

### Point and Illustration.

#### The Christ we Forget.

Is it pedantry to demand the correct spelling of proper names? In the biography of a Scotsman, written by a Scotsman, which was published recently, the name of Andrew Thomson has a *p* thrust into the heart of it. We take up *The Christ we Forget*, a Life of our Lord for Men of To-day, written by Mr. P. Whitwell Wilson (Morgan & Scott; 6s. net), and on the first page we find 'John Richard Greene.' Is it weakness to be made at once suspicious of the book?

We have got over our suspicion. We have read the book, and lay it down, not without prejudice merely but with an admiration and thankfulness that no words we can use are able to express.

Who is Mr. P. Whitwell Wilson? Turn up the name in *Who's Who*: 'WILSON, PHILIP WHITWELL, Parliamentary Correspondent, Daily News; *b.* 1875; *s.* of I. Whitwell Wilson, J.P. of County of Westmoreland, and Annie, *d.* of Jonathan Bagster, Bible-publisher; *m.* 1899, Alice A., *o. d.* of Henry Collins, Pawtucket, R.I., U.S.A.; one *s.* and two *d.* *Educ.*: Kendal Grammar School; Clare Coll., Camb. President of the Camb. Union Society; editor of the *Granta*, Public School Magazine, 1897-99; M.P. (L.) South St. Pancras, 1906-10; contested Appleby Division, Westmoreland, 1910. *Address*: The Red Gable, Meadway, Hendon, N.W. *Club*: National Liberal.'

No book is named. This is evidently Mr. Wilson's first publication. And he is a layman. The Gospels have not been his professional study, yet he knows unerringly what the study of the Gospels has come to. He has not to preach the

Gospel of the Grace of God, yet he makes every chapter a sermon of the most exquisite beauty and persuasiveness. His command of language—language that is simple without attracting attention to its simplicity, language that is hallowed and in harmony with its theme—his command of language, we say, is something. But it is only the instrument of his thought, thought that is disciplined surely by the daily practice of the presence of Christ. We shall quote a single paragraph.

"*Many*" and "*Few*."—There were so many who saw Him and knew about Him; there were so few who followed Him—so many called, so few chosen. That was why He spoke so earnestly of the broad road, where every one walks, and the strait gate, which is so seldom discovered. Ten lepers were healed, as to-day tens of millions are blessed by the material benefits of the true faith; one only returned to the Redeemer Himself, as a grateful worshipper. Yet He did not desire a testimonial, or when first He cleansed a leper He did it, as it were, confidentially, and thought only of the man visiting the priest and regaining his place in society. It was not "the cause" that absorbed His affection. He was ever seeking the individual—taking a dumb man, as at Jericho, away by himself, or a blind man, as at Jerusalem; and, gradually, by symbols of His own devising, evoking love and faith from the isolated heart, until ear heard, eye saw, tongue spoke. Of His words, all of them divine, few have been reported and published. His aim was rather, and still is, to speak to people quietly, so that no one else can hear—to make Himself, not so much a public man, as a particular and intimate Friend, who sticketh closer than a brother, "nearer than hands and feet."

## The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.LITT., HON. M.A.(OXON.), GLASGOW.

### II.

OUR modern symbolism of the priestly function does no sort of justice to the ancient view. When Matthew Arnold says of Wordsworth—

'He was a priest to us all  
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad,'

we understand that 'priest' means interpreter, one who introduces us to some deeper vision, one who opens up to us, as we say, a new world of ideas. To the author of Hebrews, such was not the ultimate function of Christ as high priest. Dogmatic theology would call this the prophetic

function of Christ. The priestly office means mediation, not interpretation. The function of the high priest is to enter and to offer: *εἰσερχεσθαι* and *προσφέρειν* form the complete action, and no distinction is drawn between the two, any more than between the terms 'priest' and 'high priest.'

The fundamental importance of this may be illustrated from the recourse made by Paul and by our author respectively to the Jeremianic oracle of the new covenant. Paul's use would be admitted by O.T. critics to be more relevant. His main interest in it lies in its prediction of the Spirit, as opposed to the Law. What appeals to Paul is the inward and direct intuition of God, which forms the burden of the oracle. But to the author of Hebrews it is the last sentence of the oracle which is supreme, *i.e.* the remission of sins, 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.' He seizes the name and fact of a 'new' covenant, as implying that the old was inadequate. But he continues: 'If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on defiled persons, give them a holiness that bears on bodily purity, how much more will the blood of Christ, who in the spirit of the eternal offered himself as an unblemished sacrifice to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve a living God? He mediates a new covenant for this reason, that those who have been called may obtain the eternal deliverance they have been promised, now that a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions involved in the first covenant.' That is, the conclusion of Jeremiah's oracle—that God will forgive and forget—is the real reason why our author quotes it. There can be no access without an amnesty for the past. The religious communion of the immediate future must be guaranteed by a sacrifice ratifying the pardon of God.

