pain of

abandoning their old ideas. The familiar worship and stately ritual of the temple had been a consolation and a delight to them; they had to endure the pain of surrendering all part in that worship. Nationalism was in their very blood; they were the heirs of the patriarchs; the love of Jerusalem was their life; they had now the pain of being accounted false to the call of patriotism and disloyal to the land they loved.

It may be that God has made men tenacious of the old order in order that there may be no sudden revolution in which the good may be lost along with that which is worthless; that all change may be by way of growth in which the incomplete is taken up into the complete, and all that is permanent and true in the old may be fulfilled and consummated in the new. Few people were more tenacious of the old than the Hebrews; and in becoming Christians they did not lose their natural bent. Our Lord had indeed prepared men for the truth that the old when it had served its purpose must pass, and warned them that the attempt to combine the old with the new or to confine the new spirit in their old forms must be not only futile but also ruinous to both.<sup>1</sup> But He had also told them that He came not to destroy but to fulfill.<sup>2</sup> It is with this thought that the *Epistle to the Hebrews* opens. To some it seems

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark ii 21-2.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 17.

its characteristic teaching.<sup>1</sup> With striking abruptness the writer begins by speaking of God's way of revelation in the past. It has been marked by variety. Many fragments of truth have been given to men, (i. 1) and there have been many methods of giving those fragments. Many teachers have given the fragments and used the methods (i. 2). Fragments imply a whole; imperfect ways point to the One Perfect Way; many teachers of a little are the pledge of the One Teacher of the whole. Now all is fulfilled in a Son. Variety is gathered up into unity. 'Divers portions' are built into the one temple of Truth. 'Divers manners' yield to the one manner of the Incarnation. Mainly in four respects CHRIST is shown as Fulfiller.

(1) *He took human nature to consummate in Himself as Man the destiny for which God had created men* (ii. 9). That destiny was loftier even than that of angels. Humanity was to have dominion not only over the world that is but also over 'the world to come' (ii. 5), not only over the realm of sense perception but even over that real world peopled by angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Already that magnificent destiny is fulfilled in CHRIST, who has thus become 'the Author' (ii. 10) of men's salvation, and 'brings many sons to glory.' 'Salvation' is the realization of all the potentialities

<sup>1</sup> Westcott *Christus Consummator*, p. 12.

comprised in divine sonship, and 'Glory' is its open manifestation. Instead of being astonished at having to suffer, it is exactly what sons in a fallen world should expect. If the 'Author' or 'Captain' became perfect through sufferings, how shall His members or followers attain their destiny in any other way? The writer does not actually speak of the Fall as responsible for this, but it is assumed (ii. 8). 'Death' and 'bondage' are not part of God's ideal counsel, they are due to the devil. But being here man must be delivered from them if his destiny is to be attained. CHRIST turns Satan's weapons against Satan, and 'through death' conquers death (ii. 14).

(2) *Christ fulfilled and consummated imperfect priesthoods and imperfect sacrifices.* The fact that the institution of priesthood has been degraded and made the instrument of superstition and tyranny must not be allowed to disguise the truth that it answers to an universal need of human nature. Men would not have made priests for themselves and relied upon them to stand between them and the object of their worship unless they had been profoundly conscious that of themselves they were unable to approach the Deity. It is doubtful whether there is any form of religion in which the institution of priesthood is not found in some form as a vital part of the system. Brahmanism without its priests ceases to be Brahmanism. When new



peoples or tribes are taken over into Hinduism the indispensable condition of such conversion is the acceptance of the Brahman priest as the divine representative in all the important transactions of family life. Even if we go back to the primitive nature worship known as the Vedic religion, when Sky, Sun, Moon, Rain, Wind, Fire were worshipped as gods, we find that men of special powers were regarded as necessary for the offering of sacrifice and prayer. The hymns which form the *Rigveda* bear witness not only to the existence of the priesthood but also to its threefold order, whilst the three Vedas, the *Rigveda*, *Samaveda*, and the *Yajurveda* were really manuals for each order of priests respectively. The need of a sacrifice corresponds with the need of a priest, and sacrificial worship has been widespread from remote times. A priest does not merely present petitions, he offers sacrifices and gifts. Probably the earliest form of sacrifice among Aryan peoples was the offering of food and drink, but animal sacrifices are also of very great antiquity. Gradually the ritual of the altar became highly intricate, and the lay people became more and more dependent on the priesthood if their offerings were to be properly performed. In the period when Elijah was carrying on his mortal combat with the the priests of Baal, the Brahmans of India were elaborating their sacrificial-ceremonial and drawing up minute rules, on the accurate observance of every

detail of which depended the effectiveness of the sacrifice. The continuance of blood sacrifices in India to this day, offered by a special priesthood, testifies to the reality and persistence of the human instinct which can be satisfied in no other way. The *Satapatha-Brahmana* gives us evidence that even human sacrifice<sup>1</sup> was offered in primitive times until there grew up a horror of it in men's minds and an animal was offered as a substitute for a man. We might have expected that in Islam sacrifice would find no place, but even here the human instinct will have its satisfaction. In every part of the Mussulman world in the Great Festival called the '*Idu'l Azha*' sacrifices are offered, and also on the birth of a child at the ceremony called *Aqiqah*. Confucianism is generally regarded as entirely a social or moral system, but even Confucianism teaches that 'Sacrifice is the greatest of all things,' and that 'the first and greatest teaching is to be found in sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup> It is true that outside Judaism there is little thought of the connexion of sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> Dr. K. M. Banerjee doubts whether human sacrifice was ever offered in India in the Vedic period, or that the institution of human sacrifice ever existed among Indo-Arians. 'It was almost unexceptionally in the worship of *Sakti*, as wife of Siva, in her blackest form, that such murderous oblations have ever been heard of'—*Arian Witness*. p. 205. Max Müller and Weber on the contrary have no doubt that human sacrifices are referred to in the *Satapatha-Brahmana*.

<sup>2</sup> Li Ki, xxii. 12.

with sin. In Islam strictly there is none; sacrifices are commemorative or eucharistic; there is no idea that they are of any avail for the expiation of sin. Popularly also, no doubt, they are used as a basis of intercession when some particular boon is desired from God; in extreme illness, for instance, a sacrifice may be offered to procure recovery. Sin in Islam is something which God forgives by the arbitrary exercise of His supreme will, and there is no need of any atoning sacrifice. And yet even among Muhammadans we have evidence that the need of a sacrifice for sin is felt, for the Shiahs celebrate the death of Husain as of one who died for the sins of mankind. This is popularly set forth in the ceremonies of the Mohurrum.<sup>1</sup> Hinduism does not emphasize the relation of sin to sacrifice, but it recognizes it. In the eleventh book of the *Institutes of Manu* Hindus are taught that 'the performance of the great sacrifice according to one's ability quickly destroys all guilt, even that caused by mortal sins.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here, for instance, is an extract from the Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain. The angel Gabriel says to Mahomed 'God hath sent thee a message, saying, none has suffered the pain and afflictions which Husain has undergone. None has like him been obedient in my service. As he has taken no steps save in sincerity in all that he has done, thou must put the Key of Paradise in his hand. The privilege of making intercession for sinners is exclusively his. Husain is by my peculiar grace, the mediator for all.'

<sup>2</sup> Manu xi. 246.

But though the Hindu *sastras* deal at enormous length with the subject of priesthood and sacrifice, there is comparatively little to suggest that the sacrificial system is the means by which deities are approached for remission of sins. Sacrifice is regarded almost entirely as a mysterious operation which duly performed with exact fidelity to the prescribed ritual will compel the gods to grant the appropriate boon. The boon may happen to be forgiveness of sin, but it is far from being the characteristic fruit of sacrifice. There is, however, one formula of sacrifice in which the sacrificer says after the slaughter and dissection of the victim as he offers each portion to the fire—Thou art the annulment of the sins committed by the gods. Thou art the annulment of sins committed by the fathers. Thou art the annulment of sins committed by men. Thou art the annulment of sins committed by ourselves. Whatever sins we have committed by day or by night thou art the annulment thereof. Whatever sins we have committed sleeping or awake, thou art the annulment thereof. Whatever sins we have committed, knowing or unknowing, thou art the annulment thereof. Thou art the annulment of sin—of sin.<sup>1</sup>

It is not until we pass to Judaism and the Levitical sacrificial system that we find the most tremen-

<sup>1</sup> Tandyā Maha Brahmana 55.

dous emphasis laid upon the sin offering. It does not indeed come first in the order of historical development, for before the Law it is not heard of. The burnt offering, the sacrifice of self-dedication, the offering of worship, comes first ; and this was always accompanied by the meat offering, which consisted of fruits of the earth. Then came the peace offering in which animal life was offered, but its special characteristic was the communion meal upon the sacrifice. Finally came the sin offering, of which the one indispensable mark was the effusion or sprinkling or presentation of the blood. It is the blood that atones (Lev. xvii. 11). But in the practical application of the Levitical system of sacrifice the order of historical development gives way to the order of spiritual succession. Whenever the sacrifices were offered together, the sin offering came first, then the burnt offering, and finally the peace offering (Leviticus ix. 22). The obvious significance of the order is that it is only the forgiven sinner cleansed in the sin offering who can wholly dedicate himself to God in the burnt offering and enjoy communion with Him in the sacramental meal in the peace offering. In the *Epistle to the Hebrews* we read little of any sacrifice except the sin offering. CHRIST is represented throughout as the one High Priest presenting the Blood which alone can take away sins, as the Fulfiller of the typical priesthood and the typical

sacrifice. Eucharistic sacrifices are mentioned once and then only in connexion with sin offerings (v. 1): the true peace offering with the communion meal which fulfilled the typical peace offering is mentioned only in the last chapter (xiii. 10-15), but the sin offering forms the main object of the exposition. CHRIST as High Priest made purification of sins (i. 3). The people's supreme need was of a merciful and faithful high priest to make propitiation for sins (ii. 17). A high priest is appointed first and foremost to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (v. 1). The perfect High Priest once for all offered up Himself (vii. 27) for the sins of the people. With blood of goats and bulls the typical high priest went into the holy place, through His own Blood CHRIST entered in once for all into the true holy place (ix. 12). This is the main theme of Chapters ix. and x, the one Priest (vii. 16-24) with a life of its very essential nature indissoluble, presenting a sacrifice of its very nature absolutely effectual (vii. 25-28). What room is there left for other priests and other sacrifices when the One Priest and the One Sacrifice are revealed (x. 8-12) and abide for ever? How can any one be dissatisfied at the loss of priests that die when he has the Priest that ever lives, or bewail the loss of sacrifices with blood that decays when they can shelter under a sacrifice with an endless life? All is fulfilled in Him who is not only Priest with an

' unchangeable priesthood ' (vii. 24) but also sacrifice with ' the blood of the eternal covenant (xiii. 20).'<sup>1</sup>

It is undoubtedly disappointing to find that it seems as if the sound instinct in Hinduism which requires priest and sacrifice for its satisfaction, seldom leads men to seek complete satisfaction in the One Priest and the One Sacrifice. They remain content with the imperfect and partial, and even use it as a pretext for rejecting that consummation of all priesthood and sacrifice which is in CHRIST the Fulfiller. Yet it is to be remembered that the effect of Judaism was very similar, marvellously ordained as it was to prepare men's minds for 'such a High Priest' as 'became' them. The

<sup>1</sup> Dr. K. M. Banerjee finds in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, an indication of the doctrine of ' the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' 'To them (the Gods) the Lord of creatures gave Himself. He became their sacrifice. Sacrifice is good for the gods. He, having given Himself to them, made a reflection of Himself which is sacrifice. Therefore they say, the Lord of creatures is a sacrifice, for He made it a reflection of Himself. By means of this sacrifice He redeemed Himself from them.' Again in the *Tandya Maha Brahmana* we find 'The Lord of creatures offered himself a sacrifice for the gods.' On this Dr. Bannerjee comments as follows: 'This idea of the "Lord of creatures" offering himself a sacrifice for the benefit of the Devas, who were then but mortals, is also found, but in a more complicated form in the celebrated *Purusha Sukta*. It would not be easy to account for the genesis of such an idea except in the assumption of some primitive tradition of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who was over all, God blessed for ever.'

vast majority of the Hebrews did not use their sacrificial system as the means by which they advanced to the knowledge of the consummating Priest, but even turned it into a barrier by which they shut themselves out from accepting Him. They rested satisfied with priests 'having infirmity' and with 'the blood of bulls and goats' which could not 'take away sins,' whilst some even of those who had once welcomed the consummation were tempted to return to the shadow, and for the sake of union with the majority of their countrymen trust themselves again to a system which was 'nigh unto vanishing away.' Had it not been so, the *Epistle to the Hebrews* would probably never have been written.

(3) *Christ fulfilled the idea of Fellowship in the General Assembly and Church of the First-born.* Man has an instinctive need of fellowship which expresses itself in many forms—the nation, the tribe, the caste, the religious society, and so on. But if there be nothing higher than the natural instinct, the desire for fellowship with some is invariably accompanied by the desire for the exclusion of others. Social as man is by constitution his social instinct will only take him to a certain point. The time quickly comes when he erects barriers and locks doors. The desire for fellowship is a divinely planted instinct witnessing to his creation in the image of God ; the desire to exclude,



which is equivalent to the desire for privilege, witnesses to the fall of man and the corruption of his nature. Most effectively does the instinct for fellowship realize itself when the union is based upon a common relationship to God; most disastrously does it nullify itself when religion is used as a means of privileged separation. A religion which does not proclaim itself catholic condemns itself not only as imperfect but as untrue. He alone is a Hindu who is born a Hindu, he alone is a Parsee who is born a Parsee; if these statements be accurate, then so far as Hinduism or Parseeism be religions, so far are they manifestly imperfect. The extremest imaginable expression of the desire for fellowship combined with the desire for exclusion of others is to be found in the Hindu system of caste; whilst the most perfect imaginable form of a fellowship based on relation to God, inviting all and rejecting none, is to be found in the Body of CHRIST which is the Catholic Church.

Judaism with all its narrowness and hardness was still a foreshadowing of the idea of Catholicity. How rigidly exclusive it could be is illustrated by the barrier erected in the temple between the great outer court of the Gentiles and the inner court, the Court of Israel. On this 'middle wall of partition' (Eph. ii. 14) in Greek and Latin were inscribed the words: 'No alien to pass within the fence and enclosure round the temple. Whosoever shall be

taken shall be responsible to himself alone for the death which will ensue." Yet the Jewish communion not only welcomed converts but sought for them. Gibbon seems to be entirely wrong when he says that the narrow and unsocial spirit of the Jews instead of inviting had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the Law of Moses, and equally wrong when he says that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The greatest activity was shewn by Jews in all parts of the world in the winning of converts from polytheism and idolatry,<sup>1</sup> and in spite of the bitter contempt with which they were regarded their success was remarkable. Our Lord Himself testifies to the zeal even of the Pharisees in Palestine for conversions (St. Matt. xxiii. 15). From every part of the world tribute was sent to the temple at Jerusalem by those who were converts to Judaism. There were notable instances of men and women occupying distinguished positions who were openly numbered among the proselytes. 'In regard to obligations and rights, proselytes were regarded as being in all essential respects on an equality with native Israelites.'<sup>2</sup> Gentiles could become through circumcision and the observance of the law practically incorporated into the Jewish people.

<sup>1</sup> The poet Horace refers satirically to the proselytizing zeal of the Jews as a fact familiar to Roman society.

<sup>2</sup> Schürer, *Jewish People* vol. II, ii. 326.

In this way Judaism was a real foreshadowing of the idea of Catholicity.

But along with this desire to convert Gentiles and willingness to welcome those who submitted to the Law of Moses there was the narrowest and most unsocial spirit manifested in all dealings with outsiders. Love was not manifested to man as man ; the simplest acts of service, such as shewing a thirsty man the way to a well, might be refused to a Gentile. All Gentile houses were as such unclean. Merely to enter them was to be defiled. The strictest of Brahmans could hardly surpass the orthodox Jew in his abhorrence of anything in the way of cooking utensils or food which had been touched or handled by the outsider. Milk which had been milked by a heathen could not be drunk unless the cow was milked in the presence of the Jew, whilst the Jewish traveller had to live on raw vegetables or fruit if he was to preserve himself undefiled. In these and other ways they barricaded themselves off from the rest of the world. Gladly would they open the gates to the convert, and make him one of themselves ; Hindu caste has no analogy here. But hapless was the case of those who were excommunicated and driven outside the barrier. Thus the Jew had been trained not only to live in a religious society but to be dependent upon it. It was a society which if it was intensely narrow was also widely extensive. The bonds which tied him

to his communion were of every kind, religious, national, and social. By conversion to Christianity he lost none of his dependence upon the society, none of his instinctive craving for fellowship, none of his delight in the wide diffusion of his religion. His Christianity was his Judaism consummated. But herein came the agonizing trial of the Christian Hebrews, they found themselves ejected from their own people, objects of contempt and hatred more bitter even than that flung at the unbelieving Gentile. Even as late as the time of Constantine it was found necessary by special enactment to protect converts from the furious indignation of the Jews. Their own countrymen would not eat with them; their presence in a Jewish house defiled it. The time had not yet come when they could take comfort in the thought of a Catholic Church throughout the world. True, by the year A.D. 65 they knew that there were little bodies of Christian believers in many of the cities of the world, but they knew also that the bitterest enemies of these little Churches were their own fellow countrymen. The great wide fellowship in religion and life, upon which all their past had made them dependent seemed lost to them, and in its place they had merely membership of what seemed to be a sect not only numerically insignificant but also distracted by internal dissensions.

So the writer points them to the fulfilment of

their old communion in a fellowship so wide that it joins earth with heaven (xii. 22-4), in a brotherhood so glorious that it includes hosts of angels as well as spirits of just men made perfect, JESUS the Saviour as well as those whom He died to save. He shews them which is the better, the old society, or the new in which the old is consummated, by pointing back to the scene of fear and terror in which Judaism had its birth (xii. 18-21) and contrasting this scene with the peaceful security of living in an order 'glorious with spiritual realities and rich in provisions of mercy.'<sup>1</sup> Their fathers came to an outward manifestation of God's majesty and power, of His separateness from frail and sinful men; they experienced outward earthly and elemental forces amidst which they recognized their own weakness and helplessness; all that they saw and felt afflicted them with overwhelming dread; a sense even of repulsion overcame them, their one thought was to hear the voice no more, to be removed from the neighbourhood of the mountain that burned with fire, a mountain that might be touched indeed but the penalty of the touch was death. Christians, on the other hand, had the power to live in the presence of God revealed in pardoning love; they had been permitted to become the elder children, the 'first born' of the human

<sup>1</sup> Westcott

race through whom all were to be brought into the one great fellowship of God, to enjoy the companionship alike of heavenly spirits who had never been subjected to earthly trials and of the human beings who are described as 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' They needed a society in which to live dependent lives; here was the society to which CHRIST had already admitted them; 'ye are come,' already had they come to it (xii. 22). It fulfilled all that Judaism pointed to; it was the actual realization of the fellowship of which Judaism was but the partial outline. All that the Hebrew Christians seemed to have lost by exclusion from the world-wide society of Judaism had been given back to them in an eternal form instead of in a transitory shadow. And so it follows that along with the fulfilment of the idea of fellowship

(4) *Christ has also fulfilled the idea of the Covenant* by becoming the Mediator of that which is 'better' (viii. 6) because it is 'eternal' (xiii. 20). It was the glory of the Hebrew people that they were a covenant people (Ps. l. 5) ministering to Jehovah under the conditions of a covenanted service; that is, it was a service into which He Himself had called them, of which He had prescribed the conditions, to which they had promised obedience. Into this covenant they had been admitted by sacrifice (Exod. xxiv. 4-8). 'The covenant hath not been dedicated without blood'

(ix. 18). In response to their promise of obedience the blood of the sacrifice which had been sprinkled on the altar was also sprinkled upon them, signifying their acceptance by God. They were thus incorporated into the consecrated body of God's servants capable of holding communion with Him. On one other occasion only we are told that the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled upon men, when Aaron and his sons were ordained to the priesthood, and then the sprinkling of the blood was combined with washing by water. Had the Hebrew Christians then lost the blessed security of living as members of a covenant people? Had they forfeited their sacramental pledges? The writer comforts them by bidding them remember the Scripture promise of a *new* covenant (viii. 8-12). If the old had provided them with all that was requisite for the full attainment of the blessedness for which they had been created, why should God promise them a new covenant (viii. 13)? Great emphasis is laid on the thought of the newness of the covenant. Two words are used to express what in English is rendered by the one word *new*. CHRIST is the Mediator of a covenant new in kind, because it is real and not a figure of the real (ix. 15), and the covenant which He mediates is also new in time (xii. 24), young and fresh, such as never can grow old. A death indeed had 'taken place,' but it was the death of the better victim that provided a better

Sacrifice (ix. 23). The verity was theirs instead of the copy. All that was shadowed in the old was realized in the new. Under the new covenant they had a Sacrament of Incorporation which made them members of a priestly body giving to all of them right of access through the veil into the holy place; by this covenant they were not only members of the people of God but of a sacerdotal people who as priests had been sprinkled with His Blood (xiii. 12). (Cp. 1 St. Peter ii. 5-9; Rev. i. 6; v. 10). They had also a Sacrament of Sustenance, for from the one altar there went forth an unfailing supply of heavenly Food. This Food was real and could not be shared by those who were contented with shadow food. What matters the loss of shadow food when we have 'our Sacrificial Feast, our Eucharist which offers to us the virtue of CHRIST'S life and death, his Flesh and Blood, for the strengthening and cleansing of our bodies and souls?'<sup>1</sup>

*The Epistle of the Mystic Life of Christ.*<sup>2</sup> An event which is only historical recedes further into the past as years pass, and its power over new

<sup>1</sup> Westcott *Christus Consummator*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> By 'Mystic' is here meant the inner life of spiritual verity as contrasted with the outward life of historical manifestation. A historical event takes place in time and space and may be apprehended in the ordinary way of sense perception, whilst the mystic life cannot be sensibly apprehended, though it can be outwardly signified by historic events.



generations proportionally decreases with its increasing distance from the present. But a historical event which represents an eternal verity can never lose its power because that which it signifies is in the present. This is the secret of the eternal newness of the Incarnation and all that it implies. CHRIST'S life and death and resurrection are as near to men now as they were in the century in which they were historically enacted, and they will be equally near should the race of men still be existing on earth five thousand years hence. They represent verities of the unchanging love of God in eternity, and of the effect of human sin upon that love, seen historically in the great rejection and the crucifixion of CHRIST. The triumph of the historic resurrection does not do away with the Passion in the mystic life of CHRIST.

In no writing of the New Testament is this set forth with such emphasis as in the *Epistle of the Hebrews*. The writer describes the Passion as historically past but as mystically present. It is in time but it is beyond time. The sphere of the operation of God's love is the human spirit, and here God in CHRIST still puts Himself at the mercy of men. He is born in them; He may be subjected to outrage and insult; He may be crucified. God's struggle with human sin is historically signified in the outward events of Passion-tide, but the Passion mystically continues as long as human sin persists.

It is said that nothing is less real than history; what is meant is that the external event is as nothing in comparison with the inward reality of which it is the temporary manifestation. In this sense the historical Passion is the manifestation of God's continual agony over human sin, and in the description of that agony the *Epistle to the Hebrews* uses the language of the historic event. The writer does not deal with the sin of those outside the Church. It is the sin of apostasy which causes the mystic agony of God described in language drawn from history as crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh (vi. 6). It is the wilful deliberate sin against light which is described as treading under foot the Son of God (x. 29). Dread verities are enacted in the mystic life of God, but they can only be set forth symbolically in the language of historic fact. There is no shrinking from conceptions which seem mutually exclusive, for the writer trusts his readers to know how inadequate is human language to express the mysteries of the life of God. CHRIST is the victorious and triumphant King reigning over angels and men, and yet the Son of God is still trodden under foot of men. The relation of the temporal to the eternal is beyond the power of the thought of man to conceive and still less in the power of his language to express. 2

The annual solemn commemoration by the Christian Church of the Passion and Death of CHRIST

largely derives its force from the realization of the truth that the Passion is still a verity of the mystic life of God. A historic event is indeed recalled, and the memory of Christians is directed to the past, but personal penitence can only be stimulated by the sense of personal responsibility, and personal responsibility is only felt when it is realized that men in the present crucify to themselves the Son of God, and that they can best learn what is the Passion in the mystic life of God caused by sin by meditating on the Passion in CHRIST'S historic life.

*The Epistle of Fear, Hope and Perseverance.* Again and again the *Epistle to the Hebrews* dwells on the motives of holy fear. It points to the certainty of retribution ; how is it possible that one who neglects 'so great salvation' (ii. 2-3) can escape the divine justice? It lays stress on the gradualness of a fall ; men let themselves drift ; there is a subtle hardening of the heart which may finally become 'an evil heart of unbelief' (iii. 12). Even when utter ruin is avoided men may fail to rise to the fullness of opportunity (iv. 1). Fear is stirred up by the consideration of the awful truth that apostasy ranks men with the murderers of CHRIST (vi. 6) and the despisers of His sacrifice (x. 29). Such apostasy is irrevocable ; it closes the door of hope. The Church can do no more ; the deliberate apostate must be left to God into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall (x. 31). It is impossible

to renew such men again unto repentance (vi. 6). For the sin against knowledge, wilfully persisted in, 'there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins' (x. 26); there remains only 'a certain fearful expectation of judgement' (x. 27). Nowhere in the New Testament writings are the grounds of fear put before men with more solemn intensity than in the *Hebrews*. But fear is ever balanced by hope, and the hope of which the writer speaks is an exultant hope (iii. 6). It is no weak vague aspiration but one which has 'full assurance' in it (vi. 11). The man who has hope is anchored, and no current of unbelief can carry him away (vi. 18). The object of hope is the ascended CHRIST; He Himself is 'the hope set before us.' His triumph is the pledge of the triumph of His members, for He is the Forerunner to be followed within the veil by the people for whom He presents the Sacrifice of Himself (vi. 20).

Hope is the life blood of perseverance. With solemn earnestness the writer stirs up holy fear; with equal earnestness he incites to patience and perseverance. 'Firm unto the end' (iii. 6, 14) is a phrase he loves. The patience that goes on and on is the patience that inherits the promises (vi. 11). The endurance that takes joyfully (vi. 12) earthly loss is the endurance that gains heavenly treasure and wins the heavenly race (x. 36). Nor is he without confidence that those whom he thus exhorts

will persevere (xii. 1). Expedient though it be to warn, his trust in them is unshaken ; already he is 'persuaded better things' of them 'and things that accompany salvation' (vi. 9). A frank and happy confidence towards God is the temper of mind which he inculcates. He shares with St. John a special liking for the word *παρρησία*. 'Boldness' is the word chosen in the English revised version to translate it (iv. 16). By it they approach the Throne of Grace and enter even into the Holy Place (x. 19). Whatever they do, they are not to cast away this confidence but to hold it fast unto the end (iii. 6 ; x. 35). The Epistle ends with the prayer that perfection may finally be attained, that they who have run with patience (xii. 1) the race that is set before them may be made perfect in every good thing to do God's will (xiii. 21). Fear, hope and patience have their fruit in perfection.

*It has already been pointed out that the main theme of the Epistle is broken by digressions of warning and exhortation. In the summary which follows, the digressions have been put in brackets so that the course of the argument may not be interrupted.*

## SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE

The assertion of God's Self-manifestation to men (i. 1-4).

The provisional and fragmentary method in the past (i. 1).

The complete and absolutely final method in the present in a Son whose pre-eminence is unique and unrivalled (i. 2-4).

That this pre-eminence is unrivalled by the angels is demonstrated from the Old Testament, for—

- i. No individual angel is addressed as Son (i. 5).
- ii. The Son is the object of the angels' worship (i. 6).
- iii. While the angels minister, the Son occupies an eternal throne from which He dispenses justice and equity (i. 7-9).

- iv. The Son is not a creature but is He through whom creation came into existence, the Eternal who endures throughout all decay and change (i. 10-12).
- v. No angel is promised universal authority; the angels' function is service.

[A digression of warning and exhortation to perseverance (ii. 1-4)].

This universal sovereignty is promised not to angels but to man.

As yet this promised sovereignty has not been realized (ii. 5-8).

But already human nature in Jesus has been crowned with glory that He might suffer death for each and all (ii. 9).

This counsel is God-befitting, for suffering perfected the Son to be the author of salvation, and the Incarnation made Him entirely one with the 'many sons.'

Through His death, death and the devil lose their power over men (ii. 10-15).

It was not to help angels but men that He became incarnate. Men need a high priest, and His experience of suffering and temptation make Him a merciful and faithful High Priest able to succour (ii. 16-18).

The duty of meditation on Him who has been sent in human nature to be our High Priest (iii. 1).

His superiority as the Son who rules the house to

Moses who as a servant serves in the house (iii. 2-6).

[A long digression of warning based on 95th Psalm. By faithlessness and disobedience privileges may be lost. God's rest, final and perfect, has been prepared, but earnest diligence is needed to secure an entry into it. This warning is the warning of the Word of God (iii. 7).]

We have a great High Priest ministering in the heavenly sphere.

Exalted as He is He is close to us through a common experience of all except sin.

Such a High Priest draws us with confidence to the Mercy Seat (iv. 14-16).

The characteristic marks of a true High Priest and of his ministry.

- (a) His selection is due to divine initiative.
- (b) He must share human experience.
- (c) His ministry is the presentation of gifts and sin offerings.

CHRIST has ideally satisfied these requirements : for—

- (a) He was divinely appointed.
- (b) He experienced human infirmity.
- (c) He exercises a high priestly ministry (v. 5-10).

[A long digression. Not only is the subject difficult in itself but the lack of progress in the Hebrew Church makes it still more difficult for the readers.



Exhortation to renewed spiritual effort. The hopelessness of the apostasy of those who have been fully initiated into the Christian mysteries and have experienced their power. Yet their love in the past encourages him to have confidence in their faithfulness to the end. God's faithfulness is the ground of that unfailing hope which penetrates the veil (v. 11-vi. 20)].

The true and eternal High Priest is after the order of Melchizedek.

What the Old Testament relates as to Melchizedek (vii. 1-3).

The mystic significance of the facts narrated and of the silence (vii. 4-10).

The inference that the Levitical priesthood, with the law under which it ministered, was imperfect, and consequently a change was to be expected (vii. 11-12).

The utter superiority is made manifest of the High Priest divinely appointed after the order of Melchizedek, ministering under a better covenant, whose ministry being unchangeable is absolutely effectual (vii. 13-25).

A Priest, eternal, transcendent, infinitely exalted, yet good with human goodness, presenting sacrifice, but only one all-sufficient sacrifice, of His own nature Son, yet consecrated Priest by divine decree—such an one, and not sinful priests who come and go, exactly meets and satisfies human needs (vii. 26-8).

This royal High Priest discharges his priestly office in the archetypal shrine and offers sacrifice (viii. 1-14) but

If there be a High Priest discharging a sacrificial ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, what is the function of the Levitical priesthood? And, if there be a new priesthood, must there not also be a new covenant? (viii. 5-13).

CHRIST'S priestly ministry in the transcendent sanctuary is elucidated by a comparison with the ritual of the earthly tabernacle:—

Both the construction of the Mosaic tabernacle (ix. 1-5), and the ministrations of its priests (ix. 6-7), with their limitations, disclose God's purpose (ix 8-10).

Exposition of the atonement made by CHRIST; the necessity of its being by blood; the eternal benefits it has procured (ix. 11-28).

The transitoriness and inefficacy of sacrifices continually repeated compared with the offering which is once for all (x. 1-10).

The temporary priests on earth compared with the true Priest in heaven who offers sacrifice and reigns as King (x. 11-14).

The old covenant contrasted with the new with its promise of inward renewal and forgiveness. (x. 15-18).

[Here ends the exposition of the high priesthood of CHRIST and of His heavenly ministry. Then

follows the practical application of this lofty doctrine].

A summons to respond to privilege (x. 19-25).

A warning of the terrible penalty of apostasy (x. 26-31).

Encouragement to persevere based on the memory of response to grace in the past (x. 32-9).

The necessity of faith; its triumphs won by their spiritual ancestors (xi) who are still their spiritual associates from whom the lessons and methods of the divine discipline may be learned (xii. 1-14).

The need of careful preservation of external peace and internal purity (xii. 15-17).

The glory and responsibility of citizenship of the imperishable Kingdom, and the horror of apostasy (xii. 18-29).

Duties as members of the Christian community and timely warnings (xiii. 1-17).

Prayer requested for and offered by the writer (xiii. 18-21).

A postscript asking his readers to be patient with him, giving them a piece of news and sending salutations (xiii. 22-5).

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The doctrine of CHRIST'S priesthood and sacrifice, described in the foregoing Introduction and Analysis as derived from this Epistle, is in part

supported by translations of three important sentences, which differ from those given in the English versions. The doctrine itself is found in the writer's argument as a whole and does not depend on the translation of any special passage. The argument is addressed to Hebrews and is based on their familiarity with the Levitical ritual and especially with the ritual of the Day of Atonement. All hinges on the purpose for which the high priest passed out of sight into the Holy of Holies. Every instructed Hebrew knew why he had passed out of sight, and what it was that he was doing on the other side of the veil. A reader of English, acquainted only with our English versions, might be led to suppose that sometimes the writer used language inconsistent with the main trend of his teaching. The passages in question are i. 3; ix. 12 and x. 12. It would seem reasonable to conclude, if they can be grammatically translated, without any forcing of the language whatever, so that they harmonize with the general theme and argument of the writer that this is in all probability the correct rendering. All depends upon how to translate the aorist participle when it either precedes or follows the finite verb also in the aorist. Does it express an action already completed, which is then followed by another action expressed in the finite verb, or may it express a simultaneous or subsequent action? It is unquestionably a custom of New

Testament writers to use the aorist participle of an action simultaneous with that of the main verb. For example, in Acts i. 24 we have an<sup>x</sup> aorist participle and an aorist finite verb, 'having prayed they said.' This plainly does not mean that after they had prayed, when their prayers were complete, they said something else, for the actual words of the prayer immediately follow in the text. We naturally render it 'They prayed and said,' as indeed it is in both English versions, A.V. and R.V. Another illustration selected from several given by Winer in his *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, pp. 430-31 may show this more clearly. In Phil. ii. 7 we read 'emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.' There is a finite verb followed by an aorist participle. It is not translated 'after he had taken the form of a servant he emptied himself.' The sense is ruined by such a translation, yet this is exactly the principle in which i. 3; ix. 12 and x. 12 are translated in the English versions, i.e. 'After he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God' 'A.V.' 'When he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down, etc.' Adopting the principle on which Phil. ii. 7 and several other passages in the New Testament are translated we may translate ix. 12. 'Entered in once for all into the holy place and obtained eternal redemption,' and x. 12 'he offered one sacrifice for sins for ever and sat down.'

The passages cited are sufficient to shew that the translations adopted in the introduction and notes of this Commentary do no violence to the grammar of the Greek but indeed are the natural renderings of the Greek words, and fit not only the grammar but the whole argument of the writer. Instead of inconsistency we get consistency.

Rackham in the *Acts of the Apostles* (Westminster Commentaries), pp. 183-4 points out what is St. Luke's use of participles. In the finite verb he expresses the fact which is of main importance and adds to it other facts in participles. If they are aorists and follow the finite verb they denote a subsequent action. This rule applied to ix. 12 in our Epistle gives us the translation suggested above. It is by CHRIST'S sacrificial action in the Holy Place that He obtains redemption for men. There is little doubt that the writer of the *Hebrews* was one of the scholarly group of Hellenists from which St. Luke, St. Stephen, and St. Philip came. It was natural that this group whose Greek was polished and literary should have used their participles in the same way. So many are the affinities of the language of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* with that of St. Luke's writings that some scholars have supposed him to be the author of the *Epistle*. But at any rate it seems consonant alike with grammatical scholarship and with the doctrine of the letter to adopt the translations of the passages i. 3;

ix. 12; x. 12 which are suggested in the notes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After this Commentary was completed an essay on 'The High Priesthood of our Lord as set forth in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*', by F. B. Westcott, M.A., came into the hands of the writer. Archdeacon Westcott is so distinguished a Greek scholar that the writer ventures to give the following extract from the essay as it confirms the view taken in this Commentary of the meaning of the Greek aorist participle in certain texts. 'CHRIST (we are told) entered once for all into the Holy Place and won redemption.' I am morally certain myself that this is the rightful rendering, and no other. If you translate it otherwise, the whole figure is destroyed. On the great Day of Atonement the high priest first entered within the Holy of Holies, bearing a golden censer, that a cloud of smoke might rise between him and the Mercy Seat and so shroud the mystic Presence. Next he bore within the shrine the blood of the bullock, and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat, making atonement on his own account. Anon he did the same with the blood of the People's goat. In either case the "atonement" made, is identified, solely and wholly with the offering, that is, with the "sprinkling" of the blood . . . in any case it is the "blood", and the use of the blood, that matters. Around that the rite is centred. The slaying of the victim has no significance. Its death is merely the means by which the all important "blood" is rendered available. And so, it seems to me, that to render *εὐράμενος* by "having won" is frankly impossible. And seeing that we know our writer (as the writer of the *Acts*) is prone to use the participle to express an added fact, we conclude it must be so here. There would have been in any case a certain probability that "and won" was the right translation. This probability is on the way to become a certainty when we carefully study the figure, as our writer understands it; the "figure" being contained in the actions of the high priest, when he entered once a year the Holy of Holies' (pp. 56-8).

# THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

## CHAPTER I

GOD, having of old time spoken unto the fathers 1

### Prologue (1-2)

- i. **The assertion of God's self-manifestation to men.**
- ii. **The provisional and fragmentary mode of this self-manifestation in the past.**
- iii. **The complete and absolutely final mode of the present.**

**I. God having of old time spoken.** Behind the speech of God in the prophets is His self-manifestation in creation. Self-expression is inherent in the essential Being of God. 'In the beginning God created. . . and God said' Gen. i. 1-3. God spoke because 'In the beginning was the Word' (St. John i. 1). He spoke to the self-conscious spiritual beings (i. e. 'the fathers,' 'us') whom He had made, because 'in Him was life and the life was the light of men.' In the *Upanishads* we find the prayer 'O Thou Self-revealing One, reveal Thyself in me.' We should compare the prologue of the *Gospel of St. John* with that of the *Hebrews*. The final source of all truth is one. The unity of Him who spoke implies the unity of the revelation. There cannot



in the prophets by divers portions and in divers

be many true religions, but there is necessarily one. Compare the teaching of the Indian reformer Kabir who lived 1440–1518.<sup>1</sup>

**unto the fathers in the prophets.** There is a studied comparison between the partial and provisional revelations and the final one. In both God spoke, but there is a threefold distinction between them. They are distinguished (1) *as regards their character*. The revelations were piecemeal, fragmentary, broken lights of truth, coming to men in a variety of methods; (2) *as regards their time*. The revelations were in the past. 'Of old time' does not mean necessarily a long time ago, but 'of old' in contrast with what is in the present, and this present is the end or final period which is to conclude the temporal history of mankind. (3) *As regards the instruments* of the Divine utterance. The revelations were in many persons, the final revelation is in a Son. To the final revelation in a Son there can be no addition; in no way can God be more perfectly revealed than in a Son. The Church, however, is to advance continually in the apprehension of this revelation, according to the promise of St. John xvi. 14. See additional note on the Exclusiveness and Inclusiveness of Christianity.

**by divers portions and in divers manners.** The manifestation was given in many fragments and in many ways; it was received through human teachers who

<sup>1</sup> *Kabir and the Kabir Panth*, by G. H. Westcott, p. 54.

manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us 2

received some portion of it, and taught it in various fashions to men. These 'prophets,' speakers-forth of what was revealed in them, in their lives and characters as well as in their words, were pre-eminently of Israel, but we need not confine the interpretation of 'in the prophets' to Israel. To every people some opportunity was given of learning a fragment of truth which might prepare them for the final revelation. The education of the human race is gradually effected, but its characteristic mark is progress. There is no foundation for the belief that in far away days God uttered knowledge perfectly and completely through Rishis, and that the meaning of this *Veda* was lost or forgotten as men gradually degenerated. There is no sign of any such *Veda*. In that which in Hinduism is claimed as the perfect utterance of God, we find the songs of a primitive people feeling after God, only dimly conscious of His unity, if conscious of it at all. Man was created capable of advancing step by step to the full knowledge of God. At each stage his advance might have been perfect, but it has been grievously checked and the knowledge distorted by sin, with the result that the fragments of the knowledge have to a greater or less extent been perverted and become the 'heathen' religions of the world. See additional note on the use of the word 'heathen'.

2. **Hath at the end . . . his Son.** The final and complete revelation is in a Son. A Son ideally shares the nature and character of a Father; thus the Father

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *a Son*. in <sup>1</sup> *his* Son, whom he appointed heir

may be fully known in a Son (St. John xiv. 7-11). That which came forth from God, the Word which He eternally uttered, is the Son. We can justifiably transfer the name Son, which in Scripture is only used in respect of His Incarnation, to denote the relation which that Person holds in the Trinity, because He who is called Son is the same as He who before His Incarnation existed from eternity with the Father. The omission of any words before 'in His Son' to correspond with 'by divers portions in diverse manners' before 'in the prophets', shows the absolute completeness of the revelation in a Son. To have said more would have been redundant. God's self-manifestation in a Son is necessarily complete. The omission of the article in the Greek before 'Son' throws stress rather upon the nature than upon the personality of the Son.

We are not to measure Divine Sonship by our ideas of human sonship. Human sonship is but a pale reflexion of that relation which in eternity has existed between the source of Godhead and the Word. Muslims frequently ask how God can have a son, and regard it as derogatory to God almost to the point of profanity to hold such a belief. But human relationships are only counterparts of the ideal relationships which are in the perfect Being. The true way of putting the question would be, not 'How can there be Sonship in the Divine Existence?' but rather 'How can man who is but a dependent creature share, in however slight a degree, the mystery of Fatherhood and Sonship?' Share it, he does, and we

of all things, through whom also he made the

may learn something of Divine Fatherhood by its reflexion on earth ; but the more fruitful method by which we may learn of Fatherhood is by contemplating it in its eternal ideal. It is through knowledge of the heavenly verities that we come to know the significance of their earthly counterparts. Compare the words of Athanasius *Ad Serap.* i. 16. 'In the instance of the Godhead only have the names Father and Son fixity and permanence ; for of men, if any one be called father, yet he has been son of another ; and if he be called son, yet is he called father of another, so that in the case of man the names father and son do not properly hold.' Again he says *Cont. Ar.* i. 21. 'Thus it belongs to the Godhead alone, that the Father is properly Father, and the Son properly Son, and in Them and Them only does it hold that the Father is ever Father and the Son ever Son'. See additional note at the end of the chapter on the implications of 'Sonship'.

**(2-4) The Unique and Unrivalled Pre-eminence of the Son.** One by one the elements of this unique pre-eminence are disclosed.

**Whom he appointed heir of all things.** The conceptions of Sonship and Heirship are inseparable. If the Mediator of the final revelation is a Son He will also be Lord over all that is the Father's : for the heir or inheritor is one who in virtue of his unique relationship of 'Firstborn' possesses and controls all that the Father has appointed him to inherit. When the Word

took human nature He seemed to abdicate His supreme place, but the Father appointed Him as 'Heir of all things' (Cp. Col. i. 15-20). As in the case of Divine Sonship, so also in our conception of Divine Heirship, we must carefully guard against importing any ideas of time or succession. We must proceed from the heavenly sphere to the earthly even though we are compelled to use words which we knew first in earthly relationships.

**Appointed** may be a timeless aorist and refer to the eternal order, or it may look to the Incarnation in time, and refer to such an acknowledgment of the Man CHRIST JESUS as was at His Baptism or Transfiguration 'This is My beloved Son.' The second interpretation seems preferable. The writer is speaking to instructed Christians. He assumes as the foundation of his teaching the knowledge of how God spoke through a Son, that is, through the union of the Divine Nature with human nature. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Throughout the Epistle a large knowledge of Christian doctrine is assumed. In v. 11-14 he chides his readers for compelling him to go back to 'rudiments and first principles.'

**through whom also he made the worlds.** He is the co-operating instrument in creation: no stage or aeon in the evolution of the universe was without Him (Cp. St. John i. 2-3). The supreme exaltation of the Son in human nature to be the Heir corresponds with His eternal dignity when 'in the beginning' creation was mediated through Him. The 'also' shews the intimate connexion of the thought of the two clauses.

<sup>2</sup> worlds; who being the effulgence of <sup>3</sup>Gr. ages. 3

It was fitting indeed that the Son should be appointed 'Heir of all things' even though He had emptied Himself of His divine state, because through Him creation came into being. See additional note on Creation.

**the worlds** are not here periods or successions of time but the *el-ālamīn* of the Qu'rān, the cosmical systems which have their origin and existence in time.

**3. Who being the effulgence of his glory.** Effulgence is either the light actually given forth by a glowing substance; as, for instance, the shining of the moon is due to the sun's light. The two meanings meet in the Word or Son, for He is the 'Light of Light,' and He is the Mediator by whom God becomes apprehensible by man. As the sun cannot be seen without the brightness which issues from it, so the Father can only be seen through 'the effulgence of His glory' which is the Son. The word 'glory' is used of the Shekinah in the Old Testament. It was the visible sign of the Presence of God. God's attributes unveiled or manifested are His Glory—His wisdom, love, power. The Son being the disclosure of God's essential character is the Glory, the Shekinah. Cp. St. James ii. 1 where the Lord JESUS CHRIST is called 'the Glory.' That which was hidden is now revealed. Partial rays of light came in the prophets, the full burst of light, 'the effulgence of the glory,' comes in the Son. The phrase carries with it the implication that that which

<sup>3</sup> Or, *the impress of his substance* his glory, and <sup>3</sup> the very image of his

emanates from light is of the same nature as light. It is the truth afterwards defined as the 'consubstantiality' of the Son.

**the very image of his substance** or '*impress* of his substance.' The word means either that which makes a mark or impression or it is the mark or impression thus made. The second is plainly the meaning here. The writer desires to express the idea of exact equivalence. The Son exactly expresses the substance or *hypostasis* of God. The word '*hypostasis*' has not here the technical significance of Person which was assigned to it in the fourth century when it became necessary for the purpose of discussion and definition to assign to words of Latin theology corresponding terms in Greek. In technical theology there are three *hypostases* or Persons in the Godhead, but the word here does not mean Person but *substantial essence*. The Son is the complete expression of the Substantial Essence of God. The writer piles up phrase upon phrase to express the completeness of the disclosure of God. God is the underlying Reality; He is that for which philosophy has sought, the eternal unchangeable Substance beneath and yet transcending all phenomena—not an impersonal neuter substance of which nothing whatever can be predicated, as the fundamental doctrine of the Upanishads teaches, but conscious Spirit whose most essential characteristic is love. 'No man hath seen God at any time,' but as the

substance, and upholding all things by the word

impress exactly reveals the type, so the Son reveals the Essence of the Reality by manifesting Divine Wisdom, Power and Love. Probably without the Perfection of Love the Perfection of Wisdom and Power could not be.

Man cannot make an image of God without degrading his conception of the Deity and so degrading himself. He must wait until God Himself gives His own image; in the Son this Image has been given and so the worship offered to JESUS CHRIST in His manhood is not idolatry. In the original creation of man 'in the image of God' there was an implied promise that in manhood should be disclosed in due time 'the very image of His substance.' See additional note.

**Upholding all things.** Closely linked to these phrases denoting the consubstantiality of the Son, by a particle which may almost be rendered 'and so,' comes the sentence which describes His present relation to the universe. The whole is sustained and carried on to its goal by the 'Word of His Power.' The Son's function is not confined to creation and revelation; all things continue in being only in virtue of His sustaining force consciously exercised.

**by the word of his power** or the utterance of His power. It is the force which proceeds from Him and fills the universe. The word 'utterance' denotes that the sustaining force is not an involuntary emanation, but that it is sent forth voluntarily and consciously. From moment to moment He sustains and directs the universe. The phrase sets forth what is called the Divine



of his power, when he had made purification of

Immanence. The 'all' is not apart from God, but only exists in relation to this energizing utterance (Cp. Col. i. 15-17). 'His' is plainly the Son's. He by whom 'the all' was originally created is He whose all-sustaining energy brings 'the all' to its destined end. The participles 'being' 'upholding' are timeless and have no reference to the historical manifestation in the Incarnation.

**when he had made purification of sins.** It should be translated 'making purification of sins sat down.' The two verbs are in the same tense and represent simultaneous not succeeding actions. See supplementary note in the Introduction, pp. 63-8. For the idea of priesthood see Introduction pp. 37-8. It is this unique and pre-eminent Being who has made God and man 'at one' by making it possible for man to be purified of sin. Here is the first indication of what occupies a large part of the Epistle, the Priesthood of the Son; not only the greatness of the Person of CHRIST but the greatness of His mediatorial position. Knowledge of the life and death and resurrection is assumed. The writer's object now is to emphasize the greatness of the Mediator who so lived and died and rose again. There is a peculiar beauty in the middle voice of the Greek verb which cannot be reproduced in English. It signifies that CHRIST does not merely provide a means of purification, but that the means of purification, of removal of the sins, is in His own Person; He Himself has taken away the hindrance to the approach of man to God.

sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty

**sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.** He passed from the visible and earthly sphere into the invisible and heavenly sphere, where exalted in His humanity over all the universe He reigns as King. The phrase 'the right hand' is taken from the Psalms and is a vivid symbol of exaltation to and closest fellowship with the Father. He who is at the Right Hand is the Minister of authority through whom the Divine power is mediated. The tense of the verb 'sat down' points to a particular time when He began as Man to exercise the function of King, i.e. the time of the Ascension.

Point by point the writer has recounted the greatness of Him through whom the Eternal Invisible God has spoken. He whose Sonship carries with it every conceivable mark of Deity, the creation, direction and sustentation of the universe, together with the unique capacity of revealing God to man, He who meets man's need of prophet and priest, now reigns as King. The writer then proceeds to emphasize further the uniqueness of the Son by comparing Him with others. Not only will all possibility of misconception be excluded by this comparison, but the marks of Deity will still more plainly emerge. The first point of comparison is with the Angels. The Son has passed out of the sphere of time and space into the unseen sphere, but this realm is not unpeopled; it also has its residents, and it is natural that the first comparison should be with those created spirits whose home is in this sphere. Moreover angels are represented in the Old Testament as having been

4 on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent

used by God as mediators and as having exercised functions of a lofty kind. It might have been thought that this wonderful Being was one of those bright and glorious creatures who had so often served Israel in its past history as ministers of God. So it is to the Old Testament that the writer turns to show the superiority of the Son.

**4. having become.** By His Incarnation He voluntarily submitted to take a nature of lower dignity than that of angels, but now by the exaltation of His Person in the Divine and human natures to the supreme authority, He has *become* superior in power and dignity to them.

**as he hath inherited.** Not, as it were, by arbitrary selection or appointment, but in virtue of His inherent relationship to the Father and His redemptive work.

**a more excellent name.** The name is the outward expression or revelation of the Essence or Nature, Character or Function. His nature is that of Son, His Function that of Creator and Sustainer, etc.

**5-14. The inheritance of the Name more excellent than that of angels is demonstrated from the Old Testament.**

- (a) No individual angel is addressed as Son. (5)
- (b) The Son is the object of the angels' worship. (6)
- (c) While the angels minister the Son occupies an eternal throne from which He dispenses justice and equity. (7-9)

name than they. For unto which of the angels **5** said he at any time,

Thou art my Son,  
This day have I begotten thee ?

and again,

I will be to him a Father,  
And he shall be to me a Son ?

(d) The Son is not a created being but is He through whom creation itself came into existence, the Eternal who endures throughout all decay and change. (10-12)

(e) No angel is promised universal authority, for the angels' function is service. (13-14)

The Old Testament is unintelligible unless we read it in the light of the principle, that although its words have their definite historical setting and reference, yet they cannot be confined to the historical, but express aspirations which can only be satisfied in the perfect Prophet, Priest and King.

(a) **No individual angel is addressed as Son.**

**5. For unto which of the angels . . . to me a Son.** The two passages (Ps. ii. 7 and 2 Sam. vii. 14) have a definite historical setting. In the one the Son is God's representative in His triumph over His enemies; in the second we have God's answer to David's desire to build a house for Him. From David's seed it is promised that one shall come who shall build the house. But the terms applied to the coming one were such that they could not be satisfied by any earthly King and

<sup>4</sup> Or, *And again, when he bringeth*  
 6 in

<sup>4</sup> And when he again <sup>5</sup> bringeth in the

<sup>5</sup> Or, *shall have brought in*

directed the thoughts of the people to the Messiah. Of no individual angel in the Old Testament are such words used as 'Son' and 'begotten'; of no individual angel is God called the Father.

**This day have I begotten thee.** In the application of these words to the Son we might possibly interpret 'this day' as expressing the idea of, the eternal begetting, 'Begotten of His Father before all worlds,' of the timelessness of that which is of the order of eternity. But the fulfilment of 'This day have I begotten Thee' is better looked for in those sealings of the Sonship of CHRIST which were revealed at His Baptism, Transfiguration and Resurrection. It is the Father's acknowledgement of the Son made flesh, who has greater witness than that of man (St. John v. 37; viii. 18). In his address in the Synagogue at Antioch (Acts xiii. 33) St. Paul applies the words to the Resurrection.

(b) **The Son is the object of angels' worship.**

6. **And when he again bringeth in.** The 'again' may either be taken with the verb, or as introducing a fresh quotation. The former is more probably right, in which case the writer is applying the words quoted to the Second Coming of our Lord and the adoration which He shall then receive from angels. If the 'again' merely introduces a fresh quotation (as in the A.V.) the words have been fulfilled in the worship of the angels

firstborn into <sup>6</sup> the world he saith, And <sup>6</sup> Gr. *the inhabited earth.*

at the Nativity. In either case the Greek words seem to mean 'when he shall have brought in,' and describe a definite event in an indefinite future.

**the firstborn.** There are two words descriptive of the relationships of the Son in His Divine nature and in His human nature; one is 'only begotten,' which sets forth the unique relationship of the Son to the Father, and the other is 'firstborn,' which sets forth His relationship to the many brethren whose nature He has taken; among them He is 'firstborn' because in His glorified humanity He has risen from the dead. But so closely has He united us to Himself that even the very word 'firstborn' is applied by the writer to the members of the Church. It is 'the Church of the firstborn' (xii. 23). Lightfoot tells us in his note on Col. i. 15 that the main ideas which the word involves are twofold. *Priority to all creation*, and the necessary corollary of this priority, *Sovereignty over all creation*. It is important to guard against the misconception of the word by which He who is 'firstborn' might be regarded as merely the first of created beings by priority of time. If this had been intended another word would have been used (*πρωτόκτιστος*). Indeed so entirely was the idea of creation in time excluded, as Lightfoot points out, that the word is given as a title of Jehovah in a commentary on the Pentateuch.

**And let all the angels of God worship Him.** The words are not in the Hebrew, but are a quotation from

7 let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith,

<sup>7</sup> Or, *spirits* Who maketh his angels <sup>7</sup> winds,  
And his ministers a flame of fire :

8 but of the Son *he saith*,

<sup>8</sup> The two oldest Græk manuscripts read *his*. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;  
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of <sup>8</sup> thy kingdom.

the Septuagint version of Deut. xxxii. 43, and probably adapted from Ps. xcvi. 7. The writer of the Epistle does not hesitate to apply to CHRIST words which were originally used of Jehovah. He does so because all the passages in which Jehovah is spoken of as about to manifest Himself as King, Saviour or Judge are regarded as Messianic. It is Jehovah entering into new fellowship with His people, and this new fellowship is in the Messiah.

(c) **While the angels minister the Son occupies an eternal throne from which He dispenses justice and equity.**

7. **Who maketh his angels winds, etc.** The words are from Ps. cvi 4-5. Probably the Psalm celebrates the obedience of all elemental forces to the will of God ; they are His servants and His messengers. But the author of the *Hebrews* sees in the direction of these natural forces the agency of angels subject to the Divine rule.

8-9. **Thy throne O God, etc.** The words are from Ps. xlv. which is the Marriage Song of the King of

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; 9  
 Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
 With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

And,

10

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the found-  
 tion of the earth,  
 And the heavens are the works of thy hands :

a Kingdom whose true King is God. It is impossible to say decisively whether the words of the Septuagint translated in the R. V. ' O God ' are to be rendered as a vocative, or in apposition to ' Thy throne.' The latter would make the sentence to mean ' Thy throne is God,' which would be equivalent to saying ' Thy Kingdom has God for its foundation.' Undoubtedly the vocative seems the more natural rendering of the Greek text, but the question at once arises, is it conceivable that a Hebrew Psalmist could have addressed such words to the King? On the whole it seems that the writer of the Epistle, whatever may have originally been in the mind of the Psalmist, interprets the words as a vocative, and as addressed to the Messianic King. The thought of the Divinity of the coming Messiah is, of course, not alien to the Old Testament (Cp. Isa. ix. 6-7).

**(d) The Son is not a created being but is He through whom creation itself came into existence—the Eternal who endures through all decay and change.**

**10. And, Thou Lord in the beginning, etc.** See additional note at the end of the chapter.



- 11 They shall perish ; but thou continest :  
 And they all shall wax old as doth a garment ;
- 12 And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up,  
 As a garment, and they shall be changed :  
 But thou art the same,  
 And thy years shall not fail.
- 13 But of which of the angels hath he said at any  
 time,  
 Sit thou on my right hand,  
 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy  
 feet ?

Again as in verse 6 the writer applies to the Son words originally addressed to Jehovah. It may be said that either he used the Old Testament Scriptures to express what was the faith of the Church as to the supreme Lordship of the CHRIST ; so unhesitating was that faith in the first century that such rigid monotheists as the Hebrews found nothing incompatible with their monotheism in ascribing to the Son terms ascribed to Jehovah ; or it may be, as suggested above, that when the Psalmist in his distress appealed for the personal intervention of Jehovah, the author of the Epistle regarded that intervention in the case of the covenant-people as necessarily in the person of the Messiah.

**(e) No angel is promised universal authority,  
 for the angels' function is service.**

13. Sit thou on my right hand, etc. Ps. cx. is more quoted in the New Testament than any other Psalm (ten times), and was regarded in our Lord's time

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to 14

as pre-eminently Messianic. It has been suggested that it is David's hymn of praise in response to Nathan's prophecy (2 Sam. vii. 8-16). A Priest-King shall occupy the most exalted position conceivable, and all who reject and rebel against Him shall finally be compelled to own His authority. In reference to no angel have such words ever been uttered.

The phrase 'right hand' which has been incorporated into the Christian creed to express the conception of the unique exaltation of One who wields supreme power was probably derived from this Psalm by the synoptists. All such phrases are necessary concessions to the human mind which can with difficulty express itself except in terms of space.

**till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.** The Psalmist takes a somewhat savage custom as the symbol of complete submission (see Jos. x. 24), but we may well see in 'the footstool of thy feet' the kneeling penitents and worshippers whose forerunners have already been found in the demoniac (St. Mark v. 6), St. Mary Magdalene (St. John xx. 16-17), and innumerable others. The Christian can never forget that the Feet are pierced and carry for ever the marks of the Passion which compels by *drawing* all men (St. John xii. 32).

14. The words have a reference to the thought of verse 7. The angels who are God's agents in unconscious nature are also employed by Him in that highest part of nature, which is man. It is theirs to

do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation ?

promote the perfection of nature, it is theirs also to promote the perfection of mankind.

**All**, that is, without any exception. There is no supreme archangel, exempt from service, whose function is to rule ; all, of whatever grade, have the essential nature of 'ministering spirits.'

**ministering spirits, sent forth.** The word 'ministering' is used in the Septuagint especially of the service of the sanctuary. Here the thought probably is that of the angels, whose general function is that of ministry to God, standing in the presence of God ready for the particular office which is to be assigned to them, whilst the Son sits on His regal throne wielding universal dominion. 'Sent forth.' The participle is present ; they are continually being 'sent forth,' and yet they remain in the Presence. The angelic spirit is indeed finite, but the Divine Spirit, the vision of whom never departs from them, is infinite. Cp. St. Luke i. 19. 'I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God, and I was sent, etc.'

**for the sake of them, etc.** As with man's service to his fellow man ('inasmuch as ye did it unto one . . . ye did it unto Me') so is it with the service of the angels ; it is 'for the sake of' the inheritors of salvation, but it is primarily rendered unto God.

**them that shall inherit salvation.** The word is used without the article to denote that complete and perfect restoration of human nature by its attainment to the

fullness of life in God for which it was originally created, and which is mediated through the Son. This salvation we 'inherit' in virtue of our union with Him who is the 'Heir of all things' (i. 2). The writer says 'shall inherit' because he is regarding 'salvation' as completely realized in its perfection. It does not follow that he regards 'salvation' as entirely in the future; by the acceptance of the life in CHRIST the process of salvation is already begun. See additional note on 'salvation' at the end of the chapter.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE EXCLUSIVENESS AND INCLUSIVENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

1-3. The opening verses of the Epistle make it quite clear why Christianity can never be relegated to a place as one of a brotherhood of religions each one of which sets forth some aspect or aspects of truth, and leads men by its own particular road to God. We have only to combine the stupendous terms which are used of CHRIST in these verses, and it becomes unquestionable that, if they are accepted as true, CHRIST is the final and complete disclosure of God. Mankind will continue to progress in the interpretation of the meaning of this disclosure ; the contents of the terms will be found to be richer as the race moves on towards its goal, but the revelation itself is necessarily final. He who is the revelation is described as ' Son, ' not ' A Son, ' but ' Son, ' i.e. ' Son ' in the fullness and perfection of the term, one who in all respects shares the nature and character of the Father. He is ' Heir of all things ; ' nothing, that is, is excluded from His control and rule ; the universe is necessarily His inheritance because it not only came into being through Him, but it is sustained from moment to moment by His power which carries forward all things to their goal (this seems to be the meaning of *φέρων*). In His relation to those beings who are made capable of knowing and loving God He is ' the Effulgence of God's Glory and the Very Image of His Substance. ' Thus if man can ever attain to the fullness of the knowledge and vision of CHRIST he thereby necessarily attains to the fullness of the knowledge and vision of God. In His relation to man as a creature needing redemption and forgiveness, it is He who makes ' purification of sins, ' and as Priest-King is now ' on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, ' the Object of the worship of the angels, Himself administering the supreme power of God. Human thought cannot conceive of any disclosure of God more complete than this ; the age in which it

has come, however prolonged it may seem to be, is necessarily 'the end of these days,' the last period of the Divine Self-utterance by which the Name has been gradually made known to men. Thus the Christian religion is necessarily *exclusive*.

