

LIGHT  

AND . .

PERFECTION.

**NOTES OF ADDRESSES
BY P. R. MORFORD ✕
AT OLD KENT ROAD
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*NOTES OF ADDRESSES
AT OLD KENT ROAD.*



THE PRIEST WITH URIM AND WITH THUMMIM.

(EXO. XXVIII. 29, 30; EZRA II. 61-63; HEB. I. 1-12;
II. 6-13.)

I DESIRE to bring before you a few salient points in Hebrews and have read the scriptures in the Old Testament which refer to the priest with Urim and with Thummim as giving a key to the epistle. We read in the passage in Ezra, of which there is an exact parallel in Nehemiah, of some who, at the restoration of Israel to the land, had married outside the priestly order and were unable to trace their genealogy—that which alone could give them right and title to have access to God in priestly service. You will remember it was said to them that they should not eat of the holy things “till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.”

Now we pass down the ages from the restoration of Israel to God's land, to the moment when Christ having come, died and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, judgment was about to fall on the unrepentant nation and on the guilty city Jerusalem. Many of the people

had turned to Christ (Acts xxi. 20), yet clung, in order to avoid His reproach, to the old order of Judaism. The epistle before us was written to disengage the affections of such from the venerable system to which their hearts were still attached and to engage them with a glorious Person in heaven, who had entered there as Man. With Him was connected a new and living system that would wholly supplant the lifeless order of Judaism, shortly to disappear under the onslaught of the Roman arms. Now the great question must arise with those to whom the epistle was addressed: "Has that priest yet stood up for whom we look?" The old priestly order on earth was about to pass away; was there anything to take its place for them? What those who were godly among them had to learn was that the priest *had* arisen with Urim and with Thummim—one bearing those marks—and that as attached to Him they were entitled to appropriate holy things.

Now the blessedness of this discovery is not confined to them, but has its bearing on every soul that loves Christ to-day. That which has come to pass in His having gone to the right hand of God is as available for you and me as it was for the Hebrews. Therefore I believe that in this epistle we find the answer to what the Tirshatha spoke of—that this priest *has* arisen with Urim and with Thummim and that in

knowing Him we are entitled not only to eat of—to appropriate—the holy things as presented to us in Hebrews but to know our priestly genealogy as connected with Him. This may seem a little difficult at first view, but if we ponder it I believe it will yield great profit.

It is essential for us to accept at the outset that while there are, at the present moment, venerable systems of religion in this world, all claiming to have a place before God, our place is to be here apart from them, but associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His rejection here, yet enjoying the good of the glorious place He occupies as Priest in the presence of God. I believe it is as possible for us as it was for these Hebrews, if dissociated from the old order. It all hangs on this: Are we prepared to share Christ's rejection? There are two psalms which give the keynote to the Book of Hebrews; one is Psalm ii., "Thou art my Son," &c. This psalm supposes the rejection of Christ: "Why do the heathen rage?" (Vers. 1-4.) We find them banded together against Jehovah and against His Christ, and in view of that He is saluted by God as Son. The other is Psalm cx., "Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Then Christ has enemies? Alas, He has! He is refused and rejected in the very world into which He came in grace. What lies at the

foundation of our entering on the good of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that we be prepared, not only to own, but to share in the refusal and rejection of Christ. We cannot know Him as Priest if we do not own Him as refused and rejected here. Are we prepared for this? That is the first point and I emphasise it strongly for this reason ; Christendom, as seen in the venerable and stately religious systems around us, with great and pretentious claims, has ignored the rejection of Christ, and ignoring His rejection it has lost His Priesthood. If we too ignore His rejection we shall lose His Priesthood ; the one hangs on the other. Read Psalms ii. and cx. and you will be convinced that His place on high depends on the fact of His refusal here. " If he were on earth, he should not be a priest." His Priesthood is in heaven ; His place here is refused Him. That is the first thing.

Now the key to what the Tirshatha said was this, that the Priest who was to arise was to be the Son. That was hidden in the Old Testament ; it is revealed here. " God hath in the end of the days spoken unto us by His Son." God has spoken to us, but in what a character ! Dear friends, it is one of the tenderest relationships that God could have selected. He has come to us in the Person of the Son, and if the Son comes to us He must bring to our hearts the knowledge of divine affection. He

has not spoken to us in the character of Judge, nor of King, but of Son. It means that divine affections have come out to engage ours.

Now I think the Hebrews must have wanted—and we, too, shall want—verification of the fact that Christ is that Priest having Urim and Thummim. Before I touch on what these mean (not that I profess to bring anything new before my brethren, though everything is new in Christ) I would ask you to survey *where* they were. *What* they were is unknown; where they were is fully known—they were on the breastplate. The priest in going in bore them there continually, and that shews us that the thought to be conveyed is one of divine affection, while what they were actually is unknown, yet we know that through Urim God chose to communicate His mind to Israel; hence the moment Hebrews opens we find God speaking. God has fully communicated His mind to us in the Person of the Son, who has entirely displaced the oracles of old. God—the blessed God—has most certainly spoken, and His mind is fully revealed.

Now as to the meaning of the two terms. “Urim” and “Thummim” are two Hebrew words, both in the plural, and the plural is used to mark intensity. “Urim” signifies light or lights, and “Thummim” perfections. The plural conveys the idea of intense light,

and perfection, for we cannot qualify perfection. If we bear these two thoughts in mind we shall see how the Epistle to the Hebrews hangs on the fact that the Priest has arisen bearing those two marks—Urim and Thummim, intense light and perfection. When God saluted Christ as Son it was as come into manhood ; so it is here, as come forth from God as Man to make known the heart of God, that Christ is viewed as the Priest with Urim and Thummim. In the first chapter of Hebrews we get largely the thought of the Urim—intense light, and in the second we have the thought of perfection, both being presented in Himself as *Man*, though a divine Person—God's blessed Son.

If, therefore, He bears these two marks, what is the thought of light? Making God known ; nothing else is light ! Is that true of Christ? Has Christ brought to us the light of what God is? Let me give you a simple illustration. Refer to Luke xv. 2 : " This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." It scandalised the religious people, those who belonged to the order of things about to pass away. But the Man who was there receiving sinners was in that very act setting forth what God is. The light of God shone in its intensity—bowels of mercy, tender compassion, that yearned over the fall of His creature, and sought to win his heart in affection, that he might come into

the joy of the blessed God. Christ in Luke xv. vindicated the heart of God and His actions: "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad." Christ has brought the light of God here, as stated in Hebrews i. 3. Is that intense light? Indeed it is—the brightness, the effulgence, the daybreak, the shining forth of God's glory. That is seen in that very verse in Luke xv., for His glory was that He could meet man just where man is. More than that, He was not only the effulgence of God's glory, but He was the expression of God's substance. "No man hath seen God at any time;" no creature will ever know absolute Deity, that is outside the grasp of what is finite, and ever will be. God dwells in light unapproachable, but He has sent forth Christ, the expression of His substance. All that is to be known of God is to be learned in Jesus, and nothing outside of Him.

How great He is! He upholds all things by the utterance of His power. Now what did He do? "When he had by himself made purgation for sins;" that is the very first thing before we can touch anything else; sins are all done with. But are they all done with for you? Is there any one here who does not know the forgiveness of his or her sins? You cannot know Christ as Priest unless you know Him as Saviour; that is supposed here. Before He

took His place on high as Priest He went into and dealt with the whole question of sins (at what a cost to Himself!), and having done it He seated Himself in His own divine Majesty on the right hand of the Greatness on high. I ask you, Does He whom we know as Jesus bear the marks of having the Urim and Thummim, of having brought to us the intensity of light? Every heart that loves Him will say, Yes, He does. You can only touch it in divine affection; it is only as our hearts go out to Him and we love Him that we can lay hold of His glorious place as Priest.

I do not propose to go through this chapter in any detail, but I will touch on one very particular point in connection with a passage in Psalm cii., "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." There is nothing more affecting than this, that the Lord Jesus Christ—perfect here as Man under God's eye, perfect in His ways before men—was yet at the age of thirty-three deemed by men to be unfit to live here any longer. When He was only just entering on manhood, so to speak, they crucified Him. Do you think that was nothing to Christ? You say, He was going to rise again. Yes, but that psalm lets us into a secret. It tells us what Christ thought as Man, what His soul entered into as Man at being cut off. There is

one very affecting type in the Old Testament, and that is, the green ears of corn dried by the fire (Lev. ii. 14) which were offered to Jehovah, cut off before they were ripe, in one sense, and yet in another in greenness, in ripeness. They were a type of Christ, I believe, according to Psalm cii. Man's sickle had gone over the corn, under the hand of God no doubt, and Christ was cut off. That was the plaint of Christ on the cross—"In the midst of my days," but then the divine answer follows immediately—"Thy years are throughout all generations . . . thy years shall have no end." Think of what the divine answer was! It was given to Him who laid the foundations of the earth, and who was to fold up the heavens. Before time began, Christ was the great Artificer who formed the earth. He will fold up the heavens as a man folds up a garment and lays it by. Who is that? Jesus. And going down to death there as Man He is reminded by Jehovah of that. When all else changes He will not. "Thou art THE SAME"—that is a divine title. He is unchangeable in His Person; death did not change Him, though He did die here. That glorious Man, cut off in the freshness of His youth, is as young to-day as when He rose from the dead. Since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus history has rolled on its course here for one thousand eight hundred years; great men have arisen, had their short spell, and gone

into the grave. Generations of dying men have been here, but there is one Man who lives, who in His life as Man has spanned all that interval of time, and who lives to-day just the same. You say, We cannot see Him; no, though in one sense we can. He lives as Man (not only as divine, for as having part in Godhead He is the everlasting Father, but as Man He has years for evermore); "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." There is one Man who has bridged in His own life and Person as Man the whole gulf of time that has intervened since He went into heaven. That is the One with whom we have to do in Hebrews; that is the One who has the light of God—Urim and Thummim.

Now I turn to the other side, only asking you to remember that God spake by Urim. It was said of Saul that God answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets; it is in Jesus God speaks to-day; God has unfolded His mind to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now as to the Thummim, I was pointing out that the word signifies perfections. Most Christians have a very good sense that God has made Himself known to them in Jesus; but there is another side in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and one, ignoring which, we fail in the proper understanding of Christianity. Not only is God presented to us in intense light, but on the other hand, man is presented to God in that same

glorious Person. The greater part of the New Testament is taken up with this truth, that He presents man to God in His glorious Person as Man, the Second Man out of heaven—another order of man altogether. Think of Christ's baptism. There was Christ fulfilling all righteousness, identifying Himself with the poor of the flock, and going down to baptism; and heaven could not contain itself at the sight; it was rent asunder. The heart of the blessed God *must* come out and find expression. The Spirit of God was identified with that glorious Man who presented under God's eye what man should be to God; for Christ was that. The apprehension of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in that way will shew us what the Thummim was—perfection there in His glorious Person.

