

AN EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF "AN EXPOSITION OF ST. PAUL EPISTLE TO  
THE ROMANS," ETC

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TO THE  
**REVEREND THOMAS JACKSON**  
THIS WORK IS DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR,  
AS AN EXPRESSION OF PROFOUND ESTEEM  
AND REVERENT AFFECTION,  
AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF  
ENCOURAGEMENT RECEIVED FROM HIM  
IN THE ATTEMPT TO EXPOUND  
SOME PORTIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

## PREFACE.

The degree of favour with which the Author's "Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans" has been received has encouraged him to attempt to illustrate another of the great doctrinal Epistles of the New Testament, in which, from an early period of his ministry, he has felt a deep interest.

This work is written upon the plan of the former one. It has been the constant aim of the Author, accurately to trace the connection of thought through-out the Epistle, and, at the same time, to bring out the fullness of meaning involved in its particular statements and expressions. The precise import of the original has been carefully considered, and many interesting views suggested by it have been dwelt upon. And while the Author has gratefully availed himself of the labours of those who have preceded him in this field of hallowed toil, this Exposition will be found to be not a compilation, but an original work.

It is the sincere prayer of the Writer, that it may

contribute, under the Divine blessing, to elucidate one of the most precious portions of Holy Scripture, and to set forth its profound teaching on the Person, and Sacrifice, and the Priesthood, of our blessed Lord.

Exeter:

*July 10<sup>th</sup>* , 1871

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## INTRODUCTION.



THE Epistle to the Hebrews has, in every age of the Church, had powerful attractions for devout and earnest students of Divine truth. The grandeur of many of the subjects of which it treats,—the depth of its reasonings,—the light which it sheds on the relation of the Mosaic system to the perfect Christian economy,—the lofty views which it affords of the priestly character and ministration of the Lord Jesus,—the solemnity and power of its warnings,—and the tender solicitude which it evinces for the welfare of the persons addressed,—all concur to rivet attention, and to render this Book one of the most important in our collection of Sacred Writings.

It is well known that the *authorship* of this Epistle has been, and still is, matter of dispute. The prevalent belief has been that it proceeded from the Apostle Paul; but in the Western Churches, at an early period, a different view was entertained; and in modern times the opponents of the Pauline authorship have been numerous and decided. But among them there is no general agreement to whom the Epistle is to be attributed. Some ascribe it to Barnabas; others to Luke or Clement; and a few, since the time of Luther, to Apollos. These, however, are, for the most part, mere conjectures. They rest not on any

external testimony, but on the subjective impressions of those who adopt them. If St. Paul was not the author of this Epistle, the person to whom it should be ascribed must ever remain a matter of uncertainty.

In inquiring into this subject, we may first examine the external evidence in favour of the Pauline authorship, together with that which is opposed to it; secondly, consider the arguments which have been alleged from the Epistle itself to show that it is not St. Paul's; and thirdly, examine the internal evidence which may be adduced to sustain the conclusion that he was really its author. When this important question has been discussed, and the canonicity of the Epistle has been adverted to, our way will be open to refer to the other topics which are proper to an Introduction:—the *time* when the Epistle was composed,—the *place* from which it was sent,—the *persons* to whom it was originally addressed,—and the *general character* and *scope* of the Epistle itself.

I. We enter, first of all, upon the question of the *authorship of the Epistle*, according to the plan just traced out.

1. In examining the external evidence in favour of, or against, the Pauline authorship, we must consider the notices of the Epistle found in the early Christian writers.

One of the most precious remains of Christian antiquity is the first Epistle of CLEMENT of *Rome* to the Corinthians, which there is reason to regard as having been written about A.D. 97. This Letter embodies many sentiments and expressions found in the Epistle to the

Hebrews; and it is clear that this Epistle was in the hands of Clement, and that he viewed it as a Book of Holy Scripture, though he does not name the writer. In support of these positions, it will suffice to adduce ch. xxxvi., designed to illustrate the sentiment, that all blessings are given to us through Christ:—"This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings, the Defender and Helper of our Infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvellous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, 'who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.' For it is thus written, 'Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.' But concerning His Son the Lord spoke thus: 'Thou art My Son; to-day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.' And again He saith to Him, 'Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' But who are His enemies? All the wicked, and they who set themselves to oppose the will of God."\*

\* This and several of the following quotations from early Christian writers are given from the translation in Clark's "Ante-Nicene Christian Library," edited by Dr. Alexander Roberts and Dr. James Donaldson.

The earliest testimony, bearing on the authorship of the Epistle, is that of PANTÆNUS, the head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, about the middle of the second century. His disciple, Clement of Alexandria, in a passage preserved by Eusebius, refers to a statement of his respecting the reason why St. Paul did not prefix his name to the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "inasmuch as the Lord, being the Apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, through modesty, as having been sent to the Gentiles, did not inscribe himself an Apostle of the Hebrews, both on account of his reverence for the Lord, and inasmuch as his sending an Epistle to the Hebrews was beyond the strict requirements of his office, since he was the Preacher and Apostle of the Gentiles."

The next authority on the subject is CLEMENT of *Alexandria* just referred to, who flourished towards the close of the second century, and who possessed an extensive knowledge of general literature, as well as of the Holy Scriptures. He unhesitatingly cites the Epistle to the Hebrews as that of St. Paul. Quotations from it occur again and again in his writings; and many of these are introduced with the remark, "The Apostle saith," or "The divine Apostle saith," while in others St. Paul is expressly named, and in others again citations from his acknowledged writings are combined with those from the Epistle to the Hebrews, as proceeding from the same author. The following examples will show the manner in which Clement is accustomed to speak of this Epistle. In the seventh Book of the *Miscellanies*, he says, "Wherefore also the Apostle designates as 'the express image of the glory of

the Father' the Son, who taught the truth respecting God, and expressed the fact that the Almighty is the one and only God and Father, 'whom no man knoweth but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him.'" In the second Book he writes, "But faith, which the Greeks disparage, deeming it futile, is a voluntary preconception, the assent of piety,—'the subject of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' according to the divine Apostle. 'For hereby,' pre-eminently, 'the elders obtained a good report. But without faith it is impossible to please God.'" In a subsequent passage of the same Book, he says, "'We,' then, according to the noble Apostle, 'wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.' 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end,' down to 'made a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.'" Then adding, "*Similarly with Paul,*" he proceeds to quote a passage from the Book of Proverbs, on the value and blessedness of religious hope.—So, also, in the fourth Book of the *Miscellanies*, he combines a passage from the Epistle to Titus with one from the Epistle to the Hebrews, as proceeding from the same Apostle. "Gracefully, therefore, the Apostle says in the Epistle to Titus, 'that the elder women should be of godly behaviour, should not be slanderers, not enslaved to much wine; that they should counsel the young women to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, discreet, chaste, house-keepers, good, subject to their own husbands; that the

word of God be not blasphemed.' But rather, he says, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently, lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel surrendered his birthright; and lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.'" From these examples it is clear, that Clement of Alexandria had a firm conviction that St. Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His opinion, as reported by Eusebius, in his *Church History*, was, that St. Paul wrote it originally in Hebrew, and that St. Luke translated it into Greek; and in this way he endeavoured to account for the similarity between the phraseology of this Epistle and that of the Acts of the Apostles.

It is a singular fact, that IRENÆUS, bishop of Lyons, towards the end of the second century, does not expressly cite the Epistle to the Hebrews, though in one or two places he seems to allude to it. He affords us, consequently, little or no help towards determining the question under review. It has, indeed, been argued, that his not citing the Epistle, when passages of it were suitable to his purpose, seems to imply that he did not receive it as stamped with the authority of the Apostle Paul: but this argument is evidently precarious.

TERTULLIAN, who held the office of presbyter, first at Carthage, and afterwards, probably, at Rome, towards the end of the second, and at the beginning of the third, century, attributes the Epistle to the Hebrews to Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul in his first missionary journey. The references to it in his writings are exceedingly rare;

but there is one passage in which he quotes Heb. vi. 4—8, and claims for it, as written by Barnab. 3, the authority attaching to the judgment of one who had intimate intercourse with the Apostles, and was familiar with their views.

HIPPOLYTUS, a disciple of Irenæus, and bishop of Portus, early in the third century, does not cite the Epistle, nor clearly allude to any of its expressions, unless his comments on the words, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent," may be regarded as having reference to them as occurring in this Epistle, as well as in the original passage, Psalm cx. 4. Photius, however, asserts that Hippolytus did not acknowledge the Epistle to be St. Paul's.

The testimony of ORIGEN, who also belongs to the first half of the third century, justly claims our earnest attention. In his various writings he unhesitatingly cites the Epistle as the work of the Apostle Paul. Two passages from his treatise "de Principiis" will suffice to illustrate his manner of appealing to it. In the Preface to that work he says, "And therefore I think it sufficient to quote this one testimony of Paul from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he says, 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians.'" In Book I. c. 2, he writes, "The Apostle Paul says, that the only-begotten Son is 'the image of the invisible God,' and 'the firstborn of every creature.' And when writing to the Hebrews,

he says of Him that He is 'the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.'" From two passages of his lost Homilies on this Epistle, preserved by Eusebius, we learn more fully his opinion on the subject before us. Examining the Epistle itself, he recognised, on the one hand, its profound sentiments, eminently worthy of the Apostle Paul, and agreeing with his cherished modes of thought; and, on the other, its pure and elegant style, far more polished than that usually employed by the Apostle. And he concluded, that the reasoning, the whole substance, of the Epistle was St. Paul's, according to the tradition handed down from the venerable men of former days, but that it was perfectly uncertain who had clothed the sentiments in the language in which they appear. The passages in question are as follows:—

"That the character of the diction of the Epistle inscribed to the Hebrews has not that rudeness of speech which distinguished the Apostle, who confessed himself to be an unpolished man in speech, that is, in his style of expression, but that the Epistle is of purer Greek in the structure of the diction, every one who is competent to discriminate differences of style must allow. And, again, that the thoughts of the Epistle are admirable, and not at all inferior to those of the Apostle's acknowledged writings, this also every one who has applied himself to the study of the Apostle must assent to as true."—  
'But, to show my own opinion, I would say that the sentiments are those of the Apostle, but the diction and the composition of some one who recalled to mind the Apostle's sayings, and who wrote, as it were, explanatory

statements upon things which his teacher had spoken. If, then, any Church holds the Epistle as the work of Paul, it is to be thought well of on this account; for it is not in vain that the men of former days have handed it down as Paul's. But who it was that wrote the Epistle, God, indeed, only knows for certain: but the account which has reached us from some persons is, that Clement, who became the bishop of the Romans, wrote the Epistle, and from others, that Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts, did so."

DIONYSIUS, bishop of Alexandria about A.D. 250, expressly cites a passage from the Epistle as St. Paul's; and from this date the belief of the Pauline authorship generally prevailed throughout the Eastern Churches. EUSEBIUS of Cæsarea, (A.D. 315,) the great Church-historian, repeatedly refers to the Epistle as the work of the Apostle, though in one place he suggests that St. Paul might have written it in Hebrew, and that it was translated into Greek either by Luke or by Clement. The great ATHANASIUS, who flourished from about A.D. 326 to A.D. 373, affirms the Epistle to be St. Paul's, and distinctly cites it as such.

In the Western Churches, in which the Pauline authorship was, for a considerable period, doubted or even denied, the belief in that authorship came to be gradually established. Many Latin writers, indeed, who quote freely from other Epistles of St. Paul, never advert to this; but AMBROSE, of Milan, (A.D. 397,) cites it repeatedly, and always as St. Paul's; and, in the following century, JEROME and the great AUGUSTINE, while recognising the

doubts that existed as to its authorship, strongly inclined to the view that it was the work of St. Paul. The former of these eminent men, when quoting the Epistle, usually gives the passages as the words of the Apostle; but in many parts of his writings he acknowledges that there was a degree of uncertainty as to the author, and his own leaning appears to be to the theory that St. Paul wrote it in Hebrew, omitting the usual salutation on account of his unpopularity among the Jews, and that one of his companions translated it into the elegant Greek in which we now have it. The mind of Augustine seems, for a time, to have been in a state of uncertainty as to the authorship of the Epistle, and in citing it, he often alludes to the doubts which existed on this question: but in a remarkable passage, in which he speaks of the Canonical Scriptures of the New Testament, he enumerates *fourteen* Epistles of St. Paul, placing that to the Hebrews last.

In reviewing these external testimonies, we conceive that they are greatly in favour of the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. One thing, especially, deserves attention, that the doubts on this subject which many of the early Christian writers expressed, took their rise apparently from the difference of style between this Epistle and St. Paul's acknowledged writings, and *not* from the *competing claims* of any other author. Tertullian, indeed, mentions Barnabas as the writer; but in this he stands almost alone. The suggestions as to Luke and Clement seem to have been prompted by the style of the Epistle; and the idea that Apollos was the author, which was advanced

by Luther, and which has, in modern times, found favour with several expositors, including Dean Alford, is a pure conjecture.

With regard to the theory of a *Hebrew original*, it is liable to many and grave objections. No one speaks of having ever seen it. This theory, like many of those which relate to the authorship of the Epistle, rests on no tangible fact, but is a conjecture suggested by its style. Again, if a Hebrew original ever existed, it is surprising that it should have perished without even a trace of it remaining. Nor is it a consideration of little weight, that the Epistle does not bear the character of a translation, its chaste Greek style not representing, except in a very few instances, Hebrew idioms.

2. We have now to consider the arguments which have been deduced from the Epistle itself against the Pauline authorship.

The first of these, and certainly the most weighty and important, is the difference of style between this Epistle and the undoubted writings of St. Paul. It is admitted, on all hands, that the Greek of this Epistle is purer and more classical than that of St. Paul's other Epistles;—that the periods are arranged with greater precision, and are marked by greater elegance;—and that the impression produced by the composition is, that it proceeded from one who was a master of the Greek language, and carefully regarded its minutest niceties of expression. It is admitted, too, that there is a striking resemblance between many of its terms and phrases and those found in St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. In explanation of

some of these particulars, it is alleged by the late Dr. William Lindsay, that the Epistle "was written near the close of the Apostle's career, after he had visited the most famous Greek cities, and held intercourse with multitudes of native Greeks, and spoken and written in the Greek language for many a year; and certainly it is not surprising that these circumstances should have exerted an influence upon the Apostle's style; not to mention that different subjects are naturally handled by the same writer in rather a different style, according to their respective nature and object." \* These considerations have a degree of weight; but it may be questioned whether they fully account for the facts referred to. Another method of explaining the peculiarity of the style of this Epistle, and its resemblance to that of St. Luke, while the authorship is attributed to St. Paul, will be suggested at the close of the discussion.

A second argument against St. Paul's being the author of this Epistle is deduced from the absence of his name. This, it is alleged, is contrary to his habitual practice. From a very early period notice was taken of this circumstance, and various considerations were alleged in explanation of it. Pantænnus, the teacher of Clement of Alexandria, suggested, as we have said, that St. Paul did not inscribe his name, as an Apostle addressing the Hebrews, because the Lord Jesus was Himself the Father's Apostle to the race of Israel. Others considered that the omission was caused by the fact, that many Jewish Christians recognised him only as an Apostle to the Gentiles; while others

\* "Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews." Edinburgh: Oliphant and Co., 1867. Vol. I., p. 9.

attributed it to a wish not to excite a prejudice against the Epistle by placing in the front of it the name of one whom many of the Hebrew believers looked upon with distrust. But the true solution of the apparent difficulty must be sought in a different direction. It is clear from the personal notices which occur towards the close of the Epistle, and from the strain of tender affection in which many of the exhortations and appeals are conveyed, that the writer did not wish to be concealed from those whom he addressed. But although this production was really a letter sent, in the first instance, to some particular Church or Churches, it has yet very much of the form of a theological treatise. It opens with a great truth relative to the constitution and character of the Christian economy; and the subject thus introduced is regularly unfolded, with exhortations and warnings interspersed, until the grand arrangements of the Christian scheme, more especially as relating to the sacrifice and priesthood of the Son of God, have been fully brought out. Surely, in dictating such a composition, St. Paul might think it right to deviate from his usual method, and at once to enter upon the theme on which his mind was intent.

A third argument is derived from the language used in ii. 3, 4:—"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?" In this passage, it is affirmed, the writer speaks of himself as included among those who

received the message of salvation from the immediate disciples of the Saviour; whereas St. Paul was accustomed to lay stress on the fact, that he derived his knowledge of the Gospel not from man, but from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This argument was regarded as conclusive by Luther and Calvin. But the explanation of Beza meets all the requirements of the case,—that, by a common figure of speech, the Apostle included himself with those whom he addressed, though his statement strictly applied only to them. An instance of this is found in the commencement of the sixth chapter. There was a beautiful propriety, a refined Christian delicacy, in the Apostle's associating himself with those whom he was exhorting, more especially as they were his brethren of the race of Israel. It was in his expostulations with those whom he had led to Christ, but who were being turned away from the Gospel which he had preached to them "unto another gospel, which," indeed, "was not another," and who, at the same time, were taught to repudiate his apostolic authority, that St. Paul felt it to be right to affirm emphatically the claims of his high office, and his perfect equality with the very chief of the Apostles whom the Saviour had chosen during His earthly course.

A fourth argument against the Pauline authorship is founded on the alleged opposition between some passages which seem to take away the hope of recovery from backsliders, (vi. 4—6; x. 26—30,) and St. Paul's instructions to the Corinthian Church to restore the person who had been guilty of incest upon his sincere repentance. If this argument were valid, it would militate against the authority

of this Epistle, and its right to a place in Holy Scripture; since it would involve a contradiction between its teaching and that of the Apostle Paul on an important doctrinal and practical question. But they who allege this argument misunderstand the passages referred to. Those passages by no means shut out from the hope of recovery persons who, after tasting the grace of Christ, have lapsed into open sin. They relate to one most aggravated case of apostasy,—an entire renunciation of the Lord Jesus, as an impostor and blasphemer, after the experience of the inward life and power which are connected with a believing reception of Him. For a full explanation of their import the reader is requested to consult the notes in the following Exposition.

Erasmus, with great boldness, and, we may say, with most culpable temerity, charges the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews with citing Psalm viii. in a manner contrary to its true meaning; and contrasts this with St. Paul's clear and accurate appeals to the ancient Scriptures. But this objection proceeds on a very superficial view of the subject. Deeper consideration will show that Psalm viii. is correctly applied in the great argument of ch. ii.; and all who have carefully studied St. Paul's writings are aware, that many of his citations from the Old Testament do not, *on the surface*, seem to imply that which he infers, but require to be profoundly studied, and then the justice of the application which he makes of them becomes apparent.

3. Before estimating the general result of these arguments, a third course of inquiry remains. We must advert

to the internal evidence which the Epistle is considered by many to afford that it was really the work of St. Paul.

The *personal notices* which occur towards the close are affirmed to be in accordance with the facts of St. Paul's history, and to be eminently suitable to him. The chief of these is the reference to Timothy in xiii. 23: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you." The association between Paul and Timothy was so intimate that such a remark naturally recalls to our minds the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Timothy was his chosen companion in evangelical toil; and as he approached the close of his labours, his heart turned to him with peculiar affection. We have, indeed, no intimation, from other sources, of any imprisonment of Timothy; but, as we shall see in considering the probable date of the Epistle, it is not unlikely that Timothy was placed under restraint, either during the first imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome, or at the very commencement of the Neronian persecution in A.D. 64.—It must be admitted, that the argument founded on this remark, in favour of the Pauline authorship, is by no means conclusive; but it has, we conceive, a degree of force.—Another personal notice is considered by many to be found in x. 34, "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." If this, the common reading, were established, it might well be argued that such a remark would come with the greatest propriety from the Apostle Paul, whose career of evangelical toil was forcibly interrupted in Jerusalem, and

who was detained in confinement two years in Cæsarea, during which period many of the Hebrew Christians may have ministered to his comfort. But the weight of external authority seems to be in favour of the reading *τοῖς δεσμοῖς*, instead of *τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου*; and nearly all critical editors, including Tischendorf, have adopted it. The statement of the writer will thus be, "For ye sympathised with those who were in bonds;" and the allusion to himself will disappear. It is worthy of remark, however, that the recently discovered Sinaitic MS. has the common reading, "with my bonds." Among the personal notices of the Epistle, we may include the request of the writer for the prayers of those whom he addressed, and the statement, which immediately follows it, of his deep sincerity, and his conscientious desire to act in everything as became the Christian character. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." (xiii. 18.) Such a request is quite in the manner of St. Paul. It is only in *his* Epistles that these affectionate appeals to the Churches for their intercessions are found. So, too, he was accustomed, when the state of the Churches required it, or when the truths which he had unfolded, or was about to unfold, were likely to prove distasteful to many of his readers, to make a solemn protest of the purity of his motives, and his conscientious adherence to truth and rectitude. We may adduce 2 Cor. i. 11, 12, as a passage strikingly resembling in its spirit that under review:—"Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our

conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more especially to you-ward."

But in inquiring into the internal evidence which the Epistle affords on the subject of its authorship, our attention must be chiefly directed to *the general cast of the thoughts, and the modes of presenting truth* which were familiar to the writer. In every age it has been admitted that the sentiments of the Epistle are eminently Pauline. Several of the topics, indeed, which are here treated at length, and, in particular, the priesthood of our Lord, are only briefly adverted to in the acknowledged writings of St. Paul: but the careful student will find, throughout the Epistle, combinations of thought, and methods of presenting the facts and arrangements of the mediatorial economy, which were evidently dear to the great Apostle. So clearly is this the case, that those who have decided against the Pauline authorship have concluded that the Epistle must have proceeded from some companion of the Apostle, who had become familiar with all his sentiments, and whose mind was cast, to a great extent, in the same mould. A few illustrations of the position now assumed may properly engage our attention; and among the Epistles of St. Paul we may select that to the Romans, as most fully developing his views of the Christian scheme, and indicating his cherished habits of thought.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, then, opens with the sentiment, that the Christian economy presents the crowning revelation of God, that which is afforded to us in THE SON,

and in His work of atonement and mediation, and that this revelation had been *prepared for* by partial and varied disclosures of the Divine will extending through the preceding ages. The very same sentiments are found in the opening of the Epistle to the Romans; while the personal dignity of the Lord Jesus as the Son is there, also, made specially prominent. It is not, indeed, so elaborately dwelt upon as it is in the first chapter of the Epistle before us; but it is placed in the very front of the Apostle's statement, according to the order of the words in the original:—"The Gospel of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His SON—who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord."

In contemplating the Person of the Redeemer, the Apostle Paul evidently dwelt with deep interest on the fact, that the Son of God had assumed our nature so as to become a partaker of all its weakness and susceptibilities, and so as to be made like unto us, His brethren, in every respect but that of sin. This view is clearly set forth in Rom. viii. 3, 4, and is implied in ix. 5, while in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews it is formally dwelt upon, and its bearings on the economy of human salvation are distinctly traced.

In the Epistles of St. Paul, and especially in those to the Romans and the Galatians, the importance of *faith* in order to personal salvation, and the ruinous character of *unbelief*, under every dispensation of religion, are dis-

tinently recognised. In Rom. iii. 3, the latter particular is brought forward, and it is implied in the general argument of ch. iv. With regard to the Christian economy, in particular, the high position assigned to faith, more especially as directed to its central Object, the Lord Jesus Christ viewed as the Sacrifice for human guilt, and the Refuge set before us by the Eternal Father, is a leading theme of the Epistle to the Romans. We may refer, especially, to iii. 21—31, iv. 23—25, ix. 30—33, xi. 19—23. Similar sentiments are found to pervade the Epistle to the Hebrews. Unbelief is represented as that through which men fail of the blessings held forth to them; (iii. 6—19; iv. 1—11;)—faith is enforced as essential to the acceptable worship of God under every economy, and as that which nerved the saints of old for the discharge of their arduous duties, while it sustained them under varied trials; (ch. xi. ;)—the Lord Jesus is spoken of as “the Hope set before us” by the Eternal Father, (vi. 18,) to which every contrite sinner is to fly for refuge;—the phrase which was so familiar to St. Paul, “the righteousness which is by faith,” is used in xi. 7;—and the declaration of Habakkuk, which St. Paul cites in Rom. i. 17 and Gal. iii. 11, “The just shall live by faith,” is adduced in x. 38, and that for the purpose of showing that the continued exercise of faith—faith in the Lord Jesus, and in the covenant-promises of God through Him—is essential to the maintenance of the inward life of piety, and to the attainment of everlasting blessedness and glory.

In unfolding Christian experience, and enforcing the exercises by which it is to be maintained, the Apostle Paul

was accustomed to lay stress on the union of *faith* and *patience*,—the latter term being understood as combining perseverance in duty with un murmuring submission to the trials which God may appoint,—and to connect with them a bright and even joyous *hope* of eternal life. We may advert, in illustration of this statement, to Rom. v. 1—5, viii. 24, 25, xii. 12, xv. 4, 13. Similar combinations of thought are found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The beautiful passage, vi. 11, 12, will immediately occur to the reader:—“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The exhortation given in xii. 1, 2, furnishes another example.

One of the most striking illustrations of the truth which we are now considering is afforded in the reasoning on *the case of Abraham*, and the *promise* of God made to him, in Heb. vi. 13—20. While the writer sets forth Abraham as one of the most distinguished examples of persevering faith and obedience, and recognises him as having “obtained the promise” of spiritual and eternal blessing through that Seed of his who was hereafter to arise, he speaks of that promise as descending to all who should tread in the steps of his faith; and he reasons on the solemn confirmation of the promise by the oath of Jehovah, as designed to afford to all such, and especially to us who, under the Christian economy, fly to the Lord Jesus, rich and abundant consolation. The significant expression, “the heirs of the promise,” forms,

indeed, the key to the true exposition of this passage; and the writer goes on to explain whom he intends by that phrase, when, after affirming that the oath of God was designed to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His gracious counsel to save and bless men in Christ, he adds, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us." These views are eminently Pauline. They accord with the great argument of Rom. iv., in which Abraham is represented as the father of all true believers, whether circumcised or uncircumcised; and they accord also with the emphatic statements in Gal. iii. 9, 29: "So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

It would be easy to enlarge this list of illustrations. In the following Exposition many points of similarity, both in thought and expression, between the Epistle before us and the acknowledged Epistles of St. Paul, are adverted to. But it is not necessary, in this place, to dwell further on the subject. It is unquestionable that this Epistle, while differing from those written by St. Paul to other Churches,—since the circumstances of the persons addressed, and the special object which it contemplated, were different,—has on it the stamp of his mind, and makes prominent views of Divine truth on which he delighted to dwell.

Reviewing the whole evidence, we feel justified in adhering to the opinion that St. Paul was virtually the

author of this Epistle. We attach great importance to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria and of Origen, and to the manner in which they cite the Epistle; and we lay stress on the consideration, that the doubts which existed as to the Pauline authorship originated in the peculiarity of the style, and not in the competing claims of any other author. The internal evidence we regard as, on the whole, favourable to the claims of St. Paul. But looking at the pure, and chaste, and even polished diction of the Epistle, and remembering its striking resemblance to that of St. Luke,—considering, also, that St. Paul was accustomed to employ an amanuensis, that St. Luke was one of his chosen companions, and that St. Paul endorsed the writings which *he* gave to the Churches,—we incline to the opinion that the great Apostle availed himself of St. Luke as his amanuensis in writing this Epistle, and permitted him to go beyond the strict duties of an amanuensis, and to mould many of the periods, the language, however, being in every case not only sanctioned, but adopted, by the Apostle himself. This view seems to us to meet all the facts of the case; and we cherish this Epistle as one of the most profound and important which we have from the Apostle of the Gentiles.

But it must not be supposed that the right of this Epistle to a place in the New Testament is bound up with the Pauline authorship. This, indeed, was the ground taken by many of the early Christian writers and Churches; so that the authority of the Epistle was not acknowledged by those who denied that it was the work of the Apostle. But in later periods a different view was

adopted; and, in the present day, the eminent men who attribute it to Apollos or to some other writer hold, as firmly as we do, that it forms an invaluable portion of Canonical Scripture. There can be no doubt that, at a very early period, even before the first century had closed, it was appealed to as an inspired writing. The passage cited from Clement of Rome is a sufficient proof of this. So, also, there is every reason to believe, that it had, at least, Apostolical *recognition*, just as the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke. If it did not directly proceed from St. Paul, the whole course of the evidence which we have considered seems to imply, that it not only conveyed his cherished sentiments, but had his sanction. And when we turn to its internal character, we find confirmatory evidence of its right to a place in the Sacred Canon. It is pre-eminently powerful and spiritual, — presenting the loftiest views of the Person, the sacrifice, and the priesthood, of the Lord Jesus, and abounding in appeals which come direct to the heart, and rouse it to vigilance and holy effort. Of itself, this consideration would be insufficient to establish the right of any book to be regarded as Holy Scripture: but, as a *confirmatory* evidence, it may well be admitted to have considerable force. If the view which we have taken of the authorship of the Epistle is the correct one, its canonicity is unquestionable; and it is refreshing to find that devout theologians, who cannot trace in it the hand of the Apostle Paul, though they acknowledge the Pauline character of its teaching, cherish the Epistle as an important portion of the word of God.

II. We may now briefly consider the *time* when the

Epistle was written,—the *place* from which it was sent,—and the *Church* or *Churches* to which it was originally addressed.

1. With regard to the *date* of the Epistle, it is agreed, on all hands, that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. There are allusions in it to the temple-services as still going on; (viii. 4, 5; ix. 6, 7;) and it has been properly remarked, that if so important an event as the overthrow of the whole Jewish polity, involving the entire cessation of the temple-services, had already taken place, it could scarcely have failed to be referred to, as having a direct bearing on the argument of the Epistle. Now, as the destruction of Jerusalem took place in A.D. 70, we are safe in considering that the Epistle was written before that date. On the other hand, it is clear that it was not written many years before that event. There is, apparently, an allusion in x. 25 to the approach of that fearful visitation of judgment on an unfaithful people; and in several passages of the Epistle there are intimations that the persons addressed had for a long period stood forth as the disciples of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle alludes to this fact, when mildly reproving them for their low attainments in Christian knowledge; (v. 12;) in another place, (x. 32, 33,) he calls upon them to remember their early experience, the trials which they endured soon after they were brought to Christ, and the grace which then sustained them; and in another passage, (xiii. 7,) he charges them to reflect on their former pastors, the close of whose earthly career afforded an illustration of the fidelity and power of Christ, and the blessedness of His service.

Another note of time is furnished by the reference to the liberation of Timothy from imprisonment in xiii. 23, if, indeed, the usual rendering of that verse is adhered to. The date of his imprisonment, however, supposing it to have taken place, is uncertain. It is possible that, like Aristarchus, referred to in Col. iv. 10, Timothy was placed under restraint during the first imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome; and Dr. Ebrard argues that the manner in which St. Paul speaks of him in Phil. ii. 19—24, expressing a *hope* merely that he might be able to send him to the Church at Philippi, renders this highly probable. It is thought by others, that the imprisonment of Timothy took place under the Neronian persecution, which began in the year 64, and continued four years: but if so, it might have been towards the commencement of that persecution, and he might have been speedily liberated. It is probable, further, that the Epistle was written before the commencement of the Jewish war, and especially before the siege of Jerusalem; for the writer expresses his hope of visiting the Church or Churches that he addressed.—On the whole we should place the date of the Epistle not later than the commencement of A.D. 65, and probably in the year 63 or 64.

2. The *place* in which the Epistle was written is involved in uncertainty. It has been considered by some, indeed, that the statement in xiii. 24, "They of Italy salute you," implies that the writer was in Italy when he composed and sent this Epistle; and it was probably this statement which led to the note subjoined to it, which, however, possesses no authority, "Written to the Hebrews from

Italy by Timothy." But such a conclusion can by no means be drawn from the expression in question. The phrase which the Apostle uses is, οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας, "they from Italy;" and it simply indicates persons whose country, and usual place of residence, was Italy. Dean Alford, indeed, and some others, contend, that this expression implies that the Epistle *could not* have been written in Italy: but this is to rush to the opposite extreme. If the writer were in Rome, he might have consistently used this phrase in relation to Christians who had come from the various districts of Italy. But, on the other hand, it would be strange that the Apostle should send greetings from the Italian Christians, as distinguished from those who resided in Rome itself, and should take no notice of the latter. We conceive, then, that this phrase renders it exceedingly improbable that the Epistle was written in any part of Italy. But, beyond this, we have no clue to guide us. The particular city in which it was composed must ever remain unknown.

3. In regard to *the Church or Churches* to which the Epistle was originally addressed, we adhere to the common opinion, that it was designed for the Christians of Palestine, and specially, perhaps, for those of Jerusalem. The title prefixed to it in all, or nearly all, MSS., and by which it is cited by the early Fathers, "To the Hebrews," is in favour of this view. Then, also, its whole character and structure show, that it was written for those who were accustomed to Jewish habits of thought and feeling, and who were familiar with the arrangements of the sacrificial and priestly system of the Mosaic economy. Indeed, many passages

naturally suggest the thought, that the readers were in a position to have ready access to the temple with its varied services; and thus indicate the Church in Jerusalem as that which was primarily addressed. The members of that Church, more than any other persons, would be in danger of being led away from the simple and spiritual system of Christianity, to the elaborate ritual of Judaism, with its magnificent temple, and its regular order of priestly ministration. In opposition to this view it has been urged, that the Apostle Paul did not stand in any very intimate relation to the Church at Jerusalem: but, on the other hand, he knew several of its members, and it is probable that, during his two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea, many of the Jewish Christians of the metropolis would seek intercourse with one who had laboured so extensively in the cause of the Lord Jesus,—who had shown his love to the poor among them by bringing for their relief the alms and offerings of the Gentile Christians,—and who, though fiercely assailed by some Jewish zealots, enjoyed the confidence and esteem of the other Apostles. It has been alleged, also, that the reference in vi. 10 to the liberality of the persons addressed, in ministering to the wants of the poor of Christ's flock, scarcely accords with the poverty of the Church at Jerusalem, which the Apostle sought to relieve. (Rom. xv. 25—27.) But if the majority of the Christians of Jerusalem were poor, there were doubtless several who possessed property, as at the time of the foundation of that Church, (Acts iv. 34, 35,) and who cheerfully acted upon the principle of their stewardship to God. These objections, then, cannot outweigh the considerations

already alleged in favour of the Church at Jerusalem, as that to which the Epistle was primarily sent. But while we hold this view, we conceive, also, that it was designed to be circulated among the other Churches of the Holy Land, the members of which had, for the most part, comparatively easy access to the centre of Jewish worship, and would be familiar with all its usages. Among these Churches, that at Cæsarea would doubtless welcome the Epistle with peculiar interest. Indeed, there is considerable force in the arguments alleged by Moses Stuart in favour of the opinion, that it was sent, in the first instance, to that Church; although other considerations point, as we have seen, to the Church at Jerusalem. The Christians at Cæsarea regarded St. Paul with great affection. The beautiful incident recorded in Acts xxi. 12—14 evinces this. When he was on his way to Jerusalem, with the alms of the Gentile believers, and when it was predicted that in that city he would be arrested and held as a prisoner, they besought him with tears not to go up to it, that his labours might not be interrupted, and his life endangered. Their intercourse with him during the long period of his detention in their city, before he appealed to the imperial tribunal, would deepen their regard, and cause them to value a letter from one whose character they revered, and who ever took a deep interest in the conversion of Israel to the faith of Jesus, and then in their establishment in that faith.

Some have advanced the opinion, that the Epistle was not originally addressed to any particular Church or Churches, but was issued as a treatise for Jewish Christians

wherever residing. But this is obviously inconsistent with the personal appeals found in v. 11—14, x. 32—34, which show that it was designed, in the first instance, for a circle of readers whose general character and state were known to the Apostle.

There are several expositors who deny that Palestine was the original destination of the Epistle. But the places which they have respectively suggested have little to support their claims. Dean Alford, in particular, who holds that Apollos was the author, considers that the Epistle was sent to the Church at Rome. But this hypothesis appears to us to be altogether improbable. The constitution of that Church, comprising, as it did, a large number of Gentile converts to the faith of Christ, makes it very unlikely that such an Epistle should be written for its special advantage; nor can we conceive that the Jewish members of that Church were peculiarly exposed to the danger of relapsing into Judaism, to the utter renunciation of the Lord Jesus.

III. It remains only to advert to the *general character* and *scope* of the Epistle.

Two features which distinguish it will readily present themselves to every thoughtful mind,—the grandeur and fulness of its doctrinal statements, and the earnestness and solemnity of its exhortations and warnings. These last are interwoven with the whole argument of the Epistle, and were evidently called forth by a fear lest the Hebrew Christians should relinquish their hold of the Lord Jesus, the exalted Mediator and High Priest of the new economy, and, allured by the stately ceremonial of Judaism, should

go back to it, and trust in it for acceptance with God. We are justified, then, in regarding the Epistle as designed specially to confirm the believing Hebrews in their faith,—to guard them against the danger of apostasy,—and to open to them the superior glory of that dispensation under which it was their privilege to live.

The course of thought which the Apostle pursues is traced in the "General Outline" prefixed to the notes on each chapter; and the reader is requested to read these consecutively, as well as in entering upon the consideration of the several chapters. It is only necessary, in this place, to present a general view of the leading topics on which the Apostle dwells.

The Epistle, then, sets forth the arrangements and privileges of the Christian economy, as contrasted with those of former dispensations, and, in particular, with the Mosaic institute. It opens with the grand sentiment, that the crowning revelation of God—that to which all former ones were only preparatory—has now been made in the Person and work of the Incarnate Son, who, having offered a perfect atonement for our sins, has been exalted to universal dominion. The superiority of Christ, as THE SON, to the holy angels, and the character which they sustain as His servants, are then dwelt upon; and, after a brief exhortation to an earnest and persevering regard to Christian truth, the Apostle passes to the thought, that in the Lord Jesus our humanity, which He assumed in all its weakness and lowliness, and in which He submitted to the deepest suffering, and even to a death of shame and agony, is now raised to unutterable glory, and invested

with sovereignty. Deep truths suggest themselves to his mind, as he dwells on this subject. The connection between the sufferings of the Redeemer and His present state of exaltation,—the relation of the scheme of redemption by the sufferings and death of the Mediator to the essential principles of the moral government of God,—and the design of the Eternal Father to constitute the Son the Head of a new and sacred brotherhood, whom He now succours in their conflicts, and whom He is leading onward to a participation of His glory,—are successively brought out: and the Apostle touches, for the first time, the great theme which he afterwards unfolds at length, the priesthood of the Incarnate Son. A comparison is then instituted between the Lord Jesus Christ and Moses; and the higher dignity of the former, and His more exalted position in “the house of God,” are emphatically affirmed. Then, again, a series of exhortations follows. The believing Hebrews are admonished to guard against the first insinuations of unbelief, lest they, like their forefathers who came out of Egypt with Moses, should fail of “the rest of God” held forth to all who persevere in faith and holy obedience. In the course of these exhortations, the character and blessedness of that “rest” which awaits the faithful Christian are beautifully unfolded; and in concluding them the Apostle again comes to the priestly mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, and the encouragement which it affords to us to come to God, not only for mercy, but for habitual and constant supplies of grace.

The great theme of *the priesthood of Christ* is now

formally entered upon. The Apostle states the essential requisites of every high priest constituted on behalf of men, and shows that they were possessed by our Lord in their highest perfection. He then adverts to the fact that, by the solemn announcement of the Eternal Father, the Messiah was constituted "a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek;" but, before unfolding this subject, he seeks to rouse the believing Hebrews to strive after a clearer and more vivid apprehension of the higher truths of Christianity, and, warning them of the danger of apostasy, he calls on them to persevere in faith and obedience, that they, like their great ancestor Abraham, might inherit, at last, the fulness of blessing promised through the Redeemer. Then follows an extended development of the truths implied in the Melchisedecian character of our Lord's priesthood. Its lofty superiority to that of the order of Aaron is pointed out in several particulars;—the abrogation of the Levitical priesthood by the very fact of the appointment of a Priest after another order, and invested with a priesthood exclusively His own, is affirmed and argued;—and our attention is made ultimately to rest on Him as the Son, "perfected for evermore," exalted as the Mediator to unutterable glory, and fully qualified to dispense to His people rich and eternal blessing. The priestly *ministration* of our Lord in heaven is then brought forward as the subject of reverent contemplation. In that true sanctuary, of which the holy of holies was only an imperfect figure, He presents His sacrifice, and constantly ministers; and His ministration, the Apostle argues, is superior to that of the Levitical high priests, just as

the covenant of which He is the Mediator excels the covenant made with the ancient Israelites. The new covenant is marked by its amplitude of spiritual blessing; and, in particular, it conveys the assurance of a direct action of God upon the soul, to impart holy affections, and then to sustain and mature them. The contrast between the services of the Levitical priests, who ministered amidst the types and symbols of spiritual realities, and who offered sacrifices that could never take away sin, and the ministration of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, is then dwelt upon at length. Jesus has gone into heaven "through His own blood;" and His *sacrifice*, constantly presented by Himself, avails both to cleanse the conscience from guilt, and to impart inward purity and strength. His sacrifice, too, ever *retains its efficacy*. It is the *one* offering, never to be repeated, and never to be supplemented by any other. Throughout successive ages,—until, indeed, the mediatorial economy is wound up,—it will be the ground of acceptance and of the communication of spiritual life to all who trust in it; and then, at last, He who offered it, and who continually presents it in heaven, will be revealed as the Judge of men, His enemies shall be made His footstool, and His believing people shall be raised to the participation of His glory.

On the great truths thus unfolded the Apostle now founds a series of exhortations and appeals; and again warns the Hebrew Christians of the fearful ruin which must fall upon those who renounce the Saviour, after experiencing the virtue of His blood. Blending tenderness with fidelity, he refers affectionately to the proofs

which they had given, in former days, of the sincerity and depth of their attachment to the Lord Jesus ; and he calls upon them still to maintain the great principle of *faith*, that they might realise at length the full salvation held forth to them. On that principle he then dwells, tracing the leading forms of its development, and illustrating it by many striking examples of its exercise in the history of the ancient saints. Other exhortations and warnings follow ; and the Apostle enforces them by an impressive statement of the position and relations of the people of God under the Christian economy, as contrasted with the position of those who witnessed the overwhelming scene of Sinai. Then he proceeds to his final admonitions and encouragements ; and in a prayer remarkably comprehensive and sublime,—one in which he brings together the leading arrangements of the mediatorial scheme,—he implores God to raise the believing Hebrews to perfection in holiness, enabling them, by His own inward working, to maintain a course of practical obedience, so as to obey in every thing His will, and enjoy at all times His complacency. A few personal notices and greetings follow ; and the Epistle closes with the simple but expressive benediction, “ Grace be with you all. Amen.”

THE  
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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CHAPTER I.

1. God, who at sundry times and <sup>a</sup>in divers  
*a* Numbers xii. 6, 8.
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CHAPTER I.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THIS Epistle opens with the truth, that the partial and gradual revelations which God had made of Himself and His purposes of grace in former ages, by successive prophets, were now completed by the revelation of Himself in THE SON, who has not only declared His counsel, but has effected a perfect atonement for sin, and, having done so, has been exalted, as the Mediator, to universal dominion. The Apostle dilates on the glory of the Son,—that He is one with the Father, possessing all His perfections in their fulness of glory,—that He, too, is the Creator and Lord of universal nature,—and that He sustains the universe by His unceasing energy. He pursues this theme by contrasting the Son with the holy angels. Adducing passages from the ancient Scriptures, he shows that, as the Son, He stands in a relation to the Father altogether peculiar and unique,—that He is set forth by the Eternal Father, as the Object of adoration to the angelic hosts themselves,—and that while they are spoken of as the creatures of God, brought into being by His power, and employed to do His bidding, the Son is

manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

addressed as God Incarnate, while His mediatorial sovereignty, the reward of His spotless purity and perfect obedience, during His state of humiliation, involves a transcendent dignity and joy. He, too, amidst all the changes of the material universe,—that universe which He has called into being, and which He still orders and controls,—remains for ever the same. And while the angelic hosts go forth, simply bearing His commission to minister to His people who are about to inherit salvation, He is now enthroned as the Lord of His Church and of the world, before Whom, at last, every hostile power shall bow.

Verse 1. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners etc.*—This and the following verses present to us an impressive view of the progressive revelations of God to mankind, culminating in the appearance on earth of THE SON, and in His work of atonement and redemption. All these revelations are traced back to the Eternal Father. HE spake to men by the prophets: HE has revealed Himself in the Son. The successive dispensations of religion were ordered by His counsel; and that last and best dispensation which the Apostle is about to set forth involves the full development of His purposes of grace. The Apostle marks two features of the earlier revelations,—that they were given *in many portions* and *in many modes*; for it is generally agreed that these phrases most accurately express the ideas conveyed by the words *πολυμερῶς* and *πολυτρόπως*. One part after another of the Divine plans was made known by the inspired messengers of Jehovah. The revelations were *fragmentary* and

2. Hath <sup>b</sup>in these last days <sup>c</sup>spoken unto us by *His*

<sup>b</sup> Deut. iv. 30 ; Gal. iv. 4 ; Eph. i. 10.      <sup>c</sup> John i. 17 ; xv. 15 ;  
Heb. ii. 3.

*gradual*; and until the light of the Christian economy burst upon the world, they were necessarily *imperfect*. So, too, the modes in which God declared or shadowed forth His purposes, and made known His will concerning men, were various. To some whom He commissioned He imparted truth in dreams and visions; while with Moses He spake "mouth to mouth." On many subjects, also, of deepest interest light was shed by typical arrangements and services. It should not be overlooked how strongly the inspiration of the prophets is here affirmed. The literal rendering of the expression ἐν τοῖς προφήταις is "in the prophets;" and although the idiom of our language requires us to employ the phrase, "by the prophets," yet the preposition selected by the Apostle beautifully marks the fact, that God moved on the minds of the prophets so as to render their utterances the expression of His word. The whole period of the Old Testament economy seems to be comprehended in the phrase, "in time past." The series of revelations closed, indeed, with Malachi, until the appearance of John the Baptist: but the declarations of the inspired messengers of God remained, and in the Scriptures of the Old Testament God still continued to speak to men.

Verse 2. *Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.* The connection between this clause and the preceding one is so intimate that in almost all the editions of the Greek Testament it is printed as a part of the first verse. It marks, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, the excellence and completeness of the Christian economy, while it sets forth the personal dignity of HIM who stands

Son, <sup>d</sup>whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, <sup>e</sup>by

<sup>d</sup> Psalm ii. 8; Matt. xxi. 38; xxviii. 18; John iii. 35; Rom. viii. 17.  
<sup>e</sup> John i. 3; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 16.

at its head. Former revelations had been gradual and partial, and had been given in many modes: but now the Son Himself has appeared to make known the Father, to declare His counsel, and to work out the scheme of recovery and salvation which He had designed. The expression used in reference to the *time* of His appearing deserves attention. It is now generally admitted, that *ἐσχάτου*, not *ἐσχάτων* is the true reading; and the phrase used by the Apostle, *ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων*, may be literally rendered, "at the end of these days." It refers to the close of that period which the Jewish Rabbis were accustomed to designate "this age,"—the period which preceded the coming of the Messiah,—and which they placed in contrast with "the coming age," the period which would follow the Messiah's manifestation. Compare ii. 5. Thus when the whole series of preparations was complete, and the period marked out in the Divine counsel to precede the appearance of the Messiah had reached its close, the grand and final revelation of God took place. The designation of the august Person by whom God spake to men in "the fulness of the time,"—THE SON,—stands here in its own simple majesty. It points Him out as sustaining a relation to the Father altogether peculiar and unique. It distinguishes Him from the merely human messengers through whom former disclosures of the Divine purposes were given, and recognises Him as truly and properly God. The sacred mystery of the Trinity in Unity, and of the filial relation of the Second Person to the First, had been intimated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This the Apostle himself goes on to show, as

whom also He made the worlds ;

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he dwells on the thought that the very fact that He who redeemed us is THE SON, proves that He is infinitely exalted above the highest created intelligences. But the Divine Sonship of our Lord was yet more impressively affirmed by Himself during the whole course of His public ministry. To cite the passages which show this would far exceed the limits of a note. But we must not pass over the remarkable parable in which our Lord affirmed the very contrast between Himself and former messengers of God which the Apostle here adopts. As the season of His deepest suffering drew near, He addressed to the Pharisees the parable of the householder who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. To them the householder sent his servants in succession, to obtain the fruit of the vineyard ; but, last of all, he sent unto them *his son*, as one who might justly claim a deeper reverence and a more willing submission.—Another point which is worthy of attention, in regard to this clause, is, that the Apostle uses the aorist, ἐλάλησεν, which should be literally rendered not “hath spoken” but “spake.” It marks the whole work and teaching of our Lord on earth as a past historical fact.—Nor should we omit to note the peculiar force of the preposition, ἐν Υἱῷ, “in the Son,” corresponding to the phrase, ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, in the preceding clause. While the latter expression implies, as we have said, that God moved on the minds of the prophets, so as to make them the instruments of uttering His word, the former phrase alludes to the ineffable union of the Father with the Son, and marks the fact that in the Son, and in all His announcements and precepts, we have a revelation of the Father’s mind and purposes. There is a beautiful accordance between this sentiment and some of

our Lord's own declarations. When, after the last supper, Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," our Lord replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." (John xiv. 8—10.) And in His high-priestly prayer He said, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." (John xvii. 8.) At all times our Lord spoke of Himself as the Father's Messenger, uttering His words, and carrying out His counsel.

*Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things.* In this clause, too, the Apostle uses the aorist, "Whom He appointed," or "constituted," "Heir of all things;" and the act of the Father referred to reaches back to eternity. The question has been much discussed, both in ancient and modern times, whether this statement is to be understood of our Lord in His Divine nature, so that the heirship which it affirms belongs to His original state of glory, or whether that heirship accrues to Him, as the Mediator, in virtue of His work of redemption. The position of the clause in the Apostle's argument seems to require the former interpretation. And the truth thus elicited is a great and important one. It is, that, by the constitution of the Father, lordship over all things belongs to the Son, as such,—belongs to Him, indeed, in virtue of that ineffable relation in which He stands to the Eternal Father. For we must not regard the word *κληρονόμον* as simply equivalent to "lord." It could not, as a thoughtful expositor

3. *Who, being the brightness of His glory, and  
f John i. 14; xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15.*

has well remarked, have been applied to the Father. The right of possession and dominion which it implies is one founded upon the filial relation. Thus the Apostle causes us to linger amidst the lofty mysteries connected with the personal distinctions in the Godhead,—mysteries which fill us with reverence and awe, but the contemplation of which, while they baffle our powers, is calculated to elevate and chasten the devout spirit.

*By whom also He made the worlds.* The precise import of this clause has been a matter of controversy. The usual meaning of *τοὺς αἰῶνας* is “the ages;” and the rendering which many have adopted is, “By whom also He constituted the ages.” But Ebrard and Delitzsch have satisfactorily vindicated the translation, “the worlds,”—the phrase including the whole system of material nature, considered as existing in time. It was the act of Jehovah which brought matter, in all worlds, into existence, and thus the ages commenced. A similar use of the expression is found in xi. 3. The truth, we conceive, which is here set forth is, that not only was the Son, as such, constituted the Lord of all things that should be created, but that *by Him the Father brought all things into being.* To Him, not independently of the Eternal Father, but in ineffable union with Him, and as carrying out His counsel, the act even of creation is to be ascribed. The arrangement of the words in the original, now adopted on the authority of the earliest and best MSS., *δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας*, throws the emphasis on the word “made,” and thus brings out, in a very striking manner, the idea just indicated.

Verse 3. *Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.* Here the Apostle, having

the express image of His person, and *ſ* upholding all

*ſ* John i. 4 ; Col. i. 17 ; Rev. iv. 11.

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spoken of the Son as possessed, in virtue of this relation, of universal lordship, and as being indeed the Creator of all things, goes on to shadow forth to us this relation itself. He invites us to draw near, though with lowly reverence, to look at this sublime mystery. But, from the very nature of the case, he can only employ figurative language, suggesting partial analogies, and leaving the subject not fully unfolded. We regard it as beyond question, that these clauses refer to the Son *in His eternal and Divine nature*,—to the mystery of His essential relation to the Father. Their position in the Apostle's argument is sufficient to evince this. The Son, then, is "the brightness of" the Father's "glory,"—the outstreaming of the Eternal Light. The idea which is suggested is that of the Nicene creed, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." In illustration of this metaphor, the Rev. Richard Treffry, in his great work on the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, remarks, "Of all material substances light is the most fair, and supplies us with the most suitable illustration of the Divine Nature. With this reference it is frequently employed in the Scriptures. In the passage before us, the Father and the Son are represented under two figures drawn from this object. The latter is the out-streaming from the uncreated luminary. There is some analogy—how faint and inadequate!—between the radiance of the sun and the relation of the second Subsistence in the Trinity to His eternal Father. If we may be permitted to analyse the terms, they supply us with the idea of *derivation*, in which the derived is contemporaneous with his source, both being perfectly and infinitely co-existent. They suggest, also, the notion of *con-substan-*

things by the word of His power, <sup>h</sup> when He had by

<sup>h</sup> Heb. vii. 27 ; ix. 12, 14, 26.

*tiality*; not, it may be, according to philosophic accuracy, but with sufficient distinctness to be appreciable by common understandings."—The Son, too, is "the express image of" the Father's "person," or, as Dean Alford renders the words, *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, an exact translation of which is confessedly very difficult, "the impress of His substance," or "of His essential being." Another figure is here introduced. Dr. Delitzsch, after carefully tracing the various significations of *χαρακτήρ* properly fixes upon the notion of *absolute similarity* as the chief idea which it here suggests. The Son is of the same essence as the Father, and possesses all His perfections in their fulness of glory. He is *of* the Father, and yet is *one with Him*, co-equal and co-eternal.

*And upholding all things by the word of His power.* Another consideration illustrative of the essential dignity of the Son is here brought forward. The whole universe of being is sustained by His unfailing energy. He upholds the worlds which He has created, and maintains all the processes of nature. There is peculiar force in the expression, "the *word* of His power." It marks the *ceaseless putting forth* of His inherent energy, and recalls the beautiful language of the Old Testament in reference to the work of creation, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm xxxiii. 9.) There is no labour, no exhausting effort, on the part of Him who sustains universal nature, as its Creator and Lord. For He possesses in Himself a power before which everything must bow, and the exercise of which is all-pervading and constant.

*When He had by Himself purged our sins.* Here the

Himself purged our sins, <sup>i</sup> sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ;

<sup>i</sup> Ps. cx. 1 ; Eph. i. 20 ; Heb. viii. 1 ; x. 12 ; xii. 2 ; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

Son is presented to our contemplation in His *incarnate state*, and, indeed, when the great work of atonement was accomplished by the sacrifice of Himself, and when He had risen again to open to us the path of life. Those views of His essential and eternal glory on which the Apostle had just dwelt are brought into connection with the redemption which he effected when He appeared on earth, and submitted for us to the death of the cross, and with the dignity and sovereignty to which, as the Mediator, He has now ascended. In the statement with which the Epistle opens, that God, having spoken to men in former ages by the prophets, has now spoken to us by His Son, the fact of the *incarnation* is implied. But the Apostle now fixes attention on the *redemptive work* of the Lord Jesus, and on its *glorious issue*.—The words, “by Himself,” though they beautifully harmonize with the sentiment of the Apostle, are wanting in the earliest and best MSS., and are now excluded from all critical editions of the Greek Testament. The clause before us literally is, “having made purification of sins,” and it marks the *completeness* and *efficacy* of the Redeemer’s sacrifice. It suggests the precious truth, that through the work and sufferings of the Incarnate Son the way is open for the justification of all who trust in Him,—that His death formed a perfect expiation of the sins of all who should come to Him and accept the Father’s scheme of grace. When that death had been endured, and that expiation accomplished, nothing remained but that He should come forth from the tomb the triumphant Mediator, and should ascend to His

4. Being made so much better than the angels, as <sup>2</sup>He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

& Eph. i. 21 ; Phil. ii. 9, 10.

Father's throne, to exercise dominion in the nature which He had assumed and glorified.

*Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* In these words the Apostle alludes to the glorious manifestation of the Divine Presence which is afforded in the heavenly world,—that world which forms “the throne” of Jehovah, while this earth, with all its scenes of loveliness and grandeur, is but His “footstool.” To that world, passing through all the inferior heavens, the Son ascended in His glorified humanity ; and the inspired oracle, uttered ages before, was accomplished, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” The session of our Lord at the Father's right hand marks the fact, that the *dominion* with which He is invested is *mediatorial*. It is exercised in connection with, and, we may say, in subordination to, ~~the~~ universal moral government of Jehovah, maintaining its principles, and securing its loftiest ends. And the Redeemer's present state is one of *glory* and holy *triumph*. Angels who marked with profound attention and reverence His state of humiliation, and who even then worshipped Him, now gaze on Him as the exalted Mediator with delight, while the whole universe of being owns the control of His resistless power.

Verse 4. *Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* The Apostle here enters upon the contrast between the Redeemer and the holy angels,—a contrast which he traces out at length in the remainder of this chapter. He

5. For unto which of the angels said He at any

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had just carried up our views to the enthronement of the Lord Jesus at the Father's right hand; and, contemplating Him as thus exalted, he affirms His lofty superiority to the angelic hosts, as resulting from the glory of His Divine Sonship. The Jews were accustomed to exult in the fact, that at the giving of the law myriads of angels acted as the servants of Jehovah; and they regarded this as illustrating its importance and grandeur. But the Apostle argues that He who has now revealed to us the Father, and who stands at the head of the Christian economy, surpasses in dignity and power all the angelic hosts. — There is an obvious distinction between the participle which the Apostle here uses, *γερόμενος*, "having become," and that which he employs in the first clause of the third verse, *ὄν*, "being." The latter refers to that which the Son was essentially and eternally; the former points out a dignity belonging to Him when His work of atonement was completed, and when He ascended to the Father's right hand. But that dignity rests upon His Sonship. The declaration of the Apostle is, in effect, that the adorable Mediator, though in His state of humiliation He was "made a little lower than the angels," (ii. 9,) is now exalted infinitely above them, since in *His Divine-human Person* He appears as THE SON,—that "Name" which is His in virtue of His essential and eternal relation to the Father.

Verse 5. *For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee?* In this verse, as in very many other passages of this Epistle, we recognise a habit of thought familiar to us in the acknowledged writings of St. Paul. He was accustomed to appeal to passages of the Old Testament in proof of the sentiments which he advanced; and he delighted to

time, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten

! Ps. ii. 7 ; Acts xiii. 33 ; Heb. v. 5.

trace the intimations which were given, in those Sacred Oracles, of the Person of the Redeemer, the work which He should accomplish, the sovereignty with which He should be invested, the blessings which He should dispense, and the whole constitution of grace which should be established through Him. The first passage here cited is from the second Psalm, one of the noblest and most sublime in the whole collection, and the direct Messianic reference of which is unquestionable. In that sacred ode, the Anointed of Jehovah, rejected indeed by men, but exalted, by a special intervention of Divine power, to be the Head and Lord of the Church, as well as to sway a sceptre of resistless power over those who should refuse to bow to His authority and to seek His grace, is introduced as saying, "I will declare the decree, The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee." Thus, in their original connection, the words quoted by the Apostle are addressed to the Son as the enthroned Mediator, just as they are here adduced : but it will be found that they recognise the truth on which the Apostle had laid stress in the preceding verse, that the peculiar and transcendent dignity of the exalted Redeemer rests on His Divine and eternal Sonship. There is a profound depth of meaning in the first clause, "Thou art My Son." These words, we conceive, imply an *essential* and *eternal* relation,—one quite independent of any manifestation to mankind or to the universe ; and the clause that follows, "This day have I begotten Thee," may be referred to the open *recognition* of the Mediator, in *His Divine-human Person*, as possessed of all the glory of this exclusive Sonship. It is worthy of our attention, that St.

Thee? And again, "I will be to Him a Father, and

*m* 2 Sam. vii. 14; 1 Chron. xxii. 10; xxviii. 6; Ps. lxxxix. 26, 27.

Paul, in his discourse in the Pisidian Antioch, cites this passage as having an important application to the resurrection of our Lord:—"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." (Acts xiii. 32, 33.) The best exposition of the deep truths implied in these words, and in this remarkable application of them, is that given by the Rev. W. B. Pope, in his Sermon on "the Resurrection-Testimony," comprised in his volume of *Discourses on the Kingdom and Reign of Christ*. Recognising the distinct reference of the first clause to the eternal relation of the Son to the Father, and affirming that it would be a fatal perversion of the words to understand them as meaning, "This day *Thou hast become My Son,*" he goes on to say, "But while the Son of God never varied from that relation, and never could vary from it, being begotten of the Father in an eternity that knows nothing of the chronology of change, in His Divine-human, or incarnate, Person, He is said in Scripture to be begotten and born in time. And, while His birth in human nature was essentially perfect at His conception by the Holy Ghost, it is regarded as fully declared and realised in its perfection, only when He came forth from the dead. There is no danger in saying that the human nature of our Lord was in a condition of imperfection before He rose from the sepulchre. Certainly His humanity possessed at His birth all its attributes, and acquired nothing afterwards but experience of their depths and powers. But that

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### He shall be to Me a Son ?

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human nature which was subject to manifold infirmities, which was from day to day more and more marred, and which was under the dread necessity of dissolution and the sepulchre, was not as yet the worthy representative of the second nature that the Son of God assumed. True, that its humiliation was its highest glory, and that expressly for the suffering of death, atoning death, it was assumed; yet, while that humiliation proceeded, and during the continuance of it, the Son was not yet fully revealed in the glorious perfection of that idea which filled the Divine Mind from eternity. His human vesture—a vesture this which, created in time, is not to be folded and laid aside, but worn for ever—must be healed of its rents, and washed from its stains of blood, and raised to its highest dignity, before the Eternal Son could be all that the Divine purpose conceived in His incarnation. Now that perfect idea was attained in the resurrection.”—“Summing up the whole, we hear the Father’s testimony to His Son, that incarnate Person who is the consecrated Messiah: a testimony uttered ages before in the depths of the eternal counsel between the Divine Persons; but now uttered at the open sepulchre as the witness of the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the gift of the Son to our human nature. My perfect Incarnate Son: this day I receive Thee in Thy new humanity as born to Me and mankind for ever; this day I proclaim Thee to be My finished Messiah, prepared for all Thine offices of teaching, expiation, and government; and the love with which I have loved Thee from eternity rests in its plenitude for Thee and Thine upon Thy new and now finished incarnate Person.”

*And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to*

6. || And again, when He bringeth in \*the First-  
 || Or, when He bringeth again. n Rom. viii. 29 ; Col. i. 18 ; Rev. i. 5.

*Me a Son.* This is the second passage which the Apostle adduces to show, that the truth which he affirms had been recognised in the ancient Scriptures. It occurs in the message which the prophet Nathan was commissioned to deliver to David, when he had formed and expressed the purpose to build a house for Jehovah, which should be more suitable than the ancient tabernacle for the resting of the ark of the covenant, and for the manifestation of the Divine glory. In great condescension God accepted the purpose of David, originating as it did in sincere devotion to Himself; but declared to him, that he should not build the house, but that, after his decease, his son who should succeed him, and whose kingdom should be firmly established, should accomplish this work. He assured him also of the perpetuity of his house and kingdom,—the promise thus reaching far beyond Solomon and his immediate descendants, to that greater *Son* of his who should, in the highest sense, build the temple of Jehovah, and whom David himself, by the Holy Spirit, recognised as his Lord. Of Him Solomon was designed to be a type; and the Apostle, contemplating the enthroned Mediator in His incarnate Person, beheld in this prophetic announcement an intimation of the filial relation which He should sustain to the Eternal Father. David himself humbly and gratefully apprehended the wide range of this prediction of Nathan, and regarded it as implying that, in the fulness of time, the promised Restorer, “the Adam from above,” would arise among his descendants.

Verse 6. *And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship*

begotten into the world, He saith, °And let all the

o Deut. xxxii. 43, LXX.; Ps. xcvi. 7 ; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

*Him.* The position of this verse in the Apostle's argument is sufficiently clear ; but its exposition involves several questions of great difficulty. Having shown that the Divine Sonship of the exalted Mediator is distinctly recognised in the ancient Scriptures, and that on this ground He stands higher than the loftiest of the angelic hosts, the Apostle now affirms, that He is set forth by the Eternal Father as the Object of their adoration. But great diversity of opinion exists as to the period of the Messiah's history referred to, and as to the precise passage of the Old Testament which the Apostle had in view.

The first point which demands attention is, the correct method of translating the clause, *ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εισαγάγῃ τὸν Πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην*, rendered in the text of our version, "And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world," but in the margin, "When He bringeth again, etc." At the first view, it would seem more natural to regard the word *πάλιν*, "again," as simply introducing another quotation, just as it does in the preceding verse ; and this is the opinion adopted by Dr. Ebrard, Dr. W. Lindsay, and others. But its position in the clause is held by the most accurate grammarians to require it to be connected with the verb *εἰσαγάγῃ*, so as to refer to a *second* introduction to the world of the august Person spoken of. It is properly maintained, too, that *ὅταν εἰσαγάγῃ* cannot mean, "when He bringeth in, or introduceth," but must be translated "When He shall have brought in," or "introduced." Adopting this view, we can have no hesitation in referring the clause to the second coming of our Lord, when the whole family of man shall acknowledge His sovereignty, and when, indeed, the whole universe shall

angels of God worship Him.

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confess that He is the rightful Lord of this world which He hath redeemed, and of all worlds, "to the glory of God the Father." At that period, He will be attended by the whole company of the angelic hosts, who will do Him homage, and offer to Him their grateful and reverent adoration, while they stand ready to do His bidding and carry out His designs. This application of the present verse derives confirmation from the view which we have taken of the first quotation in the preceding one,—that, while the former clause of that quotation affirms the Divine and eternal Sonship of the Messiah, the latter clause refers to the open recognition of Him, at His resurrection, in His Divine-human Person, as possessed of all the glory of this exclusive Sonship. And now the Apostle passes onward to His next introduction to the world, in the full and perfect revelation of His glory, using the word, as Dean Alford has observed, which was customarily employed to express the bringing in of Israel—the typical firstborn—into the promised inheritance:—"And when He shall have again introduced the Firstborn into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him."

Another question of considerable interest is that which relates to the source of the Apostle's quotation. The very words which he cites are found in the Septuagint version of Deut. xxxii. 43, and form part of the conclusion of the prophetic song of Moses, before he was called to his heavenly rest. It is true, indeed, that they are not in the present Hebrew text; but the authors of the Septuagint doubtless found them in the copies which they used; and it is by no means certain that they are not to be regarded as genuine. It is an important consideration, bearing on this subject, that in this Epistle the Septuagint is almost everywhere

literally followed in quotations from the ancient Scriptures ; and we strongly incline, with Dr. Ebrard and many other expositors, to view them as part of the sacred text, and to regard this passage of Deuteronomy as the one which the Apostle had in view. The conclusion of this magnificent song of Moses points to a period of *victory* and *judgment*,—one which shall, indeed, bring joy to the people of God, comprehending the Gentiles who have sought His mercy, as well as members of the race of Israel, but which shall be distinguished also by acts of righteous retribution on those who have despised His authority, and persecuted His saints. It is thus applicable, pre-eminently, to the final manifestation of our Lord, when all enemies shall be put under His feet, and when His people shall be exalted to the highest dignity.—Many expositors, who hesitate to recognise the genuineness of the words in Deuteronomy, on account of their absence from the present Hebrew text, consider that the Apostle refers to Psalm xcvii. 7, the Septuagint rendering of which is, “Worship Him, all His angels.” The Messianic reference of this Psalm may be satisfactorily vindicated. It sets forth the reign of God, with its commingling displays of mercy and justice ; and its glowing descriptions apply most fully to “the kingdom of God,” at the head of which the once dishonoured, but now glorified and enthroned, Mediator stands, and which, after offering its blessings to the entire family of man, and manifesting, in the whole course of its administration, the glory of Jehovah, is to issue in the final overthrow of His enemies, and in the exaltation and triumph of His believing and obedient people.

The expression, τὸν Πρωτότοκον, “the First-begotten,” or “the Firstborn,” embraces a wide range of meaning. It includes the idea of *pre-eminence* ; but that pre-eminence is founded upon our Lord’s *eternal relation to the Father*,

7. And \* of the angels He saith, † Who maketh

\* Gr. unto.

† Ps. civ. 4.

as the Son begotten before all worlds; and here, where the term is used absolutely, it must be taken in its highest sense, as indicating Him who is of the Father, and partakes of His very nature. He, indeed, is "the Only-begotten Son;" and it is ultimately upon this ground, though combined with the completeness of His work as the Redeemer, that He is, and will be throughout eternity, "the Firstborn among many brethren," "the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."

