

Him that Endured

E. W. ROGERS



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Foreword

It is a privilege as well as a pleasure to be allowed to write a foreword to a book by Mr. E. W. Rogers, to whose ministry, both written and oral one has been indebted for so many years. Those years have not diminished the author's gift for clear and succinct exposition, and for that careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture which is essential if the message of the Word is to be truly understood. In the ten chapters of this book Mr. Rogers deals with the great themes of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and gives us guidance especially on those portions which have provided difficulties for some, in particular the warning passages of Chapters V, VI, and X. Most of all, however, he brings out the master theme of the Epistle, the Supreme Excellence of the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord, Son of God, and Son of Man, Apostle and High Priest, Sacrifice and Servant and exalted King, the One Who in His own Person and Work both surpasses and supersedes all that had gone before Him.

Wisely, as I think, Mr. Rogers deals only briefly with the unsolved and probably unsolvable question of human authorship, and on this and other debatable points he gives weighty and cogent reasons for his conclusions.

This book should prove a valuable guide to those who come to the serious study of the Epistle for the first time and may well provide new insights for those who already know it well.

A. E. DALE

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Introduction

APOSTASY—the repudiation of one's faith—is an ever-present peril to the people of God, and the New Testament in many places warns us against it. 'Will ye also go away?' (John 6. 67) asked the Lord as He noticed many leaving Him because of His teaching. 'To whom shall we go?' replied Peter, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life'. Apostasy reveals the true state of the heart and makes manifest the unreality of the profession. As dogs return to their vomit, and sows to their wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2. 22), so do mere professors return to their former things, or even go to something worse. Those who, out of a pure heart, follow the Good Shepherd are genuine sheep: and should they, at times, wander they ultimately return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls (1 Peter 2. 25).

The profession of one's faith must be tested to prove its genuineness. Faith is a precious thing, more precious indeed than perishable gold (1 Peter 1. 7), and if gold is tried by the fire, who shall wonder that faith likewise is put into the fiery crucible to purge away the dross and leave the pure residue that is sterling in quality? Where there is genuineness there will be continuance, but not otherwise. Hence both Paul (Col. 1. 23) and the writer to the Hebrews use the word 'if' (Heb. 3. 6, 14) when addressing those who regarded themselves as, and posed as, true believers. They say, we shall know whether you are true or false by whether you continue or otherwise. God's purpose is to present 'you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight *if* you continue in the faith'. He cannot do otherwise.

The Epistle to the Hebrews warns against apostasy and gives means whereby professors may test themselves. Rightly understood, it affords the utmost encouragement to the people of God. Only when the eye of faith is diverted from Christ and becomes wholly occupied with self, is it likely to create misunderstandings, and is assumed to support doctrines which are not in agreement with the general tenor of the rest of the New Testament.

This letter recognises the parallel truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The will of God and the work of Christ relate to the former: the 'if' sections and hortatory parts have to do with the latter. Each must be given full weight and not be modified so as to accommodate the one to the other. Resting fully on the work of Christ, we may regard our eternal destiny as absolutely secure. But recognising the subjective duties of our faith, we should give heed to all that is here written touching continuance, holding fast, unbelief, and disobedience lest it should prove that we have never had the root of the matter in us.

As, when the gospel is preached, the preacher should recognise that everything depends in one way on the work of God's Spirit and in another way on his preaching and the response of his hearers, so in this other matter: in one way our eternal security depends solely on the effectiveness of the work of Christ, yet in another it depends likewise on our genuineness and continuance. We must prove 'ourselves' to see whether we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13. 5).

In no other letter is Christ more exalted than here: the sufficiency of His sacrificial death to make the sinner meet for the Holy Presence of God is crystal clear. Every encouragement is given to faith, but the sternest warnings are given as to the results of apostasy.

The following pages have been written with the desire

to help the reader to understand this rich portion of Scripture. Difficult parts have not been avoided, though he may not at first agree with the explanation given. Reasons for conclusions reached have been set out and the reader should 'prove all things; hold fast that which is good, and abstain from every appearance of evil' (1 Thess. 5. 21). Yet let him not reach a hasty decision to reject what to him may be new. 'Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things' (2 Tim. 2. 7).

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. David Ellis, B.D. and Dr. James Naismith, M.D., who have very kindly gone through the manuscript carefully and made useful suggestions which have been adopted.

May God, in His rich mercy, be pleased to own this small endeavour to His glory.

E. W. ROGERS

Oxford, England

Authorship

THE authorship of the epistle to the Hebrews has received, perhaps, more consideration than that of most of the other books and epistles of the New Testament. Though some of these books contain no name of the original writer, yet no letter has given rise to more guesses and speculations than has that to the Hebrews. Many and diverse conclusions have been reached, though plainly only one of them can be right, if even that is. Therefore, the present writer does not intend to offer any suggestion whatsoever; he does not know who wrote it; certainty is not attainable by any. An ancient writer has said: 'Who wrote it, God only knows.'

It is hardly necessary to remark that the heading of the Epistle, as shown in most A.V. Bibles, is not part of the original writing, and in this case assumes what cannot be proved, that Paul wrote it.

It seems as if God intended to allow this letter to remain anonymous because He wished to emphasise throughout it that He is speaking. 'God Who *spake* . . . hath at the end of these days *spoken*' (Heb. 1. 1-2). 'See that ye refuse not Him that *speaketh*' (12. 25). 'Today, if ye will hear *His voice*' (3. 7). 'The *word* of God is living and active' (4. 12 R.V.).

There is another reason for anonymity: the Lord Jesus is spoken of as 'the Apostle' as well as 'High Priest' (3. 1) and it would, plainly, be inappropriate to introduce the name of another and lesser Apostle.

Furthermore, the quotations from the Old Testament

in this Epistle, which, for the most part, are taken from the LXX,¹ are given without indicating the human author or the place in the canon where it is to be found. Now the writer was, surely, not ignorant of these things. He displays too much acquaintance with the Old Testament in general to suppose that he did not know the places from which he was quoting and who wrote them. The fact seems to be that the Spirit of God caused him to omit mentioning them, for the same reason, namely, to re-emphasise that both in the Old Testament and 'in these last days' it is God speaking to man.

Some have assumed that 2 Peter 3. 15 gives ground for supposing that Peter, who certainly wrote to Hebrews, was affirming that Paul was the author of this letter to the Hebrews. But the words 'as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you' do not necessarily relate to this epistle. It is a mistake to suppose that all Paul's letters have been preserved for us. Stronger ground than that which this passage affords is required before we can attribute the Hebrews epistle to Paul.

Others suggest that the seed was sown when Stephen said he saw Jesus 'at the right hand of God', because our epistle frequently mentions this fact. But that is no proof of Paul's authorship. Other writers in the New Testament have mentioned this, and with no stronger plea the epistle might be attributed to any one of them.

Style, moreover, proves nothing: it is quite conceivable that two servants of God, writing in regard to Christian

¹ The LXX (Septuagint) is a translation into Greek of Old Testament Hebrew scriptures made two or three centuries before the birth of the Lord Jesus. In many places it paraphrases rather than translates, and by no means all the citations of the Old Testament in the New are taken from it. It is called the LXX because it is believed that a body of seventy men were engaged in its translation.

matters, be they personal, doctrinal or hortatory, should each adopt a similar style, seeing that both are writing on similar subjects.

If Paul were the author, it may pertinently be asked, why should he conceal his name and write anonymously? This was not his habit. In fact, he tells us that he signed all his letters. 'The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write' (2 Thess. 3. 17). More than that, it is not to be supposed that he would believe his letter would gain more acceptance with his national-brethren if he omitted his name than if he inserted it. It is utterly unlike Paul to hide behind anonymity.

But suppose we knew who actually did write it: should we be much better off? We have the letter itself which everywhere bears the hallmark as having come from God. There can be no doubt of its divine inspiration and the justice of giving it a place in the canon of the New Testament. It covers a territory of truth which is dealt with by no other New Testament writer. We should suffer an irreparable and immeasurable loss were we deprived of it simply because we cannot trace it to one particular person.

We leave, therefore, the question of its authorship as it has wisely been left by others: we do not know who wrote it.

The Aim of the Epistle

THOUGH not specifically stated, it is everywhere apparent in the letter that those addressed are Jews who had accepted the Lord Jesus as their long-promised Messiah, although the nation had judged Him to be worthy of death. This resulted in persecution, confiscation of property, imprisonment and what came little short of bloodshed (12. 4; 10. 32-34).

The attitude that they had adopted towards Jesus was one which virtually condemned their nation for rejecting Him and putting Him to death. They were on the side of Jesus whom they owned as Lord: the nation was against Him.

This resulted in their being ostracised from their fellow nationals and their exposure to severe sufferings. In these circumstances the temptation to recant and go back on their decision, and to return to their old fold is understandable. They might have argued that, under Judaism, which was given by God through Moses, and was attested by miracles, they did not suffer. Why, then, should it be that under Christianity, which it was alleged was also given by God through Jesus, and was likewise attested by miracles, they suffered? Since both systems were, apparently, of divine origin, given through human agency, might they not revert to the former and so avoid suffering through adhering to the latter? Who, after all, could sav which was the better of the two systems?

The liability to apostatise was very real, and it was to prevent this that the letter was written. The genuineness

of their faith would be proved by their continuance. The writer assumes their profession to be real: nevertheless it must be tested, and in this letter he gives means whereby they may know if they have the root of the matter in them.

The ritualistic system of Jerusalem, in vogue when the letter was written, does not form its background. The writer rather takes the Old Testament sacrificial and Aaronic priestly ordinances for that purpose, and in particular, the ritual of the day of Atonement. The ritual was, of course, substantially the same in each case, but the writer consistently refers to the Tabernacle and not to the Temple (9. 11, 21). The Tabernacle in the wilderness and not the Temple in the land is used by him to throw into relief the superior blessings of Christianity over against Judaism. He is writing to a pilgrim people, and what could be more suitable than to take the Tabernacle in the wilderness as his object lesson? They are Hebrews—passers over—going through the wilderness of this world to their heavenly country. They are strangers here. They, therefore, must guard against the twin evils of 'disobedience' (*ἀπειθεία*) and 'unbelief' (*ἀπιστία*).

And so by comparing and contrasting the Levitical system with the new order of Christianity he shows the superiority of the latter to the former. He constantly employs such words as: better (7. 22; 8. 6), substance (10. 34), eternal (9. 12, 14), more excellent (8. 6), greater (9. 11).

Replying to the taunt of their adversaries that they had nothing visible or tangible: that they had no priest, temple, sacrifice, or altar, the writer repeatedly uses the words 'we have' (8. 1; 4. 15) showing that, though in one way these taunts were correct, yet the believers were not without the spiritual counterparts of these visible things, which, after all, are vastly superior.

He urges them to recognise that all they had was held by faith, and that faith has to do with eternal and invisible

realities. The visible was soon to pass away by judgment, as was bitterly experienced when Titus ransacked the city of Jerusalem and destroyed its Temple. What they had, however, could not be lost.

This letter differs from others in the New Testament as might be expected. For example, that to the Romans is occupied with showing the reader how guilty criminals may be pardoned, but Hebrews shows how those pardoned criminals have constant right of access to the throne of God. Romans tells how the guilty may get out of the criminal court. Hebrews shows how they may even have entrance into the Holiest of all. Romans has to do with the unsaved: Hebrews with those that are already saved. Romans is occupied with the sinner: Hebrews with the people of God. Romans tells how redemption may be obtained, but Hebrews assumes that the people are already redeemed. Romans begins from Exodus 12: Hebrews from Exodus 24. Not often do we hear of pardoned criminals being welcomed into the royal palace, but it is so here.

Other contrasts may be drawn. For example, the letter to the Ephesians envisages the believer as being already seated with Christ in the heavenlies, but Hebrews regards him as still travelling through a wilderness.

The mistake of the Galatians was that they were seeking to alloy the gospel—mixing up together law and grace, works and faith, the flesh and the Spirit. That was not the case with the Hebrews. The mistake they were apt to make was to abandon altogether grace, faith, and the Spirit's work, and to revert to law, works and carnal ordinances. Their danger was apostasy, not corruption.

But would they really give up the substance, the blessings of the gospel, the realities behind all their Levitical types and shadows in order to secure a little worldly comfort? Whoever heard of anyone giving up the sub-

stance of anything in order to have merely its shadow? Yet that is precisely what they were liable to do!

The General Argument

The supremacy of the Lord Jesus, the Son, over angels is first considered in Chapter 1. This was important, for the Jews held angels in high repute: they figured largely in their ancient national history. For example, the law was given by the administration of angels. But the Son of God is infinitely their superior.

Chapter 2 continues in a like strain, only here the emphasis is on the Manhood of Christ, whereas in chapter 1 it is on His deity. The 'habitable world to come' has not been subjected to angels, but to 'Man'. This is not a little startling, since man was originally made a little lower than angels. Moreover, man does not seem to be master of creation now, whatever may have been the position of the first man. The whole question is discussed in Chapter 2.

Here, then, is One who is both God and Man. In this He stands altogether unique, 'Jesus, the Son of God'. It follows then, that none of the heroes of Hebrew history, however illustrious, could be compared with Him. He is without a peer, He stands alone, for He embodies in Himself two whole and perfect natures, full deity and full and real humanity. Many of these heroes are brought forward in this letter with a view to showing the excellency of Christ over each one of them. Could these Hebrews, then, even entertain the idea of abandoning such an One as Christ in favour of adherence to a system that had to do with these much lesser lights?

Chapters 3 and 4 draw lessons from the failures of Israel in the wilderness. They fell and did not attain to the 'rest' which was before them. These Hebrews must guard against the same peril.

At Hebrews 4. 15 the writer resumes what he had incidentally mentioned in Hebrews 2. 17—the High Priesthood of Christ. He discusses it at length until the end of Chapter 8. From Hebrews 9. 1 to 10. 18 he is concerned with the one great final sacrifice, showing that, in Christ, the Old Testament sacrificial system had its complete fulfilment with far better benefits. The rest of the epistle is largely hortatory, with some warnings. Chapter 13 is not, as some have supposed, unrelated to the main argument: it is not by a different hand. Indeed, it rather sums up the argument in the words: ‘Let us, therefore, go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.’ The Hebrews were in danger of returning to the camp of Judaism by which they hoped to escape the reproach attaching to Christianity, not recognising that the former was effete.