The question is asked in chapter ii., "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Those who have studied the Old Testament will, no doubt, remember that, in Psalm viii., the first word "*man*" (what is *man*?) is different from the second (son of *man*). The first is weak, frail, mortal man; while the second is "the Son of Adam." Who is that?—Christ. Not weak, frail, mortal man, but the strong Man; Son of Adam; not Adam fallen—but the second Man out of heaven. What has God done with Christ? He has put all things under His feet. Before Him the angels

retire and that Man's glory comes into view. God has brought into view in Christ another order of Man in whom is perfection, and *He* has taken a place Godward. I wish to dwell on at least one of the traits of perfection in His Person: "It became him . . . to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The place Christ has taken at the head of His people is that of Leader of their salvation; He is the true Joshua; He has identified Himself with those who love Him, and taken a place on their behalf Godward. He has been qualified for the place He has taken through sufferings; it is not the idea of His atoning sufferings exactly, true and terrible as they were, but that He has passed through the very sufferings through which His people have to pass here, and that is His qualification to be their Leader.

His perfection is summed up in this, that He became Man in order to suffer. Now it goes on to say: "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Can you identify Christ, the Lord Jesus, as the Priest who has arisen having Urim and Thummim? Do these scriptures bring Him before you as the One who presents the full light of God to your souls, and who, on the other hand, is great enough as Man to present man in perfection before God? It is no question of our weakness and failure; God has not got *us* under His eye, but Christ as Man,

and, for the first time, God has seen in a Man perfection. He did not see it even in Adam innocent. We are not of an innocent order of manhood, but of a fallen one. Christ—the Lord Jesus Christ—is not of the innocent order of man, as Adam was, and He was certainly never of the fallen order, as you and I are. He came into human condition, took true human life, but apart from sin, in order to lay down that life in atonement ; but in His own blessed Person He was ever when here—and He is for ever in resurrection—Man of His own order, unique in His Person, the second Man out of heaven. I would ask you to study the unique manhood of Christ. He is “ God over all, blessed for ever ” ; but the other side of the truth, which is equal and a very necessary side to know, is that He is, at the same time, Man of His own blessed, unique order ; and in that way He is under God’s eye perfection ; Thummim is set forth in His Person.

You will remember that when they came to the Tirshatha, the first point was that they should not eat of the holy things until that priest arose. Now Hebrews brings before us holy things, and “ eating ” is laying hold of them and appropriating them. It is important therefore to see that what God sets before us *are* holy things. He speaks of the tabernacle, and in it of the holy place, and of the most holy place. We often utter these words lightly, but if God says “ holy ”

and "most holy," He means "holy" and "most holy," and we are not entitled to touch these holy things unless we have found and recognised in Christ the Priest who bears those two divine marks—of having come from God to present Him to us, and of having gone to God to present man to God in perfection.

The other point is this, they were unable to trace their genealogy. They had no right to approach God until they could find their place as priests, and they would never be able to do that until that Priest stood up. Israel to-day has no priestly class ; they have their Rabbis, but they have no sacrificing priests. They are a people without sacrifices, although, in God's overruling providence, they are also without idols. They have deliberately ignored the one unique sacrifice of Christ. Their genealogy is gone ; hence they have no priest. In the future, when God again takes Israel up, they will have to find their genealogy in that glorious Man, who has spanned, in His own Person, the gulf of the ages. And it is given to us now, while Christ is in heaven, to trace our genealogy in Him. And how? First we must recognise Him as bearing Urim and Thummim on His breast. Does He carry them in divine perfection, and available for us? I think every one who knows Him will say, Yes, He does! "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one"—sanc-

tified—set apart from this world and its religion, which still goes on to-day. Judaism has disappeared to an extent, but Christendom has come into view “saying they are Jews and are not”; and Christ’s great service is to set His people apart—not only positionally but intrinsically apart—that they should be holy. There is no greater thing in God’s world than the Sanctifier and the sanctified being “all of one.” Think of the grace that can take us up, who a little while ago were sinners, and can lift us on to Christ’s own platform in resurrection and say: “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

Now, can you trace your genealogy? If you accept that you are “all of one” with Him you may trace your right to approach God in priestly service. That is the height to which He would conduct us.

The succeeding chapters in Hebrews are given to bring us consciously into presence of these realities, that there may be an answer inwrought in God’s people to the glorious position presented in Christ for the affections of their hearts. But no succeeding chapter can transcend in greatness the two first, for these bring before us the unique glories of the Lord Jesus Himself, as on the one hand bringing God to man and on the other presenting man to God.



GOD'S TITHES.

(GEN. XIV. 8, 9, 17-20 ; PSA. CX. 1-5 ; HEB. VII.)

WE were looking last time at a two-fold thought in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews—the foundation on which the superstructure is built—the glory of Christ's Person, as being Himself the Priest who has arisen with Urim and with Thummim. We were taking the thought from the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, where those of the priesthood who were unable to trace their genealogy were told that they should not eat of the holy things till that priest arose. Looking on to Hebrews, we found that that Priest has arisen, that the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ exactly answers to that mysterious person foreshadowed by the governor of Jerusalem ; for on the one hand we have in the Lord Jesus Christ the intensity of light in the revelation to our souls of the blessed God Himself. He has brought God close to us, He Himself being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person. In that way we find Urim, that is, intensity of light, in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son, and, as

being the Son, is alone capable, and fully capable, of making God known to us. On the other hand, we were glancing at this—how that in Him, at the same time, is found Thummim, perfection. We cannot say intense perfection, for we cannot qualify it; it must be what it is, and we find it alone in Christ as Man in heaven—in no other man; but in Him God can see everything that His heart had ever sought and purposed in man. There was, and is, in the Lord Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and rightly crowned with glory and honour, an absolutely full answer in man to the heart of God. I will repeat what I said then, and I still think it to be true, that what follows in Hebrews cannot possibly transcend the greatness of the first two chapters; they present His Person; the rest gives us what is built on it, and how our souls are conducted into the good of the holy things, which, after all, are all displayed in Himself.

I will now pass on, in order that we may see something of the side on which the Lord Jesus Christ has a place before God according to what He is in the truth of His Person as Man. I mean that there is another side in Hebrews before we come to chapter vii.: the side of our weakness and circumstances here needs to be taken into account. Things are not glossed over; there is reality with God. We are viewed

here as needing mercy and grace ; we are here in weakness, in the wilderness, with every tendency in our hearts naturally to apostatise ; but there is the voice of God, and there is the priesthood of Christ to carry us above our weakness, and to lift us on to His own side. That is the proper side of priesthood—His own side. But the intervening chapters shew us how He lifts and supports us above the pressure here—above every form of pressure which is common to man—bereavement, loss of health, and so on—everything that could affect us naturally. He is prepared, without perhaps altering the circumstances, to lift us into His own company, that we may get our hearts expanded. The natural tendency of pressure here is to compress us, so to speak, to turn us in upon ourselves ; but the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is to widen us out, to draw us to His own side. That comes in incidentally ; but I would like now to deal a little with the side on which we may contemplate the greatness of Christ's position and Person as the Introducer, the Inaugurator, and at the same time the Sustainer of a wholly new order of things which subsists at this present moment before God in His Person, and into which Christ is prepared to introduce us if we will allow Him to do so.

A very great point in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Christ is Priest after an entirely

different order from that which obtained in Israel. That order was Aaronic, and it was compassed with infirmity and with human limitations. The order of Christ's priesthood is not Aaronic. He was of a tribe of which nothing was said concerning priests. The order of His priesthood is that of Melchisedec. It is important that we should understand this, for in that way everything is new in Christ: if He were here He would not be a priest. That at the very outset shews that all claim to the priesthood here is absolutely futile and fictitious. There is only one Priest to-day, and He is in heaven. His order, unlike Aaron's, is not hereditary; it centres in the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. When chapter vii. opens we find that it speaks of Him under the figure of Melchisedec. I admit it is actually Melchisedec who is spoken of, but he himself is a mysterious person brought on the scene, assimilated (as it says here) to the Son of God, in order to portray to Israel and to us the fact that God had ever before Him (before He established Aaron's priesthood) an order of priesthood that lay outside every human limitation, and outside the power and reach of death itself. So when we read of Melchisedec we may well see that it is not that actual person, but the Lord Jesus Christ with whom we have to deal. Melchisedec was, as his name implies, king of

righteousness, and at the same time king of Salem, that is, king of peace. In thinking of Melchisedec, therefore, let us keep before our souls Him of whom Melchisedec was but a very feeble type. In Christianity we have come to One—the Lord Jesus Christ—in whose Person righteousness and peace have kissed each other ; they have come into affinity in His Own blessed Person, and they abide there. He is King of righteousness and King of peace.

We have another king mentioned in Genesis xiv.—the king of Sodom. I suppose Abraham only took up the pursuit of the kings there because of Lot's position. Lot, his relative, who had got into a false position, had been taken captive, and Abraham comes in to rescue him from that false position. The king of Sodom presents the power and riches of this present world ; in Melchisedec were presented the power and wealth and support of *God's* world. They are there in very sharp contrast, and the point when Abraham got the support of *God's* world in His priest was when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings—when, so to speak, all the riches and opportunity of this world lay at his feet ; it was in a moment, not of weakness, but of victory, when the one in whom the riches of this world were summed up was willing to bestow everything upon him. He came forth to meet him, but Abraham

would have none of it, for God ministered to him in that mysterious personage the support of His own world, and He won, once and for ever, the allegiance of Abraham's heart. Melchisedec brought forth bread and wine. I know of nothing which gives us a greater idea of the resources that are in the Lord Jesus Christ as man than that thought. He brought forth bread and wine—the support and joy of a scene which was totally opposed to the one set forth in the king of Sodom. He brought them forth—we are not told whence; they were extraneous to his person. When we come to Christ, they are intrinsic, they are inherent in His Person. In the more or less necessarily feeble types in the Old Testament there were extraneous things brought in to convey the truth of Christ's official position before God, but when we come to the reality of His blessed Person we find that they are all inherent in Him. So here, the support and joy of God's world—the bread and wine—are in Himself, in whom righteousness and peace have kissed each other. He is King. The idea of a king conveys one who has the ability to publicly administrate these things. Christ will take that place in the future, and no doubt this chapter looks on to the future in its full application, but we can get the good of it at the present moment. He has ability to administrate righteousness and peace. They are not mere

negations ; they are moral territory, so to speak, won and administered in the hands of this great Person, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We view Him here under the type of Melchisedec, apart from every human limitation. Last time we were looking at Him as the One in whom the gulf of eighteen centuries has been bridged. He has passed into heaven in the midst of His days, and as Man has length of days for ever and ever. Of course, as a divine Person He necessarily has ; but in that one Person—a Man—the gulf of time has been bridged, and we know Him in all the freshness of perpetual, blessed Manhood. Here we find Him independent of every earthly limitation. The Aaronic order was limited, but Christ is viewed as outside all this, and He abides a Priest continually.