But at the same time it is *inclusive*, because in CHRIST is gathered up and fulfilled all that was true in every method of worship or ritual or doctrine by which men were feeling after God. Those vast fields of human life which were outside the range of Judaism were not shut off from the movements of the Spirit of God. The first words of the Epistle 'by divers portions and in divers manners' bear witness to the largeness and breadth of the writer's thought. Unquestionably the Hebrew prophets were primarily in his mind, but the 'by divers portions and in divers manners' declares the variety of kind and measure and degree in the Divine preparation of the different races of men for the last great utterance in the Heir of the Father who is 'the Image of His Substance'. No fragment can be lost or wasted by Him who is constituted 'Heir of all things.'

The writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in his first words thus represents Christianity as *exclusive*, in that it is the final and complete revelation of God; as *inclusive*, in that it includes and fulfills every fragment of those partial revelations by which God was preparing the world through the ages 'by divers portions and in divers manners' for the final revelation in the Son.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CREATION

**2. Through whom also He made the worlds 10. Thou, Lord in the beginning hast laid.**

The doctrine of Creation must always present insuperable difficulties to philosophic thought. The difficulty arises from our ignorance of the relation of the temporal order to the eternal. The old objection that the Jewish and Christian doctrine represents the Divine Being as initiating a universe after an eternity of inactivity does not take into account this limitation of the human mind. The phrase 'in the beginning' sets forth the truth that the world in its present form does not belong to the eternal order, but is

subject to decay and change, and this also seems to imply that time itself is part of creation. When we define creation as the process of making a universe out of nothing, what we intend to represent is, that there is no eternal self-existent entity apart from God, which provided, as it were, the rough material out of which the world was shaped. The world is dependent for its existence and constitution entirely on the Will of God ; nor is it a necessary or involuntary emanation from His substance. Whether God's priority to the universe is a causal priority only and not a strictly temporal one does not affect the Christian doctrine ; it is enough to know that through the Logos He made the worlds and that in the beginning He laid the foundation of the earth.

The Christian doctrine of Creation found in 'through whom also He made the worlds' declares that the universe is a revelation of God, the temporal is a real revelation of the eternal. The teaching of philosophic Hinduism is in direct opposition to this. In Hinduism the world is an unreal world, not only in the sense of being transitory and of having no independent existence of its own, but in the sense of being a delusive world, which instead of being a medium by which the mind of God is revealed, actually and effectually conceals Him. The Hebrew Psalmist speaks of nature as a garment, which however temporary, reveals to us something of the Divine : the Hindu regards it as a cloak which not only hides the Divine, but also cheats man into thinking that it is what it is not. Only by blinding ourselves to the phenomenal world can we hope to attain to true knowledge. Compare this with the conception, say, of Psalm xix. 'The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge ;' or with CHRIST'S use of nature to draw from it illustrations of the Father's methods of love. The birds, the fields, the flowers are not delusive and deceptive phenomena but indications of the mind of God. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation comes thus as the almost necessary corollary of that of the Creation, and really presents no added difficulty to philosophic thought. The difficulty is there, but its root is in the Creation and not in the Incarnation. We are using a most

imperfect phrase when we say that Creation itself is from the beginning a process of Incarnation in which the completed union is in CHRIST, but the true line of thought is indicated. In Hinduism, though the word 'Incarnation' is often used of those occasional interpositions into phenomenal affairs which Vishnu is believed to have made, yet the Hindu conception is widely different, and probably is rather a hindrance than a stepping stone to the acceptance of the Christian doctrine. In the *avatar* the god takes some phenomenal form to effect a temporary deliverance in the world of delusion, and then passes out of it. In the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation the Deity is eternally united to that humanity which is nature herself arrived at her final goal; in this union the temporal and the eternal are at one. The process still goes on; as men are united with CHRIST that which is temporal is taken up into the eternal, whilst all else having fulfilled its function passes away. 'They shall perish, but Thou remainest.'

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON i. 2. 'IN HIS SON'

It is inevitable that men should seek an answer to questions concerning the nature of JESUS CHRIST and His relationship to the Eternal God. Was He a human being so especially endowed with the Spirit of God that He was enabled to make special revelations of God's mind and will? In other words, was He the best and greatest of the prophets up to His time, to be superseded when another should arise capable of making still richer disclosures of God's mind? Or was He a superhuman being between God and man, a kind of demigod, whom God first created and then employed as an intermediary both in all subsequent creation and in the revelation of Himself to intelligent creatures? Or was He Himself of the essential and eternal nature of God? The answer to these questions is to be found in the prologue of *St. John* and the first chapter of *Hebrews*. The Person there described comes forth from within the Divine Being and is Himself Divine. The nearest terms to describe this inner relationship within the Deity are 'Word' and 'Son.' It is doubtful whether personality could be in a solitary unit, whether, that is, personality does not



need other personalities in which to realize itself: fellowship is necessary to the perfection of conscious being.

There is no express doctrine of the Trinity set forth in Hebrews i, but by implication the truth of inner relationships within the Deity is unveiled. We are largely ignorant of the nature of human personality, but our knowledge of it grows by the contemplation of the Divine Existence in which Perfection is found in an Eternal Fellowship.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON i. 2. THE USE OF THE TERM 'HEATHEN'

When we speak of the 'heathen' religions of the world we mean religions which having either no conception or very imperfect conceptions of the Unity of God are polytheistic, and apparently as a necessary consequence of polytheism are idolatrous. There is no instance in the history of the world of polytheism unaccompanied by idolatry. Hindus will ordinarily assert that there is one God, but at the same time declare that there are many crores of deities. They explain them as being either manifestations of the one God or as being His vice-regents. This at the best is so imperfect a conception of the Unity of God that it cannot escape the charge of being polytheistic, nor do Hindus always repudiate the name.

No monotheistic religion can be described as 'heathen,' and the word in modern English is applied to religions which are not Christian, Jewish or Muhammadan. Buddhism and Vedantism offering no personal God for belief and worship can hardly be described as religions at all; they are ways of life based on systems of philosophy.

As regards the origin of the term 'heathen' nothing is certainly known. It has generally been assumed to be a direct derivative of the Gothic *haissi*, *heath*, and to have been used as the rendering of the Latin *paganus*, *villager*, *rustic*, and so to have been applied to those who living in rural districts were in a backward state and had retained their polytheism and idolatry after Christianity had become the prevailing religion of the towns. This derivation is now believed to be doubtful, and it is possible that the word was

used as the Jews used the word 'Gentiles,' Greek *ἔθνα* the *nations*. Whatever the derivation or original meaning of the word may be it is the duty of Christian charity to employ it with considerate care, and in the work of evangelization to avoid any use of it which excites resentment and thus tends to close the ear of the hearer.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON i. 3. 'THE VERY IMAGE OF HIS SUBSTANCE'

The ordinary modern use of the word 'substance' carries with it the idea of something occupying space on the material plane. To speak of the substance of the world would mean the atoms of which the material universe is composed. An English dictionary will give as one of the synonyms of 'substantial' the word 'corporeal.' All such ideas must be dismissed from the mind when dealing with the word as used in Christian doctrine and philosophy. The word in these connexions is never used 'physically' but 'metaphysically'. It is true that modern science in its conceptions of matter more and more tends to get metaphysical, but according to the conceptions of most men matter is something directly apprehensible by the bodily senses; a substantial thing is necessarily cognizable by touch or sight.

The Greek word translated by the Latin word *substantia* literally means that which stands beneath, and so the word came to be used of that in virtue of which a thing is what it is. It is difficult to find a satisfactory equivalent in English; 'essence' is probably the nearest. The substance of God is that in virtue of which God is God; e. g. God would not be God, were He not holy, therefore holiness is of the substance of God; God would not be God, were He not love, therefore love is of the substance of God.

The Greek word *character*, here translated 'very image,' is used to denote the distinguishing features by which a thing is recognized to be what it is. In the word 'substance' there is no thought of relation to or apprehension by any intelligent being, but the use of the word *character* indicates that the distinguishing

properties or attributes of the substance can be apprehended through that which is the very image of the substance. This is the only place in the New Testament in which this word translated 'very image' is used, but there is another word occurring twenty-three times, one of which is in Heb. x. 1, which the revisers of 1881 invariably have translated 'image'. This is the word used by St. Paul when he calls JESUS CHRIST 'the image of God' (2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15). The difference between the words, one translated 'very image' and the other 'image' is that the one used in *Hebrews* probably refers to the distinguishing marks or traits, whilst the other denotes the completeness and exactness of the representation; but the main thought conveyed by either is practically identical. JESUS CHRIST exactly and entirely represents God to us; in Him we know what God's character and nature are. The fullness of the love, wisdom and power of God are in CHRIST and can be known in CHRIST by men. As St. Paul expresses it in Col. ii. 9. 'In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' It is not merely *divinity* which may mean *divine quality*, but *Deity* which signifies *divine nature*. The 'bodily' in Col. ii. 9. may possibly be taken to mean, as it is by St. Cyril, St. Augustine and others of the Fathers, 'essentially' or 'wholly' but probably it is better to take it as referring to the Incarnation and interpret it to mean 'assuming a bodily form'; not indeed that the fullness of the Godhead can be confined by limits of space, but it has now its fixed manifestation through a human body. CHRIST exactly represents to us under the conditions of human life all in virtue of which God is God. All that is characteristic of the Father is to be apprehended in the Son. The *Substance* of the Father is imaged in the Son and can be known by men in the *Image*.

It is interesting to note that in the Septuagint one of the words translated *image* is used in a passage prohibiting idolatry, whilst in the Hebrew the word for *image* in the passage 'So God created man in His own image' (Gen. i. 27) is also used in other parts of the New Testament as equivalent to *idol*. This seems to illustrate two truths: (1) man seems instinctively to expect that there will be an *image of God* by which God may be known in

His essential attributes, an image so truly God that it, or rather He, may be worshipped; (2) when man in his fallen state attempts to create such an image out of his own imagination he necessarily falls into idolatry. Only God Himself can give to us His own Image.

In the Old Testament the phrase translated *idolatry* is one which signifies *strange and alien service*; whilst there are no fewer than thirty different words translated *idol*. The words variously signify 'a vain thing,' 'an object of terror,' 'a shameful thing,' 'a demon,' 'a shadow,' 'a figment,' but they are applied rather to the false gods which are the objects of pagan worship than to the statues or images which represent them.

In Hinduism there are idols of three kinds: (1) There is the unusually shaped stone or rock, found it may be in some field, the apparently abnormal appearance of which is regarded as indicating that in it or in some sense attached to it there is the presence of a divine being. (2) There is the representation or symbol of one of the innumerable gods and goddesses, Kali, Ganesh or Siva; a material figure is made and worship is offered to it. (3) There is the statue of some legendary or semi-historical human being, who may have actually existed on earth, and is regarded as an *avatar* of God; as, for example, Krishna.

In each of these three cases there is idolatry in the Bible sense of the word, not merely because there is a material representation, but because it is either a representation of something in itself false, or because it is a degrading and unworthy representation which conceals, distorts and misrepresents the true likeness of God. In the first case, that of the strangely shaped stone, the idolatry is that of semi-civilized men, who believing in the existence and power of innumerable beings, probably malignant, live in the bondage of fear of the supernatural. They know not the true nature of God and their worship of the stone as the image and abode of a deity is due to delusion, and results in the debasing of their conceptions of God and as an inevitable consequence of their own lives. The second case is the idolatry of the polytheist who may be, as in India, more or less educated. Polytheism and idolatry invariably accompany one

another, or we may say polytheism has idolatry as its natural fruit, whilst idolatry embodies and preserves the errors of polytheism. A statue of a god or goddess having been made, certain rites are used to bring the required presence of the deity into the idol. This done, worship and honour are paid to the thing itself, for it is the god. It is dressed and undressed, fed, washed, provided with a punkah and mosquito net, and so on. The image is the outward body by which the god visibly expresses himself. Sometimes the idol is supposed to be only the temporary abode of the god. It is consecrated and for a few days it is worshipped ; at the end of the appointed time the figure is stripped of its ornaments and deposited in a river or tank.

The idolatry in this kind of polytheism is doubly or even trebly idolatry. It is idolatry, in the first place, because the god thus represented has no existence ; it is a mere 'phantom of the mind.' It is idolatry, secondly, because if the thing represented had any existence, it is not believed to be the Supreme Being, and to offer worship to the figure or stone which is supposed to be its abode is taking from the honour which is to be given to the one God ; it is worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. Thirdly, it is idolatry because such worship necessarily corrupts men's conceptions of the Divine Being and blocks out the true knowledge of God. Hindus, indeed, are not clear as to what relation their innumerable deities hold to the Supreme. Some hold that they have no objective existence, but are to be used simply as symbols of the attributes of the one God, e.g. Kali as the symbol of the divine wrath against sin, Durga of the bountifulness of nature, and so on. Others believe them to be really existent, and to be an intermediate order of beings, comparable with angels in the Christian system, who act as God's viceregents and are to be worshipped as His representatives. The popular belief of the Hindu millions is that they really exist as more or less independent deities, sometime described as sons and daughters of the Supreme God. Thus if a man fails to get what he wants from one god he can always try his luck with another.

Lastly, there is idolatry in the travesty of the truth of the Incarnation, which we find for instance in the belief in Krishna as an

*avatar* of God. It is true that we have no definite historical knowledge of Krishna, but there certainly was such a person, and the popular traditions present him not merely as an *amoral* but as an *immoral* being, whose conduct in a man of to-day would be stigmatized as vicious and degraded. So clearly is this recognized even by his devotees that the stock argument by which his viciousness is defended is that a divine being must not be judged by the same standards of virtue and vice as a human being. The idolatry in this case does not consist in making a figure of Krishna either by picture or statue, but in worshipping him as an *avatar* of God. A picture or statue of the true Incarnation of God might be superstitiously misused; it has been found necessary in some periods and conditions of the Church, and particularly when it has been surrounded by idolatrous peoples whom she is seeking to convert, to forbid temporarily the setting up of any pictures or representations of CHRIST. But the idolatry in Krishna worship consists in the worship of what the Old Testament calls 'a shameful thing' as God.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ANGELS

4. **The angels.** It has become the fashion for apologists of Hinduism to compare the position of the members of the Hindu pantheon with the angels of the Old and New Testaments. It is urged that they are regarded as beings of a higher order than man who act as vice-regents or agents of the Supreme Being. Even if such a comparison were in any way legitimate as regards their relation to the Supreme Being, it is enough to point out that the deities of Hinduism are the objects of worship in the highest sense of worship known to Hindus, whilst the kind of character ascribed to them in the Hindu Sastras makes such a comparison seem to Christians profane. The angels of the Bible are man's fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers, as truly creatures as himself, owing service and worship to God. It has indeed been suggested that the superhuman beings of the Old Testament, 'the sons of Elohim' (see Ps. xxix. 1; lxxxix. 6), are the gods of the nations degraded and reduced to a secondary place by the growth

of monotheism in Israel, but there is nothing to support such a theory and very much to demolish it. The Old Testament is always found in irreconcilable antagonism to the idea of the existence of such gods of the nations and describes them as vanities or nonentities; e.g. Ps. xcvi. 4-5. It is possible that in some passages that they are conceded a relative existence, as in Ps. cxxxviii. 1. 'Before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee,' and that the meaning is that the Psalmist in the very presence of the idols of heathen worship offers his praise to the one and true God.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON SALVATION

**14. Salvation.** The difference between the Hindu conception of 'salvation' and the Christian conception is vital. Hinduism is familiar with a word which is generally translated 'salvation' (*moksha*), but so wide is the separation between the idea of Christian and Hindu 'salvation' that in translating the New Testament into Sanskritic languages, a new term has had to be used; the use of '*moksha*' and its derivatives would create confusion and insert error. To the Hindu the highest goal, the supreme end, is release from existence itself. It is not merely release from a particular form or many forms of existence, which comes by death or innumerable deaths, but it is release from being. It may be attained by 'knowledge,' for existence is the realm of ignorance. This 'knowledge' consists in the removal of all desire and the annihilation of the consciousness of plurality. It is the destruction of that self-consciousness which is regarded as nothing but delusion, and which is the root of all suffering. It is thus the exact antithesis of Christian salvation. CHRIST offers salvation unto life, 'I am come that they may have life and have it abundantly;' Hinduism offers salvation from life. This conception of 'salvation' necessarily affects the Hindu conception of sin, or perhaps we should say that it is not sin, as the New Testament understands sin, from which salvation is sought. Sin is not the real evil; it is not the vice of the will so much as the mistake of the intellect. It is not even 'selfishness' but rather 'selfness'. Sin

thus regarded has a great deal to do with destiny but little to do with character. The conception of an atonement for sin is outside the range of Hindu thought. That which the author of this Epistle puts in the forefront as the characteristic work of the Son ('making purification of sins' i. 3) is to Hinduism in what are called its higher forms, unthinkable, as infringing on the law of *Karma* from which no emancipation is possible. At-one-ment, indeed, comes at the end of all by the annihilation of 'selfness', but it cannot come at any point on the way to be the power by which man, inwardly purified and rendered holy, is brought into union with God. Throughout the *Epistle to the Hebrews* runs the thought of holiness as the means by which man comes into the Presence of God, and to this holiness he cannot attain of himself. All the ceremonial cleansings of Judaism bore witness to his aspirations to be clean, and so to be at one with God. All the elaborate system of sacrifices bore witness to the truth that there was to be an adequate Sacrifice for sin.

The more popular forms of Hinduism are a revolt against the doctrines of the law of *Karma* with its exclusion of forgiveness. They indeed make forgiveness, judged from a spiritual point of view, cheap and easy. To bathe in Ganges water at the time of a particular conjunction of the moon and stars, to breathe your last breath in Benares, to utter the name of God even by mistake at the moment of decease, in these and other ways forgiveness of sins may be purchased, but the very revolt of human nature, knowing its needs, against a barren philosophy, bears witness to the provision of the true method of purification.



## CHAPTER II

**I** THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest

**1-4.** Before going further the author finds a stern exhortation to perseverance upon the truth of the unique greatness of Him through whom God's disclosure has come. There is the danger of drifting. Great privileges mean corresponding responsibility. Even the partial and provisional disclosure of God's mind which came through angels was of such value that transgression met with its due penalty; how much more terrible must be the loss if the salvation revealed in so great a 'Lord' should be treated as a worthless thing. Those who first received this revelation have passed it on to us, and we have not been left to accept it on their word alone, but their word has been confirmed by 'signs and wonders' and by the distribution of manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**1. Therefore.** This is one of the characteristic words of the Epistle. Each declaration of doctrine serves as the basis of an exhortation. The writer whose vision is so exalted is also he who is most practical. He sets forth sublime truths not to satisfy the imagination or the intellect but to be the inspiration and motive power of the will.

heed to the things that were heard, lest haply

**we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard.** It is the function of true religion to supply a continual stimulus by which believers may be spurred on to fresh endeavour. There is a tendency in human nature to slip down to lower levels (Rev. ii. 4-5). The remedy is 'more abundantly' to fix the mind on the supreme truths. Meditation in some form is essential to Christian life. It is not the abstraction of the mind, the negative way, which Vedantism and indeed some forms of Christian mysticism have pointed out, but it is the feeding of the mind with truth. It follows by a kind of logical necessity that if CHRIST is the supreme disclosure of God, infinitely superior to all spiritual beings, Christians must constantly fasten their minds on the truths which flow from this supreme truth. These are 'the things that were heard' when Christian instruction was first given. The writer wishes to recall to them their first shock of surprise and satisfaction when the 'good news' was declared to them.

**lest haply we drift away from them.** The vivid expression 'drift away' expresses that mental attitude which instead of seeking to subjugate or shape circumstances yields to them. The policy of 'drift' is carelessly adopted when a man will not oppose the current, but lets himself be carried away by it. The Christian faith supplies man with an anchorage, and it is his part by spiritual effort so to secure himself to this anchorage that he cannot drift. Compare the condition of mind expressed by the words 'lest haply we drift

2 we drift away *from them*. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every

with that indicated by our Lord in St. Matt. xi. 12, 'The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,' when the eager vehemence of the believing publicans hastening to enter the Kingdom is contrasted with the shallow aloofness of the Pharisees. There is also a stern warning against spiritual slackness in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (St. Matt. xxv. 1-13). The climatic conditions of tropical countries are a continual temptation to spiritual drifting.

2-3. Nothing but the sharpest shocks are sufficient to rouse the man who lets himself drift. Such a shock the writer now supplies by urging the certainty of retribution proportionate to the greatness and certainty of the salvation neglected (Cp. St. Luke xii. 4-7).

2. For if the word spoken through angels, that is, the Law given on Sinai. It was the common teaching of the Jews, founded perhaps on Deut. xxxiii. 2 and Ps. lxxviii. 17, that the Law was given to Moses through the mediation of angels. (See Acts vii. 53 and Gal. iii. 19). Not even Moses could hear the voice of God directly. Deut. iv. 12 may probably be to guard against the tendency to idolatry which would easily arise if it were supposed that at the giving of the Law any form of God were visible to the human eye, whilst a further safeguard was added in the doctrine that even the voice itself was heard through angelic mediators.

**proved stedfast.** The Hebrew Christians knew as a matter of historical experience that after the Law was

transgression and disobedience received a just

promulgated penalties for its infringement were invariably exacted. There may also be a hint here of the true law of *Karma*, the self-avenging power inherent in Divine Law.

**and every transgression and disobedience.** The two words 'transgression' and 'disobedience' cover both the things done and the things left undone, both the acts and the temper of disobedience. It is remarkable that our Lord's condemnation fell more frequently on the latter than the former, and, in countries where cessation from action is held up as an ideal condition, it is well to realize that inaction is a form of sowing which inevitably produces its own fruit. Cp. St. Matt. xxv. 3, 25, 45, and also our Lord's refusal to remain inactive in the presence of need: the dilemma of 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do harm? to save a life or to kill' (St. Mark iii. 4) apparently admits of the retort 'Why not do neither?' But the answer is that inaction in such a case is sin. Possibly our worst sins are the things that we have not done.

**a just recompense of reward.** The word occurs three times in this Epistle (x. 35; xi. 26) and nowhere else in the New Testament; the corresponding personal noun 'rewarder' is also found in xi. 6. The unusual compound word probably is selected deliberately to express with all the gravity possible the thought of a corresponding and precise requital of good or evil. It is the summing up in one word of the truth of Gal. vi. 7, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,' as illustrated

3 recompense of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto

and enforced in the history of the Hebrew people. See additional note.

3. **If we neglect.** The word recalls the Parable of the Marriage Feast when the same word is used by our Lord, 'they made light of it' (St. Matt. xxii. 5).

**so great salvation.** The 'so great' looks backward to what has gone before in Chapter I and forward to what is coming in verses 3 and 4. The salvation is 'so great' because the Son is the Mediator of it, and 'so great' because the original delivery of it was not by angels but by 'the Lord,' its reality was assured to us by the experience of its first hearers, and there was a persistent divine witness to its truth and power.

**having at the first been spoken through the Lord,** that is, spoken through Him who exercises supreme sovereignty ; it is not 'our Lord,' a phrase which sets forth our allegiance to Him, but 'the Lord.' He who is the Sovereign of the universe is also the Mediator of salvation. His teaching is the substance of the Gospel because His teaching declared Himself as the Gospel. 'No one cometh unto the Father but by Me.' He preached the Gospel by preaching Himself.

**was confirmed unto us by them that heard.** The writer here shows himself to be of the second generation of Christians and not one of those who saw and heard CHRIST in the flesh. The sentence may be rendered 'which was confirmed unto us by them that heard it as

us by them that heard ; God also bearing witness **4**  
 with them, both by signs and wonders, <sup>1 Gr.</sup> *dis-*  
 and by manifold powers, and by <sup>1</sup> gifts *tributions.*

having at the first been spoken through the Lord'—a rendering which brings the word which was spoken by angels into sharper contrast with that salvation which was declared by the Lord.

**4. God also bearing witness with them.** Not only was there this human witness, but in addition Divine witness accompanied it, and this Divine witness was still accompanying the preaching of the salvation ; such seems to be the force of the present participle.

The Divine witness was threefold, passing from the outward to the inward, and this perhaps gives us an indication of how this witness may be expected to continue in the evangelizing work of the Church.

**both by signs and wonders.** Supernatural portents do the work of arresting the attention of the careless. They are not the highest form of the witness ; for the same words are used by CHRIST of the 'signs and wonders' displayed by false prophets and false Christs (St. Matt. xxv. 24 ; St. Mark xiii. 22), and also of the condition laid down by the Jews which CHRIST refused to satisfy (St. John iv. 48). St. Paul attributes such 'signs and wonders' to the 'lawless one' (2 Thess. ii. 8). Yet they are attributed to CHRIST in the first preaching of Him (Acts ii. 22), and several times to the Apostles (Acts ii. 43 ; v. 12, etc.) while St. Paul claims that such had been wrought through him (Rom. xv. 19 ; 2 Cor. xii. 12).

<sup>2</sup> Or, *Holy Spirit*: and so throughout this book. of the <sup>2</sup> Holy Ghost, according to his own will.

**and by manifold powers.** From external manifestations which are intended to compel attention the writer passes to the endowment of the messengers with powers of various kinds which exceed ordinary human capacities. These 'powers' are numbered by St. Paul among the special gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 10). The 'powers' though manifold are all expressions of the one spiritual power which was promised by our Lord, and at Pentecost actually bestowed. 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you' (Acts i. 8). This 'power' in its outward manifestations may be realized in the conviction of sinners by the Word, or the casting out of evil spirits, or the restoration of bodily health; it is 'manifold' and yet one.

**and by gifts of the Holy Ghost.** The Holy Ghost is Himself the one supreme Gift who is imparted. The word 'gifts' is in the plural because the emphasis is not so much on His Indwelling Presence as on the several endowments which that Presence brings. There is no article before 'Holy Ghost,' and the word literally means 'by distributions of Holy Spirit' (Cp. 1 Cor. xii. 4-11).

**according to his own will.** By putting a comma after 'Holy Ghost,' the English version makes the words 'according to his own will' to apply to the whole participial clause and not only to the 'by gifts of the Holy Ghost.' This seems to give the richer sense, for

For not unto angels did he subject <sup>3 Gr. the</sup> <sup>5</sup>  
 3 the world to come, whereof we speak. *inhabited*  
*earth.*

it lays stress upon the truth that the whole accompanying witness and its method depends upon the will of God. The method of witness may vary in different ages. See additional note.

**5-8. Universal sovereignty is promised not to angels but to man. The nature of man, in itself, is slightly inferior to that of angels, but in spite of this, the world to come, i.e. the world of the new order in which redemption has borne its fruit, is to be subjected to human and not to angelic nature. But as yet this promised sovereignty has not been realized.**

5. For probably has no reference to the words immediately preceding, but resumes the thread of the argument which verses 1-4 have broken.

**not unto angels.** There may be a hint here of the Jewish belief that non-Israelitish nations were assigned to the guardianship and care of angels, a belief derived from the Septuagint version of Deut. xxxii. 8, but the underlying thought is more probably that, if God were to set over His new world any created being, we should expect Him to select the highest, and the angelic nature is superior to the human. But yet 'not unto angels, etc.'

**did he subject.** Here probably (as possibly in i. 2) the aorist is timeless and expresses the Divine counsel



6 But one hath somewhere testified, saying,

in the eternal order. In eternity the Divine will was to make man and not angels sovereign over a redeemed and new created world.

**the world to come**, that is, the world of the new creation inhabited by none but those whose wills are wholly subject to the Divine will. In this new order are the 'signs and wonders,' 'the manifold powers,' and 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit.' The world of the old creation still exists, for there are those who still rebel against God, but gradually the kingdoms of the world are becoming the Kingdoms of God and of His CHRIST. The faithful are already living in this world to come: they have tasted its powers (vi. 5) shadowed by the law (x. 1) and now ministered to them through the High Priest. (ix. 11).

**whereof we speak.** All Scripture from *Genesis* to *Revelation* is concerned with this 'new world,' which is the home of the redeemed. In the age preceding the Incarnation we have its shadow (*σκία*); in the present age we have its 'very image' (*εἰκὼν*), and finally when it is completely established its realized consummation (*πράγμα*). See note on x. 1.

6. **But one hath somewhere testified.** What seems a curiously indefinite method of citation is possibly used to give solemnity to the words quoted; attention is drawn to nothing but the words of Scripture. We should not have expected that such sovereignty would have been assigned to man, but yet Scripture had foreshadowed it.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?

Or the son of man, that thou visitest him ?

Thou madest him <sup>4</sup> a little lower than

the angels ;

Thou crownedst him with glory and

honour,

<sup>4</sup> Or, for a  
little while  
lower

7

**What is man, etc.** Ps. viii. is quoted by our Lord Himself (St. Matt. xxi. 16) and is used by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 27 and Eph. i. 22. It is not recognized by the Jews as Messianic, but the New Testament interprets it of CHRIST. The children's praise offered to CHRIST is praise of Jehovah, and all things are subjected to Him. In the Psalm man's weakness and insignificance are first set forth and thus the wonder of the universal dominion granted to him is heightened.

**7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.** The Greek words for 'a little lower' may refer either to time or to degree. The meaning may be that for a little while man's position is lower than that of angels, or that his nature is of a little lower dignity. The latter seems the better interpretation.

**thou crownedst him with glory and honour.** Although man's nature is of a slightly inferior order to that of angels, already he has a royal position with the dignity and splendour of kingship, for all the world is given him for his kingdom. The Psalmist, no doubt, has in mind Gen. ii. 19-20; ix. 2-3. 'I have given you all' is the keynote of the relation which God has established between man and other created things.

- <sup>5</sup> **M** a n y  
a u t h o r i t i e s  
o m i t **A** n d  
**8** *d i d s t . . .*  
*h a n d s .*
- <sup>5</sup> And didst set him over the works  
of thy hands :  
Thou didst put all things in subjec-  
tion under his feet.

For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made <sup>6</sup> a little lower than the

**9** <sup>6</sup> *O*r, *f*o*r* *a*  
*l*i*t*t*l*e *w*h*i*l*e*  
*l*o*w*e*r*.

**8. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him.** The author of the Epistle sees that the 'all things' is of wider sweep than the natural world: there is 'the world to come,' the redeemed world of the new creation. The words are to be true of this new made world as well; it also shall be under the sovereignty of man.

**9-10. But already we see human nature in the Person of Jesus crowned with glory. But crowned for what? That he may undergo death, a death which is for every man. The final bestowal of universal sovereignty on human nature is preceded by a great act of Divine condescension.**

**9. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels.** The universal sovereignty can only be realized because He who is essentially in Himself Sovereign Lord has taken this human nature which is a little lower than the angels. In the Hebrew it is 'a little less than God,' Ps. viii. 5 R.V. The

angels, *even* Jesus, because of the suffering of

writer uses one word for 'see' in verse 8, and another for 'behold' in verse 9. The change is significant. The latter implies a spiritual contemplation with which the evidence of the senses has nothing necessarily to do; it is the contemplation of faith. When our Lord said to St. Thomas 'Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed' (St. John xx. 29) the word translated 'seen' is not that which here denotes spiritual contemplation, but the word denoting physical sight. But he uses the word for 'behold' when He speaks of His contemplation of His Father's action. 'The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing.' (St. John v. 19).

**even JESUS.** The use by itself of the name taken in virtue of His manhood calls emphatic attention to His human nature. Westcott thus sums up the use of the Divine Names in this Epistle. '*Jesus* directs our thoughts to His human nature, *Christ* to His work as the fulfiller of the old Dispensation, *Son* to His Divine nature, *Lord* to His sovereignty over the Church.' The position also of the word '*Jesus*' at the end of the clause gives weighty emphasis to the thought of the human nature, which in English can only be brought out by the insertion of *even* which is not in the Greek. It is the method of the writer thus to lay stress on our Lord's humanity both by the word *Jesus* and its position in the sentence (Cp. iii. 1; vi. 20; vii. 22; x. 19; xii. 2, 24). In each case the human name stands alone and at the end of the clause.

death crowned with glory and honour, that by the

**because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.** The words derive extraordinary power from their unexpectedness. It seemed as if the course of the thought were going to run thus. 'To man has been promised supreme and universal dominion: as yet the promise has not been fulfilled entirely to the members of the human race; but we contemplate JESUS, who is indeed very man, lifted up now as supreme Sovereign.' But the writer speaks not yet of the exaltation of the Ascension. 'We contemplate Him,' he says, 'crowned with glory and honour'; but why? That He should taste death. The thought is not that of Phil. ii. 8-11. The death is not here considered as the ground of His exaltation, but He is crowned in order 'that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.' The grandeur and dignity of the Victim are enhanced in every possible way. As in animal sacrifice the victim that is being led to the knife is crowned with garlands, so this Victim is 'crowned with glory and honour' to be ready for death. It is a King who dies on the cross. Three times, we read in the Gospels, was the glory of the Man JESUS attested from heaven; after His Baptism, at the Transfiguration, and immediately before the Passion. The third (St. John xii. 28) seems especially the crowning of the Victim 'because of the suffering of death.'

In the Gospels, we may note, the word 'crown' is used only of the Crown of Thorns.

**by the grace of God.** The words seem to contain the

grace of God he should taste death for every *man*.

thought not that the Son was given grace that He might die, but that He was the free gift of the Father: 'God so loved the world that He gave, etc.'

**He should taste death.** The phrase means more than 'he should die.' It was not merely the separation of the spirit from the body that our Lord experienced, but all the long drawn-out pain and weakness of which death was the culmination. Compare 'The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' Drinking is a gradual process, and when the cup is empty death comes as a release. Our Lord Himself (as quoted by the Jews) used the phrase of spiritual separation from God; 'If a man keep My word, he shall never taste of death' (St. John viii. 52), i.e. there shall never be that gradual alienation from the life of God which finally culminates in eternal loss.

**for every man.** The word used for 'every man' implies that He tasted death for each single individual of the whole human race. The 'for' is not 'instead of' but 'on behalf of.' Each human being still tastes death, but CHRIST'S death has transformed that death into the gate of life.

**10-15.** This counsel by which the Son tasted death was God-befitting, for by suffering the Captain of salvation was completely equipped for His work which necessitated entire oneness with the many sons. They were indeed one before, in that He and they derived their being from the One, and this

**10** For it became him, for whom are all things, and oneness implying a kind of brotherhood may be illustrated from the Scriptures. But now they have become one in a way more entire; the many are flesh and blood, so He too has taken flesh and blood, and died to rescue them from the fear of death and him who wields that fear.

**10.** For it became him. Had we been left to ourselves to imagine what God would do, supposing He were to give His Son to take human nature that all might be subjected to man according to the promise, we should have looked only for the exaltation of the 'Son of Man', but when it has been revealed to us that His humanity lived in suffering, then at once we see how *beautifully befitting* to the love of God it was that the Captain of Salvation should share our lot in all things. The same word is used by our Lord of His baptism. 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness' St. Matt. iii. 15. Possibly the thought of a suffering Messiah was even yet distasteful to Hebrew Christians, or they had to listen to the scoffs of their fellow-countrymen, and so they needed to be reminded how beautifully fitting it was that the Supreme had so determined it.

**for whom are all things, and through whom are all things.** The writer does not simply say 'God', but he uses a great and majestic phrase to justify the use of 'it became'. 'Such is the will of Him', he would seem to say, 'to whom the whole universe owes its being and whose eternal counsel shapes its final end.' The 'all

through whom are all things, <sup>7</sup> in bringing many sons unto glory, to make <sup>7</sup> Or, *having brought*

things' recalls the 'all things' of v. 8. The Eternal Fount and Source of Godhead, 'for whom and through whom are all things', makes the 'all things' subject to man.

**In bringing many sons unto glory.** These words may be rendered in more than one way. The R.V. margin has 'having brought'. If we adopt this, the meaning would be that God having already brought many sons, each to his particular perfection, it was fitting, etc. Moses, Samuel, David and others having already attained to glory after passing through suffering, it was fitting that He should make the author of their salvation perfect through the same instrument. But such a rendering brings in a thought entirely foreign to the passage and utterly empties the word 'glory' of its meaning. The 'glory' of which the writer is thinking is not that to which the Old Testament saints may have attained, but the full richness of dignity and honour with which it has been promised that human nature shall be crowned in the Son.

The more satisfactory rendering is that of R.V. text. The two words 'bringing' and 'perfect' are in the same tense and might, grammatically, denote a synchronous action, but here they deal not with time, but with ideas; the thought of time is excluded. The one action is dependent on the other. He brings many sons to glory by perfecting their Leader by sufferings. He places the suffering Leader in the forefront of humanity and the



<sup>8</sup> Or, *captain* the <sup>8</sup> author of their salvation perfect

Captain leads on His followers to the appointed goal of glory. The writer calls them 'many sons', because he views them in their union with the one Son, following Him as their Leader and so already lifted up to the dignity of sonship promised to those who believe in His Name (St. John i. 12). See additional note on *Sonship*.

**the author.** No one English word can adequately give the meaning of the Greek word translated here and in xii. 2 'author'. It is the ordinary word for 'captain' in the Septuagint; the leaders of the tribes of Israel are so called. It occurs twice in St. Peter's speeches in the *Acts*, and is translated 'Prince' 'Ye killed the Prince of Life' (Acts iii. 15). 'Him did God exalt with His right-hand to be a Prince and Saviour' (Acts v. 31). The two conceptions of 'author' and 'leader' must be combined. CHRIST, the Prince or Captain, marches in front of His army leading it to the promised land, but from Him too has come that promised land; He has prepared a place for us.

**of their salvation.** Here it is 'salvation', in the previous clause it is 'glory'. The two words express different aspects of the same thing. 'Salvation' looks rather to the result in the 'many sons', 'glory' to its open manifestation before the angels (Cp. Rom. viii. 19). In realized sonship is salvation, in its revealing is glory.

**perfect through sufferings.** What kind of perfection

through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth **11** and they that are sanctified are all of one: for

is this which is conferred on the Son through sufferings? The word simply means to bring something to a complete issue so as to make it fulfill its purpose. What purpose is the author here thinking of? He has set it forth above. The Son has taken human nature that He may exalt it to its promised sovereignty over all. But this exaltation is conditioned by a deep condescension; He can only exalt men with Himself by becoming their High Priest and sharing all their sufferings. Thus the sufferings consecrate Him that He may fulfill the end of His priesthood, and that end is the leading of many sons to glory. Our Lord spoke of Himself as 'perfected' (St. Luke xiii. 32). 'The third day I am perfected'; this seems to mean the attainment of such an experience as enables Him to fulfill His end as Man, and that end may be summed up in His priesthood.

**11. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.** The Son of God became the Son of Man because being already one with men in origin from the One, He willed to complete His oneness by taking their very nature of flesh and blood. The 'One' is undoubtedly God. The Son eternally derives His Being from the Fount of Godhead. He is 'God of God.' 'The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten.' Created beings also derive their origin from God, and vast as is the distinction, yet says the writer, it is a ground of union that the Son

**12** which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren saying,

eternally of the Father, God of God, and the creatures made in the Divine Image, are 'of one.'

At the same time not only is the unity set forth but also the almost infinite distinction. There is the contrast between Him 'that sanctifieth' and 'them that are sanctified.' CHRIST is the Sanctifier imparting to them the holiness of God; men are the receivers, receiving that which comes from the Giver of all (Cp. xii. 10). Thus is true monism combined with true dualism in the Christian doctrine of God and man. (See additional note).

**that are sanctified.** The participle is present. The process is a continuous one, 'that are being sanctified one by one.'

**he is not ashamed to call them brethren.** The strong word 'ashamed' points to the almost infinite difference between their sonship and His, and to the widening of that difference by human sin. The reference is to the time before the Incarnation, and therefore the writer supports it by quotations from the Old Testament. After the Incarnation and Resurrection our Lord deliberately selected the word 'brethren' to describe His disciples, 'Go tell My brethren' (St. Matt. xxviii. 10). 'Go unto My brethren' (St. John xx. 17).

**12. I will declare thy name unto my brethren.** The quotation is from the Septuagint version of Ps. xxii. 22, the Psalm from which our Lord quoted when on the cross. The only ground on which the Psalm can be used as the

I will declare thy name unto my  
 brethren,  
 In the midst of the <sup>9</sup> congregation  
 will I sing thy praise.

<sup>9</sup>Or, church

And again, I will put my trust in him. And **13**  
 again, Behold, I and the children which God

writer to the Hebrews here uses it, is that its language cannot only apply to the author and his condition: he speaks in the name of the coming Messiah. It is unlikely that the words are David's; the agony which the author describes in the first part of the Psalm is rather that of one who was enduring the sorrows and humiliation of the captivity. In the second part there is the outburst of triumphant hope and praise, and it is in this part that the sufferer exclaims 'I will declare Thy name, etc.'

**13. I will put my trust in him.** Almost the exact words of the first quotation in v. 13 occur three times in the Old Testament (2 Sam. xxii. 3, Isa. xii. 2; viii. 17), but Isa. viii. 17 is without doubt the source of the quotation, for it is there immediately followed by the second clause quoted here. The emphatic 'I' is inserted by the writer to the Hebrews. At first sight it is not clear as to how the quotation illustrates the truth that the Son is not ashamed to call men His brethren, but apparently the writer wishes to emphasize the thought of the Son's dependence on the Father. He is like us in that, and this is an additional proof of

**14** hath given me. Since then the children are

brotherhood with us. When He was on the cross one of the taunts levelled at Him was 'He trusted in God' (St. Matt. xxvii. 43).

**Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.** The historical setting of the words is as follows. Two children have been born to Isaiah; to the younger he has been instructed to give the name 'Speed-spoil-hurry-prey'—a word he has already written on a large board and published in the presence of witnesses. The elder boy has been called by a name which meant 'A remnant shall remain.' The father, and the children with their strange names, are 'for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts'; they are signs both of coming judgement and also of the preservation of a faithful Church; they stand as living witnesses of the fulfilment of the words of God. The writer to the Hebrews takes the words and sees them completely fulfilled in CHRIST. The relationship is indeed changed, but the point lies not so much in the particular form of the relationship, as in its reality; and indeed CHRIST may be described as the 'father' of His people as well as their elder brother.

**14. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood.** The bond of union between members of the human race is that they share a common nature. The 'blood,' which in the Greek phrase comes first, is the symbol of mortal human life, the 'flesh' is the symbol of the weakness which temptation can assault. If then, the bond of union between the Son and the many sons

sharers in <sup>10</sup> flesh and blood, he also <sup>10 Gr. blood</sup> himself in like manner partook of *and flesh.*

is to be complete, He too must share this liability to death and temptation.

**He also himself in like manner partook of the same.** The children are 'sharers,' the Son 'partook.' Both the word and tense are changed. As in v. 11, so also here, the distinction as well as the likeness is emphasized. The children are 'sharers', because they have received and retain human nature which continues to exist as long as the race exists. But He 'partook,' because at a particular time He voluntarily took this nature and clothed Himself in it.

The word for 'in like manner' is a very strong one carrying with it the thought of a likeness most complete. It declares the reality of our Lord's human nature, and its use here was quoted in later controversies to oppose the heresy that His body was but an appearance or phantom.

The writer has gradually glided into a new thought. At first he dwelt on the contrast of human nature with the angelic; it was to man and not to angels that universal sovereignty as yet unrealized was promised: hence he deduced the fittingness of the Incarnation, for by it human nature is potentially exalted to its promised dominion. But leaving this thought on one side he begins to speak of the Incarnation as the fitting completion of a union which already existed inasmuch as the one Son and the many sons were 'of one'; this

<sup>11</sup> Or, *may*      the same; that through death he <sup>11</sup> might  
<sup>13</sup> Or, *hath*      bring to nought him that <sup>13</sup> had the

union entirely completed in the Incarnation renders the Son the perfect High Priest of mankind.

**that through death.** The purpose of the Incarnation is not only that the Son might be united with men in the spiritual fellowship of a life with God, but in the fellowship of the same bodily life. This perfected fellowship has the further result of bringing to nought that power of Satan which is derived from death, and one of the effects of this power on men, which is the fear of death. What the writer tells us is that CHRIST has turned Satan's weapons against Satan. He has used death as the means whereby He has robbed Satan of his power, whereas Satan uses death as the means by which he enslaves men.

**bring to nought.** The word is once used by St. Luke and frequently in St. Paul's Epistles. In 2 Tim. i. 10 it is used of JESUS CHRIST in connexion with death and is translated 'abolished' in the R.V. 'who abolished death.' The word apparently means to empty of power or effectiveness rather than 'abolish.' Neither death nor the devil are abolished, but their power has been rendered futile in respect of those who are in CHRIST.

**him that had the power of death.** In what sense has the devil 'the power of death'? The answer generally given is that as Satan is the author of sin, and sin results in death, in this sense he may be said to have 'the

power of death, that is, the devil; and <sup>13</sup> might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their

<sup>13</sup> Or, *may*

15

power of death.' He has it not immediately, but mediately through sin. It certainly does not mean that Satan is entrusted with authority to decide when and how each of us shall die, but he has the 'power of death,' because if there were no devil there were no sin, and if there were no sin there were no death.

**that is, the devil.** The only place in the Epistle in which the devil is mentioned. To Christians evil is not an impersonal force or law working in the universe, but it is the fruit of a perverted will resisting God, and the first perverted will which resisted God is that of him who in Holy Scripture is called 'the devil' or Satan. The Christian doctrine of evil does not imply a devil or spirit of evil co-eternal with God. It leaves the origin of evil a mystery, simply asserting that it came through the rebellion of the will in a created being. Nor does Christian doctrine permit us to look on evil as a necessary condition of the evolution of moral goodness. It is not a relative good nor is it only evil in comparison with something better, but something inherently and of its very nature contrary to the will of God. See additional note on the contrast with the Zoroastrian doctrine.

**15. and might deliver . . . bondage.** The purpose is not to deliver from death itself, but from the fear of death, which puts men into the position of slaves in this respect. Men may be said to fear death for four



**16** lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not of

reasons. (1) Because the process of dying seems unnatural and alien to us. (2) It seems to put an end to activities most of which are unfinished, and cuts us off from intercourse with those whom we love. (3) Its time and manner are utterly uncertain. (4) The state to which it introduces us is unknown.

From all this the death crowned by resurrection of the representative Man, the one Son, frees men. Death is revealed as the passage into a fuller life in which every form of activity finds its fruition and all human love is perfected. The time and manner of this passage cease to be of grave importance in view of what it leads to, and although we are still ignorant of the conditions of the Resurrection life we know that there is a place prepared, and that He will come again to receive us unto Himself.

**16-18. It was not to help angels that he became incarnate but to help man. Man's need is that of a High Priest, who through his experience of human conditions including temptation and suffering can bring succour to man enabling him to be rid of sin. This High Priest JESUS CHRIST has become.**

**16. For verily.** The words translated 'verily' imply that the fact about to be stated is a familiar truth. The 'for' looks back to v. 14 in which the fact of the Incarnation is declared. 'He partook of flesh and blood, for as of course, we know, etc.'

**not of angels doth He take hold.** It is now universally

angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold

allowed by scholars that the words do not mean that CHRIST became man and did not become an angel. Both the present tense and the meaning of the verb 'take hold' preclude this interpretation. The meaning is that in consequence of the Incarnation He lays hold of to help and is now laying hold of the Church of God which is composed of men. The word 'takes hold' describes the brotherly love of the Redeemer who is now grasping His brothers by the hand. He did not become man in order to help angels, but to help a seed of Abraham.

The question naturally arises, does He not then help angels? Do not the fallen angels need help as much as man? The writer, however, does not touch this subject. All he says here is that CHRIST did not become man to help angels. The love of God is of infinite resource and He may find means to bring His banished angels back again, but of that we have no knowledge and no means of knowing at present. The fall of the angels, and the fact that there is no hint in Holy Scripture of their restoration, must ever be a grave warning to such of us as have abundance of light and are comparatively free from external temptation. This seems to have been the previous state of the angels who are fallen, and so their fall seems as though it might be irreparable.

but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. We should have expected 'but he taketh hold of men'? but the writer probably wishes to emphasize these two points: (1) He taketh hold of the faithful, those who trust Him.

**17** of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved

It is not *the* seed of Abraham but *a* seed of Abraham; there is no definite article before 'seed'. Abraham stands for the father of the faithful, those who look for and claim the promises. (2) The writer is addressing Hebrews and it is natural that he should indirectly remind them that the first whom the Saviour took hold of were literally as well as spiritually a seed of Abraham. The first called into the Kingdom were the lost sheep of the House of Israel.'

Those who by the political conditions of their time, as is the case in India now, find themselves in the position of being members of a race 'subject' in the sense of not having complete self-government, should remember that the Redeemer of the world took His human nature of such a people, and that through the members of a race politically subject the Kingdom of God has spread through the world. Spiritual liberty is an infinitely greater thing than political liberty. 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' At the same time political liberty is one of those good gifts which God gives to a people to raise them to the dignity of a nation with a corporate life of their own and with their own special characteristic contribution to make to the true 'wealth of nations.' The history of 'the seed of the Abraham' gives a signal warning of how this gift conferred by God on His people was lost through faithlessness to Him.

**17. Wherefore.** That is, 'because He is laying hold of the faithful to help them.'

him in all things to be made like unto his

**it behoved him.** Three words are used in the New Testament of what we may call the obligations of CHRIST. One means that it was morally befitting in virtue of what He was; 'Thus it *becometh* us to fulfill all righteousness.' It is the word used in verse 10; 'It was God-befitting.' The second corresponds to the idea of duty, as for instance; 'Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?' The third is the word used here, which seems to mean that it was necessary to meet the needs of the case.

**in all things to be made like unto his brethren.** It is possible to conceive of the Incarnate Life as lived under conditions very different from those in which it actually was lived. Indeed, if we had to conjecture beforehand how it would be spent, the result of our imaginings would certainly have been far removed from the reality. Men had been able to conceive the idea of God dwelling among them, but that He should share their lot in all things, this was beyond the reach of human imagination. Even the disciples of CHRIST could not at first understand the being 'made like in all things.' St. Peter probably truly represented their general opinion when he protested against the idea of suffering in the Messiah's life (St. Matt. xvi. 22-3). The difference between the idea of the Incarnation and the Hindu *avatar* is profound. Of the latter it might be said: 'in all things made unlike,' so much so that even in matters of right and wrong it is urged by Hindu

brethren that he might be a merciful and teachers that such *avatars* are not to be judged by the moral standards that are commonly imposed upon men.

**that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.**

Here we have the reason why the Incarnation under conditions in all things like man's is necessary ; it is because man's supreme need is that of a high priest, and it is assumed as an axiom that only he can be that priest whose sympathy is founded on likeness of condition. Gradually the writer has been leading up to what is the characteristic teaching of the Epistle, CHRIST as the High Priest. Nowhere else in the New Testament is He called Priest or High Priest, though in the *Apocalypse* He is represented as clothed in priestly garments. Yet in the *Hebrews* the thought is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly, and the very abruptness of its entry gives it emphasis. Man's nature in CHRIST is lifted up above the angels, but He who so exalted it came down before He lifted it up, and by coming down to man satisfied his supreme need of a High Priest. But his need was not only that of a High Priest, but of a High Priest 'merciful and faithful.' The conception of 'mercifulness' is not that of overlooking sins, but a merciful man is one who stoops to help. Mercy is love exercised not between equals, as is the case in the love of the Persons in the Holy Trinity, but it is love exercised towards one who in some respect occupies a lower status. By taking human nature He stooped and so is 'merciful.' He is 'faith-

faithful high priest in things pertaining to God,

ful ' because His human nature being united to the God-head He can utterly be relied on.

**in things pertaining to God.** These words, of course, do not imply that there are things in human life which do not pertain to God, or that any department is outside the ministry of the High Priest. They might be rendered 'as towards God.' The Godward aspect of His ministry is emphasized; it is not only philanthropy but philanthropy inspired by faith which brings man to God. The expression occurs again in v. 1 and in Rom. xv. 17.

**to make propitiation for the sins of the people.** The one great bar which shuts man from God is sin. If the High Priest is to bring man to God He must remove this bar. It is to be noticed that the word 'propitiation' is never used with God as its object either in the Septuagint or the New Testament; it is never said that God needs propitiation or reconciliation. God's anger against sin is spoken of, for anger is the energy of Divine love directed against sin to destroy it, and as long as the sin is there God's anger must be exercised against it. But, it is never said that God must be propitiated. The Old Testament nowhere teaches that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant appeased God's wrath nor does the New Testament say that the sacrifice of CHRIST appeased it. The High Priest makes propitiation by His sacrifice, because that sacrifice has power to destroy sin and thus make man forgivable. God is ever

to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

ready to forgive, but man is not ever able to receive forgiveness.

It is to be noticed that the verb 'to make propitiation' is in the present tense. The one act is continually applied. So also St. John says: 'If we walk in the light . . . the blood of JESUS His Son cleanseth (is cleansing) us from all sin' (1 St. John i. 7). The contrast between the Bible conception of propitiation and that of the lower forms of Hinduism is thus seen to be absolute. In the latter, sacrifices are offered to appease or coax an angry god or goddess, and have no necessary relation to sin. Islam professes to teach that there is no need of an atonement or propitiation, but in actual practice the sacrifice of animals takes place, e.g. in the Bakr Id when goats are sacrificed in large numbers, and the blood is regarded by most Mussalmans as having propitiatory power in the lower sense. Also in time of dangerous illness animals are sacrificed by Mussalmans as a ground of entreating the Divine help. But see Introduction, p. 40 for the orthodox Muhammadan doctrine of sacrifice.

**of the people**, i. e. those who have been brought within the new Covenant—God's people. The term 'laity' is commonly used as though it were merely negative, signifying those who are not called and ordained to the special ministry of the Word and Sacraments, but it is a positive term denoting those who have accepted God's covenant; it is these who are brought under the power of the propitiation.

<sup>14</sup> For <sup>15</sup> in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

<sup>14</sup> Or, For having been himself tempted in that wherein he hath suffered **18**  
<sup>15</sup> Or, wherein

**18. For in that he himself . . . that are tempted.** The rendering given in the margin of the R.V. is 'For having been himself tempted in that wherein he hath suffered.' It is a possible translation, but not a natural one and does not give so good a sense. Suffering may indeed be an occasion of temptation to us, as in the case of Job, but the appropriate thought here is that CHRIST having Himself been tempted, and having felt the pain of temptation, is able out of His experience to sympathize with and help those who are tempted. Without the sameness of experience there could not be the fullness of sympathy, and without the fullness of sympathy there could not be the power to help. Moreover, occasions of temptation are not confined to suffering, for our joys and pleasures may be the material of temptation also.

There is a striking parallel in language in St. Mark ix. 22. 'If thou canst, . . . have compassion, . . . and help.' The 'for' connects the 'succour' with the 'propitiation' which is the essential function of the high priesthood. It is no mere ceremonial cleansing, but it carries with it a moral change. The first thought given in connexion with priesthood and propitiation is the enabling of the penitent to overcome temptation.



## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON 'A JUST RECOMPENSE OF REWARD AND THE LAW OF KARMA

II. 2. In what is known as the law of *karma* we have the distortion of the weighty truth contained in this word which is translated in the R. V. 'a just recompense of reward.' By the law of *karma* is meant that law by which a man's present life is the fruit of a series of past lives stretching back practically to infinity. The constant factor which passes from one birth to the other is the sum of the actions of each several existence, and this factor, called *karma*, by an absolute necessity from which there is no possibility of escape, determines the conditions of each new birth and all that must happen in it. Action generates force, and the force must persist from birth to birth. The man dies, but the works remain as a seed which sown afresh produces a new existence in exact correspondence with the *karma*. Thus it follows that *caste* and *karma* are inextricably connected. There is no such thing as an accident of birth; a man is necessarily Brahman or Pariah by the working of this law; nor can there be any mistake; what the man is, he is in virtue of forces which neither gods nor men can control or alter. How in the far away ages of the past came the beginning of action which constitutes the *karma* is a matter which does not now concern the man who believes in it. It is enough for him to know that he is carried along from birth to birth by an unerring force to which he must yield. It has been argued that this belief begets a sense of immense responsibility and is a powerful incentive to a virtuous life; a man perceives the justice of his sufferings which are really self-inflicted and in view of his future births abstains from such action as is likely to produce pain. In practice, however, it is found to have no such effect. All responsibility is transferred to the law. The individual regards himself as helpless in its grip. His own connexion with *karma* in past births is too vague and shadowy a

thing to touch or stimulate the conscience. No conscience, indeed, can bear the burden of the actions of an unknown number of lives, and a kind of insensibility is created which regards a state of inaction as the ideal condition of man.

In decided contrast with this is the effect of belief in the '*just recompense of reward*.' It gives just that stimulus to the sense of responsibility which man is found in experience to need. God is not merely a compassionate Being, in the sense of being weakly good-natured, whose office is to overlook evil; on the contrary 'He will by no means acquit the guilty,' He is not mocked. But the '*just recompense of reward*' is to be in itself an instrument for renewing and disciplining the character. The pain of the penalty is to be part of the sowing which is to be reaped in penitence. Over against the '*just recompense of reward*' of sin is the '*great salvation*.' Moreover the '*great salvation*' is not the remission of penalty pronounced by the fiat of a 'compassionate' God who like an arbitrary despot remits or punishes independently of considerations of righteousness, forgiving apart from the forgiveness of the sinner. The '*just recompense of reward*' is to be one of the stages which lead to the '*great salvation*.' Between the hopelessness of the law of *karma* and the immorality of a forgiveness apart from forgiveness is the Christian doctrine of 'just recompense' and 'salvation.'

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE DIVINE WITNESS

II. 4. It may be asked if these words justify us in supposing that whenever the Gospel is newly preached to men it will be accompanied and attested by this threefold witness. Ought we, for instance, to expect 'signs and wonders' when in India, a fresh district receives the word of salvation? The answer to the question is found in the concluding words of the verse, 'according to His own will.' The method of the witness depends on the will of God, and it will be so exercised that the witness which is best for the hearers in each particular case will assuredly be granted. The words of verse 4 do not mean that in each case when the Apostles preached the Gospel there was necessarily the whole of

the threefold witness. From the *Acts* we gather that one kind of witness was granted at one time and another kind at another time, as was best, no doubt, in each case for the people. CHRIST Himself refused 'signs and wonders' to those who demanded them as an attestation of a message from God. It can unquestionably be asserted that in India the witness of 'signs and wonders' would be unsuitable to the mass of the people, for where there is an insatiable desire for the marvellous and little power of discrimination between Divine testimony and human trickery, the truth of religion would depend in the mind of Indian villagers on the comparative wonderfulness of the portents; it would be to them a contest of jugglers each claiming a superior stock of supernatural power. As it is, when preachers give instances of CHRIST'S miracles as evidences of the truth of His Divinity, not infrequently the retort is made that the miracles related in the Hindu Shastras are much more numerous and wonderful. We may expect however, that power in some of its manifold forms and the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit will accompany the declaration of the Gospel in India, for this is exactly the kind of witness that is most needed. Here experience is justifying what might antecedently have been expected. The delivery of those who are under the dominion of evil possession, the imparting of physical health, the power of 'prophesying' to beget conviction of sin, these and other signs are attesting in India the Divine origin of the 'great salvation,' and produce conviction among non-Christians that 'God is among us indeed.'

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ii. 10-11. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SONSHIP OF MEN

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews surprises us by the unexpected turns which his thought takes from time to time. For instance, in the previous verse we read of CHRIST crowned with glory and honour, and we naturally expect the writer to tell us that it is because He has tasted death for every man; that the Passion was the preliminary of the Exaltation; but instead of this we are told that He is crowned in order that He may taste

death. Again, in this chapter the greatest stress is laid on CHRIST'S brotherly relation to us, but the subject is not approached from the standpoint of the Incarnation, as we should have expected, but from that of the derived Godhead of the Son. The Father is the Fount of Godhead; the Son is of the Father; men's existence is also of God. This, says the author, constitutes a ground of affinity; hence He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Underlying this conception there is, no doubt, that of our creation through the Word in the image of God, our derived existence by creation through Him thus setting up a relation with the eternal Son, but in no other place in the New Testament is the fact of our creation by God through the Word put forward as a reason for claiming brotherhood with CHRIST and therefore sonship of the Father. In the Old Testament, indeed, a prophet rebukes the men of Judah for dealing treacherously with one another by urging 'Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?' (Mal. ii. 10). But the thought of men being sons of God because He created them is very dimly conceived, if conceived at all. But the author of *Hebrews* goes far beyond the prophet, for he does not ground a relationship of men, one with another, on their common creation by God, but he grounds a relationship of men with an eternal Being within the Godhead on the truth that as the Son derives His Godhead, so do we derive our existence 'out of the One'. Thus the Incarnation comes as something expected; already related to us He condescends to share our lot in all things, even to the taking of our human nature through and through.

St. John and St. Paul, on the other hand, view our brotherhood with CHRIST and our sonship of God from a different aspect. They speak of it as a gift or possibility which has come within our reach through the Incarnation. We cannot claim to be sons by creation, but the inestimable privilege of sharing the sonship of the eternal Son may be ours if we accept it. So St. John writes: 'But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His Name.' The word he uses for child does not occur in *Hebrews* and signifies one who has derived his life. He

goes on to say that this sonship of God implies the imparting and reception of a new life, which can only be adequately described as a birth: 'Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' We are not sons because our natural life has come to us originally from God, but we are sons because our nature has been lifted up into the nature of the Son. The word which St. Paul uses to denote this gift of sonship to us is adoption: 'God sent forth His Son born of a woman . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons.' We are taken into a family to which we have no claim as creatures. He frequently, but not always, uses the word which denotes the position or status of a son, the word which is always used of the Sonship of CHRIST. He uses indeed both words, sometimes speaking of us as children with a derived life (*τέκνον*), and sometimes as sons by position and status (*υἱός*), but the life as a child of God and the status as a son of God are always regarded as secured through the Incarnation: 'Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as were baptized into CHRIST did put on CHRIST' (Gal. iii 26-7). 'The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with CHRIST,' (Rom. viii. 16-17). In the first quotation the word for son by status is used, and in the second that for son by derived life. Some of the Christian Fathers strongly emphasize the truth that we cannot claim sonship of God by creation; St. Athanasius says: 'We are creatures by nature, and God is our Creator by the Word; but afterwards we were made sons, and then God the Creator becomes our Father also. We are not sons by nature, but the Son who is in us. . . . God is not our Father by nature, but of that Word in us, in whom and because of whom we cry "Abba, Father"'. So the Father calls them His sons, in whomsoever He sees His own Son, and says "I beget"; since begetting is significant of a son, and making is significant of the works. And thus it is that we are not begotten first but made; . . . but afterwards, on receiving the grace of the Spirit, we are said thenceforth to be begotten also' (*Contr. Ar. ii. 59*). St. Hilary also says: 'The sonship to

God is not a compulsion but a possibility ; for while the divine gift is offered to all, it is no heredity inevitably imprinted, but a prize awarded to willing choice.'

