

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

A COMMENTARY

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THE EPISTLE
TO THE HEBREWS

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INTRODUCTION

*Authenticity—Authorship—
Characteristics of the epistle.*

ALTHOUGH the Epistle to the Hebrews occupies but a small space in the Bible, it is so full of matters that deserve careful study that its lessons cannot be exhausted. It contains many of the “deep things” of the Truth. It is a standing illustration of the principles upon which the typical things of the tabernacle, and the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, are to be interpreted. A consideration of its teaching will enable us to appreciate the Apostle’s statement that the Jew had “the form of knowledge and of the Truth in the law” (Rom. 2:20).

Of the authenticity of the book little need be said. In the earliest writing of Christian origin outside the New Testament there are unmistakable quotations from the epistle, although it is not expressly mentioned. The following may be taken as an illustration:

By him would God have us taste the knowledge of immortality, who, being the brightness of His glory, is by so much greater than the angels as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For so, it is written, "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." But to His Son, thus saith the Lord: "Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten thee." "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." And again He saith unto him, "Sit thou on My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (The Apostolic Fathers: First Epistle of Clement, chap. 36.)

In later writers there are fairly frequent references to, or quotations from, the epistle, and its place in the canon of Scripture cannot seriously be disputed. Yet after all the book itself is its best witness, for nothing but inspiration could account for its wonderful setting-forth of the subjects of which it treats.

The book is anonymous. In view of the character of its contents, it is not surprising that many attempts should have been made to ascertain from whom it emanated; and although we may well conclude that the fact of its anonymity renders the question of authorship immaterial, it is only natural that we should like to know the origin of such a treatise. It has been ascribed to Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, Timothy, and Titus. Some of these can only be regarded as mere guesses, for where no other writing of an individual is known, and there is no real tradition that he wrote such an epistle, it is quite valueless to suggest that such a one was the author in question.

So far as the Western section of the Christian world is concerned, the early tradition seems to be against the idea that Paul was the writer, whereas in the East it was generally attributed to him. Modern criticism has practically unanimously decided against the possibility of Paul being the writer. No one who is acquainted with the vagaries of critical conclusions will attach undue weight to this fact; indeed for some reasons it would rather lead us to consider the traditional view of the East to be correct. That Paul's name should not be mentioned is not surprising. He was not likely to meet with a kindly reception from the Jews; even Jewish Christians were inclined to be suspicious of him on account of what they understood to be his attitude towards the Law. And yet this very fact may be a reason why he should have addressed such a communication to them, for the main thesis is to prove that the writings so highly prized by them contained within them the best of proofs that in Christ the Law was both fulfilled and abrogated. The argument that Jesus was superior to angels, to Moses (through whom the Law came) and to Aaron (the first High Priest under the Law), is just what we might imagine Paul using to convince his fellow-countrymen of the irrefutable grounds upon which Christianity rested.

There is one consideration bearing upon the question of authorship which is worthy of note. In his second

epistle Peter makes a reference to Paul and his writings as follows:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3, 15 and 16.)

This epistle was addressed to Jews (comp. 1 Pet. 1, 1, and 2 Pet. 3, 1). To them, Peter declares, Paul had written, had spoken of the longsuffering of the Lord, and referred to things “hard to be understood.” It is true the word “longsuffering” does not occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews in relation to God, but the idea is clearly to be seen there. Indeed, the whole argument of the epistle is an indication of the long suffering of God, who purposes to achieve the salvation of His people notwithstanding the constant failure of Israel to attain unto His righteousness. We read, for example, that some must enter into rest (chap. 4:6), that the Lord will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, being merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembering their iniquities no more (chap. 8:8-12). As regards “things hard to be understood,” it reads like an echo of the language in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where in reference to Melchizedek it is said, “Of whom we have many things to say and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of

hearing.” The epistle contains many such matters; no other epistle could be adduced to which the statement could more fitly be applied.

Thus, although it is possible to question the personality of the author, it may be concluded that in all probability, even if we do not speak more definitely, the epistle came from the pen of the apostle Paul.¹

When we examine the epistle itself we find it to be unique. It is argumentative beyond any other, and its principal theme is “betterness.” The constant use of the words “therefore” and “wherefore” is indicative of its argumentative character. The betterness argument is shown by the following expressions: “Having become by so much better than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they” (chap. 1:4). “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you” (chap. 6:9). “Without any dispute the less is blessed of the better” (chap. 7:7). “A bringing in thereupon of a better hope” (verse 19). “By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant” (verse 22). “But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises” (chap. 8:6), “It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be

¹ For an interesting and instructive vindication of the Pauline authorship of the epistle, the reader is referred to an article by W. J. Y. in the *Christadelphian* for 1911, pp. 445 and 494.

cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these “ (chap. 9:23). “For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one” (chap. 10:34). “But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly” (chap. 11:16). “Others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection” (verse 35). “God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (verse 40). “Ye are come ... to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel” (chap. 12:24).

The constant reiteration of the word is striking and arrests attention. Around it the argument turns. Generally the comparison is between the Mosaic and the new, or everlasting, covenant, the object being to show that in every respect the latter is the better-better in its hopes and rewards, better in its sacrifices, its Mediator, its priesthood, and its channels of communication, even though the former covenant was made known by angels (chap. 2, 2). The same idea is also suggested by the use of such expressions as “how much more” and “how much also.”

In addition to the general argument relative to the betterness of the new covenant, a section of the epistle is taken up with the argument that in Christ the rites

and ceremonies of the Mosaic covenant find fulfilment, and that by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, the necessity for further sacrifices was removed. The force of this argument, if proved, upon the relative claims of the two covenants, and also on the main thesis of the epistle, is obvious.

CHAPTER I

*God hath spoken—God's Son—The heir of all things—
The maker of the worlds—The effulgence of God's
glory—The impress of His substance—The upholder of
all things—Purification for sins—Names in the
Scriptures—The name "Jesus"—The Memorial Name
and Immanuel—The order of the argument—The
priesthood—Who are the angels?—The supremacy of
Jesus—The Sonship of Christ—Worshipped by angels—
Sonship and kingship—Heavens and earth—The
heavens and earth of Zion—The millennial age an
intermediate state—The eternal beyond—The right hand
of the Father—The work of angels.*

THE opening verse of the epistle, one of the most impressive statements in the Scriptures, is in strict accord with the argument to be maintained.

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, by divers portions and in divers manners, hath in the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son. (Heb. 1:1.)

Before considering the comparison here suggested, it is worth staying to consider the meaning of such a declaration. In these brief words we have expressed one of the greatest of all facts, one which changes the prospect of the future from grave anxiety, if not of black despair, to bright and rosy hope. God hath spoken! Do we realise all that this means? Try to imagine the world without a revelation from God. Suppose God had never spoken to man since the fall. The perplexity and failing hearts which Christ foretold

should be characteristic of the last days would be infinitely increased, for every attempt to realise the future, both in relation to individuals and communities, would only result in unanswered questions. Hopeless and helpless indeed would be man's lot. The ameliorating influences of the Bible, even though it be little esteemed and misunderstood, would be absent. It is impossible to realise what would be the condition of the world without the Bible. For centuries it has been as the breath of life to the world, and all the best that has ever been accomplished in the past or the present is almost entirely due, directly or indirectly, to its influence. Twentieth-century intellectualism may refuse to recognise the fact. Higher criticism has for years been doing its best, or rather its worst, to destroy all real belief in it. Yet the great truth remains, the Scriptures are with us, they tower above all other literature, and nothing will explain their place in the world and their influence upon mankind save the great truth enunciated in these opening words—God hath spoken. Thanks be to Him, it is really true that “men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16, A.V.).

It is not part of the purpose before us to prove this, but there can be no question that a close and careful study of the Epistle to the Hebrews will furnish us with convincing proof of its inspiration. When all is

said and done, it always remains that the Bible is its own best witness.

The statement which we have just reviewed introduces at once the main theme that is to be before us. There is an implied comparison between the revelations of the past and the declaration of the mind of God in and through His Son. Christ being the manifestation of the eternal God, the Word made flesh, there was in him a focussing of all that had gone before, and his sayings were an authoritative setting-forth of the word of the Lord. "He taught them as one having authority." "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time ... but I say unto you!"

Before entering upon the first comparison which is set up, we are arrested by the language in which the writer introduces the person of the Son of God. He described as:

A son, whom He appointed heir of all things through whom also He made the worlds [margin, ages], who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image [margin, impress] of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. (Heb. 1:2-4).

Some of these expressions constitute difficulties to many, and deserve, therefore, some attention in order that their true meaning may be brought out.

That Jesus was a son of God needs no comment. He was a son not by adoption but by begettal (Luke 1:35). He was consequently "the only begotten of the

Father,” God’s “beloved son.”

The issue between Christianity and Judaism was joined in this declaration. It indicated that Jesus of Nazareth was greater than any who had appeared before him. The angels were ministers, Jesus was a son. The Jew outside the Christian community might object to such a claim, yet his own Scriptures plainly taught that such a person should appear. Of the promised seed of David it had been said, “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son” (2 Sam. 7:14). He was to be the son of Yahweh’s handmaid (Psa. 86:16). “Thou art My son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psa. 2:7). Such passages require that the Messiah should be the Son of God in no adoptive sense, but by miraculous intervention in the raising-up the son of His handmaid. The unbelief of the Jew in such a possibility was not justified. To those who did believe the fact of the Divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth prepared the way for all that was to follow in the course of the argument.

This Son had been appointed “the heir of all things”; through him God made the ages. The language used reminds the careful reader of the language of the Apostle Paul in his letters to the Colossians and Ephesians.¹

¹ 1 Colos. 1: 15-18; Eph. 1: 9-11, 23.

There the Son is described as the firstborn from the dead, the beginning, the head of the Church, in whom was to be summed up all things, and to whom all things” were to be put in subjection. Whatsoever God has promised concerning the future is summed up in him. It is by reason of this that he is the “Heir of all things,” for “How many soever be the promises of God, in him is the Yea, wherefore also through him is the Amen” (2 Cor. 1:20). The application of the term “all things” will be found later in the comments on the phrase “the upholder of all things.”

The reference to “all things” of which the Son is the heir helps to an understanding of the next reference to him as the maker of the worlds. The margin supplies the alternative “ages,” the word in the Greek being *aionas*. Adopting this rendering, the term “made” seems out of place. The word so translated is *poieo*, which has a very wide application in its usage, including that of causation. The ages are leading up to an age when the Son will be manifested not merely as the heir, but as the inheritor of all the things which have been promised to him. That age and all that appertains to it will be possible because of his place in the purpose of God, especially his sacrificial death and his resurrection.

They will therefore be constituted on the basis

of his work, and he is therefore the “maker of the ages.”

This Son, Jesus the Christ, is the effulgence of God’s glory. The idea of effulgence is a reflection. In the original the word is compounded of two words meaning “from,” and “to shine,” or “to view in the clearest light,” “see distinctly,” “discern.” There seems to be an adaptation of the language of Ezekiel in describing the cherubim and the glory of the Lord which is to enter the temple of the age to come¹ particularly of his statement that “the glory of the Lord mounted up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory” (Ezek. 10:4).

The glory of the Lord may be manifested in many ways. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psa. 19:1) because they show forth, by their beauty, order, and regularity, the power and greatness of God. Saints, by walking in His fear, should cause men to glorify God (Matt. 5:16), so that their righteous actions are the glory of God, because those actions indicate the influence of His Word. This is the sense to be apprehended in the promise that “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21). With this meaning in view it will readily be understood how Jesus of Nazareth was the effulgence

¹ Ezek. 1, 10, 43.

of God's glory, both in the reflective sense, and in the other and higher sense that from him shone forth the glory of God, for God was in him, and the works which he did were those of the Father. The thought is expressed by Paul elsewhere when he refers to—

The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God ... it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:4 and 6.)

In Jesus Christ we view the glory of God, for “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

This leads quite naturally to the other portion of the reference, “the very image of His substance,” or, adopting the marginal rendering, “the impress of His substance.” The Son bears an exact impress of the Father. The Greek for “impress” is *charakter*. It is associated with the engraver, who engraves that which he desires to impress upon the substance; by extension the word became applied to the figure thus impressed.

It is applied to “any fixed and sharply-marked lineaments, material or spiritual, by which a person or an object may be recognised and distinguished.”¹

Thus the character of God finds expression in the person of Jesus Christ. A member of our race, he exhibits to us what, in character, the Father is. Substance

¹ Alford on Heb. 1: 3. 15

is, in the original, *hypostasis*, and the application of this word constitutes somewhat of a difficulty in the passage. Amongst the meanings of the word may be mentioned—a standing under; anything set under, a support; the base or foundation; the groundwork or subject matter of a speech (metaphor); firmness, steadiness; a resolution, purpose; subsistence, reality, real being; nature.¹ The idea left upon the mind by these definitions in applying the term to Jesus Christ is that the fundamental firmness, the reality, the resolution and purpose of God are impressed upon and are expressed by him, and the combination of the two words, *charakter* and *hypostasis*, indicate that they were so impressed upon him as by an engraver, whereby he was able to illustrate to the children of men the character and purpose of the Deity, giving in his person an actual manifestation of what was otherwise only declared concerning God.

He is also said to be the upholder of all things by the word of his power. Orthodox commentators give this a very wide application, rendering “all things” as “the universe.” Such a translation or interpretation goes far beyond what the Scriptures warrant. It would, for example, imply that God purposed, as it were, to abdicate from His position as Sustainer

¹ Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*.

and Ruler of His universal creation. The idea is too absurd to be entertained for an instant. The things of which Christ is heir are well defined in the Scriptures. They include all that is necessary for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose that God shall be all in all. The land, the throne, the uttermost parts of the earth, the nations, are his. To enable him to effect the necessary change in the situation, all authority in heaven and in earth has been committed unto him, but to extend such a promise to make him the heir, or upholder, of the universe is to go far beyond what the promises in relation to him require. On the same principle that his heirship of all things is necessarily limited to the things promised, so the all things which he upholds by the word of his power are limited to those with which he is concerned in the purpose of the Father.

When the promises are fulfilled and Christ delivers up the Kingdom to the Father, and God is all in all, it will be seen that that all depended upon him. He was the sacrifice, the priest, and the mediator. All his co-rulers will be “in him” through the means appointed by the Father. During the millennial reign he will be the king, dispensing the covenant blessings to all who live under his beneficent sway, finally bringing the whole into subjection to him and his Father. Whatever process may be instituted to effect this, it will certainly be in and

through him, and thus when all is fulfilled God will have gathered together in one all things in Christ.

Finally, so far as these introductory comments of the Apostle are concerned, the Son made “purification of sins,” and “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” In the former of these sayings we are introduced to the essential feature of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth—God’s Son. The sense of the expression is to make clean by a washing off, or away, sins. There is an anticipation here of the whole argument which is to follow. It was intended to show that what could not be done by the law had been accomplished in Christ. In other words it had been declared elsewhere that “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh” God did by “sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). The blood of bulls and goats offered continually under the Law could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4), whereas, as every believer of the Truth knew, Christ was the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Comment on this may be deferred until the matter is reached in the detailed argument. The same will apply to the reference to Christ sitting at the right hand of God. It is the subject of proof a little later on, and therefore will be best dealt with when the argument is reached.

The Son of God who made purification of sins had thereby inherited a more excellent name than the

angels. The consideration of this statement opens up some of the most interesting phases of the Divine revelation.

In the Scriptures the name which is borne by a man or an angel, or adopted by God Himself, is of much more importance than it is amongst ourselves. It is a matter of very little moment what name a man bears nowadays; it is merely a convenient means of designating him.: In the Bible it is often otherwise. There, names are often descriptive of the mission of the individual, his character, or his place in the purpose of God. The various names attributed to the Deity are of this descriptive character. El, strength or might; El Shaddai, the strength of the mighty ones; Yahweh, He who shall be; are familiar illustrations of this. Among the names of men we have Abraham, the father of a multitude; Jacob, Supplanter, changed to Israel, a prince with God; David, beloved; Isaiah, salvation of Yahweh; Ezekiel, God will strengthen; Peter, a rock.

So far as the angels are concerned very few names are recorded. Two familiar ones that are mentioned are of the descriptive kind, but they do not tell us much about those who bear them. Gabriel means a man (or warrior) of God, being compounded of *geber*, a valiant man or warrior, and *El*, God, whilst Michael means Who like God. Both names are evidently expressive, but they are not sufficiently definitive to give any particular indication of the

positions of those to whom they apply, and they do not teach us much about them.

The name Jesus was not the choice of either Joseph or Mary, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins,” said the angel to Joseph when referring to his birth. No doubt the angel used the Hebrew form of the name, Joshua. This name is a combination of Yah (a shortened form of Yahweh) and *yasha*, to be open, wide, or free, to be saved, to free or succour. The name is thus the equivalent of “God will save.” It might be argued that this could not be the name intended in the argument of the epistle because it is there said that the more excellent name had been obtained by inheritance, “he hath inherited a more excellent name than they,” whereas this name was given before the child was born. But the name was prophetic; “for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.” It was given because it was foreseen that he would be faithful, and perfectly fulfil the mission entrusted to him; that he would conform to the definitely-appointed conditions which were necessary to enable him to be the Saviour of his people. Thus, although the name was given before his birth, it could rightly be said to be received by inheritance, or, as the word really implies, by allotment, or assignment; assigned to him because of his faithful adherence to his Father’s commands.

In this name of Jesus, then, we have the Memorial Name of God, and the idea of salvation. This in itself is not necessarily distinctive of Jesus as compared with angels. Their names also include the Name of God— but not His Memorial Name—and they have been associated with deliverance or salvation. Of one of them it was testified, “My Name is in him.” Their mission in the past has frequently been to deliver or save God’s people, and it is so even now, for “the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa. 34:7). But all the deliverances which are recorded in connection with the ministry of angels have been of a temporal character, bounded by the limits of human life, such as the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, shutting the mouths of lions, protecting from fire, and so forth. These examples of deliverance may have had a relation to a future redemption, yet the greatest work recorded of an angel would not have made redemption possible for anyone apart from the mission of Jesus. The salvation which he will give is one from sin and death, it will bring eternal life and a participation in the Divine nature to all who eventually benefit thereby. Thus he declares, “I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades” (Rev. 1:18). “For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:26). “Because I live ye

shall live also” (John 14:19). “My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish” (John 10:27 and 28). “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me though he die yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Hence the name of Jesus, as a Saviour, is transcendentally great, and his mission as expressed in his name is far beyond that of the angels.

There is another item of this phase of the name of Jesus which must not be lost sight of in this connection. Jesus is the embodiment of the Memorial Name of the Deity, Ehyeh asher Ehyeh, I will be who I will be (Exod. 3:14 and 15, margin). When that name was first proclaimed as a memorial nothing was said as to its future development, or the accomplishment of the purpose which was enshrined in it. Then it only indicated that God had a purpose which should certainly be; it implied that there should be some one or ones in and through whom it should be realised. The prophets gradually unfolded more of the meaning to be attached to it, but it was not until the birth of Jesus of Nazareth that it became apparent how the Memorial Name should take, if it may be so expressed, a concrete form among men. With his birth a great step was taken towards its fulfilment, for he was Immanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23), God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). His claims were most

remarkable, so wonderful that he must be held to be either the greatest religious impostor the world has ever seen, or the supreme person he claimed to be, one who had by inheritance obtained a name more excellent than any of the angels had ever attained. Listen to a few of his claims. “Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10 and 11). “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (verse 9). Apostolic references are to the same effect. “All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses” (2 Cor. 5:18 and 19). In the last message to the servants of God the same thing is still emphasised. “I am the First, and the Last, and the Living One” (Rev. 1:17). “Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:12 and 13). “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). This latter quotation is suggestive of the Elohim of Amen referred to in Isa. 65, translated in our version “the God of truth.”

If Jesus were nothing more than man, such claims and statements would be inexplicable. They condemn Unitarianism and kindred theories, for even the extreme upholders of such views are not prepared to say that Jesus was an impostor. At the same time they are equally subversive of the doctrine of trinitarianism, a doctrine which one of its supporters has declared to be “made up of a number of propositions, each of which, if maintained to the exclusion of the rest, is a heresy.”¹ A doctrine which requires a whole string of heretical statements to express it may well be called, as defined in its official creed, “incomprehensible”; it contrasts most disadvantageously with the simple, yet deep, doctrine which is involved in the name Immanuel. The latter is full of beauty and harmony, the former is confusion which becomes worse confounded the more it is explained. As the Son of the Eternal, the only begotten of the Father, the Word made flesh, Jesus was the manifestation of the Father who dwelt in him; a totally different idea from the theory which makes him the second person of a coequal trinity, the eternal Son of an eternal Father, an idea so amazingly self-contradictory that one wonders how its expounders fail to see its ridiculous character.

When the truth upon this subject is believed, the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews as to the

¹ Newman. *The Development of Christian Doctrine*

superiority of Jesus over angels is perceived in its fulness, and we realise that Jesus has obtained a more excellent name than they. When all that follows from it is considered in connection with the finality of the purpose of God in Christ Jesus, it is easily understood that even angels and authorities and powers have been made subject to him (1 Pet. 3:22). It should be noted that the writer distinctly says that Christ became better than the angels, implying that there was a time when this was not the case. Such an idea is foreign to orthodox religion, but it is in accord with the truth that Jesus was “made a little lower than the angels.” Having been “made perfect through sufferings,” he became so much better than the angels because of his faithfulness in the mission of making purification of sins.

Hitherto the epistle has been taken up with a series of declarations. Inspiration might well have stopped here and left us to fashion our beliefs accordingly. But God does not act in this way. “Come now and let us reason together” is a Divine invitation. God does not ask for blind faith, or credulity; He appeals to reason, He gives reasons, and so we now enter upon a long argumentative section, the outcome of which will be found to justify all the great things which have been said of the Son in the four opening verses.

When we examine the course of the argument, we

might at first think that the order of the comparisons had been badly chosen. The usual method of comparison, when we are endeavouring to illustrate the superlative position of one person or thing in contrast with others, is to start with the lowest comparison and work by successive stages to the highest. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the order of the comparisons is (*a*) angels, (*b*) Moses, including a reference to Joshua, (*c*) the high priests. Now it would certainly seem that if the argument could be sustained which showed that the Son was superior to angels, all else would be unnecessary, and that his superiority to Moses and the high priests must follow as a matter of course. But that is only so on a casual view of the matter, divorced from the argument as a whole. When the theme of the epistle is considered, the order adopted is seen to be in strict accord with the object in view. That object is to prove the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old.

Now to the Jew the supreme representative of the Mosaic system—the Old Covenant—was the high priest. True the law had been given “by the dispensation of angels,” had been “spoken by angels,” and “ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator.” True that mediator was Moses, with whom God had spoken face to face. Both of these agencies, however, were in the past. The work of angels in relation to the Law had been an initial one only; the mission of

Moses had been confined to the forty years which intervened between his commission at Horeb and his death. But the priesthood was always with them. In every age the high priest was the representative of the Law in all its majesty and the richness of its ritual. Year by year he entered into the holy of holies, made atonement for Israel, and came forth to pronounce a blessing on the people. Hence it is a strictly logical method that compares the Son first with angels, then with Moses, and finally with the high priests. By thus establishing the superiority of Jesus over the high priest, it showed to the Jew who appreciated the argument that to comply with the Law and its ritual, and to trust to the mediation of the Aaronic priesthood, was to “turn to the weak and beggarly elements,” because they were part of an inferior system which was superseded in Christ.

Following the order indicated, we have first of all to consider in what respects Jesus, the Son of God, was superior to angels. In making this comparison, it may be a surprise to some to find how scanty is the information which we possess concerning these wonderful beings. Of their origin we are told nothing, nor is anything recorded as to why they have been placed in their present exalted position. They are anterior to man, of course; they are evidently the beings indicated in God’s question to Job:

“Whereupon were the foundations thereof [the earth] fastened?

Or who laid the corner-stone thereof when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:6 and 7).

