

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY  
**COMMENTARY**

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE  
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE  
PART 2: NEW TESTAMENT**

*by John Nelson Darby*

**Books For The Ages**  
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA  
Version 2.0 © 1996, 1997



## John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

AGES Software is indebted to STEM Publishing, UK, for generously granting permission to reproduce their electronic text of Darby's *Synopsis of the Bible*. The Synopsis and the complete works of John Nelson Darby are available on a single CD-ROM, *The Darby Disk*. Contact L. J. L. Hodgett, STEM Publishing, 7 Primrose Way, Cliffs End, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 5LF., U.K., Tel/Fax: 01843 584686, for information on acquiring this resource. Please contact STEM for publishing rights. The format which follows is copyright 1996 by AGES Software.

## HEBREWS

The important nature of the epistle to the Hebrews demands that we should examine it with peculiar care. It has its own very distinct place. It is not the presentation of christian position in itself, viewed as the fruit of sovereign grace, and of the work and the resurrection of Christ, or as the result of the union of Christians with Christ, the members of the body with the Head — a union which gives them the enjoyment of every privilege in Him. It is an epistle in which one who has apprehended indeed the whole scope of Christianity, considered as placing the Christian in Christ before God, whether individually or as a member of the body, looks nevertheless at the Lord from here below; and presents His Person and His offices as between us and God in heaven, while we are in feebleness on earth, for the purpose of detaching us (as walking on earth) from all that would attach us in a religious way to the earth; even when — as was the case among the Jews — the bond had been ordained by God Himself.

This epistle shows us Christ in heaven, and consequently that our religious bonds with God are heavenly, although we are not yet personally in heaven ourselves nor viewed as united to Christ there. Every bond with the earth is broken, even while we are walking on the earth.

These instructions naturally are given in an epistle addressed to the Jews, because their religious relationships had been earthly, and at the same time solemnly appointed by God Himself. The heathen, as to their religions, had no formal relationships except with demons.

In the case of the Jews this rupture with the earth was in its nature so much the more solemn, the more absolute and conclusive, from the relationship having been divine. This relationship was to be fully acknowledged and entirely abandoned, not here because the believer is dead and risen again in Christ, but because Christ in heaven takes the place of all earthly figures and ordinances. God Himself, who had instituted the ordinances of the law, now established other bonds, different indeed in character; but it was still the same God.

This fact gives occasion for His relationships with Israel being resumed by Him hereafter when the nation shall be, re-established and in the enjoyment of the promises. Not that this epistle views them as actually on that ground; on the contrary it insists on what is heavenly, and walking by faith as Abraham and others who had not the promises, but it lays down principles which can apply to that position, and in one or two passages it leaves (and ought to leave) a place for this ultimate blessing of the nation. The epistle to the Romans, in the direct instruction which it furnishes, cannot leave this place for the blessings proper to the Jewish people. In its point of view all are alike sinners, and all in Christ are justified together before God in heaven. Still less in the epistle to the Ephesians, with the object which it has in view, could there be room for speaking of the future blessing of God's people on the earth. It only contemplates Christians as united to their heavenly Head, as His body; or as the habitation of God on earth by the Holy Ghost. The epistle to the Romans, in the passage that shows the compatibility of this salvation (which, because it was of God, was for all without distinction) with the faithfulness of God to His promises made to the nation, touches the chord of which we speak even more distinctly than the epistle to the Hebrews; and shows us that Israel will — although in a different way from before — resume their place in the line peculiar to their heirs of promise; a place which, through their sin, was partially left vacant for a time to allow the bringing in of the Gentiles on the principle of faith into this blessed succession. We find this in Romans 11. But the object in both epistles is to separate the faithful entirely from earth, and to bring them into relationship religiously with heaven; the one (that to the Romans) as regards their personal presentation to God by means of forgiveness and divine righteousness; the other, with respect to the means that God has established, in order that the believer, in his walk here below, may find his present relationships with heaven maintained and his daily connection with God preserved in its integrity.

I have said preserved, because this is the subject of the epistle;\* but it must be added, that these relationships are established on this ground by divine revelations, which communicate the will of God and the conditions under which He is pleased to connect Himself with His people.

[\* It will be found, I think, that in Hebrews the exercise of the heavenly priesthood is not applied to the case of a fall into sin. It is for mercy and grace to help in time of need. Its subject is access to God, having the High

Priest on high; and this we always have. The conscience is always perfect (chaps. 9 and 10) as to imputation and thus going to God. In 1 John, where communion is spoken of, which is interrupted by sin, we have an advocate with the Father if any man sin — this also founded on perfect righteousness and propitiation in Him. The priesthood of Christ reconciles a perfect heavenly standing with God, with a weak condition on earth ever liable to failure — gives comfort and dependence in the path through the desert.]