Verse 7. *And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, etc.* Continuing the contrast between the angels and the Son, the Apostle adverts to *them* as the creatures of God, invested by Him with lofty powers, and enabled to execute His varied commissions with rapidity and strength: but the Son is addressed as Himself Divine, as seated on a throne of perfect righteousness, and possessed of a dominion which shall never pass away. The passage here cited is taken from Psalm civ.,—a beautiful ode in which the majesty of Jehovah, His ceaseless agency, His control of all the elements of nature, and His providential government, involving a benignant care of the creatures which He has formed, are all set forth. It has been contended by some, that the proper import of the original Hebrew is, "Who maketh the winds His messengers, and flames of fire His servants:" but the rendering of the Septuagint, which the Apostle has followed with only a slight variation in the last phrase, has been amply vindicated. Not only do the Hebrew words admit of this rendering, but the sentiment thus brought out contributes to the completeness of the representation of God's providential agency and government. But the most eminent

13/104: 4

His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.

8. But unto the Son *He saith*, Thy throne, O God,

*q* Psalm xlv. 6, 7.

and cautious expositors are agreed, that while the words "His angels" are the *direct object* of the verb "maketh," the term πνεύματα should be translated not "spirits" but "winds," so that there shall be a correspondence between it and the expression "a flame of fire" in the following clause. Thus the grand conception is brought before us, that Jehovah, as He comes forth in majesty and power, makes His unseen messengers, His holy angels, who do His bidding and execute His purposes, as the winds, rapid, powerful, and mysterious in their movements; and His commissioned servants as flames of fire. Chrysostom and other ancient expositors have properly called attention to the force of the words ὁ ποιῶν, "*who maketh.*" They give prominence to the thought, that what the angels are, they are by the creative *fiat*, and sustaining energy, of the Most High: but the Son is Himself *God*, and now being clothed with our nature, and having accomplished the work of atonement, He is *enthroned* over universal nature. This the Apostle immediately affirms.

Verse 8. *But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness etc.* This quotation is taken from Psalm xlv., the direct Messianic reference of which may be viewed as established. While much of its imagery was derived from the regal splendour which marked the age of Solomon, there are expressions in it which cannot be applied to Solomon himself, or to any earthly king; and the vivid description which it contains of the glory of the Sovereign referred to, of His career of victory, and of the entire devotion with which He should be regarded by those who should be

is for ever and ever : a sceptre of \*righteousness is the

\* *Gr. rightness or straightness.*

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brought into the most intimate relation to Him, may well be applied to Him who is the Head and Lord of His Church and whose glory is reflected in the purity and grace of His people. It is almost needless to advert to the failure of the attempts which have been made to impugn the correctness of the authorised translation of this verse. The rendering which has been proposed, in order to set aside the distinct recognition of the Deity of the Son, "God is Thy throne for ever and ever," is in the highest degree objectionable; for, as Dr. Lindsay well observes, "the throne is inferior in dignity and importance to Him who sits upon it; and therefore to make God the throne of Christ, and Christ a creature, is a monstrous violation of the plainest dictates of common sense." Besides, the Apostle's argument clearly requires the received translation. He is contrasting the manner in which the angels are spoken of as invested by the creative fiat of Jehovah with their lofty powers, and sustained by Him in the exercise of those powers, with the manner in which the Son is addressed as Himself God, possessed of a dominion which no earthly change can affect, but which reaches onward to the ages of ages. And then, still quoting the language of the inspired Psalmist, he adverts to the prominent feature of the Saviour's mediatorial administration,—that it is characterised by perfect and unfailing rectitude. Of that rectitude, looking at the vast range and the lofty ends of the Mediator's sway, we can only be assured by His true and proper Deity. It is *perfect* rectitude, guarding the rights of all over whom it is exercised, as well as maintaining the great principles of truth, and purity, and kindness; and

sceptre of Thy kingdom.

9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated

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it supposes a discernment which no disguise can baffle or elude, and an elevation of moral excellence surpassing all mere creaturely goodness. It may be added that, in several of the best MSS., the conjunction *καί*, "and," is inserted between the two clauses of the quotation;—"and a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." But the inference which Hoffmann has deduced from this, that the quotation is purposely divided into two parts, the former referring to Jehovah, and the latter to the King whose exaltation is here celebrated, cannot be sustained. The point of the Apostle's reasoning in these verses is, that THE SON is addressed as GOD, and is thus placed infinitely above the angelic hosts; and, as Dr. Delitzsch has well observed, "it is quite impossible that it should have been the author's deliberate intention by means of that *καί* to take the whole point out of his argument."

Verse 9. *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee etc.* It is of importance to observe that in the first clause of this verse we have the aorists, *ἠγάπησας*, "Thou lovedst," and *ἐμίσησας*, "Thou hatedst," which, as Dean Alford properly remarks, shows that the statement refers to the whole of our Lord's life on earth, considered as now past. Thus the perfect character of our Lord's obedience,—an obedience which reached even unto death,—and the maintenance by Him of the great principles of purity and rectitude, not only in His own feelings and conduct, but by submitting to shame and anguish for the sins of men, are referred to as the ground of His mediatorial exaltation and of the holy joy which He realises in dispensing the blessings of His reign. This sentiment is one on which

iniquity : therefore God, *even* Thy God, <sup>r</sup>hath anointed  
*r* Isaiah lxi. 1 ; Acts iv. 27 ; x. 38.

St. Paul delighted to dwell, and which he has very distinctly brought out in Phil. ii. 7—11. The enthronement of our Lord as the Mediatorial Sovereign is made to rest on His mediatorial righteousness, completed, as that was, by His being “made sin for us” whom He came to redeem and save. To that enthronement—to the festive joy of the angelic hosts which accompanied it,—and to the holy gladness which filled the Redeemer’s own spirit,—the words which the Apostle goes on to quote from the inspired Psalmist beautifully apply. The Eternal Father is represented as “anointing” the Son, when His human obedience was perfect, and He had fully accomplished the work of atonement, “with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” Some of the ancient commentators, including the great Augustine, regarded the first *ὁ Θεός* in this verse as a vocative, and translated, “Therefore, O God, Thy God anointed Thee with the oil of gladness.” This rendering is admissible : but that of our Authorised Version is, on many accounts, to be preferred. And here the mysterious constitution of the Saviour’s Person again suggests itself. As the Son, He is truly and properly Divine : but when He clothed Himself with our nature, He became the “righteous Servant” of the Father, and all His actings as the Mediator were subordinated to the manifestation of the Father’s glory, and the accomplishment of the Father’s purposes. The Father is thus His “God ;” and this relation influences the whole mediatorial constitution.—There is considerable difference of opinion as to the designed reference of the expression, *παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου*, “above Thy fellows.” Some, fixing their regard chiefly on the kingly dignity of the august Person

These with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

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addressed, consider that *other kings* are intended: but this exposition is superficial, and, if the phrase is extended to kings in general without regard to *character*, is even objectionable. The devout mind recoils from the thought, that wicked kings, simply because they occupy a throne, can be spoken of as "the fellows" of the Incarnate Son, or as "partakers with Him" in His dignity. Dean Alford, with several other commentators, maintains that *the angels* are referred to: but this idea seems foreign to the scope of the passage, nor do the angels stand in such a relation to the Lord Jesus that they can be properly designated by the expressive phrase in question. A deeper truth, and one intimately connected with the privileges and hopes of believers, seems to have been present to the Apostle's mind. The declaration immediately preceding brings before us the Son in His incarnate state, and fixes our minds on His whole career on earth as one of spotless purity and perfect obedience; the Eternal Father, too, is spoken of as His God under the mediatorial constitution; and to us it appears unquestionable, that they who are designated "the fellows" of the exalted Redeemer, or "partakers with Him" in His dignity and triumph, are His saved people, who have become through Him the sons of God, and who shall be raised at last to the highest glory of which human nature is capable. The words cited by the Apostle recall, indeed, the message of our risen Lord sent by Mary of Magdala to the faithful eleven:—"Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." Nor is it a slight confirmation of this exposition, that in iii. 14 the Apostle himself says, "For we are made partakers of Christ, (*μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ,*) if we hold the

10. And, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid

*s* Ps. cii. 25, etc.

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beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." This is the view of Calvin, Beza, and several other thoughtful expositors.

Verse 10. *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens etc.* In this and the two following verses the Apostle applies to the Son that magnificent passage of Psalm cii. in which the eternal existence of Jehovah, His absolute and unchangeable perfection, His ever-during life and energy, are placed in contrast with the temporary duration and the incessant changes of material nature. As our reverent thought goes back through the ages upon ages that are past, it reaches "the beginning," the point when material nature first rose into being: but then, and through the eternal ages before it, God existed in all His glorious attributes and infinite resources. He "laid the foundation of the earth;" and "the heavens," with the worlds on worlds which they contain, were "the works of His hands." He created all things; He established the system of the universe; and He impressed on nature the laws by which its processes are regulated. In comparison of HIM all beings are as nothing; while on Him they are continually dependent. But this ineffable glory belongs to THE SON. The Psalm from which the Apostle takes the quotation, contains the fervent supplication of the afflicted people of Jehovah, groaning under the burden of the Babylonian captivity, for His interposition to succour them and re-establish His Church in her glory. As the Psalmist proceeds, the confident hope of such an interposition rises within his breast, and he gives utterance to language which could only find its accomplishment

the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands :

11. *They shall perish ; but Thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ;*

12. *And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up,*  
*† Isai. xxxiv. 4 ; li. 6 ; Matt. xxiv. 35 ; 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10 ; Rev. xxi. 1.*

in the manifestation of the Messiah, and the revelation to all nations of the power and grace of Jehovah in Him. Conscious of his own frailty, the Psalmist turns with satisfaction to the eternity of God, and His absolute perfection which no lapse of time can impair ; and feels that in these he has a sufficient ground of confidence that the Church of God, now feeble and depressed, should again be seen in loveliness and power, when God Himself should appear, to reveal His condescending grace to the sorrowful and perishing, and to call the nations to the acknowledgment of His sovereignty and the enjoyment of His love. But this manifestation of God was to take place in the Person of the Son, who is, in every age, the Revealer of the Father ; and to Him, therefore, the magnificent address with which the Psalm closes is properly applied. The reference of the Psalm to the time of the Messiah, and the strictly legitimate character of the Apostle's reasoning in applying this declaration to Christ, are ably vindicated by Dr. Delitzsch.

Verses 11, 12. *They shall perish, but Thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old etc.* In the preceding verse of this sublime passage, the glory of God as the Creator of all things is set forth ; and now His un failing and ever-during energy, His perfect freedom from all change and decay, are placed in contrast with the incessant changes of material nature, and with the fact that the present form

and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

13. But to which of the angels said He at any time, "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine

Ps. cx. 1; Matt. xxii. 44; Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42;  
Heb. i. 3; x. 12.

and order of the heavens and the earth shall pass away. Nothing around us bears the stamp of permanence; and we ourselves spend a fleeting and transient life on earth. In all the changes, too, of material nature, the hand of God, the hand of the Incarnate Son now exalted as the Mediator, is to be recognised. We look for the time when, in obedience to His command, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up;" and we look forward, also, to "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." But the eternal Jehovah changes not; and the Son, the Revealer of the Father, the Agent of creation, the Sustainer of all worlds, is possessed of an undecaying energy and an imperishable life.

Verse 13. *But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, etc.* The Psalm to which the Apostle here appeals is clearly and exclusively Messianic. It is utterly inapplicable to any earthly sovereign; and the attempts of some critics to explain it as referring primarily to David himself have signally failed. It is, indeed, one of the sublimest of those sacred hymns in which David expressed his own and the Church's hope of the Messiah's dominion and triumph, and of His unflinching priestly intercession. Its opening declaration is adduced to place the universal sovereignty of the Son, as the exalted Mediator, in vivid contrast with the subordinate

enemies Thy footstool ?

14. <sup>a</sup>Are they not all ministering spirits, sent

*a* Gen. xix. 16 ; xxxii. 1, 2, 24 ; Ps. xxxiv. 7 ; xci. 11 ; ciii. 20, 21 ;  
Dan. iii. 28 ; vii. 10 ; x. 11 ; Matt. xviii. 10 ; Luke i. 19 ; ii. 9, 13 ;  
Acts xii. 7 ; xxvii. 23.

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and ministerial position of the angelic hosts. To none of these last had the Eternal Father ever given the assurance of a participation of His own throne, and of a dominion which should be maintained in unfailling energy and resistless power, until all who should oppose it should be brought to acknowledge their subjection, and to confess the might of Him who had baffled their designs and visited them with judgment. But such a declaration had been addressed to the Son ; and thus He was infinitely exalted above the highest of these heavenly messengers. It is worthy of attention that this portion of the ancient Scriptures was brought forward by our Lord Himself and by His Apostles as referring to the Messiah. It recognises the mystery of the Redeemer's Person,—that He should be "the Lord" of David, though He should also be his Son ; and it recognises, likewise, the mediatorial character of His sovereignty,—that sovereignty before which, at last, every hostile power shall fall.

Verse 14. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?* In contrast with the enthroned Redeemer, the Apostle speaks of the holy angels as sent forth to minister to His people, so as to subserve the purposes of His grace, and promote that great result which He ever keeps in view. They are all "ministering spirits." The very loftiest of them sustains this subordinate character. They do not rule but serve. There is a remarkable fulness of meaning in the terms which the Apostle has chosen. The phrase,

forth to minister for them who shall be theirs of salvation ?

y Rom. viii. 17 ; Tit. iii. 7 ; Jam. ii. 5 ; 1 Pet. iii. 7.

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“ministering spirits,” scarcely expresses the idea of the original *λειτουργικά πνεύματα*. The former term is derived from *λειτουργός*, which designates a person who acts in some *public office*, whether sacred or civil ; and thus the phrase used by the Apostle implies that the holy angels bear *Christ's commission to serve His people*. This idea is then more fully brought out. They are “sent forth,”—sent forth by Him who reigns at the Father's right hand, and to whom the administration of the mediatorial kingdom is committed,—“for ministering on account of those who are about to inherit salvation,” *εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν*. They execute, as Christ's commissioned servants, the offices assigned to them, not imparting grace and strength from themselves, but ministering in various ways to the comfort and succour of His people, and, it may be, influencing also, in a manner which we cannot explain, the course of events around us. But all that they do they do in subordination to the Lord Jesus, and for the welfare of His Church, so as to contribute to the perfect sanctification, and the ultimate and everlasting triumph, of all who trust in Him. The last expression, which must be literally rendered as above, “on account of those who are about to inherit salvation,” recalls the train of thought in Rom. viii. 23—25: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope

for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." In this passage, as in the one before us, the Apostle marks the complete salvation of Christ's people—that which only can come up to the full idea of salvation—as yet *future*; and he speaks of believers as tending to it. Already they have a title to that perfect blessedness; for being constituted "sons" they are also "heirs:" but they are now toiling amidst the conflicts and sorrows of this probationary life, and before them there is the degradation of mortality. But "salvation," in all its fulness and glory, shall at last be theirs. Every vestige of dishonour, every trace of sorrow, will have passed away from the body as it is raised by Christ's resistless power; and the inward life which His Spirit has diffused through the soul will develop its freshness and power without any possibility of declension, in the realms of light and glory.

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## CHAPTER II.

## 1. THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest

## CHAPTER II.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE Apostle now pauses in the development of his great theme, to address an affectionate and earnest exhortation to the believing Hebrews, to apply themselves diligently to the truths which they had received, lest they should be drifted away from them, and he enforces this exhortation by referring to the guilt and punishment of those who should treat with neglect the message of salvation announced by the Son, and faithfully handed down by those who heard Him, while the Eternal Father attested its truth and authority by miraculous interpositions, and by rich and varied communications of the Holy Spirit to those who embraced it. Then, resuming his argument, he shows that the new and perfect economy of the last days was to be under the lordship of One who should be truly man, and in whom humanity should attain its perfect dignity and sovereignty. Such, he goes on to prove, is the case with the Lord Jesus. Having appeared among us in a state of humiliation, and having submitted to death for us to carry out the Father's gracious counsel, He is now crowned with glory and honour, and invested with a dominion which every creature shall ultimately acknowledge. But He has entered upon this glory as the Head and Leader of His people, whom He has introduced to the high privilege of sonship to God, and whom He condescends to associate with Himself as His brethren. On the intimate relation in which Christ

heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should \* let *them* slip.

\* Gr. *run out as leaking vessels.*

stands to His people, and His deep sympathy with them, the Apostle then enlarges. To effect our redemption, He took upon Himself our nature in all the lowliness and weakness of its present material constitution; He endured, as we do, conflict, temptation, and sorrow; and, at length, He yielded up Himself to a death of violence and agony. But by that death, undergone to make propitiation for our sins, He subverted the dominion of Satan, and opened the way for the deliverance of all who should trust in Him from the distressing fear of death; and still, as our High Priest, He sympathises with His people, and is ever at hand to succour and relieve us.

Verse 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, etc.* This exhortation rests on the truth which the Apostle had just set forth,—the superiority of the Lord Jesus to the angelic hosts. The words *διὰ τοῦτο* may be literally rendered “on this account;” and they recall the great argument of the preceding chapter. The lofty pre-eminence of HIM who, under the Christian economy, has revealed the Father, and accomplished His counsel for man’s redemption, justly requires of all to whom the message of salvation is made known profound, earnest, persevering attention. Such a regard to the message of Christ is especially necessary, since we are exposed to influences that may counteract its power, and lead us astray from the path of evangelical obedience. It is difficult to give an exact rendering of the last clause, *μήποτε παραρῶμεν*. The idea conveyed by the last word is that of *flowing by* an object; so that the import

2. For if the word *spoken by angels was steadfast,*  
*a* Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19.

of the clause is, "lest haply we should pass by," or "neglect," them, or, to adhere more closely to the figure of the original, "lest haply we should float past them." Weak as we are in ourselves, and surrounded by influences which tend to alienate us from the love of spiritual and heavenly good, it is essential to our safety that we should earnestly apply our minds to the great facts and truths of the gospel, realising that which God has revealed, though we see it not, and resting upon all His declarations and promises as certain and unfailing. The believing Hebrews, too, were now exposed to peculiar dangers; and many passages of this Epistle show that one object of the Apostle in writing it was, to guard them against these dangers. Again and again his intense solicitude for their establishment in Christ discloses itself in earnest warnings and appeals. In the present instance, there is a beautiful propriety and delicacy in his including himself with those whom he addresses; and regarding, as we do, St. Paul as virtually the author of the Epistle, we find an explanation of this mode of address in his strong affection for the race of Israel, and in the principle which he affirms as to his own conduct in 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21:—"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law."

Verse 2. *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression etc.* Here the Apostle enters upon an argument, to enforce the exhortation which he had

and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ;

b. Numb. xv. 30, 31 ; Deut. iv. 3 ; xvii. 2, 5, 12 ; xxvii. 26.

just urged. That argument relates to the imminent danger, indeed the certain ruin, of those who should turn away from the message of salvation announced by the Son, and handed down by His chosen messengers, whom He had trained to be His ambassadors to mankind. To place this in the most striking light, he adverts to the manner in which the authority of the ancient law was upheld, and to the fact, that every transgression of it, and even every omission of its requirements, was visited with appropriate punishment. That law was given "through angels:" but the Christian message is declared by the Son, who is Himself our Sovereign and Lord ; and to neglect it, therefore, involves deeper guilt, and will subject men to severer penalties. Some have considered that under the expression, "the word spoken through angels," we may include all the Divine messages and commands which were given through the medium of angels during the whole course of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations: but the clause which follows, "and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward," seems to point exclusively to Divine *commands*, and suggests to us the law of Moses as that which was present to the Apostle's mind. Indeed we may affirm, that he had specially in view the august scene of Sinai. The statement which he makes respecting the part of the angels in that scene is similar to that found in Gal. iii. 19:—"Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." In both these pas-

3. 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great  
e Heb. x. 28, 29; xii. 25.

sages, angels are referred to only as *instruments* in the announcements which fell on the ears of the assembled Israelites. The preposition in both cases is *διὰ* with the genitive, indicating "through;" and "it points," as Bishop Ellicott remarks on the passage in Galatians, "simply and plainly to the media and intervenient actors by whose ministry the law was enacted." The fact of the presence of the heavenly hosts at the giving of the law is distinctly recognised in Deut. xxxiii. 2 and Ps. lxxviii. 17: but these passages, as well as the narratives in Exod. xix. xx. and Deut. v. imply, also, that Jehovah Himself was present. The manner in which the ministry of angels was employed in that revelation of God, and in the announcement of the great precepts of His law, is beyond our comprehension; but the fact is affirmed, that God used them as His instruments, while the words uttered were His own. This was a sentiment familiar to the Jewish mind; and St. Stephen referred to it in his address to the Jewish sanhedrim, that their fathers "had received the law by the disposition of angels, and had not kept it." But the authority of this law was upheld and vindicated. No one could presumptuously violate its precepts, or even treat them with neglect, without exposing himself to merited punishment.

Verse 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first etc.* In contrast with the word uttered from amidst the terrors of Sinai, the Apostle places the Christian announcement of salvation, and infers the deeper guilt of those who refused to embrace it, and the certain ruin which awaited them. The superior claims of that message resulted partly from the loftier dignity of the *medium* through which it was conveyed. Just as in the

salvation; <sup>d</sup> which at the first began to be spoken by

<sup>d</sup> Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 14; Heb. i. 2.

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former verse the angelic hosts are referred to as the intervenient actors, while the law itself was issued by God; so in this verse the Apostle refers to "the Lord,"—a term which marks the sovereignty of our Saviour Christ,—as the instrument and medium of conveying to us the Father's words. He uses the very same form of speaking, *διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου*, which he had employed in relation to the angels, *δι' ἀγγέλων*. And the sentiment thus brought out not only accords with the opening statement of this Epistle, but is one which our Lord Himself repeatedly affirmed. He ever spoke of Himself as the Sent of the Father, declaring His word, and revealing Him to men. We may refer, especially, to His emphatic declaration uttered as He approached the close of His ministry:—"He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." (John xii. 48—50.) We may recall, also, His briefer but equally explicit sayings in His high-priestly prayer: "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." (John xvii. 8.) "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (v. 14.) —But the contrast which the Apostle institutes has respect

the Lord, and was 'confirmed unto us by them that heard *Him* ;

*e* Luke i. 2.

not only to the dignity of Him who, under the new economy, brings to us the Father's message, but to the *nature* of that message, as disclosing a *salvation* which meets our state of death and ruin, and opens to us eternal life. Here, again, we recall the words of our Lord, in which He affirms the character of the announcements with which He was charged, and the blessed result of cordially embracing them: "And I know that His commandment is *life everlasting*." The neglect of such a message—a message of life, inward, spiritual life, imperishable in its very nature, and at length pervading and glorifying our entire being—must be an act of the basest ingratitude, as well as of the most perverse resistance to the authority of God. To turn away from the Son, bringing to us from the Father the offer of salvation, and Himself, by His sacrificial death and His blessed resurrection, opening the way to our actual attainment of that salvation, is the crowning manifestation of confirmed obduracy in evil.

In the carrying on of his argument, the Apostle adverts to the transmission to us of the message which our Lord brought from the Father. It "began to be spoken" by Him; but it was *firmly attested* to us "by them that heard Him,"—everything conspiring to assure us of its faithful transmission and of its authority as a Divine message. These seem to be the ideas suggested by the word *ἐβεβαιώθη*, which we render "was confirmed." The Apostles, the chosen companions of our Lord, were constituted *witnesses* of His teaching and His work: and while their truthfulness was evinced by their whole career as His ambassadors, and especially by the sufferings which they

4. *f* God also bearing *them* witness, *g* both with  
*f* Mark xvi. 20; Acts xiv 3; xix. 11; Rom. xv. 18, 19; 1 Cor. ii. 4.  
*g* Acts ii. 22, 43.

endured for His sake, they were qualified accurately to reproduce His sayings by the special gift of the Holy Ghost, of which He had assured them. (John xv. 26, 27; xvi. 13—15.) But the full force of ἐβεβαιώθη, "was confirmed," cannot be brought out without comprehending the consideration to which the Apostle adverts in the following verse,—that there was a direct putting forth of the power of God in connection with the Apostolic testimony, establishing its validity, and showing that the message which it announced was indeed Divine and saving.—It only remains to add, that the circumstance that the Apostle says, "was confirmed *unto us* by them that heard Him," is accounted for by his having identified himself with those whom he was addressing in his preceding exhortation. See the Introduction, and the note on v. 1.

Verse 4. *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, etc.* It will be observed that, in the first clause of this verse, the word "them" has been supplied by our translators; but the insertion of it obscures, instead of elucidating, the meaning of the Apostle. He had spoken of the message of salvation, which was, at the first, declared by the Lord Himself, being firmly attested to us by them that heard Him; and now he adds, that *God Himself bore witness together with them* to this message, stamping it as authoritative and Divine by the miracles which He enabled them to perform, and by the varied gifts of the Holy Ghost which He conferred on those who embraced it. The force of the term συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος is thus brought out; and the sentiment is that which is found in Acts xiv. 3:—"Long time therefore abode they

signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and || gifts of the Holy Ghost, 'according to His own will?

|| Or, *distributions.*    λ 1 Cor. xii. 4, 7, 11.    † Eph. i. 5, 9.

speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."—It is not necessary to distinguish minutely between the three terms which the Apostle employs in reference to the *outward evidences* by which the Christian message was confirmed. The word "signs" fixes our attention on the works in question as done for the very purpose of attesting the claims of a religious teacher, and the validity of his declarations; while the term "wonders" makes prominent their extraordinary character, as belonging to the sphere of the supernatural. The phrase which follows, "divers miracles," or "divers miraculous powers," *ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν*, conveys a pointed reference to the putting forth of a Divine energy to accomplish these mighty works,—that energy developing itself in various forms. But all these phrases refer to the miraculous interpositions of God, by which the Christian message was attested.—The statement of the Apostle may be regarded as reaching back to the first announcement of that message by our Lord Himself; and thus we are reminded of one of our Lord's own sayings, "But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." (John v. 36.) But this statement applies chiefly to the witness of God Himself as blended with the testimony of the Apostles to the message which they delivered as spoken by the Son, and thus it calls up all the works of power

5. For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection *the world to come, whereof we speak.*

*‡* Heb. vi. 5 ; 2 Pet. iii. 13.

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which marked the Apostolic ministry, arresting the attention of men, and showing that their announcements were true and faithful. But the clause which the Apostle adds, "And with gifts" (or "distributions") "of the Holy Ghost, according to His will," opens to us a yet wider range of thought. While it comprehends the special gifts conferred on many of the first Christians, some of them involving miraculous communications, it embraces also the life-giving, comforting, sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost imparted to all believers. Christianity came forth among men as a religion of living power; and the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who believed on the Lord Jesus was one blessed evidence of its Divine authority, and an earnest of the full accomplishment of its promise of eternal life. Thus the Apostle Peter, when addressing the Jewish sanhedrim, after affirming the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and His exaltation to be "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins," added, "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." (Acts vii. 32.)

Verse 5. *For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.* Here the Apostle resumes his general argument, while his remarks naturally follow the exhortation which he had just given. He had already shown the superiority of Him who has now revealed to us the Father, and who, having accomplished the work of atonement, is enthroned at the Father's right hand, to the angelic hosts, inasmuch as He is THE SON;

## 6. But one in a certain place testified, saying,

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and he had founded on this consideration the proof of the deeper guilt of those who neglect the message of salvation which He has brought to us. And now, fixing our regard on the Son as *incarnate*, he goes on to show that it was the plan of God, partially disclosed in the ancient Scriptures, that the new economy should be placed under the lordship of One in human nature, and in whom that nature should attain a dignity far surpassing that of angelic beings. This argument he introduces with the words now before us. It appears unquestionable, that the phrase, "the world to come," *τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν*, must be understood in the sense of "the world under the latter dispensation." The words which the Apostle immediately adds, "of which we speak," clearly show this. He is professedly treating of the new economy, (i. 1, 2,) and the language which he here employs contains an allusion to his former statement, that our Lord appeared "at the end of these days," when the period which the Jews designated "this age" was expiring, and the period of which they spoke as "the coming age" was about to be introduced. The sentiment of the Apostle, then, is, that it was not the plan of God to assign to angelic beings any lordship over this world or any portion of it under the new economy; but that such lordship was to be concentrated in the person of One in human nature. Angels were to be employed under it, but only as the servants of the enthroned Mediator, ministering to the welfare of those whom He was conducting to a participation of His own glory.

Verse 6. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? etc.* Dean Alford, following many other expositors, has properly remarked,

'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'

7 Job vii. 17; Ps. viii. 4, etc.; cxliv. 3.

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that the general and indefinite manner in which the eighth Psalm is here referred to, does not show that the Apostle was quoting merely from memory, or that he was unacquainted with the author of the Psalm, but rather that "he was writing for readers familiar with the Scriptures, and from whom it might well be expected that they would recognise the citation without further specification." The Psalm in question sets forth the place of *man* in the creation of God, and claims for him pre-eminent dignity and authority. It is not, we conceive, appealed to by the Apostle as a *direct prophecy* of the Messiah, still less as referring to Him *exclusively*; but his argument is, that the deep significance of its statements can only be brought out when viewed in the light of the enthronement of the once humbled, and suffering, and dying Redeemer, and the raising of all His people to share His glory and dominion. The Psalm affirms, in sublime and beautiful language, the dignity and sovereignty conferred by God upon MAN,—realised, indeed, to some extent, when man first came forth from the hands of his Creator, but now realised only in our Lord and Head, who, having passed through the deepest humiliation, is exalted, in His Divine-human Person, to the highest glory, and in whose exaltation we have the pledge of that of all His brethren, and of the true glorification of humanity. Such an application of the Psalm involves the deepest truth, while it reveals to us the mind of Him who guided the thoughts and words of its author. In that part of it which is contained in this verse the *special regard* of God to man is dwelt upon.

7. Thou madest him || a little lower than the angels ;  
Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst  
set him over the works of Thy hands :

|| Or, *a little while inferior to.*

Sometimes, indeed, when the mind is impressed with the vastness and beautiful order of the material universe, man may, for a moment, seem to be cast into the shade: but such an imagination will be corrected by a reference to his designed place in creation. He, too, is emphatically the object of the Divine care. To him God turns with deepest interest, mindful of all his wants, interposing to succour and bless him, and opening to him, in his now humbled state, through the gift of a Redeemer, the path of life, and blessedness and glory.

Verse 7. *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels ; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, etc.* From the first, expositors have been divided in opinion whether the phrase  $\beta\rho\alpha\chi\acute{\upsilon}\tau\iota$  should be rendered "a little," or, as in the margin, "for a little while." Both this phrase, and the Hebrew of which it is a translation, admit of either rendering; so that our choice must be determined by the general course of thought in the Psalm, and in the Apostle's reasoning as founded upon it. We incline, though with hesitation, to the rendering of our Authorised Version. In some respects man, as at first created, was a little inferior to the angels,—those pure and mighty spirits in whom there is a reflection of Divine energy and glory; but the design of God was, that he should at length rise above them, being "crowned with glory and honour," and invested with a dominion to which they could lay no claim. The last clause of this verse, "And didst set him over the works of Thy hands," is wanting in some of the

8. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now "we see not yet all things put under him.

*m* Matt. xxviii. 18 ; 1 Cor. xv. 27 ; Eph. i. 22 ; Heb. i. 13.

*n* 1 Cor. xv. 25.

earliest MSS., though it is found in others, and is now excluded from the best critical editions of the Greek Testament. It is an integral portion of the Psalm ; but it is doubtful whether the Apostle here cites it. Its omission can be readily accounted for, since it is not necessary to his argument.—It may be added that, in rendering the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים by *παρ' ἀγγέλους*, "than the angels," the Apostle has followed the Septuagint ; and the propriety of this translation has been vindicated by Delitzsch, Alford, and others. The same word is similarly rendered in Psalm xcvii. 7 ; cxxxviii. 1.

Verse 8. *Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, etc.* In the first part of this verse the Apostle completes his citation from the Psalm to which he had appealed as declaring the dignity and sovereignty with which it was the purpose of God to invest *man*. He then proceeds to reason on its language, and to show that its fulfilment is to be sought in HIM who now stands at the head of humanity, and who is leading onward those who through Him become "the sons of God" to a participation of His own glory. First, he argues that the words of the Psalm imply *universal* dominion ; and then he alleges the obvious fact, that by man, as he now is in this world, such a dominion is not possessed. To behold the fulfilment of the inspired announcement, and the realisation of the

9. But we see Jesus, <sup>o</sup>who was made a little  
o Phil. ii. 7, 8, 9.

Divine purpose, we must look to the God-Man, who after His deep humiliation, His experience of bitter suffering and even of death, has been enthroned over all, and in whom we have the pledge of the perfect glorification of all His brethren. This sentiment the Apostle develops in the following verse.

Verse 9. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death etc.* To perceive the beautiful connection of thought which pervades this verse, and to apprehend the relations of its several clauses, it is necessary to place the opening words in the precise order in which they occur in the original, though in doing so we deviate from the idiom of our language:—"But Him who was made a little lower than the angels we see—Jesus—through the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." Thus the sentiment is brought out, that in our Lord, as the Head and Representative of humanity, we see the fulfilment, in part, of the declarations of the Psalm referred to, and the pledge of their ultimate and perfect accomplishment. Thus, too, it becomes obvious, that we must not connect the words "for the suffering of death," or rather, "through the suffering of death," with the first part of the verse, as if the meaning were that our Lord was made a little lower than the angels in order to the suffering of death. The preposition *διὰ* with the accusative, which the Apostle employs, forbids such a meaning; and the arrangement of the clauses equally excludes it. His statement is, that the Lord Jesus, who appeared among us in all the weakness and lowliness of ordinary humanity, is now invested with the highest dignity, and seated upon a throne of majesty, *as the result of His submission to death.*

lower than the angels, || for the suffering of death  
 p crowned with glory and honour; that He by the

|| Or, *by*.

p Acts ii. 33.

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The depth of His humiliation, reaching, as it did, even to the death of the cross, and the completeness of the atonement which He thus effected, are alleged as the ground of His mediatorial exaltation and dominion. Here again we have a view of the mediatorial scheme on which St. Paul delighted to dwell. We may especially refer to Phil. ii. 7—11.—The exposition of the last clause of this verse involves considerable difficulty. There is a remarkable reading found in several of the early Fathers, which, if adopted, would introduce into the Apostle's statement a new element, and one requiring very careful thought. The phrase *χωρὶς Θεοῦ*, "apart from God," is substituted for *χάριτι Θεοῦ*, "by the grace of God:" but this reading is not sustained, and we may at once dismiss the consideration of it. The death of Jesus, endured for the sinful race of men, and opening to every individual of that race the path of life, was the manifestation of the Father's graciousness. This, too, is a thought on which St. Paul loved to dwell, and which is brought out with peculiar force in Rom. v. 8, viii. 32. But the difficulty of this clause lies in its relation to the preceding ones. The proper rendering of *ὅπως* with the subjunctive is "in order that;" and the question naturally arises, How can it be said that Jesus was "crowned, on account of the suffering of death, with glory and honour, in order that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man?" Some, as Schleusner and Dr. W. Lindsay, to evade this difficulty, contend that *ὅπως* may be rendered "when" or "after," and that the statement of the Apostle is, that the Redeemer was thus

grace of God should taste death <sup>9</sup> for every man.

*9* John iii. 16 ; xii. 32 ; Rom. v. 18 ; viii. 32 ; 2 Cor. v. 15 ;  
1 Tim. ii. 6 ; 1 John ii. 2 ; Rev. v. 9.

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“crowned” after He had undergone death for all mankind. In support of this view, they appeal to Acts iii. 19, in which, however, it cannot be shown that *ὄπωσ* has the meaning which they assign to it, and the ordinary rendering is certainly to be preferred,—and to some passages in the *Iliad* of Homer, in which, however, this conjunction is followed by the indicative mood, not the subjunctive. This explanation cannot be deemed satisfactory. We must adhere to the proper force of the terms which the Apostle uses, and endeavour reverently to trace out the connection of thought which they indicate. The view of Dean Alford and some others is, that the Apostle here affirms that Jesus was crowned, on account of the suffering of death, with glory and honour, *in order that* His death might be *available*, through His priestly intercession and sovereignty, for every man. “Without His exaltation,” Dean Alford writes, “His death would not have been effectual. Unless He had been crowned with glory and honour, received to the right hand of the Father, and set in expectation of all things being put under His feet, His death could not have been, for every man, the expiation to him of his own individual sin. On the *triumphant issue* of His sufferings their efficacy depends. And this I believe is what the sacred writer meant to express. His glory was the consequence of His suffering of death;—arrived at through His suffering: but the applicability of His death to every man is the consequence of His constitution in heaven as the great High Priest, in virtue of His blood carried into the holy place, and the triumphant Head of our common humanity.” In this view we cannot concur. We admit,

10. For it became Him for whom *are* all things,

† Luke xxiv. 46.      ‡ Rom. xi. 36.

indeed, two things:—that the exaltation of our Lord, as the Redeemer who submitted to death for us, was an essential part of the mediatorial scheme; and that we cannot conceive of salvation being dispensed by Him, except as the Risen One, enthroned at the Father's right hand, and invested with an unchangeable priesthood. But certainly the Apostle's language does not properly convey the sentiment which Dean Alford affirms. It refers not to the *application* of the *benefit* resulting from the death of Jesus, but to His *endurance of death*, His personal experience of it in all its bitterness, that He might redeem and save us. We conceive, then, that the Apostle adds this clause as *supplementary* to the *whole statement* contained in the former part of this verse; and that, recalling the great facts on which he had laid stress, that Jesus came in the lowliness of ordinary manhood, and that in His state of humiliation He yielded Himself up to death, he makes prominent the great *purpose* of His death, and its relation to the *whole human family*. The death of Jesus, he teaches us, was not for Himself; it was endured by Him as our Representative, and for our salvation; and it was endured "for every man," so that each individual of our race, who, following the drawings of the Father, turns away from sin, and looks to Him alone, may humbly but confidently claim an interest in it.

Verse 10. *For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, etc.* Here the Apostle dwells on that grand feature of the mediatorial scheme to which he had just adverted,—that it involved the suffering and death of the Mediator, as

and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons

essential both to His own glorification, and to the salvation and glorification of those whom He should associate with Himself; and he affirms that such a procedure was in the highest degree worthy of God as the Creator and Lord of the universe. That conception of God which he first places before us is peculiarly sublime. "All things are *for* Him;" they exhibit His essential glory, and are subordinated to the accomplishment of His purposes. "All things," too, "are *by* Him;" they have been brought into being by His power; they are upheld by His unseen hand; and He rules throughout the universe, controlling all events, but without superseding the voluntary agency of His creatures. But the scheme of God—the purpose which He is carrying out, and which influences the whole course of His administration—is, the leading onward of multitudes who are constituted His "sons" to perfect and everlasting "glory." We conceive, with the best expositors, that the whole structure of the sentence requires that the clause, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα, "bringing many sons unto glory," should be connected with the words which immediately precede them. Had that clause been intended to refer to "the Captain of their salvation," a different arrangement of the terms would have placed this beyond a doubt. As the sentence is formed, these words naturally refer to "Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things;" and the fact, that ἀντὶ is in the dative case, and ἀγαγόντα in the accusative, creates no difficulty, since such a construction is a frequent one, especially in the writings of St. Luke. We may refer, in particular, to Luke i. 73, 74; Acts xv. 22, 23; xxv. 27.—There is a remarkable correspondence between the sentiments of this passage and those of Rom. viii. 28—30. The

unto glory, to make 'the Captain of their salvation "perfect through sufferings.

† Acts iii. 15 ; v. 31 ; Heb. xii. 2.      u Luke xiii. 32 ; Heb. v. 9.

latter, indeed, embraces elements of thought which are not found in that before us, and *vice versâ*; but both passages show us, that the great purpose of God is, to raise multitudes of men—all, we conceive, in accordance with the declaration just uttered, (v. 9,) who should accept the method of salvation through Christ,—to the high privilege of sonship to Himself, and to the ultimate participation of the Saviour's glory. For He stands at their head, and is to be throughout eternity "the Firstborn among many brethren." He is "the Captain of the salvation" of all His people. The term ἀρχηγός, here applied to the Redeemer, may be properly rendered, as in our version, "Captain" or "Leader," but it includes also the idea, that He is the *Author* of our salvation,—that from Him who thus stands at our head our salvation flows.—It was, then, the counsel of the Father, that He, as the Captain of our salvation, should be "*made perfect through sufferings.*" This statement is very comprehensive. It contains a reference to our Lord's own exaltation as the Mediator. It was only through His submission to death, even the death of the cross, that He could reach that state of perfect dignity and glory which the mediatorial scheme contemplated, that He could be enthroned as the Head and Forerunner of His people. And His submission to death was essential fully to qualify Him to be the Saviour of men. It was when He had endured all the penal suffering which the principles of the Divine government required Him to undergo as our Representative and Substitute, and had risen again, so as to afford an evidence that His

11. For <sup>z</sup>both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified <sup>y</sup>are all of one: for which cause <sup>z</sup>He

<sup>z</sup> Heb. x. 10, 14.

<sup>y</sup> Acts xvii. 26. <sup>z</sup> Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17; Rom. viii. 29.

atonement was complete and accepted, and had ascended to His mediatorial throne, that He was fully furnished, if we may so speak, to bestow salvation on all who should trust in Him.—It is not possible, within the limits of a note, to develop at length the sentiment with which this verse is introduced,—that the scheme of our redemption by the sufferings and death of the Incarnate Son is eminently worthy of God as the universal Creator and Lord. But we may briefly say, in illustration of it, that this scheme affords an impressive manifestation of the Divine character, in its union of holiness and love;—that it upholds, and preserves in full and efficient operation, all the principles of God's moral government;—and that it invests the claims of holiness with additional sacredness, while it is calculated to win back the human heart to its allegiance to God and to the practice of universal righteousness.

Verse 11. *For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: etc.* The truth here made prominent was suggested by the expression which the Apostle had just employed in describing the grand result to which the scheme of redemption is directed:—"It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing *many sons* unto glory." The glorious company who will hereafter encircle the Redeemer, "the Captain of their salvation," already stand invested with the high privilege of sonship to God; and the thought on which the Apostle lingers is, that that sonship derives a peculiar excellence and dignity from the intimate

is not ashamed to call them brethren.

12. Saying, "I will declare Thy Name unto My

a Ps. xxii. 22, 25.

relation into which they are brought to the Incarnate Son. It is an animating consideration, that He who stands in a relation to the Father ineffably dear, and who is the Source of that grace by which His people are sanctified and trained up for the glories of the heavenly state, "is not ashamed to call them brethren." The ordinary sense of the word "sanctify" should, we conceive, be adhered to in this passage. With eminent propriety the Lord Jesus is spoken of as "the Sanctifier;" since the Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of life," is His gift to His people, and since the whole course of His mediatorial administration is directed to their sanctification. His people, too, are properly designated "they who are sanctified," or rather, "they who are being sanctified," οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι, their earthly course being one of *progressive sanctification*, designed to issue in their perfect conformity to their Lord and Head, and their everlasting participation of His triumph. And the assertion of the Apostle is, that both the Lord Jesus, and His people who are being purified by His grace, "are all of one," *i.e.* of *one Father, God*; the Incarnate Son associating us with Himself, and thus conferring upon us a dignity far greater than any which our nature originally possessed. We are reminded here of the words of our Risen Lord, addressed to Mary of Magdala:—"Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."—There is peculiar force in the phrase "He is *not ashamed* to call them brethren." Lowly as our present state is, exposed as we are to conflicts and

brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.

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sorrows, and encompassed with manifold infirmities, still, if through Him we are constituted sons of God, and if the process of sanctification is going on in our souls, He rejoices over us as His brethren, the sharers of His dignity, and joint-heirs with Him of everlasting blessedness and triumph.

Verse 12. *Saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, etc.* In confirmation of the position just advanced, the Apostle proceeds to cite three passages from the ancient Scriptures. The first is taken from one of the great Messianic Psalms,—the twenty-second; a Psalm which first sets forth the Redeemer of men in the depth of His humiliation and anguish, and then unfolds His state of exaltation, and the inestimable blessings which He should confer on the humble and contrite who fly to Him as their Refuge. It is possible that some of the expressions in this inspired composition may have been suggested by David's own experience; but there are others which are applicable only to the great Restorer; and the whole Psalm evidently points to HIM as the One in whom it should have its complete fulfilment. Its opening words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" were uttered by our Lord in His bitterest agony upon the cross; the remarkable statement in the eighteenth verse, "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture," was literally fulfilled at the crucifixion; and the exulting language of the closing portion of the Psalm implies a wide diffusion of spiritual blessing and holy consolation, which could only result from the accomplished work of atonement.

13. And again, <sup>b</sup>I will put My trust in Him. And again, <sup>c</sup>Behold I and the children <sup>d</sup>which God hath given Me.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xviii. 2 ; Isai. xii. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Isai. viii. 18.

<sup>d</sup> John x. 29 ; xvii. 6, 9, 11, 12.

Verse 13. *And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children etc.*—It is the opinion of some commentators, including Dr. Delitzsch, that the former of these quotations is from Isai. viii. 17, where the very words occur in the Septuagint; and that the latter, which is clearly taken from Isai. viii. 18, is a continuation of the same passage. But had this been so, it is scarcely probable that the Apostle would have separated them by repeating the introductory phrase, “And again.” We conceive, then, with several expositors, that the former citation is from 2 Sam. xxii. 3, and Ps. xviii. 3; and it is worthy of our attention that St. Paul has quoted a passage from this sublime ode in Rom. xv. 9, when showing that the ancient Scriptures contained prophetic intimations of the diffusion of the gospel among the Gentiles, and of their being gathered into the Church of God. The application of many portions of this Psalm to the Messiah involves no difficulty. It contains David’s song of triumph, when he had been rescued, by the interposition of Jehovah, from varied and imminent perils, and exalted even to the throne of Israel; and David, both in his humiliation and sufferings, and in his regal elevation and dignity, was a type of his greater Descendant. Many of his utterances in this Psalm were so influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit, as to be strikingly applicable to Him who was to come. The expression here referred to was adduced by the Apostle to show how fully the Redeemer made Himself one with us whom He came to save. Allying Himself

to our nature, the Son became the "righteous Servant" of the Father; and He turned to Him with holy confidence, even as we do who embrace the message of salvation, and are associated with Him as His brethren.

The last quotation, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me," is taken, as we have said, from Isai. viii. 18. At the first view there is some difficulty in the application of these words to the Messiah; but deeper inquiry will bring out the truth which underlies the Apostle's reasoning, and justify the use which he makes of the prophet's language. The passage with which they are connected reproves the unbelief of the people of Judah, and their disposition to rely on earthly help,—sets forth JEHOVAH as the proper Object both of reverence and of trust,—and carries forward the mind to the deliverance which God would work out for His people by the coming of the great Restorer. In the firm hope of that deliverance, the Prophet and the children given to him stood "for signs and for wonders in Israel;" and, as Dean Alford well observes, "the matter illustrated is, that as the prophet Isaiah withstood the human dependence of his age, and stood forth, he and the children whom God had given him, and who were begotten, in pursuance of the Divine command, as a sign to Israel,—so *the great Prophet* Himself fulfilled the same office, and had the same hopes, and bore the same relation to those among whom He prophesied, praising God with them, leading them in confidence on God, and speaking of them as one family and stock with Himself. So that our passage forms a notable instance of the prophetic office of Christ being taken as the antitype of the official words and acts of all the Prophets: just as His kingly office fulfils and takes up all that is said and done by the theocratic kings, and His priestly office accomplishes all the types and ordinances

14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took

e John i. 14; Rom. viii. 3; Phil. ii. 7.

of the Old Testament Priesthood."—The same expositor properly calls attention to one point of difference in the application of this language, when used by the prophet, and when regarded as used by the Messiah. In the former case, the children are those of the prophet himself, whom God had given to him; in the latter they are contemplated as the children of God, given by Him to Christ, in accordance with our Lord's own declaration in John xvii. 6:—"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word." Thus the adorable Mediator stands, by the Father's appointment, at the head of all who belong to His family, and will be for ever "the First-born among many brethren."

Verse 14. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself etc.*—Here the Apostle more fully develops the truth, that to redeem us the Eternal Son assumed our nature in all its lowliness and weakness, and thus made Himself one with us. But in enlarging on this thought, he places the economy of redemption before us under some striking aspects, and sheds a clear light on the manner in which it provides for the happiness and security of the human spirit. The last passage which he had quoted from the ancient Scriptures represented the Redeemer as surrounded by the children of God, given to Him by the Eternal Father. And now, fixing his regard on the fact, that these are *men*, subject in the present life to weakness, and languor, and suffering, he affirms, that the august Person of whom he has been speaking took upon Himself our humanity in all its lowli-

part of the same; *f* that through death He might  
*f* 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55; Col. ii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 10.

ness and weakness. In the text followed in our Authorised Version, the usual order of the terms, "flesh and blood," is preserved: but in that of the best critical editions of the Greek Testament, founded on all the earliest MSS. and versions, the order is inverted, "blood and flesh." No stress, however, should be laid on this; though Dr. Delitzsch considers that this unusual order is adopted, because the great object of our Lord's assumption of our nature was, that He might redeem us by the shedding of His *blood*. It should not be overlooked, that the Apostle employs the strongest terms to affirm not only the reality of our Lord's human nature, but that, *in His earthly state*, He possessed that nature in *its present material constitution*, and with all its liability to weakness and pain. It is observable, too, that he affirms the assumption of our frail nature by the Eternal Son to have been *in order to* the suffering of death, that death being essential to the redemption of mankind. In no other way could He release us from the penalty of sin; in no other way could He rescue us from the thralldom of him who reigns in the kingdom of sin and death.—The view which is here presented of the power and tyranny of Satan over the ungodly accords with the representations of other passages of the New Testament. Our Lord repeatedly spoke of "the kingdom of Satan;" and St. Paul, in one of his most comprehensive descriptions of the Christian salvation, says of the Eternal Father, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." It is a remarkable phrase which the Apostle uses in relation to the dominion of Satan,—that "he hath the power of death." We are not to understand these words as implying that he

destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ;

15. And deliver them who through fear of death

*g* Luke i. 74 ; Rom. viii. 15 ; 2 Tim. i. 7.

has, of himself, the right to inflict death, or that he can determine the time of that great event. Whatever power he has, he has by the permission of One who controls his malice ; and far other hands than his hold "the keys of the unseen world and of death." But the words of the Apostle imply that, as to the ungodly, Satan "wields the strength of death," and can make it terrible and overwhelming. This power of his, however, is done away in the case of all who embrace the Saviour. The gracious constitution established through His sacrificial death frees us from the power of the great Adversary, and introduces us to a state of the loftiest privilege and blessing. The term which the Apostle has selected to express the effect of the Redeemer's death upon the kingdom of Satan is most appropriate and forcible. That term is *καταργήσῃ*, which does not convey the idea of blotting from existence, but rather means *to set aside*, or *to do away with*. Thus the Apostle's statement, in effect, is, that the Eternal Son allied Himself to our nature in its present material constitution, in order that through death He might set aside the dominion of Satan over all who should come to Him, and deprive the great Adversary of his power to make death terrible. In an important sense He "hath abolished death," conferring on all His people a life which the stroke of the last enemy cannot touch, but which is enduring and imperishable.

Verse 15. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* In this verse the

were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16. For verily \*He took not on Him the nature of

\* Gr. *He taketh not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold.*

Apostle completes his statement of the blessed effect of the Redeemer's death on all who come to Him. Subverting the dominion of Satan over all such, He sets them free from that "fear of death" which, up to that time, had held them in "bondage." The consciousness that there was before them the mortal conflict, severing them from the activities and pleasures of earth, and introducing them to a state which conscience announced as one of retribution, had troubled their spirits, and cast a gloom over their whole earthly course; while the corruption and decay of the grave, unrelieved by the hope of a glorious resurrection, had often saddened their minds. And from these dread anticipations there was no escape. The event to which they looked forward was *certain* and *inevitable*; and in whatever direction they turned, the fear of it made them "subjects of bondage." But Christ, by dying in our stead, has altered the character of death to all His people. They "sleep" through Him; their bodies resting in the repose of the grave, until He shall summon them to renewed life and activity, and their spirits passing to His immediate presence, to share His triumph and enjoy His love. The indwelling of His Spirit already forms "the earnest" of their consummated blessedness; and, possessed of this, they rejoice in the consciousness of present freedom, and the assurance of final victory.

Verse 16. *For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.* The marginal rendering of this verse, which our translators have

angels ; but He took on *Him* the seed of Abraham.

given as the literal import of the Greek words, must undoubtedly be adopted. That found in the text cannot be sustained. The fact that the verb *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* is in the *present* tense suffices to show that the Apostle is not referring to *one past act*,—the assumption of our nature. This, indeed, he had dwelt upon, in strong and emphatic language, in the preceding sentence ; and now he goes on to place before us a view of the Saviour's undertaking which embraces its general character and design. The verb which he employs suggests the idea of a person *taking another by the hand to succour and help him*. It is scarcely possible, indeed, to convey its full import by any single term in our language. The most literal translation of the original is, "For not of angels taketh He hold : but of the seed of Abraham taketh He hold ;" and the grand conception which the Apostle's words express is, that *the Eternal Son has associated Himself, not with angels, but with us men, who receive Him in humble faith, to succour and deliver us*.—We are not, with Ebrard and Dean Alford, to restrict the phrase, "the seed of Abraham," to the Jewish race. Such an interpretation is not in harmony either with the general representations of the New Testament, or with the argument of the present chapter. The Apostle had emphatically affirmed, that the Son assumed the nature of **MAN**, so as to endure death for *every* human being, (v. 9,) and that in Him, as the Head and Representative of humanity, our nature has attained its perfection. We have, rather, in the expression, "the seed of Abraham," a reference to the fact, that when the Son came on His mission of blessing to our world, He came in connection with the race of Israel, and exercised His ministry among that people ; and we have also a reference to the im-

17. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him <sup>to</sup> be made like unto *His* brethren, that He might be a

& Phil. ii. 7.

portant truth, that the designed effect of His mission is, to save those, and those only, who, coming to Him in humble faith, instead of treating Him with cold neglect and unbelief, became the true "seed of Abraham." There is thus a beautiful accordance between the sentiments and phraseology of this passage, and those of St. Paul in Rom. iv. 11—18 and Gal. iii. 29.

Verse 17. *Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might etc.* This conclusion follows from the general truth which the Apostle had just affirmed,—that the Son has associated Himself with us to rescue and succour us, and to raise all who should believe in Him above the fear of death, imparting to them an enduring and imperishable life. To accomplish this purpose, he argues, there existed a *moral necessity* that He should be made like unto us His brethren "in all things." Thus he again brings forward the leading thought of verse 10, applying that thought, however, to the constitution of the Redeemer's Person, and to His possession of all human feeling, as well as to the sufferings which marked His whole career, and the crowning sufferings of the garden and the cross. The phrase "in all things" has a very wide range of application: but it refers specially to the lowliness and weakness of our Lord's humanity, and its liability to pain, and conflict, and sorrow. His deep sympathy with human suffering caused Him to drink more largely than any other that has ever lived on earth of the cup of woe. There was, indeed, one point of contrast between our Lord's humanity and ours,

merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining*

i Heb. iv. 15; v. 1, 2.

which the Apostle distinctly specifies in iv. 15,—that He was “without sin:” but this does not here properly come under consideration. In all other respects He was made like unto us “His brethren;” and His whole earthly career, and especially His experience of temptation, and sorrow, and death, assures us that He who was constituted our Priestly Representative, and who still sustains that endearing character, is “merciful and faithful.” Both these epithets, we conceive, must be connected, as in our Authorised Version, with the substantive ἀρχιερεύς, “High Priest,” expressing, as they do, the qualities by which our Lord’s discharge of His priestly functions is characterised, and which are pre-eminently calculated to endear Him to us. He is “merciful” or “compassionate,” ἐλεήμων, looking upon us in our misery with tender pity, sympathising with us in our sorrows, and having a benignant regard to our feebleness and necessities. And He is “faithful,” πιστός, true to His office, in all its aspects and bearings, and One in whom we may repose unlimited confidence. That office has respect to our relation to God as His subjects, whose present enjoyment of His favour, and ultimate admission to His glory, must be determined by the great principles of His moral administration. It devolved upon Him, as the Priestly Representative of our sinful race, to offer *an effectual atonement for sin*, and thus to open the way to our reconciliation to God. The last clause of this verse properly conveys the idea, “in order to *make propitiation* for the sins of the people.” The special force of this phrase should not be overlooked. It marks the solemn fact, that there is wrath in the Divine

to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18. <sup>†</sup>For in that He Himself hath suffered being

<sup>‡</sup> Heb. iv. 15, 16 ; v. 2 ; vii. 25.

mind against sin, and against those who practise it in known and wilful resistance to the truth which they possess ; and it recognises the relation of the death of Jesus to the Divine government, that it opened the way for the judicial displeasure of God to pass away from all who should penitently rely on it alone. There is, indeed, no implacability in God ; the scheme of redemption is itself the manifestation of His graciousness to man : but still He cannot regard sin with indifference, or set aside the essential principles of His moral administration. But the sacrifice of the cross provides for our recovery in harmony with those principles ; and when we embrace the Saviour, our sins are cancelled, and we are invested with all the privileges of righteousness. By the one offering of Himself our great High Priest has redeemed the whole family of man ; (v. 9 ;) and all who come to Him in self-renouncing faith become, in a peculiar sense His "people," who through Him have access to the Father, and walk in the light of His countenance.

Verse 18. *For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.* Here the Apostle enlarges on one thought which he had just advanced,—that our Lord's experience of human sorrow and conflict contributed to render Him a "merciful" as well as a "faithful" High Priest. It is difficult to convey the precise import of the first clause, ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέποιθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθεῖς. The rendering of the Authorised Version, "For in that He hath suffered being tempted," is

tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

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nearly equivalent to, "Forasmuch as He hath suffered being tempted;" but the phrase *ἐν ᾧ* seems rather to define the *sphere* of the suffering referred to, and the sphere, consequently, of the help which our Lord is here said to afford to His tempted people. He endured suffering in the experience of temptation, and in the varied trials and the deep inward sorrow that marked His earthly career; and thus, as well as in virtue of His Divine omnipotence and love, He is qualified to succour His tempted and afflicted people. This thought leads us into a region of holy mystery. We cannot penetrate to its depths; we cannot trace it out in all its bearings. But we can understand and appreciate enough to awaken our gratitude, and fill us with heavenly comfort. Jesus, our adorable High Priest, is possessed of *human sympathy*. He knew, by personal experience, the agitations and griefs of the human spirit; He knew what it was to be again and again assailed by the powers of evil; and now, in His exalted state, we can approach Him with confidence as our Brother and our Friend, while we bow to His authority as our Sovereign and our God.

## CHAPTER III.

1. WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of "the

*a* Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. iv. 1; Phil. iii. 14; 2 Thess. i. 11;  
2 Tim. i. 9; 2 Pet. i. 10.

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## CHAPTER III.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE argument of the Apostle had now been carried forward so as to reach the point of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. It had unfolded the mysterious constitution of His Person,—that while He was THE SON, ineffably one with the Father, He was also a partaker of our humanity in its greatest lowliness; and it had shown that His deep experience of human conflict and suffering qualified Him to be a compassionate High Priest, while His atoning death, meeting, as it did, the requirements of the Divine government, opened the way to the salvation of mankind, and led to His enthronement as the Lord of all, and the Head and Forerunner of His people. And now the Apostle calls upon the believing Hebrews steadfastly to contemplate HIM, and the exalted position which he sustains in "the house of God." Regarding Him, first of all, as the Sent of the Father, he compares Him with Moses, the distinguished leader of ancient Israel, and shows His great superiority, since while Moses was only a servant in the house of God, He, as the Son, is "over" that house, and orders all its arrangements. The privileges of the house of God, he goes on to affirm, belong only to those who persevere in their faith in Jesus; and then he addresses an earnest exhortation and warning to all his readers, founded on the

heavenly calling, consider <sup>3</sup>the Apostle and High

<sup>b</sup> Rom. xv. 8. Heb. ii. 17; iv. 14; v. 5; vi. 20; viii. 1;  
ix. 11; x. 21.

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history of their fathers whom Moses led forth from the bondage of Egypt, and who witnessed the most signal displays of Jehovah's power, but nearly all of whom perished in the wilderness. He marks the principle which proved so fatal to their religious life, and led to their ultimate rejection and overthrow,—even their unbelief; and he calls upon the Hebrew Christians to guard against the first intrusion of this principle, and to encourage each other to steadfastness and perseverance.

Verse 1. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostles etc.* This form of address appears to have been suggested by the sentiment of ii. 11. The people of Christ are there referred to as they who are being sanctified, and as gathered into a sacred brotherhood of which Christ, the Source of their purity, is the Head. Holiness is thus set forth as their grand characteristic,—that which they are solemnly bound to cultivate and maintain, and that, also, to the maturing of which all the operations of Divine grace and all the dispensations of Divine Providence are directed. It is thus that they are being led forward, as the "sons" of God, "to glory;" and the Apostle takes up this thought also in the second phrase which he uses, "partakers of the heavenly calling." This expression marks the position of true Christians as called by God to be His people, separated from an ungodly world, invested by Him with peculiar privileges, and tending, under the guidance of His counsel, and through the provisions of His grace in Christ, to the heavenly world. There is a beautiful correspondence between this phrase

Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus ;

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and the language used by St. Paul in Phil. iii. 14;—"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—The exhortation of the Apostle to the believing Hebrews is, that they should earnestly "consider" the Lord Jesus, the Head of the new economy,—that they should accustom themselves to a *believing contemplation* of Him, in His glorious character and His lofty relations. Those relations he had already, in part, illustrated; and he was about still further to unfold them. Two of them he at once recalls, designating the Redeemer "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." It is difficult to fix upon the precise shade of thought conveyed by the last phrase. Some regard it as simply meaning, "whom we confess;" while others view it as indicating the Christian religion, the system of truth which all Christians are united in professing. Perhaps the latter view more fully brings out the force of the expression; and the former is implied in it if we regard the sentiment as being, "the Apostle and High Priest set forth in that system of truth which we confess,—even Jesus." The adorable Redeemer is here recognised as the Sent of the Father, a character which He repeatedly represented Himself as sustaining. In all His announcements of truth, He delivered the Father's message; and in His whole bearing, and work, and sufferings, He carried out the Father's counsel, and sought the Father's glory. He, too, is "the High Priest of our profession." He has offered up Himself as the true and perfect sacrifice for sins; (i. 3, ii. 17;) and now He has gone into heaven to present that sacrifice, to make intercession for our race, and especially for those who come unto the Father by Him,

## 2. Who was faithful to Him that \*appointed Him,

\* Gr. *made*. 1 Sam. xii. 6.

and to dispense to them the richest blessings of grace and salvation.

Verse 2. *Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house.* Some have strangely proposed to substitute "Him that made Him" for the phrase used in our Authorised Version, as being a more exact translation of the Greek *τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτόν*: but there can be no question that the rendering adopted by our translators is legitimate and correct. It will suffice to refer to Mark iii. 14, as a clear and indubitable instance in which the verb *ποιέω* means "to appoint," or "constitute." And the whole tenor of the Apostle's argument requires this meaning. He is dwelling on the *fidelity* of Jesus in the offices which he had just named; and that fidelity was necessarily rendered to Him who invested Him with these offices, who *constituted* Him His Apostle to mankind, and the High Priest of His people. In this feature of His character and administration, the Apostle compares Him with Moses, of whom God affirmed, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house." (Numb. xii. 7.) But in a far higher degree than Moses was the Lord Jesus faithful. He never swerved, even for a moment, from the path of obedience; He never lost sight of the great principle of His earthly course, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." He moved in "the house" of God, so as to fulfil, in every particular, the Father's commission, and so as to accomplish all His counsel. It has been made a question, whether the last phrase of this verse, "His house," should be understood as referring to the Father or

as also *c* Moses *was faithful* in all His house.

3. For this *Man* was counted worthy of more glory

*c* Numb. xii. 7; verse 5.

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to Christ: and Dr. Ebrard has suggested, that when Moses is spoken of, the "house" may be viewed as *his*, in the sense of being the sphere in which he acted as the commissioned servant of Jehovah, and that when our Lord is mentioned, the house is to be regarded as *His*. But the allusion to Numb. xii. 7, and the general course of the Apostle's reasoning, seem to require that, throughout this passage, as in x. 21, the house, or family, spoken of should be regarded as "the house of God;" and there is a beautiful accordance between this view and the sentiment expressed in ii. 10. While, however, it is the house of God of which the Apostle speaks, he recognises it as being also, in an important sense, the house of Christ, since He, as the Son, stands in a relation to the Father altogether peculiar and unique, and is *over* that house, ordering its arrangements, and administering its affairs. We may well linger on the encouraging view given to us, in this expression, of the position and privileges of God's people. They constitute His "*house*" or "*family*." They are gathered around Him, are watched over by His care and love, and enjoy the rich provisions which He makes for His own. They can look up to Him with holy confidence. And this is more especially the case under the new economy. Under the former dispensation, indeed, even the most highly favoured members of that family were only "servants;" and their access to God, while such as to impart to them comfort and strength, was comparatively restrained and distant: but we who receive the Lord Jesus become the "sons" of God, and by the Spirit of adoption cry "Abba, Father."

than Moses, inasmuch as <sup>d</sup>he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

4. For every house is builded by some *man* ; but

*d* Zech. vi. 12 ; Matt. xvi. 18.

Verse 3. *For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as etc.* It is probable, that the first impression produced by this and the following verse on an English reader is, that they refer to the work of creation as that of Christ. But a careful examination both of the terms used by the Apostle, and of the general course of his argument, will tend to modify this view. The verb which we render "to build," throughout the passage, is *κατασκευάζω*, which, while it may include a reference to the *erection* of a house, applies more particularly to *furnishing* it and *ordering its arrangements*. The argument of the Apostle, then, is, that the Lord Jesus stands far above Moses, since he who prepares and furnishes a house, determines its arrangements, and appoints its servants, is greater than the house which he thus furnishes and orders, and greater consequently than any servants who minister in it. Such a position, the Apostle affirms, Jesus holds in relation to the house of God ; and after interposing the truth contained in v. 4, that ultimately we must refer the constitution and ordering of all things to the Eternal Father, he goes on, in verses 5, 6, to point out more fully the difference between the character which Moses sustained in the family of God, and that which belongs of right to our blessed Lord.

Verse 4. *For every house is builded by some man ; but He that built all things is God.* The remark made in the preceding note on the proper import of the verb *κατασκευάζω*, which, in some of its forms, occurs twice in this verse, must be borne in mind, if we would correctly

‘He that built all things is God.

5. *f* And Moses verily *was* faithful in all His house,

*e* Eph. ii. 10 ; iii. 9 ; Heb. i. 2.    *f* Verse 2.

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apprehend the Apostle’s reasoning. First of all, he advances a general statement which no one can dispute, that every house which is fitted up, and furnished, and provided with proper servants, has been so fitted up and furnished by some one. Then he interposes a great truth, applicable to the arrangements of the material universe, to the whole constitution of the Church of God, and to the blessed society of all holy intelligences,—that “He that furnished all things is God.” He had already affirmed that the Lord Jesus stands distinguished from Moses, inasmuch as the ordering of and providing for the house of God belonged to Him, while Moses only moved in that house in obedience to His will ; and now he reminds us that, in all that the Son has done in this capacity, He has carried out the Father’s counsel ; just as in bringing the material universe into being, and establishing its relations and arrangements, He accomplished the Father’s purpose. Compare i. 2. Thus all the provisions of the mediatorial scheme, and of the Church of God as established under it, are referred to Him “for whom are all things, and by whom are all things ;” while the ineffable union between the Father and the Son shows that the Son has constituted the arrangements of the house of God, and thus has a right to preside over it, and to claim in it a special property.

Verse 5. *And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony etc.* In this verse the Apostle defines the position of Moses in the Church of God, that he might place it in contrast with that of the Lord Jesus.

as <sup>a</sup>a servant, <sup>b</sup>for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after ;

*g* Exod. xiv. 31 ; Numb. xii. 7 ; Deut. iii. 24 ; Josh. i. 2 ; viii. 31.

*h* Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.

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He was a *servant* only, having no right of property in that house, and no power of his own to order its arrangements and dispense its benefits. Nor was it assigned to him fully to develop the Divine scheme of blessing, or to give to the Church the form which it should ultimately take, and the institutions which should ultimately distinguish it. The system of types which he was commissioned to establish pointed to something far higher, to be announced in "the fulness of time." It bore "witness" to a Restorer to come, who should put away sin by a greater and more effectual sacrifice than those of bullocks and goats, whose priestly intercession should result in far richer blessing than that which followed the intercession of the high priests of the order of Aaron, and who should confer upon the people of God the loftiest privileges and hopes. Calvin has clearly pointed out that the phrase, τῶν λαληθησομένων, "the things which were to be spoken after," must be understood of the announcements to be made under the gospel ; and the sentiment of the Apostle is, that the whole Mosaic institute, and the entire ministration of Moses in the house of God, were designed to afford a testimony to the great truths, and facts, and arrangements of the Christian economy, and derived from this reference to the future their highest importance. To the position thus assigned to him Moses was "faithful." He discharged his high trust with a sacred regard to the will of Him in whose house he acted ; and, with the exception of one or two occasions on which he was betrayed into guilty

6. But Christ as <sup>i</sup>a Son over His own house;

*i* Heb. i. 2.

impatience, he honoured God, both by the simplicity and distinctness with which he announced His message, and by the humble acknowledgment of his own entire dependence upon Him.