We may safely infer that they have passed through a period of probation, for it is no presumption to believe that the Scriptural principle of “probation before exaltation” is of universal application. Automatic righteousness is an idea that will never appeal to a truly devout mind. This inference is strengthened by their own statement when Adam and Eve had sinned: “Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil,” for such a saying obviously suggests that they had acquired their knowledge by an experimental process, in which they had chosen the good and overcome the evil, on account of which they had been exalted to the spirit nature which they now possess. They are strong, immortal, the executors of God’s behests, the protectors of His saints; they are, though unseen and - unheeded, manipulating human affairs so that they may progress towards the consummation which God has purposed and revealed. Above all, they are implicitly obedient to His decrees. These are points which may be gathered from the Scriptures concerning them. Beyond these we know very little. No doubt the reason for the scarcity of information regarding the angels is that such knowledge is not in any way necessary for the purpose for which the Bible has been given. It is a book for the human race. It reveals all that is necessary for us to know concerning ourselves, our origin and destiny, and of the purpose of God in relation to the earth. Consequently, angels are only referred to when it is necessary to do so because of the part which they have played, or are to play, in connection with these matters. Under the name, or title,

of Elohim¹ (almost always translated God) they are referred to in the record of the creation. From this it is evident that they are of mighty strength; at the same time it has to be recognised that their power is not inherent, but is derived from the Deity, the Supreme, the Almighty First Cause—El Shaddai. The following quotation aptly illustrates the relationship:

As we have seen, Moses and the prophets teach one self-existent, supreme fountain of Power, EL, who is Spirit, and self-named I Shall Be, or Yahweh: that this one Yahweh-Spirit Power is “God” in the highest sense, and constitutes the “Godhead,” or Father in heaven; that He is the Springhead of many streams, or rivers of Spirit, which assume organic forms according to the will of the Yahweh-Spirit Power, and that when formed after the model, archetype, or pattern, presented in His own hypostasis, or substance, they become Spirit-Elohim, or Sons of God; and are Spirit, because “born of the Spirit”—emanations of the formative Spirit being *ex autou*, out of, Him. The Spirit-Elohim was also “God”; nevertheless they are created. They are formed and made

¹ That the Hebrew *elohim* may be applied to angels is recognised by it being so translated in Psalm 8:5, a translation which is fully justified by the fact that in a quotation of this verse in the epistle now before us, the Greek is *angelos*—angels, and by a comparison of the following texts: Exod. 3:4, with Acts 7:35; Psalm 97:7, with Heb. 1:6.

out of and by that which is uncreated. They are Spirit-forms, the substance of which (spirit) is eternal: while the forms are from a beginning. Each one is a God in the sense of partaking of the Divine Nature, and being therefore a Son of God.¹

We thus conclude that they are created beings, but the highest form of such intelligencies, the supreme manifestations, so far as the Old Testament carries us, of the wisdom and power of God.

Such are the beings than whom Jesus is declared to be better, and the reasons for this superiority are set out in considerable detail in the first and second chapters of the epistle. These reasons may be set out as follows:

- (a) That Jesus was the only begotten of the Father —the Eternal.
- (b) That angels are to worship him.
- (c) That certain promises had been made concerning him, having special relation to a throne.
- (d) That he has been exalted to the Father's right hand.
- (e) That the world to come has, prospectively, been put in subjection under him.
- (f) That he is the author of eternal salvation to many brethren, having made reconciliation for sins.

¹ Phanerosis, p. 23. *See also The Names and Titles of the Deity.*

Taking up the points of comparison as just outlined, we note (*a*) that Jesus is better than the angels because he is the only begotten Son of God. The argument in the epistle is—

For unto which of the angels 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?¹

The form in which the question is put involves that the answer is to be in the negative. Whatever the origin of the angels may have been, it was not that of direct Sonship by begetting. This fact singles out Jesus from amongst them, and places him altogether above them, for the relationship of a father to a son is essentially closer than that which exists between Creator and created. There is a personal relationship and association introduced that our own natural instincts enable us to appreciate. The Divine origin of Jesus of Nazareth is an integral portion of the One Faith, and this particular section of the epistle is a most damaging argument against the assertions of Unitarians and other supporters of Josephite theories in regard to the birth of Jesus. From the earliest times this phase of the Truth has been set forth, both by statement and type. The doctrine reaches back as far as the Garden

¹ It may be pointed out that both in the Hebrew of the psalm and in the Greek of the epistle the “I” is emphatic: “I and no other” (Alford).

of Eden, when it was foretold that “the seed of the woman” should bruise the sin-power in the head. This promise being coupled with the slaying of animals, whereby coats of skins were provided as a covering for our first parents, gave the first adumbration of the sacrificial element of the mission of the woman’s seed.

In Mosaic times the direction, “If thou make Me an altar of stone thou shalt not build it of hewn stones; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it” (Exod. 20:25), expresses the same truth in type. The prophets also pointed to this Divine origin of the Messiah. “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), “which is, being interpreted, God with us” (Matt. 1:23). “But thou, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth” (Mic. 5:2 and 3). The Psalmist, too, refers to him as “the son of Yahweh’s handmaid,” whilst Daniel referred to him under the figure of a stone cut out of the mountains without hands.

These predictions and shadowy representations are explained by the New Testament history. “Fear

not,” said the angel to Joseph, “to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:20). Previously, in response to Mary’s question, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” the angel Gabriel had said, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). How this fact is emphasised in subsequent pages it is scarcely necessary to illustrate. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). “The only begotten Son” (verse 18). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “The only begotten Son of God” (verse 18). “God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).

Thus prophecy, type, and historical realisation, all converge in this fact and indicate the superiority of Jesus to the angels, for “unto which of the angels said He at any time: Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee?” “The first of the reasons for the superiority of Jesus may therefore be considered as conclusively proved.

Not only is it clear that the Messiah must be greater

than angels because he is the Son of God in a way which cannot be predicated of any other being, it is also proved by the fact that (*b*) angels are to worship him. The statement upon which this argument is founded is in the Psalms.

Ashamed be they that serve graven images; That boast themselves of idols: Worship Him, all ye gods.
(Psa. 97: 7.)

It should be noted that in the Revised Version it is clearly indicated that the time when this shall apply is at the second coming of Christ. "And when He again bringeth in (or shall have brought in) the firstborn into the world, He saith: And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6). It is from the standpoint of the kingdom that the statement is made, the time when the Messiahship of Jesus will be fully revealed, and he will have been manifested as prophet, priest, and king.

The position in which the quotation is found in the Psalms is instructive. The kingship of Christ is the outcome of the promise to David that of his seed one should be raised up to occupy his throne for ever. In the eighty-ninth Psalm this covenanted promise is dealt with at considerable length, and the eternity of the days of Messiah's throne is forcibly expressed. "As the days of heaven" (verse 29), "as the sun before Me" (verse 36). But later on the Psalmist shows how the kingdom of David should end,

and the crown be profaned and cast to the ground. He then asks:

What man is he that shall live, and not see death?
That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?
(Verse 48.)

The question remains unanswered in the Psalm, but in those which follow, and which constitute the fourth book of the Psalms, an answer is supplied by a wealth of references, the explanation of which turns upon the doctrine to be dealt with in section (c). The following are examples, the force of which will be increased if it is borne in mind that the ninetieth Psalm opens with a declaration of the eternity of God, who is “from everlasting to everlasting.”

Say among the nations Yahweh reigneth ... For He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth. (Psa. 96:10-13.)

Yahweh reigneth; let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of the isles be glad ... Worship Him, all ye gods. (Psa. 97:1 and 7.)

Make a joyful noise before the King, Yahweh ... For He cometh to judge the earth. (Psa. 98:6 and 9.)

Yahweh reigneth, let the peoples tremble; He sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. Yahweh is great in Zion; and He is high above the peoples. (Psa. 99:1 and 2.)

All these passages associate rulership in the future with Yahweh Himself. Yet as the essential Deity, the Source and Sustainer of all things, it cannot be imagined that He will leave His position of Controller of the universe to become a King in Zion. By the whole consensus of Scripture teaching, we know that the kingship of the future, centred in Zion, is invested in Jesus, who, on the principles already enunciated, is the embodiment of the Yahweh Name. It is in him the prophecies associated with that name will be fulfilled. Hence it can be recorded, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and, as the object of worship must be greater than the worshipper, the superiority of Jesus to the angels is once more vindicated.

It might be pointed out that in the Psalm the reading is "worship Him, all ye gods," whereas in the epistle we read, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." The explanation of the difference lies in the fact that the Hebrew *Elohim*, rendered "gods" in this instance, is applicable to the angels, God's ministers "who excel in strength." *Elohim* signifies mighty ones, who derive their strength from El—God Himself. The word *elohim* may therefore be fitly represented in the Greek or English by *angelos* or *angels*. (See p. 29.)

Passing to the next argument, we have to consider how (c) that Jesus is better than the angels because

there are certain promises concerning him which have special relation to a throne. The language of the epistle in this respect is as follows:

Of the Son he saith:

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of
Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and
hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath
anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy
fellows. (Heb. 1: 8 and 9.)

It is both interesting and important to notice the intimate connection between this and that phase of the argument which concerns the Sonship of Christ. In the promise which links kingship with the house of David this fact is brought out very clearly.

When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shalt proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father and he shall be My son. (2 Sam. 7:12-14.)

In the Psalms the same connection is made.

Yet have I set My king
Upon My holy hill of Zion.
I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said unto me, thou art My Son;
This day have I begotten thee. (Psa. 2: 6 and 7.)

He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my Father, . My God, and the rock of my salvation. I also will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth. (Psa. 89:26 and 27.)

The passages quoted in a previous section associate Immanuel, the virgin's son, with the land of Judah, which is spoken of as "Thy land, O Immanuel," and with rulership in Israel (Isa. 8:8; Mic. 5:2). The section of the prophecy of Isaiah from which the quotation is made continues to the ninth chapter, and includes the well-known words:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth, even for ever. (Isa. 9:6 and 7.)

This close connection between the Divine Sonship and the kingship of the Messiah was well understood in the days of Jesus of Nazareth. When Peter recognised that Jesus was the Messiah, his words were, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), and when Nathaniel was convinced of the same truth by what he heard, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art king

of Israel” (John 1:49). The same connection is apparent in the words of the angel to Mary, for when the miraculous character of the birth of Jesus was told to Mary, the angel had already said concerning the child that was to be born, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32).

The quotation which forms the basis of the argument in this phase is taken from Psalm 45. This Psalm furnishes a remarkable example of the place which these matters occupied in the inspired mind of the Psalmist.

My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter;
I speak the things which I have made touching
the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
(Verse 1.)

The idea of the word “overfloweth” is really boiling or bubbling up. Like a perennial spring, or boiling water, which is constantly in motion; so there was continually welling up in his mind the glowing anticipations concerning the future of the Messiah. And so the “ready writer” proceeds:

Thou art fairer than the children of men; Grace is poured into thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one,

Thy glory and thy majesty; And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, Because of truth and meekness and righteousness; And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Verses 2-7.)

On these premises it was clear that the Messiah was related to a throne, and as the Hebrew Christians necessarily believed in the Messiahship of Jesus, his superiority over angels was evident.

Before passing to the rest of the reasons for the superiority of Jesus, it will be well to note an incidental reference in the first chapter of the Hebrews which forms a part of the argument, but is not so closely connected with the detailed reasons as to call for attention under any one of the headings set out. The quotation is as under—

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish: but thou continuest: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment: 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. ¹ (Heb. 1:10-12.)

¹ An alternative explanation of this admittedly difficult passage

The quotation is from Psalm 102. A reference to this Psalm will show that it was a prayer to God for deliverance. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the quotation has been looked upon as evidence in support of the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, for if the Psalmist prayed to him it must follow that he was then in existence. As this doctrine is opposed to the first principles of the oracles of God, such an application of the verses cannot be correct, and it becomes a matter of some importance to examine the language used, so that we may be able to appreciate the place of the quotation in the argument.

Has been suggested; it views the latter part of Psalm 102 as a dialogue between Messiah and the Father, somewhat as follows:

Messiah: I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.

The Father: Thy years are throughout all generations.

Messiah: Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands.

The Father: They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, And thy years shall have no end.

Whilst this meets the difficulty of the Psalm, and is in accord with the structure of some of the Psalms, it does

not appear to harmonise with the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is, however, submitted for the consideration of the reader as a possible explanation of the passage.

It is to be noted, first of all, that the terms “heavens” and “earth” do not necessarily refer to the heavens in which the starry orbs revolve and the globe on which we live. Frequently in the Scriptures they are used in a figurative sense. Thus Isaiah exclaims: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” which he later parallels by, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:2 and 10). Jeremiah, too, in a very expressive way, said, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord” (Jer. 22:29). It is evident that in these instances the words are used in a figurative sense. The basis of this use is found in the relationship that exists between the heavens and the earth. The former are exalted and are over the earth. Hence they became naturally associated in their figurative application with those who rule. In the very opening chapter of the Bible, language is found which fits in with this idea. Referring to the preparation of the sun and moon, which occupy their places in the heavens, it is said that God made “the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night” (Gen. 1:16). It is in this sense that the words “heavens” and “earth” are used in the passage before us, the heavens referring to the rulers, and the earth to the ruled, of the particular constitution which may be in view.

If we read through the Psalm, it will be seen that

it has to do with future developments in relation to Israel and Jerusalem.

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; For
it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time
is come
For the Lord hath built up Zion, He hath
appeared in His glory;
That men may declare the name of the Lord in
Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem:
When the peoples are gathered together.
And the kingdoms to serve the Lord.
(Psa. 102:13, 16, 21, 22.)

We may thus conclude that the standpoint of the Psalm is the Kingdom of God, from which it may be inferred that the heavens and the earth of that Kingdom are those which are referred to. A similar use of the terms will be found in the prophets.

Who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and hast forgotten the Lord, thy maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he maketh ready to destroy? ... I have put My words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people. (Isa. 51:12-16.)

Or again:

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (Isa. 65:17 and 18.)

In these quotations the heavens and earth are connected with Zion, on a principle already set forth. These heavens and earth are to be founded by the Messiah, who, as “the Name of Yahweh,” will act for Him, the works being those of God Himself accomplished through Christ. Israel’s heavens and earth have always occupied a foremost place in the Divine programme; the new heavens and earth of the future to be founded by the Son of God will be even more important. They will, indeed, be heavens which will “declare the glory of God.”

In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his
chamber, And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his
course. His going forth is from the end of the
heaven, And his circuit unto the ends of it: And
there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. (Psa.
19:4-6.)

But important and fixed as these heavens are, they will not be permanent. The millennial reign of Jesus Christ in these new heavens, ruling over the new

earth, is only an intermediate state, a bridge between the time when the world's population is only mortal, and another time when it will be peopled solely by immortals. These intermediate heavens and earth will be Israelitish in character, being founded upon promises made to the fathers of that race in relation to both the land and the throne. The truly permanent constitution of things which is to follow will know no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for in them God will be all in all. Until that finality is reached the earth will continue to be the scene of change, hence the millennial heavens and earth shall wax old and be changed, whereas of the Son, whose they will be, it is declared, "Thy years shall not fail."

There is an interesting reference to these things in *Eureka*.

In the "Former Earth," which passes away, there is sin, and generation, and death; and because of the existence of sin, and flesh and blood, and death, there are mediatorship, and priesthood, and ruling with an iron rod, in the "Former Heaven." These things are not to continue permanently. Sin, which is the transgression of law, must be wholly and finally suppressed; flesh and blood must be exterminated from the earth; disease and death, which are "the wages of sin," abolished; mediatorship and priesthood, necessary in the offering to the Deity of gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the erring and the ignorant (Heb. 5:1 and 2), "delivered up to the Father"; and religion, which is a divinely-appointed remedy for an existing breach between the creature and the Creator, superseded, as having answered its purpose, and being therefore no longer necessary. All these things pertaining

to the former, or Millennial, Heaven and Earth, John saw had “passed away.” In the final annihilation of the Devil by the judicial fire of the Deity, in the destruction of the post-millennial Gog and Magog rebellion against the government of the Saints, the bruising of the Serpent’s Head by the Woman’s Seed, is consummated. Henceforth, the earth, not burnt up, but perfected, and rendered the paradisaic arena of all the unutterable joys and beauties and ecstatic things beheld and heard of Paul, becomes a fitting habitation of Deity in unmediatorial intimacy with the humblest of mankind; for then the Father will be “the all things in all men.” ... Such is the consummation of the Divine purpose in the creation of the heavens and the earth.¹

Viewing the purpose of God as a whole, and apprehending to some extent the fact that the Millennial Age is to be succeeded by an eternity when the earth shall be a place where God shall be all in all, one vast glorified unity with the Father, one can appreciate the force of the exhortation which follows in the second chapter, and which will be noted in due course.

The next argument that we have to follow is (*d*) that Jesus is better than the angels because he has been exalted to the Father’s right hand. This is set forth in the words, “But to which of the angels said He at any time: Sit thou on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?”

The right hand is well understood as a position of honour. When Jacob’s last son was born, Rachel called him Benoni (the son of my sorrow), but Jacob

¹ *Eureka*, vol. 3, pp. 680 and 681.

changed it to Benjamin (the son of my right hand), evidently on account of the affection he felt for him as the child of his dearly-loved Rachel. So, too, when he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he placed his right hand upon the head of the younger, indicating thereby the priority of the blessing he was to pronounce upon him. As the effective hand in manual operations it became associated with the idea of effectiveness, and in relation to the Deity it would suggest omnipotence.

Thus in Moses' song of deliverance it is declared:

Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power, Thy
right hand, O Lord, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
(Exod. 15:6.)

It was God's right hand and arm that gave Israel
possession of the land of Canaan.

They gat not the land in possession by their own
sword, Neither did their own arm save them:
But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light
of Thy countenance Because Thou hadst a favour
unto them. (Psa. 44:3.)

Looking to the future, the Psalmist also says:

Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand,
Upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong
for Thyself. (Psa. 80:17.)

This is “the man” to whom the writer of the epistle refers in the argument set out above. He has in mind the words of the Psalm, “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa. 110:1).

It will be observed that this phase of the superiority of Jesus is intimately bound up with the point dealt with in section (*c*), the promise which relates to a throne. It is also connected with a matter to be referred to later: the superiority of Jesus to the priesthood under the Law, for “the man of God’s right hand” is to rule in the midst of his enemies, and be a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Such a combination of ideas indicates the supremacy to which Jesus of Nazareth has attained.

A work of the angels as defined in this chapter is particularly interesting. They are defined as “ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14). Had not such a statement been found in the Scriptures, who would have imagined that these exalted beings were deputed to such a service? Yet such is the case. The Psalmist records the same fact in other words when he declares that—

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him And delivereth them. (Psa. 34:7.)

Angelic ministrations are unseen, but they are real; they form a part of “the ways of Providence” in relation to the children of God. Such a thought cannot but be helpful to all who are the subjects of this service. Who can be effectively against such persons? Trials and Difficulties may seem insurmountable, but with such assistance nothing is impossible.

CHAPTER II

The world to come—Its subjection to Christ—Lower than the angels—Reconciliation for sins—Sin and sins—The origin of sin—Jesus and the sin nature—"My brethren"—Taking hold the seeds of Abraham.

HERE for a moment we have to pause in the argument to note the writer's statement as to what the angels are, and the searching application which he makes of the argument so far as it has gone. The angels, who are spirits, and ministers (Heb. 1:7, margin), are sent forth "as ministering spirits" "to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." Such a thought may well cause a pause in argument. If the Scriptures had not laid down clearly that this was the case, who would have presumed to entertain such an idea? No one! Yet the Scriptures go even further in reference to these wondrous beings, for the saints are to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

The application in view is made as follows:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just 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 us by them that heard: God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. (Heb. 2:1-4.)

The “word spoken by angels” was the Law associated with the first covenant. That Law was “ordained by angels” (Acts 7:53), or as the Authorised Version expresses it, it was received “by the disposition of angels.” Its stringency is well known. It hemmed men round on every side. “Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this Law to do them” (Deut. 27:26); hence “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.” If that had been the case in regard to the Law, it was needful to be doubly careful in regard to the word spoken by the Lord Jesus, who was superior to angels, testified to, as it was, by the signs performed by him and his followers who continued the ministry. The symbol used in the application is that of a boat which has slipped its moorings. In such an event the boat was lost; it must flow with the tide until disaster overwhelmed it. Hence it is for us to see that we are fast moored to the word spoken by the Lord, both as a thing believed and as a rule of conduct, “Stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” If we continue so doing, we shall attain unto “so great salvation,” as it is described, a salvation preached by the Lord, confirmed by those who heard

him, and vividly portrayed in the wonderful symbols in the Apocalypse.

We may now resume the argument for the superiority of Jesus above the angels, as it is continued in the second chapter of the epistle. The first to be noted there is (*e*) that the world to come has been prospectively put in subjection under him.

This reason is, of course, closely related to that which concerns the throne, but extends it much further than the original promises to David necessarily implied. The Davidic covenant only involves the occupancy of his throne over Israel, in Jerusalem, by his seed. The subjection of the world to come involves universal kingship. In the Greek the word for “world” is *oikoumene*, “the habitable.” This comes from *oikeo*, to occupy a house, or to reside; conveying therefore the idea of something which is inhabited. In its usage *oikoumene* was applied to the Greek portion of the earth; later it was used to designate the Roman Empire (the world of the Emperor), and also the whole world. In this case it may be given the widest interpretation, and be applied to the subjection of the whole earth to Christ, in the constitution of the Millennial Age. It will be noticed that the reference is to “the world to come of which we speak.” It is therefore “a world” connected with the things already mentioned in reference to “the sceptre of the kingdom,” the throne, and the Father’s declaration, “This day have

I begotten thee.” This declaration occurs in a Psalm which guarantees to the Only Begotten of the Father “the uttermost parts of the earth” as his possession.

Such an application is implied by the language of the Psalm on which the Apostle’s argument is based.

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, And didst set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. (Heb. 2:6-8.)

The Psalm from which the quotation is taken is introduced and ended by the words, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth” (Psalm 8:1 and 9). That we are justified in making the widest possible application of the “all things,” and the “world to come,” is evidenced by the argument which follows. “For in that He subjected all things unto him, He left nothing that is not subject to him” (Heb. 2:8). Universal dominion, “from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth,” is the only possible fulfilment of such a statement.

But is it justifiable to apply this Psalm to Jesus? Had we been left with the Psalm alone we might have hesitated to make such an application, for there is nothing to suggest it in the language used. In the

light of New Testament references, however, there is no room to question the appropriateness of it. Not only have we the instance now before us, it is also found in the following cases. When Jesus was about to enter the city of Jerusalem, and the people welcomed him as their Messiah, the Pharisees cavilled at it. In reply he said, quoting from this same Psalm, "Yea, did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matt. 21:16). Paul's references to the reign of Christ also imply the same application of the Psalm. "He put all things in subjection under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:27). "Christ ... far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and He put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph. 1:19-22). Such language is evidently suggested by the Psalm.

There is one point in this quotation that needs a little attention. David had said, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels." It seems somewhat strange that such a passage should be introduced in the course of an argument, the design of which was to prove that Jesus is superior to angels.. It would almost seem that the writer was caught tripping in his argument, giving the enemy an opportunity to take advantage of the weakness. There is no mistake; the argument is perfectly sound. The inferiority

implied by being “a little lower than the angels” was a temporary one, and it was part of a purpose which in the end was to give the Son “a name which is above every name.” He was made lower than the angels “for the suffering of death.” Angels cannot die (Luke 20:36). To suffer death it was necessary for Jesus to be of a lower nature. God’s plan required that he should be of the Adamic nature, as we shall see later, but having died, he is now “crowned with glory and honour,” to realise in due time the universal supremacy involved by the promised subjection to him of the world to come. The ground of that coming exaltation is found in the final argument of this section of the epistle.

That argument is, (*f*) that Jesus is better than the angels because he is the author of salvation to many brethren, having made reconciliation for the sins of his people.

No angel could have accomplished this work. Two things stood in the way. In the first place, as already pointed out, angels could not die, and death was essential to effect reconciliation. All the Old Testament types illustrate this. In the second place, the angels have no connection with the race that needs the reconciliation. Neither of these disabilities stood in the way of Jesus of Nazareth. He could, and did, die, and he was “all of one” with those he came to save.