“Consider how great this man [not simply “was,” but] is :” that is, Melchisedec assimilated to the Son of God. I ask your attention to the end of verse 8 : “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” There are two things that I want to emphasise : one is, that God has secured for His pleasure a world of living affections ; on the other hand, there is one Man who is capable of supporting that world before God for eternity. I do not know whether those thoughts are simple. God has brought in for His own heart a system, a world, a sphere (whatever we call

it) of moral things which are living in the hearts of His people—living affections not subject to death. We have affections here because we all have relationships, but they are all tinged with death. The tenderest relationship in nature has to go, to be closed up in death; but here we find brought out a world of living affections which God has formed for His pleasure, and which, in their very nature, are beyond the reach of death. We come to One of whom it is witnessed that He liveth, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall find that He in His Person is capable of supporting that world of living affections before God for ever. The ancients pictured a huge being, I think called Atlas, on whose shoulders the heavens were supported, and he bowed himself under their terrific weight; but here we pass from fable to truth, and we find a Person so great that He bears upon His shoulders—nay, not simply upon His shoulders, but on His heart—He can sustain before God, that glorious world which Hebrews brings before us. He has title to do it in that He Himself has gone down, in death, under all its weight and burden.

Now I turn to the thought of tithes. Abraham gave Melchisedec the tenth of all. It is not the question here at all of our paying tithes; I think we do so, but that is not the side of the truth here. The question is, that there is

One great enough to receive them. God ever set out to gain the affections of His people ; He would have living affections, and yet the whole scene was marked by death. Death came in, and the blessed God never obtained from man that perfect answer that He sought. Yet He left on record that He claimed His rights, and His rights were to the affections of man's heart. I believe that is why Christ is King of righteousness. So Abraham acknowledged that Melchisedec had the right to the tenth of all ; the tenth is God's portion. If we trace it through Scripture we shall find it extremely interesting. Jacob says later on that of all that God will give him he will give Him a tenth. I do not think it was a mere hard bargain on Jacob's part (as we have often thought), but a recognition of God's portion. It is not the idea of a tenth of one's income—a kind of spiritual income tax—that is not the idea, for our whole income is His ; but it has a spiritual meaning. God only registered His title in material things that we, and men generally, might apprehend that God claims His right to our affections. He is going to get His portion among men, even if it is a tenth only.

Now the point here is that there is One great enough to receive tithes. God set up His priesthood on earth, an Aaronic priesthood, that they might be able to gather up the affections of the

people and present them to God. That was the proper place of the priesthood of old, I take it, for they were set there to receive tithes ; but there was one thing that spoilt it all. Death marked the whole scene, and marred it in its character. The priests themselves, on account of death, were unable to hold the tithes they received. Now what I find presented in the tithes is, in the first place, the fact that God has brought in for Himself an unfailing answer to His own heart in living affections from the hearts of His people. On the other hand, there is One here, not only great enough to receive them, for it says here (again speaking, I know, of Melchisedec, but Melchisedec as assimilated to the Son of God) : " Here men that die receive tithes ; but there he of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." What does that mean ? It means this, that not only is He great enough to receive tithes, in contrast to the failing priesthood of old, to find, to form and to gather up for God all that is of God in the hearts of His people, but what is more, He can hold them, and why ? His hands will never relax in death. He died once ; He went under the burden of this world of woe and sin, not only to remove that burden from before God, but that He might too become a sympathising Priest (able to enter into all our infirmities) ; that He might rise out of death and

take the place of priesthood in resurrection, and be great enough to hold all that He receives. "Consider how great *this man!*" He is great enough not only to know how to find all that is of God here and to form it, but to sustain it and hold it all before God for ever. That was the point I wanted to come to in this chapter.

Now passing on we find that: "The priesthood being changed, there is . . . a change also of the law," and that "after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another [or, a different] priest." "There is a . . . change also of the law," the old law was one of limitation, it made nothing perfect. (See vers. 18, 19.) That is the character of law. There has been a disannulling of it, but if we place ourselves under it in any shape or form we shall fail entirely of apprehending God's glorious world and our place in Christ. It is not that there is no law in Christianity, but if we place ourselves deliberately under the law of demand we shall be losers for ever, and the woeful thing is that Christendom is a sort of mixture of law and grace. Christ is brought in to try and make me fit to approach God. All that marked that line of things was absolute weakness. The law made nothing perfect, but when we come to what is here we have come to perfection. "A change of law;" what is that change? The law hangs on the priest. If there is a different

priest there must be a change of law ; I believe we get that different law unfolded in the next chapter in the new covenant. It is the law of what God can be to us, and is for us, and we get, connected with it, a better hope by which we draw nigh to God. (Read vers. 18, 19.) The great point in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that we should know what our title is to draw nigh to God, and that everything is in the Priest and not in ourselves, and if we learn the place He has before God we shall learn what that better hope is by which we draw nigh to God. He is the Surety, the Pledge, of a better testament. We see it all described in Him—that Man continueth ever: He has the priesthood intransmissible ; He abides Priest. It is asked whether there will be priesthood in eternity. I do not know, but I am quite certain of this, that that glorious scene which God has brought in for His own heart cannot possibly support itself, but must be supported in the Son. It says of Him here, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that approach God by him." I do not think that this is saving as far as our first relationship with Him goes—that is all supposed in Hebrews—but here it is to save us from the trammels of a religious system which is effete as claiming approach to God in connection with man down here, and not in connection with

Christ's priesthood. We need saving from that. It presses on us on every side ; it is not simply outside, we find it in our own hearts. Now He is here to save us from it. He is able to save out and out—right through—those who approach God by Him.

At the end of the chapter we find not only that righteousness and peace have kissed each other, but when we look at the priesthood of old we find that between what was personal in the priests and what was official there was very great disparity. In their official character they had a place before God, in one sense, apart from weakness ; in their personal character they were compassed with infirmity—men who needed to offer for their own sins as well as for the people's. Now the great stand-by for our hearts is the thought that between what the Lord Jesus Christ is in His Person and what He is in His official character there can be no possibility of disparity. Let me make that perfectly clear. Christ's place as a Priest is an official place, that is, one in which He has a place before God as such ; but, on the other hand, there is what He is personally. Now between those two there is absolutely no disparity ; there is no gulf between what Christ is in His own Person morally and what He is in the position He has taken up before God. That is the great comfort to our hearts. It gives us

the greatest possible confidence, for it shews us that He cannot fail in support for us ; it is impossible that He could ever give way. "Such an high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." These last few words give us His position, the others the moral qualities of His person. "Holy, harmless, undefiled"—could that ever be said of one of the priesthood of old? Not even of Aaron himself. What is Christ's position to-day? Separated from sinners ; it was not so when He was here. He has taken a place now in regard to the worship of God. If we are bringing before Him our sins, and what He has saved us from, we are not laying hold of Christ as He is presented here, as the great Priest that becomes us. He is separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens. That is His official position. Now look at His personal position. "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity ;" that is what marked them as to their persons. In one particular at least even Aaron has to confess his infirmity to Moses. Christ is not compassed with infirmity ; in His own Person He is outside all that. "The word of the oath, which was since the law," &c. In the law everything depended on man ; in the oath everything depends upon God. Christ is made High Priest by the swearing of the oath, and that "maketh

the Son consecrated for evermore." That is the greatness of His glory, that He is "perfected for evermore." What He is in His Person is exactly commensurate with the official position He holds before God ; so that not only is He able to present the affections of His people before God, and to gather them up, but He can give effect to them in His own Person ; for what is the thought of the Son? The One in whom every divine relationship centres. The One who is capable, not only of expressing the heart of God, but of expressing in that place the heart of man towards God, because He is the Son. He can never lower that place, for His official place and personal glory exactly respond to one another. The way in which He has made God known to us is exactly equal to the way in which He has presented man to God.

He is Priest for ever after this new order, and we may know Him in that place. The great function of priesthood was to be able to gather up all that was for God and to present it before Him. Never before was it efficiently done, because the men belonged to a dying system, till One took it up who had been into death, and of whom it is witnessed that He liveth, and He is capable of securing the tenth for God and of holding it for ever. Would it not give us great stability if we laid hold of the thought of God's living world? Here outwardly death

is still upon men, and yet in God's people here living affections are kindled Godward which death will never be able to break off; they can never pass away, for they are all held in the undying hands of that glorious Man who can maintain them ever before God—who lives on account of the Father, and can give us to live on account of the Father. We get the same thought in John vi. There Christ is able to bring forth food for the whole multitude, but, what is more, He is capable of supporting God's world before Him, and He will never let it pass away. He will raise up all that the Father has given Him. Nothing that is of God—that is of divine affections—will ever pass into death. They are in the keeping of Christ, and we are brought in touch with an order of things outside death. Death cannot touch Christ, and it cannot touch those undying affections which He has already kindled in our souls. One can say little about it, but I ask you just to consider how great that Man is who is marked by upholding that whole world in affection before God, and has ability to save to the uttermost those who approach God by Him.

DIVINE SERVICE.

(HEB. VIII. ; IX. 1.)

AT Sinai God made a covenant with Israel, but what followed on that was complete breakdown. Here we get God promising a new covenant, and what marks all connected with that is, that it is entirely outside the breakdown. When we get to this chapter we are lifted entirely outside the failure and the ruin that is here, because everything hangs upon God, not upon man. I want to dwell upon that to make the ground clear, that while it does bring in the "us" at the end of the previous chapter, and this chapter says "we have," still it is the holy brethren, not viewed in connection with the breakdown, nor even in connection with their individual circumstances of trial and pressure and difficulty (the earlier part of the epistle has been occupied with that, and how it is met), but viewed here as Christ's companions, the holy brethren, the sanctified company. It is imperative that we should notice that, else we might fail to see the true bearing of the place Christ takes here. As I said, chapters iii., iv., v. and vi., and even chapter vii. to some extent, shew the priestly place Christ has taken in regard to our weakness here, not exactly sin, for sin is wilful in Hebrews

and only conducts to apostasy; hence the saints are not viewed as being liable to sin, but they are viewed in the earlier chapters as being here in weakness, and the first aspect of Christ's priestly care for His saints is that He lifts them above the weakness. In all that is incidental to us as here, pressure of every kind, summed up (as we have often heard) in bereavement, the breaking of links here, or the failure as to our bodily health, or the exigency of contrary circumstances—the point is, are we with God in them? If we are, if we are not seeking our own will, all the priestly service of Christ is available for us. It is not that Christ alters our circumstances, but He has ability to lift us up to His own level. That is what Christ is effecting in the earlier part of the epistle, where you find Him who has gone through the heavens, and He has left the marks of His love on all that He has passed through. He has passed through as the high priest did in going into the holy place, and He is there to succour, and not only to succour, but to sympathise. Do we weigh it enough, that Christ sympathises with us? It is the beating of His heart as Man with ours. God does not sympathise as such, He compassionates; but Christ entered into true human condition that He might feel with us. I can have the greatest concern for my fellow-saint who is in

evil circumstances, but if I have been in them and am out of them myself I can *feel with*, I can sympathise, and Christ *feels with*, and He lifts us above them. What for? That He may lift us into His circumstances; that is Hebrews. He takes us off our platform that He may lift us to His platform.