This difference between Paul and Hebrews is, of course, owing to the fact that for Hebrews the covenant or law is subordinated to the priesthood. Change the priesthood, says the writer, and *ipso facto* the law has to be changed too. The covenant is a relationship of God and men, arising out of grace, and inaugurated by some historic act; its efficiency as an institution for forgiveness and fellowship depends on the personality and standing of the priesthood, so that the appearance of Jesus as the absolute Priest does away with the inferior law.

This brings us to the heart of the Christology, the sacrifice and priestly service of Christ as the mediator of this new covenant with its eternal fellowship.

Men are sons of God, and their relation of confidence and access is based upon the function of the Son *κατ' ἐξόχην*. The author shares with Paul the view that the Son is the Son before and during his incarnate life, and yet Son in a special sense in consequence of the resurrection—or rather, as our author would have preferred to say, in consequence of the ascension. This seems to be the idea underneath the compressed clauses at the opening of the epistle. 'God has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom he appointed heir of the universe, as it was by him that he had created the world. He, reflecting God's bright glory and stamped with God's own character, sustains the universe by his word of power. When he had secured our purification from sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and thus he is superior to the angels, as he has inherited a Name superior to theirs. For to what angel did God ever say—

Thou art my Son,  
To-day have I become thy Father?'

(referring to the ancient notion that the king first became conscious of his latent divine sonship at his accession to the throne). The name or dignity which Christ inherits, as the result of his redemptive work, is that of Son; as the following quotation from the O.T. psalm suggests, the resurrection or exaltation marks, as it does for Paul, the fully operative sonship of Christ. The only way to inherit or possess the universe is to endure the suffering and death which purified human sin and led to the enthronement of Christ. This corresponds to the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, but Hebrews does not here elaborate the human opposition; it rather concentrates upon the fact that this divine being was sent into the world because he was God's Son, and that he freely undertook this mission for God's other sons on earth.

The mission was a will of God which involved sacrifice. That is the point of the quotation (10<sup>5f.</sup>) from the fortieth psalm—not to prove that obedience to God was better than sacrifice, but to bring out the truth that God's will required a higher kind of sacrifice than the Levitical, namely, the personal, free self-sacrifice of Christ in the

body. Even this is more than self-sacrifice in our modern sense of the term. It is 'by this will,' the writer argues, that 'we are consecrated, because Jesus Christ once for all has offered up his body.' No doubt, the offering is eternal, it is not confined to the historical act on Calvary. 'He has entered heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf' (9<sup>24</sup>): 'he ever liveth to make intercession for us' (7<sup>25</sup>). Still, the author is more realistic in expression than the tradition of the Testament of Levi (3), which makes the angel of the Presence in the third heaven offer a spiritual and bloodless sacrifice to God in propitiation for the sins of ignorance committed by the righteous. Hebrews assigns entirely to Christ the intercessory functions which the piety of the later Judaism had already begun to divide among angels and departed saints, but it also makes the sacrifice of Jesus one of blood—a realism which was essential on the author's scheme of argument from the entrance of the O.T. high priest into the holy of holies.

The superior or rather the absolute efficacy of the blood of Christ depends on his absolute value and significance as the Son of God. It is his person and work which render his self-sacrifice valid and supreme. But this is asserted rather than explained. Indeed, it is asserted on the ground of a presupposition which was assumed as axiomatic, namely, the impossibility of communion with God apart from blood shed in sacrifice. For example, when the writer encourages his readers by reminding them of their position, that they 'have come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to the sprinkled blood whose message is nobler than Abel's,' he does not mean to draw an antithesis between Abel's blood as a cry for vengeance and Christ's blood as a cry for intercession. The fundamental antithesis lies between exclusion and inclusion. Abel's blood demanded the excommunication of the sinner, as an outcast from God's presence; Christ's blood draws the sinner near and ratifies the covenant. The author denies to the O.T. cultus of sacrifice any atoning value, but at the same time he reaffirms its basal principle, that blood in sacrifice is essential to communion with the deity. Blood offered in sacrifice does possess a religious efficacy, to expiate and purify. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. We ask, why? But the ancient world never dreamt of asking, why? What

puzzles a modern was an axiom to the ancient. The argument of Hebrews swings from this postulate, and no attempt is made to rationalize it.