The consideration of this section opens up some

very important elements of the Truth. It involves questions which have been the cause of much controversy, and which are still the subject of considerable misconception in some quarters. They concern the introduction of sin, the constitution of the sin nature, and the Divine plan for the removal of sins, and the ending of the sin nature.

Sin was no part of the creation of God. When creation was complete, it is declared that "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). The physical constitution of our first parents was included in the "everything" of which this was affirmed. It is safe to affirm that sin, using the word both in its active application as transgression, and in the other, or physical, sense of sin in the flesh, did not then exist, for in no sense could it be said that sin, either in act or nature, is a good thing, notwithstanding the contentions of those who advocate what are aptly termed "clean-flesh" theories. Some have questioned the appropriateness of speaking of sin in reference to nature, claiming that it can only refer to transgression. They quote "Sin is the transgression of the law." This is simply to quote one Scriptural definition against other Scriptural doctrines. No one can read the Epistle to the Romans carefully, and accept its teaching candidly, without realising that sin is used in reference to something else than action. It is clearly used to define that

which is the cause of sin in action. Let us review a few of these sayings. “Sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandments all manner of coveting: for apart from the law sin is dead.” “Sin finding occasion, through the commandment, beguiled me, and through it slew me.” “Sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me ... that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful.” “So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me.” “The law of sin which is in my members.” (Rom. 7.¹)

There is no avoiding the teaching of these quotations and its bearing upon the subject in hand. Sin, as a physical evil in the flesh, termed “lust” by James (chap. 1:14), leads to sinful actions. And yet all was once very good, including the nature of man. Why the change? Because “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin” (Rom. 5:12). By that fact “sin in the flesh” came into existence, became a part of the physical constitution of mankind, and has so remained, for “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one” (Job. 14:4). The truth is further evidenced by considering the matter of temptation. When man was in his “very good” condition, it was needful for an outside agent to be employed as a tempter. Until the serpent questioned, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat

¹ This subject is further discussed in relation to chapter x. See pp. 181 and 182.

of any tree [margin, all the trees] of the garden?" the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil had not exercised any fascination over the minds of Adam and Eve. Yet, it was there, "a delight to the eyes," beautiful like all the rest of the creation. It was the serpent's question, and his subsequent he, that led to sin in Eden. No such outside source is needed now." Out of the heart of men evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21 and 22)." Each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14), whereas Eve was beguiled by the serpent, and the woman gave to the man. Then the temptation came from without, now it is from within; for the natural tendency is to sin.

It is necessary to call attention to these elementary facts, because the argument of the epistle cannot be followed aright unless they are discerned. Apart from them it would not be possible to see how Jesus, "by the grace of God, should taste death for ¹ every man." Some difficulty may be experienced in regard to this, and a plausible argument advanced for universalism. It is necessary to note the general idea of the passage. As will be seen later, it is the community of

¹ It is worthy of note that the Greek used here is *huper*, on behalf of, not a substitute for.

Christ with men that is in view, and the results which arise therefrom consequent on his death. He was “the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world,” the propitiation for the whole world. His sacrifice is sufficient for this, and will ultimately effect it. Yet it is not true to suggest that every man will obtain the benefits accruing thereby. God’s offer of salvation is conditional, and if the terms of the offer are not complied with, the efficacy of the offering will not be realised.

The participation of Jesus in human nature was essential. The “author of salvation” had to be “made perfect through sufferings”—another stumblingblock for all believers of trinitarian and kindred doctrines, for how could one who was already Divine be made perfect? Yet the Old Testament provided for such a fact, for he and those he was to redeem were “brethren,” “for he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11), in support of which assertion the Psalms were once again appealed to. In this instance it was an unquestionably Messianic Psalm.

I will declare Thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the congregation will I praise
Thee. (Psa. 22:22.)

Every reader of this Psalm who believed in Jesus, and for such only was the epistle written, recognised

its applicability to him who cried, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Whose hands and feet were pierced, and for whose garments lots were cast (verses 1:16, and 18). Being then a “brother” of those he came to redeem, he could be made “perfect through sufferings” thereby finally to bring many “sons” into glory. The addition of Sonship to brotherhood is also based upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament (Isa. 8:18, and Heb. 2:13), and is an indication of the wealth of allusions to Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The statement to which these considerations are intended to lead in the argument before us is:

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:14 and 15.)

These verses imply that whatever the physical constitution of “the children” may be, that was the nature of which “he” partook in order that he might bring to naught, or destroy (Authorised Version), the devil— sin in the flesh.¹ Thinking to honour “the author of salvation,” orthodox theologians contend that he was of a different nature from all mankind. The doctrine of the

¹ That the devil and sin in the flesh are parallel ideas in this passage will be evident by a comparison of the passages in which devil and sin in the flesh, or sin (in its application to nature), are referred to.

Immaculate Conception, so illogically repudiated by Protestants, is the necessary and unavoidable outcome of any such theory.¹ If that doctrine be rejected, as it must be, the whole idea is folly, for Job's question stands for ever in the way: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" As a matter of fact, so far from honouring the Son by such a theory, they take from him his highest claim to the love and admiration of men. Viewed as a superior being of a superhuman nature, his contest with sin was, at all events, comparatively easy. But as one "born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4), made in the likeness of sinful flesh, like unto his brethren, tempted in all points like them, his contest was real. Viewed in this light, Jesus stands out grand and peerless: an example, as well as a sacrifice, for the sons of men who will follow his steps.

That Jesus should have been of the condemned sin-stricken nature of his "brethren" was a necessity, for God must be manifested, or vindicated, as just in being the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. Any other hypothesis would involve substitution, and that is an idea totally subversive of the Truth. It was needful that sin should be condemned in the flesh

¹ For the benefit of any possible Roman Catholic readers, it may be pointed out that they are equally as illogical in their beliefs as their Protestant contemporaries. At some stage it has to be contended that an unclean thing brought forth a clean thing, and it matters little at what place in the genealogical line this impossible supposition is placed.

that the righteousness of God might be declared; hence it is recorded, “For the death that he died he died unto sin once” (Rom. 6:10), he “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26), whereas now “in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

In the epistle the reason for this fact is set forth as follows:

For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. (Heb. 2:16-18.)

As this is a most important element of the argument, it is desirable to note various renderings of this passage. Compared with the Authorised Version, the principal alteration (other than the omission of the italicised words) is in the tense, which the Authorised Version places in the past, though it supplies the present in the margin, thus making the two renderings agree in fact while differing in words. Reference may be made to the undermentioned alternative renderings.

Besides, he does not in any way take hold of angels, but he takes hold of the seed of Abraham; hence he was obliged to be assimilated to his brethren in all things, etc. (Emphatic Diaglot.)

The Diaglot also gives the following alternative rendering:

For truly it (i.e., the fear of death, or death itself) does not lay hold of (or seize on) angels, but of the seed of Abraham it does lay hold. Hence he was obliged, etc. Moreover, by no means doth he take hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold. Hence it was necessary he should be made like his brethren in all things, etc. (Macknight.)

For, doubtless of messengers it doth not lay hold, but of seed of Abraham it layeth hold, wherefore it did behove him in all things to be made like to his brethren. (Young's Literal Translation.)

From these translations one point emerges clearly, and that is that the tense of the Authorised Version is not correct, and that in endeavouring to apply the meaning of the passage in regard to "taking hold" of the seed of Abraham, we must not look for any completed action in the past, but to something which is either present or continuous. A close attention to the whole passage will indicate that the latter is the true construction. The principal point to be first decided is, Who is the "he" or "it" of the earlier portion of the passage? If this can be definitely fixed, the explanation will be simple; until it is decided, difficulty is sure to arise.

The Authorised Version implies that "he" means Jesus, and the usual commentator makes this application,

contending that the term “takes hold” has the idea of assisting. That the Greek word¹ can be used in this sense must be admitted, but from an examination of the occasions where it occurs, it is evident that this was not the usual idea intended to be conveyed, for it has far more frequently an adverse meaning. Among the definitions given by Liddell and Scott are, “to take, or get besides; to lay hold of, seize, attack, as an illness; to overtake, surprise,” and it is in this sense that it is generally used in the Scriptures. We shall best get at what is intended by following the argument carefully. It runs somewhat as follows: There is something, or someone, which takes hold of the seed of Abraham, but which does not take hold of angels. Because of this it behoved Jesus (for all agree in the application of this verse) to be made of flesh and blood nature, like unto the seed of Abraham, that he might destroy that which caused death, i.e. the devil. Put thus, the matter is certainly more clear, and the true answer is suggested. Diabolos, the devil, or sin in the flesh, does not take hold of angels. Diabolos has “the power of death,” and as we have already seen, angels cannot die. But it does take hold of the seed of Abraham, for they are “partakers of flesh and blood,” in which “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Left alone they must die, and perish for ever. It needed to be taken away, and it was for that very purpose that Jesus was born,

¹ *Epilambanomai*.

a member of the human race, “like unto his brethren,” that sin might be condemned and they who had “the fear of death “ be delivered from the bondage in which they were held,¹ and ultimately be made partakers of the Divine nature.

At the risk of appearing to labour the point, the error of the popular application of the “he” in verse 16 to Jesus Christ may be indicated by looking at the difficulty of such an interpretation. If it were intended to be so applied the language would need to be amended. It would need to be read that, as he purposed to take hold of, or assist, the seed of Abraham, it behoved him to be made like unto them; that is to say, it would need a future tense to be read into verse 16, and it would also imply the erroneous doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ. But the language used does nothing of the kind. The “taking hold” was already in operation and would continue in operation, and because of this, because “the children *are* sharers in flesh and blood,” he partook of the same to effect, finally, their deliverance.

Since the time when “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin,” the possession of sin in the flesh has necessitated the disappearance of every generation of the race into the

¹ It may be objected to this argument that reference is only made to the seed of Abraham, and that if the meaning were as suggested the reference should be wider, and made to apply to all the human race. The answer is that the Apostle is dealing with the salvation of “many sons,” whom he calls “brethren,” and who were to be related to the salvation in view by being incorporated into the covenant with Abraham to which so much attention is given later in the epistle. All else are ignored, and the argument is complete.

dust of death. That was, and is, the position, and therefore Jesus was made a partaker of flesh and blood that he might make propitiation, or reconciliation, for the sins of the people. That reconciliation or atonement has been made because he was able to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, having been made perfect through sufferings, whereby he has been made the “author of salvation” to many “sons” whom he will bring unto glory. This was a work which angels could not do by reason of the fact that they were not associated with the human race.

The outcome of these facts in relation to Jesus enabled him to become “a merciful and faithful high priest.” This phase, however, follows later, and can wait until that contrast is before us. Here we leave the first argument of the epistle—that Jesus is better than angels. We have seen the reasons for this fact, and as a result can enter into the spirit of apostolic references to Jesus which declare that he has a name which is above every name, a name at which every knee shall bow, that he in all things may have the pre-eminence, for he, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

CHAPTER III

*A prophet like unto Moses—Parallels and contrasts—
The house of God—The Establisher of the house—A
servant and a Son—Unbelief and its effects.*

ALTHOUGH in the last stage of the argument to prove the superiority of Jesus above angels we have been led to contemplate him as a high priest, another item falls to be noticed before the priesthood of Christ is enlarged upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is fitting that the order should be so, as the comparison of Jesus with the high priest forms the crown of the argument.

Evidently the mention of the high priest at the end of chapter 2 gave rise to the next idea, for we read:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus; who was faithful to Him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. (Heb. 3:1 and 2.)

The reference to Moses commences a chain of reasoning the purpose of which was to show that Jesus was superior to Moses. That such a comparison should be

made by one who desired to establish the supremacy of the Christian religion over the Mosaic Law was inevitable; the language of Moses himself invited it. He had declared to Israel:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. ... The Lord said unto me ... I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. (Deut. 18:15-19.)

Moses, then, was a type of the Prophet who should come, and as every antitype must be greater than the type, it follows from Moses' own prediction that Messiah must be the greater of the two. Israel might deny the application of the argument to Jesus of Nazareth: they do so to-day, but the fact underlying the argument remains as an unquestionable truth, and if Jesus be the Messiah his superiority is certain. It would therefore be folly to forsake the teachings of Christ for the "weak and beggarly elements" of the Mosaic Law.

That Jesus answers to the requirements of the prophecy will be apparent to anyone who compares the careers and missions of the two. From the earliest period of the life of Moses the parallels between him and Christ are manifest: his escape from death as

an infant, his rejection by his own people, his mediation, his self-abnegation, his work as a law-giver and prophet; in all these he pointed forward to One who was to come. It matters not which of these things we consider, in every comparison Jesus is the greater.

- (a) In the circumstances of his birth and salvation from an early death everything in the case of Moses was natural and called for only the providential working of God. In the case of Jesus, his birth was miraculous and his deliverance was effected on warning and advice given by angelic ministrants.
- (b) In his upbringing and education Moses was learned in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” Divine wisdom implanted by the Spirit of God marked the career of the Son of God.
- (c) At the age of forty years he was rejected by his own people. Even in rejection the “greater” feature is manifested. Moses fled from Egypt and was for forty years in Midian. Jesus remained among his enemies and, being “despised and rejected of men,” was crucified.
- (d) Forty years afterwards, commissioned by God, Moses returned to Egypt and finally effected the deliverance of Israel therefrom. Jesus will return to the scene of his rejection to effect a far greater deliverance for Israel, comprehending in the case of “Israel after the Spirit” deliverance from sin and death, and a participation in the Divine nature. It is significant that in this deliverance there will be also a triumph over a system which “spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt.”

- (e) As a leader of the people Moses manifested the power of God by wonders and signs. Jesus did this far more frequently, and will do so on a far greater scale when “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God,” and they “that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.”
- (f) In no phase of his career is the position of Moses more marked than in his mission as a law-giver, for the Law itself is best known as “the Law of Moses.” But that law was for the guidance of one nation, living in a comparatively small territory, and its rewards and punishments were bounded by the present life. It could give no participation in a life beyond. The Law of Christ has permeated the world. The issues of obedience are not confined to the life that now is, they involve the eternal destinies of all to whom they apply.
- (g) The same comparison, with the same result, appears in their offices as mediators. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant—that of the Law. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant, which relates all who enter into its bonds to the eternal things of God’s purpose. This will be elaborated later.

The foregoing considerations, which are by no means exhaustive, show the superiority of Jesus over Moses. Others could be suggested, but these are sufficient to prove the point. We may now see how it is established in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The section in which it is discussed is introduced by an exhortation: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly

calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus” (Heb. 3:1). This is an invitation to consider Jesus as an antitype of both Moses and Aaron. An apostle is one sent. Moses was “sent” unto Pharaoh that he might bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 3:10). Jesus was “sent” (John 12:49) to proclaim the words of God and to deliver His people from the bondage of sin. In due time he will be sent again to effect “the restoration of all things whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets” (Acts 3:20 and 21), and in connection therewith to secure the final salvation of the people of God.

In following the reasons for the superiority of Jesus as an apostle, when compared with Moses, we may first enumerate them as in the case of the previous argument. They are:

- (a) That Jesus as the “establisher” of the house of God is necessarily greater than Moses, who will be a part of the house.
- (b) That whilst Moses was a servant in the house of God, Jesus was a Son.

- (c) That Israel who came out of Egypt with Moses failed to attain the promised rest, but it must needs be that some shall enter into God's rest (the keeping of a sabbath).

Taking these in the order named, we note first (a) That Jesus was the "establisher" of the house of God of which Moses will be a part, and that consequently Jesus is worthy of more honour than Moses.

Before looking at the argument, it is necessary first of all to see the proper application of the expression "his house" as it occurs in the passage. A cursory reading would probably suggest that it was a reference to the house of Christ. But this is quite foreign to the argument, and also to the general usage of the term "house" in a metaphorical sense in the Scriptures. The margin of the Revised Version contains a note "that is, God's house, see Num. 7:8 (This passage is referred to below.) The house of God is alluded to elsewhere in the New Testament. "That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). "Having a great priest over the house of God" (Heb. 10:21). "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). This house is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner

stone” (Eph. 2:20). The house of God is, therefore, the community of believers of any and every age and race, each unit of whom is a “lively stone” occupying a place in the building.

Of this house Jesus is the “establisher.” The point is not well brought out in either the Authorised or the Revised Version. In the former it is expressed, “He who hath builded the house hath more glory than the house.” The latter expresses it: “He hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honour than the house” (Heb. 3:3). The word which is here represented by built is *kataskeuazo*. It includes more than building, for it covers—to prepare, furnish, or equip; to build a house and furnish it. In the Scriptures it is rendered build (Heb. 3:3 and 4), make (Heb. 9:2), ordain (Heb. 9:6), prepare (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 7:27; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20). An examination of these passages will show the meaning to be attached to the word in its Scriptural usage, and will emphasise the fact that it covers the whole process of preparing, building, and furnishing the house. This was not a part of the mission of Moses. The law which is associated with him did not lead to this. It was added to the original covenant (Gal. 3:19), it came in alongside that trespasses might abound (Rom. 5:20). On the other hand, the whole mission of Christ is to establish the house of God. Of it he is “the chief

corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20 and 21). When that temple is finally manifested in the earth Christ will be recognised as the Son “over” it, or, to adopt another figure, he will be the husband (i.e. the house band) of the church— the church of the living God, which is the house of God. In that glorified church of the firstborn Moses will occupy a place as a stone or a pillar, and therefore subordinate to the Son.

In this house of God Moses was a servant. This leads us to the second of the reasons, viz. *(b)* That whilst Moses was a servant in the house of God, Jesus was a Son. The point of the contrast between him and Jesus is thus expressed:

And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be spoken: but Christ as a Son over his house. (Heb. 3:5 and 6.)

It is significant that the expression upon which the argument before us is based relates to an occasion when circumstances required that the exaltation of Moses should be emphasised as much as possible. It arose out of the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, when they spake against Moses, and God intervened to vindicate him.

Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all Mine house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and

not in dark speeches; and the form of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses? (Num. 7:6-8.)

My servant Moses! It should be pointed out that the word used is not that which signifies bond service, but a free and honourable service. It is not used elsewhere. It had already been proved in the course of the previous argument that Jesus was a Son, the only begotten of the Father. A son is necessarily of greater standing in the house than any servant, and thus Jesus as the Son was superior to Moses in whom -the Jew boasted.

Out of these considerations there arises an exhortation which is as applicable to-day as it was to the Hebrew brethren of the first century—"Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end? "If! This small word is very arresting as it occurs here. It has been said that the house of God is the community of believers. The "if" reminds us that it is a matter of continued belief, not of one individual act of believing. "Rooted and grounded" is another apostolic expression appropriate to the subject. A writer has said "belief is life-giving." It is so because actions spring out of beliefs; consequently if belief wanes, actions will do the same, and there will be a failure to "endure unto the end."

This conclusion is enforced by reference to events in the history of Israel, out of which reference the third reason which remains to be considered arises. Before dealing with it we may look at the illustration from the past which is used to enforce the exhortation in hand. It refers to Israel's failure in the past. Quoting from the Psalms, it is said:

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,
Harden not your hearts as in the provocation,
Like as in the day of temptation in the wilderness
Wherewith your fathers tempted Me by proving
Me,
And saw My works forty years.
Wherefore I was displeased with this generation
And said, They do alway err in their heart:
But they did not know My ways:
As I sware in My wrath,
They shall not enter into My rest.
(Heb. 3:7-11.)

What was the cause of the abject failure of Israel? The answer is supplied in the phrase, "An evil heart of unbelief." This is the natural possession of all men. All history testifies to the fact. Even the incidents of the Exodus, from the plagues in Egypt to the wonders and terrors at Sinai, did not prevent the manifestation of that unbelief in Israel then, neither did the wondrous works of the Messiah prevent the same manifestation in his days. Well may the writer add, "Take heed!" and "Exhort one another daily." The events of the past are recorded for the instruction of the present. This

instruction was never more needed than it is to-day, when the whole tendency of the age is against belief in God and His Word. The whole passage (Heb. 3:7-19) is a strong exhortation to continued belief and confidence in God, and a warning against the “deceitfulness of sin” and the evils of unbelief.

CHAPTER IV

God's promised rest—Israel's failure—The rest that remains—The Sabbath as a sign—An exhortation—The application.

ARISING out of this exhortation we have the third point of the contrast, viz. (c) That Israel who came out of Egypt with Moses failed to attain the promised rest, but it must needs be that some shall enter into God's rest.

The fourth chapter opens by linking the warning of the past and the privileges and duties of the present. The promise of entering into rest is there associated with the proclamation of the gospel. However strange such a combination may seem to minds imbued with the theories of orthodox religion, it is an association which the Truth explains. The gospel preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), to Israel in the wilderness, and by Jesus and the Apostles had to do with the inheritance of the land. It was also concerned with the millennial rest to be realised after the six thousand years of sin and travail. This is the necessary background which must be kept in mind to enable the argument to be followed. The proclamation in the wilderness failed to fit Israel to enter upon the rest. Under the New Covenant some

must enter into the antitypical Sabbath rest. Therefore, he through whom that rest will be attained must be greater than Moses and Joshua, the leaders of the past.

In this argument we are concerned with the results of the two missions. The object for which Israel had been brought out of Egypt was that they might be established in the land of Canaan as the Kingdom of God. They were a people whom He had chosen to be a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exod. 19:5 and 6), who were to dwell in the land which He claimed as His own (Lev. 25:23), under laws which He had declared to them. That was the object; the realisation fell far short of it. Instead of journeying direct from Egypt to Canaan, as they might have done, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Unfaithfulness was the cause of this difference between the possible and the actual; there was “an evil heart of unbelief” in the people which caused them to “fall away from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). At the end of those forty years Moses, in his last address to the children of Israel, used the expression which furnishes the point of the Apostle’s argument in what remains of the contrast between Moses and Christ. “For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Deut. 12:9). Referring to the incidents of the Exodus the Psalmist says:

Forty years long was I grieved with that generation,
And said, It is a people that do err in their heart,
And they have not known My ways:
Wherefore I swear in My wrath,
That they should not enter into My rest.
(Psa. 95:10 and 11.)

The “rest” which is here referred to was one which is associated with God, for he calls it “My rest.” It is also associated with Zion and the temple. David referred to this “rest” and connected it with the temple. “As for me, it was in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God” (1 Chron. 28:2). At the dedication of the temple, at the conclusion of the prayer, Solomon said: “Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let Thy saints rejoice in goodness” (2 Chron. 6:41). In the Psalms similar references occur.

Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting-place; Thou and the ark of Thy strength.
For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My resting-place for ever: Here will I dwell: for I have desired it.
(Psa. 132:8-14.)

In the past there had been no fulfilment of the purpose thus declared. The most that can be said of the

past is that the incidents of Israel's history were typical of things to come. The foregoing quotation from the Psalms sufficiently indicates this. So does the usage of the word "rest" by Isaiah. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto Me? and what place shall be My rest?" (Isa. 66:1). The temple of Solomon was standing when this was spoken; in it God had been manifested to Israel upon the mercy seat sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices. Yet His "rest" had not been established, otherwise there would have been no point in the questions spoken through Isaiah. How could it be so when the history of the people in the wilderness and in the land had generally been that of a stiff-necked and hardhearted nation, usually perverting God's laws and rejecting His messengers? And this is the point in relation to the respective missions of Moses and Jesus. Viewing the work of Joshua as a continuation of that of Moses, it is said, "For if Joshua had given them rest He would not have spoken afterward of another day" (Heb. 4:8). Nevertheless prophet and psalmist had spoken of another day and of an entering into rest. Disobedient Israel had failed. The rest had not been attained. Consequently as God's purposes cannot fail there must yet be a rest provided for the people of God. We can now appreciate the point of the quotation. A "rest" formed an essential feature of the purpose of

God, symbolised from the beginning by the fact that at the end of the creative period God “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, because that in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2 and 3). Israel had been led from Egypt to Canaan by Moses, the objective being a “rest.” They had not attained thereto, Moses himself being witness, as we have seen. Neither had his successor, Joshua, led them into such a rest. He had been a successful leader, and accomplished the conquest of the land, but his labours left much unsettled, and the disturbed period of the Judges followed. But as God’s purpose cannot fail, and His word shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it, that “rest” must finally be established. Consequently, although Moses and Joshua had failed to accomplish the purpose, someone must do so, and who could that be save the Messiah for whom Israel looked, “great David’s greater son,” the “greater than Solomon,” who building the temple of the Lord (Zech. 6:13) shall provide the place where God shall “dwell” or “rest”? It is of this place that God speaks through Ezekiel in connection with the temple which is to be a house of prayer for all peoples: “Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for

ever; and the house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name” (Ezek. 43:7). Unless the Prophets were false, this must be accomplished, consequently the mission of the Messiah was to effect, on a higher plane, that which Moses and Joshua failed to realise. The conclusion might be distasteful to the Jew when applied to Jesus of Nazareth; it could not be disputed when applied as a proposition apart from any personal identification. It was thus shown by an unanswerable process of reasoning that, provided Jesus of Nazareth be the Messiah—and this could be abundantly proved—it must be recognised that he was worthy of more glory than Moses.