Verse 6. *But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, etc.* Here the comparison between Moses and our blessed Lord is completed. Both of them were "faithful" in the house of God; but while the fidelity of Moses was that of a servant merely, the fidelity of Jesus was that of One who sustained in that house a higher character, and stood in a different relation to all its members and all its arrangements. For He, as THE SON, is "over" the house of God, *ruling and ordering* it, and having also a *special property in it*, in virtue of His unique relation to the Father. Expositors are greatly divided in opinion, whether the last phrase of the first clause should be rendered, as in our Authorised Version, "over *His own* house," or whether it should be translated, like the similar phrase in the preceding verse, "over *His* house." The words themselves admit of either meaning; but perhaps the latter is to be preferred, since the house in which Moses moved as a servant, and that over which our Lord presides as the Son, is one and the same,—the house of God,—and since also fidelity to the Father is predicated of both. But the argument of the Apostle implies, if it does not directly affirm, that this house is also Christ's, since He, as the Son, has a right of property in it, and a right likewise to administer its affairs.—The Apostle then proceeds to point out who constitute the "house," or family, of God; and, in doing so, he admonishes the Hebrew Christians of

\*whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

& 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5.

Verse 14; Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13; Rom. v. 2; Col. i. 23; Heb. vi. 11; x. 35.

what was required on their part, in order to their continued enjoyment of its privileges, and the attainment of that perfect glory to which, as the "sons" of God, they were being led forward:—"whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the glorying of our hope." The last words, "firm unto the end," though found in several early MSS., are wanting in others; and are omitted by Tischendorf and Alford, among recent editors. It is doubtful whether they form part of the sacred text. The sentiment is complete without them. Our right to the character of God's people, and our title to the exalted privileges of His house, depend on our firm retention of our faith in Christ, and our exulting hope of eternal life in Him. Already we possess, within ourselves, the earnest of that life; and the anticipation of it dispels the gloom which would otherwise rest upon the future. But varied influences tend to impair our faith, and gradually to alienate us from the love of spiritual and heavenly good. Against all these we are to watch; and holding fast our confidence in the adorable Mediator, through whom we have freedom of access to the Eternal Father, we are to look forward with holy cheerfulness to the blessedness that awaits us, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The similarity both of thought and expression between the concluding words of this verse and Rom. v. 2 will readily occur to every thoughtful reader.

Verses 7, 8. *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day*

7. Wherefore, as <sup>m</sup>the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day if ye will hear His voice,

<sup>m</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 2 ; Acts i. 16.

<sup>n</sup> Verse 15 ; Ps. xcv. 7.

*if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, etc.* The sentiment which the Apostle had just advanced, that they only belong to the house of God who hold fast their confidence and hope in the Redeemer, led him to address to the Hebrew Christians the affectionate and earnest warning which occupies so large a portion of this chapter. He introduces that warning by referring to the charge which the Holy Ghost gave, in the time of David, to the members of the Jewish Church, not to imitate the example of their fathers who accompanied Moses in the departure from Egypt. He quotes a passage from Psalm xcv. ; and the emphatic formula with which he prefaces it, "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith," marks, in the clearest and most decisive manner, the *inspiration* of that Psalm, and indeed of the ancient Scriptures generally. The historical facts on which the exhortation is founded convey an admonitory lesson to the people of God in every age. The ancient Israelites provoked God in the wilderness, questioned His promises, refused to rely on His power and love, and, renouncing their reverent attachment to Him, gave themselves up to the errors and pollutions of idolatry. There were two memorable occasions on which they murmured against Jehovah, both of which are alluded to in the Hebrew text of the Psalm. The word which the LXX., whom the Apostle follows, translate ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ, "in the provocation," is literally, "at Meribah;" and the phrase which they render κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ, "as in the day of temptation," is literally, "as in the day of Massah:" but it must be borne in mind, as justifying

8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness :

9. When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.

these renderings, that "Meribah" means "provocation" or "strife," and that "Massah" means "temptation." The events referred to are narrated in Exodus xvii. 1—7, and Numbers xx. 1—13. There was a peculiar propriety in appealing to the history of the ancient Church when under the leadership of Moses, and making this the ground of an exhortation to those Hebrews who were gathered into the Church of God as now presided over by the Son Himself. The comparison which the Apostle had just drawn between Christ and Moses naturally suggested such an appeal; and the solemn truth rose before his mind, that just as many who came out of Egypt with Moses failed to attain the promised land, so there was a fearful possibility that some whom the Lord Jesus was leading forward to glory might, through unbelief, fail to become sharers with Him in His eternal rest and triumph.

Verse 9. *When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, etc.* It is generally agreed that the correct translation of the first word, *ov*, is "where," not "when;" the reference being to the wilderness in which the Israelites had to wander. Thus, while the preceding verse refers to two particular occasions, this takes in the whole course of their journeyings, until the generation of adults that came out of Egypt had melted away, and their children, under the guidance of Joshua, were about to enter the promised land. That *whole period* was marked by repeated instances of unbelief and disobedience. Though encircled with the

## 10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation,

proofs of Jehovah's power, and sustained by His constant care, the people were ever ready to call His promises in question, and to distrust His almighty arm.—It should be mentioned that, instead of the reading followed in our Authorised Version, *οὐ ἐπειράσαν με οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν, ἐδοκίμασάν με*, the most ancient MSS., which are in this instance followed by all critical editors, have *οὐ ἐπειράσαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ*, “where your fathers tempted in proving,” or “by way of proving.” The last clause, “and saw My works,” must be understood in its most comprehensive sense, as including both the visitations of judgment which fell upon the disobedient, and the interpositions of mercy to rescue and bless the people when they humbled themselves before God and sought to do His will.

Verse 10. *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, etc.* Here the Most High affirms the holy displeasure with which He regarded the conduct of the ancient Israelites. It is not for us presumptuously to speculate upon the feelings of the Divine Mind: but we must not, on the other hand, explain away the strong expressions which God Himself uses. To Him *sin* can never be an object of indifference; and He is “grieved” and displeased with those who, while encircled with the proofs of His care, and enjoying the privileges of the outward Church, distrust His promises, and forsake His ways.—The censure which He pronounces upon the ancient Israelites is most emphatic and comprehensive. Their wanderings are attributed to the state of their *hearts*:—“They do always err in their heart.” It was the alienation of their affections from Jehovah which made them an easy

and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known My ways.

11. So I swear in My wrath, \*They shall not enter into My rest.

\* Gr. *If they shall enter.*

prey to the snares into which they fell. So, too, the clause, "They have not known My ways," expresses not simply ignorance, but ignorance as the result of *criminal inattention and indifference*. These ideas are taken up by the Apostle in verse 12, where he applies this exhortation to the Hebrew Christians whom he is addressing.

Verse 11. *So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.* The literal rendering of the Greek is that given in the margin, "If they shall enter into My rest:" but many expositors have clearly shown, that this is an elliptical form of an oath, and is equivalent to a *strong negative*.—The penalty denounced against the ancient Israelites was exclusion from that land where, had they been faithful, they would have rested after the toils and perils of their journeyings and conflicts, defended by the Divine power, and enjoying a rest similar, in one respect, to that upon which God entered when He had completed this terrestrial creation, and, looking upon it in its perfect loveliness, pronounced it very good. But the rest of Canaan was typical of a higher and nobler rest to be enjoyed when the whole work of life should be accomplished; and the appeal which the Holy Ghost made to the Israelites in the time of David, not to imitate their fathers, lest they too should be excluded from the rest of God, implied that to the Church of that day there was "a rest" yet to be attained, and of which all who should give place to unbelief would fall short.

12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

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Such, also, is the case with the Church of God under the leadership of the Incarnate Son, as the Apostle argues at length in the following chapter. For they who hold fast their confidence in the Lord Jesus, and who tread in His footsteps unto the end, will enter upon a state of rest and triumph, which they will share with Him, their Head and Forerunner, for ever. But from this rest all who give place to unbelief, and are thus estranged from God, will be shut out. This is the chief point in the warning which the Apostle proceeds to urge on the believing Hebrews.

Verse 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, etc.* The earnestness of this charge, and the distinct and emphatic manner in which it is pressed on *each individual*, are specially deserving of attention. The Apostle sought to awaken in the breast of every person whom he addressed a consciousness of his constant exposure to danger, that he might rouse him to incessant watchfulness and effort.—It is important to mark, too, how distinctly the Apostle connects *unbelief* with *the heart*. It is the gradual coming on of coldness and indifference to God which causes us to relax our hold of unseen realities, and to give up a lively confidence in Him whom the Father has placed before us as our Hope and Refuge. And as this unbelief originates in the coldness of the heart towards God and spiritual things, so, as it develops itself, it leads us to depart, further and further, from Him. As the objects of faith are neglected, and the objects of sense are sought and delighted in,

## 13. But exhort one another daily, while it is

we cease to live to God, we cease to seek Him as our Portion. He who only is entitled to our reverence and worship, who only can satisfy, by the manifestation of His friendship and the communications of His love, the vast desires of our souls,—“the living God,”—is neglected and renounced, and we stand bereft of all true comfort and abiding joy.

Verse 13. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; etc.* It appears unquestionable, that the duty which the Apostle here enforces, as an important means of avoiding spiritual declension, is *mutual exhortation*. He uses, indeed, the term *ἑαυτούς*, which, at the first view, would seem to mean “yourselves,” and not *ἀλλήλους*, “one another:” but there are several clear instances, as Col. iii. 13, 16, in which the former term is used in the latter signification, or one nearly approaching to it. The Church is regarded as a united body; and the exhortations which any of its members address to their fellows will be also exhortations to themselves.—There is peculiar emphasis in the clause, “While it is called To-day,” or more literally, “While ‘To-day’ is named,” or “called.” It contains an allusion to the charge of the Holy Ghost in the Psalm already quoted; (verse 7;) but the remark of the Apostle implies that the word “To-day” stands as the designation of a *limited period*. It is the day of grace, the short period of our earthly probation.—The final caution, “Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” exhibits a confirmed state of apostasy from God. Sin, deluding the mind as to its actual position and prospects, absorbing it in worldly pursuits and pleasures, and producing a false shame which interferes with the lowly confession of unfaithfulness, “hardens” it against the truth

called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we

*o* Verse 6.

of God, and causes even the most solemn warnings to fall on it unheeded. But if we watch unto prayer, resist the first stealthy approaches of unbelief, and seek to encourage and establish ourselves and our Christian brethren in holy principles and efforts, we shall never fall into this state, but shall attain that lofty blessedness and eternal security for which we hope.

Verse 14. *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* Here the Apostle encourages the Hebrew Christians to fidelity and steadfastness, by exhibiting the glorious result of persevering faith. He sets before them the "rest" which now awaits the people of God,—the "glory" to which, being already constituted "sons," they are being led forward by "the Captain of their salvation." They are to share the rest of Christ Himself,—to reflect His perfect loveliness,—to participate His glorious triumph,—and to enjoy His everlasting friendship. Two different views have been taken of the import of the phrase, *μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ*. Some adhere to the rendering of the Authorised Version, "partakers of Christ;" while others, including Dr. Delitzsch, consider that there is an allusion to the passage cited in i. 9, and translate "partners of Christ," or "fellow-partakers with Christ,"—sharers with Him in the rest and glory to which He has ascended. If the former view is the correct one, the phrase must be understood to mean, they who have a *perfect* and *eternal* interest in Christ,—who have Christ Himself as their everlasting Portion. But we

hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

15. While it is said, *To-day if ye will hear His*

*p Verse 7.*

adopt, without hesitation, the latter rendering, and regard it as presenting the loftiest conception of the blessedness and glory which await the Christian who perseveres in humble faith. He will share that rest from toil, and conflict, and sorrow, upon which the Redeemer has entered; he will, in an important sense, share His dominion and triumph; and his breast will glow with a deep and holy joy such as that which fills the heart of the exalted Redeemer, as He "sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied."—Some expositors regard the expression, *τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως*, as equivalent to "our former confidence;" but the rendering given in our Version, "the beginning of our confidence" is the more literal one, and fully conveys the designed idea. The Apostle is addressing those in whom the principle of faith, embracing the Lord Jesus, resting upon all His promises, and apprehending unseen realities, had been implanted; and he admonishes them that this faith, thus *beyun* in their souls, was to be *held fast*,—that their Christian experience was to present it in ever-increasing *firmness* and *strength*,—and that thus only the great result to which they looked forward could be actually attained.

Verse 15. *While it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not etc.* Many expositors connect these words with the preceding verse, and regard them as intended to mark the *character* of that *period* during which our faith is to be firmly maintained,—the period of our probation, in which dangers threaten us, and in which, too, cautions

voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16. <sup>g</sup>For some, when they had heard, did provoke :

<sup>g</sup> Numb. xiv. 2, 4, 11, 24, 30 ; Deut. i. 34, 36, 38.

and exhortations are addressed to us. But it is much more natural to regard the Apostle as again referring to the words which he had quoted from Psalm xcv., to enforce the general admonition which he had just addressed to the Hebrew Christians. The opening clause may be properly rendered, "In that it is said," or "For it is said;" and then there follow the words, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This was the exhortation of the Holy Ghost to the Israelites of the time of David; and the Apostle calls upon the believing Hebrews to linger on it,—to ponder its import,—to review the historical facts to which it alluded,—and especially to mark the principle which led to the rejection of multitudes who once belonged to the visible Church, and on whose behalf God had signally interposed in rescuing them from the bondage of Egypt. That principle was *unbelief*; and thus the warning to repel the first intrusions of guilty distrust of God, and cold neglect of Him, was rendered more solemn and impressive.

Verse 16. *For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.* The reasons assigned by Delitzsch, Alford, and others, for regarding the two clauses of this verse as *interrogative*, are satisfactory and conclusive:—"For who, when they heard, did provoke? Nay, did not all that came out of Egypt by Moses?" The course of thought suggested is at once apparent. The Apostle sought to rivet attention on the fact, that nearly all the adults who came forth from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, highly favoured as

howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17. But with whom was He grieved forty years? *Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

r Numb. xiv. 22, 29, etc.; xxvi. 65; Ps. cvi. 26; 1 Cor. x. 5; Jude 5.

they had been, provoked God by their unbelief and disobedience, and thus perished in the wilderness. The few exceptions he passes over, since his argument did not require him to specify them, and since they were so few as not to affect the case as a whole, or impair the appeal founded upon it. That appeal has respect to the fact, that the very people whom God had distinguished by special marks of His care and favour, whom He had taken, indeed, into a most intimate relation to Himself, and for whose deliverance He had wrought the most stupendous miracles, afterwards rebelled against Him, and forfeited His friendship and love.

Verse 17. *But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not etc.* Still the Apostle dwells on the melancholy facts connected with the character and end of the adult Israelites who accompanied Moses from Egypt. They sinned openly against God. Their guilty unbelief led them to reject His authority, to murmur against His government, and even to insult His majesty by the worship of idols. Thus they became the objects of His holy displeasure; and though many of them, we would fain hope, repented and found mercy, yet they were condemned to wander as exiles in the wilderness, until they all succumbed to the stroke of death. The term which we render "carcasses" is κῶλα, literally "limbs" or "members;" and its use in this connection is very emphatic. It brings before us the perishing of the unfaithful Israelites,

18. And 'to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?

19. 'So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

‡ Numb. xiv. 30; Deut. i. 34, 35. † Heb. iv. 6.

as if it had been "limb by limb." Instead of entering the land of promise, they "fell in the wilderness," dishonoured and rejected.

Verse 18. *And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?* It is essential to the correct interpretation of this verse, to retain the proper force of the phrase, *εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν*, "but to those who disobeyed." The Apostle still refers to the open disobedience of the Israelites to the Divine injunctions, and, in particular, to their refusal to go forward and accomplish that to which God expressly called them. In the next verse he uses a different term, *ἀπιστία*, "unbelief," and thus points out the *radical principle* from which their disobedience and ruin proceeded.

Verse 19. *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.* This is the conclusion of the Apostle's reasoning on the history of the ancient Israelites. It was the fatal principle of *unbelief* which caused them to fail of the promised rest. They did not believe God; they did not rely on His testimony, embrace His promises, or stand in awe of His threatenings. This fact is made clear by the course of the history; and more especially by that signal instance of disobedience and revolt which led God to swear by Himself that the whole generation of adults should perish in the wilderness. When the spies who had been sent to search out the land of Canaan returned and gave their report, the whole congregation, disregarding

altogether the assurance of Jehovah that He would be with them, refused to go up and possess the land, murmured against Him for having brought them forth from Egypt to perish, and proposed to stone Caleb and Joshua, who encouraged them to go forward, relying on the Divine protection. Then it was that Jehovah declared, "As truly as I live, as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swarc to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." Thus did their unbelief lead to their exclusion from the land which had been promised to them; and by this monitory example the Apostle confirms and enforces the warning which he had just given to the Hebrew Christians, to guard against "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The way was now opened also, for the exhortations which he goes on to urge, derived from the consideration, that before us, too, there is a rest which can only be attained by persevering faith.

## CHAPTER IV.

1. LET us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left

*a* Heb. xii. 15.

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## CHAPTER IV.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN the former part of this chapter, the Apostle continues his exhortations to the Hebrew Christians, to take warning from the example of their fathers, not to yield to the fatal principle of unbelief, but to seek with persevering diligence and faith the "rest" placed before them. He dwells, with deep interest, on the thought that the promise of entering into the rest of God is one which "remains" to His Church from age to age; and he brings out the deep significance of that promise, as implying the enjoyment of a rest similar to that of God when He had completed this terrestrial system, and, ceasing from His creative acts, regarded it with satisfaction and complacency.

The admonitions which the Apostle had now urged had been founded on messages of God addressed to His people; and, to enforce them, he adverts to the character of every utterance of God, that it is "living and powerful," that it must have some effect, and that, when applied by the Spirit, it pierces to the inmost recesses of the human heart, and discloses its hidden thoughts and feelings. For it is the word of Him from whom nothing can be concealed, and to whom at last our account must be rendered.

And now, having set forth the superiority of the Lord Jesus, as the Messenger of God, to Moses, the Apostle goes on to speak of Him as "the High Priest of our pro-

us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

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fession." In this character, as well as in that of the Sent of the Father, He had charged the believing Hebrews to contemplate Him; (iii. 1;) and now, bringing together the leading considerations which show the excellence of His priesthood, and its perfect adaptation to the wants of our frail and suffering race, he encourages them to come with confidence to God for all spiritual blessings as assured to them by His intercession.

Verse 1. *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, etc.* This exhortation was naturally suggested by the facts on which the Apostle had just dwelt, combined with the truth that the present position of believers resembles, in many respects, that of the ancient Israelites while journeying to the land of promise. Before the Church of God there is even now a "rest," which forms the object of our desire and hope, and to the attainment of which our utmost efforts are to be directed. The "promise of entering into the rest" of God was not exhausted by the entrance of the Israelites under Joshua into the earthly Canaan, but "remains over" to the Church in every age. This sentiment is distinctly brought forward in the present verse, and is then established by a course of reasoning. Perhaps the phrase used above, "to remain over," most clearly and accurately exhibits the force of the verbs *καταλείπομαι* and *ἀπολείπομαι*, which the Apostle employs throughout this argument. The promise continues, and descends from age to age, though the Church of God has now assumed a different form, and the counsel of God respecting it is now more fully disclosed. Our earthly state is one of effort, and

2. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but \*the word preached did not profit

\* Gr. *the word of hearing.*

conflict, and sorrow, and peril; but before us, if we are faithful, there is a state where all exhausting effort will have ceased, and there is only a cheerful activity,—where all sorrow is unknown, and a calm, deep joy ever pervades the spirit,—where all conflict and peril are over, and we shall rejoice in the consciousness that the great end of life is secured, and that for ever. This is *the rest of God*, to which “the Captain of our salvation” is leading us onward,—a rest, the distinguishing excellence of which the Apostle had indicated in iii. 14, where he had held forth to believers a participation of the present glory of the Redeemer. But, just as multitudes of the ancient Israelites failed of the rest set before them, and fell in the wilderness, through guilty unbelief, so there is a possibility of our “coming short” of this rest; and each of us should cherish a salutary fear lest, in his own case, that fearful result should be realised. We should again mark, as in iii. 12, the *individual application* of this solemn warning:—“lest any one (*τις*) of you should seem to come short of it.” The import of the word *δοκῆ* is well brought out by Dean Alford. It does not indicate an apparent failure, as distinguished from a real and actual one: but it conveys a reference to the final manifestation of character, and the open declaration of the results of our moral probation:—“lest any one of you should *appear*,” or “*be found*,” “to have come short of it.”

Verse 2. *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached etc.* Here the Apostle traces an analogy between the position of the Church of

them, || not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

3. <sup>b</sup>For we which have believed do enter into rest, as Ho said, <sup>c</sup>As I have sworn in My wrath, if they

|| Or, *because they were not united by faith to.*

<sup>b</sup> Heb. iii. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xciv. 11; Heb. iii. 11.

God under the Christian economy, and that of the Israelites who accompanied Moses in the departure from Egypt; and points out the grand reason of the failure of these last to attain the blessings held forth to them. To both were "glad tidings" addressed,—the glad tidings of a rest which might well make the labours, and conflicts, and sorrows of the way seem light and unimportant. Had the ancient Israelites cleaved to Jehovah with their whole heart, Canaan would have been to them a land of security and joy, and would have proved a type and pledge of a yet higher rest beyond. But "the word preached," ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς, the word addressed to them as Jehovah's message, (see 1 Thess. ii. 13,) failed to profit them, since they did not embrace it in *faith*, and without this it could not be powerful and effectual. The common reading of the last clause of this verse, which our translators have followed in the text, is retained by Tischendorf in his last edition, and is, we believe, the correct one. And the sentiment which it conveys is most important, and most appropriate to the Apostle's general argument. That sentiment is, that even the glad tidings which come from God cannot really benefit those who merely *hear* them, but require to be combined with *faith* on the part of those to whom they are addressed. We must *appropriate* them and rest upon them, so that they shall influence all our thoughts and feelings, and mould our whole character and life. Thus

shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

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the Apostle re-echoes the thought with which chapter iii. closed; and this thought he again takes up in the opening of the following verse.

Verse 3. *For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, etc.* The terms used in the original of the first clause beautifully mark the entrance into the rest of God as the result of faith *maintained and persevered in*. The Apostle uses the present tense, *εἰσερχόμεθα*, "we enter;" but in designating the persons who attain this blessedness, he employs the aorist participle, *οἱ πιστεύσαντες*, "we who believed." He takes his stand, so to speak, at the point of our entrance into the rest of God, and looking upon our course on earth as *complete*, he speaks of it as throughout one of faith.—In this clause we have a general principle, affecting the procedures of the Divine government in *every period* of the Church's history. That principle is, that they who receive in faith the glad tidings which God addresses to them, and whose earthly career is influenced and governed by this faith, enter into His rest; while they who only hear them, and do not cordially embrace them, fail to attain it.—The Apostle then proceeds to refer to the passage already cited from Psalm xcv., both as affording a striking application of this principle, and as distinctly affirming that the "rest" in question—the rest which formed the object of hope to the Church of old, and to which the Church looks forward still—is *God's rest*. On this thought he dwells with deep interest. He shows the profound meaning of the Scriptural expression, "My rest,"—that it implies not merely, or chiefly, a rest prepared by God, and to which He

4. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, <sup>d</sup>And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.

5. And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into My rest.

*d* Gen. ii. 2; Exod. xx. 11; xxxi. 17.

introduces His faithful people, but a rest such as that upon which He Himself entered when He had fully completed this terrestrial system. This last idea he confirms in the two following verses.

Verses 4, 5. *For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, etc.* The nominative to be supplied to the verb εἶπεν, "hath spoken," is *God*, not *Moses*, as the whole structure of these sentences shows. The words, indeed, which are first cited were written by Moses; but they were inspired by Him who only could reveal the fact to which they referred. The passage of the Old Testament thus brought forward is Gen. ii. 2,—a passage which affirms the completion of the work of creation, and the sacred "rest" of God which followed it. That rest was not one of inactivity,—for the Divine energy is universally and constantly put forth,—but one in which the Most High contemplated with satisfaction and repose the perfect character of His work, when he had formed this earth to be the habitation of man, and had brought man himself into being. The second passage adduced is that already quoted in verse 3, in which the "rest" held forth to the faith and hope of God's people, and of which the unbelieving and disobedient will fail, is distinctly spoken of by Him as *His own rest*. This was the view of it which the Apostle regarded as suggested by the language of the Old Testament, when contemplated in its deeper significance.

6. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, 'and they to whom || it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

*ε* Heb. iii. 19. || Or, *the gospel was first preached.*

Verse 6. *Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they etc.* There are several particulars, affecting the translation of this verse, which must be borne in mind, if we would rightly apprehend its import, and its place in the Apostle's argument. *No stress*, for instance, must be laid on the word "must;" for there is no term corresponding to it in the original. It is important to observe, also, that the word which we translate "it remaineth," is ἀπολείπεται, which has the peculiar force pointed out in the note on verse 1. It marks the entrance into the rest of God as that which is not past and fulfilled, but which *stands over* to the Church in the present day, and which is to us an object of hope, even as it was to those who were first set apart from the nations, and constituted the people of God. It should be observed, further, that the phrase rendered in our Version, "they to whom it was first preached," is οἱ πρότερον εὐαγγελισθέντες: and the marginal rendering, "they to whom the gospel was first preached," though not perfectly accurate,—for πρότερον means "formerly," not "first,"—more fully exhibits the idea intended. The phrase is evidently used with a reference to the statement in verse 2. The last word, again, ἀπειθεῖαν, should be rendered "disobedience," so as not to be confounded with ἀπιστίαν, "unbelief," in iii. 19. The disobedience of the Israelites, indeed, was the result of their unbelief,—their failure to realise the presence and power of Jehovah, and to rest upon His promises; but it is desirable to adhere to the precise import of the terms

7. Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *To-day*, after so long a time ; as it is said, *To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.*

*f* Ps. xcvi. 7 ; Heb. iii. 7.

which the Apostle employs, so as to apprehend all the minute shades of thought which he places before us. Perhaps the most accurate rendering of this verse is, "Seeing therefore it remains over that some enter into it, and they to whom the glad tidings were formerly addressed did not enter in through disobedience." The conclusion which the Apostle affirms in the first clause of this verse, and which, after the parenthesis in verses 7, 8, he again lays down in verse 9, rests upon the grand consideration which he had just brought out,—that the rest of God, implying, as it did, a holy satisfaction in the completion of the work on which His heart had been set, was spoken of in Scripture as *a rest in which men were to share*, and which belonged therefore to His Church, His true people, *in every age*.

Verses 7, 8. *Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time ; etc.* In support of the position which he had now taken, the Apostle calls attention to the fact, that the words of the Holy Ghost recorded by David expressly *defined* a time *then existing*, in which dutiful attention to the declarations of God and obedience to His precepts were still required of those who professed to be His people, if they would ultimately attain His "rest." Ages had elapsed since the settlement of Israel under Joshua in the land of Canaan, when David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, wrote the ninety-fifth Psalm ; and yet in that Psalm, designed for the Jewish Church of that and every succeeding period, there were the remarkable words, "*To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts ;*" that charge being enforced by the danger of

8. For if ||Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.

|| That is, *Joshua*.

their being shut out from the rest of God, if they refused to receive and follow the Divine message. This, of itself, conclusively showed, that the entrance of the people of Israel into Canaan did not *exhaust* the promise of entering into the rest of God, or even *fully realise* it. For the argument of the Apostle is, that if this had been the case,—if the rest of God were *only* the possession of the land of Canaan, into which Joshua led the people, so that the promise of entering into that rest had been *fulfilled* and *done with*,—it would not have been afterwards spoken of as something to be attained, and the fear of exclusion from which should incite the professed people of God to watchfulness and effort. The phrase, ἐν Δαυὶδ λέγων, “saying in,” or “by,” “David,” is analogous to ἐν τοῖς προφήταις and ἐν Υἱῷ in i. 1, 2. See the notes on those verses.

Verse 9. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.* In these simple but beautiful words the Apostle affirms the general conclusion of his argument, that there “remains over” to the people of God, in this and every succeeding age, a rest which is essentially “a sabbath-rest,” since it resembles that upon which God entered when He had fully completed this terrestrial system. He uses, in this verse, a different term from that which he had previously employed, to designate the rest that awaits us, and one that brings into prominence the ideas implied in verses 3, 4, and still further dwelt upon in that which immediately follows. Hitherto he had adhered to the word *κατάπασις*: now he adopts the expressive term *σαββατισμός*, literally, “the keeping of a sabbath;” and then in the exhortation in verse 11 he goes back to the former

9. There remaineth therefore a ||rest to the people of God.

|| *Or, keeping of a sabbath.*

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term. Before us, then, if we are the people of God, and if, as such, we persevere in a course of faith and obedience, there is the prospect of a participation in the sabbath-rest of God, and, we may add, in the sabbath-rest of the adorable Mediator,—that rest upon which He entered when He had fully wrought out the work of atonement, and when His state of humiliation was exchanged for one of exaltation and triumph.—Some eminent divines have regarded this verse as affirming that the observance of a Sabbath is still the privilege and duty of the people of God, and have viewed that which follows as referring exclusively to our blessed Lord, whose rest from the shame and sorrow of His great mediatorial undertaking, and whose complacency as He looked upon His finished work, resembled the rest of God when creation stood forth in its first loveliness and in the completeness of all its arrangements. But while we gratefully acknowledge that to us, as Christians, “the Lord’s day” is now the holy Sabbath, and forms a beautiful type of the rest that awaits us when we shall be with Christ, we cannot regard the Apostle as here affirming the continued obligation of the Sabbatic institution. This would be to introduce confusion into his argument; and it would be utterly inconsistent with the exhortation with which he closes the entire subject;—“Let us labour,” (or “strive,”) “therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience.”—The phrase, “the people of God,” is very significant. It contains an allusion to ancient Israel, as separated from the mass of the nations; and it marks the character and position of believers under

## 10. For he that is entered into His rest, he also

the gospel,—that they are a people gathered out of the world, and brought into a peculiar relation to Jehovah. They are, indeed, “the Israel of God,” the true “circumcision,” offering unto God a worship actuated by the Holy Ghost, glorying in Him who stands at their head, as their Redeemer and Lord, and renouncing all dependence on that which is merely outward and formal.

Verse 10. *For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, etc.* Here the Apostle enlarges on that view of the rest that awaits believers which he had given in the significant term *σαββατισμός*, “the keeping of a sabbath.” His preceding reasonings, as we have seen, had led him to give prominence to this aspect of the Christian’s state when the toils and conflicts of earth are over; and now he dwells on it with sacred interest. That rest which “remains over” to the Church of God in successive ages, is one which resembles the complacent repose—if we may reverently speak so—with which GOD looked upon His own finished work. A holy satisfaction, a feeling of unutterable comfort and gladness, fills the breast of the Christian as he rises to be with Christ. And that satisfaction will never again give place to solicitude and fear, or be exchanged for the consciousness of conflict and suffering. The work of life is accomplished; and the great result which was so long kept in view is actually attained. All toilsome effort has ceased; all sorrow and peril are over; the tension of mind which was necessary until the very close of this probationary state is now relaxed; and the mind, filled with light, and purity, and strength, can vividly enjoy the sacred pleasures which on every hand invite its regard.—Some eminent expositors, as we have seen, apply this verse exclusively to the Lord

hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from His.

11. Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall <sup>a</sup>after the same example of ||unbelief.

*g* Heb. iii. 12, 18, 19.

|| Or, *disobedience*.

Jesus; but this, we conceive, is to obscure the reasoning of the Apostle, and interrupt the course of thought which pervades this passage. To HIM, indeed, as the Head and Forerunner of His people, made perfect through suffering, and who will henceforth know no conflict or sorrow, the words beautifully, and it may be *especially*, apply: but not to Him exclusively. They describe the rest which is before His saints, as one after another they pass from the toils and sorrows of earth to share His eternal joy.

Verse 11. *Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall etc.* With this exhortation the Apostle concludes his discussion of the rest promised to the people of God, and his warnings to the believing Hebrews not to imitate the example of their fathers. The word which we render "let us labour," *σπουδάσωμεν*, does not convey the idea of exhausting toil, but rather those of *strong desire and earnest, persevering effort*. It may, perhaps, be more accurately rendered, "let us earnestly strive;" since it brings before us the constant putting forth of our utmost energy to attain an object on which our hearts are set. Such a charge is founded both on the excellence and blessedness of the state to which we look forward, and on the danger which exists of our giving place to unbelief, and thus even to open disobedience to God. Dean Alford and some others render the last clause, "lest any man fall into the same example of disobedience:" but, while it is clear

12. For the word of God is <sup>h</sup>quick, and powerful, and <sup>i</sup>sharper than any <sup>h</sup>two-edged sword, piercing

<sup>h</sup> Isai. xlix. 2; Jer. xxiii. 29; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; 1 Pet. i. 23.

<sup>i</sup> Prov v. 4.      <sup>h</sup> Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16; ii. 16.

that the last word ἀπειθείας should be rendered "disobedience," as in the margin, the common translation of the other part of the clause may be properly retained. It has the approval of several distinguished scholars and expositors.

Verse 12. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, etc.* There are few passages in this Epistle the interpretation of which has occasioned greater diversity of opinion than this. It has been held by many, that the phrase, ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the word of God," is employed here, as in the writings of St. John, to designate *the Personal Word*; and, in support of this view, it has been urged, that the statement which follows in verse 13 is thus more fully explained, since that verse clearly refers to a Divine Person,—One to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, and to whom our account must at last be rendered. But the objections to this exposition are numerous and weighty. One of the strongest is derived from the usage of this Epistle in regard to the designation of the adorable Redeemer. The Apostle throughout gives such prominence to the august appellation, THE SON, that it is not probable that he would have passed over it, had he been speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the phrase, to him unusual, "the Word of God." The argument of the first chapter, evincing the superiority of Christ to the angelic hosts, had been based on His relation to the Father as the Son;—the reasoning by which the lofty pre-eminence of our Lord over Moses had been supported was, that whereas Moses was a servant

even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is 'a discerner of the

1 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

in the house of God, Jesus was the Son who was "over" that house, and had a special property in it;—and when the Apostle, in verse 14 of the present chapter, again introduces the subject of the Redeemer's priesthood, and seeks, in doing so, to mark His transcendent dignity as well as His tender sympathy, he designates Him "Jesus the Son of God."—Another objection to this interpretation is, that several of the statements of the Apostle respecting the word of God are far more applicable to words uttered by God, and applied by His Spirit to the consciences of men, than to the Second Person of the blessed Trinity.—On the other hand, it seems scarcely consistent to interpret this phrase of the *written revelation* of God, considered as a *whole*; since there is nothing in the context to lead to such a description of the collective body of the Sacred Writings. We conceive, then, that the phrase in question takes up the idea suggested both by the expression  $\delta \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma \tau\eta\varsigma \alpha\kappa\omicron\upsilon\eta\varsigma$ , "the word of hearing," or "the word preached," in verse 2, and by the manner in which the Apostle had introduced his quotation from Psalm xcvi. in iii. 7, "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith;" and that the meaning is, "For a word" (*i.e.*, every word) "uttered by God is living and energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword." The connection of thought between this verse and the preceding train of exhortations and warnings thus becomes apparent. The character of every word uttered by God—every message which He addresses to men, and every warning which He seeks to bring home to the conscience—forms a reason why

thoughts and intents of the heart.

13. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things *are* naked "and

*m* Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14; xc. 8; cxxxix. 11, 12.

*n* Job xxvi. 6; xxxiv. 21; Prov. xv. 11.

we should give all diligence and earnestness to attain the blessings which He holds forth to us, and should never allow ourselves to give place to unbelief and then to open disobedience. There is a power, the Apostle affirms, in the words of God, which there is not in the statements or reasonings of men. They are "living" and "energetic," since they go forth with the power of the Holy Ghost, though, if man hardens his heart against the voice of God, that power may cease to attend them. They pierce to the very depths of human thought and feeling; they lay open the real character of our emotions and principles of action; and they bring into clear light our secret purposes and imaginations, enabling us, if only we admit the conviction which comes from God, to judge truly of our state, and to apprehend our actual position and prospects.

Verse 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: etc.* By an easy transition the Apostle passes from the character of every word uttered by God and applied by His Spirit, to the *omniscience* of Him whose word it is. With the view which we have taken of the preceding verse, it is necessary to regard *αὐτοῦ* in the first clause of this as referring to Θεοῦ in the phrase, ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, nor can any valid objection, we conceive, be alleged against such a construction. It is clear that in this verse the Apostle is speaking of a living Person who beholds all things, and discerns, with unerring accuracy, the real character of every created being. The word which we translate "opened," in the second clause, is

opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

14. Seeing then that we have <sup>a</sup> a great High Priest,

*o* Heb. iii. 1.

*τετραχλισμένα*. Perhaps the phrase, "perfectly exposed," more fully conveys its import: but while there is no doubt about its meaning in this passage, the figure from which that secondary meaning is derived is very uncertain. Some consider that it refers primarily to the dividing and laying open of victims offered in sacrifice; while others regard it as alluding to the bending back of the neck of an animal about to be sacrificed, so as to expose the face to perfect view. The latter explanation is probably to be preferred. The expression found in the last clause, "Him with whom we have to do," is equivalent to "Him to whom our account must be rendered." This sentiment is most appropriate to the general course of thought. The Apostle had been referring to the Divine message, and warning the believing Hebrews not to treat it with neglect, and thus to fall into the aggravated ruin of unbelief and disobedience; and now he reminds them, that He to whose word they were to listen, and whose promises they were to embrace with persevering faith, is the Omniscient Judge, to whom their inmost thoughts and purposes were open, and to whom it belonged to decide authoritatively on their character and destiny.

Verse 14. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, etc.* Here the Apostle takes up again the subject of our Lord's priesthood, to which he had referred in ii. 16--18, and iii. 1. This, indeed, was one of the great themes on which he designed to dwell in this Epistle, as affecting the character of the Christian

that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of

*p* Heb. vii. 26; ix. 12, 24.

economy, and evincing the ample provision made under it for the salvation and eternal triumph of the people of God. His solicitude for the stability of the believing Hebrews had diverted him, for a while, from the unfolding of this theme, suggesting that series of warnings and exhortations on which we have just dwelt: but now he returns to it with profound interest, and seeks to fix the attention of his readers on the transcendent excellence of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and especially on the union in Him, in their very highest perfection, of all the qualifications necessary to the One who appears for us in the Father's presence, to present an atonement for our sins, and to intercede on our behalf. He adverts, especially, to His ineffable personal dignity,—to the fact that He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary itself,—and to the deep and tender sympathy with man which still characterises Him; and he makes these considerations the ground both of an earnest exhortation to constancy in the Christian profession, and of an encouraging invitation to maintain confiding intercourse with God, and to seek the continual communications of His grace. The verse before us is remarkably full of spiritual truth. The Apostle speaks of the Christian economy as that under which “we have a *great High Priest*,” thus intimating, in a general manner, the vast superiority of Him to whom we have to look up to all others that have ever been invested with the priestly office. He next fixes upon the fact, that He “is passed into the heavens,” or, rather, that He “*has passed through the heavens*,” as the phrase, *ἐειληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς* requires to be rendered. By

God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

*q* Heb. x. 23.

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“the heavens” we are to understand the aerial and starry heavens, through all which the Redeemer passed to the very throne of God, when, as the triumphant Mediator, He ascended up on high. Thus His priesthood is exercised in the true holy of holies,—the most sacred spot in the universe, where the Divine presence is specially revealed; and His enthronement at the right hand of the Father marks the availing character of His sacrifice and intercession. And then the Apostle adds the personal designation of our Lord, and that august title which sets forth His eternal glory and essential oneness with the Father:—“Jesus the Son of God.” These words would immediately recall the train of thought pursued in the opening of the Epistle, while they showed that He in whom we trust is infinitely higher than any creature, and may well be the Object of unlimited confidence.—Taking all these considerations together, the Apostle exhorts us to “hold fast our profession.” The system of truth which we have embraced presents to us One who can lead us to the Father, and confer on us the loftiest blessings; and it should, therefore, be *held fast* amidst all the opposition which we may have to encounter, and *openly confessed* in the face of ridicule and reproach.—Perhaps, also, in the use of the personal designation of our Lord, “Jesus,”—the name given to Joshua in verse 8,—and in the statement, that He “has passed through the heavens,” the Apostle designed to suggest another thought, that He, as our glorious Leader, has entered into His rest, so that if we hold fast our faith, and continue openly to confess Him, we shall share at last His joy and triumph.

15. For *we* have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but *was* in all points tempted like as *we are*, *yet* without sin.

† Isaiah liii. 3; Heb. ii. 18.      § Luke xxii. 28.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 John iii. 5.

Verse 15. *For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched etc.* The considerations on which the Apostle had just dwelt related chiefly to the personal dignity of our High Priest, and to the exercise of His priesthood in the most sacred place in the universe. But now he turns to another feature of His character, and one calculated to endear Him to us who are conscious of frailty and are exposed to suffering and conflict. Glorious as He is, He is "able to sympathise with our infirmities," since He Himself, during His earthly state, was the subject of weakness, and temptation, and sorrow. The phrase used by the Apostle, *ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν*, "our weaknesses," expresses the idea of *conscious feebleness*, affecting not the body only, but the mind. There is in our nature a shrinking from pain and suffering,—a sense of frailty and distress under severe mental conflicts,—a consciousness of insufficiency for the discharge of duty, unless we are specially strengthened from on high. But the Lord Jesus has entered into the deepest sorrows of our humanity; and, in His exalted state, He retains His human sympathy. His earthly course, the Apostle reminds us, was one of temptation,—repeated, varied, severe. But in all His temptations He overcame. No stain was upon His spirit: no flaw impaired the perfection of His obedience.

Verse 16. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, etc.* This encouraging

16. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

*u* Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12; Heb. x. 19, 21, 22.

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exhortation naturally follows from those views of our Lord's priesthood on which the Apostle had just dwelt. The phrase, "the throne of grace," seems to have been suggested by the mercy-seat in the Jewish holy of holies, —the covering, or lid, of the ark, on which the high priest of Israel sprinkled the blood of atonement, when he was permitted to draw aside the veil, and to go, as it were, into the immediate presence of Jehovah. But this phrase, as here used, clearly points to the throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary, where the Redeemer presents His own perfect sacrifice, and carries on His priestly intercession. That throne—the very seat of the righteous government of Jehovah—is now, through the blood of atonement, constituted a "throne of grace," so that from it pardon can be dispensed to the returning penitent that believes in Jesus, and all the blessings of a gratuitous salvation be bestowed on him. The connection of this *verse* with the two preceding ones clearly shows the *ground* of the invitation which it contains, and the *reason* of that *freedom* and *confidence* which we may cherish in our approaches to the Most High. It is because our "great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God" has "passed through the heavens" to become our Representative at the Father's throne, that that throne is now emphatically one of "grace;" and it is because HE is there, ever mighty to succour and bless us, and at the same time sympathising with us in our conscious feebleness, that we can come with freedom of spirit, and with a firm assurance of blessing. In adverting

to the *benefits* held forth to us through Christ, the Apostle first mentions "mercy,"—the remission of our sins; and then he speaks of "grace to help in time of need." Dean Alford and some other commentators render the phrase, *εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν*, "for help in time," and explain it as meaning, "for help while the day of grace and mercy lasts;" but this seems far-fetched, and detracts from the fulness of the Apostle's representation of the benefits offered to us through Christ. The adjective *εὐκαιρον*, "timely," "seasonable," directly qualifies *βοήθειαν* "help;" and it marks that help as *seasonable* and *sufficient*,—as afforded in the very time of need, before we have succumbed to the power of temptation, or the depressing influence of affliction, and as adequate to the upholding of our principles, and to our establishment in Christ.

## CHAPTER V.

## 1. FOR every high priest taken from among men

## CHAPTER V.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE Apostle now proceeds formally to unfold the doctrine of our Lord's priesthood. He lays down the essential requisites of every high priest constituted on behalf of men,—that he must be himself a man, and must know by personal experience the weakness, and conflicts, and sufferings, common to our humanity, and that he must be designated to this office by God. Then he goes on to show that both these requisites existed, in their highest perfection, in the case of the adorable Redeemer. He was constituted a Priest by the express appointment of the Eternal Father; and, though He was the Son, yet He was also truly man, and passed through the deepest sorrows and agitations to which our nature is liable. But through His sufferings, which reached even unto death, He has opened the way to the salvation of all who trust in Him, and has Himself risen to a state of glory from which He bestows that salvation. As the enthroned Mediator, He is addressed by the Father as "a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek." But, before developing the truths implied in this statement, the Apostle expostulates with the believing Hebrews on the low state of spiritual discernment into which they had sunk down, and seeks to rouse them to greater religious earnestness, and to the attainment of that spiritual maturity which would cause them to dwell with delight on the deeper truths of the Christian scheme.

“is ordained for men <sup>b</sup>in things *pertaining* to God,  
 “that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins :

*a* Heb. viii. 3.    *b* Heb. ii. 17.    *c* Heb. viii. 3, 4 ; ix. 9 ;  
 x. 11 ; xi. 4.

Verse 1. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men etc.* The elaborate discussion of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus upon which the Apostle here enters is introduced by a statement of what the office of a priest who has to act on behalf of men implies. A *priest*, the Apostle teaches us, is one who is duly constituted the representative of his fellows, so as in their name to draw near to God, to present their offerings, and especially to present an atonement for their sins, and then to intercede with God on their behalf. All these particulars are either distinctly expressed, or clearly implied, in the present verse. The clause, “taken from among men,” would have been more accurately rendered, “being taken from among men:” and the idea which it conveys is, that one who acts as the priestly representative of men must be himself a man,—he must be a partaker of the nature of those for whom he officiates, so as to be able to enter into all their feelings. The due appointment of every such person, and the representative character which he sustains, are also referred to ; while the sphere of his ministration is spoken of as comprehending the relations of men to God, and their interests and hopes as the subjects of the Divine government. The translation proposed by Dr. J. Pye Smith, with a slight modification, admirably brings out the sentiments of the Apostle: “For every high priest, being taken from among men, is constituted on behalf of men, with respect to their concerns with God, that he may present both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” The function last

2. <sup>4</sup>Who || can have compassion on the ignorant,  
*d* Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15. || Or, *can reasonably bear with.*

referred to is the distinguishing characteristic of the priestly office. While that office implies special consecration to God, and the privilege of intimate access to Him, it derives its peculiar importance from the fact, that he who sustains it stands as the representative of his fellows, and presents on their behalf a propitiatory sacrifice to reconcile them to the Father, and to open the way to the flowing forth towards them of rich and abundant blessing.

Verse 2. *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; etc.* Here the Apostle enlarges on the thought which he had briefly intimated in the preceding verse, that every high priest constituted on behalf of men must be himself a man, so as to know by personal experience the weakness of our nature, and its liability to temptation and suffering. This, indeed, is the former of the two requisites which he lays down as essential to a high priest for men. The terms which he employs to convey this sentiment are admirably chosen. The word *μετριοπαθεῖν*, which we render "to have compassion," and which is translated in the margin, "reasonably bear with," expresses a *well-regulated and moderate state of emotion*,—that emotion, in the present case, combining *compassion and sorrow*, and not excluding the moral displeasure which sin should ever awaken in the devout and spiritual mind. The words which follow, as descriptive of the character and position of sinners generally, are comparatively mild; but they mark with distinctness and accuracy two leading features of a sinful course. There is *ignorance* of God and of His ways,—ignorance which, if in some cases involuntary, is, in by far the larger number of instances, the result of

and on them that are out of the way; for that <sup>he</sup> himself also is compassed with infirmity.

*c* Heb. vii. 28.

guilty inattention and neglect: and there is *a being led astray from the right path*, (*πλανωμένοις*), and a consequent wandering in the paths of evil and sorrow. To one most aggravated form of sin,—a bold, presumptuous defiance of the Divine authority,—there is here no distinct allusion. The predominant feeling which this should call forth in every mind that is loyal to God, is holy displeasure. On the other hand, we must not limit the terms which the Apostle employs to sins of ignorance, strictly so called: they comprehend, as we have seen, transgressions which evince a culpable neglect of light afforded, and the triumph of guilty passion over the better convictions of the judgment. And it is a beautiful development of the abounding grace of God, that even presumptuous sins, if renounced and repented of, may be forgiven through the blood of Jesus; and that the Spirit of God has subdued many who were utterly hostile to Him, and brought them in humility and penitence to the Saviour's feet.—The consideration which the Apostle alleges to show, that the compassion of which he speaks will naturally have place in the breast of every human high priest, is, “that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” The last term recalls the statement of the Apostle at the close of the preceding chapter, that we have a High Priest who can “sympathise with our infirmities,” since He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” It fixes attention on the *weakness* of our nature, considered as exposing us to various influences that may lead us astray; and the sentiment of the Apostle is that the consciousness of this weakness—a

3. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

f Lev. iv. 3 ; ix. 7 ; xvi. 6, 15, 16, 17 ; Heb. vii. 27 ; ix. 7.

weakness ever present—will naturally enable every high priest to feel for those who sin. The argument, as it is here put, applies *strictly* only to *mere men* who sustained the priestly office, as the position laid down in the following verse clearly shows. Every such priest was “encompassed with infirmity;” and the moral weakness of his nature too often led him actually astray, or at least impaired the perfection of his service to God. But our great High Priest, while He so partook of our nature as to know its feebleness, its sorrows, its temptations, and its fears, as the Apostle affirms in iv. 15, and as he goes on still further to show in verses 7, 8 of the present chapter, was yet “without sin.” We must not speak, in His case, of *moral* weakness, as the impressive contrast with which the Apostle closes his discussion of our Lord’s priesthood in vii. 28 distinctly teaches. But in *every other respect* He knew by experience the *feebleness* of our humanity, and endured its *deepest sorrows*.

Verse 3. *And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*—It is important to observe that this verse opens with the words, *καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς*, literally, “and on account of it,”—the reference being to the term *ἀσθένειαν*, “infirmity” or “weakness,” with which the preceding verse closes. The precise import of that term, as it occurs in this part of the argument, has just been explained. The Apostle is contemplating the case of merely human high priests; and he affirms that every such priest is bound, by the consciousness of his moral feebleness and his manifold defects, to offer sacrifices

4. *g* And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *h*was Aaron.

*g* 2 Chron. xxvi. 18 ; John iii. 27.

*h* Exod. xxviii. 1 ; Numb. xvi. 5, 40 ; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13.

for his own sins, as well as for those of the people on whose behalf he ministers. No such necessity rested upon our adorable Lord, since He was "without sin;" but His experience of temptation, and pain, and sorrow, enable Him to sympathise with us, and to regard with human compassion, blended with holy displeasure, those who wander from God.

Verse 4. *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, etc.* Here the Apostle states the second requisite of every high priest,—Divine designation to the office. The slightest reflection must show the truth and importance of the principle thus affirmed. It would be the height of arrogance for any man to stand forth, unbidden and unauthorised, as the representative of his fellows, and in that character to go into the presence of Jehovah, to offer sacrifices for their sins, and to intercede with Him on their behalf. In proportion to the high and momentous character of the functions of the priesthood, and the special nearness of access to God which it involved, would be the temerity and guilt of any man who should assume it without an express intimation of the Divine will. A man must be "called of God," even as Aaron was, to this distinguished honour, and this most responsible work, or he could not be justified in undertaking it.—In the oldest and best MSS. there is a slight deviation from the reading which our translators have followed, the article *ὁ* being omitted before the participle *καλούμενος*. The exact translation of the verse, as it is

5. 'So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest; but He that said unto Him, 'Thou art

i John viii. 54.      k Ps. ii. 7; Heb. i. 5.

found in these MSS., is, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but being called of God, as indeed was Aaron." But the sentiment is not at all affected by this variation.

Verse 5. *So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest; but He that said unto Him, etc.* In this and the following verse the Apostle shows that our Lord possessed that requisite of a high priest to which he had last referred,—*Divine vocation to the office.* The term which he employs in introducing this thought, that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest," is very comprehensive and forcible. It conveys a reference to the office itself as one of dignity and honour; and it alludes to the exercise of our Lord's priesthood in heaven as a branch of His mediatorial exaltation. But He was constituted a Priest by the Eternal Father. It was a part of the Father's counsel that He should stand as the Representative of the race whose nature He assumed, and should offer up Himself as the sacrifice for their sins; and it was the Father who raised Him, after His deep humiliation, to the highest dignity as the Mediator. And thus we can appreciate the propriety and force of the application which the Apostle here makes of the words of the second Psalm;—"I will declare the decree; Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." That emphatic announcement of the Eternal Father was addressed to the enthroned Messiah in His Divine-human Person, when the work of atonement was accomplished, and His humanity was raised to the glory

My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee.

6. As He saith also in another *place*, 'Thou art a

*l* Ps. cx. 4; Heb. vii. 17, 21.

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which became the Son Incarnate; and it may well be regarded as including His recognition as the ever-glorious Priest of the new economy. On the deep import of the declaration in question, the reader is referred to the note on i. 5, and to the Sermon of the Rev. W. B. Pope which is there quoted. In illustration of the application of these words to our Lord's priestly mediation, Mr. Pope remarks, "Thus was he declared to be the all-sufficient High Priest. His holy life sealed Him as a perfectly holy victim; in His passion He poured out His soul as an oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and, as He was leaving the world to assume His place of priestly intercession and benediction at the right hand of God, the Father said to the *High Priest of our profession*, now fully furnished for His ever-blessed function, *This day have I begotten Thee.*"

Verse 6. *As He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever etc.* This is the second passage adduced to show that our Lord was constituted a Priest by the Eternal Father. It occurs in Psalm cx., the Messianic reference of which is distinctly asserted by our Lord Himself, as well as by His Apostles, and is indeed obvious and indisputable. Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, David speaks of the great Restorer as his "Lord," and records the address of the Eternal Father to Him, investing Him with universal sovereignty, declaring that before Him at last every hostile power should fall, indicating the spiritual victories which He should achieve, and affirming that in these victories He should be encircled with a

Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.

7. Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had

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people endued with heaven-derived graces, and who should present themselves as "free-will offerings" to Him. And then comes the solemn announcement of His unchanging and ever-efficacious priesthood,—a priesthood which was to centre in His own glorious Person, and which, in the nature of things, could never pass over to any other:—"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek." This is the emphatic declaration on which the Apostle dwells at length in his subsequent argument in ch. vii., and the profound import of which he there unfolds. Its application to the point now under consideration is clear and obvious. Divine designation to the priestly office belongs pre-eminently to Him in whom we trust, and through whom we are permitted to draw near to the Father.

Verse 7. *Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death.* The Apostle now leads us back to the former of the two requisites of every high priest constituted on behalf of men, and shows us that this also existed in the case of our blessed Lord. He was a partaker of our humanity; and, in the period of His deep humiliation, He knew by personal experience the deepest sorrows and most painful apprehensions of the human spirit. The expression, "the days of His flesh," clearly refers to the period of His earthly life, as distinguished both from His original state of glory, and from His present life as the exalted Mediator, in whom our nature is raised to ineffable refinement and dignity. He came to earth "a partaker of flesh and

"offered up prayers and supplications, "with strong

*m* Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44 ; Mark xiv. 36, 39 ; John xvii. 1.

*n* Ps. xxiii. 1 ; Matt. xxvii. 46, 50 ; Mark xv. 34, 37.

blood,"—of human nature in its present material constitution, with its susceptibility of languor, and pain, and suffering ; and throughout His earthly career, until in death He bowed His head upon the cross, His humanity, like ours, was weak, and exposed to innumerable sorrows. But, instead of tracing the Redeemer's course at length, in order to illustrate this truth, the Apostle fixes upon one scene of surpassing solemnity and awe. He leads us to Gethsemane, to behold our Lord oppressed with an unutterable anguish, and giving utterance to that anguish in reiterated prayers and supplications to the Father. Lifting a little further than the evangelists had done the veil which conceals the mysterious conflict and agony of Gethsemane, he speaks of the Redeemer's "strong *crying* and *tears*," as the overwhelming pressure rested upon His spirit. The "prayers and supplications" which He then offered are spoken of as addressed to "Him that was able to save Him from death ;" and this expression reminds us of our Lord's own words, uttered soon afterwards, when He reproved Peter who stepped forward to defend Him with the sword, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?" We do not, however, regard the Apostle as affirming that our Lord prayed to be delivered from death ; nor do we conceive that such was the import of His oft-repeated petition recorded by the evangelists, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." We freely allow, that

crying and tears, unto Him <sup>o</sup>that was able to save

*o* Matt. xxvi. 53 ; Mark xiv. 36.

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there was a recoil of our Lord's humanity from the death of the cross which was just at hand, with all its awful suffering: but we cannot forget that He had repeatedly affirmed the *necessity* of His death,—that He had indicated its *mode*,—and that, on that very evening, He had instituted that *sacrament* which was to commemorate it as the true and effectual sacrifice for sin, and as that through which "the new covenant" should be brought in. We consider, then, that the words of the Apostle are chosen with a designed allusion to that saying of our Lord which we have quoted; and we regard our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane as having reference to the mitigation of that deep anguish which He was even then enduring, and to the shortening of its duration. That anguish embraced, we doubt not, many elements. While His purpose to yield Himself up as the Sacrifice for the sins of men never wavered, the full consciousness of what was before Him troubled His soul, and the weakness of His flesh recoiled from the awful suffering. And now He realised, to the full, the solemnity and awfulness of His position as the Bearer of the sins of men. Our transgressions pressed upon His spirit, even as if they had been His own; while the unstained purity of His character gave Him the most vivid apprehension of the heinousness of sin, and the intense displeasure with which it is regarded by God. The powers of darkness, too, were now permitted to make their fiercest assaults on Him; and their great leader sought in every way to molest and distress Him. But we draw back, with lowly reverence, from the attempt any further to analyse the sorrow which in Gethsemane filled

Him from death, and was heard ||<sup>s</sup>in that He feared ;

|| Or, for His piety. p Matt. xxvi. 37 ; Mark xiv. 33 ;  
Luke xxii. 43 ; John xii. 27.

the breast of the Redeemer. Our Lord's own words, and the statements of the Sacred Writers, suggest the particulars which we have mentioned ; and beyond these we dare not go. There was a sinking of our Lord's humanity under painful apprehension and bitter anguish ; and had not relief been afforded, death must even then have been the issue. And His prayer to the Father we conceive to have been, that that "cup" of trembling and horror which He was then drinking might "pass" from Him. This is the view of the subject taken by the Rev. Richard Watson, in his invaluable Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel. "The cup here spoken of by our Lord," he remarks, "was His present bitter anguish and unspeakable sufferings. This is plain from comparing the accounts of the evangelists. . . . Mightily as He had been strengthened to suffer, He was sinking under a deadly anguish, and prayed that, 'if it were possible,' if it were consistent with the Divine purpose, if it could be done without impairing the efficacy of His atonement and vicarious undertaking, that bitter cup, that cup of trembling and horror, might pass away from Him ; yet with entire submission, leaving it to His Father to judge of the fitness of the request, and the measure of suffering which His justice was to exact from One who was now in the room and place of a guilty world, bearing their transgressions ; and who, by that substitution of Himself in their place, had given up all right to decide this question for Himself. And it was *possible*, not for the cup to be withheld from Him, but for that cup, after He had drunk so largely

of its bitterness, *to pass away* from Him. This we know from the fact: He was relieved from His agony, and rejoined His disciples in a state of composure, which itself, from its suddenness, indicated a supernatural interposition: and we know it also from the words of St. Paul in Heb. v. 7."

*And was heard in that He feared.* In these words the Apostle affirms the fact, that relief was afforded to our Lord, in answer to His earnest and oft-repeated prayer. He "was heard" by the Father; the overwhelming apprehension and anguish under which His humanity was sinking gave place, after awhile, to calmness and confidence; and He went forth with renewed strength to meet the traitor, to suffer the indignities which wicked men were ready to heap upon Him, and to pour out His life's blood for the sins of our guilty world. This part of the Apostle's statement is clear and indisputable; and the course of the Saviour's history, as given by the evangelists, beautifully illustrates it. But that history also shows that, as the Redeemer hung upon the cross, He again endured unexampled mental sorrow, so that, as the final moment approached, He uttered the exclamation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But His holy firmness never wavered; and at length He affirmed, "It is finished;" "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit;" and, having said this, He "gave up the ghost."

The correct rendering of the latter part of this clause has long been a matter of dispute. The Greek expositors, with several distinguished men in modern times, among whom may be mentioned Delitzsch and Alford, translate the words, *καὶ εἰσακουσθεῖς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας*, "and being heard by reason of his reverent submission." Such a rendering of *εὐλαβεία*, they affirm, is more accurate than the word "fear;" and they contend that, in the

passages usually alleged as instances of the meaning "fear," it refers to the fear of caution or modesty, and not to dread or terror. In answer to the objection, that the preposition *ἀπό* would scarcely have been selected to express the *ground* or *reason* of the deliverance spoken of, they point to a similar usage in Luke xix. 3, xxiv. 41, John xxi. 6, Acts xii. 14, xx. 9, xxii. 11. Several of these passages are scarcely parallel; but it must be conceded that they show the translation to be an admissible one. According to the view of these expositors, the sentiment of the Apostle is, that the reverent submission of our blessed Lord, as evinced by the fact, that His earnest requests for relief were qualified by the condition, "If it be possible," and by the petition, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," was the *reason* of the Father's special interposition to succour and relieve Him. This feature of the case they regard further as illustrating the general sentiment which the Apostle is here enforcing, that our Lord, while on earth, was a partaker of our nature in all its weakness, and stood, as we do, in a relation to the Father which required submission and reverence. But while this view of the Apostle's language has much to recommend it, we cannot but regard the more usual method of interpreting these words, "and being heard so as to be delivered from His fear," as in several respects preferable. It is the sense which naturally suggests itself, when such a term as *εἰσακουθεῖς*, which implies that a petition is both heard and granted, is followed by the preposition *ἀπό*. The construction immediately strikes us as a pregnant one, implying *deliverance* as consequent on the favourable hearing of the petition; and the preposition seems naturally to introduce that *from which* the person spoken of is delivered. The clause, thus understood, defines the *extent* to which relief was afforded

8. *Though He were a Son, yet learned He*  
*q Heb. iii. 6.*
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to our blessed Lord. He was not exempted from the death of the cross; and, as we have seen, there is no sufficient ground for considering that He even asked for this. But He *was* delivered from that painful apprehension, and that awful sinking of His humanity, which oppressed Him in Gethsemane; and He went forth strengthened to suffer, until the atonement should be complete, and the redemption of mankind be wrought out.

Verse 8. *Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.* This verse contains a profound truth. It recalls the mysterious dignity of our High Priest as THE SON; for there can be no question, surely, that the introductory clause, *καίπερ ὢν Υἱός*, "Although He was the Son," is to be understood as referring to our Lord's Divine and eternal Sonship, in accordance with the argument of the earlier part of the Epistle, and the express statement in iv. 14. But the Apostle reminds us that, by allying Himself to our nature, the Son became the "righteous Servant" of the Father,—that He stood, if we may reverently say so, in a new relation to Him, and one which required submission and obedience. That obedience He never failed to render. It was perfect in every part of His earthly career; but the forms in which it appeared were more and more impressive, and involved larger demands upon the principle of entire self-surrender to God, as that career advanced, and as the sufferings through which He was called to pass increased in intensity and depth. In this sense He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." When to the languor and pain which He often endured,—the ingratitude of men which

obedience by the things which He suffered;

9. And being made perfect, He became the

† Phil. ii. 8.    ‡ Heb. ii. 10; xi. 40.

wounded His spirit,—the consciousness of human woe as wide-spread and terrible, which woe His deep sympathy made, in an important sense, His own,—there was added the overwhelming anguish of that “hour” to which He had looked forward with peculiar emotions, He faltered not in His course of holy submission. He went from step to step in the path of service and suffering, until upon the cross He exclaimed, “It is finished,” and His sacrificial death crowned His obedience, and opened the way to His mediatorial exaltation. Thus was realised the full import of the declaration which He uttered, as He stood on the verge of this deepest suffering, and looked forward to His departure to the Father; “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

Verse 9. *And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.* The correspondence of thought between this verse and ii. 10 will at once strike every attentive reader. In the note on that passage, we have endeavoured to point out the wide range of meaning included in our Lord's being “*made perfect*” as “the Captain of our salvation.” The same amplitude of thought belongs to the phrase here. It includes a reference to the *completion* of His atonement, and to the fact that He is now *fully qualified*, as having offered such an atonement, to confer salvation on all who come to Him; and it comprehends also a reference to His *mediatorial exaltation*. It is an animating thought, that, when the Redeemer came forth from the tomb, He came forth no

Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him ;

10. Called of God a High Priest 'after the order of Melchisedek.

† Verse 6. Heb. vi. 20.

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longer "the Man of sorrows," but the triumphant Mediator. No suffering remained to be endured by Him as our Representative and Substitute. His humiliation had reached its lowest depth, and had accomplished its intended purpose. Nothing remained for the risen Saviour but to ascend, when He should have established by overwhelming evidence the reality of His resurrection, and should have further instructed and commissioned His Apostles, to the throne of His glory. From that throne, as the Divine-human Redeemer, "glorified" by the Father as our all-sufficient High Priest, He dispenses "salvation" to all who bow to His sway and rely entirely on His sacrifice. That salvation, too, is "eternal:" it reaches onward to the ages that are not measured by the divisions of time, and its blessedness will be realised in a union with the Saviour where sin and sorrow can have no place. But this salvation is the portion *only* of those "who obey Him,"—who surrender themselves to Him in humble faith, and with sincere and constant efforts to do His will. The term which the Apostle uses is very comprehensive. It includes "the obedience of *faith*;"—that submission to Christ which consists in an acceptance of Him as "the Lord our righteousness;" it includes, also, a reverent regard to all His precepts and warnings; and it implies the principle of self-surrender to Him as the governing principle of His people's character.

Verse 10. *Called of God a High Priest after the order of*

11. Of whom "we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are "dull of hearing.

u John xvi. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 16.      x Matt. xiii. 15.

*Melchisedek.* There is an intimate connection between this verse and the preceding one. The term which we render "called," *προσαγορευθεῖς*, is very different from that employed in verse 4, and would have been more accurately translated "addressed." The sentiment of the Apostle is, that the Redeemer "made perfect" through suffering, and exalted to that state of dignity and power from which He bestows an "everlasting salvation" upon His people, was *addressed* by the Eternal Father as a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek,—One whose priesthood was unique and exclusive, and who should never cease to exercise His sacerdotal functions until the mediatorial economy should be wound up. This application of the language of Psalm cx. 4, beautifully accords with the connection in which it stands. That Messianic ode opens with the address of the Eternal Father to the Messiah, declaring His enthronement as the Mediator, and the ultimate subjection to Him of all His enemies. The announcement of His everlasting priesthood, therefore, as determined by the irrevocable oath of the Father, was strictly addressed to Him as the Sovereign before whom no further humiliation lay, but only a career of spiritual victory, fraught with the richest blessings to His devout and obedient people.

Verse 11. *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, etc.* The Apostle now pauses in his argument, and seeks to prepare the believing Hebrews for the deep truths which he was about to unfold, by rousing them to an earnest effort to comprehend them, and to view the Christian scheme in all its completeness and glory. It

12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which

seems most natural to render the phrase, *περὶ οὗ*, "of," or "concerning," "whom," and to view it as relating to Melchisedek: though many expositors translate it "concerning which," and understand it of *the subject* of the Melchisedecian character of our Lord's priesthood. That subject, the Apostle felt, could scarcely be made clear to those who were content to remain on the surface of Christian doctrine, and who, indeed, needed to be reminded of the very first elements of Divine truth. In itself it was a large and copious theme; and it was "difficult of explanation, to speak,"—as the words *ὑπερμύηεντος λέγειν* literally mean,—except to minds exercised in sacred truth, and largely furnished with it. But the Hebrew Christians generally had sunk down into a low state of spiritual intelligence and power. They had "*become*," as the word *γεγόναι* implies, "dull in their hearing;" and their want of clear spiritual perception rendered it difficult to place before them the great truths connected with the priesthood of the Son of God.