We should also remark, that in the epistle to the Hebrews, although the relationship of the people with God is established on a new ground, being founded on the heavenly position of the Mediator, they are considered as already existing. God treats with a people already known to Him. He addresses persons in relationship with Himself, and who for a long period have held the position of a people whom God had taken out from the world unto Himself. It is not, as in Romans, sinners without law or transgressors of the law, between whom there is no difference, because all have alike come entirely short of the glory of God, all alike are the children of wrath, or, as in Ephesians, an entirely new creation unknown before. They were in need of some better thing; but those here addressed were in that need because they were in relationship with God, and the condition of their relationship with Him brought nothing to perfection. That which they possessed was in fact nothing but signs and figures; still, the people were, I again say, a people in relationship with God. Many of them might refuse the new method of blessing and grace, and consequently would be lost; but the link between the people and God is accounted to subsist: only that, Messiah having been revealed, a place among that people could not be had but in the recognition of Messiah.

It is very important for the understanding of this epistle to apprehend this point, namely, that it is addressed to Hebrews on the ground of a relationship which still existed,\* although it only retained its force in so far as they acknowledged the Messiah, who was its corner-stone. Hence the first words connect their present state with previous revelations, instead of breaking off all connection and introducing a new thing as yet unrevealed.

[\* He sanctifies the people with His own blood. They count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. There is no inward sanctifying operation of the Spirit spoken of in Hebrews, though there are exhortations to the pursuit of holiness.]

Some remarks on the form of the epistle will help us to understand it better.

It does not contain the name of its author. The reason of this is touching and remarkable. It is that the Lord Himself, according to this epistle, was the Apostle of Israel. The apostles whom He sent were only employed to confirm His words by transmitting them to others, God Himself confirming their testimony by miraculous gifts. This also makes us understand that, although as Priest the Lord is in heaven for the exercise of His priesthood there, and in order to establish on new ground the relationship of the people with God, yet the communications of God with His people by means of the Messiah had begun when Jesus was on earth living in their midst. Consequently the character of their relationship was not union with Him in heaven; it was relationship with God on the ground of divine communications and of the service of a Mediator with God.

Moreover this epistle is a discourse, a treatise, rather than a letter addressed in the exercise of apostolic functions to saints with whom the writer was personally in connection. The author takes the place of a teacher rather than of an apostle. He speaks doubtless from the height of the heavenly calling, but in connection with the actual position of the Jewish people; nevertheless, it was for the purpose of making believers at length understand that they must abandon that position.

The time for judgment on the nation was drawing near; and with regard to this the destruction of Jerusalem had great significance, because it definitely broke off all outward relationship between God and the Jewish people. There was no longer an altar or sacrifice, priest or sanctuary. Every link was then broken by judgment, and remains broken until it shall be formed again under the new covenant according to grace.

Further, it will be found that there is more contrast than comparison. The veil is compared, but then, closing the entrance to the sanctuary, now, a new and living way into it; a sacrifice, but then repeated, so as to say sins were still there, now once for all so that there is no remembrance of sins; and so of every important particular.

The author of this epistle (Paul, I doubt not, but this is of little importance) employed other motives than that of the approaching

judgment to induce the believing Jews to abandon their Judaic relationships. It is this last step however which he engages them to take; and the judgment was at hand. Until now they had linked Christianity with Judaism; there had been thousands of Christians who were very zealous for the law. But God was about to destroy that system altogether — already in fact judged by the Jews' rejection of Christ, and by their resistance to the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Our epistle engages believers to come forth entirely from that system and to bear the Lord's reproach, setting before them a new foundation for their relationship with God in a High Priest who is in the heavens. At the same time it links all that it says with the testimony of God by the prophets through the intermedium of Christ, the Son of God, speaking during His life on earth, though now speaking from heaven.

Thus the new position is plainly set forth, but continuity with the former is also established; and we have a glimpse, by means of the new covenant, of continuity also with that which is to come — a thread by which another state of things, the millennial state, is connected with the whole of God's dealings with the nation, although that which is taught and developed in the epistle is the position of believers (of the people), formed by the revelation of a heavenly Christ on whom depended all their connection with God. They were to come forth from the camp; but it was because Jesus, in order to sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. For here there is no continuing city: we seek one that is to come. The writer places himself among the remnant of the people as one of them. He teaches with the full light of the Holy Ghost, but not those to whom he had been sent as an apostle, with the apostolic authority which such a mission would have given him over them. It will be understood that in saying this we speak of the relationship of the writer, not of the inspiration of the writing.