The practical bearing of this letter for us Gentiles and for our present times is important. If the earthly, organised and ritualistic religion of Judaism which was in the first instance ordained by God, and was the only such thing ever owned by Him, is now superseded, what shall we say of the camp of Christless Christendom which is but an amalgamation of effete Judaism with corrupt paganism? Of that which once was divinely sanctioned with that which at no time had any such sanction? ‘Let us, therefore, go forth to Him outside the camp.’

God speaks in His Son

Chapter 1 - 2. 4

Chapter one should really end at the fourth verse of chapter 2.

WE quote with comments these four verses: 'Wherefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast (that is, the law of Moses ordained through angels) (Gal. 3. 19) and every transgression (sin of commission) and disobedience (sin of omission) received a just recompense of reward (and the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath day was stoned) (Num. 15. 32, 33) how shall we escape (the penalty of a broken law) if we neglect (disregard, make light of) so great a salvation (from that penalty) which having at the first been spoken through the Lord (as recorded in the four gospels) was confirmed unto us by them that heard (that is, by the Apostles), God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders (such as the healing of the lame man at the entrance of the temple) (Acts 3. 2ff.) and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will?' These signs, wonders and miracles, having now served their confirmatory and validating purpose are no longer to be expected (Mark 16. 20; Heb. 2. 4). Christianity has received adequate divine authentication once and for all. There would be no point in continuing these miracles.

It will be seen that there are three levers which the writer employs on the fulcrum of his argument: In view of (a) the dignity of the speaker, (b) the finality of the message, and (c) the nature of the offer, they are in duty bound to give more attention than they ordinarily gave, to the things heard, lest they should drift away from them. 'Drifting away' would be 'apostasy': 'neglecting so great salvation' is ceasing to be interested in it, while, at the same time, professing a nominal adherence to it. They must beware against drifting under the influence of adverse tides lest the place of safety be hopelessly lost. If they 'hold fast to the end' well and good, but if they neglect it, and drift back to a legal system there can be no escape from the righteous penalty due to infringement of the Mosaic law. Let us consider Chapter 1 and see how the matter is argued.

Old Testament prophets were but channels: they were neither authors nor commentators. They were reporters, transmitting a message from a higher authority. 'Thus saith the Lord' (e.g. Jer. 13. 1) 'the word of the Lord came unto me' (Jer. 2. 1) was often on their lips. Sometimes, too, God spake by dreams (Gen. 37), visions (Isa. 1. 1), wall-writing (Daniel 5), or in other ways. At times He came in an appearance—a theophany—(Gen. 18), but at no time was His revelation complete: it was 'by divers portions', here a little and there a little; line upon line, precept upon precept. There was always something more later to be added till the times of Malachi when the canonical prophetic word ceased.

But now, 'at the end of these days', or as expressed in another epistle, 'when the fulness of the time had come' (Gal. 4. 4), God has spoken all His mind, not piecemeal nor in a variety of ways, but 'in' One who is 'Son'. Note the aorist—*ἐλάλησεν*—He spoke, a completed action. He has no more to say: His word is final. The word 'Son' here

is anarthrous as also elsewhere in the letter (Heb. 5. 8), and, therefore, it is best to regard it as a proper noun: we should spell it with an initial capital S. The force is, 'such an One as Son' and not a mere prophet. The title has a unique significance in which none others can have part, even though the word son is sometimes used of them (Gal. 3. 26; 4. 6-7).

In His case 'Son' connotes equality with the Father, as John 5. 18ff. clearly shows, where this equality is both affirmed and proven by the Lord. We must not import into the word 'Son' those ideas which relate to human generation, juniority, dependence. In His case it denotes co-existence: He is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. This is, indeed, implied in what follows: He ever is ($\omega\nu$) the effulgence of God's glory, just as the sunbeam and sun are inseparable: He ever is ($\omega\nu$) the impress of His substance (R.V.) just as the wax impression corresponds exactly and always to the seal which made it. In all respects there is equality, and that eternally.

'In Son' means Son-wise, not only what was spoken by the Son but that He Himself is God's full and final message to man. His being, nature, work, position and all else that relates to Him is God's message to man. It was perilous to have ignored God's word through His prophets: how much more so when it is spoken in the Highest of all. To refuse to listen to the Queen's envoy would be serious: but to refuse to listen to the Queen herself would be far worse and more dangerous. So, to refuse to listen to God in His Son is to incur an inescapable judgment.

We have said that God has no more to say: this does not mean that there were no more inspired writings to be given after the Lord Jesus had returned to heaven, but all New Testament writings (everyone of which was written after His ascension) are written communications pertaining to the wonderful glories to be found in the Son. This,

indeed, is the force of 'In Son', for in these writings not only are we reminded of the sayings of Jesus in the days of His flesh, and not only does the Spirit take of His present 'things' (John 16. 14) and show them to us, but He also shows us 'things to come' (John 16. 13) pertaining to His future manifested glories.

But there is more. The writer calls attention to the greatness of His Person, and that in relation to the universe. Scientists are constantly exploring the universe, but its infinity defies them, as it ever will. The heavens above cannot be measured nor can the depths of the earth beneath be searched by man (Jer. 31. 37). Man asks, is matter eternal or how did it all come to be in the first instance? How is it being kept in such amazing order, co-ordinated with such exact precision, functioning harmoniously despite the multiplicity of its several parts? To whom does it belong? To man, or to whom? What is His name? Can He be found by searching?

Our writer replies: 'By whom also He made the worlds.' The word he uses is *αιῶνας* which is sometimes translated 'ages': it has to do with the time-state in this matter world. The N.E.B. translates it 'all orders of existence'. It denotes the universe. Elsewhere we read: 'All things were made by Him' (John 1. 3) and again, 'By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible' (Col. 1. 16). He was the great Originator in Creation. Not only so, He 'upholds all things by the word—*ῥήμα*—of His power' or, as elsewhere we read, 'By Him all things consist' (*συνέστηκεν*: hold together) (Col. 1. 17). 'He spake and it was done' (Psa. 33. 9) and He now speaks, and by His word the whole universe (*τὰ πάντα*) works harmoniously. Seasons follow each other in proper sequence: day follows night: tides ebb and flow: the earth and other bodies revolve on their axes and go round in their orbits without mishap or

collision. Creation in all the infinity of its marvellous detail with its apparently contradictory laws, such as the centripetal and centrifugal forces, works together as a united whole. God has appointed His Son, moreover, to be 'heir of' it all. It all belongs to Him. 'All things were created by Him and for Him' (Col. 1. 16). 'For thy pleasure they are, and were created' (Rev. 4. 11). Men and nations seek to acquire as much of earth's territory as they can: wars of aggression for territorial aggrandisement have stained human history: man forgets that the Lord Jesus is the rightful and eternal Owner of it all, and that the day will come when He will enforce His rights.

Did these Hebrews apprehend His dignity? His humble birth, poverty and death as a felon were known to them. They knew, too, of His vindication in resurrection. But did they realise, in fact, Who He was? Did they know He was before and above all the limitless universe? Sun, moon, stars and all else are His. The recent amazing discoveries of the immensity of the Universe only add glory to Him Who planned and brought the whole into existence.

Yet, note another thing: the perfection of His work is stated thus: 'When He had made purification¹ of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High.' There was no seat provided in the Tabernacle of old, for, as the letter plainly shows, the High Priest's work on earth was never done. He was 'standing daily', but the Lord Jesus, having 'finished the work' (John 17. 4) God had given Him to do said 'It is finished' (John 19. 30) and then He took His own seat in heaven at the place of honour beside the Majesty on High.

The background of this is, as we have before remarked,

¹ 'Made' has a peculiar reflexive force here—'having done it for himself' (JND). See his full note at this verse in the New Testament.

the day of Atonement, when the priest went outside the camp and burned to ashes the sin offering, and then into the holiest of all with its blood (Lev. 16). But he never sat down. Yet the Lord Jesus, having once and for all made purification of sins 'outside the gate' has now taken His seat in heaven. That part of His work is done.

The R.V. omits 'by Himself' and not without authority, yet some would insert it. Even though the words lack adequate support to justify inclusion, yet the fact is that He alone could do this work. 'There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin, He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in.' As on the day of Atonement no one but the High Priest was allowed to enter the most holy place, so none but Christ could make purgation of sins. 'Whither I go thou canst not follow me now' (John 13. 36) He said to Peter. In that work He was in His loneliness as a sparrow on a housetop, as a pelican in the wilderness (Ps. 102. 6, 7).

But there is more in the verb even than this. It is what grammarians call reflexive, and means that the work was done in His own interests, in order to satisfy His own rightful claims and gracious desires. He did it 'by or for Himself', not that He had any need of cleansing, but to carry into effect those delights of grace which had been eternally purposed. He removed sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Thus we are presented at the outset of the letter with the glories of Christ, His unique relationship, His essential greatness, and the perfection of His work. The writer further adds that in His Post-incarnate and risen state He is 'become so much better than angels' which was in keeping with what He had eternally been, the possessor of a 'more excellent name than they'.

This introduces the contrasts which are made between Christ and the angels with the aid of seven Old Testa-

ment scriptures (Ps. 2. 7; 2 Sam. 7. 14; Deut. 32. 43; Ps. 45. 6-7; 104. 4; 102. 25-27; 110. 1). 'He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire', for angels are what they are *made*, but the Son eternally *is*. 'Thou art my Son': He was not made. So far above angels is He that 'all the angels of God worship Him': He is infinitely superior to them all. He is God, Lord, The Same.

'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee' is cited three times in the New Testament (Acts 13. 33; Heb. 1. 5; 5. 5). In each case His incarnation is in view. Paul at Antioch cites it, not, be it noted, of His resurrection, but in support of the bringing into the race of Israel a Saviour for them. God had from time to time raised up deliverers for them when they were in trouble, and this is their great Final Deliverer. In Hebrews 5. 5 the passage is again cited in relation to His High Priesthood in heaven, and the third citation is the one before us, which stands closely linked with His future advent a second time to this world. The 'begetting' refers, it would seem, to His incarnation of which Gabriel spoke to Mary (Luke 1. 26, see also Matt. 1. 20) in words which command nothing but our wonder and worship. It would seem to be altogether inappropriate to relate them to what has been called an 'eternal begetting' (whatever that may mean) or to His resurrection, which is never so spoken of, that is His 'being made alive' after His death.

The word 'I will be to Him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son' was spoken, in the first instance, to David regarding his son Solomon (2 Sam. 7. 14). It is brought in here to emphasise the fact that the Lord Jesus is Son and ever will be. He was when He first came; He is now, now that He is in heaven; and when He comes forth as the true Solomon to establish His earthly Kingdom, He will even then be Son. Of course, being a relationship of life and nature, it could not be otherwise.

But this is not His only name. He is addressed as God, and as Lord, titles which show beyond a shadow of doubt that deity was His eternally. These names could never be applied to angels, not to say men.

Over and above all this, He is King and His throne is 'for ever and ever'. The Hebrews knew that the mighty empires of the Hittites, Egyptians, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, and Greeks had all passed away. The then existing Roman Empire was destined also to vanish, as indeed has come to pass. But 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever'. Creation itself, the heavens and the earth, originally founded and made by His hands, will perish and, when they have served their purpose, will be rolled up as a worn-out garment and exchanged. But the Son is constant. His years fail not. These believing Hebrews belonged to a 'kingdom that cannot be moved' (Heb. 12. 28). Would they, then, now withdraw even though their faith brought them suffering?

One thing more, changes will pass over creation, 'But thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.' He is 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever' (Heb. 13. 8). This surely was a comfort to these believers who were suffering so much for their faith. They had lost many an erstwhile friend who, in fact, had so changed as to become their enemy. But in Christ they had an unchangeable Friend.

In view of all this, the perfection of His work, the endless duration of His throne, and the unchangeableness of His character, how could they secede from Him? How could they revert to that which was so incomplete and transient? How could they abandon the eternal for the temporary, the complete for the partial, the perfect for the imperfect? His cause is sure to triumph. 'Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.' This was never at any time said to angels. They

stand and wait His bidding. They are ministering spirits sent forth by Him on behalf of those who are about to inherit salvation in all its blessed fulness. This is not an allusion to death, but to the sure end of the wilderness journey for God's redeemed people. In view of this, it may be asked, How could they contemplate throwing again their lot in with His enemies? Had not Israel been guilty of His death?

He unites in Himself offices which, in Israel's past days, were found in separate persons. He is at one and the same time Prophet, Priest and King. As Prophet He came out from God and spoke to men. As Priest He enters into the presence of God and acts for men. As King He will yet reign and enforce His rights in the earth. For all these offices He is morally fitted. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. His path of obedience brought Him more sorrow than any other ever had known, but God has anointed Him 'with the oil of gladness above His fellows'. He has more joy than any of them. The Psalmist (45. 6, 7), whose words are here quoted, was thinking of the royal honours which He will have and which will exceed those of any other of earth's monarchs. But this epistle goes further and shows these 'fellows' to be those who, by faith, have cast their lot in with Him in the time of His rejection. Whatever sorrow they had, He knew deeper. Whatever joy they have or will yet have, He has greater.

To sum up: In this first chapter the writer passes in review the glories of the Son of God, His unique relationship, the greatness of His person, the perfection of His work, the duration of His throne, the immutability of His character, the sure triumph of His cause. They ought certainly to give Him heed for none could be greater.

What is Man?

Chapter 2. 5-18

THE superiority of the Lord Jesus, in His eternal deity, to angels has been clearly demonstrated in Chapter 1. They all worship the Son; they are servants of the saints. Their work was altogether different from that of the Son. He procured salvation; they are servants of those who will inherit it. In all respects He is greater.

Even in manhood he is superior to them. This is the subject of Chapter 2. The habitable world to come is not to be subjected to angels but to Him. Reference has already been made to this habitable world (*οἰκουμένη*)¹ and now it is taken up again. The administration of this 'world to come' is not entrusted to angels, but to Man in the Person of the Son—to Jesus. Daniel 10 teaches us that, at present, angels have much to do with earth's affairs but the millennial age will be administered, not by them but by a Man who is also God's Son. God will then bring again² His first begotten into the habitable world and entrust all into His hands. This title 'First

¹ *οἰκουμένη* 'Habitable world', an almost technical prophetic word of the world in the age to come. Some take this to refer to the present order of Christianity, but this does not seem tenable in Heb. 2. 5 whichever way we read Heb. 1. 6.