In further speaking of the rest that is coming, reference is made to the type contained in the records of creation. There had been six days of work and one of rest. That day of rest was incorporated into the Mosaic Law: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God ... for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:8-11). The Mosaic Law contained much that was typical of that which was to come; it contained the form of knowledge and of the truth; it was a shadow of good things to come. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assume that the

seventh-day rest was also a type. It is in fact plainly declared to be so by Paul himself: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon, or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come” (Col. 2:16 and 17). The application, although never specifically made in the Scriptures, can only relate to the opinion widely held in past times that human life on earth in its present mortal state was to be measured by seven thousand years, each thousand years being the antitype of one day. The final revelation of the purpose of God contained in the Apocalypse endorses such a view when it records that the saints who “rest from their labours” (chap. 14:13) “live and reign with Christ a thousand years” (chap. 20:4).

In this “day” when Christ shall reign over all the earth there will be a millennial rest for the people of God—the keeping of a sabbath. “There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9), not a rest of idleness—that would be no great attraction—but a rest from all that is associated with the evil state of the six days of labour, compassed by sin and evil.

The exhortation connected with this hope is powerful. “Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.” “Some must enter.” It is for us to strive that we may be among the some! The contrast

between the experiences of Israel and the promised rest that remains for the people of God also enforces the concluding words of the section.

For 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. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Heb. 4:12 and 13.)

Comment is unnecessary; experience of the operations of that word of God is the best help to an understanding of the passage. A personal application can be made by all, and an appreciation of the active character of the Word will unquestionably result. If we could always remember that “all things are naked and laid open” to God much would be altered in our lives, and the character developed would be so much the better.

The concluding portion of this chapter forms an introduction to the matters which follow in the next. It is really a portion of the exhortation which precedes it, and is an interesting illustration of the way in which the writer naturally passes from one phase to another. It links up with the close of the second chapter, where reference was made to “a merciful and faithful high priest” who made “reconciliation for the sins of his people.”

Having then a great high priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Heb. 4:14 and 15.)

It is not necessary to comment on these verses; they are easily applied, and the idea they contain will be found to be incorporated into the argument which follows. They associate the Son of God with priesthood, an association based upon the reasoning already advanced, in which Sonship and kingship were seen to be involved by the second Psalm, whilst the 110th, clearly Messianic in character, establishes priesthood with the Lord's anointed.

CHAPTER V

*Priesthood—Patriarchal times—The choice of Aaron—
The Levites— The qualifications of a priest—The
priestly qualifications of Christ— The call to
priesthood—The passing of the Aaronic priesthood—A
digression—First principles.*

WE have now to consider the last of the three comparisons to which reference has been made, that which concerns the superiority of Jesus over the high priests of the Mosaic constitution. As was pointed out previously, this is the highest comparison that could be made in the argument for the supremacy of Jesus over the various personalities who were connected with the giving and administration of the Law. In every age the high priest was the chief figure in the religious life of the Jews under the Law; apart from him the services must have ceased, for he alone could officiate in that greatest of all the Mosaic rites, the presentation of the sacrificial blood in the Most Holy place on the Day of Atonement. Hence, to complete the argument, it was necessary to show that in the new, Christian,

dispensation there was a high priest not merely equal to, but in every respect far above, the priests with whom Israel were familiar in the temple services.

Although priesthood occupies a prominent place in the various religions of antiquity, it is somewhat singular that very few references to priests are found in the Scriptures before the institution of the Law at Sinai. The universal recognition of priesthood, however, is a clear indication that it must have existed in primitive times; the fact that it was used in connection with false religions and for bad ends does not imply that it was of human origin, any more than does the fact that religion was mostly corrupt involve the idea that originally it was the product of human imagination. It was a Divine institution, thwarted and perverted by mankind for selfish and pernicious ends. It originated in consequence of sin, and will remain in operation so long as sin continues. In man's state of innocency priesthood was not necessary, and communion between God and man did not depend upon any priestly mediator. The entrance of sin changed this, and with the institution of sacrifice as the basis of acceptable approach to God there was a necessity for provision to be made, sooner or later, for a particular individual or class of individuals to perform the necessary ceremonies. In the chapters of the Bible which relate the history of antediluvian men no reference is made to a priest. It is possible that in this period every man

offered his own sacrifice; Cain and Abel are instances in point, and may illustrate the recognised practice of that age.

The first reference to a priest occurs in the records of patriarchal times. Melchizedek is the priest in question, and it is very suggestive when we bear in mind the use which is made in the Epistle to the Hebrews of his priesthood in relation to that of Christ.

In the history of the patriarchs there is no mention of any order or line of men who acted as priests; it would rather appear that this was the prerogative of the head of the family, or the firstborn thereof. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each built altars and called upon the Name of the Lord. If the suggestion as to the firstborn be correct, it will explain a reference to Esau as “a profane person,” “who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright” (Heb. 12:16). The word in the Greek here is *bebelos*. Parkhurst defines the word for profane as from *be*, denoting privation or separation, and *belos*, a threshold or pavement, particularly of a temple or consecrated enclosure, so that *bebelos* will properly denote one who either is, or ought to be, debarred from the threshold or entrance of a temple, as the Latin *profanus* likewise is strictly one who stands *procul à* or *pro fano*, at a distance from or before the temple or consecrated enclosure. The use of the term would therefore imply that, by reason of

Esau despising his birthright, he cut himself off, not only from the birthright and the Abrahamic promises with which it was connected, but also from the right to approach the Deity as the offerer of sacrifice on behalf of the family.

The inference drawn in regard to the priestly position of the firstborn finds support in the incidents connected with the selection of a particular tribe to serve in the tabernacle in the time of Moses. Before the institution of the Aaronic priesthood and the separation of the tribe of Levi, recognised priests were to be found among the children of Israel. Thus at the giving of the Law, Moses was commanded, "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them" (Exod. 19:21 and 22, also 24). It was after this that the further command was given: "And bring thou near unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons" (Exod. 28:1). From this time the priesthood was confined to that family, and no one who was not of the seed of Aaron was allowed to approach near to offer incense before the Lord (Num. 16:40).

Shortly after the selection of the family of Aaron to act as priests, the tribe of Levi was set apart to attend to the services connected with the religious life of Israel. In relation to this choice of the Levites it is written:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel *instead of all the firstborn* that openeth the womb among the children of Israel; and *the Levites shall be Mine, for all the firstborn are Mine*; on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto Me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast; Mine they shall be; I am the Lord. (Num. 3:11-13.)

Seeing that from this time forth the service of the tabernacle was confined to members of the tribe of Levi, that the priests must be of a particular family of that tribe, and that the tribe was taken “instead of all the firstborn,” it is obvious that in the past the duties which they were to perform must have been carried out, so far as they were applicable before the building of the tabernacle, by the firstborn of the nation.

It did not follow that because a man was of the family of Aaron he could become a priest in Israel. Certain conditions were imposed, and unless these were complied with no one was permitted to participate in the higher services of the law. Definite commands of a stringent character were given concerning his family

life, and physical blemishes (disqualified from the right to minister in the priestly office.

Whosoever he be of thy seed throughout their generations that hath a blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or anything superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or is scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man of the seed of Aaron the priest, that hath a blemish, shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire; he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. ... He shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not My sanctuaries; for I am the Lord which sanctify them. (Lev. 21:17-23.)

The reiteration of the word “blemish” is impressive, and finds its chief importance in the antitype of the high priest—Jesus—the apostle and high priest of our profession—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

The head of the Aaronic family was the high priest, Aaron himself being the first of the order. He occupied the supreme position in Israel’s religious arrangements. In a very real sense he represented in his person the whole ritual of the Law, and in every age he was to the faithful Israelite the supreme representative of his religion.

This brief statement in relation to priesthood will

show the importance of the arguments we are now to consider. Sin was an insuperable barrier to salvation; sacrifice was the only appointed means of providing an atonement for the sinner; none but the priests could offer sacrifice; hence the priesthood was an absolutely indispensable element of the national economy. It will thus be seen how in this section of the epistle we reach the crisis of the argument in its personal comparisons.

Before proceeding to examine the comparisons whereby the superiority of Jesus over the high priest is established, we may stay to notice the section which introduces this phase of the matter. It assumes the priesthood of Christ and refers to the objects of the priestly institution which it was necessary should be exhibited in him. He is referred to as “a great high priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” The essentials for this position are then set out in order so that the application to Jesus may be made plain.

The readers of the epistle who were conversant with the main principles of the truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth would recognise the truth propounded in the statement at the end of the fourth chapter, that he was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” and had been “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). They would also recognise that such a fact enabled them to come boldly to the throne

of grace for needful mercy and help. They might not, however, be able to so clearly discern how these requirements were involved in the priesthood of old. This is thus expressed:

For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. (Heb. 5:1-3.)

As regards the opening section of this passage no comment is needed; the matters already discussed in relation to the institution of a priesthood sufficiently illustrate the point. He is taken from among men because it was men who needed a way whereby they might approach God. Angels could not do this on their behalf; the necessary connection between the priest and the worshipper—that of a common necessity — was lacking. The priests of the Aaronic family could do so because they had this connection. It has been seen already that Jesus had it also (Heb. 2:14). This connection made the second count of the argument follow logically. He could be compassionate towards the ignorant and erring because he had been compassed with infirmity. The terms are important. “Ignorant” and “erring” do not include presumptuous sinners. For those referred to he was a merciful and faithful high priest, because having been made

like unto his brethren he knew the power of temptation.

Being compassed with infirmity, the high priest of old was bound to offer for sins on his own behalf. Many have stumbled at the application of this portion of the parallel to Jesus, and have contended that it cannot be applied to him. Nevertheless the comparison is made and must be provided for. Later in the epistle it is stated of him that he needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself (Heb. 7:27). This he did once for all! There is only one way of giving these words their evident meaning. As one who never transgressed his Father's commandments, he needed no sacrifice to put away personal sins. How then can application be explained? He was a "whole burnt-offering" in which the complete consumption of sin's flesh was declared. Therein it was shown that human nature is not fit for the Kingdom of God. It is "the flesh," "a body of death." It has to be put away, and this Jesus did once for all when he "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26).

From what has been said concerning the origin of priesthood it is apparent that no man could take the honour unto himself—it needed a call from God (Heb. 5:4). So far as this point is concerned, both orders of priesthood could lay claim to the same advantage.

Aaron and his house were not priests by their own desire; they were “called” to the position by God, as already shown. This point is clearly brought out in connection with the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They had charged Moses and Aaron, saying: “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them,” to which Moses replied to Korah: “Seemeth it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to Himself ... seek ye the priesthood also?” In the end God vindicated the position of the house of Aaron, for the fire of the Lord burst forth and consumed two hundred and fifty of the associates of Korah, whilst Moses was commanded to make of the censers which they had used, broad plates for the altar, “to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, to the end that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to burn incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah and his company” (Num. 16).

In the later history of Israel King Uzziah aspired to act as a priest. He went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense, but was withstood by the priests, who said: “It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense.” This attempt to usurp the priesthood to which he had not been called was disastrous

to Uzziah, for he was stricken with leprosy. These incidents emphasise the lesson that “no man [legitimately] taketh this honour unto himself, but when he is called of God.”

Apart from some definite proof to the contrary, the Jew might reasonably conclude that the very necessity of the institution of priesthood required its permanent continuance so long as sin existed. That thought is met by the argument which follows. It turns upon a prophecy which in itself contained all that was necessary to disprove the Jews’ idea. That prophecy, found in a Psalm which has already been before us, clearly involves the coming of a priest who would be of another line than that of Aaron. In establishing the Divine Sonship of the Messiah, the only begotten of the Father, reference has been made to the words of David concerning his Lord who was to rule out of Zion, and whose people should be willing in the day of his power (Psalm 110). Every Jew would recognise this as a Messianic prediction. The fact was in itself sufficient to silence the enemies of Jesus when he asked them: “David therefore calleth him Lord, and how is he his son?” The Davidic descent of the Messiah was unquestionable; the Prophets teem with indications of the fact; yet the Psalm continued:

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek.
(Psa. 110:4.)

In view of his descent from David, the Messiah could not be a priest of the line of Aaron. It was therefore apparent from this first phase of the consideration that the Law could not be of perpetual application, but must give place to some other system which, being directly associated with the Messiah, must be superior to the Aaronic. This is the point of the argument of chapter 7, which we shall consider later.

Before we pass to the consideration of the arguments by which the superiority of the “great high priest” of our profession over the Aaronic priesthood is established, we have to note a statement concerning Jesus which is most helpful to those who feel the evils of the flesh in their efforts to follow his steps day by day. Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb. 5:7-10.)

When it is recognised that Jesus was “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), we understand how he needed to be saved “out of” death, as the Greek implies. When it is further recognised what the flesh really is, we understand how even Jesus learned by suffering and was afterwards made perfect. The full application of these facts will become clearer as we proceed with the argument.

Before we pass on to the further reasoning of the epistle, it is necessary to notice a break in the argument. It reaches from chapter 5:11, to the end of chapter vi. The circumstance which led to this digression was the inability of the Hebrews to receive all that might have been written in reference to the high priest after the order of Melchizedek. It will not need much in the way of exposition as, generally speaking, the meaning is apparent.

Like many others of all ages and races, the Hebrew Christians appear to have been a mixed community, although the Apostle could speak of their work, their love for the Name of God, and their ministration to the saints (chap. 6:10), he nevertheless had to chide them with being “dull of hearing” (chap. 5:11). When they ought to have been teachers, they needed that one should again teach them the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. Such a condition called for censure, and the rebuke which was given for this lack of growth in Divine things should serve as a warning to the believers of the twentieth century. To know the truth is only a first step; there must be growth unless we are to fail of the purpose for which we are called to God’s kingdom and glory.

There are “first principles.” They are composed of the elementary truths which are first learned when the Scriptures are studied by a searcher after truth. They comprise the teaching concerning God, Christ, sin and death, the hope of Israel and the Kingdom of God, and the essentials of salvation, and are familiarly and conveniently summed up as “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.”

It seems strange that believers of these things should ever require to be taught them again (Heb. 5:12). Elementary truths on most subjects, having been once learned, are usually stored up in the memory, ready for use whenever required. Why should it be different with the first principles of the oracles of God? The answer is found in the fact that the carnal mind, which is the thinking of the flesh, is enmity against God, and that consequently, if that mind is allowed to develop on its own lines, its thoughts will inevitably stray from God. The only safe course is to keep the thoughts in check by the discipline of reading, listening to, and meditating upon, the Word of God, wherein those first principles are made known. This process will keep the thoughts in the right direction. Paul was speaking with true philosophy when he wrote: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue,

and if there be any praise, think on [or take account of] these things” (Phil. 4:8). It is a fact of universal application that the mind will assimilate that upon which it habitually dwells; a kind of second nature will be set up which will, eventually, almost subconsciously affect the mind, and therefore the actions. For let it ever be remembered that actions are but thoughts turned into deeds. The Hebrews had not acted on the principle recommended to the Philippians, and as a result they continued to be babes, stunted and dwarfed, needing to be fed with milk when they ought to have been partaking of solid food. “Every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:13 and 14).

It is a disappointing thing to see growth arrested, to see a child remain intellectually undeveloped. It is even worse when it reaches man’s estate with the mind of a babe. The warning is one which is needed in these times. There is much to pamper the child of God. When the acceptance of the Truth involved the coming-out from all previous associations and fellowship with a despised and sometimes persecuted few, it needed an amount of robust faith to bring one to the initial act of obedience. It is otherwise to-day, and the danger is that the very ease of the position may induce

a satisfaction with babyhood in the faith. It is for all who think of the future to examine themselves in this respect that they may be amongst those who grow up to full maturity of manhood and womanhood in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER VI

Doctrine of baptisms—Perfection—Dangers of apostasy—A parable from nature—Faith and patience—The sworn promise—Obtaining the promise.

FOLLOWING the comparison of babes and those of full age, we continue the exhortation: “Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying-on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1 and 2).

Of these first principles generally it is not necessary to speak. Repentance, faith, resurrection, and judgment are all elementary phases of the Truth, exhaustively treated of elsewhere. The use of the plural term in regard to baptism, however, calls for note. The word used here is not the one which usually occurs for baptism, although it is closely allied thereto. It occurs in Mark 7:4 and 8 (washing), Heb. 6:2; 9:10 (washings). In view of the use of the plural word in

the passage before us it would appear that the intention was to contrast the “divers” washings of the past with the Christian doctrine of baptism, with probably a further reference to “the washing of water by the Word” (Eph. 5:26). It is by the washing of water by the Word of Truth, faithfully received, evidenced by baptism in water, whereby the conscience is cleansed (1 Pet. 3:21), and the constant cleansing influence of the Word of God (John 15:3) daily applied that we may be fitted for the Kingdom of God. Hence the use of the plural “baptisms.” As regards the laying-on of hands, it refers to an apostolic practice whereby men were initiated into a particular office in early times, but a practice which lost its importance and became a mere form when the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the ecclesias (see Acts 8:18; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6).

“Leaving, or ceasing to speak of, the first principles of Christ,” or the doctrine of Christ, or the oracles of God, does not mean that those principles are to be abandoned, otherwise there would be no meaning in the rebuke administered. It does not imply leaving the Truth, nor ceasing to speak of the Truth. What it does mean is that we should cease to dwell solely on the elementary matters of the Faith and go onward to the understanding of the deeper things of the Spirit, endeavouring to arrive at that perfection of knowledge which the Scriptures are able to impart. Every effort

in this direction will constantly remind us that there are profounder depths in the Bible than have yet been sounded. A study of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an excellent illustration of the truth of this saying, for it contains a never-failing supply of material for wider and deeper knowledge. And yet after all this epistle is but an exemplification of the Scriptures generally.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,
And jewels rich and rare Are hidden in its mighty
depths
For every searcher there.

The danger of ceasing to care for the first principles is indicated by the warning which follows:

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Heb. 6:4-6.)

There may be some difficulty in determining how far this warning may be applicable to present-day conditions. Believers now are not “made partakers of the Holy Spirit” as were those of apostolic times. They do not “taste the powers of the age to come,” and to this extent it may be contended that the severity of

the warnings should be modified. At the same time it is dangerous to under-estimate the evil and danger of such a course, and wisdom counsels the maintenance of the doctrine of Christ and the pressing-on unto perfection. The only reasonable attitude is that of the Apostle: "And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb. 6:3). The Truth is a revelation from God, it tells of His love and condescension in providing all that was needful for man's salvation, and man, in humble reverence, should accept it, and abide by and in it, come what may. It needs constant care and watchfulness over self, and a kindly regard for others to pursue the right course in such matters in relation to individuals and ecclesias. "Restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1) is a wise and appropriate exhortation when such occasions arise. Happy are they who, avoiding the dangers of the times, continue, as we read in this connection, to be imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

An interesting parable from nature is used in relation to the point before us. It is akin somewhat to Christ's Parable of the Sower, and shows how much depends upon the nature of the soil and the appropriate preparation thereof. "For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, 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” (Heb. 6:7 and 8). The rain falls on all soil alike, but how different is the produce! Thorns and thistles are part of the curse which came upon the earth consequent on the entrance of sin, and thorns and thistles seem to abound everywhere. Even cultivated land will bring forth an abundant crop of them unless those who till it take the necessary steps to keep such growths under. If this is not done, they will flourish to such an extent as to hinder, if not to entirely prevent, the growth of the desired grain or herbs. The moral is obvious: even good ground prepared to receive good seed may fail to produce the desired harvest if the weeds are allowed to grow unchecked. But as any observant person may see, there is much ground that is quite unfit for culture; yet even there brambles and thistles will often flourish. Such land is barren, and, though finding a place in the economy of nature, it does not minister directly to the higher aims of nature—the sustenance of the human race. How true this parable is in its application to the human race! All mankind is one, for God “made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth”; yet there are many varieties of capacity and disposition, and consequently the potential produce varies in kind and quantity. Some individuals are absolutely useless for the cultivation of anything higher than that which is of the earth; they

are “earthly, sensual, demonish.” They are a necessary part of the economy of God’s arrangements now, but they have no part in the future harvest. Others are capable of bringing forth good and useful fruit, but they require constant attention lest the thorns and thistles thrive and choke the good seed. The simplicity of the parable is evident, and its proper application is easy to be seen. An appreciation of the lesson will help one to be amongst the class the apostle had in mind when he continued: “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” This persuasion was the outcome of the past faithfulness of the Hebrew Christians, their labour of love, ministrations, and diligence, and it led to a desire that those characteristics should continue so that they should ultimately be of those who through faith and patience shall eventually inherit the promises.

The “better things” referred to are those already mentioned—the things that call for blessing from God, like the approval that comes upon the ground that brings forth the produce desired by the cultivator. The association with faith and patience which is made in the chapter is a natural one. The same association of patience with the cultivation of the ground is found in James: “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain” (chap. 5:7). As

the husbandman works in faith and in due time receives the reward of his cultivation and patience— a patience which found expression in labour which he performed in full faith of the results being secured— so the Hebrews were to work and wait, and thus be “imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The husbandman must plough and sow, keep down the weeds, and generally labour with a view to the hoped-for harvest; and saints who hope for future blessings in the Kingdom of God must work out their own salvation with the patience begotten of faith.

There is no greater incentive to work and patience than a constant reminder of the promises, and a full assurance of their ultimate realisation. Even of Christ himself it is recorded that “for the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame.” It is therefore fitting that the apostle should immediately turn to the promises of God, and that he should emphasise their stability and certainty. Those promises had not only been made, they had also been pledged, for God had sworn by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.” The quotation is from Gen. 22, where the record shows how the promise was renewed to Abraham after he had proved his faithfulness by his willingness to sacrifice even his well-beloved son if God so required. The terms of the promise then

sworn are sufficiently important to warrant being set out:

By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice. (Gen. 22:16-18.)

There is a peculiar mixture of singular and plural in this sworn promise, the singular seed on which Paul lays so much stress in his letter to the Galatians— where his argument is evidently based upon the foregoing passage—and the plural, as numerous as the stars or as the sand. There is no contradiction in this strange combination; the idea is one, for the multiplicity depends upon the One who is pre-eminently the Seed of Abraham. “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ... If ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:16 and 29).

One cannot but be impressed by the force of the language used in the epistle in relation to this promise. It serves to emphasise the position of the Abrahamic or New Covenant in the purpose of God.

Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. (Heb. 6:17 and 18.)

More forcible language could hardly be imagined. It is as if God had gone out of His way, not only to declare His purpose, but to so emphasise it that there should be no possibility of mistaking His intention. And yet a professedly Christian world and its religious leaders can coolly reject or ignore all these promises, and suggest by their beliefs, if not in actual words, that in so making promises, entering into covenant to perform them, swearing by His own existence to emphasise them, He neither said what He meant, nor meant what He said. To such depths can men descend when they forsake the first principles of the Oracles of God. Happy are they who have been released from such a position by a knowledge of the truth, and who have thereby “a hope both sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil,” a reference which anticipates the future development of the argument of chapter 9.