Further, we must remember that the life of God is ethical, and that therefore in the highest sense it cannot merely be imparted, it must be willingly received, and thus willingly received it produces the character of sonship. A man is in the highest sense a son of God when there is reproduced in him something of the character of God ; he is then a son by ethical likeness. So our Lord says : ' Blessed are the peacemakers : they shall be called sons of God.' ' Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh, etc.' Again : ' They that are counted worthy to attain that world . . . are sons of God.' In the same sense, and using the same word as our Lord uses (*υἱός*), St. Paul says : ' For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'

The full meaning of this 'sonship' to which we have been begotten, and which we are to appropriate by striving after ethical likeness, cannot be clearly apprehended by us in our present state of limitation (1 St. John iii 1-2). It is enough for us now to know that the gift of sonship is ours. It is the characteristic mark of the Christian religion that it points out the way to make all men sons of God, and declares that all in virtue of their original creation have this capacity for sonship. It quite clearly rejects any idea of a union which confuses personal distinctions. There is 'He that sanctifieth' and there is 'They that are sanctified'. The Creator and the creature, the Begetter and the begotten, the Giver and the receiver, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, are for ever distinct. Muhammadanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism have neither taught that men are sons of God nor pointed out a way by which they may attain to sonship. The conception of the Fatherhood of God is entirely foreign to them. Muhammadanism rightly emphasizes the creaturely relationship of man to God, but rises to no higher conception. In the 'ninety-nine beautiful names of God' (*Isma-ul-Husna*) the name of Father does not appear. 'The Merciful', 'Compassionate', 'The Faithful',

'The Protector' and other beautiful attributes of God are found in the Quran, but never that of Father, which seems blasphemy to the Muhammadan. That the creature could ever be lifted to a filial relationship with the Creator seems to him to contradict the very idea of God. Even when God is called the Creator, the Maker and the Fashioner, commentators carefully explain that no nearness of the Creator to the creature is implied in these names. Philosophical Hinduism holding, as it does, that the sense of personal distinction is an illusion, has no place for any doctrine of Fatherhood and sonship. Any such conception is part of that 'ignorance' which philosophy dispels. In the lower forms of Hinduism god to god may have the relationship of father or son, but not men and gods. Buddhism, not recognizing any being above man to whom he either is or may become related, knows nothing of God either as Creator or Father. It is thus the supreme mark of Christianity that it comes with the offer to lift men up to be sons of God.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ii. 11. CHRISTIAN UNITY AND HINDU MONISM

The distinctive doctrine of Hindu religious philosophy set forth in the Upanishads is that which may be described as '*Monism*'. Two stages of thought are passed through before the doctrine of absolute *Monism* is reached. The first stage is that in which the individual *atman* is thought of as abolishing illusion and attaining to true knowledge by knowing itself to be the one universal *atman*. When this knowledge is attained all consciousness of separation is gone: there is *One*. But there is a second and more strictly logical conception. The word 'know' in itself implies a duality, for it carries with it the ideas of a knowing subject and a known object. But if there is but *One*, that *One* can never be an object of knowledge; such a thought is self-contradictory. How then is the illusion of plurality and the accompanying idea of knowledge to be accounted for? The only answer that the *Upanishad* philosophers gave is that all which seems to be is a kind of experience which the one *atman* chooses to under-

go: 'To taste of reality and illusion the great self became two-fold.' *Maitrayana Upanishad* 7.11. In the '*Mirror of the Hindu Philosophical Systems*' by Goreh we read 'It is written in the *Veda*, with reference to God, that at the time the world was made, 'He saw,' and that He said, 'I am one I would become many.' Chapter III. The outcome of such Monism in practice is the life of *Yoga*, in which men strive by artificial means to rid themselves of the consciousness of plurality. It is almost unnecessary to point out how illogical such a method of life is, for it is obvious that such consciousness is the one *atman's* consciousness, a kind of dream in which he willingly indulges; he will recall it as soon as he feels inclined; it is not in the power of the dream-images to help in the dispersion of the dream. Nor is there any need to point out the disastrous effects of such Monism on human life, for instance, in reference to the idea of sin. It is enough for Christians to realize how resolutely men have sought for the principle of unity in the All, regardless of the intellectual and practical consequences of the theory. In the less rigid theory of Hindu Monism which has taken form in that system of thought and life known as the *Vedanta*, a kind of dualism is conceded, for the individual *atman* is reckoned to exist. But its existence is its misery, and it finds its true goal by absorption into the One. All the efforts of the individual are to hasten the time when the many shall be absorbed into the One. The irrationality of a scheme of the universe in which separation or plurality exists for no purpose, and which only produces temporary misery for existences which get their emancipation by ceasing to be, does not seem to have been considered by the philosophers who put it forth. It seems to be the offspring of minds which had lost all hope. And here we have one of the aspects of the vivid contrast between Christianity and Hinduism. Christianity is the religion of hope, Hinduism of despair. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* is pre-eminently an Epistle of the hope which is an anchor of the soul. It too lays down a deep principle of unity, and gives us a Christian doctrine of Monism, but it is a doctrine which braces up men and encourages them to use all the powers of their nature. 'For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all



of One. The words 'are of One' declare the First Person of the Godhead to be the Source and Fount of all. The principle of unity is in the Eternal Father. But this unity does not preclude plurality, for of the Eternal Father is the Eternal Word or Son, 'God of God'. Through the Word come into being those myriad existences of which it is written: 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.' The Unity is still maintained because all derive their reality from being the fruit of His thought, and have no reality apart from Him. In this sense sin and disease are 'not-things', as Christian mystics have said, meaning that the only *real* is that which shares the Unity. They are only too real in the lower sense of being permitted to exist for a time. This thought suggests the further one that the highest kind of unity is in likeness of moral nature. All kinds of beauty except one can be created, and this one is the beauty of holiness. That can only come to be through the co-operation of a free spiritual being. Hence arises the necessity of *time*. We cannot conceive of a man becoming holy apart from time, and time may be said to have a relative existence in order that holiness may be. These thoughts underly the words of v. 11. 'He that sanctifieth' is the present tense describing a continuous action in time, and the derivation of all holiness from the Godhead. 'They that are sanctified' is also in the present tense and describes the free acceptance of grace in conscious acts of choice habitually made, by which holiness and therefore unity are gradually attained. This is the doctrine of Christian Monism: out of the One, unto the One; not absorption into the One, but a Unity implying Lover and Loved, God being 'All in all.' It is futile to speculate as to how far this Unity is broken by the continued existence of wills estranged from the One or as to whether there can be in an eternal order a sort of isolated hospital for those who have rejected this sanctification and so mar the Unity. Such speculations are beyond our powers. The attempt to formulate a perfectly logical and consistent system when we are dealing with infinite premises is bound to be a failure. We may not be wise beyond what is revealed.

**II.-14. The Christian Doctrine of Evil contrasted with Zoroastrianism.**

Zarathustra (Zoroaster) is the traditional founder of Zoroastrianism. Bishop Westcott states in his *Gospel of Life*, p. 174 that Zarathustra 'had gained views of God, of the world, and of man, which approach more nearly to the fullness of truth than anything else which heathen literature can show. . . . There is indeed something almost Shemitic in the stern monotony with which he sets forth his principle, and in the faithfulness with which the Zoroastrians afterwards guarded them from the assaults of polytheism.' Yet there was in Zarathustra's doctrine of the origin of evil that which sharply contrasts with the Christian doctrine. He seems to have taught that there was a certain duality in the one Divine Being, who was alike the source of good and evil, virtue and sin. He expressed this by saying that in God were twin Spirits, a white Spirit and a dark Spirit, united as the two creators, the one the creator of good and the other the creator of evil. It would appear as though, confounded by the problem of evil in connexion with the Almightyness of God, he linked together God and the devil into one. In the inaugural speech of Zarathustra in the *Gatha Ahunavaiti* we read (Yas xxx. 3-4). 'In the beginning there was a pair of twins, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity; these are the good and the base, in thought, in word, and deed. Choose one of these two spirits! Be good, not base! And these two spirits united created the first (the material things); one, the reality, the other, the non-reality.'

In Yaana xlv. 2, however, we find the irreconcilability of the two spirits distinctly emphasized. 'Yea I will declare the world's two first spirits, of whom the more bountiful thus spake to the harmful; neither our thoughts nor commands, nor our understandings, nor our beliefs, nor our deeds, nor our consciences, nor our souls, are at one.' Later developments of the doctrine not unnaturally separated the two, and the white spirit was held to be the whole being of God, the beneficent power, whilst the dark spirit (a human) became a separate and independent entity, the maleficent power, regarded as the source of all evil in eternal

conflict with the source of good. Thus a kind of dualism was substituted for monotheism, and the devil made eternal. In true Zoroastrianism, however, so Bishop Westcott holds, the dualism is not final, and the evil power is at last to be destroyed. Thus the doctrine, though confused, and at first sharply contrasting with the Christian doctrine, finally approaches to it. Christianity teaches that the devil is a created being who has become evil by the perversion of his will in rebellion against God. How this perversion first originated, is a question to which there is no answer. Christian doctrine deals with facts as they are, and supplies an interpretation of them, but does not profess to remove all mysteries. Chief among the mysteries which cannot be explained or removed is the freedom of a created will.

## CHAPTER III

WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of

1-2. In the light of the considerations which the writer has now urged he calls upon his readers to consider Him whom God has sent to be their High Priest, and to compare Him with those who have represented men before God; they are specially to meditate upon Him in His human nature, 'even Jesus'. Thus His uniqueness will be further demonstrated.

1. Wherefore, i.e., in view of the truths just urged.

holy brethren. This mode of address gathers up in two words their high privileges as men and Christians. They are 'brethren', not merely one of another, but brethren of CHRIST (v. 12). They are 'brethren whose very nature He has taken to be His own (v. 14)' They are 'holy', that is, men consecrated and set apart and undergoing the process of sanctification (v. 11). Nowhere else in the New Testament is this combination of 'consecrated' and 'brothers' found. Christians are 'holy' men, not because they have attained to that perfection of holiness for which they were created, but because they live in the sphere of the action of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul frequently uses the word of them as a body (e.g., 1 Cor. i. 2; vi. 2; xvi. 1)

a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and and St. Peter uses it as an epithet of the whole society (1 St. Peter ii. 5 and 9).

**partakers of a heavenly calling.** This phrase also gathers up and personally applies the truths upon which the writer has already insisted. The call comes to them from the heavenly world—'the world to come' of ii. 5, the world in which human nature is exalted even above that of angels.

The word 'calling' is used by St. Paul and in 2 *Peter* of that high state of life which we have not in any sense merited of ourselves, but to which we have been invited by the love of God. If we say now that a man has 'vocation' we mean that he has received a definite call from God to a certain state of Christian life. So our Lord describes the Apostolic vocation: 'Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you' (St. John xv. 16) All who come within the hearing of the Good News of God receive vocation to the heavenly state, whilst those who respond are 'partakers'. Again, some are called to the state of Holy Orders, etc.

**consider**, that is, bring all your mental and spiritual powers to bear on Him. The same word is used by our Lord when He calls upon us to meditate upon nature in its relation to God and recognize the loving hand of the Father there (St. Luke xii. 24-7). Meditation is one of the essential practices of spiritual life, for in meditation we make truth our own. It is not as in Hindu meditation the abstraction of the mind from all in order to direct it to qualityless Deity, which

High Priest of our confession, *even* Jesus;

is nothingness, but it is the consideration of truth as it is revealed in CHRIST'S Person and words. The direct perception of God, which is called 'contemplation', is for very few, if any, whilst we are in our present state of being, but meditation is for all.

**the Apostle and High Priest**, i.e., Meditate upon JESUS as being the Apostle and High Priest. The writer calls upon the Hebrew Christians to meditate upon JESUS in the double aspect of one who being with the Father in the heavenly state was sent by the Father into the earthly state, and was sent to represent God before man and man before God. The fact that our Lord speaks of Himself as 'sent' and also of Himself as 'coming' indicates the perfect union of the will of the Father and the Son: e. g., 'I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me' (St. John vi. 38).

This is the only place in which our Lord is called 'the Apostle', though He often used the cognate verb of Himself, as in St. John xx. 21.

**of our confession.** This may mean that we openly confess JESUS to be our Apostle and High Priest, that is, we confess that we have in the Man Jesus one sent of the Father to bring us the good news of salvation, and as High Priest to accomplish it. Or it may mean that JESUS is the essential object of our faith. The word 'confession' is used of open acknowledgement of anything before witnesses.

**even JESUS.** The use of the human name alone is

2 <sup>1</sup>Gr. *made*.  
<sup>2</sup>That is,  
*God's house*.  
 See Num. xii.  
 7. who was faithful to him that <sup>1</sup>appointed him, as also was Moses in all <sup>2</sup>his house. For he hath been

significant. He who was sent by God to be the High Priest of men is Himself true Man.

**2-6.** In His mission upon earth as Man among men He is compared with great men of the old Dispensation; and first with Moses; the comparison is in two points, one of likeness and one of contrast; both were faithful, but Moses was himself part of the household which he administered, whilst Jesus was the founder of the household. Moses' faithful service was that of a servant, whilst the service of Jesus was that of a Son presiding over His Father's house.

2. who was faithful, i. e., meditate upon Him as being faithful, etc. The word 'faithful' according to the context in which it is found means either one who has faith, or one who having been trusted has proved worthy of the trust. So also the Greek word generally translated 'faith' means either 'trust in God' or 'trustworthiness.' In His human nature we may speak of CHRIST'S faith and faithfulness, and God is described as 'faithful,' that is, as one who may be utterly trusted.

to him that appointed him. Though the Greek word literally means 'made', and this text has been quoted by unitarians to support the contention that CHRIST was

counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that <sup>3</sup> built the house hath more honour than the 3

<sup>3</sup> Or, established.

only a creature, yet the writer could have no hesitation in using the simplest word possible for designation to an office, because he knew that his meaning could not be misunderstood by any one who had read the words in i. 3, in which the Divine and uncreated nature of the Son is plainly set forth.

**as also was Moses in all his house.** The reference is to Num xiii. 7. 'My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all mine house.' The 'house' is God's house, and signifies the covenanted people of Israel as organized according to the will of God. This covenanted people was the type of redeemed humanity, which is now the house of God, the new temple in which it has pleased Him to dwell. This imagery of the house or temple is frequently used in the New Testament: see Eph. ii. 21-2; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 St. Peter iv. 17.

**3. of more glory than Moses.** It is not merely that the events in the life of Moses and in the life of CHRIST are to be compared. For instance, it is not only a comparison of the glory of the Transfiguration with that of Moses after his converse with God on the Mount, nor of the glory of CHRIST'S Ascension with that of Moses' withdrawal from Israel by his death on Pisgah. The comparison is rather concerned with their abiding positions, one as Son and the other as servant, the office of the Son not being limited to this lower



4 house. For every house is <sup>4Or, estab-</sup> 'buildded  
*lished.* by some one; but he that 'built all  
 things is God. And Moses indeed

sphere, as was that of the servant, but extending to the heavenly sphere.

**he that built the house** rather 'he that established the household'. Who is meant here by the builder of the house? The argument seems to require that it should be CHRIST who is referred to, but the phrase in v. 4 'he that established all things is God' seems a meaningless parenthesis unless the subject in both places is the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. It seems here that we have an instance of the exquisite skill of the writer, both in compression and suggestiveness, who though speaking of CHRIST in His human nature leads us, without actually saying so, to identify the divine operation of the Father with that of the Son.

The word 'house' means 'household' rather than the material building in which the members of the family live.

**hath more honour than the house.** Moses is identified with the household of which he was the chief member and administrator. The word is now changed to 'honour,' which signifies some dignity conferred on a recipient rather than that which is inherently possessed in virtue of a person's character or being.

**4. For every house, etc.** V. 4 lays down the principle that every institution needs a founder, and applies the principle to the case of the Jewish Economy, each detail of which owes its enactment to God.

was faithful in all 'his house as a servant, for a testimony of those

That is, <sup>5</sup>  
God's house.  
See Num. xii.  
7.

'All things' does not here mean the sum of the universe, which would require the article in Greek before 'all', but each several thing. It is not a statement of the truism that God created the universe. The word 'God' also is without the article. The writer is intentionally indicating the Divine Nature of the Son, and making no distinction between the work of the Father and that of the Son. If he had intended definitely to signify the Father, he would have used the article: e. g., cp. St. John i. 1. 'The Word was with God': there is an article before 'God' in the Greek. 'And the Word was God': there is no article before 'God'.

**5. as a servant.** The word used here is an honourable one, and signifies one who renders free personal service. It became the fixed title of Moses—'Moses the servant of the Lord'—indicating that he was the one who waited in personal attendance on God. There are four words in the New Testament for 'servant'; that which we have here, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; the word 'deacon,' which CHRIST uses both to denote His own mission to men, and the true relation of Christians to one another (St. Luke xxii. 27); a third is used of service generally, and is applied by St. Paul to ministers of CHRIST (1 Cor. iv. 1); the fourth denotes the state of bond-service or slavery. It is worth while noticing that when St. Paul

things which were afterward to be spoken ;

wished to describe the condescension of the Son who became a servant, he chose the fourth of these words (Phil. ii. 7).

**for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken.** There are three interpretations of these words. They may mean that Moses was used as a servant to carry God's messages from time to time to the people. This interpretation is supported by the fact that one of the peculiar privileges of Moses was that God spoke with him 'mouth to mouth', and this close intercourse is directly connected with his faithfulness in the house (Num. xii. 8). Another interpretation is that Moses witnessed to the truths which were afterwards to be made clear by the Old Testament prophets, and were perfectly disclosed in CHRIST. The 'things which were afterward to be spoken' are those of the opening words of this Epistle. The third interpretation refers the 'things which were afterward to be spoken' to the good news spoken not in the prophets but 'in a Son', the full revelation of the mind and heart of God. The third seems the most satisfactory ; for instead of confusing, as does the second interpretation, it emphasizes the contrast between the Old and the New, the work of the servant in preparing and the work of the Son in revealing. Moreover, later in the Epistle the writer will use the tabernacle with its furniture and order and worship as testifying not to anything that the Old Testament prophets may have said, but to the realities of the New Dispensation.

but Christ as a son, over <sup>6</sup>his house; <sup>6</sup>That is, **6**  
 whose house are we, if we hold fast *God's house.*  
 See Num. xii.  
 7.

**6. but CHRIST as a son**, i. e., was faithful as a Son. The change from the name (v. 1) borne in virtue of His manhood to the title which bespeaks His fulfilment of type and prophecy is plainly intentional. He was 'Son' before He was 'JESUS'.

The faithfulness of a servant is one thing, and the faithfulness of a Son is another. The one carries out the instructions of the Head of the house, the other is his representative in the government of the house: see x. 21.

**over his house.** The 'his' is 'God's'; but the writer here as throughout skilfully implies that what he says of God, he says of CHRIST.

**whose house are we.** The Christian Church, in which the Jewish Dispensation has been fulfilled, is a household, a family of sons presided over by Him who, as the Son by essential nature, is Elder Brother.

**6-15.** The thought of the high privilege of membership of God's household leads the writer to break off once again to dwell on the need of perseverance. Membership of the household is not a privilege which cannot be lost. The privileges of Israel of old, as the Holy Spirit teaches in the 95th Psalm, were lost by many who by faithlessness and disobedience fell away. The richer privileges

our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto

**of the new Israel, of the partners with CHRIST, also may be lost through the deceitfulness of sin.**

**if we hold fast our boldness.** The Greek word for 'boldness' is used in the New Testament both of the relation of man to man and of man to God. In this Epistle it is used solely of the relation to God, and denotes an attitude of frank and happy confidence, which gives to Christians the power of free expression in their intercourse with God. Compare iv. 16: x. 19; x. 35, and the use of the word in 1 St. John. This 'boldness' is founded on our position as sons, and has been described as 'filial outspokenness'.

**the glorying of our hope.** The predominant temper of Christians is to be that of exultation. A considerable part of their witness to the world is to be through their joy. CHRIST Himself exulted in spirit as He thought of the grandeur of the position of the simple hearted to whom the revelation had come (St. Luke x. 21). The sense of exultation springs both from the present inheritance and from the hope of what shall be. Compare this exultant spirit of Christianity with the pessimism of Buddhism or of the Upanishads.

**firm unto the end.** These words, which are the keynote of the Epistle, reecho CHRIST'S words in St. Matt. x. 22. They are found again in v. 14, and this with the difficulty of the grammar here makes it possible, notwithstanding the strong manuscript evidence for them, that in v. 6 they are an interpolation. See also vi. 11.

the end. Wherefore, even as the Holy Ghost saith, **7**

**7. Wherefore.** Behind the 'wherefore' is the implied fear that the Hebrew Christians, though now of the household of CHRIST, may not persevere: *wherefore* let them listen to the Holy Spirit as He warned their forefathers.

**even as the Holy Ghost saith.** In ii. 6. Holy Scripture is cited with the words 'one hath somewhere testified'. Here with deeper solemnity the words are attributed to the Holy Ghost and not to the human instrument by which He spoke. Only in *Hebrews* (here and ix. 8; x. 15), and in Acts xxviii. 25 have we so direct a statement of the personal action of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. See additional note.

There would be peculiar force for Hebrew Christians in the quotation of the 95th Psalm, for it was used weekly on the Sabbath in the Jewish Liturgy. The larger part is thanksgiving to God as Creator, Ruler, Sustainer and Guide, but the last four verses quoted are a solemn warning of the danger of losing high privileges, enforced by the stern lessons of their past history.

**To-day.** The position of the word at the beginning of the sentence throws great force upon it. All the stress is upon the present offer of opportunity. The past has its lessons, the future is with God, but to us He has given 'to-day'. The same thought is urged by St. Paul in 2 Cor. vi. 2.

**if ye shall hear his voice.** It might be translated: 'O that ye would hear his voice'; but there is a vividness

8 To-day if ye shall hear his voice,  
 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,  
 Like as in the day of the temptation in the wilder-  
 ness,

in a method of speech which leaves unuttered the blessing which follows the hearing of the voice: 'if ye hear . . . how great will be your happiness'. The use of the word 'if' implies no doubt whatever that God is speaking and that they can hear: rather, it drives home 'the precept' He that hath ears to hear, let him hear'.

The voice is God's voice, but again the writer is not careful to distinguish between the Father's voice and CHRIST'S voice. One of the strongest indications of the faith of the early Church in CHRIST'S Deity is the simple natural way in which this Hebrew writer, addressing strict monotheists, applies to CHRIST words in the Old Testament which were spoken of Jehovah.

8. **Harden not your hearts.** He who wills not to hear, at last cannot hear. The spiritual sense may become atrophied. It was the tragedy of the wilful hardening of the heart which moved our Lord to grief in the midst of His anger against sin: see St. Mark iii. 5 ' . . . with anger being grieved at the hardening of their heart'. See additional note.

**as in the provocation, . . . in the wilderness.** The same two instances of Israel's faithlessness are given in the closing speech and benediction of Moses in Deut. xxxiii; the one was at the beginning of the forty years, Exo. xvii. 1-7, the other at its close, Num. xx. 1-13. They are cited as typical of Israel's wilful

<sup>7</sup> Wherewith your fathers tempted 9  
*me* by proving *me*, <sup>7</sup> Or, *Where*.  
 And saw my works forty years.

deafness to God's voice during the whole period. Meribah and Massah had become almost proverbial. Meribah literally means 'embitterment'.

**9. Wherewith your fathers tempted me, etc.** The root of the sin of tempting God was two-fold: it lay firstly in forgetfulness of the preservation and guidance vouchsafed in past days, which was the earnest of His present care for them; and secondly in the presumption of setting a test—'If God does this or that according to our will, we shall know whether He is amongst us or no.' It was precisely the sin of Israel's descendants who wished themselves to determine the test by which the Messiah should be recognized: 'Shew us a sign'. It is the same attitude in modern days which leads men to demand that if Christianity be true, if God be love, He shall manifest His truth and love in ways which men may decide to be conclusive. It is the sin of dictating to God how he ought to work instead of patiently waiting to see how He actually does work. Possibly the Hebrew Christians were urging that CHRIST should prove Himself their Saviour by manifesting Himself or helping them in some particular way.

**and saw my works.** Bishop Westcott calls attention to the fact that in the Hebrew the word for 'works' is in the singular. All that seem to us separate works of God are part of the one great plan or scheme by which all things move to the perfection of their appointed end; it is one work.



- 10 Wherefore I was displeased with this generation.  
 And said, They do alway err in their heart :  
 But they did not know my ways ;

**forty years.** The writer in quoting the Psalm transposes these words from the next clause, and inserts a 'wherefore'. No doubt he wished to throw emphasis on the number 'forty', which being a number of special significance in the history of Israel possibly corresponded roughly with the number of years which had elapsed since the Ascension of CHRIST. It was during these forty years that the Hebrew Christians had seen the 'work' of their Lord, and the Church had been guided and preserved. Were they going to dictate to Him as to how He should now act, and be faithless if it were not according to their own will !

**10. I was displeased.** The Greek word signifies far more than mere grief or displeasure ; it implies utter repugnance or loathing. It is the translation in the Septuagint (where it comes twenty-two times) of Hebrew words which mean loathing and disgust, or vomiting forth of that which offends (cp. Rev. iii. 16). The language of the Bible as regards God's attitude to sin is fearful in the intensity of the abhorrence it expresses. Sin is not a stage in the evolution of the race, or something which God's mercy may overlook, but that which has to be cast forth with loathing. 'Sinners shall not be able to stand in the presence of God'.

**with this generation.** The Hebrew has 'that generation', but the writer by use of 'this' instead of 'that'

As I swear in my wrath,

<sup>a</sup> They shall not enter into my rest.

<sup>a</sup> Gr. *If they shall enter.* ||

drives home the application of the words to the present generation of Christians.

**err in their heart.** According to the New Testament use of the word, the heart is much more than the source of the affections ; it signifies the seat of the moral and spiritual self and includes will and conscience. To err in the heart is to sin with the full responsibility of one who wilfully chooses evil. So our Lord says : ' For from within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed ' (St. Mark vii. 21). To err might be due to involuntary ignorance or unintentional frailty, and not be ' unto death ', but to err in the heart is ' the sin unto death '.

**but they did not know my ways.** The ' but ' seems to imply—' notwithstanding all their opportunities, yet they did not recognize : they might have recognized but they did not '. It is the Divine lament over rejected opportunities. Compare our Lord's words : ' If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, etc. (St. Luke xix. 42). There is such a thing as wilful ignorance for which men are responsible, which must bring upon them the Divine judgement.

**11. As I swear in my wrath.** Here we have the use of human language to express the unchangeableness of the Divine decree (Cp. vi. 13-18). We must remember how imperfect an instrument human language is to express Divine things. To speak of God taking an oath is to use a kind of allegory or parable.

**12** Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in

**they shall not enter.** The form of the Greek sentence expresses a most emphatic negative. We have the same form used in our Lord's decided refusal to grant a sign: 'There shall no sign be given unto this generation' (St. Mark viii. 12).

**my rest.** In the following chapter the writer will develop the thought of the 'Sabbath rest', and though to the Israelite the outward fulfilment of the promise was his settlement in the land of Canaan, yet even to him the promise carried with it much more than outward prosperity and domestic peace, for it implied a permanent sanctuary in which there might be peaceful fellowship with and worship of God.

After quoting this record of lost opportunities, the writer applies and drives home its terrible lessons. As the letter proceeds the exhortations and warnings grow in intensity. It is as though the writer, whilst he unfolds the truth, realizes with ever-growing force how great and splendid are the present possession and the promise of the future, and is filled with horror at the thought of those who have once believed losing so noble a heritage. The language gets terrible in its strength. He speaks of 'an evil heart of unbelief', of the loathing of God, of the carcasses rotting in the wilderness of those who might have been in the promised land.

**12. Take heed.** Abruptly, with no connecting particle such as Greek generally uses after so long a quotation, the writer breaks out 'See to it'. In xii. 25 there is another 'See to it', but then the background is

any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling not the dark record of failure but the recital of the glories of Christian fellowship.

**lest haply there shall be.** The form of the words carries with it the implication that the writer has good reason to suspect that there is already the presence of the evil.

**in any one of you.** The presence of one unfaithful member may spoil the whole body, and so the responsibility for the individual is thrown on the whole Church in that particular place. Perhaps there was one going about among the congregation, whispering doubts, spreading discontent, sowing seeds of apostasy. Let the body reform him or cast him out. The danger of even 'one' is represented in iv. 1.

**an evil heart of unbelief.** The expression is terribly strong. It indicates a life corrupted at its roots through faithlessness. The faithlessness is two-fold; it includes both loss of faith in God, and failure to respond to the trust which He has given. It is intended to stand out blackly in contrast with the faithfulness of CHRIST as Son, and of Moses as servant in God's household. Faith and faithfulness act and react on one another: faith is strengthened by faithfulness, and faithfulness springs from faith.

**in falling away from the living God,** literally 'a living God.' Faithlessness is manifested in apostasy, and its heinousness is found in the fact that the God who is thus forsaken is a *living* God. The absence of the article in Greek seems to throw stress on the epithet

**13** away from the living God : but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day ; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin :

' living.' It is from a *living* God that men fall away, whose life has been graciously revealed in the creation, preservation and guidance of His people. There is also the thought of the Old Testament use of the word, that in contrast with the 'not-things' called gods of the peoples around, gods which cannot hurt him who leaves them, the one *living* God can and will visit apostasy with retribution.

**13. but**, i. e., instead of allowing the temptation to apostasy to go unchecked.

**exhort one another day by day.** The responsibility for the health of the whole is laid upon each, and in exhorting his fellow each exhorts himself. The urgency of the danger is shown by the words 'day by day.' It was not only to be at the gatherings together on the first day of the week, which some of them were beginning to neglect as we learn from x. 25, but they were not to let a day pass without mutual encouragement and warning.

**so long as it is called, To-day.** The words indicate not an indefinite period, but a definite one. There is a limit fixed to the day of grace in which the Voice of God speaks and may be heard.

**lest any of you be hardened.** The Christian may himself narrow the limits of the day of grace by rendering himself incapable of hearing the voice. He is hardened indeed, but the hardening is a self-hardening.

for we are become partakers <sup>o</sup> of Christ, <sup>o</sup> Or *with* 14  
 if we hold fast the beginning of our

**by the deceitfulness of sin.** Cp. Gen. iii. 13. Sin is personified as in Rom. vii. She presents herself in the guise of a friend suggesting certain action, e. g., return to the Synagogue. The 'deceitfulness' takes the form of persuasion that the conduct suggested is either right, or at any rate not actually wrong, and certainly prudent. Thus men put darkness for light. See Isa. v. 20.

**14. we are become partakers of CHRIST.** In the margin 'with CHRIST.' Again we see the writer's method: the alternation of the gravest warnings with the exposition of the greatness of the inheritance. Here the latter is described as the partaking of all the glories of which CHRIST as Son partakes. Probably here the meaning is not members of CHRIST, but CHRIST'S partners. The royal title is used, 'the CHRIST,' for the thought is that of our sharing His anointing and exaltation as King and Priest.

**If we hold fast.** The status of CHRIST'S partners has been definitely conferred upon us; it is not ours by nature—the tense of the Greek verb 'we are become' makes this clear—but its fixity is conditional on our co-operation. There is an unusual particle with the 'if,' occurring only in this Epistle, which gives the force of 'we are partners, at any rate if.' However absolute and unchanging God's promise is, our permanent fruition of it depends on ourselves.

**the beginning of our confidence.** The word translated

**15** confidence firm unto the end : while it is said,

'confidence' is the same word as in i. 3 is translated 'substance.' It means the underlying reality of a thing, that which remains apart from temporal or accidental conditions. It is used of a ground of courage or steadiness in soldiers and of endurance under pain. No one English word can express it here. The underlying reality of their faith is to be the ground of their confidence. Probably the writer wishes to combine two ideas: first that the underlying reality of their faith is their union with CHRIST, and secondly that courage and steadfastness ought to be derived from this faith. It is as though he said: 'you are CHRIST'S partners, if only you will confidently rest on the truth that you are CHRIST'S members. Partners with CHRIST in the glories of His royal inheritance, if only you will hold fast to that confidence which is based on the truth that you are parts of CHRIST in the sharing of His life.'

**the beginning.** It does not necessarily mean that they had only lately become Christians, for they were almost certainly the second generation of Hebrew Christians. But all Christians are beginners in the sense that they have not yet realized to the full the greatness and power of their faith, though they have within them the first principle of growth and progress.

**unto the end.** It is not necessary to say exactly what the 'end' may be. It is enough to know that it is the end of probation.

**15. While it is said.** It is perhaps simplest to take these words as connected with 'if we hold fast.' The

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,  
Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did **16**  
not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? And  
with whom was he displeased forty years? was it **17**  
not with them that sinned, whose <sup>10</sup> carcasses fell in  
the wilderness? And to whom sware <sup>10</sup> *Gr. limbs.*  
he that they should not enter into his

end of co-operative effort is during the time of probation,  
and during the time of probation the Voice of God  
encouraging and warning sounds in our ears.

**16-19. The lessons of the Psalm are applied. The points are: (1) It was the very men that had already experienced God's salvation who provoked Him. (2) Sin was the cause of their ruin, and disobedience was the root of their sin. (3) Disobedience sprung from faithlessness which robbed them of their rest.**

**16. did not all they that came out of Egypt.** The society of the rescued, of the redeemed, as a body was apostate. There were exceptions, Joshua and Caleb, but practically the whole company of Israel failed. And so the writer says 'all.'

**17. was it not with them that sinned.** It is not by technical breaches of ritual observance that men excite God's displeasure; not by repeating *mantras* wrongly, or making mistakes in the ceremonial of sacrifice, but



rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

by violating the eternal law of righteousness. God's wrath is not arbitrary or capricious; sin must by its very nature provoke it.

**19. they were not able.** Not, 'they did not enter' but 'they could not.' The words have terrible force. Just as God's wrath is not arbitrary, neither is the infliction of the penalty arbitrary. They entered not into the rest because they *could* not enter. Theirs was a spiritual incapacity. So we truly say: 'Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.' A sinner *could* not enter Heaven.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON iii. 7. 'AS THE HOLY  
GHOST SAITH'

In the *Epistle to the Hebrews* the direct action of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is more strongly expressed than in any other book of the Bible. Twice in the *Acts* we find almost similar expressions (see i. 16 'Which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David,' and xxviii. 25 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet') but in either case the name of the human instrument is given. In the *Hebrews*, however, we find teaching ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures without the mention of any intermediate instrument. The passages are iii. 7 'Even as the Holy Ghost saith,' ix. 8 'The Holy Ghost this signifying', x. 15 'The Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us.' Several times, of course, in the historical books of the New Testament we find explicit statements of the Holy Spirit speaking to and through consecrated men, giving guidance and counsel in special emergencies. Our Lord Himself promised that it would be so: 'It is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost.' St. Mark xiii. 11. In the *Acts* we see the promise fulfilled, e. g., 'The Spirit said unto Philip, etc' viii. 29. 'The Spirit said unto him . . . ' x. 19. 'The Holy Ghost said . . . ' xiii. 2. 'The Holy Ghost testifieth unto me, saying . . . ' xx. 23. 'Thus saith the Holy Ghost' xxi. 11. But the *Hebrews* is unique in the New Testament in its direct and unqualified statements of the utterance of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

At the same time there is a remarkable point to be noticed. The writer who thus without qualification, and without the name of any human channel, tells us that 'the Holy Ghost saith,' is not careful to quote the exact words of the Scriptures; he is content to quote their sense. This is seen, for instance, in the use of the ninety fifth Psalm. He transfers the words 'forty years

from one sentence to another. The most conspicuous instance of this freedom in dealing with the words of the Old Testament is to be found in viii. 8-12 and x. 16-17. The same passage from Jeremiah is used in either place. When he quotes it the first time he does not quote the exact words of the Septuagint; but still more strangely, when he repeats part of the quotation in x. he does not even use the words which he has previously used, but varies them. To him the utterance of the Holy Spirit was clearly not merely an utterance of the past necessarily stereotyped in a certain form of words for ever, but a living message which He continues to utter now. The formula of quotation is 'As saith the Holy Ghost,' and not 'As said the Holy Ghost. In other words Holy Scripture is not merely a verbatim record of past utterances of the Holy Spirit, but a lively instrument through which He now speaks. It is not in the literalness of the transcription of certain *words* that the message and the teaching come, but in the living Word Himself acting now on the spirit of man. In iv. 12 after expounding the message of the passage quoted, the writer sums up the truth by saying, 'The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.' The Holy Spirit moves over the written words so that the living Word Himself comes forth and deals with the hearts of men.

It is a fact sufficiently familiar to instructed Christians that the Christian Church has never defined the exact meaning or limits of inspiration in its relation to Holy Scripture. It is obvious from an examination of Scripture itself that inspiration does not consist in divine dictation of exact words. If it were so, an inspired writer, such as the Church holds the author of the *Hebrews* to be, must have quoted the words of the Old Testament syllable by syllable exactly. But this is what he does not do; he seems indifferent to exact quotation so long as he can bring home to his readers the force and substance of the passage.

The action of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is found to be threefold. There is first the action on the human agent who is moved to utter or write words through which a message from

God came to those to whom the words were immediately addressed. There is secondly the action on the Christian Society by which it is led to select and preserve those writings which are found to carry permanent and living messages, and enshrine a permanent revelation. Thirdly, there is the action in the hearts of those who read or hear throughout the course of the ages, and thus realize that God is speaking to them. It follows that the Holy Scriptures may be translated into any language, and yet be the vehicle which the Spirit uses for the transmission of the Word.

If we compare this theory of inspiration with that which is claimed for the Hindu *Vedas*, or for the Qur'án, we shall see wherein the contrast lies. The four *Vedas*, generally recognized as the final authority of Hinduism, are called *Shrutih*; that is, they are believed to be uttered by Brahma, heard by the Rishis, and by them committed to writing. The theory is to be found in the *Upanishads*, as for instance, 'Being desirous of liberation, I seek Him, the manifestation of spiritual understanding, who in the beginning created Brahma and revealed to him the *Vedas*' (*Swetas-watava*). Again: 'This *Rig-veda* was breathed out by that great Being. As from the fire contained in damp fuel, smoke comes out separate, so, O Maitreyi, was breathed out of the great Being, this, namely, the *Rig-veda*, the *Yajur-veda*, the *Sama-veda*, the *Atharva*, *Anyivasa*, the *Itihasa*, *Purana*, *Sciences*, *Upanishads*, *Slokas*, *Sutras*, *After-expositions*. All these were breathed out of Him' (*Brihadaranyaka*). As this outbreathing is regarded as eternal, the *Veda* also is held to be eternal, and the question of course arose, how could the *Veda* be eternal when non-eternal objects are named in it. To this difficulty a further one is added by the fact that the *Vedas* refer to times anterior to their own age. Hindu philosophers have indeed attempted to dispose of these difficulties. Vyasa and Sankara, for instance, urge that there are eternal species of gods and men and all other existences, and that it is these species which are referred to and not to individuals. It is obvious, however, that the theory of eternity having been started it became necessary to attempt to uphold it, and a study of even a small part of the *Rig-veda* will convince any reasonable

man, who is not bound to maintain a certain theory at whatever cost, that the different hymns were composed at different times. It speaks of *old* and *new* Rishis, and there cannot be an eternal species of old and new. It was also held that the *Vedas* being so entirely and completely divine could not be liable to any change or abrogation. Nothing could possibly be lost, and no difference of reading could possibly exist. It has been found, however, that no subtlety can dispose of the fact that there are not now extant as many *Slokas* as are undoubtedly declared by old writers to have existed in their time, and so a comparatively modern theory has now been adopted to account for the modifications and losses which are admitted to have taken place. It is said that the *Vedas* were withdrawn at the end of the *Yugas*, and afterwards recovered, but on recovery they were modified to suit the special conditions of the age. One of the special conditions of the *Kali* age (i.e., the present age) for which special provision had to be made was the small intelligence of the Brahmans. For this reason the one *Veda* had to be divided into many parts because the Brahmans would not be able to master the whole. Thus, it is argued, there is a constant supervision by the Rishis of the religion, and the *Veda* being adapted to each age many of the *Slokas* have been withdrawn. It need not be considered here whether the subject-matter of the *Veda* bears witness to its inspiration, whether like the sun it proves itself to be light-giving by shining. The theory of its inspiration is the only matter in question here.

The orthodox Sunni view of the inspiration of the Qur'án is that it is unique and divinely perfect and that no other method of inspiration is conceivable in the case of a divine book designed to be complete and final. The Qur'án is the uncreated word of God. It has existed in its present form as an attribute of God from all eternity. Written on the Preserved Tablet it was copied by heavenly beings and sent down to the lowest heaven. From there it was carried by the angel Gabriel to Muhammed bit by bit. The prophet after recovering from the ecstasy in which he heard it, recited to others what had been revealed to him, and they either wrote it down or committed it to memory. After the death of Muhammed all that was either retained in the memory of the hearers

or written down on writing material was brought together into one volume by the order of the Kalifh. It is claimed that this was done with such extraordinary care that there can be no question as to the accuracy of the text and its exact correspondence with what Muhammed heard. It is allowed that a second recension was made under the Kalifh Uthman in order to put the text into the exact dialect of Arabic in which it had been originally delivered. Thus the claim for the Qur'án is that it has come down from heaven exactly as it is now, word for word, letter for letter. It is the eternal word of God unchanged and unchangeable.

It is easy to point out how precarious is such a method of transmission of the eternal word, how impossible it is reasonably to claim that there is no doubt as to its absolute accuracy, when part of the Qu'ran depended upon the retentiveness of human memories, and we do not know which part was transcribed from written materials, and which was due to the memory of the hearer. Moreover the fact that there are disputed readings shews how mistaken it is for men to imagine for themselves that a certain method is the only possible method of conveying a perfect revelation, and then to measure revelation by this supposed perfect standard. It is the presumption of insisting that God must reveal His word in a certain way instead of humbly investigating to see how as a matter of fact He does reveal it.

But it is by examining the words of the Qu'ran itself that such a theory of inspiration as applied to this book is demonstrated as impossible. The Qu'ran can positively be proved to have been drawn largely from materials which existed before it. For instance, it even quotes the Psalms. This, of course, is no argument against its being an inspired book, because there may be an inspired selection, but it is conclusive against its being inspired in the way in which it is claimed to be by the Sunni orthodox doctrine. The question as to whether it is inspired according to some other view of inspiration has to be settled by other considerations, with which we are not now concerned.

One other point may be noticed in connexion with the question of inspiration; both in the case of the *Vedas* and of the Qur'án it is claimed that the language itself has so divine a quality that

not only is it a convincing mark of true inspiration, but that also it cannot be rendered into other languages without losing its divine force. It is widely held that a knowledge of Sanskrit is indispensable for attaining to the occult knowledge of the *Vedas*. It is urged, on the other hand, that the perfection of the Arabic of the Qur'án is such that in itself this is a proof of its divine origin. Translation, therefore, of these writings is deprecated as irreverent and misleading. Rightly to know the *Vedas* Sanskrit must be known; rightly to know the Qur'án Arabic must be known. Christians, on the contrary, claim that the knowledge of the New Testament Scriptures and their substantial message does not necessarily depend on a knowledge of Greek. The inspiration is not in the words but in the Word. To make divine knowledge depend on the acquisition of difficult languages is to confine it to a very few. If the literal verbal inspiration of Scripture be accepted as the only kind of inspiration befitting a divine book, a check is at once put upon the translation of it. If, however, there is a belief in the present inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit who takes living languages as His instruments, then there is a powerful impulse to translate the Scriptures into every tongue, and it is found to be one of the functions of the Spirit so to raise and elevate a language that in its words it may be said, 'as saith the Holy Spirit.'

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON iii. 8 AND iii. 13.

One of the forms which the monistic philosophy of India has taken results in the denial of human responsibility. The desire for an intellectual system complete and logical in every part is at the root of this monism. Such a system has necessarily to ignore human experience and human sentiment, and it does so by regarding them as illusory. Logical completeness is attained by holding that as there is but one supreme Will in the universe, all that is or happens must be due to that one Will. To believe that there are other wills which can become effective causes is to deny the existence of an Almighty Will. Thus it follows that what man appears to do he does not really do; he is moved by the one Will as a marionette is moved by the hand that holds the string.

The result of this theory of existence, which lies at the back of the minds of millions in India, is a sense of passive irresponsibility 'I am what I am because I was made so' or 'I did what I did because it was fated, i.e., willed by the one all-embracing Will, that I should do it.' It is true that it is generally in the case of bad actions that the responsibility is attributed to God whilst in the case of good there is silence as to the Divine direction. Thus the tendency of popular pantheism in India is to encourage men to take credit for their virtues and to blame God for their vices.

In Holy Scripture there is a balancing of two complementary truths: on the one hand, the greatest stress is laid on the infinite power of God, and His irresistible Will; on the other hand, equal stress is laid on the freedom and responsibility of man. If certain passages are taken by themselves, it might be said that the Scriptures assert the absolute unconditional Will of God; if another set of passages be taken, it might be maintained that the Scriptures assert the entire freedom of man. The truth lies in the balancing of the two truths as they are balanced in Heb. iii. On the one hand it is: 'lest any of you be hardened'; on the other hand: 'harden not your hearts'. The typical case in the Old Testament is that of Pharaoh. Of him we are told three times that 'he hardened his heart', whilst we are also told several times that 'the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.' It means that there exists an unchanging moral law rooted in the will of God, inexorable in its working, with which man has the power to co-operate, which he has also the power to resist. If he resists the law of righteousness, he is hardened inevitably by the moral consequences which necessarily ensue. The very circumstances and conditions which should have brought him nearer to God take him further away. To take a simple illustration: a ship wrongly steered through carelessness or neglect of duty is driven by wind and tide upon rocks and smashed to pieces, but these same forces rightly used would have brought the ship safely into port. The crew were destroyed by the wind and tide and yet they destroyed themselves. St. Paul in Rom. ix after quoting the typical case of Pharaoh sums up the truth in the words 'So then He hath mercy on whom He will. and whom He will He hardeneth';



that is, the one and the same righteous Will is fruitful in mercy to those that accept it and co-operate with it, but results in the hardening of those who resist it. There has arisen the use of a sad phrase 'Gospel hardened' which is used to denote the condition of those who continually hearing the good news of CHRIST, and either rejecting it or proving indifferent to it, are actually hardened by the Gospel. They harden their hearts and so the Gospel hardens them. The same sun which shines upon one plant with its root deep in the earth and causes it to ripen into beauty, shines upon another and causes it to wither. It is not surprising that when our Lord saw the process of hardening going on before His eyes, when He perceived that His deeds of mercy and power instead of opening the hearts of the Pharisees to the action of grace were hardening them, He was moved by anger and grief (St. Mark iii. 5).

Christian philosophy thus believes in an Almighty Will of God, but believes that this Will has willed so to condition itself by the creation of finite wills, that it is true to say of man 'he has hardened his heart,' and 'he was hardened.'

## CHAPTER IV

LET us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being 1

**1-14.** The Rest is indeed prepared, but there is a fear that some may fall short, for earnest diligence is needed to secure an entry. It is God's Rest, final and perfect. Even the fathers who were promised a Rest, and warned of the passing of opportunity (many proving heedless of the warning) might have known from Joshua's words that the Rest in Canaan was not the final Rest. For the people of God there is an abiding Sabbath-Rest.

1. Let us fear therefore. 'Therefore', because if those of former times were given a promise and failed to realize it, the failure may be repeated by those who have succeeded them.

There is a 'holy fear', the completion of the seven-fold gift of the Spirit. The fruit of this 'holy fear' is a shrinking away from anything which may lead to our loss of God and all that He has promised. It is the apprehension of danger, given for the protection of the spiritual life; we work out our own salvation with fear. It may be exercised in behalf of others; so St. Paul in 2 Cor. xi. 3; xii. 20; Gal. iv. 11.

left of entering into his rest, any one of you should  
 2 seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have

**a promise being left.** The entrance into Canaan of the children of the apostate Israelites did not exhaust God's promise. It still stands waiting to be claimed by the new Israel.

**lest . . . any one of you.** The exercise of holy fear is to be by the whole body in behalf of each individual.

**should seem to have come short of it.** The Greek words may mean 'should imagine that he has come short of it'. It is a common religious phenomenon for intensely earnest men to doubt their own salvation, but obviously this was not the peril of the Hebrews. The terrible warning in vi. 4-6 could never have been addressed to them had it been so. We might have expected the author to write simply, 'lest any of you should come short of it,' but probably 'should seem' is inserted to warn against the slightest approach of what men might regard as failure. There are those without as well as the brethren within to be considered.

**to have come short of it.** It is not only active sin against which they have to be warned, but failure to respond to opportunity, with its abiding result of permanent loss. The tense of the verb specially denotes this abiding result.

**2. For indeed we have had good tidings.** 'You have no doubt that they received a promise of good things; have no doubt that we too are the possessors of a promise.' In view of the following words we might have expected the writer to have said, 'they received a

had <sup>1</sup> good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because <sup>2</sup> they were not united by faith with them that heard. <sup>3</sup> For we which have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said,

<sup>1</sup> Or, a gospel

<sup>2</sup> Some ancient authorities read, *it was.*

<sup>3</sup> Some ancient authorities read *We therefore.*

3

promise even as we have,<sup>1</sup> but it is the insidious creeping doubt that perhaps after all there was nothing in store for them which he wishes to crush.

**they were not united by faith with them that heard.**

These words are somewhat difficult. The simplest explanation of them, if the reading adopted by the R.V. be taken, is this; the offer of the promise availed them nothing in that they were not united in faith with the faithful few, Joshua, Caleb, who did accept it. The word for 'unite' is found in 1 Cor. xii. 24 where the thought is of the harmonious union of the different parts of the body. So in this passage the thought may be that a common faith in the promise would have united together all the parts of the spiritual body of Israel, but the large majority failed with ruinous results. Another well attested reading, adopted by Bishop Westcott, means that that the word did not profit them because it was not incorporated by faith in them that heard.

**3. For we which have believed do enter.** The 'for' looks back to the first part of v. 2. The goodness of the tidings is proved by experience, for the believer is now actually entering into the Rest of God.

<sup>4</sup> Gr. *If they shall enter.*

As I swear in my wrath,

<sup>4</sup> They shall not enter into my rest :

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God rested **5** on the seventh day from all his works; and in this *place* again,

**even as he hath said.** Again and in v. 4 the words quoted are directly attributed to the Holy Spirit.

**As I swore in my wrath, etc.** The argument is subtle and somewhat difficult to follow. In the English authorized version it is unintelligible. Apparently, the quotation is made to confirm the truth that a Rest has been provided; the very fact that some were excluded from it proves its existence.

**although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.** This rest has been provided from the beginning; it is God's own Rest. Man's predestined end is to share the Divine Blessedness, and that end has not yet been reached, although it has been provided for so long.

**4-5. For he hath said somewhere, etc.** The Greek particle translated 'somewhere' means rather in this connexion 'as everybody knows'. The quotation is so familiar that it is not stated where it is taken from. It is employed to support the contention that a Divine Rest is already in existence, and it is none other than this Rest of which men have been invited to become partakers.

<sup>5</sup> They shall not enter into my rest.

<sup>5</sup> Gr. *If they shall enter.*

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter <sup>6</sup> thereinto, and they to whom <sup>6</sup> the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day <sup>7</sup> saying in David, after so long a time, To-day, as it hath been before said,

<sup>6</sup> Or, *the gospel was*

<sup>7</sup> Or, *To-day, saying in David, after so long a time, as it hath been, etc.*

The writer is gradually inserting the thought that the Rest in Canaan was but symbolical, and that the real Rest of which the Holy Spirit was speaking in the 95th Psalm was the heavenly one.

**6. Seeing therefore it remaineth, etc.** It is inconceivable that God's promise should utterly fail; 'some' at any rate, will attain to the 'Divine Rest'. Deeply attractive as is the belief in 'universalism' or the ultimate salvation of all human beings, the New Testament gives no support to it. See additional note.

**7. he again defineth, etc.** There follows the proof that the promise to the Israelites in the wilderness of a Rest in Canaan was symbolical of the perfect 'Rest'. Many long years after the time of Moses and the contumacy of the Israelites, the Psalmist is used by the Holy Spirit ('He saith in David') to exhort those of his own time and to declare that the promise is still open. The 'to-day' is the time of opportunity, and the opportunity is not past.

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,  
Harden not your hearts.

8 <sup>1</sup> Gr. *Jesus*. For if <sup>2</sup> Joshua had given them rest,  
he would not have spoken afterward of  
9 another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbath

8. For if Joshua had given them rest, etc. The 'them' denotes those descendants of the faithless Israelites, who did actually reach and occupy the promised land. So a further consideration is added to strengthen the argument that the attainment of the Rest in Canaan did not exhaust God's promise. Some Israelites under Joshua had entered that Rest in Canaan. Plainly, then, if whilst they were actually living in the promised land, the Holy Spirit still exhorted them to seize the opportunity, it is necessarily implied that there is another and final Rest. And so the conclusion follows:

9. There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest. A new word is introduced. The final consummation of bliss for the faithful is described no longer merely as a 'Rest', but as a 'Sabbatismos'. The word at once takes the thought back to the Sabbath of God (Gen. ii. 2-3) when the destined end of creation was reached in so far that there were in the created world free spiritual beings capable of attaining to the eternal life of union with God. This was the 'Sabbath Rest of God,' that there were beings on earth capable of responding to His love, and so sharing his blessedness. But necessarily the fruition of this blessedness depends on man's response and co-operation. The love and service of a free being

rest for the people of God. For he that is entered **10** into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore give diligence **11**

cannot be forced; man's 'Sabbath Rest' can only be attained when hearing the voice of God he perfectly responds. The 'Sabbath Rest' remaineth, for it is in the power of each human being to attain it and to become numbered among the people of God.

**the people of God.** The word is *λαός* of God. Hence comes the English word 'laity', which thus has a far richer meaning than the negative one of not belonging to the specially ordained Christian priesthood, and signifies membership of the consecrated society, the 'people of God.'

**10. For he that is entered into his rest, etc.** There is no hint here of the Hindu and Buddhist doctrine that action is in itself a necessary evil, the cause of re-birth, and that *mukti* can only be reached by cessation from it. To rest from works in the case of the Creator meant that there came a time in the evolution of the world when man was fully equipped with all the capacities needed for perfect service; God had provided all, and in this sense had finished His work and rested. In another sense He ever works: 'My Father worketh even until now and I work' (St. John v. 17). There comes a time in the upward course of each man who is faithful, when probation, trial and temptation are over, and he rests in the fullness of the knowledge and love of God. (Compare Rev. xiv. 13.)

**11. Let us therefore give diligence.** The word



• Or, *into* to enter into that rest that no man fall  
Gr. *in* <sup>9</sup> after the same example of disobedi-

denotes that moral earnestness which brooks no delay in adopting means to the end. (See Eph. iv. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 15.)

**that no man fall.** 'Fall' is here used of utter failure to attain the end; it denotes the ruin of a soul.

From iii. 7 to the end of iv. 9, the exhortations to perseverance and the warnings of the grievous results of apostasy have been drawn from the words of Holy Scripture, and these words have been quoted and expounded as the very utterance of the Holy Ghost. It was not man who exhorted and warned them but God. Before the writer resumes his exposition of the High Priesthood of CHRIST he sums up in terse and vigorous language the truth that God's word is living, because it is now the instrument of His Spirit speaking to men and not merely the record of words uttered in the far-away past. The word of God cannot be separated from God Himself. Just as the Psalmist says: 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,' but yet the heavens are only sustained in being by the living and active presence of Him who made them, so the revelation of God in the written word is a living voice because it still continues as the present instrument of the utterance of Him who first brought it into being. To paraphrase the connecting thought between the passages: 'Do not think for a moment that the words which I have quoted are merely the words of a bygone

ence. For the word of God is living, and active, **12**

age, addressed to men who have long ago passed away; and that they have nothing to do with you to-day. No, the promise is for you to-day, the warning is for you to give diligent heed to, 'For the word of God, etc.'

It seems probable that there is no direct reference in the passage to Jesus Christ as the Word of God, but the use here is a connecting link between St. Paul's use and St. John's. (See additional note.)

**12. For the word of God is living.** All the emphasis is on the word 'living' which comes first in the Greek: 'For living is the word of God.' The difference between a dead word and a living word is not merely that the former has lost efficacy because the speaker has passed away, and so his message is without force under changed circumstances, but a word is living when a living speaker still makes the utterance his own, when the union between the utterance and the living voice is still maintained. This is what the writer asserts to be the case with the substance of Holy Scripture. (Compare 1 Peter i. 23; Acts vii. 38.)

**and active.** Life necessarily manifests itself in force. The living word must have results, either for salvation or judgement.

**sharper than any two-edged sword.** The epithets get more specific as to the nature of the living activity of the word in dealing with the individual soul. St. Paul using Isa. xi. 4 calls an utterance of God 'the sword of the Spirit.' (Eph. vi. 17.) St. John in the vision of the Revelation (i. 16 and xix. 15) describes our Lord

and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing

as having a sharp two edged sword proceeding out of His mouth. Though the use of a weapon of war as a symbol might seem to point solely to punishment, yet probably it is not mainly the punishing power but the piercing penetrating power of the word which is symbolized by the sword. It is not merely or mainly the sword of the executioner. We have in *Acts* instances of two contrasting effects of the sword-like power of the word. In one case (*Acts* ii. 37) the hearers were pierced to the heart and brought to penitence; the cutting brought healing. In the other case (*Acts* v. 33) they were cut to the heart and incited to slay the utterers of the word; the cutting brought condemnation.

**piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, etc.**  
The word is *sharper* than any sword because a sword can but pierce the body, whilst the word penetrates into the secret centre of the spiritual nature of man. Though the exact construction of the Greek words translated 'of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow,' is not certain, there is no doubt as to their general meaning. The power of the word reaches the whole of man's secret nature and affects it all; it penetrates and then unseen separates, analyzes and reveals man's secret things to himself. It touches not only his rational nature but his spiritual nature, the realms of thought, conduct and character. All is pierced and laid bare.

'Joints and marrow' are used symbolically of the inmost secret parts of man's invisible nature.

even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that **13**

**quick to discern.** The action of the word is described more and more as personal. Life and energy and penetrating power may be impersonal forces, but the exercise of 'criticism' is personal. The single word translated 'quick to discern' signifies the process of distinguishing, deciding and passing judgement. As he advances in the description it becomes difficult for the writer to separate the activity of the word from that of Him who uses it as His instrument. The speech and Speaker become one.

**the thoughts and intents of the heart.** The heart stands for the whole inner nature of man from which his moral and spiritual life proceeds. The word translated 'thoughts' indicates the emotional side, the heart as the seat of the affections and imagination; 'intents' covers the more deliberative processes of the inner life, which lead to the exercise of moral choice. It is the chief characteristic of the word that it does not merely direct an outward legal obedience to certain precepts, but claims to control the most secret springs of man's inner life. In St. Matt. v. and vi. we see our Lord taking the word, and making it 'critical' of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**13. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight.** Finally the writer passes to a complete identification of the word and Him who utters it. Grammatically no doubt the 'his' is 'the word's', but

is not manifest in his sight; but all things are

there is no longer any distinction of action between the 'Word of God' and 'God.' As the inmost soul of the individual in its subtlest movements and feelings is under His judgement, so all created things are transparent in His presence. The statement is put negatively: 'There is no created thing which is non-transparent before Him,' and so there follows the positive statement in contrast: 'nay on the contrary, etc.'

**all things are naked and laid open.** Again words naturally applicable to the body are used of spiritual things. Nothing can conceal the true nature from God. Before Him all are unclothed: and not only unclothed, but also the very veins and nerves and inward parts of the frame are exposed to His view. It is the expansion of the thought in the word 'transparent.'

The exact meaning of the word rendered 'laid open' is not certainly known, but the meaning of 'hung up and flayed' given to it by Chrysostom exactly fits the context. Another possible meaning is 'prostrate.'

**the eyes of him.** Cp. Ps. xxxiv. 15 quoted in i. St. Peter iii. 12. There is a true anthropomorphism. It is natural for man to attribute to God the perfection of those powers which are felt to be derived from Him. 'He that made the eye, shall He not see?' The reasoning that seeks to prove that man makes his own God, by arguing that if, for instance, a lion could imagine a god, it would represent him as a magnified lion, is radically unsound, because if an animal could conceive of a deity at all, it would at once be raised

naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Having then a great high priest, who hath passed **14**

into the spiritual sphere, and cease to be merely animal.

**with whom we have to do.** Rather, 'to whom we have to give account.' The prevailing thoughts of the last two verses are those of discernment and judgement, and the impossibility of disguise. It is He who knows us through and through who will 'take account of His servants.'

**14-16.** The long digression of warning ended the writer resumes his doctrinal theme of the uniqueness of Christ, to the confession of whom we are to cling. He sums up in a few brief sentences the points of his previous instruction. Christ is the great High Priest ministering in the exaltation of the heavenly sphere. But in spite of His unique exaltation in His human and divine natures He is close to us through a common experience of the trials of earthly life. His experience and ours are alike in all respects but one, He is sinless. The possession of such a High Priest draws us with confidence to the Mercy-Seat.

**14. Having then a great high priest.** The word 'having' implies a kind of intimate possession. It expresses the thought not merely that there is such an One, but that He is our very own. So devotion led the Hebrew people to speak of 'The Lord *our* God.'

through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us

It is the third mention of the high priest in the Epistle. One epithet only is applied to Him here, and that in the Greek follows the substantive: 'a high priest great'. He is 'great' in His exaltation above all angelic beings, and in the unlimited extent of His sovereignty. See Dan. vii. 13-14 for a prediction of this greatness and Eph. i. 20-23 for its fulfilment.

**who hath passed through the heavens.** The meaning is the same as in i. 3. The Ascension was His exaltation in human nature into the heavenly sphere as supreme King. See Eph. iv. 10. 'The heavens' signified here are not that eternal sphere of glory in which He now is, but the created heavens through which to the eyes of the onlookers He passed when His exaltation was pictured to them symbolically (St. Luke xxiv. 51; Acts i. 9-10). When the Son of God by the Incarnation temporarily subjected Himself to conditions of space He used these conditions as pictures or symbols of spiritual realities, but the effect of the Ascension was to abolish for Him the limitations of space. In common speech men continually use terms strictly applicable only to space to denote degrees of dignity. To take a simple illustration; to tell a boy to go *up* in his class does not mean that he is to mount to a higher part of the building. (See note on vii. 26.)

**Jesus the Son of God.** The human name comes first because the stress is laid on the exaltation of the humanity. The birth name tells of the suffering and death through which He passed, whilst the title 'the Son

hold fast our confession. For we have not a high 15

of God' sets forth His Deity and the height from which He descended to save men by becoming their high priest.

**let us hold fast our confession.** Again as in iii. 1 it is both to the faith and to the open acknowledgement of it that the Hebrews were to cling. A Christian who is unwilling openly to confess his faith is not a Christian. The expression 'hold fast' suggests danger; the precious possession may be torn from them; let them cling tightly to it. The same word is used in the *Revelation* of the High Priest's grasp of the seven stars. (See St. John x. 29.)