Now I would like to touch the side by which Christ is before the face of God in regard to taking us in as to priestly service. The first side must be known, however. If we have not known His sympathy, if we do not know His priestly grace to lift us to His level, we shall never be there according to God. Now the first covenant was made with Israel, and the result was complete breakdown; but before the breakdown came in God shewed to Moses a complete pattern of that which, in Christ, was under His eye and was to abide. Truly the breakdown had to come in, but it had not come in when God shewed the pattern to Moses. There is no breakdown in the Spirit, and I want to bring before you in this chapter the scene where there is no breakdown. You will see the importance of the new covenant coming in in the latter part of the chapter, because if the new scene beyond the breakdown comes before us we must be in suitability to it, and we cannot be in suitability in ourselves, everything must be of God. It all depends upon Him;

we have to come to an end of ourselves. We have to come to this—I can be nothing for God, but there is everything in God. It is all over on the line of “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not”—the death of Christ proved that; the old is disappearing. At the end of this chapter God pronounces the word “new,” and if God has said “new” it means that the old must go in me, in you, in creation. God has got what is new, entirely new, before Him. Christianity is what is new; it is the test of everything.

If that be so, we shall find that, first of all, a new order of priesthood comes into view, presented in type in Melchisedec, that mysterious personage, assimilated to the Son of God. Christ outside the failure and ruin has resources great enough to uphold God’s world, great enough to minister to all that belongs to it. We shall find also a new covenant, new worshippers and a new sanctuary; it is all living and real *now*, not simply in the future. We have come in this chapter to the chief point of the epistle—“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the *sum*”—it is the heading up, the climax. “We have such an high priest.” Remember, beloved fellow-saints, we are viewed here, not as connected any longer with our weakness, but with His strength. We are in connection with ‘Christ, the One who is there on our behalf ‘Such an high priest became *us*.’” Yes! It is.

the holy company, God's holy company, whose calling is so great that it needed such a High Priest to be for them. In the mind of God none less than such a High Priest would befit the holy brethren. These very chapters are to confirm in our souls the knowledge of the place in which He has put us in connection with His Son. Properly, He has called us to sonship, though that is not developed here. "The word of the swearing of the oath maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

"We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." We are conducted in thought, at the very outset of this chapter, to God's presence; we are taken where we may survey things from God's standpoint. How do we do it? Well, in that way we have to abstract ourselves, we have to view ourselves as drawn aside from our circumstances and surroundings. God in His power once enabled a wicked man to be abstracted from things here. He can effect what He will, and by His sovereign power God once abstracted that very wicked man Balaam by a vision and a trance. Much more by His Holy Spirit can God abstract us, and make us see things from His standpoint. I refer to that particularly because there is a covert allusion here to Balaam's prophecy. He was taken up to the top of the rocks and saw Israel from God's side, and then

he describes their beauty and order. (Num. xxiv. 5, 6.) It was not that God was concerned with cedars and waters; they all figure what comes under God's eye in its moral beauty and order in Christ by the Spirit. If we see with God we shall view all that is of God; we shall see it according to its definite order and beauty outside the breakdown. Naturally we are so occupied with breakdown, even in the few of us who have the privilege of walking together. How much we see one another's faults! I have no doubt that those goodly tents of Jacob and tabernacles of Israel would have looked very different if Balaam could have gone in and out among them; he did presently, and he quickly enough knew how to drag the people down to his own level when he saw all that was going on in their midst. But he viewed them here from above, from God's standpoint; and he, though he failed, may well bring before us this—that we also should view things from God's standpoint. We shall not then be occupied with the failure in one another, or even in ourselves, but with what is of God there—with God's world. This is the effect of the New Covenant.

Now Christ is introduced in a twofold character, as Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. There are two distinct thoughts there, and I desire to present simply the Lord

Jesus according to them. I speak for a moment of the tabernacle. The tabernacle which God gave was no doubt intended to be a figure of that great world of blessedness which was going to be for ever under His eye in Christ, and which He was going to form for and according to His pleasure. It is boundless and limitless as the heart of God itself. I have no doubt that it compasses every family that is going to be blessed under God's hand in Christ; for of course God is not concerned merely with material things, but with living, moral realities,—living beings—and the tabernacle was intended to embrace the whole universe that God will bring in for His pleasure. Then there was one part of it, called the sanctuary, which particularly presented the place of association between Christ and His companions of to-day—the holiest. There Aaron and his sons were meant to enter and worship; as a matter of fact, they never did; failure came in on the first day. But Christ is Minister of the sanctuary as well as of the true tabernacle. It is curious that the quotation from Numbers xxiv, 5, 6, "as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted," was also rendered "as tabernacles which the Lord pitched." We come here to the reality of what was there shadowed forth, "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man," to what is now under God's eye in its unfailing beauty

and order. That gives us a competent test for everything that lays claim to being of God here. If it has been pitched by Jehovah, it is of God ; if it bears marks of having been pitched by man, we can eschew it. It is a simple guide for the simplest of us—to see whether the tabernacle we have to do with, the religious order presented to us, has been pitched by man or by God. It is obvious that if there is anything of man in the way it has been set up, it is not of God.

I have no doubt that the tabernacle was properly pitched when the Spirit descended from above, as related in Acts ii. ; He pitched then the house of God, but, at the same time, it was the initiation of God's new world, of a limitless sphere of blessing. The Spirit had come down, on the ground of redemption, to bring in an un failing order of things that was to be for God. Now we have got One who is Minister of that order of things, not only in the broad aspect as the tabernacle, but in its inner view as the holy place. Aaron was, of course, minister of the old tabernacle ; here he is entirely eclipsed by Christ, who comes in as the official Minister of that glorious order of things that is before God in Himself and in His saints, as "all of one" with Him. The great care of Christ in that way is to take in hand the holy vessels of divine service. The first tabernacle was filled with holy vessels of

divine service; in the next chapter we find a great many of them enumerated, and they all have an answer at the present moment in Christ and the holy brethren who are connected with Him, and I think the thought of the Minister of the sanctuary is One who can preserve the holy vessels and the holy places clean and fit for the service of God. We get a similar idea in 2 Timothy, where the distinction is drawn between man's tabernacle—the "great house," and what God has pitched: "the sure foundation of God stands." When that distinction takes effect in our souls, so that we stand apart from iniquity (what man has pitched), then we find this: "He shall be a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use." How will He use us? In service Godward. Here He is the Minister of holy places, or holy things, or holy vessels. What are they? I believe they are His holy brethren, His called companions of the present day; they all set forth living realities. Christ can lift you and me (who a little while ago were sinners in this world) into His own company, and form and fashion and mould us there so that He can use us in His own service, and then His great care is to keep us clean and ready for the service of God. He undertakes that, and I think we feel the need of it. To be practical: one comes to a meeting, half distracted it may be—there has been all

the rush and worry of business or domestic life, so that perhaps there is half an hour before one can get at all right ; all the pressure has to be got over. Well, Christ's service is to hold us free from distraction : He takes up the holy vessels to keep them clean and ready for the service of God. That is a great thing, for God *will* be served. He has laid it down in His word that He will be served : " Let my son Israel go, that he may serve me." I do not mean service in the way simply of preaching the gospel. That is one side of service, and I think it flows from this ; but God will be served in the way of worship. One often feels as if He did not get much. If we look at the side of the poverty of our worship, the little we have to bring, we have to confess that there is very little for God. We want to turn from that side to this, *that God is efficiently served*. I mean this, that it is by Christ. Christ has taken up a place to-day of service Godward, and *He* serves God ; all is in His hands. It is not a question of my being a " tiny vessel," but that Christ is the great vessel. He is the One in whom everything is sustained Godward. I would like to bring before you the greatness of the place Christ has as Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, and He is that in such sort that there is no breakdown or failure in God's service. God is efficiently served because the One who has charge of

the sanctuary, the One who is Minister of it, is Christ, and on man's behalf He stands before God. If we laid hold of that it would lift us above the meetings, whether they are poor or not. What is under God's eye is Christ, and connected with Christ are the holy brethren, apart from the weakness and failure here. I can well remember how often that chapter used to be read in the Old Testament about the first-fruits (Deut. xxvi. 1-5, &c.); that is right enough. In one sense we do bring the firstfruits when we come together, that is, Christ; but the point is, that we are not content to leave that relative outside that is always a hindrance, "our father the Syrian." He represents our old condition, what we were, not as connected with Christ, as holy brethren, but afar from God. We cannot afford to bring the Syrian in, he spoils everything. We must view ourselves here as abstracted from our condition and circumstances. It is Christ who is before us, and Christ is before God, and God is efficiently served.

