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Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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PREFACE.

THE following are, strictly speaking, "Studies," not a continuous commentary. In writing them, no attempt has been made to remove every little difficulty; and yet there has been no conscious evasion of graver problems, but rather a prevailing desire to contribute help where help was believed to be most needed.

The whole of the Sacred Text has been given, mainly according to the Author's "Emphasised" Version, with such occasional modifications as seemed likely to advance the principal object, namely, that of successful exposition. It is hoped that, by thus giving prominence to the Epistle itself, detailed comment will be found to be the less required.

Following this Preface will be found an "Introductory Note" on the Authorship of the Epistle; and some notes of comparison with the conclusions of others regarding various points are given in an Appendix.

If the joy and inspiration afforded to the writer of these "Studies" be in fair measure shared by those who read them, devout thankfulness will be the result, and praise be given to Him to whom alone it is due.

J. B. R.

June, 1906.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
STUDY I.—THE STANDPOINT OF THE EPISTLE	9
„ II.—THE INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE. I. 1-4	21
„ III.—A CLUSTER OF QUOTATIONS . . . I. 5-14	45
„ IV.—HOLD FAST! AN EXHORTATION. . . II. 1-4	53
„ V.—NOT MESSENGERS, BUT MEN . . . II. 5-18	59
„ VI.—THE DIVINE HOUSE—THE PROMISED } REST—AND THE LIVING WORD. } III. 1- } IV. 13 }	75
„ VII.—A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF } CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD . . . } IV. 14- } V. 10 }	86
„ VIII.—THE DANGER OF DULNESS IN DIVINE } LEARNING AND LIFE . . . } V. 11- } VI. 20 }	98
„ IX.—MELCHIZEDEK IN HISTORY, SONG, AND ARGUMENT; AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE MESSIAH VII. 1-28	109
„ X.—THE HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD AND THE NEW COVENANT VIII. 1-13	126
„ XI.—THE HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD AND THE HEAVENLY TENT IX. 1-28	132
„ XII.—THE MANY OFFERINGS ABOLISHED BY THE ONE OFFERING X. 1-18	142
„ XIII.—EXHORTATION — WARNING — ENCOUR- AGEMENT X. 19-39	148
„ XIV.—THE NATURE AND TRIUMPHS OF FAITH XI. 1-40	155
„ XV.—RUN THE RACE: ACCEPT THE DISCI- PLINE: SINAI AND ZION . . . XII. 1-29	167
„ XVI.—FINAL EXHORTATIONS . . . XIII. 1-25	177
APPENDIX	183

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ON

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

WHEN, nearly thirty years ago, the present writer's attention was first especially directed to the style of this Epistle, he became firmly convinced that the Apostle Paul was not its author: that, unless we could suppose a miracle in violation of all known mental law, suddenly clothing the mind of the apostle with habits of thought and expression foreign to him, it was psychologically impossible that he could have penned or dictated this unique Epistle. And now, after this long interval, and after some months of renewed and continuous study, not merely for the purpose of translation, but for the different and in some ways deeper design of exposition,—the old persuasion has returned with more than redoubled force, extending now to the definite conviction that the mind that thought this Epistle composed the words in which alone its thoughts could be expressed.

That there is a *general* agreement between the thinking of Paul and that of this Anonymous Writer, may be admitted; but what does that prove? Let the student ask himself by way of illustration, in view of the *possibility* that Apollos was the writer, whether there must not have

been, in any case, a general affinity between the conceptions of Paul and Apollos, as to the Old Testament in general and the newly accomplished facts of Redemption in particular? How else could they have laboured together in the Gospel so harmoniously as they manifestly did?

But the agreement itself must not be over-pressed. *Rendall* has made out a case, with learning, industry, and skill, which would go to show that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by some accomplished man whose precise cast of Christian thought was more closely in accord with that which distinguishes the Apostles of the Circumcision (James and Peter, particularly the latter) than that which characterises the writings of the Apostle to the Gentiles; and in particular, that the Writer of this Epistle wrote *after* the Roman armies had begun to encircle Jerusalem: daring, in that fateful crisis, to say things to which he could not have hoped to gain attention at an earlier date. If, however, in spite of the plausibility of this view, we should still lean to the persuasion that Apollos was the author, that might possibly draw to itself as much of likelihood as may be discovered in Harnack's conjecture—that the Letter may have come from Priscilla and Aquila, the former being the actual writer. Well, yes; and a very pretty picture it makes: Apollos, dictating; Priscilla, writing; and Aquila highly and heartily approving. This would admirably account for the singular changes from “us,” “we,” “ourselves,” to “I,” “I” in chapter xiii. 18, 19.

It should not be forgotten that the sure result of foregoing the Pauline authorship of this Epistle is a permanent enrichment of our thoughts regarding the literary output of the primitive age, while as yet the illuminating gifts of the

Holy Spirit were richly enjoyed. If Paul did not write this eloquent treatise, then the shadow of a Great Unknown, of transcendent spiritual gifts, is thrown across our path. We are richer than we thought!

The one point which for myself remains firmly settled is the purely negative one: that whoever wrote this Epistle it was not the Apostle Paul. In holding fast to this conclusion, I find myself in excellent company. Professor *Peake* says: "Nothing is so certain with respect to the authorship as the negative conclusion that it was not written by Paul For centuries the whole Western Church refused to recognise it as Paul's. . . . These differences not only preclude Pauline authorship; they show conclusively that Paul can have had nothing to do with the Epistle directly or indirectly. It is in no sense a Pauline Epistle, and only in the loosest sense can it be spoken of as Pauline in theology."—"Century Bible—Hebrews," pp. 28, 33. "A more detailed inquiry," says *Westcott*, "shows that these [differences of style] cannot be adequately explained by differences of subject or circumstances. They characterise two men, and not two moods or two discussions."

Again, let us reflect that by this negative conclusion we are no losers. Anonymity throws us absolutely upon contents and quality, on spiritual perception and general enlightened consent. In the fine words of *Westcott*: "If we hold that the judgment of the Spirit makes itself felt through the consciousness of the Christian Society, no book of the Bible is more completely recognised by universal consent as giving a divine view of the facts of the Gospel, full of lessons for all time, than the Epistle to the Hebrews."

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

STUDY I.

THE STANDPOINT OF THE EPISTLE.

REPEATED studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews having convinced me of the great importance of gaining the right point of view for interpreting this important Christian document, the object of this "Study" is to shew what that point of view is.

I. It is plain that the writer places us *at the close of the Levitical economy*. He does this by the use of a significant phrase in his opening sentence, which, when interpreted in the light of the entire Epistle, sets this matter at rest. He tells us that it is at "the end of these days" that God has spoken to us in his Son. As the temple was still standing, its priests were still ministering, and its sacrifices were still being offered—and yet these things were ready to vanish—it is clear that the phrase "at the end of these days" denotes the close of the Levitical economy.

This clause,—as it appears in the A.V., based upon a less exact Greek text, namely "in these last days,"—might have made a different impression,—might have suggested that "the last days" of the world's history had already come. The revised Greek text makes no such suggestion; but merely intimates that, "at the end of these (then

10 STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO HEBREWS.

current) days," God had spoken in the manner described ; leaving us perfectly free to conclude from the whole tenor of the Epistle, that "the end of these days" is equivalent to the close of the Levitical age. This is a great point gained.

II. It is equally plain that the writer sees *another order coming*. This order he describes in a variety of ways, to the separate and combined force of which we must now give our best attention. He speaks of:—

- a. A "world" or "habitable earth" to come—i. 6 ; ii. 5.
- b. A "salvation" to come—i. 14 ; ix. 28.
- c. A coming "subjection of all things" to "man"—ii. 9.
- d. A "sabbath-rest" to come—iv. 9-11.
- e. An "age to come"—vi. 5.
- f. A "covenant" to be made with Israel and Judah—viii.
- g. A manifestation of the way into the holiest—ix. 8.
- h. Good things to come—ix. 11 ; x. 1.
- i. The Coming One himself—x. 37.
- j. A shaking of heaven and earth—xii. 25-27.
- k. A kingdom immovable—xii. 28.
- l. A city that will abide—xiii. 14.

These collective representations obviously go to the root of the matter, indicating what is the nature of the new order of things which it was intended should supersede the old. As we study them, however, two divergent impressions are made upon our minds. The *first* is, that the coming things are near at hand, at the time of writing the Epistle : the *second* is, that some of the most important of them have not even yet appeared. Let us look patiently in both directions.

FIRST: *The Coming Things seem to be* NEAR AT HAND.

1. Naturally, if they are to replace the obsolete order, which is on the point of departing, we should expect them soon to set in.

2. This first impression is *distinctly confirmed* when we observe *how deep a foundation* has already been laid on which the new order is to rest. Sin has been effectually dealt with, so far as sacrifice is concerned. The great salvation thereby secured has been spoken by its Author, confirmed by his immediate hearers, and divinely attested by miraculous gifts sent down from heaven. The representative Man has appeared—been tested—approved—crowned. Heaven itself has been entered by a priest after the superior order of Melchizedek. A new covenant for Israel and Judah has been guaranteed and ratified. Eternal redemption has been discovered. A new class of worshippers, with perfectly cleansed consciences, has commenced its services through a new and living way of approach unto the Divine Majesty.

3. And at length, in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle, a note of triumph is struck by a magnificently sublime and sweeping enumeration of compassed blessings that would seem to invite the conclusion that the entire new order has been definitely and finally established,

But we must hasten slowly ; for now :—

SECOND : *Some of the most important of the Good Things to Come, would seem to have* NOT EVEN YET APPEARED.

1. *Certainly* “all things” are not yet seen to be subject to Man ; or at least were not when the Epistle was written, for the writer himself explicitly says so ; and we have only to use our eyes to be just as sure of it to-day. *Certainly*, our High Priest has not yet returned from within the veil ; or at least no trustworthy information has reached us that he has done so. *Certainly*, we still have here no abiding city : we are still footsore pilgrims, seeking our way to the city that is to be. Here are *three* of the Things to Come of which we can be quite sure that they have not yet arrived.

2. *Probably* the coming habitable earth has not yet appeared. For our Epistle speaks of the introduction into it of the First Begotten as a re-introduction: "whensoever he may introduce him"—not that he has already done so, intimating, in truth, the Second Coming rather than the First. Besides, the Ninety-seventh Psalm, which summons the "gods" or "messengers" to worship the First Begotten, is a Psalm of the Kingdom yet to come. Harken to its key-note:—

||Yahweh|| hath become king,
Let the earth exult,
Let the multitude of coastlands rejoice'.

And see how unmistakably the manifestation of that kingdom, here on earth, is indicated:—

The heavens |have declared| his righteousness,—
And all the people |have seen| his glory.

Probably the way into the Holiest has not yet been manifested in the sense of the writer where he speaks of the continued standing of the "first tent" as an obstacle in the way of such manifestation. It was never contemplated that the first or outer *literal* tent should be taken down, leaving the second or inner *literal* tent standing alone, with an open way into it. Therefore, we are compelled to resort to the symbolic meaning of that double tent, as intimated by the allusion to "the veil" of Christ's "flesh"; and, so regarding the matter, as a figurative description of our double human nature, with its psychic or soul-state now existing, and its pneumatic or spirit-state yet to come,—we find the meaning to be: That, while our present psychic state continues, we cannot personally enter into the very presence of God; and that, therefore, we too must, like our Forerunner, enter into the holiest "through the veil" of our "flesh." *Probably, this* is the laying open of the way into

the holiest which the Holy Spirit signifies in the remarkable passage here alluded to; and therefore, I say advisedly, "probably" the Spirit is pointing to the transformation of our personal condition, as necessary to our actual admission into the presence of God.

Probably, also, the shaking, not of earth only, as on occasion of the Divine Appearing on Sinai, but of heaven also,—with still more decisive effect, even the removal of all removable things, — probably, I say, this tremendous shaking has not yet been brought into fulfilment. At any rate, the kingdom of the heavens, as it appears in the Judicial Parables of Matthew xiii.—and in the so-called Christian World—seems to have much doubtful and temporary matter clinging to it which must inevitably be shaken from off it, in order that *that only* which *cannot be shaken* may remain; which is the only kingdom we are receiving. Besides, the prophet Haggai, from whom the prospect of such an antitypical “shaking” is derived, plainly forecasts a shaking such as has never yet occurred—such as only the Messiah’s Second Advent can satisfy. Observe that he duplicates his prediction, and note its strong points. First he says:—

¶ Yet once || [a little] it is,—
 And I' am shaking,
 The heavens and the earth, and
 The sea and the dry land;
 And I will shake all the nations,
 And the delight of all the nations [shall come in],—
 And I will fill this house with glory,
 Saith Yahweh of hosts.
 Mine' is the silver and Mine' the gold,
 Declareth Yahweh of hosts :
 Greater' shall be the last glory of this house than the first,
 Saith Yahweh of hosts,—
 And <in this place> will I give prosperity,
 Declareth Yahweh of hosts.

When was this fulfilled? No single part of it has yet been made good! Admitting that it looks as though, when fulfilled, the temple as then to be rebuilt would be standing—standing when this greater glory should come; yet this is scarcely an insuperable difficulty, seeing that in the A.V. itself, and still more clearly in the Revised and the Emphasised, the temple is regarded as *one* in its various conditions of original erection and subsequent restoration. Better, therefore, assume a yet further restoration of the temple in Jerusalem, than suppose a final dishonour to the prophetic word. In no case has this first prediction been fulfilled:—The elements have not been shaken with a Supra-Sinaitic force; the nations have not been shaken so as to bring the delight of all nations into the temple; and neither has the greater glory appeared, nor “prosperity” been given “in this place.” The second passage in Haggai is almost equally decisive:—

Speak thou unto Zerubbabel, pasha of Judah, saying:—

I’ am shaking the heavens and the earth;

And I will overturn the throne of kingdoms,

And will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations,—

And I will overturn the chariots and them who ride therein,

And horses and their riders [shall come down], every man by the sword of his brother.

<On that day>

Declareth Yahweh of hosts,

will I take thee, O Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel—my servant,

Declareth Yahweh,

And I will set thee as a signet-ring;

For <thee> have I chosen,

Declareth Yahweh of hosts.

If Daniel is to “rise and stand in his lot” in the Messianic consummation, so also we may be sure, will Zerubbabel, thus signalised and encouraged by name. No student of prophecy needs to be told that such an over-

turning of the warriors of the nations is just what we are led to expect on Messiah's Return.

III. We are now probably in a position to state more definitely what the Standpoint of this Epistle is. That the writer realised that he and his first readers were at the close of the Levitical Economy became evident at the very outset of our inquiry. That *he* was looking—and would have *them* look—for a new order of things far surpassing the old was also plain. That a solid foundation had already been laid by the first advent and its immediate results in the resurrection and ascension of the Messiah for such new order was seen to be beyond dispute. But it was soon discovered that it would require the promised Return of the Ascended Christ in order to the final establishment of the coming age with its fulness of blessing. And, to be as precise as possible, the present interval between the two Advents was seen to correspond to the solemn moments which, in typical days, elapsed between the disappearance of the High Priest within the Second Veil and his reappearance to bless the people. And so, although so many centuries have elapsed since the entrance of our High Priest into the Divine Presence above, yet would we still seem to be under the spell of that “little while” of waiting (antitypically extended) concerning which we are assured that, after all, it will not be unduly protracted.

IV. The one objection to the above attempt to settle the point at issue is, that it necessitates the protraction of a short time into a long one. Theoretically the Delay ought to have been short, historically it is proving to be long beyond all we could have expected. Let us not shrink from realising the full force of this objection. Let us put the case in all its strength by alluding to the Destruction of the

Temple by the Romans, and by admitting how convenient it would have been, for simple and straightforward exposition, if the Christian Interpreter had been in a position to say: "That famous event (the destruction of Jerusalem) is the dividing line between the typical and the antitypical dispensations: it was then that the vanishing things vanished and that the coming things came." Of course he *cannot* say this. How can he? The vanishing things vanished—perhaps! although it is a little awkward that ever since then synagogue worship has continued, and passovers and great days of atonement have been kept. But certainly the lingering Good Things did not then cease to linger. To see this, we have only to ask a few pointed questions:—Did the new Habitable Earth appear then? Was the subjection of all things to Man witnessed then? Was the way into the Holiest thrown open then, as it had not been for forty years before? Did the Coming One come then; and, ceasing to wait above, come down below to put his enemies under his feet? Did the heavenly Jerusalem descend then, to take the place of the earthly, which was thenceforward to be trodden down of the Gentiles? Since these questions must be answered in the negative, it is impossible that we can accept the easy exegesis suggested. We prefer, therefore, to let the objection stand for the present in all its weight. The little while has proved to be a long while. The Second Advent has not followed with the promptness that might have been desired and that would have been so convenient for interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews.

V. Let us now attempt a Solution of this difficulty—the difficulty of Delay. If we succeed, our gain will be immense; for the entire Epistle will be thrown open to our edification, enjoyment and practical application to saints

and sinners as it scarcely could be, so long as this difficulty remained unsettled; and the solution found satisfactory here will certainly more or less apply to both the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles.

1. Let us first of all remember that "long" and "short" are relative terms. Under some circumstances half-an-hour appears to be an intolerably long time, while, under others, a few years appear short. All depends on the scale, and this again depends upon the nature of the events to which the terms "long" and "short" are applied. Some years ago, on occasion of a political scare as to a supposed danger in Asia, a late eminent statesman advised the alarmists to quiet their fears by procuring *larger maps*. Let students of Prophecy take the hint and enlarge their maps. Let them apprehend the large scale on which the great facts of Redemption are transpiring.

2. Let us next remember that the Law was only a Shadow of the Coming Good Things and not the very Image of them. Hence the shortness of the period of the High Priest's disappearance within the veil on the great Day of Atonement, must not be too strongly pressed. No priest ever entered into the Holiest to sit down within that sacred shrine; but our High Priest has done so: "from henceforth expecting"—from henceforth "waiting"—until his enemies be made his footstool. The very fact that a time of "waiting" is assigned to him there, and that the time of waiting is, in another view of it, a time of reigning and not of inactivity, may well familiarise us with the idea that a not inconsiderable time may elapse between his disappearance and his return.

3. But chiefly let us note that, just where—in the Epistle—speedy fulfilment seems most confidently anticipated, there, if we go back to the original prophecy quoted, some

considerable delay is very carefully provided against, lest it should unduly depress. The Epistle shews a lively hope :—

For <yet a little while, how short ! how short !>
|The Coming One| will be here, and will not tarry.

But the prophecy of Habakkuk, here referred to, is most sober and carefully balanced, as witness its words :—

For yet' is the vision for an appointed time.
Still, it presseth towards an end,
And will not deceive,—
<If it tarry> wait thou for it,
For it ||surely cometh||,—
Will not be too late.

The whole passage is full of life and movement, of energy and restraint, of urging on and holding back. There is an appointed time, very likely consisting of concurrent events rather than a mere stroke of the clock. There is a great end to be attained, and one greatly desired, towards which divine forces press, controlled and impelled by the determination that the result shall ultimately satisfy. Nevertheless, delay is supposed to be so possible, or probable, that a consequent duty is laid down: "wait thou for it." And, finally, there is the hint given that the delay may be continued until the last moment. The great fulfilment may arrive only just in time to prevent falsification. Such are the balanced bearings of this great passage in Habakkuk—the fine point of which is needlessly blunted both in the A.V. and the R.V., though a little less in the latter. Delay is so distinctly deemed possible that duty is based on that contingency. It seems only fair to urge this feature peculiar to the prophecy, especially because it is the original and fuller utterance. Nor need we admit any real contradiction between Habakkuk and Hebrews, since

the longest waiting may, after it is well past, appear but as a dream.

VI. The sum of the matter then is this: The Epistle to the Hebrews places its readers just at the junction of Two Ages—an outgoing and an incoming. These Two Ages naturally overlap each other—the outgoing has not yet finally departed, and the incoming has not yet fully set in. These Two Ages, in some measure, answer to each other—the earlier foreshadowing and paving the way for the later. But the resemblance must not be exaggerated; nor must the second be regarded as the mere product of the first. In other words, the contrasts between them are greater than the resemblances. The Two Ages lie not on the same plane: and are far from being precise counterparts. The Levitical Age was shadowy, typical, ethnic or national, earthly, temporary; the New Age is substantial, anti-typical, cosmic or world-wide, heavenly and earthly combined, and permanent. The former, therefore, cannot be a perfect picture of the latter. The latter cannot be restricted to the former. This is not only true in fact and in detail, but is enunciated by this very writer as a controlling principle which faith grasps and on which faith rests:—

||By faith|| we understand the ages to have been fitted together
||by declaration of God||,—

To the end that |not out of things appearing| should that
which is seen ||have come into existence||.

There is the principle. Creation as well as evolution goes into the constitution of the ages. Christ is greater than Moses—the Melchizedek priesthood superior to the Aaronic—the Coming Habitable Earth vaster and more enduring than Palestine—the reign of the Messiah loftier and more penetrating than the reign of David or Solomon. These conclusions govern the whole question of interpreta-

tion. We must enlarge our maps. We must make way for God's Creative word. Hence we must beware of straitened rules of exegesis. We may allow for figures of speech; but we must not contract the predicted facts to the small dimensions of the figures which foreshadowed them.

STUDY II.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

(Chap. I. 1—4.)

1. ¹ Whereas <in many parts and in many ways of old God spake unto the fathers |in the prophets|>
- ² ||At the end of these days||
 He hath spoken unto us |in a Son|,—
 Whom he hath appointed heir of all things,
 Through whom also he hath made the ages ;
- ³ Who <being an eradiated brightness of his glory
 And an exact representation of his very being,
 Also bearing up all things by the utterance of his power,
 ||Purification of sins|| having achieved>
 Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in high places :
- ⁴ By |so| much becoming superior' |to the messengers|,
 By |as| much as, going beyond them, he hath inherited a
 more distinguished ||name||.

THIS magnificent Introduction is the keynote to the Epistle, and as such invites our patient attention. It may be considered grammatically, logically, and rhetorically.

1. *Grammatically*.—It consists of 74 words in the original and 107 in the Revised Version, which are firmly compacted by participles and pronouns into a single sentence. Some translators have broken it up into two or three sentences ; but it would appear to be safer and more reverent to preserve its unity intact.

Its central word is “Son” ; for to that word all that goes before leads up, and from it a commanding force is carried forward into all that follows by the three words “whom,” “whom,” “who” ; the third of which—“who”—conducts the sense triumphantly to the close.

Its leading verb is "hath spoken"—"God hath spoken in a Son"; and its second leading verb is "sat down"—the which "Son,"—"being," "bearing up," "having achieved,"—"sat down."

Up to the Son the first leading verb conducts; from the Son the second leading verb flows: "God hath spoken in a Son—who hath sat down."

2. *Logically*.—"Son" stands in the centre of the whole thought, as well as grammatically in the central position among the words. For no sooner is "Son" named than *heirship* springs out of it: "a Son,—whom he hath made heir of all things," *heirship* coming out again in the grand climax—"hath INHERITED a more distinguished Name." Thrown into the form of a single proposition, the logical backbone of the whole passage may be thus expressed: That the Sonly method of Divine Speech surpasses the Prophetic; the Prophetic having been fragmentary and unequal, whereas the Sonly possesses a far larger element of completeness and uniformity.

3. *Rhetorically*.—The logic of the passage is enforced by two fine strokes of rhetoric: the first consists in bringing the two great adverbs *polymerôs' kai polytrópôs*, "In many parts and in many ways," to the very front, thereby making them strongly emphatic, and by contrast suggesting, "NOT THUS when Divine Speech came Sonwise;" and the second consists in withholding the word *onoma*, "name," to the very end (which the Emphasised Version has been at some pains to imitate);—and so—radiant with Divine Sonship and consequent Divine Nature—the word "Name" crowns the edifice of this most noble Introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Notwithstanding the conviction already expressed, that in *translation* it is better to preserve the whole of this Introduction intact as a single sentence,—it is readily

granted that, for the purposes of *exposition*, it may be helpful to educe, from the one sentence, the various propositions which it enfolds : their number may well cause us to admire the skill and the power with which they have been welded into one compound sentence. They are as follows :—

- I. That God has spoken to man—to the fathers in the prophets, to us in a Son.
- II. That in two particulars—completeness and uniformity—Divine Speech in the Son surpasses Divine Speech in the prophets.
- III. That the Son has been made heir of all things.
- IV. That the Son has been employed to make the ages.
- V. That the Son, with fulness and precision, makes God known.
- VI. That the Son sustains all things.
- VII. That the Son has achieved a purification of sins.
- VIII. That the Son has taken his seat at the right hand of God.
- IX. That the Son has become superior to messengers by the measure of his more distinguished Name.

I. God has spoken to man—to the fathers in the prophets, to us in a Son.

As this is assumed rather than asserted, we need not dwell upon it. God's words should be their own witness ; but they need a congenial soil on which to fall. Only let men hunger for fellowship with their Maker, and they will surely recognise his voice. Yet is it well that they should get some insight into the methods of his communications. If they look for the same fulness, directness, and explicitness of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament as in the

New, they will be disappointed; and, stumbling at the threshold, may too easily be deterred from going any further. Note well, therefore, the next point.

II. In two particulars—namely, completeness of matter and uniformity of manner—does revelation by the Son surpass revelation by the prophets.

Both particulars are suggested by way of contrast. *In many parts of old*—but now in one continuous outpouring. *In many ways of old*—but now in the one direct way of familiar personal teaching.

“In many parts;” intimating, what we otherwise know, that the most abiding truths of the ancient teaching were conveyed by a hint here, and then again—after a time—by another hint there: the disconnected hints being enigmatic for awhile, and needing to be collected with care and connected with skill, in order to decipher their meaning. That was one disadvantage “of old.”

“In many ways;” in that the ancient teaching came through varieties of manner which, though invested with some charm and utility, yet had many drawbacks. At one time the revelation came by dream or vision, at another by symbolic action, at another by verbal communication. The speech of one prophet was florid and full; of another, plain, brief, abrupt. One prophet, dealing chiefly with current events and wants, only with momentary abruptness darted forth into the future; while his fellow, soaring aloft at once, saw the future in perspective like a vast landscape, his visions demanding an instructed and cultured eye to decipher them. Sometimes several difficulties of manner clogged a single prediction. Nathan, to David, spake—one

moment—as if of royal children needing chastisement, and—the next—as if of a Son who needed none. David, in Psalm Sixteen, begins with an experience truly his own, and then imperceptibly passes into an experience entirely beyond himself: in Psalm Seventy-two he begins, as if of Solomon, yet lo! “a greater than Solomon is here.” “Jerusalem,” in the prophets, though linked with the sins and sorrows of old, as if on purpose to prove that the historical city is meant, yet is anon beheld so glorified as to tempt the unskilled reader to deem it, not the earthly Jerusalem at all, but a heavenly. Such are some of the difficulties growing out of the “many ways” of ancient Divine Speech in the prophets; and which—it is suggested by contrast—do not characterise the communications of the Son.

It would be easy to name many subjects whose Old Testament treatment is beset with *both* difficulties, such as the Divine threatening of death, with the exact nature and incidence of that death; the promise of life, whether entered upon in part at death, or only after resurrection; the seed of the Woman, of Abraham, of David, whether fleshly or spiritual; the reason and meaning of sacrifices; the relation of Israel to the Gentiles, whether temporary or abiding; the threatenings and promises of God, how far conditional and how far absolute; times and seasons, how far positively fixed and how far contingent on human and Satanic action. Suffice it to say: That the closer our acquaintance with both revelations—the Hebrew and the Christian—the more vividly shall we realise the immeasurable superiority of the latter, on the score both of completeness of matter and uniformity of manner.

It may safely be granted that the superiority is only one of degree; that, even in the teaching of the Son, there are

"many parts and many ways" to exercise our care and skill. Nevertheless, the broad fact of an immeasurable superiority remains undeniable. In the teaching of the Son the "parts" were not far separated from each other, being all compressed into about three short years; and the "ways" were not very divergent,—plain speech, easy metaphor and simple parable being the chief, while allegory and fable were conspicuous by their absence, and of symbolic actions there were almost none; and, as to the parables, it may be said that many of them were simply homely illustrations of principles, instantly luminous when spoken, and that those of them which were more difficult because they were prophetic were either at once publicly explained or else their interpretations, though judicially hidden for a time, were afterwards blazed abroad and have come down to us side by side with the parables to which they relate.

Of this alleged superiority of the Sonly revelation over the prophetic, you can judge for yourselves. The comparison can easily be made. The old communications in the prophets and the new communications in the Son have been collected and printed side by side in that one-volumed library which we call our "Bible." A candid comparison of them will undoubtedly prove how readily the several "parts" of the teaching of the Son coalesce, with such readiness, indeed, that even the unique line of the Fourth Gospel entwines itself about the story of the Synoptics so naturally that the average Christian mind becomes conscious of only One Christ and one body of teaching emanating from Him.

But now the crowning point is this:—That the undeniable superiority of the later revelation grew naturally out of the closer relationship to God borne by the Son than that sustained by the prophets. *He* could speak with such

completeness and such plainness *because he was a Son*. The Greek of this great opening clause dispenses with the definite article before the word "Son," presumably on purpose to set this point in bold relief: "hath spoken unto us *en huiō*=in Son=Sonwise"="in and through One whom He delights to call 'Son.'" By the term "Son" the appeal is carried to the universal heart of man, seeing that everywhere the relation of father and son is perfectly familiar; so that all men are able, in a measure, to apprehend how a Divine Father could speak by a Divine Son as he could speak by none other. A son is in his father's confidence; a son knows his father's principles, purposes and ways; and, when the relationship is perfect, the interests of father and son coincide and are one. Such then is the relationship which is here used for carrying this commencing half of our Introduction to its commanding climax. In such a one—in a Son—hath God now spoken. What, then, of transcendent force and fulness, light and love may we not expect in Divine communications so made?

But *who was* this Son in whom God had lately spoken? It is a stroke of rhetorical art that the Writer does not at first say. He will tell us that later on. He will identify him beyond dispute:—as being a partaker with us in blood and flesh; as praying in distress with strong crying and tears; as learning obedience by the things that he suffered; as having his blood shed without the gate of the city, after being thrust forth as unclean outside the camp of Judaism. He will not shrink from acknowledging the shame of the "Cross." And even before he comes to that he will boldly combine the bitterly reproached name of identification, "JESUS," with the title of highest honour, by saying—that it is "JESUS THE SON OF GOD" of whom he is writing.^a But meantime he must prepare the way for

that explicit avowal, and therefore as yet avoids mentioning the name "Jesus." At first he only implies that God has a Son, whom to send to us, in whom to speak to us as he had never spoken before. Yes, so it is, that in this well-calculated Introduction, the Writer takes care to go no further than to build up the honour and proclaim the achievements of the new Ambassador from heaven. And though even here in these opening verses, he evidently has the "Cross" in mind, yet does he not mention it, but only weaves its blessed result, as "a purification for sins," into his garland of praise.

And as at present he does not identify the Son, so neither does he *define the Sonship*. He does not say Eternal Son, or Son by Virgin Birth, or Son by Resurrection. He does indeed at once shew the profound meaning he attaches to the term "Son": he is plainly thinking of a Divine Son, possessing a Divine Nature, and consequently invested with ability and commission to speak as man had spoken never before. The office he here prominently attributes to him of uttering Divine Speech, and the honours which he here breathlessly heaps upon his head clearly reveal that it is a Divine Son of whom he is thinking. Moreover, the references he makes to the Sonship as he unfolds his argument are in perfect harmony with this weighty beginning. He deems it wonderful that, being a Son, he should have to learn obedience by suffering.^a He counts the Sonship a splendid equipment for the Priesthood.^b And, finally, he regards the Sonship as peculiarly dishonoured by Apostates from the faith: they are again crucifying to themselves THE SON OF GOD^c—he says with dismay; yea, they have trampled underfoot THE SON OF GOD—he exclaims with horror.^d But although we thus perceive what an exalted perception he had of the Sonship, yet does he not formally

^a v. 8.^b vii. 28.^c vi. 6.^d x. 29.

or exactly define it. And *our* wisdom is to imitate *him*; to approach the Sonship with adoring wonder, but taking good heed lest we lose its warmth, lest we miss its fellowship with our own sonship, lest we fail to grasp how our Manhood finds place in the person of the Divine Son, and how the Son lifts up our Manhood into the effulgence of God.