Before leaving this digression from the main argument of the epistle, it may be well to notice a difficulty which may be experienced in relation to the statement concerning Abraham: “And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (verse 15). Yet in the same epistle it is said that he “died in faith, not

having received the promises” (Heb. 11:13). That a writer such as the author of the epistle should thus contradict himself is unthinkable; there must be some way in which the two statements can be reconciled. As is usually the case in difficulties of this kind, the first necessity is to observe the context. In chapter 6 the essential feature of the promise is the blessing and the multiplied seed, the blessing being directly connected with the seed in the record of the making of this promise. In chapter xi the essential feature is the land. This difference in standpoint leads to the explanation. Neither Abraham nor his seed inherited the land. That is an unquestionable fact. As regards the multiplication of his seed, the one thing necessary in the time of Abraham was the provision of a seed to an old and childless man. And this, “after he had patiently endured,” he received:

And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body as good as dead (he being a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; yea, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised He was able also to perform. (Rom. 4:19-21.)

“And so” he received the promise in its incipient stage in the birth of Isaac. All that was promised depended upon this first step, and its fulfilment became a pledge of what was to follow.

This incipient fulfilment lends weight to the conclusion expressed at the end of the chapter, where the

“hope” is likened to “an anchor of the soul” reaching into “that which is within the veil,” where Jesus as a forerunner has already entered—a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER VII

Melchizedek—Without genealogy—The duration of the priesthood—Melchizedek and Abraham: Tithes—The change of priesthood—A priesthood based on oath—The oaths of God—An unchangeable priesthood—For ever—One sacrifice, once for all—A perfect priest—Perfection for others.

To any Jew who had carefully followed the argument the main object of the epistle was now established. But as it is desirable to establish all conclusions on the widest possible basis, it is necessary for us to follow the various arguments which are adduced in support of the main thesis. They may be summed up as follows: The superiority of the priesthood of Jesus when compared with that of Aaron is evidenced by the facts (*a*) that it is of a higher order; (*b*) that it was established by an oath; (*c*) that it is unchangeable; (*d*) that its offerings were of a better and more efficacious character; (*e*) that Jesus himself was perfect; and (*f*) that it ensures the perfection of others.

Such are the points which we have now to consider. Other points arise in relation to these, but they fall

for treatment in association with other phases of the argument.

Taking the points in the order enumerated, it is necessary to show (*a*) that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of Aaron because it is of a higher order—the order of Melchizedek.

As we have seen, prophecy required that a priest should arise who would be of another order, that of Melchizedek. This order must necessarily be higher than that of Aaron, inasmuch as it was to be occupied by the Messiah himself. Wherein, then, does the superiority of the order consist? In answering this question, we enter upon considerations of deep interest and have to consider matters which are spoken of as “hard of interpretation,” matters to which the Hebrews could not rise, because they needed that someone should teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God. The things in question constitute “solid food” as compared with “milk.”

The initial difficulty arises from the slight knowledge we have of Melchizedek. He appears before us just for a moment, as it were, in history, and just once in prophecy, and is never again referred to until he reappears in the argument of the epistle before us. The record in the history is as follows:

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

he gave him a tenth of all. (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1 and 2.)

Who was Melchizedek? The question is a natural one, and is much easier to put than to answer. Some have assumed that he was Shem, and there is no inherent impossibility in the suggestion. Shem was a contemporary of Abraham, and as a survivor of the Flood would occupy a unique position in patriarchal times. One cannot help thinking, however, that if Shem had thus been introduced into the history of Abraham the fact would have been recorded, and as nothing definite is stated, we must be content to remain unaware of the identity of this remarkable individual. All we can do is to consider what is written of him. These are (1) that his name means king of righteousness; (2) that his title and place of rule (Salem) indicated that he was king of peace; (3) that he was without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; (4) that his priesthood was a continuing one; (5) that he received tithes (or a tenth) from Abraham, and blessed him.

The combination of king of righteousness and king of peace in one who was also a priest of God Most High (El Elyon) is in accord with other prophecies besides the one in the Psalm, and it definitely indicates that he must be considered as a type of the Messiah. Zechariah, for example, has written:

Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne: and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. (Zech. 6:12 and 13.)

Little as Israel appear to have understood it, this prediction, together with the remarkable statements in the closing chapters of Ezekiel regarding the shepherd-king-prince-priest of the age to come, necessarily involve the setting-up of a higher order of priesthood than the Aaronic, and consequently the changing of the Law. So much is apparent from statements (1) and (2) referred to above.

When we examine the third statement we are confronted with expressions which are difficult to understand, and which have led to some extraordinary efforts in interpretation. How is it to be explained that Melchizedek was “without father, without mother”? Some have suggested that he must have been what they term “the Eternal Son.” Apart from the fact that the very expression is a contradiction in terms in the sense in which it is used, this interpretation would introduce the peculiar idea that Melchizedek was “like unto” himself (Heb. 7:3), an argument so absurd that it could not be attributed to a writer who reasons as the writer of the epistle does. The supposition is even more impossible when it is recognised that he wrote under the influence of Divine inspiration. A

more prosaic and rational interpretation must be sought for the saying. Fortunately, in modern times a discovery has been made which throws considerable light upon the remarkable language which is used, and enables us to understand and apply the expressions before us.

The Tel-el-Amarna tablets take us back practically to the times of Abraham and Melchizedek. They may be dated somewhere between Abraham and the Exodus, and therefore introduce us to contemporary conditions in Palestine. Among these tablets there are some from one Ebed-Tob, who may have been a successor of Melchizedek, at any rate in that phase of the latter's official position which is defined as "King of Salem." In these tablets we find language which is almost identical with that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In one he says:

Lo, in so far as I am concerned, it was not my father who installed me in this place, nor my mother, but the arm of the mighty King has allowed me to enter into my ancestral house.

In another he writes:

Lo, in regard to the region of this city of Jerusalem, it was not my father, not my mother, who gave it to me, but the arm of the mighty King gave it me.

The meaning of these expressions is evident. Ebed-Tob had attained to his position not by reason of descent or genealogy, but because he had been appointed thereto by the Mighty King, a title which some

Assyriologists, at any rate, refer to God. Applying the same principle to Melchizedek, it will be seen that what the statement implies is that he held his position as priest of God Most High, not to any fleshly descent or carnal ordinance, but because he had been appointed thereto by a Divine call. "No man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God."

The great contrast between the two orders of priests in this respect is strongly emphasised by an incident recorded in connection with the restoration from Babylon. In enumerating those who went up to Jerusalem, it is stated:

And of the priests ... these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. (Neh. 7:63-65.)

Genealogy was of prime importance, for a priest under the Law must be able to prove his descent from Aaron. In the Melchizedek order this is not so. They are not dependent upon genealogy, they are priests "without descent." In this respect, therefore, the Melchizedek was the higher order; it had to do with an arrangement which was "not after the law of a carnal [fleshly] commandment," not according to physical descent, but

by reason of a direct personal appointment from God Most High. Its superiority was therefore established.

The further reference to “having neither beginning of days nor end of life” must be understood in reference to the foregoing. A literal application is not only inadmissible, it is impossible. Such exceptional cases as Enoch and Elijah might be adduced to illustrate the latter portion of the saying, but no example of the former could be produced. Unqualified eternity in relation to both past and future can only be predicated of God Himself. It is evident, therefore, that the reference must apply to the official position of Melchizedek as the priest of God Most High. In the Levitical institution an age-limit was fixed which applied at both ends of the careers of the Levites, although there is no corresponding rule regarding the priests. There is no hint of such a limitation in regard to Melchizedek, and consequently there is none in reference to him who was to be a priest after that order. Indeed, he had a life which was indissoluble. The inference is obvious, and leads again to the conclusion which the Apostle sets out to prove—the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over the priests of the Law. By a logical reasoning which could not be gainsaid, the Jew was forced to admit that a “change of the Law” was inevitable.

The fourth point, the continuity of the priesthood of Melchizedek, scarcely calls for comment; it necessarily arises from the foregoing, and conveys its lesson in relation to the high priest who now “stands in

Aaron's place." The whole argument thus far developed finds its application in the reference which is suggested by the fifth point. It is twofold in its bearing: firstly Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and secondly Abraham paid him tithes, or a tenth. These facts form the basis of the following statement and argument:

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils. And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the 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 tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there one of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (Heb. 7:4-10.)

Again the argument was unanswerable. The Jews' proudest boast was, "We be Abraham's seed" (John 8:33), "Our father is Abraham" (verse 39). Yet here, by the logic of history, the whole point of their boastings was overturned. Abraham, their father, had paid tithes to Melchizedek. Abraham had been blessed by the King of Salem; and both these actions involved

the supremacy of the king-priest. Their Psalmist had foretold that the Messiah should be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and being thereby superior in position to Abraham, he was necessarily superior to the Law and its priestly ordinances. It followed, therefore, that the Mosaic institutions were not perfect, and required to be superseded by others. This was precisely what was involved in the Christian teaching. How the point enters into the essentials of the Christian religion may be seen by an examination of the Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Colossians. The Law was but a schoolmaster, or pedagogue; it contained weak and beggarly rudiments, being but a shadow of things to come, and condemning all who came under its sway. This could not be the end of God's dealings with man, and the historical parable of Abraham and Melchizedek was a standing proof of the truth of this conclusion. The reasoning is excellent, for it could not be overthrown, and it confounded Jewish objectors by reasons which their zeal and reverence for the Law and the Scriptures would not permit them to dispute even if they desired to do so.

Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses

spake nothing concerning priests. ... For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness. (Heb. 7:11-18.)

This is the argument which the writer applies on the basis of the facts he has reviewed. His reasoning in chapter vii, 11-19, brings out most effectively the conclusion to be drawn from the reasoning he has advanced in connection with the choice of a new order of priesthood. It necessitated “a change also of the law,” for the high priest after the order of Melchizedek was of the tribe of Judah. This high priest, too, had attained unto the Divine nature, being made “after the power of an endless life” in striking contrast to the priests of old, who were made “after the law of a carnal commandment”—that is, a commandment which depended on fleshly descent. The disannulling of the old Law implied its weakness and unprofitableness—had it been otherwise, it would not need to be superseded by another. All the history of the past indicated that the Law made nothing perfect, and showed the necessity of a better hope based on the New Covenant in Christ.

Continuing the argument concerning the superiority of Jesus to the high priest, we notice the second proposition before us, (*b*) that it is established by an oath. The reason may not seem very cogent, yet considerable weight is evidently attached to it in the epistle. The argument is as follows:

And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith 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 better covenant. ... For the law appointeth men
high priests having infirmity; but the word of the
oath, which was after the law, appointeth a son,
perfected for evermore. (Heb. vii, 20-22 and 28.)

Why should so much importance be attached to this contrast between the two orders? An answer will be suggested if we note some of the occasions when God is represented as swearing by an oath. The first incident is found in the life of Abraham. "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord ... thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:16-18). In the record concerning Isaac it is alluded to thus: "Sojourn in this land [Canaan], and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I sware unto Abraham, thy father ... and I will give unto thy seed all these lands" (Gen. 26:3 and 4). Frequent references to this oath will be found in connection with this promise of the land to Abraham and his seed, the Christ. Later on in the history of Israel we read: "I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David, my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations" (Psalm 89:3 and 4; also 35 and 36). Alluding to the time when these

promises shall be fulfilled, it is written, “By Myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isa. 45:23). In connection with the future deliverance of Jerusalem, which is a necessary event for the accomplishment of the foregoing, another reference is made to an oath of God: “The Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength” (Isa. 62:8). All these may be viewed as summed up in the closing words of Micah’s prophecy: “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Mic. 7:20). The same time and purpose are suggested by another form of reference which involves God’s oath: “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21). These illustrations associate the oath of God with the fulfilment of His purposes in the establishment of the Kingdom. In the New Testament the same truth is discerned. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, associated the birth of Jesus with “the oath which he swore unto Abraham our father” (Luke 1:73). Peter referred to the fact that God had sworn unto David concerning his son and throne (Acts 2:30).

The connection of this with the matter before us is indicated in the passage in the epistle which leads up to the main reference to Melchizedek:

For when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And thus, having patiently endured, He obtained the promise. For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to he, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whether as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb. 6:13-20.)

In view of the foregoing references to oaths, it is most suggestive that in the only allusion in prophecy to the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, an oath is specifically associated with it:

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek.
(Psa. 110: 4.)

Impressive as the ceremonies connected with the

consecration of the priests of the house of Aaron were, no such form of speech was used, and the reference to an oath in this prophecy must have suggested to the reflective Jew that the priesthood in question must be related to the subject-matter of the other oaths, that is, to the Kingdom of God, to the new covenant connected therewith, and to the position of the Son in relation to the Kingdom and the priesthood (Heb. 7:28; Psa. 89:4, 27, and 35).

Passing to the third proposition, we have to note that (c) the priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of Aaron because it is unchangeable. The argument is thus expressed: "And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing: but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable" (Heb. 7:23 and 24). The correct meaning of the term "unchangeable" is, as the argument suggests, not transferable. The marginal note in the Revised Version indicates this: "Or hath a priesthood that doth not pass to another." The superiority of such a priesthood is obvious. However good a high priest of the old order might be, his life was but brief; death was inevitable, and his successor might be careless of the forms of the Law and lacking in sympathy for the people. "Like priest, like people," is a proverb well illustrated in the history of Israel. The result was seen in the constant declension of the nation. The priests, whose lips should keep knowledge, so that the people might seek the Law from their mouth (Mal. 2:7), too frequently fed upon the sin of the people, and set then-hearts upon their iniquity (Hosea 4:8). This was a grievous drawback in the old system, but under the new no such

contingency could arise. Its priest was to endure “for ever”; it had been so promised concerning the one who was to sit at the right hand of Yahweh (Psalm 110). Of this priest it is testified that he was “holy, guileless, separated from sinners,” “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” It is therefore impossible for the old difficulties to arise, for there was a superlatively good high priest, whose priesthood was continuing, or for ever.

In view of what has been said in reference to the connection between sin and priesthood, it will be recognised that the term “for ever” is not to be understood of unlimited duration in the case of priesthood. Such an interpretation would imply the eternity of sin, an idea quite out of accord with the declared purpose of God. In the Hebrew of the Psalm the word is *olahm*, and in the Greek of the quotation it is *aion*. The former is defined as “time hidden or concealed from man, as well as indefinite and eternal.”¹ It is derived from a root signifying “to hide” or “conceal.” The Greek is equally wide in its application. Its meaning is given: “I. (1) A period of time, especially a lifetime, life; (2) one’s time of life, age, the age of man; (3) an age, generation; (4) one’s lot in life. II. A long space of time, eternity. III. A space of time clearly defined and marked out, an era, age, period of a dispensation.”² “Duration, or continuance of time, but with great

¹ Parkhurst, Hebrew and English Lexicon.

² Liddell and Scott: Greek-English Lexicon.

variety.”¹ It will be seen that both the Hebrew and the Greek imply a period undefined in length, the duration varying according to the cycle of the person or thing to which they are applied. In the instance before us the duration is limited by the necessities of the case. Priesthood is required because of sin. Abolish sin, and priesthood is not required. When God is all in all, mediation is out of the question, for “a mediator is not of one.” It therefore follows that the duration of “for ever” in this case can only be until the end of the millennial reign. In the millennium there will be need for priesthood, for although sin is to be restrained during that time, it is not abolished until the end, when the Son will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father. Until then the Messiah is both king and priest (Zech. 6:13).

The personal application of the word of the oath is indisputable. The Messianic application of the Psalm needs no proof, Jesus himself having used it in his contentions with the Pharisees (Mark 12:35-37). “THOU art a priest for ever,” clearly involved the bringing-in of a priesthood far superior to the Aaronic. Such a statement could not be made of any of the priests of the house of Aaron, and no greater evidence could be asked for in proving the betterness of the new covenant. The argument is conclusive. The

¹ Parkhurst: Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament. See also *Eureka*, vol. 1 pp 125-131, for an exposition of both terms.

new high priest must continue for ever. He was made “after the power of an endless life”—an indissoluble life, as the Greek implies—and thus once again the argument is triumphantly upheld by the use of Messianic arguments which the Jew could not dispute.

There are far-reaching conclusions arising out of this consideration. We cannot do better than set them out in the words of the epistle, immediately following those quoted in introducing this phase of the argument:

Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore. (Heb. 7:25-28.)

In this section we have the first, indirect, reference to the Day of Atonement that later on forms an important phase of the argument. Several points invite comment, but, as they will be more conveniently considered in relation to the references to sacrifices, they may be left until that phase of the argument is reached, and we can therefore pass on to the next consideration,

namely (*d*) that the offerings associated with the Melchizedek priesthood are better and more efficacious than those of the Aaronic.

Although it is not necessary to elaborate this argument at present, it is desirable to call attention to the general bearing of this reason. The constant repetition of the Mosaic sacrifices, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, indicated that there was no final efficacy in them. The offering of sacrifice is an essential duty of a priesthood. "Every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1). If, therefore, in this primary duty the Aaronic priests could only obtain what was evidently but a temporary, or provisional, efficacy, there was necessity for a more perfect result to be achieved. This is the real point of the argument under this heading. Without entering upon the details, we may notice the reasoning in the epistle:

And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ... for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb. 10: 11-14.)

The contrast is striking, and, as in the previous phases of the argument, the point is established by reference to statements which the Jews could not dispute. The quotation relied upon in this connection is from Jeremiah, who, speaking of the time to come, said:

Publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth. ... He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. ... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ... This is the new covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it, and I will be their God and they shall be my people ... for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more. (Jer. 31; Heb. 8.)

The Law had no provision which could accomplish this. In that system there was “a remembrance made of sins year by year.” Unless, therefore, something more efficacious were to be provided, the most cherished hopes of Israel in relation to their promised Messiah were doomed to complete failure. Admiration of the argument grows as we advance along the course of the reasoning. Surely the enemy was already silenced, and yet much more remained to be brought forward before the end was reached.

We have next to consider the reason (*e*) that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of Aaron because he (Jesus) was perfect. This is not merely a reason, it is also a conclusion forced upon us by the various lines of thought we have followed in this connection. This and

the next phase are really the logical results to be deduced from the argument.

That the Law could not produce perfection is evident. All Israel's history proved it. The frequent references to the making of a new covenant, and various matters connected therewith, also proved it. Had perfection been possible under the covenant of the Law, there would have been no need to speak of its supersession by another system, and yet it had been demonstrated that such a development was to take place. That a perfect system should be abolished was unthinkable; and nothing but a perfect system could produce perfection. The deficiencies of the old order are apparent. There is no person among the priests mentioned in the Old Testament of whom perfection could be predicated. There had been good priests; some of them stand out as excellent examples of what priests under the Law should have been. But they were not perfect. As a matter of fact, the priests were, generally speaking, failures.

The contrast between the two orders is thus expressed. "For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore" (Heb. 7:28). It will be noted that he had been "perfected," an expression which involves that there was a time when perfection could not be attributed to him. This is in accord with several testimonies. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons

unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became, unto all them that obey him, the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8 and 9). In the first place his perfection was only moral. He did always those things which pleased his Father; it was as his meat and drink to do God's will. By such a course treasure was developed in his earthen vessel, a perfect character resulting from his obedience to the commandments of the Father, even unto the death of the cross. In this perfection of moral beauty he exhibited the character of God to men, and passing through the sorrows and sufferings of human life, including the contradiction of sinners against himself, he was "perfected" in physical beauty also. By his faithfulness he attained unto the power of an endless life, being made a partaker of the Divine nature, to be thenceforth the Lord the Spirit, "perfected for evermore." How greatly such a high priest transcended the priests of the Aaronic order everyone must see who considers it. After all, what more can be said? Perfection is itself superlative, it brings before us the highest possible ideal in the priest of the new order—the apostle and high priest of our confession—Christ Jesus.

The last point arises out of this, for it furnishes the corollary to it, namely, (*f*) that the priesthood of Jesus

is superior to that of Aaron, because the result of his ministrations is the perfection of those who are benefited thereby. The means being perfect, the result may be also. On the other hand, it follows as a necessity of the case that, the old priesthood being imperfect, it could not produce perfection for others. But the Son, being a perfect high priest, became the author of eternal salvation. He is able to “save to the uttermost” (verse 25). Such will be the result of his priestly intercession: complete salvation for those who draw near unto God through him. Like him they will become participants in the Divine nature, constituents of the kingly-priestly constitution of the world to come (Rev. 5:9 and 10), and constituents in that great finality of the redemptive process when God shall be all in all. Here we finish our survey of the main argument of the epistle: the betterness of Jesus when compared with angels, Moses, and the high priests. Much remains to be considered before the reasoning is completed, but no one who has carefully followed it so far can have the slightest hesitation in acknowledging that the writer has succeeded in proving that Christianity entirely overshadowed the Mosaic institutions, and that the new covenant was fit to supersede the old.

CHAPTER VIII

*The Divine pattern—The true tabernacle—Covenants—
Covenant-making—Some Scriptural examples: Noah—
The Abrahamic covenant—Cutting a covenant—
Messiah given for a covenant—The covenant repast—
Berith {covenant)—Diatheke—A new covenant—The
first covenant—The covenant broken—Prophecies of a
new covenant—Written in the heart—No remembrance
of sins—An everlasting covenant.*

WITH the eighth chapter we enter upon a new phase of the epistle. From the ministers, mediator, and high priests of the Law we turn more to the Law itself and its ordinances in order that it may be proved that in this respect also the superiority is with the Covenant associated with Jesus. These matters arise out of what has been considered before. Hence they are introduced by a summing-up:

Now 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 Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. (Heb. 8:1 and 2.)

There are interesting and important matters arising out of this reference to the tabernacle. The purpose for which a tabernacle was provided was that there should be a place where God and man might meet. In view of the fact which made such a provision necessary, it was essential that such a place should be fashioned in strict accordance with Divinely-given

instructions. Man was an offender, and needed forgiveness. The way of approach must be indicated by God, whose law had been broken. This fact was constantly indicated in the instructions for the making of the tabernacle, and in the record of its construction.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they take for Me an offering: of every man whose heart maketh him willing ye shall take My offering ... And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it. ... And see that thou make them after their pattern which hath been shewed thee in the mount. (Exod. 25:1-9, 40.)

When the required materials had been obtained, and the tabernacle and its contents and the garments of the priests were prepared, we read the constantly-recurring phrase that all had been done “as the Lord commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31), “and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they” (verse 32). This is the point emphasised in the chapter now before us (Heb. 8:5). There can be no mistaking the truth which this constant reiteration of a phrase implies. It is the truth, so unpalatable to modern sectaries, that God will only be approached in the way that He may indicate, and that the oft-claimed right to serve God as one likes is really no right at all.

It was in this tabernacle, constructed in obedience

to God's directions, that the priests of the old order ministered. However valuable the materials may have been, they consisted of lifeless matter. The glory of the place was material, save for the fact that from time to time the glory of God shone forth above the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat.

But all this was only a figure (Heb. 8:5). To what extent did Israel realise this? It is impossible to say, but thoughtful minds must have been impressed by the Apostle's words: "Into the second [i.e. the most holy part of the tabernacle] the high priest alone [entered], once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people; the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way unto the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing" (Heb. 9:7 and 8). These words leave a deep sense of a serious lack on the part of the old constitution. The approach unto the Divine presence, communion with the Deity, was for one and one alone, and that but once a year! That surely could not be the final arrangement which God purposed to institute? The Jew who seriously thought about the ways of God to man must have felt that some development, better, greater, and more soul-satisfying than this, would be provided. And there was, and that better and greater thing was foreshadowed in the weaknesses and shortcomings of the first tabernacle and its services.

These greater things are alluded to in the summing-up referred to above, and again in the reference to “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation” (Heb. 9:11). What is the more perfect tabernacle in which the antitypical high priest was to minister? The tabernacle was spoken of as “the house of the Lord thy God” (Exod. 23:19). So was the temple: “The glory of the Lord filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chron. 7:2). In the epistle before us Jesus is spoken of as “a great priest over the house of God” (Heb. 10:21). The figure has been before us already in considering the contrasts between Christ and Moses.¹ There the house of God was seen to be the ecclesia of God. The figure is a familiar one. “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood [margin, a spiritual house for a holy priesthood], to offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet. 2:5). “We are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16). “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God?” (1 Cor. 3:16). “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the

¹ See p. 72.