The word minister here has a very large application. It is a peculiar word; it carries with it the thought of a public, official place. We have the word in its application to service, that is, "liturgy;" and so the word here is properly "liturgist"—one who takes up an official, public place. I admit Christ has not got

that place at the moment. There is no public worship to-day. The idea prevails in Christendom of public worship, but it is as yet too early for that, for Christ is rejected here. There can be no public worship where Christ is rejected. There is going to be public worship, for that is what will mark God's world in a coming day. When He ushers in His day there will be public worship. Read all the last psalms of the fifth book. "Let everything that hath breath praise the name of the Lord." Will that be public worship? Yes. Why? Because Christ will not be rejected then; He will be in honour. Now Christ has already the place of Minister of worship, and He is going to have it publicly, too. When God's world is brought into display God will be publicly and efficiently served, but by Christ. He is going to uphold that great scene of worship pictured in the end of Psalm xxii., "All the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." Read the last psalms, every one beginning and ending with Hallelujah—"Praise ye the Lord." Everything is called upon to join in that grand chorus of worship to Jehovah. Is that scene going to be self-supporting? No, it will all be held in the hands of a Man, and that Man God's blessed Son, Christ. He is great enough to be set in that glorious, official position in which He can support the magnificence of that hymn of worship to God

right through the ages. He will then be seen in His true character of Minister of public worship. To-day *we* know Him in that character, but it is hidden ; it is all before God in secret ; it is worship in spirit and in truth. And if we know Him in that character, we shall be able to pass in spirit with Him into all the breadth of what He upholds to-day before the face of God. We have but to lay hold of Him in the glory of His Person and in the greatness of the official position He occupies before God. He holds that official position, not in any coldness of office, but in affection. As a Priest all His affections as Man are engaged, and then He sets all our affections in motion. It would give us great confidence in our meetings to know this, that God is efficiently served. Christ takes up your poor heart and mine, and He can form and fashion and fill and fit them for the service of God. So it goes on to say here : "Every high priest . . . somewhat also to offer." What has Christ to offer ? I believe He offers to God the affections of the holy brethren, affections which He Himself has formed. He forms His holy brethren for the service of God. When Christ was on earth, there was one whose action brings before us anticipatively the beauty of this position—Mary in John xii. We see there, if only in pattern, how Christ, as Minister of the sanctuary, could take her up as a holy vessel—

though nothing in herself—and could fit her to come into the worship of God, and in that way I think the alabaster box of ointment shewed the measure of praise which Christ could draw from her heart. She herself disappears as an individual ; she is here a pattern of the worshipping company. At the end of this chapter we find that Christ has ability, as Minister of the sanctuary, to take up the worship of the hearts of the ministering company (as set forth in the alabaster box of ointment), to present all to God—all of the sweetest fragrance before God. We have the poor always with us, but there are moments when we can afford to be abstracted from occupation with the poor, to let the worship and adoration of our hearts flow out to God through Christ.

Think of the greatness of His position Godward, that He can uphold the worship of our hearts ! I do not think Mary was occupied with her poorness ; she was lifted outside herself, and Christ and God in Christ was the one Object ; everything was surrendered that it might be expended on Him, and He was great enough to take it all up.

Now why does the new covenant come in at the end of the chapter ? It is because if we are to be put in touch with a scene that is so great as this we must be formed in suitability for it. That work must be of God ; it can be nothing

in ourselves, we cannot work ourselves up to it. We might see the level of it, and determine to be "up to date" in our meetings, and not go on a sort of low level. Very well—that only means confusion. That is the old order, of what we *ought* to be. That is near "disappearing," and to bring that in now spells disaster. How many times we have tried it! We have felt things are not up to the level at which they ought to be, and that we must just raise the tone a little! That is simply Sinai—what we ought to be for God, but what comes in here is what *God can be for us*: "I will"—all is of God, that we may be brought into the conscious knowledge of Himself. It is that, and that only, from which worship can spring, and in which we may be suitable and at home in that glorious scene into which He would conduct us. That is why the new covenant comes in: the old one was ineffective, and God found fault with it. It was not efficient to lead men into the service of God. It failed because men were on the line of what they could be to God; but what a comfort to let all that side go!—to place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of Christ, as Minister of the sanctuary, that He may do what He will for us and with us. Our responsibility is to be separate for Him; His glorious privilege to take us up as vessels "meet for the Master's use," He knows what

to do with them. Our privilege is to surrender ourselves into His hands.

Now the end of this chapter tells us how we are formed for the enjoyment of and entrance into this holy scene. First of all there must be forgiveness: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." God says: I have met all that in atonement through the death of Christ. If Christ has taken His seat on high, having made purgation of sins, it is the guarantee that God will remember them no more. When a Sovereign ascends the throne there is usually (in the case of political offenders at least) what is called an amnesty granted; that means a "not-remembering-any-more," and that is what is used here, though it is a still stronger word. That is the effect of Christ having taken His place at the right hand of God. Do you know God's amnesty, God's no-more-remembering of sins? But then there is another side. God comes in to teach us, and how we need it! He teaches us line upon line, and what is the force of His teaching? That we should come to the consciousness of Himself as our God, not simply as our Saviour, but to the conscious knowledge of Himself in the enjoyment of our souls. Looking forward to the future, we have: "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." It is Christ written there, and to-day in anticipation Christ is formed in

the affections of our hearts by His Spirit. That is, we are taught to love Christ, and if so, we appreciate what is of Christ. And what is the effect? We know God consciously, and that cannot be taken from us.

I desire to shew you God's way of working. When He sets out to teach people, with whom does He start? The lowest form! "For all shall know me, from *the little one* among them to the great one." That is where God starts—with the little one. Nobody need be left out where God is left free to work.

None of His own need despair of knowing the blessedness of Christ as presented in this chapter. God has said "new;" the old has disappeared from His eye; then why not from yours and mine? If we accept His amnesty and surrender to His teaching, the old order will disappear from our eye too. We shall be able to let the old go, and to take up in conscious suitability our glorious place with Christ, the Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.



HOLY BOLDNESS.

(LEV. XXI. 10-24; HEB. X. 1-30.)

THERE are two great principles, not only principles but privileges, in Christianity which mark it off most definitely from the Jewish religion which preceded it. Both of them are brought forward in this Epistle to the Hebrews that they may have a separating effect upon those who are addressed, and both are used in the way of the strongest warning lest, having been presented, they should be refused. The first of these two privileges we find in chapter vi., which we passed over for the moment ; the second is in chapter x. The first is the abiding fact that God's Holy Spirit has come down here, where Christ was, in order to maintain in power all that came in through Christ, and to bring to light the powers of that world which is shortly coming into display. That is chapter vi. It unfolds, on the positive side, the present blessings which come to God's people outwardly, in the outward profession of Christianity, consequent on the power and presence of the Holy Ghost down here. It brings in the awful results if that power and presence be renounced. This

chapter x. brings to light the second great principle of Christianity, upon which in fact all is founded, and that is the one, unique, exclusive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ: *one*, in that there can be no place for a second; *unique*, in that our mind or the mind of men could never have conceived it—much less have carried it into effect—but only could it have found its source in the heart of God; *exclusive*, in that having, as it has done, accomplished the whole of God's will, it can leave no possible room for any other intervention on the part of God. That again is presented in the way, first of blessing, then of warning: blessing if the good of it be taken heed to; awful warning if its value be slighted. The two things have been falsified in man's hands. The power and presence of the Holy Ghost here have been superseded by the human invention of a clergy; the unique, atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ has been displaced among men by sacraments. In those two thoughts you get the key to the ruin and failure of that which outwardly bears the name of Christ and professes nearness to God. So much for the failure; now for the good.

We may read in chapter vi. the positive blessings that have come in in the profession of Christianity through the presence and power of the Spirit. They are positive blessings if

men will avail themselves of them. I allude to verse 4 onwards: "Those who were once enlightened"—that is the first effect of the presence and power of the Spirit; "And have tasted of the heavenly gift"—that is the second great blessing; "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost"—that is, the Holy Ghost has come within the range of man, and has brought here the blessings of heaven. There is a sphere here marked by the Holy Ghost, and the very profession of Christianity brings men into touch with that sphere. "And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;" I have no doubt these last are summed up in the power of resurrection. They are all positive blessings to be known and enjoyed here in the power of the Holy Ghost. If any one falls away from them all is over, for sin in Hebrews has the character of apostasy. Priesthood is not for sin in Hebrews, but for infirmity—a very different thing. Infirmity is weakness, and the Spirit can join His help to our weakness (Rom. viii. 26), but not to our sin. It has often been said that when Sarah laughed it was infirmity; when she lied, it was sin. Sin in Hebrews has the character of departure from the living God; that is why the warning comes in. So in chapter x. we find the warning coming in if we neglect or slight the one great sacrifice of Christ

Now as to the positive side of the blessing. The whole tenor of the middle chapters of Hebrews is the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Minister of the sanctuary, as the One who takes hold of the holy vessels of service, which are God's saints. Christ takes them up that He may fit them in separation from this world for the service of God. We saw how "if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use;" and then the Master of the house takes those vessels and fits and prepares them for the service of God. That service of fitting and preparing is a very real thing, and I want to give an idea of it. I have no doubt that all whom I address know the forgiveness of their sins. They have received it by faith in the announcement of God's glad tidings to them, but I do not think that that in itself will give them fitness to enter God's presence. There must be God's work in the soul—what I speak of as God's fitting of the vessel; He must produce there that which is akin in nature to Christ. If God works to bring about Christ in the soul (which is the effect of the new covenant), what will result in the vessels is that, not only will they know the forgiveness of sins as a matter of faith in the glad tidings, but they will have it in conscious enjoyment by the power of the Holy

Ghost. You say you do not see the difference. It is this: the first thought is forgiveness of sins in regard to your justification or clearance; but here it is no more conscience of sins in regard to approach to God. Neither you nor I could draw nigh to the presence of a holy God at this present moment if there were the stain and conscience of sin upon us; but the work of Christ is through His Spirit, to perfect us as to conscience. It all rests upon His atoning death, for by one offering we are perfected. He has established the will of God, and in doing that He has set aside man's will. The work is all on God's side; there may be failure on ours. I read that extremely important scripture in Leviticus because it is of great help to us to see where the failure comes in. The positive side is this, that Christ came here into manhood that He might carry into effect God's will. He has done it; He has taken away the system of sacrifices (which after all gave only temporary relief to the conscience), and in place of that He has established God's great will. That has put us out of court; there is no room for our will.

Now God's will is our sanctification. What is sanctification? Setting apart. What is in question here is God's priestly company, the companions of Christ. In the Old Testament God set apart visibly and actually the tribe of

Levi, that they might be a priestly company and serve Him in divine things. Not only were they positionally set apart, but there had to be in them bodily correspondence with their calling; I do not say spiritual correspondence, but if there was in them a bodily blemish they were thereby unfitted for the intimacy of priestly service. They were not disqualified as to being sons of Aaron, and in a certain measure they could appropriate holy things, they could eat them, but they were disqualified from the service of God from coming unto the veil. In Christianity it is not bodily defects that disqualify. We have come to a new order, the order of the Spirit, and what disqualifies now is moral deformity where there should be none, for the sacrifice of Christ has paved the way for perfection. If there be hesitancy on our part to enter in, if there be moral deformity, we cannot place that burden on Christ. Let us individually weigh these traits in Leviticus, which I think will throw up into stronger light the beauty of the boldness into which the Spirit would lead us in Hebrews x. It is the death of Christ, as having set aside our wills and established God's will, that gives this boldness. He has effected all, and He is prepared to take up the holy vessels (the holy brethren), and fashion them that they may have boldness for the privilege of entering into the presence of the blessed God.

Now as to the hindrances mentioned in Leviticus xxi. 16-24. You will see very plainly that it is the generations of Aaron's seed that are in question. It is not a question of sinners but of the priestly company to which I think we come in this part of Hebrews. They are viewed as apart from the weakness and failure of the flesh here, properly speaking, but as those who are set apart by Christ's death—are constituted His companions. These are addressed here. (Ver. 17.) I say this to start with, that these blemishes were not in the power of the individual to remove. The Spirit brings before us moral blemishes so that in self-judgment we may have them removed. That is the great advantage of Christianity over Judaism, that if these things exist in us they are brought before us that we may judge them, and in judging them they disappear. They are almost too simple for us to dwell on, but if we go through them on our knees with God, I believe He can and will in one moment expose things to us that hinder our approach to Him, and give us power to judge them. The effect on any man who had a blemish was that he could not go in unto the veil. (Read vers. 21-23.) Why? "... that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them." God would surround Himself only with what is of Christ.