**15. a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling.** The recital of His greatness might make men fear that their high priest was far removed from them, an exalted being untouched by the griefs of men. The writer at once guards against the possibility of such an error.

'Be touched with the feeling of;' that is, 'sympathize'. In 1. St. Peter iii. 8 we have the adjective 'sympathetic', but only in this Epistle is the verb used, and only in this place is it applied to CHRIST in His revelation to us. It does not mean actually experience the same sufferings at the same time (as a related word in Rom. viii. 17 and 1. Cor. xii. 26 denotes) but the power to put oneself in the same position as the sufferer and so have a fellow-feeling with him. Even in the highest conceptions of the Hindu *avatar* the idea of human fellow-feeling has little place; it is the



priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our

super-human which is the chief characteristic. In the Muhammadan world next to the cry 'There is no God but Alláh' there is perhaps no phrase more frequently uttered than 'Alláhu akbár' 'God is great.' But this sense of God's greatness seems to remove Him from His worshippers. Their attitude is to be one of fear and subjection before an all-powerful Master, a God to whom it would be derogatory to be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. To Christians God is great indeed, but the conception of His greatness is balanced by the conception of His loving sympathy.

**of our infirmities.** See St. Matt. viii. 17 where the words of Isaiah are interpreted of CHRIST, and we are told 'Himself took our infirmities'. In the Gospels and Acts the word is always used of physical ailments, but in the Epistles it seems to have a wider meaning, and may be taken to include all those weaknesses of our human nature which under circumstances of temptation may become occasions of sin. Besides the weariness and pain of body there are the tendencies to sloth and impatience, the shrinking from moral effort, the distress of disillusionment, etc.

**but one that hath been in all points tempted.** Here is the root of the high priest's sympathy: He has shared the common experience of men. Cp. ii. 18 where, as here, the perfect tense of the verb directs the thought to the continued and permanent effect of the historic fact of the temptation rather than to the fact itself. He is one who having been tempted ever retains the fruit of that

infirmities; but one that hath been in all points experience. The Greek word for 'tempted' is that which is used in the New Testament in the widest sense of putting to the test or trial. Sometimes it signifies inducing to sin; it is the word used by three Evangelists of the temptation in the wilderness. Sometimes it only means that kind of testing which our Lord Himself applied to His disciples, as in St. John vi. 6. It is the ground of the Christian's absolute confidence in his Lord's sympathy that there is no kind of trial and no kind of inducement to sin which He Himself has not experienced.

**like as we are.** The Greek words literally mean 'according to likeness'. They may mean either 'according to the likeness of our trials' or 'according to the likeness of our nature'. Possibly the vagueness is intended to cover both meanings. There was in our high priest the likeness of temptations and the likeness of nature wherein to confront the temptations.

**yet without sin.** But the likeness must have this one limitation. Again the words are, no doubt, intentionally wide. They may include the following thoughts:—

(1) In His case temptation did not result in sin, and so there was not in Him that kind of weakness which comes from the wounds of former sin, and makes a man more liable to fall; (2) There is a limit to the likeness of His nature; in Him there is no transmitted weakness or taint known technically as 'original sin'.

The question therefore arises: Can one whose human nature was both without any hereditary taint and also

**16** tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us

from its union with the Divine nature necessarily incapable of sin, be said to have endured real temptation, or to have been 'in all points tempted like as we are'? The answer seems to be that only he has felt the full force of temptation who has never yielded to it. Against Him who stood firm the whole conceivable power of temptation was exerted. He experienced it at all points. The fact that through the union of the two natures it was impossible for Him to yield takes nothing either from the force of the temptation which attacked Him or from the completeness of His knowledge of it. To take a simple illustration: a breakwater conceivably might be so constructed that it would be impossible for the sea to break it. Such would endure the utmost power of the waves, whilst a weaker one might succumb before the full force had been felt. No doubt a moral example is more complete when it is set by one who in every respect is under exactly the same moral circumstances as ourselves. But had CHRIST come, not merely 'in the *likeness* of sinful flesh' but in flesh that was actually tainted with original sin, He could neither have been our Redeemer nor a perfect model of humanity. Nor does the truth that CHRIST was incapable of sin impair His moral liberty. God is the one Being who is perfectly free, but God cannot sin. Liberty in its highest sense does not carry with it the capacity of doing evil.

**16.** Let us therefore draw near. The word for 'draw near' is a favourite one with the writer. He uses it

therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help *us* in time of need.

seven times and always of the approach to God. It is the ordinary word in the Old Testament either for the approach of the priest to the altar or of the ceremonially clean to the holy place. Its use here suggests the dignity of the Christian's state. Not outside the sanctuary is he to stand, but depending on the greatness and sympathy of his high priest he is to draw near.

**with boldness.** See note on iii. 6.

**unto the throne of grace.** The throne which at the consummation of all things must be a throne of judgement is now a throne of grace, from which the Supreme Pontiff of mankind dispenses His gifts. (Cp. Eph. iv. 8.)

**that we may receive mercy, and may find grace.** We may expect 'mercy' because of His sympathy. He has stooped to sinners and knows their need. We may expect 'grace' because of His greatness: He has power to raise and strengthen those to whom He stoops. We '*receive*' the mercy, the gift of pardon; we have to *seek* grace continually for the needs of life, and seeking we are bound to *find*. (St. Matt. vii. 7.)

**to help us in time of need.** Grace is God's answer to man's need. To be commissioned to His service is to have the assurance that adequate grace will be provided for its fulfilment.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON iv. 6. 'SOME SHOULD ENTER

Hindus sometimes urge that in Hinduism there is a more noble conception of the wideness of God's mercy than in Christianity. They claim that the mercy embraces every soul and brings all at length to the attainment of the true end. The way may be immeasurably long, the number of re-births may be almost innumerable, but all finally reach *mukti*. This conception they contrast with the Christian doctrine as contained in the words of CHRIST: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned;' or in the words of Heb. iv. 6 which imply that there are those who shall not enter into the 'Sabbath-Rest' of God. To quote the words of a Hindu writer: 'Christianity inculcates that our souls were created by God at the time of our entering the world, and that this life is one of brief probation wherein we must prepare for a place in heaven, and after death we shall be in eternal communion with God. For those who will seek God and find Him and decide in CHRIST, this eternal happiness may be assured, but what for the endless number of His creatures who cannot prepare themselves during the brief probation? For such as do not know CHRIST, or knowing Him do not decide in Him? What hope does the Christian doctrine hold out for these myriads of helpless? It holds out little hope for them, and this is a most disheartening feature of Christian doctrine. Contrast this with the Hindu belief. It supposes an endless series of lives, each life being a stage of purification and advancement. The humblest worm will pass through the evolution till it obtains salvation. Thus every creature of the earth will advance and reach the goal of existence, and every sinner will be purified and taken to Him. Each birth is a stage of improvement, each stage removing a man to a state of comparatively higher intelligence until he is saved. More mercy of God is revealed in this doctrine than in that of the Christians, according to which numberless must be doomed to eternal

perdition for sins uncondoned. The purpose of the Creator is also better revealed in the one than in the other.'

It is important to point out that directly we hold that all men must necessarily be saved we rob 'salvation' of the character of holiness. For holiness cannot merely be imparted to men at the will of a merciful God. It must be freely chosen and accepted. By its very nature it is the quality of free self-determining spirits. In the true sense of holiness no created being can be holy unless he himself wills and chooses to be so by a voluntary service and devotion to God. If a man is finally to be saved, he must necessarily become holy. Supposing that he rejects holiness, or as the *Hebrews* puts it, refuses to enter into the 'Sabbath-Rest' of God, no process of rebirth however long continued can necessarily produce this result. If Hinduism presents us with a conception of universal 'salvation' it does so at the cost of emptying the salvation of reality; and we are not surprised to find that the Hindu *mukti* is widely different from the Christian salvation. The former is the 'salvation' of deep unvarying unconsciousness, which can easily be compared with a state of coma, and a state of coma infinitely prolonged is a state of death. It is sometimes denied that *mukti* means the loss of individual consciousness, but the denial is only made by those who have been influenced by Christian teaching, whether they realize it or no. Passage after passage of the Upanishads teach that *mukti* is a state of unconsciousness. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* 8. ii. 1 we read: 'When a man has fallen so sound asleep, and has so completely and perfectly been lulled to rest that he knows no dream-image, that is the Self, so he spake, that is the Immortal, the Fearless, that is Brahman.' The pupil replies to the teacher, 'He has entered then into nothingness; herein I can discern nothing consolatory.' The Christian conception of salvation is that of conscious blessedness of the love and service of God in His unveiled Presence, and of this blessedness we have become capable by the free acceptance of His grace.

The New Testament lays down very definitely that universal salvation is the will of God. 'God our Saviour' who willeth all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; for

there is one God, one mediator also between God and men: Himself man, CHRIST JESUS, who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. ii. 4-6). God's love is to the world and to each particular portion of it: 'God so loved the world that He gave. . . There is no limitation: the wideness of the mercy of God is for the world.

And yet the New Testament lays down equally definitely the dignity of human nature, by which man is declared to be not a part of a great mechanism which works out a certain result by a foreordained process, but a co-operating agent free to serve and free to refuse service. In other words, it teaches that though God's will is that all without exception should attain to blessedness through His love and service, yet blessedness cannot be forced upon those who will not have it. A man cannot be forced into heaven, nor can the heavenly character be forced into him. The choice between the Hindu conception mentioned above and the Christian is the choice between man emptied of true manhood and man raised to God through the co-operation of his own will by the free acceptance of God's grace

It is urged in reply: the grace which men are willingly to accept is given in CHRIST, and they are to accept it during a probation which in all cases is short, and in some cases is very short. Further, what is to become of the millions who were born before CHRIST, and of the millions who even in the Christian era have either had no opportunity of ever hearing His name or have never had the truth presented to them in such a way that they could really apprehend it and realize its call to them? The answer to the difficulty as to the length of the probation is that we cannot measure opportunities of spiritual choice by minutes, hours, years and centuries. It is not hard for those who believe in the wisdom and love of God to believe that whatever length the probation may be, sufficient opportunity will be provided. The Hindu believes that sufficient opportunity can only be provided in the course of countless ages and countless rebirths into earthly life. The Christian believes that he is only sure of one earthly life, of one opportunity which he knows is his 'while it is called to-day.' The *Epistle to the Hebrews* is a loud and insistent call

to men to seize the opportunity. As to the process of growth in holiness after the earthly probation is over, we may well believe that eternity is not too long for that, if it be right to predicate of eternity ideas which belong to time—which probably it is not.

The difficulty of the millions either born before the Incarnation or without genuine opportunity of accepting CHRIST, could only be raised by those who have very imperfect conceptions of the doctrine of His Person and eternal existence. The term Christianity is comparatively modern when measured by the duration of the human race on earth, but the religion which it describes began not with the Incarnation of the Son but with the first dawn in man of the knowledge of God. The first man who had intercourse with God was the first 'Christian'. The light by which he became conscious of God was mediated to him through the eternal Word of God, who was the Mediator of creation, for 'all things were made by Him'. To speak of the millions before CHRIST who have had no opportunity of accepting CHRIST is wholly to misconceive the doctrine of the Word of God. All men have had the opportunity of receiving and responding to such a measure of light as was granted to them through Him 'who lighteth every man, coming into the world.' More and more as man became ready did God manifest Himself, until finally there came the perfect manifestation in human nature when the Eternal Word was made man, God in CHRIST reconciling all things unto Himself. That the term 'Christianity' is applied to this religion simply means that in the Incarnation there has come the completion of that which through all the ages was in varying degrees the faith of faithful men. In Hebrews xi. we have a roll of those who lived by faith, by response, that is, to the light that was mediated to them through the Word before the Word became the CHRIST by completely uniting Himself with human nature. Instead of being regarded as those without opportunity they are held up to those who know of the completion in the Incarnation as their example and inspiration.

One point remains: it may be said 'Even if we accept the doctrine of the Word that "lighteth every man" and gives all their opportunity or probation, granting that the difference



between men cannot possibly be measured by the test as to whether they were born before the Incarnation or after, yet a difficulty remains. God by His foreknowledge must have known which of the souls He created would respond in faith and which would rebel in unbelief. That there should be at the last any in final rebellion would argue failure on the part of God. Is it not reasonable to believe that God in His foreknowledge would create none but those whom He foreknew would eventually respond to His love and so attain their destined end? Does not belief in Divine love combined with Divine foreknowledge preclude the creation of any soul which should fail?

The only answer to be made from the Christian standpoint is that the human mind is incapable of drawing conclusions from such premises. The creation of self-determining spirits was an act of self-limitation on the part of God. How it affects His foreknowledge we do not know and we have no means of knowing. All we can be sure of is that it does not affect His love. The Christian must believe that it was not without reasons of the gravest import that CHRIST could say of a human being, 'It were good for that man if he had never been born'. To proclaim a doctrine of universalism is to weaken men's sense of responsibility and to encourage them to laxity. No book in the Bible stands as a more stern and terrible witness against this than the Epistle to the Hebrews. Its constant message is: 'Rich and magnificent are God's promises to you: terrible and irrevocable is the penalty of the rejection of them.'

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON iv. 12-13. 'THE WORD OF GOD'

Though it is probable that there is no direct reference in this passage to JESUS CHRIST as the Word of God, it should be remembered that some commentators have interpreted it in this sense. At least it may be said that there is an approach in the passage to the idea of the Personality of the Word.

*Logos* in classical Greek means either *word* or *reason*, but in the New Testament, apart from St. John's use of it, it generally stands for the substance of God's message to man whether

conveyed through speech or writing. In one or two passages it plainly means *reason*, and in one or two more *account* (as in Heb. iv. 13), but usually it means the substance of the revelation as proclaimed by the messengers of the Gospel. This use was naturally taken over from that in the Old Testament where the *Word* always denotes the message which God revealed to the prophets to be declared to the people in God's name. The usual phrase is 'The Word of the Lord came', but once it is 'The Word which Isaiah saw' (Isa. ii. 1). The essence of the message is not dependent on the special circumstances of the time or place; it is from God and therefore permanent, and so can be applied to God's people under new circumstances. Thus the writer applies the 'Word' in Heb. iv.; the substance of the message of Ps. XCV is applied to men under a new set of circumstances, for 'Living is the word of God'.

But it was natural that the phrase 'The Word of God' should have been selected as a description of JESUS CHRIST Himself, not merely as equivalent to the Teacher, but to express the truth that He Himself is the complete substance of the revelation of God and that His eternal function is that of manifesting God. For the idea contained in the phrase was familiar both to Hebrew thought and to Alexandrian philosophy. In the opening words of *Genesis* there is the repeated '*And God said*', which is the instrument of His manifestation of Himself in creation, and Jewish literature before the Incarnation had already spoken of this 'Word of God,' which was the medium of revelation, as personal. Possibly the language may be regarded as in part poetical, but it familiarized Jewish thought with the idea of a personal Word. In the *Wisdom of Solomon* God's Word is spoken of as His Agent in creation and in judgement (*Wisdom* ix. 1; xviii 15). Alexandrian philosophy, particularly as represented by Philo, used the term 'The Word' to denote the total manifestation of the divine powers in the universe. Philo, though apparently having no place in his system for the Incarnation, applies to 'the Word' terms which resemble those applied to CHRIST in the New Testament. For instance, he calls it 'The Image of God,' 'The Elder Son,' 'The First begotten,' 'The

Intercessor, ' ' The Instrument of Creation, ' ' The Interpreter of God, ' ' The High Priest', ' The Fountain of Wisdom from which drawing water one may find eternal life instead of death.' It was not unnatural then that St. John in seeking for a term to describe the relation of CHRIST to God and the universe should have selected one which conveyed ideas already familiar. It was as though he presented to Hebrew and Greek thought the fullness of what both religion and philosophy had felt after and partly and dimly described. Moreover there is nothing in St. John's doctrine of CHRIST which is not to be found in the *Hebrews* and in St. Paul's Epistles, but when he sought for a single term which would express both to Jew and Greek the ideas of eternity and mediation he found it in the term *Logos* or *Word*.

It is in the doctrine of the *Logos* that we have the interpretation of all that is good and true in every form of religion. Indian teachers have suggested hints akin to this doctrine, for they have spoken of the *Word* (*Shabda*) as the substance of the revelation to men, though the term itself does not occur in the *Vedas*. Here for instance is a *Sakhi* attributed to Kabir, a religious reformer of North India of the fifteenth century: 'Under the influence of *Shabda* one man died to the world, another gave up his throne; those who have understood *Shabda* their work is completed.' Again, we read in the *Amar Mul*, one of the books of a sect in North India, that 'Immortality attaches to those into whose heart the immortal *Word* has entered.' 'When the voice of the *Word* was sounded the indestructible 'One took form.' 'All who have assumed bodies have been produced by *Shabda*. The true *Shabda* reverberates in the universe.' 'The *Atman* without *Shabda* is blind and cannot find the path.' The latter saying we may see fulfilled in 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' In all such sayings we are bound to recognize the feeling after the truth revealed in Him who 'In the beginning was the *Word*.'

Note, however, that in the Hindi and Bengali translations of the Gospel according to St. John *Shabda* has not been used as the translation of the *Word*.

## CHAPTER V

FOR every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God,

It is because we have a high priest, both great and sympathetic, in the heavenly sphere, that we are to cling to our confession. It becomes, therefore, necessary that the writer should expound more fully (1) what is implied in the high priesthood of CHRIST (v. 1-10 and vii) and (2) what is His present work in heaven for us (viii-x. 18).

V. 11 to end of VI. is another digression from the main theme in order to suggest further solemn warnings.

**1-4. The characteristic marks of a true high priest and of his ministry are laid down, and 5-10 Christ is shewn to have ideally fulfilled them.**

**I. every high priest.** The word 'every' seems to widen the conception beyond the Aaronic priesthood to the essentials of priesthood wherever it may be found.

**being taken from among men.** Here are two marks of the priest: (1) he is 'taken', i. e. his selection is due to the Divine initiative, and neither to his own nor that of his fellows. GOD'S hand is laid upon him: (2) he must be human; e. g. an angel could not be a priest of

that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins :

men. These marks are illustrated in the appointment of the Christian Ministry : (see St. Mark iii. 13-15 and St. Luke vi. 12-16). CHRIST calls to Him 'whom He Himself would', and selects some from among those whom He called : 'He chose from them twelve.' The called and the chosen were from the 'common crowd of men.'

**is appointed for men in things pertaining to God.** The third mark of priesthood is that existing for the Glory of God it sets forth that Glory by representing men before God. (See note on ii. 17).

**that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.** The ministry peculiarly belonging to the priesthood is that of offering. The offerings here are put under two heads, eucharistic ('gifts') and propitiatory ('sacrifices for sins'). Man has to offer as a creature recognizing his grateful dependence on His Creator, and as a sinful creature seeking forgiveness from an offended Father. When the twofold expression 'gifts and sacrifices for sins' is used, the 'gifts' are such offerings as do not entail blood shedding, and are eucharistic, whilst a sacrifice for sin is the presentation of the blood of a slain animal. The word 'offer' used here and in eighteen other places in this Epistle is not found in any of the other Epistles. Its first use in the New Testament is of the offerings made by the Wise Men to 'the Young Child.'

The words 'for sins' must be connected with 'sacrifices' and not with the verb 'may offer'.

who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, **2** for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity ;

**2. who can bear gently.** Another mark of the true priestly character is that he strikes the right mean between indifference to sin and undue severity. The word is changed from that in iv. 15 'feel with' to one properly denoting 'feel with in the right degree or mean.' The priest in some measure was necessarily a judge. When the penitent came to him it was his duty to consider the type of offence and to decide the penalty as inflicted by the law. He must not be too lenient nor must he be too hard and unbending. To 'bear gently' is to take the middle course between the two extremes. The word was a favourite one with Greek ethical philosophers, but occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

**with the ignorant and erring.** Wilful and defiant transgressors of the law are excluded from the scope of this 'gentle dealing.' For them, indeed, no provision was made under the old covenant ; see x. 28 : no expiation was possible. Such was the stern and terrible character of the Law of Moses. But for those who erred through ignorance, or those who through inadvertence and fleshly weakness violated the law, reconciliation was possible. The words seem to include both these classes. It must be remembered, however, that there are two kinds of ignorance of God's will, voluntary and involuntary. Ignorance which comes from sloth and indifference, from neglect of opportunity, is voluntary : that which comes from want of opportunity is

**3** and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people,  
**4** so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man

involuntary. Our Lord tells us that the latter is to be dealt gently with at the Great Day. (St. Luke xii. 48.) See additional note on the meaning of *ignorance*.

**for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.**

His own human nature fits him for his office. His judgement is based on knowledge, and his knowledge on his experience of himself. It takes a man to appreciate the infirmities which are the occasions of sin in men.

**3. by reason thereof.** In the case of the Levitical high priest infirmity actually resulted in sin. The comparison with the great high priest is continually guarded and limited by the words 'apart from sin.'

**is bound**, i.e. both legally and morally; both law and conscience prescribe it.

**as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.**

He who would offer for others must himself be clean. On the Day of Atonement the high priest had to make three confessions; the first for himself and for his family; the second for the whole priesthood; the third for the people.

**4. no man taketh.** The mark of the Divine initiative in the appointment of the priesthood is further emphasized and enlarged upon. The priest does not take, but is taken.

**the honour**, i.e. this office endowed with so lofty a dignity.

**when he is called of God.** God's will is made known by His call. CHRIST continually laid stress on this

taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron. So Christ also glorified **5**

Divine initiative 'ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you.' (St. John xv. 16.) The word is commonly used of the Christian's vocation in general; e.g. Eph. iv. 1.

**as was Aaron.** Aaron's selection is taken as a type of true vocation. He was first indicated as one who should act representatively (Exod. xvi. 33,) and then definitely and outwardly called to his office. (Exod. xxviii. 1.)

**5-10. Christ is now shewn to have ideally satisfied these requirements. (1) He was divinely appointed (vv. 5-6); (2) He experienced human infirmity (vv. 7-8); (3) He exercised the high priestly ministry (vv 9-10).**

**5. So Christ also.** Here He is called not JESUS but CHRIST, the title which in Hebrew thought indicated most prominently His Kingship. Even He who was King did not of Himself assume the office of High Priest.

**glorified not himself.** Instead of repeating the phrase 'took not the honour to Himself' it is changed to 'glorified not Himself.' The writer recalls CHRIST'S own words, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing.' (St. John viii. 54.)

**to be made a high priest.** As sinless man He might of Himself have approached the Father in His human nature, but He waited until, duly qualified by Divine



not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son,  
This day have I begotten thee :

as he saith also in another *place*,

6 Thou art a priest for ever  
After the order of Melchizedek.

appointment and human experience, He might approach as the ideal representative of His sinful brethren.

**but he that spake unto him**, i.e. 'He that spake unto him glorified him'; again recalling the words 'It is my Father that glorifieth me.'

The two quotations that follow are from Ps. ii. 7 and Ps. cx. 4. The first has already been cited in i. 5. The connecting of the two passages seems to be intended to illustrate the truth that God who has solemnly pronounced the newly crowned King to be His Son declares Him also to be high priest with a priesthood which is inseparably united with His Kingship. Melchizedek was king and priest. For the meaning of 'to-day' (See note on i. 5.)

**6. Thou art a priest for ever.** The 'for ever' clearly shows that the application of the words to any temporary King could not possibly fulfill their meaning. The Psalmist must have been looking forward to the ideal and eternal King whose priesthood was to be coeval with His Kingship. Freed from the limits of time such a priest can have no successor, for He ministers in the eternal order, and His ministry is one eternal act.

Who in the days of his flesh, having offered 7

**7-8. The requirement of human experience satisfied in Christ. The way is unfolded of suffering and fear, the agony and bloody sweat, of the acceptance of the Father's will, by which He attained to the high priestly glory.**

The sentences are involved but the main proposition is: 'Who in the days of his flesh (or "his days of flesh") though he were a son learned obedience by the things which he suffered.' The two participial clauses describe the way of suffering and His eventual deliverance as the means by which He learned.

**7. in the days of his flesh.** The words do not imply that CHRIST in passing through the heavens laid aside His humanity. 'The days of His flesh' are the days of earthly life when 'JESUS was not yet glorified' (St. John viii. 39), when His human nature was subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, and even death. 'Flesh' is often used in the New Testament of humanity in the aspect of its dependence, weakness and mortality. His body is still human but it is now 'the body of His glory', to which also our bodies are to be conformed when He fashions us anew. (See Phil. iii. 21.)

**having offered up prayers and supplications.** The word for 'offered' is the word used of the ritual of sacrifice. (See note on verse 1.) The implication is that the 'Agony' is part of the preparation for the one Sacrifice once offered.

'Prayer' is the word commonly employed in the New Testament to signify a definite petition; e.g. the

up prayers and supplications with strong crying

angel said to Zacharias 'thy supplication (A. V. prayer) is heard' (St. Luke i. 13,) when both the words for 'supplication' or 'prayer' and 'heard' are the same as those used in this passage. But the word translated 'supplications' is unique in the New Testament. It literally signifies an olive branch; which, covered with wool, was among the Greeks held out by a suppliant who sought protection in direst danger. Its use here betokens the reality of CHRIST'S position as a suppliant oppressed with an overwhelming sense of need. He came with His prayers to the Father, and He came in utter humility as one stripped of all defences to plead for help.

**with strong crying and tears.** It is as though the writer were depicting in vivid phrases the wrestling in prayer described by St. Luke: 'being in an agony he prayed more earnestly' (St. Luke xxii. 44.) The 'tears' may be those drops of blood which fell from Him in the bloody sweat. But not only is the suffering in Gethsemane described. This 'strong crying and tears' were experienced before the Agony (cf. St. John xi. 33-5, 41; xii. 27) and were continued unto the end, when 'He cried' (the word is the same as here) 'with a loud voice' the words of desolation which were the consummation of His supplications. See additional note on the Agony in its relation to the perfection of CHRIST'S character.

**him that was able to save him from death.** The literal translation 'out of death' is given in the margin. The

and tears unto him that was able to save him

words may mean 'able to bring him out of the state of death' after he had died, or 'able to save him from dying' or 'able to deliver him from the agony of sorrow which was unto death.' Our Lord prefaced His prayer: 'Father, all things are possible unto Thee,' i.e. He was able to save Him from death. The prayer continues 'Remove this cup from me.' The cup contained agony, physical death, and spiritual desolation which was worse than death.

**having been heard.** CHRIST'S prayer was answered. Peace followed conflict; the agony in the garden was succeeded by the resolute courage which quietly confronted His enemies; 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' became 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit:' out of the state of death He passed into the fullness of life: 'I am the living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore' (Rev. i. 18.) 'Death' as St. Paul says 'no more hath dominion over Him' (Rom. vi. 9). The two participles represent not succession in time but that which is simultaneous, 'offered . . . and was heard.'

**for his godly fear.** This 'godly fear' accompanies necessarily all true prayer. The word is only found in the New Testament in this Epistle, and only once again in xii. 28, but the adjective is found frequently and is used of such men as Zacharias and Ananias of Damascus. Originally the word was used of the careful handling of a fragile article, but spiritually it came to mean that reverence which seeking God and finding

<sup>1</sup> from death, and having been heard for <sup>1</sup> Or, *out*  
 8 his godly fear, though he was a Son, *of*

Him in all things fears above all to offend Him and fall from Him by sin. It is God's will that His purposes should be carried out through the co-operation of human beings, and prayer is one of the forces with which He entrusts them. Thus all true prayer is co-operation with the Divine Will. The particular petition may not be answered as human desire may for the moment prefer, but if the human will is in accord with the Divine will prayer sets a spiritual force in action. But co-operation is not merely submission to a resistless will against which reason teaches us it is useless to rebel, but the actual lifting up of our wills into God's. This is what 'godly fear' enables us to do, and therefore without it we cannot pray. It is the completion of the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit (Isa. xi 2), and balances the 'filial outspokenness' of iii. 6 and iv. 16.

**8. though he was a Son, i.e.** Though He was the complete and perfect expression of the Father's nature and character. As in I. i. there is no article: the stress is laid on ideal Sonship as being that which alone can represent and reveal God. 'Son' therefore is used of the Divine nature, and this accounts for the emphatic 'though'—'though He was God's Son sharing the Divine essence or substance, yet, etc.'

**yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered.** The Greek means 'the obedience.' This does not mean that He learned to be obedient, as we learn gradually after much disobedience, but that He learned

yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he 9

the fullness of what obedience meant and comprised; it was only the experience of suffering that could teach Him that. So a soldier may take the oath of obedience, but it is only in arduous campaigns that he learns what obedience entails. Before his baptism the candidate promises obedience, but it is only in the course of Christian life and struggle that he learns how much his promise means. CHRIST as man learned ~~stage~~ by stage His lesson perfectly: the final stage was when He learned what obedience meant by 'becoming obedient even unto death.' (Cp. Rom. v. 19.)

Having thus shewn that the two requirements of a high priest, Divine appointment and human sympathy based on experience of human weakness, have been ideally fulfilled in CHRIST, the writer goes on to declare that His priesthood is being exercised.

**9. having been made perfect.** See note on ii. 10. Here the word covers the effect of all the experience of CHRIST 'in the days of His flesh', of His passing into the state of death, of His being saved out of death in the Resurrection, of His exaltation in His human nature to the glory of the Father. Stage by stage all was enacted which enabled Him to satisfy the requirements of a perfect high priest sympathetic and powerful, and made ready for consecration by the Father to that office to which He had been fore-ordained before time was.

It must not be forgotten that the word for 'to make

became unto all them that obey him the <sup>9</sup> author of eternal salvation; <sup>9</sup> Gr. *cause*.

perfect' is the regular word in the Levitical books of the Old Testament for consecration to the priesthood, and to Hebrews the use of the word in this connexion must necessarily carry with it something of that idea.

**he became** not 'He will become,' i.e. to many in the future, nor 'He has become,' i.e. to those who accepted Him in the past. The thought of time is excluded; the writer sees the consummation in eternity.

**unto all them.** Here is the note of catholicity; there is no longer one privileged people, for all peoples may be privileged.

**that obey Him.** He who has 'learned obedience' is the supreme object of obedience. Only the man who has learned to obey is really fitted to rule. Thus the meek are to inherit the earth (St. Matt. v. 5; Ps. xxxvii. 11). Moreover the obedience CHRIST requires is to be as perfect as that which He gave: it reaches to the inmost recesses of the hidden man and claims the secret thought (2 Cor. x. 5).

**the author,** i.e. He who causes or originates. The word is appropriately used of Divine action: thus Josephus uses it—Aaron and his family praise God as the *cause* of their salvation.

**of eternal salvation.** See notes on i. 14. The phrase is taken from Isa. xlv. 17. The salvation then promised is now offered. It is not like that of Moses, temporary and concerned with earthly welfare, nor even like that which Aaron could mediate giving ceremonial cleansing

named of God a high priest after the order of 10 Melchizedek.

from sins not wilful, but it is the gift of eternal life especially as viewed in its contrast with that alienation from the life of God which ignorance and sin entail. See additional note on the meaning of 'eternal' in the Epistle.

**10. named of God, etc.** Better 'addressed' or 'saluted.' This is the solemn declaration of the exalted office for which He has been prepared, and to which He has been designated and consecrated. The significance of the order of Melchizedek is now to be expounded; but before the exposition there is another digression of grave rebuke and warning.

For the second time when the subject of the priestly work of CHRIST is approached the writer pauses; he would still more deeply prepare the minds of those who are to meditate upon truths so profound. The warning of Israel's apostasy has been driven home; now they are sharply reminded of their want of progress, and its result in the weakening of the faculty of spiritual apprehension.

**11-14. Progress is essential to Christian life and knowledge; without it there must be falling back. Alike in natural and spiritual things each stage of life has its corresponding food, but those who physically are adults may spiritually be infants. The writer's difficulty in approaching an exalted but difficult theme lies in the lack of progress in the Hebrew Church.**



Of <sup>3</sup> whom we have many things  
 11 to say, and hard of interpretation, <sup>3</sup> Or, *which*

**11. Of whom.** It may be translated 'of which'; in this case it refers to the whole subject of the high priesthood and work of Christ in the heavenly sphere. This reference seems more likely than the restriction of the difficulty to the interpretation of Melchizedek's typical character.

**we have many things to say.** Though the minds are ill prepared for the teaching, yet it must be given because they ought to have been ready for it; and there is much of it. The words literally are 'Much is the discourse.' 'We' seems to point to the representative character of the writer.

**hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become, etc.** 'Seeing ye are become' is not to be connected with 'we have many things to say.' The dullness of the hearer causes the *difficulty* of interpretation but not its length. The theme of the glories of the priesthood of CHRIST will necessarily take much exposition.

**dull of hearing.** This may be compared with our Lord's complaint in the adopted words of Isaiah: 'their ears are dull of hearing' (St. Matt. xiii. 15). The sting of the reproach in both cases is that the dullness was self-induced and need not have been. The same word is used in vi. 12; it denotes a kind of languid indolence of mind and body. To this kind of spiritual inertness, which is loth to raise itself to effort, the conditions of tropical countries seem to create a special temptation.

seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again <sup>4</sup>that some one teach you the rudiments of the <sup>5</sup>first principles of

<sup>4</sup> Or, *that one teach you* **12**  
*which be the rudiments.*  
<sup>5</sup> Gr. *beginning.*

12. This dullness makes it necessary for them to receive elementary instruction when judging by the length of time they have been Christians they ought to be giving it.

**that some one teach you.** The word translated 'some one' is ambiguous. The sentence might be rendered 'teach what are the rudiments', as in the A.V. and the margin. But this is hardly likely: such depths of ignorance must have been impossible so soon in the case of Hebrew Christians. A man may know what the elements of the faith are without truly knowing them in their bearing on life and action. To be able to say the creed is not to know the creed.

**the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God.** The word translated 'rudiments' is used of the atoms of the universe; it means the simplest elements into which anything can be analyzed. Simple as elementary Christian faith is, it is complex in the sense that it has, as it were, its alphabet. Primary truths duly co-ordinated make a first principle, as the letters of the alphabet make a word. All is to be found in the revelation given in CHRIST. The logia or oracles might possibly refer to the Hebrew Scriptures, but as the word 'first principles' is used immediately after-

the oracles of God : and are become such as have  
**13** need of milk, and not of solid food. For every  
 one that partaketh of milk is without experience

wards of the first principles of CHRIST (vi. 1) it seems more likely to mean the same here also.

**such as have need of milk.** The rebuke is scathingly severe. It is not enough to say that they do not know their alphabet, he insists that they must be fed with milk. If it be asked what truths correspond with milk the answer is given in vi. 1-2. Cp. St. Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. iii. 1-2).

**13. without experience.** Age does not necessarily bring ripeness ; years may pass without experience : all do not 'bring forth more fruit in their age ;' the young may be more mature than the old.

**the word of righteousness.** The phrase is ambiguous and probably intentionally so. It may mean doctrine which deals with that righteousness which is in CHRIST, or it may mean that they are without experience as teachers in expounding Christian truth, in which case 'word' means, as often in the New Testament, the faculty of speaking : our Lord is said to have been 'powerful in word' (St. Luke xxiv. 19). The force of the sarcasm it a little softened by the order of the words : it would have been more logical if he had written : 'for every one that is without experience. . . partaketh of milk,' when the rebuke would have lain upon them all. But he leaves a loophole of escape : perhaps after all it may be found that there are some who will not need to partake of milk ; already he begins to 'bear gently.'

of the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe. But solid food is for <sup>6</sup> fullgrown <sup>6</sup>Or, *perfect* 14

**14. for full grown men** literally 'perfect.' The word contains one of the characteristic ideas of the Epistle, and occurs in one form or another a dozen times. A perfect man in the New Testament is one who having been initiated into the mysteries, and entrusted with the endowments, of the Christian Faith, actively corresponds with his vocation ; he fulfills his end and so attains to spiritual maturity. Our Lord said to the rich young man 'If thou wouldst be perfect,' or full grown (St. Matt. xix. 21), and then laid down what were in his case the conditions of reaching spiritual maturity. (Cp. i. Cor. ii. 6 ; xiv. 20 ; Phil. iii. 15 ; Col. i. 28 ; iv. 12 ; James i. 4.) Here the word includes both the natural and spiritual sense : in the case of Christians physical full growth ought to carry with it a corresponding spiritual maturity.

**by reason of use.** The word generally means 'habit' ; here it signifies the result of a process of meditation and its equivalent action. Christian life is not merely passive ; men grow by using their spiritual sustenance.

**have their senses exercised.** The senses are the organs of spiritual perception. 'Exercised' literally means 'in a state of having been developed through exercise.' (Cp. xii. 2 ; 1 Tim. iv. 7 ; I Peter ii. 14.)

**to discern good and evil.** Amongst the Hebrews one of the marks of childishness was considered to be the inability to distinguish between good food and bad. (Cp. Deut. i. 39 ; Isa. vii. 16). The discernment here is

men, *even* those who by reason of use have apparently not the moral discrimination of a conscience sensitive to evil, but the recognition of the right kind of food for spiritual health. The undeveloped Christian might reject doctrines which would contribute largely to his growth and stability.

The teaching of this section v. 11-14 is of special value at a time when the doctrines of Theosophy, 'New Theology', Christian Science, etc., are corrupting the purity of the faith of a certain number of Christians. Only those who stage by stage in the orderly development of Christian life and knowledge have meditated upon and incorporated and exercised themselves in Christian truth are capable of distinguishing the right kind of spiritual nourishment. The organs of spiritual perception are most delicate and in need of continual exercise if they are to remain sensitive to truth. Experience shows that those Christians who have been seduced by strange doctrines are those who though adults in age are babes in Christian understanding. Questioned and tested they are found to have the vaguest and most inaccurate conceptions of the elements of Christian doctrine, which they have rarely studied and never meditated upon. They reject truths which they have never tried to make their own. The practical outcome of the writer's warning is that meditation is essential to the due development of Christian life; it is thus that the senses are 'exercised to discern both good and evil'; without it men become dull of hearing. Concentrated meditation has ever been one of the most

their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

admired practices of India. It may prove to be one of the special vocations of Indian Christians to rescue this work of meditation from the contemplation of the quality-less Absolute, i.e. the contemplation of what amounts to nothing, and make it a rich and fruitful exercise for the apprehension of truth and the reception of spiritual nutriment.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON IGNORANCE

In v. 2 the ignorance with which the sympathetic priest deals gently is almost certainly ignorance of the intricate details of the Levitical law, leading to the involuntary violation of some of its many injunctions. On the one hand there was a people largely kept in ignorance of the law, on the other hand there was an elaborate code full of minute prescriptions. On the one hand there was the spirit of contempt : ' This multitude which knoweth not the law is accursed ; ' on the other hand there was Christ's defence of the ignorant, ' Ye took away the key of knowledge : ' ' ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.' A merciful high priest, then, will deal gently with those who in this sense are ignorant.

But in the case of the Hebrew people, there is another sense in which *ignorance* is used in the New Testament, viz. : ignorance of the nature and office of Him who took the name of JESUS. With this ignorance, even in its gravest aspect as being the cause of the crucifixion of the Messiah, the Apostles deal with extraordinary gentleness. St. Peter, when the actual tragedy was only a few months distant, found it possible to say, ' And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers ' (Acts iii. 17). St. Paul too ascribes the crime to ignorance, though he hints that the ignorance was culpable. ' Because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him ' (Acts xiii. 27). He feels that he himself is involved in this condemnation of culpable ignorance. ' Howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief ' (1 Tim. i. 13). Again in speaking of his own people he acknowledges that they have a zeal for God, but it is a zeal combined with an ignorance which led them to fashion methods of righteousness of their own instead of accepting God's (Rom. x. 3).

So too in dealing with what is called sometimes 'heathen ignorance,' by which is meant the ignorance of those who having unworthy conceptions of God strive to represent Him in images of their own invention and making, and thus invariably are polytheists, St. Paul on one occasion at any rate is reported as exhibiting gentleness: 'The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked,' so he declared to the Athenians to whom he also preached repentance in view of the appointed day of judgement. (Acts xviii. 30-31).

Ignorance then is the fitting object of that gentle dealing which found its supreme example and consummation in the intercession of CHRIST for the ignorant agents of the Passion 'Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

But gentleness towards ignorance of this kind must not blind us to the fact that St. Paul gives prominence to quite another point of view. There is a kind of 'Gentile' ignorance which he ascribes to the darkening of the understanding and the hardening of the heart. It leads to alienation from the life of God and its fruit is moral ruin. (Eph. iv. 18). He distinctly teaches that there are those who are ignorant because 'they refused to have God in their knowledge' and because 'they have changed the truth of God for a lie.' The passage in Romans I is the weightiest indictment in the New Testament of a voluntary ignorance with its fruit of idolatry and its accompaniment of spiritual degradation and moral corruption.

There are thus two kinds of ignorance issuing in idolatry; the ignorance which for a time God 'overlooks', because there is in it some measure of sincerity, the ignorant not being responsible for their ignorance; and the ignorance which being due to moral corruption comes under the terrible wrath of God revealed against all who 'hold down the truth in unrighteousness.' That both these two kinds of ignorance are to be found in India it is hardly possible to doubt, the one leading to idolatry in which there is sincerity, and the other to idolatry which refuses to have God in its knowledge. What is the right attitude of Christianity towards them? Since there is the kind of ignorance which God overlooks for a time as being sincere, it is better to *hope* that all the



ignorance with which Christian teaching comes in contact is of that better kind until it is decisively demonstrated to be not so ; to meet it, that is, with faithfulness but also with the love that hopeth all things. Nor must we exclude from this loving hope the ignorance which rejects CHRIST when He is presented as the true object of knowledge. There are, unquestionably, certain moral standards which may be confidently appealed to in India. Should forms of idolatry be obviously connected with conduct which violates these standards, this kind of ignorance must be stigmatized as voluntary and vicious ; it must be denounced as St. Paul denounced it, and menaced as he menaces it with the wrath of God. That idolatry does take such forms in India the legal code of India bears unmistakable witness when it excludes from legal punishment certain kinds of obscenity should they be connected with Hindu religious worship and literature, whilst it penalizes them in common life. With this ignorance, actually to be found for instance in the idolatrous worship of Puri and Benares and abominable indeed to many a Hindu, love cannot deal gently without ceasing to be love and becoming indifference, for this is surely the ignorance of those ' who have refused to have God in their knowledge. '

**Ignorance in the Upanishads.** The conception of ignorance has a place in the teachings of Hindu religious philosophy as well as in those of Christianity. There is one respect in which its use in the *Upanishads* has a very real affinity with the Christian conception of it as the absence of true knowledge.

The *Chhandogya Upanishad* teaches that all learning is to be regarded as ignorance so long as it is confined to the objects of experimental knowledge ; that is to say, a man may be deeply versed in the sciences and yet be ignorant ; and not only so, but even knowledge of the *shastras* and of theology, may leave him ignorant (*Chhand* 7.1.) The only knowledge which may be truly termed knowledge is the knowledge of Brahman. In Christianity too there is a supreme knowledge which transcends all other kinds, and without it man however learned is ignorant. This knowledge is the knowledge of God : ' This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God ' (St. John xvii. 3.) All

other knowledge is necessarily temporal and destined to pass. 'Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away' (1 Cor. xiii. 8.) No doubt when we come to compare what the *Upanishads* mean by the knowledge of Brahman with what Christianity means by the knowledge of God there is a profound contrast, but they are alike in insisting on the transcendent value of the one knowledge in comparison of which all other kinds of knowledge are ignorance. Probably also the knowledge of Brahman may be said to be attained intellectually and once attained leads to emancipation from individuality and personal subsistence; through knowledge the individual *ātman* becomes the one universal *ātman*, and *ātman* is Brahman. In Christianity the knowledge of God is attained not so much by rational processes but by personal intercourse; not by intellect but by love. Love is the indispensable key to this transcendent knowledge. 'Every one that loveth. . . knoweth God.' Ignorance is the want of love: 'he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love' (1 St. John iv. 7-8). Such knowledge of course does not annul the distinction of subject and object, for love implies the distinction of the lover from the loved; it also implies their unity, for the bond of union between persons is love.

#### V. 7 THE AGONY IN ITS RELATION TO THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER

Even those who have refused to acknowledge JESUS CHRIST as 'the very Image of the substance of God' and the Son 'by whom all things were made' have almost without exception rendered full homage to the spotlessness and perfection of His human character. All the resources of language have been employed without stint by non-Christians as well as Christians in the attempt to depict the moral beauty of the Poor Man of Nazareth. A French unbeliever, Voltaire, has however pointed to the struggle in Gethsemane as a manifestation not only of human weakness but of human weakness so yielded to as to be positively culpable. He finds in it a blot on a character otherwise admirable, and compares this shrinking and shuddering fear at the

prospect of pain and death with the calm fearless aspect with which many a heroic martyr has met his end. Amongst Indians, too, the highest admiration is reserved for those who amidst bodily and mental sufferings maintain a demeanour calm and unmoved. The Hindu reader of the Gospels acknowledges and appreciates the love and humility of CHRIST which he traces there, but in the agony in Gethsemane and in the cry of dereliction on the Cross it appears to him that the spiritual level is lower than would have been exhibited had the Sufferer borne His afflictions in unbroken silence and with unruffled serenity.

It is remarkable in view of such criticism that this episode of His life 'in the days of His flesh' should have been specially selected by the writer of the Epistle to illustrate the reality of the human experience by which CHRIST gained the power of human sympathy. There were so many other incidents in the Gospels in which our Lord displayed the sympathy of a man with the poor, the afflicted and the ignorant, and made their sorrows His own, that it would have been easy for him to have shewn that our Lord fulfilled the condition of humaneness by narrating some of these. But the writer who has just insisted upon the perfection of the human character of CHRIST and reminded his readers that the one limit to our Lord's human experience was that which His sinlessness postulated, selects the experience of Gethsemane as gathering into one focus the proofs of CHRIST's knowledge of what human weakness entails.

A closer consideration of the episode makes it clear why it was selected for this purpose. Two things come out most prominently ; (1) CHRIST's horrible dread of the impending calamity and (2) His complete acquiescence in His Father's Will. It is the two things brought into the sharpest possible contrast that unmistakably disclose the perfection of CHRIST's character. Obedience is a sacrifice only when it is really costly. It is here represented as costing the uttermost of which human nature is capable. Moreover, the human nature which can offer this costly obedience must be true to type in every respect. Now typical human nature shrinks from death, for physical death as we know it seems to violate human instincts, and is thus far unnatural to man. CHRIST revealed

Himself as true to type as man, even if His shrinking were only from the event of physical death in excruciating pain. But plainly it was from much more than this that He shrank. His death was different from the death of some martyr who may have died for others, because CHRIST's act of dying was inextricably bound up with the sin of mankind. To use the astounding phrase of St. Paul, it was the death of one 'who was made sin for us'. His abhorrence of it, therefore, was necessarily immeasurably greater than the shrinking from ordinary death such as is the common lot of man. Had He not thus shrunk from it, or had He met it with indifference He would not have been sinless. It follows that His surrender to His Father's will was an obedience of ideal perfection, whilst His experience of the depths of woe into which humanity may be plunged rendered His sympathy capable of embracing every conceivable sorrow.

One more consideration remains. Voltaire wrote mockingly to Rousseau, 'Look at Him in the Garden of Gethsmane and you see Him prostrate with fear'. Even the Hindu who reverences Him thinks that He would have presented a nobler example to men had He retained His calmness unshaken. But we must remember that no human eye saw that sweat of agony which 'was as it were great drops of blood'. Of this horrible dread there was no human witness. No human ears heard His 'prayers and supplications'. He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and we know indeed that they slept. He was neither seen nor heard. Mankind would never have known of it had not He Himself told it, and He can only have told it, as He told of His temptation, in order that men might be convinced that He who was to save them to the uttermost had Himself experienced the uttermost from which they were to be saved. Fear in public He never shewed. A little later when He met the armed ruffians sent to seize Him there was not the slightest trace of alarm; there was only the quiet fearless word 'Whom seek ye?' His captors fell back in panic before a courage so serene, and the only one who shewed no fear then was the One who was going to the scourging and the cross. Without a sense of fear there can be no true courage, and courage reaches its highest when the fear which is overcome is

greatest. In selecting this episode of Gethsemane the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* not only testifies to the fullness of CHRIST'S human experience and the consequent richness of His sympathy, but He also exhibits to those who are tempted to faint-heartedness an ideal example of human courage.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON 'ABLE TO SAVE HIM FROM DEATH'

This verse is the stock passage with Muhammadan controversialists to prove that CHRIST did not die upon the cross. 'He prayed to Him', so the argument runs, 'who was able to save Him from death and was heard'; and being heard was saved from death. The Qur'án teaches that He did not actually die but that an *eidolon* or 'similitude' was crucified in His place. 'For their saying "Verily, we have killed the Messiah, JESUS the Son of Mary, the apostle of God," but they did not kill Him, but a similitude was made for them. And verily, those who differ about Him are in doubt concerning Him; they have no knowledge concerning Him, but only follow an opinion. They did not kill Him, for sure! nay God raised Him up unto Himself; for God is mighty and wise.' (Suratu'r Nisá 155). The Qur'án itself, however, is not consistent, for in another passage His death seems to be admitted 'When God said, "O JESUS" I will make Thee die and take Thee up again to me, and will clear Thee of those who misbelieve, and will make those who follow Thee above those who misbelieve'. (Suratu Ali 'Imran 45). The obvious answer to the Muhammadan who interprets 'from death' as equivalent to 'from dying' and argues that the Qur'án is supported by the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in its teaching that CHRIST did not die is to point to the passages in the Epistle in which the reality of CHRIST'S death is stated in explicit language which can admit of only one interpretation. In the second chapter we are taught that CHRIST was crowned with glory and honour in order that He might taste death for every man (ii. 9) and it was through death that He robbed the devil of his power and delivered men (ii. 14). These two passages are

entirely free from ambiguity. At the end of the Epistle the writer invokes the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, where the meaning is clearly that the Shepherd had Himself been numbered among the dead. But besides these passages there are others in which the use of the phrase 'The Blood of Christ' implicitly conveys to the reader the certainty and reality of His death. It was 'through His own Blood' and not the blood of goats and calves that He 'entered in once for all into the holy place' (ix. 12). It is the Blood of CHRIST which cleanses the conscience from dead works (ix. 14). It is the Blood of JESUS which gives us boldness to enter into the holy place (x. 19), whilst wilful apostates count this Blood 'the Blood of sprinkling' (xiii. 24) with which they were consecrated as members of the priestly race (xiii. 12) as though it were some common thing (x. 29). The passages which speak of CHRIST offering Himself once for all (vii. 27), as putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (ix. 26), as enduring the Cross (xii. 2), as offering His Body (x. 10), have no meaning apart from the fact of His death.

Thus the whole teaching of the Epistle confirms the interpretation adopted in the note on the text. CHRIST was not saved from dying, but He was saved out of the state of death. Had it not been for the exigencies of Muhammadan controversy it would never have occurred to any one that the words taken in their context and in harmony with the rest of the Epistle could mean anything else.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON 'ETERNAL'

The theme of this Epistle necessarily gives prominence to the conception of the *eternal*, for its main subject is the High Priest who ministers by one eternal act in an eternal sphere, one who is 'a priest for ever', 'who ever liveth', and is the author of 'an eternal salvation'. The words used to express the idea of eternity are not peculiar to this Epistle: it adopts those employed by our Lord who formulated the conception, though He Himself adopted the phrases of the Old Testament whilst endowing them with a new significance. There can be little doubt as to the general meaning of the idea, impossible of course as it is to define it. It was necessary to find terms to signify the quality of that which

transcends the conditions of earthly existence, which is superior to time and space, the heavenliness of that which being in union with God is independent of all created limitations. The terms adopted were necessarily those which originally had had a temporal or spatial significance, and the aim in their new use was to empty them of all that was temporal and conditional and to fill them with the heavenly. The term 'eternal' does not describe an endless succession of moments, or leagues of space indefinitely extended, but that with which time and space have no necessary concern at all.

The word '*aeon*' (*age*) and its adjective '*aionios*' occur again and again in the Old Testament. In the singular '*aeon*' often means this present world, and in the plural those cosmic systems which have their existence in time and were created through the Son (i. 2). But underlying them there is that of which they are the temporal manifestation, that uncreated *aeon* which is called '*the aeon of the aeons*', the real which is within the phenomenal, and may be contrasted with it; the absolute as contrasted with the conditional. And so our Lord made use of this phrase of the inward transcendent *aeon* and the derived adjective to describe that which we have in virtue of our union with God, and forfeit when we are separated from Him. He spoke of 'eternal inheritance', 'eternal life', 'eternal tabernacles'. When sin is of such a character that it robs us irremediably of these eternal realities He described it as 'eternal sin'; the loss of the eternal is an 'eternal punishment', or 'eternal fire'.

In this Epistle we find the phrases 'eternal salvation', 'eternal redemption', 'eternal inheritance', 'eternal covenant', and once we have 'eternal judgement'. It is the exact repetition of our Lord's teaching in the Gospels. He is the High Priest 'unto the eternal', He came to mediate the eternal unto men; to save them from what was transitory and imperfect, or rather to teach them to use the transitory as the sacrament of the eternal; to redeem them from what was false and evil; to translate them into that rest of God for which they were created, which was pledged to them by a covenant which dealt only with the eternal, and secured to them in the Divine faithfulness was finally to be irrevocably theirs by the unerring judgement of God.

## CHAPTER VI

WHEREFORE let us <sup>1</sup> cease to speak *<sup>1</sup> Gr. leave the word of the beginning of Christ.* |

**1-3. Exhortation to renewed spiritual efforts which may lead to perfection or full growth, and an enumeration of the rudiments of the first principles.**

**1. Wherefore.** This word strikes a hopeful note, and confines the thought to v. 14. There is hope that there are some after all who are of full age and exercised.

**let us cease** literally as in A.V. 'leaving.' It is the ordinary word used by orators when they are going to pass by one subject to go on to another. Westcott sees in it more than this. As regards the writer it may mean only this, but as regards those who are addressed it includes the thought of 'giving up' as a necessary condition of progress.

**the first principles of Christ** literally 'the account of the beginning of the CHRIST,' i.e. the primary instruction regarding the CHRIST which teachers of the Gospel were in the habit of giving to Hebrew catechumens and others. No doubt it included the exposition of the fulfilment in JESUS, of the Messianic predictions but it was not confined to this, as verse 2 shews. In v. 12



of the first principles of Christ, and press on

this instruction is called 'the first principles of the oracles of God', here it is 'the first principles of CHRIST', 'for the testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy.' (Rev. xix. 10.)

**press on unto perfection.** The translation 'press on' misses the point. It should rather be 'let us be carried on' or 'upheld.' The thought is that He who is 'upholding'—the same word is used here—'all things by the word of His power' (i. 3) will uphold these weak Christians if only they will surrender themselves to His guidance. Thus they will grow, for growth is due to Divine action, whilst man's part is to use what God provides. The verb is in the present tense and signifies that as the guiding and upholding are continuous, so the Christian's co-operation must be continuous also.

The 'perfection' or 'full growth' is maturity of spiritual knowledge with its resultant Christlike character.

**not laying again a foundation.** These words at first sight present a difficulty, for the writer has just been urging the need of the renewal of the foundation v. 12. This apparent difficulty led to the Latin versions translating by a word meaning 'throwing down' or 'destroying'—'at the same time as you advance, do not destroy your foundation—take care that it is secure.' But the middle voice of the verb never occurs in this sense. The solution is found in this, that 'laying a foundation' was a current phrase to describe the method of preliminary instruction. All the writer says is that

unto <sup>9</sup> perfection; not laying again a <sup>9</sup> Or, *full growth*

he is not going to do that work, but he does not in any way dispense his readers from doing it for themselves. Indeed it is ever the duty of Christians, however 'full grown,' to be constantly securing the foundation.

The fundamentals are in three pairs. The first pair has to do with that which in this life has to be given by man to God; the second with that which in this life is given by God to man; the third with man's eternal state. The first pair implies a man's individual responsibility in his relation to God; religion must begin with a man's inmost self, his *ego*, and unite him to God. The second pair implies that he is a social being, and has a relation to an organized body which is the channel of divine gifts; religion must unite a man to his fellow-men. The third implies his relation to the unseen world for which all here is a preparation; religion must lift the veil of the future.

**of repentance from dead works.** This was the order of our Lord's teaching (St. Mark i. 15) of St. John Baptist's (St. Matt. iii. 1) and of the Apostles'. The call to repentance was part of the apostolic commission both before and after the Resurrection. (St. Mark vi. 12; St. Luke xxiv. 47.) So St. Peter taught (Acts ii. 38) and St. Paul (Acts xvii. 31). Repentance has the first place because the great hindrance to fellowship with God is sin. (Cp. 1 St. John i.) There must be a radical change of attitude, a complete revolution of mind, as regards sin, before a man can come to God through CHRIST. As an indispensable preliminary to the pro-

foundation of repentance from dead works, and

clamation of the Gospel comes the stern exhortation to repent. The taking away of sin is declared at the beginning of this Epistle to be CHRIST'S characteristic work: 'Making purification of sins He sat down' i. 3. He upholds the universe and has provided for the purification of sins. Nothing else of His work is mentioned: this one thing stands out by itself. So, too, it stands in St. John Baptist's message (St. John i. 29). No people with an inadequate recognition of the malignancy and guilt of sin will ever feel the need of that salvation from sin which CHRIST offers in Himself. Thus the writer in harmony with the teaching of the whole of the New Testament puts repentance as the first fundamental. 'Dead works' (see ix. 14). That which is dead has lost the principle of life and has itself become a source of corruption and death; death leads to death. Included in the term, doubtless, are the external observances of the Levitical ritual and worship when devoid of the inner spirit of devotion to God and the desire to do His will (Cp. Isa. i. 11-15). Formalism in worship is almost invariably accompanied by moral degeneration. Religiousness without religion issues in corruption of life and character. But plainly the term is used here with the widest possible significance: a 'dead work' is not only an act of devitalized worship; it is a breach of the law of righteousness, which originating in a will perverted and separated from the source of life in God, results, if not repented of, in final alienation which is eternal death.

of faith toward God,<sup>3</sup> of the teaching

<sup>3</sup> Some ancient authorities read, *even the teaching of.*

2

**faith toward God.** Faith is put after repentance, not because it comes after it in the temporal order of spiritual progress but because of the primary necessity of laying the greatest stress on the need of repentance. Compare St. Paul's description of his own teaching in Acts xx. 21, where he puts repentance first and describes it as 'towards God.' The two are contemporary and may almost be described as the negative and positive aspects of our union with God—the turning away from and renunciation of all that is contrary to God's will so as to rest in Him as the sole source of life and holiness. Faith in God in the teaching of a catechumen necessarily includes faith in Jesus Christ. (Cp. St. John xiv. 1 and Acts xx. 21.) The phrase 'faith towards God' is unique in the New Testament, but the meaning is clear from other passages in which the same preposition is used with the verb 'believe' (St. Matt. xxvii. 42; Acts ix. 42; xi. 17; xvi. 31; xxii. 19; Rom. iv. 5, 24). In almost every case it is used of those who have turned away from the old to the new, from the old life of unbelief and sin to the new dependence on God.

The next two pairs of fundamentals are shewn to be closely connected with the first by the omission of any conjunction: though the foundation is composed of different parts it is one. The fundamental instruction of a candidate for baptism reaches from the first turning

<sup>4</sup>Or, *wash-ings* of <sup>4</sup>baptisms, and of laying on of

from sin to God and the admission into the Kingdom up to the final scene of the Judgement.

**of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.**

There is a reading which might be translated, either, 'of baptisms, of teaching, and of laying on of hands' or 'of baptisms into teaching and of laying on of hands.' But the translation in the text gives the simplest and most intelligible sense. Repentance and faith are the preparation for Christian baptism: they do not convey life, but they render the convert capable of appropriating the life when in the one Spirit he is baptized into the one Body (1 Cor. xii. 13). The plural 'baptisms' is used because a Hebrew convert being familiar with religious uses of water in initiation would have to be carefully instructed in the difference between, for instance, the baptism of St. John Baptist and Christian baptism; the former is a sign and a sign only and the latter actually conveys that which it signifies: the one is a baptism with water only and the other a baptism with water and the Spirit. So St. John Baptist himself contrasted them, and each evangelist carefully records the contrast as made by him. (St. Matt. iii. 11; St. Mark i. 8; St. Luke iii. 16; St. John i. 33.) We have an actual instance of this 'teaching of baptisms' in Acts xix. 1-7 where different baptisms had to be carefully distinguished from one another by St. Paul. Some have thought that the plural is used because of the ancient practice of trine immersion in baptizing, or because the writer is contemplating the baptism of

hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of many candidates, each to be separately and individually baptized. But neither of these explanations is as simple and natural as that which the *Acts* teaches us to have been the practice of St. Paul. In India where water is constantly used religiously there has to be the same careful 'teaching of baptisms' in order that there may be no confusion between the Christian use of water as the outward sign of the Sacrament of the baptism of the Spirit, and the Hindu ceremonial use; there is, for instance, a festival in Bengal and elsewhere, called the Ardhodaya-jog, in which it is believed that those who bathe in the Ganges at the moment of a particular conjunction of stars obtain remission of sins for themselves and their ancestors. Such baptisms and the need to which they testify may indeed be used by the Christian teacher as signs pointing to that baptism of water and the Spirit which is to be prepared for by repentance and faith toward God.

**'laying on of hands.'** From the *Acts* we learn that a solemn blessing by the laying on of hands was the means by which the newly baptized received the fullness of the gift of the Spirit. (*Acts* viii. 17; xix. 6.) The laying on of hands was not a separate and distinct rite, but the completion of baptism, which was regarded as incomplete without it. (*Acts* xix. 2-3.) This laying on of hands as recorded in the *Acts* was only performed by one who had the Apostolic commission. At Samaria St. Philip the Deacon administered the water of baptism, but two Apostles came afterwards

to the city with the special object of completing the baptism by the laying on of hands. (Acts viii. 12, 14-18.)

The Christian Church was naturally led to adopt a symbol familiar to the Hebrews (Deut. xxxiv. 9). It had been frequently used by our Lord (St. Matt. xix. 13; St. Mark vi. 5; viii. 23; St. Luke iv. 40; xiii. 13) the people expected Him to use it (St. Matt. ix. 18; St. Mark v. 23; vii. 32). As used by the Apostles it effectively expressed the handing on of a gift, the distribution of the Spirit to individual believers by those who had themselves previously received it. It seems clear that by his connecting it thus closely with baptism the writer has here chiefly in mind, if not solely, the distribution of the Spirit which was made to all Christians alike in 'Confirmation' (to use the common western term), but the same outward sign was used in the ordination of the Christian ministry and in the commission for special work (Acts vi. 6; xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6). Here where he is recalling the main outlines of such instruction as was given to Christian catechumens it would have been as unnatural to speak of ordination to the Christian ministry as of the mystery of the Eucharist and the high priesthood of CHRIST to those who were as yet only on the threshold of the Church.