Verse 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need etc.* Here the Apostle continues his reproof of the Hebrew Christians for their declension in spiritual knowledge and discernment. He adverts to the length of time during which they had known the Saviour; and reminds them that they ought now to have been qualified to explain to others the whole system of Christian truth. But, instead of this, they needed to be themselves instructed again in the very first principles of our religion. The phrase employed to express this thought, *τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λόγων τοῦ Θεοῦ*, is very forcible and suggestive.

be <sup>y</sup> the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of <sup>z</sup> milk, and not of strong meat.

<sup>y</sup> Heb. vi. 1.      <sup>z</sup> 1 Cor. iii 1, 2, 3.

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It means, literally, "the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God;" and it points to the first and simplest elements of God's revelation to man. The expression, "the *oracles of God*," naturally recalls Rom. iii. 2. There it refers to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as those in which God spoke to men; but here it is employed in a wider sense, to denote *the whole body of Divine revelation*. The sentiment with which the Epistle opens, viewed in connection with the phrase itself, clearly shows this. "The oracles of God," the Divine utterances to mankind, while they include the communications made through the prophets in successive ages, embrace also the fuller announcement of truth, and privilege, and duty, which God has made to us through His Son, many of whose sayings are now recorded under the inspiration of the Spirit, and whose whole redeeming work the Spirit has unfolded through the teaching of the Apostles.—In the latter part of this verse, we have again to mark the expression, "Ye *are become such as have need of milk*,"—an expression which clearly shows that the persons addressed had sunk down into this state from a much higher one. In their case spiritual declension had already commenced; and the solicitude of the Apostle was awakened,—as his admonitions in the following chapter clearly show,—lest it should proceed farther and yet further, until they should entirely lose the life of God and openly abandon the Saviour. But, on the other hand, he reflected with interest on the proofs which they had given of sincere attachment to Christ and

13. For every one that useth milk \*is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is <sup>a</sup> a babe.

\* Gr. *hath no experience.*

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 11; xiv. 20; Eph. iv. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 2.

to His cause; (vi. 9—11;) and his faithful remonstrances were designed to arrest this declension at its very commencement. As yet it appeared only in the want of that spiritual discernment which results from close fellowship with God, and the devout and earnest study of His truth; and the Apostle designed to rouse the believing Hebrews to attain this, and to repair the loss which, in this respect, they had sustained.—It is scarcely necessary, perhaps, to observe, that the phrase rendered “strong meat,” *σπερεῖς τροφῆς*, properly means “solid food.” At the time when the Authorised Version of the Scriptures was made, the word “meat” was often employed in the general sense of “food;” and this is still the case in some parts of our island. The remark of the Apostle indicates a state of *infantile weakness*, such as requires the exclusive use of milk, and will not allow of *any* solid food to be taken with advantage.

Verse 13. *For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: etc.* Dean Alford has properly remarked, that in this and the following verse there is a frequent blending of the figure with that which it is intended to illustrate. But this involves no obscurity or confusion of thought; and the sentiments of the Apostle are clear and obvious. We adhere to the ordinary rendering of the phrase, *λόγου δικαιοσύνης*, “the word of righteousness;” and we regard such a designation of the system of Christian truth as eminently beautiful, while it recalls the

14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are  
 || of full age, *even* those who by reason || of use have  
 their senses exercised <sup>b</sup> to discern both good and evil.

|| Or, *perfect*. 1 Cor. ii. 6; Eph. iv. 13; Phil. iii 15.

|| Or, *of a habit, or perfection*. b Isai. vii. 15; 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

modes of thought which were familiar to St. Paul. The message which Christ's servants bear to mankind derives a special interest from the fact that it unfolds the Divine provision for our attainment of righteousness. It reveals, as the Apostle affirms in Rom. i. 17, iii. 21, 22. "the righteousness of God,"—the righteousness which He now imputes to all who come to the Lord Jesus, according to that scheme of grace which was present to His mind from eternity.

Verse 14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, etc.* In contrast with the state of infantile weakness which he had just described, the Apostle here sets forth the state of full maturity and perfect development. To men of ripe age solid food, and not simply milk, is suitable: and thus the thoughtful and experienced Christian will rejoice to dwell on the deeper truths of the gospel. In the case of every such Christian there is a *habit* of spiritual inquiry and discernment; and the truths which minister to the edification of Christ's people, and to their progressive sanctification, at once commend themselves to the mind thus trained and disciplined, while the errors that impair the spiritual life are detected and cast aside. The phrase used by the Apostle, *διὰ τὴν ἐξέιν*, expresses such a *habit* formed by frequent and long-continued use.—The reference of the last words, "to discern both good and evil," is primarily to *doctrines*,—but to doctrines

considered in their *tendency* and *influence*, as well as in their essential truth or falsehood. The message of Christ, in all its parts, is health-giving and sanctifying; while corruptions of the truth impair the principles of piety, and too often lead men astray from the path of rectitude and purity.

## CHAPTER VI.

1. THEREFORE <sup>a</sup>leaving ||the principles of the doc-*a* Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14; Heb. v. 12.|| Or, *the word of the beginning of Christ.*

## CHAPTER VI.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE digression upon which the Apostle had entered at the close of the preceding chapter, is continued and completed in this. He exhorts the believing Hebrews to seek spiritual maturity, so as to attain to a full apprehension of the Christian scheme, and so as to realise the highest blessings which it holds forth. This exhortation he enforces by the consideration of the awful consequences of apostasy from Christ; and then, in a tone of warm affection, he adverts to the proofs which those whom he was addressing had already given of their attachment to the Lord Jesus and to His people. The earnestness which they had evinced in this course of holy service he encourages them to put forth in relation to the attainment of an established faith and an assured and joyous hope, that they might be associated, at length, with those who, through faith and patient endurance, had already attained the blessings held forth to them in the Divine promises. Among these he particularly mentions Abraham; and dwells, with deep interest, on the promise made to him,—on the solemn manner in which it was confirmed by the oath of God,—on the interest which all true believers have in that promise,—on the immutability of the gracious counsel of God of which it is the expression,—and on the fulness of

trine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not

comfort and hope imparted to those who become "heirs of the promise," by embracing the Lord Jesus. To Him, the Apostle reminds us, the people of God have now to look as their glorious Forerunner and their ever-living High Priest; and again adverting to the fact, that the priesthood of our Lord is "after the order of Melchisedek," he prepares the way for the development of the deep truths which that fact involves.

Verse 1. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; etc.* The Apostle here addresses an affectionate exhortation to the believing Hebrews, founded on that representation of their religious state which he had just given. Some have strangely imagined that, in these words, he is indicating his own purpose to proceed, in this Epistle, to the unfolding of the higher truths of our religion, and his wish to carry his readers along with him; but the general scope of the passage, and especially the sentiment expressed in verse 3, clearly show that he is urging them to seek *spiritual maturity*,—that maturity embracing an extensive and profound acquaintance with *Christian truth*, and an established state of every *Christian grace*. His love for those whom he was addressing, and his own deep consciousness of spiritual need, requiring a constant supply of wisdom, and grace and strength from the Source of all good, induced him to associate himself with them in this exhortation. Such a form of address at once commends itself to the heart, recognising, as it does, our common brotherhood, and our common liability to fall.—The phrase used in the first clause, and rendered in our Version, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον,

laying again the foundation of repentance <sup>b</sup>from dead

<sup>b</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

is peculiar. Its literal meaning is, "the word of the beginning of Christ;" and it corresponds to the expression employed in verse 12 of the preceding chapter, τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λόγων τοῦ Θεοῦ, literally, "the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God." (See note.) It is designed to indicate the truths which would be first presented to a person entering upon the Christian life, and especially to a Hebrew embracing Jesus as the promised Messiah, and seeking in Him the blessings held forth to his fathers. These truths the Hebrew Christians were exhorted to "leave,"—not in the sense of forgetting them, or putting them aside, but rather in the sense of advancing beyond them to other and higher doctrines, involving an ampler disclosure of the Divine counsel with its surpassing riches of grace and blessing. It has been properly remarked by Calvin, that the figure of a *foundation* to be built upon, introduced in the very next member of this sentence, shows that the Apostle did not contemplate any forgetfulness of these truths, but only a rising to higher Christian knowledge and loftier spiritual attainments. The phrase in which he expresses this thought, ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερόμεθα, may be most accurately rendered, "let us go on to maturity," and it obviously alludes to the word τελείων in the last verse of the preceding chapter. It indicates a state of spiritual maturity, as opposed to one of infantile weakness, and to the comparative feebleness of early youth;—a state in which there is a clear apprehension of spiritual truth, and in which the principles of the regenerate nature appear in their full development.

In speaking of "the foundation" laid in the case of all who truly enter upon the Christian life, embracing

works, and of faith toward God,

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the Lord Jesus as the Deliverer to whom the arrangements and types of former dispensations pointed, the Apostle recounts six things, two of them pointing out *states of mind*, and the remaining four referring to *doctrines to be held*.—First of all, he mentions “repentance from dead works.” The last phrase, “dead works,” occurs also in ix. 14; and it is peculiarly forcible and comprehensive. Its import is, works belonging to *the state of spiritual death*,—works which evince the utter absence of spiritual life. In the discourses of our Lord recorded by St. John, and in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, this view of the state of unregenerate men is repeatedly dwelt upon. Spiritual life is spoken of as a great and blessed reality, though to man it must ever be profoundly mysterious; and if this life, which only the Holy Ghost can impart and sustain, be absent, the human spirit is in a state of death, and all its works are of a corresponding character. The whole course of an unregenerate life thus needs “repentance;” and the first thing required of a disciple of Christ is, that he should confess his iniquities, and turn away with shame and sorrow from the sin which has vitiated his fairest actions and polluted his entire career.—The second particular is, “faith toward God,” or rather “faith on God,” *πίστεως ἐπὶ Θεόν*. This expression, too, is very comprehensive. While it includes the general habit of reliance on all the declarations and promises of God, it implies, in particular, *a believing acceptance of the Divine scheme of grace in Christ Jesus*. This method of representing saving faith is frequently adopted by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. We may refer especially to Rom. iv. 5, 23—25: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on*

*c* Acts xix. 4, 5.      *d* Acts viii. 14, 15, 16, 17; xix. 6.

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” It is, indeed, a most precious and encouraging truth, that while our faith reposes on the Lord Jesus, the crucified and risen Saviour, it reaches beyond its immediate Object, and involves a calm, sustaining confidence in the Eternal Father, whose purposes of grace the Son has carried out.

Verse 2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* This verse completes the statement of the particulars included in “the foundation” laid in the case of those Hebrews who embraced the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah. The Apostle had already mentioned the two grand features of the state of mind required of all Christians,—repentance for the sins which had pervaded their unregenerate state, and a believing acceptance of the Father’s scheme of grace in Christ. Now he specifies four things in which those who were entering upon the Christian life needed to be instructed; and among them he selects two which would have a special interest for a member of the race of Israel, accustomed to the rites of the ancient economy, and who wished to understand the relation of that economy to the perfect Christian dispensation. Without entering at length into the disputes which have been raised respecting the structure of this verse, and the mutual relations of its several terms, we may affirm, in accordance with the views of the ablest expositors, that the word *διδασχῆς* “of the

of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

*e* Acts xvii. 31, 32.    *f* Acts xxiv. 25; Rom. ii. 16.

doctrine," is to be connected with each of the four particulars mentioned. The first of these relates to "baptisms;" and it should be carefully noted, that the Apostle uses the masculine plural form, βαπτισμῶν. This seems to give to his statement a very wide reference. The masculine term, βαπτισμός, is sometimes applied to washings generally, instead of being restricted, like the neuter, βάπτισμα, to baptism, as a religious ordinance. The Apostle, then, appears to have had in view a course of instruction which should explain the significance of the ablutions required under the Mosaic dispensation,—the nature and design of the baptism administered by John,—the import and obligation of Christian baptism, as the appointed mode of admission to the Church under the new economy,—and the blessed privilege of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, promised to all whose confession of Christ is connected with a simple and lively faith in Him. The next particular mentioned is "the laying on of hands." This rite was not only in use under the ancient law, but was practised on different occasions in the Christian Church. It was employed, for instance, in the solemn recognition of a person as called by the Lord Jesus to the ministry of the word, and in setting him apart to that great work; (1 Tim. iv. 14, 2 Tim. i. 6;) it was used in the designation of persons already in the ministry to some special service; (Acts xiii. 2, 3;) it was used, further, to mark out individuals as those on whose behalf special prayer was offered; (Matt. xix. 13;) and, more particularly, it was employed by the Apostles when they

3. And this will we do, *if* God permit.

*g* Acts xviii. 21 ; 1 Cor. iv. 19.

prayed for individuals "that they might receive the Holy Ghost," and that even in His miraculous gifts. (Acts viii. 15—20; xix. 5, 6.)—The last two particulars specified by the Apostle are leading articles of the Christian faith, which would be placed before every one who was introduced to the Church. The "resurrection of the dead" is the great hope of the Christian, since it stands connected with the completeness of the Saviour's victory, and the perfect glorification of His people. To the wicked, indeed, that resurrection will be one of shame and condemnation: but to all believers it will be an occasion of holy triumph, since the last vestige of corruption and decay, the last trace of the fearful consequences of sin, will then pass away from their entire nature. That resurrection will lead to "eternal judgment,"—judgment the *issues* of which shall be everlasting and unchangeable. Again and again our Lord Himself affirmed that He should be at last revealed in glory, as the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of men; and His Apostles ever gave prominence to this truth, as they went forth to announce His claims, and to set Him forth as the Refuge of the guilty, and the Lord both of the living and the dead.

Verse 3. *And this will we do, if God permit.* The resolve which the Apostle here expresses, associating himself with the believing Hebrews, has reference to that pressing onward towards maturity in the spiritual life to which he had just exhorted them. Some MSS. of very great authority have the reading *ποιήσωμεν*, "let us do:" but that followed in our Authorised Version is still more strongly supported, and is retained by the best critical

4. For <sup>k</sup>it is impossible for those <sup>i</sup>who were once  
<sup>k</sup> Matt. xii. 31, 32 ; Heb. x. 26 ; 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21 ; 1 John v. 16.  
<sup>i</sup> Heb. x. 32.

editors.—The last clause, “if God permit,” does not imply any doubt of the willingness of God to lead His people onward to higher attainments, but only marks the deep consciousness of entire dependence on God for all spiritual good which ever filled the Apostle’s mind.

Verse 4. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, etc.* To confirm the Hebrew Christians in the purpose to go forward to maturity in holy principles and spiritual knowledge, the Apostle now admonishes them of the fearful results of apostasy from Christ. His fears were awakened for them, since some had already declined in spiritual perception and feeling ; (v. 12 ;) but, on the other hand, he cherished hope that they would persevere in the Christian life, so as to attain at length the glorious prize held forth to their faith. (Verses 9—12.) But he was constrained to place solemnly before them the awful consequences of departing from Christ, after experiencing His saving grace, and to warn them of the hopeless, or all but hopeless, obduracy unto which those persons sank down who, after knowing the Saviour, wholly rejected Him, abandoned His religion, and treated Him as an impostor and blasphemer.—It would seem to be unquestionable, if this passage were regarded apart from any theological system, that the expressions used to describe the former experience of the apostates spoken of imply genuine conversion. (We can scarcely conceive what stronger phrases the Apostle could have selected to intimate the actual possession of the grace of Christ, and the enjoyment of the inward life and power of piety.)—The first particular

enlightened, and have tasted of <sup>the</sup> heavenly gift, and <sup>were</sup> made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

‡ John iv. 10; vi. 32; Eph. ii. 8.

† Gal. iii. 2, 5; Heb. ii. 4.

referred to is *spiritual illumination*, including, we conceive, not only the presentation of Divine truth to the mind, but such an embracing of that truth as brings men "out of darkness into the marvellous light" of Christ.—The precise import and application of the second phrase, "and have tasted of *the heavenly gift*," have been greatly disputed; and the different interpretations advanced by expositors are very numerous. The view of Bengel and some others seems to be the correct one,—that the expression refers to the reception of Christ, the feeding on Him, as the bread of life from heaven, by a true and living faith. This view is favoured by our Lord's address to the Jews of His own day in the synagogue at Capernaum; (John vi. :) and the use of this figurative language was especially appropriate in an address to Hebrew Christians, who would readily recall the allusion to the manna of which their fathers partook in the wilderness. We must not regard the word "tasted" as implying only a slight and transient participation of the thing spoken of: the other passages in which this figure occurs, among which ii. 9 stands prominent, clearly show that this was not the idea intended, but that the term expresses the *intimate knowledge* which is derived from *personal experience*.—The third particular, "and were made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*," naturally follows the reception of Christ by faith. For it is the established order of God, to give the Holy Spirit to all who embrace the Saviour, not only to move occasionally on their minds, but to dwell within them, to shed abroad His love in their hearts, to fill them

## 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and

with holy comfort, to consecrate them to His service, and to be to them the earnest of that inheritance to which their justification confers a title. This truth is clearly brought out in Rom. v. 1—5, Eph. i. 13, 14, and many other passages of the New Testament; and it forms one of the leading principles of the gospel. All true believers become the subjects of a new inward life derived from the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ; and thus they habitually realise vital union with Him, and are more and more assimilated to His character.

Verse 5. *And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.* The Apostle here brings forward two other particulars in the past religious experience of the apostates whose case he is describing. He had spoken of them as having been brought out of the darkness of error and sin into the light of heavenly truth,—as having appropriated Christ, as the Father's gift for man's salvation,—and as having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and now he marks, as a fourth particular, their delight in the Divine word, and their habit of dwelling on it so as to derive from it strength and comfort. There can be no question that the phrase *καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα*, "the good," or "excellent," "word of God," refers to His revealed truth,—to *His word addressed to men*, disclosing to them His purposes of grace, and enforcing the holiness by which they should be distinguished. Many of our Lord's own sayings will readily occur to the thoughtful mind, as illustrative of this sentiment. We may recall, in particular, His language, as He stood on the verge of His deepest suffering, and looked back on His intercourse with His apostles:—"I have given unto them the words (*τὰ ῥήματα*) which Thou gavest Me; and they

the powers of "the world to come,

m Heb. ii. 5.

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have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." The epithet *καλόν*, "good," "beautiful," "excellent," which the Apostle prefixes to the phrase, "the word of God," not only indicates its real character, but shows in what light it was regarded by the persons spoken of. They had a lively appreciation of its excellence, and dwelt upon it with sacred complacency.—The last particular referred to has been differently viewed by expositors. Some have understood it as implying those foretastes of heavenly glory which are sometimes afforded to the believer who walks humbly with God, and delights in meditation on His truth; but it is very doubtful whether the word *δυνάμεις*, "powers," can be held to convey this idea. The more general interpretation appears to be the correct one. The phrase, "the world to come," resembles that employed in ii. 5, and seems to refer to the Christian age as that to which the hope of men was so long directed; and "the powers of the world to come" are, as in ii. 4, the miraculous powers which marked the opening of the Christian economy. The persons, then, of whom the Apostle is speaking, had not only realised the great spiritual change which the gospel sets forth, but had witnessed, and in some cases, probably, had been endued with, those miraculous gifts by which the message of Christ was attested, and which evinced the abiding presence of the Spirit among His people. This consideration, like those previously dwelt upon, showed their awful guilt in renouncing the Lord Jesus, and going back to the services of Judaism, thus in effect declaring Him to have been an impostor. They had the most convincing outward

6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; "seeing they crucify to themselves

n Heb. x. 29.

evidence that He was indeed the Son of God, possessed of a power to control universal nature; and they had the clearest inward testimony of the reality of His grace, and the blessedness of His salvation.

Verse 6. *If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; etc.* This verse sets forth the apostasy which the Apostle had in view,—marks its distinguishing features and its overwhelming guilt,—and affirms the fearful condition of moral obduracy which it involved. It is generally allowed, that the first clause, *καὶ παραπεσόντας*, should be translated, "and have fallen away." The Apostle contemplated the apostasy in question not only as possible, but as having, in some cases, actually taken place. That apostasy was not merely a loss of the inward peace and power of piety; it included, as the words selected to describe its special guilt clearly show, an entire rejection of the Lord Jesus, a disallowing of His claims, and a consequent repudiation of Him as one of the vilest of mankind. Every one who, after having embraced the gospel, and experienced its power, turned away from it, and went back to the rites and services of Judaism, *openly proclaimed*, by his conduct, that Jesus was *not* the promised Messiah and the Son of God, and, if so, that He was an impostor and blasphemer. Thus he made the act of the chief priests and Pharisees in crucifying Him his own, and virtually repeated that act. They condemned Him as worthy of death, and induced Pilate to sentence Him even to the death of the cross, because He claimed to be the Son of God, which they regarded

the Son of God afresh, and put *Him* to an open shame.

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as blasphemy; and these apostates, in effect, 'passed the same condemnation on His character and professions. Thus they "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."—It is important to remember that the solemn declaration of the Apostle in this passage has respect to *this* case of *total* apostasy. There is nothing in it to imply that the recovery of backsliders, in the ordinary sense of that term, is impossible; and other passages of the New Testament, as Gal. vi. 1 and 2 Tim. ii. 26, prove that they who have forfeited the favour of God, and have indeed openly sinned against Him, may be again melted into penitence, and may, through renewed faith in Jesus, be restored.—And here the question arises, whether the term ἀδύνατον in verse 4 is to be understood as affirming an *absolute* impossibility. Even if it is, it must be remembered that *that* which is affirmed to be impossible is, "to renew" the persons spoken of "to repentance," to subdue them, after so entire a repudiation of Him who is the only Hope and Life of men, to a penitent submission to His sovereignty, and an earnest seeking of His grace. To the penitent backslider,—the man who feels the burden of his guilt, weeps over his ingratitude, and turns with utter self-renunciation to the Lord Jesus,—the offer of pardon is clearly made; and "the blood of Jesus" can wash out all his stains. The impossibility of bringing about repentance in the case of the persons spoken of is made to rest on the heinous character of their sin, as involving a contemptuous rejection of the Lord Jesus after the experience of His saving grace, and on the fact, also, that this rejection is not one solitary mental act, but a *continuous* state of mind, and that too *openly avowed*. This last thought is suggested by the

7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them || by whom it is dressed, °receiveth blessing from God :

|| Or, *for.*     ° Ps. lxx. 10.

*present* participles, ἀναστραποῦντας and παραδειγματίζοντας ; and we fail to apprehend their full significance unless it is borne in mind. Looking at the whole case, may we not say, with Bengel and others, that the words of the Apostle indicate a *moral impossibility* according to the general facts of human history, and even the general operations of Divine grace, without absolutely excluding hope if there should be an extraordinary interposition of Divine mercy and power ? This view seems to meet all the requirements of the Apostle's language. His mind was impressed with the utter obduracy—the total insensibility to religious influences—into which *they* must have sunk down who, after experiencing in their own souls the power of the grace of Christ, and after witnessing the outward miraculous confirmations of His claims, could so renounce Him as even openly to proclaim that He was a blasphemer and deserved to die the shameful death of the cross.

Verses 7, 8. *For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs etc.* The comparison which the Apostle institutes in these verses is designed to enforce the exhortation which he had just given. The rendering adopted by Dean Alford is more exact than that of our Authorised Version, and brings out more clearly the intended contrast:—"For land which has drunk in the rain frequently coming on it, and brings forth plants fit for those on whose account it is tilled, partakes of blessing from God ; but if it bears thorns and thistles,

8. *But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

*p. Isai. v. 6.*

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is accounted worthless, and is nigh unto cursing, of which the end is unto burning." In each of the two cases specified, the land is supposed to have been favoured with copious and fertilizing showers; but in the one it yields valuable fruit, and in the other that which is not only worthless but injurious. In employing this figure, therefore, the Apostle keeps in view the *abundant spiritual privileges* bestowed on the persons to whom he is referring: but he marks the difference of the result, according as those privileges are improved or perverted. In the former case, the showers of blessing which descend from God accomplish the gracious purposes which He has in view; and the Christian virtues which are thus strengthened and matured evince their heavenly excellence, while they contribute to the happiness of their possessors and of all who are brought within the sphere of their influence. In the latter, these showers fail of their design; and the corruption of the heart converts even spiritual privileges into means of greater condemnation. The fearful issue which awaits all those who, in spite of the highest religious advantages, renounce the Saviour, and give themselves up to error and sin, is forcibly depicted by the land, on which all the means of culture have been tried in vain, being given up to the ravages of fire. Some have understood the last clause, "whose end is unto burning," as referring to a fire that purifies and improves: but the whole connection of the passage points rather to a fire that consumes. The utter rejection of Christ must end in the ruin of the soul, and the

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

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endurance of the miseries of that world "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Bengel and some others regard these words as a prophetic intimation of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by fire; but if there is any allusion to this event, that allusion is only incidental, and the words have a far wider and more general application.

Verse 9. *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, etc.* Here the Apostle, in a strain of tender affection, affirms his confidence that the Hebrew Christians would be found faithful, and would so improve their advantages, as to rise to a state of Christian maturity and attain everlasting life. His solicitude had been awakened for them, (v. 11, 12,) and had led him to address to them the most solemn warnings; but now, as he reflected not only on their past development of love to Christ, but on its present practical manifestation, he cherished a confident hope that they would take the better course and realise eternal salvation. The phrase which we render "better things" is τὰ κρείττονα, and its proper force is, "the better things," or "the things which are better." It is manifestly used with reference to the preceding remarks. The Apostle had been pointing out two different courses, which he had illustrated by the figure just employed,—the one, in which spiritual privileges are improved, so that Christian maturity is attained, and the ripe fruit of heavenly graces adorns the character and diffuses blessing around,—the other, a course in which, notwithstanding these privileges, unholy tempers and

10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed

q Prov. xiv. 31; Matt. x. 42; xxv. 40; John xiii. 20.

r Rom. iii. 4; 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. s 1 Thess. i. 3.

noxious principles gain sway, and Christ is at length altogether renounced, so that probation issues in everlasting ruin. And now he affirms his confident persuasion,—a persuasion resting, to some extent, on the evidence which they even now gave of sincere love to Christ, (verse 10.)—that the believing Hebrews would take the *former* and *better* course, notwithstanding that he had felt it right to give them so solemn an admonition. The phrase, “things that accompany salvation” is given as the translation of the Greek, ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας. These words might have been rendered, with equal propriety, “things connected with salvation,” and they include every thing in the state of the affections, and in the outward conduct, that leads onward to the perfect salvation for which the Christian hopes. It is important to note, that the term “salvation” must here be taken in its loftiest and amplest sense, as including even eternal life. Thus the sentiment of this verse is brought into the most intimate connection with those of verses 11, 12. There is an obvious similarity between the phraseology of this verse and that of Rom. xv. 14; and both these passages evince the same habits of thought and feeling.

Verse 10. *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed etc.* This was the ground of the Apostle's confidence that the Hebrew Christians would take the better course, and realise at length the blessed consummation to which they looked forward. They had already become the subjects of a spiritual change,

toward His Name, in that ye have 'ministered to the saints, and do minister.

*t* Rom. xv. 25; 2 Cor. viii. 4; ix. 1, 12; 2 Tim. i. 18.

which had developed itself in practical obedience; their piety was even now fruitful; and as they were anxious to use aright the grace which they had received, still richer blessing would descend upon them. The sentiment with which this verse opens, "God is *not unrighteous to forget your work, etc.*," rests, we conceive, on the principle so often affirmed by our Lord, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The application of this principle, in each of its branches, involves a manifestation of the *Divine rectitude*. In imparting to those who cherish and use the grace bestowed still richer grace, and in withdrawing from those who slight it and never call it into exercise the grace which was conferred, God evinces His rectoral justice, as well as His fidelity to His declarations under the covenant of mercy. But to God alone will His saved people give all the glory of their salvation. All the good which God imparts to man, from the first movement of spiritual desire to the perfect maturity of holy affections, is *of grace*; all the good, consequently, which man evinces as he develops these holy desires and principles in action, is of grace; and thus every reward which he receives from God, both during his probationary course, and amidst the glories of the future life, is also of grace, and not of personal and independent merit.—It is important to observe, that all the oldest and best MSS. read simply, "to forget your work, and the love which ye have showed toward His Name, etc.;" and this reading is adopted in all the critical editions of the Greek

11. And we desire that "every one of you do show

\* Heb. iii. 6, 14.

Testament. The former phrase, "your work," is a general one, indicating *the whole active service of the Christian life*. From this the Apostle passes to the animating principle of Christian obedience, even *love to God*,—a thoughtful, earnest, filial love, one which regards with complacency and delight, as well as with lowly reverence, the glorious perfections of the Divine character. But this love, wherever it exists, will seek expression in *acts of service and help to the saints of God*. Love to the brethren is everywhere enjoined as the proper indication and proof of sincere love to God; and this attachment to those who are united to the Saviour and renewed by His Spirit will evince its power in ministering to their comfort and relieving their wants. Such an evidence of genuine piety the Hebrew believers had given in their past course; and still their love bore this precious fruit. It may be added, that the terms which we render "have ministered" and "do minister" are so comprehensive as to include all kinds of service and help.

Verse 11. *And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence etc.* Here again the vivid consciousness of the perils to which the spiritual life is exposed induces the Apostle to warn and stimulate the Hebrew believers. His language breathes the spirit of warm and tender affection. The first word, *ἐπιθυμοῦμεν*, means "we earnestly desire:" it marks a strong and abiding feeling. The Apostle then singles out, as it were, each individual of those whom he is addressing, and directs his exhortation to each in particular:—"that *every one of you* do show the same diligence, etc." Still further, the term "diligence" is a feeble rendering of

the same diligence \*to the full assurance of hope unto the end :

\* Col. ii. 2.

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the Greek *σπουδήν*, which implies the direction of all the energies, and that without intermission, to the attainment of the result in question.—At the first view, the meaning of the Apostle seems to be that given by Chrysostom and the Greek expositors generally, that the Hebrew Christians \* should continue to exert themselves diligently in a course of holy service, that they might thus attain the fulness of heavenly hope. But on a closer examination of the terms of the passage, and the general course of the Apostle's reasoning, the interpretation adopted by nearly all modern expositors of eminence, including Bengel, Ebrard, Bleek, Delitzsch, Alford, and Lindsay, will appear, we think, to be the correct one. These commentators regard the Apostle as exhorting the Hebrew Christians to manifest the same earnestness in maintaining the great principle of personal faith in Jesus, and in the promises of God through Him, so as to attain "the full assurance of hope," which they had already evinced in developing the principle of love. In illustration of this view, Dr. Lindsay remarks, "They had been exemplary in one respect, which is cheerfully acknowledged as an encouraging circumstance, but their confidence in the great hopes and promises of the gospel had suffered decline; and however steadfast some of them might still be in their attachment to Jesus, and in their expectation of His return, there were not a few of them who were wavering, and disposed to question whether it might not be better for them to fall back to the old religion. The precise point where their Christian character threatened to fail was in respect of the confidence to be placed in the

12. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience <sup>y</sup>inherit the promises.

*y* Heb. x. 36.

promises of Christ, however long hope might be deferred; and accordingly we find, in various parts of the Epistle, admonitions to hold fast their hope and trust."—The phrase, "the full assurance of hope," is very expressive. While it implies a firm, unwavering confidence in the promises of future blessedness and glory through Christ, it implies also a joyous expectation of realising that glory, and a rich foretaste of it. Such a fulness of hope often pervades the mind of the believer, as his experience of the grace of Christ is deepened, and as he draws near to "the end" of his probationary state. Compare Rom. v. 2—5.

Verse 12. *That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith etc.* To enforce the exhortation just addressed to the believing Hebrews, the Apostle here alludes to a danger which arises from the very constitution of our nature, and which can only be avoided by sustained effort and waiting upon God,—the danger of sinking down into a state of spiritual languor and sloth. That danger, however, he reminds them, might, in their case, as in the case of those who have already entered into rest, be warded off; and he encourages them to contemplate the saints who now realise the blessings for which they so long hoped, and to tread in the steps of their faith and constancy.—Dean Alford contends that the words τῶν κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας must be understood in the sense of "those who are inheritors of the promises," and that they refer to those who, in all times, and under all circumstances, are heirs of the promises of God. But the whole course of the Apostle's reasoning points rather to those who now inherit the

## 13. For when God made promise to Abraham,

fulness of blessing assured to them in the Divine promises, —those who have already entered heaven, and are safe for eternity. No argument is needed to show that the words admit of such an application; and its correctness is placed beyond a doubt by the illustration which the Apostle immediately brings forward. He takes the case of Abraham, as affording one of the most illustrious examples of faith and holy endurance; and after citing, in part, the promise made to him, and adverting to the solemn oath of God by which it was confirmed, he adds, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Thus he himself shows us, that in the words now before us he refers not to the possession of promises hereafter to be fulfilled, but to the actual enjoyment, in virtue of our heirship, of the blessings held forth to us in these promises. This is the view taken by Delitzsch and most expositors of eminence. The hope of the people of God is directed to the attainment of *eternal life*. In that bright world which the Incarnate Son has opened to us, the spiritual life which is here diffused through our souls will develop itself in all its perfection, amidst scenes and associations congenial to it; and that life, too, will be secure from danger and all possibility of decline. But, to realise this glory, we must maintain unto the end a lively and active faith, and we must manifest "endurance," *μακροθυμία*, putting forth untiring efforts to do the will of God, and evincing an un murmuring submission to the dispensations of His providence.

Verse 13. *For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, etc.* The occasion here referred to was that ever-memorable one recorded in Gen. xxii., when Abraham evinced his faith in the Divine

because He could swear by no greater, "He sware by Himself,

14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and

z Gen. xxii. 16, 17; Ps. cv. 9; Luke i. 73.

fidelity and power, as well as his submission to the Divine authority, by complying with the command to offer up Isaac the son of promise. The faith which he thus manifested was signally honoured by God; and as the typical scene closed, with its rich instruction to the spiritual mind of the patriarch,—now doubtless under a special Divine illumination,—the great promise was renewed to him, with the additional solemnity of an oath, "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." The Apostle here suggests the thought on which he expatiates in verses 16—18, that the Most High designedly invested the promise with the greatest possible solemnity, to convey the most indubitable assurance of His unchangeable purpose to fulfil it, both to Abraham himself and to his spiritual seed.

Verse 14. *Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying etc.* The promise is here abbreviated, because it was not the Apostle's intention to discuss fully all that it implied, but rather to concentrate the attention of his readers on its essential features, and on the spiritual history of Abraham in whose case it was eminently fulfilled. It is important to bear in mind that the promise comprehended *spiritual and everlasting blessing to Abraham himself.* This

multiplying I will multiply thee.

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we regard as the chief import of the first words which the Apostle cites, "Surely blessing I will bless thee." When the age and circumstances of Abraham are taken into consideration, it will be seen that to restrict these words to temporal prosperity during the years of comparative feebleness that remained to him on earth, would be to reduce them almost to insignificance: but when they are understood as including the blessing which descends from God upon the spirit of man, meeting its deepest wants, satisfying its loftiest aspirations, and reaching into eternity itself, they are eminently worthy both of the occasion itself, and of the peculiar solemnity with which the promise was confirmed. This exposition, too, accords with the concluding portion of the promise, which extends the assurance of blessing through the seed of Abraham, to all the nations of the earth. The comments on this part of the promise, found in various passages of the New Testament, clearly show that it pointed to spiritual and eternal blessing,—that it contained, indeed, the assurance of gratuitous justification and everlasting life to all who should embrace the promised Deliverer. We may refer, in particular, to Gal. iii. 8, 9, the concluding remark of which proves that St. Paul regarded the blessing promised to Abraham himself, like that promised to mankind through his Seed, as including spiritual good:—"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith *are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" It is only by a distinct recognition of this truth that we can trace the connection of the Apostle's argument, and apprehend its force.

15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16. For men verily swear by the greater: and "an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

*a* Exod. xxii. 11.

Verse 15. *And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.* This verse evidently points back to verse 12, the note on which the reader is requested to consult. It marks out Abraham as having himself attained the blessing assured to him, through steadfast perseverance in faith and obedience. When his probationary course ended, he entered upon eternal life, he realised the deep and full import of the words, "Surely blessing I will bless thee." And as he passed away from earth, he left behind him Isaac, in whose line he was assured the Messiah should appear, while His descendants should become a numerous and powerful nation.

Verse 16. *For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* Here the Apostle begins to reason on the solemn confirmation of the promise given to Abraham by the *oath* of God. In allusion to his remark in verse 13, he refers to the fact, that among men an oath is an appeal to One greater than themselves,—even to Him who rules over universal nature, and whose exclusive prerogative it is to search the heart. He adverts, also, to the consideration, that an oath, solemnly administered and deliberately taken, is, in ordinary cases, accepted as a sufficient confirmation of a statement, and closes the discussion which might have gone before as to its truth and certainty. The term ἀντιλογίας might, perhaps, have been more accurately rendered "gainsaying" than "strife;" and the order of the words in the original

## 17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to

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seems to require the translation, "And an oath is to them an end of all gainsaying for confirmation." But the idea thus conveyed is the same as that given in our Authorised Version, though it is more vividly brought out. Calvin and others have properly remarked on this verse, that the Apostle evidently contemplated the thoughtful and solemn use of an oath, on grave and momentous occasions, as legitimate under the Christian economy.

Verse 17. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise etc.* In this and the following verse the Apostle applies his remark respecting the bearing and effect of an oath among men to that solemn oath with which God, on the great typical occasion referred to, confirmed the promise of blessing to Abraham and his spiritual seed. The views which he brings out are most animating and consolatory. He teaches us that God graciously purposed to give to every humble spirit that casts itself upon His promise in Christ, the most indubitable and overwhelming assurance, that it is His fixed and settled counsel to bless it with spiritual and eternal life. He was "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel." Almost every term in this clause is of deep significance. The first word *βουλόμενος*, which we render "willing," conveys the idea of a *purpose deliberately formed*; while the term *περισσότερον*, taken in connection with those that follow, implies that God designed to accumulate *beyond the demands of necessity—beyond what might have reasonably sufficed*—the assurance of His immutable counsel to bless men in Christ. But the phrase which specially claims our attention, and which, indeed,

show unto <sup>b</sup>the heirs of promise <sup>c</sup>the immutability of His counsel, \*confirmed *it* by an oath :

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xi. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. xi. 29. \* Gr. *interposed Himself by an oath.*

forms the key to the true exposition of the whole passage, opening to us its beautiful combinations of thought, is "the heirs of promise," or rather, "the heirs of *the* promise," τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. It is the promise of blessing—spiritual and eternal blessing—made to Abraham on this solemn occasion, to which the Apostle refers in this phrase; and he represents that promise as descending, as an inheritance, to all who should tread in the steps of his faith, and especially to those who should fly to the Messiah when actually revealed as their Hope and Refuge. For Abraham had already been constituted "the father of many nations;" and to the mind of God, when He uttered this declaration, there were present successive generations of believers who should arise in future ages, to share his privileges. All these, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, are the spiritual seed of Abraham; and the promise of abundant and eternal blessing becomes their inheritance, while the solemn confirmation of that promise by the oath of God assures them of its unchangeable certainty. This is the grand conception which the expression now under review suggests; and it is in beautiful accordance with the reasonings of St. Paul in Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. The concluding verse of the latter chapter is very clear and decisive:—"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Nor should we pass over the remarkable phrase, "the immutability of *His* counsel." It brings before us the scheme of redemption,

18. That by two immutable things, in which *it was impossible* for God to lie, we might have a strong

and the constitution of grace established through it, as *the development of the deliberate purpose of God*; and shows us that the heart of the Eternal Father is set on blessing and saving all who fly to the appointed Refuge. It is not on His part a reluctant act to admit the penitent believer to His favour, and to confer on him eternal life. It is only the carrying out of His gracious purpose, formed from eternity, and now unfolded in the economy of redemption.

Now the assertion of the Apostle is, that to assure us, beyond the possibility of doubt, of the immutability of this gracious purpose of His, God "interposed with an oath," *ἔμεστένωσεν ὄρκον*. It is difficult to bring out the precise import of this last expression. It contains an allusion to the fact that, in the case of an oath among men, the adorable Being sworn by is appealed to as a middle party. But inasmuch as God could not swear by any one greater than Himself, He made Himself, so to speak, the middle party by this very oath; or, to vary the mode of presenting the thought, He placed His own oath as a middle thing between Himself and "the heirs of the promise," that, as they turn in penitence and faith to the Crucified One, they might appeal to this oath as binding the Eternal Jehovah to carry out His counsel of grace. In all this, the Apostle intimates, the Most High proceeded beyond the demands of necessity: but He did so in condescension to our weakness, and to call forth and sustain, on our part, a firm and unfailling faith.

Verse 18. *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, etc.* There can be no question, surely, that the "two immutable things" here spoken of

consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope "set before us :

d Heb. xii. 1.

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are the *promise* and the *oath* of God. Some, indeed, have regarded the Apostle as having in view the oath of God to Abraham on the occasion now under consideration, and the oath with which the Messiah was constituted "a Priest after the order of Melchisedek." But he is here reasoning upon the former case exclusively, and pointing out the bearing of the solemn confirmation of the promise made to Abraham by the oath of God on our consolation and encouragement as Christians. He reminds us, then, that the promise of the Eternal Jehovah is itself a sufficient warrant of our faith. To His engagements of love and mercy He cannot be unfaithful; and we may turn to His word, and cast ourselves, with all our interests and hopes, upon it. But to His immutable promise He has added His immutable oath, and thus He has provided "more abundantly," that all who fly to the Saviour should enjoy "strong consolation,"—consolation that shall not give way when assailed by temptation, or even in the prospect of eternity. The designation of true Christians which is here adopted, "we who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," is rich in instruction. It conveys an allusion, probably, to the flight of a manslayer to one of the cities of refuge provided under the Jewish constitution; and it implies, on the part of the persons spoken of, a consciousness of danger, while it marks the character of saving faith as an active, earnest principle. Different views have been entertained of the precise import and application of the phrase, "the hope set before us." Some have taken it subjectively, as referring to the

19. Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ;

e Lev. xvi. 15 ; Heb. ix. 7.

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principle of hope in the human breast; others have regarded it objectively, and have explained it of the promises to which our hope clings; while others have viewed it as involving a blending of the two things,—the principle of hope itself, and the objects of which it takes hold. To us it appears unquestionable, that the phrase must be understood objectively, since believers are spoken of as "*laying hold of the hope set before*" them; and we have no hesitation in referring the phrase to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself *the Hope of man*, and *in union with whom* we become entitled to all the glorious privileges and blessings for which we look in the future life. Such an exposition is certainly in accordance with the habits of thought cherished by St. Paul; and we may refer, in particular, to the opening of his First Epistle to Timothy, where he says emphatically, "the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *our Hope*." In the passage now under consideration, he reminds us that the Lord Jesus is "set before us" by the Eternal Father, in accordance with His "counsel" already spoken of, as the one, the unfailing, Refuge of the sinner. To Him we cannot fly in vain. As our faith grasps the Saviour, we have the security of the most solemn engagements of the Most High that we are safe in Him, and may well cherish the joyous hope of eternal life.

Verse 19. *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, etc.* It is clear that the relative "which," in the commencement of this verse, refers to the phrase, "the hope set before us," at the close of the preced-

20. *f* Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, *g* made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.

*f* Heb. iv. 14; viii. 1; ix. 24.      *g* Heb. iii. 1; v. 6, 10; vii. 17.

ing one. That phrase we have seen reason to understand of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is set forth by the counsel of the Eternal Father as the Refuge to which we may fly, and in union with whom the assurance of eternal life becomes ours. The sentiment which the Apostle now advances is, that Christ, thus apprehended by a living faith, and with the hope of realising the fulness of blessing promised through Him, sustains the soul in all the conflicts and trials of life, and in the immediate prospect of the last great change. Whatever storms may beat around, the soul that reposes on the Lord Jesus, and looks forward to an eternal union with Him in heaven, is safe.—In the last clause, the relative “which” is not in the original, but the participle *εισερχομένην*, “entering,” is used. The literal translation, therefore, is, “Which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil.” Our faith and hope are directed to One whom now we see not, but of whom we are assured, that He has gone, as our Forerunner and as the High Priest of our profession, into the heavenly sanctuary. He who is “our Hope” (1 Tim. i. 1,) is now in the immediate presence of the Father; and amidst the tossings of this probationary life, and the fierce tempests that sometimes burst upon us, our souls are kept in safety because they are held by an anchor that is itself firmly fixed in the holiest place.

Verse 20. *Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Mel-*

*chisedek.* Here the Apostle, dropping the figure of an anchor, speaks in plain terms of the Lord Jesus as having "for us" entered into the true holy of holies, in the glorious characters to which we have just adverted. As the Redeemer whose atonement is complete and accepted, He has ascended on high, and is now glorified and exalted: but His state of exaltation, while it is one of reward to Himself, is also one of blessing to His people. This is a sentiment on which St. Paul has dwelt with deep interest in Rom. v. 9, 10, viii. 34.—Each of the two characters here referred to has a favourable bearing on the interests and hopes of His people. He is our "Fore-runner." He has gone before us, leading the way to the Father's presence, and opening that way to us, that we might share His triumph and be for ever with Him. And He is our High Priest,—appearing for us in the heavenly sanctuary,—presenting on our behalf His own all-availing sacrifice,—making intercession for us according to our varying circumstances and wants,—and bestowing upon us His own effectual blessing. His priesthood, too, is one that will never pass over to any other. It abides in His own glorious Person; and He will exercise its functions until the economy of grace is wound up, and all His people are gathered around Him in the abodes of light and joy.—Thus was the Apostle brought back to the theme from which he had digressed at v. 11,—the priesthood of our Lord as being after the order of Melchisedek; and this theme he proceeds to unfold in all its fulness of truth, and all its encouragements to a simple and unwavering faith in Him.

## CHAPTER VII.

1. For this "Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of  
*a* Gen. xiv. 18, etc.
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## CHAPTER VII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE Apostle now proceeds to unfold the surpassing excellence of the priesthood of our Lord, as implied in the prophetic announcement that He should be a Priest "after the order of Melchisedek." He recalls the several particulars given in the Book of Genesis respecting that remarkable man, and shows how every thing affecting him and his relation to the patriarch Abraham was purposely arranged by Divine Providence to constitute him the type of One in whose Person royalty should be combined with the priestly office, while His reign should be at once righteous and pacific,—of One, too, whose priesthood should abide in His own Person, and never pass over to any other,—and of One whose priesthood should be higher and more effectual in blessing than the Levitical priesthood.

From the development of this obscure but profoundly interesting theme, the Apostle passes to the position, that the very fact that the Messiah was to be a Priest after the order of Melchisedek implied a fundamental change in the system of priesthood, and implied, consequently, the setting aside of the whole Mosaic ritual. To illustrate and confirm this position, he dwells on four particulars. First, he adverts to the fact, that our Lord was of the tribe of Judah, while the priesthood of the former economy was

the Most High God, who met Abraham returning

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expressly limited to the tribe of Levi. Secondly, he affirms that the priesthood of our Lord essentially differs from that of the Aaronic priests, since instead of being constituted according to an outward law, and exercised amidst the material symbols of spiritual things, it is marked by the power of an unfailing and imperishable life. Thirdly, he recalls the fact, that the Lord Jesus was constituted a Priest by the solemn and irrevocable oath of the Eternal Father,—a fact which, of itself, evinced the vast superiority of His priesthood to that of the order of Aaron. And, fourthly, he dwells on the truth, that the priesthood of our Lord, instead of passing over to any other, abides continually in His own sacred Person, so that from age to age He can bestow a perfect salvation on all who come to the Father by Him.

Having thus established the general position, that the ancient system of priesthood is now done away, and with it the whole Mosaic ritual, the Apostle dwells with manifest exultation on the greatness and excellence of Him to whom we have to look up as our High Priest. His character, he reminds us, was pure and spotless, and adorned with every excellence; while His mediatorial exaltation shows us that He is indeed a perfect Saviour. Unlike the priests of the order of Aaron, who needed daily to offer up sacrifices for their own sins as well as for those of the people, He offered up Himself once for all as the true and perfect propitiation for human guilt; and now He lives and reigns as the Redeemer whose work is complete, and whose sacrifice is effectual. The high priests of Israel were compassed with infirmity and liable to fall: but He is THE SON, a partaker, indeed, of our humanity, and even in His exalted state able to sympathise with our

from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him ;

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weakness, but possessed of a holiness which no change can impair, and the glory of which can never be obscured.

Verse 1. *For this Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, etc.* The particulars adduced in this and the following verses are taken from the brief narrative in Gen. xiv. 18—20, the only passage in the ancient Scriptures in which the position and history of Melchisedek are mentioned. The remarkable statements of the Apostle respecting him in this chapter have led many, in different ages, to indulge in fanciful speculations as to his person,—some maintaining that he was a superhuman being, and some even contending that he was the Holy Spirit, or the Son of God Himself. But it seems unquestionable that in the Book of Genesis Melchisedek appears before us simply as *a man*, though invested with a peculiar dignity and sacredness, and raised by the priesthood which he had received from God above even the patriarch Abraham. This view, also, is in accordance with the reasonings of the Apostle in this chapter ; in which he shows us how every thing that is recorded respecting him is significant and instructive, while the absence of other particulars which we might have wished to know is significant and instructive too ; and in which he proves that all things conspired to render His priesthood an impressive type of that of the Incarnate Son of God.—Melchisedek lived at a time when the land of Canaan was ruled by a number of petty kings, who frequently engaged in sanguinary conflicts with each other. He was the king of *Salem*. The general opinion is, that this was Jerusalem,—the city afterwards chosen to be the seat of the theocracy ; nor are we prepared to relinquish this opinion in favour of that which some modern

critics have embraced, and to which even Dean Alford seems disposed to accede,—that the place in question was the Salim near to Ænon mentioned in John iii. 23. The argument of the Apostle is not affected by this question; but the typical significance of the history of Melchisedek is more complete if the place where he reigned was that which God selected as the place of His temple, and which included the hill of Zion, the type of the Church of God, over which our glorious Priest-King now reigns. Dr. Delitzsch strongly maintains the correctness of the ancient and more general opinion.—Melchisedek was also the “priest of the Most High God,”—not only a devout believer in Jehovah, and accustomed to observe all the rites and duties of the patriarchal religion, but specially invested, by Divine appointment, with the priestly character. His whole administration, we have reason to believe, was influenced by this fact. He was looked up to by the people and chiefs around him, as one to whom military enterprises and conflicts were alien, and whose special function it was, to draw near unto God on behalf of his people, to present sacrifices for their sins, and to invoke blessings upon them. The incident which has brought him on the page of the sacred history stands connected with the history of Abraham. That eminent patriarch had gone forth to rescue his nephew Lot, who had been taken captive by the confederate kings; and, by the blessing of God upon his valour and that of his attendants, he had succeeded in his purpose. When he was returning from the defeat of the kings, Melchisedek came forth to meet him with bread and wine, and solemnly blessed him in the name of Jehovah. The significance of this act the Apostle points out in some of the subsequent verses.—It may be added, that the word *κοπής*, which the Apostle uses, is more accurately rendered “defeat” than “slaughter.”

2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteous-

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Verse 2. *To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all.* This circumstance completes the facts on which the Apostle is about to comment. Not only did Melchisedek solemnly bless the distinguished patriarch to whom God had given the promise that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed; but Abraham received that priestly benediction with gratitude, and in acknowledgment of the character of Melchisedek, as "the priest of the Most High God," he gave him tithes of the recovered goods. Thus did he emphatically mark his own sense of sacredness and dignity of the office with which Melchisedek was invested, and confess that he looked up to him as having more intimate access to God than that which he himself enjoyed.

*First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.* In these words the Apostle points out the typical significance of the very name "Melchisedek," and of the circumstance that the place over which this distinguished man reigned was designated "Salem," or "City of Peace." It was a remarkable fact, specially ordered by Divine wisdom, that he who was to stand as the type of the priesthood of the Redeemer, should be named "King of righteousness;" and there is reason to think, that this designation expressed the real character of Melchisedek,—that all his regal acts, his whole administration of the affairs of his city, were marked by a sacred regard to that which is just and right. It was equally remarkable, that this city should bear the name of "Peace," or "City of Peace." Dr. Ebrard has properly observed, that the tribe of people who built

ness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace ;

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Salem must have been really a peaceable tribe: for otherwise they would not have selected such a name for their city. And still that people seems to have sustained the same character. Amidst the sanguinary conflicts of the neighbouring tribes, Salem enjoyed quiet and repose. Melchisedek, the holy priest-king, reigned as a *pacific* sovereign: no deeds of violence or blood stained his rule; but while strife and war prevailed around, he exercised his sacred functions as the priestly representative of his people, and sought in every way to promote their highest interests. In all this he was a beautiful type of our blessed Lord. In the Person of the Redeemer sovereignty is combined with priesthood; and He is, emphatically, the King of righteousness and the King of peace. All the acts of His administration are distinguished by perfect rectitude; and the whole course of His government is directed to the upholding of the interests of righteousness and truth. To His people, who gratefully own His sway, and who are gathered around Him, as it were, in His holy "Salem," His city of "Peace," He imparts *peace* in all its fulness. Placing them in a state of acceptance with the Father, and bestowing upon them a new inward life, He diffuses through their souls a sacred tranquillity, and makes them, indeed, partakers of His own heavenly peace. He imparts to them also a pacific spirit, enabling them to reflect His own gentleness and meekness, and causing them to shrink back with abhorrence from violence and wrong. For our glorious Priest-King has no sympathy with worldly ambition, and leads not onward His people to any enterprises of worldly glory and dominion. His government is

3. Without father, without mother, \*without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end

\* Gr. *without pedigree.*

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directed to spiritual results; and, while every agency throughout the universe is subjected to His control, and the whole course of events is made subservient to His ultimate and everlasting triumph, He calls upon His people to advance His cause only by spiritual weapons, and the manifestation of the unearthly graces which His Spirit infuses into their hearts.

Verse 3. *Without father, without mother, . . . having neither beginning of days, etc.* It is chiefly on the ground of these expressions that some, both in ancient and modern times, have contended that Melchisedek was a superhuman being. But strong as these expressions are, they all admit, we believe, of a satisfactory explanation without having recourse to such a supposition. No violence is done to the Apostle's language by regarding the phrases, "without father," "without mother," as indicating one whose parents are wholly unknown; since they occur in several ancient authors with this meaning, and since this interpretation is sanctioned by the term that follows, "without genealogical record." In the same manner we are shut up to regard the clause, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life," in a qualified and figurative sense; for if taken literally and absolutely, it would imply that Melchisedek existed from eternity, and was therefore God. The object of the Apostle was to show that, as far as a mortal man could be made a type of One whose being knew no commencement and will know no end, and whose priesthood abides in His own person, Melchisedek was such a type. He calls attention, therefore, to the fact, that

of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.

4. Now consider how great this man was, <sup>b</sup>unto

*b* Gen. xiv. 20.

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Melchisedek was *not one of a race of priests*, receiving his office in virtue of his descent from sacerdotal ancestors, and in his turn transmitting that office to his descendants, but that he stood *alone*, the *one* priest of his own order. It was specially arranged by Divine Providence, that no record of his lineage should exist, and that no one of his race before him or after him should stand as a priest-king. In this respect the priesthood of Melchisedek formed a striking contrast to that of the order of Aaron. It was essential for the Levitical priests to be able to trace, by genealogical records, their descent from Aaron; and it was in virtue of that descent that they were solemnly set apart to the sacerdotal office. So, too, when they, in their turn, passed away from earth, they left the priesthood to their sons. With Melchisedek all was different. His father and mother were unknown; he was "without genealogy;" his birth and death were not recorded; no entrance upon his priesthood was marked; and no transmission of that priesthood to any other took place. Thus all the circumstances of his history were such as to assimilate him, as far as any mortal man could be assimilated, to the Son of God, and to make his priesthood a type of that which should abide continually in the Redeemer's Person.

Verse 4. *Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.* Here the Apostle seeks to rivet the attention of his readers on one of the incidents which he had mentioned, and to

whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

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point out its bearing on the *personal* and *official dignity* of Melchisedek. To him even the patriarch Abraham, the head of the chosen race, offered tithes selected from the very best of the spoils,—for this idea is conveyed by the word *ἀποθίβια*,—in acknowledgment of his higher position, and of the sacredness of his priestly office. The interview between Abraham and Melchisedek took place, indeed, before that memorable occasion when the faith of the former was re-assured, and it was declared of him, that “he believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,” and many years before the rite of circumcision, separating him and his descendants from the mass of mankind, was instituted: but he had already been marked out as the object of special Divine regard,—he had obeyed the call to leave his country and his kindred, and to go forth as a wanderer,—and the promise had been given to him by Jehovah, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. xii. 2, 3.) Nothing, then, could more impressively evince the dignity of Melchisedek, and the lofty position which he held as “the priest of the Most High God,” than that *Abraham* should offer him tithes. In one sense, this eminent patriarch may be regarded as the representative, at that time, of the Church of God; for in the Divine counsel he was marked out as the person in whose race the visible Church should be developed, and through whom blessings should flow to all the nations of the earth.

5. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham :

c Numb. xviii. 21, 26.

Verses 5, 6. *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, etc.* A difficulty has by some been considered to exist in the fact, that the Apostle speaks of the priests, who formed only one branch of the sons of Levi, receiving tithes, whereas the whole body of the Levites received tithes of the people, and then paid a tithe of them to the priests. But this difficulty disappears when it is remembered, that it was no part of the Apostle's plan to explain the precise arrangements of the Levitical system; but that, fixing upon the general fact, that the Levitical priests received tithes, he draws a contrast between this and the receiving of tithes by Melchisedek on the occasion in question. The Levitical priests received tithes in virtue of a claim given to them by the law; and they had them from their brethren of the race of Israel. In many respects they and those from whom they received tithes stood upon the same ground: they were equally the descendants of Abraham, were comprehended, as such, in the visible Church, and shared in the promises given to him and his seed, if only they were careful to walk in the footsteps of his faith. Thus, although the very fact that they received tithes implied a superiority of *office*, they were, in many respects, the equals of those on whose behalf they exercised their priestly functions. But Melchisedek, who stood in no relation to the line of priests that should arise from Abraham, but

6. But he whose ||descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, <sup>d</sup>and blessed ¶him that had the promises.

7. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

|| Or, *pedigree.*     <sup>d</sup> Gen. xiv. 19.  
                           <sup>e</sup> Rom. iv. 13; Gal. iii. 16.

whose priesthood centred in his own person, received tithes from Abraham himself, the head of the race that should thus be distinguished by special interventions of Divine mercy, and special communications of Divine blessing. Nor was this all. "He blessed him that had the promises." Eminent as Abraham was, since God had designated him to be the father of His covenant-people, and had given to him the promises of blessing with which the hopes of the world were bound up, even *he* received blessing from Melchisedeck, as one yet higher in position than himself. All this shows how glorious was the priestly office as sustained by Melchisedek; and how the Most High arranged every circumstance to make it the fitting type of the priesthood of Him from whom the whole Church of God receives continual and abundant blessing.

Verse 7. *And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.* Here the Apostle calls attention to a general principle which must be universally admitted,—that he who solemnly blesses another in the name of Jehovah does, in that very act, stand higher than he who receives blessing. The "blessing" intended is, clearly, not the mere utterance of a wish for the happiness of another, dictated by a feeling of kindness, since an inferior might very properly give utterance to such a wish,—but a solemn invocation of blessing from God, and the declara-

## 8. And here men that die receive tithes ; but there

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tion that such blessing shall be given, though the full experience of the benefits set forth may be, to some extent, conditional. Dr. W. Lindsay has properly remarked on the blessing of Abraham by Melchisedek, "It does not simply mean that the priest congratulated the patriarch on the success of his expedition, but that he also pronounced a real blessing upon him, which the God whom he served would not allow to fall to the ground. When the patriarchs blessed their children, it was as prophets they spoke, whose tongues were guided by the Spirit of God; and the same doubtless was the case in the present instance." The inference to be deduced from this principle is not stated by the Apostle; but it immediately suggests itself to every mind. In the transaction which passed between Abraham and Melchisedek, the latter assumed the higher position; and the father of the faithful, by receiving blessing at the hands of the honoured priest-king, acknowledged his own inferiority.

Verse 8. *And here men that die receive tithes ; but there etc.* Another consideration is here brought forward to show the contrast between the Levitical priesthood and that of Melchisedek. The former was sustained by men who passed away in the ordinary course of nature, and left their office to others; the latter continued in the person of one man, the commencement and cessation of whose priestly office are nowhere recorded, and who stands before us, in the Divine arrangements, as the type of One whose priesthood should be continuous and everlasting. It seems necessary to understand the last declaration, "*that he liveth,*" in the same sense as the statement in verse 3, "having neither beginning of days,

he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

f Heb. v. 6 ; vi. 20.

nor end of life." The Apostle could not mean to affirm that even then, under the Christian economy, Melchisedek stood invested with the priestly office; since he speaks of that office as now the exclusive possession of HIM of whom Melchisedek was a type. In the statement, "of whom *it is testified that he liveth*," there is probably an allusion to Psalm cx. 4, in which *perpetuity* is set forth as one great characteristic of the priesthood after the order of Melchisedek, as distinguished from that of the order of Aaron. The whole subject has been treated in a very lucid manner by Dr. W. Lindsay: "The clause before us," he remarks, "must be interpreted on the same principle as the third verse; and they are both grounded upon the fact, that it is only as a living person that Melchisedek is exhibited upon the canvas of inspiration. Not a syllable is breathed of his death, or of the cessation of his priesthood; and God's purpose in this studied silence of the record was, that, appearing and known only as a living priest, he might be a type of Him who is literally a priest for ever, and ever liveth to make intercession. The eternity of Christ's priesthood could not, in the nature of things, be typified by another priesthood literally eternal too; and therefore it was necessary, if it was to be typified at all, that some kind of similitude to it should be contrived. Such a similitude we find in the priesthood of Melchisedek. He was made like to the Son of God. His life, his office, purposely exhibited without recorded commencement or recorded close, furnish a suitable prefiguration of the eternal duration of the

9. And, as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

10. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedek met him.

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Messiah. Aaron is known to us as a man throwing off his pontifical robes, resigning them to a successor, and preparing to die; but Melchisedek is never presented in such an attitude. He appears only as a living man and a living priest; and the purpose is, that he might prefigure the enduring priesthood of Christ."

Verses 9, 10. *And, as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham; etc.* In these verses the Apostle still further develops the significance of that remarkable transaction on which he was commenting; and affirms that it involved *an acknowledgment of the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood to the Melchisedecian.* He founds this upon the consideration, that the act of Abraham in giving tithes to Melchisedek affected not himself only, but those also who afterwards descended from him. His words do not imply, that Levi was actually a party to this act of Abraham; but he teaches us that the relation of inferiority in which Abraham acknowledged himself to stand to Melchisedek, by receiving blessing from him and paying him a tithe of the spoils, held good also with respect to his descendants not yet begotten. This is a principle which, as Dr. Ebrard has shown, is recognised in human affairs generally. If a man is invested with the freedom of a city, this does not affect his children already grown up, and who stand, so to speak, as independent men, but it does affect the children whom he may afterwards beget. The *relation* in which he is now placed *descends* to them. So, too, if the prince of any

11. *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest*

*g Gal. ii. 21 ; Heb. vii. 18, 19 ; viii. 7.*

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state or city acknowledges himself a vassal of some mightier sovereign, this act of his binds his children whom he may afterwards beget. This, then, is the argument of the Apostle. At the time when Melchisedek met Abraham and blessed him, and when Abraham gave him the tenth of the spoils, Isaac (and of course Jacob and Levi) was not yet begotten; and hence this significant act of Abraham placed them, as well as himself, in a relation of acknowledged inferiority to this honoured priest-king. Thus, therefore, the Levitical priesthood, from the very first, was set forth as inferior to that of Melchisedek, after whose order our blessed Lord is constituted a Priest for ever.

Verse 11. *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need etc.* The Apostle had now unfolded the several particulars in which Melchisedek was a type of the great High Priest of the Christian economy, and had pointed out the deep significance of that one event in his history which had been placed on record. He now proceeds to argue, that the very arrangement that, in the fulness of time, a Priest should arise after the order of Melchisedek implied that the priesthood of the order of Aaron was imperfect and insufficient,—that that priesthood would consequently be set aside,—and that the whole system of the Mosaic ritual, which was bound up with it, would also be superseded. Dean Alford, in common with some other expositors, properly explains *τελείωσις*, “per-

should rise after the order of Melchisedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

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fection," as referring to the bringing of man to that high state of spiritual life and blessedness for which he is designed,—a state of salvation in which not only the sentence of death is cancelled, but the power of the Holy Ghost actually consecrates him to the Divine service, and raises him to the enjoyment of God. This, the Apostle contends, the Mosaic institutions, and, in particular, the ministrations of the priests of the order of Aaron, which formed the central and most important part of the whole system, were unable to effect: and he deduces this conclusion from the very fact, that under the new economy "a *different Priest*," after the order of Melchisedek, was "to arise,"—the allusion in this last term being probably to the growth of a branch from the stem, or the roots of a tree. The argument is clear and conclusive, that if the former order of priesthood had been sufficient,—if it could have availed to bring man to a state of salvation, and purity, and perfect moral excellence,—no reason could have existed for its being superseded. The parenthetical clause which the Apostle inserts—"for under it," or rather, "upon it," "on the basis of it," "the people hath received the law"—expresses the important sentiment, that the arrangements respecting priesthood lay at the foundation of all the Mosaic enactments.

Verse 12. *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.* Here the Apostle advances to the general position, that the Mosaic institute is now superseded, since its fundamental arrangements—

13. For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14. For *it is* evident that <sup>h</sup>our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

<sup>h</sup> Isai. xi. 1; Matt. i. 3; Luke iii. 33; Rom. i. 3; Rev. v. 5.

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those which defined the system of priestly ministration—are altogether changed. This reasoning is indisputable. If instead of a continuous succession of priests of the line of Aaron, ministering amidst the symbols of spiritual realities, there is now one ever-living Priest constituted after the order of Melchisedek, it is obvious that the former law is set aside, and that the whole system of ceremonial worship which it prescribed is done away. A higher and more spiritual economy is now introduced, bringing men nearer to God, and imparting to them the loftiest hopes.

Verses 13, 14. *For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, etc.* The positions which the Apostle had just assumed, that the Levitical system of priesthood is now annulled, and that with it the whole Mosaic institute is superseded, he proceeds to confirm by several considerations. The first is alleged in the verses now before us, that our Lord, the High Priest announced in the prophetic Scriptures, belonged to the tribe of Judah and not to that of Levi. This, of itself, involved the abrogation of the former system. The difference was essential and fundamental, since the Mosaic law so strictly limited the priesthood to the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron.

15. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedek there ariseth another Priest,

16. Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Verses 15, 16. *And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedek etc.* A second consideration is here brought forward to support the general positions to which we have referred in the preceding note. Not only did our Lord spring from Judah, which was not a priestly tribe; but His priesthood was announced beforehand as *different* from that of the priests of the order of Aaron,—that difference being indicated by its resemblance to the priesthood of Melchisedek. The more literal rendering of the former of these verses is, “And it is yet more abundantly evident, if after the similitude of Melchisedek there ariseth a *different* Priest.” The point which the Apostle has here specially in view is, that the priesthood of Melchisedek was so ordered as to form the type of an *abiding* priesthood,—a priesthood from which all decline should be shut out, and which should ever present the fulness of living energy. But that which was only imperfectly represented in the priest-king of ancient Salem, is beheld in its reality and completeness in the Person of the adorable Redeemer. His priesthood is characterised by *the power of an indissoluble and unfailling life*. The priests of the order of Aaron were such in virtue of a formal law, which, while it indicated the *line* in which the sacerdotal office should *descend*, prescribed also the *outward* and *material* types of spiritual realities among which it was to be exercised; but the priesthood of our Lord is marked by an ever-during life, which dwells in

17. For He testifieth, *Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.*

18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for *the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

† Ps. cx. 4; Heb. v. 6, 10; vi. 20.

k Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 9.

Him as its Source, and is communicated by Him to all who come unto Him for blessing. It is a priesthood which never fails,—the efficacy of which never becomes less,—and through which spiritual life is conveyed to every believing mind, life that, after developing its power amidst the exercises and conflicts of earth, shall be perfected in the realms of light and blessedness.

Verse 17. *For He testifieth, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.* In confirmation of the view just given, the Apostle now cites that passage of Psalm cx. which forms the basis of his reasonings, laying stress, as it would appear, on the words "*for ever.*" He seeks to rivet the attention of his readers on the consideration, that the grand announcement respecting the Messiah's priesthood gave prominence to the fact that it should be an *enduring* priesthood, one the efficacy of which should never be impaired, but which should be marked, as he had just said, by the power of an indissoluble and unailing life.

Verses 18, 19. *For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness etc.* Considerable difference of opinion has existed as to the correct translation of the second of these verses, and the relation of the several clauses of both of them to each other. Some adopt the marginal rendering of the second verse, according to which the Apostle is made to affirm that, while

19. For 'the law made nothing perfect, ||but the  
*l* Acts xiii. 39 ; Rom. iii. 20, 21, 28 ; viii. 3 ; Gal. ii. 16 ; Heb. ix. 9.  
 || Or, *but it was the bringing in.* Gal. iii. 24.