Spirit” (Eph. 2:20-22). These expressions will indicate the character of the antitypical temple in which the high priest of the new covenant will officiate. Every stone thereof will be a saint, taken from the human quarry, fashioned by the operation of the Divinely-revealed truth, and polished by the tribulation of a probation for life eternal. The glory of this “greater and more perfect tabernacle” is a moral one, and therefore far above the mere material glory of gold or precious stones, reflecting the light given by the lightstand or the effulgence of the Schekinah. It is the living reflection of the character of God compared with the lifeless brilliance of metals and gems. When this tabernacle, or temple, in all its perfection is complete, it will be realised how far it transcends all that was before it in the Old Testament type.

The allusion to the gifts and sacrifices offered by high priests, and the application of the fact to the “apostle and high priest of our profession,” is another illustration of the argument sustained through the epistle. Shadows involve substance, and the substance is Christ; consequently that which was shadowy or typical must be moved, that the real things might be manifested. In these Jesus had “obtained a ministry the more excellent,” being “the mediator of a better covenant” “enacted upon better promises” (verse 6).

To the attentive reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews

it will be evident that the crisis of the argument is reached in that section which discusses the Old and New Covenants, and the sacrifices connected therewith. It is obvious that this must be so, for the object in view was to show that the national covenant of Israel (the Mosaic) was not a finality, that it was to be abrogated, and that, therefore, Christianity, with its message of a new covenant was just what was to be expected if the Scripture was to be fulfilled. It only remained to show that the covenant with which Christian teaching was connected was predicted by the prophets, who declared that such a new covenant should be brought in; and that this covenant was better than the old.

In view of the importance of the matters which are now to engage our attention, it will be useful to look first of all at the subject of covenants and covenant-making in general, particularly in the early ages of mankind, when the covenants in question were first made.

A covenant may be defined as a mutual agreement, entered into by two or more parties who undertake certain obligations towards each other. In English law it is an agreement or promise under seal, contained in a deed duly signed by the parties thereto. Provided the proper legal forms have been complied with, such an agreement becomes binding upon all who are party to it, and its terms may be enforced by process of law.

In the early times of mankind the method of covenant-making was very different from that which appertains to-day. The ceremonies that were gone through seem to have had a twofold object: firstly, to

give a religious basis or sanction to the matter; and, secondly, to imply that, should either of the parties fail to comply with the covenanted conditions, the one who broke them recognised that he was liable to the retribution suggested by the ritual which had been performed.

The ceremonies varied in different times and places, but those that were usual in the lands with which the early history of the people of the Bible is concerned are set out in the following extracts:

Almost all nations, in forming alliances, etc., made their covenants or contracts in the same way. A sacrifice was provided, its throat was cut, and its blood poured out before God; then the whole carcass was divided through the spinal marrow from the head to the rump, so as to make exactly two equal parts; these were placed opposite to each other, and the contracting parties passed between them, or entering at opposite ends met in the centre and there took the covenant oath.¹

Thus we find that in a covenant were these seven particulars: (1) The parties about to contract were considered as being hitherto separated. (2) They now agree to enter into a state of close and permanent amity. (3) They meet together in a solemn manner for this purpose. (4) A sacrifice is offered to God on the occasion: for the whole is a religious act. (5) The victim

¹ Adam Clarke on Gen. 6:18.

is separated exactly into two equal parts, the separation being in the direction of the spine; and these parts are laid opposite to each other, sufficient room being allowed for the contracting parties to pass between them. (6) The contracting parties meet in the victim, and the conditions of the covenant by which they are to be mutually bound are recited. (7) An oath is taken by these parties that they shall punctually and faithfully perform their respective conditions, and thus the covenant is made and ratified.¹

For whatever purpose a covenant was made, it was ever ratified by a sacrifice offered to God; and the passing between the divided parts of the victim appears to have signified that each agreed, if they broke their engagements, to submit to the punishment of being cut asunder, which we find from Matthew 24:51, Luke 12:46, was an ancient mode of punishment.²

The forms thus described, no doubt modified in various ways by different peoples, are known to have existed in Chaldea, they were practised in Greece, and also in Rome. Israel also adopted the custom, and one of their Rabbis, Solomon Jarchi, is quoted by Clarke as saying, "It was a custom with those who entered into covenant with each other to take a heifer and cut it in two, and then the contracting parties passed between the pieces."

Although nothing is known definitely of the origin of these customs, it seems probable that they arose

¹ Adam Clarke on Deut 29:12.

² Ibid., on Gen. 15:10.

in connection with the transactions in Eden after the entrance of sin into the world. Adam and Eve made coverings of fig-leaves for themselves, whereas God provided for them coats of skins, a fact which necessitated the slaying of animals. A review of a few illustrations of covenant-making as recorded in the Scriptures will be useful, and will serve to establish the suggestion that in the events in Eden are to be found the origin of sacrifice and its association with covenants. The first reference to a covenant is in the record of the Flood. After giving instructions for an ark to be made, God said to Noah, "I will establish My covenant with thee." Although the term does not necessarily involve it, it appears to imply that a covenant already existed. When all flesh had corrupted "the way" of God, this covenant had, doubtless, been obscured; with Noah it was to be established. Consequently, after the waters of the flood had subsided, the record goes on to tell how Noah and his family left the ark, "and Noah builded an altar unto the Lord ... and offered burnt offerings on the altar." The promise was then given that the necessary ordinances of the earth should continue, and then "God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you ... the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh" (Gen. 9:8-16). Sacrifice and a covenant are here intimately connected, and, without any forced interpretation, they may be linked up with the first slaying of animals in Eden. It should also be noticed that a token was given which was to be a constant reminder

of the relationship thus established. That token was the rainbow, which afterwards enters into the symbols of the Bible as a reminder of God's covenant concerning the redemption of the earth.

The next reference to a covenant is in connection with the symbolic events mentioned in Gen. xv, where it is recorded that God made a covenant with Abraham. In response to Abraham's question, "O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it [the land]?" he was commanded to take a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. The animals were divided in the midst, each half being laid over against the other. Afterwards a deep sleep fell upon Abraham. "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram" (Gen. 15). It is easy to see in this an adoption of the recognised forms of covenant-making. One could not expect God Himself to take part in the ceremonies, but in the flaming torch which passed between the divided portions of the sacrificial animals there was a symbolic representation of the Spirit of the Deity. By this typical ceremony God entered into covenant with Abraham, and gave for the assurance of the patriarch a ratification of the terms of the promise. The type found its antitype in connection with the passing of the Spirit of God into the body of the seed—who was also the sacrifice, or covenant victim, of the promises—on the third day after he was crucified. By this the seed became "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might

glorify God for His mercy” (Rom. 15:8 and 9). The Gentiles who thus glorified God became by faith and obedience Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.

It is not necessary to enlarge upon this aspect of the matter, but there is one very pertinent reference to covenant-making which is worth noting here, as it illustrates the ceremony described. In the closing days of the kingdom of Judah, just prior to the Babylonian captivity, Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people at Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to their brethren, so that every Hebrew bondman and maidservant might be released from servitude. The covenant was evidently made during a passing wave of contrition, born of the troubled times. The mood soon passed, and the people again caused the servants and handmaids to be brought into bondage. Jeremiah was therefore charged with a message to them:

Therefore thus saith the Lord: Ye have not hearkened unto Me, to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbour; behold, I proclaim unto you a liberty, saith the Lord, to the sword; to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will give you to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof; the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the

eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and then dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. (Jer. 34:17-20.)

This will give a clear indication of that aspect of the ceremony which involved the death of a sacrificial victim, and the passing-between the parts thereof, in order that a covenant should be made and ratified.

The fundamental idea of the foregoing enters into the language of the Bible in its many references to covenants. It does not come out, unfortunately, in the Authorised or the Revised Version, but in the Hebrew reference is constantly made to “cutting a covenant.” The word is *karath*, to cut off, a cutting-off, to cut in pieces. Thus it is recorded of Abraham and Abimelech “they two cut a covenant” (Gen. 21:27). Joshua and the princes of Israel “cut a covenant” with the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:15 and 16), Jonathan and David, too, “cut a covenant” or “cut a league” (1 Sam. 18:3; 22:8) with each other, and many similar expressions might be referred to. Similar language is used when God is said to have made covenants. “In that day the Lord cut a covenant with Abraham” (Gen. 15:18). “After the tenor of these words I have cut a covenant with thee and Israel” (Exod. 34:27). “I have cut a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever” (Psa. 89:3 and 4). There is an interesting variation in the language used in a passage in

Deuteronomy, where Moses, speaking to Israel, said: “Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ... that thou shouldest enter into [literally, pass through] the covenant of the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God putteth with thee this day” (Deut. 29:10-12). In this case we have reference to both aspects of the covenant-making ceremony—the cutting of the animal into halves, and the passing-through the pieces.

It will be gathered from the foregoing that as the act of cutting became associated with the covenant, so the slain animals were spoken of as if they were the covenant itself, for the act of passing between the divided portions of the animal was spoken of as passing through the covenant. This fact illustrates an important allusion to the Messiah in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; He that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. (Isa. 42:5-7.)

Later on in the same prophet we read:

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I answered thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the

land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages: saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. (Isa. 49:8 and 9.)

The import of these two passages, taken in connection with the context, will be apparent. The Servant of Jehovah, who would not break a bruised reed (Matt. 12:18-21), but whose dominion was to be world-wide (Isa. 42:1-4), was to be given for a covenant, that occupants of the prison-house (of death) might be released (comp. Zech. 9:11 and 12). He was to be Yahweh's salvation unto the end of the earth, yet his visage was to be marred, and himself would be a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief (Isa. 42-53). Being given for a covenant implied that he should undergo a violent death, be cut off, otherwise there was no meaning in such an expression. Daniel specifically foretold this: "And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing" (chap. 9:26). An examination of the whole passage in Isaiah will repay attention in this connection, and will show that Israel was "without excuse" when in due time the Messiah came and was "wounded," "cut off out of the land of the living," when he "poured out his soul unto death." All this was necessary that he might "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

In addition to the ceremonies already indicated, it was usual for the parties who made a covenant to eat together, the food being, at least in part, taken from the sacrifices. A familiar instance of this is found in the agreement made between Jacob and Laban, when the former had fled from his servitude. Laban said, "And now come, let us cut a covenant, I and thou." A memorial was prepared, the terms of the covenant were recited, and the parties swore by their Gods; Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain "and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread and tarried all night in the mountain" (Gen. 31:44-54). It must be borne in mind that "bread" in such passages does not bear the confined meaning attached to it to-day, but stands for food generally. There is no reason to doubt that in the case before us the food was a portion of the sacrifice.

A similar case is found, but on a higher plane, when Israel entered into covenant with God at Sinai. After Moses had said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath cut with you," it is recorded: "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ... and they beheld God, and did eat and drink" (Exod. 24). It seems probable that out of this custom arose the fact that to partake of food with certain people in Eastern lands was a guarantee of protection from any evil they might otherwise devise against the eater.

When we turn from ceremonies to the word itself as found in the Hebrew Scriptures, the same outstanding features are seen. The word is *berith*, which is derived from *barah*. The following definitions or comments on the word will be interesting:

PARKHURST. *Barah*—to feed, eat, or take food. *Berith*—a purifier, purification, or purification-sacrifice. Referring to the word in his Greek Lexicon, he says, after suggesting that it does not mean, strictly speaking, a covenant, “though *kereth berith*—cutting off or in pieces, a purification-sacrifice—be indeed sometimes equivalent to making a covenant, because that was the usual sacrificial rite on such occasions.” Writing under *kereth* he says: “Hence the phrase *kereth berith* implies the making of a league or covenant, and doubtless a sacrifice was generally offered on these occasions.”

DAVIDSON. *Barah*—properly to cut, hence to eat, to choose, select. *Berith*—agreement, league, covenant (from the idea of cutting).

GESENIUS defines it as a covenant, so called from the idea of cutting, etc.; hence also an eating together, since among Orientals to eat together is almost the same as to make a covenant of friendship. He further gives it as the conditions of a covenant from a root meaning “to cut,” “to hew,” from which comes *barath*—to pass through, to cut through.

FUERST. *Berith*—properly, cutting in pieces of the sacrificial animal, hence covenant, league. *Berit* (not used)—to cut into; both coming from the root *brth*— to cut in pieces, to separate.

It will be seen that in these comments of lexicographers there are the twofold applications already noted—that of cutting the covenant (victim) and the partaking of (sacrificial) food.

Before passing to the argument of the epistle, we may examine the word which is used in the Greek of the New Testament for the *berith* of the Old. The word is *diatheke*, which occurs thirty-three times in the Greek, and is translated in the Authorised Version twenty times by “covenant,” and thirteen times “testament.” In the Revised Version this difference almost disappears, the word “testament” only occurring twice (Heb. 9:16 and 17), and even in these two instances the American revision adopts the term “covenant.” It is much to be regretted that uniformity has not been followed, and one cannot help thinking that doctrinal bias is responsible for the failure, especially as some who recognise that “covenant” is the better word, strongly contend for “testament” in these two verses. As a matter of fact, the adoption of “testament” breaks the continuity of the argument (compare Heb. 9:18-20, with Exod. 24:8). So far as this exposition is concerned, the word “covenant” will be used consistently, except when for

convenience the terms Old or New Testament may be used to designate the two portions of the Scriptures popularly so described.

Following the system adopted in relation to *berith*, we call attention to the following definitions of *diatheke*:

PARKHURST. I. A disposition, dispensation, institution, or appointment of God to man. II. A personal title of Christ (this is a questionable interpretation, although it has some support from the use of *berith* in Isaiah 42 and 49). III. A solemn dispensation or appointment of man.

STRONG. Properly a disposition, specially a contract, especially a devisory will.

LIDDELL AND SCOTT. I. A disposition of property by will; a will and testament. ... III. A convention or arrangement between two parties; covenant.

It might be argued with much weight that the foregoing definitions of *diatheke* are much more in harmony with the term “testament” than “covenant.” It must be remembered, however, that the Bible, being a Jewish book, is to be interpreted on a Hebrew basis, and the evident adoption of *diatheke* as the equivalent of *berith* must be allowed for in any explanation of the terms.

Some writers have pointed out that in the language of the Greeks the proper word for “covenant” is *syntheke*.

This word is never used in the New Testament, and only infrequently in the Septuagint Version of the Old, and then it is as the representative of the Hebrew *berith* when used in relation to covenants made between men. It is never used in reference to a covenant made by God.

It is evident from this that the writer to the Hebrews would not have used the word *diatheke* if he had intended to convey the idea of a covenant entered into between equals. The word is derived from *dia*, through the channel by which a thing is done, and *themi*, to place; so that the main idea which the word is intended to convey is something through which a thing is placed, or done. Bearing in mind that it is God's covenant, not man's (Gal. 3:15), we must regard it as something by, or through, which God purposes to accomplish something which he designs. This conclusion, which excludes the idea of an ordinary mutual covenant, is borne out by a reference to the old covenant. After having sprinkled "the blood of the covenant" on the book and the people, Moses said: "This is the blood of the covenant which God *commanded* to you-ward" (Heb. 9:20). It clearly involves the superior position of God in the whole transaction, but it is not a "will" in the ordinary acceptance of that term.

The combination of the Hebrew and Greek words enables us to get a clear idea of the meaning of the

term in the Scriptures. As *berith* is used in the Old Testament to define human covenants, such as that between Joshua and the Gibeonites, the word must carry something of the mutual obligations connected with such an arrangement. With the use of the New Testament *diatheke*, emphasis is laid upon the Divine side of the matter, and we realise that God commands, or enjoins, in connection with His arrangements to place or accomplish through His promises and covenants the consummation which He has purposed.

This is a somewhat lengthy introduction to the subject of the old and new covenants as they are discussed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The importance of the matter, however, is a sufficient reason for the time involved, for a knowledge of the terms used will add much to our appreciation of the argument.

In introducing the section which compares the two covenants, the reasoning employed is somewhat parallel to that used in regard to the priesthood. It will be remembered that in dealing with that phase of the matter it was argued that, as the Jewish Scriptures foretold the uprising of one who was to be a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, it followed that the Aaronic priesthood must pass away, and that, having regard to the purposes of God, it was impossible to think otherwise than that the new must be better than the old. There would be no reason in supposing that a superior should be moved out of the way to make room for an inferior, or even an equal for an equal. So also in regard to the covenant.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt ... In that he saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away. (Heb. 8:7-13.)

The argument is incontrovertible; it followed, therefore, that the Jewish objector, met by the testimony of his own Scriptures, must find his position untenable. That the prophets had foretold the making of such a new covenant was indisputable. Jeremiah and Ezekiel¹ both had made pointed references to such an event, and both associated it with the coming of the Messiah. In these predictions it was indicated that everything in connection with the new covenant would be better than that associated with the old. That being so, the principal thing necessary to complete the vindication of the Christian position was to prove that it provided what was necessary to answer to the terms of the predictions. The argument circles around the word “better,” which is applied to the medium upon which the writing in connection with the covenant was impressed, the services in connection with its ratification, the sacrifices, and the person of the mediator.

¹ Jer. 31, 32; Ezek. 34, 37. 156

The first covenant had been made at Sinai, and a brief review of the ceremonies connected with its institution will form a suitable introduction to the matter generally. It will be found that allusions are made to each of the items mentioned above, and that in the transactions everything that has been spoken of as essential to covenant-making took place.

In the third month after leaving Egypt the children of Israel arrived at Sinai, and there received from God the ten commandments which constituted the central feature of the Law. These were pronounced by God Himself in the audience of the people. To these were added sundry enactments which were given to Moses for him to set before Israel: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments, and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath spoken will we do" (Exod. 24:3). Following this, Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in a book. He then built an altar, upon which young men of the children of Israel, acting as priests, offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings unto the Lord. The blood being sprinkled upon the altar, the words of the book, called the Book of the Covenant, were read in the ears of the people, who again declared, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." Moses then sprinkled of the blood on the

people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made [cut] with you concerning all these words." Following this it is recorded, as already mentioned,¹ that Moses, Aaron and his sons, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ascended the mount, where they saw the *elohim* of Israel, and did eat and drink. After this Moses ascended still higher up the mountain, and there received two tables of stone on which God had inscribed the ten commandments which He had pronounced. He likewise received particulars of the tabernacle which was to be prepared as the centre of Israel's worship in the wilderness (Exod. 24).

In reviewing these circumstances, the only practice which may be deemed to have been wanting is the passing of the contracting parties through the divided parts of the covenant victim. This is accounted for by the circumstances of the case. It would not have been practicable for the whole of the assembly to have passed between the portions, and it may be assumed that the sprinkling of the blood upon the people took the place of the more usual custom.

Alas for the vanity of human engagements! The people, who had voluntarily entered into covenant relationship with God, were almost immediately afterwards worshipping a golden calf. From that day their whole history, with a few brief exceptions, is a record of covenant-breaking. Instead of doing all that the

¹ See p. 150. 158

Lord had spoken, they turned their backs upon Him, and became rebellious, hard-hearted rejectors of the covenant of their God. They were thereby liable to the fate of covenant-breakers. In accordance with the ritual of the ceremony, the penalty was that they should be cut off. And that was the fate which finally overtook them; for Israel and Judah were cut off by the Assyrians and Babylonians respectively. The covenant had failed, not owing to any fault inherent in itself, but because of the evil disposition of the people.

It was “finding fault with them” (i.e. the people) that God foretold of a new covenant (Heb. 8:8). The law which formed the main feature of the covenant was, “holy, righteous, and good” (Rom. 7:12). It was “weak through the flesh,” the carnal mind was too strong, and the cutting-off of Israel and Judah resulted.

It was just about the time of their cutting-off that the prophecies alluded to ¹ were pronounced. The following may be taken as two of the principal predictions in this connection:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. ... This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother,

¹ See p. 156.

saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. (Jer. 31:31-34.)

This is the prediction quoted in Heb. 8:8-12.
Through Ezekiel the words are:

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (Ezek. 37:26-28.)

These passages serve to illustrate the different medium upon which the new covenant was to be written, as compared with that which received the impress of the old. They also established the superiority of the end to be attained, both in regard to its nature and duration.

With regard to the medium of the writing. The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God on tables of stone (Exod. 32:16; Deut. 5:22). There is no question as to the impressive character of this fact. Nevertheless, however good laws may be, and however reflective of the wisdom of the lawgiver, they depend for their success upon the attitude of the people for whom they are enacted. The “glory” of such a law is found in a

willing and loving subjection to its terms by those who come under it. In this the Law failed, and God, speaking through Jeremiah, had to say, “which My covenant they brake.” Engraven on stone, it found no response of a lasting kind from Israel. Their hard hearts received little or no impression from the graving-tool. The new covenant was not to be graven on stone or tablets, but “in their inward parts,” “in their hearts.” Written there by the finger of God, the result will be different: it will produce a unity between the Law and the individual which will produce a very different result from the previous writing. Hearts of flesh will succeed the hearts of stone, and on them the works of the Law will be written. In the Hebrew idiom, and in our own use of language, the heart is the seat of the affections, and the writing on the heart will result in the affections being influenced by the writing. What was in the past “a ministration of death” will be replaced by “a ministration of righteousness.” The Law, the old covenant, had failed to accomplish this. Christianity, however, had succeeded in so doing, even its enemies being witness. Thus Paul wrote: “Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh” (2 Cor. 3:2 and 3; see also verses 6 and 14 for the connection of his statement with the old and new covenants).

Thus in the controversy between Judaism and Christianity the point was established that the new covenant exceeded the old in its effects upon the character of its adherents, and it was shown that the coming of such a new covenant was in accord with the writings of Israel's prophets.

When we turn from the medium of the writing to the end to be achieved, the same superiority is manifest. The old covenant was to be a law for Israel, to guide them in their dealings with each other, and it constituted the terms on which their national occupation of the land of Canaan was to depend. Individually the Law could give them no future; something more was needed to effect this. Sin was a fatal barrier which needed to be removed, and the Law only contained typical enactments which "can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh." In those sacrifices there was "a remembrance made of sins year by year." The new covenant was to go far beyond this. "Their sins will I remember no more." The old covenant made no provision sufficient for this. It could not, therefore, bring about the realisation of the covenants made with Abraham and David, both of which necessitated the removal of sin in order that the eternal life, which each of them involved, might be made possible. By a process of reasoning, logical and irresistible, it was thus shown that the doctrines of Christianity alone provided the things necessary to enable the predictions of the Jewish Scriptures to be fulfilled. By so much, therefore, was Christianity superior to Judaism, for it told of "one sacrifice for sins for ever."

As regards the duration of the results little need be said. The Law promised long life, the new covenant promised aionian life in the Kingdom of God. Although the term “aionian” need not necessarily involve the idea of an everlasting future, it is implied by the terms used. “Sins remembered no more” suggest that the consequence of sin, namely death, will be removed. “They that are accounted worthy to attain to that aion, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God” (Luke 20:35 and 36). Life everlasting, equality with the angels, participation in the Divine nature—these are the essential features of the hope enkindled by the promises of the new covenant which was superseding the old, already prepared to vanish away.

CHAPTER IX

The Day of Atonement—The ordinances of the old covenant—Christ and redemption—The mediators of the covenants—Testament or covenant—The covenant-victim—Why the “new” covenant?—The ordinances of the new covenant.

THE supreme ceremonies of the old covenant were those which were associated with the Day of Atonement. To complete the vindication of Christianity over Judaism, it was necessary, therefore, to show that in regard to the matters associated with that day the former had the antitype of the latter. This is the subject-matter of much of the ninth chapter, and a brief review of the ordinances of that day will be a useful introduction to the consideration of the chapter. The day was the tenth of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27; Num. 29:7). On that day the high priest, divested of his special garments “for glory and for beauty,” and clothed in fine linen (the emblem of righteousness, Rev. 19:8), after washing his flesh in water, offered a sin-offering to make atonement for himself and his house. Then, with a censer of fire from the altar of incense and with incense in his hands, he took the blood of the sin-offering and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat. Then followed the sin-offering for the

people, with the same ceremonies. These completed, he put on again his holy garments and came out (Lev. 16). He alone entered into the Most Holy Place.¹

To enable the foregoing and other stipulated offerings to be carried out, the old covenant was associated with various articles and ordinances. These are referred to in the opening verses of the chapter now before us:

Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the Shewbread: which is called the Holy Place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies: having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, of which things we cannot now speak severally. (Heb. 9:1-5.)