**of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.** The phrase used here of the resurrection is that which broadly signifies the doctrine that men, both just and unjust, rise from the dead. Acts xxxiv. 15: it is so used in Acts xvii. 32; xxiii. 6; xxiv. 21; and several

eternal judgement. And this will we do, if God **3**

times in 1 Cor. xv. There are other phrases in the New Testament which signify more than this, such as that used by our Lord in St. Luke xx. 35, 'the resurrection out of the dead': this is applied to the faithful only; to our Lord Himself in Acts x. 41; 1 St. Peter i. 3; and to the Christian's resurrection in Phil. iii. 11. The foundation, however, on which is built the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, viz.: 'CHRIST the first fruits, then they that are CHRIST'S at His coming,' is to be found in the doctrine of the general resurrection.

The word 'teaching' covers all the last four points of doctrine and in some measure unites them. Even by creation man has a destiny which stretches beyond the limits of this present life—the just and unjust alike must stand before the great white Throne—but in the case of the Christian baptism and confirmation prepare his human nature for that final glorification to which the resurrection introduces him and which the eternal judgement makes for ever secure. Those who have already been made the temple of the Holy Spirit rise not only from the dead, but out from among the dead.

The 'eternal judgement' is to be pronounced by the risen Saviour. (Acts xvii. 31.)

**3. And this will we do,** i.e. 'press on unto perfection.' The writer is resolute, but he knows that there are things which human resolution cannot touch, so he begins to strike the note of profoundest warning.

**If God permit.** The words do more than merely ascribe to God the supreme oversight of human affairs.



4 permit. For as touching those who were once

There is a fall from which no recovery is possible, an apostasy so extreme that there can be nothing for it but rejection. So the writer goes on 'For.'

**4-8. The hopelessness of apostasy in the case of those who have been fully initiated into the Christian mysteries and experienced their power.**

**4. For as touching those, etc.** Though this order of the words avoids the long separation of 'it is impossible' from 'to renew' as in A.V. yet it reduces the tremendous emphasis of the word 'impossible', which in the Greek is the first word in the sentence. 'Impossible is it' says the writer: there is a limitation to the work of men which has been set by the wilfulness of men. It may be that he has in mind the words of our Lord 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.' (St. Matt. xix. 26.)

**who were once enlightened**, i.e. 'once and once for all enlightened.' They are pointed back to a definite time which is known, and to a definite act which is complete; to a time which can never recur and to an act which can never be repeated. As natural birth has its definite time, and cannot be repeated (St. John iii. 4), so is it with the spiritual birth into life and light; it is once, and once for all; there is no second baptism. The convert has been made a partaker of the new life by his birth into the Body of CHRIST, he has received the capacity of interior illumination by initiation into Him who is the true light (St. John i. 9; cp. Heb. x. 32).

enlightened <sup>5</sup> and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the

<sup>5</sup> Or, *having both tasted of . . . and being made . . . and having tasted, etc.*

In men life is light: natural life carries with it self-consciousness: spiritual life carries with it God-consciousness: In him was life and the life was the light of men' (St. John i. 4). Enlightenment is the common term used of baptism by the Apostolic Fathers. Eusebius (Hist. iii. 23) quotes from Clement of Alexandria to illustrate the distinction between 'enlighten' as used of baptism and 'seal' as used of confirmation. CHRIST spoke of Himself as the light (St. John viii. 12; xii. 46) and of men being 'full of light' or 'full of darkness' (St. Luke xi. 34) and light became a favourite term for the description of the Christian state, e.g. Eph. v. 8; 1 Thes. v. 5.

**and tasted of the heavenly gift.** From spiritual capacity he goes on to spiritual experience. By enlightenment or baptism made capable of it, they have actually and consciously enjoyed the heavenly gift, which is CHRIST Himself who came down from heaven and is giving life to the world (St. John vi. 33, 51), life which is light (cp. St. John iv. 10). CHRIST is the Father's gift to the world, and the Holy Spirit is the gift of the Father and the Son (St. John xiv. 26; xv. 26); thus this same word 'Gift' is frequently applied to the Spirit as well as to the Son. (Acts ii. 38; viii. 20; x. 45; xi. 17.)

The genitive case after 'tasted' implies that the

- 5 <sup>6</sup> Or, *tasted the word of God that it is good* Holy Ghost, and <sup>6</sup> tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the

fullness of the gift has not been exhausted—that cannot be in this life or ever—though a real beginning has been made.

**made partakers of the Holy Ghost.** Baptism into CHRIST has been completed by their becoming partakers of the Holy Ghost. The order of the fundamentals as given in verse 2 is being followed. The word 'partakers' means more than the verb 'partaking': it is not merely a process, but it is a fact accomplished: they have actually been made the temple of the Spirit; they have become partners in the possession of Him. St. Luke uses the word of partners in fishing (St. Luke v. 7), and besides this place in the Epistle it is used of partnership in a common possession in iii. 1 and iii. 14 and in a related sense in i. 9 and xii. 8.

**5. and tasted the good word of God.** 'Word' here means 'utterance'. It is not the Word of God of iv. 12, but some particular truth or promise uttered by or contained in that Word. The whole sentence might be more closely translated 'and tasted an utterance of God that it is good.' All the emphasis is thrown on the goodness or beauty of that saying, as the word 'good' comes first (Cp. 1 St. Peter ii. 3). The word 'tasted' is no doubt purposely repeated to set forth more vividly the reality of the individual experience, but by changing the case that follows it from genitive to accusative, the writer wishes to imply that the experience was a

age to come, and *then* fell away, it is impossible to 6

complete one ; they had already completely experienced the truth of some of CHRIST'S promises or words.

**and the powers of the age to come.** They had experienced even more than the truth of CHRIST'S teaching, they had actually seen the forces of the unseen world at work among men. The reference must surely be to those ' manifold powers ' by which God had borne witness, confirming the truth of the great salvation, ii. 4. They are the works of healing and conversion which CHRIST wrought, not by the use of natural forces, but by spiritual.

' The age ' is described as ' to come ', because it is not yet fully manifested ; it is already present hidden beneath the world of sense, and from time to time breaking through it as its forces are wielded by those who are in union with its supreme Lord. (St. John xiv. 12). A state, rich and glorious in its endowments, has been described : now with startling suddenness comes the word that denotes apostasy.

**6. and then fell away.** It is not a relapse into the previous state before conversion and baptism ; as one who slips in climbing may fall back to his former position, but it is a falling *aside*, as one who falls from a path of security over a precipice. An apostate Christian can never be again what he was before he ' tasted of the heavenly gift ' ; he becomes something deplorably worse : compare CHRIST'S words : ' the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. ' (St. Luke xi. 26).

<sup>7</sup> Or, *the* renew them again unto repentance;  
*while* <sup>7</sup> seeing they crucify to themselves the

**it is impossible.** See note on v. 4. Not 'it is unlikely' nor 'it is difficult', but '*it is impossible.*'

**to renew them again unto repentance.** It is only human agency that is here excluded; in such a case men can do nothing; the apostate must be left to God. The verb is in the present tense, and might be translated 'to keep renewing again'. The writer goes back again to the fundamentals, and selects the first on his list as being the most essential. Repentance is so great a thing, carrying with it so complete a revolution of the whole self in its attitude towards God and man, that it cannot take place again and again. It can be deepened and made more thorough, but the very constitution of human nature prohibits its continual recurrence. See additional note.

**seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.** The Greek verb does not necessarily mean 'crucify again'. Here we have the reason of the impossibility of the renewal. The apostate is crucifying CHRIST, and exposing Him crucified to the scorn of the world. CHRIST has come to him, and put Himself in his power, and like those in Jerusalem, he rejects and crucifies Him. But there is this dread difference. Many of those who bore the guilt of the historical crucifixion did it in ignorance, they knew not whom they were crucifying (Acts iii. 17), but the apostate has heard CHRIST knocking, has opened the door and has wel-

Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs

comed Him within, and when he has Him within he crucifies Him. See introduction and additional note.

**and put him to an open shame.** The crucifixion, indeed, is in the mystic processes of the human spirit, and unseen, it is 'to themselves', but in its outward aspect it is the holding up of CHRIST to public derision. 'Fell away' is in the past tense, but 'crucify' and 'put Him to an open shame' are in the present tense. The fall is complete, but the effects of the fall are continuous: the apostate continues crucifying CHRIST and exposing Him to shame.

**7-8. The warning is driven home by an analogy from the natural world. The readers are left to interpret it for themselves. The soul of man and the soil of earth are alike God's work, and into either He pours His gifts. From both alike good fruit is expected, each after its kind. Of such land as only brings forth various weeds, the inevitable end is to be set on fire: what other end can be expected of the soul that brings forth evil character?**

**7. For the land which hath drunk, etc.** Compare the parable of Isa. v. 1-7. No analogy is commoner than that between the processes of moral and spiritual training and those of agriculture: our Lord several times used it. Here the first point of comparison is that the gift has been received, and received in abundance.

meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, **g** receiveth blessing from God ; but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse ; whose end is to be burned.

**for whose sake it is also tilled.** There is a hint here of the human ministry through which God works among men. God gives the life, but men prepare others for its reception, and help to provide the conditions of its growth (1 Cor. iii. 5-9). Yet the labourer works not for himself, but for the community ; the spiritual labourer also works not for himself but for God.

**receiveth blessing from God.** As the gifts received are from God, so also is the fruitfulness. The 'blessing' may be both in the bringing of the young shoots to perfection (Phil. i. 6) and according to the laws of fertility laid down in St. Matt. xiii. 12 and St. John xv. 2.

**8. but if it beareth thorns and thistles.** The conditions are the same in each case : the same gifts and the same labour, and there is the same expectation of fruit. The word is changed '*bringeth forth* herbs'—'*beareth* thorns.' In the Greek the first is the word for what naturally ought to ensue, the second seems to imply that the result is unexpected and unnatural.

**It is rejected,** that is, it is tested and found wanting. This is a favourite word with St. Paul, who uses it seven times ; e.g. 1 Cor. ix. 27 ; 2 Tim. iii. 8.

**nigh unto a curse.** There is just a glimmer of hope here ; he only says 'nigh'. Men may be on the brink of ruin and yet be pulled back.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of **9**

**whose end is to be burned.** Two meanings are in the word 'end'; land which produces only thorns has no other function or 'end' to fulfill than that of being set on fire, and this therefore must be its fate at the 'end'.

The condemnation is gradual: it is as though the farmer looked at the land, examined it and found it worthless; he is on the point of giving his verdict, and that verdict if given would be that it must be set on fire, for it has no other 'end'.

**9-12.** The writer is himself a conspicuous illustration of one who 'can bear gently' (v. 2) i.e. who can find the right mean between the extremes of excessive severity and undue leniency. Though he has drawn a dark and terrible picture of what apostasy means, he has left a loophole of escape: men may be on the edge of a precipice, and yet not have fallen over. He has spoken with chilling sternness, now he speaks with warm tenderness and love, and encourages and inspirits those who must have been cast down by his severity. He recalls their loving ministrations, and he builds his hope for the future on them.

**9. beloved.** The only place in the Epistle in which they are thus tenderly addressed. The writer has spoken sternly, but it has been with the severity which springs from love. Compare the ascended Lord's message: 'as many as I love, I reprove and chasten' (Rev. iii. 19). In His ministry on earth it is



you, and things that <sup>8</sup> accompany salvation, though  
 10 <sup>8</sup> Or, *are* we thus speak: for God is not unright-  
*near to* eous to forget your work and the love

noticeable that when our Lord has been speaking truths which seemed hard to His disciples, immediately He speaks to them in terms of exceptional endearment, e.g. St. Mark x. 24; St. John xiii. 33.

**we are persuaded better things of you.** He has indeed described the fate of the unfaithful field, but not because he wished to imply that they are already in that unhappy state: on the contrary he is convinced that they are even now producing better fruits than those signified by 'thorns and thistles.'

**and things that accompany salvation.** Literally 'things that hold on to salvation' the phrase is probably purposely vague. These 'better things', which he afterwards mentions, are fruits of that state of salvation into which the Hebrews have been brought, and they also act as bonds which tend to secure them to that state.

**though we thus speak.** 'Thus', i.e. warning of a grave danger which is not remote.

**10. for God is not unrighteous to forget.** There is no idea here of storing up merit through good works, but the thought is that when the Master surveys His field, He overlooks neither good nor evil, and His judgement concerning it is just: His righteousness or justice can be absolutely relied upon. He does not treat as 'thorns and thistles' what are manifestly good fruits. Judgement is not necessarily condemnation:

which ye shewed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

God exercises the attribute of righteousness when He says, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant' as when He says, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant.' Moreover this process of discernment is ever going on (St. John xii. 31) though its final result only becomes irrevocable at the 'Last day' (See additional note).

**your work**, i.e. your moral conduct generally.

**and the love which ye shewed.** The characteristic mark of this conduct is active love. In verses 11 and 12 he speaks of hope and faith, but first 'he lays hold of their love as an occasion of sharpening their faith and hope' (Benge). The man whose love is living will never permanently lose faith and hope.

**towards His name.** God's name is in CHRIST who wholly reveals and represents Him; to shew love into or towards that name is to shew love to CHRIST and all who bear His name. The love described here is, that which is exercised within the Christian community towards Christians as such. This love serves as a testimony to the world, 'see how these Christians love one another', and as an invitation to those outside the Church to come into the fellowship of this love. The love of Christian to Christian is not that of caste-fellow to caste-fellow, for the caste is rigidly exclusive, whilst the Christian community opens its arms to all and welcomes all to its love.

In India it is pre-eminently true that the love in the Christian community which proves itself able to break

**11** And we desire that each one of you may shew the

down the barriers of race and caste will be the main attractive force to draw men to CHRIST, whilst betrayal of that love by the assumption of racial superiority or the retention of caste prejudice will be actual apostasy from CHRIST.

**in that ye ministered unto the saints.** xiii. 24. For the use of the term 'saints' in the New Testament see note on iii. 1. The ministrations here signified are acts of practical beneficence, such as are described in Acts ii. 45 ; iv. 35 ; vi. 1.

**and still do minister.** The writer's confidence is not based merely on the past. No one's present condition can be gauged by his past alone : actions however good do not store up merit, though the motives which prompted them pass into character. Present character must be discerned by present fruits.

**11. And we desire.** The word expresses passionate yearning. It is the same as that used by our Lord in St. Luke xxii. 15, where its use as applied to Him is unique in the Gospels.

**each one of you.** His passionate longing is not only that the Church as a whole should be faithful, but that there should not be a single member of it lost. It is the individual love of the true pastor as set forth by the Good Shepherd Himself in St. Luke xv. 3-10.

**may shew the same diligence.** Christian life is many sided, and should be cultivated on every side. In the case of the Hebrews, on one side—that of loving service—there is moral earnestness which deserves

same diligence unto the <sup>9</sup>fulness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who

<sup>9</sup> Or, full assurance 12

commendation, but similar earnestness must be applied to the other sides of the Christian profession.

**unto the fullness of hope.** Without hope as the inspiration and support of love Christian life is in danger. The writer is preparing to set before them the supreme object of Christian hope in the ascended Lord as high priest, that they may have hope growing in them until it attains its fullest measure. The virtue of hope is especially exercised with respect to the Lord in Glory. It is remarkable that our Lord Himself in His teaching as recorded in the Gospels never spoke of hope or exhorted men to hope: what He did was to set before them the great motive which after His ascension created Christian hope. In every Epistle of St. Paul with the exception of 2 Timothy and Philemon we find hope, as well as in 1 St. John and 1 St. Peter. In this Epistle it is one of the dominant thoughts see iii. 6; vi. 18; vii. 19; x. 23.

**even to the end.** It is the vivid anticipation of spiritual attainment in CHRIST which inspires men with courage to persevere unto the end.

**12. that ye be not sluggish.** The word is the same as in v. 11 'dull'. In one respect, that of appropriating Divine truths, he has been unable to acquit them of sluggishness, but he is anxious that this sluggishness should not spread over all their spiritual energies.

through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Sluggish in meditation they may become sluggish in everything.

**but imitators of them.** Not merely admiring pupils but men who actually live the same life inspired with the same hope. Only St. Paul uses the word elsewhere in the New Testament. 1 Cor. iv. 16 ; xi. 1 ; Eph. v. 1 ; 1 Thess. i. 6 ; ii. 14.

**who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** They have as objects of imitation not only the patriarchs who have already inherited much of what was promised them, but also fellow-Christians who even now realize the promises in CHRIST: attainment is not only in the future. It seems impossible to exclude the patriarchs from the author's meaning, as Abraham is almost immediately given as an example. For the apparent contradiction with xi. 13-39 see the notes in those places.

Faith and patience are also put side by side in 2 Tim. iii. 10. Faith opens the eyes and gives the vision, and patience makes it an abiding power. In this Epistle we have two different words both translated patience in the R.V. The word used here means perseverance in spite of trials; that in x. 36 and xii. 1 bearing up under a heavy load. One sets forth the glory of going on to the end, the other the strength of endurance. Both are ascribed to 'love' in 1 Cor. xiii. 4 and 7. 'Love suffereth long' 'Love endureth all things.'

**13-15. The lesson that faith and patience will surely attain is supported by the illustration of**

For when God made promise to Abraham, since he **13** could swear by none greater, he swore by himself,

**Abraham, whose faith and patience were based upon God's promise rendered secure by an oath.**

**13. When God made promise . . . he swore by Himself.** Four times at least we read that God had promised Abraham that he should have an inheritance, be the founder of a numerous people, and the channel of blessing to all mankind (Gen. xii. 3, 7; xiii. 15-16; xv. 5; xvii. 6-8). After the supreme crisis on Mount Moriah when his faith had been put to the sorest test and had not failed, the promise was repeated, and this time in a form even more assuring. God condescended to human forms of speech due to human frailty and confirmed his promise by an oath. Faith needed reassurance, for much of what was promised could only be realized in the far future.

**since he could swear by none greater.** In the case of men an oath is an appeal made to the highest conceivable authority to act as witness and as judge. It is an assertion before other men that God is recognized as present, as omniscient, and as judge with power to condemn him who speaks falsely. Strictly speaking an oath can only be taken by the invocation of a Personal Being: men can only swear by a thing in so far as it represents a person. In a society of entirely truthful people oaths would be unnecessary. Thus among Christians CHRIST forbade them: the absolute truthfulness of every faithful Christian is assured: he knows that he is living in the presence of God; to appeal to

**14** saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and  
**15** multiplying I will multiply thee. And thus, having

that presence as a sign that he was speaking the truth would be a tacit acknowledgement that under other circumstances he might lie, which is impossible with one whose 'yea' is 'yea' and whose 'nay' is 'nay' (St. Matt. v. 37).

**sware by himself**, i.e. He reminded Abraham of His essential nature with its necessary attributes of faithfulness and truth: if God were not faithful and true He would not be God. That this 'oath' was actually a source of comfort to Israel we know from Ps. cv. 8-9 and from the song of Zacharias. (St. Luke i. 72-3).

**14. I will multiply thee.** In the Hebrew it is 'thy seed' instead of 'thee'. Abraham is so identified with his seed that the emphasis is laid upon the personal promise. Abraham apparently lived to see Isaac's children, i.e. the multiplication of his seed.

**15. And thus**, i.e. depending on the divine pledge.

**having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.** No time had been fixed. Twenty-five years had elapsed since the time the promise was first given. It was while he was patiently enduring that Isaac was born. Such appears to be the force of the two verbs both in the same tense. The period of patient endurance was not over but during it the first instalment of the promise was paid. A large part still remaining unfulfilled, Abraham's faith and patience were further supported by the addition of the oath.

patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For **16** men swear by the greater : and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. Wherein **17** God, being minded to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his

**16-18. As the promise was doubly assured to Abraham so is it to those who have inherited the promise. This is to be their encouragement.**

16. The explanation of the meaning and effect of an oath among men : it closes disputes and confirms the truth.

17. **Wherein**, such being the effect of an oath.

**being minded to shew more abundantly**, 'more abundantly' comes first in the Greek and is the emphatic thought. God's purpose was to afford such confirmation that all doubt must be absolutely excluded.

**unto the heirs of the promise**, i.e. all who can be brought within its terms. 'All the nations of the earth' was the only limit set to the sphere in which should operate the blessing which should be through Abraham's seed. The unity of mankind demands a unity of faith and hope.

**the immutability of His counsel**. God's will is necessarily and inherently unchangeable, but what is here promised is that His counsel, which is one particular method of carrying out that will, shall be unchangeable also.

When we speak of the immutability of God and of His will we mean that He is changeless, not because



18 counsel, <sup>10</sup> interposed with an oath: that by two  
<sup>10</sup> Gr. *mediated*. immutable things, in which it is impos-  
 sible for God to lie, we may have a

He is without quality but because He is the extremity of all possible perfection. The will of God is perfect, and being perfect any change would imply deterioration.

**interposed with an oath.** The verb literally means 'acted as mediator'. It is a vivid way of describing God's condescension to human nature, and contains a hint of the truth that only He who is God can be the mediator between God and man.

**18. by two immutable things.** The two things which as the result of the Divine Will are unchangeable are the promise and the oath: either is equally immutable.

**in which It is impossible for God to lie.** In the Greek there is no article before 'God'. This means that all the stress here is laid upon the Divine nature 'it is impossible for one whose nature is Divine, etc.:'

God's omnipotence does not include the power to sin; it consists in His being able to do whatever He wills to do, but being essentially holy He cannot will to sin: if He could will to sin, He would not be God.

The defence commonly made by Hindu apologists for violations of moral law by *avatars*, such as are described in the *Puranas*, is that what is sin in a man is not sin in one who is a god; that if a god adopts a human form, being a god he is free to do what he wills. Probably at the root of this reasoning is that conception of deity in which any ascription to him of moral quality is regarded as denying his absoluteness. To meet the

strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to popular mind revolting against this inaccessibility of God, the doctrine of *avatars* has been formed ; but there has still been retained the idea that right and wrong can have nothing to do with deity.

**we may have a strong encouragement.** Again the writer associates himself with those whom he exhorts and warns ; their need is his. So great is the contrast between that which appears to be and that which really is, between the straitness of their present state and the richness of the pledged inheritance, that all Christians need 'strong encouragement' ; 1 Cor. xv. 19.

**who have fled for refuge.** The tense points to a definite time when they fled and found a refuge. This particular crisis was the time of their baptism into the body of CHRIST.

**to lay hold of the hope set before us.** See note on iv. 14. As a man in danger flees to a place of refuge and lays hold of the object which is the pledge of his security, e.g. the horns of the altar (1 Kings i. 50 ; ii. 28), so the Christian firmly grasps the hope. The idea is twofold, that of laying hold and keeping hold. Trusting to the promise men have fled to lay hold of the hope ; stimulated by the oath they have strong encouragement to keep hold of the hope. The 'hope set before us' is primarily CHRIST Himself and all that is implied in His high priestly work for men. To hold tight to CHRIST who is the hope is the only way to create and strengthen the inner virtue of hope, which is included in that which must not be lost. Hope being the virtue especially

**19** lay hold of the hope set before us ; which we have as an anchor of the soul, *a hope* both sure and stedfast

directed towards CHRIST as ascended (see note on vi. 11) the writer at once recalls His exaltation as high priest.

**19-20. As He who is our hope has assumed His full prerogatives within the veil, so our hope follows Him there and renders us secure.**

**19. which we have as an anchor of the soul.** This is the only place in the Bible where hope is likened to an anchor, but the symbol was common in classical writers, and the anchor has become universally adopted as the Christian emblem of hope. It is frequently found in the most ancient inscriptions in the catacombs at Rome, and this points to a very early knowledge of this Epistle among Roman Christians.

**both sure and stedfast.** The two adjectives cover the double sense of hope. The hope which is the Christian's anchor is subjectively sure ; i.e. he is inwardly confident because he has the security of God's promise and oath : the hope is objectively stedfast, because he is united to Him who cannot fail, CHRIST the high priest.

**entering into that which is within the veil,** i.e. the immediate unveiled presence of God, symbolized by the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary before which the second veil hung ; ix. 3.

As a ship in danger casts forth her anchor through the covering waters, and secures herself to the invisible stedfast ground, thus saving herself from being carried out of her course and wrecked, so the soul reaches forth

and entering into that which is within the veil ;  
whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having **20**

through the veil to attach herself by the virtue of hope to the unseen CHRIST, and so is saved from being carried away and lost.

**20. Whither as a forerunner.** The word is intensely significant. The Levitical high priest went alone into the Holy of holies, and was never followed by the people, but 'forerunner' necessarily implies that there are those that follow. In like manner CHRIST is called the 'first fruits' and 'the first begotten from the dead.'

**Jesus entered for us.** The order of the English words does not render the emphasis of the order of the Greek : 'Whither as a forerunner for us entered JESUS' ; i.e. there entered the very same as He who on earth lived and suffered, died and rose again, who still and for ever retains that human nature which He has lifted into the Godhead. All this is implied in the use of the human name alone and its emphatic position at the end. He entered 'for us', and not as the high priest '*instead of us.*' 'I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also.' (St. John xiv. 2-3).

**having become a high priest.** The Greek might possibly mean that He entered because He had become a high priest : after His entry He fulfills His high priestly ministry. All things that had befallen on earth, His death and resurrection, were to make His work as high priest possible. The more likely translation is 'Whither as forerunner has entered in for us JESUS and become for evermore high priest.' By essential

become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

nature He was high priest from the moment of His birth; He became high priest in action from the moment of His entry into heaven. (See note on ix. 11.) See also introduction, explanatory note. We have an exact parallel in language in Phil. ii. 8 translated in the A.V. 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death.'

**for ever after the order of Melchizedek.** But it is not the old temporary order of priesthood with its strictly limited and imperfect powers to which He belongs, but the new and glorious and eternal order.

Thus again, and for the third time, the writer finds himself face to face with his great theme, and he now proceeds to unfold the meaning of the high priesthood of CHRIST and His heavenly ministry.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON vi. 6

In no place in the Epistles of the New Testament, except the similar passage of this Epis. x. 26-31, is there a passage regarding human failure so stern and apparently so hopeless as this. The only other passages with which these may be compared are those in which our Lord speaks of the sin against the Holy Ghost which 'hath never forgiveness'. (St. Matt. xii. 31; St. Mark. iii. 29; St. Luke xii. 8-10). Nor can we weaken the force of the words by translating--as indeed the actual Greek would allow--'it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance while (or, so long as) they are crucifying to themselves the Son of God, etc. It is sufficiently obvious to a Christian, however poorly instructed, that as long as a man persists in living in flagrant and deadly sin he cannot be renewed unto repentance: unquestionably the writer did not mean merely to say that men could not both crucify CHRIST and be repentant at one and the same time. The words express a warning immeasurably graver than that contained in so obvious a truism.

And yet it is clear that 'fell away' cannot include every fall into mortal sin. To say that a man once converted and received into full membership of CHRIST'S body must be lost eternally or even permanently excluded from the fellowship of the Church, should he ever afterwards commit a deadly sin, would be to contradict the whole Gospel of the love of God. The sheep that was both lost and found again had previously been safe within the fold; the son who wasted his substance in a far country but afterwards repented himself had before experienced the security of the father's home. The fallen Christian is plainly not outside the operation of the mercy of God. 'Fell away' in the passage must, therefore, signify an apostasy of so heinous and deliberate a kind that it deprives men of the capacity of accepting grace to repent. A bodily organ may be injured or it may be destroyed;

the eye, for instance, may suffer from a disease which for a time either partially or entirely excludes participation in the light. But restoration is possible; the blind may see again. Let, however, the optic nerve be destroyed, there is no more hope: restoration is impossible; it is no longer 'blindness in part', but the loss of sight is total and irreparable.

The author of this Epistle follows CHRIST in teaching that there may be such a catastrophe as the destruction of the spiritual organ so entire that it carries with it the impossibility of restoration. It is by examination of our Lord's statements concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost in relation to the special circumstances under which they were spoken that light is thrown upon the meaning of this impossibility of renewal to repentance as laid down in Hebrews vi. It appears that He twice warned men of the danger of sinning against the Holy Ghost, and on both occasions those to whom He spoke were men with special opportunities and privileges. On one occasion He warned Scribes and Pharisees and on the other His own disciples. In the former case it is abundantly clear that the Scribes and Pharisees sinned against light. They had witnessed the manifested power of God, and seen it rescue men from the domination of evil; yet to the people they described this redeeming energy as due to diabolical agency, and they must have known that they were speaking falsely. Men may speak a word against the Son of Man from ignorance or folly: their mental atmosphere or intellectual training or inherited prejudices may have disposed them to find difficulties that seem insuperable in the doctrine of the Incarnation: the cross may be a stumbling block and the Resurrection appear to lack conclusive evidence: all this may influence those who 'speak a word against the Son of Man'. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to know truth to be truth and to reject it; it is to be illuminated and yet sin against light: it is to recognize the good and deliberately to choose the evil. The eventual and inevitable effect of such a course is the destruction of spiritual capacity: he who sins against the Holy Ghost is a spiritual suicide; such a one cannot be forgiven, or rather 'hath never forgiveness', not because God will not to forgive, but because he has by his own action rendered himself

unforgiveable : in other words, he has lost the power of accepting the grace of God.

The Scribes and Pharisees were privileged, but those to whom our Lord spoke on the second occasion in which He warned against sinning against the Holy Spirit were still more privileged : for they were His own disciples. There is a closer parallel between them and those to whom this letter was addressed than was the case with the Pharisees. A non-Christian may indeed be guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit ; he may wilfully and persistently reject the truth that he recognizes through the illumination of the Spirit to be the truth, but those who are most liable to temptation to this blasphemy are ' those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come. There is a further point of likeness between the disciples whom CHRIST addressed (St. Luke xii. 4-12) and these Hebrew disciples of the second generation. They both are in danger of savage persecution which will bring the peril of apostasy very close to them. It is in view of the coming persecution that CHRIST warns His disciples : it is because his readers ' have not yet resisted unto blood, ' and they may have to resist unto blood that the author of the *Hebrews* wrote this passage to those whom he feared were ill prepared for the struggle. The disciple who denies CHRIST before men, who forgets that they are powerless really to hurt him, who fears when there is no need to fear (v, 4) shall in turn be denied before the convocation of angels ; CHRIST cannot recognize as His own one who has deliberately and persistently repudiated Him. Then there comes the warning as to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Others, outsiders, may speak against the Son of Man ; they may be ignorant or prejudiced, but the *disciple* knows ; he has experienced : he has tasted the good word of God : for him to apostatize, however great his dread of torture and death, is to sin against grace and truth ; he may destroy even the capacity of receiving grace and truth, and so the sin ' shall not be forgiven ', because the alienation from God is complete. It is this latter case which is contemplated in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* : ' as touching those who were once enlightened,



etc. . . . it is impossible'—not that they will have offended God beyond the limit of His forgiveness—for that is illimitable—but they will have rendered themselves incapable of accepting it, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance."

The writer does not say that such a thing has happened; indeed he carefully implies that it has not happened; but he does not shrink from saying that it may happen. He exactly follows the teaching of CHRIST who does not say that men have sinned against the Holy Ghost. He did not even say it of the Scribes and Pharisees; but He warns them that they may: for these men were unquestionably on that perilous road which leads to the utter loss of spiritual capacity.

If our Lord warned thus gravely those whom He knew would have to face the peril of torture and death for His sake, if the writer of this Epistle flatly tells the Hebrew Christians that it is impossible to restore the deliberate apostate to repentance, how searching and terrible should such warnings be to those who having become Christians threaten to apostatize from Christianity for reasons so contemptibly vile as personal pique or sordid gain. To those who have actually done so it is difficult to give any other message than there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement' (x. 26-7). Probably the sterner aspects of Gospel teaching need especially to be emphasized at this time in India as in the rest of the world, whilst all Indian Christians subject to persecution for their faith may be encouraged by remembering that inscribed on the roll of martyrs and confessors are the names of many Indians who in spite of the peril of torture and death have confessed CHRIST before men.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For examples see life of Dr. Duff, vol. ii. pp. 340-350. In the Visitation Charge 1916 of Bishop Durrant of Lahore occurs the following passage:—'Dr. Mehr Khan, holding the fort at the lonely frontier outpost of Thal, won the martyr's crown. When the raiders invaded the Mission Hospital there, they gave him the option of reciting the Kalima or death, and he proved yet another of those who in this land have been faithful unto death and received the crown of life.

In the first centuries of the Church these passages of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* were used by the followers of Montanus and Novatian, whose attempts to enforce a too vigorous and unmerciful discipline led them into schism, to base their contention that a Christian who was guilty of apostasy or grievous sin must be excluded from the Church for the whole of his life: they denied that it was within the power of the Church ever to readmit to communion in such cases. Besides this contention of those who were schismatics even in some parts of the Church at certain periods the discipline was so stern that reconciliation was forbidden to those who had been guilty of particular forms of uncleanness, of idolatry, or of bloodshed. By the canons of the Council of Eliberis such offenders were utterly debarred from communion to the end of their lives. But generally speaking, severe as was the discipline of the earlier centuries of the Church, Hebrews vi. 6 was not interpreted as justifying such severity; most writers regarded it as prohibiting a second baptism or as implying that no more than one solemn penance and reconciliation was possible after baptism for the man who had fallen into gross sin. Such an interpretation does not, indeed, appear to fall within the author's meaning: he is not here dealing with the limits of ecclesiastical authority, but rather enunciating the terrible fact that there is such a thing as a moral and spiritual impossibility: he who flings himself out of the Ark of Salvation may find it impossible to return, not because those in the Ark reject him, but because he has lost alike the desire and the power to return. But the sterner interpretations of this passage in earlier days should testify to us in this lax age, when the power of discipline has largely been lost, that a young Church must above all bear witness by its holiness; that its power of attraction will be in proportion to its purity. In India where the Church, comparatively tiny in numbers, is confronted by the millions upon millions of Hinduism and Islam, real and permanent progress can only be made by its obviously and conspicuously raising before men the standard of simple truth and goodness. There is no mistaking the taste of salt—but if the salt have lost its savour! Moreover the purity of a Church can only be preserved by the faithful application of discipline. To the

early Church the sin of a Christian was a horrible thing, only to be dealt with by a process of penance long drawn out and utterly humiliating. To give one illustration of the difference between the severity of the first centuries and the laxity of to-day, S. Basil who lived in the middle of the fourth century describes the 'stations of penance' which in his time were in use as the established rules of penitential discipline. As regards one particular sin he says, 'such as offended by incontinence were for the first year to be excluded entirely from the whole service, and to stand weeping at the Church door, which was the station of *mourners*; in the year following, they were admitted to that of *hearers*; in the third, to that of the *prostrate*, called by way of eminence, the penance; in the fourth they were permitted to stand with the faithful whilst they communicated, but might not themselves partake with them. And this I have termed that station of *consistentes* or *bystanders*, and thus, at last they were restored in full to all their privileges, and were allowed to communicate.'<sup>1</sup> A five years process of public humiliation before the Church would allow herself to be convinced of the reality of the penitence! It may well remind the Church in India of the duty laid upon her of preserving at all costs the reality of her discipline: the *Epistle to the Hebrews* bears special witness to the truth that in fervent love of souls there must be an element of zealous severity.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON vi. 6. 'SEEING THEY CRUCIFY TO THEMSELVES THE SON OF GOD'

Historically speaking, it is true of course, that the event of the Crucifixion happened once and once for all at a definite point of time on a definite spot of the surface of the earth. But historical events such as the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection are outward manifestations of inward realities which are continuous: the external occurrence has its counterpart in the inner life; or, perhaps it would be better to say that what we describe as the

<sup>1</sup> Basil in *Epistle Canonic Ad. Amphilocheum* Can. 22.

counterpart is the real and that the outward historical events are the visualizing or externalizing to mankind of that which is enacted invisibly within the secret sphere of the spirit. Even before the historic Incarnation there was a presence of the Word of God in men though they were too ignorant to recognize it and mistakenly imagined its inspirations to be due to their own natural powers : before the historic Crucifixion men fought against goodness and love and truth to which the Word was prompting them and so were crucifying the Word : even before the historic Resurrection conscience reasserted itself by the power of the Spirit and the soul of the sinner rose to newness of life. But in the historic Incarnation this presence of the Eternal Word went outside men and clothed itself in flesh and blood like theirs, apart from sin, and taught them face to face, living visibly upon earth that same life which invisibly He had lived in man's inner being. Then too of necessity, the Passion and Resurrection were externalized, and it was brought home to the senses what men do when they resist conscience and rebel against the will of God. Only historically speaking is the Passion of CHRIST entirely in the past ; mystically it is in the present ; mystically it takes place in the core of human being ; mystically but not the less actually CHRIST is continually betrayed, forsaken, denied, crucified, buried, forgotten.

And this can be stated with greater emphasis since the Word was united to human nature for now He dwells in the baptized in a more intimate way, bringing to them the new nature which He has for ever made His own ; the Word made flesh has made His abode in men. This is the truth taught by the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. It uses the language of mysticism, but it is the language of actuality : the sinner crucifies CHRIST now, puts Him to an open shame, and treads under foot the Son of God. It is not merely the language of allegory or parable that is employed ; the inward reality of crucifixion, of treading under foot, is being enacted : such are the actual crimes which apostates commit.

It is by setting forth this truth of the indwelling of the Word in men before the historic Incarnation and still more intimately in those baptized into His Body after the Incarnation that the very

real difficulty of the lateness of the coming of Christianity is met. Hindus not unnaturally ask, if CHRIST be the Saviour of all mankind, why did He appear so late in history? How can He be the Saviour of those countless millions who lived before His birth, or of those other countless millions who living since have died without opportunity of hearing of Him? The solution of the difficulty is found in the doctrine of the Eternal Word through whom all things were made, who was the inner light of all men before the historic Incarnation, who must have endured suffering when neglected and disobeyed; it was this Eternal Word whose presence was externalized in the Incarnation, whose rejection was visibly actualized in the Crucifixion. But the facts which these historic events openly manifested were as old as humanity since the fall, and will continue as long as God descends to man and man rejects God's will. Long before the Incarnation Moses, so the writer of this Epistle declares, bore 'the reproach of CHRIST.

Further, this truth of the mystic indwelling of CHRIST exactly meets the aspirations of those who hold the doctrine of the identity of God and the soul which is the characteristic dogma of the pure Vedānta. The outcome of this dogma in practice has been the attempt to effect the destruction of desire and the dispelling of the supposed illusion of a manifold universe. To do this is the function of what is called *yoga*: he who practises *yoga* aims at dissolving the ties by which he is bound to an illusory world that only seems to be and is not, that thus he may know that he is Brahman. Christianity teaches that human personality is not an illusion to be dissolved, but that the true goal of man is that his personality shall be brought into the most intimate relationship with the Divine, that it shall be surrendered to and so dominated by the Divine Personality that perfect union or true *yoga* is attained.

CHRIST Himself points out the way of true *yoga* and lays down its indispensable condition. Individual personality must not be set up in independence; it can only realize itself by surrendering itself utterly into the hold of the Supreme. 'If any man will come after Me let him *deny himself*'. At first sight apparently this is what the Vedānta prescribes, the denial of the self in order

to find the Supreme Self. But CHRIST does not call upon men to deny that they exist except in illusion, but to deny the self as an independent entity with the right to choose its own will. He goes on, 'and take up his cross daily and follow Me.' This following under conditions of possible pain and persecution even up to death is the work of one who still has a will to choose even though he has denied the self. St. Paul in speaking of his 'self-denial' and his following of CHRIST says: 'I am crucified with CHRIST; nevertheless I livé; yet not I but CHRIST liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20). Here is the true *yoga*: it is 'I' and yet 'not I'. The self is so denied that all its independence is gone, but the personality continues consciously and deliberately choosing to live by faith in the Son of God. Again, CHRIST describes under a figure the true relation of man to God: man is to have no independent life, but he is to draw his life from union: he is to be a living part of the One; 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.' At the same time this union in part depends upon the surrender of the will of man, for CHRIST commands 'Abide in Me'; He calls for the exercise of conscious choice: man's fellowship in the life of God is to depend in part on his own will.

The doctrine of the Vedānta aims at logical completeness. Christianity satisfies a deeper need of man than the provision only of an intellectual system: it offers a fellowship in the Divine life as well, in which the human spirit by a willing surrender is enfolded and dominated by CHRIST: he is in CHRIST and CHRIST is in him.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON vi. 10. 'GOD IS NOT UNRIGHTEOUS TO FORGET YOUR WORK'

It has already been pointed out (see additional note on ii. 2) that belief in the law of *karma*, though it does produce a kind of patient submission by which men endure uncomplainingly the evils which they attribute to themselves, yet it fails to act as an effective incentive to virtue or as a powerful deterrent from vice, because no conscience can bear the burden of the actions of innumerable past lives. But the doctrine of *karma* does at any rate represent man as living in a moral universe and his actions as possessing moral values. To believe that such a system has been set

in force by God is to believe also that God is not unrighteous and therefore forgets neither good works nor evil. But whilst it must be recognized that belief in *karma* carries with it these ideas, yet the meaning of the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in vi. 10 is not that which is implied in this law. For the law of *karma* implies that what a man suffers or enjoys in the present life is the direct and necessary fruit of what he did in his past lives; that what he will suffer or enjoy in the next life will be the consequence of his action in this; the present is the requital of the past, the future will be the requital of the present, and so on until all action ceases. Such a belief makes retributive justice, the inflicting of penalties or rewards, the one supreme purpose of the moral order, the one great process of the universe. In Christianity judgement is secondary: men do not live in order they may be judged: the events of life are not retribution for the past, but rather opportunities for the formation and discipline of character. Again, as character is known by its fruits, the just judge who 'will judge the world in righteousness' can no more overlook the work and the love of men than He can overlook their evil deeds (cp. Gal. vi. 7-10).

## CHAPTER VII

FOR this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God

**1-25. The meaning of high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The author of the 'Hebrews,' adopting the Psalmist's words in Psalm cx. 4, has found in the Old Testament a mystic figure which will enable him to depict more vividly the characteristics of the absolute high priesthood of CHRIST. In verses 1-3 he sums up all that is historically known of Melchizedek and all that can mystically be inferred from the silence of Scripture concerning him, and then (4-10) proceeds to interpret the facts and the significant silence; and (11-12) to draw the inference of the insufficiency of both the Levitical priesthood and of the law under which it ministered; and in consequence that a change was to be expected; in (13-25) he makes manifest the utter superiority of the high priest divinely appointed after the order of Melchizedek whose ministry being unchangeable is absolutely effectual.**

**1-3. What the Old Testament relates as to Melchizedek.**  
(See Gen. xiv. 17-20.)

**1. For this Melchizedek.** The main proposition is 'For this Melchizedek abideth a priest continually.' The last words of Chapter VI state that Jesus is a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, and as the



**Most High, who met Abraham returning from the**

first point to insist on is the unbroken and unending continuity of CHRIST'S priesthood he explains 'for this Melchizedek abideth a priest continually'

The author's purpose is not to show that an Old Testament type has been fulfilled, but to find Scripture terms in which to delineate the absolute superiority of CHRIST'S priesthood. The historical character of Melchizedek only concerns him so far as the historical facts admit of mystical interpretation. Teaching as to type and antitype is only found once (Rom. v. 14) in the New Testament, though it is found frequently in the Fathers. See note on ix. 24.

**King of Salem.** The geographical position or extent of Salem are of no account: the point is that the word means 'peace'.

**priest of God Most High.** The A.V. translates 'priest of the most high God' which in a polytheistic land might be taken to imply that there were lesser deities with one supreme God over them. In a country where monotheism obtained there was no possibility of such a misconception, but in any case it is better to translate 'priest of God Most High' which makes it evident that 'Most High' is an ascription of glory meaning that He transcends all creaturely existence. See St. Mark v. 7; St. Luke i. 32, 35, 76; vi. 35; viii. 28; Acts vii. 48; xvi. 17.

**who met Abraham returning, etc.,** i.e. at the time when he was at the summit of his earthly prosperity and power.

slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom **2** also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first,

**and blessed him.** The incident related in *Genesis* of Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine is omitted here. The reason of the omission may be that the one great point upon which the author wishes to lay stress is the superiority of Melchizedek, and to do this it is amply sufficient to recall that which most vividly manifested it, viz. the priestly act of blessing. For one man to bless another implies that he is in a position of superiority and can convey to the other some gift of God v. 7.

**2. to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part, etc.** The presentation of tithe was an acknowledgement on Abraham's part of the higher dignity of Melchizedek.

Thus far historical facts have been stated: now comes the unfolding of the mystic meaning both of what Scripture says and of what it does not say.

**being first by interpretation, King of righteousness.** 'Melchizedek' means 'My King is righteous.' A deep significance is attached to names in Holy Scripture. They are not merely collections of letters or sounds by which persons or places may be conveniently distinguished from one another, but they reveal office or character or destiny. Thus the names of God are a revelation of the being and character of God. (Cp. Gen. xxviii. 19; xxxii. 29; 1 Sam. iv. 21; Isa. viii. 3-4; St. Matt. i. 21-3; St. Luke i. 13.)

**then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.** Peace is *shalām* in Hebrew, *salām* in Arabic;

by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then

introduced into India it is the commonest and most beautiful of greetings. It was the greeting of the Risen Lord to His disciples (St. Luke xxiv. 36; St. John xx. 19-21). It was evidently the greeting which He instructed them to give to others. (S. Matt. x. 12-13.) At its root it means the summit of a thing, and so completeness of attainment, and so peace.

The first mark of a priesthood of absolute perfection is that it shall be combined with kingship. He who is in closest fellowship with God and is the channel of divine grace is he who alone can fitly guide and control the lives of men. Ideally the priest is king; ideally Church and State are one. In earthly priesthoods and societies this has proved impossible because of human weakness and sin: thus the divine ideal of a State-Church or Church-State has not been realized. But the ideal is satisfied in CHRIST. When He is said to be priest after the order of Melchizedek it means that we have a King-Priest or Priest-King. Such a King of course rules in righteousness (Isa. xxxii. 1). He Himself is righteous, and He makes righteousness the atmosphere of His Kingdom. 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness' (Ps. xi. 7). Religion without goodness, worship without moral purity, are conceptions of blasphemy. So righteousness necessarily comes first; 'being first'. But 'then also' peace: righteousness is the essential condition of peace, and peace is the unfailing fruit of righteousness. 'The work of righteousness shall be peace' (Isa. xxxii. 17). Peace comes from the attainment of right relationships with

also King of Salem, which is, King of peace ; with-<sup>3</sup>out father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but

God, man and self. So in the kingdom of God ' Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other ' (Ps. lxxxv. 10 ; cp. Rom. xiv. 17). CHRIST is called ' our Righteousness ' (Jer. xxiii. 6), and ' our Peace ' (Eph. ii. 14.)

**3. without father, without mother, without genealogy.**

There follows the mystic meaning of the silence of Scripture. *Genesis* says nothing of his parents or his lineage. Scripturally he is isolated and stands alone : hence his priesthood is neither inherited nor derived ; it is a personal dignity entirely and peculiarly his own.

**having neither beginning of days nor end of life.** The death of Aaron is carefully recorded, but nothing is said either of the birth of Melchizedek or of the close of his priesthood. As regards the Scriptural record of him, therefore, he fittingly illustrates the eternal character of the absolute high priest. There are no days in eternity. As the Eternal, the Son has no ' beginning of days ' : having taken human nature, He retains it for ever and has no ' end of life '. The temporary separation of His spirit from His body through death did not mark the end of His human life, but was the gate of its fuller realization.

This method of mystically interpreting the silence of Scripture is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, but it was familiar to the Hebrews.

**made like unto the son of God.** Not ' JESUS ' nor

made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of

'CHRIST' but 'the Son of God', the designation in which the idea of eternity is necessarily implied; see note on i. 2. Emphasis is laid on '*made* like': this mystic silence has made him like. The Son is not compared with the portrait of Melchizedek, but this portrait has been made a means of vividly inculcating the truth of the eternity of the Son who is high priest.

**abideth a priest continually.** The term is not, as in the case of the true high priest 'for ever', but 'continually'. There is no record of any predecessor or of any successor, and so this continuousness mystically illustrates that high priesthood which is 'for ever'. The same term is used, however, of CHRIST's presentation of His sacrifice and His session in heaven. (See note on x. 12).

#### 4-10. The significance of the facts and silence.

4. **Now consider.** (Cp. iii. 1; x. 24; xii. 3; xiii. 7). Different words are used in the Greek, but 'consider' is the rendering in each case. Here the word means 'take a thoughtful look at'; in iii. 1; and x. 24 it is 'concentrate the powers of the mind on'; in xii. 3 'meditate, considering each detail,' i.e. in regard to CHRIST and His Passion; in xiii. 7. 'look again and again'. Christian life is to be contemplative and meditative if it is to be progressive and fruitful. Truth cannot merely

the chief spoils. And they indeed of the sons of 5 Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the

be passively received: it has to be made one's own through mental and spiritual effort. See note on v. 14.

**unto whom Abraham, the patriarch.** In the Greek 'the patriarch' comes at the very end of the sentence: 'unto whom Abraham gave a tenth . . . and he the head and founder of the race'. It was a spontaneous act of voluntary homage indicating unmistakably the superior dignity of Melchizedek.

**a tenth out of the chief spoils.** Every circumstance added to the significance of the gift. The tithes given were composed of the pick of the spoils generally reserved as an offering to deity.

Now comes the application of the incident to the Levitical priesthood. What Abraham did the priesthood did, for in him it potentially existed.

**5. They indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office.** The words apparently imply that only such members of the tribe of Levi as were priests received tithes; but this was not so: the whole tribe received tithes from the other tribes, and these offerings were tithed again for the benefit of the priests. The point, however, is that what they, the priests, received—and the writer is thinking only of the priests as priests—had been derived originally from 'the people . . . their brethren.'

Moreover he thinks of the priests as engaged in the activity of service to their brethren. The word trans-

**6** law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken **7** tithes of Abraham and hath blessed him that hath

lated 'priest's office' signifies not merely the priestly order, as does the word translated 'priesthood' in verse 11, but the actual service they perform. A priest is not merely one who has been exalted to a high dignity, but one who is put into a position to serve his fellowmen in a way which precludes him from earning his own support. They support him, therefore, not because he belongs to a priestly order but because he renders priestly service. The same is true of the Christian ministry: the nature of their service to men is a bar to their engaging in secular pursuits, but this makes it all the more imperative that they shall not eat the bread of idleness: they too are supported not because they hold an office but because they render spiritual and indispensable service.

**according to the law.** The payment of tithes was in obedience to a law which could be enforced; Abraham's tribute to Melchizedek was given of his own free will.

**6. though these have come out of the loins of Abraham,** i.e. the superiority of the Levitical priesthood over their brethren was simply one of order: all were equally children of Abraham; but Melchizedek was inherently of his own nature superior.

**7. hath blessed him that hath the promises.** That Abraham should voluntarily pay tithes to Melchizedek was a sign that the patriarch recognized Melchizedek's

the promises. But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive 8 tithes; but there one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And, so to say, through Abraham even 9

superiority: that Melchizedek should bless one already highly favoured by God was a sign that he claimed a position of pre-eminent dignity.

Now comes the application of the truth drawn from the mystic silence of Scripture.

**8. here men that die receive tithes.** 'Here', i.e. in the Levitical system, dying men, who exercise their priesthood for a little and then transmit it to others, receive tithes.

**but there.** 'There', i.e. in the case of Melchizedek, priesthood is neither transmitted nor derived.

**It is witnessed that he liveth,** i.e. by mystically interpreting the silence of Scripture, which records neither his birth nor death.

**9. And, so to say.** No illustration should be pressed in every direction: throughout the writer is using the story of Melchizedek as a kind of parable. All that has preceded has served as a vivid and picturesque method of delineating the characteristics of the absolute high priest.

**through Abraham even Levi, etc.** If an objector retorts that the Levitical priesthood was not instituted in the life-time of Abraham, the answer is ready: the priesthood was potentially in Abraham both as a fact of nature and as a gift of grace. As a fact Levi sprang naturally from Abraham, and the priesthood sprang



- 10 Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes ; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.
- 11 Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need *was there* that an other priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek,

from the beginning of the fulfilment of that blessing which had been inseparably attached to Abraham's personality. The conception of the unity of a family in its head is much more an Eastern way of regarding human life than a Western.

Again, if an objector were to argue that this proves too much, for CHRIST Himself as regards His humanity was descended from Abraham, the answer is that it is not meant to *prove* anything but is 'so to say.' (See additional note).

**11-12. The inference is drawn that the Levitical priesthood with the law under which it ministered was imperfect, and consequently a change was to be expected.**

11. Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, i.e. if the priesthood had answered the purpose for which a priesthood ideally exists. That purpose is 'perfection', the process of bringing human nature to the end for which it was created, viz. union with God. Men being sinful, this process necessarily

and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For **12** the priesthood being changed, there is made of

includes the taking away of sin and the restoration to holiness.

**under it hath the people received the law.** The constitution of the commonwealth of Israel with all its ordinances of life and worship had the priesthood as its centre.

**what further need was there that another priest should arise.** Another order of priesthood had been distinctly foreshadowed in Ps. cx. and its transcendent characteristics mystically depicted in Gen. xiv. 17-20.

**another.** The Greek word here used signifies a different kind of priest, and not merely a superior priest of the same order, as Aaron was the chief priest of the Levitical order.

**12. For the priesthood being changed . . . also of the law.** The 'change' signified here includes both 'transference' and 'transformation'. The priesthood being vital to the constitution of Israel, its 'change' necessitated the 'change' of the whole religious constitution under which the people lived. The priesthood was transferred to another line, and it was transformed into absolute perfection: the law was transferred by becoming catholic, and it was transformed by becoming a system of grace and truth.

**13-15. The utter superiority of the high priest divinely appointed after the order of Melchizedek, ministering under a better covenant whose ministry being unchangeable is absolutely effectual.**

necessity a change also 'of the law.

**13** For he of whom these things are said  
'belongeth to another tribe, from  
which no man hath given attendance at

<sup>1</sup> Or, of law  
<sup>2</sup> Gr. *hath*  
*partaken of*  
See ch. ii. 14.

**14** the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath  
sprung out of Judah ; as to which tribe Moses spake

**13. For he of whom these things are said.** 'These things' are the words of Ps. cx. There is no doubt in the minds of these Jewish Christians that JESUS is the Messiah and that the words refer to Him.

**belongeth to another tribe.** The translation 'belongeth to' does not give the force of the Greek verb which emphatically expresses the voluntariness of the incarnation. He, the Eternal Son, *has partaken* of human nature in another tribe. The same word is used with the same meaning in ii. 14 where see note.

**from which no man . . . altar.** There is no record in the history of Israel of any member of the tribe of Judah having performed duties which appertained strictly to the priest's office.

**14. For it is evident.** The fact was too well known and attested to be disputed.

**that our Lord hath sprung out of Juda.** (Rom. i. 3 ; 2 Tim. ii. 8 ; Acts ii. 30 ; Rev. v. 5). Technically our Lord's connexion with the tribe of Judah was through His foster-father Joseph (a mother's genealogy was not counted) but actually it must have been through the Blessed Virgin Mary, though it is not expressly stated so in the New Testament. In primitive days it was

nothing concerning priests. And *what we say* is 15

believed that she was of David's line, and such evidence as there is points to her being first cousin to Joseph. The fact that she was a kinswoman of Elizabeth, who was 'of the daughters of Aaron,' is no indication that she was not of the tribe of Juda, for the tribes were not *castes* and there was free intermarriage between them, the only restriction being that a woman who inherited land might not marry out of her own tribe (Num. xxxvi. 5-9) but this was merely to prevent the alienation of the land assigned to a tribe.

**Our Lord.** This is the second time He has been so designated in this Epistle. At a time when His human nature is being emphasized it is important to recall His Divine Sovereignty over us. In ii. 3 it is 'the Lord'; here it is 'our Lord'; in xiii. 20 'our Lord JESUS'. Whenever 'Lord' by itself occurs in this Epistle it means Jehovah.

**bath sprung.** The Greek word is rich with meaning. It is used of a shoot or branch springing out of a root. (See Isa. xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12) where this figure is applied to the Messiah. It is also used of the rising of the sun or of a star, and this is also used as a figure of the Messiah's appearance. (See Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. lx. 1; Mal. iv. 2). The two images are combined in Rev. xxii. 16. Strangely enough the substantive (*ἀνατολή*) has been translated both 'Branch' and 'Sunrise'.

as to which tribe Moses, etc. See Exod. xxix. 44.

15. And what we say is yet more abundantly evident,

yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of  
**16** Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who hath

i. e. the change of the priesthood which carries with it the change of the law.

**if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest.** The Greek means 'if there ariseth, as indeed has actually happened, another priest, etc.' CHRIST Himself is the supreme and incontestable evidence of the change of priesthood.

**after the likeness.** The word 'order' is changed to 'likeness'. The absolute priesthood is distinguished from the Levitical not merely by difference of descent, but by the fact that this priesthood, like Melchizedek's, is personal and not tribal. CHRIST is priest not by arbitrary enactment but in virtue of His own consummated humanity in union with the Divine Nature.

**16. Who hath been made** literally 'hath become'; 'priest' is understood. CHRIST has become priest by becoming man: He became merciful and faithful through experience of human life with its temptations and sorrows (iii. 17-18). All this is now an accomplished and eternally abiding fact—such is the force of the perfect tense.

**not after the law of a carnal commandment.** The law by which the Levitical priesthood was constituted was that of 'a carnal commandment'. It is not 'carnal' in the bad sense of the word, but carnal is used here of that which is mortal and transitory and so necessarily imperfect. The commandment was 'carnal' because the priests were selected from mortal and imperfect

been made, not after the law of a carnal command-

men, whose qualifications were of natural birth and not of the moral and spiritual order. There was not necessarily any special moral excellence in the tribe of Levi or the descendants of Aaron. This being so, the priesthood chiefly dealt with outward requirements, with ceremonial purity rather than inward holiness. Such a priesthood could only be the channel of limited blessings. Whatever may have been the origin of the Brahman priesthood in India, the epithet 'carnal' in the sense explained above exactly fits it. Succession in the priesthood is hereditary, and it deals almost entirely with a ceremonial law which is of bewildering complexity. In Israel the priesthood was supplemented by the work of the prophets whose appeal was entirely to the moral and spiritual side of men. In India too there have arisen reformers and teachers, whilst philosophy has aimed at releasing men from the bondage of the 'carnal commandment', but the work of prophet as well as of priest, of philosopher as well as of reformer, was clearly provisional and preparatory, and bore witness to a need which it did not satisfy.

**but after the power of an endless life.** The meaning is that the life is not merely endless in fact but of its essential nature indissoluble. Each word descriptive of the temporary and provisional system finds its contrast: *law* is contrasted with *power*, *carnal* with *endless*, *commandment* with *life*. The perfect priest is priest, not by arbitrary selection, but in virtue of what he essentially is; his power is inherent in a life which being

ment, but after the power of an <sup>3</sup>end-  
**17** less life : for it is witnessed of him, <sup>3</sup> Gr. *indis-*  
*soluble.*

Thou art a priest for ever  
 After the order of Melchizedek.

**18** For there is a disannulling of a foregoing command-  
 ment because of its weakness and unprofitableness

indissoluble carries with it necessarily the prerogative of conferring indissoluble blessings. The question arises, is this life the life of His humanity or His life as Eternal Son? The answer seems to be that it is the life of His humanity rendered indissoluble by its union with the Godhead: the death on the Cross did not dissolve this life, which was manifested as indissoluble at the Resurrection (cp. Rom. i. 4). It is the Manhood in union with the Deity which constitutes Him in power and life as the absolute and perfect priest.

**17. for it is witnessed of Him.** The quotation attests the indissolubility and transcendence of the priesthood of CHRIST.

**18. For.** The fact that an absolute priest has been made has necessarily a two-fold effect: (1) the abrogation of the old system; (2) the introduction in its place of 'a better hope.'

**there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment.** The old has done its work and must now be *disannulled*. The word is a strong one, used of the utter rejection of a thing so that it no longer has any effectiveness, and so cannot be a hindrance to advance: it is used of the putting away of sin by CHRIST (ix. 26). 'Foregoing'

(for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing **19** in thereupon of a better hope, through which we

might be translated 'leading forward'; the writer selects a word which skilfully conveys the idea not only that the system was prior in time, but that it was preparatory, leading forward to something beyond and better than itself.

**because of its weakness and unprofitableness.** Not because of its burdensomeness or inherent wrongness is the commandment disannulled, but because that which at a certain stage of development is useful becomes unprofitable at a later stage. The crutch upon which an injured man leans becomes a source of weakness if it be not rejected at a certain stage of his recovery: for a man to continue to use the books of childhood is to check and injure mental progress. Moreover, a commandment of its very nature can only discipline and restrain, it can impart no power; it is weak in the sense that it cannot endow any one with strength to obey.

**19. for the law made nothing perfect,** i.e. it did not bring men to the end for which they were created. Moral law, however high the ideals to which it may point, is a thing external which leaves the human will unempowered. Even the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are law, and by themselves might prove weak and unprofitable to men. A plumb line may shew the wall to be out of the perpendicular, but a plumb line would prove a weak and unprofitable thing if it were the only instrument the workman had for repairing the wall.



**20** draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as *it is* not

If this be true of moral law, much more is it true of ceremonial: sacrifices pointed to an end which they were powerless to attain, and wilful sin remained still unforgiven (cp. Rom. vii. 5-16).

**and a bringing in therefore of a better hope.** To abolish the old without substituting something better may be retrogression and not advance: e.g. for a Hindu to reject the restrictions of his caste and society without 'the bringing in thereupon of a better hope' is to be 'empty' without even being 'swept and garnished' (St. Matt. xii. 44).

The 'better hope' is in CHRIST, the high priest, already described as our Hope in vi. 18, through whom we become partakers of the new life.

Does it mean a hope better than the commandment, or a hope better than the hope which the commandment held out? Probably the latter; for the hope held out by the commandment was that of temporal prosperity (see Deut. xi. 13-15) whilst the commandment itself may be said to have pointed mystically to the true high priest and His sufficient sacrifice.

**through which we draw nigh unto God.** The approach to God is no longer restricted to members of one tribe who approach instead of those they represent, but approach in CHRIST, the high priest.

**20. And inasmuch as.** The 'and' introduces an additional consideration by which the superiority of CHRIST'S priesthood may be seen.

**It is not without the taking of an oath, i.e. the bring-**

without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have **21** been made priests without an oath ; but <sup>4 Or, through</sup> he with an oath <sup>5 Or, unto</sup> <sup>4</sup> by him that saith <sup>5</sup> of him,

The Lord sware and will not repent himself,  
Thou art a priest for ever) ;

by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a **22**

ing in of the better hope in the perfect priest is not without, etc. The new consideration is that the perfect priesthood is rooted in the faithfulness of God's promise : this faithfulness has been assured to man by His condescension to human methods of speech, as explained in vi. 16-18.