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the law perfected nothing, it was yet the introduction of a better hope, leading us onward to Him through whom we have access to the Father, and can enjoy His complacent smile. But the structure of the verses in the original precludes, we conceive, such a translation ; and there can be little doubt, as Delitzsch, Alford, Lindsay, and others have pointed out, that verse 18 and the second clause of verse 19 correspond to each other. The correct rendering seems to be, "For there is, indeed, a disannulling of the preceding commandment on account of its weakness and unprofitableness ; (for the law perfected nothing ;) but there is, on the other hand, the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God." The sentiments thus expressed are full of instruction, and have an important relation to the Apostle's general argument. The position which he had assumed in verse 12, and which he had supported in the intervening verses, he here again expressly affirms,—that the former enactments respecting priesthood, and indeed the whole Mosaic ritual, were now abolished. He had already characterised "the commandment" according to which the priests of the order of Aaron were constituted as "a carnal commandment ;" and now he affirms that it has been set aside, and with it the whole Mosaic system, as being "weak" and "unprofitable,"—unable to meet the wants of the human spirit, to rescue it from the thralldom of sin, to bring it into vital fellowship with God, to empower it to offer spiritual obedience to Him, and to raise it to the blessedness for which it has been designed. In the parenthetical

bringing in of <sup>m</sup>a better hope *did*; by the which <sup>n</sup>we draw nigh unto God.

20. And inasmuch as not without an oath *He was made Priest*:

21. (For those priests were made ||without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto

<sup>m</sup> Heb. vi. 18; viii. 6.

<sup>n</sup> Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12; Heb. iv. 16; x. 19.

|| Or, *without swearing of an oath.*

clause which follows, the Apostle extends his assertion beyond the particular commandment to which he had just referred,—the special injunction respecting priesthood,—to the Mosaic precepts and institutions generally. He affirms that “the law perfected nothing;”—it did not, and could not, of itself, raise man to that state of purity and actual consecration to God for which he has been formed; and, in all its arrangements, it had the character of a preparatory system. But in the place of the Mosaic ritual there has now been introduced “a better hope,”—the trust and hope of the human spirit being directed to Him in whom the types of the law are fulfilled, and in whom the Divine counsel for the sanctification and eternal life of men has been actually wrought out. Thus is the Christian economy set forth as pre-eminently rich in *spiritual blessing and consolation*, laying open to us the way of access to Jehovah’s throne, banishing all shy distrust of Him, dissipating the gloom which before rested upon the life to come, and causing us to feel that God Himself is our satisfying Portion.

Verses 20—22. *And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made Priest: etc.* These verses contain the third consideration which the Apostle adduces to show, that the

Him, °The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek :)

22. By so much ¶was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

o Ps. cx. 4.

p Heb. viii. 6 ; ix. 15 ; xii. 24.

system of priesthood established under the law has been superseded by a priesthood far higher and more effectual, and that the ancient dispensation generally has given place to a covenant of far loftier privilege and blessing. He adverts to the fact, that the Levitical priests were constituted such without any solemn oath of God ; but that the priesthood of the Messiah was introduced with such an oath, and was affirmed to be a fixed and irrevocable arrangement of the Eternal Father. Such a declaration as that found in Psalm cx. 4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek," marks, in the clearest manner, the transcendent importance of the appointment in question, and its essential relation to the whole scheme of human recovery. Had it been a subordinate arrangement, it would not have been announced with so peculiar solemnity, as the unalterable purpose of the Divine Mind. And the argument of the Apostle is, that just in proportion to the higher dignity with which the oath of the Eternal Father invests the priesthood of our Lord, is the superiority of that covenant which has been established through Him, and of which He is the Surety.—There can be little question, that the word *διαθήκη* should be rendered "covenant" in verse 22, just as it is throughout the following chapter, and in the New Testament generally. The term which is here applied to our Lord, that He is "*the Surety*" of this covenant, has given rise to much discussion ; not

23. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death :

24. But this *Man*, because He continueth ever, hath ||an unchangeable priesthood.

25. Wherefore He is able also to save them ||to the

|| Or, *which passeth not from one to another.*

|| Or, *evermore.*

that its general import is doubtful, but its precise application, and the limits within which the idea suggested is to be held, have been disputed. It seems clear, that the Apostle is referring to our Lord as now exercising His priestly office in the heavenly sanctuary, and that the suretiship referred to extends to the whole course of His priestly ministration. *In Him the covenant is secure.* His perfect mediatorial righteousness and completed sacrifice avail for all who embrace Him and thus come into the covenant of grace. Through Him, unworthy as we are in ourselves, we are accepted of the Father, and are assured that all the blessings of a covenant relation to God are ours. And His priestly ministration, founded on the solemn and irrevocable oath of the Father, makes it certain that these blessings shall be actually conveyed to us, meeting all the wants of our spirits as they arise, and introducing us at length to the world of perfect purity and cloudless joy.

Verses 23, 24. *And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death : but this Man, etc.* Here the Apostle brings forward a fourth consideration, to show the contrast between the Levitical priesthood and that of our blessed Lord, and to show also that the ancient law was set aside to introduce a higher and better state of things. The priests of the order of

uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth <sup>g</sup>to make intercession for them.

*g* Rom. viii. 34 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5 ; Heb. ix. 24 ; 1 John ii. 1.

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Aaron were necessarily many, since they succumbed successively to the law of mortality ; but the Lord Jesus *ever lives*, and is thus invested with a priesthood that never passes over to any other. The sacred oracle which the Apostle had just cited laid stress on the *perpetuity* of the Messiah's priesthood, and implied that, in all its fulness of power and blessing, it should remain unchangeably in His sacred Person. Thus was it marked out as essentially different from the Levitical priesthood, and as holding forth the most glorious hopes to all who should avail themselves of it.

Verse 25. *Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost etc.* This is the consolatory and animating conclusion which the Apostle deduces from the perpetuity of our Lord's priesthood. His power to save reaches to the utmost limit of man's need ; it assures to each individual believer an unfailing supply of blessing through the whole period of his earthly course ; and it extends to all, in every age, who come unto the Father by Him. The Apostle had emphatically affirmed that the Levitical priesthood could not raise man to that "perfection," that state of salvation and entire consecration to God, in which only the true dignity and blessedness of our nature are realised ; and now he maintains that the priestly mediation of the Lord Jesus can accomplish this,—that in virtue of His perfect atonement, and His unfailing intercession grounded on that atonement, He can save His people even "to the uttermost." The phrase, *εις τὸ παντελές*, marks primarily the *completeness* of the salvation which Christ bestows, and thus

26. For such a High Priest became us, *who is*  
 \* Heb. iv. 15.

infers its *perpetuity*. It is a salvation which not only reverses a state of condemnation and bondage to iniquity, but which embraces the communication and maturity of all holy principles,—victory over every adverse influence,—and the glorification of our entire nature. And this salvation Christ bestows on *all*, in every age, “who come unto God by Him,” who accept Him as their Mediator, and put their trust in Him alone.—The ground of our confidence that all this shall be accomplished by our adorable Lord is, that His is an unfailing and unchangeable priesthood, distinguished by a fulness of life which never knows exhaustion or decline. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” As the Representative of our race, which He has redeemed with His own precious blood, He appears in the presence of God; and on the ground of His perfect sacrifice He receives from the Father, and dispenses to His people, the grace which they need to succour them under the conflicts of earth, to mature them in every holy affection, and to crown their earthly career with final victory and everlasting blessedness.

Verse 26. *For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, etc.* The considerations on which the Apostle had just dwelt had fully established the positions which he had assumed,—that the ancient order of priesthood has been set aside in favour of that which abides in the Person of the Lord Jesus, and that with it the whole Mosaic ritual has been superseded. And now he seeks to concentrate the attention of the believing Hebrews on the distinguishing excellencies of our great High Priest, in contrast with the successive high priests of Israel, and the surpassing dignity of the priesthood which is centred

holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, "and made higher than the heavens ;

27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests,

s Eph. i. 20 ; iv. 10 ; Heb. viii. 1.

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in One so exalted and glorious. He adverts to the *perfect purity* of the Redeemer during the whole of His earthly career. No unhallowed affection had place in His breast ; no stain attached to any action of His outward life ; and while He moved among men, though sin abounded on every hand around Him, He remained free from the least moral contamination. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." This spotless purity, the Apostle affirms, was essential to Him who was to draw near to the Father as the Representative of the race of men, and, on the ground of His own perfect sacrifice, to dispense to them the blessings of a spiritual and everlasting salvation. "Such a High Priest *became us.*" But this is only one view of the excellence of our High Priest, and His qualifications for the discharge of His sacred functions. The Apostle passes to another thought,—that He has gone, as the exalted Mediator, to the very throne of the Eternal Father. He is "made higher than the heavens." We naturally recall here the sentiments conveyed in iv. 14, that the Lord Jesus has "passed through the heavens" to that very spot where the throne of the Divine government is established, and the special manifestation of the Divine glory is afforded. Far above all the orders of being who may people "the heavens," which form, as it were, the ante-chambers of that place where God reveals His presence, He is enthroned at the right hand of the Father, and ever appears as the Mediator whose work is

to offer up sacrifice, 'first for His own sins, "and then for the people's: for <sup>t</sup>this He did once, when He offered up Himself.

<sup>t</sup> Lev. ix. 7; xvi. 6, 11; Heb. v. 3; ix. 7.

<sup>u</sup> Lev. xvi. 15.      <sup>x</sup> Rom. vi. 10; Heb. ix. 12, 28; x. 12.

perfect, whose intercession is availing, and whose reign is powerful and glorious.

Verse 27. *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, etc.* Pursuing the course of thought on which he had just entered, and especially having in view the spotless purity of the Redeemer, the Apostle here directs attention to the contrast between Him and the Levitical high priests. They needed to offer sacrifices for their own transgressions; for they were sinful men, exposed continually to the danger of falling; and hence the sacrifices which they presented needed to be again and again repeated. The sacrifices, indeed, which the high priests themselves offered, and to which the Apostle seems specially to allude, were those which distinguished the great day of expiation: but as men whose daily experience and life were, to some extent, marred by sin, they needed a daily sacrifice, and had a share in those daily offerings which the ordinary priests presented. But the Lord Jesus had no sin of His own to need expiation; and the offering up of Himself for the sins of the people formed a complete and ever-availing atonement. The efficacy of His sacrifice reaches from age to age; and now, in His state of exaltation, He presents it to the Father as meeting our condition of sinfulness and guilt, and opening to us the path of life.—The slightest reflection is sufficient to show that, when the Apostle affirms, "*This He did once for all when He offered up Himself,*" he has respect only to

28. For the law maketh <sup>s</sup>men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was

y Heb. v. 1, 2.

the *latter* of the two particulars just before specified,—the offering of sacrifice for the sins of the people. He had just affirmed, in the strongest terms, the perfect sinlessness of the Lord Jesus; and it would be in direct opposition to his own statements in this very sentence, to understand him as saying, that the Saviour offered up sacrifice for His own sins. Besides, as Dr. Delitzsch has well observed, the idea of offering Himself for His own sins would be against all sacrificial analogy, according to which the *sinless* is an offering for the *sinful*.

Verse 28. *For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, etc.* In these beautiful and comprehensive words the Apostle completes his statement of the surpassing excellence and dignity of our High Priest. He brings together many of the thoughts which he had before suggested, and shows how they all concur to evince the glory of Him who is now our Intercessor, and the availing character of His priesthood. The Mosaic law constituted "men"—*mere men*—high priests; men, too, who "had *infirmity*," who were encompassed with moral weakness, and who, alas! were not only liable to fall into sin, but often actually did so, and thus needed expiation for their own transgressions. But "the word of the *oath*," the very form of which marked the dignity of Him to whom it related, and the grandeur and permanence of the arrangement which it announced,—that word, too, "which was *since the law*," and thus belonged to a further stage of the development of the Divine counsel,—constituted THE SON the High Priest for men; and in Him we

since the law, *maketh* the Son, \*who is \*consecrated for evermore.

ε Heb. ii. 10 ; v. 9.

\* Gr. *perfected*.

behold the essential glories of the Divine nature, securing His perfect sinlessness, even though He stooped to become a partaker of our humanity in its weakness and lowliness, and its liability to conflict and sorrow. He, too, "is *perfected* for evermore;" for this, the marginal rendering, is the only correct translation of the last clause, *εις τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον*. He has passed through those sufferings which were essential to the redemption of mankind, and through which only He could rise to His state of exaltation as the Mediator, and bestow life and salvation on all who trust in Him. His atonement is complete; His state of humiliation is over; and now, as "the Captain of our salvation," made "perfect through sufferings," He appears in the Father's presence, and leads onward His people to eternal life and glory. Thus in closing this emphatic statement of the excellence and dignity of our High Priest, the Apostle recalls the argument of the first and second chapters of the Epistle, fixing the attention of the believing Hebrews on the Lord Jesus as THE SON, once indeed manifested in lowliness and suffering, but now exalted to ineffable glory, and invested with all power to save and bless mankind.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. Now of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum*: We have such a High Priest, "who is set on  
*a* Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; x. 12; xii. 2.

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## CHAPTER VIII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE peculiar and surpassing dignity of the High Priest of the Christian economy had now been set forth; and it had been shown that the former order of priesthood, with its imperfections and successive changes, had given place to a priesthood which abides for ever in the Person of the Incarnate Son, now made perfect through sufferings, and who has gone, as the exalted Mediator, into the immediate presence of the Father. The Apostle now proceeds to dilate on the priestly *ministration* of our Lord in the heavenly sanctuary. That ministration he speaks of, in the present chapter, only in general terms, marking its superiority to the ministrations of the Levitical priests by a reference to the *covenant* of which He acts as the Mediator. That covenant is distinguished by the fulness of Divine influence which under it is shed forth: and it is, emphatically, one of spiritual blessing, assuring to all who come into it the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of their nature, the clear apprehension of Divine truth, and the eternal enjoyment of God in the realms of light and glory. The preparatory covenant made with the people of Israel could not lead men to that state of purity and blessedness for which our nature is designed; but the new covenant, of which Jesus is the Mediator, brings us near

the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

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to God, and enables us, as His people, to reflect His image and do His will.

Verse 1. *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a High Priest, etc.* The subject of which the Apostle treats in this and the following chapter, as well as in the former part of the tenth,—the *ministration* of the Lord Jesus, as our High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary,—is introduced by a reference to the great truth which his preceding reasonings had illustrated and established. He had shown the superior excellence of our Lord's priesthood as being after the order of Melchisedek; and he had just dwelt on His spotless purity, on the abiding efficacy of His sacrifice, and on His exaltation as the Incarnate Son, whose work of atonement is complete and perfect, to the full glory of His mediatorial rule. And now he says, "Of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum,*" or, rather, "the principal thing," *κεφάλαιον*: "we have *such* a High Priest,"—one possessing the lofty characteristics just referred to, and invested with a priesthood so peculiar and glorious,—*"who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."* Thus the Apostle seeks to concentrate the attention of the believing Hebrews on the Lord Jesus as appearing for us in that world which God has constituted His special dwelling-place, and the seat of His universal government,—and as Himself enthroned as the Mediatorial Sovereign, while He exercises His priestly functions on behalf of the race which He has redeemed. The statement, that our adorable Lord has *sat down* on the right hand of the

2. A Minister || of <sup>b</sup>the sanctuary, and of <sup>c</sup>the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

|| Or, of holy things.    b Heb. ix. 8, 12, 24.    c Heb. ix. 11.

throne of God, has been properly dwelt upon as illustrating His personal dignity and the transcendent glory of His priesthood. The high priests of ancient Israel were only permitted to enter for a very short time the holy of holies, on one day of the year; and during their brief ministrations there, they continued *standing*, the cloud of the smoke of the incense covering the mercy-seat, while they sprinkled upon it and before it the blood of the appointed sacrifices. Had any one of the Jewish high priests ventured to sit down in the most holy place, still more to sit down at the right hand of the mercy-seat, it would have been the most awful presumption, and would have been punished with instant death. But Jesus, the Son of God, made perfect as the Mediator through sufferings, is enthroned at the Father's right hand, and is Himself the proper Object of lowly adoration, of reverent submission, and of unbounded trust.

Verse 2. *A Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, etc.* Here the Apostle affirms, in general terms, the *ministration* of our Lord in the heavenly world. But the stress of his remark is on the character of the heavenly sanctuary, as presenting the *reality* of that of which the holy of holies in the Mosaic tabernacle only afforded a faint and imperfect type. The beautiful and impressive symbols of that most sacred place were illustrative of the arrangements of the spot where God reveals His presence, and where the true and effectual sacrifice for sin is presented by our enthroned High Priest. The presence of Jehovah sheds its holy light on the whole region in which

3. For <sup>d</sup>every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. v. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 14.

His glorified worshippers draw near to Him; and thus heaven is described as "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." The very fact, that the priestly ministration of our Lord is carried on in the sanctuary above shows its superiority to the ministrations of all earthly priests moving amidst the types and shadows of spiritual realities. Some eminent expositors have understood the phrase, "the true tabernacle," of our Lord's human body: but this is to introduce confusion into the Apostle's argument.

Verse 3. *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity etc.* The nature of the ministration in which our Lord is engaged in the heavenly world is here illustrated by a reference to the peculiar and distinguishing function of the priestly office. We have seen that it was essential to that office to offer sacrifices for sins, and, on the ground of such sacrifices solemnly presented to Jehovah, to make intercession for those on whose behalf they were offered. Thus, the Apostle reminds us, the Lord Jesus presents a sacrifice to the Father,—even that sacrifice of Himself which was referred to in vii. 27, and which is dwelt upon at length in chapters ix. and x. We are not to conceive of Him as continually offering Himself in heaven; for such an idea is shut out by the distinct and reiterated statements of the Apostle in the preceding and following chapters. His sacrifice, we are taught, was offered *once for all*. It was complete and finished when He expired upon the cross;

4. For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that ||there are priests that offer gifts according to the law :

|| Or, *they are priests.*

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and when He rose from the dead, no penal suffering or humiliation remained to be endured by Him as the Representative of our sinful race. But he *presents* His sacrifice to the Father, as the ground of salvation and blessing to all who trust in Him. And the Eternal Father, who declared the completeness and sufficiency of that sacrifice in our Lord's resurrection from the dead, ever accepts it as valid and efficacious for the acceptance, the perfected holiness, and the eternal glory, of His believing people.

Verse 4. *For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, etc.* The comparison just instituted between our Lord and ordinary high priests,—a comparison limited to the one point, that it is essential to the office, by whomsoever held, to present sacrifices for sins,—led the Apostle again to advert to the grand distinction between Him and them, that his ministration is carried on in the heavenly sanctuary, the true “holy of holies.” Such a sphere of ministration, the Apostle in effect affirms, was the only one adapted to the priesthood with which He is invested. In the typical holy of holies sacrifices were presented “according to the law,” by priests of the order of Aaron, all the arrangements of whose service were expressly adapted to the earthly and prefigurative character of their ministration. But His priesthood belongs to a higher order: it was established by “the word of the oath which was since the law;” and, instead of being exercised according to “the law of a carnal commandment,” it was distinguished by “the power of

5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: *For, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount.*

*f* Col. ii. 17; Heb. ix. 23; x. 1.

*g* Exod. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 8; Numb. viii. 4; Acts vii. 44.

an indissoluble life." Such a priesthood could only be exercised amidst those heavenly realities which the Jewish tabernacle and temple shadowed forth.—It may be added, that the language of the Apostle in this verse clearly implies, that the temple was still standing when this Epistle was written, and the course of priestly service was being actually carried on.

Verse 5. *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses etc.* Here the Apostle expressly affirms, that the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, in which the Levitical priests ministered, presented a suggestive representation of things in the heavens, and yet that that representation was only as a shadow, instead of affording a full and accurate delineation of them. Some, indeed, have founded upon this verse the opinion, that there is a material structure in heaven serving as a sanctuary, similar in form to the tabernacle. But this, we conceive, is an erroneous view of the Apostle's language. "It is heaven itself," as Dr. Lindsay well observes, "that is the Christian sanctuary; and all that can be concluded from the passage before us is, that the earthly tabernacle was made after God's direction, and every thing connected with it so arranged, that it was fitted to prefigure, when its services were going on, the services Christ performs for His people." It was because the tabernacle was designed to

6. But now <sup>h</sup>ath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a  
*h* 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8, 9; Heb. vii. 22.

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shadow forth heavenly realities, that all its arrangements were expressly prescribed by God Himself, and a strict injunction was laid upon Moses, to make all things according to the pattern showed to him in the mount. Any deviation from that pattern would not only have been, in itself, most presumptuous, but would, to some extent, have defeated the purpose which the tabernacle was intended to answer.

Verse 6. *But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the Mediator of a better covenant, etc.* Another consideration is here brought forward to illustrate the superiority of our Lord's priestly ministrations to that of the Levitical priests. He acts as "the Mediator of a better covenant," under which loftier privileges are conferred on the people of God than those which were enjoyed under the preparatory covenant made with Israel when brought out of Egypt, and constituted the nation of Jehovah. It is interesting to recall, in this connection, the words of our Lord Himself, when he instituted the sacrament of His supper. As He handed the cup to His Apostles, He said to them, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." It is through His completed sacrifice that all spiritual blessings are offered to mankind; and, as He presents that sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary, He introduces to the Father all who rely on it alone, and, as they come through Him, the light of the Father's countenance beams on them from the throne. He, too, administers the whole economy of grace

better || covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7. 'For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

|| Or, *testament*.

† Heb. vii. 11, 18.

with a view to the present and eternal salvation of all who trust in Him.—The covenant of which He is the Mediator is described as “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” It is contrasted, clearly, with the preparatory covenant made with the people of Israel when they were led forth from the bondage of Egypt. The covenant of grace to mankind which had been made with Abraham, as the head of all the faithful, is not here in question; but the special engagements of God with Israel, securing to them, upon their observance of the law enjoined on them, the possession of the land of Canaan, a state of outward peace and prosperity, as well as the manifestation of Jehovah's presence in the sanctuary, and His blessing upon them in all the forms and services of their ritual worship. But the covenant which is now established through the blood of Jesus holds forth to us those spiritual blessings which meet our deepest wants,—the conscious forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of our entire nature, and the everlasting enjoyment of God Himself. That covenant, too, gives the assurance of an abundant communication of Divine influence to accomplish within us that to which all efforts of our own are utterly inadequate.

Verse 7. *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.* The Apostle here argues from the very fact that a new covenant was promised in the prophetic writings, that the first covenant was imperfect and insufficient. Had this not

8. For, finding fault with them, He saith, <sup>†</sup>Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah :

<sup>†</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34.

been the case, he contends, it would not have been superseded. The word which he employs, ἀμεμπτος, "faultless," is most appropriate and striking. *That* is faultless, in a case of this kind, which fully answers its design, raising man to the moral and spiritual state which God contemplates.

Verse 8. *For, finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, etc.* The first clause of this verse contains an evident allusion to the term "faultless" which the Apostle had just employed. Some, viewing the covenant itself as the object of blame, translate, "For, finding fault, He saith to them:" but it appears better to adhere to the rendering of the Authorised Version, and to regard the Apostle as giving a delicate turn to the thought, by not speaking of the covenant itself as the *direct* object of censure, but affirming that the people who lived under it remained in such a state as to incur the reproof of God. Then he proceeds to quote the remarkable prediction contained in Jer. xxxi. 31—34. This prediction clearly pointed to the time of the Messiah, and the rich spiritual blessings which He should bestow on the people of God. In it the ancient Israel had a *special*, though *not* an *exclusive*, interest; and even now, though the majority of that people still stand aloof from the Lord Jesus, and have thus cut themselves off from the blessings of the covenant, yet the mercy of God waits to welcome them again, to raise them to the highest privileges of His saints,

9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they

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and to crown them, as a people, with special tokens of His favour and complacency. But all true believers, of whatever nation, are now "the Israel of God," and share in the promise of spiritual and eternal blessing.

Verse 9. *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers etc.* The new covenant which formed the hope of Israel is here expressly contrasted with that made with their fathers when they came forth from Egypt. The condescending care which God took of the race of Israel, at that eventful period of their history, is beautifully expressed in the statement, that God "took them by the hand" to lead them forth from that land of bondage. His signal interpositions on their behalf, and the watchful regard that He manifested towards them, are forcibly indicated in this simple phrase. The covenant referred to is that recorded in Exod. xxiv. 3-8, to which the Apostle further refers in ix. 18-20. The requirements of Jehovah, including the ten great commandments issued from Mount Sinai, but embracing also various other precepts by which they were to be distinguished as a nation separated to Him, were solemnly laid before them; and the assembled people answered, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." In connection with this great transaction sacrifices were offered: and Moses, taking half the blood of the victims, sprinkled it on the altar which he had made, and the other half he sprinkled upon the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Now this covenant was

continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10. For *this is the covenant that I will make with*

*l* Heb. x. 16.

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defective, as not containing the promise of an abundant supply of Divine influence to mould the hearts of the Israelites to a perfect conformity to the Divine commands. *It lacked the fulness of spiritual power.* And they who lived under it, for the most part, violated it, and forfeited the friendship and complacency of Jehovah. "They continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." In thus rendering the passage of Jeremiah, the Apostle follows the Septuagint; and the propriety of this translation is maintained by the ablest Biblical critics. Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, after referring to the meaning assigned to the Hebrew words in the English Version, "Although I was a husband unto them," adds, "The propriety of that rendering is justly called in question, and the translation of the Septuagint is rather to be maintained. The primary meaning of the verb is, to possess, or have dominion over; then, to possess a wife, to marry; but finally, according to Gesenius, to loathe, to reject, in which sense he takes it in the two passages referred to. 'The common meaning,' he says, 'may do in chapter xxxi., if it be rendered, *Although I was their Lord*; but it gives a harsh sense; and, what weighs with me more, the signification of *loathing* is not foreign to the primary power of the verb. For there are also other verbs, in which the sense of subduing, being high over, ruling, is applied to the signification of looking down upon, despising, condemning.'"

Verse 10. *For this is the covenant that I will make with*

the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will \*put My laws into their mind, and write them ||in their hearts : and =I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people :

— 11. And \*they shall not teach every man his

\* Gr. *give.*

|| Or, *upon.*                      m Zech. viii. 8.

n Isai. liv. 13 ; John vi. 45 ; 1 John ii. 27.

*the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.* This portion of the ancient prophecy sets forth the first great and distinguishing blessing of the covenant to be established through the Messiah. Under that covenant the Holy Ghost was to be sent down in His richest energy to renew, and sanctify, and keep, the human mind. The Most High engaged that, by His own direct operation on the spirit of man, He would bring it to a clear apprehension of His precepts and a sacred delight in them ; and that He would Himself implant in the heart those spiritual affections which His laws enjoin, and which naturally lead to the outward acts of obedience which they require. It is this ample provision of Divine influence which meets our case of moral weakness. Were we left to the unaided efforts of our own reason, and to the firmness of our own resolves, we could not come up to the spiritual demands of the Divine law, and should often fail and sink in the day of trial. But if " God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure," we shall be enabled to develop the Christian character in its loveliness and power, and, amidst the changes and conflicts of earth, to " work out our own salvation."

*And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a*

neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.

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*people.* This is the general and most comprehensive form in which the *privileges* of a covenant relation to God on the one hand, and its *duties* on the other, are set forth. Jehovah engages to be to us "a God,"—to be to us, in time and in eternity, all that it becomes the ETERNAL GOD to be to those whom He specially acknowledges as His own; and we, gratefully accepting His provisions of grace, and His promise of abundant spiritual help, yield ourselves to Him as His "people," whose highest aim is, to enjoy His friendship, to reflect His image, and to do His will. Under the Christian covenant, such a relation of God to His people is realised in all its fulness of blessing; and the rich communication of Divine influence enables all who embrace the Saviour to maintain that self-dedication to God which is at once the duty and the ornament of the human spirit.

Verse 11. *And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, etc.* Another distinguishing feature of the covenant which God was about to establish with His people is here indicated. The knowledge of Himself—that spiritual knowledge which elevates and refines the soul, and exerts a transforming influence upon the whole character, while it supplies to the intellect themes of transcendent and undying interest—was to be *universally* diffused among them. Both in the passage of Jeremiah, and in the original of that before us, the last clause is, "from the least of them unto the greatest of them," or, more literally, "from the little one of them unto the great one of them." The blessing in question

12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, <sup>e</sup>and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. xi. 27 ; Heb. x. 17.

belongs to the covenant-people of God. And it is enjoyed by all who stand in that relation. The humblest individual, the man, too, of comparatively feeble intellect, who comes to God through the adorable Mediator, and is by Him introduced to the privileges of His people, is favoured with the spiritual apprehension of God ; and the man of highest station, and of most commanding mind, who comes into the covenant, esteems the knowledge of God his joy and strength. The very "babe" in Christ "knows the Father," and rejoices in His love ; while they who have attained to Christian maturity delight to contemplate God, to trace His perfections in the scheme of human redemption, and to receive, yet more and more, the transforming impression of His character.

Verse 12. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins etc.* This inestimable blessing of the new and better covenant is intimately connected with the spiritual privileges that have been already unfolded. It may, indeed, be said to lie at the foundation of them all ; and the manner in which it is here introduced suggests this. Were our sins remembered against us to our condemnation,—were the judicial displeasure of God still resting upon us,—our hearts could not become the temples of His Spirit, hallowing all our affections, and consecrating us to His service, we could not exult in the spiritual knowledge of Himself, we could not claim Him as our God. But the covenant of which the Lord Jesus is the Mediator assures us, upon our embracing Him, of

13. *In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath*

*p 2 Cor. v. 17.*

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the forgiveness of all our sins ; and, being accepted in Him, we receive the life-imparting Spirit in all the fulness of His grace, and are assured that the Eternal Jehovah is indeed our Father and our Portion.

Verse 13. *In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth etc.* In this verse the Apostle reasons upon the prophetic announcement of a new covenant which he had just cited. The position which he assumes is, that the very promise of "a new covenant" gave to that which before existed the character of an *old* one. It marked it out as not designed to endure, but as that which was soon to be superseded in the Divine arrangements. It placed it among the things which were nearly worn out, and in the place of which something fresher and more efficient must be introduced. And then the Apostle adds, "Now that which is being made old," in the sense of being declared to be old and soon to be superseded, "and getting into old age, is nigh unto vanishing away." Thus does he indicate the position of the first covenant made with the people of Israel, from the very time when the promise of a new covenant, marked by the fulness of Divine influence and of spiritual privilege, was given. That covenant was stamped with the character of feebleness and decline ; and when, at length, the great Restorer, the Incarnate Son of God, had offered up Himself as the true Sacrifice for sin, had risen from the dead, and had ascended to His mediatorial throne, to carry on His priestly ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, then was the Holy Ghost sent down in all the riches of His grace, and the new and better covenant was brought in. At that very time, the ancient covenant made with the people of

made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

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Israel, as such, ceased : but the descendants of Abraham were cordially welcomed to come into the higher covenant of spiritual blessing and sanctifying power, under which they and believing Gentiles were together to constitute the true "Israel of God."

## CHAPTER IX.

1. THEN verily the first *covenant* had also ||ordi-  
 || Or, *ceremonies*.
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## CHAPTER IX.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN this chapter the Apostle unfolds the great theme of the *priestly ministration* of the Lord Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, which he had introduced in the preceding one; placing that ministration in contrast with the services of the Levitical high priests. He recalls the leading arrangements of the tabernacle-worship, and points out their character and significance. He adverts to the want of spiritual efficacy in the sacrifices offered under the law,—that they could not raise man to that state of peace and purity for which he was originally designed; and then he shows that Jesus, our great High Priest, has gone into heaven itself with His own completed sacrifice, having, by that sacrifice, effected a redemption which meets all the wants of our spiritual nature, and reaches onward to eternity. He dwells, with holy exultation, on the transcendent excellence of *the sacrifice of Christ*, and its efficacy both to cancel the guilt of those who penitently rely upon it, and to consecrate them to the Divine service. The death of Jesus, he affirms, is the basis of all the acts of mercy that distinguished the former economy, as well as of the exalted blessings conferred under the new and better covenant. The Lord Jesus, indeed, is Himself *the Covenant-Victim*; and just as the covenant which God made with the Israelites was ratified with sacrificial blood,

nances of Divine service, and "a worldly sanctuary.

a Exod. xxv. 8.

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even so it is through the death of Christ that God now enters into covenant with His people, and imparts to them the loftiest privileges and hopes. Under the former dispensation, also, it was requisite that the very place of worship, and the vessels which were set apart to sacred uses, should be sprinkled with sacrificial blood; and it was only through blood that any sin could be remitted. Even so, the Apostle goes on to show, the Lord Jesus has gone through His own blood into the holy place above, to make it accessible to us, and now appears, as our Priestly Representative, in the presence of the Eternal Father. The sacrifice which He presents on our behalf is one which needs no repetition. Offered up once for all, when the fulness of the time had come, and the last and best dispensation was about to be introduced, it formed the ground of blessing to sinful men through the ages that were past, and it will be effectual for the salvation of men through every succeeding age, until the final consummation shall arrive. And just as there is before men the great change of death which will close their state of probation, and complete that work of life upon which the recompense of eternity will proceed, even so the Representative of our race once bore in death the penalty of our sins, and now, His past relation to sin being wholly severed, He reigns as the exalted Mediator, and shall at last come in glory to perfect the salvation of His people.

Verse 1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of Divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.* In illustrating the superiority of the priestly ministration which our Lord

2. <sup>b</sup>For there was a tabernacle made; the first,  
<sup>b</sup> Exod. xxvi. 1.
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carries on in the heavenly world, the Apostle had spoken of it as that through which the privileges and hopes of the new and better covenant, promised in the prophetic Scriptures, become ours. That covenant he had now set forth in the language of Jeremiah; and, reverting to his great theme of the ministration of our adorable High Priest, he traces the *contrast* between it and that of the Levitical high priests. The first covenant, he affirms, had Divinely appointed services; and its priests ministered in an earthly sanctuary. The phrase *δικαιώματα λατρείας*, "ordinances of worship," designates the whole system of the Levitical service, as *instituted* by God, and characterised by that *rectitude* which marks all His appointments. In the expression which follows, "a worldly sanctuary," there is a designed contrast to the statement in viii. 2, that our Lord is "a Minister of the sanctuary, and of *the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Other explanations of it have been proposed, but this commends itself at once as the simple and obvious import of the words, and as suited to the general course of the Apostle's argument.

Verse 2. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, etc.* The general structure and arrangements of the ancient tabernacle are pointed out in this and the following verses. The tabernacle proper was divided into two principal apartments; while immediately before it there was a large area or court, in which there stood the great brazen altar of sacrifice. It is of the *first apartment* of the tabernacle that the Apostle speaks in this verse,—the first, as Dean Alford properly remarks, "in

‘wherein *was* <sup>d</sup>the candlestick, and ‘the table, and the showbread; which is called ||the sanctuary.

3. *f*And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

*c* Exod. xxvi. 35; xl. 4.

*d* Exod. xxv. 31.

*e* Exod. xxv. 23, 30; Lev. xxiv. 5, 6.

|| Or, *holy*.

*f* Exod. xxvi. 31, 33; xl. 3, 21; Heb. vi. 19.

situation, to those entering it.” This was designated “the sanctuary,” or “holy place,” as distinguished from the second apartment, or “holy of holies.” It was the place in which, as the Apostle remarks in verse 6, the daily ministrations of the ordinary priests were carried on; and we shall not, perhaps, err, if we regard its arrangements and services as symbolising the worship of the Church on earth. Among its sacred furniture, the golden candlestick and the table of showbread are particularly specified. The former, with its seven stems or branches, formed a beautiful emblem of the fulness of light which God sheds on His true worshippers; while the showbread, consisting of twelve cakes arranged in two rows,—which were replaced by new ones every Sabbath,—illustrated the constant supply of spiritual nourishment which He affords to His covenant-people.

Verse 3. *And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all.* This second apartment of the tabernacle formed the type of the heavenly world, where Jehovah’s throne of grace and righteousness is established, and where our adorable High Priest now presents His own perfect sacrifice on behalf of all who come unto God by Him. The whole course of the Apostle’s argument in this chapter implies this, and it is expressly brought out in

4. Which had the golden censer, and <sup>s</sup>the ark of

*g* Exod. xxv. 10 ; xxvi. 33 ; xl. 3, 21.

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verses 23, 24. The holy of holies, the Apostle remarks, was "after the second veil." There was one veil before the door of the tabernacle; (Exod. xxvi. 36, 37;) and another veil, of exquisite workmanship, hung on four pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold, separated the most holy place from the first sacred apartment. (Exod. xxvi. 31—35.)

Verse 4. *Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant etc.* This verse suggests several questions of considerable difficulty, which have, in every age, engaged the anxious attention of expositors. The first relates to the proper translation of the word *θυμιατήριον*, rendered in our Version "censer," but which often has the meaning "altar of incense." In this last sense it is understood by many; and the statement of the Apostle, that the holy of holies "had" the altar of incense, is explained on the ground that, though standing in the holy place, just before the veil, it *belonged* more to the inmost sanctuary than to the first apartment of the tabernacle. When the high priest of Israel went into the holy of holies, he was, first of all, to take burning coals of fire from off the altar, and sprinkle incense upon them; and as he drew aside the veil, and went into that most sacred spot in which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, the cloud of the smoke of the incense was to cover the mercy-seat. Any neglect of this requirement would have been followed, on his part, by instant death.—Now there is nothing forced in this interpretation of the Apostle's words; for he does not affirm, that the altar of incense *stood in* the most holy place, but employs the general term *ἔχονσα*, "*having*," which admits

the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein

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of the meaning contended for. But there is one consideration which seems greatly to favour, if it does not even require, the rendering "censer." The Apostle applies to the object of which he is speaking the epithet χρυσῶν, "golden," while, immediately afterwards, when he mentions the ark of the covenant, he affirms that it was "overlaid round about with gold." This last was the case with the altar of incense; and the epithet "golden" seems clearly to point to some portion of the tabernacle-furniture which was of solid gold. Now it is an important circumstance, in this inquiry, that the censer used on the great day of expiation, as we learn from the Mischna, was different from that employed at other times, and was made of the purest gold. To this, then, we conceive, the Apostle refers. This censer, though not kept within the holy of holies, *belonged* properly, and we may even say *exclusively*, to it, since it was used only in connection with the entrance of the high priest into that most sacred place.—The next question of importance relates to the statement of the Apostle, that in the ark were placed not only "the tables of the covenant," but also "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded." This has been held by some to be inconsistent with the statement in 1 Kings viii. 9, 2 Chron. v. 10, that in the ark in Solomon's temple there was nothing "save the two tables of stone which Moses put therein at Horeb." But the remarks of Dean Alford, taken in substance from Dr. Delitzsch, meet this apparent difficulty. The account in the passages of Kings and Chronicles, he observes, "will not prove anything against the pot of manna and the rod having *once* been in the ark; nay, rather, from the express declaration that there was *then*

was <sup>k</sup>the golden pot that had manna, and <sup>i</sup>Aaron's rod that budded, and <sup>k</sup>the tables of the covenant;

<sup>h</sup> Exod. xvi. 33, 34.                      <sup>i</sup> Numb. xvii. 10.

<sup>k</sup> Exod. xxv. 16, 21; xxxiv. 29; xl. 20; Deut. x. 2, 5;  
1 Kings viii. 9, 21; 2 Chron. v. 10.

nothing but the tables of stone, it would seem that formerly there had been other things there. The Rabbis certainly treat of the pot of manna and of the rod as *being in the ark*: see the testimonies of Levi ben Gershom and Abarbanel in Wetstein, h.l." The golden pot containing the manna was commanded to be laid up "before the Lord," for a memorial of the special providential care over His people; (Exodus xvi. 32—34;) and the rod of Aaron that budded—the proof of the Divine appointment of the Levitical priesthood—was, in a similar manner, to be laid up "before the testimony." (Numb. xvii. 10, 11.) In these statements one of the Jewish writers just referred to sees a proof that the objects in question were kept within the ark.

The arrangement that the two tables of the law were placed inside the ark of the covenant was one of deep significance. It marked the ten commandments issued from Mount Sinai as the great and fundamental requirements of the Divine government, and conferred on them a lofty pre-eminence above the ceremonial precepts and the political regulations which were afterwards given to the people of Israel. It indicated, also, the intimate connection between *law* and *grace* in God's present administration of our world. The mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, formed the type of Jehovah's throne from which He now shines forth upon the penitent worshipper that trusts in the sacrifice of Jesus: but the

## 5. And 'over it the cherubim of glory shadowing

l Exod. xxv. 18, 22 ; Lev. xvi. 2 ; 1 Kings viii. 6. 7.

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government of God is one of *righteousness* as well as of *mercy*,—it is based on the fundamental principles of moral rectitude,—its acts of grace rest upon a provision that vindicates the sacredness, and upholds the majesty, of the law,—and they are designed to issue in the re-establishment of holy principles within the human breast, and the conformity of the human character to all the moral requirements of the law.

Verse 5. *And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat ; etc.* Here the Apostle refers to the well-known fact, that to the ends of the ark of the covenant were attached figures of cherubim, with their wings extended, and their faces bent towards the mercy-seat, as if in the attitude of devout and earnest contemplation. He speaks of them as “the cherubim of glory,” probably in relation to the sacred symbol of the Divine presence which shone forth from between them, and on which they seemed to be in reverent and dutiful attendance. The question, whom or what these cherubic forms were intended to symbolise, is one of great interest but at the same time of great difficulty. Some have regarded them as emblematical of the angelic hosts ; and if this view may be admitted, the truth suggested is clear and obvious. Their position and attitude would mark the interest—the intense and unflinching interest—which the hosts of heaven take in the scheme of redemption, and the earnestness with which they dwell on the peculiarities of the Divine administration of our world, as one in which grace is combined with the firm maintenance of law. But in some passages of Scripture, and more particularly in Rev. iv., the “living

the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

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creatures," which seem to be identical with the cherubim, are distinguished from the hosts of angels, while they are equally distinguished from the representatives of the glorified Church; and they appear to stand as emblematical of *creation generally*. The passage which has been regarded by the Rev. E. B. Elliott and others as establishing the strange opinion, that they represent the whole company of Christ's redeemed and saved people,—Rev. v. 9, 10,—cannot, for a moment, be held to sustain the conclusion founded upon it. Even if the common reading were the true one, it might be consistently maintained that the song in question was an antiphonal one,—the former part being uttered by the living creatures, and the latter by the four-and-twenty elders. But the best MSS. have the reading which Tischendorf and Alford have adopted, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst redeem to God by Thy blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation; and madest them a kingdom and priests, and they reign over the earth." Regarding these "living creatures," then, as the representatives of creation generally, we find that from them the anthem of adoration ascended to Jehovah as the Holy and Self-Existent One, whose resources are never impaired, and who will carry out all His purposes as the ages roll on. They, too, adored the Lamb, acknowledging with reverent admiration His lofty claims, as having redeemed mankind with His blood, and as having raised His people to the highest dignity and the most intimate access to the Father. We may, then, conceive that the ~~cherubim~~ attached to the ark of the

## 6. Now when these things were thus ordained,

covenant were designed to intimate, not only that all creation waits on God, but that the principles and acts of His government, as now modified by the economy of redemption, have an interest for the whole creation, and call forth the earnest thought of all intelligent beings, who have not themselves renounced their allegiance to the Most High.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length on the phrase, *τὸ ἰλαστήριον*, "the mercy-seat." It indicates the massive golden cover of the ark of the covenant, over which the symbol of the Divine Presence appeared between the cherubim, and on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled by the high priest on the great day of expiation. It is to this last fact that the word *ἰλαστήριον* alludes. It was there that the sacrificial blood was presented through which Jehovah could show Himself propitious to His people, and still own them as His, notwithstanding their past offences.

The final remark of the Apostle, "Of which we cannot now speak particularly," or "one by one," applies not merely to the cherubim, but to the several parts of the tabernacle-furniture which he had specified. Instead of dwelling on the import of each of these, he hastens onward to his great subject,—the contrast between the ministration of the Levitical priests in the tabernacle thus constructed, and that of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Verse 6. *Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests etc.* The expression "the first tabernacle" is clearly to be understood, as in verse 2, of the first apartment of the tabernacle,—the holy place as distinguished from the

"the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7. But into the second *went* the high priest alone

*m* Num. xxviii. 3; Dan. viii. 11.

most holy. In this the ordinary priests carried on their daily ministrations, attending to the golden candlestick and its lights, burning incense to Jehovah morning and evening, and when the Sabbath came round changing the showbread. The use of the present tense, *εἰσῆλθον*, "enter," marks the Levitical services as still going on when this Epistle was written.

Verse 7. *But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, etc.* This was a remarkable peculiarity of the Levitical economy. It was only to the high priest that it was permitted to enter into the holy of holies, and to him only on one day in the year,—the great day of expiation. The instructions which he was to observe are given in detail in Levit. xvi., and the neglect of any of them would have exposed him to the penalty of death. The *one* purpose of his entering into this most sacred place was to make atonement for sin. He could not enter it "without blood:" to have done so would have been a most presumptuous and guilty intrusion into the spot which Jehovah had constituted the type of His special dwelling-place. Before, indeed, he sprinkled the blood of atonement, he had to take "a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar, before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and to bring it before the Lord," that "the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat;" but if, as is probable, he went into the holy of holies for this purpose, in the *first* instance, and then came forth that he might bring in the blood of the bullock

"once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people :

8. *The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way*

*n* Exod. xxx. 10 ; Lev. xvi. 2, 11, 12, 15, 34 ; Verse 25.

*o* Heb. v. 3 ; vii. 27. *p* Heb. x. 19, 20. *q* John xiv. 6.

which formed the sin-offering for himself and his family, the force of the Apostle's statement is not impaired. The burning of the incense was only the immediate preparation for the presentation of the blood of atonement which constituted *the object* for which the high priest went at all into that most sacred place. Again he came forth, and slew the goat selected as a sin-offering for the people ; and again he went within the veil with its blood, which also he sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. All this the Apostle recognises when he says of the "blood" of these sacrifices, that the high priest "offered it for himself and for the errors of the people." He solemnly presented the blood of atonement to Jehovah, first of all for himself, as a sinful man, and then for the transgressions of the nation generally. The word *ἀνομιμα*, which the Apostle uses, primarily denotes sins of ignorance, but, as Dean Alford has shown, it is not necessarily restricted to these, but is sometimes used with a much greater latitude of meaning.

Verse 8. *The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, etc.* Here the Apostle points out one great truth which these arrangements of the Jewish tabernacle-service were intended to teach. That truth was, that the provisions for man's redemption were not then complete, and that the way was not then open to that intimate and confiding access to God, to hold satisfying and transforming intercourse with Him, which we now enjoy through Christ. The

into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing :

9. Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, <sup>r</sup>that

r Gal. iii. 21 ; Heb. vii. 18, 19 ; x. 1, 11.

place where Jehovah specially revealed His presence was shut out from the approach, and even from the view, of all but the high priest of Israel; and it was closed to him except on one day in the year, and even then he could only enter it for a few minutes, to sprinkle the blood of atonement. It was in the first apartment of the tabernacle, where there were emblems indeed of the light and the spiritual nourishment which God imparts to His true worshippers, but where the sacred symbol of the Divine presence, which distinguished the holy of holies, did not shine forth, that the daily ministrations of the priestly representatives of the people were carried on. Thus while "the first tabernacle," in the sense already explained, "was yet standing,"—while it *had place*, in the order of the Divine arrangements, with its prescribed course of service,—the highest and most blessed form of worship, involving access to the very throne of God and intimate communion with Him, was not the ordinary privilege of His people.

Verse 9. *Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered etc.* The tabernacle, and especially the first apartment of it, the holy place, is here stated to have had a figurative and symbolical meaning; and the whole system of gifts and sacrifices connected with it is also affirmed to have been prefigurative of something higher and better to be disclosed in the fulness of time. It is the opinion of Delitzsch and Alford, that the phrase, *εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεσθηκότα*, should be rendered "for the

could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience ;

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time now present ;” but most expositors adhere to the translation of our Authorised Version. The phrase itself, we conceive, is one of such latitude as to be applicable to any portion of the whole period during which the services of the tabernacle or temple were going on, including, as the remaining clauses of the verse clearly show, the time in which the Apostle wrote. The more exact rendering appears to be, simply, “the time present.” The sentiment which is here affirmed deserves our careful attention. During the ages through which the tabernacle, with the daily ministrations of the priests, and the daily presentation of the prescribed sacrifices, had place, it constituted a figure suggesting to the thoughtful worshipper a better sacrifice hereafter to be offered, and loftier privileges hereafter to be enjoyed. In the second clause, the reading *καθ’ ἣν*, “according to which,” referring to the word *παραβολή*, “figure,” is now generally adopted, on the authority of the earliest MSS.—The verb, too, which the Apostle uses, *προσφέρονται*, is in the present tense, and should be rendered “are offered ;” and thus, also, the phrase *μη δύναμεναι* in the last clause should be translated “which cannot,” instead of “which could not.” This verse, consequently, forms an additional evidence that the temple-services were still going on when this Epistle was written. The figure which had subsisted through so many past generations still had place.—The last statement of the Apostle, that the sacrifices and offerings referred to were “not able to perfect the worshipper in respect of his conscience,” is very forcible and expressive. These sacrifices restored him, indeed, to ceremonial and relative

10. *Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

*s* Lev. xi. 2; Col. ii. 16.

*t* Numb. xix. 7, etc. *u* Eph. ii. 15; Col. ii. 20; Heb. vii. 16.

|| Or, *rites, or, ceremonies.*

purity; they enabled him to retain his position as one of the covenant-nation, brought into a peculiar relation to God, and waiting for the promised salvation; but they could not, of themselves, take away his guilt and thus bring peace to his conscience, nor could they impart to him inward purity and the joyous hope of eternal life. It was only as the promised Restorer, and the effectual sacrifice which He should offer, were appropriated by *faith*, that the troubled spirit could find rest, and the polluted heart be renewed and sanctified.

Verse 10. *Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, etc.*—Here the Apostle specifies certain features of the religious life and service of the ancient Israelites, which were intimately connected with the tabernacle-worship. An outward and ceremonial purity was maintained by those who observed the Divine requirements; but the law, of itself, provided for nothing more.—It will be observed that the words “which stood” have been supplied by our translators. The original phrase is *μόνον ἐπὶ βρώμασιν*, the correct rendering of which is a matter of great difficulty. Some connect these words with the last clause of the preceding verse, and understand the Apostle to affirm, that the sacrifices in question, while they could not avail to perfect the worshipper in respect of his conscience, could only make him right as to the particulars here mentioned. Others, including Bengel,

11. But Christ being come, <sup>a</sup> High Priest <sup>of</sup>*x* Heb. iii. 1.*y* Heb. x. 1.

Bleek, and De Wette, give to the preposition ἐπί the meaning "together with," and consider that the observances referred to are classed with the gifts and sacrifices spoken of in the preceding verse. This appears to be the preferable view.—In the best critical editions of the New Testament, the word δικαίωμα is now adopted instead of δικαιώμασιν, on the authority of some early MSS. It is the preferable form, as being in apposition with ἐνώμα τε καὶ θυσίαι in the preceding verse, and as that with which ἐπιτίθειμενα, in the following clause, agrees. The Apostle marks the whole system of gifts and sacrifices prescribed under the law, together with the ceremonial observances of which he had just spoken, as *ordinances of the flesh*, which could not reach to the deeper wants of the human spirit, or restore it to inward purity.—The last expression μέχρι καιροῦ διορθώσεως, which we render "until the time of reformation," is very significant and beautiful. It marks the introduction of an economy under which man would be fully brought into a *right relation* to God and a *right state* towards Him.

Verse 11. *But Christ being come, a High Priest of good things to come, etc.* The Apostle now passes to the priestly ministration of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, contrasting it with the ministration of the Levitical high priests, and showing both its transcendent excellence, and the vast superiority of the blessings which it confers. The name of our Lord which he selects at this point of his argument, "But *Christ* being come," is, as Dean Alford has observed, the most appropriate and forcible that could have been employed. It is "the name which carries with

good things to come, "by a greater and more perfect

≈ Heb. viii. 2.

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it the fulfilment of all type and prophecy;" while the word combined with it, "being come," refers not simply to the fact of our Lord's coming into the world, but to the whole course of His earthly history, terminating in His entrance upon His priestly functions in the heavenly sanctuary.—The clause which follows, "a High Priest of good things to come," or rather "as High Priest of the good things to come," marks the connection of our Lord's priestly ministration with the bestowment of those higher blessings which were prefigured under the law, and held forth as objects of hope. The Apostle had just spoken of "the time of reformation," when a higher economy should be introduced, under which man should be made right with God,—not only restored to His favour, but consecrated to His service; and now he affirms that Christ has come to introduce this economy, and in the continual exercise of His priesthood to dispense its spiritual blessings. The sentiment of this clause thus corresponds to that of viii. 6, in which the excellence of our Lord's priestly ministration is illustrated by the superiority of the covenant of which He is the Mediator, and the "better promises" which it holds forth and assures to us.—The interpretation of the last clause of this verse has, in every age, been felt to involve considerable difficulty. The most exact and literal rendering of it is, "*through* the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation." Among the various methods of exposition that have been advanced, there are two which seem to take the lead. Some, as Calvin, Bengel, and Owen, understand it of our Lord's own human nature, and

tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

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especially of His sacred body; while others, as Tholuck, Bleek, De Wette, and Stier, explain it as referring to the lower regions of the heavens, through which our Lord passed in ascending to that highest and most sacred place where the Father's presence is revealed. In endeavouring to decide on the true import of the Apostle's language, we must bear in mind that he draws a contrast between the thing here spoken of,—whatever it was,—and the first apartment of the ancient tabernacle *through which* the high priest of Israel passed, as he went, on the day of atonement, into the holy of holies. To the analogy thus suggested we must keep as close as the facts of the case will allow. Nor should we overlook the circumstance, that in an earlier passage of the Epistle, where the Apostle presents a general view of our Lord's priesthood, before unfolding that great theme in detail, (iv. 14—16,) he notes, as an important circumstance, that "He has *passed through* the heavens." These considerations seem powerfully to support the latter of the two methods of interpretation above mentioned. On the other hand, it seems essential that, if any region is referred to, that region, like the first apartment of the tabernacle, should be *a place of holy worship*. May we not, then, understand the Apostle as having in view some portion of the heavenly regions *leading immediately* to that august spot where the throne of "the Majesty on high" is fixed,—in which portion of the heavenly regions the angelic hosts, or some of them, at least, offer their worship to Jehovah?—Of this "greater and more perfect tabernacle" the Apostle affirms that it is "not made with hands, that is, not of this creation."

12. Neither <sup>a</sup>by the blood of goats and calves, but

<sup>a</sup> Heb. x. 4.

Thus he places it in contrast with the Jewish tabernacle, and carrying our views still further, he teaches us that it belongs not to this earthly system, but to the world above, where all is pure, and spiritual, and glorious.

Verse 12. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, etc.* Here the Apostle proceeds to fix attention on the great distinction of our Lord's priestly ministration, and that which shows its surpassing dignity and efficacy. He presents to the Father *His own perfect sacrifice*. The Jewish high priests went into the holy of holies "through the blood of goats and calves," which could not, in itself, possess any saving virtue; but He has gone into heaven "through His own blood," and His intercession is founded on that effectual and all-availing atonement which He accomplished when on Calvary He bowed His head in death.—He, too, has entered into the holy place above "once for all." It was only for a very short time, on one day in the year, that the high priest of Israel stood within the veil; but Jesus *abides* in the heavenly sanctuary. His priestly ministration is continuous and unchanging. For no further act of expiation is necessary. The sacrifice of Himself which He presents has availed to meet all the necessities of our case, and to effect a redemption which endures throughout eternity. On this sentiment the Apostle dwells with holy interest, connecting this perfect and everlasting redemption with the solemn presentation of our Lord's sacrifice in heaven:—"through His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." It should be borne in mind, that the entrance of the high

<sup>b</sup>by His own blood, He entered in 'once into the holy place, <sup>d</sup>having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

13. For if 'the blood of bulls and of goats, and <sup>f</sup>the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

*b* Acts xx, 28; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. i. 5; v. 9.

*c* Verses 26, 28; Zech. iii. 9; Heb. x. 10.

*d* Dan. ix. 24.

*e* Lev. xvi. 14, 16.

*f* Numb. xix. 2, 17, etc.

priest into the holy of holies with the blood of the appointed victims was, in an important sense, the *completion* of the act of atonement. And thus, also, the entrance of our blessed Lord with His own perfect sacrifice into the heavenly sanctuary had an important relation to our salvation. That sacrifice, indeed, was complete and finished when He expired upon the cross. But the order of the Divine government required that He should Himself present that sacrifice in the very place where the Eternal Father reveals His glory, and thence bestow on us the inestimable blessings of a spiritual and everlasting redemption.

Verses 13, 14. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, etc.* In these verses the Apostle dwells with sacred exultation on the *efficacy* of the sacrifice of Christ, placing it in contrast with the typical sacrifices offered under the law. In the use of the phrase, "the blood of bulls and of goats," he alludes to the victims presented by the high priest on the great day of atonement. When he mentions "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean," he refers to the ordinance established for the purification of persons who had contracted defilement. A

## 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ,

*g* 1 Pet. i. 19 ; 1 John i. 7 ; Rev. i. 5.

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red heifer, without spot or blemish, and one on which no yoke had ever come, was to be presented by the whole congregation and slain as a sin-offering. Her blood was to be sprinkled, by the priest, seven times before the tabernacle of the congregation ; and then the whole heifer was to be burnt with fire. Her ashes were to be carefully gathered up, and preserved in a clean place ; and a portion of them being mixed with running water formed the water of separation, to be used as a purification for sin. When any one, therefore, had become defiled, so as to be unfit to enter into the tabernacle of the Lord, he was, on a given day after that circumstance, to be sprinkled with the water of separation ; and if he neglected thus to purify himself, he exposed himself to Divine judgments.—But these sacrifices, the Apostle teaches us, and this sprinkling with the water of separation, could only avail to “the purifying of the flesh.” The utmost which these services, in themselves, could effect, was to restore individuals, or the congregation generally, to a state of *ceremonial* and *relative* purity. Whatever spiritual blessings were received, under the ancient economy, were received through faith in the coming Saviour, and in the promises of God in Him. But “the blood of Christ” can avail to take away every stain of guilt, and thus to give repose to the troubled conscience ; and through it the consecrating grace of the Spirit may descend upon us so as to fill our souls with spiritual affections, and render our whole life one of sacred service to God.

In no passage of the New Testament is the great doctrine of *the sacrifice of Christ* more clearly or fully

<sup>k</sup> who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself

<sup>k</sup> Rom. i. 4 ; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

<sup>i</sup> Eph. v. 2 ; Tit. ii. 14 ; Heb. vii. 27.

set forth than in this. The very expression, "the *blood* of Christ," placed as it is in contrast with the blood of the victims offered on the day of atonement, implies that doctrine; and it is further brought out in the statement, that our blessed Lord "*offered Himself* without spot to God." The death of Jesus is thus spoken of as having an *important relation to the principles and acts of the Divine government*. It was not merely an impressive example of self-sacrifice, designed to act on the selfish heart of man, and to win it back to allegiance to God and the love of that which is pure and good: it was a sacrifice offered to God, as that through which the transgressions of men might be remitted, and a new spiritual life be imparted to the soul that was dead in trespasses and sins.—Some of the characteristics of the sacrifice of Christ are also marked in this passage. The Lord Jesus was a *spotless* and *perfect* Victim. His humanity was ever free from the least stain of defilement; and His whole earthly career had been one of devotion to the Father, and of unmingled purity and goodness. He had established a perfect human righteousness; and thus, when the crisis of the mediatorial scheme arrived, He "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The *voluntary* character of our Lord's sacrifice is also emphatically affirmed. Thoughtfully and deliberately He yielded up Himself to death, with all its attendant circumstances of shame and suffering, that He might accomplish the Father's counsel, and effect the redemption of mankind. As the High Priest of the new economy, He "*offered Himself* without spot to God;" and, having on the cross made a

without ||spot to God, <sup>k</sup>purge your conscience from  
'dead works <sup>m</sup>to serve the living God ?

|| Or, *fault.* <sup>k</sup> Heb. i. 3 ; x. 22.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. vi. 1. <sup>m</sup> Luke i. 74 ; Rom. vi. 13, 22 ; 1 Pet. iv. 2.

complete atonement, He has gone with His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary. And the Apostle, to mark the surpassing *dignity* and *value* of this sacrifice, shows that there was in it the combined action of our Lord's Divine nature and His sanctified human spirit. In common with many of the best expositors, we regard the phrase, "the eternal Spirit," like the similar one, "the Spirit of holiness," in Rom. i. 4, as referring to our Lord's Divine nature, and thus suggesting the truth which we have just indicated. Some, indeed, contend that it should be understood of the Holy Spirit; but if this had been the Apostle's meaning, the probability is that he would have used one of the phrases which explicitly designate the Holy Ghost. And in so important a passage on the subject of the Redeemer's sacrifice, it was most natural and appropriate that there should be a distinct reference to the personal dignity of Him who died for our redemption, as uniting in Himself the Divine nature with our weak and suffering humanity. It was this which gave to His sacrifice its peculiar virtue, and rendered it a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world.

Such, then, is the sacrifice which the Lord Jesus, in His priestly ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, presents on behalf of men. And this, the Apostle teaches us, can avail to "purge our conscience from dead works." The last phrase is most comprehensive and expressive. It includes all works which belong to *the state of spiritual death*,—not only works openly and flagrantly sinful, but

15. "And for this cause <sup>o</sup>He is the Mediator of the new testament, <sup>p</sup>that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the

<sup>n</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. vii. 22 ; viii. 6 ; xii. 24.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. iii. 25 ; v. 6 ; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

those also which may appear fair and good to the world, but which are marked by the utter absence of spiritual life, and cannot, therefore, be acceptable to God. The guilt of all past sin is cancelled when the sacrifice of Jesus is appropriated by faith; and the conscience, relieved of its load, is filled with holy peace. And now the forgiven sinner, being renewed by the Holy Ghost, enters upon a course of *sacred service*. His worship is no longer cold, formal, dead: it is pervaded by the warm, though reverent, affections which belong to a child of God. His whole deportment and conduct, also, assume a new and higher character. He becomes a consecrated man; and, realising by faith the things that are unseen and eternal, he seeks continually to please God, and to show forth His glory.

Verse 15. *And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, etc.* There is obviously an intimate connection between the sentiment of this verse and the great truth on which the Apostle had just dwelt,—the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. That connection he himself intimates by the opening phrase, *καὶ διὰ τοῦτο*, "and on this account." The idea is, that inasmuch as the Lord Jesus has offered *such a sacrifice*,—one which can avail to purge the conscience from dead works, and to raise man to a state in which his whole life shall be one of sacred service to God,—"*He is the Mediator of the new covenant*," which far transcends the old covenant in its privileges and hopes. The word "new" is placed by the Apostle in an emphatic

first testament, <sup>g</sup>they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

*g* Heb. iii. 1.

position; and his remark recalls the statement in viii. 6, and the whole course of reasoning by which that statement is borne out.—We defer, until the note on the two following verses, the consideration of the question, whether the word *διαθήκη*, throughout this passage, should be rendered “covenant” or “testament.” It may be assumed as certain, that if *this* verse had stood alone, it would have been translated “covenant,” just as in the eighth chapter, the sentiments of which are here recalled. Even Dean Alford, who in verses 16—20 adopts the rendering “testament,” is constrained to translate *διαθήκη* in *this* verse by the term “covenant.”—But the Apostle, while he makes prominent the blessings which *now* accrue to those who accept the Divine counsel, and come into God’s scheme of grace in Christ, adverts also to the bearing of the great propitiatory sacrifice on the ages that preceded it. It was through that sacrifice, announced beforehand, and typified by the rites of the patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, that penitent and devout men, throughout those ages, who looked forward to it, and placed their hope on it alone, were accepted and saved. And now all who listen to the gracious call of God, and become the avowed people of Christ, receive the promise of an inheritance which shall endure for ever, and the joys of which shall never fade away. All spiritual blessings are thus connected with *the accomplished fact of the Saviour’s death*. Its efficacy reached back to former generations; and it forms the ground of an everlasting salvation to all who now embrace the Divine overtures of mercy.

16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity || be the death of the testator.

|| Or, *be brought in.*

Verses 16, 17. *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force etc.* One of the most perplexing questions connected with the exposition of this Epistle, relates to the proper interpretation of these verses. Authorities are about equally divided between the two renderings of the term *διαθήκη*, "covenant" and "testament;" and whichever of them is adopted, the structure of the passage, and its position in the Apostle's argument, involve difficulties. If, indeed, these verses were severed from the context, and viewed without reference to the general use of terms in this Epistle, the preference must be given to the rendering "testament," and the sentiment of the passage be held to be that conveyed in the Authorised Version. But two great and almost insuperable difficulties stand in the way of our adopting this view. In the first place, throughout chapter viii. the Apostle clearly uses *διαθήκη* in the sense of "covenant;" that sense, also, it seems unquestionably to bear in the verse immediately preceding; and, as Dr. Pyc Smith properly remarks, to understand it here as referring to a testamentary disposition, is to suppose that the Apostle "quits abruptly the former sense in which he had always before applied it, but returns to that sense immediately after, and never again departs from it." "Such a way of dealing with language," Dr. Smith adds, "cannot but appear very extraordinary, and nothing but inextricable necessity could justify us in imputing it to any good writer." The second consideration to which we have alluded, and one to which great importance is to be

17. For *τ*a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

*r* Gal. iii. 15.

attached, is, that when the Apostle comes to *apply* the principle laid down in these verses, he does not speak of *any testator* as *dying*, in order to the passing over of an inheritance, but of the *ratification* of God's covenant with the people of Israel by the offering of sacrifice, and the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant-victims.

These considerations seem to require us to adopt the rendering "covenant" throughout the passage. But on this plan, the expression *ὁ διαθήμενος*, which is rendered in our Version "the testator," must be understood as meaning "the covenant-sacrifice." This is an unusual sense, but it appears to be an admissible one; and perhaps the choice of the term may be accounted for on the ground, that in the ultimate application of the Apostle's argument, the Lord Jesus is Himself the covenant-Victim. So, too, the phrase *ἐπὶ νεκροῖς*, which we translate "when men are dead," must be rendered, "over dead victims;" and if this application of the term *νεκροῖς* is an uncommon one, it may be alleged, on the other hand, that the force of the preposition *ἐπὶ* is far more fully brought out in this translation than in the one opposed to it. The argument of the Apostle appears to be the following. He had just affirmed, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of the efficacy of His sacrifice to take away the guilt of sin, and to consecrate man to the Divine service, is the Mediator of the *new* covenant; and then he proceeds to concentrate attention on the *accomplished* fact of His *death*—*θανάτου γενομένου* (v. 15)—as that through which transgression is really

18. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.*

s Exod. xxiv. 6, etc.

|| Or, *purified*.

expiated, the efficacy of which reaches back to former ages, and which now gives to all who listen to the Divine call and accept the Divine counsel the assurance of an eternal inheritance. Then, recalling the fact, that a covenant between God and man rests on sacrifice, and can only be ratified and confirmed by sacrifice, he speaks of the Lord Jesus as the covenant-Victim, whose death was essential to the validity of the gracious engagements into which God now enters with man. We adopt, then, the following rendering of these difficult verses: "For where a covenant is, it is necessary that the death of the covenant-sacrifice be brought in. For a covenant is of force over slain victims: seeing that it is not of binding force while the covenant-sacrifice is alive."

Verse 18. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.* In this and the two following verses the Apostle adduces an illustration of the principle which he had just laid down, derived from the ratification of the first covenant,—the covenant which God made with Israel in the wilderness. To this covenant he had referred in chapter viii., quoting a passage from the prophet Jeremiah, in which it was placed in contrast with the new and better covenant which should be introduced in the fulness of time. To it, also, he had alluded in verse 15; and now he affirms that it *has been inaugurated* (*ἐγχεκαίνισται*) by the sprinkling of sacrificial blood. It was thus that it was brought in, and solemnly recognised and accepted as binding.

Verses 19, 20. *For when Moses had spoken every precept*

19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, 'he took the blood of calves and of goats, "with water, and ||scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

*t* Exod. xxiv. 5, 6, 8 ; Lev. xvi. 14, 15, 18.

*u* Lev. xiv. 4, 6, 7, 49, 51, 52.      || Or, *purple*.