Of the typical significance of the various things thus referred to it is not needful to speak now. They do not enter into the actual argument of the epistle. They are mentioned, no doubt, because of their intimate connection with the Mosaic ordinances for the forgiveness of sins, and their association, so far as most of them are concerned, with the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, to which reference is immediately afterwards made. After pointing out that the Holy

¹ For a detailed account of the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, see *Christadelphian*, 1907, p. 492.

Place was open to the priests for the service they were appointed to fulfil, the readers were reminded that the Most Holy Place was only entered once every year—that is, on the Day of Atonement, as previously shown. The High Priest went there “not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people.” The application of this is that, so long as these ceremonies were enacted year after year, it indicated that the way into the Holiest was not then made manifest. The veil was still there, and until it was rent the way was not open. All was temporary, depending on carnal ordinances which could not make perfect those who took part in the old worship.

In contrast with these features, the new covenant, which centred in Christ, was related to eternal things.

But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. (Heb. 9:11 and 12.)

Here was the antitype—the high priests of old entered into the Most Holy once every year, thereby obtaining a temporary covering for sins on behalf of themselves and also of the people. Christ, through his own blood, entered in once for all and obtained eternal redemption. In what way, and to what extent, can it be said that there was in this an antitype of the high priest who offered “first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people”? Certainly not to the extent that the high priest after the order of Melchizedek needed any

sacrifice for his own sins, for it is testified of him that he did no sin. Yet the construction of the passage involves that he participated in the benefit of the sacrifice. Moreover, the Scriptures frequently testify to the same fact. In prophecy it was foretold of him that he should be just and saved (Zech. 9:9, margin). An apostle declared of him that he slew the enmity in himself (Eph. 2:16, A.V. margin); whilst in the epistle before us it is testified that he prayed to be saved out of death and was heard for his godly fear, and that he was brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant. As a possessor of sinful flesh, he needed to be redeemed therefrom, and so “he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” There is no need to stumble at such a fact; indeed, it is only when the truth involved herein is rightly understood that the true value of Jesus’ obedience to his Father can be fully appreciated. An impeccable man, or one who was entirely free from sin, as was Adam before the Fall, could not present such an example to members of a sin-stricken race.

In dealing with the comparison between the two covenants, attention must be directed to, among other matters, the two mediators. The mediator of the first covenant was Moses; that of the new was Jesus. As we have already considered the superiority of Jesus over Moses, it is unnecessary to pursue that point further. We may just refer to one statement in the argument which will serve to emphasise the matter:

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh; how

much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? *And for this cause* he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Heb. 9:13-15.)

Of Moses such a statement could not be made; “without blemish” is a description applicable only to him who was the mediator of the new covenant and the antitype of the paschal lamb. A perfect mediator, yet withal one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because tempted in all points as we are, Jesus as the antitype of Moses in his mediatorial work excels him as an antitype must excel the type.

The immediate context of the foregoing quotation brings before us one of the most interesting sections of the epistle, and one that has been the theme of much controversy among expositors. It reads as follows:

For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for doth it ever avail while He that made it liveth? Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the 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 blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. 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 sacrifices than these. (Heb. 9:16-23.)

Reference has already been made to the unsatisfactory translation of the earlier portion of this quotation. A little attention to the argument of the whole section will show that to use the term "testament" in verses 16 and 17 changes an illuminating contrast into a comparison of things that have no connection, except that in the Greek language the same word happened to be used for them. Such a flaw in the argument is unthinkable, and as a matter of fact no such flaw occurs.

Having regard to the importance of the passage, it will be helpful to note a few of the various translations which have been made. The alternative marginal renderings of the Revised Version give:

For where a covenant is there must of necessity be brought the death of him that made it. For a covenant is of force over the dead; for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth.

Other renderings are:

For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be brought in the death of the covenant-victim. For a covenant is stable over the dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the covenant-victim liveth. (Newbury.)

(A footnote is appended—" The Hebrew word *berith* is 'covenant'; the Greek word *diatheke* is 'testament.' Hence in these verses the words may have a double sense." As will be gathered, there is no necessity for this note; the whole passage is full of meaning when the words are consistently rendered "covenant." The "double sense" introduces confusion.)

For where a covenant is, the death of the covenant-victim to come in is necessary, for a covenant over dead victims is stedfast, since it is no force at all when the covenant-victim liveth. (Young's Literal Translation.)

Where for a covenant death necessary to be produced of that having been appointed; a covenant for over dead ones firm, since never it is strong when lives that having been appointed. (Emphatic Diaglott—interlinear.)

For where a covenant exists, the death of that which has ratified it is necessary to be produced, because a covenant is firm over dead victims, since it is never valid when that which ratifies it is alive. (Ibid., marginal.)

For where a covenant, there is a necessity that the death of the appointed sacrifice be brought in. For a covenant is firm over dead sacrifices, seeing it never hath force while the appointed sacrifice liveth. (Macknight.)

This is paraphrased as follows:

For, to show the propriety of Christ's dying to ratify the new covenant, I observe, that where a covenant is made by sacrifice, there is a necessity that the death of the appointed sacrifice be produced. For, according to the practice both of God and man a covenant is made firm over dead sacrifices, seeing it never hath force whilst the goat, calf, or bullock, appointed as the sacrifice of ratification liveth.

The following note from Weymouth may also be useful:

It is possible that the real meaning of verses 16 and 17 is, "For where a covenant is made, there must be evidence of the death of the covenant-victim. For a covenant is only of force over dead bodies, because it is not binding as long as the covenant-victim lives." Some maintain that to introduce the Gentile notion of a "will" here would be out of place in an essentially Jewish letter.

An examination of these renderings will indicate

that, notwithstanding the endeavour of the majority of modern commentators to give the passage the application of a will, there is plenty of support for the rendering adopted in our exposition. The two important words are *diatheke* and *diatithemai*. The former has been already examined ¹ and seen to be the equivalent of the Hebrew *berith*. The latter combines *dia*, through, and *tithemi*, to place, and is thus intimately connected with *diatheke*. The argument turns on a comparison between two covenants and the ratification-sacrifices associated with them. The old had been dedicated by the blood of the sacrifices which were offered, and it is evident from the record that the usual covenant ceremonies were carried out. What, then, of the new?

Were the same ceremonies, in any way, adopted for its ratification? Unquestionably so, though in a higher form than applied in the case of the old. Death took place, blood was shed; not the blood of bulls and calves, but the “precious blood of Christ,” the Lamb of God. In the case of the old, Moses had told the people all the words of the Lord and His judgments; so before the new was ratified, Jesus, the prophet like unto Moses, had proclaimed the principles upon which those who so desired could participate in the blessings of the covenant. The Sermon on the Mount, as it is called, may be taken as a characteristic declaration of these principles. The sacrifice then took place. His body was “broken,” the “blood of sprinkling” was shed. Thus the covenant was confirmed, or ratified, and Jesus became “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might

¹ See p. 153.

confirm the promises [the covenants of promise] given unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). To all who enter into the covenant in the appointed way, “the blood of sprinkling” is applied by faith, and Jesus himself indicates the nature of the covenant repast which is also required by the typical proceedings of the past:

My Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. ... If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. ... He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (John 6:32-55.)

That Jesus is the covenant-victim of the new covenant, the ratification-sacrifice, is evident from various references to him in the New Testament. Thus in relation to his prospective birth, it was said by Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist, that God had raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David, “to shew mercy towards our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which he sware unto Abraham” (Luke 1:72 and 73). Paul’s reference in Romans 15:8, has already been quoted. The same association of ideas is apparent in Peter’s words: “Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers. ... Unto you first God, having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3:25 and 26). This confirmation

fulfilled the type of the transactions connected with the sacrifices offered by Abraham (Gen. 15). The passing of the flaming torch between the divided pieces on the altar found its antitype when the “body prepared,” having been broken, was quickened by the spirit of God which, as it were, passed through his body, which thus became a “body repaired”; “declared to be the son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead” (Rom. 1:4).

If the foregoing association of the death of Christ with the covenant made with Abraham be true, it will be apparent that what is termed the new covenant is really older in its terms than the old. The latter was made at Sinai four centuries after the promise was given to Abraham. The apparent anachronism is easily explained. “A covenant is of force over the dead”; consequently the Abrahamic covenant could not come into force until its appointed sacrifice was offered—hence the appropriateness of the term “new.”

The points which we have thus reviewed will enable us to enter more fully into the meaning of the two ordinances connected with Christianity—baptism and the breaking of bread. It is deeply significant that baptism is particularly associated with Jesus in that phase of his mission which shows him to be the antitype of the sacrifices of old. “All we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death. We are buried therefore with him through baptism into death. ... We have become united with him by the likeness of his death” (Rom. 6:3-5). Baptism therefore inducts into the bonds of the covenant. Hence Paul could write, “For as many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on

Christ. ... And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27 and 29)—the promise enshrined in the covenant of promise. The results which flow from this fact are of first importance, and have to do with every phase of the experience of all those who have been so "buried."

So also in regard to the breaking of bread. As the parties to a covenant partook of the sacrificial food together, so week by week those who forsake not the assembling of themselves together partake of the covenant meal, proclaiming thereby their intention to conform to the terms of the covenant. In the bread we discern "the broken body," and in the wine "the blood of the covenant." Jesus referred to this when he said, "Take this and eat it: it is my body. ... Drink from it, all of you: for this is my blood which is to be poured out for many for the remission of sins—the blood which ratifies the covenant" (Matt. 26:27 and 28, Weymouth's translation). The ordinances of the past had shown the necessity for the shedding of blood. The "copies of things in the heavens" used in association with the old covenant had all been cleansed by the blood of the sacrifices of the past. Better sacrifices, or rather a better sacrifice, even that of Christ himself, was the appointed means for the cleansing of the heavenly things themselves. By that sacrifice and the necessary shedding of blood he entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us, not once each year, but "once at the end of the ages" he was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

In the typical things of the Day of Atonement the return of the high priest from the Most Holy intimated

the acceptance of the annual sacrifice for the sins of the people. So, in the antitype, it waits for the return of our Great High Priest from heaven to intimate to the faithful their acceptance of the Father, and their consequential change from mortal to immortal nature, and a participation of the Divine nature. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (verse 28). Thus the type will be completely fulfilled, but with results so far exceeding the past that the whole effects of sin will be for ever eradicated from all those who thus “look for him” and receive the blessing of the high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER X

The origin of sacrifice—The shedding of blood—Putting away sin —What is sin?—Christ and sin—Establishing the will of God—A body prepared and ears digged—The blood of the covenant—The two constitutions—The application.

In passing to the tenth chapter we enter very closely on the subject of sacrifice. It has been before us in earlier portions of the epistle, but now it forms the essential subject of the argument.

It is therefore necessary to look more particularly at the subject of sacrifice, with the object of ascertaining wherein it was that the sacrifice which ratified the new covenant was better than those which were offered in connection with the old. The matter has been touched upon in the argument concerning priesthood, but it needs to be further considered at this stage of our study.

Sacrifice is the earliest appointment of religion; its origin is found in the opening chapter of human history. Sin, which caused a breach between God and man, made a means of approach to God necessary, and from the earliest times sacrifice has been that means. It evidently took place first in the Garden of Eden.

Throughout early times it was practised by Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job. With the institution of the Mosaic Law it became incorporated by Divine enactment in the national code of Israel. Daily, weekly, monthly, and annual sacrifices were commanded, and every festival and fast had their accompanying offerings.

This constant repetition of offerings contained in itself a lesson as to the weakness of the institution in relation to the purpose of taking away sin. How far this may have been realised by thoughtful Israelites is not clear. The fact that prophecies spoke of a time when sins should be remembered no more probably caused some to recognise that something more was needed, and to see in the constant offerings types of something greater to come. It is only in the New Testament that the full answer to any such queries is to be found.

The foundation-truth to be remembered in this connection is that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). This was no new doctrine, for the Law clearly declared the same truth. “The life of the flesh is in the blood ... it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life” (Lev. 17:11). In accord with this, blood was constantly shed in Israel’s sacrifices. Yet it is testified that “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”

The law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. ... For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. ... And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins. (Heb. 10:1, 4, 11.)

Here, then, is the problem before us: Shedding of blood was essential to the remission of sins; blood was continually being shed in accordance with the Mosaic legislation; yet it did not avail to the end in view. Why?

The answer to this question is of primary importance, and nowhere is it more effectively answered than in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are two closely-related passages, one of which occurs in the previous chapter, but which it is desirable to have before us in this connection.

But now once in the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ... Having been once offered to bear the sins of many, [he] shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." (Heb. 9:26 and 28.) Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me . then said I, Lo, I am come ... to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:5 and 7.)

Two points stand out in these testimonies. They are: (a) that Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and (b) that he established the will of God,

which he came to do. These two statements bring before us the great difference between the blood-shedding under old and new covenants. The former could not take away sin because, by the sacrifice of an animal, there was no putting-away of sin, and in the life of an animal there could be no doing the will of God. Moreover, there was no association, except a ceremonial one, between the sinner and the sacrifice. It was precisely because there was this association in the case of Jesus, and because the two requirements set out above were fulfilled in him, that the sacrifice of Christ effected what whole hecatombs of animal sacrifices could not do.

It will be necessary to look at these two sayings somewhat closely, as they form the essence of the argument of the section now before us.

(a) In the offering of himself Jesus put away sin. In orthodox circles this is supposed to mean that in some way, which cannot be defined, the accumulated sins of mankind were placed upon Jesus by imputation, and that consequently they were taken away by his death, a death which he suffered as a substitute for others. Any further meaning is ignored. And yet a little reflection should show that such a limited interpretation fails to meet the facts of the case. If all that was required to “put away sins” was that the sins of mankind should be “imputed” to the sacrifice, why should the blood of bulls and goats not have availed? Could not sins have been “imputed” to

them? As a matter of fact, so far as the imputation of sins was possible, they were so imputed to the sacrifice by the ceremonies connected with it. If, therefore, that were the principle involved, there would be no difference in this respect between the sacrifices of the old and new covenants. Consequently this cannot be the meaning of the statement before us. Besides, the Law was only a shadow of good things to come, not the very image of them. If the association between Jesus and sin were precisely the same as that between the Mosaic sacrifices and sin, then shadow and substance would be alike on one of their most important points, and that would be absurd. No shadow can ever equal the substance; the substance is real, the shadow is intangible. The statement that "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" evidently implies that in some way sin was associated with Jesus. Yet it is testified of him that he was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners," though it is also declared that he was the antitype of the high priest who offered first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people (Heb. 7:27).

The difficulty, if such it may be termed, is only apparent. Sin is a term of double import in the Scriptures; it has a physical as well as a moral application. When Adam and Eve were first created, sin had no association with them in any way. They were very good. When, however, by the sophistry of the serpent, they were led to disobey God's command, a principle was established in them which, later, is defined as the law of sin and death. Their nature became defiled, and on the principle that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, all descended from them became partakers of

their defiled or sin-stricken nature. The Apostle Paul is very precise in his references to sin as a physical principle inherent in human flesh. He speaks of "the body of sin" (Rom. 6:6), and says in relation to it, "Sin, finding occasion, wrought in me, through the commandment, all manner of coveting." "Sin revived." "Sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me." "Sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me ... that sin might become exceeding sinful." "So now it is no more I that do it but sin which dwelleth in me." "The law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7). Sin as spoken of in these verses must necessarily be considered as something different from actual transgression. It is "sin" within that leads to sin in action. The following quotations are much to the point:

The word "sin" is used in two principal acceptations in the Scripture. It signifies, in the first place, "the transgression of law," and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature, which is the cause of all its diseases, death, and resolution into dust. It is that in the flesh "which has the power of death"; and it is called sin because the development, or fixation, of this evil in the flesh was the result of transgression. Inasmuch as this evil principle pervades every part of the flesh, the animal nature is styled "sinful flesh," that is, flesh full of sin; so that sin, in the sacred style, came to stand for the substance called man. In human flesh "dwells no good thing"; and all the

evil a man does is the result of this principle dwelling in him.¹

Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean. It is therefore written: “How can he be clean who is born of a woman?” “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” ... This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus. The apostle says, “God made him sin for us, who knew no sin”; and this he explains in another place by saying that “He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” in the offering of his body once. Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there. His body was as unclean as the bodies of those he died for; for he was born of a woman, and “not one” can bring a clean body out of a defiled body: for “that,” says Jesus himself, “which is born of the flesh is flesh.”²

The importance of this teaching cannot be overestimated. John’s warning in relation to it is most explicit: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist” (1 John 4:2 and 3). As a member of the race, partaking of sin’s flesh, Jesus was in a position to receive in himself the

¹ *Elpis Israel*, p. 113.

² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

sentence pronounced against sin, in harmony with the righteousness of God, which, indeed, was declared thereby (Rom. 3:25). In his death “he died unto sin once” (Rom. 6:10), and “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

The matter is illustrated by the analogous case of the curse of the Law. That rested upon every Jew, and was an effective barrier to eternal life. That curse must therefore be removed, and the method whereby this was effected is indicated by Paul when he wrote, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). By means over which he had no control, which involved no shadow of fault or responsibility, and which were in fact incurred by his obedience to the Father’s will, he came under the curse of the Law, and was thereby able to bear it away. His birth brought him into relation with the Adamic curse, his death with the Mosaic, and thus the one final act of obedience enabled him to become the Redeemer from both.

Over this doctrine orthodoxy completely stumbles; so do some who ought to know better. It is considered that the suggestion is derogatory to Christ. Why should it be? No one can be held responsible for the circumstances into which he is born. The possession

of sin's flesh is no disgrace, and implies no stigma. The real effect of the reception of this doctrine is to enhance our appreciation of Jesus. The temptation of an impeccable and immaculate Jesus would convey but little comfort to one who was struggling against the enticements of lust (Jas. 1:14), whereas the triumphant emergence of one who could be tempted in all points, like as we are, is a real incentive to every earnest follower who is learning, amid many failures, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts:

He once temptation knew, That he might truly
find A fellow-feeling true For every tempted mind.

There are many considerations which arise out of this fact concerning Jesus Christ which deserve attention, but this is not the place to follow them out. The reception of the truth on this point will enable one to realise the beauty of the Divine plan of atonement— a plan which, above all else, reflects the glory of God, and teaches true humility to man. It will lead to the frame of mind exhibited by the apostle when he wrote: “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out. ... For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33-36.)

Having considered the first of the points which indicate in what ways the sacrifice in connection with the new covenant is better than those relating to the old, we may now pass to the second.

(b) In the offering of himself Jesus established the will of God. That sacrifice in itself was not sufficient to take away sin and ensure the acceptance of the sinner by God had long been indicated in the Scriptures. Prophets and psalmists combine to declare this very clearly. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifice unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isa. 1:11). "I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). "Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering" (Psalm 51:16). Something more was necessary. How could it be thought that merely sacrificing a bullock or a ram should put away the guilt of transgression? All the cattle on a thousand hills were His; how could the death of one of them be supposed to give satisfaction to their owner? Though they had their place in the economy of the Mosaic arrangements, it was evident that something more was required.

In considering this matter, we come to the essential features of an acceptable sacrifice that should be efficacious in removing sin, for after having declared

that “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins,” the apostle continues:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, *but a body* didst thou prepare for me. In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God. ... He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. (Heb. 10:5-9.)

Here are the essential features—a body prepared and a will done. Of the “body prepared” we have already spoken. “God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, “made” in the likeness of sinful flesh “that therein sin might be condemned. Now we have to consider the other feature—the doing of the will of God. In this all had failed. No matter how earnest and upright many of the Old Testament characters had been, of none of them could it be said, without qualification, he had done God’s will.” There is none righteous, no, not one,” was the Divine summing-up of all the generations of the past. Hence there had never been one who could furnish the two requirements of acceptable sacrifice. Where the Mosaic system had failed because of the weakness of the flesh, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant succeeded. He did God’s will perfectly. He said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me” (John 4:34). He sought the will of Him that sent him (ch. 5:30), and in so doing his obedience was absolute. Thus what was written of him

“in the roll of the book” was fulfilled, and the “body prepared” became a fit sacrifice “to take away the sin of the world.” Nothing could more emphatically testify to the superiority of the “better sacrifices” of the new covenant.

There is a peculiar variation in the quotation in the Hebrews when compared with the language of the Psalm from which it comes. Instead of a “body didst Thou prepare for me,” we read in the Psalm: “Mine ears hast Thou opened” (Psa. 40:6). The margin gives as an alternative “Heb. Ears hast Thou digged (or pierced) for me.” Digged ears—for the Hebrew clearly means “to dig”—is a peculiar idea which has given rise to much discussion amongst commentators. Yet the use made of it in Hebrews is evidently explanatory of the Psalm. Ears digged are ears opened, and to open the ears is evidently to prepare them to receive intended instruction. One whose ears were digged would thus “hear.” In Scriptural language, to hear is to profit by the words spoken. Thus Samuel said to Saul, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 25:22). The parallelism here indicates that hearing and obeying are intended to convey identical meanings. “The body prepared” was thus a “body” ready to hear and to do the

will of God. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient, even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). He was thereby the sinless bearer of sinful nature, an innocent member of a sinful race. In his death God condemned sin in the flesh, while at the same time declaring His own righteousness. Christ’s faithfulness to the Divine commandments ensured a resurrection from the dead, whereby being “delivered up for our trespasses [he] was raised for our justification.”

A recognition of these two principles will enable us to understand why the sacrifice whereby the blood of the new covenant was shed was superior to all those of the old dispensation. It also enables us to understand the true meaning of many expressions in the Hebrews which are stumbling-blocks to orthodox readers. We read, for example, “Christ ... through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). How much this passage is misunderstood is evidenced by the addition in the Authorised Version of the words “for us.” These words are not merely unnecessary, they are opposed to the construction of the passage, which implies that he obtained it for himself; even as the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, which form the basis of the reasoning of the ninth chapter, imply. That he needed a personal salvation is evidenced by another saying:

Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from [margin, out of] death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey Him, the author [margin, Gr. cause] of eternal salvation. (Heb. 5:7-9.)

He was “brought again from the dead” “with [or by] the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20). The types connected with the first covenant set forth this fact in many ways. The “copies of the things in the heavens” needed to be purified; the tabernacle, even the altar itself, were purified by the sprinkled blood of the sacrifices, and so “the heavenly things themselves,” including the altar (Heb. 13:10), were “purified” by the better sacrifice, when “he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” How much does a realisation of the truth upon this matter add to the force of the words!

For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself.” (Heb. 7:26 and 27.)

The teaching of these testimonies is most important. It was not as a substitute that Jesus died; God’s plan has nothing of such an idea. He was a representative, a prospective federal head. As death passed upon all men because their first progenitor was a

sinner who had earned the wages of sin, and they die in him (1 Cor. 15:12), for by nature they are in him; so life eternal may be obtained by all who become “the children” of Christ (Heb. 2:13) by being baptised into him (Gal. 3:27) who “loved righteousness and hated iniquity,” and who thereafter “abide in him.” To such he says, as to his disciples long ago, “Because I live ye shall live also.” Thus, “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” Upon the basis thus laid down God in His forbearance forgives their sins. He regards those who are, and abide, in Christ as righteous. Such teaching is beautiful, and reflective of the glory of the great Creator who arranged such a wondrous plan of salvation. That plan in its outlines may be summed up in a few sentences. Christ, as a member of a race condemned to death, died under that condemnation. Being perfectly righteous, he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. The sin-nature having been destroyed, and Jesus having attained unto life and immortality, can bestow the same gift upon others on conditions clearly expressed in the Scriptures. Those who conform to those conditions will at the last receive the gift of life eternal by a physical deliverance from the power of sin and death.

A recognition of these principles will lead to an appreciation of the summing-up of the matter. The priests of old offered oftentimes, Christ offered one

sacrifice for sins for ever, and thereby “perfected for ever them that are sanctified “ (Heb. 10:11-14). All this had been involved by the prediction of a covenant under which sins and iniquities should be remembered no more (verses 15-17).