**21. for they indeed have been made priests, etc.** The Levitical priesthood was constituted by a law to which obedience must be rendered : the true priesthood was a promised gift to mankind to be gladly welcomed and gratefully accepted. It was something almost too good to be true ; so God made assurance doubly sure. 'The Lord sware, etc.'

**22. by so much also hath JESUS become the surety of a better covenant.** As the Levitical priesthood was the centre of the old system, so 'JESUS' is the 'surety' of the new. As the ineffectiveness of the old priesthood was the measure of the inadequacy of the old covenant, so the perfection of 'JESUS' is the 'surety' of the adequacy of the 'better covenant'. It is 'JESUS' who 'hath become' ; He who took human nature at the Nativity, and passed through the experience of pain and

**23** better <sup>6</sup> covenant. And they indeed <sup>6</sup> Or, *testament*  
 have been made priests many in num-

death, has exalted that same human nature into the heavenly sanctuary (vi. 20). The word 'surety' is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. This heavenly 'surety' is the pledge to men of something that now is and of something that shall be; potentially men are already in 'heavenly places', being in CHRIST who is in Heaven; actually the consummation of their blessedness is in the future (cp. Eph. i. 20 and ii. 6 with St. John xiv. 2-3; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17 and Col. iii. 4).

**a better covenant.** The Greek word translated 'covenant' or 'testament' in the R.V. literally means a 'disposition' or 'appointment', and it was used of that—be it a deed or a constitution or a book—which could be, as it were, laid up and appealed to as containing the terms of the 'disposition'. In secular affairs it has to do with dispositions of property, as in a will, or with arrangements made between two parties, as in a contract; in the relation of God to man and the revelation of His will it is used of those Divine orderings of human life by which men are taught to respond to the purpose for which they were created. It is because God has led the human race gradually from stage to stage of knowledge and privilege that it is possible to speak of 'a better covenant.' (See additional note.)

**23. And they indeed have been made priests many in number.** A further proof of the preeminent superiority of the absolute priest. Under the Levitical system many priests have to be made, either at one time or one

ber, because that by death they are hindered from continuing : but he, because he abideth for ever, <sup>7</sup> hath his priesthood <sup>8</sup> unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save <sup>9</sup> to the uttermost them that draw near unto God

*7 Or, hath a priesthood that doth not pass to another* 24  
*8 Or, inviolable* 25  
*9 Gr. completely.*

after another; why? in order to secure continuity of service. Death prevents them from retaining their priestly office and fulfilling its functions.

**24. but he, because he abideth for ever.** Here is the sharp contrast. He has made His humanity eternal by its union with the Divine nature, and the human nature being 'for ever' the priesthood is also 'for ever' (Cp. St. John viii. 35; xii. 34).

**hath his priesthood unchangeable.** The Greek word translated 'unchangeable' in the text means literally 'not to be transgressed' and either 'uninvadable' or 'unalterable'. Probably it carries the sense of the word 'absolute'. CHRIST'S priesthood is unique: it cannot be invaded by others, for no others can fulfill its functions; it cannot be altered, for it is eternally unending.

**25. Wherefore also,** i.e. in virtue of the absolute character of His priesthood.

**he is able to save to the uttermost.** The word 'save' recalls the emphatic use of the name 'JESUS' in verse 22 (St. Matt. i. 21) and implies the need of redemption. Humanity unfallen would need to be brought to the perfection of the end for which it was created; it would need perfecting. But humanity fallen needs

through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

more than this ; it needs saving before it can be perfected. It is out of sin that men are to be saved and so brought to the end. This 'saving' is a continuous process ; the tense is present. Further, it covers the fullness of man's nature and being ; it is 'unto the all-completeness,' so that in every respect man's spirit, soul and body are preserved entire (1 Thess. v. 23-4).

'He is able' and He alone is able : there cannot be two absolute priests any more than there can be two Gods. Strictly speaking it is only of the Divine Being that it can be said 'He is able' : when we assert of men that they are able, behind the assertion must be the consciousness that the sufficiency is of God : 1 Cor. iv. 7 ; 2. Cor. iii. 5.

**them that draw near unto God through him.** The sole limit to the all-saving power of the absolute priest is set by men ; to be saved they must co-operate with Him ; He can only save those that are drawing near ; He cannot save men against their own wills. Yet even in drawing near He 'prevents' or goes before them : the impulse and power to approach are 'through Him'. See note on iv. 16.

**seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.** 'With Him it is evermore "Atonement Day".' The power to save is intrinsically inherent in the eternally-human and divine life, the infinite energy of which goes forth in perpetual intercession for those who are approaching. The word translated 'to make intercession' is

For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, **26**

also used of making a suit against; see Acts xxv. 24. Romans xi. 2. He who had been so ill used of men (S. John i. 10-11) and is still so ill used (vi. 6.) might have pleaded against men to the Father (see S. John v. 45), but for Him to live is to love, and to say that 'He ever liveth' is to say that He ever loveth; and to say that He loves is to say that He intercedes. Compare Rom. viii. 34 where CHRIST'S intercession—the same word is used—is connected with His Resurrection and Ascension, i.e. with His inviolable and glorified human life. The basis, mode, motive and fruit of this intercession are unfolded in the following chapters.

**26-28. A priest, eternal and transcendent, infinitely exalted yet good with human goodness, presenting sacrifice yet presenting only one all-sufficient sacrifice, of His own nature Son yet consecrated priest by divine decree, such an one, and not sinful priests who come and go, exactly meets and satisfies human needs.**

**26. For such a high priest became us.** More literally the translation is: 'For such became us *as* high priest'. The 'such' gathers up the marks enumerated above of eternity, transcendence, absoluteness. He 'became us', because He exactly meets and satisfies our necessities; e.g. our need of salvation, our need of present communion, and our need of the consummation of our nature. See note on ii. 10. In saying 'us' the writer contemplates only the Christian society, not in the spirit of exclusiveness, but because his effort is concentrated on the

**undefiled**, separated from sinners, and made higher edification of those who are already in the Body, and because all men may become of 'us' and share the high priestly ministry.

**holy, guileless, undefiled.** His goodness is that of ideal human excellence, of one who has passed through human life with its searching trials and temptations, and is 'holy, guileless, undefiled.' The goodness is described both positively and negatively. Positively He is 'holy': the word used here is only found in the New Testament of the holiness of one who is human, measured by a divine standard. Even Rev. xv. 4 is no exception, for though the victorious saints are chanting to the 'Lord God Almighty' they are singing the Song of the Lamb. Negatively, He is 'guileless,' i.e. without malice; He knows no thought towards man save that of love. And He is 'undefiled'; notwithstanding His passage through the world and His adoption of a human body and soul, nothing ever polluted His purity of motive and action.

**separated from sinners.** There are four ways in which this phrase may be interpreted, none of them mutually exclusive. (1) It may denote the final and eternally-abiding issue of His life under earthly conditions: by his victory over temptation in the wilderness and over all subsequent temptation He is one who is in a state of having been 'separated from sinners.' (2) On earth He was numbered with the transgressors: (St. Mark xv. 28; St. Luke xxii. 37). At His baptism He appeared to men as a sinner seeking cleansing, at His Crucifixion

than the heavens ; who needeth not daily, like those **27** high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own

as a criminal enduring the penalty of His crime. Now by His Ascension He is for ever vindicated and 'separated from sinners.' (3) 'He did not contain in Himself the sinful principle of sympathy with sin.' (Liddon) compare. iv. 15 'without sin', and St. John xiv. 30. (4) Sinners no longer have power to hurt Him: He is utterly removed from their hands in fulfilment of Isa. liii. 8. 'From oppression and judgement he has taken away.' (Cp. St. John vii. 34-6). Nor is this inconsistent with the mystical life in which CHRIST still permits himself to be crucified by those in whom He dwells: see vi. 6.

**and made higher than the heavens.** Here is the expected consummation. The Greek is 'having become higher, etc.' He has '*become*' by attaining stage by stage to holiness, in each stage compassing the perfection possible in that stage, until at the final 'it is finished' He is ready as man for inconceivable exaltation above the created universe into the uncreated glory of God. See note on iv. 14, and additional note on the use of 'heavens' and 'heaven' in this Epistle.

**27-28. Imperfect priests imply a continual offering of sacrifice after sacrifice, each incomplete: one Perfect Priest implies the offering of one Perfect Sacrifice which is effective for all time.**

**27. who needeth not daily, like those high priests, etc.** The Greek is 'who hath not daily need.' The high



sins, and then for the *sins* of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself.

priests under the Levitical system had daily need because of their daily sins. The high priest did not necessarily offer daily sacrifice (unless the 'meat-offering' of Lev. vi. 20-3, be included in the offering of sacrifice), though apparently he might do so if he chose. But if as seems natural, the idea of 'daily' be carried on from the need to the offering of sacrifice, it may reasonably be said that as the day of Atonement recurred each year the sacrifice there offered gathered into itself those sacrifices which had been daily offered.

**to offer up sacrifices.** The literal meaning of the Greek verb is 'to bring up to.' The offerer who was about to have a sacrifice presented brought it up to the temple and to the priest. The word here is not the same as that in v. 1, 3, 7 (where see notes) which is also translated 'offer.' In this Epistle there appears to be some distinction in the use of the words. Those who needed cleansing—and in this passage the priests are included—brought up the sacrifice, and after certain ritual acts by the offerer, amongst which the actual slaying was included, the priest carried it to God. In the whole action of sacrifice there were six parts, of which the first three were done by the offerer, whether he were layman or priest; the last three were done by the priest. The first three were of the nature of the absolute surrender of the victim and the identification of the offerer with it; of this action the word in this verse (*αναφέρω*) is used; the last three are of the

For the law appointeth men high priests, having in- 28

nature of the presentation to God of that which has been completely dedicated and surrendered; of this action the word in v. 1. and in eighteen other places of the Epistle (*προσφέρω*) is used.

**this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.** There are two readings, one of which gives the first word for 'offer', and the other the second. If we adopt the first, it signifies that CHRIST'S surrender or dedication or offering up of Himself was in His birth, life and death; it was thus that He was led up as victim, and the first three actions of sacrifice were performed; in this there was not necessarily any priestly action, which began with the entrance into the Holy of Holies in the Ascension. If the other reading is adopted, the whole action of CHRIST is here described, not only the surrender of Himself in the Incarnation and Passion, but also His presentation of Himself before God. To the surrender and to the presentation nothing can be added: it is 'once for all' eternally effective.

This is the first time in this Epistle that CHRIST is described as the Sacrifice as well as the 'High Priest. (See Introduction on Priesthood and Sacrifice).

Finally, we have a terse summary of the essential difference between the priesthoods.

**28: For the law appointeth men high priests.** It is 'men' or *human beings* in the plural who are appointed under the Levitical system; there have to be many of them, because they do not continue. It is a Son, one

firmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, *appointeth* a Son, perfected for evermore.

and one only, who is appointed under the new dispensation: He too is human, but His humanity is united with the divine nature.

**having infirmity**, i.e. with human limitations. As long as the Levitical high priest lives and serves he has infirmity. In v. 1-8 great stress has been laid upon the truth that He who has become our high priest was also once compassed with infirmity, i.e. He voluntarily submitted to the limitations of a human nature. But now the point is that still being man He has passed out of these limitations, carrying indeed the sympathy gained by the experience of them, and is 'perfected for ever more.'

**perfected for ever more**, i.e. His humanity is consummated, infirmity is gone, and He is perfect man eternally. At the same time the idea of priestly consecration cannot be entirely excluded from the meaning of 'perfected.' The consummation of His humanity was essential to His consecration as high priest. (See notes on ii. 10 and v. 9).

## ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE AUTHOR'S USE OF MELCHIZEDEK AND ITS PRESENT DAY LESSONS

In two places only does the name of Melchizedek occur in the Old Testament, and both of them are cited in *Hebrews* and nowhere else in the New Testament. No Jewish commentator has been found who used Melchizedek as a type of the Messiah, and it does not appear to be the aim of the author of *Hebrews* to shew that he was in a strict sense such a type, or to point out detail by detail how the type has been fulfilled in the antitype. Nor is his object to teach that the Old Testament has been fulfilled in the sense that now the New can be seen to lie hidden in the Old. He seems rather to use the Scripture record of Melchizedek as a kind of parable or allegory. He does not take Melchizedek himself as a historical character; historically of course he was born of human parents as any other man: but taking the Scripture record he interprets what is said and what is not said as though it were a parable of which the mystic meaning may be used in order to delineate the characteristics of the ideal and unique priesthood of CHRIST. The office of Melchizedek, which as a matter of historic fact was quite another thing, is transformed into something unearthly and becomes 'a heavenly abstraction.' Everything is made subservient to the one object of setting forth in the most picturesque and vivid terms the transcendence and supremacy of the priesthood of CHRIST. It is not CHRIST that is compared with Melchizedek, but Melchizedek that is compared with CHRIST. The Aaronic high priest was actually and historically a type of CHRIST, but Melchizedek was not, save in so far as all priests of whatever system have pointed forward to the one true priest.

There are certain outstanding lessons to be drawn from the writer's use of the mystic figure of Melchizedek, and the elaborate

comparison between his priesthood as inferred from the Scriptural record and the Levitical priesthood. The Hebrew people themselves were taught that, though blessed with peculiar privileges, true knowledge and service of God were not limited to their race. Staring them in the face in the pages of their own sacred literature was the fact that there was one who was described as 'priest of God most high'; that he was not of Abraham's seed, that Abraham regarded him as superior to himself: The Levitical priesthood then was not the only one among mankind whose foundation could be attributed to divine instigation. The thought may be transferred to the origination of other priesthoods, which, however corrupt they may have become in the course of the ages, may be regarded as owing their inception to a true inspiration of God. Man's passionate desire for a priest divinely appointed cannot be regarded otherwise than as an instinct implanted by God. The record of Melchizedek is an illustration of the truth of the words that 'in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him' (Acts x. 35). But it also follows from the teaching of Hebrews vii. that priesthoods although of divine initiation are necessarily temporary and provisional, and that they were only instituted to prepare men for the ministry of a perfect priest: and that unless this be frankly recognized they become obstacles to spiritual progress. There is nothing more injurious to the loftiest interests of men than a slavish bondage to the past. If this can be laid down with such emphatic certainty by a Hebrew writer in dealing with a system consecrated by sanctions so solemn as the Levitical system, with still greater emphasis must it be said of all other sacrificial systems in the world. It was natural that the Hebrews should still cling to their temple and their priesthood and sacrifices; they were intimately connected with glorious memories of saintly men, and with a history in which for sixteen hundred years the bitterest sorrows had been mingled with the richest joys. Yet to continue to cling to the Levitical system meant the rejection of the dispensation of life. It is natural also that Hindus should cling with passionate devotion to the Brahmanical system of priesthood and sacrifice which has been intertwined into the history of the

Indian peoples and closely fused into almost every function of their social life, yet to continue to cling to it must mean the spiritual degradation of a continent. But the Christian teacher may learn a lesson in method from the laborious care with which the author of *Hebrews* examines the details of a system which he declares to be effete, in order that he may shew not only the superiority of the new and absolute, but also the witness to be found in the old system to human needs which can only be satisfied with the new. It is not enough to shew that the old is obsolete: it must also be shewn that the old itself is the best attestation of the new. So too the Christian teacher in India must examine the Brahmanical system of priesthood and sacrifice, and shew how it bears witness to the need of a perfect priest and of a final sacrifice.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE USE OF THE WORD DIATHEKE (COVENANT OR TESTAMENT)

In vii. 22 occurs for the first time one of the key words of the Epistle, a word the Hebrew original of which is consistently translated 'covenant' in the English versions of the Old Testament. The R. V. of the New Testament is not consistent in its translation: it generally renders it 'covenant', and sometimes but not always puts 'testament' in the margin: as an illustration of inconsistency in this respect it puts 'testament' in the margin in Rev. xi. 19 but not in Heb. ix. 4 though the phrase is the same in either case: 'the ark of the covenant'. In one place only in the R. V. 'testament' is put in the text, viz. Heb. ix. 16.

The question as to whether *covenant* is the best rendering of *διαθήκη* is governed of course by the meanings which may be attached to the word 'covenant'. If it be regarded as merely the equivalent of *contract* or *mutual agreement*, it is doubtful whether such a word can ever be fitly used of God's dealings with men or of men's relationship to God; all things come of God and we owe Him all that we are and have. Men indeed can respond to and co-operate with God's will, but they only do this because

He has endowed them with the power. There can be no such thing as a bargain between Creator and creature, Judge and sinner, Father and child. Moreover, had this conception exclusively lain in the Hebrew word, the Greek translators had another word at hand which exactly signifies *contract*, but they never used it of G-'s covenant. It was probably because we cannot conceive of God dealing with men on the basis of a mutual agreement that this word (*συνθήκη*) was intentionally avoided. At the same time it must be remarked that in a few instances in the Old Testament the other word *διαθήκη* is used of what may be described as a kind of treaty or bargain between man and man, e.g. between David and Jonathan.

The ordinary meaning of *διαθήκη* in classical Greek is *will* in the sense of a disposition of property to take place after the death of its possessor. It has now been established by the papyri discovered in Egypt that this was the common significance of the word at the time when this Epistle was written; indeed it is never found in any other sense. It has, however, been pointed out that bequeathing of property by will was unknown to the Hebrew people until the time of the Herods. This fact has some weight in determining what meaning they would be likely to attach to a word which was very familiar to them through its occurrence in the Septuagint. At the same time it is to be remarked that Josephus, the Jewish historian, uses the word in the sense of *will*.

The most literal rendering into English is the word *disposition*: God has disposed the course of human affairs and the course of His revelation in certain ways, and man has to respond in obedience. He has not only disposed or arranged that His revelation to man shall come in certain ways but He has deigned to meet the weakness of their faith by giving them pledges or security that it shall be so. So the writer to the Hebrews dwells much upon God's oath as something to which appeal can be made to strengthen the faith of men. The Levitical system with its order of priesthood and worship was a sign that God had disposed the affairs of Israel and that they had something definite and tangible to confirm them in the knowledge of this disposition. This seems to be the general meaning of the word: it is not a contract, but God having

arranged to give, man has to respond faithfully in order to render himself capable of receiving what God has pledged Himself to give.

The question now arises whether *covenant* is the best word to express these ideas, or whether its use will introduce others which are foreign to the word *διαθήκη*. In modern English undoubtedly the word '*covenant*' mainly conveys the thought of a mutual agreement between two parties, and it is important that this conception should not be prominent in the religious use. The word is indeed used as equivalent to *pledge* or *security* (e.g. in Milton's Areop; '*covenant of fidelity*'), but this is a rare use. '*Testament*' in its wider sense of that which bears witness to something, and can be appealed to as bearing that witness, seems on the whole to be the most suitable word, though it fails to convey the thought of the need of response to what God has disposed. It has the further advantage that the same word can be used throughout, and yet hardly anything will have been lost of the manifold ideas which the word must have called up. It is impossible, for instance, in the one passage (ix. 15-20) in which '*testament*' is put in the text of the R.V. that the word can be used in different senses from verse to verse, though of the several kindred ideas contained in the word one may be more prominent at one time and another at another. It is difficult to suppose that any one who knew that *διαθήκη* commonly meant *will* could entirely exclude from his mind the thought of a will in reading ix. 16. '*Testament*' may be used of a written document, of a will, of a dispensation, because the root idea throughout is that of something arranged which can be appealed to, and therefore gives confidence of security.

The use of any word commonly employed in human affairs and in the disposition of worldly goods, to signify God's dealings with men, is in itself a kind of parable, and no parable should be too closely interpreted or it loses its force. It was constantly our Lord's practice in His parables to infer from men's dealings with men how we might expect God to deal with us, but such parables can never be pressed so as to yield analogies exact in every particular. To speak of God making a *διαθήκη* with men is a forcible allegory



denoting that He disposes of what is His alone and gives us the inheritance of sons ; that the gift of this inheritance was at the cost of life, a truth faintly and imperfectly shadowed in the death of a testator who has made a will ; that men have always something to appeal to as their security—the oath, or the law, or CHRIST Himself—all this and much more is allegorically expressed in the use of a familiar word. At one time one idea may be the more prominent, and another at another. Compare the use of 'covenant' in Isa. xlii. 6 and xlix. 8.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE USE OF 'HEAVEN AND 'HEAVENS' IN THIS EPISTLE

The word 'heaven' or 'heavens' occurs ten times in this Epistle. Roughly speaking, the use of the singular signifies something specific and definite, whilst the plural is used more widely of the whole order either in nature or spirit. In two passages, i. 10 and xi. 12 the word has the simple natural sense of the visible firmament with all that it contains ; and in xii. 26 the meaning is probably the same, though it may be used of the inhabitants of the spiritual order. In the other passages the term is used of that which is not apprehensible by the natural senses to represent a state of transcendence of every possible limitation and imperfection. It becomes, what it generally is in both the Old and New Testaments, a spiritual instead of a literal term. Spiritual truths can for the most part only be represented by terms which originally and ordinarily are employed of temporal and spatial things. Earth is contrasted with heaven, not as one part of the created universe may be compared with another, but as the temporal and limited and imperfect may be contrasted with the eternal and infinite and absolute. No more fitting symbol of the transcendent could be found than the heavens which no man could measure or comprehend.

In this Epistle there are three expressions used to describe our Lord's exaltation. In iv. 14 He is said to have 'passed through the heavens' ; in vii. 26 He is said to have been 'made higher

than the heavens' ; in ix. 24 He is said to have 'entered into heaven itself.' It is clear of course, that spatial localities are excluded from the conception, though in the first passage (see note on text) it is possible that the visible heavens may be taken as a pictured equivalent of that veil which hung before the Holy of holies in the tabernacle: as the high priest passed through the curtain and became invisible, so the passage into the transcendent world is pictured by the passage through the visible heavens. But the main thought to be derived from the three expressions is that of a spiritual progress: He passes out of the vision of earthly eyes into the order entirely spiritual. In that order He is exalted above all its inhabitants; angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim own Him as supreme Lord: He is made 'higher than the heavens.' The final stage is His entrance into the absolute, eternal, uncreated glory of God: He has 'entered into heaven itself.'

The three phrases indicate that Ascension may be represented as a spiritual progress: it is '*through*', '*above*', and finally '*in*.' It is a hint that for man after the resurrection there are stages in heavenliness.

In ix. 23 where there is mention made of 'the things in the heavens' of which there were 'copies' in the worship on earth, it seems that the word is also used of that state of blessedness in which He manifests Himself to the holy, and is alike the Leader and Object of their worship. See also xii. 23, 'Church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven.'

## CHAPTER VIII

- 1 <sup>1</sup> Or, *Now to sum up what we are saying: We have, etc.* <sup>2</sup> Gr. *upon.* <sup>1</sup> Now <sup>2</sup> in the things which we are saying the chief point is *this*: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the

Chapter VIII begins the exposition of the ritual of the high priesthood of CHRIST, which is continued to x. 18. We have a royal high priest; where and how does He fulfill His liturgical ministry?

**1-4. The royal high priest discharges His priestly office in the archetypal shrine and offers sacrifice.**

1. Now in the things which we are saying . . . is *this*. The preeminent truth urged throughout the whole instruction is the actuality of the royal priesthood of CHRIST. In the margin and in the A.V. is another possible rendering, 'to sum up'; but as new matter is at once introduced, the meaning 'chief point' is preferable.

**We have such a high priest.** See note on iv. 14. He is 'such' as has already been described, with a priesthood sympathetic, underived, indissoluble, perfect.

**who sat down.** It is the fact of the enthronement as King which is here expressed; there is no reference to any particular time.

Majesty in the heavens. A minister of <sup>3</sup>the sanctuary, and of the true <sup>3</sup>Or, *holy* <sup>2</sup>things.

**on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.** Cp. i. 3. Here the phrase is made still more dignified by the addition of 'throne.' Humanity is exalted to power and dominion and authority inconceivable. The exaltation of CHRIST involves that of His members, though this thought is not to the front here: but see Rev. i. 6; iii. 21; St. John xiv. 3. 'Heavens' is here used in the widest sense of the transcendent regions.

**2. a minister of the sanctuary.** Enthroned as King though He be, He yet discharges His liturgical ministry. Symbolically He is represented both as sitting as King and standing as Priest. This is the only place in the New Testament where CHRIST is called a *liturgical minister*, and the word is used not of that wider service of which He speaks in St. Mark x. 45, but its connexion with 'sanctuary' shows that it has the restricted meaning commonly found in the Septuagint of one who discharges priestly functions in the holy place. The word translated 'sanctuary' is literally either 'holy persons' or 'holy things': either it means that CHRIST as their Head and Representative offers the worship of His consecrated ones, or that He performs the perfect act of ritual offering in the true sanctuary.

**and of the true tabernacle.** The true tabernacle is the place of the manifested Presence of God, immediately and directly revealed to His faithful for their adoration.

**3** tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this *high*  
**4** *priest* also have somewhat to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing

The word translated 'true' describes a thing as being of its own nature and essence the real and absolute of which all others bearing the same name are but copies or symbols: that which is *true* is both ideal and real.

**which the Lord pitched, not man.** The manifested Presence is God's act: man has not attained to it by his own efforts.

**3. For every high priest, etc.** See note on v. 1. Two things are required for a priest, a sanctuary and a sacrifice; somewhat to offer and somewhere to offer it.

**wherefore it is necessary, etc.** If there be any meaning in calling CHRIST high priest, He must not only have a place of sacrifice, but He must also have a sacrifice to offer, and this sacrifice must be commensurate with the dignity of His priesthood. The 'somewhat to offer' is the completed sacrifice which is summed up in His Blood (cp. ix. 7). To present His Blood is to present Himself as one who has been slain. So St. John saw Him in his vision: 'A lamb standing, as though it had been slain' (Rev. v. 6). As long as He is discharging the function of priest He is presenting continuously the one perfect sacrifice.

**4. Now if He were on earth, etc.** This is stated to prove that the scene of the liturgical ministry of CHRIST is necessarily heaven. The argument may be

there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve *that which* is a copy and shadow of <sup>5</sup> the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of *God* when he is about to 'make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern

<sup>4</sup>Or, complete.

paraphrased as follows: 'Had He stayed on earth and claimed to officiate in the Temple services He would not have been admitted: already there was a divinely instituted order of priests whose duty was legally prescribed. He could not have been a Levitical priest, and He could not officiate in the earthly sanctuary. There cannot be two legitimate divinely instituted priesthoods on earth. It follows then, that CHRIST being a priest and therefore bound to offer sacrifice, He must officiate in another and transcendent tabernacle.' Earth is the outer court, the real place of sacrifice is Heaven.

**5-13. If there be a high priest discharging a sacrificial ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, what is the function of the Levitical priesthood? If there be a new priesthood, must there not also, be a new covenant?**

**5. Who serve.** More exactly 'who are of such sort that they serve'. Again the word for 'serve' denotes the ministry of the sanctuary.

**that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.** The sphere or scene of their ministry is a sanctuary containing faint representations of the true, which are

6 that was shewed thee in the mount. But now

'the heavenly things'. A copy can help us to realize something of what the original is like; a shadow can give a dim idea of that which causes it; but the copy and the shadow are not the thing itself; their function is to impress upon men that the real true thing exists. This was what the Levitical priesthood and tabernacle did: they witnessed to the fact of the true. (See note on x. 1.)

**even as Moses is warned of God.** Exod. xxv. 9-40; xxvi. 30. The word for 'warned' is commonly used of divine direction.

**See, saith he, . . . in the mount.** St. Stephen reminded his hearers of the same truth. (Acts vii. 44.) The fact that the pattern was shewed him does not imply that Moses had the power to apprehend fully the heavenly glories. We know that this was not so (see Exod. xxxiii. 18-23); but he could apprehend enough of the vision of the heavenly temple and its worship to be able to represent it truly, however imperfectly and inadequately, in copy and shadow. The pattern, of course, was not an architect's plan, but it was the order of spiritual transactions and relationships.

Probably the whole universe represents in copy or shadow form realities of the heavenly world.

It is important to notice that the system and mode of worship was not devised below, but it was divinely revealed from above. Israel did not worship as they thought best but as GOD directed.

6. **But now**, i.e. it being impossible that He should

hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better <sup>5</sup> covenant, which hath <sup>5</sup> Or, *testament.* been enacted upon better promises.

be a Levitical priest, or that two divinely appointed priesthoods should exist side by side on earth.

**hath He obtained a ministry the more excellent.** It is implied in the Greek word that the ritual ministry of the Levitical priesthood was good, but that, that which is exercised in heaven must be super-excellent.

**by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant.** There follows an inevitable result: a new and superior covenant is necessarily inherent in a new superior priesthood, and the superiority of the new priesthood is the measure of the superiority of the new covenant. Aaron was the high priest of the old covenant and Moses its mediator, but in CHRIST both offices meet: the high priest of the new covenant is also its mediator. In vii. 22, where the ineffectiveness of the old priesthood and therefore of the old covenant is insisted on, He is called 'the surety of a better covenant.'

**which hath been enacted upon better promises.** The new covenant is not vague and indefinite, but it is based upon a constitution divinely founded. Even the 'Gospel' must be a system of law, but it is a law of liberty. The covenant being better, its promises are better. As a man changes his will to make richer bequests, so God changes what He has of old disposed in order to give man more.



**7** For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then  
**8** would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith.

**7.** For if that first covenant had been faultless, i.e. if it had fully answered men's needs and so had satisfied them.

**Then would no place have been sought for a second.** Men sought not a new covenant, but a *place* for it. They could not have sought for the covenant, because they could not have conceived beforehand how surpassingly rich God's mercy would be: (cp. 1. Cor. ii. 9-10). But conscious that the old did not satisfy them, the faithful searched the Scriptures to find if there were any room left for a new: nor did they search in vain. This is the attitude of the true seeker after God. Does the religion of my fathers—be it Islam or Buddhism or Brahmanism—answer the highest needs of my nature, or does it leave room for the fulfilment of all that is shadowed in it?

**8. For finding fault with them, he saith.** There is another reading 'finding fault he saith to them', which fits in well with the context and argument. 'If that first covenant had been faultless,' but it was not: and so God Himself reveals its inadequacy.

**Behold the days come, saith the Lord.** When the Scriptures are searched room or place is found for a new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 31-4). The words gain special force when spoken to men who are face to face with an impending disaster, because they were originally spoken when the people seemed overwhelmed in ruin.

Behold, the days come saith the Lord,  
That I will <sup>6</sup>make a new <sup>7</sup>covenant  
with the house of Israel and with  
the house of Judah;

Not according to the <sup>7</sup>covenant that  
I made with their fathers

<sup>6</sup> Gr. *ac-* 9  
*complish.*

In the day that I took them by the  
hand to lead them forth out of the  
land of Egypt;

<sup>7</sup> Or, *testa-*  
*ment.*

For they continued not in my <sup>7</sup>cove-  
nant,

And I regarded them not, saith the  
Lord.

The new covenant was promised at a time when national hopes seemed hopelessly wrecked, but they are taught that out of the ruins of the old there shall rise a new and purified people.

**I will make a new covenant.** The writer does not quote the Septuagint word for word, but uses in part his own language to express the prophet's meaning. He alters the word here translated 'make' and in the margin 'accomplish'. A better translation would be 'consummate'. Probably the word was deliberately selected to indicate the continuity of the old with the new. CHRIST came primarily not to destroy but to fulfill or consummate. The Greek word for 'new' means here not merely new in time but new in kind.

**with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.** Among the fruits of the new covenant shall be the healing of the schism and the reunion of the separated.

**9. Not according to the covenant that I made.**

<sup>8</sup> Or, *testament.*  
 10 <sup>9</sup> Gr. *I will covenant.*

For this is the <sup>8</sup> covenant that <sup>9</sup> I will make with the house of Israel

After those days saith the Lord ; I will put my laws  
 into their mind,  
 And on their heart also will I write them :  
 And I will be to them a God,  
 And they shall be to me a people :

Though it consummates, yet it does not resemble the old. The fruit does not resemble the flower from which it sprang.

**For they continued not in my covenant.** Faithless to the old covenant they had not profited by it as they might have done. Even Nicodemus was reproached by our Lord for his failure to rise to his opportunities (St. John iii. 10) ; 'and understandest not these things.' The point was that he might and ought to have understood them.

**and I regarded them not.** Unfaithfulness met with its necessary reward. They turned from God, and He turned from them. Yet His gracious purpose was not to fail. The English versions of the Old Testament translate, 'although I was a husband unto them,' which fits well with the thought in 'I took them by the hand.' The picture is of the tender gentleness of God who led His people by the hand as a loving husband guides his wife.

**10. For this is the covenant that I will make.** Now come the four positive marks of the new covenant, which are all realized in the Incarnation.

And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,  
And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord :  
For all shall know me,  
From the least to the greatest of them.

**I will put my laws into their mind, etc.** Firstly the law shall no longer be an external code correcting and prohibiting, but being itself within the mind and heart shall be obeyed from reason and love (cp. Ps. xxxvii. 32). This makes it a 'law of liberty' (see St. James i. 25 ; ii. 12). As an illustration of a 'law of liberty' ; a mother may be prohibited by law from injuring her child's health by neglect, and may be punished should she do so ; but she tends her child because she loves it, and not because she looks to the external law : the law she obeys is in her heart, and is a 'law of liberty.'

**I will be to them a God, etc.** The true relationship between God and man shall be finally established. This is the second mark.

**11. And they shall not teach every man his fellow citizen, etc.** The third mark of the new covenant is that there shall be an inward Teacher to convey teaching to the soul, and to convince of its truth (cp. St. John vi. 45 ; xiv. 16-17, 26 ; xvi. 13 ; 1 St. John ii. 20-27). This promise has indeed been distorted (e.g. by the Quakers) so as to lead men to dispense with outward agencies of Church and ministry and sacraments, but this is not CHRIST'S teaching. The feature of the new covenant is that beneath and within all the outward agencies ordained by God there shall be the Spirit

- 12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities,  
And their sins will I remember no more.
- 13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made

infusing within the individual soul a conviction of the truth.

**From the least to the greatest of them.** There is to be no privileged caste or class: there is no birth incapacity of apprehending divine truth; all may be admitted to the fullness of knowledge and fellowship. Sometimes 'the least,' even children or illiterate folk, are distinguished by their spiritual insight.

12. **For I will be merciful to their iniquities.** Under the old covenant there was no promise of forgiveness of wilful breaches of the law, but now assurance of real forgiveness is granted to the penitent. This is the fourth mark of the new covenant. The Epistle goes on to expound the grounds of this forgiveness.

**And their sins will I remember no more.** Christians have speculated as to whether they will be able to recall their old sins when in heaven, and whether the perfection of their bliss would not be marred by such memories. Though the recollection of sin may deepen the sense of divine mercy, it may be asked, can man remember what God wills to forget?

13. **In that he said . . . he hath made, etc.** God's word is God's act. 'God said . . . and there was.' Gen. i. 'He spake and it was' (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

**that which is becoming old and waxeth aged.** Yet God wills to act through processes. The transition is

the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.

not sudden and abrupt. The word for 'old' signifies not merely old by continuance through duration of time, but old in the sense that it is not of the sort required for the present need: in common speech, it is equivalent to 'out of date'; it is the exact antithesis of 'new' as explained in note on verse 8.

'Waxeth old,' i.e. is losing its vitality and energy. It is no longer the right kind, and even what was good in it is losing its force. The prophets themselves had long denounced the uselessness of animal sacrifices that were not prompted by the true spirit of devotion; e.g. see Jer. vii. 21-3.

**nigh unto vanishing away**, i.e. is ever drawing nearer to that time when the reason for its existence shall have disappeared. That time has come, such is the teaching of this Epistle. Men have to resist the temptation to say 'the old is better' (St. Luke v. 39).

## CHAPTER IX

¶ Now even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, *a sanctuary* of this

**Christ's priestly ministry in the transcendent sanctuary is elucidated by a comparison with the ritual of the earthly tabernacle. A brief examination of the construction of the Mosaic tabernacle (1-5), and a description of the ministrations of its priests (6-7), with a view to seeing what is disclosed by its limitations as to God's purpose (8-10).**

1. **Now even the first covenant.** Though 'He hath made the first old' yet even under this first covenant there was a divinely instituted provision for sacrificial worship.

**had ordinances of divine service.** The 'had' may look back to the original institution in the wilderness, or it may imply that the writer regarded the Levitical system as abolished. The phrase 'ordinances of worship' includes all that was used in the ritual,—the prescribed furniture, as well as the ministerial acts of offering.

**its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world.** The scene of this worship was indeed a sanctuary but of its nature it was transitory and local; it was 'of this world' as contrasted with that which is transcendent.

world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the 2

The Greek Fathers interpreted 'of this world' as signifying the catholic character of the worship of the sanctuary. Here, indicated by the court of the Gentiles, was the centre of the world's true worship. But this interpretation introduces an idea which is foreign to the argument. The antithesis is between the absolute, eternal and the relative, local, temporal.

**2. For there was a tabernacle prepared.** It is to the original scene of the Levitical ministrations that he goes for his description, and not to Solomon's temple. Grandeur of construction or splendour of architecture could add nothing to the copy and shadow of the divine idea: all was in the tent of skins in the wilderness. So the mud Church of the village may be the sanctuary in which not the shadow or copy but the 'very image' of the heavenly is given and received, as truly as the spacious and magnificent Cathedral.

**the first wherein, etc.** Twelve chapters of *Exodus* are occupied with the plan and construction of the tabernacle (see Exod. xxv-xxxv, xxxv-xl). Its interior was divided by 'the second veil' into two parts—the 'Holy' and 'the Holy of holies.' The latter was a perfect cube, ten cubits every way; the former was of the same height and breadth but twice as long.

**the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread.** In 'the Holy' were three things, the altar of incense, the table of shew-bread and the golden candlestick (literally, lampstand: St. Matt. v. 15, etc). Of these the writer only mentions two, though he retains the appearance



first, wherein <sup>1</sup> were the candlestick, and the table, and <sup>2</sup> the shewbread; <sup>1</sup> Or, are  
<sup>2</sup> Gr the setting forth of the loaves.  
 3 which is called the Holy place. And

of three by separating the shewbread from the table on which it was placed. The candlestick or lamp-stand carried seven lamps. In the Hebrew the phrase translated 'shewbread' means literally 'Bread of the Face,' i.e. the Face of God (Exod. xxv. 30). Here it is 'Bread of the ordering.' There were twelve loaves according to the number of the tribes, arranged in sets of six loaves each, and renewed every seven days. The candlestick and the shewbread were the copies of light and life, of the distribution of the Spirit, and the gift of the Bread of Heaven; the Spirit in His completeness and manifoldness of distribution, the Bread by which man is represented before the Face of God and receives the life of God.

**3. And after the second veil.** The curtain through which 'the Holy' was entered from the outer court was 'the first veil'; it was of blue, scarlet, and purple, joined with the whiteness of fair linen. The colours were symbolical, blue of God, red of created life, of which man is the crown, and purple of the union between the two, which can only be in holiness: hence the significant white linen (see Rev. xix. 8). The second veil differed only from the first in having figures of Cherubim embroidered on it, probably representing that within was offered the worship of holy creatures. (See note on x. 20). It is not quite certain which of the two veils was rent at the moment of CHRIST'S death

after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden **4**

(St. Matt. xxvii. 51) but the more probable opinion, held by both Origen and Jerome, is that it was the first, as being the veil which excluded the Gentiles and so divided humanity (cp. Eph. ii. 13-15).

**the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies.** Literally 'a tent which is called.' The name which is given to the whole is given to each section. What 'the Holy' is when compared with the outer court, so is 'the Holy of holies' in comparison with 'the Holy.'

**4. having a golden censer.** Although the Greek word might indeed mean 'censer' or anything that has to do with the offering of incense, it is most improbable that this is the meaning here. A censer was no part of the permanent furniture of the Holy of holies, but was only carried in on one occasion in the year. The writer has omitted, and without question purposely omitted, to mention the altar of incense in the Holy place, and this word in the text is used continually of the altar. He does not say as before 'wherein, etc.,' but '*having.*' Locally the altar of incense stood outside the Holy of holies, but he evidently desires specially to connect the altar of incense with the ritual performed in the Holy of holies. It is so connected in Exod. xxx. 6 and xl. 5. There was the daily offering of incense morning and evening; but besides this there was the annual solemn offering on the Day of Atonement by the high priest, and this formed an essential part of the ritual (Lev. xvi. 12-13). The cloud of the incense is

<sup>3</sup>censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein <sup>3</sup>Or, altar of incense. <sup>4</sup>Or, is was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables

to be within the veil, covering the Mercy Seat, 'that he die not.' Incense is the symbol of prayer which successfully intercedes (Rev. v. 8). As prescribed in the Levitical ritual it was a 'shadow' which faintly pointed to that sweet and acceptable Love, which having become incarnate was to interpose for the sinner 'that he die not' (cp. vii. 25).

**the ark of the covenant.** In *Exodus* and *Leviticus* it is called exclusively 'the ark of the testimony.' In the later books it is generally called 'the ark of the covenant', but also 'the ark of the Lord' (Joshua iii. 13), 'the ark of God' (1 Sam. iii. 3), 'the ark of the strength of the Lord' (2 Chron. vi. 41), 'the holy ark.' (2 Chron. xxxv. 3). It was transferred to Solomon's temple, but in the second temple the Holy of holies was empty, save for a small slab of stone. What became of the ark at the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldees is not known, though there is a legend about it in 2 Macc. ii. 4-8. It was a chest of wood, two cubits and a half in length and one cubit and a half in height and breadth, and it was cased in gold both inside and outside.

**wherein was a golden pot holding the manna.** The manna was to be laid up before the Lord as a testimony of how God had fed His people in the wilderness (Exod. xvi. 32-4). He who reigns, feeds: the King of Israel is the Shepherd of Israel. He who was the support of

of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory **5** overshadowing <sup>5</sup> the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak <sup>Gr. the</sup> *propitiatory*

His people on earth will be their eternal food (Rev. ii. 17).

**Aaron's rod that budded.** (Num. xvii. 10). This was God's testimony to the divinely instituted priesthood, to the truth that a priest cannot be made by man but must be called of God (v. 4).

**the tables of the covenant.** Finally comes that which was originally in the ark and from which it derived its name. In the temple the ark contained nothing else. It is noticeable that each thing laid up in the ark was a testimony to the longsuffering of God and the perversity of the people: there was the sign of the food of which they had complained; the sign of the priesthood against which they had rebelled; the sign of the covenant which by idolatry they had broken.

**5. above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.** Margin 'the propitiatory' (see Exod. xxv. 22). The Hebrew word in the Old Testament which is translated 'mercy seat' literally means 'the cover'. This 'cover' was interposed between the symbols of the pure glory of God and the demands of His law; sprinkled with the blood of the victim on the Day of Atonement it came to mean the 'Mercy Seat.' The 'Cherubim of the Glory' are the heavenly sentinels who guard the presence, and signify its unapproachableness by man who has fallen short of that glory through transgression of the law (Rom. iii. 23). The ark, and the symbols

**6** severally. Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first

that were above, about and within it, shadowed the truth that God was enthroned in the midst of His people, that though His glory was unapproachable yet He fed them, taught them, guided them and forgave them. The shadow of all this was in the tabernacle, but the 'Very Image' is in the Incarnation. CHRIST is the ark of the covenant (Isa. xlii. 6, xlix. 8). He is the 'propitiatory' (1 St. John ii. 2). He is the 'hidden manna' (St. John vi. 49-50), and He rules with the rod of a royal priest (Rev. xix. 15). No longer do the 'Cherubim of the Glory' render Him unapproachable by frail men, but angelic beings direct men how to find Him (St. Luke xxiv. 4-7).

**of which things we cannot now speak severally.** It is not that their symbolical importance is insignificant, but nothing must be allowed to distract attention from 'the chief point' (viii. 1) which is the high priesthood of CHRIST and the scene of His ministry.

**6-7. A brief description of the ministrations of the priests.**

**6. Now these things having been thus prepared.** 'These things' are the tabernacle with its divisions and furniture. After the description of the scene of the ministry comes the outline of its acts.

**the priests go in continually.** By 'continually' is meant that there was no period of the week or month or year when entrance was prohibited.

tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the **7** second the high priest alone, once in the year, not

**into the first tabernacle.** Here man might worship: it was not the place of the presence, but the place from which he might worship towards the presence (Ps. v. 7; cxxxviii. 2).

**accomplishing the services,** such as dressing the lamps, offering the morning and evening incense, changing the shewbread at the appointed intervals. Under certain contingencies, such as a sin of ignorance, a priest's sin, or a sin of ignorance on the part of the whole congregation, blood of the sacrifice was carried into the 'first tabernacle' and put on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled before the curtain of the Holy of holies (Lev. iv. 6-7, 17-18).

**7. but into the second.** The second was not the place where man might worship; it was the symbol of the very presence of God.

**the high priest alone, once in the year.** True, it may be entered, but the marks of limitation and exclusion are immediately emphasized: out of all Israel, only one man; out of all the days of the year, on only one day.

**not without blood.** Moreover, even he enters not in virtue of his own sanctity but in that of sacrifice. It was customary for the victim to be slain by him who had sinned. Killing was no part of the priest's office. But on the Day of Atonement the high priest killed the offerings, a bullock for himself and a goat for the people: that is to say, he approached as a sinner and as one of a sinful people.

without blood, which he offereth for himself, and  
 8 <sup>Gr. igno-</sup> for the <sup>o</sup> errors of the people: the Holy  
 rances. Ghost this signifying, that the way into

**which he offereth for himself.** The application and presentation of the blood was the consummating act of the sacrifice to which all that happened before was preparatory. This consummating act on the Day of Atonement was performed in the Holy of holies itself. The first time the high priest entered he offered the blood of the bullock for himself; he then went out and entered a second time with the blood of the goat for the people.

**for the errors of the people.** 'Errors' is literally 'ignorances.' See note and additional note on v. 2. Under the Levitical system there is no atonement for wilful and deliberate transgression of the law, but only for those 'errors' of human infirmity of which the sinner did not at the time recognize the guilt. The Israelites were taught that man may not regard himself as sinless because at the time of his 'error' his conscience neither warned nor reproached him. Sins of ignorance need penitence and the atoning blood.

**8-10. The teaching of the limitations of the tabernacle and its ritual.**

**8. the Holy Ghost this signifying.** Three times in this Epistle the personality of the Holy Ghost in His office as teacher is plainly indicated: besides this place see iii. 7; x. 15. Here He is said to teach not only in

the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, the written or sp<sup>o</sup>ken word but in the interpretation of the ritual.

**the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest.** It is literally 'the way of the holies,' and it seems to mean the way into the transcendent sanctuary of heaven, the veritable 'holies' and not merely its symbol. As long as the people were excluded from the holy place, as long as the priests were excluded from the Holy of holies, as long as the high priest was excluded from the Holy of holies except on one occasion, as long as he himself was excluded unless he carried sacrificial blood, it was clear that men knew not yet the way to heaven. The worship of the tabernacle pointed to the Way, bore witness that there was a Way, but was not itself the Way.

**while as yet the first tabernacle is yet standing.** This might mean 'as long as there is a system of worship outside the place of the symbol of the manifested Presence, a system in which the Presence is intentionally hidden from the worshipper.' In this case 'first tabernacle' is used in the same sense as in verses 2 and 6 as the first of the divisions of the tabernacle. At the same time 'first' may have a temporal meaning, and may signify 'first' as contrasted with that which came after, as the old covenant is contrasted with the new. The latter seems to fit the course of reasoning better. The first tabernacle with its system of graded exclusions was evidence that heaven was not yet open to man. If it be urged that it is unlikely that the writer would so



9 while as the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a parable for the time *now* present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that

quickly use 'first tabernacle' in a different sense from what he uses it in verses 2 and 6, it may be answered that he undoubtedly changes the meaning of 'Holy place' within a few verses (cp. verse 2 with verses 8 and 12). He leaves it to the context to make the meaning clear.

**Is yet standing**, i.e. while the system is yet established. It is not merely the existence of the building that is meant, but the remaining in force of the whole scheme of ritual and worship.

**9 which is a parable.** These words seem to confirm the interpretation of 'first tabernacle' as meaning the whole system of Levitical worship, and not merely a particular part of the tent. It was not only 'the holy place' that was a parable: the 'gifts and sacrifices' and 'divers washings' specified in verses 9 and 10 were not solely confined to that part of the tabernacle. It was the whole system that was a parable, speaking of something beyond itself.

**for the time now present.** This does not mean the time in which the author was writing, but the time which was present when the Levitical system had a true function to perform, the time, that is, for which it existed and for which it was designed to exist. This time is in the Epistle directly contrasted with 'the future age' which is called 'future' because it is only in the future that its verities will be fully and openly

cannot, as touching the conscience, make the manifested. Already Christians taste these verities: spiritual realities are received and offered by them, but they are sacramentally veiled. In the time of the Levitical system there were but shadows or copies, a parable of the true and not its very image. See note on vi. 5.

**according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices.** See note on v. 1. Grammatically '*which*' may refer either to 'first tabernacle' or 'parable.' The former seems to give the simpler meaning: 'it is under the Levitical system that both gifts, etc.'

**that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect.** All that they professed to do was to remove ceremonial impurity, and thus to restore the offender to the privileges of the congregation. The true ideal, however, was not that of outward purity but of inward holiness (Ps. li. 10), and this no Levitical offering of itself could effect. As regards those deeper things of which conscience spoke and judged, there was no assurance of pardon and cleansing to be gained from 'gifts and sacrifices.' The Hebrews at their best had already this conviction (see Ps. li. 6, 16-17).

The word 'perfect' here primarily conveys no thought of initiation, but describes one who attains at each stage of life that standard of goodness for which God made him, and is therefore at length able to enter into the true Holy of holies. In a secondary sense this perfection is *initiation*, for being 'pure in heart' he sees God. 'The perfection in all good, after which

**10** worshipper perfect, *being* only (with meats and

every Christian should strive simply as a Christian, is infinite in its nature, like a heavenly ladder the steps of which constantly increase the higher we climb ; but woe to him who would make landings in it out of his own invention and on his own behalf.' (Ewald quoted by Dr. Hort in his Commentary on St. James). (Cp. St. Matt. v. 48).

**10. being only . . . carnal ordinances.** Literally 'ordinances of flesh.' The meaning is that there was no spiritual virtue inherent in them : they were signs but not sacraments : there was nothing in them which of itself could effect more than a ceremonial cleanliness.

**with meats and drinks and divers washings.** One kind of food might be eaten but not another : certain circumstances rendered drinking vessels unclean : there were various kinds of washing, e.g. see Exod. xxix. 4 ; xxx. 19 ; Lev. xi. 25 ; Num. viii. 7 ; cp. St. Mark vii. 4. Moreover in addition to the very numerous injunctions and restrictions of the law there grew up a traditional code in which such 'ordinances of flesh' were continually multiplied. For instance, stalks of various kinds of fruits, should they touch food, rendered it 'unclean' and therefore uneatable : wine sold by a Samaritan, if it were in public, might not be drunk : the various baths after ceremonial defilement, prescribed by unwritten law, were very numerous. The tendency of such a system is to lead men to substitute a kind of fictitious purity for interior holiness, to make sin consist

drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

not in the violation of moral law but in the infringement of rules of diet, of regulations of bathing, etc.

This tendency has worked itself out in a most exaggerated form in Brahmanism in which caste rules have become of primary importance. A man will be excommunicated from his caste for receiving water, even of the Ganges, from the hands of a *panchama*, whilst grave breaches of the moral law may be overlooked.

**imposed until a time of reformation.** Such a system is of its very nature temporary; it was never meant to be permanent. It is useful for a time and serves a true purpose; but if it is retained beyond this time it becomes destructive of religion. 'Imposed' is literally 'laid upon' the word speaks of the burdensomeness of 'ordinances of flesh' which have no necessary moral value. 'A time of reformation' is more literally 'a season of making straight,' and so comes to mean 'establishing permanently.' The transitory system is the prelude of the permanent.

The limitations of the worship of the tabernacle and the Levitical system have been described. Now comes the contrast: shadow speaks of substance; the transitory points to the permanent: the local is a figure of the transcendent; the high priest with his limited earthly sanctuary is a type of the true High Priest with His eternal heavenly sanctuary; ceremonial purity indicates the need of inward sanctity.

**11** But Christ having come a high priest of

**11-28. Exposition of the atonement made by Christ; the necessity of its being by blood; the eternal benefits it has procured.**

**11. But Christ having come a high priest.** Literally it is 'having become near or alongside of.' The reference is to the Incarnation by which He became Man among men. The same word is used in 'Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth?' St. Luke xii. 51. By His essential nature as the 'Word made flesh,' He was high priest from the moment of His birth. He was called to the office by the Father, and fitted for it by His experience on earth (see notes on ii. 17; v. 5; vi. 20), but He only began to exercise His high priestly ministry after the Ascension.

**of the good things to come.** It is tempting to choose the reading in the margin adopted by Westcott and Hort; for it is not shadows or copies that the High Priest ministers, but the very things themselves. But it is the manner of the author to speak of these things as not yet openly manifested, and therefore in that sense 'to come.' Christians actually enjoy them now under 'the very image' (see xi. 1).

**through the greater and more perfect tabernacle.** These words are to be taken with 'entered', and not with 'having come.' What is 'the greater and more perfect tabernacle' through which CHRIST entered into 'the holy place?' There are several interpretations. It has been suggested that it is that lower region

<sup>7</sup> the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle,

<sup>7</sup> Some ancient authorities read *the good things that are come.*

of divine communion in which He lived during the days of His 'self-emptying' (cp. Phil. ii. 7 with Heb. ii. 9). But this seems unsatisfying and to give no force to 'greater and more perfect.' The favourite interpretation of the Fathers is that 'the greater and more perfect tabernacle' is His own sinless humanity, that human nature which conceived by the Holy Ghost is indeed 'a new creation.' This interpretation is the more attractive because He Himself spoke of the temple of His Body (St. John ii. 21). In this case the meaning will be that it was in virtue of His sacred humanity and in virtue of His life poured out in sacrifice that He entered the Holy place. Another interpretation, which undoubtedly is more in harmony with the analogy of the Levitical high priest's passage through the Holy place into the Holy of holies, is that the greater and more perfect tabernacle is the abode of the blessed, the state of the beatific vision in which God manifests Himself to angels and men for their worship. As the high priest passed through the Holy place and then entered the Holy of holies, so the true High Priest passed through this heavenly place at His Ascension carrying His manhood into the glory of the infinite eternal Godhead. 'The greater and more perfect tabernacle' is heaven as commonly understood, and 'the holy place' is the self-manifested eternal Glory which existed before the

not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creature-worlds. But there is no veil between them: God's glory is manifested to 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' Yet another interpretation is that the two phrases, each preceded by 'through,' in itself in the Greek an ambiguous word, should be taken with 'having come' and describe the necessary accompaniments of CHRIST'S high priesthood. He needs a place of offering, and it is not of this imperfect order, built of wood and stuffs and metal. He needs an offering, but it is not the blood of goats and bullocks that He carries but His own. In this case the preposition translated 'through' has the same meaning in the two phrases, and the English word 'with' is perhaps the nearest we can get to it.

This tabernacle, however it may be interpreted, is described as 'greater' because it was free from the limitations of a type or copy or shadow; it is described as 'more perfect' because the purpose which it fulfilled was higher than the end answered by the Levitical tabernacle. Strictly speaking one thing cannot be 'more perfect' than another, for to be perfect is to have reached a pitch of excellence above which it is impossible to rise. But here the comparison intended is between the ends which the two tabernacles served: one was nobler than the other.

**not made with hands . . . this creation.** Of both the glorified body and the heavenly temple it is said that they are 'not made with hands.' (See 2 Cor. v. 1 and Acts vii. 48 and also cp. St Mark xiv. 58). But it

tion, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves but **12** through his own blood, entered in once for all into

was necessary to point out not only that human agency had no part in the building of the 'greater and more perfect tabernacle,' but also that it belongs to an entirely different order: it is not of the visible creation at all.

**12. nor yet through the blood of goats and calves.** The Levitical high priest entered the Holy of holies to present a sacrifice. Indeed it was only in virtue of that sacrifice which he had to present that he could enter at all: thus it was 'through the blood, etc.', that he entered. Moreover he must make a twofold presentation, the blood of the goat for the people, that of the bullock for himself.

**but through his own blood.** The perfect high priest in virtue of His own eternal Deity abides of right in the true Holy of holies, but when He took human nature then He must do so in virtue of a perfect sacrifice. For to His own perfect human nature He has united those who are partakers of a fallen human nature. He takes them in Him into the holy place, and He takes them *through* sacrifice. As the true 'holy place' infinitely transcends its shadow upon earth, so the blood of CHRIST infinitely transcends the typical sacrifices.

**entered in once for all.** The Levitical high priest not only entered twice in one day, but there was an annual repetition of these entrances. The true high priest effected all by one entrance, and humanity ever abides in the Divine Glory.



the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

**the holy place.** It is evident that 'holy place' is not used in the same sense as in ix. 2. Here it describes the eternal counterpart of the Holy of holies of the tabernacle on earth, and not of its first division. See note on verse 8.

**having obtained eternal redemption.** The Greek almost certainly means that it was by His entrance that He obtained eternal redemption ('He entered in once for all and won redemption'), and not that it was after He had obtained it that He entered. Otherwise the whole figure is destroyed. See Explanatory Note, p. 64. The entrance into the 'holy place' by the Ascension is the final crowning of the work of redemption which was prepared for by the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection. In the celebration of festivals that of the Ascension is given a distinguished place: St. Augustine is even inclined to attribute its appointment to an ordinance of the Apostles. In the word 'redemption' is the thought of deliverance effected at great cost and by mighty effort. For 'eternal' see additional note on v. 9.

Four points of contrast have been given: (1) the heavenly tabernacle through which CHRIST passed is contrasted with the place made with hands; (2) the entirely efficacious sacrifice which He presents is contrasted with the blood of animals; (3) the finality and uniqueness of His entrance within the Presence is contrasted with the repeated entrances of high priests into the typical 'Holy of holies'; (4) the eternity of the

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of 13  
a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled,

redemption He has procured is contrasted with the temporary and external purification of Levitical sacrifices.

**Now the writer proceeds to develop the truth of (2) and to add further considerations 13-28. The efficacy of Christ's blood to impart inward purification and to ratify the new covenant, is illustrated by the earthly law of inheritance (15-17) and the Mosaic ritual (18-22).**

**13. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer.** Ceremonial purification, as far as it went, was effective: it did remove the bar to admission to the privileges of Levitical worship. Two illustrations are given which bear witness to the fact that men live in a world of sin and death. The sacrifices of the Day of Atonement which speak of the fact of sin have been referred to in the preceding verse; a significant addition is now made: 'the ashes of an heifer.' These were used for the cleansing of those who had been defiled by contact with a dead body. A thing from which the life was gone was regarded as unclean, and contact with it excluded both from the worship of God and from fellowship with men. (See Num. xix). Among Hindus the relations of one who has died as well as those who have actually touched the dead body must undergo purification.

**sprinkling them that have been defiled.** The word for

## 14 sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh : how much

'to defile' means 'to make common.' The defiled were those who had been temporarily made as though they were not of God's consecrated people, but were outside among the common mass of men.

**sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh.** The process does result in an external purification which readmits to the fellowship of the consecrated. For the contrast between 'sanctify' and 'cleanse' (see note on v. 14).

**14. how much more shall the blood of Christ.** Now come the reasons for the superior efficacy of the blood of CHRIST.

**who through the eternal Spirit.** In the Greek there is no article: it is 'through eternal spirit.' The spirit of Him who offered Himself is eternal. This eternal spirit is the Divine nature of CHRIST, with the Divine Will as its centre. The writer wishes to point out that the efficacy of CHRIST'S sacrifice was primarily due to its being a Divine act. CHRIST on the cross was God as well as man: it was in virtue of His Deity that He was priest as well as sacrifice. St. Cyril asks: 'What virtue has a mere man's blood which a goat's has not?' The blood is not the blood of a mere man, but of one who offered His life as man through the Divine Will that was in Him, the human will consenting and co-operating. 'The eternal spirit' has been interpreted of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. The absence of the article seems to forbid this, nor does it give so rich a meaning, though it would be true to say that the Holy Spirit which filled CHRIST'S human

more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto nature without measure co-operated with Him in the sacrifice.

**offered Himself.** The word ' offered ' here covers the whole sacrificial action of CHRIST, both His action as offerer and victim, and His action as priest in presenting the Sacrifice. The first parts of the typical sacrifices were performed by the offerer, who, after presenting the offering and identifying himself with it by the laying on of his hands, slew it. Then began the action of the priest, who had previously examined the victim to see that it was without blemish. He carried the blood before God and presented it. By His incarnation and identification of Himself with the human race and by His surrender of Himself to death CHRIST fulfilled the offerer's part of the sacrifice ; in His case offerer and victim were one. The cross was not the altar but simply the instrument by which the Victim was slain. The priestly action of CHRIST began when He entered heaven and presented His Blood before God : the altar is in heaven (Rev. viii. 3 ; ix. 13).

**without blemish.** This is the technical word used of a victim passed for sacrifice. Three times was CHRIST the Victim sealed from on high as ' without blemish ' ; at His Baptism (St. Matt. iii. 17), at His Transfiguration (St. Matt. xvii. 5), and immediately before His Passion (St. John xii. 28). The common knowledge of men also assented to the Divine judgement (St. Matt. xxvii. 24 ; St. Luke xxiii. 14, 41. See note on ii. 9).

God, cleanse <sup>a</sup> your conscience from  
 dead works to serve the living God?  
 And for this cause he is the

**cleanse your conscience.** The operation is inward; it touches the centre of real life, and does not merely remove a ceremonial obstacle. It relieves of the sense of guilt, and so is able to impart the power of growth into holiness. The truth has now become personal: it is 'your conscience.' In verse 13 the word is 'sanctify,' which expresses the idea of external restoration to a religious society; here the word is changed to 'cleanse,' which expresses the idea of personal restoration and the renewal of the sources of character.

**from dead works.** It is not the touch of a dead body that really defiles, but the doing of dead works (see note on vi. 1).

**to serve the living God.** The conscience is cleansed to render the forgiven and renewed man capable of service in the true sanctuary. The epithet 'living' has special force here, where the thought is of God renewing the inward life.

**15. And for this cause.** Because the blood of CHRIST has this inward efficacy, and this inward efficacy is a *new* thing, it follows that it is a new kind of covenant which is mediated. From the thought of CHRIST as the fulfiller of Aaron's office we pass to the thought of His fulfilment of Moses' office.

**that a death having taken place . . . first covenant.** But there were sins under the old covenant from which

mediator of a new <sup>9</sup> covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first <sup>9</sup> covenant, they

<sup>9</sup>The Greek word here used signifies both covenant and testament.

men had not been redeemed. The efficacy of CHRIST'S death reaches and covers them. It is 'redemption from the transgressions'. It is not merely from the consequences of the transgressions, for the sin a man commits becomes incorporated with himself: he is to be redeemed from the sin itself.