*to all the people according to the law, he took the blood etc.* The historical facts here mentioned are taken, in substance, from Exod. xxiv. 3—8. Before Moses went up into the mount, to receive explicit instructions as to the tabernacle which he was to form, he called upon the people of Israel solemnly to enter into covenant with God. He read to them not only the ten commandments issued from Sinai, but the other injunctions which God had already given through him, and the observance of which was to distinguish them as the covenant-nation; and they deliberately avowed their earnest purpose to obey all the Divine requirements. The priesthood of the order of Aaron was not then instituted; but "Moses sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled upon the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." The Apostle has mentioned two or three circumstances which are not expressly stated in the original narrative. He specifies calves and goats as

20. Saying, *“This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.*

*æ* Exod. xxiv. 8; Matt. xxvi. 28.

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the animals offered; and there can be no question that these animals were included in the burnt offerings and the peace-offerings spoken of in Exodus. He affirms, too, that Moses used scarlet wool and hyssop in sprinkling the blood of the sacrifices: on which Dr. Lindsay well remarks, “There can be no doubt that Moses used some instrument to sprinkle the blood and water, as it was a very extensive sprinkling, such as his finger could not well have effected; and it is plain from Levit. xiv. 4—7, 51, and Exodus xii. 7, 22, that a bunch of hyssop with scarlet wool was commonly employed for this purpose.” Still further, the Apostle mentions the sprinkling of the book from which Moses read to the people the Divine precepts. On this point, too, we may quote the observations of Dr. Lindsay: —“It is not difficult to see that the sprinkling of the book is, in itself, an exceedingly probable and appropriate circumstance. The book was to be viewed as in some sense the representative of God in the covenant; it embraced the conditions He laid down; and seeing the people as one party were sprinkled, there was an evident propriety that the book should be sprinkled too. Moreover, where did Moses lay the book when not actually reading it? He could not hold it in his hand, for the vessel containing the blood and the instrument of sprinkling would fill both his hands. Where else would he lay the book but upon the altar, of which he tells us that half the blood was poured upon it? All the circumstances, therefore, mentioned by the Apostle are highly probable in themselves, as deductions from the Mosaic narrative; and

21. Moreover <sup>y</sup> he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

*y* Exod. xxix. 12, 36; Lev. viii. 15, 19; xvi. 14, 15, 16, 18, 19.

doubtless they were currently believed among the Jews at the time, either as inferences from Scripture, or as well-authenticated traditions. Probably there were many other traditions floating in society which had no historical basis to rest upon; but the Apostle's intimate acquaintance with Scripture, and his inspiration, would completely shield him from the danger of taking up any current notion that was not founded in truth and fact."

Verse 21. *Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, etc.* This statement refers to a different occasion from that of which the Apostle had just spoken, and introduces a new point in his argument,—that even the place which was specially set apart for Divine worship, with the various articles of furniture belonging to it, needed to be sprinkled with sacrificial blood. The covenant, as we have seen, was entered into before Moses received his instructions relative to the structure and arrangements of the tabernacle; and now the Apostle comes to the time when the tabernacle was erected, and was to be solemnly dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, and when Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated to the priestly office. The account of these transactions is given in Levit. viii. In the case of the tabernacle, Moses does not expressly mention that it was sprinkled with blood, but only that it, and all the vessels belonging to it, were anointed with the holy anointing oil. He does, however, state, that he took the blood of the sin-offering which he presented on that occasion, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and purified the altar, and that he afterwards

## 22. And almost all things are by the law purged

sprinkled the blood of the burnt offering upon the altar round about; and he further mentions that he took of "the blood which was upon the altar,"—the blood, as it would appear, of the ram of consecration,—“and sprinkled it upon Aaron and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons’ garments with him; and sanctified Aaron and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him.” (v. 30.) All this may well lead us to conclude, that the tabernacle and all its vessels were likewise sprinkled with blood; and the statement of the Apostle to this effect expressed the general belief of the Jewish people. This is evident from a passage in Josephus, *Antiq.* iii. 8, 6, in which he affirms, as the Apostle does, that Moses, in dedicating the tabernacle and its furniture, sprinkled them with blood, as he did Aaron and his sons, as well as anointed them with oil. All that was set apart for the worship of God by sinful men needed to be sprinkled with the blood of atonement, that the Holy One might come into fellowship with His polluted creatures.

Verse 22. *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; etc.* Here the Apostle advances to a general principle which pervaded the arrangements of the ancient economy,—that the blood of animal sacrifices was the appointed means of cleansing persons and things from pollution, and rendering them fit for the service of God. This statement is borne out by the entire tenor of the Mosaic legislation. The few exceptions recognised by the law, such as those adverted to in *Levit.* xv. 5, xxii. 6, are amply provided for in the word *σχεδόν*, “almost.”—And now there follows the emphatic statement, that it was a principle of universal application, that “without the

with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23. *It was therefore necessary that "the patterns*

*z Lev. xvii. 11.*

*a Heb. viii. 5.*

shedding of blood there is no remission." This was a grand feature of the arrangements of God with man in his fallen state. There is sufficient evidence that expiatory sacrifices were instituted by God immediately after the fall, and that they were offered during the patriarchal age. Under the law, they were explicitly prescribed; and no one who neglected them could hope to attain the remission of sins, or to gain access to the Most High. A peculiar sacredness was on this ground attached to blood; and hence the eating of blood was absolutely prohibited under the severest penalty. For after Jehovah had declared, "I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people," He added, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Levit. xvii. 10, 11.)

Verse 23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens etc.* The Apostle now comes to the application of the principles which he had just laid down. From the earthly sanctuary sprinkled with sacrificial blood, and from the sin-offerings again and again presented, he raises our minds to the heavenly sanctuary, and the constant presentation there of the true and perfect sacrifice of Christ. He designates the ancient tabernacle, and especially the holy of holies, "the patterns of things in the heavens," thus recalling the sentiment which he had expressed in viii. 5, and affirming it, if possible, in still

of things in the heavens should be purified with

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stronger terms. That most sacred spot where Jehovah revealed His presence between the cherubim over the ark of the covenant, and where, on the day of atonement, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the appointed victims, was the type of heaven, where the very throne of God—the seat of His moral administration—is established.—There is a difficulty, which has been felt by all thoughtful expositors, in the application of the verb καθαρίζεσθαι, “to be purified” to the heavenly world. That verb, indeed, occurs only in the former member of the sentence; but it is related also to the latter member; and the question arises, In what sense “the heavenly places” can be said to be purified? The solution of this difficulty proposed by Dr. Delitzsch, in which Dean Alford ultimately acquiesces, is as follows:—“If I see aright, the meaning of the writer is, in its ground thought, this: the supernal holiest place, *i.e.*, as verse 24 shows, the uncreated eternal heaven of God, although in itself untroubled light, yet needed a purification in so far as the light of Love towards man was, so to speak, outflared and obscured by the fire of wrath against sinful man; and the heavenly tabernacle, *i.e.*, the place of God’s revealing of His majesty and grace for angels and men, needed a purification, in so far as men had rendered this place, which was destined for them from the beginning, unapproachable by reason of their sin, and so it must be changed into an approachable place of manifestation of a God gracious to men.” But this solution is open to one very grave objection. It seems to imply that in God’s wrath, as directed against sinful men, there was something which obscured the glory, and even impaired the purity, of the heavenly sanctuary. But that wrath is *holy*, as well

these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24. For <sup>a</sup>Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of <sup>c</sup>the true;

*b* Heb. vi. 20.

*c* Heb. viii. 2.

as His love: it is, indeed, a manifestation of the absolute holiness and perfection of His character. It is better, we conceive, to fall back on the solution adopted by Luther, Calvin, Ebrard, and others, that the verb in question, which is not repeated in the second clause, applies to that clause only in a *partial* and *modified* sense. The sentiment of the Apostle appears to be, that as the holy of holies on earth needed to be purified, with the blood of the appointed victims, from the defilement which the presence of man as a sinner might impart to it, so as to become the place whence God might shine forth in grace upon His people, so the heavenly sanctuary itself needed to be sprinkled, as it were, with the blood of a far higher sacrifice, that it might become accessible to sinful man, and that from it spiritual blessings, in all their amplitude and fulness, might be dispensed.

Verse 24. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, etc.* Here the Apostle dwells, with manifest interest, on the priestly ministration of our Lord as carried on in the heavenly sanctuary, of which the holy of holies on earth was only a figure; and shows us that by the constant presentation of His own perfect sacrifice to the Father,—a sacrifice which infinitely transcends the sacrifices offered under the law,—He has opened the way for us to come unto God, and to attain a perfect and everlasting salvation. The original of the last clause, *νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*, is very

but into heaven itself, now <sup>d</sup>to appear in the presence of God for us :

25. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as ‘the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others ;

*d* Rom. viii. 34 ; Heb. vii. 25 ; 1 John ii. 1.

*e* Verse 7.

remarkable, and certainly conveys a much stronger sentiment than the rendering of it in our Authorised Version. It may be literally translated, as by Dean Alford, “ now to be manifested to the face of God for us ;” and it suggests the ineffably intimate access of our High Priest to the Eternal Father. The high priest of Israel, on the day of atonement, might not attempt minutely to gaze on the Shekinah, but amidst the smoke of burning incense stood, for a short time, within the holy of holies, just while he sprinkled the blood of atonement. But Jesus, who has gone into the heavenly sanctuary as our Priestly Representative, draws near to the very “ face ” of God ; and His perfect sacrifice, ever presented on our behalf, is regarded by the Father with absolute complacency, and is recognised as the sufficient ground of blessing and salvation to mankind.

Verses 25, 26. *Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest etc.* Another contrast between the ministration of our Lord in heaven, and the ministration of the Jewish high priests, is here dwelt upon. The sacrifice that He presents is one that needs no repetition, but which, in virtue of its completeness and its unfailing efficacy, forms the ground of blessing and salvation to mankind in every age. Had it been requisite for that sacrifice to be renewed, it would have been necessary, the apostle argues,

26. For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *for* once *in* the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

*f* Verse 12; Heb. vii. 27; x. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

*g* 1 Cor. x. 11; Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10.

for the Lord Jesus to have again and again appeared on earth, from the very earliest period, and again and again to have suffered death. In every age since the fall the Divine government has proceeded upon the ground of an expiation to be offered for sin; and if it had not been sufficient for that expiation to be made once for all, then must the Redeemer have passed repeatedly through the bitterness of death. But it was not so. His one sacrifice of Himself offered in "the fulness of the time," when the ages that were to precede the full unfolding of the Divine counsel had reached their close, sufficed to meet all the claims of the Divine administration, and to provide for all the wants of men. The argument of the Apostle clearly recognises the truth, that the efficacy of our Lord's atonement went back to former ages, and that it will continue until the very end of time. All spiritual blessing was, from the first, conferred on men through it, foreseen and predetermined; and now that it has been actually offered, it forms the ground of a perfect salvation to all who rely on it alone. For the Redeemer was manifested "for the putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself." The phrase which the Apostle has selected to express the purpose of the sacrifice of the cross, *εις ἀθέτησιν ἁμαρτίας*, is comprehensive and forcible. It includes the cancelling of the guilt of sin; and it includes, also, the breaking down of its dominion, the setting it aside as a power which con-

27. <sup>2</sup>And as it is appointed unto men once to die, <sup>1</sup>but after this the judgment :

*h* Gen. iii. 19 ; Eccles. iii. 20.     *i* 2 Cor. v. 10 ; Rev. xx. 12, 13.

trolled and tyrannised over man. Thus does it mark the grand features of that salvation which Christ bestows, and which is to be consummated in the perfect deliverance of our nature from all the consequences and effects of sin.

Verses 27, 28. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered etc.* Here the Apostle traces an analogy between the Divine appointment in regard to the great crisis of death which is before all men, to be followed by judgment and retribution, and the Divine appointment in respect of Him who stood as our Representative and Substitute. The term ἀπόκειται, which he employs in the first part of the sentence, is very expressive. It implies that there is *laid up* for all men, as the result of a fixed arrangement of God, once to die. To that great change, to be gone through once for all, every thoughtful man looks forward as certain and inevitable; and he knows, too, that that change will terminate his state of probation, and leave only its solemn issue. For after death is "judgment." The stroke which terminates our earthly course transfers the spirit to a state of retribution, whether of happiness or woe; and there will come at last the public and solemn judgment of mankind by Him who is now enthroned as the Mediatorial Sovereign. Even so, the Apostle affirms, Christ once for all submitted to death as the Representative of our sinful race: but that death completed the work of atonement, and severed His relation to sin. No more penal suffering remains to be undergone by Him; but there is before Him the consummation of His triumph,

28. So <sup>k</sup>Christ was once <sup>l</sup>offered to bear the sins <sup>m</sup>of many; and unto them that <sup>n</sup>look for Him shall

<sup>k</sup> Rom. vi. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 18.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 John iii. 5.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xxvi. 28; Rom. v. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Titus ii. 13; 2 Peter iii. 12.

when He shall appear in glory, and shall raise all who have looked for Him as their Redeemer and their Lord, and whose constant effort has been to be ready for His coming, to a state of perfect and everlasting salvation. The language in which these ideas are conveyed will amply repay careful and earnest attention. The Apostle speaks of the Lord Jesus as offered "to bear the sins of many." There is an obvious allusion in this phrase to the predictions of Isaiah in liii. 4—6, 12; and, indeed, in the verse last mentioned, the very words used by the Apostle are found,—“He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” No language could have been employed more forcibly to represent the character and purpose of the death of the Lord Jesus. Though Himself pure and spotless, He took the place of the guilty, and our sins pressed upon Him as if they had been His own. He, too, “bare the sins of many:” He stood as the Representative of the whole sinful race, sustaining in His own Person the penalty of sin, so as to open to all who will come to Him the way of salvation and life. But He will come the second time “without sin,” *χωρίς ἁμαρτίας*. It would be to lose the deep significance of this phrase, if we regarded it as simply implying that when He comes again it will *not* be to offer Himself as a sin-offering. It conveys a far more profound and precious truth. It affirms that in His present state of exaltation, and as He will at last appear again, *He has done with sin. His relation*

He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

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*to it was severed when He died upon the cross.* This is an idea which the Apostle Paul clearly and beautifully brings out in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:—“In that He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.” As the Representative of our race, He “bare the sins of many;” the pressure of our guilt was upon Him; but when He exclaimed, “It is finished,” and bowed His head in death, the atonement was wrought out; and when He rose again, there was before Him no penal suffering. And now, as we look up to Him, the enthroned High Priest of the Christian economy, we rejoice in the thought, that all His humiliation is over, and that He only waits for the consummation of His triumph in the perfect salvation of all who trust in Him and desire His coming.

## CHAPTER X.

I. FOR the law having "a shadow <sup>b</sup> of good things<sup>a</sup> Col. ii. 17; Heb. viii. 5; ix. 23.<sup>b</sup> Heb. ix. 11.

## CHAPTER X.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN unfolding the priestly ministration of the Lord Jesus in the heavenly world, the Apostle had been led to contrast His one perfect offering of Himself, which He ever presents to the Father, with the often repeated sacrifices which the high priests of Israel offered, year after year, when the great day of expiation came round. On this theme he still lingers, pointing out, on the one hand, the *inefficacy* of the Jewish sacrifices to take away sins, and to restore men to inward purity, and affirming, on the other, that these objects have been provided for, according to the counsel and purpose of the Father, by the coming of the Eternal Son into our world, clothed with our nature, to render a perfect human obedience, and to offer Himself in death as the sacrifice for our sins. That one offering of Himself avails for ever; and now, all suffering being over, He looks forward to the completion of His triumph, in the perfect redemption of His people and the overthrow of His enemies. The absolute perfection and sufficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ, so that it can never need to be supplemented by any other, and must, indeed, exclude every other, are inferred from the promises of forgiveness and inward purity which distinguish the new and better covenant established through it.

to come, *and* not the very image of the things, <sup>c</sup>can

<sup>c</sup> Heb. ix. 9.

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And now the Apostle, having completed his exposition of our Lord's priesthood, and of the transcendent excellence of His sacrifice, founds a series of appeals on the great truths which He had brought out. He exhorts the believing Hebrews to habitual and confiding access to God through Christ,—to the firm retention and open confession of their hope,—and to the cultivation of affectionate intercourse with each other, that intercourse being directed to the increase of their love and their establishment in universal holiness. These exhortations he enforces by the consideration, that if the sacrifice of Christ is rejected, after its efficacy has been experienced, no other sacrifice for sin remains, but only visitations of judgment the most terrific and overwhelming. Then, in a strain of tender affection blended with fidelity, he calls upon the Hebrew Christians to remember the sufferings which they had endured in former days through their attachment to the Lord Jesus, and encourages them to hold fast the confidence which then sustained them. That which was necessary, on their part, was perseverance, the result of a strong and abiding faith. Before them lay the glories of a perfect salvation, and a participation in Christ's eternal triumph; and if only they maintained their faith, and continued steadfast in a course of obedience to God and patient submission to His will, they would realise, in its fulness, the great promise of eternal life. If, however, they relinquished their faith, and drew back from the path of holy obedience, they would forfeit the Divine favour, and sink into eternal woe. Such a result the Apostle deprecates; and, with affectionate confidence in

never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto <sup>d</sup>perfect.

*d* Verse 14.

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the Hebrew Christians, expresses his conviction that they would persevere in faith and attain everlasting salvation.

Verse 1. *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, etc.* In this and the following verses, the Apostle enlarges on the inefficacy of the sacrifices offered under the Levitical economy, and, in particular, of those which were presented, under circumstances of the greatest solemnity, on the day of atonement. He points out the general character of the Mosaic legislation, as far as it related to the ordinances of Divine worship. It gave the hope, indeed, of "the good things to come," of the privileges and blessings to be enjoyed under the perfect economy of the gospel; but it only afforded vague and shadowy intimations of them, and not a clear and exact representation. It did not fully and accurately unfold the Divine counsel for the salvation of man, nor the lofty state of spiritual life and power to which all who should embrace the Saviour should be raised. This was reserved for the dispensation to be established when the promised Restorer should have come into our world, and wrought out the redemption of mankind. The expression, "the good things to come," is used with reference to the statement in ix. 11, and the general argument of chapter viii.—Now of the law the Apostle affirms, that the sacrifices which it prescribed to be offered, year by year, were utterly unavailing to raise those for whom they were presented to a state of forgiveness and entire consecration to God. The phrase, "year by year" which the Apostle

2. For then || would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

|| Or, *they would have ceased to be offered, because etc.*

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puts into a position of prominence, shows that he has in view specially the sacrifices of the day of atonement, while it marks the continued repetition of these sacrifices, on which he proceeds to found an argument to show their want of spiritual efficacy. The word *τελειῶσαι*, "to make perfect," conveys the same idea as *τελειώσει* in vii. 11. It points to that state of peace with God and inward purity for which our nature has been formed, and in which only it can find the satisfaction of its deepest wants. It is when man walks in the light of God's countenance, and enjoys habitual fellowship with Him,—when, too, his whole nature is hallowed to the Divine service, and his energies are called forth in a course of obedience to the Divine will,—that he attains his true moral position, and realises his proper blessedness.

Verses 2, 3. *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers etc.* The position which the Apostle assumes in these verses is, that the very arrangement which required that, under all circumstances, the sacrifices of the day of atonement should be annually repeated, showed that none of them could really avail to effect a spiritual redemption. If, he argues, they had been effectual to purge away the guilt and pollution of those on whose behalf they were presented, these might have so stood in the state of freedom from condemnation and entire dedication to God, as not to need their repetition, which, however, was yet expressly enjoined. In the yearly offering of these sacrifices there was a distinct and vivid calling

3. 'But in those *sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

4. For *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

*e* Lev. xvi. 21; Heb. ix. 7.

*f* Micah vi. 6, 7; Heb. ix. 13; Verse 11.

to mind of sins as needing expiation. As often as the day of atonement came round, its solemn services implied the presence of guilt on the part of the covenant-people. The sacrifices of that great day pointed, therefore, to a coming redemption, instead of providing for the actual remission of sin and the entire consecration of men to the Divine service.

Dr. W. Lindsay contends that the argument of the Apostle in the second verse implies, that individuals who have once obtained the benefit of an efficient sacrifice "are placed in a position of security. Their sins are for ever pardoned. Once for all they are purged from guilt; and if they have a right view of their state, they can no more be agonised with the consciousness of sin." But it is straining the Apostle's language to regard him as affirming that *all* who experience forgiveness shall never again be involved in guilt. Such a sentiment is obviously at variance with the solemn warnings which he gives in verses 26—31, 38, 39, of the present chapter, which clearly imply that they who have truly believed in Christ may be brought by various influences to give up that faith, and even openly to deny the Saviour, and may thus stand exposed to eternal rejection.

Verse 4. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* Here the Apostle states the *ground* of the inefficacy of the sacrifices offered by the

## 5. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He

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high priests of Israel on the day of atonement. There was an inherent want of virtue in them. The blood of bulls and of goats, considered simply in itself, could never avail to cancel the guilt of a far higher being, endowed with a spiritual nature, and invested with moral responsibility. It was only as that blood typified a nobler sacrifice to be offered in the fulness of time, that it could be acceptable to Jehovah; and it was when the offerers, humbled and penitent for their sin, looked forward in faith to that coming sacrifice, that spiritual blessing descended on them from on high. In all other cases these sacrifices only restored individuals, as the Apostle had affirmed in ix. 13, to ceremonial and relative purity. They "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh;" but could not take away the guilt of sin, bring peace to the troubled conscience, or consecrate man to the Divine service.

Verses 5, 6. *Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering etc.* A remarkable declaration of the fortieth Psalm is here ascribed by the Apostle to our adorable Lord. Dean Alford contends that the clause, "When He cometh into the world," is to be referred to "the whole time during which the Lord, being ripened in human resolution, was in intent devoting Himself to the doing of His Father's will." But this is a strange application of the words, which seem definitely to point to our Lord's entrance upon His state of humiliation, His coming into our world in "the form of a servant." The language of the Psalm is quoted by the Apostle as employed by the Eternal Son when assuming our nature, that He might redeem us by the sacrifice of Himself. The Messianic reference of this Psalm is established, we conceive, by the

saith, *g* Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body || hast Thou prepared Me :

*g* Ps. xl. 6, etc. ; 1. 8, etc. ; Isai. i. 11 ; Jer. vi. 20 ; Amos v. 21, 22.  
|| Or, *Thou hast fitted Me.*

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use thus made of it by an inspired writer. In some parts, indeed, it appears unquestionably to refer, in the first instance, to David : but there are expressions in it, especially the statement in verse 7, which can scarcely be understood of him, or, if so understood, can only be so in a very indirect and secondary manner ; and it may be affirmed, as a general principle of great importance, that the eventful history of David, and his official position, were so ordered by Divine Providence, that many of his utterances respecting himself contained *anticipatory allusions*, designed by the Holy Spirit, to the history and work, the sufferings and the triumphs, of the Messiah. In some cases, doubtless, the full prophetic import of his own language was not clearly apprehended by himself : but that prophetic import properly belonged to it, and was at length brought out by the Spirit who guided and controlled all his utterances in his sacred compositions. The fortieth Psalm, we conceive, affords a striking illustration of this principle. The deep and overwhelming distress of which the Psalmist speaks, and the joy which followed when, as the result of a Divine interposition, he was raised from his degradation and placed on high, may be affirmed with truth of Him who was "the Man of sorrows," but is now the enthroned and triumphant Mediator. The language of the Psalm, indeed, has a far deeper significance, and many portions of it a far greater propriety, when thus understood, than when applied exclusively to the sufferings of David and his subsequent exaltation. So, too, other portions of the Psalm, especially

6. In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.

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verses 9, 10, beautifully set forth the character of the Messiah's ministry, and the unswerving fidelity with which He declared to men "the words" which the Father "had given" Him; and then there follows a statement (verse 12) which recalls to our minds the scene of Gethsemane, and the deep anguish of the cross, when the sins of the whole world, the burden of which the Lord Jesus had taken upon Himself, pressed, with all their crushing weight, upon His spirit.—That portion of the Psalm which the Apostle quotes in these verses, distinctly affirmed the principle which he had just laid down,—that in *itself* the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, or be acceptable to God; while the declaration contained in the verse which follows showed, that the Divine counsel was to bless and save mankind through the coming of One in our nature whose obedience should be perfect, and who, after having borne an unflinching testimony to the truth, and fully unfolded the message of God, should consummate His obedience by bearing the iniquities of men.—It is necessary for us to observe, that the Apostle adopts, in his quotation, the reading of the Septuagint, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," instead of the literal rendering of the Hebrew, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," or "dug through." But it is not difficult to perceive that the same general truth is conveyed by both these expressions, and that the Septuagint correctly represents the sentiment of the inspired Psalmist. Dr. Patrick Fairbairn contends that the phrase in the Hebrew, "dug through," is equivalent to "laid thoroughly open," so that the clause conveys the meaning, "Thou hast formed in Me a willing and obedient

7. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.

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spirit, so that I preserve an open and listening ear to all Thy commands." Then he regards the phrase which the Apostle adopts from the Septuagint as equivalent to it; the "body prepared" being "a body formed and qualified for the service of God,—ready in all its powers to yield the obedience required." This solution of the apparent difficulty seems to meet all the requirements of the case.—It may be added, that the terms used by the Psalmist, "sacrifice and offering," "burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin," comprehend the various kinds of sacrifices and offerings prescribed by the law; so that *all* are represented as vain in themselves, and to be ultimately superseded by the obedience unto death of Him who should appear to work out the Divine counsel.

Verse 7. *Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.* These words of the fortieth Psalm, if used at all by David in reference to himself, could only be so in a most indirect manner. No passage in the Pentateuch can be pointed out in which David was explicitly foretold, and that as the righteous servant of Jehovah. It has, indeed, been suggested by Dr. Ebrard, that David, contemplating the rejection of Saul, and his own selection to be the king of Israel, saw in these events the fulfilment of the patriarchal blessing, that the sceptre should belong to Judah. This may be allowed: but if this thought was in the mind of David when he wrote the words before us, the Holy Spirit certainly guided him to the adoption of language which could only apply properly to One far greater than himself. When understood as uttered by the Messiah,

8. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin Thou wouldst

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this declaration expresses an obvious and most important truth. *His* coming was explicitly promised in the earlier revelation; and He was set forth as perfectly carrying out the Father's counsel, and effecting the redemption of our race. The announcements made to our first parents after the fall,—the promise of the great Restorer given to Abraham, and illustrated by the remarkable transaction of the offering up of Isaac, together with the meek submission of him who was laid upon the altar as a sacrifice,—and the explicit prediction of a Prophet like unto Moses, but vastly superior to him, and clothed with higher authority,—may all be adduced in support of the statement before us. And it will amply repay us to trace the history of our blessed Lord on earth, and to mark how repeatedly He affirmed the governing principle of His whole career, as the Mediator, to be devotion to the Father's will. "My meat," He said on one occasion, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." "I came down from heaven," He affirmed at a subsequent period, "not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And as He stood upon the verge of His deepest suffering, and of the final act of His mediatorial obedience, His submission to death for us, He said in His solemn prayer, looking forward to that great issue, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." All that the Redeemer did, all that He suffered, He did and suffered in fulfilment of the Father's counsel.

Verses 8, 9. *Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings etc.* Here the Apostle comments on

not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law;

9. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.

10. <sup>h</sup>By the which will we are sanctified <sup>i</sup>through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

<sup>h</sup> John xvii. 19; Heb. xiii. 12.    <sup>i</sup> Heb. ix. 12.

the prophetic declarations which he had just cited, and shows how they necessarily involved the setting aside of the Levitical sacrifices under the dispensation which the Messiah should bring in, and the establishment of another ground of blessing, and that blessing effectual and abiding. If, he contends, the sacrifices prescribed by the law were represented as not being in themselves acceptable to God, and the Redeemer was introduced announcing His own coming, to render a perfect obedience to the Father, and fully to carry out His counsel for the salvation of men, it was in effect declared, that the ancient system of sacrifice should be done away, and that the Mediator's perfect obedience, consummated by His offering up of Himself upon the cross, should be the ground of the acceptance and sanctification of His people.

Verse 10. *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* These words define the special arrangement of that will of God which the Messiah came to carry out, and mark His obedience as completed by His sacrificial death. The term which the Apostle uses, "through the offering (*διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς*) of the body of Jesus Christ," as well as the general course of His argument, clearly shows the *sacrificial* character of the death of Jesus. *This was the Father's*

11. And every priest standeth <sup>d</sup>daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, <sup>l</sup>which can never take away sins :

& Numb. xxviii. 3; Heb. vii. 27. l Verse 4.

counsel, that He whose coming was the hope of the world from the period of the fall, and who, as His righteous Servant, should render, throughout His earthly course, a perfect obedience, should Himself become the one effectual Sacrifice for sin; and that the offering of Himself, once for all, upon the cross, should avail for mankind in every succeeding age. All this has been accomplished by the death of the Lord Jesus; and now, in the further working out of the Divine plan, we who come to Him, to rely on His perfect atonement, are accepted in Him and are actually consecrated to God.

Verses 11, 12. *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes etc.* Here the Apostle brings into vivid contrast the ministrations of the Levitical priests, and that of our adorable Lord. He had already dwelt on the yearly repetition of the sacrifices offered on the day of atonement, as implying their want of spiritual efficacy; and had affirmed that the great Deliverer, promised in the earlier revelation, had actually appeared in our nature, to fulfil the Father's purposes, and work out a perfect redemption. And now, extending his remarks to the whole course of priestly ministration under the Levitical economy, he brings into one view the points of difference between it and the priestly ministration of Him in whom we trust. The Levitical priests engaged in daily service in the first sanctuary, and again and again presented the same sacrifices of animal victims, which could not, of themselves, take away sins. The Levitical priests, also, stood

12. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ;

*m* Col. iii. 1 ; Heb. i. 3.

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to minister in the sanctuary,—as the posture which became them when, as sinful men, they reverently drew near to God, and presented the offerings of His people. To have sat down in the holy place, the first apartment of the tabernacle, would have been an act of guilty presumption ; and it would have been a still more fearful violation of duty, and a more flagrant insult to the Divine majesty, for the chief among them to have sat down, even for a moment, in the holy of holies. But the Lord Jesus has " offered *one* sacrifice for sins *for ever*," εἰς τὸ ἄπενεκέε, — a sacrifice the efficacy of which reaches through all ages, and which is never to be repeated. That sacrifice *does* take away sin from those who embrace and appropriate it. And now, the work of atonement being fully accomplished, our Lord has "*sat down* on the right hand of God," being exalted, as the Mediator, "far above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." He is the *enthroned* High Priest of His people, swaying a sceptre of universal dominion and of resistless power, while He administers the economy of grace and salvation, and confers the richest blessings on all who trust in Him. His session at the Father's right hand is itself the proof of the completeness and unfailing efficacy of His sacrifice, while it shows the fulness of glory with which He is invested, and the unbounded resources which He can command to save and bless His people.—In these remarks we have assumed that the phrase "for ever" is to be connected with the preceding words, "having offered one

13. From henceforth expecting "till His enemies be made His footstool.

α Ps. cx. 1; Acts ii. 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13.

sacrifice for sins;" and this we regard, in common with several eminent expositors, as the preferable construction. But it should be mentioned, that other expositors of equal eminence connect this phrase with the verb which follows, so as to make the statement of the Apostle, that our Lord "for ever sat down on the right hand of God."—It may be added, that some ancient MSS., which Tischendorf and Alford follow, have ἀρχιερεύς, "high priest," in the first clause of verse 11; but the common reading ἱερεύς, "priest," is sustained by good external authority, and accords more accurately with the facts to which the Apostle refers.

Verse 13. *From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.* This verse completes the statement of our Lord's session at the right hand of the Father, as the enthroned Mediator, and the High Priest of the new economy. Before Him there is no more sorrow or humiliation, but only a reign of blessing and triumph. His kingdom, indeed, is now in a state of conflict with opposing powers; and He Himself is regarded by many with dislike and hatred. But the time is coming when every foe shall fall before Him, when they who stood in proud defiance of His authority shall bend the knee to Him in acknowledgment of His sovereignty, and when the tongues that blasphemed Him on earth shall confess His dignity and power. To this glorious consummation He looks forward. When it arrives, even "death" will be "swallowed up in victory;" the redemption of His people will be complete: and the whole universe of being will

14. For by one offering <sup>o</sup>He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

*o* Verse 1.

acknowledge the permanent and unfailing efficacy of His redeeming work.

Verse 14. *For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Here the Apostle affirms the *ground* of the mediatorial exaltation and enthronement of the Lord Jesus, and of His assured triumph over all who oppose His sway. His *one offering* of Himself was *complete* and *sufficient*. Perfect in itself, and meeting all the requirements of the Divine government, it admitted of no repetition; and thus no further humiliation awaited Him who passed through the heavens as the Priestly Representative of mankind. And it was sufficient for the actual and perfect salvation of all, in every age, who should rely on it alone,—sufficient to restore them to the Divine favour, and to prepare them for the Divine presence. Upon our coming to Christ in penitent faith we are both reconciled to God, and brought under the sanctifying operation of the Spirit; and the process of sanctification may go on, till our spiritual conformity to Christ is complete, and every grace appears in its own perfect loveliness, unimpaired by any contrary tendency. It is important to bear in mind, that the phrase *τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους* properly means “those who are being sanctified;” and the sentiment of the Apostle is, that the one perfect offering of Christ provides for the continuance and completeness of this process, and for the perpetuity of the holiness and bliss in which our nature realises its true perfection.

Verses 15—18. *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant*

15. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before,

16. *This is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

17. \*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

*p* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Heb. viii. 10, 12.

\* Some copies have, *Then He said, And their etc.*

*etc.* In these verses the Apostle brings forward an additional confirmation of the completeness and unchanging efficacy of the one sacrifice of our Lord. He recalls the passage of Jeremiah which he had cited in chapter viii., as exhibiting the features of that new and better covenant of which Jesus is the Mediator; and he argues, that the blessings which it sets forth, as those to be actually realised by the people of God, imply that a true and effectual sacrifice has been offered, and that no other, consequently, is necessary, or can, indeed, have place. The inspired testimony of the ancient Scriptures had pointed out the new economy as one which should be marked not only by the communication of spiritual affections, leading men to a cheerful obedience to the Divine precepts, but by the cancelling of their guilt, so that their past sins should never be remembered against them to their condemnation. In common with Dean Alford and some others, we regard verse 17 as forming the "apodosis" of the sentence in which it occurs. The phrase, "for after He had said before," naturally leads the reader to expect some additional statement to that immediately cited. This additional statement we have in verse 17, very much as if

18. Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin.

19. Having, therefore, brethren, *¶*boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

*q* Rom. v. 2; Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12.    ¶ Or *liberty*.

*r* Heb. ix. 8, 12.

it had been introduced with the words, "He further said." The grand consideration on which the Apostle here fixes attention is, that the new covenant promised by God was one which should include a provision for the actual forgiveness of sins. If, therefore, he contends, a sacrifice avails for this, no other is required. It was not thus with the Jewish sacrifices. Their repetition was distinctly enjoined; and this very circumstance showed that the object to which they pointed was not fully attained. It is instructive to observe, how emphatically the Apostle recognises the prophetic announcement of Jeremiah as the utterance of the Holy Spirit. On the import of that announcement the reader is referred to the notes on viii. 10—12.

Verses 19, 20. *Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, etc.* The great subjects of the priesthood of our Lord, and of His one ever-availing sacrifice of Himself, which He presents on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, had now been unfolded; and the vast superiority of the Christian economy to the Levitical, in these respects, had been amply set forth. And now the Apostle, ever anxious for the stability, and comfort, and holiness, of the Hebrew believers, addresses to them a series of *exhortations* on the ground of those provisions and arrangements of the perfect scheme of grace in Christ which he had just traced

20. By 'a new and living way, which He hath

\* John x. 9 ; xiv. 6 ; Heb. ix. 8.

out. The entire passage of which these verses form the commencement is remarkably rich in spiritual truth, and suggests the most encouraging views of Christian privilege and duty. It is difficult to give an exact and literal rendering of these verses: but, perhaps, that of Dean Alford may be accepted as showing, more clearly than the Authorised Version, the precise relation of the several clauses:—"Having, therefore, brethren, confidence as regards the entering into the holy places in the blood of Jesus, which" (*i.e.*, which entrance) "He initiated for us, a way fresh and living, through the veil, that is, His flesh." Many points of deep interest are here brought before us. It is the privilege of *all* believers to come with *confidence* even to the *holiest of all*,—to enjoy through Christ the most intimate access to the Father. The dread which must often have filled the breast of the high priest of Israel, as he went, on the day of expiation, into the holy of holies, lest in anything he should deviate from the prescribed order, has no place in our hearts as we draw near to the mercy-seat above. For there the true and effectual sacrifice is ever presented on our behalf. Our confidence rests on "the blood of Jesus;" and that blood can really avail to cancel guilt, and to impart purity to all who rely on it alone.—Our access to the heavenly sanctuary has been *opened* to us by the Redeemer, who has gone through His own blood into that most sacred spot, and is enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He "*initiated*" this entrance for us, going before us as the Forerunner of His people, as well as the High Priest of the new economy. This statement beautifully accords

|| consecrated for us, 'through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

|| Or, *new made.* † Heb. ix. 3.

with our Lord's own words in John xiv. 1—3; and it recalls the conclusion of that sublime passage of this Epistle, vi. 17—20, in which the Apostle dwells on the abundant provision now made for the unfailling comfort of all who embrace the Saviour, and their enjoyment of a lofty and exultant hope.—The path to the heavenly sanctuary which the Redeemer has trod before us, and in which we may now advance with holy confidence, is described as "*fresh and living.*" The import of the former term is beautifully brought out by Dr. Rudolf Stier, as quoted by Dean Alford:—"None before Him trod this way: no believer under the Old Testament dared or could, though under a dispensation of preparatory grace, approach God so freely and openly, so fearlessly and joyfully, so closely and intimately, as we now, who come to the Father by the blood of Jesus, His Son." The latter term suggests, as the principal idea, that of "leading to life." It is the path in which we can walk only in virtue of the incipient movements of spiritual life, and which leads us onward to the full attainment of that life, and thus to the enjoyment of blessed communion with God.—But the Saviour opened this path to us, "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." The first expression clearly alludes to the veil which separated the holy of holies in the Jewish temple from the outer sanctuary; and the remark of the Apostle seems to contain a reference to the fact that, when the Redeemer expired on Calvary, that veil was "rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." The sentiment appears to be, that just as the holy of holies, which

21. And *having* "a High Priest over "the house of God ;

*u* Heb. iv. 14.

*x* 1 Tim. iii. 15 ; Heb. iii. 6.

had before been concealed from the view of all, was thus laid open, so through the suffering humanity of our Lord, actually given up to death, the way was opened to the heaven of heavens, the very throne of God ; and He Himself, the Risen Saviour, first trod this way as the Fore-runner of all His people.

Verse 21. *And having a High Priest over the house of God.* The great truth here adverted to stands in a most intimate relation to those just brought out. Not only has the adorable Redeemer led the way into the holiest of all, going thither with His own completed sacrifice ; but He habitually carries on His priestly ministration, and presides over the whole family of God. On the subject of our Lord's ministration in the heavenly sanctuary the Apostle had dwelt at length ; and now he recalls in these brief words the truths which he had unfolded, that he might make them the ground of the earnest exhortations which follow.—It is important to note, that the phrase which the Apostle employs is "a great Priest," *ιερέα μέγαν*, just as in iv. 14 he had used the expression, "a great High Priest." The epithet points out the surpassing dignity of our Priestly Intercessor,—the glory with which He is invested,—and the powerful and prevailing character of His ministration.—And then our glorious High Priest is "over the house of God." Here the Apostle recalls the truth to which he had adverted in iii. 5, 6. The Lord Jesus presides over the whole family of God, administering its affairs, caring for every member of it with a special regard, succouring every one that looks to Him in the time of trial, and bestowing

22. <sup>y</sup>Let us draw near with a true heart, <sup>z</sup>in full  
<sup>y</sup> Heb. iv. 16.      <sup>z</sup> Eph. iii. 12 ; James i. 6 ; 1 John iii. 21.

on each the blessings which he needs. Some members of that family, indeed, already encircle Him in the realms of light, and rejoice in the everlasting salvation secured to them by Him ; while others are still on earth, toiling amidst its sorrows and conflicts, and needing His habitual support and comfort. But He, as the Son, is "over the house of God." He rules as well as intercedes ; and His Church, both in heaven and on earth, gratefully and confidently looks up to Him as its Head and Lord.

Verse 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, etc.* This is the first of the exhortations which the Apostle founds on the truths which he had so fully developed in his preceding argument, and which he had just recalled. He encourages us to draw near to God, so as to maintain intimate and habitual communion with Him through Christ. And he points out the state of mind in which we must come into "the holiest of all," if we would actually receive the blessings which we need,—a state of mind authorised and required by those arrangements of the Christian economy which he had unfolded. There must be perfect *sincerity*. In approaching the Eternal Father through the mediation of the Son, we must not give utterance to sentiments which we do not cherish, or desires which we do not feel. With childlike simplicity we should open our hearts to God, meaning all we say, and desiring His friendship above every earthly good. Our worship must be characterised, also, by *unwavering confidence*. We are to draw near in the "full assurance of faith." There should be no lingering suspicion that, after all, our prayers shall be unheeded, and that God will refuse

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled <sup>a</sup> from an evil conscience, and <sup>b</sup> our bodies washed with pure water.

<sup>a</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25; 2 Cor. vii. 1.

to be gracious to us. As we appropriate the sacrifice of Jesus, and look to Him as our Priestly Intercessor who ever presents it on our behalf, we should be assured that all spiritual blessings shall be ours. But to warrant this confidence, there must be *an entire renunciation of sin*. We must come, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." It is most probable, that there is an allusion in the last clause to the arrangement, that the priests, under the Levitical economy, had to wash themselves with water previously to their approach to God. This was especially binding on the high priest on the day of atonement, before he ventured to engage in its solemn services, and, drawing aside the veil, to come into the presence of Jehovah. But the point of the Apostle's exhortation to us is, that we must put aside all known sin, that we must turn away from every iniquity, if we would gain access to God through Christ, and receive blessing from Him. We must not pollute our hands with open transgressions, and then come and lift them up in prayer. Nor is it only from outward sin that we must turn away. We must be "sprinkled as to our hearts from an evil conscience;" we must not harbour any unholy tendency or desire, secretly rebelling against the authority of God, but must give ourselves up to Him to do His will, and seek to be entirely consecrated to His service. Some expositors consider that the allusion in the last clause of this verse is to *baptism*, and connect that clause with the exhortation that follows: but it appears rather to have

23. 'Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for 'He is faithful that promised;)

c Heb. iv. 14.

d 1 Cor. i. 9; x. 13; 1 Thess. v. 24; 2 Thess. iii. 3; Heb. xi. 11.

an intimate relation to the words that precede it, and to carry on the development of the general thought that all sin is to be renounced by those who draw near to God.

Verse 23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; etc.* As a second duty required by the arrangements and promises of the Christian economy, the Apostle charges believers to maintain, without wavering, the open confession of *their hope*; for it is unquestionable that the phrase τῆς ἐλπίδος, "our hope," is the correct reading. There rose to his view, as he contemplated the position of Christ's people, the glorious hopes which are given to them in Him, more especially as He has now initiated for them the new and living way to the Father's presence. He is Himself, in an important sense, our Hope; for whatever light of holy comfort is shed upon the future comes from His redeeming work, and whatever blessings are promised to us, either on earth or in heaven, are promised to us in Him. And the Apostle's exhortation is, that under all the difficulties and trials of life, which might tend to make us waver in our Christian profession, we should be firm and steadfast,—openly confessing, at all times, that in Christ we have a hope of the fulness and perpetuity of spiritual blessing, a hope even of eternal life. That hope, he reminds us, may well be cherished and openly professed; since it rests upon the promise of One who cannot fail us. The Eternal God has become our covenant-God in Christ; and to all His engagements of love and mercy He will be faithful. Dr. Delitzsch has

24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works :

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properly called attention to the circumstance, that in the exhortations comprised in this passage, the three great principles of faith, and hope, and love are brought together, just as they are in 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Verse 24. *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.* This verse introduces the third exhortation which the Apostle addresses to the Hebrew Christians on the ground of the perfect arrangements of the mediatorial economy. He calls upon them to take an affectionate interest in each other's spiritual welfare,—to regard with solicitude each other's dangers and difficulties in the Christian course,—and to encourage each other to fidelity and steadfastness. He charges them, more especially, to incite each other to the cultivation of love, and to the practice of all that is right and lovely. It is an error to regard this verse as referring to believers' challenging each other to particular acts of Christian generosity. The charge of the Apostle is much more comprehensive ; while the tenderness and solicitous care for others implied in the first words,—“let us consider one another,”—seem almost to shut out the application often made of this passage. We are thoughtfully to seek to promote in each other the great principle of “love,” that principle including love to God, benevolence to all our fellow-men, and the special attachment of believers ; and we are to encourage each other to a course of “good works,” *καλῶν ἔργων*, all works that are morally beautiful and excellent, all works that involve a development of the light and life which come from God, and in the performance of which we reflect His own moral loveliness.

25. 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one

*e* Acts ii. 42; Jude 19.

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Verse 25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; etc.* The Apostle here enlarges on the duty of mutual encouragement which rests on us as believers; and he points out one mode in which we are to incite each other to love and to universal holiness. We are to come together in our Christian assemblies, and that for the purpose of mutual exhortation. Not only should we listen to the public declaration of the truth of Christ by those whom He has called to the holy ministry, that we may be established in the faith, and that our spiritual affections may be quickened; but we should meet as Christian believers, to encourage one another to the performance of every duty, and to the maintenance of the spiritual life in all its freshness and strength. The constitution of every Christian Church should afford facilities for this mutual exhortation; and all our social intercourse should be pervaded by the recognition of common Christian privileges, and a common striving after the purity of the Christian character.—The consideration by which the Apostle enforces this charge is very emphatic and affecting:—"And so much the more as ye see the day approaching." It is probable that in these words he referred primarily to the fearful judgments which were about to overtake the land of Judæa, where the believing Hebrews whom he addressed resided,—judgments which should issue in the overthrow and desolation of their once holy city. When this Epistle was written, that visitation of judicial wrath was already near at hand. But though that day has passed away, the language of the Apostle is full of

*another*: and *so* much the more as ye see *the* day approaching.

26. For *if* we sin wilfully, *after* that we have

*f* Rom. xiii. 11.                      *g* Phil. iv. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 11, 14.

*h* Numb. xv. 30; Heb. vi. 4.                      *i* 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

meaning for us. It carries us onward in thought to that day which will consummate the Saviour's triumph, and perfect the redemption of His people,—that solemn period to which the Apostle had referred at the close of the preceding chapter, and to which every true Christian will turn with reverent and chastened desire. Dean Alford properly remarks, "That Day, indeed, in its great final sense, is always near, always ready to break forth upon the Church: but these Hebrews lived actually close upon one of those great types and foretastes of it, the destruction of the Holy City,—the bloody and fiery dawn, as Delitzsch finely calls it, of the Great Day." And the eminent commentator from whom he quotes, Dr. Delitzsch, farther adds, respecting the day of the Lord's coming, "It is the Day of days, the ending-day of all days, the settling-day of all days, the Day of the promotion of Time into Eternity, the Day which for the Church breaks through and breaks off the night of this present world."

Verse 26. *For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, etc.* Mournful thoughts suggested themselves to the Apostle's mind, as he dwelt on the case of some whose religious indifference might lead them at length to an entire rejection of the Redeemer and His one all-availing sacrifice. In urging believers to persevere in mutual exhortation, and charging them "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," he had written the sad words, "as the manner of some is." The

received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

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coldness of heart towards Christ and His people which could lead to such a course betokened, if not speedily removed, fatal results. And the Apostle now introduces a solemn warning to all who might forsake the Lord Jesus, and go back to the services and sacrifices of Judaism. The opening words of this passage clearly show that he is speaking of a *state* of sin, and not of one *solitary act*. The extent and heinousness of that state of sin are indicated in the expressions used in verse 29. It involves an *entire* renunciation of Christ,—a repudiation of Him as an impostor and blasphemer,—and this after a personal experience of His grace. Dr. Delitzsch has correctly and beautifully pointed out the peculiar force of the term *ἐπίγνωσιν*, which we render, “knowledge,” in the phrase “the knowledge of the truth.” “The writer,” he says, “by the use of this word, gives us to understand that he means by it not only a shallow historical notion about the truth, but a living, believing knowledge of it, which has laid hold of a man, and fused him into union with itself.” The term clearly implies such an apprehension of the truth as impresses the mind and heart; and the whole tenor of the passage shows that the Apostle is referring to those who had experienced genuine conversion. For such, if they utterly renounced the Lord Jesus, and went back to Judaism, no sacrifice for sin which they might offer could avail. This is the point of the Apostle’s assertion. He does not affirm that, if they should be brought penitently to acknowledge their sin, and again to seek an interest in the sacrifice of Jesus, the door of mercy would be closed to them; but that to those who reject the one true sacrifice,

27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and <sup>k</sup>fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

<sup>k</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 5 ; Zeph. i. 18 ; iii. 8 ; 2 Thess. i. 8 ; Heb. xii. 29.

the virtue of which they once experienced, "there is no longer left remaining a sacrifice for sin." All the principles of the Divine government forbid the recognition of any other sacrifice than that which was offered on Calvary, and which our great High Priest lives to present on our behalf; and the man who, after realising its efficacy, utterly discards it, and tramples it, as it were, under foot, exposes himself to the full penal visitations of the Divine wrath.

Verse 27. *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment etc.* Here the Apostle passes to the awful prospects of the apostates of whom he was speaking. To those who rejected altogether the blood of Jesus, and treated it as if it were "a common," or "unholy," "thing," after themselves experiencing its efficacy, there remained only judgment in its most appalling forms. The word "certain" in our Version is the rendering of the Greek *τε*, and indicates the expectation in question as in one sense indefinite, while yet it is sufficiently powerful to awaken terror.—Dean Alford contends that the word *ἐκδοχή* should be rendered not "a looking for," or "expectation," but rather "reception;" and he makes the point of time had in view by the Apostle that of the great Day. But the common interpretation is, we conceive, justifiable; and it marks the *present position* of the persons spoken of. Before them there is "judgment,"—a judgment of condemnation and ruin; and there is the experience of "fiery indignation," or rather, "of the fierceness of fire,"—fire which shall consume all

28. 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy <sup>m</sup>under two or three witnesses :

<sup>l</sup> Heb. ii. 2.

<sup>m</sup> Deut. xvii. 2, 6 ; xix. 15 ; Matt. xviii. 16 ; John viii. 17 ;

2 Cor. xiii. 1.

who have set themselves to oppose God and resist His truth, involving them in utter and hopeless ruin.

Verse 28. *He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.* To place the guilt of rejecting the Lord Jesus, and repudiating His sacrifice, after having experienced its power, in the strongest light, and to show the terrible penalty which must follow this sin, the Apostle refers to the consequences, under the former dispensation, of renouncing the law of Jehovah as made known by Moses. In an early stage of his argument, he had instituted a comparison between Christ and Moses, and had shown the lofty superiority of the former, inasmuch as He was the Son, presiding over the house of God, and having in it a special property, while Moses only acted in that house as a servant. And now he argues that, if the repudiation by any Israelite of the law of Moses, and the rejection of Jehovah as He had revealed Himself in that law, were to be punished with death, a far more fearful penalty awaited the man who turned his back on Christ, and treated Him as if He were an impostor and blasphemer. The term which the Apostle uses, ἀθετήσας, implies an entire rejection of the law in question,—a presumptuous disregard of its provisions and requirements, and a renunciation of Him whose will it expressed. The passage which the Apostle seems specially to have had in view is Deut. xvii. 2—7, which clearly refers to the utter casting off of Jehovah, and a sinking down into idolatry.

29. \*Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under

\* Heb. ii. 3; xii. 25.

Verse 29. *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, etc.* All the expressions used in this verse show the awful guilt of the apostasy in question, and the appalling punishment by which it must be followed. They point, unquestionably, to an entire rejection of the Lord Jesus,—such a rejection as implied that His loftiest claim, His claim to be THE SON OF GOD, was one to be treated with contempt and scorn, and that His blood, shed on the accursed tree, was the blood of an impostor and blasphemer, who deserved to die that bitter death. The Apostle speaks of “treading under foot the Son of God,” and of accounting His blood—“the blood of the covenant”—as a “common,” or “unholy,” “thing.” The word used to convey this last idea is *κοινόν*, which properly means *common*, as distinguished from that which is *sacred*. The primary thought is, that the apostates in question, repudiating altogether the claims of the Lord Jesus, regarded His blood as having no sacredness, no sacrificial virtue; but such a sentiment involved the additional conclusion, that it was the blood of an unholy man, of a guilty impostor. For if He was not indeed the Son of God, He must have been a blasphemer in assuming that dignity, and claiming to participate in the Father’s loftiest perfections.—The heinousness of the sin of which the Apostle speaks was still further aggravated by the fact, that these apostates had experienced the inward life and purity which result from the appropriation of the sacrifice of Jesus. That blood which they now treated with such indignity was “the blood of the covenant;” and they had themselves

foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ?

o 1 Cor. xi. 29 : Heb. xiii. 20.      p Matt. xii. 31, 32 ; Eph. iv. 30.

reverently and gratefully regarded it as such. In the phrase thus selected by the Apostle we find an allusion to the words of our Lord at the institution of the sacrament of His supper, as well as to his own argument in chapters viii. ix. Now the persons whom he describes had come into a covenant-relation to God through trusting in this precious blood, and had actually experienced its sanctifying efficacy. No words can more clearly or emphatically express this than the statement, "and hath counted the blood of the covenant *wherewith he was sanctified* an unholy thing." This, indeed, is one consideration on which the Apostle lays stress, in depicting the aggravated character of the state of sin which he contemplates, and inferring from this its terrible punishment. If even they who once became conscious of new and holy principles, and of a power over sin which reason could never confer, through trusting in the blood of Jesus, came, after all, to regard it as an unholy thing, they had reached the very depth of moral baseness, and offered an indignity to the Son of God which could not be surpassed.—But the Apostle introduces another consideration. The persons of whom he speaks had "done despite to," or "openly insulted," "the Spirit of grace." This last expression is full of meaning. It reminds us that it is the Holy Ghost who imparts all grace to the human spirit,—that He is given to believers to be an indwelling Source of peace, and purity, and strength. And the sentiment of the clause is, that the rejection of the Son of God, and the repudiation of His sacrifice, by

30. For we know Him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense*, saith the Lord. And again, *The Lord shall judge His people.*

*g* Deut. xxxii. 35 ; Rom. xii. 19.

*r* Deut. xxxii. 36 ; Ps. l. 4 ; cxxxv. 14.

the apostates in question, involved the greatest insult to the Spirit, who by His gracious movements on their souls had led them to the Saviour, and who, upon their trusting in Christ, filled them with holy peace and comfort, and constituted them new creatures. These gracious operations of His on the souls of men are themselves attestations of the claims of Jesus; and the rejection of Him involved the rejection of the Spirit, and a contemptuous disregard of His life-giving power.

Verse 30. *For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, etc.* In confirmation of the solemn appeal just made, and the awful threatening of judgment just issued, the Apostle calls attention to the general truth that the government of God is one of *retribution*. This truth he sets forth in the words of the ancient Scriptures. He cites two passages from the inspired song of Moses, uttered just before he closed his earthly career, and left by him to be treasured up in the memory of the people of Israel. The declarations referred to are found in Deut. xxxii. 35, 36. It is observable that the former is quoted just as in Rom. xii. 19, although the mode of expression differs both from the Hebrew and the Septuagint. It affirms, in the most explicit terms, that a recompense will be made for human conduct, and that it belongs to Jehovah, as one of His most sacred prerogatives, to render that recompense. The latter declaration is of a more general character, but it embraces the principle in question. It

31. *'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

32. *But 'call to remembrance the former days, in*

*s Luke xii. 5. t Gal. iii. 4; 2 John 8.*

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recognises Jehovah as *judging* His people,—regulating His dealings with them according to their character and state. He can never be indifferent to their principles and conduct, but will act towards them as their righteous Governor and Lord.

Verse 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* This reflection naturally arises from the truth which the Apostle had just affirmed,—that it is GOD HIMSELF who will bring men into judgment. If we are standing in an attitude of hostility to Him, and have utterly renounced the one Sacrifice for sin which He has provided, it may well alarm us to reflect on His unbounded power, His infinite resources, His universal dominion. He is “the living God,” possessing in Himself the fulness of life, and imparting life to every thing that lives. His glorious perfections are inherent and essential; His resources can never be impaired; and as every being throughout the universe is dependent upon Him for life itself, there is none that can resist His will, or stand against Him when He ariseth to judgment.

Verses 32, 33. *But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, etc.* After the solemn warnings which the Apostle had just given, he turns with affectionate confidence to the believing Hebrews, reminding them of their past religious history, and of the sufferings which they had cheerfully undergone for Christ. He appeals to those sufferings as an evidence of the warmth of their attachment to the Saviour, and of the firmness of

which, "after ye were illuminated, ye endured <sup>r</sup>a great fight of afflictions ;

33. Partly, whilst ye were made <sup>s</sup>a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions ; and partly, whilst <sup>t</sup>ye became companions of them that were so used.

<sup>u</sup> Heb. vi. 4.

<sup>x</sup> Phil. i. 29, 30 ; Col. ii. 1.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 9.

<sup>z</sup> Phil. i. 7 ; iv. 14 ; 1 Thess. ii. 14.

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their purpose to live to Him ; and he encourages them to maintain the same holy resolution. A similar turn of thought occurs in vi. 9—12 ; and it is instructive to mark how different emotions commingled in the breast of the Apostle, as he thought of the spiritual dangers of those whom he was addressing, and of the many things in their past experience which tended to inspire confidence as to the future. The word *φωτισθέντες*, which we translate "after ye were illuminated," clearly refers to the first reception of the Christian message,—its sincere and cordial reception, introducing the persons in question to the privileges of Christ's people, and bringing them "out of darkness into marvellous light." It is used with the same import in vi. 4. At the very commencement of their Christian course, then, many of the believing Hebrews were subjected to severe persecution. Some of them were openly treated with contempt and violence. The term *θεαριζόμενοι*, the general import of which is correctly given in the phrase, "made a gazing-stock," properly means "set forth as in a theatre," the theatre being the place where some conspicuous punishments were inflicted. But even they on whom the violence of persecution did not directly fall were ready to brave its terrors. They were forward to express their sympathy with their suffering brethren, and to minister, in every possible way, to their relief and comfort ; and thus

34. For ye had compassion of me <sup>a</sup>in my bonds, and <sup>b</sup>took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, know-

<sup>a</sup> Phil. i. 7; 2 Tim. i. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. v. 12; Acts v. 41; James i. 2.

they exposed themselves, thoughtfully and deliberately, to the bitter and malignant passions which sought the ruin of their fellows.

Verse 34. *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully etc.* In the first clause of this verse, nearly all critical editors have adopted the reading *τοῖς δεσμίαις*, on what appears to be sufficient authority. The statement of the Apostle consequently is, "Ye sympathised with those who were in bonds;" and it is pleasing to mark, how fully the Hebrew Christians, at the period referred to, observed the lessons taught by our Lord in Matt. xxv. 34—40. They did not coldly stand aloof from their persecuted brethren, but visited them in prison, regarding every such act of kindness and expression of sympathy as rendered to their common Master. In many cases, this identification of themselves with the persecuted brought upon them also open violence. But they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," sustained by the hope of an inheritance that could never fall from their grasp. One of the renderings of the last clause given in the margin is undoubtedly correct;—"knowing that ye have for yourselves a better and an enduring substance." The order of the words in the original forbids us to connect "knowing" with "in," or "for, yourselves." Some of the earliest and best MSS. also, omit the words "in heaven," or "in the heavens;" and they are followed by Tischendorf, Alford, and others. The sentiment of the Apostle is, that the believing Hebrews, when called to

ing ||in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, <sup>d</sup>which hath great recompense of reward.

|| Or, *that ye have in yourselves, or for yourselves.*

c Matt. vi. 20; xix. 21; Luke xii. 33; 1 Tim. vi. 19.

d Matt. v. 12; x. 32.

submit to the loss of their worldly property, through their attachment to the name of Jesus, did so even with joy, since they were assured that they had *as their own*, in reserve, "a better and enduring substance," possessions infinitely superior to all earthly good, which should never pass away, and of which no hand of violence could ever deprive them. The property which was here unjustly wrested from them could only have been held for a few short years, and must then have been transferred to other hands: but the heavenly riches to which they looked forward were *their own*, and these could never fail.

Verse 35. *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.* This is the affectionate exhortation which the Apostle grounds upon the past religious history of the believing Hebrews. He calls upon them to hold fast that joyous assurance of which he had just spoken, and the power of which had been so signally manifested. And he assigns the reason why they should cherish this confidence, and never be induced, either by outward violence, or by the seductions of the world, to cast it away. A glorious recompense, he affirms, awaits it, if it is maintained even to the end. The lofty blessings which are assured to all believers in Christ shall be realised at last, and they will surpass our highest anticipations, and confer on us an imperishable dignity and joy.

36. \*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

e Luke xxi. 19; Gal. vi. 9; Heb. xii. 1.

f Col. iii. 24; Heb. ix. 15; 1 Pet. i. 9.

Verse 36. *For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, etc.* The sentiment of this verse naturally follows from the exhortation just urged. The Apostle was anxious that no one of the Hebrew Christians should make shipwreck of faith, but should maintain it amidst all opposition, and develop it in a course of practical obedience. The great requirement of their present position was *steadfast endurance*. If that only was kept up, the glorious result to which he had just pointed them would be attained, and "the promise" of eternal life, in all its fulness, would be realised. It is necessary to bear in mind that the term *ὑπομονή*, which we render "patience," combines the ideas of perseverance in holy effort, and patient submission under trials and afflictions. Perhaps the word "endurance" is that which most fully represents its amplitude of meaning. And this endurance, or perseverance, is to be evinced in "doing the will of God." A beautiful and instructive view of the Christian life is here suggested to us. That life is one of *service to God*. The power and constancy of Christian principle are to be manifested in a course of unswerving obedience to His commands, and lowly submission to His dispensations. And when, at length, the Christian's probationary service is complete, he will "receive the promise," he will actually enter upon the fulness of life and blessedness assured to him in Christ, and upon which Jesus Himself has entered as the Head and Forerunner of His saints.

37. For <sup>s</sup>yet a little while, and <sup>a</sup>He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38. Now <sup>t</sup>the just shall live by faith: but if *any*

*g* Luke xviii. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

*h* Hab. ii. 3, 4.      *i* Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11.

Verse 37. *For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* This verse is obviously founded upon Habakkuk ii. 3. The Apostle, however, did not design formally to quote the passage, but rather to adapt it to the Christian economy, and the glorious hopes which rise before the view of Christ's people. In the following verse, he quotes, with a slight variation, the well-known declaration which occurs in the next verse of the prophecy of Habakkuk.—It is to the second coming of our Lord that he here directs the attention of the believing Hebrews. Even at the period of our individual dismissal from earth, when our course of service to God is complete, a state of unutterable glory awaits us: but our highest hopes go forward to the final manifestation of the Lord Jesus, to perfect the redemption of His people, and to overthrow His enemies. That great event is fixed and certain; and though it is delayed for important purposes, yet, when the fitting time arrives, it will burst upon the world, and the present economy will be closed. In the faith of our Lord's second coming we may well persevere in a career of service and suffering, since we are assured that we shall share His glory and enjoy His presence for ever.

Verse 38. *Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, etc.* Here the Apostle further enforces the lesson which he had inculcated in verses 35, 36,—the necessity of maintaining faith in lively and vigorous

*man* draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.

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exercise, in order to the continued possession of spiritual life, and the ultimate attainment of the glory held forth to us. He cites, in illustration of this truth, those words of the prophet Habakkuk which are quoted both in the Epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Galatians, as affirming the principle, that faith is the grand instrument of justification and life, and that it is to be constantly exercised, in order to our continued enjoyment of the privileges of God's people. Some critical editors, including Tischendorf and Alford, adopt the reading  $\delta \delta \epsilon \delta \acute{\iota} \kappa \alpha \iota \acute{\omicron} \varsigma \mu \omicron \nu$ , "But *My* just man." Nothing but the authority of the oldest MSS. could outweigh the considerations which may be urged in support of the reading given in the text: but, probably, we should follow those MSS. In this case, the expression will mean, "The man whom I account righteous;" and it will stand in striking contrast with the declaration that follows, in reference to the man who gives up the principle of faith, and forsakes the path of life, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him."—It has been correctly remarked by Dr. Delitzsch, that the phrase "any man" is improperly introduced into the latter clause, and that the literal meaning of the Apostle's words is, "but if he draw back," the reference being to the very man who had been accounted righteous through faith. No words, indeed, can more distinctly or emphatically teach us, that there is an awful possibility that they who enjoy the favour of God through Christ may gradually give way to unbelief, and forsake the path of righteousness, so as to forfeit that favour and sink into condemnation.

Verse 39. *But we are not of them who draw back unto*

39. But we are not of them <sup>4</sup>who draw back unto perdition, but of them that <sup>1</sup>believe to the saving of the soul.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

<sup>l</sup> Acts xvi. 30, 31 ; 1 Thess. v. 9 ; 2 Thess. ii. 14.

*perdition, but of them that believe etc.* The solicitude of the Apostle for the stability of the believing Hebrews was often relieved by a feeling of confidence in them, that they would indeed cleave to the Lord Jesus and be saved for ever. The commingling of these emotions is beautifully indicated in several passages of this Epistle, among which we may particularly mention vi. 3—12, and the whole of the hortatory portion of the present chapter. In the verse before us, the solemn truth suggested by the Apostle's last words is brought out, if possible, in a still more emphatic form. There are those, he teaches us, who "draw back unto perdition,"—who fall from the favour of God, and continue in that state so as ultimately to perish. But his confident hope was, that the Hebrews whom he addressed would maintain the principle of faith, so that the result of their probation would be glorious and happy. The literal rendering of this verse is very striking:—"But we are not of backsliding unto perdition, but of faith unto the saving of the soul." The declaration, "We are of faith" marks a form of character in which faith is the *governing principle*, and thus introduces the course of thought which the Apostle so beautifully pursues in the following chapter.—The last expression, which we translate "unto the saving of the soul," *εις περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*, can scarcely be rendered into English with precision. It represents the soul as *an object gained and possessed*, in opposition to its being *lost*; and thus recalls the appeal of

our Lord recorded in Matt. xvi. 26. Our thoughts are carried forward to the issue of our probation; and we are reminded, that the result of the habitual maintenance of faith will be the attainment of a state in which all danger will have ceased, and *the soul*, with its highest interests, *will be safe for ever.*

## CHAPTER XI:

1. Now faith is the ||substance of things hoped for,  
 || Or, *ground, or confidence.*
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## CHAPTER XI.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN the final exhortations and warnings of the preceding chapter, the Apostle had given prominence to the principle of *faith*, as that which sustains us in a course of obedience to God, and the continued maintenance of which is essential to our eternal safety. On this principle he now enlarges; tracing it in the leading forms of its development, and illustrating its practical power by the examples of many of the ancient saints. He shows how God Himself honoured it, giving His testimony to His servants of old who maintained it, and openly acknowledging them as His own. He shows, also, how this principle upheld the pious of former dispensations, when placed in circumstances of difficulty and trial, or when called to the discharge of arduous duties. But as they passed successively from earth, they looked forward to something far higher than they had yet attained, and of which, indeed, they had only partial conceptions. The clear disclosure of the perfect salvation which God has provided for His people was reserved to the Christian economy; and at length that salvation shall be actually realised by all the believing and obedient.

Verse 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* It is, perhaps, more correct

the evidence of "things not seen.

*a* Rom. viii. 24, 25; 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7.

to regard this verse as a *description* of faith in the leading forms of its manifestation, than as a formal *definition* of it. Faith, as a religious principle, has respect to the testimony of God, and rests upon this as its sure and sufficient basis. In its essence it may be viewed as *trust in God*,—a *firm reliance on His word and promise*, influencing and controlling all our habits of thought and feeling, and governing our whole life. But it has to do, specially, with two classes of objects. There are the "things hoped for" upon the security of the Divine promise,—the blessings held forth to our attainment, and the great events which are made known to us as yet to come. And there are the "things not seen,"—the realities of that spiritual world which the eye of man cannot penetrate, but which God has partially disclosed to us. In reference to the former class of objects, the general principle of reliance on the Divine testimony becomes a firm confidence that the blessings held forth to us shall be actually attained, and that the great events announced shall actually take place; while in reference to the latter it involves a realising and powerful conviction of that which sense cannot apprehend. A degree of obscurity has rested upon this verse, in consequence of the rendering of the term *ὑπόστασις* by the English word "substance." This, perhaps, is its most frequent meaning; but it signifies, also, a *firmly grounded confidence*,—not a confidence which can be dissipated by the first suggestion of doubt, but one which is fixed and settled. It is worthy of attention that it has this import in this very Epistle, iii. 14; "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence (*ὑποστάσεως*) steadfast unto the end."