² 'When He bringeth again.' It is only fair to say that translators are not agreed as to where, in English, to place the word 'again', whether it relates to a further citation, or whether it relates to a 'second' bringing into the world of the Lord Jesus. The present writer favours the R.V. text: the matter is of very little consequence: it does not affect the general argument.

begotten' denotes priority and superiority. He then will be seen to be 'the First' of all as well as infinitely greater than all.

Psalm 8 is cited. It is quoted anonymously for the reason, as we have earlier remarked, that God is throughout the speaker, whoever the human author was. It is not the mere expression of David's ideas, though they are his words. In one sense they express what David felt and thought, but the record of them is God's voice to man. It goes beyond David's experience. It is possible that this Psalm had in mind David's resounding victory over Goliath. He was then as but a 'babe and suckling' in his own eyes, and Goliath was 'the enemy and the avenger'. But David's words to him are never-to-be-forgotten. God, through him, had made His name excellent in all the earth. David then ponders. Many a night has he, when keeping the sheep, looked at the moon and stars of heaven and wondered why God should have put them there. They certainly did help him to see when, at night, the wild beasts emerged from their dens and sought their prey. Plainly they were there as a help to man, and specially to such as he, a shepherd. How else could he have spotted the wild beasts in the darkness of night and saved the flock from their ravages? But that raises the question, What is man that God should think of him, and as one interested in his well-being, thus visit him? In kindness to man He has put night lights in the heaven. What then is man? The answer is that man is, as a matter of fact, the highest order of God's creation, the chief part of the dust of the earth. Adam stood as God's vicegerent and everything in the air, on land, and in the waters was put under him. The crown of authority was once on his head. All had been brought to him to name. He then ruled under God as supreme.

God excepted nothing from his domain. 'All things'

were put in subjection to man. Yet we do not *now* see all things so. Something calamitous has happened. The flying eagle, the wild beast of the earth, and the sea monsters all seem to be in rebellion against their erstwhile head. These were not originally excepted from man's domain. The crown of authority has fallen from the head of the first man due to sin, and creation itself has been made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same (Rom. 8. 20).

Yet there is hope, for the 'second man' has come, the 'last Adam', the Lord from heaven. 'Jesus', the name of His manhood¹, the name which wherever it stands alone, as frequently it does in this epistle, is designed to emphasise His humanity, has restored all that the first man lost. He 'was made a little lower than the angels', that is, both temporarily and positionally: for a little while and to a little extent. He was not lower essentially or morally, for angels worshipped Him at His birth and ministered unto Him when on earth (Matt. 4. 11; Luke 2. 13). But by coming into Manhood He experienced what no angel could ever experience. He hungered, thirsted, slept, was weary, suffered pain, wept, and indeed died. These things no angel could ever know, but He shared them in common with man. He did not share man's sin, but being real man He shared the concomitants of manhood. When He became man He did not cease to be God, but conjoined with His deity another full and perfect nature, that of humanity, real in every way, for He had human spirit, soul, and body (Luke 22. 43).

¹ It is to be deplored that the name 'Jesus' alone is used by modern writers without adding the title 'Lord'. The apostle Paul was consistent: 'As the Lord Jesus said, It is more blessed to give . . .'. And 'The Lord Jesus, the night in which He was betrayed . . .'. It is strange that modern writers are careful to give the prefix 'St.' to Paul and others, to which they are not specially entitled, and yet do not give the title 'Lord' to Jesus, to Whom it is due.

'Since then the children (that is, the children of Abraham, believers) are sharers (in common with each other) in blood and flesh (possibly put in this order because the fall is not here in view: flesh had not primacy before sin entered), He also in like manner (or closely corresponding to) partook (a voluntary action) of the same.' All others were passive in the matter of their birth: they had no choice of race, or place, or date. But He was active throughout, and His entrance into humanity was His own act. He came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1. 15). 'The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to . . . give His life a ransom for many' (Matt. 20. 28). He elected to change both His position and His condition, to leave heaven and to come to earth, to manifest His deity in humanity. He elected the time of His birth, His race, nation, tribe, family, place of birth and all else. None other ever did this.

'Partakers' and 'took part' of the A.V. are apt to mislead: they do not sufficiently clearly throw into relief the passive state of the human race at birth, and the voluntary entrance into that race of the Son of God.

The 'likeness' was real in all respects though there was a vital difference between Him and all others of the human race. The word translated 'likewise', indicates this, a cognate word being elsewhere translated 'nigh unto' (Phil. 2. 27). Jesus was God manifest in flesh: His human nature was free from all taint of sin. In this respect He was different from all. Indeed, the very beginning of His humanity was different from that of all others, yet it was real, for He 'was made in all things like unto His brethren'. Plainly this excludes sin, for sinnership is not part of human nature, it is something which invaded it from without, after it came into being. Yet this likeness includes all those experiences of life on earth which are common to man. It was essential that He should become

man, for only by coming into such a state could He become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God on behalf of His brethren.

The writer enumerates various reasons for all this, and we may set them out as follows:

Reason I. 'Because of the suffering of death,' not merely death but all that was involved in it, mental and physical: death in the fullest sense of the word. Some read 'Because of the suffering of death crowned', whilst others read 'made a little lower than angels because of the suffering of death.' Both are grammatically tenable, as well as true. He was born with the intention that He should die. It was the main object of His coming, for as has been well said, Bethlehem without Calvary would be a mockery. In this He was unique. He came to give His life a ransom for many. Not that He would 'kill himself' (John 8. 22) but His death was a commandment that He had received from His Father (John 10. 18). It was the main, though not the final goal, of His earthly life, for 'on account of the suffering of death' He is now 'crowned as a victor with glory and honour', being in heaven clothed with garments of 'glory and beauty'.

It is just possible that 'crowned with glory and honour' relates to Him in the days of His flesh, for even then He stood as God's vicegerent in His creation, wearing the crown of authority which Adam, by sin, had forfeited. He then displayed His authority over the wild beasts of the field (Mark 1. 13) and the fish of the sea (Matt. 17. 27) as well as the tempestuous waters and the winds of heaven (Matt. 14. 23ff). All creation was at His feet and subserved His will.

Verse 9, then, would seem to admit of two possible meanings: which was in the writer's mind? Some think the word 'behold' (R.V.) should determine the question,

for they consider it has to do with the present glory of Christ in heaven which by faith the Hebrews could then see, and we now, though neither they nor we may never have known Christ in the days of His flesh. But the context appears to require the reference to be related to the days of His flesh.

Reason II. 'That by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.' The word 'man' is wanting in the original, and some supply 'thing' instead. The latter, of course, includes the former. God has, through the death of Christ, ensured the recovery of fallen creation as well as made possible that of the sinner. When the 'sons of God' are manifested then the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8. 21). The lion will eat straw like the ox, and the wolf and the lamb will lie down together (Isa. 11. 6ff; Isa. 35); war will be no more (Micah 4. 3)—all this will flow from the fact that 'He tasted death for everything'. The death of Christ is as a stone thrown into the pond of creation affecting every part of it from centre to circumference. In this God has acted in sovereign grace for, manifestly, if sinful man had received the just recompense of his deeds and no grace had been shown to him, recovery would be out of the question. And how can creation be restored unless its rightful head be first restored?

Reason III. 'That through death He might put out of action him that hath the power of death, that is the devil.' Just as David first stunned Goliath and then beheaded him with his own sword, so the Lord Jesus silenced the devil when he tempted Him and later by His own death ensured the ultimate doom of the devil. Death is the wages of sin, and therefore, the Lord Jesus, being sinless, was under no necessity to die. But He did so

willingly and in accordance with the command that He had received from His Father. The empty grave demonstrates the conquest of the devil by his own weapon, for he it was who was responsible for bringing death into our world. Whatever he is allowed to do in this present age (for note the tense—'him that hath the power of death') his incarceration in the abyss and final consignment to the lake of fire are assured by the victory of Calvary.

Reason IV. 'And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' The background seems still to be that of Israel trembling before their foes and the triumphant victory of the historic David. That victory relieved all Israel from fear of bondage to the Philistines. So, too, the death of Christ delivers from the fear of death. In consequence of this we read such things as: Stephen said 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (Acts 7. 59). Paul spoke of his death as 'departing to be with Christ which is very far better' (Phil. 1. 23); as being 'absent from the body and at home with the Lord' (2 Cor. 5. 8). Peter calls his death an 'exodus' (2 Pet. 1. 15 Gk), an emancipation, much as Israel left the brick-kilns of Egypt for a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3. 8). The Lord Jesus has now 'the keys of Hades and of death' (Rev. 1. 18). Both will have to yield to Him all they retain in His own due time.

Before the cross it was far otherwise, and one has only to read the moanings of men like Job (Job 14) or Hezekiah (Isa. 38) to realise what death meant for them. Both regarded death as being the end of all joy. They did not possess the glorious light of the gospel on such a sad subject. It is all so different now that the Saviour's tomb is empty.

Reason V. 'That He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.' In order that

many sons might be brought to glory it was requisite that the Captain (*ἀρχηγός*) of their salvation should be fully qualified¹ to act on their behalf whilst they are on the journey thither. He must, therefore, have trodden the same path and have gone through the whole range of human experience, feeling in himself the consequences of human sin, though never being tainted with it. He and they are 'all of one' group (*ἐξ ἑνός*). He is the sanctifier and they are the sanctified. They belong to the human race and He entered it also. Consequently, He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Three Old Testament quotations are cited in support of this. As dependant Man He says 'I will put my trust in Him' (cf Isa. 8. 17). He declares God's name to His brethren: in the midst of the congregation He leads the praises (Ps. 22. 22); He regards His brethren as children that God has given to Him (Isa. 8. 18). The Lord Jesus often made allusion to these in that way as is clearly seen in John 17. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24.

Whatever were the thoughts of the Hebrews touching angels, it was apparent that the Lord Jesus does not undertake their cause but He has espoused the cause of the 'seed of Abraham'. This seed is the faithful: those who like the Hebrews, have put their trust in Him. He did not become an angel in order to help angels, but He became man in order to restore men.

Moreover, it was His humanity which made it possible for Him to 'become a merciful and faithful High Priest', dispensing mercy to us and being faithful not only to God

¹ *τελειόω* (to make perfect) does not imply moral perfection of the Lord Jesus: there was no need for that in His case. But the word has to do with qualifying a person to enable him to fill a particular office. As a medical student must pass through all the stages of training requisite to enable him to practise as a doctor, so the Lord Jesus had to pass through all the requisite experiences of humanity to enable Him to function as a High Priest on behalf of men.

who had appointed Him to the office, but also to us whom He represents before Him.

Verse 16 should read as shown in the R.V. It is the present tense and denotes what the Lord is now doing. He is championing the cause of the seed of Abraham before God. The ground of it is, of course, His completed work at the cross which enables Him to be a priest 'seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high'. The A.V. is astray here. It is not His taking human nature that is in view, but His dealing with the case of those in need.

Reason VI. 'To make propitiation for the sins of the people.' The sense really is 'with a view to making, etc.' (εἰς τὸ). While His work on earth was done—as He said 'It is finished' when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost—His work in heaven is continuing. Propitiation or atonement (the corresponding Hebrew word is כפר frequently used in the Old Testament in this sense)¹ is a work now being done by the Lord in heaven. It is priestly work. It is consequent upon the killing of the sin offering outside the camp. The offerer under the Levitical economy could not offer the blood because he was a sinner. The priest must do that, but the Lord Jesus, being 'holy, harmless and undefiled' was not only both 'offerer' and 'offering', but He now has gone inside the veil as High Priest also, in virtue of His own blood (not 'with it', an altogether too materialistic notion). The whole period from the time He entered heaven until He later comes out is the 'day of Atonement'. He there 'makes propitia-

¹ It is a mistake to say that 'Atonement' is not a New Testament doctrine. Sins, as well as their penalty, in the Old Testament times were not merely covered, they were actually removed, cancelled, lifted off. The equivalent of the Hebrew word כפר in the LXX is ἰλάσκομαι. Vine's Dictionary of New Testament words says: 'The corresponding New Testament words are ἰλασμός propitiation 1 John 2. 2; 4. 10 and ἰλαστήριον mercyseat, Romans 3. 25 and Heb. 9. 5.'

tion', that is to say, His very presence there is the ground on which God can, in grace, deal righteously with His people and yet show mercy in respect of their sins. Sir Robert Anderson has rightly said that 'in scripture making atonement is priestly work following and based upon a sacrificial death'. The words of the Lord Jesus uttered on the cross 'It is finished' should not be construed to mean more than that the basic work for atonement was then finished. To say 'atonement' was completed then would assume atonement without death, for He said 'It is finished' *before* He died. Those words indicate, as one hymn-writer has put it, that 'His work *on earth* is done' and He, therefore, could bow or recline His head (John 19. 30 κλίνας). But atonement could not have been completed apart from the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is inconceivable that there could have been atonement otherwise. He himself is the 'atonement offering' for our sins. John does not say He *was*, but He *is* (1 John 2. 2), which is in full accord with what we have in this epistle, in which He is seen as at present seated in heaven, acting as a High Priest, His earthly work admitting of no repetition. But that work was an initial and essential part of a whole; it was not the end. The three stages must never be separated; the work outside the camp on the day of atonement; the work inside the veil whither the High Priest went with the blood, and His coming out with blessing for the waiting people. In fact the incarnation, sinless life, sacrificial death, triumphant resurrection, and ascension in glory and His present priestly work are all of one piece, and not one thing can be separated from another without doing damage to the whole.

From verse 17 we learn that His High Priestly work is not restricted to the weaknesses of His people as has been supposed by some. Chapter 4. 15 shows clearly that it has to do with them, but it has also to do with sins. It is

the 'sins of the people' that are in view here, sins committed in the wilderness after 'redemption' from Egypt has been experienced. Thus this aspect of His priesthood is almost identical with His advocacy of which John writes. Both are concerned with sins, the one of the people and the other of the children of God. Of course, 'the people' and 'the children' are the same persons.