III. The Son hath been appointed heir of all things.

Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.—Here the word “appointed” is worthy of notice, as suited to something unique. In ordinary cases of heirship, the words would have naturally run: “In a Son, who was also (or therefore) his heir.” Why, then, “appointed”?

This significant word at once makes me think of Jesus—the Man—the Crucified—the Disowned. And from this point of view the conception becomes in the highest degree exhilarating. My Jesus—my Brother—my Saviour—is appointed heir of all things! He who had not where to lay his head is now placed in possession of the Universe. All material things, all intelligent beings, are acknowledged as belonging to him by virtue of his Divine Sonship. How the life of Jesus on earth is glorified by his inheritance of all things. As I read the story of his lowliness I exclaim with admiring love: So toiled, so suffered he who now, by Divinely admitted right, is Lord of the universe!

IV. The Son has been employed in making the ages.

Through whom he hath made the ages.—“Ages” rather than “worlds” should be understood, both here and in

chapter xi. 3.^a It is mainly a question of exposition ; for if these two passages can be well explained by referring them to "ages," there can be no good reason for making of them the only exceptions to the general rule—which is, to distinguish in translation between *æon* "age" and *kosmos* "world." The one real difficulty springs from the unfamiliarity of the subject ; but by time and perseverance this difficulty may be overcome. And I am not without hope of being able to shew that "ages" is truer to the language and more honouring to the Son of God than "worlds." Let us begin quite simply, and advance little by little.

An "age" is, popularly, *a long period of time* ; as when we say of a building, "It will stand for an age" ; or of the coal beds, "They were deposited long ages ago." More precisely, an "age" is *a long period of time, bearing a certain character* : as "the dark ages," "the age of the printing press," and in the N.T. "the present evil age." Still more especially, an age is *a long period of time bearing a certain character, impressed on it by divine ordering or control* : then we call it a "dispensation" ; as for instance the Mosaic or the Christian. It is interesting to note that a long age may include several shorter ; as the Hebrew Commonwealth may be regarded as administered by priests, by judges, by kings ; and the great Christian age may be subdivided into the Church age and the Kingdom age. One very important feature in *a Divine Dispensation* is, that each dispensation has its especial laws, and consequently its especial duties. Love to God is due from his intelligent creatures in all dispensations alike ; but in one age this principle may make circumcision binding, because there is a divine law to that effect ; in another, baptism,—by virtue of a special command. And here we note two things ; namely, first, THAT NO LAW CAN BE OBEYED BEFORE IT IS

^a See App. (1).

GIVEN; and, secondly, THAT NO LAW NEED BE OBEYED AFTER IT IS ABROGATED. Another very important point with regard to all "ages" properly so called, including those we call Divine Dispensations, is—That they are not commonly, if ever, begun in an instant and ended at a stroke; but overlap each other, so that one is ending while another is beginning. Even Christ went on obeying Moses at the very time he was giving little by little a new constitution—a new covenant—a new dispensation.

Perhaps we have already gone far enough to be able to see that it redounds quite as much to the Son's honour to say that through him "the ages" have been made, as to say that through him "the worlds" have been formed.

Are there more worlds than one? There may be; but I believe that the Bible knows nothing of them by that name—at least, when the original or a uniform translation is consulted. We do know that there are "ages," and "ages of ages;" and is it nothing to be told *they* are made by the Son of God?

But let us advance to chapter xi. 3, of our Epistle. I submit that the language there used better suits "ages" than "worlds." "By faith we understand the ages to have been fitted together by declaration of God; to the end that not out of things appearing should that which is seen have come into existence." I repeat, It has yet to be shewn that the Bible knows anything of a plurality of worlds (*kosmoi*); but be that as it may, and without denying that the term "fitting together" *might* apply to them if they could be found; what I claim is that this beautiful artificer's word does most admirably suit the overruling and controlling and adjusting of the "ages." Indeed, I feel inclined to modify the familiar words of the hymn—

'Twas great to speak a world from naught
But greater to redeem—

by saying—"Twas great to speak into being a world in space, but greater to speak a world in time into its place, with its new commencement, new energies, new developments; to provide for and order the gradual passing away of one age, and the gradual introduction of a new one.

And our interest in such new creative developments is all the keener when we grasp the second conception conveyed by the words of chapter xi. 3: That a current age goes far beyond any promise that may have been perceptible in its predecessor. With all the foreshadowings of the Levitical age, and all the prophetic hints contained in the prophets, how truly creative the person and work of Christ appear as we now view them in the history of the New Testament! And so with respect to the next impending "age"—say the Millennial—how little appearance, shewing promise of it, as yet meets the eye; and yet how little this matters to faith! The "Coming Age" will not be a mere development of what we see at present: the newly commencing creative word of God has to be taken into account.

And therefore we say: How sublime the conception that "the ages" have been "framed," "fitted together," "adjusted" by the Son of God! What fellowship with the Eternal Mind it implies; what foresight of the action of created wills; what provision for contingencies foreseen only by the Infinite; what outgoings of love and holiness, of wisdom and power!^a

V. The Son, with fulness and precision, makes God known.

WITH FULNESS: *Who being an eradiated brightness of his glory.*—Of course this language is figurative; but it is very beautiful and expressive. The natural prototypes of

^a See Appendix (1).

the figure are the lamp in the house and the sun in the heavens diffusing their rays. All men—in such ages as gave birth to this figure—used the lamp by night, and all men were illumined by the sun by day; and hence all were sufficiently schooled by the incidents of their daily existence to be able to distinguish between the centre of light and its circumference, the light-giver and the light given. They naturally observed that opaque objects interposed and hindered the diffusion of the light-giver's beams; and they soon discovered that the eradication of light might be hindered where the central light was not extinguished. The lamp might be put under a bushel and hid, without being instantly put out; and even the sun naturally became invisible in the caves of the earth. And, in any case, the alternations of day and night sufficed to educate every eye, since the departing sun left his lingering rays on the clouds and the returning sun bathed the hill-tops in glory before he revealed his own face.

It is thus, by such public and efficient teachers as these, that men are taught the intimacy of the relation between God and the Son of God. The Son makes the Father known. Wherever the knowledge of God exists, there the mediation of the Son is in exercise, whether recognised or not.

At this point the harmonies of Scripture ravish the instructed ear. We are reminded how Paul describes the Son as the "image of the invisible God"; how John declares that "GOD (HIMSELF, in his essence, in his central potency) hath no man seen at any time: God only-begotten he hath declared (or interpreted) him." Yea, even before he came in the flesh he "was in the world," though the world "knew him not." And so, step by step, we are carried away back to the prophet Micah, who, in telling us that the Messiah would come forth out of Bethlehem,

seems to have been suddenly borne up as on eagle-wings to add with sublime daring and significance: "Whose comings forth have been from of old, from the days of age-past time."^a Aye, and the deepest harmony of all is sounded when we are reminded of the almost certain significance of Deity's one proper Name, as YAHWEH, THE BECOMING ONE—becoming present—becoming known—becoming recognised—becoming Man—becoming glorified.^b

"Who, being an eradiated brightness of his glory." It is in deference to this figure that I have used the word "fulness," feeling all the while how feeble is any abstract word we can use. How much more than fulness is suggested:—what force, what fire, what life, what joy, what simultaneous life-giving and yet consuming energy! Still, "fulness" is prominent in the figure. The lamp lights all the house: the orb of day floods the heavens. Obstructions there may be—shutters of prejudice—midnights of unbelief—caves of ignorance. But this at least is the mission of the Son of God: to flood the world with the knowledge of the Father; to illumine the thoughts of men, to warm their affections, to fire their imaginations, to kindle their activities, to fill them with abundant life and joy.

WITH PRECISION: that is manifestly the force of the second figure, *and an exact representation of his very being*. The Son of God is the *character* of his *hypostasis*, the latter term denoting that which supportingly stands under—which underlies—all qualities, activities, manifestations; and, therefore, equivalent to "substance, nature, essence," or "very being"; and the former—*character*—being "that which is cut in or marked, the impress or stamp on coins, seals, etc." From the nature of the case and the context, we may perhaps venture this very simple out-

^a Micah v. 2.

^b See Intro. to Emphasised Bible, chapter iv.

working of the term, by saying: As a seal on wax gives forth its exact image, so is the Son the exact image or representation of Deity. In any case precision is implied—exact representation, and no better comment can be desired than Christ's own words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

VI. The Son sustains all things.

Also bearing up all things by the utterance of his power.—All created being has been made to depend on him. It hangs upon his word. His word is with power. He speaks, and it is done. The ceaseless potency of his word sustains all things. His all-sustaining power is "uttered" power—spoken power—the expression of creative will. He wills it; and all creation holds on its destined way; stars shine; heavenly ministers worship and wait; messengers go and return; men live. So says this clause. It is marvellous; it is astounding. We are merely measuring, as far as we can, the meanings of the severed clauses. We are not just now estimating their credibility. We are not, for the present, even linking them together—in their connected and collective cogency.

VII. The Son has made purification for Sins.

Purification of sins having achieved.—Let us try to understand what this means.

"Purification" presupposes defilement: defilement is a consequence of sins. According to this Epistle, it is mainly the *conscience* that gets defiled by sins.

And no wonder; for a sin is a wrong, and conscience is that within us which knows and condemns the wrong we do.

A wrong done can never be undone. As committed against God, no man can make amends for committed sin ; simply because no man can do more than his present duty—no man can do more than “love God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and his neighbour as himself.” Moreover, even against our fellows, many are the wrongs for which no compensation can be made : injuries once inflicted have a tendency to cry out for ever for a redress which they can never, in the nature of things, receive.

But “conscience” is not the only thing that becomes defiled by sin. The contamination works outwardly as well as inwardly : sin works outwardly—as example, and example is contagious ; sin creates precedents and companionships in evil ; sin taints the moral atmosphere and tempts others to rebellion. If sinners could enter heaven, they would defile heaven. This, indeed, seems to be the meaning of the symbolic purifying of the altar and the tent ; it was because sinners had been allowed to enter there, leaving a typical defilement behind them. This also appears to be the significance of the asserted need of “the heavenly things themselves,” to be cleansed by a nobler sacrifice than those which were sufficient for merely conveying the symbolic lesson.^a

Who then can say that it was not a stupendous achievement, to “make purification” for sins ? Who that ponders the inwardly and outwardly defiling power of sin can doubt the greatness of the task ?

But, incredible as at first it might appear, the Son of God has accomplished it.

Is that incredible after due consideration ? I submit that it is not. Consider !

^a Chapter ix. 23.

The worth of the Person of the Son of God—according to this description of it in the Hebrews—is incalculable.

The Spotlessness and Beneficence of his Life are undeniable and immeasurable.

The Surrender of that Life possesses a value as inestimable as the combined Willinghood and Obedience and Love that prompted it.

And, finally, the High Priestly presentation to God in heaven of that Surrendered Life, has in it elements which in vain we seek for elsewhere !

No Animal ever went to the death in conscious and purposeful Love for others. No Man, purposely dying for others, ever came back to a second life to present the finished first life unto God. The Son of God did both. He was first, on earth, the spotless and infinitely precious Victim. He was next, in heaven, the Priest, offering Himself. The connecting link was welded by infinite piety, infinite wisdom, infinite power.

We are not dreaming when we thus put the case, but are closely following the lead of the gifted Author of this Epistle. Jesus our Lord, “by an eternal spirit”—“an age-abiding spirit”—offered himself without spot unto God. The most simple and natural interpretation of this remarkable clause in the ninth chapter, is that which takes it to allude to the human spirit of Jesus ; which—instead of being evanescent, as it would have been in unstayed, unmitigated death, losing any further personality and simply returning to God who gave it,^a to be merged thenceforth in him,—was piously committed to the Father’s care

^a Ec. xii. 7.

and keeping,^a and doubtless not in vain. Being quickened^b (it may be by virtue of its personal union with the Eternal Word), and faithfully preserved through the brief period of death in the bosom of the Father; he, Jesus, was then constituted by Resurrection the "First-begotten from the dead;"^c constituted High Priest "after the power of an indissoluble life."^d Ascending,—above all the lower heavens, and in and through those heavens, as along a new "path of life"^e shewn to him by the Father, into the very presence of God,—he there "appeared" in our behalf; offering—what?—offering his "body;" himself, his perfected and ended, his triumphantly surrendered earthly life. He entered "through means of his own blood,"^f which simply stands for that perfected and surrendered Life, which as we know, was terminated by violent bloodshedding. That is how he entered. Nothing could bar his way. No flaming sentinel could forbid his access to the innermost sanctuary of the Divine Presence. Yea, with that price in his hand—with that plea on his lips—no law, no power could stay his progress; upwards "above all the heavens" he still ascended; inwards, and still further inwards, he penetrated; until, coming in before the Uncreated Light, he was once for all and for ever accepted.

He—there and thus and then—"discovered age-abiding redemption."^g He "found" it. So the Greek says, and why should we tone it down? why should we dilute it? Why should we shrink, by saying merely "obtained"? Nay, *eurisko*; the verb that has given us *eureka*! He "found" it. He had been seeking it all his life of humiliation and toil and shame; and now he "found" it. The ages had been seeking it, from the time man fell; the

^a Lu. xxiii. 46.^d Chapter vii. 16.^f Chapter ix. 12.^b 1 Peter iii. 18.^c Ps. xvi. 11.^g *Ibid.*^e Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5.

priests of all ages, with their blood-streaming victims, had been seeking it; but could not discover it. But, now, here, in heaven, before the throne, Jesus our Lord the Son of God "found" it!

Well might the eloquent Writer of this marvellous Introduction place his verb, *poieo*, in the middle voice, and thus warrant our rendering it "achieved," as affirmed of an act redounding to the credit of him who dared and did it, constituting it an "achievement" to be for ever after celebrated in story and in song.

PURIFICATION OF SINS HAVING ACHIEVED!

Of course, the "purification" was the fountain-head, or summary, sacrificial *provision* of purification, once for all secured when the peerless sacrifice was offered and accepted. It was not and could not be the individual application of the purifying potency to the consciences of men yet unborn. That was impossible with regard to consciences not yet in being, and therefore necessarily not yet defiled. But it is important to grasp what actually lies before us in the words: The purification—that is the sacrificial provision and potency of purifying guilty consciences—was then once for all completed.

The Greek is singularly careful to make this quite clear. For whereas this is the third great participle flowing out from that great pronoun "who" that was to carry the grand burden of thought to a climax, this third participle is in a different tense to the two preceding it. They are "present" or incipient participles, whose force runs on indefinitely; but this is "aoristic," rounded off, complete, preparing the way for the next movement, forming a firm step for the next verb to rest on. Read the passage thus: Who *being and remaining* the eradiated brightness of his

glory and the exact representation of his very being; (Who) *bearing up and continuing to bear up* all things by the utterance of his power:—both participles being inceptive; but now with a change: “Purification of sins having there and then completely achieved,” he then did the next thing—“he sat down.” For nice precision, and for an open and effective march of thought, it is not easy to see how language could go further: unless by that larger amplification which we find in the body of the Epistle. Keep this in mind: *being, bearing up, having achieved—sat down.* To this last named and final act, we must now advance.

VIII. The Son has taken his seat at the right hand of God.

(Purification of sin having achieved) *sat down on the right hand of the majesty in high places.*—The act thus expressed is unique in the history of redemption. How far it is figurative language is a question of no importance so long as we look straight through it to the thing intended, to the principle involved. It simply and forcibly expresses the bestowment of the highest conceivable honour.

We read in the Bible of nothing like it, until later on we behold four-and-twenty Elders sitting on thrones; but, interesting to note, they appear as men. We read in the Psalms of ministering attendants, and in the Revelation of ten thousand times ten thousand messengers round about the throne, but they are never represented as seated. “Purification of sins having achieved, age-abiding redemption having discovered, the Son sat down on the right hand of the majesty in high places,” “at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The Seeker of Redemption, having at length discovered it, in triumph “sat down”!

The Son, welcomed of his Father, "sat down"!

The Son, finding himself at home in the Eternal Light,
"sat down"!

We never read of a High Priest under the old economy sitting down in the Most Holy place. Everything quite the contrary. None of his brethren could enter with him. Only on one day could *he* enter, and only twice on that one day for a few moments of solemn suspense each time, first for himself and then for the people.

But our High Priest, ministering in the power of an indissoluble life, offering one sacrifice for sins for evermore, and being once for all accepted, sat down; from "henceforth," or "as for the rest," as though along that line of activity there was nothing more to be done, "as for the rest, waiting until his foes be made his footstool."^a

This last statement,—found in the tenth chapter, amplifying and confirming that which we have already found in this summary introduction to the whole Epistle,—shews clearly the mistake of those who represent the heavenly High Priest as offering himself with a perpetually continued presentation. Not so. With the utmost precision in the first chapter, and with a most satisfactory amplification in the ninth and tenth chapters, our Author says, No! the one offering was offered once for all—offered and accepted—and then he sat down.

It is true that the one offering has a perpetual voice; that the once-offered blood still speaks according to the twelfth chapter,^b but that suffices not to alter the verdict of explicit statement, previously given, that the offering *was* made once for all.

And if not repeated and continued in heaven, then certainly not repeated or continued on earth, no matter how

^a Chapter x. 13.

^b Chapter xii. 24.

many humanly constituted priests and solemnly celebrated masses may proclaim the contrary.

IX. That the Son has become superior to messengers by the measure of the more distinguished name which, as Son, he has inherited.

By [so] much becoming superior [to the messengers].

By [as] much as, going beyond them, he hath inherited a more distinguished ||name||.

It will be observed by the thoughtful reader that there are, in this final clause, three movements; one implied, and two expressed. It is implied that messengers are an eminent order of beings; it is expressed that the Son of God has become more eminent; and further expressed that his pre-eminence is according to the measure of his inherited name.

1. The eminence of the rank of beings called "messengers" is here, by our Author, assumed. We perceive clearly that the object of the Writer is to exalt the Son. In proportion, then, as the messengers are themselves of high rank, it amounts to an extolling of the Son to say that, high as they are, he has become higher still. And this fully accords with the whole tenor of what the Holy Scriptures teach respecting the *angeloi*, "angels," "messengers." This their name is expressive of their office, which office is so distinguished that their official name makes needless any other. We know them by no other. They are simply "messengers," but, in all such contexts as this, it is implied that they are holy messengers, heavenly messengers, God's messengers. As such, they are great in power and might and personal dignity;^a their faces are

^a Ps. ciii. 20; 2 Peter ii. 10.

striking to behold;^a their knowledge, though not unlimited, is nevertheless vast;^b their numbers are overwhelming — “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands”;^c their access to the Divine Presence seems to be near and constant;^d and finally their work is of the most varied and constant character—in executing which they can be swift as the winds, formidable as fire-flames.^e They are spirits; but it would be too much to say they are disembodied or unembodied spirits. They appear to be insusceptible of death.^f Although their home appears to be heaven; yet have they such intimate relations with this world that in one place the Apostle Paul speaks of them as a part of it, although distinguished from men: “a spectacle to the world, both to messengers and to men.”^g Leaving for notice later on what this Epistle tells us about these heavenly messengers, the above gleanings from other parts of the Bible abundantly suffice to confirm the assumption underlying the statement at present under consideration. God’s heavenly messengers are of eminent rank.

2. But the Son is of higher rank—he has become of a rank superior to theirs. It is implied that he was once inferior,—at least for awhile as man. “*Tanto melior . . . effectus*,” says the Latin Vulgate. “Being made so much better,” says the “Authorised.” “Having become so much better,” says the Revised, English and American. “Being made as far superior,” says Weymouth. “Becoming superior,” says the Emphasised (if I may say so), with the greatest amount of neatness and precision: as if implying,—as by an undertone,—“there and then becoming superior.” All agree in regarding the superiority as acquired or bestowed. It is not merely “being superior,” as if by

^a Acts vi. 15; Judges xiii. 6. ^d Mt. xviii. 10. ^f Lu. xx. 36.

^b 2 Sam. xiv. 17; Mt. xxiv. 36. ^e Ps. civ. 4. ^g 1 Cor. iv. 9.

^c Rev. v. 11.

primordial divine right; but "becoming superior" or "being made superior," as if by means of honour conferred.

3. And now, finally, we observe that the superiority of the Son over the messengers is expressed as by a proportion or measurement. How much superior? As much superior as his inherited name is a more excellent name than any that was ever bestowed on them.

But *what* "name" is it that is intended? Is it simply the name of relationship itself, namely "Son"? Or is it rather (as seems more natural) what perhaps we may presume to term the Son's patronymic, that is, the name which as Son he derives from his Father, so that as the Father is named "God" so also is the Son named "God"; or, still more significantly, that as the Father is designated "Jehovah" ("Yahweh"), so likewise does the Son now bear that most august and jealously guarded Name?

Now, in looking for an answer to this question, the interesting and satisfying thing is:—That, in the verses immediately following this Introduction, all three names are attributed to him who having achieved purification for sins sat down on the right hand of the throne of God: he is spoken of as "Son" in two quotations from the Old Testament, as "God" in one, and really though not quite obviously as "Jehovah" in two more. So that the natural answer appears to be correct. To make clear that the most sacred name of Deity known to the Hebrew nation is here attributed to the Son would be to anticipate a further "study." But assuming that such an appropriation of the Highest Name to Jesus the Son of God will be satisfactorily evinced, it only remains to add: That, according to this, it appears that the Man who despised the Shame of the Cross has been exalted immeasurably above all the holy and heavenly messengers who wait upon the Majesty on high.

STUDY III.

A CLUSTER OF QUOTATIONS.

(How readest thou?) Chapter I. 5—14.

⁵ For |unto which of the messengers| said he at any time—|| *My Son* || art |thou|,|| *I* || *this day have* |begotten| *thee?*

and again—

|| *I* || *will become* |his' father|,And || *he* || shall become |my' son| ?⁶ But <whensoever he again introduceth the first-begotten into the habitable earth> he saith—*And let all' God's messengers worship him !*⁷ || Even as to the messengers || indeed, he saith—*Who maketh his messengers* |winds|,*And his ministers of state* |a fiery flame| ;^a⁸ but || as to the Son ||—*Thy throne, O God, is unto times age-abiding,*

and—

|| *A sceptre of equity* || is the sceptre of his (or thy) Kingdom,⁹ *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated lawlessness,—*

|For this cause| hath God, thy God, anointed thee with the oil of exultation |beyond thy partners| ;

¹⁰ and—|| *Thou* || |by way of beginning|, Lord, |the earth| didst found,

And |the works of thy hands| are the heavens,—

¹¹ || *They* || shall perish.But || *thou* || abidest still,And || *all* || |as a mantle| shall be worn out,¹² And |as if a robe| wilt thou fold them up,—

As a mantle, and they shall be changed ;

But || *thou* || art |the same|,

And |thy years| shall not ||fail||.

¹³ But |to which of the messengers| hath he said, at any time—*Sit thou at my right hand,**Until I make thy foes thy footstool ?*^a See App. (2).

¹⁴ Are they not all spirits |doing public service|,—|for ministry|
(being) sent forth for the sake of them who are going to inherit
salvation?

WE have here a Cluster of Quotations from the Old Testament, respecting which we may notice—their *number*, their *point*, their *setting*, their *force* and their *conclusion*.

I. Their Number.

There are seven of them ; as may at once be seen in the Revised, in the Corrected, in the Emphasised, in Modern Speech, and in the Twentieth-Century New Testaments. In the order in which these quotations are made by the Writer of this Epistle they stand thus :—

1. Psalm II.
2. 2 Sam. VII.
3. Psalm XCVII.
4. Psalm CIV.
5. Psalm XLV.
6. Psalm CII.
7. Psalm CX.

II. Their Point.

The point of them all is the same—which is, to prove the superiority of the Son of God to the heavenly messengers, commonly known, in our conventional speech, as “Angels.” This is done by employing language concerning the Son which is never used about the Divine Messengers. Their office is indeed extolled, but not in the same lofty terms. However great the messengers, they are not by any means so distinguished as the Son. That is the point.

III. Their Setting.

The Seven Quotations are placed within a Setting of Questions. There are four such questions; two at the beginning, and two at the end of the series. Of these four questions, three require a negative answer; and then, in a soothing and satisfying way, the fourth anticipates an affirmative reply. It is half the battle, in attempting to grasp the force of the entire argument derived from these Quotations, to perceive and remember the kind of answer expected. The way is not difficult, since the very form of the questions bespeaks the correct reply.

Question: To which of the Messengers did he ever say this first thing, "Thou art my Son," etc.?

Answer: To none of them.

Question: To which of the Messengers did he ever say this next thing, "I will become," etc.?

Answer: To none of them.

The same reply is indicated as suited to the third question; and then, the actual Quotations being done with, the closing interrogatory is proposed.

Final Question: "Are they not spirits doing public service," etc.?

The final Answer is implied by the very form of the question: "Yes—that is what they are. That suggestion will give them enough honour, and yet not too much."

IV. Their Force.

In the *first* place the force of these Quotations on the minds of the original readers sprang from the fact that they *were* quotations from their venerated Sacred Writings;—which for centuries had been said and sung in their homes

and in their Temple worship, and which they believed had been given by holy men under Divine guidance and inspiration.

In the *second* place the force of these quotations arose out of their contents—out of the striking and suggestive things said in them. Therein the voice of their God is heard addressing One whom he owns as his king enthroned in Zion as his “Son”: “Thou art my Son.” Again, when seeming to be speaking by a Psalmist of the same Coming King, he actually styles him “God”: “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever”—the person so addressed being the hero of the Psalm: whose lips had poured forth grace; who was challenged to gird his sword on his thigh, and to let his arrows be sharp in the heart of his enemies; who had already proved his love of righteousness and hatred of lawlessness, and already received a Divine Anointing as a reward of such noble love and noble hatred. He—this hero—is addressed as “God.” There is the historical fact, engrained in the record, centuries old. Of the Messiah, he says: He will be recognised as a Divine “Son”—as himself Divine. Can this be denied?

That is a long way for the Quotations to carry us; but—in the hands of our Author, in the strength of his teaching insight and authority,—they carry us much further: They bestow upon this same hero King—this Divine Son—the ineffable and incommunicable name Y H W H=“Yahweh,” “Jehovah,” “the Becoming One.” The Ninety-seventh Psalm proves it, and so does the One-hundred-and-second.

The former says: “Worship him, all ye Elohim”—“all ye *angeloi*” (as the Septuagint calls them, followed by the Vulgate)—“all ye divine messengers.” We know something of these *elohim*—these *angeloi*,—and we have some notion of the reason why they could occasionally bear the lower title of the Divine Being,

namely as representatives of God, as even the judges are so termed in the Pentateuch.^a But WHO IS IT, ABOVE THEM, unto whom they are here summoned to bow down?

“Worship him all ye *elohim*—*angeloi*—divine messengers!”

Yes, but UNTO WHOM were they thus to bow down? The whole Psalm answers—unequivocally, repeatedly, sublimely. Six times over, in this short Psalm of twelve verses, is the Being before whom the angels are summoned to bow down named “Jehovah,” and with this agree the sublime descriptions of Divine majesty which the Psalm contains. Jehovah is the only lawful object of worship; and unless the Anointed Son and King shares in the name and nature of Jehovah we may not—dare not—worship Him.

Yet here is One, said to be Jehovah—described as Jehovah—to be worshipped by angels as Jehovah; of whom the Writer to the Hebrews says he is the Son, expressly calling him “First-begotten,” telling us that he has been (or is to be) brought by God into this habitable earth. And I can well believe it, especially when this Psalm is applied to the Messiah’s second advent: “Yahweh hath become King. . . . And all the peoples [have seen] his glory.” It is God, as seen in the eradiated brightness of his glory, that we here behold. Need we wonder that the highest known created beings are here commanded to bow down before him?

Of the One-hundred-and-second Psalm the same remarks in substance hold good. In that Psalm the name “Jehovah” occurs eight times. Divine attributes are there attributed to him who bears it, as may be seen from the ample quotation above given from it in the Hebrews. And all this the Writer to the Hebrews assures us is said of the Son: “But as to the Son he saith.”

• Exo. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28.

V. Their Conclusion.

The conclusion appended to the Seven Quotations has already been stated. It may be described as balanced—inspiring—suggestive. *Balanced*, because it gives high honour to God's heavenly messengers, without making them equal with the Son. They are spirits; they are God's public ministers of state; and they are charged with a noble—useful—loving—holy mission. Still they are merely created beings, and merely servants. *Inspiring*, because this their ministry concerns us; in fact, is a ministry of service unto us. I confess that I am so far daunted against following this path, in consequence of our total experimental ignorance of any such angelic ministry as a service now in exercise, that I have severely questioned myself as to whether I could not be faithful to the teaching here laid down, and yet accept the words in a purely prospective sense: "Are they not all spirits [doing public service] who are GOING TO BE SENT FORTH for the sake of those who are destined to become inheritors of salvation." That is, that when we shall be installed in that lofty position of joint-heirship with Christ and joint-rulership with him over the universe with which our final and complete salvation will invest us,—that THEN they will become our servants; waiting upon us in our attained royal estate; and, as such, be executors of our behests in holding in subjection "the coming habitable earth of which we speak." But, though I do not regard such a prospective application of the words as altogether so visionary as probably some readers of them would deem it, yet on the whole I cannot rest in such an interpretation. It may be grammatically possible, and nevertheless be wholly against the spirit and drift of this remarkable passage,—especially when we recur to the obvious circumstance that the writer refers to such

angelic ministry as something familiar and undeniable, as though, for instance, based on ancient recorded incidents, the like of which had been again realised in these Apostolic times. Accepting this as a fair and final adjustment of the question as one of exegesis, I have no choice left but to take the particular word in question as bearing this meaning, namely: Which spirits ARE BEING FROM TIME TO TIME sent forth for the sake and benefit of those who, like ourselves, are destined to become inheritors of salvation. And, being so persuaded as to the legitimate force of this particular passage, and deeming it unlikely that our heavenly Lord—under whose command these heavenly beings now are—has wholly withdrawn this ancient merciful ministry,—I comfort myself with the conclusion that, as sometimes in ancient story, so likewise now, heavenly messengers are oftentimes near us and helping us even though we know it not.

In proportion as we can accept this solution, we cannot fail to draw a most joyful inspiration from the confidence thence arising. Of course, God himself is ever nigh; the Holy Spirit dwells within us; Christ is head over all things to his Church. But when God is pleased to rescue us from misfortune and ills of any kind, he has always the means of interposition at his command. And is it nothing that amongst those means is a numerous order of holy and heavenly beings, strong of arm and swift of wing, who delight to do the behests of our merciful and faithful High Priest now enthroned in heaven? Said we not rightly it is an inspiring thought?

But it is *suggestive* as well—of practical obligation. It already is seen to magnify the salvation of which we are heirs. Other magnifying facts are almost immediately to follow in the notable “Exhortation” which breaks up the current of the Writer’s great argument; for he has more to

say about these wonderful heavenly messengers. He is going to set their destined relative inferiority to man in a new and striking light. But meantime he cannot proceed until he has unburdened his mind by uttering burning words of caution. What is it that thus interrupts the flow of his great argumentative discourse? It is this: That a heavenly order of beings are from time to time receiving commission to help us in our arduous upward way to glory; and ought we not, therefore, ourselves to beware—watch—pray—contend—persevere?

STUDY IV.

HOLD FAST! AN EXHORTATION.

(Chap. II. 1—4.)

2. ¹ |For this cause| it behoveth us |with unwonted firmness| to be holding fast unto the things that have been heard, lest, at any time, we drift away. ² For <if the word through messengers' spoken became firm, and |every' transgression and disobedience| received a just' recompense> ³ how shall ||we|| escape, if |so great a salvation as this| we have neglected,—|which| indeed, <having received |a beginning| of being spoken through the Lord> |by them who heard| unto us' was confirmed', ⁴ God |jointly witnessing also| both with signs and wonders and manifold' mighty works, and with distributions of Holy' Spirit' |according to his own' will|?