2. For <sup>b</sup>by it the elders obtained a good report.*b* Verse 39.

Another example of this meaning is found in 2 Cor. ix. 4; and our translators have recognised it as admissible in the rendering of the present verse by placing it in the margin.—There can be no doubt, also, that the word *ἐλεγχος* may be properly rendered “conviction.” It implies the firm assurance of the reality of the objects in question,—such an assurance as would result from the clearest demonstration,—and an abiding conviction of them, so that they influence the character and life almost as if they could be seen.—The comprehensive character of the expressions, “things hoped for,” and “things not seen,” is well deserving of our regard. The latter, indeed, while it includes past events revealed to us by God, and of which no human testimony could inform us, embraces also the whole range of spiritual realities, and in particular the unseen government of the Eternal Father, and the priestly intercession and mediatorial reign of the adorable Redeemer. Every announcement and every promise of God may be viewed as an object of faith; while the great central Object is the LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, set forth by the Father’s counsel as the Refuge of the perishing, and the Source of eternal life to all who embrace Him as their own.

Verse 2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.* The more literal rendering of *ἐμαρτυρήθησαν* is “were witnessed of;” and it is important to mark how frequently this verb, in some of its forms, occurs in the course of the chapter. (Verses 4, 5, 39.) The grand idea which it conveys is, that God Himself bore testimony to the persons spoken of, recognising them as His accepted people; while it may include, as a subordinate thought, that even to the men

3. Through faith we understand that 'the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

c Gen. i. 1; Ps. xxxiii. 6; John i. 3; Heb. i. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 5.

around them their active manifestation of the principle of faith afforded evidence that they sustained this character. There is peculiar force in the first expression, *ἐν ταύτῃ*, literally, "in this." It is equivalent to "in the exercise of this principle;" and it marks the *element*, so to speak, in which the elders lived and acted. Faith was the all-pervading principle of their character; and this principle God stamped with His marked approval.

Verse 3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, etc.* Dr. Delitzsch has satisfactorily shown the propriety of rendering *τοὺς αἰῶνας* by "the worlds," as in i. 2; and, indeed, the context absolutely requires this meaning. As the first illustration of the practical development of faith, the Apostle mentions our firm conviction of the creation of the material universe out of nothing, in opposition to the sentiments so generally held by the heathen philosophers, that it was formed from eternally existing matter. As we go back, in reverent thought, to "the beginning," we have no evidence of sense, or of human testimony, to this great fact; but God has made it known to us, and has declared Himself to be, in the strict and proper sense, the Creator of all things. Some expositors have interpreted the phrase, "the word of God," as referring to the Personal Word; but the original terms, *ῥήματι Θεοῦ*, do not admit of this meaning. The sentiment of the Apostle is, that the worlds were called into being, and were constituted as they are, by the *utterance*, so to speak, of God, by the *direct exertion of Divine power*. "He

4. By faith "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness

*d* Gen. iv. 4; 1 John iii. 12.

spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast." The vast system of this universe has been framed by God. It exists not independently of Him; and as He gave it being, so He orders and controls all its processes.

Verse 4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which etc.* This is the first example which the Apostle adduces of the active exercise of faith, on the part of the worthies of the Old Testament. The sacrifice of Abel is represented as "more excellent" than that of Cain; and although this rendering of *πλειονα* has been disputed, and it has been contended that it is properly an adjective of quantity, it has been satisfactorily shown that it is, in some cases, an adjective of quality, and that this is the only sense that is suited to the context. The difference between the sacrifice of Abel and the offering of Cain was, that the former presented to God of "the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof:" while the latter "brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." But the Apostle teaches us, that this act of Abel was an expression of his *faith*; and that because it was such it was accepted of God, and was followed, indeed, by the distinct testimony of God that he was accounted righteous. Now this very consideration shows, that the offering which he presented—that of an animal victim—rested on a *Divine appointment*, and that it was combined with a firm reliance on a *Divine promise*. In the Book of Genesis, indeed, there is no express mention of the Divine appointment of animal sacrifices immediately after the fall; but all the facts recorded imply it, and the argument of the

that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he, being dead, “||yet speaketh.

5. By faith <sup>f</sup> Enoch was translated that he should  
*e* Gen. iv. 10 ; Matt. xxiii, 35 ; Heb. xii. 24. || Or, *is yet spoken of.*  
*f* Gen. v. 22, 24.

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Apostle in this verse places it beyond a doubt. But it was not his sacrifice, as such, which constituted him righteous ; it was the faith that looked through that sacrifice to the coming Redeemer, and took hold of the promise of life in Him.—Several of the ancient commentators, as Theophylact and Œcumenius, and many of the best modern expositors, consider that there was a visible acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice, by the descent of fire from heaven to consume it ; and that it is to this that the clause, “ God testifying of his gifts,” or, more literally, “ God bearing testimony *upon* his gifts,” refers. It is, indeed, implied in the narrative in Genesis, that in *some* way the Divine acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice was openly evinced ; and there is every probability that it was in the mode now indicated. And thus “ he was witnessed to that he was righteous.” The visible acceptance of his sacrifice, as offered in the exercise of a faith which embraced the Divine scheme of blessing, and rested firmly upon the Divine promise, was the testimony that he himself was accepted of God. By this faith he yet “ speaks ” to us. He stands as an impressive example of a believing reception of God’s counsel, and a simple reliance on God’s promise ; and he encourages us to come to that Saviour to whom he looked forward, and to rely without wavering on the fulfilment of the promise of eternal life in Him.

Verse 5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; etc.* The case of Enoch is selected as the

not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6. But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that

second example of the power of faith; and the active exercise of this principle—its habitual development, indeed, in the whole course of his life—is connected with the signal honour conferred on him, that he was exempted from the common law of mortality, and admitted to his eternal rest without passing through the degradation of death. It was through his faith, the Apostle teaches us, that he was pleasing to God,—that he was regarded by the Most High with complacency, and was himself assured of the Divine favour. He “walked with God,” realising His presence and character, acknowledging His government, and firmly resting upon His declarations and promises. And in some way witness was borne to him that he was accepted of God. There was, doubtless, a vivid conviction of this imparted and sustained by the Holy Ghost; and, probably, there was an announcement made to him of his approaching translation, as the result of the special favour with which God regarded him, as one whose whole life was governed by the principle of trust in Him.—Dean Alford has properly remarked that the form of the verb, *μεμαρτύρηται*, which is in the *perfect* tense, implies the continued existence of the testimony to the acceptance of Enoch in the text of Scripture.

Verse 6. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God etc.* This verse contains a general principle on which the Apostle rests his preceding argument on the case of Enoch. Without faith, he con-

He is, and *that* He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

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tends, man cannot be pleasing to God,—he cannot become the object of His complacency, and receive an assurance of that complacency. Indeed, there can be no real, vital intercourse between the human spirit and the Most High, unless faith is possessed and exercised. There are, in particular, two *settled convictions* without which prayer must be an empty form. The former is, *that God is*,—that we are addressing a living Being, who listens to our supplications, and with whom our spirits may hold fellowship. And the latter is, that if we earnestly seek God, desiring His friendship above every earthly good, and desiring also the grace and strength which He alone can impart, He *will reward that seeking*, and in the *retributions* of eternity will openly acknowledge and honour it. This last idea is distinctly suggested by the word *μισθαποδότης*, which we render “a rewarder.” It conveys the idea of one who renders a recompense; and the sentiment is, that God will not suffer a diligent waiting upon Himself to pass without a gracious recompense. He will manifest Himself to the soul that perseveres in humble, fervent supplication,—will impart to it strength to do His will,—will succour it under the changing scenes of earth,—and will receive it, at last, to dwell in His immediate presence.—It is deserving of attention, that in the last clause the Apostle uses the verb *γίνομαι*, which might have been rendered “becomes” instead of “is.” Two thoughts of deep interest are thus suggested;—that if, for a while, our prayers appear to be unanswered, and no special blessing seems to descend upon us, we have only to continue to wait on God, and He will indeed fulfil His promises; and

7. By faith <sup>g</sup>Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, || moved with fear, <sup>h</sup>prepared an ark

<sup>g</sup> Gen. vi. 13, 22.

|| Or, *being wary*.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 20.

that although, in the present mixed state of things, the righteous may seem to be forgotten by Him, or not to be the objects of any peculiar regard, He will *eventually* recognise them as His own, and confer on them the highest honours and rewards.

Verse 7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, etc.* This is the third example of the power of faith which the Apostle adduces. Under a firm conviction that the deluge of which God had forewarned him would certainly take place, Noah prepared the ark which he had been instructed to build, and persevered in that work amidst the scoffs of the ungodly. Year after year passed away; and the processes of nature went on as usual, and no indication was given that there was coming a flood which should sweep away the whole human race except those who should be sheltered in the ark. But the faith of Noah rested on the certainty of the Divine announcement, and embraced the promise of safety for himself and his family, in the adoption of the means prescribed. It was enough for him that God had spoken; and though every thing around seemed to show that his anticipations were groundless, and though he was doubtless the object of continual ridicule and reproach, he believed God and prepared the appointed refuge.—Many of the expressions used by the Apostle, in speaking of the faith of Noah and its glorious result, are remarkably forcible and instructive. In the phrase, “being warned of God of things *not seen as yet*,” we cannot fail to trace

to the saving of his house; by the which he con-

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a reference to his statement in verse 1, that "faith is a firmly grounded confidence of things hoped for, an assured conviction of things not seen." Indeed, the examples which he adduces are intended partly to illustrate and confirm this position; and in this case, he reminds us that the coming deluge was not indicated by any thing that sense could appreciate, but every thing that *was seen* seemed to show that it would not be. The term, *εὐλαβηθεὶς*, which we translate "moved with fear," combines two ideas, those of *fear* and *careful forethought*, the latter, perhaps, being, in this instance, the prominent one. In the clause which follows, "by the which he condemned the world," the last expression, *τὸν κόσμον*, clearly refers to the world as *ungodly*, in opposition to the people of God, as in John xvii. 14, and innumerable other passages of the New Testament. It has been made a question, whether the relative phrase, "by which," should be referred to "the ark," or to the words "by faith." The latter is by far the more probable construction; but the import of the passage is not materially affected by the decision of this question. It was by the faith which Noah evinced *in* the building of the ark that "he condemned the world:" the lofty trust in God which sustained him during the hundred and twenty years in which he carried on that slow labour formed a striking contrast to the thoughtless levity with which the men around him gave themselves up to the business and pleasures of earth, and laughed at the anticipation of any signal Divine judgment. But even thus he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." He rested upon the Divine testimony; he embraced the Divine counsel for the preservation of himself and his house; he

demned the world, and became heir of 'the righteousness which is by faith.

8. By faith <sup>†</sup>Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an

<sup>†</sup> Rom. iii. 22; iv. 13; Phil. iii. 9.

<sup>‡</sup> Gen. xii. 1, 4; Acts vii. 2, 3, 4.

clung to the promise, "With thee will I establish My covenant,"—a promise which looked forward to the coming of that great Restorer who had been announced as the Seed of the woman, and the Conqueror of the great enemy of man; and thus he had a place among those who are accounted righteous by God through the faith which rests upon His promise in Christ, and accepts His scheme of peace and blessing.—It is scarcely necessary to direct attention to the Pauline character of the expression, "the righteousness which is by faith." Every reader will at once recall several passages of St. Paul's writings in which similar phraseology occurs.

Verse 8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, etc.* The Apostle now introduces Abraham as one whose history afforded many striking examples of the power of faith. The first great act of his faith was his compliance with the call of God to leave his country and kindred, and become a wanderer. Disregarding the earthly inducements to retain his settled home, and severing many of the ties of kindred, he gave himself up to follow the direction of God, as it should be, from time to time, made known to him. Nothing could have induced him to adopt this course, or have sustained him in it, but a firm conviction of the reality of Jehovah's government, and of the glories of the life to come. But these were not the only objects of which his

inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise,

faith took hold. When he was called to go forth from Haran, there was given to him the promise, that "in him all the families of the earth should be blessed." In this we mark a further stage of the development of God's counsel for the salvation of men. Not only was Abraham assured that he should become the father of a great nation, and that God Himself would watch over him and bless him, but he was designated as the one in whose line that "blessing" for which mankind had hoped through a coming Redeemer should be actually realised. All this the faith of Abraham embraced; and, embracing it, he gave up his home, and led a pilgrim-life.—It should be mentioned that some very early MSS. have the reading, "*he who was called Abraham* obeyed to go forth etc.;" but the evidence in favour of it is not sufficient to outweigh that by which the common reading is sustained. If it were adopted, the sentiment would be, "he who was afterwards called Abraham," that name of lofty spiritual import being given to him long after he had left his country, and only a little while before the long-delayed promise of a son by Sarah was fulfilled.—In another particular, the Authorised Version fails to indicate the precise connection of words in the original. The order which the Apostle adopts should certainly be adhered to:—"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go forth unto a place which he was hereafter to receive for an inheritance; and he went forth, not knowing whither he was going."

Verse 9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, etc.* As the Divine purposes respecting

as *in* a strange country, <sup>l</sup>dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, <sup>m</sup>the heirs with him of the same promise :

10. For he looked for <sup>n</sup>a city which hath foundations, <sup>o</sup>whose builder and maker is God.

*l* Gen. xii. 8 ; xiii. 3, 18 ; xviii. 1, 9.     *m* Heb. vi. 17.

*n* Heb. xii. 22 ; xiii. 14.     *o* Heb. iii. 4 ; Rev. xxi. 2, 10.

Abraham were gradually unveiled to him, he received the promise that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, to which God conducted him from Haran. That promise is recorded in Gen. xiii. 14—17 ; and it was renewed on several subsequent occasions. But Abraham himself held no possession in that land, except that, in very advanced age, when his beloved Sarah had been taken from him, he acquired one solitary spot as her grave. He dwelt in Canaan as a pilgrim. He might have founded a city for himself and his household : <sup>n</sup>but he carried out the design of God, and lived only in tents. Isaac, also, avowed, in the same way, his faith in God and in the realities of the future world, both during the life of his father, and after his decease ; and Jacob, who succeeded to the promise, adopted the same pilgrim-life. But while each of these distinguished patriarchs evinced, in this manner, the reality and strength of his faith, Abraham stood pre-eminent for his lofty trust in God, and his example largely influenced the conduct of his son and grandson.

Verse 10. *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Here the Apostle shows the particular form which the faith of Abraham took ; and his remark illustrates the statement in verse 1, that " faith is a firmly grounded confidence of things hoped for, an assured conviction of things not seen." He believed in a

11. Through faith also <sup>p</sup>Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and <sup>q</sup>was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him <sup>r</sup>faithful who had promised.

*p* Gen. xvii. 19 ; xviii. 11, 14 ; xxi. 2.      *q* Luke i. 36.  
*r* Rom. iv. 21 ; Heb. x. 23.

life to come ; he looked forward to an abode which should be permanent and enduring, and which should infinitely transcend the fairest cities that man could build. He was content that his earthly life should be passed in tents, since he was assured that there was provided for him, and for all the true people of God, "a city which hath foundations," which no assault from without, and no fierce tempest bursting upon it, could overthrow, and which no decay could impair. And this permanent abode of the saints he viewed as infinitely glorious. He knew that God Himself was its Architect and Framers,—that all its arrangements were ordered by His wisdom and power,—and that its beauty and excellence would show forth the boundless extent of His resources.

Verse 11. *Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, etc.* In tracing the development of Abraham's faith, the Apostle beautifully combines with it that of Sarah, who was chosen by God to be the mother of him in whose line the covenant was to be established. For twenty-five years they had together pursued their pilgrim-life, and Sarah had long passed the age at which it was possible for her, according to the natural course of things, to become a mother. At length the time drew near when, according to the Divine plan, the designated ancestor and type of the Messiah should be born ; and an explicit promise was given to Abraham, that within a year

12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and <sup>s</sup>him as good as dead, <sup>t</sup>so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. iv. 19.      <sup>t</sup> Gen. xxii. 17 ; Rom. iv. 18.

Sarah should bear him a son in whom the Divine engagements, on which he had so long reposed, should be fulfilled. That promise was embraced by the faith of Sarah, as well as by that of Abraham. She relied on the Divine fidelity and power, and thus experienced, as Abraham did, a renewal of vital energy. It should be mentioned, that the word ἔτεκεν, which we translate "was delivered of a child," is wanting in the best MSS., so that the Apostle's statement is simply, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, even when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." In this last clause the character and operation of faith are beautifully brought out. It reposes on the fidelity of God to His engagements; and taking hold of His promise waits, with assured expectation, for its fulfilment, whatever difficulties may lie in the way, and even although, in the ordinary course of things, it may be impossible.

Verse 12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, etc.* Thus was the faith both of Abraham and Sarah honoured. The promise on which they had long dwelt with interest and hope, that Abraham should be the father of a numerous and powerful race, was accomplished in a way contrary to human thought, when the strength of nature was gone, and when they were cast exclusively upon the power and faithfulness of Jehovah. It was not in the line of Ishmael that the promise was fulfilled, but in that of Isaac, the circumstances of whose birth afforded an

13. These all died \*in faith, \*not having received the promises, but †having seen them afar off, and were

\* Gr. *according to faith.* u Verse 39.

æ Verse 27; John viii. 56.

illustration of the principle, that the true children of Abraham, they who should inherit the covenant-promise in its fulness, should be such in virtue of a Divine power communicating to them a life which no energy of nature could supply.

Verse 13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, etc.* This verse contains a general statement respecting the life and character of the patriarchs to whom reference had just been made, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with Sarah: and beautifully traces the action of that principle of faith by which their earthly course was distinguished. To the very end they held fast their confidence in the Divine engagements, and "died according to faith," cherishing, as they passed into eternity, a firm hope of that better inheritance to which they looked forward. The "promised blessings," indeed, and specially the coming of the great Deliverer, the Hope and Refuge of mankind, together with a life of blessedness and glory beyond the grave, were beheld by them "afar off." They were among the "things hoped for" on the security of the Divine word. But these earnest men "embraced" them, or rather "*greeted*" them, from afar. They steadily looked towards them, regarding them with intense desire and chastened love, and assured that they would at length be realised. The words, "were persuaded of them," are wanting in all the earliest and best MSS., and are now universally considered not to belong to the text; so that the statement of the Apostle may be

persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and <sup>v</sup>confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14. For they that say such things <sup>v</sup>declare plainly that they seek a country.

y. Gen. xxiii. 4 ; xlvii. 9 ; 1 Chron. xxix. 15 ; Ps. xxxix. 12 ;  
 cxix. 19 ; 1 Pet. i. 17 ; ii. 11.  
 z Heb. xiii. 14.

literally rendered, "but from afar having seen them and greeted them." The *effect* of this habit of mind is then set forth. They "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." There is probably an allusion in these words to the declaration of Abraham to the sons of Heth recorded in Gen. xxiii. 4, and that of Jacob to Pharaoh recorded in Gen. xlvii. 9 : but they reach much further than to any particular utterances of individuals. They imply that the patriarchs avowed, in the whole course of their lives, as they dwelt in tents, and refrained from seeking to found a city, that *earth was not their home*,—that they were "strangers" in this world, and were only passing onward as "pilgrims" to the place on which their hearts were set, and where their treasure was laid up. This was the spirit which the Apostle was anxious that the believing Hebrews should maintain, and which Christians in every age should cultivate.

Verse 14. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* In this and the two following verses the Apostle reasons on the declarations and conduct of the patriarchs to whom he had just referred. He lays down, first of all, the general principle, that the whole tenor of their earthly life showed that they sought a country,—a country to which they properly belonged, and which they looked upon with affection as *their own*. This

15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16. But now they desire a better *country*, that is,

is the force of the term *πατρίδα*, which the Apostle here employs. Dean Alford has even gone so far as to translate it "*a home*." This land, which they loved, they ever kept in view; and to reach it was the object of their constant and earnest effort.

Verse 15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, etc.* This is the second leading thought in the Apostle's brief argument. The country which the patriarchs sought as their own, could not be that which Abraham left in obedience to the command of God. If their hearts had turned to *this* with fond affection, and their thoughts had dwelt on it as the chosen object of regard, they would have had opportunities to return to it, and could without difficulty have accomplished that purpose. They needed not, in that case, to have made the whole of their earthly life a pilgrimage; but might have found the settled abode which they desired.

Verse 16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: etc.* Here we have the conclusion to which the considerations just advanced manifestly led. The country which the patriarchs sought as their *home* was a *heavenly* one, and infinitely superior, therefore, to any earthly region. The word *ὀρέγονται*, which the Apostle uses in the first clause, is beautifully expressive of *active, earnest desire*. It implies the reaching forth of the soul towards the object in question, and marks a regard which influences the life and deportment.—In rendering the latter part of the verse, it is important to adhere to the exact

a heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed <sup>a</sup>to be called their God ; for <sup>b</sup>He hath prepared for them a city.

*a* Exod. iii. 6, 15 ; Matt. xxii. 32 ; Acts vii. 32.

*b* Phil. iii. 20 ; Heb. xiii. 14.

words of the Apostle :—“ Wherefore God is not ashamed *of them* to be called their God ; for He hath prepared for them a city.” There is an obvious reference to the fact, that Jehovah again and again announced Himself as “ the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob,” this declaration implying that He was *their covenant-God*, bound by solemn engagements to bestow on them the blessings which it becomes Him, as the Eternal God, to confer upon His own. In the remarkable words before us two things are made prominent. First, the *personal character* of the patriarchs is alleged as the ground why Jehovah was not ashamed to avow Himself their God. They desired and sought that heavenly home which they apprehended by faith. Had their thoughts and affections been concentrated on earth, God would have been “ ashamed of them ” to own them as His covenant-people. It would have been unworthy of Him, and inconsistent with the principles of His government, to do so: but, inasmuch as they cultivated spirituality of mind, and strove against the worldly influences with which they were surrounded, He could acknowledge them as His without derogating from His essential moral perfection. And, secondly, the *provision* which God has *actually made* for the blessedness of His people in the life to come is dwelt upon. He “ has prepared for them a city,”—a place of fixed and permanent abode, the glories of which are worthy of Himself. Had their hopes been doomed to disappointment,—had they been left by God, when this short life was over, to sink into nothing, or to dwell in a

17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son,

*c* Gen. xxii. 1, 9.     *d* James ii. 21.

region of gloom and sorrow,—they would have received nothing worthy of the high relation in which they stood to God, and in which He openly acknowledged them. But the “city” prepared for them by Him meets the highest aspirations of their nature, and will for ever show forth the grandeur and infinity of His resources.

Verses 17, 18. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: etc.* The Apostle now comes to the most impressive and affecting proof of sustained trust in God which the history of Abraham presented. The expression, “when he was tried,” recognises this as the *severest test* to which his faith was ever subjected; and the Apostle brings together the several considerations which evince this. First of all, he designates Abraham “he that had received,” or “embraced,” “the promises.” Thus he reminds us that Abraham, from the time when he was called by God to leave his country and kindred, gratefully accepted the distinguished promises which God made to him,—that he rested upon them, and waited for their fulfilment. Those promises comprehended the possession of Canaan by his seed, as the type of a better inheritance,—the multiplication of his descendants so that they should become a powerful nation,—the future appearance of the Messiah in his favoured line,—the bestowment of blessing, rich, exhaustless blessing, on himself and on mankind through Him who should hereafter arise,—and the assurance that Abraham himself should stand as “the father of many nations,” the head, in one sense, of all true believers

18. ||Of whom it was said, 'That in Isaac shall thy seed be called :

|| Or, *Zo*.

*e* Gen. xxi. 12; Rom. ix. 7.

in every age. In the gift of Isaac, under circumstances involving a remarkable intervention of Divine power, Abraham beheld the beginning of the working out of the Divine counsel, and the pledge of the fulfilment of all the Divine engagements. Isaac was, in one sense, "his only-begotten son,"—not merely his only son by Sarah, but the one in whose line *alone* the promises were to be fulfilled. On this consideration the Apostle dwells; for, after saying, "He that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son," he adds, according to the strict meaning of the words in the original, which the marginal rendering recognises, "He *to* whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called." God had Himself unfolded to Abraham His purpose, that not in the line of Ishmael, but in that of Isaac, and Isaac only, the covenant-people should arise, and the great Restorer should appear. Thus the whole series of the Divine arrangements with Abraham, involving, on his part, a waiting for many years for the actual bestowment of promised blessings, and at length giving to him, in a way altogether unexpected, the pledge of their perfect fulfilment, contributed to fix his regard on Isaac, and made him feel that with his life the promises of God were bound up. And yet, while Isaac was yet a youth and unmarried, Abraham was commanded to take him, and, going to the land of Moriah, to offer him up as a burnt-offering on a mountain to be pointed out to him. This was, indeed, the trial of his faith. The command, in addition to the violence which it did to his natural feelings, seemed to be utterly at variance with

19. Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

*f* Rom. iv. 17, 19, 21.

the Divine promises on which he had so long hoped, and of the fulfilment of which he had regarded Isaac as the pledge. If it were executed, if Isaac should die beneath the knife of sacrifice, the accomplishment of the Divine engagements would seem to be impossible. But the faith of Abraham sustained him. He went forward to obey the command of God, given to him under circumstances which excluded all doubt that it came from HIM, assured that the promise could not fail, but that in some way God would interpose to fulfil it, restoring the life of Isaac, when it had been surrendered.—It is desirable to mark the precision with which the Apostle describes the act of Abraham, in the use of the imperfect *προσέφερεν*, literally, “was offering.” The act of sacrifice was in progress, but was not completed, when God interposed, accepting this proof of Abraham’s faith and submission, and renewing to him, in a yet more solemn manner, the assurance of blessing.

Verse 19. *Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; etc.* Here the Apostle completes his statement of this memorable act of Abraham, showing the particular direction which his faith took, and then adverting to the reward conferred upon it. Dean Alford has called attention to the circumstance, that the first clause of this verse is so expressed as to contain a general sentiment,—“Accounting that God is able even to raise from the dead.” But it is clear that the Apostle refers to this settled conviction of Abraham, as having a direct and immediate reference to the act required of him. He

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

*g* Gen. xxvii. 27, 39.

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was assured that Isaac, if allowed to die beneath the sacrificial knife, would be raised from the dead by the immediate power of God, that His covenant-engagements might be fulfilled.—The precise import of the latter part of this verse has been much disputed; but the rendering of our Authorised Version conveys, we believe, the sentiment which was in the Apostle's mind. Isaac, when surrendered to death, and when the act of sacrifice was on the point of completion, was given back to his father, *as if* raised from the dead, that in him and in his seed the Divine counsel should be wrought out. Nor was this all. The whole transaction had an important *typical meaning*; and to the spiritual mind of Abraham, who exulted in the hope of seeing the day of Christ, and who, indeed, "saw it and was glad," it conveyed, we believe, the most valuable instruction, shedding light on the great arrangements of the economy of redemption. Here was a father giving his own son, his only-begotten, as a sacrifice; here was that son meekly surrendering himself to die, instead of offering resistance to his father's will; here was an impressive intimation, in the fact that a ram caught in a thicket was substituted, by Divine appointment, for Isaac, that the animal sacrifices then presented were only pre-figurations of a nobler Victim hereafter to be offered; and here, at length, when the humiliation and suffering to which Isaac submitted were over, he came forth, as if raised from the dead, and the promise of God respecting him received an additional confirmation.

Verse 20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.* The history of this transaction, as

21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, <sup>a</sup>blessed

<sup>b</sup> Gen. xlviii. 5, 16, 20.

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given in Gen. xxvii., evinces, on the part both of Rebekah and of Jacob, most unworthy feelings, and methods of procedure which God did not approve. The artifices to which they had recourse brought their own punishment; and they were by no means necessary to the attainment of the result which they had in view. God would have taken care, in His own way, that Jacob, whom He had chosen to that distinction, should be marked out, in his father's blessing, as the ancestor of the more powerful nation, and as the person in whose line the Messiah should arise. But the faith of Isaac appeared in his adhering, and that firmly, to what was eventually revealed to him, as the Divine purpose respecting the descendants of his sons, instead of seeking to reverse his blessing in accordance with his own preferences. And it appeared, too, in his emphatic utterances concerning things to come, which no human sagacity could foresee, and which he declared only under the conviction that he was inspired by God.

Verse 21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; etc.* The latter of the events here referred to took place shortly before the former; but the plan of the Apostle did not require him to adhere strictly to chronological order. The faith which Jacob evinced on these two occasions was a firm confidence in the fulfilment of the Divine counsel. The prophetic Spirit had disclosed to him, in part, the position of the descendants of the two sons of Joseph: these discoveries his faith embraced; and he marked the respective destinies of the two by placing his right hand on the head of the younger son, and his left hand on the head of the elder. When

both the sons of Joseph; and 'worshipped, *leaning upon the top of his staff.*

i Gen. xlvii. 31.

Joseph expostulated with him on this, and pointed out that Manasseh was the firstborn, the venerable patriarch explained, "I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." (Gen. xlviii. 19.) Nor should it be overlooked, that the blessing which he pronounced on the two sons of his beloved Joseph recognised the covenant-promise of Jehovah to Abraham and Isaac as certain of fulfilment:—"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Verses 15, 16.) The occasion to which the Apostle refers in the latter clause of the verse, was when Jacob sent for Joseph, and gave him a solemn charge that his remains should rest, not in Egypt, but in Canaan, the land of promise; that he might thus, even in death, be identified with his fathers to whom the covenant-promise was given. No lengthened argument is necessary to show the incorrectness of the rendering of the Vulgate, "And worshipped the top of his staff," and the fallacy of the conclusions that have been built upon it. It is sufficient to cite the original terms, *καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ*, and to call attention to the preposition *ἐπί*, which requires the rendering of our Authorised Version. The point of difficulty in connection

22. By faith <sup>2</sup>Joseph, when he died, || made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

*2* Gen. l. 24, 25; Exod. xiii. 19.    || Or, *remembered.*

with this clause is, whether the Hebrew word found in Gen. xlvii. 31 should be rendered "bed," or, as the Septuagint have translated it, "staff." The Apostle, we conceive, has sanctioned the latter, as conveying the true idea; and we believe that, on the occasion referred to, the aged patriarch made an effort to sit up in his bed, and supported himself on his staff; and when Joseph had bound himself by a solemn oath to carry his remains to the land of promise, he worshipped God with lowly reverence, expressing his faith in the fulfilment of the covenant, and his own assurance of the salvation of God.

Verse 22. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; etc.* As another example of the power of faith, the Apostle mentions the dying charge of Joseph to his brethren and people. Notwithstanding the high honour which he had attained in Egypt, his heart turned to Canaan as the land of promise and to the assurances of blessing given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. By a faith which rested upon the Divine engagements, and looked forward to the perfect working out of the Divine counsel, he spoke of the going forth of his people from Egypt to possess the land of Canaan; and his charge to them to convey to that land his own mortal remains involved a solemn profession that he was one of the covenant-nation, and that he accounted this his greatest privilege and honour. He died in the faith of the promises given to his fathers, and looking forward to Him in whom the covenant should be established.

23. By faith <sup>l</sup>Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's <sup>m</sup>commandment.

24. By faith <sup>n</sup>Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

<sup>l</sup> Exod. ii. 2; Acts vii. 20.      <sup>m</sup> Exod. i. 16, 22.

<sup>n</sup> Exod. ii. 10, 11.

Verse 23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, etc.* In the narrative in Exodus, the mother of Moses is specially mentioned as preserving him in defiance of the cruel edict of the king, that all the male children of the Israelites should be destroyed; but there can be no doubt that his father was a party to this course, and willingly incurred all the risk that it involved. Dean Alford and others have shown that the phrase, *ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ*, literally, "by his fathers," may be correctly rendered, as in our Version, "by his parents." It is probable that the parents of Moses had a secret conviction that God designed their child for some special service. His great beauty seems to have been associated in their minds with this thought; and, relying on God to protect them, they disobeyed the cruel injunction which ordered his death. They were assured that He who had given to them so fair a child, if indeed He intended him to be an instrument of blessing to His people, would carry out His purpose, and shield them from any danger to which they might be exposed.

Verses 24, 25. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; etc.* The choice of Moses, to which the Apostle now turns, afforded one of the most impressive illustrations of the

25. °Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ;

o Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

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practical power of faith. Though placed, by the wonderful arrangements of Divine Providence, in the very court of Pharaoh, and adopted by his daughter as her son, he deliberately renounced that position, with all its dignity and wealth, and the bright prospects which it held out to him, to cast in his lot with the oppressed and despised Israelites, as the covenant-people of Jehovah. He felt that the time had come when he must avow himself to be one of that persecuted race, and separate himself from the idolatry of the Egyptian court, if he hoped to have any interest in the salvation to be bestowed through the Messiah.—It is important to mark the force of the expression which the Apostle has selected to designate the race of Israel,—“the people of God.” The faith of Moses recognised them under this character, and rested on the promises of God given to them, and through them to mankind. The narrative in Exodus shows that the early training of Moses was committed to his pious mother ; and from her instructions, as well as from his subsequent inquiries, he learned God’s dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the blessings assured to them and to their seed. And thus, when the great crisis in his history to which this passage refers arrived, his faith led him to the right decision. He chose rather “to suffer affliction with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin.”—These last words are very monitory. Whatever gratifications a sinful course may involve, they are transient and short-lived, and leave the soul at last in

26. Esteeming <sup>p</sup>the reproach ||of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto <sup>q</sup>the recompense of the reward.

*p* Heb. xiii. 13.

|| Or, for Christ.

*q* Heb. x. 35.

utter darkness.—The full development of the Apostle's reasoning on the faith of Moses must be reserved for the note on the following verse.

Verse 26. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; etc.* In these words the Apostle completes his illustrative remarks on the faith of Moses, as that which dictated his great choice. The phrase, "the reproach of Christ," has been variously explained. Perhaps the most superficial interpretation is that which makes it mean "reproach similar to that of Christ." A far deeper exposition, and one having greater claims to our regard, is that of Dr. Delitzsch and several others, that in virtue of the *union* subsisting between Christ and His people, all the reproach which <sup>a</sup>falls upon them *as His people*, may be regarded as falling upon Him, even though they lived before His manifestation in the flesh. But we adhere to a simpler view, which seems to meet all the requirements of the case. The reproach which Moses willingly incurred was that which he knew would be cast upon him by the men whose company he forsook, indeed by all men of the world, as a poor enthusiast who, because he believed in a Messiah to appear ages after he should have passed away from earth, and because he hoped for some spiritual benefit from that Messiah, cast away "the treasures of Egypt," which to some extent he actually enjoyed, and which he had the prospect of possessing in yet greater abundance.—But the faith of Moses not only

## 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the

r Exod. x. 28, 29 ; xii. 37 ; xiii. 17, 18.

embraced the promise of the Messiah, but went forward to the retributions of eternity. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward;" and hence he "esteemed the reproach of Christ," which was intimately and necessarily connected with a saving interest in Him, "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."—The forms, then, which the faith of Moses took were manifold; but they all converged to one practical result. He believed in the government of Jehovah, as a great and momentous reality; he recognised the race of Israel as His covenant-people, to whom the promises were given, and from whom, though despised and persecuted, he could not stand aloof without forfeiting his own interest in the covenant; he embraced the promise of the Messiah, and looked for the spiritual blessings which should flow through Him to mankind; and he had a firm conviction of the realities of the future life, and estimated everything by its bearing on that state of retribution.

Verse 27. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: etc.* It has been much disputed, whether this statement is to be referred to the leaving of Egypt by Moses after he had slain an Egyptian, in defending his brethren of the race of Israel,—an event which preceded his call to his high mission; or whether it is to be understood of his leading forth the people of Israel from that land of bondage. Names of great weight are ranged on both sides of this question. The former opinion is held by Bengel, Tholuck, De Wette, Delitzsch, and Alford; while the latter is advocated by Calvin, Stuart, Bleck, Ebrard, and others. For our own part, we unhesitatingly adopt the latter view.

wrath of the king : for he endured, as 'seeing Him who is invisible.

\* Verse 13.

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There is a difficulty attaching to the former, which its advocates candidly acknowledge, and of which, as yet, none of them has proposed any satisfactory solution,—that while the narrative in Exodus expressly connects that first leaving of Egypt with the *fear* of Moses, his fear of Pharaoh, the Apostle says that “he left Egypt, *not fearing* the wrath of the king.” But, besides this, the example of faith afforded by the flight of Moses from Egypt is not to be compared with that given in his leading forth the children of Israel. This last was one of the most impressive instances of *trust in God* which human history has ever presented; and to it the declaration that “he endured as seeing Him who is invisible” is strikingly applicable. The objections which have been taken to this view have certainly no great force. We may consider them as laid down by Dean Alford. He contends, first, “that the exodus was made, not in defiance of the king of Egypt, but with his consent, and at his urgent instance.” This is admitted; but it should be borne in mind, that although, at the moment, the king urged the people to depart, yet he had so often changed his mind on that point, that Moses had every reason to apprehend what actually happened, that Pharaoh would pursue them with a hostile purpose. The second objection, though to this less importance is attached, is, “that thus the chronological order is broken, the next particular, the institution of the pass-over, having taken place previously to the exodus.” To this it is sufficient to reply, that in the examples of faith given in this chapter the Apostle does not invariably

## 28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the

† Exod. xii. 21, etc.

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adhere to chronological order. Not to speak of the arrangement of the names found in verse 32, we have already seen that he mentions the faith of Abraham in offering up Isaac, after comprehending him with Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, as one who had died according to faith. Besides, the reference to the passover as an *abiding* institution, marked by the use of the perfect tense, might well come in after the mention of the one past fact of leaving Egypt. The third objection alleged by Dean Alford is, "that the singular *κατέλιπεν* cannot well be referred to an event in Israel's history, but must refer to the personal history of Moses." Doubtless it is of an act of Moses, and of the personal faith of Moses, that the Apostle is here speaking: but we contend that the leaving of Egypt with the people of Israel was specially an act of *faith* on the part of their *leader*, who had no means of providing for them, or defending them from their enemies, apart from the constant, and often the miraculous, interposition of Jehovah. It was an enterprise which could only have terminated in utter ruin, had not God Himself been with Moses, guiding his steps, and providing for every emergency as it arose. But the faith of Moses realised the unceasing care, the universal agency, and the boundless resources, of Jehovah. Amidst the difficulties of his great undertaking, and the constant pressure of anxiety and toil which it involved, "he *endured* as seeing Him who is invisible."

Verse 28. *Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, etc.* The faith which Moses, and indeed the people of Israel generally, evinced in the observance of the passover, and in sprinkling the blood of the immolated

sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.

29. By faith \*they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

\* Exod. xiv. 22, 29.

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lamb on the lintel and the door-posts of their houses, involved a dutiful acceptance of the method of preservation which God had prescribed, and a firm confidence in the promise, that they should thus be exempted from the terrible calamity—the destruction of the firstborn of man and beast—which was about to fall upon the Egyptians. It was this development of the principle of faith which the Apostle here had in view: but we may well conceive that a thoughtful and spiritual mind, like that of Moses, would, under a special Divine illumination, go forward to the greater deliverance to be conferred by the Messiah on all who should appropriate His sacrifice, and trust themselves to that alone.

Verse 29. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: etc.* Here the Apostle brings forward an instance of faith on the part of the people who came forth out of Egypt with Moses. Confiding in the promise of God, they went into the bed of the Red Sea, assured that the waters would not return to their natural position until they had passed over. They realised the unseen agency of Jehovah, and rested upon His engagement that He would lead them in safety, and would magnify His power in the overthrow of their enemies. And their faith was honoured and rewarded. The whole host of Israel, treading on dry land, reached the opposite shore; and when Pharaoh and his host had descended into the bed of the sea to follow

30. By faith <sup>r</sup>the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31. By faith <sup>s</sup>the harlot Rahab perished not with

<sup>r</sup> Josh. vi. 20.      <sup>y</sup> Josh. vi. 23 ; James ii. 25.

them, the waters returned at the bidding of Jehovah, and overwhelmed them all.

Verse 30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.* This example of the faith of Israel, and of the honour which God put upon it, belongs to the time of Joshua. The whole proceeding of carrying the ark of the covenant—the token of Jehovah's special relation to Israel—round the walls of Jericho six days, the seven priests who went before it blowing all the while with their rams' horns, and then carrying it back to the camp without any attempt to assail the city, must have appeared strange, and perhaps foolish, to its ungodly inhabitants, while it was calculated to impress even them with the conviction, that the Israelites looked for success to a signal interposition of Him whom they worshipped. The seventh day came; and on that the ark was carried seven times round the city; and at length, at the command of Joshua, the priests having sounded with their rams' horns, all the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down. In all this we have a striking instance of the faith of Israel in the promise of God, and in His unseen but resistless agency. They accepted Jehovah's counsel, and relied upon His engagements; and the event justified their faith.

Verse 31. *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, etc.* An illustration of the principle of faith is here given from the history of one who was not of the race of Israel, but of the devoted race of the

them || that believed not, when <sup>s</sup>she had received the spies with peace.

32. And what shall I more say? for the time

|| Or, *that were disobedient.*    *z* Josh. ii. 1.

Canaanites. Some expositors have contended that the word *πόρνη* need not be rendered "harlot," but may have a signification approaching to that of "inn-keeper." It is safer, however, to adhere to the common meaning of the word, referring it to the past life of Rahab, and regarding her as having abandoned that course of life under the influence of the deep religious feelings that were awakened in her breast. She had heard, as the men of Jericho had heard, of the wonderful interpositions of Jehovah on behalf of the people of Israel; she, as they, had been filled with fear; but while they refused to bow to Jehovah, she cherished the conviction of His exclusive Godhead, declaring to the spies who came to her house, "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Her faith in Him, her settled conviction that He would watch over His people, and give them victory, led her to receive the spies whom Joshua had sent forward in peace, and to commend herself and her father's house to their protection. And God accepted that faith, and graciously provided for her safety.

Verse 32. *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, etc.* In this and the following verses the Apostle groups together the almost innumerable instances of faith which the recorded history of God's ancient Church presented. He felt that to dwell on them separately would be almost endless, and would give a disproportionate length to this branch of his Epistle. In the arrangement of names in the verse before us, he does

would fail me to tell of <sup>a</sup>Gideon, and of <sup>b</sup>Barak, and of <sup>c</sup>Samson, and of <sup>d</sup>Jephthah; of <sup>e</sup>David also, and of <sup>f</sup>Samuel, and of the prophets:

33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms,

*a* Judges vi. 11.      *b* Judges iv. 6.

*c* Judges xiii. 24.      *d* Judges xi. 1; xii. 7.

*e* 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 18; xvii. 45.      *f* 1 Sam. i. 20; xii. 20.

not observe strict chronological order. The principle which guided him was perhaps that indicated by Alford and others, that Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah are classed together as *judges*; and David and Samuel and the rest as being *prophets*, David taking the precedence in this list on account of the lofty position assigned to him in the Divine arrangements. With regard to the *judges* mentioned in this passage, and others whom God raised up to deliver His people, they were men—to use the beautiful language of the Rev. L. H. Wiseman—“to whom, whatever may have been their errors, the THINGS UNSEEN were present realities; men who possessed a living FAITH in that covenant which the priest and the Levite taught merely as a matter of form.”—The wide application of the phrase, “*the prophets*,” must not be overlooked. It recalls to us the memorable histories of Elijah and Elisha, abounding as they did in instances of trust in God,—the notices, also, of other prophets found in the account of the kings of Judah and Israel,—and the distinguished men whose writings, as prophets, have come down to us as part of the Sacred Oracles of the Old Testament.

Verse 33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, etc.* Here the Apostle enters upon a general statement of the practical results of faith on the part of the judges and prophets to whom he had just referred.

wrought righteousness, <sup>g</sup>obtained promises, <sup>h</sup>stopped the mouths of lions,

*g* 2 Sam. vii. 11, etc.

*h* Judges xiv. 5, 6 ; 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35 ; Dan. vi. 22.

The first particular, that they "subdued kingdoms," includes, doubtless, the victory of Gideon over the Midianites, of Barak over the host of Sisera, of Samson over the Philistines, of Jephthah over the Ammonites, and of David over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, and the Ammonites.—The second, that they "wrought righteousness," may be illustrated by the history of Samuel, who was pre-eminently a righteous judge, and of David, whose administration was characterised by its equity and its profound regard to God.—The third particular, that they "obtained promises," has a wide range of application. It does not mean, we conceive, that through their faith promises were made to them, but that they realised the fulfilment of the Divine engagements. Some of the judges of whom the Apostle speaks received from God the explicit assurance that He would make them victorious over Israel's foes, and were instructed as to the course which they were to adopt,—a course, in some instances, contrary to the dictates of human prudence: but their faith reposed on the Divine word, and that word was signally fulfilled.—The fourth particular, "stopped the mouths of lions," was exemplified in the history of Daniel, whose refusal to cease from offering prayer to God, when commanded to do so on pain of being cast into the den of lions, was a striking instance of his faith, and whose deliverance evinced the fidelity and power of Jehovah. This statement may also include a reference to events in the life of Samson, (Judges xiv. 6,) and of David. (1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35.)

34. <sup>i</sup>Quenched the violence of fire, <sup>k</sup>escaped the edge of the sword, <sup>l</sup>out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, <sup>m</sup>turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

*i* Dan. iii. 25.      *k* 1 Sam. xx. 1 ; 1 Kings xix. 3 ; 2 Kings vi. 16.  
*l* 2 Kings xx. 7, etc. ; Job xlii. 10 ; Ps. vi. 8.  
*m* Judges xv. 8, 15 ; 1 Sam. xiv. 13, etc. ; xvii. 51, 52 ;  
 2 Sam. viii. 1, etc.

Verse 34. *Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, etc.* Additional instances of the honour which God put upon the faith of His ancient servants are here brought forward. The fifth particular, "quenched the violence of fire," received its most striking illustration in the history of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ; while the sixth, "escaped the edge of the sword," is applicable to many of the judges and prophets spoken of, whose lives were again and again placed in imminent peril, but who were rescued by the special interposition of God. We may refer to David, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, and others.—A similarly wide range of meaning attaches to the seventh particular, "out of weakness were made strong." It was particularly exemplified in the case of David, and in that of Elijah who, after his deep depression, was again strengthened for duty, and sent forth to his work as a prophet of God.—The eighth and ninth particulars do not require comment ; since they are abundantly illustrated in the history of the judges and others to whom the Apostle had referred. Some consider that in the last expression he had especially in view the pious heroes of the Maccabæan period, and the victories with which their efforts were crowned. But this is doubtful.

Verse 35. *Women received their dead raised to life again ;*

35. \*Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were °tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection:

a 1 Kings xvii. 22; 2 Kings iv. 35.

o Acts xxii. 25.

*and others were tortured, etc.* The Apostle here glances at other examples of the power of faith, including some given by persons who held no official position, and who were not called to prominent service. He refers to those women whose sons were raised from the dead through the instrumentality of Elijah and Elisha. In these cases, God honoured the faith of His distinguished servants; but He honoured also the faith of the women themselves, who relied on the God of these prophets, as their only Hope in the time of bitter distress.—In the second part of the verse, the word “others,” ἄλλοι, is masculine, and is equivalent to “other persons.” Dean Alford translates the verb ἐτυμωσθησαν “were broken on the wheel,” and observes, in explanation, that “the τύμπανον seems to have been an instrument like a wheel or drum-head, on which the victim was stretched and scourged to death.” Several cases of this kind occurred during the Maccabæan period. But the sufferers in question were sustained by their faith in God; and would not accept the deliverance offered to them on the condition of their sacrificing their fidelity to Him. They hoped for a future life of blessedness and glory, as the reward of their faith and submission. In the use of the phrase, “a better resurrection,” the Apostle clearly alludes to his former remark respecting the sons of the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite. These were raised from the dead, but only again to pass through the

36. And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of *bonds* and imprisonment :

37. *They* were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; *they* wandered about in *sheepskins* and *goatskins*; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ;

*p* Gen. xxxix. 20 ; Jer. xx. 2 ; xxxvii. 15.

*q* 1 Kings xxi. 13 ; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21 ; Acts vii. 58 ; xiv. 19.

*r* 2 Kings i. 8 ; Matt. iii. 4.      *s* Zech. xiii. 4.

mortal conflict, and to be conveyed to the silent tomb : but the resurrection for which the martyrs hoped was one which should introduce their whole nature to a state of immortal life.

Verses 36, 37. *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment : etc.* Here the Apostle enumerates other forms of suffering to which some of the ancient saints were subjected. In the statement, " were sawn asunder," he alludes, probably, to the death of Isaiah, whom a tradition universally received among the Jews represented as having been thus cruelly murdered by the order of Manasseli. The word which follows has occasioned no little difficulty. It cannot but excite surprise that so mild a term as *ἐπειράσθηναι*, " were tempted," should be introduced between " were sawn asunder," and " were slain with the sword." Many thoughtful expositors, including Calvin and Delitzsch, advocate the omission of this word, considering that it was, originally, a mistake of some transcriber for the preceding word *ἐπίσθηναι*, which ultimately crept into the text, and alleging, in support of this view, that it is omitted in the ancient Syriac version. Others, including Ebrard and De

38. (Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

39. And these all, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise :

† 1 Kings xviii. 4 ; xix. 9.      \* Verses 2, 13.

Wette, suppose that it is a mistake for *ἐπρήσθησαν*, "were consumed with fire." The former opinion is, perhaps, the most probable. If the word is retained, it can only be explained, as by Moses Stuart and others, of temptations held forth to sufferers, in the very extremity of their tortures, to give up their religion, and worship the gods of the heathen.

Verse 38. (*Of whom the world was not worthy :*) they wandered in deserts, etc. The remark which the Apostle here interjects is very forcible. The saints of whom he was speaking were cast out by the world as unworthy of a place in it: they were rejected from its society, excluded from all the comforts of civilised life, and compelled to pass their days in continual danger. But the real state of the case was, that the world was unworthy of them. The principles which governed their character, and especially the principle of faith which upheld them in all their trials, gave them a moral elevation, surpassing the dignity of wealth or outward station, and raising them far above all who acted on worldly maxims, and lived for worldly objects.

Verses 39, 40. *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise : etc.* In these verses the Apostle takes up the case of all the Old Testament saints to whom he had referred, and defines their position in the Divine arrangements, while he sets forth the perfect salvation provided for men under the Christian

40. God having || provided \*some better thing for us, that they without us should not be †made perfect.

|| Or, *foreseen.*    x Heb. vii. 22 ; viii. 6.

y Heb. v. 9 ; xii. 23 ; Rev. vi. 11.

economy, as that in which they and we shall ultimately share. The phrase, "having obtained a good report through faith," or, more literally, "borne witness to through their faith," recalls the sentiment in verse 2, with which the Apostle entered upon the enumeration of these examples of the practical power of faith. It implies, first and chiefly, that God Himself acknowledged them as His own ; that the witness of His Spirit assured them of His favour, while His manifest interpositions on behalf of many of them attested His regard and care. It suggests also the idea, that the principle of faith, influencing, as it did, the whole of their outward conduct, and especially sustaining them in the great crises of their history, afforded evidence that they were indeed the people of God.—In the statement, that the ancient saints, though thus borne witness to through their faith, "received not the promise," there is, at the first view, a difficulty ; but that difficulty vanishes upon close consideration. It was emphatically THE PROMISE,—the promise of *complete salvation*, including *the glorification of their entire nature*, which they did not realise ; but for which they wait until the mediatorial economy is wound up, when they, together with all believers under the gospel, shall be "made perfect." There is, therefore, no inconsistency between this statement and that found in verse 33, that through faith many of the ancient saints "obtained promises :—" for that expression is *general*, whereas this is *special* and *emphatic*,—"received not the promise " Nor is there any inconsistency between

it and the statement in vi. 15, that Abraham, "after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise;" for the context shows that the promise there referred to is that of blessing,—spiritual, eternal blessing,—through that Seed of his who was to come. This promise, too, was general, comprehending the happiness of the intermediate state, together with the right to, and the assurance of, the perfected blessedness which will follow the completion of Christ's triumphs. Here the expression, "the promise," seems to point definitely to the full salvation and the perfect glorification *brought in by Christ's offering of Himself* for all who should trust in Him, and of which *His own enthronement in heaven*, as the Forerunner of His people, as well as their Lord and King, is *the pledge*. Of this the ancient saints had dim and indistinct perceptions; and for it, as far as they could apprehend it, they longed. Some of them, when life was offered to them in the midst of their tortures, if they would cast away their religious principles, nobly refused, since they hoped for "a better resurrection." It is this perfect glorification—this participation of our Lord's own consummated glory—which forms that "better thing" which God has provided for us, and which He has now fully disclosed. In this we shall share with the members of the ancient Church. They await, even as we do, the perfect triumph of the Redeemer; and when He descends again in glory, we and they shall be "made perfect" in Him. Compare ix. 28.

## CHAPTER XII.

## 1. WHEREFORE seeing we also are compassed about

## CHAPTER XII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

AFTER illustrating the operation of faith, and showing the honour which God had put upon it in the case of the ancient saints, the Apostle resumes his exhortations to the Hebrew Christians, to maintain it in constant exercise, and to persevere in a course of service and suffering, animated by the contemplation of their great Leader, of the sufferings to which He submitted, and of the rest and glory upon which He has entered. He reminds them that they only shared the common trials of the people of God; and enlarges on the thought, that God Himself orders the discipline of affliction, with a view to the spiritual improvement of His children, their establishment in holiness, and their attainment of the richest consolation. He admonishes them to watch against the evils into which they were in danger of falling; and calls upon them to seek each other's spiritual welfare,—to succour the tempted,—to encourage the desponding,—to live in the maintenance of peace and purity,—and to guard against every act that might lead others astray, or cause them to renounce their profession.

The Apostle then draws a striking contrast between the Mosaic economy with its aspect of terror, and the scene of overwhelming awe with which it was inaugurated, and the Christian economy with its more attractive features, and the higher privileges and loftier relations which it

with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

a Col. iii. 8 ; 1 Pet. ii. 1.

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involves. As believers in the Lord Jesus, we are introduced to His Church, as it is now constituted through His perfected work, and we are thus brought into fellowship, not only with our brethren who are still on earth, but with the saints who have already passed to glory, and with the whole company of holy intelligences, while we have intimate access to God Himself through the Mediator, in the abiding efficacy of whose sacrifice we gratefully rejoice. But the very fact that we are placed in these more favoured circumstances, and called to these loftier privileges and relations which shall never pass away, demands, on our part, the most reverent attention to every command of God, and ceaseless efforts to devote life to His glory. To the impenitent and the presumptuous He is, even under the gospel, a consuming fire.

Verse 1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, etc.* The exhortations contained in this and the following verses most appropriately follow the enumeration of the triumphs of faith which the Apostle had just completed, while they stand connected, also, with the warnings, appeals, and encouragements which he had given in x 34—39, and which he had interrupted, for a while, to dwell on the principle of faith, and to trace it in active operation. He represents all believers as engaged in a race; and the illustrations of their position and duties suggested by this comparison are vivid and striking. The foot-race was one of the most important of the public games of ancient Greece; and the

us, and <sup>h</sup>let us run <sup>e</sup>with patience the race that is set before us.

*b* 1 Cor. ix. 24 ; Phil. iii. 13, 14.      *e* Rom. xii. 12 ; Heb. x. 36.

residence of St. Paul for eighteen months at Corinth, where the Isthmian games were celebrated, not to speak of his visits to other places, made him intimately acquainted with the usages of these public contests. In allusion to the immense multitude of spectators who witnessed them, and whose interest in the respective runners stimulated them to effort, the Apostle represents the ancient saints as the witnesses of our conflict. They look on us from those realms of light upon which they have entered, with affectionate interest, rejoice in our spiritual progress, and rejoice, yet more, as, one after another, we reach the goal, and receive "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." But we must not limit the import of the term *μαρτύρων*, "witnesses," to the one idea, that the saints referred to are witnesses of our efforts. It is so clearly related to the word *μαρτυρηθέντες*, "borne witness to," in verse 39 of the preceding chapter, and to *ἐμαρτυρήθησαν*, "were witnessed to," in verse 2 of that chapter, that it must be regarded as including the thoughts, that they who thus look on us are themselves the approved servants of God, to whom, as having maintained their faith amidst severe trials, He bore witness,—and that their past history constituted them also witnesses of the fidelity, and power, and love, of Him whom we serve, and on whose all sufficient grace we are cast. A sublime theme, but one requiring reverent and cautious treatment, is here suggested to us,—the deep interest which the heavenly Church takes in the Church on earth. They and we constitute one family, at the head of which there stands the Incarnate Son, through

whom all our privileges and hopes come to us, and who brings us into fellowship with the Eternal Father. The communion of saints reaches beyond the limits of this earthly state.

“One family we dwell *in* HIM,  
One Church above, beneath,  
Though now divided by the stream,  
The narrow stream, of death.”

The Apostle goes on to charge the believing Hebrews to “lay aside every weight,”—to put away from them every thing, even if not directly sinful, that would impede their progress in the Christian race, and render them less fit to serve God with all their energies. And he calls upon them, in particular, to avoid all *sin*, which, in various and subtile forms, is at hand, ready to seduce us from the right path, and to impair, or even extinguish, our spiritual life. The ordinary rendering of *εὐπερίστατον*, “easily besetting,” or “easily surrounding,” should, we conceive, be adhered to; but it is very doubtful whether *τὴν ἁμαρτίαν*, to which it relates, should be understood of one particular form of sin. *Sin*, considered generally, is represented as *surrounding* us, and that in *favourable* positions for assailing or undermining our Christian graces. But the chief stress of the Apostle’s exhortation is on the phrase *ἐν ὑπομονῇ*, which should be literally rendered, “through patience,” or “through endurance.” The position of this phrase in the sentence shows it to be emphatic; and the writer evidently sought to fix attention on the quality referred to as that by which our Christian running, if it is to be successful, must be characterised. The term *ὑπομονή*, which we render “patience,” is very comprehensive. It implies holy *constancy* and *firmness*, both in the discharge of duty and in the endurance of suffering. Occasional and fitful efforts will not suffice. We must persevere in the

2. Looking unto Jesus, the || Author and Finisher of our faith; <sup>d</sup>who, for the joy that was set before

|| Or, *Beginner*.

*d* Luke xxiv. 26; Phil. ii. 8, etc.; 1 Pet. i. 11.

path of obedience, however difficult and arduous; and we must bear up under whatever trials and afflictions God may permit to come upon us. It is on this feature of the Mediator's character, so strikingly displayed in His endurance of deepest suffering, that the Apostle proceeds to fix our regard, as he presents Him to us as the great Object of our contemplation and trust.

Verse 2. *Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, etc.*—It is an instructive thought, suggested by the relation of this verse to the preceding one, that, while the consciousness that we are regarded with interest by multitudes who have themselves passed to glory may well animate us in our Christian course, our minds should be specially directed to *One* infinitely higher than they, who has Himself led the way of faith and holy endurance, who alone can sustain our faith and bring it to its glorious issue, and whose present state of rest and joy forms the pledge of that upon which we too shall enter if we are faithful unto death. Almost every expression in this verse is full of rich spiritual truth. The Apostle uses, in the first place, the very forcible term ἀφορώτεες, which implies the fixing of the gaze upon an object, so that other things are comparatively disregarded. There is an important sense in which JESUS stands *alone* as the Christian's example; while to Him, as the Sent of the Eternal Father, the Revealer of His counsel, and the one perfect Sacrifice for our sins, our trust is to be directed, as it may not be to any other.—The

Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and 'is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

*e* Ps. cx. 1 ; Heb. i. 3, 13 ; viii. 1 ; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

Apostle then proceeds to designate the Lord Jesus "the Author and Perfecter of our faith," or, more literally, "of the faith," or even simply, "of faith." The term ἀρχηγόν, rendered in our Version "Author," is one of those comprehensive words the full import of which it is difficult to express in another language. It seems, in this place, to combine the two ideas of *Leader* and *Originator*. It implies that our blessed Lord has Himself led the way of faith in God, and of holy endurance as connected with that faith ; but it implies, also, we conceive, that He produces faith in His people. The former meaning is borne out by the manner in which the Apostle enlarges on the example of our Lord in this and the following verse ; while the latter is required by the connection between this word and τελειωτήν, "Finisher," or "Perfecter," which immediately follows it. It is possible, indeed, that this last term, as Bengel suggests, may include a reference to the fact, that in our Lord's case faith was maintained to the very end, and appeared in its perfect manifestation in His submission to the death of the cross ; but it implies also, we conceive, that it is Jesus who brings the faith of His people to maturity, and crowns it with its full reward.—His example, then, as one of holy constancy and endurance sustained by a firm apprehension of the Divine counsel, we are ever to keep in view. Before Him, as the Mediator, there was placed the ineffable joy of opening to mankind the way of life, and of introducing all who should come to Him to a state of peace, and purity, and everlasting glory ; while He Himself should be enthroned as their Sovereign and Head,

3. *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

*f* Matt. x. 24, 25; John xv. 20.      *g* Gal. vi. 9.

and should sway a sceptre of uncontrolled and universal dominion. But to attain this "joy," it was necessary for Him to pass through all the humiliation and sorrow of His earthly state, and at length to endure the shame and anguish of the cross. Through all this He went; He faltered not, for an instant, in the path of obedience; He gave up Himself, in everything, to do and suffer the Father's will; and now He "has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God." He has entered upon the state of glory, authority, and triumph, held forth to Him; and that state shall continue until all His enemies are placed beneath His feet, and the mediatorial economy is consummated by the solemnities of the final judgment.

Verse 3. *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, etc.* The habitual contemplation of the Lord Jesus as the perfect Example of holy endurance is here still further enforced. Bengel and others have correctly remarked, that the word which we render "consider" properly means "to contemplate by way of comparison." To sustain the Hebrew believers under the opposition which they had to encounter, the Apostle exhorts them to look at their sufferings and trials in comparison with those which their Lord and Head had to endure. Not only was He assailed with reproachful epithets, and His acts of kindness misrepresented and vilified by those whose malignity against the truth made them specially His enemies and "sinners against Himself," but He was treated by them with open violence, and

4. <sup>A</sup>Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

h 1 Cor. x. 13; Heb. x. 32, 33, 34.

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subjected to a cruel death. All this seems to be referred to in the Apostle's remark; for it has been satisfactorily shown, that the word *ἀντιλογία*, which we render "contradiction," must *not* be confined to *words*.—It is worthy of our attention, that our Lord Himself, in His addresses to His disciples, repeatedly admonished them that the same hostility of the ungodly which had pursued Him would pursue them, and that they must be prepared to submit, even as He had done, to reproach and persecution. "It is enough for the disciple," He said, on one occasion, "that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" (Matt. x. 25; see also John xv. 19, 20.) The remembrance of these words of the Lord Jesus, and the devout contemplation of His example, as well as of His present exaltation and reward, would tend to stimulate the believing Hebrews, and to sustain them, if at any time they were beginning to "faint" under their trials and sorrows.

Verse 4. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* This consideration is brought in to rouse the Hebrew Christians to steadfastness in their holy profession, by leading them to think of some who had been put to far severer tests, and who had yet remained faithful. Towards the close of the preceding chapter, the Apostle had referred to many whose faith in God had enabled them to meet death, for His sake, under circumstances of torture and agony. But the Christians whom He addressed had not been called to shed their blood for

5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, <sup>i</sup>My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him :

<sup>i</sup> Job. v. 17 ; Prov. iii. 11.

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the Lord Jesus, submitting to the violence of their persecutors, while they resisted the "sin" which would have led them to seek their own ease and comfort, and to forsake their Master. Some of them, indeed, had been made the objects of reproach and insult, and had endured the loss of their worldly substance: but they had not, as yet, been subjected to personal violence threatening the extinction of life itself.

Verses 5, 6. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, etc.* The Apostle here adverts to another view of the sufferings which the believing Hebrews were called to undergo; introducing it with an intimation that they were in danger of losing sight of it, and thus depriving themselves of the rich consolation which it was calculated to afford. It has been much disputed whether the opening remark is to be taken *affirmatively*, as in our Version, or *interrogatively*. Names of great weight might be adduced on each side of this question. The chief argument in favour of the interrogative rendering is, that the verb ἐκλέλησθε implies *complete* forgetfulness; and it is thought that to affirm *this* of the believing Hebrews would have been too severe a censure. The mingled tenderness and fidelity which mark all the Apostle's appeals certainly seem to favour the translation, "And have ye completely forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children?"—It should not be overlooked, too, that the word παράκλησις, which we

6. For <sup>t</sup>whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

7. <sup>l</sup>If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you

*l* Ps. xciv. 12 ; cxix. 75 ; Prov. iii. 12 ; James i. 12 ; Rev. iii. 19.

*l* Deut. viii. 5 ; 2 Sam. vii. 14 ; Prov. xiii. 24 ; xix. 18 ; xxiii. 13.

render "exhortation," combines the two ideas of exhortation and consolation. The charge in question, while it is calculated to rouse the minds of God's people to firmness and constancy under suffering, and to meek submission to His will, is calculated also to banish all desponding feelings, and to shed light upon the darkest scenes of earth. Our trials, whatever may be their immediate cause, are taken up by Him into His plan of training us to maturity in holiness. Thus they become His chastisements: they form part of the discipline which He exercises over us as our Heavenly Father. The passage specially referred to is Prov. iii. 11, 12, the thoughts of which the Apostle fully brings out. It teaches us to mark in all suffering the hand of God; to bear up under it with submission and faith, as ordered or permitted by Him; to keep in view the great spiritual results to which he designs it to be subservient; and to regard even the discipline of affliction as the proof, not of dislike or indifference, but of a love that designs to raise us to a higher spiritual state, and to prepare us for everlasting glory. The discipline which God exercises over His people who embrace His scheme of grace, and surrender themselves to His service is regulated, in all its parts, by a Father's wisdom and love. On this thought the Apostle enlarges with deep interest.

Verse 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; etc.* Dean Alford and some others adopt the

as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8. But if ye be without chastisement, <sup>m</sup>whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

<sup>m</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 9.

reading *εἰς*, instead of *εἰ*, in the commencement of this verse, which gives a different character to the first clause, and indeed to the whole structure of the passage. If this reading is embraced, the meaning is, "It is for discipline that ye are enduring: as with sons God is dealing with you: for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" The external authority for *εἰς* seems, indeed, to be almost decisive: for it is found in all the oldest MSS., including the recently discovered Codex Sinaiticus, and this reading was evidently that acknowledged by Chrysostom and other Greek writers. Happily, the leading thoughts of the verse are not affected by this question. The Apostle fixes the minds of the believing Hebrews on the consideration, that the trials and sufferings which they were called to endure were, in fact, part of a Divine discipline; and that this itself was an indication that God was dealing with them as His children, seeking to raise them to a yet higher state of purity and spiritual excellence, and to prepare them for a more glorious reward. Every son, he contends, is subjected, by the very love of his father to a process of discipline, in order to the correction of his faults, and the strengthening of his right and virtuous principles.

Verse 8. *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, etc.* Here the Apostle enlarges on the thought, that the special love which a father cherishes towards a son whom he acknowledges as his own, will

9. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence:

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manifest itself in efficient training, and will lead to restraint and correction, as well as encouragement. The absence of such a course of discipline, he contends, would imply that the individual who claimed to be a son was in reality disowned by his father. Even so, he reminds us, all the true children of God, in every age, have been partakers of affliction, and have regarded that affliction as a discipline ordered by Divine wisdom and love.—It is worthy of remark that, in the second clause, the Apostle uses the perfect tense, *γεγύρασι*, “*have become* partakers.” This clause would naturally recall many of his statements in the preceding chapter relative to the ancient saints: but its application must not be limited to any particular examples. It extends to all the true children of God in every preceding period.

Verse 9. *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: etc.* In this and the following verse the Apostle draws a contrast between fatherly discipline as exercised by men, and by Him from whom we have derived a spiritual nature, and who seeks to sanctify, elevate, and refine it, that He may admit us at last to His immediate presence, and to the everlasting enjoyment of His own society. He dwells on the far higher character and purposes of the chastisement of God; and infers from this consideration, as well as from His ineffable majesty and purity, the lowly reverence and submission with which we should ever bow to His hand. Even the “*fathers of our flesh*,” whom we once “*had as chastisers*,” were regarded by us with reverence; and how much more, then, should we “*be in subjection to the*

shall we not much rather be in subjection unto "the Father of spirits, and live ?

\* Numb. xvi. 22 ; xxvii. 16 ; Job. xii. 10 ; Eccles. xii. 7 ;  
Isai. xlii. 5 ; lvii. 16 ; Zech. xii. 1.