**that they that have been called.** Those who passed away before the Incarnation are here included in the call: the call of Abraham was the call of Abraham's seed, and it was a call not merely to a temporary inheritance but an eternal. The purpose of the writer is to unite the present with the past, the Christian Hebrews with their fathers (cp. xi. 40), and the Hebrews with those of Gentile birth.

The word for 'called' is that used by our Lord in St. Matt. xxii. 3, 4, 8; St. Luke xiv. 24. The Greek tense lays the stress on the fact that the called have passed into a certain state. A man who has become a partaker of a heavenly calling (cp. iii. 1) can never again be as though he had not received it. So men who have heard the message of the Gospel, though they reject it, can never again be in the same state as though they had not heard.

**may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.** The newness of the covenant consists in this that the

<sup>10</sup> The Greek word here used signifies both *covenant* and *testament*. that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a <sup>10</sup> testament is,

inheritance promised is eternal. The old covenant promised an inheritance but only a temporary one. Behind that covenant was the promise to Abraham which no temporary inheritance could fulfil (See note on vi. 15).

The truths involved in the death that has taken place are now drawn out. The thought of the death of the Messiah was naturally repugnant to the Hebrews, and thus it was especially important to lay stress upon the meaning, purpose and necessity of that death. It has been shewn to be necessary for 'the redemption of the transgressions;' it is now to be shewn that it ratifies the covenant which gives an eternal inheritance. This latter truth is illustrated by what happens in the case of a 'covenant' when it takes the particular form of a 'will' by which an earthly inheritance passes to an inheritor. This can only happen on the death of him who made the 'covenant' or 'will'. It is difficult to reproduce the force of the illustration in an English translation because there is no one word which is used in the sense of both 'covenant' and 'will'. 'Testament' is the nearest: see additional note on vii. 22. It is true that the Hebrews did not use 'wills' until they came into contact with the Romans, but at the time of the Epistle they were familiar enough with them. In the same way it has been intercourse with the British that has familiarized Hindus with the practice of making

there must of necessity <sup>11</sup> be the death of him that made it. For a <sup>12</sup> testament is of force <sup>13</sup> where there hath been death: <sup>14</sup> for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth?

<sup>11</sup> Gr. *be brought.*

<sup>12</sup> The Greek word here used signifies both *covenant* and *testament.* 16 17

<sup>13</sup> Gr. *over the dead.*

<sup>14</sup> Or, *for it doth never . . . liveth.*

wills and though not strictly of their own custom an illustration from the making of a will would be forcible enough with them now. If, as has been strongly urged, the word cannot suddenly be used with a new meaning, then 'the death of him that made it' must mean either the offer to forfeit life should the covenant be violated, or the slaying of a victim as the representative of the covenanter to signify that as he who is dead cannot undo his deed, so the covenant stands unchangeable. But both of these interpretations seem to have to be forced upon the passage.

**16. there must of necessity be the death of him that made it.** The literal translation is 'the death of him that made it must needs be brought.' No one can succeed to an inheritance until the authorities have been satisfied that the man who has thus disposed of his property is dead.

**17. where there hath been death.** The literal translation is 'upon dead things' or 'persons.' The phrase is of wide scope so as to include more than one kind of *διαθήκη* and more than one kind of death. Exactly



**18** Wherefore even the first *covenant* hath not been  
**19** dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the

the same kind of phrase is used in the Septuagint of Lev. xxi. 5 to signify 'should there be a death.'

**doth it ever avail, etc.** The words have a simple natural meaning if the writer is using the special sense of *διαθήκη* to illustrate the wider. A will is not effective in the lifetime of its maker; he may either alter it or destroy it. But when he is dead the will stands.

**18. Wherefore even the first . . . without blood.** If this be true of that 'disposition' by which a man enters on an earthly inheritance, it was also true of that by which Israel of old entered upon its inheritance, even though that inheritance could never satisfy the deeper needs of men. Instead of saying 'without a death' the writer says 'without blood.' Death may be natural, but 'blood' implies an inflicted death.

**19. For when every commandment, etc.** (See Exod. xxiv). It was after the solemn declaration of the Ten Commandments and other rules of life that the Covenant was inaugurated. The people expressed their acceptance by saying 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.'

**he took the blood of the calves, etc.** Some of the details, such as 'water and scarlet wool and hyssop,' are not mentioned in Exod. xxiv. nor are the goats spoken of: this latter addition is significant for the goat was always a sin offering. Here as continually the writer

people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people, saying, This is the **20**

does not regard himself as tied to the letter of the Old Testament; he uses it freely, giving its sense rather than its words and adding to its narrative details that were traditionally known, and which served to illustrate the sacrifice of CHRIST. The water is mentioned in view of St. John xix. 34. Compare the symbolical use St. John makes of it in 1 St. John v. 6.

**sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people.** The blood of the sacrifice was divided into two parts, one of which was sprinkled on that which represented the divine side of the covenant and the other on the human side. The people accepted the terms of the covenant, and in virtue of their promise of obedience the blood was sprinkled on them; thus they became incorporated into the consecrated body. See the fulfilment of the sprinkling in St. Peter i.1 'Elect . . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST.' The blood sprinkled signified the cleansing from impurity and the ratification of the terms of the covenant. The 'book itself' is not mentioned in Exod. xxiv. Westcott suggests that though it contained the words of God, yet being outwardly the work of man it also needed the application of the purifying blood:

**20. This is the blood of the covenant.** In Exod. xxiv. it is 'Behold the blood', but familiarity with

<sup>15</sup> The Greek word here used signifies both covenant and testament.

21 blood of the <sup>15</sup> covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner

CHRIST'S words 'This is my blood of the covenant' has no doubt led the author to quote in this form. We might perhaps have expected that it would have been after His death and resurrection that CHRIST would have given to men the blood of the new covenant, but His doing so before His death in time signifies that His death is really timeless; by His surrender of Himself in eternity He is 'the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world', (Rev. xiii. 8; cp. 1 St. Peter i. 19-20). In all ages there was 'a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness' (Zech. xiii. 1), even though the forgiven knew not the source of their forgiveness.

**which God commanded to you-ward.** A divine covenant is not a contract between God and man, but an offer of blessing which God has prescribed shall be received in a certain way, and for which man prepares himself by obedience. God's covenant, therefore, is God's command to man.

**21. Moreover the tabernacle . . . with the blood.** This, again, is not recorded in *Exodus*, but was handed down traditionally. The tabernacle and its furniture being made by sinful human hands needed cleansing: it needed also the sign of the divine ratification and approval of its use for sacred purposes.

with the blood. And according to the law, I may **22** almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.

**22. according to the law.** The constitution which was itself ratified by blood continues the use of blood in the carrying out of its appointed ritual.

**I may almost say, all things.** The 'almost' points to an exception to the general rule, such as may be found in Lev. v. 11.

**apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.** The Greek means 'apart from outpouring of blood.' To 'shed blood' means to kill, but here the thought is primarily not of the killing but of the pouring out of the blood at the foot of the altar, which signified the entire devotion of the life to God. By the surrender of a perfect life there comes deliverance. CHRIST uses the same word at the institution of the Eucharist. 'This is my blood of the covenant which is being out-poured, etc.' (St. Matt. xxvi. 28). The R.V. changed the translation in St. Luke xxii. 20, from 'shed' to 'poured out' but retained 'shed' in St. Matt. xxvi. 28 and St. Mark xiv. 24. Westcott in *Some Lessons of the Revised Version of the New Testament*, p. 90, note, regrets that the force of association was strong enough to prevent the translators from putting 'poured out' in the three places. The word 'remission' is used in its widest sense (cp. St. Luke iv. 18). By the outpouring of life in sacrifice men are delivered from all that enslaves and oppresses them. In one brief sentence the whole secret of human redemption is summed up.

**23** It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better

After illustrating the principle that life must be offered to secure an inheritance and to cleanse from impurity, a return is made to the thought of the supreme and perfect efficacy of the blood of CHRIST.

**23. It was necessary therefore.** If it be the universal law that blood is the only means of purification that law must extend into the eternal sphere.

**the copies of the things in the heavens.** (See note on viii. 5). The dispensations of God are represented as three. In the first men have the copies of the things in the heavens; in the second they have the things themselves sacramentally veiled; in the third they have the heavenly things unveiled, 'face to face.'

**should be cleansed with these.** Instead of 'these' we should have expected 'this', viz: 'blood.' But 'these' probably refers to the continually offered sacrifices as contrasted with the one.

**but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.** How can heavenly things need cleansing? The answer seems to be that they are used by those who need cleansing. We are reminded that in our worship now we are continually handling heavenly things, and defiling them because we are ourselves defiled: but when cleansed ourselves the things we use are cleansed. All this is mystically set forth in Church worship in the censuring of the altar and holy vessels, etc.

sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a **24** holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before

The 'better sacrifices' are all summed up in the one which was perfect in all its parts.

**24. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands.** The 'for' introduces the source of the effectual cleansing of the heavenly things. 'It was not into a hand-made sanctuary that CHRIST entered.' It was also true that in His earthly life He had never entered the Holy of holies of the temple at Jerusalem which was made with hands (cp. St. John ii. 19 and St. Mark xiv. 58).

**like in pattern to the true.** The true is the eternal, but the copy did represent something of the true.

**but into heaven itself,** i.e. the absolute, perfect, eternal self manifestation of God.

**now to appear before the face of God for us.** The thought is not that CHRIST has entered to behold the face of God, but that He has entered that God may behold Him. Eternally God looks on the sacrifice and is well pleased. The 'now' signifies an eternal present: CHRIST perpetually presents Himself as having died and risen again. This presentation is 'for us', i.e. 'on our behalf' not 'instead of us.' He presents Himself that we may be presented in Him. There is no more need of screening as in the presentation of the Levitical high priest (Lev. xvi. 13), for in CHRIST human nature has become utterly pleasing to God.

**25** the face of God for us : nor yet that he should offer himself often ; as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his  
**26** own : else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world : but now once at the

**25. nor yet that he should offer himself often.** It is one continuous, timeless, uninterrupted sacrifice. This is the answer to those Hebrews who felt the lack of the repeated sacrifices of the temple ; repetition is a sign of imperfection. That which is ' now ' cannot be repeated.

**26. else must he often have suffered, etc.** The one sacrifice is preceded by the one passion and death, and that one death, though actually consummated in time, was willed before time (Acts ii. 23) and thus the sacrifice for which it prepared, being timeless, is effective in all time, past, present and future.

**but now.** Here the ' now ' dismisses the mistaken idea of sacrificial repetition, and introduces the actual truth.

**at the end of the ages.** This is what St. Paul described as ' the fulness of time ' (Gal. iv. 4). It is the beginning of the final dispensation however prolonged in duration it may be.

**hath he been manifested.** The sacrifice willed in eternity is manifested in time.

**to put away sin.** (See note on vii. 18). Sin is robbed of its power, for those who share in the sacrifice are set free. The phrase ' expresses the triumphant truths of Rom. viii. in another shape.'

**by the sacrifice of himself.** The ' of himself ' is con-

<sup>16</sup> end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin <sup>17</sup> by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is <sup>18</sup> appointed unto men once to die, and

<sup>16</sup> Or, *consummation.*

<sup>17</sup> Or, *by his sacrifice.* **27**

<sup>18</sup> Gr. *laid up for*

trusted with the 'not his own' of verse 25. There is an abiding power in that one, unique, present sacrifice of Himself continually offered by Himself.

**27-28. The oneness of Christ's offering is illustrated by the oneness of human life and death. As man's death is one, so is Christ's offering through death one. As the issue of man's death is abiding, so is the effect of Christ's offering. Man will be manifested after death for judgement; Christ will be manifested after death as Judge.**

**27. it is appointed unto men once to die.** Death is in store for man as man, but only one death. There is no well nigh endless succession of births and deaths. The doctrine of re-incarnation finds no support in Holy Scripture. Though the usual lot of men is to die once, St. Paul speaks of those who shall be alive at the Second Coming. (1 Thess. iv. 15-17; 1 Cor. xv. 51).

**after this cometh judgement.** The time of this judgement is not defined: it is only said to be 'after' death. But the mention of the second appearance of CHRIST implies that the reference is to the general judgement at the Last Day when after the Resurrection the justice and mercy of God are manifested before all men (St. Matt. xxiv. 31; xxv. 32; Rev. xx. 11-12). The



28 after this *cometh* judgement; so Christ also, having

particular judgement by which men are assigned each to his own place necessarily takes place immediately after death (St. Luke xvi. 22-3; xxiii. 43; Acts i. 25).

**28. So Christ also.** The title 'CHRIST' is used alone, as throughout this chapter. It was as Royal High Priest that He entered into heaven itself; it is also as the High Priest-King that He will be manifested. To St. John on Patmos He appeared vested in priestly garments (Rev. i. 13).

**having been once offered.** He was offered because He offered Himself. The only priest whose dignity was commensurate with such a sacrifice was Himself. The active form of the verb emphasizes His priesthood, the passive His sacrifice. The sacrifice is necessarily 'once' because being perfect it transcends the limitations of time.

**to bear the sins of many.** The phrase is taken from Isa. liii. 12. It is literally 'to carry up the sins.' In the Levitical ritual the sins were metaphorically laid upon the victim (see Lev. iv. 4, 15, 29, etc.) and carried by it to be destroyed in its death: then the life set free through death was offered in sacrifice. So the sins of men who are united to Him by faith and penitence are laid on CHRIST to be destroyed in His death, and through death His life, with theirs purified by union with His, is offered in heaven as an unending sacrifice. It is to be noted that it is not said that CHRIST bore the punishment of sins, but the sins them-

been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall selves; He came not primarily to save men from the penalties of sin but from sin itself, though necessarily He does save men from the supreme penalty of sin, which is separation from God.

'Many' is not in contrast with 'all', as though there were some who were necessarily lost, but it is set over against the One (cp. Rom. v. 15-19). So also in the delivery of the Cup in the institution of the Holy Eucharist: the blood of the One is poured out for 'many' (St. Matt. xxvi. 28; St. Mark xiv. 24).

**shall appear a second time.** As He was visible to the eyes of men in His first appearing, so shall He be visible at the 'second time' (Acts i. 11; Rev. i. 7).

**apart from sin.** The same phrase as in v. 15 but the context shews the meaning to be different here. His second Advent will not be as Saviour: He will not come at the last Day to bear sins (cp. Rev. xxii. 11-12).

**to them that wait for him.** Only the happier aspect of judgement is here spoken of, as in St. John xiv. 3.

**unto salvation.** The final irrevocable attainment of the blessedness for which they were created. Nothing is here said of the lot of those who wilfully reject CHRIST, for the truth to be emphasized is that of the efficacy and eternal validity of the One Sacrifice for those who partake of it. (See note on i. 14.)

It would seem as though the writer had here concluded his argument, and had for a space laid down his pen. He has set forth the one eternally valid and

appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.

eternally efficacious sacrifice offered by the one unchanging deathless priest, and contrasted it with the sacrifices continually repeated by priests that continually change and die. But so ardent is his desire to make the teaching of the eternal priesthood and sacrifice unmistakably clear that he recapitulates in new words the truths he has already urged.

## CHAPTER X

FOR the law having a shadow of the good *things* to come, not the very image of the things,

(1) The transitoriness and inefficacy of sacrifices continually repeated are compared with the offering which is once for all (1-10). (2) The temporary priests on earth are compared with the true priest in heaven who reigns as King (11-14). (3) The old covenant is contrasted with the new with its promise of inward renewal and forgiveness (15-18).

**1-10. The transitoriness and inefficacy of sacrifices continually repeated compared with the offering that is once for all.**

1. For. 'For' does not connect the coming argument with the preceding words, but resumes the whole subject.

**the law having a shadow of the good things to come.** The 'law' here stands for the whole Levitical system, as in vii. 19, etc.

As a painter draws an outline or sketch which shews something—and accurately as far as it goes—of what the finished work will be, so the Levitical system provided accurate though faint indications of what the future blessings would be. St. Paul in Col. ii. 17 contrasts the shadow with the substance using the same word for 'shadow' as is used here, though here the illustration is differently worked out. From the standpoint of those who lived under the law the 'good things'

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read it can.

<sup>1</sup> they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that

were yet to come : to those who live in the new dispensation they are already come ; they are only still to come in the sense that they are not yet openly manifested, but are sacramentally veiled: the final stage will be when they are actually experienced ' face to face ' in heaven.

**not the very image of the things.** The outline filled in with form and colour becomes ' the very image '. It is one of the words chosen by St. Paul to express the relation of CHRIST to the Father : He is the image of the invisible God (Col. i. 15), really and actually God manifest through the veil of human nature. The word translated ' things ' means the actual reality as it is in itself. The immediate experience of the actual divine reality is the third and heavenly stage. The three stages of shadow, very image, and actuality may be illustrated in numerous ways by the ordinances of the Levitical system, the blessings of the Christian Church, and the final fruition in heaven. For instance, the ' shadow ' of the ' Bread of Life ' is the shewbread : the ' very image ' is the Eucharist : the actuality is open fellowship with CHRIST in heaven, ' the Marriage Supper of the Lamb ' (Rev. xix. 9.)

**they can never with the same sacrifices year by year.** The fact of continual repetition argues the ineffectiveness of the yearly round of sacrifices. An effective sacrifice is one which abides and thus provides the potential means of fellowship with God without any intermission.

draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased<sup>2</sup> to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more

**which they offer continually make perfect them that draw nigh.** The comma is better placed after 'offer': such sacrifices cannot make perfect for ever the worshipper. The phrase translated 'continually' is peculiar to this Epistle, and is used by the writer of that which is continual not in time but in eternity. Verse 14 makes it almost certain that 'continually' is to be taken with 'make perfect', for there the same verb is repeated with the same phrase: 'He hath perfected for ever.' The repeated sacrifices can give that kind of external consecration which removes the bar to entrance into the earthly sanctuary, but they cannot give that inward consecration which is 'for ever', effecting a relation with God in eternity. For 'draw near' see note on iv. 16.

**2. else would they not have ceased to be offered.** The answer expected is 'yes, they would have ceased, because an abiding sacrifice makes repetition superfluous.'

**having been once cleansed.** The essential characteristic of the true sacrifice is that it can establish an eternal relation once for all. There is one baptism for the remission of sins, admitting to fellowship with the one sacrifice and thus creating a new and permanent relationship (see Acts xxii. 16). Baptism cannot be repeated: there can be but one spiritual birth as there is but one natural birth: once a child of God, always a child of God even though every privilege of sonship should have been flung away.

**3** conscience of sins? But in those *sacrifices* there is  
**4** a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it

would have had no more conscience of sins, i.e. the sins of the past being actually and really forgiven need not come into the consciousness; they need not be remembered and confessed again. It does not mean that those who have become members of CHRIST by regeneration are necessarily sinless, though as long as they hold to their union they are incapable of deadly sin (see 1 St. John v. 18). Should they fall, the one sacrifice abides and through true penitence they may be restored to the privileges of their state of redemption.

**3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins.** The sacrifices brought the sins before God not as forgiven but as still pleading for forgiveness and this went on year after year. The one sacrifice is a continual remembrance before God of the remission of sins. In the institution of the Eucharist the word for 'remembrance' is the same as here. In the repeated sacrifices there was 'remembrance' of sins unforgiven; in the one sacrifice, being a memorial before God of redemption, of sins forgiven. Though the word 'remembrance' might be used of recalling to human recollection, in both cases in which it is used in the Pentateuch (Lev. xxiv. 7; Num. x. 10), it signifies a memorial before God, and there can be no doubt that where it occurs in other places besides this in the New Testament (St. Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25) it could carry no other meaning to the Hebrew reader.

**4. For it is impossible that the blood, etc.** It made no

is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh 5 into the world, he saith,

difference whether one or a thousand such animals were offered: there was nothing in the blood of an irrational creature which could effect the spiritual redemption of a sinful man; that could only be by his sharing in the offering of a perfect human life. The limit to what 'the blood of bulls and goats' could do has already been laid down in ix. 13.

**5. Wherefore,** i.e. because of the futility of animal sacrifice in the respect just mentioned.

**when He cometh into the world.** Thus is described the Incarnation of Him whose pre-existence is assumed. A particular moment of time is not necessarily defined, but the eternal will and counsel of the Son to become incarnate are expressed. To come into the world is to submit to the conditions of creaturely existence as man.

**he saith.** Thus is described in human terms the unspeakable mystic intercourse between the Eternal Word and the Fount of Godhead. It is 'he saith' not 'he said' both because it is the utterance of Him whose will to come is 'in the beginning' before time was, and also because the Incarnation ever abides as an eternal fact.

The quotation which follows is from Ps. xl. 6-8. It is the third great quotation by which the writer establishes one of his main positions that in the Old Testament itself is to be found the proof that the Levitical system was to be superseded: in Ps. cx. a superior priesthood is shewn to be indicated; in Jer.



- Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,  
 But a body didst thou prepare for me ;  
 6 In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou  
 hadst no pleasure :

xxx. a superior covenant ; and now in Ps. xl. a superior sacrifice.

The words originally proceeding from the poet, possibly David himself, go far beyond what was true of the devotion of any man however saintly ; in the fullness of their meaning they are only true of CHRIST, and so are rightly treated as His utterance : see note on ii. 12. That sacrifices in themselves had no spiritual value or power was the not uncommon teaching of the prophets, such as Samuel, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, but this passage goes further even than this and distinctly declares that the true sacrifice is of the will surrendered in perfect obedience even unto death.

**Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not.** The words with the addition of those in v. 6, ' whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin,' are chosen so as to cover all the Levitical offerings : whether they were of animals or of fruits of the earth, whether they were eucharistic or expiatory, all alike were incapable of effecting the true object of sacrifice. The same truth is expressed in Ps. li. 16.

**But a body didst thou prepare for me.** The literal translation of the Hebrew is ' ears hast thou dug out for me,' which seems to mean ' thou hast made me able to hear and obey'. But the writer quotes the Septuagint version. The inspired change by the Septuagint trans-

Then said I, Lo, I am come  
(In the roll of the book it is written of me)  
To do thy will, O God.

7

lators to 'But a body didst thou prepare for me' is a clear foreshadowing of the Incarnation with its fruit of the mystical Body of CHRIST. Human nature is to offer a perfectly willing sacrifice by the surrender of all its faculties to the obedience of God. The body prepared is first fashioned by the Holy Ghost of the substance of the Virgin Mary, and after the Resurrection and Ascension draws into union with itself innumerable human beings and thus becomes the mystical body (Eph. i. 22-3; iv. 15-16).

**7. Then said I, Lo, I am come.** It is 'I am come', not 'I shall come.' As in v. 5 the eternal purpose, which transcends time and yet is embodied in the events of time, is expressed by the present.

**In the roll of the book it is written of me.** What is meant by 'the roll of the book?' Probably there is no reference to any particular passage; but the Psalmist sets forth entire obedience to God as the one essential prescription of the Law. Interpreted as the utterance of CHRIST 'the roll of the book' is that eternal purpose of God which is gradually unrolled in history.

**To do thy will, O God.** Within that purpose is the entire obedience of man to God's will by which alone he can attain to blessedness. The will of God was not fully done in human nature until the Divine Voice could say: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'

8 Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy  
 9 will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. <sup>9</sup> By which will  
 10 <sup>9</sup> Or, *In* we have been sanctified through the

8. **Saying above, Sacrifice, etc.** We should have expected 'having said above', but the writer's thought is not concerned with order in time but with the design of the eternal purpose. The argument is not that the Levitical system of sacrifice was tried, found wanting, and consequently abolished, but by the eternal counsel of God it was to give place to the sacrifice of perfect human obedience.

9. **He taketh away the first . . . the second.** It is not the first 'will' (v. 10) and the second 'will'; God's will is eternally one, and includes 'the first' and 'the second'. 'The first' is the Levitical system of sacrifice and 'the second' is the free self-oblation of perfect humanity. The word 'taketh away' is a very strong one and is often used of destroying or killing. There is no opposition to our Lord's teaching, 'I came not to destroy but to fulfil' (St. Matt. v. 17). The seed sown is destroyed as a seed; it dies (St. John xii. 24), but it is fulfilled in the perfect plant.

10. **By which will we have been sanctified.** The Greek is '*in* which will.' God's people are included

offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

in His eternal will, and His will is embodied in them (1 Thess. iv. 3). To be in the will of God by filial surrender is equivalent to being in CHRIST, for CHRIST is the supreme expression of the will of God.

**through the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all.** The way of sanctification is through the 'once for all offering' of Him who is JESUS, Very Man; who is CHRIST, true Priest and King. The 'once for all offering' is 'before the foundation of the world'; it is enacted historically in time; it is in the eternal now of the heavenly sphere. The body is the wholeness of the human nature which He eternally willed to take, which gathers redeemed humanity into itself; see note on v. 5.

The 'once for all' qualifies the whole of verse 10. From the eternal standpoint the 'once for all offering' effects a 'once for all' sanctification. God sees the perfect fruit apart from the process of development in time. From the temporal standpoint, as the offering of the Body is in a time series of historical events culminating in the Ascension, so also is the sanctification of the member of CHRIST'S Body gradually worked out in the successive experiences of time. We get the two conceptions together in verse 14: there is the 'for ever' perfection through the once for all offering, but it is also 'them that are being sanctified.'

**11-14. The temporary priests on earth are compared with the true priest in heaven who reigns as king.**

- 11 <sup>3</sup>Some <sup>o</sup>ancient authorities read *high priest*. And every <sup>3</sup>priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins:
- 12 but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for

**11. And every priest indeed standeth, etc.** Sacrifices which have to be repeated are confessedly ineffectual. Emphasis is laid upon 'standeth'. No priest was allowed to sit in the Holy place; he could only sit outside it. To have sat in the sanctuary would have implied a permanent and unchanging place within it, but in the offering of repeated sacrifices there is continual change. A priest is at one time in the sanctuary, at another time outside it. When one sacrifice is finished another has to be begun.

**12. but he . . . sat down.** (Cp. i. 2). Contrasted with the many priests who stand is the one priest who sat down. The image of the session expresses the permanent eternal character of the Priesthood of one who is also King. He is unchangeably within the sanctuary with a sacrifice which is for ever. That the priest is represented as sitting does not signify that his priestly ministry of offering has ceased; this would contradict the teaching of the rest of the Epistle (see vii. 24-5; viii. 1-3); but that His presence 'in heaven itself' is unchanging. The Greek words for 'offered' and 'sat down' represent simultaneous actions, one being the aorist participle and the other the aorist indicative. As CHRIST'S session in heaven is continuous so also is

4 sins for ever, sat down on the right  
 hand of God: from henceforth ex-  
 pecting till his enemies be made the  
 footstool of his feet. For by one offering he hath **14**

4 Or, *sins,*  
*for ever sat* **13**  
*down, etc.*

His sacrifice: 'offering one sacrifice for ever He sat.'  
 The phrase translated 'for ever' comes between 'offer-  
 ing' and 'sat'. It might equally mean 'offering for  
 ever', and 'sat for ever', there is little doubt that this  
 skilful arrangement of the words was intended to suggest  
 that 'continuousness' was the mark both of the offering  
 and the session. Both His state in heaven and His sac-  
 rifice are unchanging. The A.V. 'after he had offered'  
 is misleading, and the R.V. 'when he had offered' may  
 be misunderstood. See Introduction, Explanatory Note.  
 For 'right hand of God' see note on i. 13.

**13. from henceforth expecting, etc.** See note on i. 13  
 where the same quotation from Ps. cx. is also made.  
 In this verse and the following we have the combination  
 of the conception of the eternal order with that of the  
 temporal. Within the eternal order CHRIST reigns  
 triumphantly; within the temporal order the process of  
 conquest is going on.

**14. For by one offering, etc.** Within the eternal order  
 the sanctification of the faithful is perfect: in the  
 temporal order it is a gradual process of 'from strength  
 to strength'. The rendering 'that are sanctified' dis-  
 guises the gradualness of the process: the participle is  
 a temporal present, 'them that are being sanctified',  
 one after another from time to time.

15 perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And the Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us: for after he hath said,

16 This is the <sup>5</sup> covenant that <sup>6</sup> I will make with them  
 After those days, saith the Lord;  
 I will put my laws on their heart,  
 And upon their mind also will I write them;

<sup>5</sup> Or, *testament*

<sup>6</sup> Gr. *I will covenant.*

*then saith he,*

15-18. The old covenant is contrasted with the new with its promise of inward renewal and forgiveness.

15. And the Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us. They have heard CHRIST speaking in Ps. xl. and testifying to the passing away of the Levitical system and to the substitution of the sacrifice which consists in the free self-oblation of humanity. Now they are to hear the Holy Ghost bearing witness to the inauguration of the new Covenant which is involved in this change. This is the only place in the Epistle in which the Holy Ghost is said to be a witness; (cp. i. St. John v. 6-7.) Hitherto He has been described as 'speaking' and 'signifying' in the Scriptures. The 'us' denotes those who hold the Christian faith.

16. This is the covenant, etc. (Cp. viii. 8-12.) See additional note iii. 7 on the change made in the words of the quotation here.

then saith he. These words are not in the Greek but their insertion is necessary to make the writer's meaning

And their sins and their iniquities will I remember **17**  
no more.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more **18**  
offering for sin.

clear. Under the new Covenant the indispensable condition of forgiveness is that inward and spiritual change which is described as the law being in the heart and mind. Letter becomes spirit: external conformity becomes inward character.

**17. And their sins and their iniquities, etc.** In x. 3 it is said that man brings his sins to God's memory as unforgiven. Here it is promised that God will blot them out of His memory as though they had not been. It is sometimes asked whether in heaven we shall retain the recollection of sins committed in earthly life. The answer may be: Can man in perfect union with God remember what God Himself has willed to forget?

**18. Now where remission of these is, etc.** See note on ix. 22. In the one abiding sacrifice continually offered in heaven there is the potency of remission of sins, i.e. of deliverance from all that sin effects—guilt, estrangement from God, corruption of the nature found in the weakened will, the darkened mind, the polluted heart and the confusion of the conscience. With this potency of remission belonging to him in virtue of the one sacrifice which never passes, the Christian has no need of any more Levitical offering for sin. The surrender of the old ritual is gain and not loss. It is folly to desire the 'shadow' when the 'very image' is at



hand. It would be like desiring a letter when there is the living voice or seeking a picture when the friend himself is present.

The great exposition of the high priesthood of CHRIST and His heavenly ministry, which began at vii. 1, is now complete. Unlike the earlier doctrinal parts it has been uninterrupted by exhortations and warnings. From the beginning of the Epistle the one theme has been the superiority of the Christian Covenant as demonstrated by the unapproachable and unique dignity of its Mediator. Angels are but worshipping spirits; He is the Supreme Being whom they worship, whose directions they obey. Moses and Joshua were but servants; He is the Son whom they serve. The Levitical high priest was a temporary minister, his service was in an earthly sanctuary, his sacrifices were many and ineffective; the true high priest is eternal, His service is in heaven, His sacrifice is one and eternally efficacious.

The rest of the Epistle consists in the practical application of this lofty teaching, for Christian life is rooted in Christian doctrine. The Epistle which bristles with dogma bristles also with calls to duty. First there is the summons to respond to privilege (19-25); this is followed by another warning as to the terrible penalty of apostasy (26-31). Then comes encouragement to persevere based on the memory of response to grace in the past (32-9).

The thought of their own brighter past leads to that of the triumphs of faith in their spiritual ancestors (xi), who are still their spiritual associates and from whom the lessons of the methods of the divine discipline may

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into **19**

be learned (xii. 1-14). The Epistle concludes with a further intermingling of exhortation with warning (xii. 14-29), and a kind of postscript in which are practical instructions and personal notices (xiii).

**19-25. The summons to respond to privilege.**

This section may be compared with iv. 14-16. In both the exhortation is based upon the truth of CHRIST'S priesthood, but the theme having now been more fully developed the exhortation is also fuller. 'Boldness' is proved to be more amply justified.

**19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness.** The name by which he addresses them is appropriate. They are brethren, blood relations, for they enter 'in the blood of JESUS'. They have 'boldness' because theirs is the confidence of sons (see note on iii. 6) and of sons who are forgiven.

**to enter into the holy place.** It is literally 'unto the entrance,' i.e. to use the entrance. To use the entrance into the Holy place was an exclusively priestly privilege; it belongs now to all the brethren in virtue of their membership of a priestly Body. See note on ix. 8. The 'Holy place' as in ix. 12 is the transcendent counterpart of the Holy of holies and signifies the very Presence of God. Now the brethren enter sacramentally; hereafter they shall have the open vision (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

**by the blood of Jesus.** Literally 'in the blood of JESUS' 'By' or 'with' or 'through' do not convey fully

**20** the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way,

the significance of 'in'; it combines the force of the three. In ix. 25 it is translated 'with': 'entereth . . . with blood not his own'. The 'brethren' have appropriated the life; it has become truly their own; they are in the life and the life is in them. It is a truly human life bestowed through death, so it is described as 'the blood of JESUS'. The human name alone is used.

**20. by the way which he dedicated . . . . . his flesh.** What is this way, which is new and living, by which we can pass through the veil? The answer is that it is His flesh. It is because the Word was made flesh that He has become the Way (St. John xiv. 6), that men may become His members, and 'in His blood' pass into the very Presence of God. What is the veil through which they pass? The veil is all that keeps men from the true knowledge of God and shuts off access to Him.

The Way is the Way of the Incarnation and the Sacrifice that it includes. It is new because though dedicated in eternity it is new in time, and remains ever fresh in efficacy. It is living, for He ever liveth to impart life. To tread the ways of earth is to grow wearier each step; to walk in CHRIST, the Way, is continually to receive new supplies of life.

This interpretation requires that the comma after 'way' be deleted. If the comma is left, as in the R.V., the veil is then taken to mean 'his flesh'. In this case the flesh stands for all those limitations of existence

through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and **21** *having* a great priest over the house of God; let us **22**

under human conditions which seem to veil His Godhead—limitations which must be cast off before men have God fully made known to them. But in the New Testament the human nature of CHRIST is never regarded as hiding God from men but rather as the means of His manifestation. Nor is the death of Christ regarded as the rending of the veil in the sense that by it He was freed from the limitations of a body and so was able to manifest His Godhead. On the contrary after His resurrection He asks His disciples to recognize Him through the medium of His body. St. Luke xxiv. 39-40. 'See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself'. (Cp. St. John xx. 27).

**21. and having a great priest.** There is a change here: in iv. 14 it is 'having a great high priest'. The emphasis is laid now not upon His supremacy over all other priests, but upon His priesthood as priesthood. There is but one priest in God's household and He that one. 'Great' is not a synonym for 'high' but is used as in iv. 14.

**over the house of God.** The house is the whole 'family in heaven and on earth' (Eph. iii. 15) for the Church is one whether on this side or that, and even now we who are on this side are in heavenly places: (Eph. i. 3; ii. 6).

**22. let us draw near.** See note on iv. 16.

**with a true heart in fulness of faith,** i.e. with entire sincerity and unrestricted confidence. Sincerity is born

<sup>7</sup> Or, *full assurance* draw near with a true heart in <sup>7</sup>fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled

of penitence. For the heart to be true it must be cleansed from all forms of duplicity and untruth. So the writer naturally goes on

**having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.**

Conscious, as we must be, of sin and imperfection in our lives and characters, we may approach as men who are sure both of forgiveness and of the potency of an inward renewal, for it is our hearts and not merely our bodies or clothes which receive the application of the Blood of JESUS. See notes on ix. 14 and ix. 19. The words which follow shew that the writer is thinking of the Christian sacraments. He is setting forth the 'very image' of which the Levitical rites were the 'shadow.' (See Exod. xxix. 21; Lev. viii. 30). The application of the Blood of which he is thinking here is in the Eucharist.

**and our body washed with pure water.** (Exod. xxix. 4).

The Levitical priests could not enter the holy place until they had been washed with water: the laver of brass made from the offerings of the women's metal mirrors stood at the door. The Christian enters the Presence Chamber of God not in virtue of His own merit but because God has graciously washed him in Baptism. The water is pure because it has been consecrated for this high purpose. Confidence thus resting not on their own feelings but on the security of definite divine acts in the Eucharist and Baptism which they themselves have undoubtedly shared, acts which bring the Incarnation and

from an evil <sup>8</sup> conscience, and our body washed with pure water: let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that

<sup>8</sup> Or, *conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast* 23

Priesthood of CHRIST within their own experience, he can go on to exhort them to 'hold fast' and to respond to the great goodness of God to them. This is always the order in the New Testament: the Christian is not set to win his inheritance by his own efforts, but having already a heavenly inheritance he is to respond to the call of his great position. It is because he has, that he is to hold fast.

**23. let us hold fast the confession of our hope.** (Cp. iv. 14). The 'confession' is the open promise of faith and duty made at the time of baptism. The confession is one of hope because though the Christian passes at once into the Kingdom and participates in heavenly blessings, yet he lives in the anticipation of the unveiling in full of those divine glories which are now revealed by the Spirit (1. Cor. ii. 9-10).

**that it waver not.** To surrender one item of hope is to allow the baptismal confession to waver.

**he is faithful that promised.** Because God is faithful men must respond by faithfulness; that God may be utterly relied upon to fulfill His promises is a stimulus to man to fulfill his. This truth is again appealed to in xi. 11, and by St. Paul in 1. Cor. i. 9; x. 13 and 1. Thess. v. 24. We get the same thought in respect of the virtue of love in 1 St. John iv. 19.

**24** promised : and let us consider one another to pro-  
**25** voke unto love and good works ; not forsaking the

**24. let us consider one another.** The same word is used in iii. 1 of concentration of thought on the Apostle and High Priest JESUS. He who loves God loves his brother also ; he who considers JESUS considers also His members. True religion cannot be lived in solitude. Life cannot rightly be divided into periods in one of which a man performs the duty of *ghrihastha* (householder) and in another lives as a *vanaprastha* (hermit). The solitary contemplation of God is good, but it ceases to be good unless out of it springs as its necessary fruit the contemplation of one another.

**to provoke unto love and good works.** They are to sharpen the edge of each other's love by manifesting love ; they are to incite to noble deeds by doing noble deeds. The word 'provoke' is generally used in a bad sense as in Acts xv. 39. It may be that the writer is delicately rebuking another kind of provocation which has been going on among them. People so often consider one another to find matter for criticism and censure ; let them consider one another to find matter for loving kindness.

The mention of love completes the triad of Christian virtues in the order in which St. Paul puts them 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The fullness of faith, the confession of hope and the provocation of love are to be energetic in Christian lives.

**25. not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.** The indispensable means of cultivating Christian fellow-

assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

ship and renewing Christian strength is by communion with Christ and one another. Thus the first disciples met either daily (Acts ii. 46) or weekly (Acts xx. 7) to 'break bread'. To such 'assembling together' Christ has attached the promise of His special presence (St. Matt. xviii. 20). The neglect of the opportunity of such blessing may be the prelude to indifference leading to apostasy. The strong word 'forsaking' implies an abandonment of duty by which injury is done not only to the individual deserter but to the whole community.

This insistence on the duty of public as well as private worship is of special value in India where among the Hindus worship is almost solely regarded as an individual and not a social act. Hindus frequently express surprise at the emphasis laid by Christians on the duty of common prayer.

**but exhorting one another.** See iii. 13. The word combines the thoughts of cheering and consoling. The work of the Holy Ghost is to cheer and console (Acts ix. 31) and He fulfills His office not only in His secret operations within the human spirit but by using those in whom He dwells to cheer and console one another.

**so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.** The swift approach of the crisis of which they had been forewarned by CHRIST made the duty of mutual encouragement the more urgent. 'The day' must be that



**26** For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more

final decisive Day of the close of opportunity for mankind. (1 Cor. iii. 13). All days of divine visitation are true figures of that day. As the critical change in the life of an individual by which he is ushered through death into new conditions is for him 'the day', so also a great change in the history of a people is 'the day'. Possibly there were signs which they could actually see of the coming investment and fall of Jerusalem, a catastrophe which had been used by our Lord as a figure of the final day of revelation. (St. Mark xiii.)

**26-31. Warning as to the terrible penalty of apostasy.**

**26. For.** The mention of the approaching 'Day' naturally leads to the thought of how an apostate will appear in that day.

**if we sin wilfully.** (Cp. iii. 12; vi. 7.) A wilful sin is in a matter in which the will of God has been revealed and men either knowing or having had the opportunity of knowing that will commit the sin consciously and purposely. The present tense of the verb implies further that the sin is habitually persisted in knowingly and deliberately. The writer by saying 'we' humbly includes himself in the number of such possible apostates.

**after that we have received the knowledge of the truth.** This means more than an intellectual apprehension and acceptance of Christian doctrine; it implies an

a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement and a <sup>9</sup>fierceness of fire which shall devour the

<sup>9</sup> Or, *jealousy*

27

interior union with JESUS CHRIST. The word for 'knowledge' signifies that the truth has been made one's own; it is not only known, it is inwardly realized. The Truth is Jesus Christ Himself. To have been baptized into the Truth is to have put on the Truth; to be consciously in the Truth is to be in that state to which the enlightenment of Baptism should lead (cp. Col. i. 6; Titus i. 1.)

**there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.** Literally it is 'no longer for sins there remaineth a sacrifice.' The emphasis is on 'sins' as explained in the preceding words. For sins repented of and renounced the one Sacrifice ever effectually abides; for sins persisted in and unrepented of no sacrifice can be effectual; to persist wilfully in sin is to lose the power of repentance. See additional note on vi. 6. There is a melancholy contrast between this state and the blessing of iv. 9. 'There remaineth (the same word is used) a sabbath-rest for the people of God.'

**27. but a certain fearful expectation of judgement.** Hell begins here. The 'expectation of judgement' is fearful to the apostate who having known CHRIST and having wilfully rejected Him necessarily retains an intellectual knowledge of the truth which from time to time recurring to his memory must awaken terror in his soul.

**a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.** An adaptation of the words of Isa. xxvi. 11. The

**28** adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on *the word of* two or three **29** witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think

margin gives the true meaning, 'jealousy of fire.' God's love is fitly represented by the symbol of fire, for fire which illuminates and purifies and preserves the warmth of life also destroys what is worthless. The fire of divine love is jealous, in that He has a rightful claim to the love and service of those whom He has created and redeemed.

**28. A man . . . two or three witnesses.** (Deut. xvii. 2-7). If under Mosaic law bodily death was the inevitable penalty inflicted without opportunity of appeal for mercy for offences such as murder, adultery, idolatry, disobedience to parents, what must be the punishment of sin immeasurably more heinous? Our Lord teaches us to regard bodily death as a thing insignificant when compared with the injury done to the soul by sin. (St. Matt. xviii. 6).

**29. of how much sorer punishment.** In no other place in the New Testament is this word for punishment used, though the verb is used by St. Paul in Acts xxii. 5; xxvi. 11. It means what is expressed by the word 'retribution.'

**think ye.** Even from their own human point of view is not a sorer retribution just? Does it not seem right to them that God should vindicate His Majesty? It must be remembered that it is their own human point of view that is being urged. There is a kind of instinct in

ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the

human nature which makes men regard exact retribution as satisfying justice. He who wantonly inflicts pain himself deserves the retribution of pain. But this is only the human point of view. It is 'think ye'? It may be from the divine point of view that the only true requital is that which aims at the restoration of the sinner (St. Matt. v. 43-8). Even the Greek word for retributory punishment carries hope in it, for originally it meant to help and was even used of medical succour. Aristotle (Rhetoric i. 10-17) points out the difference between the meanings of the two words for punishment: one (used in St. Matt. xxv. 46) is punishment for the sake of him who has offended, and the other (used here) is for the sake of him who inflicts it that he may be satisfied. But we may believe that Divine Love will only be satisfied when God is 'all in all.' It is especially important in India, where each human life is regarded as itself retribution, to point out that the satisfaction of what from a human point of view may seem to be justice is not the supreme end of the order of the universe as it has been revealed in the Christian Gospel. See additional note on vi. 10.

**who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.** The effect of wilful apostasy is described in language of horror such as is to be found nowhere else in the New Testament. Even the terrible words of vi. 6 fall short of what we have here. First, such apostasy is an insolent outrage against the Father. See St. John v. 23.

blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified,

To honour the Son is to honour the Father, to insult the Son is to insult the Father. It is the eternal Sonship which constitutes Him as the one supreme Mediator and King. To fulfill His office of Mediator He takes human nature and puts Himself in the power of men. The apostate tramples on Him as a worthless thing, even as the infamous Jezebel was trampled on (2 Kings ix. 33) or as the savourless salt is flung out and trodden under foot of men (St. Matt. v. 13). It is not merely an ignorant trampling as of those who carelessly tread under foot the good seed which is the Word of God (St. Luke viii. 5), or of those who know not how precious is the Pearl of great price, as in St. Matt. vii. 6; but it is the deliberate conscious rejection of those who having experienced His love turn against Him with hatred and scorn.

**hath counted the blood . . . an unholy thing.** Secondly such apostasy is an insolent outrage against Jesus Christ whose Blood has consecrated him as a member of a royal priesthood. As the blood of the old covenant consecrated the ear, the hand and the foot of the priest, the ear to listen to the voice of God, the hand to do His will, the foot to walk in His ways (Exod. xxix. 19-20), so 'the Blood of the Covenant' (St. Matt. xxvi. 28; St. Mark xiv. 24) consecrates the Christian to entire devotion to the service of Jesus Christ. The communicant presents himself, his soul and body to the obedience of Him whose Blood has not only touched him but which he has actually received (1 Cor. x. 16). To

<sup>10</sup> an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense.

<sup>10</sup> Gr, *a* 30  
common  
thing.

And again,

renounce this service is to treat 'the precious Blood of Christ' (1 Pet. i. 19) as though it had no special efficacy but were a thing 'common,' as the blood of some guilty criminal.

**done despite unto the Spirit of grace.** Thirdly such apostasy is an insolent outrage against the Holy Spirit whose grace has been experienced. See Zech. xii. 10 whence the phrase, unique in the New Testament, is taken, and where the context is significant.

**30. For we know him that said.** Human instinct has been appealed to: '*think ye?*' Now comes the appeal to knowledge of the Divine character: '*we know him.*'

**Vengeance belongeth . . . his people.** Both citations are adaptations from Deut. xxxii. 35. The first occurs also in the same form in Rom. xii. 19 which shews it to have been a customary adaptation. It is in keeping with what we know of the revealed character of God that His people should be tried by the true test and manifested as they really are. The Greek word translated 'Vengeance' originally means the bringing out of the right, and it is only in its human use that it has become associated with something of malignity. To manifest and maintain the right implies punishment.

**31.** The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**31. It is a fearful thing . . . living God.** It has been truly said that it is a still more fearful thing to fall out of the hands of the living God. To be left to oneself and the society of those who have fallen from God is hell. The hands of God may signify His mighty yet gentle protection (St. Luke xxiii. 46), or His guidance (Ps. cxxxix. 10) or His wise and purifying discipline (2 Sam. xxiv. 14 ; Heb. xii. 7, 11), or the punishment of His love manifested as wrath. The latter is plainly the thought emphasized here. The 'fearful' recalls the 'fearful expectation' of verse 27.

**32-9. Encouragement to perseverance based on the memory of response to grace in the past.**

In accordance with his manner (cp. vi. 9) the writer swiftly turns to brighter and more encouraging thoughts. If he has bidden them look into the abyss in front should they turn from the one true way, he also calls upon them to look on the brighter scenes which lie behind them. After their baptism they were sorely tried but they did not fail. Let them not now lose the reward which is waiting for them. To what 'conflict of sufferings' he refers we cannot know with absolute certainty ; if the letter was written to Jerusalem, possibly it was one of those related in Acts viii. 1. and xii. ; if it was addressed to Hebrews in Rome he probably is recalling the recent cruelties of Nero. The latter seems more likely.

But call to remembrance the former days, in **32** which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a **33** gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. For ye both had compassion on them that **34**

**32. But call to remembrance.** It is always good for converts to regain something of their first love and fervour by recalling their baptism and the strength then given them. They had put grace to the test and found that it did not fail them.

**after ye were enlightened.** See note on vi. 4.

**ye endured a great conflict of sufferings.** They did not give way when they publicly contended, even as athletes do, for a prize. The word for 'conflict' implies a kind of public competition, and this thought is further emphasized by the use of 'gazingstock' in the next verse. Both words are appropriate to the methods of Nero's persecution.

**33. partly . . . ; partly . . . so used.** They manifested a twofold endurance: when they themselves were exposed to public derision and persecution, they did not fail; when others were similarly exposed, they claimed them as their fellows, and ran the risk of openly manifesting sympathy.

**34. For ye both . . . an abiding one.** This endurance made material loss a joy. Whether they expended their goods on their brethren in prison, or whether they were robbed by the rapacity of their persecutors,



<sup>11</sup> Or, *that ye have your own selves for a better possession.*

35 <sup>12</sup> Some ancient authorities read *ye have for yourselves a better possession.*

36 *ye have for yourselves a better possession.*

were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing <sup>11</sup> that <sup>12</sup> ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one. Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, having

they rose to the height of their Lord's beatitude in St. Matt. v. 10-12, were able to obey His behest in St. Matt. vi. 20, and rested on His promise in St. Luke xii. 31-5. The words may be rendered, 'knowing that you had your own selves for a better possession.' By their union with Christ they had renounced the selfish self and so had found the true self, and possessing the true self material possessions became a matter of indifference. This possession of the true self is the true *Yoga*. The A.V. adopting the reading of the oldest of all the manuscripts of the New Testament has 'ye had compassion of me in my bonds.' If this reading be adopted, the writer speaks out of his own experience of persecution and imprisonment.

**35. Cast not away . . . reward.** They are not exhorted to get something which they have not got, nor merely to hold on tight to something which they have, as in iii. 6; but they are not to be so foolish as to fling away as worthless the filial confidence which their past has proved them to have. Even now it carries its own reward.

**36. For ye have need of patience.** The need is conti-

done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.

For yet a very little while,  
He that cometh shall come, and shall  
not tarry.

37

nuous. The work of endurance is not yet finished. No one can say 'I am saved' but only 'I am in a state of salvation' (cp. St. James i. 2-4). Only at the very end can the Christian say, as his Master did, 'It is finished' St. John xix. 30; or as the faithful servant did 'I have finished' 2 Tim. iv. 7.

**having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.** The fullness of what has been promised is awarded at the end. The servant has carried out what His Lord eternally willed should be done by him, and so receives the crown (cp. Rev. ii. 10).

**37. For yet a very little while.** The words of Isaiah in a different connexion come to the writer's mind (Isa. xxvi. 20; xxix 17). Moreover they are almost exactly the same words as those used by our Lord in St. John xiv. 19; xvi. 16.

**He that cometh shall come.** (Hab. ii. 3-4). The Septuagint has changed the Hebrew which is translated 'the vision' into 'He that cometh,' for the vision was that of the coming Redeemer. One of the titles of the Messiah was the Coming One. Though He has come He is still for Christians the Coming One, who comes when they meet in His Name bringing to them the Gift which is Himself. He is the Coming One, for His open manifestation in triumph is still awaited (St. John xiv. 3; St. Mark xiv. 62).

38 <sup>13</sup> Some ancient authorities read *the righteous one.*

<sup>14</sup> Gr. of *shrinking*

39 *back but of faith.*

But <sup>13</sup> my righteous one shall live by faith :

And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him.

But we are not <sup>14</sup> of them that shrink

**38. But my righteous one . . . faith.** Endurance and confidence are the fruit of faith, and faith is the means of life, for faith unites the believer to Him who is the Life. Literally it is 'shall live out of faith.'

**if he shrink back.** The 'he' is 'my righteous one,' who has once drawn his life from faith, who has tasted the good word of God (vi. 5). 'Shrink back' implies that there are enemies in front: should Christ's soldier turn coward when he is ordered to advance?

**my soul hath no pleasure in him.** God rejoices in His works (Ps. civ. 31); most of all He wills to rejoice in the obedience of love of those whom He has created to be His children. His joy in human nature was perfect when He could say. 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased' (St. Matt. iii. 17).

**39. But we are not . . . unto perdition.** Again the writer associates himself with those whom he warns and encourages. 'Perdition' is the negation of all that is meant by salvation and life (St. Matt. vii. 13). Judas was called 'the son of perdition' because salvation and life had once been his and he had flung them away (St. John xvii. 12).

**faith unto the saving of the soul.** The Greek means the winning of the soul for a possession. He who

back unto perdition ; but of them that have faith unto the <sup>15</sup> saving of the soul. *15 Or. gain-  
ing.*

would possess his soul must surrender it to God in faith, and then he wins it. It is the paradox of St. Matt. x. 39 ; St. Mark viii. 35 ; St. Luke ix. 24-25.

Verses 36-39 reiterate the teaching of our Lord when He was preparing His disciples to face tribulation. (See, for example, St. Mark xiii. 13 ; St. Luke xxi. 19, 30-32). National feeling was fervently strong among the Hebrews. But our Lord had warned His disciples that by excommunication they would lose the national fellowship which was intensely precious to them (St. John xvi. 2). To a second generation of Hebrew Christians it may have seemed that separation from the national solemnities with which the history of the nation was intimately bound up was equivalent to the loss of their spiritual ancestry. Excluded from the temple they may not unnaturally have feared that they had no longer any part in Abraham, Moses, Joshua and the saints of old. So for his illustrations of the victory of faith the writer recalls the great names of Hebrew history. Warriors, prophets, martyrs, kings, one and all had won their triumphs by the power of faith. So far from being cut off from them, these are the very men whose faith they are to imitate, with whom they are united in a fellowship of glory (xi. 40).

## CHAPTER XI

1 <sup>1</sup> Or, *the*      Now faith is <sup>1</sup> the assurance of *things*  
*giving sub-*      hoped for, the <sup>2</sup> proving of things not  
*stance to*      seen. For therein the elders had wit-  
2 <sup>2</sup> Or, *test*

### **The triumphs of faith won by their spiritual ancestors.**

1. **Now faith . . . things not seen.** This is not a definition of faith but a description of what it does for the believer. It makes him confident that the objects of his hope are real and not imaginary; it convinces him of those spiritual realities of which formerly he had the shadow and now has the sacrament or very image. But the word used for 'assurance', which occurs three times in this Epistle (see notes on i. 3, and iii. 14), signifies even more than this: it conveys the thought that the Christian's faith and the Divine fact may be treated as identical. Faith is not only the certainty that the object exists but it is the present possession of that object. Already the believer possesses that which underlies the visible.

2. **For therein the elders had witness borne to them.** 'Therein', that is, because they lived in the power of faith. The history of their religion was the story of their faith: it was memorable for no other reason.

3. This verse comes unexpectedly: after the mention of the elders we naturally look at once for the

ness borne to them. By faith we understand that the <sup>3</sup> worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that

<sup>3</sup> Gr. *ages*

names of some heroes of faith. But first is postulated a necessary condition of all faith, viz. : an intuition into the root and origin of things. The first great act of faith must be in the Creator as Creator. As far as the natural processes of observation and experiment can lead us, that which is apprehended by the senses as matter, whether it be analysed into atoms or electrons, might be uncreated and indestructible. But just as science is impossible without postulating faith in the uniformity of nature, so religion is impossible without postulating faith in a Creator, Almighty and Eternal, by whose thought and will the universe was brought into being and is now sustained from moment to moment. The first article of the Creed is 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker, etc.' Thus the Christian doctrine of creation is not merely a basis of a Christian philosophy negating theories of eternal matter or force, but a necessary antecedent of all religious life, a postulate which separates God from creatures and secures His supremacy, majesty and personality. The Christian may, however, conceive of the worlds as existing eternally in the mind of God and as brought under the limitations of time and space by the act of creation described in Gen. i-ii. (See additional note on i. 2).

**by faith we understand.** Cp. Rom. i. 20 where the same word is used for 'perceive'. It is not by the ordinary natural processes, by the use of sight and

what is seen hath not been made out of things  
4 which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God

inference, but by the use of faith that this sure conclusion of truth is attained.

**the worlds have been framed.** 'The worlds' as in i. 2 are the cosmical systems which have their existence in time and space. The word for 'framed' signifies that all the various elements have been disposed into one harmonious whole.

**by the word of God.** What is the *hypostasis*, the actual reality behind and beneath the universe? Faith answers 'the Word of God.' (See Gen. i. Ps. xxxiii. 6-9.) Compare 'the word of His power' (i. 2), where see note. God's utterance is the manifestation in time and space of His eternal thought and will.

**so that what is seen hath not been made . . . appear.** Here we have the principle involved in belief in the Creator. The believer rejects a physical interpretation of the origin of 'the worlds.' To him matter is not an eternal entity. He distinguishes between the phenomenal and the noumenal. Beneath the temporal seen there is that which can only be apprehended by the intuition of faith.

But though faith must have a metaphysical basis, its true sphere is not so much thought as action; its fruit is the attainment not of knowledge but of character. True thinking is only the prelude to true living. So at once the writer turns to enumerate the heroes of faith.

4. **By faith Abel offered unto God . . . than Cain.** Faith expresses itself in worship, but the secret of

a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, <sup>4</sup> God bearing witness <sup>5</sup> in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not

<sup>4</sup> The Greek text in this clause is somewhat uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Or, *over his gifts*

5

acceptable worship is holiness. Abel's sacrifice was 'more excellent' than Cain's because he brought a clean heart with it.

**through which he had witness . . . righteous.** *Genesis* does not tell us how God bore witness to Abel. In Chapter v. of the Qur'án we read that Moses was charged by God to relate to the people the history of Cain and Abel and of the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice. Muhammadan commentators narrate that fire descended on Abel's sacrifice.

**through it he being dead yet speaketh.** His faith resulted in what men call death: in reality it was life. Not only does the fruit of his faith remain in the treasury of the Church available for our use, but through it he lives and teaches.

**5. By faith Enoch . . . not see death.** Faith is the secret of the victory which overcomes death. In *Genesis* we have a list of names of those who lived a specified number of years and then died. In verse 24 the monotony of the record is interrupted: the years are mentioned but there is no mention of the word death: it is simply 'he was not, for God took him.' Nothing



found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that  
**6** he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing *unto him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,

is said as to the manner of his departure; it is enough to know that for a man who walks with God death ceases to be death and becomes translation.

**for before his translation . . . well pleasing unto God.** The Hebrew of Gen. v. 24 literally means 'And Enoch walked with God.' The Septuagint which is here followed renders by the words translated 'well pleasing unto God.' To walk with God is to have intimate and uninterrupted fellowship with Him and thus constantly to know and do His will. It is one of the favourite expressions of the New Testament. (See, for instance, Rom. vi. 4; Gal. v. 25; Col. ii. 6; 1 St. John i. 7; Rev. iii. 4.)

**6. And without faith it is impossible . . . unto him.** Faith being the indispensable condition of fellowship with and obedience to God, it follows that Enoch's secret was faith.

**for he that cometh to God.** The word is that which denotes coming to God in worship (see note on iv. 16,) for the first attitude of him who seeks God is that of worship.

**must believe . . . a rewarder of them.** The worshipper's faith includes necessarily these two primary articles: (1) God is: He never began to be, but 'is';

and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek after him. By faith Noah, being warned of *God* concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

the One Eternal Self-Existent Life, the uncaused Cause of all, He alone can truly say 'I am' (Exod. iii. 14.) (2) This Eternal Self-Existent Being has personal relationships with His creatures. He is not loveless force but personal, who exercises moral government. For 'rewarder' see note on ii. 2. To believe in God as 'Rewarder' is to believe in his Power, Love and Wisdom.

**that seek after him.** The word implies a sustained and earnest quest. It is not by passively accepting traditional religious observances or by professing unintelligently hereditary beliefs that men find God, but by the arduous effort of prayer and thought and the activity of self-renouncing love. Each man must make the faith his own. But such a search is certain to be crowned with success. God rewards those who seek Him by giving Himself as their Reward. (Gen. xv. 1; St. Matt. vii. 7-8).

**7. By faith Noah, . . . the saving of his house.** Faith which has been presented to us as the secret of acceptable worship and of victory over death is now shewn in the person of Noah as discerning judgement to come and as accepting the covenanted place of security.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an

**through which he condemned the world.** 'Which' may be either his faith or the ark which was the visible embodiment of the faith. The life of a good man or the life of the Church is a tacit condemnation of evil. It is for this reason that holiness evokes hatred. The Greek philosopher Plato with wonderful insight perceived this and so was able with marvellous accuracy to delineate the fate of a man who should be absolutely just. Republic ii. 362. (See St. John vii. 7; xv. 18-19).

**and became heir of righteousness . . . faith.** Events justified Noah's faith, and shewed what seemed to be faith's folly to be wisdom, and what seemed to be the world's common sense to be folly. Upon Noah first of the Old Testament 'elders' was the title of 'righteous' conferred. The righteousness which was bestowed on Noah as his inheritance was his not by the use of his natural faculties but by the use of that higher supernatural faculty of faith which made him capable of receiving spiritual gifts from the unseen world. Consequently it was a 'righteousness . . . according to faith.'

The flood is past, and a new era begins. Faith is no longer treated in its effect on the individual, but in its relation to the people of God. It is through faith that they came into being as a people, that they were redeemed, that they attained the promised land.

8. **By faith Abraham.** It is natural that the greatest

inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a *land* not his own, <sup>6</sup> dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which **9**

<sup>6</sup> Or, *having taken up his abode in tents*

**10**

stress should be laid on Abraham's faith, for by it the Hebrew people came into being. Nor was it only by one striking manifestation of faith that the promises were secured to his descendants, but his faith bore him through crisis after crisis in which all would have been lost had he failed.

**when he was called, obeyed . . . whither he went.**

Faith inspired to prompt instantaneous obedience to the divine vocation demanding a tremendous venture and unquestioning self-resignation. The Greek tenses signify the immediacy of the obedience.

**9. By faith he became a sojourner . . . not his own.**

Faith is the secret of detachment from worldly possessions: it teaches men that they are 'sojourners and pilgrims' (Gen. xxiii. 4) and that they must possess as though they possessed not. (Cp. 1 St. Peter ii. 11).

**dwelling in tents . . . heirs with him of the same promise.** Lot who entered upon his share of the land as though it were to be his permanent home had to suffer the ruin of his hopes, but Abraham, his son and grandson were content to live as nomads.

**10. for he looked for the city . . . maker is God.**

Faith taught him that nothing but an eternal home

hath the foundations, whose<sup>7</sup> builder and maker is  
 11 <sup>7</sup> Or, *ar-* God. By faith even Sarah herself  
*chitect* received power to conceive seed when  
 she was past age, since she counted him faithful  
 12 who had promised : wherefore also there sprang of  
 one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars  
 of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is  
 by the sea shore, innumerable.

could satisfy the needs of the people of God. His dwelling in the 'land of promise' was the means by which faith opened his eyes to recognize the larger purpose of God. Contrasted with the transitory and moveable dwellings of the patriarchs is the indestructible eternal city which knows no change or decay, of which God is both architect and builder. This city with its foundations is described under vivid images in Rev. xxi. It is the archetype of that earthly Jerusalem whose foundations were upon the holy hills (Ps. lxxxix. 1), to which the first readers of this Epistle clung with such loyal and fervent affection, but which became a danger to them directly they mistook the shadow for the real.