THIS Exhortation consists of two unequal portions. The first and shorter, simply urges a *duty*, in view of a *danger*—the duty of holding fast to what has been heard, in view of the danger of drifting away. The second and longer portion enforces the duty and enhances the danger by an *extended comparison* between the ancient Hebrews and those now addressed. The fathers were laid under solemn obligations: their children, now warned, have been laid under obligations still more solemn. Such is the scope of the whole passage,—which is united by a *connecting link* with what has gone before.

Note, first, this CONNECTING LINK: “For this cause”—for what cause? Because God has now spoken in a Son who is immeasurably superior to all heavenly messengers; and because those heavenly messengers are themselves appointed to minister to those who are called to the inheritance of the great salvation which the Son has announced and procured.

For *this* cause ought we to beware lest we drift away: surely the cause is ample and potent!

Observe the DUTY which is based upon this cause: it is that with greater firmness than we should use to keep our choicest earthly treasures, we should be unremittingly holding unto the things which we have heard and believed, and which have constituted us heirs of such salvation. That is the duty.

Look at the DANGER: that of drifting away by slow and insensible degrees from the anchorage of our hope, until we are caught by the strong current of apostacy and become powerless to turn back even if we would.

Now comes the EXTENDED COMPARISON: "If the word through messengers' spoken became firm, and every' transgression and disobedience received a just recompense. . . ." What "word" was this? Through what "messengers" was it spoken? The correct answer comes through careful attention to the exact expressions employed. The words "every' transgression and disobedience" naturally suggest the Mosaic Law, with its multitude of prohibitions and injunctions. The peculiar phrase "became firm" is precisely fitted to point rather to the detailed outworking of the Law, than to the Ten Commandments themselves, which being solemnly announced by direct Divine Voice and enjoining primal duties of self-evident obligation—*were* "firm" from the first and did not merely "*become* firm." Furthermore, the very phrase "just recompense," following the detailing and ramifying expression "every' transgression and disobedience," just as naturally indicates the graded penalties of Leviticus rather than the leading Covenant words of Exodus. Then—in support of this interpretation—comes the crowning reflection, that these were the very details which were undoubtedly spoken by "messengers" in contradistinction from the word spoken by God himself

on Sinai's summit: details which were *not* directly proclaimed from heaven; so that, indeed, the people knew nothing of them, save as they were spoken and written and repeated by such "messengers" as Moses and Aaron and Joshua and the heads of tribes and houses—all of whom would be needed to bring word of them to the ears of all the people. And this conclusion brings out the Writer's point in this part of his Exhortation, which is:—That notwithstanding an inferior mode of communication, yet the word so spoken became firm, binding, solemnly sanctioned by pains and penalties.

Of course this exegesis, which appears to be unanswerably just, sets aside (as less suited to the context) any reference, just here, to that loftier ministry of heavenly messengers which still undoubtedly did find place in the delivery of the primary law on Mount Sinai.^a

And again, of course, the interpretation just advanced shews the importance of adhering closely to the literal meaning of words; as, for instance, in this place, of keeping the rendering "messengers" well to the front, with its easy freedom of application to either heavenly or earthly messengers. In the first chapter the allusion is plainly to heavenly messengers; as it is again, later on, in this second chapter. But just here, if we were to limit the reference to that application, we should be baffled in working out the meaning of the particular clause on which we have been dwelling. In other words, we are unable to discover any part taken by heavenly messengers in *speaking* to Israel either the Ten Commands from Sinai's summit or the numerous subordinate commands communicated at Sinai's base.^b

Resting then, as we clearly must, in this interpretation,

^a Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19.

^b See App. (3).

we have only to gather up its force, and so proceed to the second part of the comparison :—If it is so, as none can deny, that a Law for the more part spoken by mere messengers became firm,—was placed under divine sanctions which none could disregard with impunity ;—how shall we, whose position is superior to theirs, escape punishment, if we neglect,—if we do not care to prize and hold fast,—not a law, not a ritual,—but—so great a SALVATION as this ; whose greatness has already been indicated by two marked characteristics—ministered by a Son so august, and whose heirs are being ministered to by heavenly messengers so exalted ;—and the greatness of which is still further commended by the considerations that follow : that it was first spoken by the Lord himself, then confirmed unto us by those who heard the Lord, and all the while additionally witnessed to by God-given signs, wonders, diversities of mighty works and actual distributions of Holy Spirit freely bestowed on the newly-made heirs of salvation ? To neglect so great a salvation as this—what folly, what crime !

The several ministries here mentioned, as employed to make known the great salvation, are familiar to us and need little comment. We all know how the Lord himself led the way, especially in revealing “life age-abiding” ; leaving, as he needs must, the fuller unfolding of the ransom of his own blood to his chief apostles after that precious ransom had been paid. We further know the important part taken in making the great salvation known by the Lord’s earthly messengers, repeating by word of mouth what they had heard from their Master’s own lips, and adding such fuller explanations and expansions as the Holy Spirit revealed to them. In every way, the word spoken by the Lord was *confirmed* by those who heard him. They were agreed about it, and repeated it, and handed it

on : no man contradicting—no one apostle having left behind him a discordant note. John himself could not say of the portrait drawn by Mark : “That is not the Lord I so devotedly loved.” Paul, it is true, had “not known Christ after the flesh ;” but the risen Christ whom he adored was the same Jesus whom his senior brethren had familiarly known on earth. They doubtless all greatly *exalted* the same ascended Master. But those who had heard him confirmed his word spoken on earth.

You will note how the divine attestation is superinduced upon the apostolic testimony as something at once concurrent and additional, as the beautifully compounded Greek word *sun-epi-martuountos* indicates. As an incidental illustration of the weaknesses besetting very free versions, perhaps we may withhold approval of the limit suggested in “The New Testament in Modern Speech,” to the effect that it was solely the apostolic word that was confirmed by Divine corroboration. Surely, as the Lord himself seemed ever to delight to refer to his Heavenly Father’s works in confirmation, we can scarcely go wrong to regard such approval as taking in both the original word of the Lord and the added word of his messengers.

The chief thing that remains, to make our exposition measurably complete, is to discriminate the rich variety of terms here applied to the methods in which the Divine attestation was given.

Supernatural works throughout are intended, but with different shades of meaning discoverable in the terms employed to denote them. The word “signs” marks the significance of such interposition : generally as making evident the finger of God ; and particularly according to the appropriate teaching of the several interpositions—one being a revelation of power, another of knowledge, another of wisdom, another of mercy, and so on. “Wonders” again

characterises such doings as causing astonishment, instilling fear, and the like. "Mighty works" or simply "powers" speak for themselves: here their diversity is signalled as remarkable; and anyone familiar with the four Gospels and the Acts can fill in the details: supernatural acts on the mind, on the body, on evil spirits, on the elements of nature; those which were beneficent, as by far the greater number were, and the few that were punitive and admonitory—as those on the swine, the fig-tree, and Ananias and Sapphira; even the raising of the dead showing a diversity, as a grappling with death in the house,^a—on the road,^b—in the grave!^c Finally, we have distributions of Holy Spirit—for such is the literal rendering, against which there can hardly be any valid objection.^d

It only remains to say that here we touch matters of fact, well-known to the first Christians. In the lofty flights of the great Introduction there are grand ideas which to some minds will appear only as lofty words, although to others their very conception will seem to be proofs of their divine origin. It is equally true that the fulfilment of those Old Testament passages in Christ will not equally affect all minds. Hence it is well to rest for a moment on the more historical reminiscences here made. None can successfully deny that these signs were shown, these wonders gazed upon with awe, these diversities of healing wrought, these endowments enjoyed. We are chiefly called upon to note and admire the fair structure of this primitive epistolary building; but here, for a moment, we are permitted to observe that it rests securely on the rock of newly accomplished fact.

^a Mt. ix. 18.

^b Lu. vii. 12.

^c John xi. 38.

^d See note on "Spirit—Personality of," in E. N. T. Appendix.

STUDY V.

NOT MESSENGERS, BUT MEN.

(Chap. II. 5—18.)

- ⁵ For |not unto messengers| hath he subjected the coming habitable
earth of which we are speaking ;
- ⁶ But one somewhere hath borne witness, saying—
What is man, that thou shoulds make mention of him ?
Or the son of man, that thou shouldst put him in charge ?
- ⁷ *Thou hast made him less, some little, than messengers,*
|With glory and honour| hast thou crowned him,—
[And hast set him over the works of thy hand ;]
- ⁸ |All things| hast thou subjected beneath his feet.
For <in subjecting [to him] the all things>
|Nothing| left he, to him unsubjected ;
But |now, not yet| do we see, to him, the all things subjected ;—
- ⁹ But |Jesus| we do behold,—
Made some little less than messengers,
Because of the suffering of death,
|With glory and honour| crowned,
To the end that, by favour of God,
|In behalf of every one| he might taste of death.
- ¹⁰ For it was becoming in him—
For the sake' of whom are the all things,
And by means' of whom are the all things,—
<When ||many' sons|| |unto glory| he would lead>
||The Princely Leader of their salvation|| through sufferings' |to
make perfect|.
- ¹¹ For |both he that maketh holy, and they who are being made holy|
Are ||all|| of One' ;
|For which cause| he is not ashamed to be calling them |brethren|
- ¹² saying—
I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
|In the midst of an assembly| will I sing praise unto thee ;
- ¹³ And again—
|I| will be confident upon him ;
and again—
Lo ! |I| and the children which, unto me, |God| hath given.

- 14 <Seeing therefore |*the children*| have received a fellowship of blood and flesh>
 ||He also|| |in like manner| took partnership in the same,—
 In order that |through death|—
 He might paralyse him that was holding the dominion of death,
 That is the Adversary,—
- 15 And might release these—
 As many as |by fear of death| were all their lifetime liable
 ||to bondage||.
- 16 For |not surely of messengers| is he laying hold,
 But |of Abraham's seed| he is' laying hold.
- 17 Whence he was obliged ||in every way|| |unto *the brethren*| to be made like,
 That he might become a merciful' and faithful high-priest,
 |In the things pertaining unto God|,—
 For the making of propitiation for the sins of the people.
- 18 For <in that |he| suffered |when tested|>
 He is able |unto them who are being tested| ||to give succour||.

OBSERVE that one great conception governs this entire section, and it is this:—THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE SON OF GOD WITH THE SONS OF MEN. Observe further: That under cover of this major conception, THE DIFFICULTY OF DEATH IS MOST SKILFULLY SET FORTH AS DIVINELY DEALT WITH. And now note: That these great thoughts are introduced by a proposition partly negative and partly positive in character. That proposition may be stated as follows:—THAT NOT TO MESSENGERS (OR ANGELS) UT TO MEN HAS GOD (IN PURPOSE) SUBJECTED THE COMING HABITABLE EARTH. This introductory proposition will doubtless prove as helpful to us as to the first readers of the Epistle. To it, therefore, let us first give such attention as may fix it in our minds as really intended by the Writer; working our way backwards to the second and then to the first positions just mentioned.

I. As already intimated, this proposition is partly negative: "Not to (heavenly) messengers (or angels) has God subjected the coming habitable earth:"—which negative, being expressly stated in the text, needs no comment at present, save as it leads us to ask, With what object is that

negation made? Why does the Writer *deny*, but because he wishes to affirm?

Passing on, then, to the affirmative side of our proposition—"Not to messengers BUT TO MEN has God subjected the coming habitable earth,"—it is worth while to analyse the method by which the writer conveys this affirmation; observing that he does so by (1) emphasis, (2) quotation, (3) admission, and (4) pledge.

1. By EMPHASIS. To emphasise a negative is to suggest an affirmative. "Not *to me* did he bequeath his estate"; well, then, to whom did he bequeath it? It appears probable that you know, and are about to tell us. So here: "Not to messengers"; well, then, to whom has he subjected the coming habitable earth? We are led to expect that the Writer is about to tell us.

2. By QUOTATION. The quotation from the Eighth Psalm advances to the affirmative, it says: "Not to messengers BUT TO MEN," for notice the "but" with which that quotation is introduced; "Not to messengers hath he subjected the coming habitable earth. BUT one somewhere hath borne witness, What is man?" and then follows a pretty full extract—all about man: an extract which has no relevancy, but as supplying the information for which the negative has prepared us. It is to man, then, that God has subjected the coming habitable earth.

3. By ADMISSION. The Writer admits that we do not yet see realised this subjection to man of the coming habitable earth. But this, of itself, implies that we are to see it—it is to be!

4. By PLEDGE. But though we do not yet see the full realisation of this Divine intention, yet we do see something—in Jesus—of the nature of a pledge that the whole will ultimately be brought to pass.

Putting these four suggestions together, then, as clearly

revealing the intention of the Writer, we conclude that, although, it is true, he does not express his affirmation in so many words, yet does he most clearly and strongly imply it. He intends us to understand him as teaching that the coming habitable earth has, in Divine purpose, been subjected to Man as Man! The Psalm predicts it; Christ pledges it.

The only *objection* to this which springs out of the actual words before us is, that the Eighth Psalm does not at first sight appear to refer to the coming habitable earth at all; but rather to the present earth, or (say) the past earth, as it was placed under man's dominion at the beginning; for, that the Eighth Psalm itself again refers back to the first chapter of Genesis is undoubted. And that being so, it might have seemed more natural had the Writer of the "Hebrews" said, rather "We no LONGER see it," than "We do not YET see it"; in other words, more natural, if he had referred the Psalm to a dominion lost, rather than to a dominion not yet gained. But, in truth, this difficulty is very slight; for as soon as we assume that in this, as in so many other Divine appointments, the principle holds good that "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance"; and that, therefore, the dominion once decreed must ultimately be realised—however it may for a time be lost or held in abeyance;—no sooner do we assume this than the difficulty at once disappears. And, indeed, I am inclined to regard the words "held in abeyance" to be quite as applicable as the term "lost"; since I know of no positive proof that man in paradise fully entered into his regal inheritance. Moreover, the way in which the Psalm places in parallelism "Man" and "the son of man" inclines me all the more to think of a *race destination* rather than an *individual installation*;—which race destination, indeed, is plainly hinted at by the original charge to man,

to "fill the earth and (so) subdue it." Be that as it may, and conceding the dominion to have been at least seriously damaged and "lost" for a time, it is surely easy to conclude that the loss was only temporary; and that the original investiture has been authoritatively clothed with the significance of a standing prediction. It is a dominion yet to be realised; and is to be realised in "the coming habitable earth," which, as we have seen,^a means the earth as it is to be ordered under Messiah's reign.

Some, perhaps, may find in the Eighth Psalm this further difficulty; namely, that, even conceding the prophetic character of that composition, the dominion which it describes appears too limited to suit the grandeur of the coming reign of Yahweh over the earth. It seems to carry us no further than the dominion of man over the animal creation.

For the present it must suffice to say: That such is the manner of the ancient word, as we saw when studying the opening lines of the Epistle concerning the "many parts" and the "many ways" in which God spake in the prophets: their communications were ever more or less fragmentary. Other snatches in other parts of the prophetic writings contribute further particulars concerning Man's coming dominion; and for the present we had better perhaps acquiesce in that wider view of "the coming habitable earth" which our divinely illumined Writer undoubtedly entertained.

II. Taking so much on trust, our more immediate duty is to endeavour to do justice to the context before us; more especially as it revolves around the conception regarding THE DIVINE DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTY OF DEATH,—for observe, it is just here, in chapter ii. 9, that the perplexing

^a See *ante*, p. 49.

subject of DEATH is first introduced into this Epistle: consequently the manner in which that is done should be closely observed; and, may I say that, the more I ponder that manner the more am I impressed with the wisdom and skill with which it is accomplished.

1. The important thing to note is that Death is first named under the form of a comment on the Psalm. Fail not to notice that five or six connected lines of quotation from the Psalm are first given; and then—after a general remark on the universality of the dominion assigned to man—a line from the Psalm is recalled and a comment offered upon it; then a second line, and a comment offered on that. To perceive this is to lay hold of the key which opens the Writer's method and argument.

We see Jesus—

Made some little less than messengers,

says he, quoting from the Psalm; adding, by way of comment,—

Because of the suffering of death.

We see him—

With glory and honour crowned,

he continues, quoting another line from the Psalm; adding by way of comment on that,—

To the end that <by favour of God>

<In behalf of every one> he might taste of death.

To perceive that this is the Author's method is to have cleared up the construction of a sentence which otherwise appears exceedingly involved, and which has led some translators and expositors to endeavour to remove the difficulty by resorting to a desperate inversion of the clauses. No inversion is needed; but every clause is found most aptly and beautifully to fall into its place—

when once the Writer's way of handling his Old Testament quotation is observed.

Let me now state more particularly that the grave difficulty which has confronted us has been this: That the Writer appeared unaccountably to postpone his statement of the design of Jesus' death until after he had advanced to crowning him with glory and honour. Or, to put it in another way: He has seemed to say that it was the crowning of Jesus which imparted to his death its great object; and inasmuch as we have looked upon the crowning as exclusively *following* the death, we have wondered how the *after crowning* could impart an intention to the *prior death*. It is by *first* attending to the *mosaic* structure of the sacred text; *then* by noting the *generality* of its first reference to death as the liability and doom of the race rather than an individual; and finally by connecting more closely the *crowning of the individual man Jesus with the Psalm and with Genesis*—in other words, *with the crowning of the race, Man*; it is thus that the whole difficulty is swept away; and while, on the one hand, the structure of the text becomes clear and simple, on the other, the ideas it sets forth are seen to be at once orderly, progressive, and grand.

(1) The MOSAIC STRUCTURE of the text has already been sufficiently stated; and nothing more can be needed to secure for it acceptance than to observe how it conduces to the luminous unfolding of the whole passage.

(2) Next, as to the GENERALITY of the first reference to death—in the commenting words “Because of the suffering of death”—I am, in part at least, indebted to Dr. Weymouth for suggesting this, in his note on the passage, which runs as follows: “Or ‘because man has to suffer death.’” Without putting it so definitely as this in actual translation, still we may *understand* the clause to point that way; for the Writer, it should be well observed, does

not himself say "Because of his suffering of death," but only, more generally, "Because of the suffering of death." And, indeed,—when we couple this generality with the fact of the clause being a comment on the Psalm, which Psalm manifestly treats of Man as Man,—we are emboldened to go back behind the *fact* that Man was made lower than heavenly messengers, to the *reason why* he was so made inferior: It was for the very purpose that he—Man—might be susceptible of death. Heavenly messengers cannot die—awful truth; Man can die—merciful provision, since out of that possibility, in the favour of God, springs the possibility of redemption. The words of our Writer's comment are exactly right, and exactly in place: "Because of—for the sake of—with a view to—the suffering of death"; true of Man—true of the Son of Man.

(3) Now, finally, we have to treat the **crowning** of Jesus **in the same broad spirit**; namely, as catching up the thread of man's original creation and royal destiny. Man—the Race—was "crowned with glory and honour," either actually or in divine purpose: Jesus—the Individual representing the Race—was "crowned with glory and honour." As soon as we grasp this close connection between the crowning of Man and the crowning of Jesus, we are on the way to a material modification in our view as to wherein the crowning of Jesus consisted; no longer regarding it so much as *the reward of his suffering* as rather *the perfecting of his manhood*. And this will effect a further modification in our ideas: it will lead us to place the crowning *before* the Crucifixion rather than after—which is exactly what our text requires; since, according to it, the Crowning gives merit to the Death: He was "crowned . . . that he might taste of death for every one"; not because he had tasted death for every one. And, needless to say, it will bring in the mysterious event of the

TRANSFIGURATION, investing it with a significance it did not before possess : that event being now regarded as the actual "crowning" of Jesus "with glory and honour"—the "glory" of personal transformation, the "honour" of preference over Moses and Elijah, over men and angels.

Going back for a moment to the original "crowning" of Man as celebrated in the Psalm, the alternative was just now suggested that, at his creation, Man was "crowned with glory and honour"—*either actually or in divine purpose*. To the present argument it does not matter which. If he was then actually crowned with a halo of glory and honour, giving majesty to his person, and calling forth the instinctive reverence and obedience of all his subjects throughout all his dominions,—then we can only conclude that the crown soon fell from his head. If, however, as I rather think, he was himself first put under discipline and training, expressly that his manhood might be perfected before it was visibly crowned,—even then it will practically come to the same thing so far as Jesus is concerned. In other words : Adam either lost his crown, or failed to win it. The crown of perfected and glorified Manhood was, in any case, won by Jesus ! I do indeed incline to the view that in Adam Man never fully entered upon his royal inheritance ; and, for this conclusion, I have already given some reason from the very language used in the First of Genesis. But the main thing here is to regard the Crowning of Jesus as the Divine acknowledgment of his trained and perfected Manhood, won before the Cross was reached, and investing the Cross itself with a merit it would not otherwise so clearly be seen to possess. He was "crowned with glory and honour" that it might be seen that for himself he needed not to die—that there was no reason why he should die at all, except for the sake of others.*

* See App. (4).

Yet, even so, we must not be too rigidly logical in attempting to interpret our Author, nor seek to confine his meaning within too straitened a channel; otherwise he will burst open and sweep down our banks. For he is everywhere rhetorical, and as such very apt to reveal an overflow of thought that will not be pent up within narrow bounds. As for instance here, Jesus was already crowned with glory and honour before he came up to the Cross; which means, that his manhood was morally adorned with every grace by devotion and fidelity and obedience even before he suffered, and so that he was well fitted to be physically adorned, as we know he practically was on the holy mount. Nevertheless we know, from this very Epistle further on, that Jesus *went on* learning by his sufferings a more painful, a more complete, a more heroic obedience up to and upon the very Cross itself. This we can allow for without retracting what we have said about the preliminary crowning that preceded his death.

2. So far, we have studied the death of Jesus in its relation to the possible and actual death of MAN. Next, we have to note its relation to God, in so far as that is glanced at in this context. Was it derogatory to God to permit his ever loyal and obedient Son to die? Far from that, says this Christian Author: it was a "becoming"—"suitable"—"beseeming" thing for him to do. For he had a worthy and noble end in view; namely, that of "leading many sons to glory"; and, by giving his First-begotten permission to lay down his life, he endowed him with the capacity of becoming a yet more accomplished leader of those other sons; equipped with an experience of suffering, and a patience in suffering, and a schooling through suffering which even he could not have otherwise possessed. In this way does our Author thus early, namely in verse 10, lay a foundation for those final solacing words

with which in verses 17 and 18 he winds up this entire section. Jesus knows by experience what suffering is: he knows its stern power to put the sufferer's obedience to the test: hence pity fills his heart, and he becomes not only a "faithful" High Priest, which in any case he must have been, but emphatically "merciful" withal. Moreover, he thus acquires an ability to bring prompt and effectual succour to those who are passing through the fiery ordeal which only experience could impart. Yes! God is vindicated: "it became him" by such means to secure such ends. Therein lies the Divine justification—namely, in producing and setting before us such a Leader. Let us follow him, through obedience, up to glory, dominion and age-abiding renown!

3. Once more: note the relation of Jesus' death to the ADVERSARY, as set forth in this section (verses 14 and 15). To appreciate what is here said at its proper value, we have to consider the nature of that "hold" of death which is here conceded to belong to Satan. He has, or had,—not exactly the "power" of death (*dynamis*), nor the "authority" of death (*exousia*), but the "grasp" or "hold" (*kratos*) of death. This points to the Adversary as the accuser of the brethren.^a He tempts men to sin; and then, when he has succeeded in enticing them into it, he accuses them of it before God; and, as it would appear, challenges the Most High to vindicate his law and truth by inflicting death on the offenders. If this be correct, we see what sort of "hold" he has of death: it is the "hold" of a simulated zeal for law and order—which according to the counsels of Divine wisdom, must be effectually met. He invokes Divine Justice on offending Man. "Thou hast made him of an inferior order to ourselves, on purpose that it might be possible for him to suffer death. Thou hast

^a Rev. xii. 10.

ordained that Death shall, in his case, be the wages of sin. He has sinned : fulfil thy threat ! ”

If this be the nature of Satan’s “hold” on death, we begin to see how Jesus’ Death affects him. It answers him. It silences him. It paralyses him. It brings to naught his murderous machinations. It reduces him to powerlessness (*katargein*). For the Son of God, in becoming Man, assumes the Astounding Office of Redeeming Kinsman, of becoming the rich, strong Partner, who can save the Human Firm from Bankruptcy ! Besides, the new Creature, Man, though liable to Death, is a composite being, the elements of whose personality can be temporarily dissolved without necessitating its instant and absolute destruction. His Redeeming Partner demands that Death itself shall be resolved into two deaths—the first and the second—Death partial and temporary, and Death final and absolute ; that, in the meantime, after the first death, there shall be a “judgment.” Our Hero Saviour becomes Sinbearer to the Race, offering his own life as a ransom. What can the Adversary say to this ? Nothing ! He is dumb. He is beaten. He has compassed the Death of the Son of God—and thereby compassed his own undoing. And so it is emphatically through the Death of the Redeemer that Satan loses the only “hold” on Death that he had. This great redemption has been long in coming ; but it has come at last :—long in coming, hence the provision of the Underworld, the world of waiting spirits, not yet finally denuded of their “souls” or “personalities” ; hence for ages the looking forward to Hades with fear and even dismay ; the best of men being all their lifetime liable to bondage through fear of it. But Redemption has come at last ; and spoils must be taken from under the Enemy’s hand. The spirits of the captive righteous must be at once set free ; and so we find that henceforward they are, if

actually not in, at least in association with, the heavenly Jerusalem.^a

But the one thing worthy to be sounded out above all else, so far as yet appears, is, that this aspect of victory comes emphatically through the Redeeming Partner's own death;—and therefore not primarily by physical force put forth against the Adversary. We can scarcely doubt the power of the Creator to destroy whatever he has created; even though destruction should come in some way other than death. But here it is no question of destroying Satan's being; but rather that of vanquishing his schemes—undoing his works.^b Why the adversary should have been held in being so long, it is not perhaps for us at present to know. But this at least is worthy of deepest pondering, that it is only of the present redeeming activities of God that our Author is here speaking in verse 16 (*epilambanetai*, present tense twice). What he may do for angels in the future we are not here informed. All that he here says concerns the present range or order or dispensation of Divine dealing,—that which culminates in the death of the Son of God. This, he says, is not being directed to the laying hold of and helping messengers fallen or unfallen; but is being directed to the laying hold of and helping the seed of Abraham—the laying hold of and helping *men*, no doubt; but only in as far as they can be converted from aliens and enemies into “sons”; only so far as they will consent to fall into line with the Princely Leader of their salvation, and follow him through obedience and suffering to glory; and, therefore, only so far as they can be included in the spiritual family of the father of the faithful, and so also included in the believing, loving, holy family of God.

III. All that remains in order to complete this “Study,”

^a Chap. xii. 23.

^b 1 John iii. 8.

is to endeavour to draw to a focus the rays of the master-truth of the entire section, namely :—**The Partnership of the Son of God with the sons of men.** This may be done within the compass of a few sentences. Were they made lower than heavenly messengers? So was he. Was the design of this inferiority, in their case, to render possible the suffering of death? So was it in his case. Did the possibility of death become actual with them? So it did with him. Was the possession of human nature (blood and flesh) in their case a partnership involving responsibility for others? So it was in his. Were men designed for wielding dominion? So was he. Were men to be trained by obedience and suffering for such dominion? So was he. Were men designed to attain bodily glory? So was he. (Compare the Apostle Paul's teaching, that there is in the Divine plan of human nature, a psychic body and a pneumatic body—1 Cor. xv. 44.)

This final aspect of the section should not be dismissed without a notice, however brief, of the remarkable way in which the fellowship of the Redeemer with his people is illustrated by quotations from the Old Testament. Not only do the sweep and variety of the quotations surprise us, but the principle of selection and the terms of application make us ponder. The first quotation, being taken from the Twenty-second Psalm, is easily seen to be Messianic; for in that composition the Great Sufferer is portrayed with as much vividness as in the Fifty-third of Isaiah; and therefore, when the terrible crisis of suffering is passed, we who believe that the Crucified Messiah rose again from the dead are not surprised though we are delighted to hear the Delivered One's exultation, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren," etc.; and, indeed, from John xvii. 26, we were prepared for the jubilant announcement. The second quotation is probably taken from 2 Sam. xxii. 3 (=Ps. xviii.),

which is on the face of it a Davidic composition; and is notable as shewing how the experience of the Shepherd King is intensified until it beseems the Son of David: the start and colouring being Davidic, but the scope and outcome Messianic. The third quotation is from the eighth of Isaiah; and startles us with the suggestion it makes of a parallelism between Isaiah and his "children" and the Messiah and his Disciples: both alike being designed to serve as "signs and wonders in Israel,"—how truly such the latter will yet be, can be clearly foreseen by those who look for the revelation of the Church in glory along with its glorified Head at the very time when the Ancient Nation is brought into allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth as their own Messiah. The point of all three quotations is the one conception of fellowship between the Son of God and the sons of men. In one place (verse 11) the term "brethren" is singled out for notice; in another (verse 14) the word "children" is specified; and then again (verse 17) the name "brethren" is once more brought up for observation. Probably the difference between the two terms should not be insisted on; since, obviously, in handling quotations some allowance should be made for the circumstance that they *are* quotations; in citing which it is natural that the general sense should be that which attracts a writer's attention. Messiah's "brethren" are naturally of his own "blood and flesh"; the Davidic Descendant again is of the same blood and flesh of his illustrious Ancestor; and Isaiah, as a type of the Messiah, is of the same blood and flesh as the two sons whom he takes by the hand that he may significantly march in procession with them before the eyes of the people of Israel. Perhaps the most significant thing in the making of these quotations is the way in which they are introduced: he is not ashamed to call them "brethren—saying": so that, in the opinion of our Author,

it is his voice we hear in the Psalm, and in the prophecy. Thus are Galilean Fishermen—and myriads more who believe through their word—brought into the endearing bonds of being designated Brothers of the Son of God.

The practical outcome of this whole “Study” is:—That, as the Son of God has entered into fellowship with us, so must we enter into fellowship with him, willingly, gratefully, savingly; that we must trust him, obey him, suffer with him: that we may be also glorified together. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”^a

^a 1 Cor. vi. 17.

STUDY VI.

THE DIVINE HOUSE, THE PROMISED REST, AND THE LIVING WORD.

(Chap. III. 1—IV. 13.)

- 3** ¹ Whence, holy brethren, |partners| in a heavenly calling',
Attentively consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession—
||Jesus' ||
- 2** As one |faithful| to him who made him :
As |Moses also| in [all] his house.
- 3** For |of more' glory than Moses| hath ||this|| one been counted
worthy—
By as much as more' honour than |the house| hath ||he that
prepared it||;
- 4** For |every' house| is prepared by some' one,—
But |he that prepared all' things| is ||God||.
- 5** |Even Moses| indeed, was faithful in all' his house,
|As an attendant| ||for a witness of the things which were to be
spoken||;
- 6** But ||Christ|| as |a Son| over his house,—
Whose house are |we|—if |the freedom of speech and boast of
the hope [throughout, firm]| we hold fast.
- 7** Wherefore,—
According as saith the Holy Spirit—
To-day < if |unto his voice| ye would hearken >
- 8** Do not harden your hearts,—
As in the embitterment,
- 9** *In the day of testing in the desert,*
When your fathers tested by proving,
And saw my works forty' years.
- 10** Wherefore I was sore vexed with this generation,
And said, Always err they in their heart ;—
Howbeit |they| learned not my ways :
- 11** So I sware in mine anger—
They shall not enter into my rest !—
- 12** Be taking heed, brethren,
Lest at any time, there shall be in any one of you
A wicked heart of unbelief,
In revolting from a Living God.