But not only so: this Great High Priest, in addition to making atonement, also helps those that are tempted, for He has suffered, being at one time in like testings. There is a difference between 'taking hold' and 'succouring': the former seems to be more general, the latter more specific. 'Taking hold' (verse 16) is almost equivalent to undertaking a cause in order to help the helpless, but 'succouring' (verse 18) is the active response to a cry for help, as *βοηθῆσαι* implies.

These, then, are the objects achieved by the incarnation and death of the Son of God. It all stands in sharp contrast with that to which the Hebrews had been accustomed before they accepted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. Could they, then, entertain the thought of abandoning all this and revert to a system which was so imperfect and incomplete? The inspired writer presents all this in such a way as to meet the peculiar difficulties with which they were beset. It is so different from the ideas which they had had hitherto, and so much better.

Rest

Chapters 3 to 4. 13

SIN is destructive of rest. Man's history generally, and that of the Jewish people in particular, demonstrates this. Captivity, servitude, and oppression followed their many sins. Nor was it only their outward circumstances which were all awry, but they found no rest of conscience whose accusing voice was insistent. It is so everywhere and with everyone, unless the conscience has become seared. As soon as sin entered, the original tranquillity which man enjoyed was lost. Sin has disturbed the ordered creation of God, and sinful man is restless.

The chapters before us now are devoted to this subject. The Greek word for 'rest' used by our writer (*κατάπαυσις*) differs from that used by the Lord Jesus (*ἀναπαύσις*) (Matt. 11. 29). In the latter case, the thought is of *lifting up* burdens from the weary shoulders of others who were 'labouring' under the rigours of the Mosaic law and 'laden', not only with that yoke, but with all its unsanctioned and humanly imposed accretions. In Hebrews, however, the writer is concerned with the *laying down* of the legal works of Judaism, and adopting the principle of faith in its stead. In Matthew it is what Christ does: in Hebrews it is what they should do. Here rest is cessation from works.

The Hebrews were engaged in a great struggle: they were liable to revert to the law and to apostatise from Christ. They were, in fact, in danger of not entering into

the rest which had been made possible for them. Who would have the mastery, Christ or Moses? Christ is superior to all—angels, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Melchizedek, and all. There should be no doubt, then, as to Who was entitled to the mastery, but there were two other principles at work which made the issue uncertain. These are named in our chapters: one is unbelief (*ἀπιστία*) and the other is disobedience (*ἀπειθεία*). The meaning of the latter is literally a refusal to be persuaded as to the truth of a thing with the result that, whatever that thing requires is not conceded, hence it results in disobedience. Unbelief, on the other hand, has to do with distrust of a person. They are as cause and effect. Unbelief is the cause, disobedience is the effect.

Israel was promised the land of Canaan: that was the gospel that was preached to them (Heb. 4. 2). Notwithstanding the evidence of the grapes of Eshcol, however, they remained unconvinced. They could not trust God to redeem His promise and give them the land. His promises were not believed, His ability was not trusted. No wonder they fell in the wilderness and did not enter the land. 'Can God', they asked 'furnish a table in the wilderness?' (Ps. 78. 19). They 'limited the Holy One' (Ps. 78. 41) and, though He had brought them out of Egypt, they doubted if He could bring them into Canaan.

The Holy Spirit speaks in no uncertain tone; it is He and not men who called upon these Hebrews: 'today' they must listen to His voice and exhort each other before it is too late. Psalm 95, vv. 7-11 is quoted, it will be observed, as the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Their true safeguard lies in constant occupation with Christ. Study His words in Chapter 3. 1, 2. Verse 1 is really a brief summary of what has gone before. In the words 'holy brethren' the writer takes up the two threads woven into the fabric of chapter 2: there he had spoken of

the 'Sanctifier' and them that are sanctified: here it is summed up in the one word 'holy'. There he had said 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren': here that word 'brethren' is repeated. In Chapter 1 he had already spoken of 'Thy fellows': here he repeats the same word, although it is translated differently by the word 'partakers'. He has spoken of their 'calling': here it is a 'heavenly calling'. In Chapter 1 the Lord Jesus is seen as the great Apostle who has come out from God to men as Moses of old: and in Ch. 2. 17 He is viewed as the High Priest who has gone in from men to God as Aaron of old did. Here the two titles are combined—The apostle and high priest. In Chapter 2 we have a 'faithful High Priest': here the word 'faithful' recurs but is used in comparing Him, not with Aaron, but with Moses. Thus all the various strands are gathered together in one cord. They should consider Jesus.

The Jews held Moses in high esteem, but the glories of Christ are infinitely greater: He was the builder of the house, Moses was but part of it, for the house here is not a stone building but one made up of living persons. In fact, He is God. In that house Moses officiated as servant, but Christ is Son. That house, we say, is of living persons—the Hebrews to whom the letter is sent—but only 'if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end'. Abandonment would be apostasy, and they would then be like their forefathers who fell in the wilderness because they did not hold fast the hope that was set before them. As we have seen, they did not trust God, who had brought them out of Egypt, to bring them into the land. They were not persuaded that the land was what they had been given to understand: the report of the ten spies was accepted, that of the two had no effect. 'Let us return into Egypt' was their cry, the very thing these Hebrews were spiritually liable to do. Only 'if they

continued' would it become evident that they were genuine; only so would they enter into rest.

It is very easy to harden one's heart: the lesson of Meribah and Massah (Exod. 17. 7) which names are reminiscent of the sins of provocation and temptation, could too readily be forgotten, and the twin evils be all too easily repeated by these Hebrews. They must 'take heed'.

'Take heed' says the writer 'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief'. It was said of Israel 'they do always err in their heart'. If the heart is not right it is unlikely we shall understand God's ways. Note the emphasis laid upon the heart in this section. 'Keep thine heart with all diligence' said the wise man (Prov. 4. 23). The propensity to wander is persistent: Israel always erred in heart. Backsliding begins there: it exists before it is seen by others. How grievous when, as with that people, they become perpetually erring!

Israel saw God's works but did not discern His ways (Ps. 103. 7): they did not discern the principles which underlay His acts. They were only interested in the actual, not in the spiritual. Can we marvel, then, that God said 'they shall not enter into my rest'? What is God's rest? Is it something present or future? There can be little doubt, it would appear, that it is both present and future—available in time and to be enjoyed throughout eternity. It is not first entered into either at death or when the Lord comes (whichever is earlier); it is available to be enjoyed in the present life. We must not press the type of Israel in the wilderness too far. In their case certainly the 'rest' lay at the end of the journey, but in our case it is not so. We do not have to wait for it till life's journey is ended. 'We which have believed do enter into rest.' (See also Chapter 4. 10). Note the present tense. We enter it now. Faith and rest are two things which God has

joined together, they must not be put asunder. It is those who believe, and only those, who enter this rest.

In the Old Testament history Israel entered Canaan and that was their land of promise—their rest (Deut. 12. 9) though they failed to obtain it. But Canaan is not a picture of heaven, if for no other reason than that there was sin and fighting there. No such things are in heaven. Therefore the type must not be pressed too far.

The 'rest' spoken of here is cessation from works. God inaugurated it on the seventh day when He rested from all His works. It is to keep this lesson constantly before His people that He enjoined them to 'remember the sabbath day to keep it holy' and to do no work then. But what works are before the writer's mind? It would not seem to be the labours of God's servants touching whom it is written 'They rest from their labours'. The background of the letter must not be forgotten. It is written to Hebrews who were prone to revert to ritualistic and legalistic works, dead works. Now were they to do that, they could not possibly enjoy rest; how could they, since they would have returned again to a system which was throughout marked by imperfection and, as the daily routine showed, by non-completion?

'So great salvation' is of faith and 'not of works', and as we have remarked earlier, faith and rest go inseparably together. 'Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest.' The thought is complementary to Matthew 11. 28: there it is release from the burdens of Judaistic ritualism. Here it is the enjoyment of all that has been procured by the Lord Jesus who, through death and resurrection, abrogated the Levitical ceremonial system, having fulfilled its typical significance.

The 'rest' here, then, is cessation from the ceremonial works of Judaism.

When he warns against possible lapsing, the writer is

not inconsistent with the clear and indubitable fact of the believer's eternal security. His use of the conjunctions 'if' and 'lest' is not contrary to it. We must distinguish between things that differ. Relationship, the result of imparted life, is not here in view, but rather the pilgrim character of the Christian. The stress here is on human responsibility and not on divine sovereignty; on our continuance and not on our election. Everything here seems to depend on us, and not on God. We have voluntarily made a 'confession' of faith in the Lord Jesus and thus have started a pilgrimage to 'better things'. 'Let us, therefore, fear lest' under the pressure of persecution, we should 'seem to have come short of' God's intended rest. Note the tense: 'to have come short' implies the possibility of here and now failing to enjoy the rest which might have been ours.

The writer takes the Hebrews on the ground of their confession, and assumes it is necessarily a genuine confession. He would fain hope so, but they must examine themselves and 'take heed'. If they continue, their genuineness will be apparent. If they apostatise it will show the contrary.

The argument of the writer seems to be this. God's rest existed from the foundation of the world, that is, when He completed His work of reconstruction. He rested on the seventh day. Creation's rest, however, was broken by sin. In due course there followed the offer of Canaan's rest but, whatever Joshua achieved, Israel did not attain to it. They fell in the wilderness and those who did enter Canaan had no settled peace; enemies still remained there. Later on David spoke of that 'rest' as still remaining available for the people of God. Whether these Hebrews entered into it would depend on their condition of heart and their response to God's voice. 'The word of God is living and active', that is, the particular word cited from

Psalm 95, though what is true of that Psalm is true of all scripture. Its sharp edge would be felt by hearts that had not been hardened. It pierces and reveals what men really are; it lays one bare and naked before the eyes of God. What failure and weakness it reveals! How sorely the High Priest is needed, and how gracious of God to bring Him in just at this point of the writer's argument!

Leviticus 23, which sets out the Feasts of the Lord, shows that 'rest' is the ultimate goal of God for His people. The numeral seven speaks of it: the seventh day, the seventh week, the seventh month, the seventh year and the end of the forty and ninth year are all there. On the seventh day God rested. There is, therefore, a *sabbatismos*, a sabbath keeping, for the people of God. God's goal for His people is that they should enjoy rest, enjoy it here and now, a foretaste on earth of what will be known in perfection in heaven.

It follows from all this that, if Judaistic works are now unacceptable to God, any other kind of work must equally be so. The works imposed by Rome, its penances and monetary payments, and all else imposed by no matter whom, is as unacceptable as the offering of Cain. Paul is very clear on the matter: 'By the works of the law no flesh shall be justified' (Rom. 3. 20). He hammers it out when writing to the Galatians. To the Ephesians he says it is 'not of works' (Eph. 2. 9). All the New Testament writers are unanimous as to this.

The 'good works which God hath afore prepared that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2. 10), are not a means to salvation, but a result issuing from it. They are done, not in order to get, but because we have received. They are not performed as meritorious acts but as worshipful ones.

Our Great High Priest

Chapters 4. 14 to 5. 10; 7 and 8

IT is born in man that he must have dealings with an Unseen God. Hence all the world over he is found worshipping a Being higher than himself as he imagines, even though the true God be unknown. Fallen as he is, he has an awareness that he needs an intermediary to secure a favourable standing, his relations with the true God, or the god of his own mind, not being what they should. Conscience tells him this, even though he be not able to give any proper explanation of why things are so with him.

In early Old Testament times the head of a family acted as priest, e.g. Noah, Abram and Job. Later, Israel as a nation was chosen to be a kingdom of priests but, at their request, they renounced the position (Exod. 20. 19). Later they fell into idolatry, worshipping the golden calf and later into even worse whoredoms. God, therefore, chose the tribe of Levi (Num. 25. 13), who stood for the true God at the time of national apostasy, to be His priests, though even they, as the history of Eli shows, failed also (1 Sam. 2. 12). God, however, has His resources and He promised to raise up a faithful priest who would do according to that which was in His heart and mind.

Israel was next given a king, but monarchy as well as priesthood was a failure, as all else that is put into the hands of man is bound to be. "The kingdom was divided, ten tribes going into captivity first and later the remaining

two tribes also. A remnant of the latter returned, and in their days Zechariah, by the Spirit, said that God intended to raise up a priest who should sit on His throne (Zech. 6. 13). One who would unite in Himself both offices of priest and king. In this He would be unique, for such an union was forbidden under the law. Royalty belonged to Judah: priesthood to Levi. When any attempted to function in both offices the judgment of God followed, as in the case of Kings Saul (1 Sam. 15) and Uzziah (2 Chron. 26. 16; Isa. 6. 1). It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, and, therefore, when on earth He could not be a priest. The union of both offices could only be effected, therefore, in resurrection as we shall, in due course, see.

Melchizedek foreshadowed the Lord Jesus in this respect. It is true that David wore an ephod and offered sacrifices (2 Sam. 6. 14), but the circumstances were special and prophetic.

The royal priesthood of the Lord Jesus is one of the main themes of our letter. But before this could be established it was necessary that there should be a change of the law; the Mosaic law must be abrogated. There was no doubt that, according to the flesh He sprang from the tribe of Judah and was, therefore, entitled to the throne. But it was not so as to the priesthood, and before He could fill that office a fundamental change of law must come into force.

We have already seen that one of the purposes of His incarnation was that 'He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people'. This has now been achieved. Therefore it is written: 'Having then a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.' The taunt of the Jews that, because these Hebrew believers had

nothing visible, they therefore had nothing at all, was groundless. They had in 'Jesus, the Son of God' far more than ever Israel at any time had in any others. He had gone through no mere earthly curtains, but through the heavens themselves, to God. For them faith turned into a substantial reality what otherwise could not be seen.

Christendom seeks to interpose between man and God those who set themselves up as priests and intermediaries. But there is 'One Mediator between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2. 5.). There is now, in God's sight, only one High Priest. He alone should come between the soul and God. He is the only Mediator for the sinner and the only High Priest for the believer.