**11. By faith even Sarah herself . . . promised.** Faith expelling unbelief enabled her to yield herself as the instrument of God's purpose. 'Even Sarah herself', that is, even she who had at first scornfully refused to believe.

**12. Wherefore also there sprang of one, etc.** Faith produced an innumerable harvest. The promise at first was that there should be one son, and then it was

These all died <sup>8</sup> in faith, not having received the **13** promises, but having seen them and <sup>8 Gr. according to.</sup> greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the

enlarged and made to include a posterity as numberless as the stars or the grains of sand. (Gen. xiii. 16 ; xv. 5 ; xxii. 17).

**13. These all died in faith.** 'All' means Isaac and Jacob in addition to Abraham whose union with Sarah is so close that they are reckoned as one. They who had lived inspired by faith were sustained by faith unto the end of earthly life.

**not having received the promises.** Had they received them in full they would not have been described as dying in faith, i.e. as still looking forward in confidence.

**but having seen . . . on the earth.** This manifestation of faith is described as threefold : insight, which gives the vision ; joy which welcomes the vision ; unworldliness which confirms the vision. They were as sailors who see the land in the distance, acclaim it with joy, and by the very sight are the more confirmed in their sense of homelessness until they reach it. The writer of this Epistle is in effect commenting on our Lord's words in St. John viii. 56.

**having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims.** See Gen. xxiii. 4 for Abraham's confession ; Gen. xxviii. 4 for Isaac's ; Gen. xlvi. 9 for Jacob's. Compare also the language of i. Ch. xxix. 15 ; Ps. xxxix. 12 ; cxix. 19, 54.

**14** earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their **15** own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that *country* from which they went out, they would have **16** had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God

St. Peter uses the same figure of man's abode on earth (1 St. Peter ii. 11). There are close affinities between *1 Peter* and *Hebrews*, and some think that the writer of *Hebrews* was familiar with *1 Peter* and even quotes it.

**14.** For they that say such things, that is, speak of life as a pilgrimage and of themselves as earth's temporary inhabitants.

**make it manifest . . . of their own.** The Greek means 'fatherland'. They recognized that they were truly natives of some other land, and this they sought.

**15.** And if indeed they had been mindful, etc. They cannot have meant Mesopotamia from which they had emigrated, because there was nothing to prevent them returning there had they so willed.

**16.** But now they desire . . . a heavenly. The only inference left is that the native land which they sought was not on earth at all, but was the true ideal shadowed by all earthly habitations. Faith taught them that they were the offspring not of earth but of heaven.

**wherefore**, because of this unworldly hope, and their persistent resolve not to make earth a home.

**God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God.**

is not ashamed of them, to be called their God : for he hath prepared for them a city.

They have proved worthy of their divine lineage, and therefore in the record of Holy Scripture they are crowned by the distinction of having the Most High God calling Himself emphatically 'their God'. See especially Exod. iii. 6; 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'. The use of the word 'ashamed' points to the unexpectedness of the honour. The High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy, deigns to be known as associated with the names of these His faithful servants. (Cp. ii. 11).

**for he hath prepared for them a city.** Their confidence was justified indeed. Death was not the end but the beginning. (See St. Matt. xxii. 32.) The fatherland awaited them, prepared by God Himself (cp. St. John xiv. 2), and not only a land but a city, an organized fellowship in eternal life.

In this passage (vv. 8-16) there is no thought of earthly life as a life of illusion of which men must rid themselves if they wish to attain to the freedom of the real. The world is not *maya* but *prakriti*: life in it is a state ordained by God for man; it is not the final state but a temporary and necessary state. Man passes through it as a pilgrim on his way to somewhere else; his time of tenancy is a sojourn not a permanent occupation; he may rightly be described as a stranger in it because it is not his destined home. His danger is not that of mistaking an illusory thing which has no proper existence as a real entity, but that of mistaking it for



- 17 <sup>9</sup> Gr. *hath offered up*. By faith Abraham, being tried, <sup>9</sup> offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only
- 18 <sup>10</sup> Or, *of* begotten son; *even he* <sup>10</sup> to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be

something which it is not meant to be—mistaking it for a goal and not a road, an end and not a means. Earthly life was very real to the patriarchs, so the Epistle teaches, but it derived all its value from being a preface; it was the divinely appointed path which they must tread if they were to reach the city that was prepared.

After the more general lessons of the power of faith drawn from the principles upon which the patriarchs acted, the writer proceeds to further details of their history.

**17. By faith Abraham, being tried, etc.** This was the supreme triumph of the faith of Abraham. It surmounted what seemed to be the insuperable difficulty of apparent inconsistencies in the divine revelation. God's word seemed to oppose God's word. How could faith accept it as God's word when one part seemed in flat contradiction to another? But the faith which had seen one impossible thing became possible in the fruitfulness of the old and barren could confidently look for another impossibility in the restoration of the dead to life.

**offered up . . . was offering up.** The sacrifice incomplete historically was complete spiritually. What a man sincerely wills to do, that in God's sight he has done.

called : accounting that God *is* able to raise up, even **19** from the dead ; from whence he did also in a parable receive him back. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and **20**

**19. from whence he did also in a parable receive him back.** This is the simpler way of interpreting the Greek ; Abraham received his son from the dead, not by a literal restoration to life, but by what was a figure of a resurrection.

But the word rendered 'from whence' may mean as in the five other places where it occurs in this Epistle 'wherefore'. In this case the interpretation is that to reward his faith Abraham received Isaac given back to him as a type of the resurrection. In this also lies a possible interpretation of St. John viii. 56. This is a tempting rendering, for it opens out in a word the typical significance of what happened on Mt. Moriah and afterwards. Isaac is the type of the Son given freely (Rom. viii. 32), carrying His own Cross and unresistingly giving Himself to be stretched out for death. 'So again Isaac recovered from the dead, and espoused to a virgin of his father's house, who veiling herself steps down from her camel to meet her appointed husband, is a type of that Crucified One who rising from the grave, receives at His Father's hand the Church of the redeemed, who then, in faith and repentance, throwing herself at the feet of the ever-living One, awaits His coming to fetch her home.'

**20. By faith Isaac blessed . . . things to come.** A blessing may be no more than the prayer of one who is divinely authorized by his position or office to convey

- 21** Esau, even concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph ; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top  
**22** of his staff. By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel ; and gave commandment concerning his  
**23** bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid

grace to others, but with Isaac faith made it more than that ; it made the blessing a revelation of a divinely ordained future ; and this too at a time when judged by earthly standards the birthright was worth but little.

**21. By faith Jacob . . . top of his staff.** Still less attainable did the promised inheritance seem when Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, yet faith was undismayed, and overcoming physical weakness expressed itself in grateful adoration of Him who had made the promise. The writer follows the Septuagint reading : the Hebrew has ' upon the bed's head.'

**22. By faith Joseph . . . concerning his bones.** Rich and powerful as he and his people had become in Egypt yet faith showed Joseph that their true destiny was not to be fulfilled there, and he associated himself with that destiny by requiring that his remains should be conveyed to the promised land.

We pass now to a further stage ; if Abraham and the patriarchs especially represent the faith which inspires endurance and hope, Moses represents the faith which calls forth resolution and action.

**23. By faith Moses . . . king's commandment.** Moses

three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child ; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he **24** was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; choosing rather to be evil en- **25** treated with the people of God, than to enjoy the

began his unconscious life in an atmosphere of faith, for strengthened by faith his parents risked their own lives to save the life of their child. There is a truly human touch here : all parents think that there is something exceptional about their particular children, but Moses' parents were justified in the belief that theirs was no ordinary child.

**24-5. By faith Moses . . . pleasures of sin for a season.** Faith gave him the insight by which he recognized in a horde of slaves the people of God. It bore fruit in the rejection of a position of worldly splendour and the choice of a life of hardship. The man who hears the call of the higher and chooses the lower is guilty of sin. His life may be free from wilful transgressions of the moral law but it is a life of sin, because it is lived under conditions which are contrary to the will of God for him. There came to Moses the hour when he had to make a definite choice and he made it. It is the choice which comes to many in India to whom faith has been given. They are 'grown up' ; no joint family system or duty to the head of the family can take away from one 'grown up' his own responsibility to God. On one side is the easy course, conformity with

**26** pleasures of sin for a season ; accounting the reproach  
<sup>11</sup> Or, *the* of <sup>11</sup> Christ greater riches than the trea-  
*Christ* sures of Egypt : for he looked unto

caste, continuance in the family, the share of the family inheritance ; on the other side is the lot of the outcaste, the disinherited, of one who is 'evil entreated with the people of God.' Faith calls for a definite choice. Moses might have said 'I can sympathize with and help the people if I stay in Pharaoh's court.' He who in India says 'I can be a Christian at heart without Baptism and open profession' will lose his faith and his life is sin.

**26. accounting the reproach of Christ . . . reward.** Here is true other-worldliness which makes wise calculations. Moses deliberately weighed heavenly riches against earthly treasures, and decided on the heavenly. Such a decision implies the insight of faith : he saw two worlds and compared them. Non-believers see only one world, and so the man of faith appears to them a fool ; half believers get occasional glimpses of the higher world ; the believer sees them both.

'The reproach of Christ.' The eternal Christ is identified with all the faithful before the Incarnation ; all are His members through the indwelling Word : He dwells in them and they in Him. All suffering endured for conscience sake is 'the reproach of Christ.' (Cp. Ps. lxxix. 7-9, lxxxix. 50-1 ; see also the beatitude in St. Matt. v. 11-12, and St. Peter's reproduction of it in 1 St. Peter iv. 14). Persecution inflicted on His members after the Incarnation is inflicted on 'Jesus' :

the recompense of reward. By faith he forsook **27** Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. By faith **28**

the emphasis is laid on the humanity which is outraged (Acts ix. 5).

**27. By faith he forsook . . . king.** Faith made him aim not merely at raising his people from demoralizing servitude to their old position of citizens of Egypt but at the utter abandonment of Egypt. This was his openly declared policy and he disregarded the wrath of the king.

**for he endured, as seeing . . . invisible.** Time after time his petition was rejected, and his life threatened, but time after time he braved the wrath of the king. What sustained him in his resolution was his vision of God. God who is invisible to the faithless is visible to the faithful. He could go on in faith because he saw God. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word for 'endured' is used; in classical Greek also it sometimes signifies steadfastness to a resolution.

**28. By faith he kept . . . touch them.** In the observance of the first passover each act was, prompted by faith. The haste in eating, the readiness for departure, argued faith in the certainty of the immediate fulfilment of their hope; the sprinkling of the blood argued faith in the certainty of divine judgement and of their own security. There was no sign either of the impending doom or of their deliverance from bondage, yet faith did not hesitate to obey. The tense of the verb 'kept'

<sup>19</sup> Or, *instituted* Gr. *hath made.*

he <sup>19</sup> kept the passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them.

- 29** By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were  
**30** swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell

implies that the passover thus celebrated for the first time became a permanent institution.

**29. By faith they passed . . . dry land.** The man of faith necessarily inspires others with faith. The faith of the great leader passes to the people. Thus buoyed up by faith they faced what seemed like certain death, but what proved to be the one path of safety. The passage of the Red Sea is a figure of Holy Baptism. That which appears to be death is found by faith to be life. (Cp. Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12). Compare the words of the prebaptismal collect: 'and also didst safely lead the children of Israel Thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby Thy holy Baptism.' But to pass through the waters of Baptism without faith is not life but death. (Cp. 2 Cor. ii. 16).

**which the Egyptians . . . swallowed up.** That it was not merely a path chosen by human knowledge and foresight was proved by the disaster which befell their enemies when they tried it.

**30. By faith the walls . . . for seven days.** In the obedience of faith human methods were rejected and the divine instructions followed in patience. The fall of Jericho is a figure of the victory of the Church. The

down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with 31 them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for 32

Church is ever tempted to adopt the world's methods, but her victory lies in faithful obedience to the way of the Spirit. (Cp. Zech. iv. 6; St. Matt. xvi. 18.)

**31. By faith Rahab the harlot . . . with peace.** Faith wins its victories in the most unexpected places. God's army does not only destroy; it restores. The record of the triumphs of faith finds its climax in the name of a stranger, a woman, and a sinner. Already God's people give proof of the Catholicity of the Church, and of its power to ennoble womanhood and to reclaim the fallen.

The writer breaks off here. Perceiving that a detailed narrative of how the heroes of Israel manifested the power of faith will prolong his letter to an excessive length he sums up by an enumeration of representative characters and of typical achievements. The heroism of faith was both active and passive; there were the triumphs of those who did great deeds and of those who endured great sufferings. It is to be noticed however that the heroism of endurance is described at greater length than the heroism of action.

**32. And what . . . time will fail me.** The writer uses expressions which indicate his classical culture.

**if I tell of Gideon . . . the prophets.** The order is not strictly chronological. There are judges, kings and prophets: Samuel who was both judge, prophet and



the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the **33** prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped **34** the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were

king-maker is a suitable link between groups of rulers and teachers.

Now begins the stately and symmetrical recital of the historical evidences of the power of faith in the Hebrew nation. Both the Old Testament and Apocrypha are drawn upon for instances. The phrase is changed: it is no longer 'by faith' but '*through* faith'. Faith was the inspiring force that made such achievements possible.

**33. subdued kingdoms.** The long succession of victories which culminated in the peace and glory of Solomon's reign.

**wrought righteousness.** The fruit of victory was the setting up of a system of justice under Samuel and the Kings. (See especially 1 Sam. xii. 3-5).

**obtained promises.** Not only the fulfilment of past promises but the pledge of benefits for the generations to come.

**stopped the mouths of lions.** (Dan. vi. 22).

**34. quenched the power of fire.** (Dan. iii. 27).

**escaped the edge of the sword.** (Esther iv. 14).

**from weakness were made strong.** As in Judges vii. 7; 1 Sam. xiv. 6; Neh. iv. 8-14: and in 1 and 2 Maccabees.

made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. Women received their dead by a **35**

**waxed mighty . . . aliens.** As in the deeds of Matthias and Judas Maccabeus (1 Mac. iii) which the Hebrews recalled with peculiar exultation.

Now come the achievements of endurance.

**35. Women received their dead by a resurrection.**

First in the narrative of passive heroism comes the faith of women with its startling and unexpected fruit. It is remarkable that in each of the instances of restorations from death to life recorded in the Bible it is *women* who 'received their dead'. Even the raising of Jairus' daughter is not an exception, for the mother is specially mentioned. Woman's dominion is in the home, and death wounds the home: so the dead are specially the *women's* dead: '*their* dead'. When the power of intense natural affection is united with the power of faith even natural death may be overcome.

**others were tortured . . . a better resurrection.** But faith may rise higher still. It may look beyond the restoration to the former earthly conditions, and sacrifice all for that 'better resurrection' which admits to the celestial life. The main reference is without doubt to 2 Mac. vii. where the mother having seen six of her sons perish by torture before her eyes addressed the youngest as follows: 'Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.' In the case of the seven sons compliance with the king's orders would have meant 'accepting their deliverance.'

resurrection: and others were <sup>13</sup>tortured, not accepting <sup>14</sup>their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated (of whom the world

<sup>13</sup> Or, beaten to death

<sup>14</sup> Gr. the redemption.

36

37

38

**36. others had trials of mockings, etc.** Probably the writer is still thinking of the heroes whose sufferings are related in the Maccabees. Eleazar is a conspicuous example (2. Mac. vi. 18-31.)

**37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder.** Here plainly he is thinking of the prophets. It was traditionally believed that Jeremiah was stoned to death and that Isaiah was sawn asunder 2 Chron. xxiv. 20-21 records the stoning of Zechariah. (Cp. St. Matt. xxi. 35; xxiii. 37).

**they were tempted, they were slain with the sword.** (Cp. 1. Kings xix. 10).

**they went about in sheepskins . . . evil entreated.** The long drawn out sufferings of life patiently endured may be as conspicuous evidences of faith as the sufferings which issue in death; Elijah is no less faith's martyr than Zechariah. To destitution and homelessness was added the insolent oppression of their fellow men. (Cp. 1 Cor. iv. 11).

**38. of whom the world was not worthy.** A short

was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. And these all, having had witness borne to them **39** through their faith, received not the promise,

pithy interpolation which may include several meanings. They who wandered about despised and rejected of the world were in truth so far superior to the world that God withdrew them from it, as in the notable instance of Elijah. This earth was not fit to be their home. All that this life could give them would be an unworthy reward, for they themselves were worth more than all the world contained.

**39. And these all.** The long list of the faithful from the opening of history up to the Incarnation. Some have been mentioned by name, but there are innumerable others who are unnamed.

**having had witness borne to them through their faith.** As in verse 2 the meaning is that their faith was the secret of their memorable triumph which was now acknowledged by all, and in virtue of which they were accepted of God.

**received not the promise.** That is, the supreme promise which underlies and gives their value to all other promises, namely, eternal life in Christ in the heavenly country. In vi. 15 Abraham is said to have 'obtained the promise'; there is no contradiction, for the promise there intended is the promise of the son who was the pledge of the richness of future blessings for mankind.

40 <sup>15</sup> Or, *fore-* God having <sup>16</sup> provided some better  
*seen* thing concerning us, that apart from  
 us they should not be made perfect.

40. **God having provided . . . made perfect.** Not 'provided' in the common sense of the term, but as the Greek and English words literally mean 'having foreseen'. In God's foreknowledge was hidden the 'better thing', that is the mystery of the Incarnation and the Mystical Body of Christ, into which were to be gathered in a Unity of eternal life all who since the world began had lived and overcome by and through faith. That Body is not complete until 'all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ', (Eph. iv. 13). To that fullness each hero of faith has something to contribute, and none may be made perfect until the whole be perfect. During the erection of a building each stone and each bit of carving may be finished, but they only come to perfection when each occupies its place in the completed scheme of the architect. Each adds beauty to the whole but each also gains beauty from the whole. Without the whole they are not 'made perfect'. So also even holy patriarchs, saints and martyrs await their perfection, because full individual perfection may not be without the perfection of the whole Church. It is the widest and most splendid conception possible: no man may by God's decree fulfill the end for which he was created except in the fellowship of the whole mystical Body of Christ. 'Apart' from one another the redeemed of all ages cannot be made perfect.

## CHAPTER XII

**THEREFORE** let us also, seeing we are compassed

The writer goes on to exhort them to shew endurance worthy of such spiritual ancestors, who are themselves now witnesses of the struggle, and worthy of such a Leader, who has Himself endured and conquered (1-4). The painful struggle has a divine disciplinary purpose (5-13). There is need of careful preservation of external peace and internal purity (14-17). Let them remember the glory and responsibilities of citizenship of the imperishable Kingdom, and the horror of apostasy (18-29).

**1-4. Exhortation to shew endurance worthy of such an ancestry and such a Leader.**

**1. Therefore let us also.** Again the writer identifies himself with those whom he addresses. There is no stronger word in the Greek language for expressing a conclusion than that used here for 'therefore.' The long recital of heroes has not been merely to arouse patriotic pride, but it is a stirring summons to imitation.

**seeing we are compassed . . . witnesses.** A dense mass of noble human spirits is closely pressing round the members of the Hebrew Church, as spectators in an arena surround and tower above the competitors.

about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside

'Cloud' gives two ideas of 'multitude' and 'indistinctness.' By faith we see them, but not yet with the distinctness of an open vision. The teaching is that one fruit of 'the Communion of Saints' is that the departed are conscious of the trials of the Church and are able to encourage and help those who are still struggling. Of their knowledge of us and our condition the writer has no doubt; for who has ever heard of spectators of a race who were unconscious of the contestants? All the emphasis has to be laid not on their consciousness of us, but upon the need and importance of our recollection of their presence. The word 'witnesses' means more than spectators: they are spectators indeed, but they are spectators who themselves have had 'witness borne to them' xi. 39. To change the image, they are the tried and victorious veterans watching and encouraging the soldiers still in the fight.

This conception necessarily excludes the idea of repeated births. The same persons who struggled on earth are now witnessing the struggle, but there is no question of 'Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah' and the rest returning to it.

**lay aside every weight . . . beset us.** The comparison of the Christian course with a race seems to make the meaning here unmistakable. Just as in the case of a runner all superfluous flesh must be removed by training and the clinging garment must be laid aside, so also all habits of self-indulgence must be given up and

<sup>1</sup> every weight, and the sin which <sup>2</sup> doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the <sup>3</sup> author and perfecter of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat

<sup>1</sup> Or, *all cumbrance*  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *doth closely cling to us*  
 Or, *is admired of many*  
<sup>3</sup> Or, *captain* <sup>2</sup>

sin utterly renounced by the Christian who contends in so glorious a contest, with such witnesses and such an Umpire. (Cp. 1 Cor. ix. 24-5).

**let us run with patience . . . before us.** A course has been definitely marked out for us by God. There is to be no 'chance' in the Christian's life, but a definite response to a sure vocation. For 'patience' see note on x. 36.

**2. looking unto Jesus.** Still the image of the race is maintained. The runner's attention must not be diverted; to look away from the goal to the right hand or to the left is to lose pace and run the risk of a stumble or a fall. The Greek carries the meaning of looking away from every distraction unto JESUS who is Himself the Goal. The name Jesus is used alone that all the stress may be laid upon the truth of the human nature of Him who as Man has run the course and endured and conquered.

**the author and perfecter of our faith.** Faith has been shewn to be the supreme secret; instance after instance has been given; now comes not one more instance of a soldier in the noble army of the faithful, but the Captain



down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Himself, who has manifested faith in its utmost perfection, and thus revealed what it can effect in human nature. For 'author' see note on ii. 10. It seems impossible that the reader could have excluded from his mind the thought implicitly contained in the words translated 'author' and 'perfecter' that He who is the ideal Example of faith is also its Originator in us, and that it is He who brings it to perfection in us. (Cp. Phil. i. 6).

**who for the joy that was set before him.** The Greek grammatically might mean that Christ surrendered the joy of the heavenly state and took in its place the cross and shame, but this is not in harmony with the thought of the passage, and empties 'set before him' of its force. The richer meaning is that He too as He ran His course as Man had the goal 'set before him' (cp. verse 1.) on which He concentrated His gaze. The goal which was His joy was the Redemption of mankind. For the mention of Christ's joy see St. John xv. 11, xvii. 13.

**endured the cross, despising shame.** In this He is the Captain of faith, for faith alone is the secret of such endurance. What kind of endurance was His? None greater is conceivable, for He endured death by crucifixion; and not only the excruciating physical agony of such a death, but the shame of being exposed to the public gaze as a criminal slave, even this He treated as nought in comparison of the joy of redeeming the world.

For consider him that hath endured  
 such gainsaying of sinners against  
 †themselves, that ye wax not weary,

<sup>4</sup> Many **3**  
 authorities,  
 some ancient,  
 read *himself*.

**hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

In this He is proved the Perfecter of faith. Faith has won its reward. He is for ever enthroned with the Father on His right hand. Henceforward He can with authority dispense the gifts of grace by which the faith of His followers shall be perfected (Cp. Rev. iii. 21).

**3. For consider him that hath endured.** As they run the race with their gaze concentrated on Him who is their Captain and their Prize they are to take note that He is one who has passed through bitter adversity, and still and for ever carries the marks of all that He has endured.

**such gainsaying of sinners against themselves.** It is more than mere contradiction, it is rebellion; and rebellion that ended in regicide. (St. John xix. 15). Yet the rebellion was its own punishment; it was in truth 'against themselves' (Cp. Jer. ii. 19). They were 'sinners against their own souls.' See Num. xvi. 38.

**that ye wax not weary, fainting in your own souls.** Two-fold is the comfort to those who are tempted gradually to slacken effort through weariness of the long drawn out struggle. Let them remember that the outcome of persecution is glory: 'He hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God': and secondly, †that the only real harm persecution can do is to the persecutor.

4 fainting in your souls. Ye have not yet resisted  
 5 unto blood, striving against sin: and ye have  
 forgotten the exhortation, which reasoneth with you  
 as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the  
 Lord,

Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him ;

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,  
 And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

4. **ye have not yet resisted unto blood.** If 'ye' means the Hebrew Church, the words are difficult to reconcile with the history of that Church either in Rome or in Jerusalem. Both Rome and Jerusalem had already had their martyrs. But probably the writer has only his hearers in mind, and the 'not yet' plainly warns them that their Christian profession may yet cost them even their lives.

**striving against sin.** The powers of the world which persecute are described as 'sin', but it is also implied that there is an inward enemy which may tempt to surrender or retreat.

**5-13. The painful struggle has a divine disciplinary purpose.**

5. **ye have forgotten . . . as with sons.** Or it may be translated 'have ye forgotten'? The Holy Spirit in Scripture speaks with a living voice and converses tenderly with the children of God.

5-6. **My son, regard not lightly . . . receiveth.** (Prov. iii. 11-12). The man who is called to suffering may

<sup>5</sup> It is for chastening that ye endure ;  
 God dealeth with you as with sons ;  
 for what son is there whom *his* father  
 chasteneth not ? But if ye are without chastening, <sup>8</sup>  
 whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye

<sup>5</sup> Or, *En-<sup>7</sup>  
dure unto  
chastening*

not realize its significance ; he may only look on it as a troublesome experience of which he must get rid as quickly as possible ; or he may be overwhelmed by it and give way to listless despair. Either attitude is equally wrong ; God's love, even though it manifest itself through pain, is not to be regarded lightly, nor may one to whom God has given a sure token of His approval allow himself to despair (Cp. St. John xv. 2).

**7. It is for chastening that ye endure.** He now applies the teaching of the passage he has quoted. Your endurance is not wasted : it is all part of a divine system of education. The A.V. translates another reading.

**God dealeth with you . . . chasteneth not.** The word for 'chasten' may be rendered 'instruct' as in 2 Tim. iii. 16 and Titus ii. 12. It is wider than the mere infliction of pain. All that contributes to the education of a son is within the care of a father. Pain has its part, and it is the very assurance of sonship that the father instructs through pain.

**8. But if ye are without . . . not sons.** If it be the very assurance of sonship that the father instructs through pain, to be without that assurance is to be in the position of one who can claim no father as his own.

9 bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of <sup>6</sup> spirits, and live?

10 <sup>6</sup> Or, *our* For they verily for a few days chastened *us* as seemed good to them; but he for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of his holiness.

11 All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth

9. **Furthermore, etc.** A new point is added. If reverence be due to the authority of a father, through whom bodily life is transmitted, should he educate through pain, it follows that submission in a far higher degree must be due to Him who is the author not only of bodily life but of all spiritual life, especially when the issue of such filial submission is life eternal.

The phrase 'Father of spirits' seems to yield some support to the doctrine that each human spirit is not derived from the parents but is newly created and clothed with a body at the time of birth.

10. **For they verily for a few days . . . his holiness.** Fathers of the flesh may make mistakes; they may chastise selfishly to satisfy their temper; their discipline for the most part only fits the circumstances of a temporary life. Not so the Father of spirits; He has but one aim, that of giving His own likeness to us, and His discipline fits us for the life eternal.

11. **All chastening . . . grievous.** The second part of the verse seems to indicate that the 'all' here means

peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, *even the fruit* of righteousness.

Wherefore <sup>7 Gr. make</sup> lift up the hands that hang <sup>straight.</sup> **12**  
down, and the palsied knees ; and make **13**

'all *God's* chastening,' though of course it is equally true of every kind of chastening.

**yet afterwards.** Education necessarily looks to the future (Cp. 2 Cor. iv. 17).

**it yieldeth . . . righteousness.** It bears the fruit inherent in it as a seed necessarily does ; such is the force of the Greek verb. The fruit is peculiarly fitting ; after the struggle and unrest comes peace, the peace which comes from being right with God and right with man. But seed however good needs a suitable soil. This 'peaceable fruit of righteousness' is produced only by those who have been 'exercised', i.e. have surrendered themselves 'stripped and trained' for the conflict. Here again the writer, mixing his metaphors, recalls the image of the arena (Cp. St. James iii. 18 ; Ps. cxxvi. 6).

**12. Wherefore.** That is, because painful discipline is alike indispensable and salutary.

**lift up the hands . . . knees.** Again we have the figure of the arena. The fight needs strong hands, not those that hang listlessly down ; the race needs swift feet, not knees that are paralysed. The words recall the messages of the prophet, Isa. xxxv. 3, and the sage, Prov. iv. 26-7.

**13. make straight paths . . . healed.** Remove the obstacles from those who can but hobble along, so that

straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame

• <sup>8</sup> Or, *put out of joint* be not <sup>8</sup> turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

**14** Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see

instead of the knees being entirely disabled they may recover their strength. The translation in the margin 'put out of joint' seems to give a more satisfactory sense.

**14-17. The need of careful preservation of the peace and purity of the Church.**

**14. Follow after peace with all men.** Whatever may be the disquiet from the struggle against persecution without, yet within the Christian Body let there be strenuous and continuous efforts to maintain peace, not only with some members, but with all. It seems unlikely that 'all' includes those without. They would hardly have to be warned not to provoke persecution, when warning after warning has been given them of the danger of apostasy under the stress of persecution.

**the sanctification without which . . . Lord.** In verse 10 we have the final fruit of God's discipline. 'His holiness' or 'sanctity'. Here we have the gradual process of attaining to that sanctity. They are ardently to seek after every means by which the likeness of God may be attained, for only the godlike shall see God. The writer is implicitly recalling our Lord's beatitudes, put side by side, of the pure in heart and the peace-maker. (St. Matt. v. 8-9.)

the Lord : looking carefully <sup>9</sup> lest *there be* any man **15**  
 that <sup>10</sup> falleth short of the grace of God ;  
 lest any root of bitterness springing up  
 trouble *you*, and thereby the many be  
 defiled ; <sup>9</sup> lest *there be* any fornicator,  
 or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of

. <sup>9</sup> Or, *whether*  
<sup>10</sup> Or,  
*falleth back*  
*from*

**16**

**15. looking carefully.** The responsibility for the preservation of the purity of the Church rests upon all its members.

**lest there be any man . . . grace of God.** Even a single individual who habitually fails to correspond with the grace of God is a menace to the whole body.

**lest any root . . . trouble you.** He may become a growing power of evil, for evil is not merely the absence of good, but it is an active malignant force. The phrases are taken from Deut. xxix. 18.

**16. lest there be any fornicator or profane person.** Two typical sins are selected as especially dangerous to the society ; violations of chastity, and that irreverent worldliness which lives entirely in the present for the present and scorns the unseen.

**as Esau . . . birthright.** The second typical sin is illustrated by the case of Esau, who was a flagrant example of one who flung away the privilege of his birth for the sake of a little temporary gratification of the flesh. The warning is of special force to those who for the temporal advantage of security from danger might be tempted to surrender the privilege of the new birth with its eternal right.



**17** meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears.

**17. even when he afterward . . . rejected.** There are attitudes of mind which produce sudden uncalculated acts, and of these the consequences may be irreparable. The past may be forgiven, but it cannot be undone, nor can its penal effects be escaped. Esau wasted his birthright, but he had no wish to lose his blessing, but the loss of the one entailed the loss of the other. The apostate Christian separates himself outwardly from Christ, but he has no wish to lose his heavenly inheritance, but the one entails the other (Cp. St. Matt. x. 33; St. Luke xii. 9).

**for he found no place of repentance,** i.e. he found no opportunity of changing his former decision. There is no question of 'repentance' here in the sense of spiritual sorrow for sin apart from its penal consequences.

**though he sought . . . with tears.** We know from Gen. xxvii. 38 with what pathetic longing he pleaded with his father for the blessing of the firstborn.

He who publicly apostatizes from Christ may never find another opportunity of as publicly withdrawing his denial however earnestly he may long for it; there are deeds which can never be undone. But this does not imply that one who loves God and earnestly desires to repent and be restored could ever be finally rejected by Him.

For ye are not come unto <sup>11</sup> *a mount* that might **18**  
 be touched, and that burned with fire,  
 and unto blackness, and darkness, and <sup>11 Or, a</sup> *palpable and*  
 tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, <sup>*kindled fire*</sup> **19**  
 and the voice of words ; which *voice* they that heard  
 intreated that no word more should be spoken unto  
 them : for they could not endure that which was **20**  
 enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it  
 shall be stoned ; and so fearful was the appearance, **21**  
*that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :

**18-29. The glory and responsibilities of citizenship of the imperishable Kingdom, and the horror of apostasy.**

The blessedness of the Christian's state is heightened by putting it in vivid contrast with the terrors of the earlier revelation ; Zion is set over against Sinai.

**18. For ye are not come unto a mount, etc.** In the old dispensation each symbol of the Divine presence was calculated to inspire fear. The description seems to be that of a volcanic mountain in eruption, or whilst a storm was raging. The sound of articulate words audible through the thunder increased the terror. Every circumstance conspired to repel men from the place of the Divine manifestation ; even an irrational animal that touched the sacred mountain must perish. Even the great lawgiver himself, the friend of God, who was entreated by the people to intervene, was not exempt from the general terror.

- 22 <sup>19</sup> Or, *and to innumerable hosts, the general assembly of* but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and to <sup>13</sup> innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to
- 23 *angels, and the church, etc.*
- <sup>13</sup> Gr. *myriads of angels.*

**22. but ye are come.** It is not 'ye shall come if you abide steadfast' but 'ye are come'. Already the blessedness is theirs. The full apprehension, indeed, of its glories and powers, is in the future; in that sense it is 'the world to come', but even now they dwell in the holy City under the protection of the heavenly Presence, enjoying the companionship of angels and saints. This blending of the present and the future is one of the marks of this Epistle. See notes on ix. 11 and x. 1.

**unto Mount Zion . . . the heavenly Jerusalem.** Under these images is described the true theocracy. The dwelling place of Christians is a fortress of security, lifted far above the mists and defilements of earth; it is an organized community in which is enthroned a living God; it is a place of peace and the centre of worship; it is heavenly in its origin, laws and spirit, from above and not from below; not a polity which man has gradually evolved by his own efforts, but a gift to men from God (Cp. Rev. xxi. 2).

**22-23. to innumerable hosts . . . in heaven.** Their fellow inhabitants in the heavenly City are those bright and glorious spirits of whom he has written at the beginning of his letter, who worship God alike by the

the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus **24**

service of adoration and the service of mankind. (i. 14). Joined with them in one vast assembly are the faithful baptized who are the 'firstborn' of the human race, the eldest sons or firstfruits (St. James i. 18) through whom all things are to be restored to God. See note on i. 6. They are 'firstborn' only in virtue of their membership of the 'Firstborn'. They are on the heavenly register of the Book of Life (Cp. Rev. iii. 5; xii. 8; xvii. 8; St. Luke x. 20).

**to God the Judge of all, . . . made perfect.** Of the human inhabitants of this heavenly City some are still on their trial, continually being tested by Him who is the Judge of all. The words may be rendered 'to God of all as Judge'. Others who have laid aside their earthly bodies have already attained; they are 'just men made perfect.' In verse 1 they are described as 'so great a cloud of witnesses.' The idea of condemnation is not necessarily in the word for 'Judge': God is He who sees men as they actually are and separates accordingly.

**24. and to Jesus . . . blood of sprinkling.** There is no temple in the City, for the whole City is the temple (cp. Rev. xxi. 22) but there is Priest, Altar and Sacrifice, all in one, for there is Jesus . . . and 'the blood of sprinkling.' It is no longer the shadow but the very image to which they have come. The writer sums up in a sentence all the mediatorial and sacrificial teaching of the Epistle. The name 'JESUS' stands alone as he loves to write it (ii. 9-10; vii. 22; xii. 2), for

<sup>14</sup> Or, *testament* the mediator of a new <sup>14</sup> covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh

it contains the whole teaching of the Priesthood and Sacrifice. He changes the word for 'new'. The covenant is no longer as in ix. 15 described as fresh or new in kind; but as new in the sense that it is ever efficacious and can never grow old. Those who have attained and those who are still struggling owe alike all their grace to the Saviour-Priest and His Sacrifice.

**that speaketh better than that of Abel.** Abel, of whose actual words none at all have been recorded in *Genesis*, is again (see xi. 4) described as speaking. He spoke through his death of the acceptableness of worship offered with a clean heart. He spoke also in that his poured-out blood demanded justice. But the 'Blood of Jesus' is not merely the blood of a martyr whom God's justice will not overlook even when dead, but it is the Blood of Him who through eternal Spirit offered Himself, who being alive has passed once for all into the Holy of holies to mediate and offer a sacrifice which is once for all. Thus it speaks of God's love in the cleansing of sinful men; not of retribution but of renewal.

We have no sanction in this great passage (22-24) for the theory of a visible and an invisible Church. There is only one Church, one vast system which stretches away into the unseen, in which the visible and invisible are blended together. The larger part is removed from our sense perception but it is not the less in contact with

better <sup>15</sup> than *that of Abel*. See that ye refuse not **25** him that speaketh. For if they escaped <sup>15</sup> Or, *then* not, when they refused him that *Abel* warned *them* on earth, much more *shall not* we

ourselves. It is the great Society of visible and invisible, of earth, paradise and heaven, of which angels and men are at one and the same time citizens.

**25. See that ye refuse not.** Abruptly, in the writer's manner, after the recital of the glory comes the stern warning. The word translated 'refuse' may mean 'shrink from'. They shrank from the terrors of the Voice at Sinai, let them not shrink from the voice that speaks from Zion.

**him that speaketh.** 'God spoke' is the opening word of the Epistle: 'God speaketh' is its final word: He 'speaketh' in His sacrificed, glorified Son.

**if they escaped not . . . earth.** Although they shrank terror-stricken from the Voice yet in after days they were heedless and disobedient, and on earth they suffered (Cp. iii. 7-19). The position of 'on earth' in the Greek makes it impossible to separate it from 'escaped': 'if they escaped not on earth'; their punishment was not deferred; it was inflicted whilst they were on earth.

**much more . . . from heaven.** We have passed into the heavenly system, from the shadow to the sacrament, from bare symbols to celestial verities. How much greater, then, the penalty of those who neglect God as He deals with them in the heavenly sphere!

*escape*, who turn away from him<sup>16</sup> that *warneth* from  
**26** <sup>16</sup> Or, *that* heaven: whose voice then shook the  
 is *from* *heaven* earth: but now he hath promised, say-  
 ing, Yet once more will I make to  
 tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And  
**27** *this word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of  
 those things that are shaken, as of things that have  
 been made, that those things which are not shaken  
**28** may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that

**26. Whose voice then . . . the heaven.** The writer uses a quotation from Hag. ii. 6 to illustrate the truth that if God tested those who were under earthly conditions, and rejected those who failed, He will also test the stability of those who are under heavenly conditions. The Kingdom of God is eternally secure, and those who are true to their heavenly calling partake of this security.

**27. Yet once more . . . may remain.** The passing of the Levitical system with the fall of Jerusalem and the cessation of the temple ritual, contrasted with the permanence of the Christian Church, is a partial fulfilment of the prophet's words, but only a partial fulfilment. The bitter persecutions of the Church also may be described as a shaking of heaven, proving it to be a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. The failure of apostates was 'the removing of those things that are shaken'; the perseverance of the faithful manifested that 'those things that are not shaken . . . remain.'

**28. Wherefore.,** i.e. because this time of testing is surely coming.

cannot be shaken, let us have <sup>17</sup> grace, <sup>17</sup> Or, *thankfulness* whereby we may offer service well-

**receiving a Kingdom . . . shaken.** 'Receiving' it, that is, as God's gift. No earthly kingdom is permanently stable, but this Kingdom has the stability of God. This is the only place in the Epistle in which the new order of which Christians partake is described as a Kingdom, though from the beginning the kingly dignity of its Head is assumed. See i. 3.

**let us have grace.** This may mean 'let us shew gratitude'. Thankfulness is an essential part of worship; without it no service can be well pleasing. The central act of Christian worship is necessarily the Eucharist. Or it may mean that 'as grace is provided for us, let us take it and use it,' for without God's help we cannot serve Him at all. So we pray 'O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee.' The verb is in the present tense and signifies not something done once and for all, but continuously going on.

**whereby we may offer service.** As always in this Epistle the service is that of priests. Christians are a priestly race who offer their Eucharist in the One Priest.

**well-pleasing to God.** As children bring gladness to their parents so men can minister to the joy of God. He whom Christians worship is no inaccessible and disappointing abstraction only to be described by negatives, but He is Love who demands love and is well pleased by love (cp. Zeph. iii. 17; Isa. lx. 7; cp. also 2 Macc. vii. 6), where endurance under torture is said to 'comfort' God. 'The Lord God looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us.'

**with reverence and awe.** Christian worship is to be offered in filial confidence (iii. 6; iv. 16), but filial



<sup>18</sup> Or, *godly* pleasing to God with <sup>18</sup> reverence, and  
 29 *fear* awe: for our God is a consuming fire.

confidence must be balanced by the most careful reverence. (See note on v. 7.) This careful reverence is even to be completed by *fear* (it is more than *awe*), but it is the fear of a son lest he may offend and lose his Father, not the terror of the Israelites at the Voice from Sinai. The Greek word is generally but not always used of physical fear. This is the only place in the New Testament where it occurs.

**29. for our God is a consuming fire.** 'Our' is added to the quotation from *Deuteronomy*. The God with whom we have relations so intimate and so glorious, He who is the supreme Object of our hope and love, is 'a consuming fire'. He is fire indeed, for all the heat and light, the joy and knowledge, without which life is impossible, come from Him, but the emphasis is on 'consuming'. The terrible aspect of God is not cancelled by the Christian Faith. Fire consumes what is worthless: it separates the dross from the good metal. God must destroy all that is not from Him; Love must consume all that contradicts love. His love and wrath are one.

The doctrinal treatise which began with the first words of Chapter I without either introduction or prologue ends abruptly with these words of awe. What follows is of the nature of a postscript. Before the treatise was sent a few personal injunctions were added.

## CHAPTER XIII

LET love of the brethren continue. Forget not to **1,2** shew love unto strangers : for thereby some have

**Duties as members of the Christian community, and necessary warnings (1-17).**

**1. Let love of the brethren continue.** It was more than ever necessary that the Christian brethren should continue to hold together. Christian love is first directed to the members of the Christian community, but it is not confined to them. It is not like the love of caste or sect, for the Christian community is catholic and open to all. The devoted love of Christians to one another greatly impressed the people among whom they lived. Tertullian, who was born in the early part of the second century, appeals to it as evidence of truth. 'See, they say, how these Christians love one another . . . . See how these men are ready to die for one another.'

**2. Forget not to shew love unto strangers.** The duty of hospitality was especially incumbent on them, since Christians by becoming Christians were generally, as in India, compelled to break the old ties of relationship and friendship. There is nothing, however, which seems to imply that this hospitality was only to be given to Christians ; indeed what follows indicates that the guests might be entire strangers.

**3** entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are evil entreated, as being yourselves also in the body.

**for thereby . . . angels unawares.** The reference is, no doubt, to the case of Abraham (Gen. xviii). The same kind of thought is also found in Greek legend. The Christian, knows, however, that when he entertains the stranger he entertains Christ Himself (St. Matt. xxv. 35). In the second century the pagan Lucian mocked at Christians for their liberality to strangers.

**3. Remember them that are in bonds.** See x. 34. It is an exhortation to be true to the tradition of the Hebrew Christian community, which had proved itself true to the promise of Christ (St. Matt. xxv. 36). Christians must not only help those who seek their help; they must go to seek those who need their help.

**as bound with them.** So close is the union of the members of Christ one with another that when some are in prison for the truth's sake all are in prison with them (1 Cor. xii. 26). Christ has taught us that persecution of His members is persecution of Himself (Acts ix. 5-6).

**them that are evil entreated,** i.e. suffering any of those trials of sickness or poverty that human nature is subject to.

**as being yourselves also in the body.** This may mean that as you yourselves have the same kind of bodily nature and so are liable to the same bodily afflictions your practical sympathy ought to be the more stirred. But it gives a far richer meaning if 'body' mean 'the

*Let marriage be had in honour among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. <sup>1</sup> Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will*

<sup>1</sup> Gr. Let <sup>5</sup>  
*your turn of*  
*mind be free.*

'Body of Christ' (1 Cor. xii. 27), and it continues the thought of 'as bound with them.'

**4. Let marriage . . . will judge.** If the Christian community was to bear faithful witness marriage must be put in its proper position. There were two special reasons for this. On the one hand divorce was prevalent among the Jews, and so it was necessary to emphasize the Christian doctrine (St. Mark x. 1-12). On the other hand it was important to oppose the false asceticism that taught that the true Christian life could only be lived in the unmarried state (1 Tim. iv. 3). At the same time unchastity of every kind in married or unmarried was a sin against God and would be judged by Him. Most of all, as Bengel says, he punishes those whom men do not punish. 'Among all' may also be translated 'in all respects'. He who believed himself called to serve Christ in the celibate life was not to disparage those who served Him in the married state.

The three chief occasions of temptation to mankind are the world, the flesh and the devil. The Christian community is warned against the three. The flesh tempts to unchastity, the world to covetousness, the devil to self-will. The writer has dealt with the flesh; he now turns to the world.

**5. Be ye free . . . as ye have.** That is, cultivate

in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say,

The Lord is my helper ; I will not fear :  
What shall man do unto me ?

the spirit of detachment. They have already won high praise for their indifference to wealth. They had not merely acquiesced in but had been glad of the loss of possessions in a good cause ; x. 34. As the exhortation in verse 1 is to hold fast to their brotherly love, so here it is to hold fast to their unworldliness. It may be that the Christian community had been well to do, and there were temptations to repine at their altered circumstances.

**for himself hath said . . . forsake thee.** See Gen. xxviii. 15 ; Deut. xxxi. 6 ; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20 ; Isa. xli. 17. The words are not found in this form in the Old Testament, but as Philo also quotes them exactly as they are given here, it is probable that they were familiar through use in some Jewish liturgy which had adapted them from several passages.

**6. The Lord is my helper . . . me.** See Ps. cxviii, which was used in the services of the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The writer now turns to the remedy for self-will. He finds it in (1) The memory of their fathers in the faith. (2) The unchanging Object of their faith. (3) The separateness of their faith, which implies separation from all self-chosen doctrines.

Remember them that had the rule over you, which **7** spake unto you the word of God: and considering the issue of their <sup>2</sup> life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, *yea* and <sup>3</sup> for ever. Be not carried away by divers and strange

<sup>2</sup> Gr. *man-ner of life.*

<sup>3</sup> Gr. *unto the ages.*

**7. Remember . . . their faith.** It seems that these leaders had passed away, and that they had given conspicuous witness to their faith in their manner of 'going out.' St. James the apostle must surely be referred to, and possibly also St. Peter, and St. James the brother of the Lord. It seems strange that no name is actually mentioned, but possibly to recall names so eminently known and revered was superfluous. They are called upon to contemplate earnestly the meaning of such lives, and of the manner of their departure. It is significant that there is no mention of the word 'death'. The Christian does not die. Nor are they told to imitate 'the issue', but the faith which sustained and inspired 'the issue'. Not all are called to martyrdom, but all are called to faith.

**8. Jesus Christ . . . and for ever.** The supreme Object of faith is Jesus Christ who changes not. His love, wisdom and power are eternal, for they are the qualities of God mediated in an unchangeable humanity. He is Priest, Prophet and King for ever: such is the force of the full title 'Jesus Christ.' He whose grace and truth supported the fathers will support their children in the faith. (Cp. 1 Cor. iii. 11).

**9. Be not carried away . . . teachings.** Self-will

teachings : for it is good that the heart be stablished

<sup>4</sup> Gr. *walk-* by grace : not by meats, wherein they  
*ed.* that 'occupied themselves were not

leaves the path trodden by the saints and martyrs of faith, and indulges in wild speculation ; it has no solid foundation to rest on and so is 'carried away with every blast of vain doctrine.' Such 'teachings' are picked up here, there and everywhere, and so are divers, a kind of patchwork—everywhere, that is, except in the unchangeable Jesus Christ, and this makes them foreign or strange, alien from the Commonwealth of God.

**for it is good . . . not by meats.** One characteristic of this doctrinal patchwork was the importance attached to distinctions of food. Sanctity was attainable by avoiding this kind of food and by taking that. It is remarkable how persistent and widespread is this belief in the connexion between food and sanctity. It seems generally to accompany wild doctrinal speculations, such as are found in Hinduism, gnosticism in all its forms, and the modern patchwork of theosophy. A holiness that depends on food is so much more speedily and easily attained than the holiness of the Christian character. The really beautiful thing—such is the force of the Greek word for 'good'—is the inward renewal of the springs of goodness, which alone has permanence, and this can only be by grace, that is, by the inflowing of the life of Christ through membership in Him.

**were not profited.** This food system of sanctity has been tried and it has failed.

profited. We have an altar, whereof they have no 10

Yet Christians have Food, and Food that is specially their own, Food that is of heaven not of earth.

**10. We have an altar.** The word 'altar' has a very definite meaning which no Hebrew could misunderstand. It is used again and again in the Septuagint of the altar of the true God. There was the altar of burnt-offering (Exod. xxvii. 1-8) which was also called God's Table (Ezek. xli. 22) and the altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 1-10). These altars were used in the sin-offering, the burnt-offering and the peace-offering. In the peace-offering was the sacrificial meal, the solemn eating of the body of the consecrating peace-offering by Aaron and his sons within the precincts of the tabernacle. Nothing was ever killed upon an altar, but after the three preliminary ritual acts, of which the slaughtering was one, came the sprinkling of the blood and the burning of parts of the victim on the altar. The cross upon which our Lord was killed could not have been thought of by a Hebrew as the Christian altar. What he would look for would be the fulfilment of all that the old system of sacrifice and altar foreshadowed. One great purpose of this Epistle has been to assure him that he has it. In the heavenly sanctuary, into which the High Priest has entered, is the true altar, and there the one eternal Sacrifice is being presented, and thence the heavenly Food is being sent. Each altar in a Christian Church is but a symbol of the one heavenly altar. See Rev. vi. 9; viii. 3; ix. 13; xvi. 7.

There is emphasis on 'we have.' It is our very



**11** right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the holy place <sup>3</sup> by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned without the **12** camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without

own. Just as we have a High Priest (iv. 14; viii. 1) so we have an altar and sacrificial Food.

**whereof they have no right . . . tabernacle.** They who are satisfied with the shadow are not permitted to partake of the substance. The priests, even the Levitical high priest himself, were immeasurably in privilege behind the humblest member of the Christian people.

**11. For the bodies . . . without the camp.** But the Christian privilege rises even higher than was foreshadowed. Of the sin-offering in type no Levitical priest, not even the high priest, could partake. It was carried entirely outside the tabernacle precincts and burned. But of the true Sin-offering, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Christian partakes.

**12. Wherefore Jesus also.** Only the human name is used, for all the stress is on the truth of His humanity: He who suffered was indeed very Man. Above in verse 8 it is 'Jesus Christ,' for the stress is on His unchangeable character as Priest, Prophet and King.

**that He might . . . without the gate.** It was outside the holy city that the Body of Jesus was slain and entombed, and so surrendered to the fire of the Holy

the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto him without **13** the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have not **14** here an abiding city, but we seek after *the city* which

Spirit. He became the great outcaste, but by becoming outcaste He was able to carry and present His own Blood within the heavenly Sanctuary, and thus to bring the true consecration as members of the one Body within the reach of the people.

**13. Let us therefore go forth . . . camp.** If He became outcaste for us let us not fear to become outcaste for Him. The writer plainly implies that the time has come when they must choose between Judaism and Christ. They are to come out and be separate. They should not even wait to be driven out, but of their own initiative should leave the society which outcasted and slew their Lord.

**bearing his reproach.** St. Luke uses the same verb of Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross of Christ. So identified with Christ are His members that His reproach is theirs. See note on xi. 26.

**14. For we have not . . . city.** To those who view all from the standpoint of the eternal, who contemplate the heavenly sanctuary, who present the One unchanging Sacrifice in union with the heavenly Priest, who partake of the One Food of the heavenly altar, how transitory is the earthly state! Why should they mind being excommunicated from a thing that has no permanence? History has written its comment on the words. In A. D. 70 the temple was in ruins; in 137

15

\* Some  
ancient autho-  
rities omit  
then.

is to come. Through him <sup>6</sup> then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name.

the Emperor Hadrian had a plough driven over its site, and the very name of the city was changed.

**but we seek after . . . to come.** 'Not one to come' as in the A.V., but the city that already is, and of which our full occupancy is yet in the future. It is the 'fatherland' (xi. 14), the organized fellowship of God's children (xi. 10 and 16).

**15. Through him then.** That is to say, priest, sacrifice, and altar being ours, let us use them.

**let us offer up . . . continually.** 'The sacrifice of praise' is the term applied to the chief of the Levitical peace offerings, in which along with the lamb were offered both unleavened and leavened cakes. Part of the latter were presented to the Lord and then consumed by the priest, whilst the rest which was traditionally called 'the bread of thanksgiving' was eaten by the worshippers. See Lev. vii. 12-13. The writer tells them that they have the true 'sacrifice of praise,' and the real 'bread of thanksgiving,' and that they are continually to offer it through their Priest. The phrase is taken into the prayer of Oblation in the Liturgy of the Church of England: 'accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.' For 'offer' see note on vii. 27.

**the fruit of the lips.** Again the writer adopts for Christian use a phrase of the Old Testament. See Isa. lvii. 19 Hos. xiv. 2. It is no formal sacrifice which is

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for **16** with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey them **17** that have the rule over you, and submit to *them*: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that

offered, but a spiritual service in which the thought of the heart finds expression on the lips.

**make confession to his name.** The 'Name' of God is His revelation, and this is given in Jesus Christ. Those who use Jesus Christ as their Priest and Peace-offering are those who make confession to the Name of God.

**16. But to do good . . . well pleased.** That which is given to those that need is part of the sacrifice offered to God. The collection of alms at the Eucharist was introduced very early, and these alms were part of the 'offertory' made to God with the fruits of the earth. St. Justin, less than a century after, describing the celebration of the Eucharist says that 'the willing give as much as they deem fit, and whatever is collected (at the offertory) is deposited with the President, who thence succours the orphans and widows, sick and needy persons, and strangers; in a word, takes care of all who are in want.' (Cp. 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Phil. iv. 18).

'Well pleased.' See note on xii. 28. Five times in this Epistle the happiness of God in His faithful children is mentioned.

**17. Obey them . . . submit to them.** As loyalty to the Rulers who are gone protects from self-willed speculation in doctrine (7-9), so obedience to living authority protects from self-willed action. They are to obey

<sup>7</sup> Gr. *groan-* shall give account ; that they may do  
*ing.* this with joy, and not with <sup>7</sup> grief : for  
 this *were* unprofitable for you.

not only when it suits their own inclinations, but when it does not. To obey may happen to be easy ; to submit is always hard.

The same word is used here (and in vv. 7 and 24) to describe the Clergy as is used from time to time in the Septuagint to express one aspect of the office of the Levitical priesthood. The priest is one whose office is to rule the House of God. (See 1 Chron. ix. 11, 20 ; 2 Chron. xix. 11). Possibly it may have been the unruliness of these Hebrew Christians that led the writer to select this word. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament to describe the Christian Ministry. In 1 St. Pet. v. 3 the Clergy are warned that their rule is not to be in a domineering spirit.

**for they watch . . . account.** The right to claim obedience and submission is based upon their office and their work. They are watchmen (see Isa. lvi. 10) who are responsible for your lives to God, who will demand an account from them. The emphasis here is not on the dignity of the office but on its weighty responsibility.

**that they may do this.** 'This' may be either the care of souls or the rendering an account of the charge, but it is probably the former. To watch spiritual children walking in the way is to watch with joy ; to watch them going out of the way and to warn without effect is to be in anguish. For an illustration of the latter see Phil. iii. 18.

Pray for us : for we are persuaded that we have **18** a good conscience, desiring to live honestly in all things. And I exhort *you* the more exceedingly to **19** do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

**for this were unprofitable for you.** A very gentle warning of the danger of eternal loss.

**Prayer requested for and offered by the writer (18-21)**

**18. Pray for us.** or 'pray concerning us', i.e. bring our affairs before God. 'Us' probably includes others associated with the writer in his work or suffering.

**for we are persuaded . . . all things.** This seems to imply that their sincerity had been doubted, or that mischief-makers had been at work. The words for 'good' and 'honestly' are the adjective and adverb of the same word. 'An honest conscience' and 'live honestly' is a more accurate rendering. The writer wishes them to know not only that he believes in regard to the past that he can make his righteousness as clear as the light and his just dealing as the noon-day but that it is always his desire to make his sincerity obvious to them.

**19. the more earnestly.** The words may qualify either 'I exhort you' or 'to do this.'

**that I may be restored to you.** Possibly illness had delayed his return, and he asks them to pray for his recovery. It can hardly be imprisonment, for how should he know that he will soon be released; verse 23 implies some control over his own movements.

No more fitting conclusion could be conceived than the following benediction in which is gathered up in a

**20** Now the God of peace, who brought again from

few rich phrases all that has been taught in the Epistle and all that they have been urged to be.

**20. Now the God of peace.** Distracted with fears from without and torn with dissensions from within they have a God who gives peace—peace with Himself and peace with men. It is a favourite expression of St. Paul; Rom. xv. 33; xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 23. With the very nature of God is associated peace, and therefore 'peace-makers' shall be called His children, for they share that which is of His nature.

**who brought again from the dead . . . sheep.** His supreme gift to them is the risen and ascended Lord, who is the true Moses leading His people up out of what seems to be disaster to the promised rest. This is the first definite mention of the Resurrection in the Epistle, but it is always implied in the sacrificial entrance of the High Priest at the Ascension. Isa. lxiii. 11 is now fulfilled. Cp. Rom. x. 7.

**the great shepherd of the sheep.** The shepherd, the great one. The emphasis is on 'great'. As He is the 'great high priest' (iv. 14) so He is the great shepherd. He is 'great' in His exaltation above all other shepherds and in the unlimited extent of His pastorate. (Cp. 1 St. Peter v. 4.) Our Lord preferred to describe Himself as 'the good shepherd' rather than as the 'great' (St. John x. 14). He is 'good' in the attractive beauty of His character, and in the richness of the stores of grace He ministers. The name 'Shepherd' suggests

the dead the great shepherd of the sheep <sup>8</sup> with the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good <sup>9</sup> thing to do

<sup>8</sup> Or, *by*  
Gr. *in.*

<sup>9</sup> Many ancient authorities read **21**  
*work.*

the ignorance and helplessness of man who without guidance and care can only go astray just as sheep do. Only in Christianity do we find the combination of priest and pastor. The idea of a Hindu priest taking spiritual charge of people is alien to the conception of priesthood in Hinduism. In the Old Testament the priest is not the shepherd; that is the office of the king. In Ezek. xxxiv. the shepherds denounced are not priests but kings. But CHRIST, being Himself both priest and king, has combined the pastoral office with the priesthood. The true priest is ever a pastor.

**with the blood of the eternal covenant.** Literally 'in the blood.' He is given not only as pastor but as Priest, not only as Priest but as Sacrifice. Risen and ascended He has carried within the veil the Blood which is His own, which pledges to us blessings that are eternal. For 'in the blood' see note on x. 19.

**even our Lord Jesus.** Who is this Shepherd-Priest and Sacrifice? He is none other than He who is our own Lord, the Jesus to whom is given universal sovereignty as Man over men.

**21. make you perfect in every good thing.** The Perfect can be satisfied with nothing less than perfection. The Greek verb implies that the perfection is to be in all parts of man's nature which, fitted together, make one



<sup>10</sup> Many ancient authorities read you.

<sup>11</sup> Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

his will, working in <sup>10</sup> us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be the glory* <sup>11</sup> for ever and ever. Amen.

perfect whole. But the prayer is not only for the individual, it is also for the Church. As the individual is to be perfect, so is the body of which he is a member. 'Ye therefore shall be perfect' promised our Lord 'as your heavenly Father is perfect.' The great Shepherd, Priest and Lord is given for no lower end than this.

**to do his will.** God furnishes the power but man must use it. He gives the Shepherd but the sheep must follow. He provides the Altar but the worshipper must eat of it. The Christian Faith keeps the balance between the omnipotence of God and the responsibility of man.

**working in us . . . in his sight.** It is no external sanctity that is well pleasing to God but interior holiness; not 'the cleanness of the flesh' but of the conscience (ix. 13-14).

**through Jesus Christ.** Such holiness can only be ours in virtue of our union with Him who is alike the Source and Channel of all holiness. We are to be perfected, we are to do God's will, through Jesus Christ; the prayer which the writer offers is also through Him.

**to whom be the glory . . . Amen.** This ascription may be to 'the God of peace'; in this case a distinct pause must be made in reading, after the words 'through Jesus Christ.' But it seems unlikely that the words

But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of **22** exhortation: for I have written unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy hath **23** been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

'through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory' would have been put together unless the writer intended the ascription to be to Jesus Christ. Moreover it is in keeping with the theme of the whole letter, which is the transcendent glory of Jesus as Priest and King. As the writer began, so he closes: Jesus is the effulgence of God's glory, so he wrote at the beginning: that glory is His for eternity, so he writes at the end. The use of 'Amen' probably indicates that the words already formed part of a Christian liturgy.

Again the writer appears to have finished, but he seems to recall the sternness and abruptness of his warnings, and to fear that they may repel his readers; so he begs them to be patient with him.

**22. But I exhort you . . . exhortation.** As though he said 'I end my exhortation by exhorting you not to be offended with my exhortation.'

**for I have written . . . few words.** After all, you must remember that I might have written at greater length on so stupendous a subject, and my very brevity may cause misunderstanding.

**23. Know ye . . . set at liberty.** It is not known certainly to what this refers. The actual language may mean either that Timothy had been detained in prison or that he had discharged some mission and was

- 24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.
- 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

now free. The former is the more likely. It is a reasonable conjecture that St. Timothy hastened to Rome in answer to St. Paul's appeal (2. Tim. iv. 21); that he was then arrested and imprisoned, but escaped with his life.

**with whom, if he come . . . see you.** It probably means that they will make the journey together, if Timothy can join him before long.

**24. Salute all . . . the saints.** This shews that the letter was not written to the whole Church but to some dissatisfied or wavering section of it. They are to convey greetings not only to their own circle and to the clergy whom they regard as sympathetic but to all. The repeated 'all' is significant.

**They of Italy salute you.** This is ambiguous, and no certain conclusion can be drawn from it. But it fits well the supposition that the letter is written to Italy and that residents of Italy now absent from home send salutations to those whom they know. (See Introduction.)

**25. Grace be with you all. Amen.** Another 'all'. We have exactly the same ending in Titus iii. 15. It is '*the* grace,' that is, the grace which is specially the endowment of Christians given through Jesus Christ. It sums up all that is given through His Priesthood and Sacrifice.