- ¹³ But be exhorting one another, |on each' successive day|,—
 While the *To-day* is being named !
 Lest any from among you be *hardened* by the deceitfulness of sin.
- ¹⁴ For |partners of Christ| have we become,—
 If, at least, |the beginning of the confidence, throughout, firm| we hold fast :
¹⁵ So long as it is said—
To-day < if |unto his voice| ye would hearken>
Do not harden your hearts,—
As in the embitterment.
- ¹⁶ For ||who|| |though they heard| *caused embitterment* ?
 Nay, indeed ! did not all' who came forth out of Egypt through Moses ?
- ¹⁷ But ||with whom|| was he *sore vexed forty years* ?
 Was it not with them who sinned, |whose dead bodies fell in the desert| ?
- ¹⁸ But ||unto whom|| *swore he*, that *they should not enter into his rest*,—
 Save unto them who were obstinate ?
- ¹⁹ And we see they were not able to enter |because of unbelief|.
- ⁴ ¹ Let us therefore fear, lest at any time,
 Although there is left behind a promise of *enter'ing into his rest*,—
 Any one from amongst you should be deemed' |to have come short| ;
- ² For we have had delivered unto us the joyful message, just as even |they| ;
 But the word that was heard did not profit |them|,
 They not having been blended, by faith, with the things heard.
- ³ For we who have believed |are to enter into the rest|,
 According as he hath said—
So I swear in mine anger
They shall not enter into my rest ;
 And yet |the works| from the foundation of the world' |had been brought into existence|,
- ⁴ For he hath spoken, somewhere, concerning the seventh [day] thus—
And God rested, on the seventh day, from all his works ;
- ⁵ And in this again—
They shall not enter into my rest.
- ⁶ Seeing, therefore, that it is left over for |some| to enter into it,
 And |they who formerly' had delivered to them the joyful message| entered not in by reason of obstinacy,—
- ⁷ Again he marketh out a certain day,
 ||*To-day*|| |in David| saying—after so long a time as this,—according as it hath been said before :—
To-day < if |unto his voice| ye would hearken>
Do not harden your hearts.
- ⁸ For < if ||unto them|| Joshua' had given rest>

- It had not in that case |concerning another' day| been speaking
|after| these things.
- ⁹ Hence there is |left over|
A Sabbath-keeping for the people of God.
- ¹⁰ For |he that hath entered into his rest|
||He too|| hath rested from his' works,—just as from his own ||God||
[rested].
- ¹¹ Let us, therefore, give diligence to enter into that' rest,
Lest anyone fall into the same' example |of obstinacy|.
- ¹² For ||living|| is the word of God, and |energetic|,
And more cutting than any knife with two edges,
And penetrating as far as a dividing asunder of soul and spirit,
Of joints also, and marrow,—
And able to judge the impulses and designs of the heart ;
- ¹³ And there is |no created thing| can be secreted before him,
But |all things| are naked and exposed to his eyes :—
As to whom is ||our discourse||.

I. It seems almost an abuse of words to call this portion of the Epistle a "section": it is rather a *layer* than a section. "The household of God"—"the Rest that remaineth for the people of God"—and "the life and power of the Word of God"—may be said to inlay the Messianic Priesthood. For it is evident that it is to this we are coming: it was first caught sight of in chapter ii. 16—18; then again is named here in chapter iii. 1; and, though postponed for the present, will be resumed and more fully considered at iv. 14 and onwards, until "priesthood" and "household" are combined at x. 21. We may perhaps thread our way into our present extract thus:—the kinship suggests the priesthood—the priesthood introduces the household—the danger of losing our place in the household is enforced by the dangers and the losses of them "of olden time" who were denied entrance into Canaan. One "if" suggests another: "Whose house we are—IF." "To-day IF unto his voice ye would hearken!" The dangers of the past are living warnings still!

II. Several VERBAL DETAILS are worthy of notice:—

1. "Partners" (iii. 1)—a far more expressive and adequate word than "partakers," or even "fellows." Compare the three occurrences of this delightful designation, as found in i. 9; iii. 1, 14 and its cognate verb in ii. 14, with the fountain head of them in Ps. xlv. 7.

2. "Heavenly calling" (iii. 1)—much more than a call coming from heaven. Nay! rather a calling to the heavenly glory and honour (ii. 7, 9, 10) of dominion over "the coming habitable earth" (i. 6; ii. 5).

3. "Attentively consider" (iii. 1)—worthy of note as occurring in this Epistle elsewhere only at x. 24. Fixed and prolonged attention, amounting to earnest study, is the least it can mean when directed to "the Apostle and High-priest of our confession." What a careful consideration of each other, then, it must enjoin in the latter passage. Without such study, we may, with the best intentions, move to anger where we would only "provoke to love."

4. "Confession" (iii. 1)—deeper and more serious than "profession." It is the courageous refusal to "deny," when challenged. "Profession" is cheap: "confession" in spirit prepares for martyrdom.

5. "House" (iii. 2—6)—no doubt, in this connection suggesting "household." Nevertheless the metaphysical sense clings so closely to the physical or literal, in English as well as in Greek, that it seems needless to vary the translation. The accompanying verb *kataskeuazomai* plainly alludes to the supplying of a house with vessels, utensils, furniture; and thereby, in this connection, conveys the closely related ideas of building a house and making it completely ready for habitation. To translate *oikos* "family" here and "house" in x. 21—as "The Corrected New Testament" has done—is to withhold from the English reader a helpful comparison of texts.

6. "If ye will hear his voice" (iii. 7, A.V.): "If ye shall

hear his voice" (R.V.).—The difference between "will" and "shall" in this connection is considerable. "Will" applies to the disposition of the hearer: as much as to say, "If to-day ye will hearken to his voice, as ye ought, with a genuine desire to know and do his bidding, then be careful not to harden your hearts against his leadership; but see that ye turn your vague and general wish into specific performance." But the English auxiliary "shall" puts another and very different complexion on the clause, by referring not to the disposition of the hearer but to his opportunity, in reference to a matter of fact which may or may not occur to-day: "If to-day ye shall, as a matter of fact, hear his voice"; which is the same thing as to say, "If to-day God shall be pleased to speak; for instance, by sending a prophet with a message;—then mind that ye receive the message with tender and responsive hearts." In this case (with the "shall" of eventuality), it is regarded as uncertain whether God will or will not speak to-day. With the term "will" in it, this introductory line forms an essential part of the exhortation, the next line merely sustaining it; whereas, with "shall" substituted, the words point to the possible occurrence of a fact: should it happen then the exhortation is tendered as expressed in the words that follow. It is observable that the O.T. revisers, in Ps. xcv. 7, have not so much as alluded to such a rendering, even as an alternative; and the opinion is here hazarded that neither Hebrew nor Greek favours so important a change.

7. "Rest" (iii. 11, etc.).—It should be easy for the intelligent reader to rise above the idea of "rest" here as mere relief of weariness (which as applied to God is repugnant, Isa. xl. 28) and grasp the higher conception of cessation from good work well done, with implied satisfaction in the finished product—a conception suitable and acceptable. A

notable thing it is, that God's own works are so "good" that they need no after-mending. He "rests" in what he has done, and proceeds to new working on a higher plane; rising from creation to providence, from providence to redemption: with the notable but undoubted result that, of necessity, the "rest" itself is thereby heightened and intensified. The most wonderful thing of all, however, is: That the infinite God should so rejoice in the works of his own hands as to crave the fellowship of his intelligent creatures with him in that joy;—so intensely, indeed, that, though the invitation to share it remains unresponded to for centuries, the effect is merely the pushing of the horizon further on, meantime renewing the invitation:—the "rest" is only "left over"; for "some must enter it." The Father's house must be filled with guests. It is not unworthy of being added, as an observable thing, that God should call his people's rest (Num. x. 33; Deut. xii. 9) his own. Moreover it would appear to follow from iv. 10, that Christ first, and we after him, are to rest from our works, as God from "his own." What an incentive to do our work well. Even in our poor labours, it is good to know when to leave off, and "let well alone." Disturbed roots do sometimes refuse to grow.

8. "Whom"—"with whom"—"unto whom"—(iii. 16—18).—It is an acceptable suggestion, made by the "Speaker's Commentary," that these questions are designed to impart an encouraging tone to these otherwise stern warnings: as much as to say, "THEY deserved their chastisement; but such things need not befall you, unless ye bring them on yourselves; therefore, Beware!"

9. "Seem" (iv. 1, A.V., R.V., and others)—a most unfortunate rendering. The changed version in the 2nd Ed. of the 20 Cent. N.T., "even appear to have missed it," is only a little better. It is, perhaps, a slight improvement,

inasmuch as it supposes that, at the time of "appearing," the "short-coming" or "missing" has become an accomplished fact: which of itself might have led the reviser to recall the circumstance that the Greek word is occasionally found as a law-term. Everything, surely, depends upon how our conduct "seems" or "appears" to our Judge. Granville Penn, therefore, was justified in translating the word, "should be judged"; as Dr. Weymouth also was in rendering it, "should be found to have fallen short of it." Alas! the "slothful" are unlikely to be alarmed by such a suggestion as, That though they may SEEM to have missed the prize, they will not REALLY have lost it. The above translation, "should be deemed," may have been suggested by the well-known fact, that, in the Isle of Man, JUDGES are called "deemsters." Seriously: as our "Deemster" will be our "Doomster," "let us take heed," "let us fear," "let us attentively consider one another," "let us exhort one another," while the inviting sound of "To-day" is heard; for the living and penetrating word is coming to search us through and through.

10. "With the things heard," lit. "With them who heard" (iv. 2).—If we might take "them who heard" as referring to them who first heard, believed, and reported the "good tidings" concerning the promised land (say Caleb and Joshua), then that would yield the most feasible explanation of a passage made difficult by divergent "various readings," which seem, indeed, in the opinion of experts (as Westcott and Hort), to indicate some early accident to the text. The general sense would then be: "Did not profit them, because they (the people in general) were not united by faith with the believing spies who brought them the good tidings."

11. "Are to enter" (iv. 3).—The occasional prospective force of the Greek present tense being well known, it seems

better to make that meaning at once evident in this text by the above rendering, rather than risk the conveyance of the wrong sense by our English form "do enter," which is apt to mean, to the casual reader, "do (at once) enter into rest,"—which, most decidedly, is *not* the Writer's intention, as the context abundantly shews.

12. "If they shall enter" (iv. 3).—The R.V. has done well to remove this Hebrew idiom of swearing from the text in this place, as it is distinctly misleading to English readers. It may be doubted whether either A.V. or R.V., in Psalm xcv. or here in Hebrews, has done wisely to retain it in the margin; as, even there, it can do nothing save suggest a doubt which does not really exist.

13. "Knife" (iv. 12).—This surely is more suited to the dissector's hand than "sword."

14. "Soul and spirit" (iv. 12).—On its merits, this hint is well worthy to be added to our materials for constructing a Biblical Psychology. Ordinarily, in the Bible, man is bi-partite; being constituted of either "body and soul" or "body and spirit." Occasionally, however, he is regarded as tri-partite, composed of "body," "soul" and "spirit"; and then the question naturally arises, What is the precise relation between "soul" and "spirit"? And, from scattered Biblical hints, the answer suggests itself: That the relation between them is so intimate, that they may often be practically treated as one and the same; so that, for example, if the persecutor cannot destroy the "soul" proper, neither can he touch the "spirit." If the body without the spirit is dead, that is because "spirit" carries "soul" with it. Man's sharpest knife cannot sever "soul" from "spirit": God's knife can. Hence, before we say that either "soul" or "spirit" or both are absolutely indestructible, we had better think again. Broadly, it would seem that God claims it as his own sole prerogative

—to create and to destroy. And it may even be, that just here we have a hint as to the process by which man may be destroyed; namely simply by the severance of “soul” and “spirit.” If we are right in regarding “spirit” as primarily an emanation from Deity,^a and “soul” as the realised and generally self-conscious individuality of that emanation; then we may not be far wrong if we further conclude that “soul,” uninformed by “spirit” because severed from it, cannot continue to exist; and that “spirit,” disrobed of “soul” and no longer “bounded” by it, would naturally be re-absorbed in God. Thus “spirit” *as* “spirit” might in a sense be indestructible, and yet personality be finally lost, and man as man be for ever destroyed. If it be suggested that here, in Heb. iv. 12, we are more likely to have a practical allusion to the diverse sources of “the thoughts and intents,” or “impulses and designs” of the heart, than a severely exact analysis of man’s constitution,—the reply is obvious, that there is no necessary conflict between the two interests; and that it is characteristic of the sacred writers to adduce more than is absolutely necessary for the enforcement of present lessons. It may well be that the main point here is that, whether the activities of mind take the form of direct intuitions of the “spirit,” or are coloured by the likes and dislikes of the personality—of the “soul,”—in any case the word of God is able to sift them and sit in judgment on them; and yet it may remain true, that the Divine Dissector’s knife, and it alone, can resolve man into his constituent elements. At all events, it would seem that this passage stands absolutely alone in its penetration and suggestiveness. It cannot, therefore, be tied down to parallels which do not exist.

15. “Joints also and marrow” (iv. 12).—Quite possibly

^a Gen. ii. 7; Eccl. xii. 7.

this is a mere analogical enrichment of the thought already expressed; as much as to say: "As penetratingly and unerringly as the human dissector can sever from each other 'joints and marrow,' so penetratingly and unerringly can the Divine Dissector make a clear and complete cut between 'soul and spirit,'" notwithstanding their intimate and manifold inter-relations.

16. "As to whom is our discourse" (iv. 13).—Since the Greek here is nearly the same as in v. 11, it seems safer to give of it the same English translation in both places. Moreover, the continuity of the text is thereby made distinctly more evident. How "great" must our High-priest be (ver. 14) who knows precisely the quality of the offerings made through him (ver. 13). Resting in these two considerations as conclusive, we are thereby prepared to reflect: That the remarkable transition observable within the compass of verses 12 and 13, is from the Written Word to the Personal Word. Both are living.

III. The COURSE OF THE ARGUMENT through this portion of the sacred text is evident—if we bear in mind that the controlling purpose is to re-ground the Hebrew converts in their faith and to move them to steadfast boldness in confessing it. As to the "house of God"; was Moses faithful therein? Admitted! So was Christ—with this difference, That the position of Christ in God's house is higher than was that of Moses; and that the house itself is nobler, namely, a "house" or "household" of living members,—among whom WE have the honour and responsibility of being counted; only we must not shrink from filling up our place therein. As to "the rest": that rest in substance still remains for us to enter; but we must beware of following the bad example of them who failed in olden time. As to "the word of God": it is THAT which keeps

alive these examples, and cuts deep in giving them effect ; which in fact lays bare our inward powers, our current and casual thoughts,—approving itself thus as the living and energetic word of the living and active Son, before whose all-seeing eye all mixed and hidden motives are exposed to view, yea even the deepest springs of unbelief issuing in timidity, disobedience and apostacy.

STUDY VII.

A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD.

(Chap. IV. 14—V. 10.)

- ¹⁴ <Having then a great high-priest who hath passed through the heavens, ||Jesus the Son of God||>
 Let us hold fast the confession.
- ¹⁵ For we have not a high-priest unable to have fellow-feeling with our weaknesses,
 But one tested in all respects, by way of likeness, |apart from sin|.
- ¹⁶ Let us, then, be approaching with freedom of speech, unto the throne of favour,
 That we may receive mercy.
 And |favour| may find |for seasonable succour|.
5. ¹ For ||every' high-priest who from among men' is taken||
 |On behalf of men| is appointed, as to the things pertaining unto God,
 That he may be offering [both] gifts and sacrifices for sins,—
- ² Able |to have a measure of feeling| for the ignorant and erring,—
 Since |he also| is compassed with weakness;
- ³ And |for this cause| is he obliged—
 As for |the people|
 So also |for himself|,—
 To be offering for sins.
- ⁴ And ||not unto himself|| doth one take the honour,
 But when called by God',
 Just as |even Aaron|:
- ⁵ ||Thus|| |also the Christ| glorified not himself' to become a high-priest,
 But he that spake unto him—
 ||My Son|| art |thou|,
 ||I|| |this day| have begotten' thee;
- ⁶ As also |in a different place| he saith—
 ||Thou|| art a priest |age-abidingly|,
 ||According to the rank of Melchizedek||:
- ⁷ Who ||in the days of his flesh||
 <Having offered up |both supplications and entreaties
 Unto him that was able to save him out of death,

- With mighty outcries and tears|,
 And been hearkened to by reason of his devoutness>
⁸ | Even though he was' a son|
 Yet learned, from what things he suffered, ||obediencē||.
⁹ And |being made perfect|
 Became |to all' them that obey him|
 Author of salvation age-abiding ;
¹⁰ Being addressed by God as high-priest—
 ||According to the rank of Melchizedek||.

THIS portion of the Sacred Text so readily lends itself to analysis that the following summary view of its principal contents may be acceptable.

OUR HIGH PRIEST ATTENTIVELY CONSIDERED.

I. *Absolutely.*

- A. *Has won access and acceptance : iv. 14.*
a. Impelling us to courage in confession : iv. 14.
 B. *Possesses sympathy and sinlessness : iv. 15.*
b. Inspiring confidence in prayer,—
as a passive receiving,
as an active finding : iv. 16.

II. *Comparatively.*

- A. *Compared with Other Priests : v. 1-2.*
 1. *Do they represent the people ? So does Christ.*
 2. *Were they appointed by God ? So was Christ.*
Note the passages which appoint him { Ps. ii.
„ cx.
 B. *Compared with Himself before he was a priest.*
“In the { 1. The schooling : v. 7.
days of { 2. The lesson : v. 8.
his flesh.” { 3. The reward : v. 9.

I. We are not surprised that now at length the Writer should address himself in earnest to the subject of CHRIST'S

PRIESTHOOD, inasmuch as he has already, twice over (ii. 17; iii. 1), approached it. Nor are we unprepared to find him characterising that priesthood as "great." Everything he has so far advanced concerning "Jesus the Son of God" has suggested greatness: his superiority to heavenly messengers, his superiority to Moses, assure us that if he be a "priest" at all, he must needs be a "great" one. What we are rather surprised at is, the one bold stroke by which the Writer here illustrates that greatness: "Who hath passed through the heavens." He has not mentioned this before, in such a connection; nor does he now seem to be telling it for the first time. The natural explanation of this informality is: That his own mind is full of it, full of the heavenly nature of Christ's priesthood; so that having in the very first sentence of his Epistle seen Jesus seated at the right hand of God as the sign of his having succeeded in achieving purification for human sin, by that very reference there has flashed on him the whole glory of the heavenly priesthood. He has seen it; and now he assumes that we too have seen it; and he would exhort us that, having seen it and become assured of it, we should draw inspiration from it,—such inspiration as shall at once embolden and warn us to hold fast our confession of Jesus with unfaltering and unswerving tenacity.

II. But there is a beautiful BALANCE in our Writer's statements; and so he moves on with circumspection. Forbearing at present to press the greatness of his Lord's priesthood, he adduces its gentleness. Jesus the Son of God is, it is true, a strong priest; but he is at the same time a sympathetic priest. He is, it is true, a triumphant priest, witness the position he has taken in heaven; but he is a tender priest, with the tenderness which he experimentally acquired on earth, and still retains in heaven.

Moreover, the sympathy of our priest is further commended to us by its association with sinlessness. For this, indeed, greatly enhances its value. We might have hastily assumed the contrary; and half wished that Jesus had sinned, as we sin,—imagining that at least, he being thereby brought nearer to us, the helpfulness of his sympathy would have been greater. But this will not bear reflection. The sympathy of sinfulness on his part would have weakened us, not only by reconciling us to failure, but by lessening our confidence in the prevalence of his intercession with God in our behalf. Let us rather say with a thoughtful commentator on this passage: “It is the love which suffers, and not the weakness which fails, that is able to help us.”^a It is well that we should not be reconciled to failure, lest thereby it should be rendered more difficult for us to repent, and turn, and find mercy; and well that our confidence in the power of his intercession for us should not be lessened, since our faith may easily be tried at any time by a renewed sense of guilt. But, to proceed, let us follow our guide by making a prompt transition from theory to practice. The greatness of our priest inspires us with courage to hold fast our confession: his sympathy helps us to the source of strength--of renewed strength after failure. It invites us to the Throne. It encourages us to come there, even when our hearts are weighed down with despondency and shame. Thus are we led on by a passage of such supreme charm and helpfulness, that its like is scarcely to be found among all the most famous of the sayings of God. Before we give it the separate attention which its intrinsic merits so abundantly deserve, let us reflect a moment on the consummate skill by which our Author thus strengthens his appeal to the imperilled Hebrews. He may argue with them, and fail;

• Witham.

he may exhort them, and fail: but if he can induce them to take into their own hands the weapon of prayer and make proof of its efficacy, the likelihood is that he will succeed!

III. THE THRONE OF FAVOUR. This is not another throne than the throne of the universe. It is the central and supreme royal seat of sovereign authority over heaven and earth, over messengers and men. It is not the throne of Jesus as set over against the throne of the Divine Majesty. Rather, it is the Father's throne, unto which Jesus has himself drawn near, on which, by his Father's side Jesus has himself triumphantly sat down. There would be incalculably less comfort had we to come to a secondary throne, from which there might lie an appeal. No! it is broadly the throne of God, with all the attributes of a throne: as the symbol of government, the centre of authority, the source of power. It is not even as if God had two thrones—one of justice, the other of favour. No! it is the one throne of justice, majesty and might, viewed as at the same time a throne of favour, where blessings are bestowed, where mercy may be obtained. Of course it is through Jesus that that central throne is revealed as at once a throne of justice and of grace.

To this throne of favour we are invited to come near. We can get to it. He that sits thereon can hear us: he is omniscient. Our prayers can reach him.

The invitation is thrown into a significant form. It is not, "Let us approach once for all" (*aorist*); but "let us be approaching" (Greek present tense), the present tense of continuance and custom. "Let us form the habit of coming near, Let us accustom ourselves to the privilege." And this is well sustained by what accompanies and follows.

We are invited to come "with boldness," or rather "with

freedom of speech." This is boldness shewing itself in a particular way; the freedom of speech that completely unburdens itself, that says all that it desires to say. This may be a very helpful word of guidance, seeing that some good men, from the best of motives, have seemed wishful that we should restrict our petitions to those things which we know to be acceptable to God. But, however much we may press our suit in respect of those things which we know to be most needed and which we are sure God is most wishful to bestow, it is well to perceive that our welcome is not confined within those limits. A child does not need always to know whether what it asks will be granted; and, in fact, it would detract from childlike boldness, never to make an experimental request. Think of Abraham, in interceding for Sodom,—how he kept shifting his ground; and, so to speak, making a further experiment. Think also of our Lord himself, not indeed as making experiment in prayer, but as repeatedly asking for that which it seemed to him as he prayed might possibly not be according to his Father's will. To these examples may be added a reminder that the Apostle Paul prayed "thrice" that the thorn in his flesh might be taken away; and that, in reply, although direct answer was denied him, he received most comfortable assurances. We are, then, to approach the throne of grace "with freedom of speech." At the same time the greatest felt need will naturally most press for utterance; and what is our greatest need but mercy that forgives and succour when danger is near? To these considerations offered as reasons for coming, let us now give brief attention.

"Mercy" we always need: and although we do well to avoid all insincerity in our confessions of sin, and to shun as cowardly such pointed confessions of particular offences as amount to the accusing of others, yet we can seldom do

wrong in asking very humbly for mercy because of sins known or unknown, remembered or forgot.

The familiar clause, in the old rendering, "grace to help in time of need" nearly but not quite expresses the striking force of the original. It does perhaps express it, if stress is laid on the restrictive words "time of need." "Help," of itself, is too general; since we may often be glad of help which we do not urgently and instantly require to prevent disaster; whereas this last-named element is of the essence of this second specified object of prayer. *Boetheia*, from *booe* "an outcry," means the succour needed to avert calamity, as when an army must be quickly reinforced to prevent defeat, or when a beleaguered garrison must receive supplies at once to avert surrender. So *we* may need speedy and specific deliverance to rescue us from the spell of an almost overmastering temptation, or to prevent overwhelming misfortune entailing lasting shame.

Agreeably with these two leading objects to be sought in prayer is the difference between the two words "receive" and "find"—the former being more passive, and the latter more active. Confessing sin, we then have simply the assurance of *faith* that we are heard and that mercy is extended; whereas we "find," we "discover," we "recognise" the seasonable succour, and mark it on our calendar as a memorable deliverance.

This then, in some detail of exposition, is the encouraging invitation based at once on the strength and on the sympathy of our great high priest.

IV. It is a satisfaction to note, as we next do, how Christ's priesthood is brought into relation with PRIESTHOOD IN GENERAL, more particularly as known in Israel as an ordinance of Divine appointment; though at the same time as rooting itself so deeply in human nature as to touch the

priesthood of all believers mentioned in chapter xiii. 15, 16; 1 Peter ii. 5, and elsewhere. A priest is taken from among men, and he officiates in behalf of men. It is true that it is with reference to things pertaining to God that he acts in his priestly capacity. Still the passage does not say that priesthood is to benefit God, but it does strongly affirm that it is for the advantage and blessing of man. We may sufficiently summarise this part of our text by putting the matter thus :

Did those other priests headed by Aaron represent the people and act in their behalf? So does Christ.

Were those priests divinely appointed to their office and not self appointed? So was Christ.

We observe that our Writer sustains the latter assertion by quoting two passages from the Old Testament; namely, Psalm ii. 7 and cx. 4. We shall probably anticipate what he has yet to say about Melchizedek so far as not to feel surprised that he should quote the latter passage in sustaining the Divine call of the promised Messiah to priesthood. But what has the former text to do with priesthood, which in explicit terms it does not mention? On one condition it has everything to do with it; and that condition is, that the "This day" of the verse refers to the day of the Messiah's resurrection from the dead, whereby he became the Firstborn from the dead—an interpretation which seems more suitable to the passage itself, and to have been perfectly familiar to Apostolic minds. Conceding that—and I do not see how it can be seriously doubted—the relevance of that reference at once appears. It was in and through the very fact of his resurrection that he was endowed with that "indissoluble life" which constituted him the one undying high priest of men.

V. It only remains to ask what is the relation to CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD of the pathetic reference to "THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH" which suddenly breaks in upon us at verse 7?

It is indeed a pathetic reference, and highly suggestive. The very description of the time when those sorrows were borne by Jesus arrests attention: it was "in the days of his flesh"; as much as to say, "in the days of his weakness and humiliation"—a sense to which the term "flesh" lends itself, as every Bible reader knows. But the most striking thing is the decision with which the phrase represents those days as past and gone for ever. He himself continues, still possessing a body; but his present body is a spiritual, a heavenly, a glorious body; one that betokens power, that is invested with majesty. Here, with a keen sense of the contrast, the reference is back to those pre-resurrection days. They were days in which he was physically and mentally susceptible of pain and sorrow, and what a crisis of anguish the Writer puts into those days. Doubtless he refers to the agony in the garden, of which we have vivid and touching accounts in the Gospels. It might be thought that nothing could add to the impressiveness of those stories; the perturbed mind of Jesus, his evident longing for fellowship in his loneliness, and yet his inability to endure too close a witnessing of his anguish, his return to his disciples, his being again torn from them, his broken petitions, his repetition of them in the same words; moving incidents indeed! And yet additional details are here given; he made supplication, he entreated, as we already knew, but here we learn that he did so with mighty outcries and tears! In presence of such violent grief, such loud and sobbing petitions, our instinct is—silence. But we do well to brace up our minds to learn, as well as we can, all that is set before us; and, marking the fresh words which carry us a little beyond the earlier

records, we ask: What was it that called forth such impassioned outcries? What was it that Jesus so much dreaded; from which he thus passionately sought deliverance? There would seem to be but one answer. It was not exactly a nameless terror in presence of impending death—as some have supposed; as if we had to understand that he prayed exclusively that that terror might be taken away, and that when he was answered the terror was removed, and he again looked forward to death with equanimity. There is, perhaps, some truth in this representation; but it does not seem to go quite far enough. Far less does the singular conclusion satisfy us which some have formed: That Jesus was afraid that he should die before the Cross was reached. This scarcely comports with the simplicity of the words before us. For what are those words? They come before us, it is true, in an oblique way; not as a direct and independent statement of what it was that Jesus feared; but in the form of a description of him to whom he addressed his supplication; nevertheless with sufficient clearness to make the object of Jesus' dread apparent. He addressed his supplications and entreaties "Unto him who was able to save him (literally) out of death." The most natural conclusion seems to be, that it was DEATH ITSELF that he feared—not merely the pain and shame of dying—but death; the dissolution of his human nature; the being dead, the remaining dead; the end of his human life. "From death" (A.V.) might easily have meant, "saved from dying." But "out of death" would appear to mean, more naturally than anything else, saved out of death by restoration to life—in a word by resurrection; by the reconstitution of that unique and holy personality that was about to be dissolved. If we accept this view, then we are entitled to claim that Jesus' prayer was in fact and in fulness answered when he was raised from

the dead ; nor are we estopped from adding that an immediate assurance that it should be so may well have calmed our Saviour's breast, and served to bring anew into his perturbed and distracted memory "the joy that had (already) been set before him," and that so he was afresh armed to "endure the Cross, despising the shame."

Such a prayer—such an assurance of a coming triumphant answer to that prayer—such a renewed trust and thenceforth unfaltering surrender—would appear to answer to the words of the sacred text already considered, and besides to those further words which declare that it was thus—by this very triumph of agonised prayer—that Jesus, by the things that he suffered, learned the perfection of obedience.

But what has all this to do, even as a reminiscent background, with the post-resurrection priesthood of Jesus the Son of God? Plainly, it has everything to do with it in the way of a most thorough preparation for the office upon which he was so soon to enter, and in which he was to abide for evermore. He was first made perfect, and then by resurrection installed in his priesthood. Made perfect : by the sufferings which tested his obedience, and whereby his obedience was perfected, and which obedience being personal and experimental and persistent and victorious, entered into his character, became for ever a part of himself.

And being thus made perfect, he became "author" or (perhaps better still) "cause,"—personal cause, personal justifying and satisfying reason,—for the divine bestowment of salvation age-abiding ; salvation in its largest sense, in its ultimate fruition, the being led up into glory unfading. That men who have been rebellious, wayward, tainted, corrupt, death-doomed, should be ushered into unending life—needs vindication. Here it is ! It is in him. He is the answer to every question ; the eternal vindicator from all gainsaying.

But the bestowment of this boon—even with this Cause attached—is subject to one limitation: The perfected Sufferer became this, “to all them who obey him.” At this we need not wonder, when we remember that disobedience, rooted in unbelief, was man’s one ruinous sin. Salvation must needs be salvation in its own inherent nature. There can be no real salvation which has not a moral root and which does not deliver from self-will.

But who would not obey One who thus himself obeyed; crying out in his last extremity of anguish, “Not my will, but thine, be done”?

Once more our Author rises to the greatness of our high priest, by again repeating the almost mystic formula, which, whatever else it signifies, at least means kingly priesthood, personal majesty, and unbroken continuance in office: “Addressed by God as high priest according to the rank or order or likeness of Melchizedek.”

But here again a sudden and very instructive interruption to the main argument claims attention, to which consideration must be given in our next “Study.”

STUDY VIII.

THE DANGER OF DULNESS IN DIVINE
LEARNING AND LIFE.

(Chap. V. 11—14 ; VI. 1—20.)