Father of spirits," so as to attain that eternal life and blessedness which He designs for His own.—The appellation, "the Father of spirits," here applied to the Most High, in contrast with the preceding phrase, "the fathers of our flesh," has naturally engaged the earnest attention of expositors. Three leading explanations of it have been given. Some of the ancient commentators, as well as a few among the moderns, have understood it as implying "the Author of spiritual life;" but the phrase scarcely admits of such an interpretation. Others, considering that the word *ἡμῶν*, which follows *σαρκός* in the first clause, "fathers of *our* flesh," though not expressed in the latter, properly belongs to it, translate the phrase, *τῷ Πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων*, "the Father of our spirits," and view it as expressly teaching the doctrine of Creatianism,—that all human spirits are directly originated by God,—in opposition to that of Traducianism, that they are derived by natural descent from our parents. Others, again, take the phrase in its widest extent, "the Father of spirits," and regard it as including human spirits, but as comprehending also other spiritual beings, whom God has brought into existence, and whom He designs to resemble Himself. This last is probably the correct view. There can be no doubt that the phrase embraces human spirits, and that it suggests the important and encouraging truth, that there is a special affinity between our spiritual nature and God Himself, and that our spirits have been called into being to reflect His glory and enjoy His love.—It is not possible,

## 10. For they verily for a few days chastened us

within the limits of a note, to enter at length upon the doctrines of Creatianism and Traducianism already referred to. It may be admitted that this passage seems, at least, to favour the former view. But the solemn doctrine of original sin, so clearly brought out by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, is not affected by the adoption of either of these theories. All who spring from Adam in the way of natural descent are involved in the penal results of his apostasy; and, in particular, the human race is propagated under the sentence which entailed on it the loss of the Holy Spirit, and consequent moral depravity. It is only by being brought into union with Christ, according to the provisions of the economy of grace, that we can attain to spiritual life, or rise to the enjoyment of God.

Verse 10. *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, etc.* The contrast between Divine correction and that administered by earthly fathers, is here very forcibly brought out. The latter, while it reaches over a very brief period, and is directed chiefly to the course of our earthly life, is regulated by the imperfect views and feelings of fallible and passionate men; but the former is directed, with the clear discernment of a Mind of perfect purity and boundless wisdom, to our real and permanent welfare, and is, in particular, designed to raise us to a participation of the Divine holiness. The terms chosen by the Apostle to convey these thoughts are most expressive. Speaking of the discipline of human parents, he affirms that they "chastened us after their own pleasure," or, rather, "according to that which seemed good to them," *κατὰ τὸ ἑκούσιον αὐτοῖς*,—plainly implying their liability to error, and to impulses of passion which might

||after their own pleasure; but He for *our* profit, °that *we* might be partakers of His holiness.

11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it

|| Or, *as seemed good*, or, *meet* to them.

o Lev. xi. 44; xix. 2; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

obscure their perception of what would really conduce to the right formation of their children's character. But the discipline which God exercises over us is directed to that which is really beneficial, ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον, that which really promotes our welfare and conduces to our moral elevation. The statement, also, that the correction of earthly parents is exercised only for a short time, and has relation more immediately to our training for the active duties of the present transitory state, suggests the thought which, though not formally expressed, is comprehended in the phrase just referred to, ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον—that the discipline of God is designed to mould our character for *eternity*, and to promote our everlasting welfare. The great result to which it is directed is, that we should partake of that holiness which is the grand distinction of the Divine Nature,—the purity which delights in every thing that is really excellent and lovely, while it recoils from sin with utter aversion and disgust.

Verse 11. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward etc.* It is contended by Dean Alford and others, that the opening words of this verse, πάντα δὲ παιδεία, "Now all chastisement," must be taken in their widest extent of meaning, so as to include human as well as Divine chastening. This may be admitted: but it is clear that the latter was almost exclusively in the view of the Apostle, since it is to this only that the

yieldeth <sup>#</sup>the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12. Wherefore <sup>†</sup>lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

<sup>p</sup> James iii. 18.      <sup>q</sup> Job iv. 3, 4; Isai. xxxv. 3.

second clause of the sentence can refer. It is the correction of God, regulated by His perfect wisdom and goodness, and directed to the spiritual and eternal welfare of His children, which yields, to those who endure it meekly, and lay to heart the lessons which it teaches, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." This beautiful expression has been variously understood. Some have interpreted it as meaning "the fruit which righteousness produces;" but the more usual method of regarding it, and, we conceive, the correct one, is, that *righteousness* is itself the *fruit* of Divine discipline when submitted to with resignation and trust. The term "righteousness" must here be considered to refer to the right and holy principles of the regenerate character. These the chastening of God tends to mellow and mature; and they constitute in themselves precious "fruit," tending to satisfy and enrich the soul. And with beautiful propriety the Apostle speaks of "the *peaceable fruit of righteousness*." An established state of hallowed feeling is connected with a sacred peace. As the disciplinary process closes, the soul rises to more intimate communion with God, and dwells in a region of holy tranquillity and joy.

Verses 12, 13. *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths etc.* The Apostle, having now set forth the great purpose of God in suffering His people to be afflicted, resumes his exhortations to the believing Hebrews, to apply themselves earnestly to

13. 'And make ||straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; \*but let it rather be healed.

14. 'Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness,

r Prov. iv. 26, 27. || Or, *even*. s Gal. vi. 1.

t Ps. xxxiv. 14 ; Rom. xii. 18 ; xiv. 19 ; 2 Tim. ii. 22.

the duties of the Christian life, and to guard against the dangers which beset them on every hand. There is a connection in thought between this verse and the charge contained in verse 1. The idea of a race seems still to be present to the Apostle's mind : but here he adverts to the encouragement which we ought to give to each other in the Christian course, and to the solicitude which we should ever cherish, not to be the occasion of turning aside the feeblest and most halting of our brethren from the right path, but rather to be the means of restoring them to spiritual health and vigour. Everything in our deportment which might prove to them a stumbling-block is to be carefully avoided. Our profession of the Saviour's name is to be sustained by a course of conduct so consistent and holy, that even they who were beginning to fail may be encouraged to tread in our footsteps, and reach the goal to which we are tending.

Verse 14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* There is a beautiful accordance between the former part of this exhortation and those found in Rom. xii. 18, xiv. 19. The Apostle was anxious, not only that the members of the Church should maintain peace and harmony among themselves, but that they should evince a pacific temper in all their intercourse with the world. This would recommend the religion which they professed ; while the indulgence of a litigious spirit

"without which no man shall see the Lord.

15. <sup>z</sup>Looking diligently <sup>y</sup>lest any man || fail of the

*u* Matt. v. 8 ; 2 Cor. vii. 1 ; Eph. v. 5.    *x* 2 Cor. vi. 1

*y* Gal. v. 4.

|| Or, *fall from.*

would tend to alienate the men around them, and deprive of force their admonitions and appeals. Some expositors restrict the term πάντων, "all," to the Christian brotherhood; but there is no sufficient reason for this limitation.—The latter part of this charge refers to the earnestness with which every believer should seek the sanctification—τὸν ἁγιασμόν—of his nature. We should habitually keep in view the maintenance and development of every holy principle, and the removal from our hearts of everything opposed to the Divine purity. Living in the spirit of entire self-dedication to God, we should seek, in richer and yet richer measures, the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, to destroy our corruptions, and to consecrate us wholly to the Divine service. It is by this "sanctification" that we are prepared for the Saviour's presence. Some understand the phrase, "the Lord," of the Eternal Father, and regard the declaration, "without which no man shall see the Lord," as resembling that in Matt. v. 8;—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." But it seems more consistent with the general style of the Apostle, to view this expression as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the hope of the believer to be with Christ for ever, to "see Him as He is," to be admitted to the most intimate fellowship with Him, and to reflect His perfect loveliness. St. John, in his first Epistle, places before us this view of our future blessedness, and then immediately adds, "And every man that hath this hope in Him—ἐπ' αὐτῷ—purifieth himself even as He is pure."

Verse 15. *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the*

grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled.

z. Deut. xxix. 18; Heb. iii. 12.

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*grace of God; lest any root of bitterness etc.* The Apostle enforces his exhortation to seek the entire sanctification of our nature, by referring to the fearful possibility of our losing our spiritual life, and failing of the glorious result to which we had looked forward. He calls upon us diligently to watch our hearts, and to avoid the occasions of sin, lest we should fall short of the salvation of Christ; and he charges us to be solicitous, also, lest any of our Christian brethren should be involved in this fearful issue. Not only should the possibility of our own final ruin alarm us, and rouse us to caution and effort; but we should do what in us lies that no one of those associated with us in the Church should "fall short of the grace of God." And to this end we should be anxious never to give place to sin in our lives, so as to diffuse around us a corrupting influence. The language of the latter part of this verse, in which this sentiment is emphatically conveyed, was doubtless suggested by Deut. xxix. 18, although that passage is not formally quoted. It is an admonitory and affecting thought, that the sin of one man, especially of one who stands prominent in the Church, may injure multitudes, and that its effects may go on, long after he himself has passed from earth. If ever we are tempted to trifle with sin, and to gratify our passions in defiance of the restraints of the Divine law, let the solemn words, "And thereby many be defiled," recall us to our duty, and lead us to humble ourselves before God, that we should, even for an instant, have forgotten the claims of holiness and of our allegiance to Him.

16. "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, <sup>b</sup>who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17. For ye know how that afterward, "when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected;

*a* Eph. v. 3 ; Col. iii. 5 ; 1 Thess. iv. 3.

*b* Gen. xxv. 33.      *c* Gen. xxvii. 34, 36, 38.

Verse 16. *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, etc.* Here the Apostle proceeds to specify particular forms of evil, the appearance of which within the Church would produce incalculable mischief. He adverts especially to fornication,—for there is every reason to understand the term *πόρνος* *literally* and not *metaphorically*,—and to an open neglect of spiritual good, blended with an eager love of sensual gratification. It has been made a question, whether both the expressions, "fornicator" and "profane person," are to be applied to Esau, or whether, as in our Authorised Version, a comma is to be placed after the former, and the latter designation only referred to him. We have no hesitation in adopting the second of these views. Esau stands before us as a man of generous impulses, combined with strong and ill-regulated passions; and as one, also, who did not properly appreciate spiritual advantages, and was ready to forego them for a slight temporal enjoyment.—It would be better to render the last clause, "who for one meal sold his own birthright." A severe censure is conveyed in this remark. The birthright was connected with such high religious privileges, that Esau should have been willing to submit to any temporary pressure of hunger rather than part with it.

Verse 17. *For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; etc.* This con-

“for he found no || place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

*d* Heb. vi. 6.      || Or, *way to change his mind.*

sideration is introduced to show the fearful character of that temper of mind which prefers sensual gratifications to spiritual privileges, and the marked displeasure with which it is regarded by God. The proper application of the term “repentance,” in this verse, has greatly divided commentators; some contending that it is to be understood of a change of purpose on the part of Isaac, while others, including Dr. Delitzsch, consider that the repentance referred to must be that of Esau himself. Dean Alford, who maintains the latter view, thinks that the phrase, “he found no place of repentance,” may be understood as meaning, “he found no place to reverse what had been done by repentance:” but this method of explaining it seems to be shut out by the fact, that the word *αὐτήν*, “it,” in the statement which follows, “though he sought it carefully with tears,” clearly relates to *μετανοίας*, “repentance.” The attempt to refer it to the phrase *τὴν εὐλογίαν*, “the blessing,” in the first clause, does violence, as Dean Alford himself contends, to the whole structure of the period. But if we are to refer it to “repentance,” we cannot consistently understand this last of the repentance of Esau himself. The Apostle could scarcely mean to affirm, that Esau utterly failed to obtain repentance, as a state of mind to be experienced by *himself*, “though he sought it earnestly with tears.” We are compelled, therefore, to regard *μετανοίας* as having, in this verse, the general meaning of “a change of purpose;” and we may properly understand it of a change of the Divine purpose as declared by Isaac, which conferred the blessing on Jacob. No tears

18. For ye are not come unto 'the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

*e* Exod. xix. 12, 18, 19 ; xx. 18 ; Deut. iv. 11 ; v. 22 ;  
Rom. vi. 14 ; viii. 15 ; 2 Tim. i. 7.

on the part of Esau, fondly as his father was attached to him, could avail to alter the Divine plan ; and the loss of the blessing properly followed on that contempt of the birthright which he had in past years manifested.

Verse 18. *For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, etc.* The passage which extends from this verse to the close of the twenty-fourth is one of the most sublime contained in the Epistle. It presents a vivid contrast between the Mosaic constitution and the position of those who lived under it, and the Christian economy with the lofty associations and ennobling relations to which all true believers are now introduced. The former dispensation was inaugurated by a scene of overwhelming terror. The people of Israel stood before a mountain "that might be touched,"—a material mountain, which, had they not been forbidden to do so, they might actually have touched with their hands ; and they witnessed an affecting display of Jehovah's majesty, and of the terrors of His justice. He descended upon that mountain in fire. There rested upon it, indeed, a thick, black cloud, while thunder and lightning played around, and then a fiery flame indicated that God was specially there. "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Exod. xix. 18.)

Verse 19. *And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of*

19. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard *⁠*entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more :

20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded; *⁠*and if so much as a beast touch the

*f* Exod. xx. 19 ; Deut. v. 5, 25 ; xviii. 16.

*g* Exod. xix. 13.

*words; which voice etc.* The Apostle here continues his description of the scene of Sinai. The special manifestation of Jehovah's glory on that mount was heralded by an unearthly trumpet; and when the flaming fire, and the trembling of the mountain to its base, indicated Jehovah's presence, that trumpet "sounded long, and waxed louder and louder." Then "Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." But the phrase "the voice of words," here used, refers specially to the voice of Jehovah uttering the ten commandments as the great precepts of His law. To that voice the people listened with solemn reverence; but they were filled with terror and alarm; and, drawing back from the overwhelming scene, they asked, through Moses, that *he* might be the medium of the further communications of Jehovah, and that they might not again witness so awful a display of the Divine glory, or listen to the voice of God Himself. To this the Apostle refers in the last clause of this verse. The rendering of the Authorised Version, "that the word should not be spoken to them any more," scarcely conveys the precise meaning of the original terms, which signify "that more discourse should not be added to them," and thus accurately represent the request of the terror-stricken Israelites.

Verse 20. (*For they could not endure that which was commanded; and if so much etc.* The first clause of this

mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart :

21. *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :)*

*h* Exod. xix. 16.

verse should be understood as referring both to the stringent nature of the commands issued, and to the awful mode of their announcement. The Israelites felt as those who had to do with law in all its stern severity, and with law, too, enforced by the punitive righteousness of the Divine government. All the accompanying circumstances of the scene of Sinai were calculated to deepen this impression. To one of these the Apostle immediately refers. No hand of man, no foot of beast, was to touch mount Sinai, when Jehovah revealed His glory there; and it was expressly ordered, not only that if any man should presumptuously violate this command, he should be put to death, but that if even a beast should by chance touch the mountain, it should be stoned or thrust through. The writer does not quote the precise words of the original injunction, (Exod. xix. 12, 13,) but gives the substance of the requirement as to beasts. The last clause of this verse, "or thrust through with a dart," is not found in the earliest and best MSS., and is now omitted in all critical editions.

Verse 21. *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :)* This is the last particular brought forward to show the overpowering character of the scene of Sinai. The punctuation of the verse suggested by Beza, and, since his time, generally adopted by critical editors and expositors, seems to be required by the structure of the sentence: "And—so terrible was the sight—Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." This utterance of

22. But ye are come 'unto mount Zion, 'and unto

‡ Gal. iv. 26 ; Rev. iii. 12 ; xxi. 2, 10.    & Phil. iii. 20.

Moses is not recorded in the Pentateuch. The suggestion of Calvin, that these words express the general feeling and acknowledgment of the people of Israel, and that Moses is mentioned as representing them, is far-fetched, and does not accord with the general course of the Apostle's reasoning. To the terror of the people he had already adverted; (verses, 19, 20;) and now he adds the crowning circumstance, that even Moses, favoured as he was with Divine communications, was on this occasion filled with fear, and trembled before Jehovah. Equally unsatisfactory is the view adopted by Dr. W. Lindsay and others, that the Apostle refers to the statement of Moses in Deut. ix. 19, as to the alarm and terror which he felt when he witnessed the worship of the golden calf. The plausible reasoning by which it is sought to connect this with the scene of Sinai, does not meet the requirements of the passage. We agree with those expositors who regard these words of Moses as handed down by tradition, and as verified to the writer of this Epistle by inspiration. On his authority, as an inspired Apostle, we receive this declaration as having been really uttered by the leader of Israel, and as showing that, even to *him*, the manifestation of Divine glory on mount Sinai was all but overwhelming.

Verse 22. *But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, etc.* Here the Apostle enters upon his magnificent description of the position and relations of true believers under the Christian economy. Instead of having to stand before a material mountain, enveloped in smoke and flame, and to listen to a voice which inspires terror, we are come "to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the

the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,  
'and to an innumerable company of angels,

† Deut. xxxiii. 2 ; Ps. lxxviii. 17 ; Jude 14.

heavenly Jerusalem," which cannot be apprehended by sense,—which invites our approach, even when we are conscious of unworthiness,—and all the arrangements and relations of which, while they are high and glorious, are such as to inspire confidence and hope into the breast of the humble and devout. In the exposition of this passage, it is clear that we must not regard the expressions just cited as describing *heaven*, viewed as the ultimate abode of all Christ's people ; for this is shut out by the explicit declaration, "ye *have come* to Mount Zion, the city of the living God." The Hebrew believers are addressed as having *already* a place in that "city" in which God reigns over His own, and confers upon them the most exalted privileges and immunities. Many of the particulars, indeed, which the Apostle goes on to specify, clearly refer to heaven, and to the pure and glorious beings who there encircle Jehovah's throne, adoring His universal rule, and contemplating with admiration and reverence the active administration of the economy of grace : but it is not of heaven alone that he is speaking, or of the future glory that awaits the people of Christ. His words point to the Gospel-Church,—to *the Kingdom of God as it is now established through the perfect work of Christ*. That Church is *one*, whether its members are in heaven or on earth. Some of the subjects of that Kingdom have already passed to glory, and enjoy in its fulness that intercourse with the angelic hosts and with each other to which they looked forward on earth, while they gaze upon the vision of the Divine majesty, and behold HIM to whom they here committed their souls :

23. To the general assembly and Church of "the  
m Exod. iv. 22; James i. 18; Rev. xiv. 4.

but others are still below, in a state of trial and conflict. But *all* belong to "the city of the living God;" all are actually introduced to its relations and privileges, though they enjoy them in different degrees. This exposition is required by the general argument of the passage, and it is sanctioned by the manner in which St. Paul speaks in Gal. iv. 26 of believers as belonging to "Jerusalem which is above." It is still further confirmed by the exhortation which the Apostle addresses to the Hebrew believers in v. 28, with an express reference to the considerations which he had here brought forward:—"Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably," (or, rather,) "let us cherish gratitude, by which let us serve God acceptably," "with reverence and godly fear." The whole passage thus presents to us an impressive contrast between the Mosaic constitution, with its aspects of dread, and the material terrors with which it was introduced, and the Christian economy as that which brings us into fellowship with all holy beings, and gives us access to God Himself through the Mediator.—The last particular mentioned in this verse, "to an innumerable company of angels," will be specially considered in the following note.

Verse 23. *To the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, etc.* The proper distribution of the original words, in the concluding portion of the preceding verse, and the commencement of this, has been much disputed. Dean Alford, following some eminent continental scholars, arranges them thus, *καὶ μυριάσιν, ἀγγέλων πανηγύρει καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων*

firstborn, "which are || written in heaven, and to God

\* Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8.

|| Or, *enrolled*.

ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς, and translates, "and to myriads, the festal host of angels and the assembly of the firstborn which are written in heaven." Tischendorf distributes them as follows,—καὶ μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων πανηγύρει, καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων κ. τ. λ., which will require the translation "to myriads of angels, the festal assembly, and to the Church of the firstborn who are written in heaven." This last arrangement appears to be decidedly the best. It seems harsh and unnatural to insert a comma after "myriads," as Dean Alford has done, and to separate this word from the genitive ἀγγέλων, "of angels," which appears properly to belong to it. On the other hand, the term πανηγύρει, "the festal assembly," may well be regarded as in *apposition* with the words, "myriads of angels." The manner, too, in which the several clauses of the sentence are connected by the conjunction καί, "and," adds to the probability of this arrangement.—The first thought, then, here suggested is, that, being introduced to the kingdom of God, we are brought into endearing relations to *the myriads*, the countless hosts, *of angels*, who rejoice in its triumphs, who own themselves the subjects of the adorable Redeemer, its exalted King, and who deem it their highest joy to fulfil His pleasure in ministering to His faithful people who are still in a state of conflict and trial. As they gather in jubilant assembly around the throne of God, they celebrate the praises of Him who has bought us with His blood.—The Apostle next adverts to the fact, that we are brought into endearing relations also to *the universal Church of Christ's true people upon*

“the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men <sup>r</sup>made perfect,

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. xciv. 2.      <sup>r</sup> Phil. iii. 12; Heb. xi. 40.

*earth.* We belong to that company whom he acknowledges as the most honoured of the human family, and who have already a title to the heavenly inheritance. Some have thought that by “the Church of the first-born” the angelic hosts are still intended: but such an interpretation is shut out by the words which follow,—“which are written in heaven.” Dean Alford and Dr. Lindsay have shown that these words must be understood of the saints who are *on earth*, but whose names, according to the language of our Lord in Luke x. 20, are registered in heaven. It must be borne in mind that it is only of *true believers* that the Apostle is here speaking. These he designates “the firstborn,” in allusion to their consecration to God, and to the pre-eminent dignity which belongs to their position in the human family. The statement of St. James in i. 18 comes in to illustrate the thought: “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”—In enumerating the lofty relations to which true Christians are introduced, the Apostle next mentions *their access to the Eternal Father*. The order of the words in the original, καὶ κριτῆ Ὁεῷ πάντων, requires, we conceive, the rendering adopted by many eminent expositors, including Bengel and Delitzsch, “and to the Judge, the God of all,” though Dean Alford dissents from this view, and adheres to the received translation. The sentiment appears to be, that, being introduced to the kingdom of God, we are brought into an endearing relation to HIM who sits as the righteous Administrator of law, and who

24. And to Jesus the Mediator of the new  
*q* Heb. viii. 6 ; ix. 15.

is the God of all rational beings, invested with authority over them, and to whom the decision of their destiny belongs. *With Him we are at peace.* We are placed under His smile, and all the principles of His government have a favourable aspect on our welfare.—In the next clause, the Apostle introduces our relation to *the saints who have already passed to glory*,—"the spirits of just men made perfect." Their entire nature, indeed, is not yet raised to a participation of the Saviour's dignity : but their "spirits" have entered into rest through Him. Their probation has terminated ; and they are "made perfect" as having attained a state of salvation, which not only involves the full sanctification of all their powers, but which is eternally secure. To this glorious company we are intimately related ; we form, indeed, one body with them under Him who is our common Head and Lord.

Verse 24. *And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, etc.* Among the relations of the kingdom of God, as now established through the perfected work of the LORD JESUS, the Apostle finally mentions that which connects us with HIM. Intimate and endearing as are the ties that bind us to the glorified saints, and to our brethren on earth "who are written in heaven," interesting as is our relation to the angelic hosts, who rejoice in our salvation and gladly minister to our comfort,—we turn, with far deeper and holier interest, to "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," and we triumph in the virtue of His blood, which avails to the cancelling of our guilt, and the sanctification of our nature. Through Him we have access to the Eternal

|| covenant, and to <sup>r</sup>the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things <sup>s</sup>than *that of Abel*.

|| Or, *testament*. <sup>r</sup> Exod. xxiv. 8; Heb. x. 22; 1 Pet. i. 2.

<sup>s</sup> Gen. iv. 10; Heb. xi. 4.

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Father, so as to be placed beneath His smile, and enjoy the exalted privileges of His covenant-people. The humble believer looks up to the Lord Jesus as *his own*; and while conscious of entire dependence on Him, he glories in the fact that he has a personal and saving interest in all that He has done and suffered, as well as in His constant priestly intercession and gracious mediatorial reign.—In designating our Lord “the Mediator of the new covenant,” the Apostle recalls the course of thought which he had pursued in viii. 6—12; and in the phrase which follows, “the blood of sprinkling,” he recognises the Redeemer’s sacrifice, as that through which the covenant is established, and the efficacy of which all His people realise. That “blood” is sprinkled, as it were, upon our consciences, cleansing us both from guilt and from pollution; and it is only by relying on it that we come into the covenant of grace, and are entitled to its privileges. From age to age the sacrifice of Jesus retains its saving power. It “speaks” *for* our guilty race; it speaks, especially, for those who penitently rely on it, and pleads, as it were, for their salvation: and it speaks *to* us, telling us of the graciousness of the Eternal Father, and declaring that all the requirements of His government are met, and that the way of life and peace is now open. The “blood of Abel” cried from the ground for vengeance on him who shed it: but the blood of Jesus speaks for mercy for our sinful world, and pleaded even for those who consigned Him to the death of the cross.—Some com-

25. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For 'if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from Him that *speaketh* from heaven :

† Heb. ii. 2, 3 ; iii. 17 ; x. 28, 29.

mentators regard the reference to Abel as recalling the sentiment of xi. 4,—that he still speaks to us in the sacrifice which he offered: but the view given above, which is that usually taken, is the more simple and consistent.

Verse 25. *See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not etc* In the spirit of earnest solicitude for the believing Hebrews which pervades this Epistle, the Apostle appends a solemn warning to his sublime delineation of the privileges and relations of the people of God under the new economy. The lofty character of those privileges, and the blessedness and dignity of those relations, form a reason for the most reverent attention to the Divine message, on the part of all who profess to enjoy them. The very manner of the Divine communications, too, under this last and perfect dispensation, is calculated to win our hearts, and at the same time to impress us with the danger of trifling with any declaration or precept of Jehovah. The general charge, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh," must be understood as referring to the Eternal Father. He it is who is represented as speaking to men, in accordance with the sentiment so clearly and fully brought out in i. 1. The discoveries of truth and duty, and the intimations of mercy to the penitent, under every dispensation of religion, have come from Him. But the Apostle contrasts the giving of the law from Mount Sinai with the announce-

26. "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

u Exod. xix. 18.    æ Haggai. ii. 6.

ments of the gospel. In uttering the ten commandments amidst the darkness and the fires of Sinai, God spake to men "on earth:" now, as He opens to us the perfect scheme of our redemption, and presents to our faith the exalted Mediator, whose blood pleads for mercy, while it tells of His own readiness to save, He speaks to us "from heaven." His Spirit, too, again and again applies these truths to our conscience, and seeks to lead us to the Saviour. To "turn away" from God when He thus draws near to us in mercy, is an act of the deepest guilt, and must involve us in irretrievable ruin.

Verses 26, 27. *Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more etc.* The application of the first statement of verse 26 is clear and obvious. It refers to the shaking of Mount Sinai, when Jehovah revealed His glory on its summit, and uttered from it the great precepts of His law. All nature seemed to tremble at that majestic display of the Divine purity and justice. But the application of the latter part of the verse is not so clear. The Apostle refers to a passage in Haggai, the commencement of which he quotes with a slight variation; and then he proceeds to argue upon its opening words. Many expositors contend that when he says, "But now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," he alludes to the physical convulsions which will immediately precede the second advent of our Lord, and the winding up of the present economy. But it is difficult to see how the

27. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth <sup>the</sup> removing of those things that ||are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain.

y Ps. cii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. xxi. 1.

|| Or, *may be shaken*.

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passage cited from Haggai can apply to this great event. That remarkable prophecy seems rather to refer to the first advent of the Messiah, whose presence in the latter temple, together with His works of power and messages of peace and grace, should make the "glory" of that house "greater" than that of the former. Still further, if the passage here quoted is referred to the second advent of our Lord, and the argument of verse 27 is considered to apply to that event and its results, the connection between this verse and the exhortation which immediately follows is obscured. The Apostle affirms that the convulsions in question would issue in the removal of the things shaken "in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain;" and then he goes on to admonish the believing Hebrews, as being already possessed of that which no change can affect, and which is not designed to pass away, to cleave to God with gratitude and yet with reverence. The view taken of these verses by Dr. W. Lindsay and some others appears to be the correct one. We conceive, with them, that the passage of Haggai refers, and is cited by the Apostle as referring, to the *extensive changes, political and religious*, which should be connected with the advent of the Messiah, and the establishment of the new economy through Him. In particular, the Apostle argues that the ordinances of the Mosaic system, which were *material*, had been done away,

28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, || let us have grace, whereby we may

|| Or, *let us hold fast.*

in accordance with the plan of God ; but that the *spiritual Church*, and the *spiritual fellowship* which it involves, not only of the members on earth with each other, but with the glorified saints, with the angelic hosts, with the Mediator of the new covenant, and with the Eternal Father Himself, *remain*, and will remain for ever. These are "the things which cannot be moved;" but which continue now that that which was earthly and symbolical has been set aside, and which will continue throughout the ages of eternity.

Verse 28. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, etc.* Again the Apostle introduces an affectionate exhortation, grounding it upon the enduring and permanent character of our spiritual privileges. As believers in Christ, we have come into that "kingdom of God" which was to be established in the latter days, and which shall remain, in all its lofty relations, when the history of earth is closed ; we are already invested with its privileges and immunities ; and we are consequently placed under corresponding obligations. We are bound to cherish gratitude to Him who has conferred on us so great benefits, and to make our whole life one of reverent service to Him. Nearly all expositors, from Chrysostom and Theophylact downwards, are agreed that the words *ἔχωμεν χάριν* mean, not "let us have grace," but "let us have thankfulness," "let us cherish gratitude." Dr. Lindsay properly says, that *χάριν ἔχειν* is a "current phrase for having or cherishing gratitude ;" and he refers, in particular, to Luke xvii. 9, 1 Tim. i. 12, 2 Tim. i. 3. The grateful

serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear :

29. For <sup>our</sup> God is a consuming fire.

z Exod. xxiv. 17 ; Deut. iv. 24 ; ix. 3 ; Ps. l. 3 ; xcvi. 3 ;  
Isai. lxvi. 15 ; 2 Thess. i. 8 ; Heb. x. 27.

acknowledgment of the blessings which we receive from God is an imperative duty ; and more especially should we be thankful for privileges so exalted, and hopes so glorious, as those to which we are called under the Christian economy. In one of the most instructive and beautiful of the Psalms,—the fiftieth,—Almighty God gives prominence to this duty, as one eminently becoming on the part of man, and acceptable to Himself. “Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.” (Verse 14.) “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me ; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” (Verse 23.) But the Apostle goes on to remind us, that our gratitude is to be combined with a profound reverence of the Divine majesty, and a sacred fear of incurring the Divine displeasure ; and that all our worship of God, and the whole course of our earthly life, as His dedicated people, must be marked by these dispositions. For he adds to his exhortation respecting gratitude, another charge, “by which *let us serve*” (or “worship”) “God acceptably with reverence and fear.” In the presence of the unsullied purity and ineffable glory of Jehovah, we should feel that we are nothing, and should tremble at the very thought of trifling with sin. And yet our service should be one of gratitude and joy. Our reverence is not to be oppressive and painful : our fear is not to be servile. The Eternal God has become, in Christ, the Object of our cheerful trust, and to Him we cling as the very Portion of our souls.

Verse 29. *For our God is a consuming fire.* This consideration is brought in to enforce the "reverence" and "fear" which the Apostle had just enjoined, as dispositions which should commingle with our gratitude. The language was suggested, doubtless, by the fire which burned on and around Mount Sinai, when God descended upon it, the flames of which filled all who beheld them with awe. To this scene the Apostle had been referring; and now, to stir up the believing Hebrews to watch against sin, and to devote themselves to the service of God, with reverence and yet with gratitude, he reminds them that, *even under the gospel*, the more awful attributes of Jehovah will come into operation against the man who refuses to listen to His voice, or who, while professing to be His, lives in the practice of iniquity.

## CHAPTER XIII.

I. LET <sup>a</sup>brotherly love continue.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. xii. 10 ; 1 Thess. iv. 9 ; 1 Pet. i. 22 ; ii. 17 ; iii. 8 ; iv. 8 ;  
2 Pet. i. 7 ; 1 John iii. 11, etc. ; iv. 7, 20, 21.

## CHAPTER XIII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN bringing this Epistle to a close, the Apostle addresses various exhortations to the believing Hebrews, encouraging them to the faithful discharge of the duties of the Christian life, and guarding them against the dangers to which they were exposed. In the course of these exhortations, he adverts to some of their former pastors, whose earthly career had terminated in peace and holy triumph, and charges them to imitate their faith. He adverts also to the position of believers in the present life, as called to share the reproach of the Redeemer, sustained by the hope of a higher and enduring state. These thoughts are interwoven with a series of most impressive admonitions; and the Apostle, having requested the prayers of the Hebrew Christians for Himself, offers up for them a prayer remarkably comprehensive and spiritual,—a prayer in which he brings together many of the grand arrangements of the economy of redemption, and unfolds the state of holiness to which it is the design of God to raise us through Christ, and by the operation of His Spirit. A few personal notices and salutations follow; and the Epistle closes with the comprehensive benediction, "Grace be with you all. Amen."

Verse 1. *Let brotherly love continue.* This exhortation

2. <sup>3</sup>Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for

*b* Matt. xxv. 35; Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9.

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deservedly holds a leading place among the final admonitions of the Apostle. The love of believers to each other—the special attachment which is to distinguish them as brethren in the Lord Jesus, and which has for its rule and model His love to His people—is, on every ground, a most important element of the Christian character. It results, naturally and necessarily, from the common spiritual life which pervades the hearts of all who are in Christ; it affords one of the most impressive manifestations of the reality and power of that life; it has been constituted by our Lord Himself the mark of our discipleship to Him; and it is essential to render our intercourse with each other conducive to our spiritual welfare, and a preparation for the higher and purer associations of heaven. The prominence which the Apostles ever gave to this disposition, in estimating the piety of individuals, or the spiritual state of Churches, is evident from many passages of the New Testament. We may refer, especially, to 2 Thess. i. 3; Eph. i. 15; Col. i. 4; 1 Pet. i. 22; 1 John iii. 16, 17.—There is a beautiful propriety in the charge, “Let brotherly love *continue*.” It is clear, from several passages in this Epistle, that the Hebrew Christians had already given decisive proofs of this disposition, and that it still influenced their general bearing and deportment. It will suffice to quote vi. 10, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which ye have showed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” The Apostle was anxious that this principle should be maintained in all its freshness and power, whatever might arise to chill and repress it.

thereby "some have entertained angels unawares.

3. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound

*e* Gen. xviii. 3; xix. 2.

*d* Matt. xxv. 36; Rom. xii. 15; 1 Cor. xii. 26; Col. iv. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 8.

Verse 2. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* There were special reasons in the Apostolic age, and those which followed it, why Christians should be ready to exercise hospitality. Houses of public entertainment were not then provided; and believers in Christ, who were compelled to travel from place to place, and some of whom had had to give up their own homes for His sake, were necessarily cast upon the kindness of their brethren.—And the Apostle adverts to the *special blessing* which often attends such a development of Christian love. He alludes to the fact that, in entertaining strangers, "some had entertained angels unawares;" referring, probably, to the cases of Abraham and Lot. (Gen. xviii., xix.) His argument implies that even now some strangers whom we welcome as brethren in Christ may prove to us messengers of God, enlarging our views of Christian truth, and conveying to us instrumentally Divine comfort and strength.—There is a beautiful accordance between the exhortations contained in this and the preceding verse and those found in Rom. xii. 10, 13.

Verse 3. *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, etc.* In this verse, again, we find an echo of the latter part of the charge given in Rom. xii. 15; but the duty of sympathy with suffering is here dwelt upon more fully. We are called upon to remember those who are "in bonds" for Christ's sake,—to think of them with affectionate interest and solicitude,—to

with them, *and* them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

4. Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed

pray that the richest consolation may be theirs,—and, as far as opportunity is afforded, to minister to their comfort. And our sympathy is to extend to every form of human suffering. We should seek to relieve the pressure of poverty,—to cheer the gloom of affliction,—to assuage the sorrows of bereavement,—and to afford spiritual help and comfort to others under the diversified trials of this probationary state. For we ourselves are “also in the body.” We are liable to the afflictions which we witness around us; and the time will come when we, too, must drink the cup of sorrow, and our frail nature must sink under the wasting of sickness and the languor of dissolution.

Verse 4. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers etc.* It is very doubtful whether the received translation of the former part of this verse can be sustained; though few, perhaps, will sacrifice it without a degree of reluctance. But when the order of the words in the original of this verse, *τίμος ὁ γάμος—καὶ ἡ κοίτη ἀμίαντος*, is compared with the order in the following verse, which is *clearly* an exhortation, *ἀφιλάργυρος ὁ τρόπος*, we seem bound to translate both in a similar manner. And just as we render the latter, “Let your conversation,” or “manner of life,” “be without covetousness,” so we are required to render the former, “Let marriage be held in honour—and your marriage-bed be undefiled.” It must be admitted, further, that the general usage of the New Testament, and of this Epistle in particular, requires us to translate *ἐν πᾶσι* which follows *γάμος*, “in all things.”

undefiled : \*but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness ;*  
*e* 1 Cor. vi. 9 ; Gal. v. 19, 21 ; Eph. v. 5 ; Col. iii. 5, 6 ; Rev. xxii. 15.

The charge of the Apostle then is, that marriage is ever to be regarded by Christians as honourable and worthy,—that its sanctity is to be guarded with the most jealous care,—and that we must shun the slightest approach to impurity, not only in act, but in thought and feeling. And this charge is enforced by the consideration, that all who violate the obligations of this holy institution, and all who, neglecting it, give themselves up to fornication, will incur the judgment of God. Even though their conduct may escape detection, or though, if it be brought to light, their position may shelter them, to some extent, from disgrace among their fellow-men, there is ONE to whom their account must be rendered, and who will at last reveal the baseness of their conduct, and inflict on them the threatened penalty.—Some of the earliest and best MSS. have the conjunction γάρ instead of δέ, in the last clause,—“for whoremongers and adulterers God will judge:” and this reading is adopted by Dean Alford, Dr. Lindsay, and others. The clause in this form strikingly accords with the hortatory rendering of the preceding words.

Verse 5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have : etc.* It is quite in the manner of the Sacred Writers, and of St. Paul in particular, to connect with sins of *impurity* the great vice of *covetousness*, and to warn believers against both. The charge here given is most comprehensive. The believing Hebrews are called upon to guard against the love of money, and to show, in the whole course of their life, and in all

and *be* content with such things as ye have : for He hath said, *I* will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

*f* Matt. vi. 25, 34 ; Phil. iv. 11, 12 ; 1 Tim. vi. 6, 8.

*g* Gen. xxviii. 15 ; Deut. xxxi. 6, 8 ; Josh. i. 5 ; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20 ;  
Ps. xxxvii. 25.

their intercourse with each other, that they were not actuated by this principle which, alas! so easily steals into the human breast, and so strongly entrenches itself within it. The original words of the first clause have been cited in the preceding note; and the student will at once perceive how wide is their import and application.—Instead of setting our hearts on the accumulation of wealth, we are to cultivate contentment with the circumstances in which Divine Providence, from time to time, may place us. Such a temper of mind, the Apostle goes on to show, is required by the consideration of the special Providence of God, and by the assurance that He will never forsake His people,—will never abandon them to the caprice or malice of their enemies,—will never leave them to be the sport of circumstances,—and will never fail to succour them under their trials. Mysterious as are some of the permissions of God in relation to His people, He is not, for a single instant, unmindful of them, and He is directing all things to their present and eternal welfare.—The precise words which the Apostle quotes are not found in any particular passage of the Old Testament: but the sentiment which they express occurs again and again, and that in language very similar. The reader may consult with advantage all the passages referred to in the margin, which clearly show how God had assured His servants, in every past age, that He would be with them throughout their earthly course, and would stand by them in the accomplishment of the work which He had assigned to them.

6. So that we may boldly say, <sup>4</sup>The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

7. Remember them which || have the rule over

*k* Ps. xxvii. 1 ; lvi. 4, 11, 12 ; cxviii. 6

*i* Verse 17.      || Or, *are the guides.*

Verse 6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear etc.* These words express the assured and joyous trust in God which it is our privilege to cherish. In the original this trust is still more strongly expressed,—“So that *we say* boldly, The Lord is my Helper, etc.”—He has engaged that He will never be unmindful of our interests, but will be always at hand to provide for, succour, and sustain us. In the faith of this promise, we may look with calmness on the vicissitudes of earth, and on the projects and efforts of our enemies. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The passage here adduced, as expressive of the sentiments proper to the Christian, is Psalm cxviii. 6; and its concluding words should be rendered here, as there, interrogatively: “The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear; what shall man do unto me?” Such an inquiry is the fitting utterance of a lofty faith in God. All the contrivances of human skill, and all the efforts of human strength, are powerless to injure us, if the Eternal Jehovah is our Protector and Friend.

Verse 7. *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: etc.* This is clearly an exhortation to the believing Hebrews to cherish an affectionate remembrance of their former pastors who had already entered into rest. They are admonished to recall their instructions and warnings, as they ministered to them “the word of God,”—to dwell, especially, on the close of their earthly career, as illustrating the fidelity, and

you, who have spoken unto you the word of God :  
<sup>k</sup>whose faith follow, considering the end of *their*  
 conversation.

*k* Heb. vi. 12.

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power, and grace, of Christ, and the blessedness of being His at last,—and, under the influence of these considerations, to “imitate their faith,” that faith which, having sustained them through the trials and sorrows of their earthly course, enabled them to triumph at length in the mortal conflict. In the first clause, the Apostle uses the phrase, τῶν ἡγουμένων ἡμῶν, “your leaders,” or “rulers;” and although this phrase, viewed simply in itself, might be applied to their present teachers, yet the following clause, “who spoke to you (ἐλάλησαν) the word of God,” shows it to refer to those whose service was over, and this is placed beyond a doubt by the conclusion of the sentence.—The term by which Christian pastors are here designated is very suggestive. They are to stand at the head of their people,—to lead them onward in the way of faith and holy obedience,—to preside over them, maintaining that godly order by which the Church should ever be distinguished,—and to minister continually to their spiritual refreshment and strength. To this end they are to “speak” to them “the word of God,” not seeking to amuse them with their own speculations, or to dazzle them with the display of their own powers, but faithfully to deliver Christ’s message, to bring out the deep import of the truth which He has revealed, and to enforce the duties which He has enjoined.—The charge of the Apostle implies, also, that some, at least, of the former pastors of the Hebrew Christians had borne in death a glorious testimony to the grace and power of the Lord Jesus. It is thought by

8. Jesus Christ *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

ℓ John viii. 58 ; Heb. i. 12 ; Rev. i. 4.

many, that there is a special allusion here to James, the brother of our Lord, who for many years presided over the Church in Jerusalem, and whose character as a pure and upright man was so established that he was usually designated "James the Just." He had recently died a martyr's death, having fallen a victim to the rage and malice of some of the Jews: but his last hours had afforded a striking illustration of the excellence of Christian principle, and of the sufficiency of the Saviour's grace. He is said to have been thrown from a pinnacle of the temple, and then tumultuously stoned by the Jews: but, as the stones were falling upon him and around him, he knelt and prayed for his enemies, as the first martyr Stephen did, and as the Saviour Himself prayed for those who nailed Him to the cross. Such examples of holy constancy, and of lofty triumph in death, the Apostle commended to the consideration of the believing Hebrews, that they might be stirred up to "imitate the faith" of those who had led them onward in the way of life, and whose dying experience had crowned a career of piety and usefulness.

Verse 8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* It is now universally agreed that this is a distinct assertion, forming a separate sentence:—"Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It is a beautiful and impressive affirmation of the *unchangeableness* of the Lord Jesus; and this attribute obviously implies His true and proper Godhead. The connection of thought between this verse and the preceding one is very

9. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be  
*m* Eph. iv. 14 ; v. 6 ; Col. ii. 4, 8 ; 1 John iv. 1.

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intimate. The Apostle had called on the Hebrew Christians to remember their former pastors, who once spoke to them the word of God, but whose earthly career was over ; and now he turns to the animating thought, that Jesus Christ, the Head and Lord of the Church, ever lives, and that no earthly change can affect the relations in which He stands to His people. So, too, he had adverted to the closing scene of the life of the pastors in question, and had charged the Hebrew Christians to "imitate their faith ;" and now he reminds them, that He from whom all their excellence and strength were derived, He who sustained them in the agonies of dissolution, is the unchangeable Saviour, possessed of resources which no lapse of time can impair, and able consequently to meet all the necessities of His people from age to age.

Verse 9. *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing etc.* Here the Apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews firmly to hold the truths which they had embraced, and not to surrender their minds to the varying speculations and theories of men, or to the precepts which they might wish to enjoin, alien, as they would generally be, from the teaching of the gospel. The great object of solicitude to every Christian should be *establishment in grace*,—the grace which flows from Christ Himself into the hearts of His people, and which His own pure and simple truth serves to nourish and sustain.—To this general exhortation there is appended a particular caution against having the mind occupied with disputes respecting meats and drinks:—

established with grace; "not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

10. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle.

*n* Rom. xiv. 17; Col. ii. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 3.

*o* 1 Cor. ix. 13; x. 18.

"Not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." It is properly considered by nearly all expositors of eminence that the term βρώματα, "meats," is used with reference to the distinction of *clean* and *unclean*, and the liberty of Christians to partake of certain species of food. This branch of the exhortation, therefore, bears on the controversies mentioned in Rom. xiv.; and the emphatic statement with which the verse closes shows that the Apostle regarded such controversies, and that predominant regard to outward observances which they supposed, as unfavourable to the progress of the spiritual life. We are naturally reminded of the impressive declaration in Rom. xiv. 17, 18: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in this serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

Verse 10. *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle.* This declaration has been understood by many to refer to the communion of Christians in the supper of the Lord; and it has been maintained that the Apostle here designates the sacramental table "an altar." Even if this were admitted, it would not prove the doctrine which it is brought forward to uphold,—that there is, in the eucharist, an actual offering up to God of the Lord Jesus as a sacrifice, the

officiating minister sustaining the character of a sacrificing priest. Such a theory is altogether alien to the theology of this Epistle. Among the truths which the Apostle had dwelt upon, one of the most prominent, and one which awakened in his mind the deepest interest, was, that the Lord Jesus Christ offered up Himself as a sacrifice *once for all*; and that, His one offering of Himself being complete and perfect, He has ascended to the very throne of God, Himself to present it on behalf of all who come unto God by Him. In the elaborate discussions on the subject of priesthood, which form so important a portion of this Epistle, not a single hint is given that there is even yet in the Christian Church an order of sacrificing priests; but our trust is directed to the ONE HIGH PRIEST of our profession, through whom each individual believer has access even into the holiest of all. If, therefore, it were allowed that the term "altar" is here applied to the communion-table in the supper of the Lord, it could only be with reference to the *commemoration* of a sacrifice which, retaining for ever its saving efficacy, may be *even now appropriated* by the faith of the humble and devout. But we agree with Dean Alford, Dr. W. Lindsay, and others, in considering that the "altar" referred to is *the cross* on which our Lord suffered and died. Of that altar we may be said to eat when we spiritually appropriate His sacrifice. And the observation of the Apostle is to this effect,—that they who still offered the temple-sacrifices had no right to eat of this altar; for by continuing the whole round of sacrifices for sin, as if the true and perfect Sacrifice to which they pointed had not yet been offered, they did in effect repudiate this last. Subordinate to this general consideration there is another suggested by the following verses, and which is brought out in the note upon them. Those verses strongly con-

11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

*p* Exod. xxix. 14; Lev. iv. 11, 12, 21; vi. 30; ix. 11; xvi. 27; Numb. xix. 3.

firm the exposition which we have given of the "altar," as the cross on which the Saviour actually suffered and died.

Verses 11, 12. *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary etc.* The thought which seems to underlie these verses, viewed in their connection with the preceding one, is this,—that the arrangement which permits us, as Christians, to eat of the altar of the cross belongs altogether to the new economy. There were some sacrifices, under the law, of which the priests were allowed to partake, and others which even the offerers joined in eating: but those which formed the most striking types of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus—the sacrifices offered on the great day of atonement—were not allowed to be eaten by any human being. The bullock and the goat which were immolated on that day, and with the blood of which the high priest entered into the holy of holies, were wholly consumed with fire; and that, without the camp in the first instance, and, after the building of the temple, on the outside of the walls of Jerusalem. Even so, the Apostle reminds us, the Lord Jesus "suffered without the gate," offering up Himself as the true and effectual Victim, that, going with His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary, He might "sanctify" all who should trust in Him, and thus become "the people" of God,—not only cancelling their guilt, but actually consecrating them to the Divine service. Our "altar," then,—the cross on which the Son

12. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, <sup>q</sup>suffered without the gate.

13. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing <sup>r</sup>His reproach.

14. <sup>s</sup>For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

*q* John xix. 17, 18 ; Acts vii. 58.

*r* Heb. xi. 26 ; 1 Pet. iv. 14.

*s* Micah ii. 10 ; Phil. iii. 20 ; Heb. xi. 10, 16 ; xii. 22.

of God expired,—is one which they who still “served the tabernacle” renounced ; nor could the benefits of that true and perfect Sacrifice be theirs.

Verse 13. *Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.* This exhortation is naturally suggested by the views just set forth. The true position of the Hebrew Christians was not amidst the scenes of the temple-sacrifices. With these they had now nothing more to do ; but they were to go forth to their Lord,—the Rejected One of the chief priests and elders,—to rely on His atonement, and to share His reproach. Assured of the unfailing efficacy of His sacrifice, they were to avow to all men that to Him they committed their everlasting interests, and that for His sake they were prepared to undergo any suffering or contempt.

Verse 14. *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.* It is with beautiful propriety that the Apostle adverts to this consideration to encourage believers to “bear the reproach” of Christ, openly confessing Him even at the sacrifice of earthly friendships and temporal interests. In the first clause of this verse some expositors trace a prophetic allusion to the approaching overthrow of

15. 'By Him, therefore, let us offer "the sacrifice

† Eph. v. 20 ; 1 Pet. ii. 5.

u Lev. vii. 12 ; Ps. l. 14, 23 ; lxxix. 30, 31 ; cvii. 22 ; cxvi. 17.

Jerusalem: but it is very doubtful whether this was intended. The sentiment is a general one. Our earthly life is transient. Should we even wish to make earth our permanent abode, and allow our hearts to repose on its possessions and its pleasures, we must in a short time be summoned from its activities. It presents to us "no continuing city." The proudest structures which man can rear will ultimately crumble into ruins; while his personal enjoyment of them is limited to a few brief years. But, as Christians, our hopes and efforts are directed to a higher state which will endure for ever. We "seek a city"—a continuing city—"to come." Before us, if "faithful unto death," there is that world to which our Lord has ascended as the Head and Forerunner of His people, and in reference to which He has said, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

Verse 15. *By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, etc.* In this and the following verse the Apostle points out the *sacrifices* which Christians are now called upon to offer to God. He had just been reminding the Hebrew believers that they had nothing now to do with the Levitical sacrifices,—that their spiritual life was derived from, and sustained by, Him who died as the one perfect Sacrifice for sin, upon the altar of the cross; and that their true position, consequently, was around Him, avowing their confidence in His atonement, and being ready, at all times, to share His reproach. And now he

of praise to God continually, that is, <sup>z</sup>the fruit of *our* lips <sup>\*</sup>giving thanks to His Name.

<sup>z</sup> Hosca xiv. 2.

<sup>\*</sup> Gr. *confessing to.*

tells them that the sacrifices which they had to present were spiritual. Consecrated to the Divine service through the blood of Jesus, and having access even to the holiest of all, they, as a holy priesthood, were to offer up, first of all, "the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Gratitude for the abounding mercy of God was ever to pervade their hearts; and that gratitude was to find expression in all their acts of worship. They were thus to render to the Most High "the fruit of their lips," acknowledging the glory of "His Name," and celebrating especially His goodness and love in Christ Jesus. But these acts of thanksgiving were to be offered through the Redeemer; for it is only as we come through Him that we can have access to the Father. It is instructive to recall the manner in which the grateful acknowledgment of the Divine mercy is inculcated in the ancient Scriptures. In the fiftieth Psalm, in which the worship which God approves is set forth, we read, "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Verses 14, 15.) "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." (Verse 23.) In the sixty-ninth Psalm, also, we read, "I will praise the Name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." (Verses 30, 31.) Nor should we overlook the beautiful passage of Hosea, to which there is a direct allusion in this verse; "Take with you words,

16. <sup>y</sup>But to do good and to communicate forget not: for <sup>z</sup>with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

<sup>y</sup> Rom. xii. 13.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 12; Phil. iv. 18; Heb. vi. 10.

and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." (xiv. 2.)

Verse 16. *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* By an easy transition the Apostle passes to another kind of spiritual sacrifices which believers are now to offer to God,—even those acts of beneficence and of mutual kindness which show that they have received the Spirit of Christ, and are being confirmed to His image. These he charges the believing Hebrews never to forget. As the disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are bound, "as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." In such acts of kindness to our Christian brethren, our mutual love finds its appropriate expression; while the neglect of the poor, and especially of the poor of Christ's flock, would evince the absence of all true love to God, and of the deep and pure benignity of the Christian character.—"With such sacrifices," the Apostle goes on to affirm, "God is well pleased." The intimate connection between this verse and the preceding one suggests the thought, that while the offering of praise is acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ, these practical manifestations of holy principle are still more so. They form a beautiful development of that inward life which His Spirit imparts, and show that His great purpose is being accomplished in the assimilation of His people to His own purity and love.

17. "Obey them that || have the rule over you, and submit yourselves : for <sup>b</sup>they watch for your souls, as

*a* Phil. ii. 29 ; 1 Thess. v. 12 ; 1 Tim. v. 17 ; Verse 7. || Or, *guide*.

*b* Ezek. iii. 17 ; xxxiii. 2, 7 ; Acts xx. 26, 28.

Verse 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, etc.* The import of the phrase, τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν, "your leaders," or "rulers," which the Apostle again uses to designate the pastors of the Hebrew Christians, has been explained in the note on verse 7. It is, as we have seen, a very suggestive phrase, indicating the position and duties of those who stand at the head of the Churches.—Dean Alford has correctly marked the difference between the two verbs employed in the first clause, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves,*"—that the former refers to the cheerful following of their instructions, and the latter to a dutiful yielding in cases in which personal inclination or preference might be interfered with.—This exhortation is enforced by the consideration of the solemn responsibility which rests on Christian pastors. They have to "*watch over the souls*" of their people,—to maintain a constant, and, as it were, a *sleepless*, regard to everything that would affect their safety or impede their growth in holiness, and to strive, in every possible way, to lead them onward in the path of life and peace. And for the faithful execution of this trust they are responsible to the Lord Jesus. Before them lies an "account," to be rendered to Him who has bought His people with His own blood ; and the anticipation of this may well incite them to diligence and fidelity.—The latter part of the verse, "*that they may do this with joy, and not with grief,*" or, more literally, "*that with joy they may do this, and not lamenting,*" must be understood as referring

they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have <sup>d</sup>a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

*c* Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1.

*d* Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. 1. 12.

not to the final rendering of their account to Christ, but to *their present watchful care over their people*. And the sentiment which is thus brought out is very impressive and beautiful. The Apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews to follow the instructions of those who stood at their head, and sought, with sleepless vigilance, to promote their spiritual interests, and even to yield to them in some things which might cross their own inclinations; in order that the exercise of this pastoral care, in itself so laborious, and involving a responsibility which might well oppress the strongest mind, might be rendered a matter of joy, and not be connected with deep and constant sorrow. "For this," he adds, "is unprofitable for you." If a pastor's heart is grieved and wounded by the conduct of his people, he will not be able to contribute, as he might otherwise have done, to their edification and establishment; and thus the Church will lose the full benefit which was intended to result from the appointment of the Christian ministry.

Verse 18. *Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, etc.* It is scarcely necessary to point out that this request of the writer for the prayers of the Hebrew Christians on his own behalf, is quite in the manner of St. Paul. Living, as he did, in the element of devotion, he greatly valued the intercessions of believers, and again and again asked for them, in writing to the Churches.—The reference to his own principles and character, by which he

19. But I beseech *you* <sup>e</sup>the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

<sup>e</sup> Philemon 22.

sustains the request, is most appropriate to the close of this Epistle. Some of those whom he addressed were in danger of taking offence at certain sentiments which he had advanced, and at certain features of his own conduct, more especially in regard to the ceremonial observances of the ancient law. And he now solemnly protests that he acted, in all things, from sincere and pure motives; that he had a full persuasion that he had "a good conscience," seeking to know the path of duty, and then following it, without being turned aside by any inferior or selfish purpose. He lays particular stress, also, on his habitual solicitude to do that which was right and seemly. He did not follow sudden impulses of feeling, or act without a careful consideration of the requirements of Christian duty and propriety: but he desired "in all things to conduct himself *becomingly*," (*καλῶς*;) in a manner consistent with moral rectitude, and calculated to adorn his holy profession.

Verse 19. *But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.* This remark has been thought by many to imply, that the writer was now in a state of confinement, and thus kept at a distance from those whom he was addressing. But all that can be certainly inferred from it is, that *some* hindrance had existed to the renewal of his personal intercourse with them, though he now cherished the hope and purpose of speedily visiting them, (verse 23,) and he asks for the prayers of the believing Hebrews that his way might be opened to them. He had a firm conviction of the reality of God's providential government, and of the power of intercessory

20. Now the God of peace, that brought again

*f* Rom. xv. 33 ; 1 Thess. v. 23.

*g* Acts ii. 24, 32 ; Rom. iv. 24 ; viii. 11 ; 1 Cor. vi. 14 ; xv. 15 ;  
2 Cor. iv. 14 ; Gal. i. 1 ; Col. ii. 12 ; 1 Thess. i. 10 ; 1 Pet. i. 21.

prayer. It is an encouraging thought, that God often grants the requests of His people even as to temporal arrangements. Such requests, however, must always be presented with lowly submission. We must leave it to the perfect wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father to mix our cup of earthly enjoyment and suffering, and to direct the whole course of our probationary life.

Verse 20. *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, etc.* It has been properly observed that the Apostle, having solicited the prayers of the Hebrew Christians on his own behalf, now offers for them a prayer full of rich spiritual truth, and setting forth the loftiest spiritual attainments. The prayers of St. Paul for the Churches are among the most precious portions of his writings. In a few comprehensive words they afford the profoundest views of the economy of redemption,—of the relations of believers to Christ and to each other,—of the privileges and blessings to which they are called, and of the glory that awaits them; and the affectionate heart of the Apostle pours itself forth in earnest supplications, that all the grace that can elevate, sanctify, sustain, and comfort the human spirit might be the portion of those for whom he “bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—The prayer before us is one of the most instructive and beautiful of the whole. The appellation given to the Most High, “the God of peace,” is one very familiar to St. Paul, and suggestive of many thoughts of deep interest. It would be a most superficial view of it to regard it as implying chiefly, that

from the dead our Lord Jesus, <sup>h</sup>that great Shepherd

<sup>h</sup> Isai. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24; John x. 11, 14;  
1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4.

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God delights in the harmony of His people, and views with displeasure all strife and contention among them. It includes this thought; but the grand ideas which it conveys are, that God has now come forth to recover us to a state of peace and friendship with Himself, through the provisions of redemption,—and that He imparts to every soul that flies to the appointed Refuge a measure of *His own heavenly peace*, so that even amidst the sorrows and trials of earth it may enjoy a holy serenity, as the result of its fellowship with Him.—The grand arrangements of the mediatorial scheme now rise to the Apostle's view. He recalls some of the truths on which he had dwelt in the course of this Epistle; but he gives prominence to one great fact which he had not before expressly mentioned,—*the resurrection of our Lord from the dead*. The Lord Jesus, he reminds us, is “the great Shepherd of the sheep.” This beautiful metaphor had been supplied by some passages of the ancient Scriptures, and by our Lord's own discourse recorded in John x. It illustrates the tenderness and constancy of His regard to every one of His people, and the ever-watchful care with which He guards their spiritual interests; while it marks also their cheerful and confiding submission to Him. In the epithet “great” we trace an allusion to the under-shepherds whom Christ gives to His people. The Apostle had been exhorting the believing Hebrews to follow the godly admonitions of their pastors; and now he fixes their regard on Him who is emphatically THE SHEPHERD of the universal Church, and the Source of all the gifts and

of the sheep, 'through the blood of the everlasting  
|| covenant,

i Zech. ix. 11 ; Heb. x. 29.    || Or, *testament*.

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graces by which merely human pastors are distinguished. To this appellation of the Redeemer, he appends the clause, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The precise connection of thought thus indicated has been matter of dispute; but we conceive the sentiment to be, that it is in virtue of His sacrificial death, as that through which God again receives us into covenant with Himself, that the Lord Jesus has become "the great Shepherd of the sheep." He has bought His people with His own blood; and His rule over them, and all the blessings which He confers upon them, are founded upon His atoning death. The covenant established through that death is an "everlasting covenant," since no other is to follow it, and since the relation established between God and His people is designed to endure for ever. Eternity only will unfold the rich and exhaustless amplitude of blessing involved in having God as our covenant-God.—But the Lord Jesus, having offered His perfect atonement, and thus opened the way to the establishment of the everlasting covenant of grace and peace, has been raised from the dead by the Eternal Father. This great event is the unfailling ground of the believer's triumph. Not only did it establish the Saviour's personal claims, but it declared the sufficiency and acceptance of His atonement, and it formed the pledge of the ultimate resurrection and perfect glory of all His people. With beautiful propriety the Apostle adverts to the Father as having "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus," when about to implore through Him the richest communications of purity

21. <sup>2</sup>Make you perfect in every good work to do

& 2 Thess. ii. 17 ; 1 Pet. v. 10.

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and spiritual strength. For this interposition of the Eternal Father clearly shows, that the way is open for the bestowment of every blessing on those who come to the Saviour. No obstacle now exists to the flowing forth of the riches of Divine grace to those who believe on the Son ; and the loftier and more abundant the blessings which we receive, the more they accord with the glory of our risen and exalted Lord.

Verse 21. *Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you etc.* This verse completes the prayer of the Apostle for the believing Hebrews, setting forth that perfect state of holiness which it was their privilege to attain through the provisions of redemption. He who had raised and glorified the Mediator, when, by the sacrifice of Himself, He had completed the work of atonement, and opened the way to the establishment of "the everlasting covenant," might well be implored to fulfil His counsel of grace as to all who come to the Lord Jesus, by establishing them in every holy principle, and enabling them to pursue a course of uniform and universal obedience.—The views given to us in this passage of a matured state of holiness are remarkably full and comprehensive. The *practical development* of pure and benignant affections is first adverted to. We are to be made "perfect in every good work." Christianity knows nothing of a holiness that does not manifest itself in outward obedience to God, and in active service to man.—The *completeness*, too, of our obedience is made prominent. We are to be ready to "*every good work*," shunning no opportunity of doing good to others, and evincing the depth of our piety by our

His will, ||'working in you that which is well-

|| Or, *doing*.

l Phil. ii. 13.

solicitude to keep every commandment of God, and to present our whole life as a sacrifice to Him.—But the Apostle dwells with special interest on *the Source of our spiritual strength*. The holiness of Christ's people is derived from the powerful inward working of God Himself. Theirs is not a course of mere external service, entered upon in the strength of nature, and persevered in through the force of human resolution. They are the subjects of new and sacred dispositions, implanted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and sustained by His continual operation. God must Himself “work in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.” Nothing in human feeling or character can attract His complacency, but that which partakes of His own essential purity, and which He Himself has imparted to the soul. And the great promise of that “everlasting covenant” which is now established through the blood of Jesus is, that God will Himself put His laws into our mind, and write them on our heart. His action, too, on the believing mind is not transient, but abiding and permanent. The grace of the Holy Ghost which constitutes us “new creatures” in Christ Jesus, is ever vouchsafed to us, while we humbly cling to Him, to sustain us in the hour of trial, and to enable us to persevere in a course of evangelical obedience.—Still further, the Apostle refers to *the will of God* as the rule of our duty, and admonishes us that the great object of our solicitude should be to please HIM in all things. There is, indeed, an essential rectitude in the principles and acts which constitute true holiness. It is because they are morally right and lovely that God has enjoined them. But to us

pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ ; <sup>m</sup>to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word

<sup>m</sup> Gal. i. 5 ; 2 Tim. iv. 18 ; Rev. i. 6.

His declared will is the standard of rectitude. We are not left to trace out the scheme of duty by our imperfect reasonings, so often darkened by selfish inclinations and passions. He whose intellect is without a cloud, whose view comprehends all the relations and interests of the Universe, and whose decisions are the expression of perfect wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, has Himself enjoined the principles which we should cherish, and marked out the path in which we should walk. To do His will, and enjoy His complacency, must be our constant aim.—But it is only “through Jesus Christ” that we ourselves, or any service that we can render, can be pleasing to Him. We are accepted under a *constitution of grace* which rests on the atoning death and priestly intercession of the Mediator. Then only can the Eternal Father approve our principles and conduct, when they form a development of that new life which we receive from union with the Son, and when He alone is the Object of our trust for salvation. And He, too, is entitled to our reverent and grateful worship. It is to the Lord Jesus that the last clause of this verse—“to whom be glory for ever and ever”—refers ; and every Christian will re-echo the “Amen” with which this ascription of praise, this utterance of lowly adoration, is sealed.

Verse 22. *And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: etc.* This final request beautifully illustrates the warm affection which filled the heart of the Apostle towards those whom he was addressing. Some of the

of exhortation : for "I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23. Know ye that *our* brother Timothy *is* set at liberty ; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

*n* 1 Pet. v. 12.

*o* 1 Thess. iii. 2.

*p* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

sentiments which he had advanced in this Epistle might, at the first view, shock their prejudices ; while the faithful warnings and solemn cautions which he had interwoven with his argument might tend to depress them. But he asks them to bear with all this, to admit the truths which he had set forth, and to act upon the exhortations which he had given.—The import of the last clause is well brought out by Dean Alford. The expression "few words" is used with reference to the greatness and amplitude of the theme of the Epistle,—“few, in comparison of what might have been said on such a subject.”

Verse 23. *Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty ; with whom, etc.* It is a question not easily decided, whether the term ἀπολελυμένον, applied to Timothy, should be translated, as in our Version, "set at liberty," or whether it should be rendered "sent away." There can be no doubt that it admits of the latter meaning, and that it is often applied to persons formally parted with, or officially sent on any mission. We may refer, in particular, to Acts xiii. 3, xv. 30, 33. Many expositors consider that the Apostle, unfolding his own plans to the Church or Churches that he was addressing, refers to Timothy as now absent on an important mission, and intimates that he awaited his return before visiting them, that he might have the society of one so dear to him. But the more common opinion is, that the

24. Salute all them <sup>s</sup>that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

*q* Verses 7, 17.

phrase has respect to the liberation of Timothy from confinement. We do not, indeed, read elsewhere of any imprisonment of Timothy; but it is a consistent supposition that he was put under restraint, like Aristarchus and others, during the first imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome, or at the commencement of the Neronian persecution. The subject has been adverted to in the Introduction, in the inquiry into the date of the Epistle. It is clear, that Timothy was one of the intimate personal friends of the writer; and this circumstance greatly favours the opinion, that the Epistle proceeded from the Apostle Paul.

Verse 24. *Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.* In these brief words the Apostle sends his own affectionate greetings, and those of several brethren who were with him, both to the pastors of the believing Hebrews, and all the members of the Churches,—all who had come out from the world and were cultivating holiness as the great aim of their Christian calling. The import of the expression, “they of Italy,” or, more literally, “they from Italy,” *οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας*, has been much discussed, as bearing on the question *where* the Epistle was written. The only thing that can be viewed as certain is, that the persons in question were individuals from various parts of Italy, who were now present with the Apostle, and who wished to be specially remembered to the Hebrew Christians. The inferences that have been deduced from this phrase are considered in the Introduction.

Verse 25. *Grace be with you all. Amen.* This bene-

25. 'Grace be with you all. Amen.

r Titus iii. 15.

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diction is similar to that with which St. Paul closes his Epistle to the Colossians and the three Pastoral Epistles. It is an abbreviation of the more usual form, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you;" and it is observable that, in all the cases in which it occurs, the article is retained. Literally the Apostle's final prayer is, "*The grace be with you;*" and the expression points to the grace which centres in Christ,—the grace of God which flows to us through Him, raising our nature from its sinfulness and gloom, and imparting to it peace, and purity, and strength. In this one word the Apostle comprehends all spiritual blessing. The gracious favour of God, shedding a calm and tranquil light on the human spirit, and the powerful inward working of the Holy Ghost, investing the character with moral loveliness, and imparting strength for the discharge of every duty, are both included in this "grace." These blessings come to us from the abounding benignity of the Eternal Father: but they come through the Incarnate Son, who has opened to us the path of life, and who stands at the head of the mediatorial constitution. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is thus the theme of adoring contemplation and of unceasing praise to the Church on earth and in heaven. And as the Apostle closes this wonderful Epistle, in which the rich provisions of the mediatorial scheme are unfolded, and the personal dignity, the accomplished sacrifice, and the constant priestly intercession, of the Lord Jesus Christ are set forth, he prays that His abounding "grace" might be the portion of every believer.

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