The inspired history of Melchizedek, given briefly in Genesis 14, is deeply instructive. It omits much which might have been of interest, but the silences of scripture have been likened to pauses in music, they add to its harmony. To speak when God is silent, spoils all. The writer of our letter considers (*a*) what the old testament record says, (*b*) what it does not say, and (*c*) what it implies. No mention is made of the birth of Melchizedek or of his death, or of his lineage or parentage, which things were of indispensable importance in the Levitical priesthood. His history was thus accommodated to make it illustrative of what is actually true of the Lord Jesus. Melchizedek was but a man, yet his historical record is so written that he becomes like the Son of God who abides a priest continually. His very name is significant: it means 'king of righteousness'. Moreover the place of his rule is suggestive, for Salem means peace. And observe the order. Righteousness comes first, peace afterwards, for only on such a principle can peace be permanent.

The High priests of Israel could only bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that they themselves also were compassed with infirmity. But there is no such re-

striction to the sympathy of Jesus, the Son of God. The two words used are in contrast with each other: *συμπαθήσαι* and *μετριοπαθεῖν*, the former being most aptly translated as 'touched with the feeling of': it is a fellow-feeling. Many a surgeon 'feels for' his patient but, should he himself have to be subjected to surgical treatment, he can thereafter 'feel with' them, having experienced the same. For experience is essential to sympathy. Our great High Priest has none of the limitations of Israel's priests. His earthly experiences give Him competency to be a 'merciful and faithful High Priest'. He has been 'in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart'. In every class of temptation He was tested. Sin could not appeal to Him for there was nothing in Him to respond to it. But in every other way He was tested. All goods of merchandise are classified under a certain number of classes. So, too, all life's experiences may be classified and, though not in precise details, yet in all essential principles of each class, Jesus, when on earth, was tested. He, therefore, is able to sympathise with those who, in any one of these classes, is tempted.

He is a 'merciful' High Priest, seated on the right hand of the majesty on high. Let us, therefore, draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy in respect of the past and find grace for the present to help in time of need. He is always available to give such timely aid. The word 'succour' is an old English word meaning 'help' and has the thought of an action in response to a cry. We cry, He helps.

Of course, He cannot nor does He sympathise with sin, for He had no experience of that. He is an advocate with the Father in respect of the sins of God's children. But He is a High priest acting in sympathy in regard to their weaknesses. His memory of His sojourn here is ever green; He was hungry, thirsty, poor, bereaved, tired and so on.

As two harps answer the one to the other when one is plucked, so He feels all that touches us. Therefore He said 'Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?' although Saul was actually persecuting the saints.

He has 'passed through the heavens' as the High Priest on the day of atonement 'passed through the veil' into the holiest of all. He is now 'within the veil', in the 'true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man', 'in the presence of God', 'in heaven itself'. All this is real to faith; it is not demonstrable to sight.

Under the old economy none but the High Priest might 'draw near' to the throne of God in the sanctuary. But now all are invited to 'draw near with boldness'. It is an ever-present privilege at all times.

The High Priesthood of Jesus began when He had been made perfect, that is to say, when He had completed all the experiences essential to qualify Him to hold the office. Aaron was not appointed high-priest until Moses, the mediator of the covenant, had made purification of sins (Exod. 29): so, too, not until the work of redemption had been finished and Christ had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, was He publicly addressed by God as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He did not take upon Himself this office, independent of God, any more than Aaron took the honour to himself.

The Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is in sharp contrast with the Aaronic priesthood. The one was a royal priesthood, but the other had nothing to do with royalty. The one belonged to the tribe of Judah, the other to the tribe of Levi. The Aaronic priesthood was temporary, its priests were mortal, and the office was, therefore, transmissible to successors. In the nature of things this made the well-being of the people precarious, for who could tell whether the successors would be like the sons of Eli? or worse? (1 Sam. 3. 13). But the Melchizedek priesthood

is held by One who lives by the power of an endless life. It will be transmitted to none other.

In every way it is superior to the Aaronic system. Levi, when yet in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek showing the recipient of the tithes to be superior to the one who rendered them. Again, Melchizedek blessed Abram and in so doing virtually blessed Levi, and the one who blesses is far greater than the one blessed. Moreover, the priesthood of Christ was established by divine oath: this was not so with Aaron. That had to do with a carnal commandment, and related to the flesh; but the Melchizedek priesthood has to do with the spirit.

All this was most encouraging to the believing Jews. It gave them an effective answer to those who taunted them, both on the ground of their having no visible priesthood and the loss of all the privileges that they supposed accompanied it.

What are the functions of our Great High Priest? 'It is necessary that this high priest have somewhat also to offer.' Of course, He does not repeat the sacrifice which was made outside the camp, but He offers His very presence in heaven as One who, on earth, had once for all put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In that way He makes propitiation for the sins of the people. He has entered heaven in virtue of His own blood. He is a priest 'for ever'. His priesthood will never terminate, not even when He returns to earth and establishes His millennial kingdom. Indeed, the history of Genesis 14 is prophetic throughout, of which we cannot here speak particularly. But when Israel are hard pressed by their enemies, their true Melchizedek will come out bringing to them the 'bread of sustenance' and the 'wine of joy'.

There can be no doubt who has the better part. These Hebrews have a high priest who is able to save to the

uttermost¹ all who keep coming to God through Him, and who ever liveth. What more could be desired? The Aaronic priesthood had deplorably failed and, at the time this epistle was written, was but a hypocritical system in the hands of wicked men. But their Great High Priest is 'holy, harmless, undefiled', and though at one time He 'was numbered with the transgressors' both at His baptism and at His crucifixion, yet 'He was separated from sinners' in His burial and ever afterward. He has been made 'higher than the heavens'.

The Aaronic priesthood only served 'a copy and shadow of the heavenly things', but Jesus has brought in a 'better hope', and He is the mediator of a better covenant which hath been enacted upon better promises. A perusal of the terms of the New Covenant will show this. In contrast to 'Thou shalt' of the old, here there is 'I will'. Infringements under the old covenant have righteously been dealt with making it possible 'for their sins and iniquities to be remembered no more'. As 'surety' the Lord Jesus guarantees the terms of the New covenant: as 'mediator' He administers those terms. Although in the first instance the 'new covenant' was made with both the houses of Israel and it will have its final and complete fulfilment to them later on, the believer to-day comes into its benefits now.

The very word 'new'² implies that the former has been made 'old' and is soon to vanish. Could these Hebrew believers, then, contemplate reverting to it? Do they prefer the old, the inferior, the temporary, the ineffective, the mortal? Could they, in view of all this, really give up their 'confession'?

¹ εἰς τὸ παντελές. The only other occurrence of this phrase is in Luke 13. 11.

² καινή, new in kind, not νέος, new in date, though the New Covenant could not become operative until the sacrifice upon which it was based had been made.

The Perfect Sacrifice

Chapters 9 and 10. 1-18

BEFORE the martyr John Brown of Ashford, county Kent, England died, he was required to retract what was called his blasphemy. 'Christ was once offered' said Brown 'to bear the sins of many and it is by this sacrifice we are saved, not by its repetition by the priests.' After his feet had been placed on a pan of burning coals, and he had been very tightly bound to the stocks so that he could barely move his head, he was burnt alive. How much we owe to such men who stood unflinchingly for the 'perfect sacrifice'.

The atmosphere of Chapter 9 is the Day of Atonement when the High Priest entered into the most holy place. We say this because the golden censer is spoken of as being in that place. On other days it was in the Holy place beside the altar of incense. All the various items of the furniture of both holy place and the most holy are deeply instructive and the phrase 'of which we cannot now speak particularly' virtually gives the believer freedom to interpret these according to the tenor of scriptural doctrine.

We will not go into these details now save for mentioning one thing. The pot of manna here alluded to was not in the ark of Solomon's temple nor, indeed, the rod of Aaron which budded; nothing was there save the two tables of stone. This is suggestive, for by the time when that which is signified by Solomon's temple has come, that is when Christ will have set up His kingdom on earth as the true King of peace, wilderness conditions will have ceased and the provision therefor, such as the manna, will

no longer be required. The inclusion here of the manna and the budded rod show that the writer has wilderness conditions in mind.

The tabernacle in the wilderness and its ordinances declared that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. They were but a parable for the time then being, 'standing' as owned of God, although they could not perfect the conscience. They only related to carnal ordinances which had to do with the flesh and its defilement. The conscience remained untouched. God, indeed, did not intend that system of things to be permanent. It was imposed only until the time came when there would be a true reformation or setting right of things. The cross has now done what that could not do. Christ was ever before the mind of God in all His ancient dealings with Israel.

Whether the tenses of verses 9 and 10 are rendered in the past as in the A.V. or in the present as in the R.V. seems to make little difference. The one takes the mind back to the Old Testament, whereas the other envisages the situation as it then existed by the religious practices of the Jews in the land. In any event, what God had legislated is now 'done away' in Christ. Judaism has been superseded and can be safely abandoned.

'Good things to come' signify all the blessings of Christianity that have been brought in consequent upon the death and resurrection of Christ—they are 'the heavenly things' (9. 23). His High Priesthood has to do with a greater and more perfect tabernacle. His sacrifice is Himself and in virtue of 'His own blood' He has entered into the presence of God. He needs not to repeat that entry annually; it is 'once and for all time' because He has obtained 'eternal redemption'; His blood cleanses the conscience from dead works and gives right of approach to God in true service and worship.

'The offering up of the body of Jesus Christ' was not a thing which He was compelled to do contrary to His own will, but He readily consented to do it in order that God's claims might be met and the desires of His heart righteously satisfied. The notion of the offering to God of a human body was obnoxious not only to the Jews but to God Himself. It was a thing that never came into His mind nor entered His heart. His judgment followed wherever it was in practice. Yet, in the case of the Lord Jesus, God specially prepared Him a body for this very purpose. The compulsory substitution of an innocent for a guilty person or persons is against all morality, but the willing substitution of a person in the stead of the guilty is the display of the greatest possible love. Great stress is here laid on this. He made purgation of sins 'by Himself'. 'He tasted death.' 'He offered Himself' and 'through the eternal spirit He offered Himself without spot to God'. He was manifested 'to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself'. The initiative was always in His hands, whether during His earthly course, or in the garden of Gethsemane, or in Pilate's hall, or on the Cross. His death was a determinate act on His own part, and not the outcome of physical exhaustion or irresistible forces.

'The eternal Spirit' is the Spirit of God; the word 'eternal'¹ does not appear to be appropriate to His own human spirit. Characteristically the Lord Jesus always acted 'by the Spirit' even as at His conception it was 'by the Holy Spirit'. Irrational animals were bound by cords

¹ 'Eternal Spirit.' The humanity of our Lord Jesus had a beginning and, therefore, His human spirit, and soul and body had that beginning. The Holy Spirit who is one Person in the Godhead, however, had no beginning, for all divine attributes are His as much as they are those of the other two Persons. Some take 'Eternal Spirit' as denoting His eternal divine nature, 'His own pre-existent divine personality'. But this does not seem to be tenable. Had it been in the accusative and not the genitive there might have been something to say for it.

to the altar, but He laid down His own life. It was love to His Father and to us that 'bound Him to the tree'.

The death of Christ makes it possible for Him to be the Mediator of the New Covenant, for by it redemption from the penalty which transgressions under the Old incurred, is obtained. The benefits of a will are only dispensed after the death of the one who made it, so our spiritual benefits do not depend on a conditional covenant in which there are two covenanting parties, but on a 'will' made in sovereign grace. It becomes operative because the testator has died.

If the importance of 'blood' in the Old Testament ritual cannot be over-rated, what shall we say then of the 'blood of Christ'? Without the shedding of blood there could at no time be remission of sins. The word 'almost' which indicates there were some exceptions in connection with 'the pattern of things in the heavens' (Heb. 8. 5) could never be used in respect of 'heavenly things'.

From verse 24 to 28 the writer refers to the Day of atonement, and calls attention to its three phases: (a) 'outside the camp' where the sin offering was made; (b) inside the veil where the priest is functioning, and (c) his coming out thereafter.

He first speaks of Christ's presence before God 'inside the veil'. This is the chief point and is, therefore, put first, for he wishes to impress on his readers that it is of first importance. Faith should lay hold upon it, that 'Christ *now* appears in the presence of God for us'. But that presumes that He has already made the offering for sin outside the camp, and the fact is that He has done that 'once and for all time' without need of any repetition. 'At the consummation of the ages' of man's earlier history, when it had been proved beyond dispute that, apart from Christ, man was utterly without hope, He appeared for the specific purpose of putting away sin by the sacrifice of

Himself. This was a never-to-be-repeated offering, for had it been necessary to repeat it, it would not have sufficed merely to have gone back to the days of Israel's wilderness pilgrimage. One must go back right to the foundation of the world, for sin did not originate with Israel but with Adam.

The writer is not particularly concerned with the efficacy of the death of Christ to meet the needs of 'all', but shows its particular value to those who exercise faith. He is content to say 'He was once offered to bear the sins of many', though we know in fact 'He gave Himself a ransom for all' (1 Tim. 2. 6) and 'He is the propitiatory offering not for our sins only, but for the whole world' (1 John 2. 2). The intrinsic worth of His offering is not in view here, however, but its imparted benefits to the 'many', 'the called', 'the sanctified'.

The offering then has been made: the priest has gone inside the veil and is now there: but soon He will come out, not again to deal with the question of sin (*χωρίς ἀμαρτίας*)—as the High Priest of old did year by year—but to complete altogether the 'salvation' which 'the people' already enjoyed in part. 'Them that look for Him' is not an oblique exhortation to be watchful, but a characteristic of 'all the people'. In the wilderness days only Israel was interested in the ceremony of the day of Atonement. It did not concern others. So it is believers now who await Christ: the world does not await Him.

We cannot stress too strongly the importance of keeping in mind the background of the letter, and the Day of Atonement and its ritual with which the work of Christ is contrasted. Unless we do this we shall fail to see how this letter agrees with other epistles. The writer is not here concerned with details of the Lord's second advent. He rather regards the work of Christ as all of one piece, yet in three separate stages, each inseparable from the other,

but integral parts of a whole. The reader is reminded of what we have said touching Reason No. VI on page 39.