Melchizedek :—

- ¹¹ Concerning whom—
 <Weighty> is our discourse,
 And hard to express in plain words,
 Seeing ye have become ||slow to learn||.
- ¹² For <even when ye ought to be teachers |by reason of the lapse of time|>
 Again' have ye need' that one be teaching |you|
 What are the first principles of the oracles of God ;
 And have become such as have need' of milk, not of strong food.
- ¹³ For ||everyone partaking of milk|| is unskilled in a discourse about righteousness,
 For he is ||a babe|| ;
- ¹⁴ But <to such as are mature> pertaineth the strong' food,—
 To them who <by reason of habit> have the organs of perception well trained for discriminating both good and evil.
- ⁶ ¹ Wherefore <dismissing the elementary discourse concerning the Christ>
 <Unto maturity> let us be advancing ;
 Not again' <a foundation> laying down—
 Of repentance from dead works,
 And of faith toward God,
 A teaching—
- ² ||Of immersions||,
 And of laying on hands,
 Of the rising of the dead,
 And of judgment age-abiding :—
- ³ And <this> will we do—if at least |God| permit'.
- ⁴ For it is impossible—
 <In the case of those who have been once for all illuminated,
 Who have tasted also of the heavenly free-gift,
 And have been made ||partners|| in Holy Spirit,
⁵ And have tasted God's utterance to be ||sweet||,
 Mighty works also of a coming age,

- 6 And who have fallen away >—
 Again' to be renewing them into repentance;
 Seeing they are afresh crucifying to themselves the Son of God,
 And holding him up as an example.
- 7 For ||land||
 <Which hath drunk in the rain thereupon oft-times coming,
 And which bringeth forth *vegetation* fit for them for whom it is
 even cultivated >
 Partaketh of a blessing from God;
- 8 But <should it be bringing forth thorns and briars>
 It is disapproved, and <unto cursing> nigh,—
 Whose |end| is for |burning|.
- 9 But we are persuaded <concerning you, beloved>
 The things which are better and which include salvation,
 Though <even thus> we speak.
- 10 For <not unrighteous> is God to be forgetful of your work and of
 the love which ye have shewn forth for his name,
 In that ye have' ministered unto the saints, and are' ministering.
- 11 But we are coveting—
 That |each of you| be shewing forth the same diligence,
 Unto the full assurance of hope throughout:
- 12 In order that <not slow to learn> ye may be found,
 But imitators of them who <through faith and patience> were
 becoming heirs of the promises.
- 13 For ||when to Abraham God made promise||
 <Seeing he had no one greater by whom to swear>
 He *swore by himself*, ¹⁴ saying,—
 |Truly, if blessing| I will bless thee,
 And |multiplying| I will multiply thee;
- 15 And ||thus|| <being patient> he attained unto the promise.
- 16 For ||men|| <by the greater one> swear,
 And ||with them|| <an end of all gainsaying by way of confirmation>
 is ||the oath||:
- 17 Wherein God <being more abundantly disposed to shew forth unto
 the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his counsel>
 Mediated with an oath,—
- 18 In order that <through means of two' unchangeable things, in which
 it was impossible for God to make himself false>
 <A mighty consolation> we might have, who have fled along to
 grasp the forelying hope,
- 19 Which we have as an anchor of the soul,
 Both secure and firm,
 And entering into the interior of the veil:
- 20 Where |a forerunner in our behalf| hath entered ||even Jesus||
 Who <according to the rank of Melchizedek> hath become
 ||A high-priest unto times age-abiding||.

GENERAL VIEW.

WE now reach a portion of the Epistle which may be described as a **Digression**. It is of considerable length, and touches on several topics of great importance. We may summarise its principal contents by the help of three or four words; DIFFICULTY—BLAME—REMEDY—EXHORTATIONS to apply the remedy; which exhortations run into the two channels of WARNINGS and ENCOURAGEMENTS.

The DIFFICULTY is one which the Writer feels to be standing in the way of his saying what he wishes concerning Melchizedek.

The BLAME for the existence of this difficulty he does not trace to the inherent mysteriousness of the subject, so much as to the fault of his readers: their dull-wittedness, their “want of push and go”^a in learning the deeper things contained in the oracles of God; their want of practice and skill in handling those oracles; their injurious habit of confining their attention to the very simplest things, which is here disparagingly treated as an infantile feeding on milk and an avoidance of strong food; and from which protracted babyhood he argues such weakness and danger as shew themselves in a want of discrimination as to the good and evil embraced in the Divine word itself, leading them to imitate what they should avoid, and to avoid what they should imitate. And this mischief does not confine itself to the already written word—it extends to the first principles of the New Faith, to the A B C of Christian Teaching. They are confining their attention, too exclusively, to the mere beginnings of instruction concerning the Christ. They are like builders laying a foundation, and then relaying it—doing and undoing and doing over again: how by such means can the building progress?

^a So, literally, the Greek word *nothros* means.

So far we might take all this pungent and almost sarcastic remonstrance as merely amounting to a quite bearable reproach for intellectual dulness. But on closer examination we perceive that the blame is meant to penetrate more deeply than that. The reproach of these Hebrew Christians, for being so slow to learn, contemplates a peril—the mortal peril of falling away utterly and irrecoverably from the Christian character and position—from salvation itself. Connect the sentences (especially at the junction of verses 3 and 4) logically together, part to part, and this will become evident: “We WILL dismiss the elements and advance to deeper knowledge, BECAUSE of the impossibility of restoring to repentance those who through such continued babyhood fall away altogether.” This more serious character of the blame becomes further evident when we observe the recurrence of the word *nothros*, first used in chapter v. 11, and then repeated in chapter vi. 12: the Writer is apprehensive that the slowness to learn should not only hinder their progress in knowledge but should imperil the steadfastness of their faith. Such is the blame which he charges on his readers, and which so hampers him in the development of his theme, as that he cannot yet get on with it although he has now returned to it for the third time.

The REMEDY he urges is the obvious one—that, waking up to their unenviable and dangerous position, they should dismiss the elements and advance to deeper and more comprehensive knowledge. To move them to apply this remedy, he warns, and he encourages, at considerable length, through all the remainder of the sixth chapter. He begins to warn at verse four, and to encourage at verse nine; holding on, especially with encouragements, until these rise into a grand chorus of “mighty consolation” which rolls on and on up to the close of the chapter at

verse twenty. His warnings are terrible, his consolations are inspiring; but they are all directed to the one aim of moving his readers out of infantile weakness into manly strength.

PARTICULAR POINTS OF EXPOSITION.

1. It is evident that, in due time after their conversion, all Christians ought to be able to teach others what they have themselves learned. This is in accord with common sense and common experience. It is a duty elsewhere recognised in the Scriptures and is certainly implied here. It has nothing necessarily to do with public speaking, still less with the formal delivery of sermons; but proceeds upon the obvious principle that what we know ourselves we can teach others—if not publicly, then privately; if not to both sexes, yet to our own; if not by speaking, then by writing. And the question is worthy of serious consideration whether, if we find we cannot teach others, the reason is not simply because we ourselves do not know.

2. It is further evident that a new convert's first duty is to learn, and not to teach.

3. It is also manifest that, before we teach others, it may at least be very helpful if we have some one to teach us.

4. It is clearly suggested that the Oracles of God do not run upon a dead level; they have their elements, and they have their advanced principles; discrimination is needed to eliminate the elementary from the advanced; and, to do this successfully, not only are teachers helpful, but time and practice on our own part are indispensable. We must try to teach, even if at first we fail; and must try again.

5. As with the Oracles of God in general so with Messianic teaching in particular. Even with respect to the Christ there are first principles which should be regarded as settled, and be—not forsaken—but “dismissed” from

continuous insistence, in order to make way for advanced teaching; in which teaching we discover that instruction contained in the Old Testament, even in its Types, should be included.

6. There are, in the portion we are now studying, two remarkable *series* of particulars closely compacted together: one of them has to do with the foundation of Christian knowledge (vi. 1, 2) and the other with the experimental verification of truth involved in being built on the foundation (vi. 4, 5). Those who fall away, lose their hold of the first series and question or deny the second; they therefore lose their faith in the first and forget or deny their knowledge of the second: which latter fact greatly adds to the guilt and shame of apostacy—not only did they believe otherwise than they now do, but they have **known** better. Of this in a little.

7. By the introduction of a various reading from ancient written copies some difficulty has been caused in the interpretation of the first series. The harder reading (*didacheen* instead of *didachees*), which is preferred by the best scholars, may perhaps be explained thus: thereby the word for “doctrine” or rather “teaching” is lifted up into the position of a second heading, answering to the word “foundation” and carrying it forward; so that in the result the sense—instead of being “not laying again a foundation of repentance—of faith—of teaching,” etc., becomes—“not laying again a foundation of repentance and of faith, even a teaching (even a foundation consisting of teaching) concerning immersions,” and so forth to the end. In this way the difficulty due to the various reading is reduced to a minimum; and may be dismissed by observing that the main force of the series remains practically the same. Partly included under the figurative term “foundation” and partly under the unfigurative term

"teaching" there are still six items of which the elementary foundation is constructed: 1. repentance, 2. faith, 3. immersions, 4. laying on hands, 5. the rising of the dead, 6. judgment age-abiding.

8. In any case we have to face the momentary difficulty that the word "baptisms" or "immersions" is found in the plural number: the aptest solution of which is that the Writer (probably Apollos) was familiar with the two baptisms—(1) that of John the herald, and (2) that put into commission by the Lord Jesus himself, this latter comprehending, as it did, the recognition of Christ's death and resurrection; and that the Writer was himself accustomed to differentiate between them, and perhaps had heard of their being distinguished from each other more frequently than was necessary. To him, with his known antecedents, it would come quite naturally to say: Not for ever repeating instruction so elementary as that every convert to the Messiah must be well grounded in it. This view dispenses with the finding here of any allusion to Jewish ablutions in general, which as such *are no part of the teaching of Christ.*

9. It only remains to admit, with all candour, that a proper interpretation of this series of Christian elements imparts more importance to "the laying on of hands" than is usually attached to it by Nonconformists; though it by no means favours the reservation of so-called baptised infants for confirmation by the hands of a bishop.^a

10. As to the second or experimental series (verses 4, 5), there is little needing to be said, if only we can succeed in trying to realise what it was to be a Christian in that first age when supernatural gifts were vouchsafed to the Churches of Christ. *Then*, how great was the light with which each convert felt he had been illuminated; each one

^a See App. (5).

realised that he too had tasted of the heavenly free gift of the Spirit; nay had become a partner in the common but glorious possession of that Spirit which constituted them members of the living Body of the Messiah; how fresh and sweet was the new *rheema Theou* or "divine utterance" which threw new light on ancient oracles and guided into new truths not before revealed; what joy was occasioned by supernatural works, chiefly of healing, done among them on their suffering brethren and neighbours, especially when viewed as foretastes and pledges of beneficent ministries destined to be common in an "age" of healing and health and longevity yet to dawn. The undeniable manifestation of such powers, sent down from the Ascended Son of God, could not but enhance the guilt and peril of such as having seen and felt and known these precious realisations, nevertheless denied their Lord. Well might this Writer point out to his wavering brethren the constructive **cruelty** and **criminality** of such treatment of Him who had bestowed such gifts upon them; they would be virtually saying—**against their better knowledge**—"We have tried him and found him false, and pronounce him a Pretender and a Fraud, who deserved the Cross to which he was affixed, as an example to all coming ages." From this point of view, we see plainly that so to fall away after *such* an experience—*such* a verifying confirmation of faith—would be to commit the unpardonable, the irreversible, the ineffaceable sin.

11. No wonder that our Author suddenly changes his voice, and hastens to indulge in more encouraging strains. In the main those strains can be understood without commentary. It will suffice to point out two or three things which might otherwise escape notice.

A. Abraham, after testing and training, became a *settled* heir of the promises made to him. When the great

promise was first given him (as recorded in Gen. xii. 1—3) it was *conditional*. When, however, his faith had been tried and perfected, then the promise was confirmed and made *unalterable* by Divine Oath (as narrated in Gen. xxii. 1—19). This view enables us to regard as harmonious the disclaimer of chapter xi. 40, that those ancients could not then enter into possession of the promises: they simply became settled and irrevocable heirs.

B. Everything, however, which had been done when our Author wrote in the way of implementing the great promise made to Abraham, as well as all that has since been done, builds up our hope. Abraham's seed has already been multiplied beyond calculation: true of his natural seed, more wondrously true of his spiritual seed. Accordingly the hope of the ancients augments and confirms our own; and this accounts for the imperceptible gliding of our Author (in verses 17, 18) from the ancients to ourselves; so that, before we are aware of it, the "mighty consolation" arising from the two unchangeable things which appeared to be about being set down to the account of the *patriarchs* is made over to us: "That a mighty consolation we might have who have fled along to grasp the forelying hope."

C. "Hope" is now the dominant note; and it is interesting to observe how our Writer's perception of its inherent greatness and diversified uses leads him to transcend the ordinary bounds of rhetoric, by passing from one figure of speech to another so rapidly that he reaches forward into a second before he has completely expressed the first: his mixed metaphors simply shewing the strength of his exultation. First our hope is an *ASYLUM* to which we have already fled; then it is an *ANCHOR* by which we are still firmly to hold fast; and then finally it becomes personal and is embodied in a *FORERUNNER* who has gone before us, in our

behalf ; but whom sooner or later we are to follow, to be where he is already—else our Forerunner he would not be. The first transition involves a complete change of figure, since an asylum and an anchor are distinct things. But the second transition is rather less abrupt. The “anchor” is transformed into a person—into a forerunner ; but there is a bond of connection between the two ; for an anchor enters within a veil—the veil of water ; and it is through a veil that our Forerunner Jesus has entered. The anchor is like Jesus. Jesus becomes an anchor and our Forerunner as well. Or,—to bring out in other words this delightful incongruity of metaphor, which becomes such a sparkling irradiation of blessed truth,—we may say : That the veil of water which hides the anchor and the firm rock in which the anchor holds, suggests another veil—not of water ; the veil between earth and heaven ; the veil between the earthly stage of our humanity and its heavenly stage ; and at the same time suggests and is partly framed upon yet another veil, the inner veil of the symbolic tent, the veil between Israel and Israel’s God. Our anchor goes, not downwards, but upwards ; it penetrates a veil, not of water but of sky ; our anchor is hid in heaven, it is hid in God : it is as safe and strong and sure as the unchanging truth and grace of God. Behind that veil is the throne of majesty and grace whereon the Eternal sits. Within that veil is held all the power, wisdom, love, holiness from which “the coming habitable earth” is to be unfolded. *There* is the “glory” up to which the sons of God are being led^a ere they descend and take possession of a ransomed world. Only a veil—only a curtain !—all that lies between our earthly and our heavenly humanity only a veil !—the “separate state” not taken into account, as though it were a mere temporary accident, for certain it

^a Chapter ii. 10.

is that Christ is not personally in the separate state or hades; he is clothed with his complete, transformed humanity:—only a veil between us and him. He has entered for us. By his accepted atonement he has prepared our way; and by his kingly priesthood after the rank of Melchizedek he is preparing us to follow him.

STUDY IX.

MELCHIZEDEK IN HISTORY, SONG, AND ARGUMENT; AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE MESSIAH.

(Chap. VII. 1—28.)

- 7 ¹ For ||this *Melchizedek*, king of Salem, priest of God Most High,
Who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and
blessed him,—
- 2 To whom <even a tenth of all> Abraham apportioned||;—
<First, indeed, when translated, king of righteousness,
But |after that| king of Salem also, which is King of Peace,—
- 3 Without father, without mother, without pedigree,
Having neither beginning of days, nor <of life> an end,
But made like unto the Son of God>
||Abideth a priest evermore||.
- 4 Now consider ||how great|| this one was, to whom <a tenth> Abraham
gave, out of the choicest spoils,
[Yea Abraham] ||the patriarch||.
- 5 And ||they, indeed, from among the sons of Levi' who <the priest-
hood> receive||
Have |commandment| to take tithes of the people |according to
the law|,—
That is, of their brethren, |although sprung from the loins of
Abraham|;
- 6 But ||he who deriveth not his pedigree from them||
Hath taken tithes of' Abraham,
And <the holder of the promises> hath he blessed.
- 7 But <apart from all gainsaying>
The less' by the greater' is blessed.
- 8 And ||here|| indeed, dying' men take ||tithes||;
But ||there|| one of whom it is witnessed |that he liveth|.
- 9 And—so' to say a word'—
<Through Abraham> even Levi' who taketh' tithes hath paid' tithes;
- 10 For even then' was he |in the loins of his father| when *Melchizedek*
met him.

- ¹¹ <If, indeed, therefore there had been a perfecting through means of the Levitical priesthood,—
For the people <thereon> have had based a code of laws>
What further' need that <according to the rank of Melchizedek> a different' priest should be raised up,
And <not according to the rank of Aaron> should be designated?
- ¹² For <seeing there is to be a change of the priesthood>
||Of necessity|| <of law too> a change' cometh.
- ¹³ For ||he as to whom these things are said||
<With a different tribe> hath taken partnership,
From which |no one| hath given attendance at the altar.
- ¹⁴ For |it is very evident| that <out of Judah> hath sprung our Lord,—
||Respecting which tribe|| <concerning priests> nothing' did Moses speak.
- ¹⁵ And ||still more abundantly evident|| it is—
That <according to the likeness of Melchizedek> there is to be raised up |a different' priest|,
- ¹⁶ Who <not according to a law of commandment dealing with the flesh> hath arisen,
But ||according to the power of an indissoluble life||.
- ¹⁷ For it is witnessed—
||Thou|| art a priest age-abidingly,
According to the rank of Melchizedek.
- ¹⁸ For ||a setting aside|| doth indeed take place of a foregoing' commandment,
By reason of its own weakness and unprofitableness,—
- ¹⁹ For the law' perfected ||nothing||;
But [there is] the superinducing of a better' hope,—
Through which we draw near unto God.
- ²⁰ And <inasmuch as not apart from oath-taking—
- ²¹ For ||they|| indeed, <apart from oath-taking> have been made priests,
But ||he|| with' an oath-taking,—
Through him that was saying to him—
The Lord |sware|, and will not regret,—
||Thou|| art a priest age-abidingly>—
- ²² <By as much as this> hath Jesus' |become surety| ||of a better' covenant also||.
- ²³ And ||they|| indeed <in greater numbers> have been made priests,
Because <by reason of death> are they hindered from remaining at hand;
- ²⁴ But ||he|| <by reason of his remaining age-abidingly>
<Untransmissible> holdeth the priesthood:—
- ²⁵ Whence he is able ||even to be saving to the very end||

Them who approach |through him| unto God,
 Since he evermore' liveth to be interceding in their behalf.

26 For ||such|| a high-priest ||as this|| <for us> is even suited :

Loving, noble, undefiled,

Set apart from sinners,

And become' ||higher than the heavens|| ;

27 Who hath no daily' necessity <like the high-priests>

<Beforehand, over his own' sins> to be offering sacrifices,

|After that| over those |of the people|,—

For <this> he did, once for all, when <himself> he offered.

28 For ||the law|| constituteth |men| high-priests, having weakness ;

But ||the word of the oath-taking which cometh after the law||

||A Son|| age-abidingly' |made perfect|.

THE best method of dealing with this section will probably be,—first to give a connected view of MELCHIZEDEK as he appears in history, in song and in argument ; and then add a few observations concerning the priesthood of the Messiah which may seem called for by the conclusion of the chapter, and which manifestly goes beyond anything immediately springing out of the Old Testament type.

I. Melchizedek.

1. Melchizedek in *history* (Gen. xiv. 18—20).—The story in Genesis is very brief, but profoundly interesting and significant—all the more so when it is observed how the king of Sodom fills the background of the canvas on which Melchizedek appears. The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, but in four generations more would bring down the vengeance of insulted heaven. Meantime God had not left himself without witness in this land of growing idolatry and corruption. Abraham the monotheist appeared upon the scene, building altars to the true God here and there in the land of his sojourning ; and, prior to his coming, there were already a faithful few who still continued worshipping “the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth ;” the most notable among them being

Melchizedek, king of Salem (probably afterwards Jerusalem), who was a priest as well as a king—priest to Abraham's God, probably offering sacrifice and intercession for a constituency found both within and without his small royal dominions. Whether Abraham, who had taken up his dwelling at Mamre or Hebron only some twenty miles to the south of Salem, ever worshipped at Salem and availed himself of the priestly ministry of Melchizedek prior to the incident to which we are turning, we know not. But these two noble men—brothers in the uncorrupted faith—cannot have been unacquainted with each other; and stirring events were soon to bring them face to face. About equidistant, eastward, from Hebron and Salem lay the rich Circuit of the Jordan, in which the infamous Sodom and Gomorrah then stood; and in the former of which cities Abraham's nephew, Lot, had—unwisely and to his hurt—fixed his abode. Four invading chiefs against whom the five local chiefs had rebelled, had turned against these cities of the plain; and gaining the victory over them, had taken captive a number of the inhabitants, carrying them away to the north with a considerable amount of property. Lot was among the captives; and Abraham, hearing of the startling event, collecting his formidable band of servants—who were practically shepherd-soldiers,—and, joined by his three confederates, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre with similar bands, gave the enemy pursuit, overtook them, and, coming in three divisions upon them suddenly by night on the way to Damascus, vanquished them and rescued the captives, including Lot, in addition to the spoils, which appear to have been considerable. Abraham, having accomplished his purpose, was making his return journey, when there met him two of his royal neighbours, Melchizedek king of Salem, and Bera king of Sodom; and, since Bera is first mentioned, before Melchizedek is introduced, and

then, as soon as the brief story of Melchizedek is narrated, Bera is *again* brought into notice—we cannot be wrong in regarding the two as intentionally brought into juxtaposition, and concluding that the noble Melchizedek is all the better appreciated when Sodom's ignoble king is regarded as a foil to bring the other into bold relief. "Ignoble" Bera certainly was; for he was not only king of the abominably wicked Sodom, but he had cut the sorry figure of having, with his neighbour of Gomorrah, fallen among the bitumen pits of "the valley of the open fields," where the battle between the four kings against five was fought. How long he lay among the bitumen pits we know not: what became of him then, we are not told—whether he joined those who "fled to the mountains" or at once returned ingloriously to Sodom is left to conjecture. But this we know,—he did *not* hasten to join the pursuers, had *no part* in rescuing his own people and goods; for here we find him, instead of coming back with Abraham, actually, unashamed, going out to meet him; with no bread and wine, we may be sure, and probably with no humbler fare to refresh the wearied host. This is that king of Sodom who has to stand aside while Melchizedek performs his priestly functions in welcoming the noble Abraham home. Methinks I see Lot's king, looking on with shame and envy while the grand religious ceremony is being consummated. The Royal Priest acts royally; and devoutly too, with all the solemnity becoming a Sacerdotal Function; for having refreshed the conquering hero, Melchizedek rose to the full height of the occasion. A twofold blessing sprang to his lips:—

Blessed be Abram, of God Most High,
 possessor of the heavens and earth;
 And blessed be God Most High, who hath
 delivered thine enemies into thy hand:

Abraham had accepted the bread and wine, and now he accepted the blessing. Instead of objecting to be thus a two-fold receiver—first of temporal and then of spiritual good—from the Priestly King of Salem, Abraham gave to his Benefactor a Tenth of all the spoils: thus at once assuming his undoubted right by conquest to deal with the spoils—acquiescing in the thanks to God offered on his behalf—and cordially recognising the priestly calling of Salem's King. And now the king of Sodom reappears. Utterly unable to deny Abraham's right to assume the ownership of the whole of the spoils of war, he nevertheless puts in a plea (virtually a claim) for the "persons," with assumed generosity giving Abraham leave to keep the "goods" himself. The lofty independence with which the victorious chief declined to accept any possible enrichment at the hands of the King of **Sodom**, thus strongly accentuates the wholly different feelings of respect and submission manifested by the patriarch towards the King of Salem—**Melchizedek**.

2. *Melchizedek in song*.—Although in Hebrew history Melchizedek is not again named, in Hebrew song he just once reappears. The Psalm (CX.) in which he is mentioned is wonderfully dramatic and impressive. From beginning to end it celebrates a single mysterious Hero. In verse 1, the Psalmist tells us that Jehovah himself has addressed this unnamed Hero, bidding him be seated at his right hand until he shall put his foes beneath his feet:—

The declaration of Yahweh to my Lord—
Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

In verse 2, the decisive moment is anticipated for reducing these foes to subjection:—

Thy sceptre of strength will Yahweh extend out of Zion,
[saying],—
Tread thou down in the midst of thy foes.

In verse 3 the Hero's own "people" (whoever they may be) join him, as an army of volunteers, suddenly appearing on the scene in holy beauty and dazzling brightness, like the flashing out of myriad dew-drops in the rising sun :—

Thy people will freely offer themselves in the day of thine army,—
 <In the splendours of holiness, out of the womb of the dawn>
 To thee [shall spring forth] the dew of thy youth.

Then comes verse 4 (which now immediately concerns us), with an oracular utterance, in which the Psalmist indeed leads the way, but only to quote from Jehovah's own lips the words of an oath by which the Hero of the Psalm is Divinely designated to the office of priest :—

Yahweh hath sworn—and will not repent,
 ||Thou|| [shalt be] a priest unto times age-abiding,
 After the manner of Melchizedek.

To this verse we must return. In verses 5—7, the description is resumed of the down-treading, by the Hero, of his foes ; culminating in his triumphant return from the pursuit. In these closing verses the Psalmist is again the speaker. The person addressed is Yahweh ; for it was at his "right hand" that the Hero was seated until he received his commission to go forth to the overthrow. The person of whom the Psalmist here speaks to Yahweh is clearly the Hero himself ; for *to him alone* can the description apply which depicts the shattering of kings, the judging of the nations, the drinking for refreshment of the mountain torrent, and the return with head uplifted in exultation :—

||My Lord, on thy right hand||
 Hath shattered—in the day of his anger—kings ;
 He will judge among the nations—full of dead bodies !
 He hath shattered the head over a land far extended :
 <Of the torrent in the way> will he drink,—
 <For this cause> will he lift up [his] head.

So far we have assumed three things only,—the unity of the Psalm—the identity of the Hero throughout—and the culmination of the second movement of the entire Psalm in the CRISIS by which the promise of the opening verse is fulfilled: of which last-named assumption we may feel morally certain, if we can be satisfied with a simple and straightforward exegesis; seeing that the leading terms, “footstool,” “strong sceptre,” “tread down,” “day of thine army,” “day of his anger,” “shatter,” “judge,” “dead bodies,” are thus accounted for in their natural significance as unitedly and amply describing the ultimate and final overthrow of the Hero’s “foes”—manifestly the *motif* of the whole composition.

We have now to affirm that the Hero can be none other than the Son of David—the promised **Messiah**; and that consequently the Messiah was to be a “priest age-abidingly after the manner of Melchizedek.”

That the Psalm is Messianic is of course a foregone conclusion with Christians, by reason of the solemn quotation of it as such by Jesus himself. But, apart from this, its very terms seem to shut us up to that conclusion; since we cannot imagine such an honour, as being invited to sit on Jehovah’s right hand, attributed to any other person known in sacred story or song. No Psalmist could have claimed such a position for himself; and, indeed, the very terms of the opening line forbid it: they are unsuited for such a purpose, seeing that the writer speaks of the hero as his “Lord.” On the other hand, neither David nor any other hymn-writer in Israel could in his most rapt moments have anticipated such an honour to be conferred on any ordinary son or descendant of his, or on any general or leader ever likely to arise. David’s own experience could not so much as have framed such a suggestion; for, so far from *his* sitting on Jehovah’s right hand until his foes were

subdued, he was the banished and hunted one until the time came for him to ascend the throne of his master ; and even on the assumption of a later date for the writing of this Psalm, we know of nothing that occurred later on in Jewish history that could have suggested such a situation to the most imaginative poet, as that depicted in verse 1 of this Psalm. Aided, however, by such companion Psalms as II., XLV., and LXXII., we *can* imagine such an address as this to have been directed to the Messiah ; though, even then, we must await fulfilment, before we can satisfy the wistful wonder thereby created. The Psalm is, then, undoubtedly written in celebration of the promised Messiah ; and the Ascension of the risen Jesus to heaven, abundantly satisfies the mind of every Christian as to the actual fulfilment of the first great movement of the composition. And, as to the second movement, which brings in the CRISIS of the overthrow of the Hero's enemies,—the very circumstance that we have been led on, naturally, to regard all these graphic incidents as constituting one great crisis, *still unfulfilled*, furnishes us in advance with an answer to any objection, which might otherwise be urged, against a Messianic fulfilment of incidents so warlike and so human. We need not, in any case, assume that these details of assault and overthrow must have a slavishly literal accomplishment according to the narrowest and most earthly view that could possibly be taken of the words ; since the MESSIAH must necessarily be above and beyond any other warrior that ever fought and overcame. But we are bound to follow the natural trend of the description ; and as the simple doing of this lands us, as we have seen, in the conclusion that the whole process of the overthrow of Messiah's enemies is yet future, any speculation as to the precise means which will be employed in bringing these visions into the realm of accomplished fact would be mani-

festly foolish and vain. We plead for a natural, as distinguished from a necessarily literal, exegesis, and the great gain of such exegesis here is,—that we are once for all delivered from any temptation to interpret the processes of down-treading and overthrow as at all consisting of such evangelistic victories as were initiated on the day of Pentecost. In the strength of this gain, then, as rebutting an anticipated objection based on the battle-scene of its close, we may rest content with the broad and immovable conclusion that the Hero of the Psalm is the Messiah.

But if the Psalm is Messianic, then to the Messiah pertains a priesthood after the “order” or “rank” or “likeness” or “manner” of Melchizedek. What this implies may reasonably demand a little consideration; although we should never forget that fulfilment alone can be expected to fill in the details and define the connecting joints of the prophetic word.

What, in general, then, does this oracle (“Thou art a priest,” etc.) mean, as applied to the promised Messiah? Its chief points are obvious:—(1) It is a very solemn and unalterable decree regarding the Messiah’s destiny, as is manifest from its being set forth as a Divine Oath. (2) It destines the Messiah to be and remain a priest from age to age. (3) It likens him in his predestined priesthood to the Royal Priest who met Abraham and blessed him when he returned from the slaughter of the invading kings. To what degree this likeness should be carried, and in what details it should be verified, we cannot perhaps beforehand conjecture. A general resemblance, at least, we may expect to find between the type and the antitype: a resemblance sufficiently marked and significant to be worthy of both the earlier history and the later song; worthy of Melchizedek and worthy of the Messiah.

3. *Melchizedek in argument.*—Here we gladly place our-

selves under the guidance of the eloquent Writer of this Epistle. What is the argument he derives from the combined history and song? Evidently this, in chief: That the Aaronic priesthood was not final: that another and greater was to arise: that the greater would endure. "Here in your history," says our Writer to his countrymen, "you have an account of Melchizedek, who is both King and Priest, and greater than Abraham himself; and here in your prophetic Psalms, after centuries of silence, Melchizedek reappears as a pattern to which your Messiah was to be conformed. And therefore you cannot object when I allege that our Jesus has been conformed to this Divinely provided type."

That our Author sees more than a general resemblance between Melchizedek and Messiah must be frankly admitted: that he sees the likeness verified in a number of details is clear. The very name "Melchizedek" is to him significant. It means, by its derivation from two familiar Hebrew roots, "King of Righteousness"; and Jesus has been exalted as king of righteousness. "Salem" also signifies "Peace"; and Jesus as well as Melchizedek is emphatically king of peace. Nay, the very order of the titles seems to him beautifully significant: Jesus, like Melchizedek, is *first* "king of righteousness" and *after that* "king of peace": suggesting a fundamental principle in the entire divine plan of salvation, according to which righteousness must come first and peace follow after.

But when our Author goes further than this; and specifies a variety of details about Melchizedek, all of which he regards as charged with meaning, then, no doubt, we begin to wonder where we are, and to enquire on what principle of interpretation we are to proceed. The difficulty becomes acute when we look patiently and comprehensively at what follows. For it is said, not only that Melchizedek

was without father, mother, pedigree, beginning of days and end of life, but that he is still living and abideth a priest evermore! Perhaps it is in the very sweep of these details that the true principle of interpretation may be found securely lodged. As for the principle itself: it is, if I mistake not, discoverable in the clause "made like unto the Son of God." So then, Melchizedek was not himself the Son of God, as some have concluded; since it could scarcely have been said that the Son of God had been made like unto himself—that would have implied, not likeness, but identity,—whereas likeness is the thing affirmed, and moreover a *caused* or superinduced likeness: "*made* like unto the Son of God." And note that it was not the Son of God who was made like unto Melchizedek, but Melchizedek who was made like unto the Son of God. In the order of time, it is true, the manifestation of the Son of God comes after the priestly blessing of Melchizedek; but this hint intimates that, *in the order of nature and importance*, the Son of God is the original, and Melchizedek is the copy; *and a copy given in advance is the same thing as a type!* Hence Melchizedek is the type, and the Son of God the antitype. Melchizedek is made like unto the Son of God, by being made a type of him. This, I humbly think, is the key to the true exposition. It is an instance of what the Apostle Paul teaches us to call "the foresight of Scripture." The Scripture, foreseeing the abiding priesthood of the Messiah, conformed the historical picture of Melchizedek to serve this purpose; telling us nothing of his parentage or pedigree or birth or death; the foreseeing Spirit of God projecting on the screen of Scripture the image of a living, acting, officiating priest; and there that image unalterably and abidingly remains. It is thus *typically* "witnessed that he liveth"—*typically* witnessed that he "abideth a priest evermore." He is typically

made, patterned, shaped, conformed—alike in what is said and in what is not said about him—unto the Son of God. It was remarked a little way back that this principle of exegesis is sustained by the very multitude of details in which it is embedded. And, in fact, it is collectively only, and not individually, that those details help out the likeness between Melchizedek and the Messiah. How, for example, could it be said of Messiah that he was without mother? But, regard these particulars as the parings and mouldings of a Divine Artist, putting in what would *make* the picture and leaving out what would *mar* it for his typical purpose, and then all becomes clear. For what is the result? Why, simply this: That in those three verses in the fourteenth of Genesis, you see the living Melchizedek officiating as priest of the Most High: the very thing which, in this purely literary sense, he has been doing for all the centuries which have passed since the picture was drawn, and will continue to do as long as the record shall endure. Look when you will, and as often as you will, that is what you will see, and nothing else!