I believe that while the negative side is

largely touched on here, it brings us to the positive side of Hebrews x. the moment we touch the thought of the veil. To return to Hebrews again, the sacrificial order of things was wholly ineffective to bring souls to God. It doubtless gave relief of conscience for the time, but on the great day of atonement the remembrance of sins was made every year. It was a system of bringing sins to mind. Christianity is a system of putting sins out of mind. "I will remember no more"—that is the point with God. My sins shew what I was. If God would bring us into His own service in worship, He would lead us beyond what we were; He would lead us to what He is, that is, to Christ. He presents before us the great sacrifice of Christ, which has taken the place of all the sacrifices of old: "A body hast thou prepared me." That body was the vehicle of Christ's obedience. Weigh for a moment the simplicity of scripture, that Christ took a body! He who was Himself "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5), came into true human condition; He took human life that He might die, and it was truly human life. Had it not been, there would have been no atonement, for He laid down that very life to which in you and me sin had to say. He took human life apart from sin but He truly laid down that life; that was atonement. That was the great force of His

taking a body, in order to carry out God's will, as it says: "Mine ears hast thou digged" (Ps. xl. 6, marg.), which is translated here: "A body hast thou prepared me."

Now in death, Christ has set aside once and for ever the human will, and with it the great system of sacrifices which have to say to the old order; but He has established on an unalterable basis God's will, which is the sanctification of His people. "By the which will we are sanctified"—that is, set apart for God—"through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." How affecting it is in the Supper—"This is my body, which is . . . for you"! There was one Man here whose body was wholly for God: it was the vehicle of unswerving obedience to God. He had never learned to obey, it was His to command, but He "learned *obedience*" here in that in lowly manhood His body was at the disposal of God, and that body was given up in death, the very climax of obedience. He laid down His life; none could take it from Him. That body which could see no corruption, but in which God's will had been done, went into the grave, and "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." That sets aside the old order, and therefore we get this great contrast: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often-

times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins"—that is the old order—"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Christianity is a perfected system, it is a perfect order of things. The work of Christ has been carried out to the full, and now Christ has sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. You have come to perfection in the work of Christ, and the whole effort of Satan is to rob people of it. The great professing system, the church of Rome, knows that its doom is sealed by this verse, and they will not let the people know it; they translate that verse: "This man, *offering* one sacrifice for sins," an unfinished sacrifice! What a mockery! We have not come to an order of sacrifice which is going on at the present moment, but to a finished one, perfect in One who laid down His life, and has sat down on the right hand of God. What is the consequence? It is that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." His saints, the priestly company, are not only set apart by Christ's death according to God's will, but they are perfected, that is, they are brought in touch with an order of things which is in itself perfection, for it rests upon a perfect work. I wonder whether we young saints have come to it,

that we are "perfected for ever;" that is, as to our conscience, that there should be no more conscience of sins with us. It is not that we are here in the unfitness of Leviticus xxi.: we see what the work of Christ has effected for us, and that by that one offering God has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Have you a difficulty about it? How can you have a difficulty when the Holy Ghost is a witness to you? But where? In the very fact that He is here and can address you, and here it is even in the inspired page: "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us," not for faith, but for the consciousness in your soul—there is the positive declaration that you have the forgiveness of sins. If that be so, if God has perfected the companions of Christ, what can hinder their approach? Nothing. The whole chapter is to lead God's saints up to enter on their privilege with boldness, and what is that? The way into the holiest. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest . . . by a new and living way . . . dedicated for us." Think of the contrast in Eden. God had walked with man not on the ground of redemption, but in that measure of holy communion which could exist between the Creator and the unfallen creature who was formed in His likeness. When man fell, God drove out Adam and his wife, and He placed at the east

of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life. The cherubim were the ministers of God's authority, and the flaming sword, I have no doubt, was death. If man ever attempted to regain the state of innocence here, he was met point-blank by death. Man in flesh cannot force his way beyond the mystery of death, which in its fiery power turns in every direction. But what have we come to here? A new and living way; once more the way of life, but "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." That is, He came here into true human condition that He might die, but it was in His death that He Himself underwent the very penalty that He had pronounced upon man at the beginning. He tasted death; we do not in the same sense, for we have been privy to evil, and we cannot tell what death must be in the sight of a divine Person. He tasted it, for He could weigh it, and He knew its evil power and bondage and terrors for man, but He went into it. By that means He has made a new and living way for us. The cherubim no longer guard that. No! The cherubim are on our behalf. Think of the veil in the Old Testament, which sets forth in its perfect beauty the life of Christ. It was spread out upon the four pillars made of shittim wood overlaid with gold. In that way we get portrayed in its beauty the whole life of Christ,

telling us that when Christ was here it was ever in view of redemption ; He came to die. Death had no claim upon Him ; man could never take His life from Him. He laid it down, and there never was a moment when Christ was here but what His death was in view. Even in that supreme moment when, as Man here, He was on the mount of transfiguration, Moses and Elias spoke of His departure, His exodus, from this scene.

I invite your attention to the thought of the veil, for there was set forth in that the perfection of His humanity—the blue—the heavenly colour ; the purple, the royal colour ; the scarlet, human glory, to which, mark you, Christ alone had title. Then it was woven with cherubim, that is, the very judicial power of God which was against man in the garden of Eden is now for man ; it is woven in the veil, through which we pass.

I would like to remove a very common misconception in regard to the veil. People often speak of the “rent veil” in Hebrews, but in Hebrews the “*rent veil*” is not spoken of. In Matthew xxvii. we read that when Christ died the veil of the *temple* was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What was that for ? It was an actual fact, and it was a figure of God’s *coming out*, of God’s approach to man ; the rending of the veil set forth that

the death of Christ had set free the flood-gates of God's heart of love. But there is nothing about the rent veil here in Hebrews, nor about the temple. It is the veil of the tabernacle that is in question here, not of the temple. *This* veil was never rent. The fact is, that while we could never have gone in if God had not come out, what is set forth here is not God's coming out, but our going in. We go in by the way God came out: we go in *through* the veil. What does that mean? I think it means this, that what we are as natural men or women can never have to say to God's holy presence. If we approach Him it is *through* the veil, it is in the conscious appropriation of the death of Christ for ourselves, and of His body given for us, and there is no other way. It is not exactly through a *rent* veil, but through the veil, that is, in the full appropriation of His death. (Read vers. 19, 20.) There is no having to say to God apart from that, the veil excludes all that is of myself; that has to be left outside, but I go in as *of Christ*—as an entirely new order altogether. The old order must be left outside, for the cherubim are there. God does not abate one bit of His judicial authority; we get that at the end of chapter xii. and again in this: "Our God is a consuming fire," and "the Lord shall judge his people." The judgment of God is not

abated one bit, but it is on behalf of His people.

Now what an immensity of privilege lies before us, "A new and living way," &c.; that is to the holiest of all, and that is a privilege open to every one of us. I do not say it brings us to the full thought of the church, or of worship, but it brings us in that direction. It takes us right up to the threshold, so to speak, and then it introduces the great Priest over the house of God. There is One great enough to take up the whole order of worship of God's house, and this is all brought in, not to discourage, but to occupy the saints with the goodness of God. (Read ver. 22.) There is no room for an evil conscience, and our bodies being washed with pure water means, I suppose, that in our ways down here we are separate from the world and its defilement. Then warnings come in, but first of all every encouragement is given to us for taking up our privilege of boldness for entrance into the presence of God.

Now I touch on our behaviour in accord with it. We want to be a truly provoking people. It says: "to provoke one another to love and to good works." I would like to meet a provoking sort of brother, one who when I met him would set in motion what might otherwise be laggard and dull in me—love and good

works. But what is it all connected with? "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." That is most important. People come to the meetings, and sit at the very back, and go out first, and then when you meet them they say: "They are such a cold lot there." Well, do *you* shew any love? The assembling of ourselves together is to get into conscious warmth, into God's presence. We should each bring our share of the warmth and affection acquired in the knowledge of the love of God. We must help to keep the others warm; that is what I take to be the assembling of ourselves together. "But exhorting one another . . . the day approaching." How encouraging it is.

Now the warnings come in: "If we sin wilfully." Why does it emphasise wilfully? It is when our will is at work; that makes it perfectly distinct. It is not a mere question of failure here, but a deliberate course of our will in departing from God, and there is no room for our will if Christ died to establish God's will.

Now the solemn thing is this, that Christendom has substituted sacraments for the sacrifice of Christ. It has put baptism out of its place, and it has put what it calls the Eucharist—the Lord's Supper—in the place of the one great sacrifice of Christ. While we may be in a

measure free from that which marks Christendom around us, we have to be on our guard lest it should creep into our hearts. The danger is, if we do not fully know the value of redemption, of our putting meetings and sacraments in the place of the Lord's sacrifice. Even the breaking of bread, as is the case in Christendom, may be used by us as a means of assuring ourselves of forgiveness, rather than as the remembrance of His love shewn in His death. For when we come together to break bread, it is to remember Christ in the consciousness of being perfected in Him and with no more conscience of sins, not to get confirmation of the forgiveness of our sins, and we have to examine ourselves that the principle is not at work in our hearts. If it is, we may well beware of the warnings that come in here; it is most certain that the cherubim are still active, and will vindicate God's authority. Remember the Corinthians: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." I only allude to these warnings that we may weigh them in His presence, and judge ourselves lest we fail of the "Spirit of grace:"—"hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." What is grace? It is the distinctive word of Christianity, for it is God coming out in the fulness of His love in the death of Christ, that He might lift us on to Christ's platform before

Him, and the Spirit has come here to carry it into effect. And what if we sin wilfully? We insult the Spirit of grace. This warning need not discourage, for it enhances to our souls the value of that unique offering of Christ. That has set us apart, to start with, and then it has perfected us that we may have boldness. This can only be as we maintain self-judgment, as we see to it that the word of God has its full place with us, and that we are not harbouring some secret thing that is hindering its operation, for it is this which results in those moral blemishes which we have spoken of.