The exhortations with which this section closes are intimately connected with the matters which have been considered. By “a new and living way”—an expression which really means “a newly-slain and living way,” opened up “through the veil” of his flesh, by the Great High Priest over the house of God—we may with boldness, and in full assurance of faith, enter into the holy place, with hearts sprinkled by the blood of the covenant victim and bodies washed with pure water in accord with the doctrine of baptisms. Therefore, “let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the 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” (Heb. 10:24 and 25). The “assembling together” is for the purpose of jointly partaking of the covenant meal, the bread which represents the “body prepared,” the wine, the “blood of the everlasting covenant.” Such expressions take on a deeper meaning when they are seen to be associated with the reasoning out of which they were developed.

The other side of the matter is exhibited in the same connection in reference to wilful sins on the part of

those who have entered into the bonds of the covenant. As the Law of Moses could not be trifled with without dire results, so it is to an even greater degree with the new covenant. Treading underfoot the Son of God, esteeming as unholy the blood of the covenant whereby sanctification was obtained, are courses which no one can view without feeling how heinous they must be in the sight of God. Alas for those who have so acted, for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Happy are they who, enduring affliction, holding companionship with the persecuted, realise that they have “a better possession and an abiding one”— the life eternal to be bestowed when “he that cometh shall come.” Such had been the attitude of the Hebrew Christians during trial and tribulation, so that it could be said they were not of those that shrunk back into perdition, but were followers of God’s “righteous one” and who, therefore, lived by faith, a faith that leads to the saving of the soul.

CHAPTER XI

Substance and conviction—Past and Present—The effects of faith— Examples of men of faith—Noah— Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Moses —The Exodus, etc.— “And what shall I more say?”

THE reference to faith at the end of the tenth chapter leads to the definition of that quality in the succeeding section of the epistle. What is this faith by which a righteous one may live? All will be familiar with the definition as given in the Authorised Version. The words of the Revised are less well known: “Now faith is the assurance [margin, or the giving substance to] of things hoped for, the proving [margin, test] of things not seen.” Dr. Thomas has rendered it, “Faith is a confident anticipation of things hoped for, a full persuasion of events not seen, “which he elsewhere explains by saying:

Here faith, or belief, is said to be *hypostasis* and *elenchos*; that is, faith is reality and proof. The person who has it embraces certain things promised as realities, and certain transactions as things proved. Hence faith is the assured hope of things promised, the conviction of the truth of transactions not witnessed by the believer.¹

Such a faith takes hold of the entire mentality of the individual who has it, transforms the life, and forms the

¹ *Eureka*, vol. 1, p. 284.

foundation of a character which will bring the possessor of it to the perfection spoken of in the last verse of the chapter before us.

The two words *hypostasis* and *elegchos*¹ are worthy of attention. The former has already been considered in its usage in reference to the Son.² It is a combination of *hypo*, under, through, and *histemi*, to stand. It is rendered confidence (2 Cor. 9:4; 11:17; Heb. 3:14), substance (Heb. 1:3), and now assurance (Heb. 11:1). These are the only occurrences of the word in the New Testament, and if they are compared with the previous comments, they will assist us to gain a clear idea of the meaning. *Elegchos* is from *elegcho*. It means a proof, Latin *argumentum*, an evident demonstration or manifestation. It only occurs in the passage under notice and 2 Tim. 3:16 (reproof). *Elegko* occurs several times and is rendered convict [John 8:9 (not in Revised Version) and 46; 16:8; Titus 1:9; James 2:9; Jude 15], to show (i.e. a fault, Matt. 18:15), and reprove (Luke 3:19; John 3:20; 1 Cor. 14:24; Eph. 5:11 and 13; 1 Tim 5:20; Titus 1:13; 2:15; Heb. 12:5). It will be seen that conviction is the underlying idea of the word as used in the Scriptures.

Bearing in mind the twofold aspect of the faith thus declared, we may note the language of the chapter concerning it. It is an essential qualification for an acceptable approach to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him" (Heb. 11:6). The "invisible

¹ This is the actual spelling of the word pronounced *elenchos*.

² Ante, p. 16.

God” cannot be seen, but faith apprehends the evident demonstration of His existence and power, and therefore trusts in Him. It is not a mere vague or shadowy belief, there is a real substance in it. The believer consequently trusts in Him, and, hearing of the promised reward, faith is manifested in a confident anticipation of the time of realisation.

The various examples of faith set forth in the chapter give examples of both aspects of the definition: the things hoped for (concerned mainly with the future), and those not seen (relating to the past and also to the present).

In regard to the past, faith is manifested in the reception of the testimony that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.... For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:6 and 9). No one was there to see, yet faith accepts the statement, not as a matter of credulity, but as the result of a conviction based on reason and the record in the Scriptures. The present application is shown by acceptance of the declaration of an overruling providence of God, which gives an *assurance* that “to them that love God, all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28). This truth is expressed by the Psalmist when he says:

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about
them that
fear Him, And delivereth them.
The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous,

And His ears are open unto their cry.
(Psa. 34:7 and 15.)

Angelic agency is unseen, yet faith recognises it. This recognition is not a credulous acceptance of a mere statement; it is based upon a conviction, assured by a consideration of the “ways of Providence” as exemplified in many cases of the past. We thus believe that angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation.” The reception of this truth enables all who believe it to say with the apostle, “If God is for us, who is against us?” and thereby rejoice in the fact that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31 and 39).

In a very beautiful passage of his prophecies Isaiah joins all three applications—past, present, and future—into one:

Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint. (Isa. 40:28-31.)

Here we have faith manifested in regard to the past, for God is spoken of as the Creator; in regard to the present, for “He giveth power unto the faint” (“My grace is sufficient for thee; for My power is made perfect in weakness”: 2 Cor. 12:9); and in regard to the future, for the renewed strength is the strength of immortality. The same combination of times is seen in Paul’s address on Mars’ Hill:

God that made the world, and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is He served by men’s hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. ... For in Him we live, and move, and have our being. ... He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained: whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead. (Acts 17:24-31.)

The list of worthies whose faith exemplifies the definition given commences with Abel, and includes examples from many a succeeding age. An examination of the illustrations will show that their faith was not like that spoken of by Reformation leaders and modern so-called evangelical preachers. Theirs was a faith that worked, for “faith without works is dead.” A brief survey of the examples given will show this very clearly. Abel “*offered* unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4). Noah, warned by God, “*prepared* an ark to

the saving of his house” (verse 7). Abraham, “when he was called, *obeyed* to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance” (verse 8), and “being tried [he] *offered* up Isaac” (verse 17). Moses “*refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, *choosing* rather to be evil entreated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”; “*he forsook* Egypt” and “*kept* the passover” (verses 24-28). Israel *compassed* the walls of Jericho (verse 30); Rahab “*received* the spies with peace” (verse 31). When we reach the end of the chapter we read in a summary form of those who “subdued kingdoms,” “wrought righteousness,” “waxed mighty in war,” “turned to flight armies of aliens.”

There is no suggestion here of the emasculated thing called faith in the religious circles of to-day.

The faith that made the saints of old In patience to endure—

was very different from that which modern religionists speak of when they sing, “O to be nothing, nothing!” It was a robust belief in Divine things which caused its possessors to do what was commanded by God. Those who have it now “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” whilst at the same time they recognise that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12 and 13), they “give diligence” to enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God (Heb. 4:11).

It is not necessary to dwell at length on the various examples referred to in the chapter, but there are a few points to which attention may be directed with profit. Thus Abel's sacrifice, foreshadowing the death of the "Lamb of God," was an act of faith, indicating the belief of the offerer in the promise given in Eden, in contrast to his brother's action. By that act of obedience, the outcome of faith in God, he, being dead, yet speaketh (Heb. 11:4). Enoch's translation "that he should not see death" was a proof of his faithfulness. It testifies that he did the things commanded by God because he had faith in God. This is evidenced by the fact that "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him" (verses 5 and 6).

Noah's faith was based upon a warning of the approaching flood, and found its expression in the fact that, "moved with godly fear," he prepared an ark in accordance with the directions of God. By this action he "condemned the world." This is an interesting allusion in view of the application of the principle to our own times. The world necessarily dislikes, even if it does not hate, those who are more righteous than its own constituents. Noah, by preaching and practising righteousness, gave offence to his contemporaries. The attitude of separation adopted by a righteous person is instinctively felt to be a condemnation of the free-and-easy way of the world generally. Noah's attitude was fully vindicated when the threatened judgment arrived; a fact of encouraging

import when we bear in mind the saying of Jesus: "And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26).

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are associated together in the record of the faithful as heirs of the land of promise. Abraham's removal from Ur of the Chaldees was a clear indication of his faith in the God who called him thence to journey to an unknown land. Referring thereto, it is said that Abraham "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder [or Architect] and Maker is God." "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "They that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking a country of their own." In these references there are two points to be noted. The statement that they looked for a city with foundations needs to be contrasted with the fact that they dwelt in tents. They thereby indicated their belief that the promises made to them were not intended for immediate realisation. Had it been otherwise, they would have endeavoured to found a polity in the land of promise, instead of which they journeyed from place to place as occasion required. They thereby testified that the fulfilment was a long way off; they "greeted them [the promises] from afar" (verse 13). The word for "country" in this connection is very significant. It is *patois* (from *pater*, father), a father-land. It is generally used in the

sense of a native town, but in this passage it can only be used in the sense of a fatherland. Abraham left his native town, Ur of the Chaldees, to seek a country. No fleshly association can account for it being called a fatherland. It can only be so termed because it was in an especial way the land of *the* Father—God. Such an application is familiar to every believer of the Truth. “When ye come into the land which I give you ... the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine” (Lev. 25:2, 23). “A land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it” (Deut. 11:12). “If ye turn away and forsake My statutes ... then will I pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them” (2 Chron. 7:19 and 20). In the prophets Jehovah speaks of that land as “My land” (Joel 1:6), and referring to the future invasion of the Gogian hosts He says, “I will bring thee against My land” (Ezek. 38:16), at which time “the Lord shall be jealous for His land” (Joel 2:18). This was the fatherland for which Abraham looked; in it “the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God,” “the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High” (Psa. 46:4) will be established “at the dawn of the morning” (verse 5, margin). Such a country, with such a metropolis, may well be called heavenly. Sarah is associated with Abraham in the exhibition of faith in the promises of a

seed in whom all families should be blessed (verses 11 and 12). The severest test of all was in the command to offer up the seed on whom so much depended. Yet it was unhesitatingly obeyed, because he “accounted that God was able to raise up, even from the dead.” It was not merely the raising-up of Isaac, it was resurrection in general that was in Abraham’s mind. He recognised that the promises involved resurrection and the bestowal of eternal life, and testified his faith in God in this relation by his willingness to sacrifice his son.

Passing over the blessing of Jacob and Esau by Isaac, and the sons of Joseph by Jacob, also Joseph’s commandment concerning the removal of his bones to the land of promise—each a proof of faith—we come to the case of Moses. After referring to the faith of his parents, who trusted him to the providence of God, it is said that Moses accounted “the reproach of [the] Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” Such a reference implies a clear recognition of the part Israel was to play in the purpose of God, and of the Messianic hopes bound up with Israel’s future. From the lips of his mother he would doubtless have heard of the promises concerning the seed of Abraham in whom all nations should be blessed, and of the seed of the woman who was to be bruised, and yet should destroy the bruising power. He recognised that this seed must arise in the line of Israel, not of Egypt, and therefore he refused the

treasures and prospects which Egypt had to offer, and identified himself with Yahweh's "firstborn" (Exod. 4:22), who was to be called out of Egypt. It needed faith indeed to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and to see in the association with the Israelitish bond-slaves that which should lead to a great recompense of reward. To all natural appearance such an idea must have seemed preposterous. Egypt was a great kingdom; Israel a multitude of slaves. But the promise of the seed, the Anointed, or Christ, contained far greater riches than Egypt could supply, for it pointed to a time when the Promised One should sit in the gate of his enemies, when all nations, yea, all the families of the earth, shall be blessed. True, Moses miscalculated the times, he judged from a human point of view, and had to learn by experience that God's time and God's way are best; but even in his mistake it was his faith in the ultimate triumph that made him anticipate the fore-ordained time.

"By faith he forsook Egypt." A question arises as to the application of these words—do they apply to his flight, or to the Exodus? It is usually assumed that the reference is to the former, yet in relation to this event it is testified that "Moses feared ... and fled from the face of Pharaoh." On the whole it would seem rather to apply to the incidents associated with the Exodus, as the word used is more in keeping with an action settled upon as a

course determined on as a part of policy, not the hurried flight of a fugitive.

A few references follow dealing with specific events. The slaying of the passover lamb, the sprinkling of blood in obedience to command was a signal example of faith. The crossing of the Red Sea was another although it was accompanied at first with fear of the pursuing Egyptians. The fall of Jericho and the salvation of Rahab are other incidents in which the faith of Israelites and of a Gentile were evidenced.

And here the detailed list ends. It could have been extended to a great length, as the next few verses show. All past history could have been laid under tribute for sterling examples of actions which presupposed the faith of the actors. Little purpose would have been served by such a lengthening of the list, and so the writer says, "And what shall I more say?" And so one feels in trying to carry on the thoughts suggested by the chapter. The names mentioned, and many another, rise to the mind and array before us the choicest of the sons of men, who by faith had become the sons of God, and who have supplied striking examples of the faith that pleased God. Gideon and Barak, Samson and Jephthah, David and Samuel are alluded to by name. The prophets generally are included. They furnish illustrations of men who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of

lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens.” Taking a mental survey from the early times of Israel’s history to the last revival under the Maccabees, many a hero stands forth upon the pages of inspired and apocryphal history to illustrate these varying items. *Men of action, because men of faith*; that is the clear purpose of the reference to them. Its lesson for these last times is obvious—faith must work by love.

Important as this phase of faith is, however, it is not a complete exhibition of its results in those who possess it. Faith not only leads to action, it also leads to endurance. And so we read, “Women received their dead by a resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting 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; wandering in deserts and mountains, and caves and the holes of the earth.” What a summary! And yet how many cases could be cited, not only in Old Testament times, but also in the New; and how many more have perished unknown and unrecorded (save for the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the

foundation of the world) in after-times when the dragon waxed wroth with the woman and went away to make “war with the rest of her seed which keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus,” and when the Babylonian Mother of Harlots was “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17, and 17:6). As we look back on the bloodstained record of the past we recognise that our lines have fallen in comparatively easy places. The ease has its dangers; it is soothing, it needs that we take heed lest it lull us to satisfaction with the present, and so cause us to have little desire for the better thing provided when all shall be made perfect together.

Of those whose names and doings mention is made it is recorded the world was not worthy. Despised and destitute; scourged, imprisoned, and killed; deemed to be the “offscouring of all things,” the whole *kosmos* of human institutions did not approach them in worth. And why? Because they pleased God, and of all such, whether of antediluvian, patriarchal, Mosaic, or Christian ages, the apostle’s saying is true,” all things are yours” (1 Cor. 3:21). Human pomp and human pride are vain and fleeting things, destined to pass away to make room for that Divine constitution in which those who now and in the past are and have been lightly esteemed shall take

their places as the rulers of the age to come, the associates of the Lord from heaven. Such will be the results of faith manifested in days of evil, but receiving its recompense of reward when faith shall have been turned to realised hopes. The galaxy of stars then associated with the bright and morning star (Rev. 22:16) will include those summed up in the closing words, “these all having witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

CHAPTER XII

Wherefore—Running the race—Sinai and Zion—The heavenly Jerusalem—A kingdom which cannot be moved.

THE argument of the epistle and the definition of faith being finished, the rest is taken up mainly with exhortations arising out of the subject-matter already considered. Generally very little is needed in the way of exposition in regard to what remains.

The twelfth chapter opens with “Therefore,” a word which emphasises the connection between the foregoing argument and summary, and the following verses. Of the Greek word *toigaroun* it has been said: “*Toi* affirms the conditions of fact, *gar* grounds on them, *oun* follows thereupon, so that the whole amounts to an earnest *ergo*.”¹ It does not occur elsewhere in the epistle, the English words “therefore” and “wherefore,” which are used so frequently, representing other Greek terms on every other occurrence. Evidently special emphasis was intended to be conveyed by the use of the word.

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let

¹ *Toi*, asseveration; *gar*, assigning a reason; *oun*, certainly or accordingly. The only occurrences of the combined word are 1 Thess. 4: 8 Heb. 12:1.

us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1 and 2.)

The language is that of one who realises that the object of his writing had been achieved. The aim had been to prove the excellency of Jesus, and the superiority of the new covenant. That Jesus had “sat down on the right hand of the throne of God” was a supreme evidence of the fact. Of none in the past could such a thing be said. The angels were God’s “ministers” (Psa. 103:21), “ministering spirits sent forth to do service” (Heb. 1:14). Moses had died and was buried in the land of Moab, Aaron died, and so did every successor; Jesus also had died, but had been raised from the tomb to the Father’s right hand, there to await the time for every foe to be subjected to him. He had attained the position consequent on his endurance, hence the appeal to “consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself” as an antidote to weariness in the race.

The basis of the exhortation was the old Grecian games in which athletes contended for mastery. Not only did they for the race dispossess themselves of clothing, they also, by a process of training, reduced all superfluous flesh. Both these ideas are involved in the terms used. “Every weight” refers to the superfluous flesh, whilst the “sin which doth so easily beset

us “answers to the clothing, which in many cases was entirely discarded by the competitors. The combination of the two furnishes a comprehensive indication of the duty of those who would attain to the prize of their calling—crucifying the flesh, and casting-off sins. The example of Christ himself is held out as the ground of confidence, that we may look unto and follow him who has already won in the race.

In the course of the race for life eternal the competitors must endure much hardship. “Striving against sin,” and endurance under chastening, are specifically referred to; the absence of the latter being a proof that the individual has not attained to true Sonship. On the other hand, the patient endurance of chastening leads men and women to become partakers of God’s holiness, yielding peaceable fruit to all who are exercised thereby. In the midst of these exhortations there is a warning:

Looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; ... lest there be any fornicator, or profane person as Esau, who for one mess of 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. (Heb. 12:15-17.)

This warning leads up to a kind of summary that gathers up the preceding argument with the exhortations and warnings of the chapter before us.

For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them: for they could not endure that which was enjoined, if even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned: and so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to 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 the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.”

It is the contrast between old and new, the religious associations of Moses and of Jesus. Sinai and the Law, and the terrors with which that Law was inaugurated, were of the old; the new associated Jesus with Mount Zion, the city of the living God. The church of the firstborn (Christ “the first begotten from the dead”) takes the place of Israel of old Yahweh’s firstborn (Exod. 4:22).

Orthodox applications of this passage to heaven and immortal souls are quite beside the point. The heavenly Jerusalem is in the heavenly country which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sought (Heb. 11:16); it is the city which hath the foundations whose Builder and Maker is God. That Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, is to be in Zion needs no proof here. He is to sit upon the throne of his father David; for

God will set His king, the Messiah, upon His holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2:6). This fact has already been involved in the proof set forth in support of the argument that Jesus is greater than the angels, where the immediate context of the Psalm is quoted. It is the literal Jerusalem in its glorified state with Christ enthroned therein:

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city
of the great King.
Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
Tell the towers thereof.
Mark ye well her bulwarks,
Consider her palaces;
That ye may tell it to the generation following.
(Psa. 48.)

Why, then, is it said, “Ye are come unto Mount Zion”? As the city is one “which is to come” (Heb. 13:14), it must be understood in a sense which can be harmonised with that idea. Clearly the intention of the passage is that in coming to Christ and the new covenant we come to a constitution of things related to the future glory of Messiah’s kingdom. In a sense we are “translated into the kingdom of the Son of His [God’s] love” (Col. 1:13). Really it is but potential, the end is viewed as already experienced. God’s purpose must be realised, hence the definite character of the statements. This understanding of the matter coincides with the other items of the passage before us. For example,

“the general assembly and church of the firstborn” with “innumerable hosts of angels” recall the visions of the Apocalypse, where the saints are in symbol represented as singing a new song in praise of him through whom they are to reign as kings and priests upon the earth:

And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands: saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (Rev. 5:11 and 12.)

Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Rev. 7:15-17.)

They enter into the city with the Lamb, who is also the King of Glory (Psa. 24), when the throne of the house of David is again set up.

The “therefore” in the latter quotation is that they had washed their robes and made them white in the

blood of the Lamb, “the mediator of the new covenant,” whose blood is “the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than the blood of Abel.” From these considerations it will be seen how this summing-up arises out of the subject-matter of the epistle. It speaks of the time when the “spirits of just men made perfect” shall have obtained “the better thing” provided, when this corruptible having put on incorruption, mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

The correctness of the application of the passage to the things of the Kingdom of God is further proved by the quotation which follows from the prophecy of Haggai. Emphasising the necessity of listening to the message, the writer said:

If they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from Him that warneth from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And 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 may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:25-29.)

It is the same antithesis that has run all through

the epistle. As the priest “made after the power of an endless life” (chap. 7:16), who “ever liveth to make intercession” (verse 25), takes the place of priests who had infirmity (verse 28), and who “were not suffered to continue by reason of death” (verse 23), so in the result a kingdom which cannot be moved is to supplant the old order of things. Neither Israel nor the nations have experienced such a kingdom. All are constantly changing and passing, and must continue so doing until the time referred to by the Psalmist. “The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted” (Psa. 46:6). Then the city of God, of which it is declared “she shall not be moved” (verse 5), will be established, for “God will establish it for ever” (Psa. 48:8). It is the day when “the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Dan. 7:27).

CHAPTER XIII

Final exhortations—Our altar—The closing prayer.

THE final chapter contains sundry exhortations to love of the brethren, hospitality, sympathy, chastity, and contentment. Ecclesial order is alluded to, in the recognition of those who exercise oversight in the ecclesias and whose faith leads to a good “issue of their life.” Warning against false teaching is also given, primarily, of course, against the Judaizing tendencies of the times, but equally necessary to-day against the Gentilisation of the ecclesias—if such a word may be allowed.

This leads to another comparison of the old and new orders in reference to the altar and the offerings. Our altar is the Lord Jesus himself; he too is the offering and the priest. Those who served the tabernacle had no part in the Christ-altar; they might not, therefore, partake of the Christ-sacrifice unless they became associated with the altar in the appointed way. The sacrifices under the Law provided for their sustenance (see, for example, Lev. 6:14-30); necessarily they gave no right to any participation in the things of the new covenant. The reason for this is thus expressed:

For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate. (Heb. 13:11 and 12.)

Christ as the antitype suffered “without the camp” of Israel; “he came unto his own and his own received him not,” he was rejected by them; “a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psa. 22:6). That being so, there was a distinct cleavage between those who served the tabernacle, who were the instigators of the national rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, and those who “went forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Ever since, all who have become associated with the new covenant have had to respond to the exhortation which follows: “Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (verse 13). It is no light task, and needs much encouragement. The remembrance of the fact that in so doing they are treading the same path as their Master is the greatest incentive by the way.

The needful encouragement is furnished in the hope set before us—the hope of a “city to come” (verse 14). The reference is a return to the subject of two previous references—the city that had foundations for which Abraham had looked, the city of the living God to which, by faith, they had already come. Really it was a city to come. Just as the saints’ constant petition

is “Thy Kingdom come,” so they look for the city to come. In its extended application it leads on to the closing references to this city as “the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” the “holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Rev. 21:9-11). The combination of the reproach and the hoped-for coming of the city—the sufferings and the glories that shall follow, find their effect in the “sacrifice of praise” and doing good.

With more exhortations we pass to the closing prayer, in which the main theme of the epistle is yet once more introduced. “Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” It is a natural conclusion to the epistle. It has been shown by the victim-mediator that the blood of the new covenant has been sufficient to give resurrection from the dead to eternal life (not the mere renewal of mortal existence), so that Jesus hath brought life and immortality to light. The prayer for the perfection of the sheep is on this basis an exhortation and incentive to let the work be perfected in them unto life eternal, recognising all the time that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

On the last four verses no comment is needed. Reviewing all that we have considered, we may “bear with the word of exhortation” the epistle contains: “For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.”