The Writer of this Epistle was a better judge than we can be as to the fitness of his artistic presentation of Melchizedek to convince and persuade his Hebrew readers. But, methinks, if we had him here, and revealed to him our difficulties in carrying out his finishing touches into hard and detailed realisation, he would *smile*, and ask whether we also were babes, inexpert in the word of righteousness, and unable to discern between the “good” of a few wholesome strokes of wit and the “evil” of a mad realism productive of a monstrosity of a priesthood for which there could be no conceivable place nor use in all the universe of God.*

* See App. (6).

II. The Priesthood of the Messiah.

There are several other points of resemblance between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Jesus the Son of God which we have not formally noticed, feeling that they are perfectly intelligible without comment; but there are two or three weighty matters remaining towards the close of Chapter vii. of the Epistle, which claim from us some further attention.

1. In working out the general truth of the abiding nature of the priesthood of Jesus, and emphasising the prediction of the Psalm,—that the priesthood of the Messiah should be an abiding priesthood, never to be terminated by death and so never needing, like the Aaronic priesthood, to be transmitted to a successor,—our Author uses the remarkable phrase that our High Priest has been constituted “according to the power of an indissoluble life”—evidently referring to our Lord’s resurrection life. As we have already seen, it was in the power of that life that he was constituted priest. On earth he was not a priest. On earth his life was dissoluble, or he could not have died. Now his life has become “indissoluble”; and now he cannot die. How it is that so many translators and revisers have shrunk from this beautifully expressive and apt word “indissoluble” I know not,—unless it has been, as I surmise it has been, owing to an unconscious shrinking from any appearance of favouring a conception of human life which they were reluctant to countenance—that man’s Adamic life—essentially, according to its original constitution, and apart from redemption—is composite, and therefore a dissolvable thing. Certain it is, that the one primary meaning of the Greek adjective *akatalutos* is “indissoluble”—as witness Liddell and Scott and the margin of the Revised Version; and therefore in my judgment it is a wholly unwarranted pro-

cedure to hide this fact by such generalisations as the "endless" of the Revised Versions (English and American) and Govett; the "beyond the reach of death" of the Twentieth Century; the "imperishable" of "The Corrected New Testament;" the "indestructible" of Dr. Weymouth's "New Testament in Modern Speech," and of Rendall; and "a life of undying perpetuity" of J. B. McCaul. The Risen Life of Christ *is* indeed ALL THIS—it *is* "endless," it *is* "beyond the reach of death," it *is* "imperishable," it *is* "indestructible," etc.; but it is so BECAUSE it is "indissoluble." And if the resultant inference,—that when death does befall men it is because their life is dissolvable—does not suit the psychological theories of theologians, then all we need say is: So much the worse for their theories! Perhaps the practical hint is worth pondering, that when the true psychology of the Bible is really believed, we shall all more adequately feel the force of the example of our dying Lord and the protomartyr Stephen, when, in the article of death, they prayed, respectively: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."^a

2. We gladly pass to a very practical because experimental observation, by emphasising the fact that our High Priest's perpetual occupancy of his sacerdotal office especially commends him to our sustained regard and confidence, in that he is thereby "able to be saving us to the very end." How bitterly many an afflicted and sensitive soul, under the Levitical priesthood, must have shrunk from opening anew long-standing griefs to an unknown successor, whose sympathy had never been tested; instead of merely, by a hint or even a look, bringing up to date the old troubles which now needed no further enlargement; a Hannah, for

* For further suggestions on this subject, see *ante*, pp. 37, 38, and *post*, pp. 137, 153-154. And see App. (7).

instance, finding it imperative to detail experiences to Eli's flippant sons instead of recalling them by a word to the memory of the kind old man their father. Consoling thought in our age, that we still approach the Divine Throne through the same Intercessor as pleaded for and helped us in our youth. Let us therefore go forward with confidence: he who has saved us so far will save us to the end; he who has sanctified us in measure already, will sanctify us wholly. The Priest who interceded for my father, my mother, lives to intercede for me. With my heritage of ancestral weaknesses and victories he is abidingly familiar, and will assuredly turn them to good account.

3. With a splendid outburst of eulogy, in which the choicest words of commendation are piled up, our Author brings his present train of thought to a climax. "For such a High-priest AS THIS *for us* is even suited": "Loving"—*hosios*, the Greek representative of the beautiful Hebrew *hésedh*, full of lovingkindness, like God himself,—and does not that "suit" us? "Noble"—*akakos*, free from baseness and especially malice, by implication the opposite of this, considerate, generous, "noble,"—and does this not "suit" us, who could ill bear to be chided harshly for our shameful failures? "Undefiled"—*amiantos*, with no spot to bar his way to God or to limit his holy power over us,—and does this not "suit" us? "Set apart from sinners"—*kechorisimenos*, showing that although he was once hemmed in and thwarted by sinful men, he is so now no longer. "And become higher than the heavens" through which he has triumphantly passed and is exalted above all who do those heavens inhabit; so that no accuser can come so near the Divine Throne but Jesus is nearer still. "Who hath no daily necessity to offer sacrifice"—having no sins of his own to atone for, and having once for all made propitiation

for others. And, to say all, "A Son age-abidingly made perfect" with the acquired perfection of experimental discipline and obedient surrender; we say, Do not all these exquisite fitnesses and adaptations in our High-priest pre-eminently "suit" and "beseem" us,—causing us at once to appreciate our unspeakable preciousness to the Divine Father, and to realise how much *saving* we need, to require so many illustrious qualifications in him who, as our Priest, has to achieve the task of "leading" us—even us—to the "glory" of joining our Leader in holding in subjection "the inhabited earth to come of which we speak"?

Truly our Author has transported us far out of sight of Melchizedek; who, after all, personally is comparatively unknown. He has made us feel afresh that we do indeed intimately know him in whom we have believed—Jesus the Son of God.

STUDY X.

THE HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD AND THE NEW COVENANT.

(Chap. VIII. 1—13.)

8. ¹ || A crowning point on the things being spoken || :—
 <Such a one as this> have we |as high-priest|,
 Who hath sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty
 in the heavens,—
- ² <Of the Holy place> a public minister,
 And of the Real Tent, which |the Lord| pitched and not |man|.
- ³ For ||every' high-priest|| <for the offering of both gifts and sacrifices>
 is constituted ;
 Whence it was |necessary| for |this one also| to have something
 which he might offer.
- ⁴ <If, indeed, therefore, he had been on earth>
 He had not, in that case, even been' a priest,
 Since there are' those who are offering the gifts |according to the
 law| :—
- ⁵ Who, indeed, are rendering divine service, with a glimpse' and
 shadow' |of the heavenly things| ;
 Even as Moses hath received intimation, when about to complete
 the tent,—
 For see! saith he—*Thou shalt make all things according to the
 model which hath been pointed out to thee in the mount.*
- ⁶ But |now| hath he attained unto |a more distinguished| public
 ministry,—
 By as much as <of a better' covenant also> he is |mediator|,
 Which indeed <upon better promises> hath been legislated.
- ⁷ For <if ||that first|| had been |faultless||>
 Not' in that case <for a second> had there been sought |a place|.
- ⁸ For finding fault with them he saith—
Lo ! |days| are coming, saith the Lord,
When I will conclude, for the house of Israel and the house of Judah,
||A covenant of a new sort|| :
- ⁹ *Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers,*
In the day when I took them by their hand, to lead them forth out
of the land of Egypt,—

- Because |they| abode not in my covenant,
 And |I| disregarded them, saith the Lord.
- 10 Because |this| is the covenant which I will make with the house of
 Israel,
 |After those days| saith the Lord:—
 <Giving my laws into their understanding>
 <Upon their hearts also> will I inscribe them;
 And I will become their' God,
 And |they| shall become my' people;
- 11 And in nowise shall they teach—
 Everyone his fellow-citizen,
 And everyone his brother;
 Saying,—Get to know the Lord!
 Because |all| shall know me,
 From the least unto the greatest of them;
- 12 Because <propitious> will I be as to their unrighteousnesses,
 And <of their sins> in nowise will I be mindful |any more|.
- 13 In saying Of a new sort he hath made obsolete |the first|;
 But |the thing that is becoming obsolete and aged|
 Is near ||disappearing||!

I. It is worthy of notice that, in specifying what he regards as the “crowning point” of the things he is saying, our Author should simply name the heavenliness of Christ’s priesthood: “such a one as hath sat down,” etc. This shews that the emphasis is none too great which in Studies II. and VII. we have already laid upon this very point. It is a point which is continually being missed; and, where not altogether missed, is at least obscured. It must not be overlooked. It must be persistently made prominent. It is a crowning point in the Author’s own estimation. The shadowy Tent was on earth: the Real Tent is in heaven. The Messiah could not have been a priest on earth: it is solely in heaven that, in that capacity, he ministers.

II. The description here given of the Levitical priests, as men who were ministering “with a [mere] glimpse and shadow of the heavenly things,” is especially illuminating when connected with the “pattern” or “model” which was

shewn to Moses in the holy mount. Let us try to realise this. Moses' Tent was a *copy of a copy*. The primary copy was *only* a copy on a reduced scale, affording a mere hint—a faint outline—a vague and dim shadow—of the vast and splendid heavenly realities. Those realities, if they could have been seen by Moses, would have dazzled and bewildered him, and have afforded him little or no help in constructing the small tent he was commanded to rear. What he needed was a working model, to be carefully and exactly imitated. Only a Divine Artist could have constructed for him such a model; for, though it was only “a glimpse and shadow,” yet it *was* that, and therefore must be scrupulously followed in every detail; since it is obvious that the slightest departure from it might have resulted in caricature instead of resemblance. Nor is this all. The model must, we think, have shown Moses how far he might go in adapting the tent he was to make for setting up and taking down, and for removal from place to place. So far and no further, even in these things, might he go; for on no account must the “glimpse and shadow” be defaced. Moreover, there is this to be considered: That the Divine Artist, in constructing that model, must himself have introduced into it certain temporary arrangements; as, for instance, the division of the whole structure into two compartments; the first to be of merely temporary significance. Only on a direct Divine basis would the Holy Spirit have given the hint, which in the next chapter he has given, that a time would come when that “first tent” (or compartment) would have no further “standing” or use. And therefore the Divine hand must itself have incorporated the feature which was to be of merely temporary application. The idea of doing such a thing of his own accord could never have occurred to Moses. For all these reasons, then, the inherent difficulty of reducing the vast and sublime heavenly things

to the dimensions of a working model, the need for appliances suited to the exigencies of journeying in the wilderness, and the incorporation in the model itself of some features of continued but not eternal significance, so that the double tent could ultimately be resolved into a single dwelling-place,—these things adequately account for the stringency of the oft-repeated Divine injunction laid upon Moses—to be very careful to follow implicitly the “pattern” or “model” which he was caused to see in the holy mount. There is always risk in copying a copy, and therefore the smallest departure from exemplar must, in this instance, be scrupulously guarded against.

III. The heavenly ministry of Jesus is now brought into relation to his position as Mediator of “a better Covenant resting on better promises” than those which sustained the Sinai Covenant. Already has he been named as “Surety” of such a Covenant—a title of no small significance, as we shall see. A “Surety” of a covenant is one who pledges himself to see it fulfilled: a “Mediator” is one who negotiates it, induces the parties to it to undertake its obligations. Jesus brings the New Covenant into existence: Jesus undertakes that its stipulations shall be faithfully carried into effect. How immediate the bearing of this is on the future of Israel and Judah, will appear presently. Meantime we are arrested by the statement that the New Covenant rests upon *better promises* than did the Old. And this at once becomes obvious as we glance down the terms of the New Covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah, and then recall the conditional basis of the Old Covenant. “If ye will INDEED HEARKEN to my voice and keep my covenant, then shall ye be mine as a treasure beyond all the peoples”—such was the original overture to Israel. “Therefore shall ye observe my statutes and my regulations, which < if the son of

earth shall do them > then shall he live in them," is the oft-repeated reminder of conditionality. The Old Covenant was based on a conditional promise—"If"; but how serious an "if" was that! Not so the New Covenant. It begins and runs on with absolutely unconditional promises, in the strength of which guaranteed fulfilment the happy realisation was to follow.

It should be well observed how pre-eminently national the foundation promise of the New Covenant is: it is primarily and abidingly for "the house of Israel and the house of Judah": a distinction between the Two tribes and the Ten which has no conceivable application to any other nation under the heavens. I know, indeed—and rejoice to know—that the spiritual kernel of this New Covenant has meantime passed into the blessed possession of the Christian Ecclesia, and that, as the token of this grace, "the Cup of the Covenant" has been passed into believing Gentile hands. But this fact does not obliterate the primary national destination of the Covenant to the Twelve-tribed nation. It is theirs by express promise. It is furthermore confirmed to them by the specification of outward and local benefits which have no relation to Gentiles. And, indeed, it stands in a most remarkable section of Jeremiah's predictions; forming, as it does, the central promise of *three*, each beginning with the significant and confident Divine announcement—"Lo! days are coming." As surely as the house of Israel and the house of Judah are to be "sown with the seed of men and of beasts"; as surely as the waste places around Jerusalem are to become once more holy unto Jehovah *and so remain*;—so surely shall this central promise of a New National Covenant receive its most circumstantial and literal accomplishment. The time has gone by when we Gentiles could with impunity steal away the

promises expressly made over to the ancient nation; especially that of the COVENANT of which their Messiah has become SURETY.

IV. Let us enlarge the bounds of our observation and of our exegesis, and not doubt whether there will be room in the "Kingdom" which we "are receiving" for all the gracious products of former and later dispensations. The anti-type of the old time of typical shadows is not the Church but the Kingdom. The Church is only twice named in this Epistle,—the first time as the worshipping Assembly gathered around the glorified Messiah,^a and the second time as merely one of the companies of immortals gathered into or located around the Heavenly Jerusalem.^b The myriad messengers are there, the spirits of the perfected righteous from the old economy are there; and the church, as a distinct group, is also there, but only as an assembly of first-born ones, affording a distinct hint of later-born ones to follow. And as we thus make room for reaches of space out of which the ultimate harvest is to be gathered, so let us take in the reaches of time which incidentally come under our notice. One such incidental reference, as to time, arrests us at the close of this eighth chapter; where, quite informally, we are given to understand that the Old Sinaitic Covenant was labelled "obsolete" for five or six hundred years before—according to any calculation—it finally passed away. God takes time to abolish: he takes time to introduce. We are receiving a Kingdom; and yet its final manifestation is still in the future.

^a Chap. ii. 12.

^b Chap. xii. 23.

STUDY XI.

THE HEAVENLY PRIESTHOOD AND THE
HEAVENLY TENT.

(Chap. IX. 1—28.)

- 9 ¹ [Even] the first, indeed, therefore, used to have righteous appointments of divine service,
The sanctuary also—pertaining to this world.
- ² For [a tent] was prepared, [the first],
In which were both the lampstand and the table and the setting forth of the loaves,—
The which is called Holies;
- ³ But <after the second' veil> a tent, that which is called Holies of Holies:
- ⁴ Having a golden' altar of incense,
And the ark of the covenant covered around on every side with gold,
In which was a golden jar holding the manna,
And the rod of Aaron that sprouted,
And the tables of the covenant;
- ⁵ But <over above it> Cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiatory:—
[Concerning which things] it is not now [needful] to be speaking particularly.
- ⁶ Now <these things having been thus' prepared>
<Into the first' tent> indeed <continually> do the priests enter,
<The divine services> completing;
- ⁷ But <into the second> once' for all in the year',
Only the high priest,
Not without blood,
Which he offered for himself and the ignorances of the people:
- ⁸ The Holy Spirit [making this' evident]—
That <not yet> hath been manifested the way of the Holies,
[So long] as the first' tent hath [a standing].
- ⁹ The which is a similitude for the present season,
According to which both gifts and sacrifices are offered,
Which cannot [as to the conscience] perfect him that rendereth the divine service:—
- ¹⁰ Only as to eatings, and drinkings, and diversified' immersions,—

Righteous appointments of the flesh,

Which [until a season of rectifying] are in force.

- ¹¹ But <when Christ approached, as High-priest of the coming good things,

Through the greater and more perfect tent, not made by hand,

That is, not of this creation,—

- ¹² Nor yet through blood of goats and calves,

But through his own blood >.

He entered once for all into the Holies,

||Age-abiding' redemption discovering||.

- ¹³ For <if the blood of goats and bulls,

And the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the profaned,

Halloweth unto the purity of [the flesh] >

- ¹⁴ ||How much rather|| shall [the blood of the Christ,

Who through an age-abiding spirit

Offered ||himself|| unspotted unto God|

Purify our conscience from dead' works.

To the rendering of divine-service [unto a living God]?

- ¹⁵ And ||for this cause|| <of a new covenant> is he mediator,—

To the end that <death coming to pass for the redemption of the transgressions against ||the first|| covenant>

The called might receive [the promise] of the age-abiding' inheritance.

- ¹⁶ For <where a covenant is>

It is necessary for the death to be brought in, of him that hath covenanted;

- ¹⁷ For [a covenant over dead persons] is firm',—

Since it is not then' of force when he is [living] that hath covenanted.

- ¹⁸ Whence ||not even the first|| <apart from blood> hath been consecrated;

- ¹⁹ For <when every' commandment according to the law ||had been spoken|| by Moses unto all people>

<Taking the blood of the calves and the goats,

With water and scarlet wool and hyssop>

<Both the scroll itself and all the people> he sprinkled;

- ²⁰ Saying—

[*This*] is the blood of the covenant which [God] hath sent in command unto you:

- ²¹ Yea <the tent also, and all' the utensils of the public ministry> with blood' in like manner' he sprinkled;

- ²² And [nearly] all things <with blood> are purified [according to the law],

And <apart from blood-shedding> cometh no ||remission||.

- ²³ It was indeed therefore [necessary] for [the glimpses of the things in the heavens] with these' to be purified;

- But |the heavenly things themselves| with better' sacrifices than
|these|.
- ²⁴ For <not into Holies |made by hand|> entered Christ,—
Counterparts of the real [Holies];
But ||into the heaven itself||,
|Now| to be openly manifested before the face of God in our behalf;—
- ²⁵ Nor yet that |ofttimes| he should be offering himself,—
Just as |the high-priest| entereth into the Holies year by year,
with alien' blood;—
- ²⁶ Else had it been |needful for him| oftentimes' to suffer from the
foundation of the world;
But ||now|| <once for all,
Upon a conjunction of the ages,
For a setting aside of sin through means of his sacrifice>
Hath he been made manifest;
- ²⁷ And <inasmuch as it is in store for men—
Once for all' to die,
But after this' |judgment|>
- ²⁸ |Thus| ||the Christ also||
<Once for all having been offered,
For the bearing of the sins of many>
<A second time, apart from sin> will appear,
|To them who for him' are ardently waiting|
||Unto salvation||.

I. THIS is probably the most difficult portion of the Epistle, and calls for especial care if we are to thread our way successfully through it.

II. The connection with what has gone before appears to be simple and obvious, the underlying thought being something like this: "Nevertheless, although the old Sinaitic Covenant had by Jeremiah been practically declared obsolete, yet had it valuable adumbrative instruction to yield"—some of which our Author proceeds to unfold.

III. Closer consideration brings me round to the more usual rendering of the remarkable word *kosmikon* ("worldly" or rather "world-related") used of "the sanctuary" in the first verse: "Even the first [covenant] used to have righteous appointments of divine service, and its

sanctuary—one related to this world.” This description was probably intended to strike the key-note of what follows—in which the relation of the Sacred Tent to this world is at several points made prominent: “a similitude for the present season”—“righteous appointments of the flesh.”

IV. It will be observed that the Writer describes the arrangements of the Sacred Tent with especial reference to the ceremonies which were celebrated therein; hence the use of the word “prepared” twice over (“a tent was prepared”—“these things having been thus prepared,” vv. 2 and 6). It is the ceremonial action in the prepared places which carries forward the thought to a climax.

V. It is remarkable that, for his purpose, our Author divides the one tent into two, and that he sets in strong contrast the daily ritual of the first or outer compartment (“continually do the priests enter”) and the yearly ritual consummated in the second or inner compartment. That this is essential to his argument is clear from the circumstance that it is the first tent *only* which he represents as a similitude for the present time. Whatever prefigurative force was centred in the second tent, falls into the background for the moment, so intent is he to note the lesson intended to be conveyed by the Holy Spirit from *the hiding of the second tent behind the first*, and the comparative prominence of the daily ritual in the outer place over the yearly ritual in the inner: as long as the daily service in the first tent continues, he says, it bars the way and obscures the entrance into the second.

VI. The most surprising thing of all is the clear assumption of our Author that there is something essentially more

temporary in the existence—or, at any rate, in the use—of the first tent than holds good of the second. The way of the Holies, he says, is obscured so long as the first tent has a “standing”: as though he were thinking of a time to come when the first tent would either be utterly abolished, leaving the inner tent remaining alone, with a ready and evident way into it; or, at least, when the outer tent would have no further significance—no “standing”, no especial use, no adumbrative force. The difficulty of the thought lies in its novelty; for, up to this point, the hypothesis has never been met with in the Sacred Writings that a time would ever come when the inner shrine would exist alone, apart from the outer.

VII. Perhaps, after all, this difficulty is not so great as at first would appear. It may be due to the rapid sweep of the Writer's thought, which, impatient of restraint, darts forward to greet the heavenly realities without first staying to point out what were the typical features of the inner tent. If this be the true explanation, then we must conclude that the marked transition which meets us at verse eleven conveys a fuller significance than is expressed in so many words: as much as to say—“But when Christ entered into the antitypical Holies, the very distinction between Holy and Most Holy was abolished. Passing through the one veil of his flesh, he was immediately in the unveiled presence of God. The heavenly Tent is not double, but single, spacious, complete: all of it lit up with the Divine Glory—all equally the Divine Home. Into this Christ entered at once, as well as once for all. The way of the Holies is henceforth manifest: Christ has entered it: he is in the Holies.”

VIII. Perhaps all that is wanted to complete our exposition at this point is that we blend state and place—the

glorious *person* of Christ with the heavenly *presence* of Christ. He has passed through the veil of his flesh into the spiritual condition of his person: he has passed out of earth into heaven. He is both glorious and in glory.

IX. All that remains before we pass on, is to emphasise the certainty that the "approach" mentioned in verse eleven is Christ's approach unto God, and *not* his coming into this world.^a The "being come" of the A.V., the "having come" of the R.V., and even the "having appeared" of the Corrected N.T. are misleading. One has only to glance forward to verses 24 and 26 to be sure of this; but a misconception once lodged in the reader's mind is not always easily dislodged. The Greek word *paraginomai* simply means "to get near," whether by coming or going; and as in this place it is drawing near as priest—which Christ was not on earth—there should not be a moment's misconception.

X. The immeasurable superiority of Christ's death over that of the Levitical offerings has been sufficiently anticipated in "Study II." It may be well, however, to re-affirm the conviction that the "age-abiding spirit" (verse 14) through which the Messiah offered *himself* without spot unto God refers to his own human spirit, which in death was committed into the Father's hands, and which, being made dominant in his reconstructed personality by his resurrection, enabled and entitled him to resume the devotion which had on earth carried him to the Cross, and so now, as priest acting in "the power of an indissoluble life," he offers HIMSELF—offers the sum total of his surrendered earthly life—as an adequate offering for the sins of the world. This view invests the Messiah's priesthood with a

^a See App. (8).

dignity which does not otherwise so triumphantly shine forth. According to this view, moreover, all excuse for charging with injustice the Divine substitution of the Just for the Unjust is effectually obviated. The Willinghood of earth is re-affirmed in heaven. Well might our Author claim that such blood—such a life—so surrendered—had efficacy to cleanse our conscience from the defilement of “dead works,” works done in death, even the miserable death which puts outward ceremonies in the place of love; and to bring us into holy and loving service to a Living God.

XI. Notwithstanding the inferiority of the first Covenant, its just claims must not be disregarded; hence offences against it must be dealt with, and those who have fallen under its condemnation must be treated as offenders. The old Covenant, however, though it could mark offences against its statutes, could not efficaciously deliver even the pious from its condemnation. The difficulty is met by the retrospective force of Messiah’s death, which avails for “the called,” who have by faith accepted promises of an age-abiding inheritance; who have caught glimpses of the life immortal, and counted themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Such is the teaching of verse 15.

XII. With the utmost decision must we continue to protest against the introduction of “testament” as the meaning of *diatheke* in verses 16, 17. It is needless, and it does violence to the continuity of our Author’s argument. It is needless, as a patient consideration of Gen. xv. 7—21, and Jeremiah xxxiv. 18, 19, might have shown, where both parties to the Covenant are represented as dead to all change of mind; and it does violence to the argument of the present passage, as the sudden jerk back to the covenant idea, which in that case is felt in verse 18, alone sufficiently

shews: "Whence not even the first apart from blood hath been consecrated." "The first"—what? "Testament?" Nay! the first (that at Sinai) was *not* a testament, but a covenant. Besides, as well said by the "Speaker's Commentary" on vii. 22, "A testament no more requires a surety than it does a mediator;" and on ix. 15, "The use of the term Mediator shews that we have here to do with the Hebrew idea of a 'covenant,' not with the Roman idea of a 'testament.' A mediator is the proper guardian of a covenant (see Gal. iii. 15—20), but has no place in regard to a testament. Neither, again, does the death of a testator possess any of the sacrificial character which is referred to in vv. 15—22."

XIII. As already suggested in our second Study, the necessity for cleansing the holy places can only be relative. Sin is contaminating. Holy places are to be treated as defiled by the entrance of unholy persons. If into the former the latter enter, it must be under solemn Divine protest. He that has been unholy must be unholy no longer; and for the past, satisfaction must be made. If we would enter heaven itself, the holy abode of God, we must have a Sacrificial Forerunner.

XIV. It is evident on the face of the two concluding verses of this chapter (ix. 27, 28) that a CORRESPONDENCE is assumed to exist between Men in general and Christ—between the Race and the Redeemer of the Race. The introductory words "Inasmuch" and "Thus" make this sufficiently clear. But when we proceed to the working out of the correspondence, some difficulty is felt, probably due to the absence of exact words of comparison. If it had been said, "Inasmuch as it is in store for men once for all to die, thus Christ died once for all," the correspondence in

this part of the statement would, of course, have been self-evident; and it is worth while to observe that it is only because of the richness of the thought to be conveyed—only because the death of Christ is clothed in terms expressive of the object for which he died—that the correspondence in this particular is momentarily obscured. Of course, the statement about Christ at this point is equivalent to, “Thus Christ also died once for all, and in dying was made an offering for the bearing of the sins of many;” and when this is noted obscurity vanishes. It is in the next clause that the more serious difficulty arises; for, it may be asked, what resemblance is there between the appointment or reservation unto men of judgment after death and the second appearing of Christ? Fairly to confront this question is a good step taken toward discovering the answer. We have only to think of the judgment after death rather as an encouragement than as a warning, to perceive the correspondence in this matter also between the Race and the Redeemer of the Race. Regard judgment after death as primarily a righting of the wrongs of this life, and a stable basis is at once laid for the implied further correspondence between Men as Men and their New Head. How great the wrong done to the Messiah—from the human side—by his rejection and death: how triumphant the righting of that wrong which is brought into view by the prospect of his re-appearance from behind the veil which at present conceals him; especially when his bestowment of salvation on those who are looking for him is regarded as only an instalment of the full recompense that awaits him. Nor is it *far-fetched* to regard judgment after death as primarily and fundamentally a blessing; seeing that the last word on the line of sin is “Death,” and therefore the moment the weighty clause is added “but after death a Judging,” we have a right to infer that already the light of

Redemption has begun to dawn ! Our text is dealing with what is in store for man *as man*, and not with special condemnation for special sin : a breadth of view which affords a solid basis on which to contemplate the triumph of Men's Redeemer, and thus this climacteric text shines out according to its manifest intention.

STUDY XII.

THE MANY OFFERINGS ABOLISHED BY THE ONE OFFERING.

(Chap. X. 1—18.)

- 10 ¹ For the law <having ||a shadow|| of the destined' good things,
Not the very' image' of the things>
They can never' <with the same' sacrifices which ||year by year||
they offer evermore>
Make |them who approach| ||perfect||;
- 2 Else, would they not, in that case, have ~~ceased~~ being offered,
By reason of those rendering the divine service having no' further
conscience at all' of sins,
||Being once for all purified||?
- 3 But <in them> is a recalling to mind of sins |year by year|,
- 4 For it is ||impossible|| for blood of bulls and goats to be taking
away sins.
- 5 Wherefore <coming into the world> he saith :
<Sacrifice and offering> thou wiltdest not,
But <a body> hast thou fitted for me,—
- 6 <In whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sins> thou didst not
delight :
- 7 |Then| said I—
Lo ! I am come,—
<In the heading of the scroll> it is written concerning me,—
To do, O God, ||thy will||.
- 8 <|Higher up| saying—
<Sacrifices, and offerings, and whole-burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for
sins> thou wiltdest not, neither delightedst in,—
The which <according to the law> are offered>—
- 9 |Then| hath he said—
Lo ! I am come
To do |thy will|.
- He taketh away the first, that <the second> he may ||establish|| :
- 10 By which will we have been hallowed,
Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ||once for all||.
- 11 And ||every' priest||, indeed, standeth daily, publicly ministering,
And the ||same|| sacrifices oftentimes' offering,
The which never' can clear away sins ;

- ¹² But ||this|| priest <having offered one sacrifice ||for sins|| for evermore>
Sat down on the right hand of God :
- ¹³ <As for the rest> waiting—
Until his foes |be made| his footstool ;
- ¹⁴ For <by one' offering> hath he perfected for evermore, them who
 are being hallowed.
- ¹⁵ But even the Holy Spirit ||beareth us witness|| ;
 For <after having said—
- ¹⁶ ||*This*|| is the covenant that I will covenant unto them
After those days saith the Lord,—
 <Giving my laws upon their hearts>,
 <Upon their understandings also> will I inscribe them'>
- ¹⁷ [He] also [saith]—
 <Of their sins and of their lawlessnesses> I will in nowise be mindful
 any more.
- ¹⁸ But <wherever remission of these is> there is |no further| offering
 |for sins|.