The wonderful position into which He has brought us is of being sanctified and perfected—as to the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins—that we may have boldness to enter God's presence, to sit there at the feet of Christ. I suppose the thought of the holiest is where everything speaks of Christ. None but Aaron could enter the holiest of old, but when he entered, what met his view in the light of the glory which abode upon the mercy-seat? All was covered in, but what was revealed to Aaron's view, as he gazed round, was gold—nothing seen but gold. Truly, beneath the gold in the ark of the covenant was the shittim wood, shewing the spotless humanity of Christ; true also that all His saints were shewn in type in the boards of the building; but what met

Aaron's view was only one thing—gold—that is, Christ under God's view. When we enter the holiest there is only one thing that meets our view, and that is Christ. The human mind has no entrance there, just as of old, natural light had no entrance. The boldness for entrance must be by God's work alone, that we may be there at home in His presence, in the consciousness that God has fitted us to approach Himself—that the flaming sword has been sheathed in the death of Christ, and that now the very justice and authority of God, as seen in the cherubim woven in the veil, are on our behalf, to give us, not fear, but confidence.



OUR BIRTHRIGHT.

(HEB. XII. 14-24.)

WE come here to the climax of the teaching in this epistle. It is important to see that holiness is so greatly insisted on. We began these addresses by seeing that Hebrews is the unfolding of *holy things*. It very largely treats of the "holy place" and of the "holiest," and we must give the word "holy" its full force. Last time we spoke of those who were debarred by a blemish from going within the veil, yet they might eat of the holy things. Here it says: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The importance of that is, that it involves a certain state in us in order that we should lay hold of the glorious things set before us. If that state be lacking in us, we shall fail to lay hold of the glories that are presented here in connection with Christ. I emphasise that strongly, because in chapter viii. we saw how Christ prepares the holy vessels for the service of God, and these intervening chapters shew how the holy vessels are fitted and formed to appreciate God's things, not simply as a matter

of faith, but in conscious enjoyment, and for that there must be christian state, that is, holiness—practical holiness in separation from this world and its religious systems, and intrinsic holiness, inward holiness and self-judgment, the being near to God and shrinking from evil.

I do not propose to refer to the things previous to verse 22, except as to Esau. The blessing of Isaac belonged to Esau. It was his birthright, but Jacob stole it, and Isaac refused to revoke the blessing. Jacob was blessed with a blessing almost as large as we get unfolded to us in verse 22 onwards, spiritual blessings (I have no doubt)—“Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven” (Gen. xxvii. 28)—not merely earthly ones, and there was very little left for Esau. He deliberately turned away from them all. He said: “Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.” (Gen. xxv. 32, 33.) The things that come out in this chapter are the birthright of every Christian, not by natural birth, but by the fact that every Christian is introduced into the family of God. I mention it to seek to impress the awful responsibility of turning away from what God presents, of selling for a mess of pottage (that is, for a share of this world’s

honour) those things which cannot be known apart from a state in us which answers to them, that is, holiness. I would speak to those who are young, that we may not despise our birthright. With regard to Esau we should not exactly have thought that selling his birthright was profanity, but God views it as that. These things have come to us as our birthright, and if we despise them we come under the ban of Esau, and mark it well, we shall find *no* place of repentance, though we seek the blessing earnestly with tears. How plaintive his cry was to his father: "Bless me, even me also, O my father."

What I desire to bring under our view now are the eight things which I have read in verse 22 onwards. It is instructive that eight are presented, a number peculiarly connected in Scripture with the introduction of a new order of things. They are brought forward in strong contrast to Mount Sinai, and the connection follows immediately on Esau. "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," &c. Bounds were set about the mount lest the people should draw near. The glory of devouring fire on that mount was angelic glory; the chariots of God—thousands of angels—had descended on Mount Sinai, and Jehovah in the midst of them, to proclaim His fiery law among the people (Psa. lxxviii. 17), and the consequence was that none dare approach the mount on

penalty of death. In Christianity we have come to an order of things entirely different in its character, and one to which we may draw nigh. I have often thought how it was illustrated in Christ being here wholly apart from the law. How very possible it was to draw nigh to Him! Think of John viii., where the Jews were inviting the thunders of Sinai to descend on that hopeless, sinful woman in Christ's presence; but they themselves had to retire, as Christ lifted up Himself and said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Convicted in their own consciences they found the judgment they had courted for another recoiling on their own heads, but the woman discovered that there were no bounds about Christ—she could remain in safe-guard in His presence. I believe Christ's attitude presents to us how the Jews called forth what was latent in His Person—convicting power was there, for *grace and truth* came out in Him—but the woman found Mount Zion in His presence. We get there the contrast between the two systems, one connected with Mount Sinai, and the other with Mount Zion.

I do not think we can weigh these eight statements (Heb. xii. 22-24) too carefully. Let us look at the first four, and afterwards at the last four—I think they arrange themselves in that way. Each one is separated from the

next by the word "and;" hence there can be no doubt as to the place each occupies. (Read vers. 22, 23 as far as "heaven.")

"Ye are come unto mount Sion," that is the first. "The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," second. "An innumerable company of angels, . . . the general assembly," third. The "church of the firstborn [ones], which are written in heaven," fourth. I do not now go further than that.

It is of the greatest importance that we should lay hold of the meaning of those four before we look at the next four. It will only be possible here to give a few hints, so that we may weigh the matter before God and search it out for ourselves. I would say this to start with: each four hangs on the first of its set. The first four, therefore, depend on mount Sion.

I turn aside for a moment to say this: I do not think "Ye are come" refers to any sort of christian progress; it is not the portion of the more advanced in distinction to others. It presents Christianity—what I speak of as the birthright of the family of God—in its normal aspect; it is the right and title of every Christian. We have come to these things; they have not come to us as yet. They present to us properly what will come into display and be patent before the eyes of men in God's coming

world. They will have come to us then, but we have come to them now, not only in faith but in consciousness, if there be holiness, that is christian state. These things are the birthright of the very youngest Christian, but what we have to see to is, that we follow holiness in order that we may lay hold of them.

In taking up the first four I would ask you to note that they depend upon the first mentioned, that is, mount Sion. The first four differ from the second four in that they bring before us (and this is very important) *what God has secured for His own pleasure*. Let our thoughts be disengaged for a moment from how the things affect us, and let us see the thought of the blessed God, and how He gets His own heart met in these four great elements presented to us here at the outset. "Ye are come to mount Sion:" that stands all alone. It is not a material mountain, but, where types are used, we must go to the Old Testament to see how they are employed. In Psalm lxxviii. we find something connected with mount Sion, namely, election, that is, choosing. God chooses, according to His sovereignty. It must be right, for it is according to the sovereignty of His nature. We read there that He chose mount Sion: He discarded every other claim on His notice, but He chose "mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high

palaces." (Psa. lxxviii. 68, 69.) If it says that God chose it and loved it, it could not be a material mountain. The whole thought of mount Sion is extremely beautiful in Scripture. I do not dwell on it, but I ask you to look at its initiation in connection with bringing the ark to it, for it was at that point that it was first sung: "For his mercy endureth for ever"—and that in spite of Israel's failure.

What does mount Zion present? The impregnable position taken up by Christ risen from the dead. Psalm cxxxii. would give a key to that, too; in fact, Scripture teems with the whole thought of mount Sion. Think of Psalm xlvi. : "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion;" no doubt the literal future city is in view, but it also has reference to the present position of Christ, and in that glorious Man, risen from the dead, the whole heart of the blessed God has been met, for in Him every purpose of God's sovereign counsel has found its establishment, and can never fail. All that is in man's hands will fail, like the ark carried into captivity, for He "delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hands (Psa. lxxviii. 61); but now His glory is gathered up in a Man risen from the dead. That is what we come to in mount Sion, and it gives character to the other three.

“The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem:” that carries us a step further. I do not think the thought of the city here is the aspect in which the nations walk in the light of it, but as to how it meets the heart of God. I believe the aspect here is this, that every divine principle that was seen in the pathway of the Lord Jesus Christ when down here is enshrined and wrought out in God’s city—is treasured up there for the heart of the blessed God. For instance, you get the principle of the city and the details of it in the last few chapters of the Revelation. There were gates on each side of it—“on the east three gates; on the north three gates,” and so on—I have no doubt that presents absolutely perfect accessibility. See how that came out in Christ when He was here! Men had not to go out of their way to get blessing from Him. Grace in His own blessed Person met them just where they were, and I believe that very principle is enshrined in the thought of the city. Then there were streets of gold like transparent glass; that presents the walk of the saints in righteousness under the eye of God, that is what came out in the Lord when here in perfection. “Looking upon Jesus as *he walked*,” John the Baptist could say: “Behold the Lamb of God.” You get that principle summed up and maintained there. “And the gates of it

shall not be shut at all by day ; for there shall be no night there." Why? Because of the light of holiness within. When Christ was here the gates were never shut with Him, yet nothing that defileth could enter in. Christ entered the Pharisee's house ; we could not have entered, for we should have dropped to the level of the Pharisee, but it could not be so with Christ : there was the intrinsic holiness which allowed the gates to be open equally for the Pharisee and the woman. She knew that the gates were open, and the holiness within attracted her, producing repentance. There was none with the Pharisee ; she was attracted, he was not. There never was a moment when Christ was here when the gates were not open. Every divine principle that came out in the pathway of Christ is treasured up under God's eye in the city. It is there already—the building of the city, Christ in His saints ; but when it comes into display it will be under His eye for ever. Do you wonder it is the "city of the living God"? No, it is no wonder, if it is the record of those "books that could not be written." (John xxi. 25.) The four gospels have been written, but the great library that will enshrine every principle of the pathway of the Lord Jesus Christ is the heavenly city.

"The heavenly Jerusalem:" it is God's new metropolis, but a metropolis that meets His

heart; it is living, and expressed under His eye in Christ and all that hangs upon Him to-day. I am not speaking of what it is for us—it is an immense blessing—but of what it is to the heart of the blessed God, that He should secure for Himself a city.

Fair city! Where the length and breadth and height
Equal in every part and jasper-bound,
Mark the great record God Himself has found:
One wide, far-reaching miracle of light!

“To an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly:” we find that angels have a place in connection with the city, as doorkeepers at the several gates. They do not form part of that system of glory, and they do not inaugurate it, but they are in that way the guardians of it. This stands in contrast to Sinai. The glory of Sinai was devouring fire, and that was angelic glory, as shewn in Psalm lxxviii. Jehovah came down in angelic glory in demand upon man—that is why man could not draw near. He gave the law “by the disposition of angels,” according to Acts vii. 53. We have not come to angelic demand to-day, but to the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly. That is a peculiar expression which occurs but once in the New Testament. It gives the idea of a great festal gathering. When Christ came into this world apart from law

but in grace, as a little Babe, the whole scene was changed for God and for heaven, in such sort that the angel of the Lord came from heaven, and suddenly with him a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men!" It is not simply "in a *Man*," but "in *men*," that is, the whole scene was altered under the eye of God, because Christ was there as Man. Reconciliation had already come into God's view. God could already find complacency in this scene, because Christ was under God's eye. He is great enough to fill God's eye and heart. Do we believe it? What power it would give us in preaching the gospel if we saw that He fills God's eye and heart. Hence God can send out His gospel from *His* side.