Chapter 10. vv. 1 to 18 is a development of the whole theme. The three Persons of the Godhead, in their respective activities, are each seen to have co-operated for the eternal good of the believing sinner, providing benefits infinitely exceeding the temporal benefits accruing from the now effete Levitical ritual. First he speaks of the will of God; secondly, he presents the work of Christ which had in view the doing of that will; and thirdly, he cites the witness of the Holy Spirit that God's will has been achieved through Christ's work.

The will of God may be stated thus: He desired that man should be 'perfected', that is made fully acceptable to all that is appropriate to God's justice and holiness. It is not here a matter of perfecting character, but rather of their state, that they may be able to appear before God. In order that this may be done, however, they must be 'purged' from their sins. In fact, God desired that man should have 'no more conscience of sins'. He wished man to be without an awareness of personal guilt, not because ostrich-like he blinded himself to it, or because of self-righteousness he denied the fact, but because it has been removed in a righteously satisfactory way. In a word, God desired that sin, as a root principle, be irrecoverably put away.

That He was desirous and ready to forgive was evidenced by the Levitical sacrifices. The day of Atonement declared it most eloquently. But God knew that these sacrifices could never take away sins, He merely gave them as object lessons to teach His people their need of such a provision and of His readiness to clear them from their guilt.

These sacrifices were but the shadow and not the substance. They were ineffective and could give no lasting

blessing. Their constant repetition was proof of this, that they offered 'oftentimes the same sacrifices'. Year by year the blood was taken into the holiest; year by year the scape-goat was sent into the wilderness after the people's sins had been confessed over its head. In them there was a remembrance made of sins every year, but there was no final removal of sin.

The wish of God, therefore, remained unsatisfied. Because of this the Lord Jesus declared His willingness to 'come to do' His will. It was so written of Him in the volume of the book. His willingness thus to come can be traced throughout the whole of Sacred Scripture. Certain words should be noted.

'Wherefore', that is because of the inherent inability demonstrated throughout the age of 'the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin', the Lord Jesus undertook to come and do what was outstanding.

'Then' indicates the point of time as being 'when He came into the world'.

'Above' or 'higher up' referring, as it appears to the writer, to heaven from whence He came. It was there that the undertaking was given. (In like manner, the earth is referred to as 'lower parts': Eph. 4. 9).

Because the whole system of sacrifice and offering, whole burnt offerings and offerings for sins did not satisfy God 'Thou hast not desired', and because they gave Him no delight 'Thou hast had no pleasure therein', the Lord Jesus undertook to come personally, and Himself do what they had failed to accomplish.

The difference in the citation from the text of Psalm 40 should be noted. There it reads 'Mine ears hast thou digged' (margin); here, 'a body hast Thou prepared me'. The reference in the Psalm is not to the law concerning the boring of the ear, for the details are different (Ps. 40. 6). There it is 'boring', in the Psalm it is 'digging'. There it

is 'an ear', in the Psalm it is 'ears'. Evidently the LXX translators considered the Hebrew was a pictorial allusion to the formation of a body, the sculptor having reached the ears. Hence they gave the sense, 'A body hast thou prepared me', and the Holy Spirit has set His *imprimatur* on this, citing it in His own later letter to the Hebrews. An author has the right to alter when citing his own former work. This the Spirit of God does here. Had the authorship in each case been different, no such right would have existed. Strict adherence to the letter would have been morally required when quoting. But neither David, the penman of the Psalm, nor the writer to the Hebrews were strictly the authors. They were but instruments, taken up in their respective personalities, to convey the mind of God in their own times.

The Lord Jesus, then, undertook in willing submission to His Father, to whom His ear was opened morning by morning, to travel the course that inevitably led to the accomplishment of His will. The agony of the garden and the well-known words, 'Not my will but Thine be done' reveal the victory that had already been won in submissive resolve before the actual conflict of Calvary.

The result of this was that the Levitical order, 'the first' was taken away, and it became obsolete. God tore the veil from top to bottom. He had finished with that system. 'The second', that is the will of God and all that pertained to it, was established and it superseded the first. Therefore, any continuance of the old economy, in however a Christianised or, more accurately, paganised form nowadays, is but an anachronism and the prolongation of something long since effete.

God's will has now been done by the 'offering of the body of Jesus Christ'. These words are most striking. They denote, as we have earlier remarked, the whole-hearted willingness of the Lord Jesus to become the

sacrificial victim. He was under no duress in the matter.

Several things are stated of His offering: It was *unique*, 'one offering'; there was none other like it. It was *final*, the offering has been made once for all time. It was *vicarious*, the offering was 'on behalf of sins'. It was *permanent*, it was offered in perpetuity, so that its repetition was unnecessary. It was *finished*, the offerer 'sat down in perpetuity', a thing impossible in Levitical times. It was *preliminary*, for He is now expecting the subjugation of all His enemies under His feet, He having initially dealt with the intrusion of sin into God's creation. It was *effective*, for by it He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

All this is in sharp contrast with the Jewish ritualistic system. How, then, could anyone contemplate reverting to it after having known these things? There many priests functioned: here one. There they stood daily: here He sits. There they offered oftentimes: here but once. There the same sacrifices were repeated: here but one was offered.

The words of Jeremiah are cited: they are acknowledged to be the words of the Holy Spirit. They relate to the New Covenant which has now become operative (see pp. 53-54). Although the words 'covenant' and 'testament' represent the same Greek word (*διαθήκη*) the word 'covenant' appears to be better suited to the Mosaic law, and 'testament' is better suited to that which has been brought in consequent upon the death of Christ.¹ A

¹ *διαθήκη*. Despite all that has been said to the contrary, it seems that chapter 9. 16-17 admit only of the translation of 'testament'. Old Testament covenants were ratified, it is true, by sacrifices (see Gen. 15. 9ff), but in this passage in Hebrews there is both the death of the testator and the fact that the testament is of no force while the testator is alive. In the Old Testament manner of ratification of a covenant there is not the death of the testator though there is the death of the sacrifices. Before discarding 'testament' in favour of 'covenant' a satisfactory explanation must be given of these two verses.

testament is made by one party and is, normally, without conditions. It expresses the wish of the testator as to the disposition of his estate and comes into force after his death. Likewise new testament blessings flow from the death of Christ. This testament is that God would give His laws 'upon their hearts' so that they might love them: He further would write them upon 'their minds' so that they might do them. And, He adds, 'their sins and iniquities will I remember no more'. His own wish has thus been achieved. This is exactly what He desired to be done. The work of Christ has given righteous ground for God to promise this. Sin was 'brought to mind' once and for all when Christ died to put it away. Now God promises He will not remember it any more. That is doubtless why in Chapter 11 where so many Old Testament worthies are named, none of their failings is mentioned. Only their faith is cited.

This renders unnecessary any further offering concerning sins. God has been satisfied by the work of His Son and He is able now righteously to confer on His creatures, who believe, that which He has always longed to bestow. Of course, He forgave in Old Testament times, but then it was a 'passing over of sins that are passed' (Rom. 3. 25) in view of the fact that Christ would later die. They were 'forgiven on credit'. The forgiveness then given was as real and lasting as that now given. Only then it was in anticipation of the death of Christ: now it is because He has died.

The constant repetition of the word 'once' (*ἄπαξ*) should not escape attention; not once upon a time, but once for all. He offered His body. 'Once in the consummation of the ages He appeared to put away sin'; 'He was once offered to bear the sins of many'. The offering up of a sacrifice for the sins of the people He did once when He offered up Himself. By His own blood He en-

tered in once into the Holiest. 'There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins.' 'There is no more offering for sin.' The writer is clear beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt touching this. For the godly Jew this meant a cessation of all his laborious daily and periodic sacrifices. To the God-fearing Gentile it means the solution of all his spiritual problems.

The death of Christ is described as 'better sacrifices', a plural of excellence, for it wrapt within its folds all the actual truths signified by the various offerings under the antiquated Levitical system. The death of Christ stands out in all its solitary grandeur and excellence as that to which all God's previous dealings with man pointed and from which all His subsequent actions towards man flowed.

His death was penal; it was 'for sins'. This is time and again emphasised. He makes propitiation for the sins of the people. He was offered to bear the sins of many. Since He was personally sinless, His death must consequently have been for the sins of others. It must have been a *vicarious* death.

Indeed, it has a far wider range. Not merely were sins dealt with, but sin itself was put away, for He then finally and for ever dealt with the root principle of the evil that has blighted God's creation and man's life.

The infringers of a law have no right nor power to prescribe a penalty, much less the means to satisfy it when God's law is at issue. But God, who imposed the penalty, has provided the escape from it through the death of Christ. By it alone can the sinner be 'sanctified' and rendered fit for God's holy presence. By it alone can he be 'perfected' and be regarded as having no guilt.

The resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus prove that His sacrifice was efficacious. 'He sat down for ever.' It matters little with which verb we associate the words

'for ever': grammatically either 'He offered . . . for ever' or 'for ever sat down' is tenable, but the context appears to favour the latter. Old Testament priests were given no seat: their work was never regarded as finished. Eli was seriously at fault when he sat down at a time when his priestly work was so much needed (1 Sam. 4. 18). But no less than four times in this letter is the fact mentioned that our Great High Priest has sat down (Heb. 1. 3; 8. 1; 10. 12; 12. 2). His work on earth was done. He has taken His place of honour 'at the right hand of God'. Joseph recognised that the place of honour was the right hand (Gen. 48. 13, 14). The Holy sufferer of Psalm 109 is given the place of honour in Psalm 110. The Lord Himself drew consolation from the fact that this lay ahead of Him when He was risen from the dead (Ps. 110. 1; Matt. 26. 64). Both Mark and Peter tell us it is now a realised fact (Mark 16. 19; Acts 5. 31 R.V.). Paul from his prison cell looks up by faith and lays hold on the truth also (Eph. 1. 20). What greater evidence could there be that the sacrifice of Christ is the 'perfect satisfaction' given to God, admitting of no repetition, than this that the Sacrificial Victim is now the enthroned High Priest?

He sits there expecting the day when every foe will be put beneath His feet, and the universe cleared of all trace of sin or rebellion. This looks beyond the millennium and goes on to the eternal state when God shall be 'all in all'.

Earnest Warnings

Chapters 5.11 to 6. 20; 10. 19-39

IN addition to those sections which we have already considered, in which the writer of the letter warns the Hebrews against apostasy (e.g. Ch. 2. 1-4 and 3. 7 to 4. 1) there are other passages which we should consider.

Melchizedek having been mentioned in Chapter 5. 6ff the writer finds himself somewhat embarrassed in proceeding with his exposition because of the state of the believers to whom he writes. He, therefore, breaks off into a parenthesis which occupies the remainder of Chapter 5 and most of Chapter 6. As it seems to the present writer, this section is not so much a warning against apostasy as it is a warning against immaturity.

It appears to the writer that the application of this section, specially Chapter 6 verses 4-6, to mere professors, who lack reality, fails altogether to do justice to what is actually written. The whole section affords, it would seem, the strongest proof of the eternal security of the believer and the impossibility of repeating the initial work of God's grace in the soul. The passage assumes this eternal security. It is not written to affirm or to prove it.

On the supposition that those contemplated in verses 4-6 have never really been saved, and do not really belong to the people of God, but are spurious, the following points should be considered. They must not be avoided, but should be fairly construed, if we are to be satisfied that our interpretation of the section is sound. It is all too

easy blindly to follow what others have said; we must satisfy ourselves.

(i) They have been once for all enlightened. Note the word 'once' (*ἄπαξ*): it is not once upon a time, or at some time or other, but once for all. We have earlier discussed this word in relation to the work of Christ: it speaks of finality and unrepeatability. Moreover, the word 'enlightened' is used elsewhere of true believers who have received 'inward light' (Eph. 1. 18; Heb. 10. 32). How can this be true of a mere professor?

(ii) How can the words 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost' be true of any but genuine believers? The phrase cannot, it is submitted, be fairly construed to mean that those referred to have only come under the influence of the Holy Spirit and His works. In this epistle the word 'partakers' is used in other connections but only in the sense of a real and not a nominal partaking or sharing. There is an actual partaking of 'blood and flesh' (Heb. 2. 14); an actual partaking of milk (Heb. 5. 13 Gk.); and so it is in every other use of the word in this epistle; there is an actual participation in the thing concerned. Why, then, should it be necessary to modify the sense in this passage and regard it, not to mean an actual partaking of the Holy Spirit, but merely a coming under His influence? Besides, the words 'were made' (*γενηθέντας*) implies a change which was experienced—a becoming something which they were not before.

(iii) 'The powers of the world to come' are spoken of separately which seems to disprove the interpretation given by some that this is the same as partaking of the Holy Spirit. This undoubtedly refers to the miracles that characterised early Christianity.

(iv) It seems too much to say that 'fall away' (*παραπεσόντας*) is equivalent to apostasy. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and so we

have no guide save the context and the etymology of the word, though this latter is insufficient to determine the significance of its use. It means to 'fall alongside' as one might fall out of the ranks of a regiment of soldiers, not by way of desertion but because of inability to maintain the pace. This seems to accord with the sense here where there has been decline and a need of milk has recurred: strength has waned and strong meat can no longer be digested.

(v) Nor must the force of 'taste' be reduced to merely that of sipping. The word is used of the Lord Who 'tasted' death for everything. He actually experienced it.

(vi) The constant repetition of the word 'again' is a key, we suggest, to the true meaning (as the present writer supposes) of the section. They need to be 'taught again'; they need milk 'again'; but no one lays the foundation 'again'; it is impossible to 'renew again' for that would entail 'crucifying again': the force of all which is, that the work in the soul, once done, cannot be done again.

If the section is made to apply to false professors, then the interpretation creates a class for whom there is no hope of repentance whatsoever. It may be answered that this is so only 'while they are crucifying afresh the Son of God, etc.' but the writer of the epistle did not use the word 'while' unless it be claimed that, in English, it is required to give the sense, and cannot be properly translated without it. Grammarians may affirm or deny this. We must be careful not to make our grammatical rules according to our theological views.

What then, does the section mean? We suggest as follows:

The writer of the letter says that he has many things to say touching Melchizedek, which are difficult to express, not because of the complexity of the subject but because of the low spiritual condition of the Hebrews. They ought

by the time then present to have been able to teach others, but they had gone back and had become themselves in need of teaching: teaching of the first oracles of God, or 'the beginning of the oracles of God'. They needed to start all afresh, right from the very beginning. They had reverted to babyhood and needed milk, not strong meat. They were without spiritual teeth.