In the Law of Holiness, incorporated in Leviticus, there is indeed one incidental allusion to the rationalé of sacrifice or blood-expiation, when, in prohibiting the use of blood as a food, the taboo proceeds: 'the life of the body is in the blood, and I have given it to you for the altar to make propitiation for yourselves, for the blood makes propitiation by means of the life' (*i.e.* the life inherent in it). This is reflection on the meaning of sacrifice, but it does not carry us very far, for it only explains the peculiar efficacy of blood by its mysterious potency of life. Competent Semitic scholars warn us against finding in these words (Lev 17<sup>11</sup>) either the popular idea of the substitution of the victim for the sinner, or even the theory that the essential thing in sacrifice is the offering of a life to God. Now, as far as the Hebrew text goes, this may be correct. But the former idea soon became attached to the verse, as we see from the LXX—*τὸ γὰρ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἀντὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξιλάσεται*. This view does not seem to be common in later Jewish thought, though it was corroborated by the expiatory value attached to the death of the martyrs. It is in this later world, however, rather than in the primitive world of Leviticus, that the atmosphere of the Hebrew-idea is to be sought, the idea that because Jesus was what he was, his death has such an atoning significance as to inaugurate a new and final relation between God and men, the idea that his blood purifies the conscience because it is *his* blood, the blood of the sinless Christ, who is both the priest and the sacrifice. When the author writes that Christ 'in the spirit of the eternal' offered himself as an unblemished sacrifice to God, he has in mind the contrast between the annual sacrifice on the day of atonement and the sacrifice of Christ which never needed to be repeated, because it had been offered in the spirit and—as we might say—in the eternal order of things. It was a sacrifice bound up with his death in history. But it belonged essentially to the higher order of absolute reality. The writer breathed the Philonic atmosphere in which the eternal Now overshadowed the things of space and time. But he knew this sacrifice had taken place on the cross, and his problem was one which never confronted Philo, the problem which we moderns have to face

in our own day and way when we are asked, How can a single historical fact possess a timeless significance? How can Christianity claim to be final, on the basis of revelation at a specific period in history? The writer of Hebrews answers this by explaining that the mediating sacrifice of Christ took place in the eternal order, that his person is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' and that nothing can impair or supplement what has thus been done 'in the spirit of the eternal.'

But while this is the most characteristic feature of the Christology, it belongs to the writer's higher gnosis, and alongside of it we find traces of primitive and popular christologies. (a) One of these is the eschatological idea of messiah as the heret, who at the resurrection inherits full messianic power as the divine Son or royal *Kύριος*. Strictly speaking, this hardly harmonizes with the conception of Christ as the divine Son from all eternity, but it reappears now and then. (b) Again, we have a primitive survival in the isolated allusion (2<sup>14-15</sup>) to the overthrow of the devil by the death of Jesus, an idea which lies quite outside the regular scheme of the high priestly sacrifice and service. 'Since the children share blood and flesh, he himself participated in their nature, so that by dying he might crush him who wields the power of death (that is to say, the devil) and release from thralldom those who lay under a lifelong fear of death.' This would not be so remarkable in Paul. The ruin of the devil by messiah was a commonplace of apocalyptic eschatology, and the connexion of the devil and death was not unfamiliar. But while Paul saw the bondage of the evil power in the sinful desires of the flesh, our author sees it in the

fear of death. With the overthrow of the tyrant, his prisoners are freed from the terror of his power. But no explanation is given of how this is effected by the death of Christ. We can only suppose that it alludes to a popular belief in the connexion between sin and death which the author does not develop. Elsewhere, the effect of Christ's sacrifice, which is indifferently described by the verbs *ἀγιάζειν, καθαρίζειν* and *τελειοῦν*, is bound up with the axiomatic blood-theory of the ancient world. According to Paul, Christ's death is a sacrifice which expiates the penalty of sin for those whom he represents; according to Hebrews, his death is also due to God's grace and also a representative act, but it is specifically the sacrifice which purifies the defilement of sin. Both work out the primitive idea that 'Christ died for sins according to the scriptures,' but they work it out from different points of view, and Hebrews starts from the sacerdotal. It is strange that Calvin and Matthew Arnold, who do not often agree, think that Hebrews presents Christ as a priest who appeases the wrath of God by a vicarious sacrifice which reinstates the sinner in God's favour. But the O.T. sacrifices to which Hebrews appeals are not intended to avert the wrath of God from offenders without; they imply his gracious attitude to the people and seek to preserve it. The annual sacrifice by the high priest on the day of atonement was to assure the people that the flow of blessing was not interrupted. Christ's sacerdotal function, according to Hebrews, is not to appease the divine wrath but to establish once and for all the final and immediate relation between God and his people. The wrath of God, in Hebrews, is for apostates and renegades.

## Entre Nous.

Ralph Hodgson.

The title is simply *Poems*, by Ralph Hodgson (Macmillan; 3s. 6d. net). The poems are refreshingly objective. Mr. Hodgson has an eye for nature and folk—especially gipsy and other unconventional folk. He sympathizes with Eve (abhorring the Serpent) and all her daughters, both the righteous and the sinners. He sym-

pathizes with Adam and all men. His song is

The song of men all sorts and kinds,  
As many tempers, moods and minds  
As leaves are on a tree,  
As many faiths and castes and creeds,  
As many human bloods and breeds  
As in the world may be.

He sympathizes even with death.