When you come to Christ ascended into heaven you come to this: "An innumerable company of angels, the general assembly." Let the good of the scene presented here sink into your hearts for a moment. Here is the great angelic host, and they must be a most wonderful world of beings, greater than men in power and might, as Scripture tells us (2 Pet. ii. 11); yet when, in the birth of Christ, they saw man that had fallen now taken up in a new order of Man, an order of Man out of heaven—the Creator come here into human

condition—when they saw the advancement of man, then (as has been so beautifully said) “they unselfishly hymned the advancement of another race.” They retire in favour of man. These mighty heavenly beings—angels of which in their various families there must be tiers upon tiers in their great princely ranks, right up to Gabriel “who stands in the presence of God,” and to the Archangel Michael himself—what is their one occupation? The great festal gathering. What about? The Man in heaven. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates . . . and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory?” The angels could answer: “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. . . . The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.” (Psa. xxiv.) There is a Man gone in there, and that Man God’s blessed Son, and all the voice of the angelic host in heaven is concentrated on hymning the praises of that glorious Man. And we have come to this. Heaven is open to faith, and we can already anticipate the glorious song of which Christ is the centre. There His name is all the music, and His love the song. Angels have never needed redemption, but they can voice the joy of heaven that the Lamb who was slain is there in the power of resurrection, and it is all for the heart of the blessed God. It is a wonderful scene—an innumerable company of angels, not

now in demand upon men, but in celebration of that glorious Man who has entered heaven.

“Church of the firstborn [ones], which are written in heaven.” This is the only place other than chapter ii. 12 in which we get the assembly mentioned in Hebrews. Hebrews has a very wide character: there is no doubt that God’s church, the church of the living God is brought in, but in a very abstract way. But here we get a very pointed allusion to the place the church has to-day. Referring to the Old Testament again: in regard to the firstborn, whether of man or beast, God had said, “It is mine.” (Exo. xiii. 2.) If of a beast (unless of an ass) it was slain; if a man it might be redeemed; but it belonged to Jehovah. Instead of the firstborn of all Israel God chose one particular tribe, Levi (Num. iii. 12), and said: “therefore the Levites shall be mine; because all the firstborn are mine.” Here in Hebrews I think you get again what is taken instead of Israel. It is a spiritual kind of Levi, so to speak; it is the church of the firstborn ones, and they are taken as the pledge of the whole redeemed company. That is our glorious privilege of to-day, to be here for the heart of God, so that He can say, “they are mine.” “Church of the firstborn [ones], which are written in heaven.” They are written there in virtue of redemption. There is no other possible way (for the five shekels had to

be paid) (Num. xviii. 16), but they are there nearest to the heart of the blessed God. They are there in anticipation of all the blessing which God will bring in in the future. He is going to bring every earthly and heavenly family into blessing, but there is one peculiar family, the saints of to-day, those who are associated with Christ in His rejection, and yet whom He associates with His present place before God. They are not written in the earth. They have no place here. You could not find their epitaphs on the tablets of this world's roll of honour. They are registered in heaven, because Christ has a place there, and they are for the heart of God: He says, "They are mine."

Do not these four thoughts bring before us what God gets for His pleasure? It is good to survey them, because they lift us out of our things, and we need to see them as one glorious whole, all depending upon mount Sion. Everything for God is established and summed up in Christ risen from the dead.

Now I turn to the last four. (Read ver. 23: "and to God the Judge of all," &c., ver. 24.) "God the Judge of all" gives its character to the last four. The importance of these things is this, that when we come in the apprehension of our souls to what God has secured for His pleasure, we shall then be prepared to come

into the consciousness of the blessing He has for man. I am not now speaking of the forgiveness of sins; I have got that by faith to start with; but have I got it in conscious enjoyment from God's side? We get here the blessing that flows out to man, but we view it from God's side. "God the Judge of all." There is a danger with us when we come to the thought of "judge" in Scripture to associate exclusively with it the idea of penal or punitive judgment. I do not think it always bears that meaning, and it does not here. In the fourth book of Psalms the thought of judging the earth is for blessing, not at all in the way of punitive judgment. When God takes up the thought of judgment, it is for blessing. So in the Book of Judges—when there were judges, Israel had a very good time. I think we may read that thought here. It may involve punitive judgment, I admit, because God blesses in view of Himself, and to-day in this world, if what is irreconcilable to authority were not restrained and judged, the rest of men would have a very bad time of it; therefore the inauguration of God's rule on earth no doubt involves punishment, but the grand thought is that we have come anticipatively to God the Governor of all. If that be true, that God is Governor of all, and we know it beforehand, it means this, that every abuse will be righted, and everything put in its proper place. When God

rises to judge the world it will be in righteousness. In Acts xvii. we read that God "hath appointed a day"—(and a very long day, too, thank God)—"in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Doubtless that judging the habitable earth may involve at the outset of it—and very likely in some degree all through—punitive judgment, for the good of the mass ; but the great thought is undoubtedly that of governing. Now it is the greatest joy to us—where we see evil rampant to-day, wrong taking the place of right, oppression in the seat of justice, the vile person in the place of the righteous man—to know that God is going to put all that right in the hands of a Man, and that He has given the pledge of it in having raised Him from the dead. In spite of the unrighteousness of man in regard of Him, and that He died apart from justice (for there was no judgment in His condemnation at man's hands). God has raised Him from the dead, and that is the pledge that God will put right every iniquity. God protect us from trying to put it right ourselves ! God will do it by a Man, and meanwhile we can keep our souls quiet, because we know God as the Judge of all beforehand. What a scene it brings before our souls !

Surveying it from God's standpoint, while we see the awful condition of things here, we can say to our souls: "Rest in the Lord." It is not that we do not seek to do good, for we are to be well-doers and blessers, and we do not shut our eyes to the evil; but we are not trying to set things right, but we leave that to God.

"The spirits of just men made perfect." That is not very simple at first sight; let us take an illustration. In chapter xi. we see how God wrought in the souls of men down the ages to bring Christ known there in affection under His view. It was His world that He was setting in their hearts in divine affection. (Eccles. iii. 11.) Those men—Abel, Enoch, Noah, &c., are not dead, they live. Take Moses, for instance; "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (Deut. xxxiv. 10), yet the closing chapter of his history, as far as the Old Testament only tells us, would remain an enigma. At one moment in his history he did not give God His place (Num. xx. 10), and for that God cut him off from going into his inheritance in the land. Moses went up into the mount Pisgah, and died there, and God buried him. (Deut. xxxiv. 5.) We see the thread cut off there, as it were, and we do not understand it. Here we have come to the spirits of perfected just men, not to their bodies, and not to perfected just men, but to their spirits. Christ Himself said of those very men that they

all live unto God. (Luke xx. 38.) If we pass on in thought to the mount of Transfiguration, we find Christ there, and with Him Moses and Elias. Now there we have the key to God's ways. If we only had God's ways down here in view we should have no key, but in the mount of Transfiguration we have the key. Had Moses lost anything? No, indeed; for we see him there in the joyful contemplation in Christ of the substance of the blessed land he had only been given to survey in type from mount Pisgah. We have come to the spirits of perfected just men. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the others all live for us; their lives are not mere histories. They live to God, and do they not live for us? They do, and what is more, we have the key to all their histories here, and their histories are for our instruction, that we may learn how God could discipline them that He might reproduce in them Christ in His moral features. Do not murmur and say: I do not think Moses deserved to be shut out of the land; get to the thought of "God the Judge of all," that is the key. "The Judge of all the earth" (Gen. xviii. 25) has done right, and these all live to Him, and form part of that great system of blessing to which by grace we have come. It is beautiful to see that when God brings in His glorious world He does not leave one of His saints out; they are "sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke xx. 36.)

“Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.” The idea of mediator is one who takes the place of negotiator, and the idea of “new” here is that of fresh and juvenescent. So the new covenant means the completely new terms on which God is with man, outside the old order of demand. In Jesus the mediator of the new covenant we have come to terms which are always fresh and new. I wonder sometimes, when I get up in the morning (perhaps it is Monday morning, and everybody is feeling the returning burden of daily toil) whether I have the sense that I am on terms with God in Jesus which are perpetually fresh. We know His mercies are fresh every morning, but this is more than mercies. God is on absolutely new terms with me in Jesus—perpetually fresh terms. Do you not think a sense of that would keep us above the pressure of things here, that in Jesus we have a negotiator, One who carries into effect the entirely new terms on which God is with His people, terms that never lose their freshness. We have to go through the pressure and toil here, but the point is that there is a Man who can keep us in the perpetual freshness of God’s attitude towards us. It would keep us bright and spiritually youthful in such sort that “as thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deut. xxxiii. 25), that is the older we grew, the stronger and fresher we should be. Jesus cannot grow old. As I said the first time

I was speaking here—In His own life as Man He has spanned the whole gulf of time since He returned to heaven; and in Jesus there is a perpetually fresh covenant established and carried into effect.

And then, last, we have come to "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh *better* than Abel." It is not simply that it is better than the blood of Abel, nor "speaks better things," but "speaks better than Abel." And when you get the blood of sprinkling it is not quite the idea of what is individual, it refers to all the people (see Heb. ix. 19), and it brings in here (I have no doubt) the idea of Christianity, and embraces perhaps even more than that. We have come to the blood of sprinkling, and the blood is that which sets apart entirely for God, and its character is that it speaks better than Abel. What has Abel's faith to say? "By it he being dead yet speaketh." He speaks of a world which was to be founded entirely upon redemption and to be marked by the moral intrinsic excellence of Christ as the Victim; it is specifically stated in Scripture that the blood was offered with the fat thereof. We have come here to a voice better than Abel's. It is the voice of Christ, and He addresses us from heaven, from the heights of God's counsels and purpose in Himself, seen already in connection with that world which is to form the

home of our hearts beforehand. He encourages us to lay hold to-day of that which is before God, which is based on redemption, and marked by the moral excellence of Himself as the Victim.

And just as we appropriate what God has secured for His own pleasure, so shall we lay hold in conscious power and liberty and enjoyment of the blessings in which He has come out for man, to be known both now and in the day of His manifested power and glory.

We cannot add to it, for we have come to the climax. We have only taken up a few thoughts in the epistle. May the effect be that we get before God about them, and search into the things and weigh them, until in the knowledge of Christ they become part of our moral being, until we can live (while the pressure of our circumstances may be unaltered) outside the circumstances, so that already (as we often sing) we may live in the "stainless joy" which "gleams through the present gloom."

"The new creation's stainless joy
Gleams through the present gloom ;
That world of bliss without alloy,
The saints' eternal home."