I. At first sight we may fail to see the force of our Author's argument (verses 1, 2), that, if the old offerings had been of real efficacy for the removal of sin, then would they naturally have ceased to be offered. But our failure to feel the cogency of his reasoning may be due to a misapprehension on our part. If, indeed, the yearly sacrifices presented on the great day of atonement, had been the mere clearing off of a year's transgressions, but thoroughly effective at that, there might have been some difficulty in the way of being quite satisfied with the inference so triumphantly embodied in the question, "Would they not in that case have ceased being offered?" It might have been replied, "The inference does not follow; because, however efficacious the annual offering may have been to clear off the past year's obligations, another year will infallibly bring new transgressions and therefore demand renewed offerings." The better view is suggested by the intimation given in Leviticus xvi. 16, 21, which teaches that this annual sacrifice was presented "because of the uncleanness of the sons of Israel, and because of their transgressions—to the extent of all their sins." But what

an extent was that! could it be circumscribed by the bounds of the single newly by-gone year? Were the sins of antecedent years not still theirs? The offerer (let us suppose) had committed theft the year before this last; had spoken reproachfully of his God in the year antedating that in which he had committed theft, and so on, indefinitely backwards over all his life. Who is to snap the thread of responsibility for all the sins of all the life hitherto? Who is to give perfect peace to the conscience over the remembered sins of all the bygone years? There is in this view, inevitably, the calling to mind of accumulated transgressions from *all the past*; and though a solemn form of absolution has been accepted from year to year, the question still remains as to the practical efficiency of that absolution. How can the conscience be kept from being still troubled by sins *at any time* committed, so long as the propitiation for them consists of animal blood only; the assurance of perfect and final acquittal can scarcely be stronger than the adequacy of the substitutional sin-bearing; and the question must still return, "How many animals' lives are equivalent to one man's life?" If it be said "That the Divine Word of pardon is alone sufficient," we have still to reply, "Yes! but in what way, on what conditions, through what medium, is that forgiving word vouchsafed?" The view thus suggested, as to the real meaning of the yearly ritual atonement, is greatly confirmed by the reflection that all the year's sins had already—when the great day of atonement came—been expiated by the daily and occasional offerings already presented,—*imperfectly* expiated, clearly, else why offer sacrifice anew with respect to them at the year's end? *Imperfect* was the daily general offering; *imperfect* also the occasional and individual offerings; and still *imperfect*—always *imperfect*—the yearly sacrifice! There was always a reaching forth for something more complete, more

efficacious, more fully and abidingly satisfying to the imperious demands of a guilty conscience. But it never came—or else the offerings would have ceased, never came until it arrived in the voluntary offering of Israel's Messiah.

II. This quotation here made from Psalm XL. possesses great interest, but at the same time is beset with considerable difficulty. The *interest* arises in part from the terms in which it is introduced, as being the language of the Messiah, disclosing the purpose with which he came into the world ; partly from the comprehensiveness of the terms by which animal sacrifices are represented as relegated to an inferior place in the Divine economy, or even altogether abrogated ; partly, moreover, by the decisive words with which the quotation is dismissed as clearly indicating a change in the Divine Will ! The *difficulty* is mainly due to a discrepancy, at an important point, between the original Hebrew, as it has come down to us, and the Septuagint version, which is here followed by the writer of this Epistle. The Hebrew says, "Ears hast thou opened for me ;" whereas the Septuagint renders the clause, "A body hast thou prepared for me." Either form of expression will make sense, but it is not easy to see how both representations can have had a common origin which would harmonise them and stand as the authentic original of the Psalm. Whether the present Hebrew is correct, and the Greek has missed its way ; or the Hebrew has somehow become corrupt, and the true primitive assertion has been preserved in the Septuagint, we cannot say. No fault in the Hebrew as it now stands can be detected, no incongruity with the context be alleged ; "the opening of the ear" is quite an easy expression for conveying the thought of a willing and attentive mind, and this would certainly weave well into the strain pursued throughout the verses wherein

it stands; since everyone must admit that the disposition of the worshipper is of far more consequence than the offerings which he brings. On the other hand, a much deeper sense is conveyed by the Septuagint than by the Hebrew, seeing that the clause "A body hast thou prepared for me" more naturally suggests to the Christian mind the great fact of the Incarnation itself than anything else. And this moreover brings out a meaning from the exclamation "Lo! I am come," which goes far to justify our Author in attributing the entire passage to the Messiah as uttered by him on "coming into the world." Moreover, from the Septuagint rendering as a starting point, we instinctively carry forward the term "body," when reading this Epistle, to the great Antitypical Offering, as the means by which it was rendered unto God; and it may plausibly be asserted that the very terms of verse 10, "Through the offering of the 'body' of Jesus Christ once for all," are expressly framed on the basis of the presence of the term "body," as it must be assumed to have stood in the Psalm while yet retaining its pristine purity.

Admitting a difficulty which we are unable to remove, we may nevertheless mitigate its severity by the reflection that, even accepting the minimum statement of the present Hebrew text, there is left us in the Psalm a striking and valuable addition to a notable class of passages, such as 1 Sam. xv. 22; Psalm li. 16, 17; Isaiah i. 11—17; Jer. vi. 20; vii. 22, 23; Amos v. 21—24; Micah vi. 6—8; in which the inferiority of animal sacrifices to moral disposition and conduct is strongly enforced. Whenever the ceremonial and the moral come into conflict, we are thus left in no doubt as to which is Divinely preferred; and we are at the same time prepared for a possible new mandate from heaven that the offering of animal victims is henceforth to cease. With all this taken into account as of some

weight in favour of the existing Hebrew text, it is impossible not to feel that *inherent probability* strongly favours the presumably lost text underlying the Septuagint rendering. Is it likely that the Seventy would have thought of such a word as "body," in such a connection, without documentary warrant? It is on the face of it the "harder reading," and hence very unlikely to have been merely *imagined* as the correct word. It is far more probable that the term "body" was dropt by Hebrew copyists as unintelligible and another word substituted for it, than that it was gratuitously inserted by the Hebrew translators into Greek. The facts remain, that the equivalent for "body" (*soma*) has come down to us in the ancient Greek translation of a still more ancient Hebrew text; and that this word "body" has been turned to most forcible account by the Writer of our Epistle to the Hebrews. He, at any rate, betrays no fear of being charged with a misquotation.*

* See App. (9).

STUDY XIII.

EXHORTATION—WARNING—ENCOURAGEMENT.

(Chap. X. 19—39.)

- 19 <Having therefore, brethren, freedom of speech for the entrance of the holies |by the blood of Jesus|,
- 20 Which [entrance] he hath consecrated for us, as a way recent and living,
Through the veil, that is, his flesh,—
- 21 And having a great priest over the house of God >
- 22 Let us be approaching with a genuine' heart, in full assurance of faith,
Having been sprinkled, as to our hearts, from an evil conscience,
And bathed, as to our bodies, with pure water ;
- 23 Let us be holding fast the confession of the hope that it waver not,—
For <faithful> is he that hath promised ;
- 24 And let us be attentively considering one another, to provoke unto love and noble' works,—
- 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,
According to the custom of some,
But exhorting,
And by so much the more as this',
By as' much as ye behold drawing near ||the day||.
- 26 For <if <by choice> we be sinning after the receiving of the full-knowledge of the truth>
<No longer, for sins> is there left over |a sacrifice|,
- 27 But some |fearful| reception of judgment and fiery jealousy,
|About to devour' the opposers|.
- 28 ||Any one having set aside a law of Moses||
<Apart from compassions, upon [the testimony of] two or three witnesses> dieth ;
- 29 Of |how much| sorer |punishment|, suppose ye, shall he' be accounted worthy,
Who hath trampled underfoot |the Son of God|,
And <the blood of the covenant> hath esteemed |a profane thing|
||by which he had been hallowed||,
And <unto the Spirit of favour> hath offered wanton insult?
- 30 For we know him that hath said—
<To me> *belongeth avenging*,
||I|| *will recompense* ;

and again—

The Lord will judge his people.

³¹ <A fearful thing> [it is] to fall into the hands ||of a Living God||.

³² But be calling to mind the former' days,

In which |once ye were illuminated|,

<A great combat of sufferings> ye endured ;—

³³ ||Partly||, indeed, because <both with reproaches and tribulations>

'ye were being made a spectacle,

But ||partly|| because <into fellowship with them who were so involved> ye were brought ;—

³⁴ For <even with them who were in bonds> ye sympathised,

And <unto theseizure of your goods> with joy' ye bade welcome,—

Knowing that ye have yourselves for a better' possession and
|an abiding|.

³⁵ Do not, then, cast away your freedom of speech,—

The which hath |a great' recompense|.

³⁶ For <of endurance> ye have need,

In order that <the will of God> having done,

Ye may bear away |the promise|.

³⁷ For <yet a little while, how short! how short!>

|*The Coming One*| will be here, and will not tarry ;

³⁸ But |my righteous one| by faith |shall live|,

And <if he draw back> ||my soul delighteth not in him||.

³⁹ ||We||, however, are not of a drawing back unto destruction,

But of faith unto an acquisition of life.

I. THE *faith* of Christ ministers to the *life* of Christ in the souls of them who believe. Hence, after teaching comes exhortation ; and such teaching as abounds in this Epistle is fitly crowned with large and impassioned discourse immediately moving to steadfastness of conviction and consistency of conduct. Already hortatory impulses have broken forth from the deeply moved mind of our Author, as in chapters ii. 1—4 ; iii. 12 ; iv. 1, 11, 14—16 ; vi. 1—8 ; but now, having completed his exposition of the heavenly priesthood of the Messiah, he throws his whole energy into large and prolonged appeal. And yet, so closely are light and love combined in those who have “the mind of Christ,” that, even when exhorting, new forms and combinations of truth shed further illumination and originate fresh arguments to steadfastness. These

reflections are suggested by the anticipation that, even after we have committed ourselves to the overflowing stream of exhortation which here begins, we may discover that renewed expository effort is necessary if we would keep abreast with our Author.

II. The contents of the portion of the Epistle on which we now enter may be described as, *first*, exhortation proper (verses 19—25); *second*, warning (26—31); *third*, encouragement (32—39).

First, exhortation pure and simple; of which it is worth noting the framework, as seen in the effective repetitions, "Having and having Let us let us And let us." "Having" a way of entrance into the house of God; "and having" a great high priest over that house, "Let us" make good use of our high privilege. The moving verbs of exhortation are, in the original, aptly thrown into the form which prolongs the actions successively urged: "Let us be *habitually* approaching through the new and living way; let us be *continuously* holding fast our confession; and let us with *constantly renewed* brotherly love be attentively considering one another for the worthy purpose of emulative provocation." Note also the effective—the almost startling—reservation to the very last place, in this one hortatory sentence of seven verses, of the word "day." It is like the final blast of a trumpet. How has lukewarm Christendom lost sight of—the Day! Of course, the Day has been long in coming, and the extension of the short time of waiting for it into a long time (as to which see our first "Study") has proved a sore trial to her faith—a trial so severe that contradictory voices have confused her as to the identity of—the Day. The connected study of the Epistle as a whole should do something to remove the confusion.

The rhetoric of our Author tends to hide his logic from observation. In this very exhortation there is a logical order employed in describing the way of approach which has possibly not attracted much attention; the immediate cause of the partial concealment being this: That, although there is a logical order, it is an *inverted* order. In other words, as actually named, we have:—

1. The sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience ;
2. The bathing of the body in pure water ;
3. The confession of the hope.

It is not fanciful to say that the bathing of the body alludes to Christian immersion. Unless words are perverted or historic facts distorted, it can allude to nothing else, seeing that there is, in the process of consecration to Christ, no other observance to which the words can literally apply ; and, as to literalness, it may justly be observed that if “ body ” does not mean “ body,” neither does “ heart ” mean “ heart ” ; but, in fact, the very contrast between the two necessitates the acceptance of both terms in their usual significance. ^aBut when this is settled, is it fanciful to see further in this place a tracing backwards of the process of conversion ? Let us try the hypothesis of inversion ; and, doing so, the order will stand thus :—

1. The confession of the hope ;
2. The bathing of the body in pure water ;
3. The sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience.

Now it is notorious that in primitive times such was the common order of conversion :—

- 1st. The Christian hope was confessed with the mouth ;
- 2nd. The body of the confessor was immersed in pure water ;

^a See App. (10).

3rd. And seeing that the baptism of the penitent was avowedly "for the remission of sins," it follows that just as certainly as the obedient believer trusted the assurance given by God in this covenant ordinance, so certainly would his heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience; and, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, he would go on his way rejoicing.

The reason of the inversion is evident. The whole process of the foregoing discussion of Messiah's heavenly priesthood having carried the Writer in thought *into the Holiest*, what more natural than that he should mentally *step backwards*, retracing the way by which all converts in those days passed into the shrine of the Divine Presence?

Second, warning. Out of the exhortation springs the warning. "Let us approach—let us hold fast—let us consider one another with frequent exhortations"—*because* of the danger of apostacy. Wilful continuance in sin is exactly what is expressed; and therefore it is doubtful whether actual apostacy is regarded as contemplated from the first by the erring one; or whether (as rather appears) any wilful sin persisted in is not looked upon as inevitably leading to a total departure from Christ. In any case it is presupposed that, whatever be the form of sin wilfully persisted in, it does in fact culminate in conscious renunciation of the Son of God; and this is the grand point to be considered. We are of course at once reminded of the parallel warning in chapter vi. Here, as there, the Writer seems to take pains to express himself so that there shall be no escape from the conclusion that those who revolt, revolt from a real experience of the saving power of the Redeemer. They have received the full or experimental knowledge of the truth, as the Greek compound word *epignosis* always signifies. They have been hallowed

by the blood of the covenant. They have known the Spirit of favour—whom the world cannot know (John xiv. 17) intimately enough to be able to **insult** him. So that it seems impossible to question the reality of their conversion: indeed, the very object of accumulating the evidences of this, manifestly is to demonstrate the enormity of the guilt of those who thus apostatise, and so to lay a firm basis for the conclusion that there is really no compassion possible for those who *thus* sin. Every approach to such an unpardonable crime must therefore be vigilantly guarded against; and every possible means, including those which are secured by regularly assembling together, must be employed to rouse the careless and to make the timid bold.

Third, encouragement. As in the former passage (chapter vi.) so here, the very force of the warning against such a terrible danger, brings a reaction in the spirit of the Writer, as though he must needs seek relief from an intolerable strain: not indeed by weakening his admonitions, nor by any minimising of the dreaded guilt if really incurred; but by a recurrence to the fond hope that the crime of apostacy *will not be committed*. Hence he encourages his wavering readers to indulge those happy memories of past sufferings bravely borne which will be likely to move them to take heed lest they defeat the promise of so good a beginning. The general meaning of this wooing strain is so clear as to need no detailed comment. There are, however, two allusions therein to the primitive teaching of endless life in Christ only which should not be missed. The one is couched under a “reading” now generally accepted by textual critics, according to which we “ourselves” are the better and abiding possession—which seems indeed to be but an echo of our Lord’s own well-known

teaching (Mat. xvi. 26, and parallels), to the effect that, no matter what we gain, if we lose **ourselves**, we lose all. The other allusion springs out of the closing verse of the chapter, when rendered with resolute fidelity. "We are not of a drawing back unto destruction; but (of the opposite) of faith unto an acquisition of life" (or "soul" or "personality") of a something, therefore, which is not ours naturally and inevitably, but only if we win it in the only way in which it can be acquired. "The N. T. in Modern Speech" is the only known version which can be named with satisfaction as confirming the above rendering and the explanation based upon it: "But are among those who believe and gain possession of their souls." Even this, however, is not entirely satisfactory; since the original for soul (*psyche*) is in the singular number and without either article or pronoun; and so precisely and naturally suggests that the thing gained is "soul," which, as is well known, is the great biblical word for conveying the idea of "self" or "personality." There ought to be no hesitation to accept the passage before us in this sense, especially in view of Luke xvii. 33: "Whosoever shall lose his life (*or*, soul) shall preserve it (Gr. save it alive)." Now, if faith is the grand instrument on our part for winning the abiding acquisition of personality, no wonder that the nature and triumphs of faith should be celebrated at large,—which is exactly what awaits us in our next "Study."

STUDY XIV.

THE NATURE AND TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

(Chap. XI. 1—40.)

- 11 ¹ But faith is' <of things hoped for> a confidence,
 <Of facts> a conviction |when they are not seen|;
- ² For <thereby> well-attested' were |the ancients|.
- ³ ||By faith|| we understand the ages to have been fitted together ||by
 declaration of God||,—
 To the end that <not out of things appearing> should that which
 is seen ||have come into existence||.
- ⁴ ||By faith|| <a fuller sacrifice> did Abel' offer unto God than Cain',—
 |Through which| he received witness that he was |righteous|,
There being a witnessing upon his gifts ||by God||;
 And |through it| though he died' ||he yet' is speaking||.
- ⁵ ||By faith|| |Enoch| was translated, so as not to see death,
And was not found, because that |God| had translated him;
 For <before the translation> he had received witness that *he had*
become |well-pleasing unto God|;—
- ⁶ But <apart from faith> it is impossible to be well-pleasing;
 For he that approacheth unto God—
 Must needs ||have faith|| that he is'
 And that <to them who seek him out> <a rewarder> he
 becometh.
- ⁷ ||By faith|| |Noah| <having received intimation' concerning |the
 things not yet' seen|>
 <Filled with reverence> prepared an ark to the saving of his house—
 Through which he condemned the world,
 And <of the righteousness |by way of faith|> became ||heir||.
- ⁸ ||By faith|| <being called> Abraham' obeyed—
To come forth into a place he was destined to receive for an inheritance;
And he came forth ||not well knowing whither he was going||.
- ⁹ ||By faith|| *he sojourned* in the land of promise |as a foreign land|,
 <In tents> dwelling,
 Along with Isaac and Jacob, |the joint-heirs of the same promise|;
- ¹⁰ For he was awaiting the city having foundations',
 Whose architect and builder is |God|.
- ¹¹ ||By faith|| |even Sarah herself| received |power for founding a seed|,
 |Even beyond the season of life's prime|,—
 Seeing that <faithful> she reckoned |him that had promised|;

- 12 Wherefore <even from one> were born,
 And <as to these things> one who had become dead,—
Like the stars of the heaven, for multitude,
And as the sand that is by the lip of the sea, that cannot be
numbered.
- 13 ||In faith|| all' these died'—
 Not bearing away the promises,
 But <from afar> beholding' and saluting' them,
 And confessing that <strangers and sojourners> were they upon
the land.
- 14 For ||they who such things as these' are saying||
 Make it clear that <of a paternal home> they are in quest ;
- 15 And <if indeed |of that| they had been mindful from which they
 had come out>
 They might, in that case, have had an opportunity to return ;
- 16 But ||now|| <after a better one> are they reaching forth,
 ||That is, a heavenly|| ;
 Wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be invoked |as their God|,—
 For he hath prepared for them |a city|.
- 17 ||By faith|| Abraham |when tested| offered up Isaac ;
 And <the only begotten> would he' have offered up |who <the
 promises> had accepted|,—
- 18 Even him of whom it had been said—
 <In Isaac> shall there be called to thee |a seed| ;
- 19 Accounting that <even from among the dead> ||God|| was able |to
 raise [him]|,—
 Whence <even in similitude> he bare him away.
- 20 ||By faith|| <even concerning things to come> did Isaac bless |Jacob
 and Esau|.
- 21 ||By faith|| Jacob, when about to die|,
 Blessed ||each of the sons of Joseph|| ;
 And bowed in worship on the top of his staff.
- 22 ||By faith|| |Joseph, when drawing to his end|—
 <Concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel> called to remem-
 brance,
 And <concerning his bones> gave commandment.
- 23 ||By faith|| |Moses, when born|—
 Was hid three months by his parents,
 Because they saw that <goodly> was |the child|,
 And were not affrighted ||at the decree of the king||.
- 24 ||By faith|| |Moses, when grown up|—
 Refused to be called son of a daughter of a Pharaoh,
- 25 Rather choosing—
 To be jointly suffering ill-treatment with the people of God,
 Than <for a season> to be having ||sin's enjoyment|| ;

- 25 Accounting—
 <As greater riches than Egypt's treasures>
 || *The reproach of the Anointed One*||;
 For he was looking away unto the recompense.
- 27 ||By faith|| he forsook Egypt—
 Not put in fear of the wrath of the king;
 For <as seeing him who cannot be seen> ||he persevered||.
- 28 ||By faith|| he hath kept *the passover* and the besmearing of *the blood*,
 Lest | *he that was destroying* the firstborn | ||should be touching them||.
- 29 ||By faith|| they passed through the Red Sea, as over |dry land|,—
 Which the Egyptians |seizing an attempt' to do| they were
 swallowed up.
- 30 ||By faith|| |the walls of Jericho| fell,
 |Having been surrounded for seven days|.
- 31 ||By faith|| |Rahab the harlot| perished not with them who refused to
 yield,
 ||She having welcomed the spies with peace||.
- 32 And what more' can I say?
 For |time| will fail me while I go on telling—
 Concerning Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah,
 David also, and Samuel, and the prophets,—
- 33 Who ||through faith||—
 Prevailed in contest over kingdoms,
 Wrought righteousness,
 Attained unto promises,
 Shut the mouths of lions,
 Quenched the power of fire,
 Escaped the mouths of the sword,
 Were made to gain power from weakness,
 Became mighty in battle,
 Overturned |camps of aliens|;
- 34 Women received |by resurrection| ||their dead||;
 But |others| were put to the rack,
 Not accepting redemption,
 That <unto a better resurrection> ||they might attain||:
- 35 |Others|, again, <of mockings and scourgings> received trial,
 |Nay! further| of bonds and imprisonments:
- 37 They were stoned, were pierced through, |were sawn asunder|,
 <By murder> with a sword, ||died||,
 Went about in sheep-skins, in goat-hides,—
 Being in want, suffering tribulation, enduring ill-treatment:
- 38 Of whom the world' |was not worthy|—
 <Upon deserts> wandering, and mountains, and in caves,—and
 in the caverns of the earth.
- 39 And ||these all|| <though they obtained witness through their faith>

Yet bare not away |the promise| :

40 ||God|| <for us> something better' providing,—

That <not apart from us> should they be made ||perfect||.

I. It is certainly more important to *have* faith than to be able with accuracy to *define* it. Nevertheless, in the sphere of exposition, there is probably nothing to come before us in our present "Study" more important than the definition of faith here at the outset given; especially seeing that, so far as we are aware, this is the only definition of faith offered in the Bible. That the first verse of chapter xi. of our Epistle *is* a definition of faith, is probably self-evident to nearly all readers; and the few who may possibly have persuaded themselves to the contrary are reminded that the very position of the verb "to be" in the sentence is such that by its rightful emphasis it ought to set this matter at rest. In short, our Writer first defines what faith *is*, for the purpose of then expatiating at length on what faith *does*.

The misfortune is that the popular rendering of the verse—that at least which is familiar as the translation of the A.V.—while still appearing to be a definition, practically mystifies what it should have made clear. That faith is "substance" and "evidence" is by no means satisfactory, and a professed definition of it in that sense can only puzzle the uninitiated; whereas to have said that faith is "confidence" and "conviction," would have at once commended itself to every unsophisticated mind; and even the sub-distinction between "confidence" in relation to "things hoped for," and "conviction" in relation to "things (simply) not seen" would have been readily appreciated after a little reflection, inasmuch as things hoped for naturally elicit the action which *confides*, whereas things not seen, being good, bad, and indifferent in their nature, may broadly be said to be objects of conviction irrespective of the especial attitude toward them which they evoke.

The definition thus submitted ought most assuredly to have appeared in this place. The fact that *hypostasis* (here employed) had already, with universal consent, been rendered "confidence" at chapter iii. 14, should have prepared the way for its adoption here; and then by a similar derivation of a good sound secondary sense for *elenchos*, "conviction" would have followed to complete the sentence. That "confidence" and "conviction" are secondary meanings of the Greek words they represent, is frankly admitted; but while primary acceptations for words ought not to be needlessly departed from, on the other hand too much reluctance to admit derivative senses should not be displayed. In the instance before us, there is not only the fact to consider, that "confidence" is too manifestly right and too securely lodged in iii. 14, to be removed; but there is the volume of evidence conveyed by the whole chapter that follows, to confirm the definition at its outset in the clear and simple significance which is here submitted as correct. Indeed, it may be said that the account of the triumphs of faith which succeeds the definition both generally and particularly protests against the mystical exaggeration which is conveyed by the word "substance" at the outset. Why not be content to say that Noah, Abraham, and the rest had "confidence" beforehand in the good things that were promised them? Why exaggerate by making out that they had the "substance" of the promises *before the promises were fulfilled*? Besides, it is scarcely too much to say that the sacred text twice over flatly contradicts such an assumption; seeing that in two instances, namely, at verses 13 and 39, it is most careful to protest that the ancient heroes of faith "bare not away the promises"! Surely to say that they "bare not away the promises" and yet all the while had the "substance" of them in their bosoms is a species of exegetical trifling to be

deprecated. We observe with pleasure that the rendering of this definition in "The Corrected New Testament" is a great improvement on that of the Revised.

Recurring to the sub-distinction between faith when fixed on "things hoped for," and faith when simply directed to "things unseen," it may prove of practical assistance to reaffirm and emphasise the difference. In ordinary life the principle is the same: we believe or credit what appears *true on evidence*; but, properly speaking, we **confide** only when we act or resolve to act. There must be some venture, some committal of our interests, some reliance—frequently upon another—before intellectual conviction is ripened into whole-souled confidence. To follow this out would be to exhibit the personal relations of the faith that saves, as always in that case trust in another; and yet at the same time—as an unwarranted trust where there is no repentance, no determination of will to accept and win the promises. Moreover, the whole cause and cure of so-called "dead" faith is at once laid bare. Let a man only *act on his conviction*, and his faith will be dead no longer. So, again, the freedom of faith is hereby vindicated: "conviction" of truth is partly at least involuntary; but "confidence" in promised good demands the voluntary surrender of an obedient life to prevent its becoming presumption.

II. To those who have observed how little appears to be said of a future life in the early books of the Bible, it may come as a surprise to be told that Abraham and others looked for the heavenly Jerusalem, and so far came under the spell of the hope of ultimately dwelling therein as to avow themselves "strangers" on the earth. Such readers will be apt to feel as though they had made some mistake or committed some strange oversight in reading the ancient sacred histories, not to have taken from them an impression as to the hope

in olden times more commensurate with the glowing picture presented by the writer of our Epistle. It would seem as though either our Author had access to information which is not in our possession, or else that he read in the sacred documents, which we also possess, evidences which have escaped our search. It is indeed easy to conceive that he did possess an amount of inspirational insight surpassing our own; but it is not easy to regard that insight as being wholly independent of the actual memoirs of patriarchal lives—as though it had come to him by direct revelation from heaven. The likelihood is, rather, that we have been dull scholars; and that greater diligence and keener insight may yet vindicate the inferences which our Author draws from the incidents of those early biographies. To do justice to the argument of our Epistle there are three things which should not be forgotten.

First, we ought to clear our minds of all mere formal acquiescence in popular phraseology, current at the present day. It is easy for *us* to talk and sing about being “strangers and pilgrims” on the earth, but what was it for a man like Abraham to do so? We have behind *us* the fuller revelations of a future life which the later sacred writings have bequeathed to us, and whether we have absolute faith in them or not, it is easy for *us* to adopt current phraseology without seriously confronting all that it involves. To enter into the feelings of the ancient patriarchs, we ought to weigh well the hypothesis that light on the great Beyond was only just beginning to dawn upon their minds; and *then* what would it be for them to confess they were “strangers and sojourners” amongst men?

Secondly, we should note well exactly what the Writer to the Hebrews attributes to Abraham and his joint-heirs. To some extent it is easy to detect in his language that he is

putting his own (no doubt enlightened) construction upon their conduct. But there are two definite things which he attributes to *them*—something they **did**, and something they **said**; and it is fair to assume that he saw the significance of the two things in their combination, since an act, and a hint in explanation of that act, will often be more significant than a fuller verbal explanation alone. They dwelt in tents: they avowed they were strangers. They dwelt in tents—they did not build houses. All three of them did this—father, son, grandson. For a brief stay in Canaan this would have been quite natural; but Abraham so dwelt there for many years. His sojourn when Sarah died must, allowing for one short absence, have been already lengthened to fifty years. Still he continued living in tents; and his sons after him. Why was this? It cannot have been merely because they were sheep and cattle owners; so were their neighbours, and like them these Chaldean foreigners could have dwelt in houses and still have sent abroad their flocks and herds. There were cities: why did they not dwell in them? Their action, on the face of it, seemed ever to be proclaiming that they expected shortly to leave the country. Then, besides their action, there was the occasional confession falling from their lips, as from Abraham's on occasion of Sarah's death: "A sojourner and settler am I with you." How often this frank avowal was made we know not; but we may fairly suppose that, ever and anon in friendly intercourse with their neighbours, it fell from their lips, and that in their own homes it became a household word. This last reflection is obvious when we find the grandson Jacob, as though accustomed to such language, in his speech before Pharaoh, alluding with rhythmic repetition to "the years of my sojournings" and to "the days of the sojournings of my fathers." Nay! it is not a far-fetched inference that this

confession passed into the thought of later times with constant and special reference to those early patriarchal wanderers as probably the first to make it, seeing that in David's noble prayer at the close of his life^a and in the thirty-ninth Psalm the same association with the fathers occurs: "Sojourners are we before thee, and strangers like all our fathers"; "A sojourner am I with thee, a stranger like all my fathers." It is natural to think that it was from those three famous "pilgrim fathers," Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that this association of ideas—in fact this confession—originally sprang. For, when thoughtfully examined, it is not a very natural confession for men to make who have no hope of a future life; since, however brief human life may be and must sometimes affectingly appear, yet, on the hypothesis of there being no life beyond the present, it may be asked—If man is not at home in this his only dwelling place, then where is he at home? and why then should he describe himself as a stranger therein? Such, at all events, are the two facts in the lives of the patriarchs which there is no denying: for long years, even for three generations, they dwelt in tents; and they avowed themselves to be strangers and sojourners in the land.

Thirdly, having noted well the facts on which our Author builds, we have finally to consider how far his conclusions from those facts are legitimate inferences, and how far they were matters of direct revelation. It is obvious that the language in the text before us is partly inferential. For example when it says, "They who such things as these are saying make it clear that of a paternal home they are in quest," this by no means conveys the idea that the patriarchs actually *said* so; but only that, from their conduct, such was the conclusion to be legitimately drawn. And so, further on, in reminding us that these sojourners could

^a 1 Ch. xxix. 15.

have returned to Ur of the Chaldees had they been so determined, the writer is again making a legitimate *comment* and inviting his readers to form that conclusion concerning the three notable wanderers. But after ample allowance has been made for the play of just inference, it must be admitted that there is yet something which a mere later construction of recorded fact can scarcely account for. Granted, as a fact clearly substantiated, that God was not ashamed to be invoked as their God, yet how does that shew that he prepared for them a city; where is that narrated in the ancient record? or how is it implied in his acknowledging himself as their God? If it is narrated, we have failed to discover the narrative: if it is to be inferred from what is recorded, then we should be glad to see the force of that inference clearly evinced. The strongest statement awaiting solution is probably that other, contained in verses 9 and 10, namely, that the reason why Abraham and his co-heirs dwelt in tents was that they—Abraham at least—were awaiting the God-built city well founded. Does it suffice to say of this: That it shews Abraham looked for a permanent abode at home with God, and that the specific description of that condition *as a city* is due to a half-unconscious crystallisation of that conception by the writer of this Epistle? or—better still perhaps—is due to a clearer light than Abraham himself possessed on the nature of the hope which in its substance he cherished? As much as to say: He looked for an eternal happy home with God—which *we now know* as the heavenly Jerusalem.

The above analysis has been thus pressed rather searchingly upon fellow-students of this Epistle under the feeling that, perhaps, just here—namely in relation to the apparent feebleness of evidence for a future life discoverable in the Old Testament—God has more light to break forth

from his Word. This, at least, may be said in advance: that it would greatly enhance the perceived completeness of those ancient biographies, could we find in them satisfying proofs that, amid the vicissitudes and disappointments of their earthly lives, they possessed a heavenly hope, which, though they might only seldom and enigmatically speak of it, nevertheless was to them a firm and enduring support to their faith in a Living God.

III. There is but one other matter which especially craves to be included in our present Study; and that is, some notice of the peculiar terms in which this most eloquent Eleventh Chapter concludes. It is not merely that the ancient heroes of faith bare not away the promises; but that there was some imperfection clinging to themselves, for the removal of which they had to await our time and our companionship. What that persisting imperfection was, may be gathered from the prevailing usage of the Epistle in particularising the "conscience" as that which animal sacrifices so signally failed effectually to cleanse. It would appear, then, that for the adequate cleansing they had to await the earthly provision and heavenly presentation of the One great Messianic Sacrifice: a conclusion which in many ways furnishes food for thought, and which besides furnishes an especial uniting bond to the whole Epistle. It was for the want of such cleansing that the fear of death rendered even the faithful all their lifetime liable to bondage.^a It was for the same cause that the offences of even "the called" committed "against the first covenant" demanded a redemption which only the sacrifice of "the Mediator of the new covenant" could furnish.^b And, finally, this accounts for the enumeration, as of a distinct class among the associates of the heavenly Jerusalem, additional to "the Assembly of Firstborn ones," of those

^a Chapter ii. 15.