We should carefully note the twice repeated 'ye have become'. 'Ye have become dull of hearing'; 'ye have become such as have need of milk'. Their spiritual health was bad. They were going back to the beginning of things such as those set out in Chapter 6. 1, 2. These were common both to Judaism and Christianity, elementary but basic. The things peculiar to Christianity these Hebrews, or some of them, were not at that time able to digest.

But the writer is desirous of 'going on'. 'Let us go on unto full growth.' It is pointless to remain on the foundation without advancing further. No builder ever does that; he proceeds with the edifice. The foundation cannot be laid again: once laid the building should proceed. How, then, is it they need to be taught again? how is it they need milk again? It is impossible to renew to repentance again. The initial work cannot be repeated. 'Repentance' headed the list of six items of basic things and this is selected, it would seem, as representative of the other five. 'It is impossible to renew again to repentance'. Therefore, seeing this is so, we will go on: 'this will we do if God permit'.

It is as though he would say, consider brethren what is involved: if the work has to be repeated, then you cannot stop at the initial work of repentance, you must go farther back to the furthest possible point. It will entail crucifying again the Son of God, and that would put Him to an open shame in that, manifestly, His first death was in-

sufficient. But this could not be, as he proceeds to show incontrovertibly in the later part of his epistle.

No one can do without the foundation any more than a Christian can dispense with the six cardinal items of vv. 1, 2. But he should not remain there. To linger is pointless; the foundation is firm; let us go on. . . .

The experiences, then, of verse 4 are, for the purposes of the argument, supposed to be real. The persons were, in fact, once for all enlightened; they had actually tasted of the heavenly gift; they had actually partaken of the Holy Spirit; they had tasted the good word of God: and the powers of the world to come. They are, the writer of this commentary supposes, genuine believers but weak ones at that. Their hands hang down; their knees are feeble; they have fallen out of the ranks due to weakness, but they have not deserted.

The illustration which follows depicts two classes, each of whom has been privileged but with different results. When the rain falls on the earth good fruit results in some places, thorns and thistles in others. Verse 8 is similar to 1 Cor. 3. 15. The product is burned up. Where there are worthless results of all the labour expended upon these Christians, such 'results' will be consumed. Yet the writer is persuaded better things of these to whom he writes, for he cannot but recall their work and labour of love which they have shown towards the name of Christ, in that they have ministered to the saints and were, in fact, then doing so. But he earnestly desired that this should continue and that they should not be sluggish (the same word as is translated 'dull' in Chapter 5. 11).

If the results in the one case would be burned, in the other they would be rewarded. God would not be forgetful.

He desired them to continue as they had begun. They had shown love to His name, and he desired them to show

the same diligence right on until the end, and not to become slothful or sluggish. Consider Abraham. He, with others, was marked by faith and patience and they inherit the promises: they should imitate him. He patiently endured and he obtained the promise; Isaac was born. God promised to Abraham and he ratified it by an oath; the immutability of God's counsel was demonstrated in that He not only made verbal promise, but did so by a sworn oath. The promise and the oath made the blessing sure.

We are the children of Abraham because of our faith: therefore the promise and the oath give us 'strong encouragement' who have fled from the abrogated and judged system of Judaism to lay hold of the hope set before us.

The figure is taken, we are told, from the practice that prevailed in olden times in the harbours of the Mediterranean sea. There may be seen in every harbour to this very day a great stone, immovably embedded in the ground near to the water. That rock was called the Anchoria, and sometimes the ship could not by means of its sails make its way to the secure mooring of the harbour. In such a case the forerunner would go ashore in a little boat with a line which he would make fast to the Anchoria. This was sure and steadfast, and therefore, those on the ship had but to work on the line, hand over hand, and by this means would draw into the shore.

In our passage the 'anchor' is out of sight, but it is our 'hope'. Our forerunner is Christ and He has gone within the veil. Therefore, though the sea of life may, through persecution, be very stormy, there is no need to abandon ourselves to it or to revert to our former way of life. 'Let us go on.'

Such seems to be the gist of the chapter. But one or two remarks on its details may be made.

The third person used in verse 6 and the second person used in verse 9 would seem to be in keeping with the view here set forth, though it has been urged in support of the view that verse 6 envisages empty professors. But surely, the third person is essential for the general argument working out the logical issue of a certain course: and the second person is essential when the writer expresses his hope of the state of the Hebrews. It is true that a 'mixed multitude' came out of Egypt but it must not be forgotten that all save two fell in the wilderness.

The 'principles' referred to in vv. 1 and 2 are, as we have said, common to both Judaism and Christianity. Repentance was found in David and faith in Abraham, to say nothing of others. The 'doctrine of washings' is that which is taught by the ceremonial washings of Old Testament times, such as the washing of regeneration. The teaching of 'laying on of hands' is that of identification and substitution, such as is seen when the hands were laid on the Scapegoat. The 'resurrection of the dead' and 'eternal judgment' are things found in the Old Testament, although it be in a dim light.

The day of Atonement is still before the mind of the writer. The High Priest has gone inside the veil. He is there as our Forerunner. Outside, the people are expecting Him to appear. Much stood to the credit of these Hebrews, and God would not forget how they had occupied the waiting time. Their work and labour of love would not go unrewarded, but they must not lose heart; they must show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and not give up before.

Now let us consider Hebrews 10. 19-39.

From verse 19 the writer of this letter exhorts the saints to use their privileges and to appropriate in a practical manner the truths he has set out. Verses 19-25 are hortatory, 26-31 are cautionary, and 32-39 are consolatory.

Not only has the High Priest gone into the holiest, but the believer may also do so with boldness: he may freely open his mouth in praise or petition: he need not stand there speechless. Such is the force of *παρηγορία*. He has right to be there due to the constant efficacy of the 'blood of Jesus'. It is a 'new' way which has not hitherto been available, having but 'recently' been opened by the death of Christ: it is a 'living way' in that it has to do with a Risen Christ: it was opened by His death and is kept open by His life. The rending of the temple's material veil denoted the death of Christ because of which we may draw nigh to God. Moreover we are priests, having had our hearts 'sprinkled' and our bodies 'washed', the two requisites at the consecration of the Levitical priests. Their bodies had both to be sprinkled and washed.

'Let us draw near'; 'let us hold fast'; 'let us consider one another', 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together', for that would be the beginning of apostasy. By obeying these injunctions, we shall keep 'faith', 'hope', and 'love' alive. We should each encourage the other for by so doing we shall be mutual helpers of one another's faith. And this is all the more urgent as we see the day approaching when the Priest will come out.

The word 'for' of verse 26 is important. It shows that what follows flows out of what has gone before. Forsaking, abandoning the assembling of ourselves together is, as we have said, the first step to apostasy, and 'if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth' and abandon not only our gatherings together but also our position altogether, nothing whatever can help us. It has been shown that the Levitical sacrifices are useless and cannot take away sins; the death of Christ alone can do that. If, then, Christ is abandoned there remains no other sacrifice that can prove effective. What then? Assuredly there can be no alternative, but a certain fearful

looking for of judgment and fiery indignation from the Lord who will devour the adversaries. To the penalty of a broken law which is inescapable there is added the guilt of 'sinning wilfully', that is, abandoning Christ, which is apostasy. This is far more serious.

Under the Mosaic law, where there were two or three witnesses, judgment was without mercy. Here there are three indictments which call for far severer judgment. (a) They would have 'trodden under foot the Son of God'. (b) They would have regarded the 'blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified a common thing', and (c) they would 'have done despite to the Spirit of grace'. By professing faith in Christ they had taken a place separate from the nation and were positionally 'sanctified' or 'set apart', but should they apostatise it would reveal there had been no reality: the profession was but nominal.

There was the likelihood that these Hebrews were a 'mixed multitude': some true, some spurious. Some were like Ruth who go on and some like Orpah who draw back. The apostates must beware, for they become 'adversaries' (not, be it noted an enemy, *ἐχθρος* but *ὑπεναντίας*, one who has taken an opposing stand) and they must remember that the Lord has said 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay'. On the other hand, His own people can take courage in that 'the Lord shall judge His people' and vindicate them before their adversaries. It is, indeed, a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The 'sinning wilfully' is not deliberate sin of any kind but the specific sin of apostasy, abandoning one's professed faith in Jesus: it is the sin of unbelief; of 'shrinking back'. In such as do these things God has no pleasure.

These believers were in an infinitely better position than were the Jews who still adhered to Judaism. Why, then, give it up? They had a very praiseworthy record so far. After their illumination and early confession of faith

in the Lord Jesus they had given proof of reality by their endurance of a great conflict of sufferings: partly in personal injuries and partly in sympathy with fellow-saints. They had shown sympathy (*συνεπαθήσατε*) with those in prison, and the confiscation of their property had been accepted with joy. They knew that in heaven they had a better and an abiding substance. Their confidence would be handsomely rewarded: why then cast it away?

Faith and patience are indispensable requisites. Both will be rewarded, the one by receiving the promises and the other by seeing Him Who is now unseen, inside the veil. 'Yet a little while' and He will come out. The words are emphatic: 'A little while' (lit. how little, how soon) and 'the Coming One will come and will not tarry'. Our hope is real, our faith is well-founded. The writer could say: 'We—we ourselves—are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'

Faith

Chapters 11; 12. 1-4

THE emphasis in this epistle on the importance of faith and the perils of unbelief have already been noted.

The writer stresses this because of the special circumstances of the Hebrews and to give them an answer to the taunts of their fellow nationals. All their spiritual blessings were held by faith. They could not be seen, but they were none the less real. 'The Just shall live by faith.' The pilgrimage journey commenced on this principle and it must never be abandoned until faith gives place to sight.

Chapter 11 is devoted entirely to this subject.

Faith is basic. It bridges the two eternities, for we can know nothing of the past or of the future save by believing what God has revealed in His word. We believe that the visible things were made by the spoken word of God out of things which are not seen. Creation can be accounted for in no other way, for scientific research cannot discover the origin of things. Science has only to do with the things which exist; it halts when it is a question of discovering how they came to be.

Further, faith turns into substance things hoped for, so that they become as real to the soul as if they were factual and visible. Faith gives inward conviction of the reality of unseen things. What is visible is temporal, transient and has the stamp of death upon it; 'the things that are not seen are eternal'. Faith does not busy itself with explanations, it accepts unquestioningly what God has said. The

dictionary defines it as 'spiritual apprehension of divine truth apart from proof'.

The eleventh chapter of our epistle is not merely a record of the faith displayed by certain Old Testament worthies chosen at random, but it is a carefully selected list appropriate to the main theme of the writer—a list which is calculated to show the excellence of Christ over all others, and to encourage the Hebrews to go on and not to take the retrograde step of reverting to Judaism and abandoning Christ.

Abel is mentioned first. He approached God with his offering and was accepted. This is exactly what the Hebrews have been urged to do, to draw near to God in virtue of the Offering of Christ which alone could prove acceptable to Him. To revert to 'dead works' would be but to repeat the error of Cain, and to stain one's hands with blood far more precious than that of Abel.

No man hath seen God at any time: He 'dwells in light unapproachable Whom no man hath seen nor can see.' If, therefore, anyone comes to God, (*προσερχόμενον*) as Abel did, he must first believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him out. This is an initial pre-requisite.

'Enoch was translated by faith that he should not see death, for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God'. In that way the LXX renders the Hebrew, which is 'he walked with God'. Now 'two cannot walk together unless they be agreed' (Amos 3. 3), and seeing that Enoch and God walked together it follows that he must have been well-pleasing to Him. But the God with whom Enoch walked was invisible: he walked 'by faith', a faith which gave to him the reality of the Person and Presence of God. Like Enoch these Hebrews had not even the Shekinah glory of Jehovah between the cherubim. It had long since been withdrawn, but the absence

of that visible token of His presence made room for the fuller exercise of faith.

Noah is cited next. He certainly did not 'neglect so great a salvation' of which God had told him. By faith he prepared the ark by which he and his house were delivered from the flood. The relevancy of this to the Hebrews is plain for they were liable to neglect their great salvation.

Abram is next mentioned. He went out in obedience to the call of God, and he left all. That is what these Hebrews should do: they should 'go forth to Him without the camp' and, as Abram left his city, so should they leave theirs and all that pertained to it.

Not only he, but his sons Isaac and Jacob could, if they had been so minded, have returned to Ur of the Chaldees. They were not without the opportunity to do so but they desired a better country than that to which they had come, they desired a heavenly country. And were not these Hebrews called 'with a heavenly calling', so why should they ever entertain the idea of returning to the Judaistic fold?

In keeping with the faith in which they lived, so they died. Even death did not quench it. They 'all died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth'. Surely these Hebrews could not wish to come behind the 'father of the faithful' in this respect!

But there was more. Abram offered up to God Isaac his son in whom were centred all the promises of God, reckoning, though he had no precedent, that God was able to raise even the dead. Why then should death be a deterrent to these Hebrews?

They had made their 'Confession' with their mouth, like Isaac of old who by faith blessed both Jacob and

Esau, and like Jacob who blessed the two sons of Joseph, and like Joseph who, when his end was near, made mention of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and gave commandment as to the transportation of his bones. Faith is strengthened when there accompanies it such a confession of the lips. Paul said so (Rom. 10. 9), and the writer of this letter urges the saints to 'confess His name' (13. 15).

Moses next comes on the stage. His case is much to the point for he renounced earthly and providential advantages, throwing his lot in with the people of God, choosing rather to suffer affliction with them than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. How pertinent this is to the case of the Hebrews! Had they not chosen to throw their lot in with the true 'people of God'? Were they not suffering for the 'reproach of Christ'? Well, then, let them consider Moses. He did not flinch nor did he return to the palace and his forfeited comforts. He positively refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose rather to be ill-treated with God's people than to enjoy sin's pleasures which are but for a season. He knew which were 'greater riches'. He forsook and he endured: the one the Hebrews had done when they left Judaism, the other is what they are exhorted to do, to 'endure to the end'.

Faith gives courage. The parents of Moses were 'not afraid of the king's commandment' nor did Moses 'fear the wrath of the king'. So why should these Hebrews fear their adversaries? The writer has in mind Exodus 3 to 12, not chapter 2.