^b Chapter ix. 15.

described as "spirits of righteous ones (now at length) made perfect" or sacrificially cleansed.^a Such need to wait for our time and our companionship before their consciences could be made finally pure, furthermore harmonises with the well-known fact that to the logical mind of the Apostle Paul the *aphesis* of the sins committed aforetime by the ancients appeared to be but a *paresis*—the apparent *sending away* to be only a temporary *setting aside* for future dealing, and even so as requiring to be vindicated or justified "through means of the redemption in Christ Jesus."^b

^a Chapter xii. 23.

^b Rom. iii. 25, 26.

STUDY XV.

RUN THE RACE : ACCEPT THE DISCIPLINE. SINAI AND ZION.

(Chapter XII. 1—29.)

- 12 ¹ Therefore, indeed,
 <Seeing that ||we also|| have encircling us |so great' a cloud of witnesses|>
 <Stripping off every |incumbrance| and the easily entangling sin>
 <With endurance> let us be running |the race that is lying before us|,
 2 Looking away unto our faith's Princely-leader and perfecter,
 ||Jesus||,—
 Who <in consideration of the joy lying before him>
 Endured a cross, <shame> despising!
 And <on the right hand of the throne of God> *hath taken his seat.*
 3 For take ye into consideration—
 Him who hath endured |such' contradiction| *by sinners against themselves,*
 Lest ye be wearied, <in your souls> becoming exhausted.
 4 <Not yet' unto blood> have ye resisted, <against sin> waging a contest;
 5 And ye have quite forgotten the exhortation which, indeed, <with you' as with sons> doth reason :—
My son! be not slighting the discipline of the Lord,
Neither be fainting, when <by him> |thou art reproved|;—
 6 For <whom the Lord loveth> he doth |discipline|,
And scourgeth every' son whom he doth |welcome home|.
 7 <For the sake of discipline> persevere!
 <As towards sons> |God| beareth himself |towards you|;
 For who is |a son| whom |a father| doth not discipline?
 8 <If however ye are without' discipline,
 Whereof |all| have received a share>
 |Then| are ye |bastards| and ||not sons||.
 9 ||Furthermore, indeed|| <the fathers of our flesh> we used to have
 |as administrators of discipline|,
 And we used to pay deference :
 Shall we not ||much rather|| submit ourselves to |the Father of our spirits| and ||live ?

- 10 For |they| indeed <for a few days, according to that which seemed good to them> were administering discipline;
But |he| unto that which is profitable, | with a view to our partaking of his holiness| :
- 11 But ||no discipline|| <for the present, indeed> seemeth to be of joy' but of sorrow';
||Afterwards|| however—
 <To them who thereby have been well trained>
 It yieldeth |peaceful fruit| ||of righteousness||.
- 12 Wherefore <the slackened hands and paralysed knees> restore ye,
- 13 And <straight tracks> be making for your feet,—
That |the lame member| may not be dislocated, but |be healed rather'|.
- 14 <Peace> be pursuing with all, and the obtaining of holiness,—
|Without which| no' one shall see the Lord| :
- 15 Using oversight—
 Lest any one be falling behind from the favour of God,—
 Lest |any root of bitterness| springing up above' ||be causing trouble||,
 And |through it| ||the many|| be defiled :
- 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person |like Esau|,—
 Who <for the sake of one meal> yielded up his own firstborn rights;
- 17 For ye know that <afterwards—
 When he even wished to inherit the blessing>
 He was rejected ;
 For <place of repentance> found he none,
 Even though |with tears' he diligently sought it|.
- 18 For ye have not approached—
 Unto a searching' and scorching' fire,
 And gloom, and mist, and tempest,
- 19 And a trumpet's peal,—
 And a sound of things spoken:—
 From which |they who heard| excused themselves,
 Lest there should be added to them |a word| ;
- 20 For they could not bear |that which was being enjoined|,—
 And <should a beast' be touching the mountain> it shall be stoned ;
- 21 And <so fearful' was that which was showing itself>
 |Moses| said— *I am terrified and do tremble !*
- 22 But ye have approached—
 Unto Zion's mountain,
 And unto the city of a Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,—
 And unto myriads of messengers ²³ |in high festival|,—
 And unto an assembly of firstborn ones, |enrolled in the heavens|,—
 And unto God |judge of all|,—
 And unto the spirits of righteous ones made perfect,—

- 24 And unto the mediator |of a new covenant| ||Jesus||,—
And unto blood of sprinkling, more excellently' speaking than
||Abel||.
- 25 Beware, lest ye excuse yourselves from |him that speaketh|;
For <if ||they|| escaped not, who excused themselves from him
who <on earth> was warning>
||How much less|| shall ||we|| who <from him that warneth from
the heavens> do turn ourselves away:
- 26 Whose voice shook the earth' ||then||,
But ||now|| hath he promised, saying—
||Yet once for all|| I will shake—
<Not only the earth>
But ||also the heaven||.
- 27 But ||the saying Yet once for all||
Maketh clear the removal of the things which can be shaken,
|As of things done with|,—
That they' may remain' ||which cannot be shaken||.
- 28 Wherefore—
<Seeing that <of a kingdom not to be shaken> we are receiving
possession>
Let us have gratitude—
Whereby we may be rendering divine service well-pleasingly unto
God |with reverence and awe|;
- 29 For ||even our God|| [is] *a fire that consumeth.*

WHILE there is much to contribute to holy living in verses 1—17 of this Twelfth Chapter, there is so little that needs explanation that we may at once address our best expository diligence to the sublime contrast between Sinai and Zion which concludes the chapter.

I. That this remarkable passage grows out of and crowns the foregoing exhortations, is obvious. Let us pursue peace and holiness, with the diligent oversight that cares for our brethren; **for** we have *not* approached Mount Sinai (described, though not named), but *have* approached Mount Zion, both named and amply described by the enumerated fellowships and privileges of which it is the centre, and by which we are laid under supreme obligations to steadfastness.

II. The general drift of the contrast is evidently: on the

one hand, to represent Mount Zion as attractive and encouraging in opposition to the terror inspired by Mount Sinai; and yet, on the other hand, as imposing obligations even more solemn and urgent than those enforced by the solemnities of Horeb: If *they* escaped not, much less shall *we*! We have more to answer for than *they*!

III. It may be well to notice in passing that Israel *approached* but did not *ascend* the earthly mount: her mediator alone went up to the summit and entered into the cloud of the immediate Presence. How far this distinction between "approaching" and "ascending" applies to the heavenly mount, remains to be seen; but the same guarded expression "coming unto," or "approaching," is carefully used in both cases. Introduction into fellowship with Law and Grace respectively manifestly lies in the heart of the words.

IV. Perhaps the most significant detail in the description of Sinai and its incidents, is the circumstance that the Sons of Israel "excused themselves" from hearing any more directly uttered by the Divine Voice; for this it is which is caught up and expounded as a warning in verse 25 after the attractions of the heavenly Jerusalem have been displayed. Note well, then, that incalculable responsibility is incurred by any who presume to ask that divine communications be brought to a close. Constructively it is "turning away from" him that speaketh.

V. The general grammatical structure of the description of Mount Zion and its associations, demands a moment's attention; inasmuch as, in the symmetrical arrangement of the passage we discover our best substitute for authoritative punctuation—which, of course, we do not possess. From

this point of view we cannot fail to observe how naturally and effectively the seven-times repeated *kai* ("and") divides the sentence into eight clauses; and a perception of the commanding force imparted to this "And," as it appears in the rendering given above, will probably satisfy any English reader of literary instincts that in this and no other way should the clauses be divided. The one exegetical point involved concerns the clause about "myriads of messengers," and has the effect of *affixing* to it—rather than *prefixing* to the next clause—the phrase "in high festival"; or, if that were in the least too brightly coloured a rendering, we might be content to translate, "in general gathering." The "Speaker's Commentary," indeed, not only decides for the clausular division above adopted, but boldly sustains it by the exegetical remark: "'Tens of thousands of Angels' had attended 'the ministration of death' on Sinai (2 Cor. iii. 7) and had mournfully watched over Israel's later history. Now they were able to hold festival: celebrating the victory of Divine love." In any case this interpretation almost certainly looks in the right direction; for the gathering of heavenly messengers, it would seem, is already complete, whereas the "assembly of the first-born ones" though already "enrolled in heaven" is not yet, as to actual congregating, an accomplished fact. Moreover, since we know that, to the ascended Christ, "messengers and authorities and powers" have already been made subject,^a it is no very extravagant exercise of fancy to suppose that, although their curiosity regarding the work of redemption is not yet by any means satisfied,^b they have even now so ravishing a view of the superlative worth of their newly exalted Head, that their very subjection to him has occasioned them unbounded joy, and that in the constant spirit and recurring realisation

^a 1 Peter iii. 22.

^b 1 Peter i. 12.

of "high festival" they (those among them especially, called "messengers") have already started on their mission of ministering unto those who are destined to inherit salvation.^a

VI. It is perhaps impossible not to feel the idealism of this whole description of Mount Zion and all that it represents. In other words we are restrained from pressing too anxiously the question, "*What Mount Zion is this?*" All that we need say is, That it is the heavenly realisation of that which the earthly Zion symbolised. The counterpart of the earthly Zion is in very deed "the Sunny Mount." It has its head in the heavens. On its summit is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We are at the base of the mountain, not having reached its summit yet. But we are in touch with all that is thereon. Our Mediator and Forerunner, who has ascended into it, is in communion with us at the foot. In the next chapter, indeed, we learn that at present we have by no means reached our Mother City. We are only seeking our way to it. But that is not the dominant thought here. The controlling conception in this place is, not distance, but nearness; not separation, but fellowship. And the fellowship is living, active, fruitful. The heavenly messengers are already ministering to us. Our Mediator is interceding for us. The blood of sprinkling has touched our consciences. Much remains to be done. But the circle of blessing is large: and it is all ours.

VII. The amplitude of blessing centring in Mount Zion is so evident that we are thereby put on our guard against any overnarrowing definiteness which might otherwise gain admission into our thoughts. For instance, it has been concluded that Mount Zion here simply stands for the

^a Chapter i. 14.

Church ; but that position is at once set aside when we pay proper attention to the wide circumference of fellowship which centres in the "Sunny Mount." It comprehends both heavenly messengers and the spirits of the righteous ones who have been made perfect, neither of which classes is included in the Church. To speak of Angels as forming a part of the Christian Church is manifestly unwarranted ; and, even if it were not, here at least we are taught to differentiate them. The last consideration also applies to these "spirits," whoever they are : they are enumerated as a class over and above the "*ecclesia* of the firstborn ones," and even if they had not been so parted off in the present passage, they so much better fall into their right place as having lived their life before the Messiah *began* to build his assembly^a by connecting them with the previous statement at the close of the eleventh chapter, as being those who could not be made perfect without us, that we are dutifully bound to abide by the present distinctive classification. It is quite true, according to the express teaching of the Apostle Paul,^b that the free Jerusalem that is above is "our mother" ; but, whether we (the Church) are her only child, remains to be seen : in truth, it does not seem likely—from the very passage before us. No ! leave Mount Zion alone, in her majestic largeness. We have no need to limit the ages,^c and we have no need to impoverish the "Sunlit Mount" which stands for the wide blessings of Redemption.

VIII. Lingering for another moment over the Associates of Mount Zion, we shall do well to decline a timid exegesis of the significant term coupled with the *ecclesia*—"assembly of firstborn-ones" : a literal translation of importance, as revealing the fact that the word in the Greek is in the plural number, not in the singular, as the A.V. certainly,

^a Mt. xvi. 18.

^b Gal. iv. 26.

^c See *ante*, Study II.

and the R.V. probably would lead the merely English reader to suppose. Surely it is a timid exegesis to say that the members of the Church are called "firstborn" because their Head is *the* Firstborn; the natural conclusion being that they themselves also are "firstborn" by some valid right. What that right may be is another question, which we may or may not be able to settle. Possibly the bringing of the ancients up to the same standard of redemption as that which the Church enjoys, may, in its realisation, be somewhat posterior to the investiture of the Church with her first-born rights, and so *they* may be the "after-born" ones whose existence is here implied; or else the anticipatory reference may be to those who *shall* be born of God after the coming Reign has been inaugurated. We need not set conjecture in the place of revealed truth; but it is *most important that we do not, by our dull and blundering unbelief, shut out further light.*

IX. And now we reach anew the question glanced at in our first "Study," as to the "promised" Voice which is to shake not earth only but also heaven. Let us note what lies before us in the text. "Beware lest ye excuse yourselves from him that speaketh": who has spoken from heaven—*did* so speak while on earth as a messenger from heaven; again so *spake* by his Apostles and Evangelists after he had ascended into heaven; and *will* so speak on his Return from heaven: whensoever and howsoever He speaketh, let us beware lest we excuse ourselves from hearing him. And yet the language—especially when taken in connection with the example given in the earlier context (verse 19) as to those who were brought to the foot of Sinai—rather imports *dismay*, and hence is especially suited to those further words which we know the Son of God will speak on and after his Second Advent. This

alone is not decisive, it is true: for the whole word of Christ, whensoever delivered by him, has in it an undertone of warning, solemn and searching enough to cause restive hearts to "turn away" from him. The language of verse 26 is considerably more fitted than that which goes before to carry on the reference into the future; since the very contrast of the text between "then" and "now" might naturally have led on to a different sequel—something like this, but "now" hath he **fulfilled**,—rather than "promised," which is the word actually employed. "Now **hath he spoken** with a voice which **hath shaken** not the earth only but also the heaven, as it is written in the prophecy of Haggai:" that is, had such been our Author's intention. Besides, the voice that thus shaketh all things is represented as making *a clean sweep* of all those things that are done with—all those things which, by reason of their temporary use, are susceptible of being shaken down and removed: leaving in permanence only those things which **cannot** be shaken. Whereas, whether we look back or look around, we are everywhere confronted with things in lingering Judaism and in corrupted Christianity which we know cannot abide! Equally guarded against premature notions of fulfilment is the allusion to the "kingdom" which we "are receiving"; the observable thing being that we are not said to *have* received it, but to be either in process or in prospect of *receiving*. Moreover, it is only the abiding kingdom, which cannot be shaken, that we are here said to be receiving. And finally, though our God is a fire that in his holy love consumeth, and the fire of his holy displeasure has begun to burn, yet certainly the consuming of that against which it is lighted has not yet reached its consummation. On the whole, then, the future reference predominates throughout these final hortatory words: which brings them into accord

with the fullest demands of Haggai the prophet.^a Let us say, if we will, that, as the speaker is one from chapter i. 2 to this place, so the Voice or utterance is one, from the first opening of his lips in Nazareth until now; and that, in particular, his accepted blood has already begun to speak to merciful purpose in heaven; ^b yet these concessions to the past and to the present rather favour than discountenance the thought of a suitable culmination in the future. The trumpet on Sinai sounded long and loud, and with repeated blasts,^c yet the occasion was *one* in character and results; and if the larger scale of fulfilment demanded by the antitype than by the type be considered and due allowance be made for the natural summary largeness of the prophetic word, we may rest satisfied with the terms of the text before us as chiefly pointing forward to a renewed resounding of the Voice that shall usher in the Kingdom to Come.

^a Compare Study I., pp. 13, 14, *ante*. ^b Verse 24. ^c Exo. xix. 19.

STUDY XVI.

FINAL EXHORTATIONS.

(Chap. XIII. 1—25.)

- ¹³ ¹ Let ||brotherly love|| continue.
- ² <Of the entertaining of strangers> be not forgetful,
For |hereby| <unawares> have some entertained ||messengers||.
- ³ Bear in mind them who are in bonds,
|As having become jointly bound|,—
Them who are suffering ill-treatment,
|As being ||yourselves|| also in the body|.
- ⁴ Let marriage be ||honourable|| in all, and |the bed| undefiled,
For <fornicators and adulterers> ||God|| will judge'.
- ⁵ <Without fondness for money> be your way of life,—
Being content with the present things,—for |he| hath said :
||In nowise|| thee |will I leave|,
||No indeed!| ||in nowise|| thee |will I forsake|.
- ⁶ So that |taking courage| we may be saying—
||The Lord|| hasteth to my cry,—I will not be put in fear ;
What shall ||man|| do unto me?
- ⁷ Be mindful of them who are guiding you,
Who, indeed, have spoken unto you |the word of God| :
<The outgoing of whose behaviour reviewing>
Be imitating |their faith|.
- ⁸ ||Jesus Christ|| <yesterday and to-day> [is] |the same|,—
||And unto the ages||.
- ⁹ <With teachings manifold and strange> be not carried aside ;
For it is ||noble|| that <with gratitude> |the heart| be getting
confirmed,—
|Not with matters of food|,
In which they who are walking |have not been profited|.
- ¹⁰ We have an altar—
<To eat out of which> they' have no right |who <in the tent>
are doing divine service| ;
- ¹¹ For <in the case of those living creatures, whose blood for sins is
carried into the holies, through means of the high-priest>
||The bodies of these|| are burned up outside the camp.
- ¹² Wherefore ||Jesus also||
<That he might hallow the people through means of his own blood>
<Outside the gate> suffered.

- 13 ¶Now, therefore¶ let us be going forth unto him |outside the camp|,
 <His reproach> bearing.
- 14 For we have not here an abiding' city,
 But <unto that which is to be> are we seeking our way.
- 15 <Through him> then—*let us be offering up a sacrifice of praise*
 continually ¶unto God¶;
 That is, a fruit of lips confessing unto his name.
- 16 But <of the doing good and of fellowship> be not forgetful;
 For <with such sacrifices as these> is ¶God¶ well-pleased.
- 17 Be yielding unto them who are guiding you, and submit yourselves;
 For they are watching over your souls |as having an account' to
 render|,
 That <with joy> the same' they may be doing, and not with
 sighing,—
 For <unprofitable for you> were ¶this¶.
- 18 Be praying for us;
 For we persuade ourselves that <an honourable conscience> have we,
 <In all things honourably> desiring to behave ourselves.
- 19 But <much more abundantly> do I exhort you, <the same> to do,
 That <more speedily> I may be restored unto you.
- 20 But ¶the God of peace¶
 <He that led up from among the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep,
 With the blood of an age-abiding covenant ¶our Lord Jesus¶>
- 21 Fit you, in and through every good thing, |for the doing of his will|,
 |Doing within us| that which is well-pleasing |before him, through
 Jesus Christ|:
 To whom be the glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.
- 22 Now I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation,—
 For <even with brief words> have I sent unto you.
- 23 Know ye that |our brother Timothy| hath been set at liberty,—
 With whom <if more speedily he be coming> I will see you.
- 24 Salute all' them who are guiding you, and all the saints:
 ¶They from Italy¶ salute you'.
- 25 Favour be with you all.

I. It is observable that three times over in this concluding portion of the Epistle does the Writer refer to the spiritual guides of his brethren: Be mindful of them; Be yielding to them and submitting yourselves; Salute them. Their office he represents as no sinecure: they are watching for your souls as having an account to render. On them, at least in some cases, these Hebrew converts had been de-

pendent for their knowledge of the spoken word of God—the Gospel. As a class, these their “guides” were worthy of honour and imitation; although, in some instances, they may have proved unstable, and must in no case be allowed to divert attention from the more marked and reliable stability of Jesus Christ himself. Indeed, it is more than hinted that some who assumed to be teachers spent their time on frivolous questions respecting “food” which were to no profit. In any case, it is noteworthy that this letter is not especially addressed to them: the great Epistolary Exhorter aims to get at his wavering brethren direct, and trust what remains in them of spiritual enlightenment to enable them to profit by his arguments and appeals. Finally, as possibly having some bearing on the question of authorship, it should be said that the title he gives the teachers is unique in New Testament usage.

II. A suspicion is raised by the very terms of verse 9, that among the wavering Hebrews there were opportunists whom if found among Gentile churches we should have called Judaizers. This suspicion is confirmed by the next verse, which seems written under the impulse to insist on a clearer line of demarcation: “One thing or another: you cannot share our benefits without making up your minds about our Jesus; if he was not our Messiah, he was an unclean outcast; and then even as a sin-offering you could not derive any benefit from him, for according to the old ritual there was no feasting on a sin-offering.” But this line of thought is not fully carried out. It seems as though our Author was stirred to the depths by the mere suggestion that Jesus had been made a sin-offering; and in mental vision of the Nazarene being led outside Jerusalem’s gates to suffer, he is moved to call for the sternly needed cleavage in another way. The camp of Judaism rejects our Master:

let us go forth to him, although to do so we have to leave the camp of the Old Faith. And then, as if suddenly confronted with the idea of homelessness, he bravely faces the issue: Here, it is true, in that case, we have no continuing city. Be it so: we are on our way to that which is to be! Quickly recovering himself, our Author grasps the reassuring conception that the Outcast of earth is the Officiating High-priest in heaven. "Through him, then, let us be offering the (bloodless) sacrifices of praise to God and of doing good to others;" for we, too, in our measure, are priests, with freedom of speech for entrance into the Holies—in spirit now, in person when our redemption is complete. If this account of the train of thought is approximately correct, we shall scarcely exclaim—"What altar?" when we hear the protest commencing with the words, "We have an altar." The altar is simply the ideal centre from which all Christian benefits emanate: as, to the Levitical Priest, all privileges were guaranteed by the altar to which they ministered.

III. An exquisitely beautiful Invocation carries this primitive Letter to a fitting conclusion. "But"—whether I be restored to you sooner or later; may "the God of peace"—who amidst all troubles from without imparts his own peace to obedient souls; "he that," having once led up his people out of the Red Sea into a new and national existence, hath now led up from among the dead his own Son, the Shepherd of the sheep, that *he* may lead *them* up into glory as the rulers of the Coming Habitable earth; the Shepherd—who has entered upon his resurrection state invested with all the merit and power of his sacrificed earthly life,^a and thereby become mediator and surety of a new and better covenant than that of Sinai; by which

^a App. (11).

Shepherd I mean our Lord Jesus:—may He—fit, adapt, adjust, you; in and through every blessing He bestows, for the doing of his will; doing within us that which he requires from us; even that which is well-pleasing before him; doing it within us through the mediatorial energy of Jesus Christ; to whom, as the primary doer of it, be the glory of this entire redeeming work unto the ages of ages: Amen.

IV. A few details precede and follow this invocation which are undoubtedly in the Pauline manner, but the style of which would naturally become current in common between two such intimate co-workers as Paul and Apollos; between whom and Timothy there was an undeniable bond of loving co-operation.^a

• See "Introductory Note."

APPENDIX.

(1) *The Ages.*

“The ages have been made by God, and we apprehend them by this principle of faith. The ‘ages’ there is not the world, or worlds. If we merely translate, we are bound to use the word ‘ages.’ If we indulge in speculation, we may use other words. We may write it that the habitable world was framed by God, but that is not translation. We may say that the universe was framed by God, but that is not translation. It is simply a concession to the general explanation of this verse, which is that the writer here meant to say that the world we know, and the worlds about us, were made by God. Personally, I do not so understand this verse. I think he here means to say that the ages or dispensations, age succeeding age, have been framed by God, that He is not only Maker of the worlds of matter, but He is also the Framers of the ages of time, and I understand the writer here to say that the elders, the men who have come down the ages, have had witness borne to them by faith. By faith we believe that the very ages have been framed by God, and that ‘what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear.’ He is surveying the whole movement of human history down to the One Witness, and he says, Age has succeeded to age, and the forces that have made the ages have not been the seen things, but the unseen things, and the men that have taken hold of the unseen things and pressed their dynamic into the making of history, have been the men of faith.”—*Dr. G. Campbell Morgan*, “Westminster Record,” for Jan. 1906 (Hodder & Stoughton), p. 7.

- (2) *Who maketh his messengers winds,
And his ministers of state a fiery flame.*—i. 7.

“The conception that God gives his angels, when employing them to carry out his purposes in the sensible universe, elemental bodies, as it were, of wind and fire, as *media* of manifestation, is certainly the deeper (thought) of the two, and not unsuited to such a lyrical echo as the Psalm is meant to be of the great creative beginning. In this sense, also, the rendering of the Targum must be understood when rendered in the light of the Midrash [on which it is based]: ‘who maketh His messengers speedy as the winds, His ministers strong as a flaming fire.’ . . . That our author understood the text in the Psalm in this sense cannot be doubted.”—*Delitzsch*, on “Hebrews.”

- (3) *The word spoken through messengers.*—ii. 2.

This is the best explanation I can offer. Of course its weak point is that it diverts the application of the word “messenger” from heavenly to earthly agents, and supposes an almost immediate return to the higher reference, which is undeniable in chapter i. I am however, instinctively, reluctant to resort to the explanation of *Delitzsch* given below.

“In Exo. xix. et seq., however, we read nothing of angels, but of thunder, lightning, the sound of a trumpet accompanying the very voice of Elohim speaking. This seems contradictory to the statement that the law was not only given in the presence of angels, but was spoken by angels . . . The unity of these statements consists in this, that it was indeed Jehovah who spoke on Sinai, but that his speaking was mediated through angels (including also the Angel of the Lord, *kat’ exoc’ēn*. Acts vii. 38, comp. 30).”—*Delitzsch*.

(4) *Crowned—to the end that.*—ii. 9.

“As the words stand, it seems as if the crowning went before the death, and in order to it. And that I am persuaded is the true sense, though not denying the glory after it The verse refers, I doubt not, to our Lord’s *glorification on the Mount of Transfiguration.*”—*R. Govett*, in “Christ superior to Angels.”

(5) *Of immersions and of laying on hands.*—vi. 2.

“The historical sequence is followed in the enumeration. When a sinner repented and believed, the next step was that he was baptized for the remission of sins, and connected with this was prayer and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 38, viii. 12, 15-17; comp. Acts ix. 17 with xxii. 16). Through the remission of sins the convert became a member of the house of God in the new covenant (ix. 15; Jer. xxxi. 34 in viii. 12), heir of the promises (vi. 17), partaker of a heavenly calling (iii. 1) to the world to come, of which through the gift of the Holy Ghost he then tasted the powers (vi. 5; comp. ii. 4, x. 29). Early baptism was into the name of Christ, implying a confession of His Messiahship (Acts viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5); so in the Epistle, Christ occupies the place of High Priest and Apostle in our confession (iii. 1, iv. 14). The act of immersion naturally suggested that the old life was done away and that a new man had arisen, and thus the preceding repentance and faith were confirmed.—The plural baptisms probably refers to the various Jewish washings (ix. 10), the baptism of John (Acts xix. 3), and Christian baptism, in their distinction from one another and in the meanings of the last. That teaching regarding baptisms and the Holy Ghost was not always unnecessary in the case of Hebrew converts may be seen from Acts xviii. 25, etc., and xix. 2, etc.” *A. B. Davidson*, in *Handbooks for Bible Classes*, “Hebrews” (Clark).

“The plural and the peculiar form seem to be used to include Christian Baptism and other lustral rites. The ‘teaching’ would naturally be directed to shew their essential difference.

Comp. Acts xix. 3, 4; John iii. 25, *peri katharismou*.”—*Westcott*, on “Hebrews.”

“Baptism was practised by the Pharisees, Essenes, and disciples of John the Baptist (comp. Acts xix. 3, 4), as well as Christians. Converts from Judaism would therefore need instructions not only in Christian baptism itself, but in its special character as distinct from other baptisms. Hence the use of the plural in this passage.”—*Rendall*, “The Epistle to the Hebrews” (1888).

“But why is the plural used? And why is not the *usual* Greek word for immersion used? The plural is employed because there are two baptisms: (1) that of *water*, and (2) that of the *Spirit*. This is the reason, too, I suppose, of the slightly different word employed (*baptismōn* instead of *baptismatōn*.)”—*R. Govett*.

(6) *Melchizedek . . . without father, etc.*—vii. 3.

“To make the facts serve his purpose the writer finds it necessary to attach importance, not merely to what is said of Melchizedek, but to what is not said,—to the silences as well as to the utterances of history; also to give ideal meaning to the names occurring in the story . . . A personal, not an inherited dignity (without father, without mother, i.e., so far as the record is concerned) . . . an eternal priesthood (without beginning of days or end of life—so far as the record is concerned).”—*A. D. Bruce*, in “Hastings Bible Dictionary,” Art. “Hebrews, Epistle to.”

“Melchizedek then had, as a man, both father and mother, both beginning of days and end of life. But *in so far as he is made like unto the Son of God*, and appears on the page of Scripture, he has neither father nor mother, neither birth nor death.”—*R. Govett*, “Christ superior to Angels,” etc.

“I take these expressions (‘without father,’ etc.) to relate purely to his priesthood, of which only the apostle is speaking; as if he had said, Melchizedek had neither father nor mother of any priestly order, and was without descent from any race of priests . . . As a priest he had neither the beginning of the

days of his priesthood, nor the end of his life in it limited by any particular law, as was the case with the Levitical priests, whose time of officiating was limited to twenty years.”—*Archibald McLean*, on “Hebrews,” Edinburgh, 1820.

“The designation of the Messiah to a heavenly priesthood was distinctly asserted in one passage in the Old Testament (Ps. cx. 4): ‘Thou art,’ etc.; the Messianic import of which was universally admitted by Jews.”—*Rendall*, p. 47, “Epistle to the Hebrews.” Compare J. B. McCaul on “Hebrews,” where quotation is given from the Talmud to this effect.

(7) *An indissoluble life.*—vii. 16.

“His life was once dissolved. The union between his body and soul was once unknit. But now his power of life is indissoluble. The eternity of his priesthood knit to his indissoluble life, is the proof of Aaron’s priesthood being put away for ever.”—*R. Govett*. “The life of a tabernacle which could not be dissolved.”—*Farrar*.

(8) *When Christ approached.*—ix. 11.

“This appearance was not Christ’s coming amidst men, but his appearance as high priest before God after his ascension, like the parallel appearance of the high priest on the day of atonement.”—*Rendall*.

(9) *A body hast thou fitted for me.*—x. 5.

“By the opening of the ears [in Ps. xl. 6], is meant the opening of a passage for hearing in the formation of the body: the two versions therefore agree in spirit; both make God’s creation of the body a ground for devoting that body to his will.”—*Rendall*.

“The rendering must be considered to be a free interpretation of the original text. In this respect it extends and emphasises

the fundamental *idea*. The 'body' is the instrument for fulfilling the divine command, just as the 'ear' is the instrument for receiving it. God originally fashioned for man in his frame the organ for hearing his Voice, and by this he plainly shewed that he was made to obey it."—*Westcott*.

Very much to the contrary is *Govett*; who not only regards the difference between the Hebrew and the Septuagint as irreconcilable, but, inasmuch as the latter was itself the production of Jews, is disposed to maintain the latter against the former and conclude the Hebrew to have been by accident or design corrupted.

(10) *Bathed, as to our bodies, in pure water.*—x. 22.

"There are many learned and judicious commentators who understand both the *body* and *water* literally, and explain these words of Christian baptism. That this is what is meant is very probable; for there is no other washing of the body appointed under the gospel but in baptism: And it is most natural to understand both *body* and *water* here in a literal sense; for if having *the body washed with pure water* were to be understood entirely of something spiritual and internal, it would be hard to distinguish it from *the sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience*, mentioned immediately before, which seems to be the spiritual signification of baptism."—*Archibald McLean*, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," Edinburgh (1820).

(11) *With [lit. "in"] the blood of an age-abiding covenant.*—xiii. 20.

"The raising of Christ was indissolubly united with the establishment of the Covenant made by His blood and effective in virtue of it. His 'blood' is the vital energy by which he fulfils his work. So, when he was brought up from the dead, the power of his life offered for the world, was, as it were, the atmosphere which surrounded him as he entered on his triumphant work."—*Westcott*.

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