By faith Moses kept the passover and the sprinkling of the blood. Israel's very safety from divine judgment and from Egyptian cruelty depended upon it. They could not, dare not, dispense with it. Then why were these Hebrews even contemplating giving up, and 'sinning wilfully' by apostatising from their only hope?

The writer says nothing as to faith in the wilderness. That was a scene of failure.

Faith is the highway to victory over the enemy, as the inhabitants of Jericho fell before the oncoming armies of Israel. Moreover, had not Rahab thrown her lot in with God's people and, as a result, been saved?

Let them look at the long list of the heroes of faith, time failing to admit of naming all who could be mentioned. Some triumphed, some suffered, and each by faith. These Hebrews had not yet suffered such things as the fiery furnace or the lion's den. They had not suffered 'unto blood' as their Lord Himself had. No one can read Hebrews 11 without being profoundly moved. Its pathos grows as the chapter draws to its close. As we walk up and down and look at the monument erected to one after another, each and all of whom laid hold on the unseen, we are challenged, and if there be in our hearts any unbelief or tendency to 'shrink back' they stand as witnesses against us.

Without exception, they all had testimony borne to them through their faith yet they received not the promises. That waited the development of God's ways with others, with us, He having foreseen some better thing concerning us. That 'better thing' was the better hope, the better testament, the better covenant, the better promises, the better sacrifice, the better possession (Heb. 10. 34) and the 'better resurrection'. Until these were brought in, it was impossible for these Old Testament worthies 'to be made perfect'. Sacrifices which are offered according to the law 'cannot as touching the conscience make the worshipper perfect'; those that 'draw nigh' under such a system 'can never' be made 'perfect'. But, as we have previously seen, 'by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'. And that sacrifice has both a retrospective as well as a prospec-

tive effect. It benefits those who lived in the times of the Old covenant who were marked by faith, as well as those who live on earth after that Offering was made. The death of Christ has made perfection available for them all, so that those who are dead are now spoken of as 'the spirits of just men made perfect'.

But notwithstanding all that is said of those named in chapter 11 not one of them is faultless, though their faults are not named. This is in accordance with the promise 'their sins and iniquities I will remember no more'. Nevertheless, there is One who is perfect, who had trodden the path of faith on earth. That One is Christ who is both the Author and Perfecter of faith. The pronoun 'our' is better omitted. He is the One who had trodden the whole course from beginning to end. He began His earthly life in faith ('Thou didst make me hope when I was on my mother's breast' Ps. 22. 9) and He finished His life in faith, for when about to enter into that which He had never hitherto been He said 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit'. Moreover, there was no lapse in His faith during the whole of His earthly course from the manger to the cross. This could be said of none other. It could not be pleaded that His circumstances were easier than those of those mentioned in chapter 11. 'He patiently endured a felon's gibbet, despising the shame' attached to it. He won His way through by faith and 'hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'.

As we have remarked, the lapses of others are not mentioned, though they existed. Abram, for example, went down to Egypt and denied his wife Sarah, and brought back with Hagar no end of trouble. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, and so we could go on as to others. But it is not proper to do so, seeing the Spirit is silent as to all this. But in the case of the Lord Jesus no failures

existed. He stands supreme at the head of the line (*ἀρχηγός*) altogether blameless.

Yet these others constitute 'a cloud of witnesses'¹ to the great principle of implicit confidence in God and His word, and the record of their lives is with the view that 'through faith and patience we, too, might have hope'. They beckon us on, and we should lay aside every encumbrance just as the athlete, not only keeps his weight down but, strips himself of all unnecessary things calculated to hinder his progress: his aim is to succeed in the contest. One thing in particular beset these Hebrews, it was 'the sin that doth closely cling to us' or that is 'admired of many'. This was the sin of unbelief. It was that to which they were most likely to fall, and did they do so their fellow-nationals would admire them that they had had the courage to return to the fold. They must guard against the praise of men.

The 'witnesses' with which they were surrounded did not go back, nor give in, though they were sorely tried and hard-pressed. They dare not ignore their testimony: they should imitate their faith.

Yet there was One supreme above them all, and turning their eye off (*ἀφορῶντες*) from these they should 'look unto Jesus', God's perfect Son, who perfectly trod earth's pathway of faith right on through death to the goal of heavenly glory.

The force of *ἀντὶ* in verse 2 is not 'instead of' but 'in consideration of', 'in view of', 'in order to obtain'. To translate it by the words 'instead of' is not tenable nor, indeed, does it accord with facts. The grammatical construction is the same in verse 16 touching Esau. In order

¹ 'Cloud of witnesses'. This does not mean that departed saints are observers of what transpires on earth. Scripture does not support such an idea. They are witnesses to a life of faith which they themselves had lived when on earth.

that he might secure one mess of pottage he sold his birth-right. So, in order that the Lord Jesus might obtain the joy set before Him He endured the cross. 'The joy set before Him' was not cancelled and substituted by the cross, but the cross was the way by which the joy was reached—the inevitable way.

What was the 'joy'? Surely nothing less than all the blessed issues that flow from His death, both for the glory of God, and the blessing of mankind and creation itself which was in view at the beginning of the letter (2. 9).

The Hebrews were being persecuted by their adversaries, but would they, in order to secure mere temporal ease, forfeit all that lay ahead of them? They must beware against self-indulgence in every shape and form, even that which, though not sin may be a hindrance—'every weight'. They must guard against unbelief and apostasy; their eye must be fixed on the Perfect Man of Faith; they should consider Him, never forgetting that He 'patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself' and that 'He patiently endured the cross'.

They knew something of suffering, but not to the extent that He knew it. They had not resisted unto blood; He had. They should 'strive against sin' in all its aspects, sin on the part of their adversaries, sin as besetting them through unbelief. They must maintain their stand and not yield to their foes, nor to their self-interest. The fight must go on.

Will Ye also Go Away?

Chapters 12. 5 to 13. 1-25

THERE was another aspect of their sufferings which the Hebrews were apt to forget. Their sufferings were part of the Father's disciplinary dealings of His children and proof, not only of His love for them but of their relationship to Him. Chastening is the hall-mark of sonship. It is found in every well-conducted family, though when applied to God's children its aims are far greater than those of any earthly parent. God has in view our 'profit', 'that we may be partakers of His holiness' and that there may be the 'peaceable fruit of righteousness'. Those that are without such chastening are not true sons.

Thus what men inflict on God's people is used of Him for their good, and the persecution of these early believers became His method of developing their Christian character. They should not 'despise' it or treat it as a little thing, nor should they 'faint' under it. It is common to 'every one whom He receiveth', for He is not partial. If we respect our earthly parents who trained us in childhood, how much more should we be subject to the Father of our spirits, and not rebel against or chafe under it!

These believers are viewed as a band of pilgrims on the march through an enemy's country. Their hands should not hang down limply nor should their knees be feeble;

they should tread an even path; not merely for their own sake but for the sake of those that are lame. Peace and holiness should mark them.

Care must be exercised lest 'any fall back from the grace of God', lest there be any 'root of bitterness' troubling others as well as themselves. They must not forget that they do not live to themselves. An uneven path can drive the lame out of it, and a bitter root among the pilgrims can be a source of trouble and many of them become defiled. To 'fall back from the grace of God' is to abandon the sovereignty of divine grace and to revert to Judaistic principles. It might seem to be a sensible course, calculated to ease their circumstances, but they must consider not themselves but their fellow-pilgrims and the effect that their vacillation may have on others.

Esau is introduced as a warning to them. He was utterly profane and cared only for temporary and immediate self-gratification, cost him what it might. For a morsel of meat he sold his birthright, and later he lost the blessing, only to discover that he could not get his father to change his mind despite his urgent and tearful entreaties (Gen. 27. 38). He was no true child of God, for he had no room either for the true or for that matter, for any other so-called god (see Obadiah). These Hebrews were liable to be enmeshed in a like snare and, in the interests of present ease, to forfeit all that grace might have given, or that belonged by right to sonship.

The undoubted superiority of Christianity over Judaism is the theme of verses 17-24. Mount Zion is far better than Mount Sinai; the former speaks of grace, the latter of judgment. The terrible scenes that accompanied the giving of the law spoke of the severity of God when judgment had to be executed without mercy. Who would prefer that to His sovereign grace? The 'heavenly

Jerusalem' is far to be preferred to the earthly, for the latter was destined to destruction as came to pass, but the former cannot be shaken. 'The church of the firstborn ones enrolled in heaven' is a far greater conception than the 'church in the wilderness'. In the new order they were linked with 'the spirits of just men', now perfected by the accomplished sacrifice of Christ, and so brought into an association far more precious than mere association with fellow-nationals on earth. The new covenant with its unconditional promises is much to be preferred to the old covenant with its stern obligations, and penalties. The *blood of sprinkling*, 'precious blood' as Peter calls it, tells of better things than Abel, who though dead still speaks. His offering spoke of one yet to be; Christ's offering tells of a finished work. Abel's blood called for judgment, but Christ's calls for mercy.

The writer seems to have reached a crescendo of contrasts. These believers professed to have left the ground of law and to have taken their stand on that of grace, to have left Moses for Christ, the old for the new. But they must not allow their present troubles to lead them into graver sins than those which marked their forefathers. Should anyone have refused to listen to Moses he would have found that there was no way of escape from punishment. But Moses spake on earth, not from heaven. It follows, then, that there cannot possibly be any escape whatever, should we refuse to listen to Him who speaks from heaven. Thus the writer comes back to his opening remarks: 'we should give the more earnest heed, for how shall we escape if we neglect . . . ?'

The giving of the Mosaic law was attended with an earthquake, for all that has to do with earth inevitably must be shaken. God has forecast the shaking again not of earth only but of heaven also. These believers need not fear, however: they have an unshakeable kingdom. They

therefore, should hold fast to grace and not revert to law, for were they to do that they would discover that even in Christian days 'Our God, also, is a consuming fire'.

Fellow-feeling, it is said, makes us wondrous kind; it should do so. When our brethren suffer for their faith it affords a peculiarly opportune occasion to show 'brotherly love' and when they are ousted from their homes, we can and should show them 'hospitality', and in that way manifest real 'sympathy' (13. 1).

Suffering is a purifying fire, but God allows His people to have times of ease as well. The enemy, however, is all too cunning and he would use such times to lead the saints into moral corruption and the ways of the world. They, therefore, must not forget the fundamental laws of human society which God has established. Marriage must be held in honour and there must be no illicit conduct. If earthly governments do not punish the sins of fornication and adultery, God will do so. There should also be a healthy spirit of contentment with God's dealings with them. To be discontented is to doubt both His wisdom and love. They can safely rely on the never-failing presence and help of God, and they need not fear anything their enemies might contrive to do.

They should remember their 'guides' and how they finished their course, bearing in mind that they encountered precisely the same difficulties and had the same temptations. In their days opposition was no less fierce and the desire for earthly comfort no less attractive. Yet they held fast to their course and kept their faith in God. They should 'imitate' the faith of these guides for, though they had passed on, the object of their faith remained unchanged: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever' (13. 8). He is unaltered and unalterable.

Furthermore, the Jewish system had its altar¹ and ritual, but as we have seen, the fulfilment of the typical significance of all this has now been accomplished by the death of Christ. He suffered 'without the gate', just as the sin offering was burned outside the camp. They, therefore, should 'go forth to Him outside the camp' of established Judaism 'bearing His reproach'. The 'tent of meeting' was now outside 'the camp' of the apostate nation. They should therefore, leave 'the camp' and 'go forth' to Him (see Exodus 33. 7). Admittedly, there is a stigma attaching to association with the Lord Jesus, but what of that? Moses, who estimated 'the reproach of Christ greater riches than the pleasures of Egypt' took the same line. They can afford to abandon Jerusalem for it was, in any case, soon to be destroyed. Here they had no continuing city, and believers characteristically seek one to come, 'the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. In this they are in the company of Abraham whose quest was the same.

Offerings? High Priest? They have both. 'By Him, therefore, let us offer', not at stated times, but 'continually', 'the sacrifice of praise' to God, that is the fruit of our lips, making confession to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not. There must be both word and action, not the one without the other for confession without action is hypocrisy, and action without confession speaks very little. God is well-pleased with such sacrifices.

¹ Hebs. 13. 10. There appears to be no room for doubt that 'we have an altar' refers to the Jewish sacrificial system: the 'we' means 'we Jews'. The whole argument in verses 10 and 11 shows that the writer is referring to the earthly sacrificial law and altar. Nowhere does there appear to be any justification for the Christian claiming to have an altar. Certainly the Cross is not it; nor is there need of one in heaven now, since the sacrifice of Christ is once and for ever accomplished. The word 'for' in verse 11 seems to be decisive as to this. Verse 11 explains verse 10. 'We have' of verse 10 may be read impersonally as 'There is'.

In animal sacrifices He has no pleasure, but His heart is pleased when He hears the lip of praise, confessing His name, and when His eye sees the kindly deed, sharing with others what in His providence He has given.

They should obey their guides, submitting to their rule. These guides watch for their souls in that watchfulness that often keeps them awake at night (*ἀγρυπνοῦσιν*), conscious of the many wild beasts that would prey upon the flock, a flock for which they will have to give an account to God. Where there is obedience and submission, the watching can be done with joy. But where it is otherwise it causes grief to the guides and loss to the sheep.¹

Nothing can be plainer than that the spiritual well-being of these Hebrews lay heavily on the heart of the writer of the letter. He solicits their prayers, being assured of a good conscience before God as to the manner of his living. He desires to be among them in order to help them further, for he is deeply aware of the immensity of the subject and of the brevity of its treatment in his epistle. He hopes to bring Timothy also, a specially suitable person, having regard to the fact that his mother was a Jewess, though his father was a Greek. In the mouth of two witnesses, and witnesses such as these, every word would be established.

What more apt prayer could be offered than that which closes the epistle. 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

¹ Heb. 13. 15 'that they may do this with joy and not with grief'. 'This' refers to watching, not the giving account.

The writer was, as we have said, aware of the immensity of his theme, and the brevity of his treatment of it. Yet that very brevity was not without advantage, and he pleaded, therefore his addressees to 'suffer the word of exhortation'.