While developing the sympathies of Christ and His sufferings, in order to show that He is able to compassionate the suffering and the tried, the epistle does not bring forward His humiliation nor the reproach of the cross, till quite at the end when — His glory having been set forth — the author engages the Jew to follow Him and to share His reproach.

The glory of the Messiah's Person, His sympathies, His heavenly glory, are made prominent in order to strengthen the faltering faith of the Jewish Christians, and to fortify them in their christian position, that they might view the latter in its true character; and that they themselves, being connected with heaven and established in their heavenly calling, might learn to bear the cross and to separate themselves from the religion of the flesh, and not draw back to a Judaism just ready to pass away.

We must look then in this epistle for the character of relationships with God, formed upon the revelation of the Messiah in the position which He had taken on high, and not for the doctrine of a new nature; approach to God in the holiest, impossible in Judaism, but no revelation of the Father, nor union with Christ on high.

He is speaking to persons who were familiar with the privileges of the fathers.

God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways; and now, at the end of those days, that is to say, at the end of the days of the Israelite dispensation, in which the law ought to have been in vigor; at the end of the times during which God maintained relationship with Israel (sustaining them with a disobedient people by means of the prophets) at the end then of those days God had spoken in the Person of the Son. There is no breach to begin a wholly new system. The God who had spoken before by the prophets now went on to speak in Christ.

It was not only by inspiring holy men (as He had done before), that they might recall Israel to the law and announce the coming of the Messiah. Himself had spoken as the Son — in His] Son. We see at once that the writer connects the revelation made by Jesus\* of the thoughts of God, with the former words addressed to Israel by the prophets. God has spoken, he says, identifying himself with His people, to us, as He spake to our fathers by the prophets.

[\* We shall see that, while showing at the outset that the Subject of his discourse had seated Himself at the right hand of God, he speaks also of the communications of the Lord when on earth. But even here it is in contrast with Moses and the angels, as far more excellent. All has in view the deliverance of the believing Jews from Judaism.]



The Messiah had spoken, the Son of whom the scriptures had already testified. This gives occasion to lay open, according to the scriptures, the glory of this Messiah, of Jesus, with regard to His Person, and to the position He has taken.

And here we must always remember, that it is the Messiah of whom he is speaking — He who once spoke on the earth. He declares indeed His divine glory; but it is the glory of Him who has spoken which he declares, the glory of that Son who had appeared according to the promises made to Israel.

This glory is twofold, and in connection with the twofold office of Christ. It is the divine glory of the Person of the Messiah, the Son of God. The solemn authority of His word is connected with this glory. And then there is the glory with which His humanity is invested according to the counsels of God — the glory of the Son of man; a glory connected with His sufferings during His sojourn here below, which fitted Him for the exercise of a priesthood both merciful and intelligent with regard to the necessities and the trials of His people.

These two chapters are the foundation of all the doctrine of the epistle. In chapter 1 we find the divine glory of the Messiah's Person; in chapter 2:1-4 (which continues the subject), the authority of His word; and from 5-18 His glorious humanity. As Man, all things are put in subjection under Him; nevertheless, before being glorified, He took part in all the sufferings and in all the temptations to which the saints, whose nature He had assumed, are subjected. With this glory His priesthood is connected: He is able to succor them that are tempted, in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted. Thus He is the Apostle and the High Priest of the "called" people.

To this twofold glory is joined an accessory glory: He is Head, as Son, over God's house, possessing this authority as the One who created all things, even as Moses had authority as a servant in the house of God on earth. Now the believers, whom the inspired writer was addressing, were this house, if at least they held fast their confession of His name unto the end. For the danger of the Hebrew converts was that of losing their confidence, because there was nothing before their eyes as the fulfillment of the promises. Consequently exhortations follow (chap. 3:7 to 4:13)

which refer to the voice of the Lord, as carrying the word of God into the midst of the people, in order that they might not harden their hearts.

From chapter 4:14 the subject of the priesthood is treated, leading to the value of the sacrifice of Christ, but introducing also the two covenants in passing, and insisting on the change of the law necessarily consequent upon the change of priesthood. Then comes the value of the sacrifice very fully in contrast with the figures that accompanied the old; and on which, and on the blood which was shed in them, the covenant itself was founded. This instruction on the priesthood continues to the end of verse 18 in chapter 10. The exhortations founded thereon introduce the principle of the endurance of faith, which leads to chapter 11, in which the cloud of witnesses is reviewed, crowning them with the example of Christ Himself, who completed the whole career of faith in spite of every obstacle, and who shows us where this painful but glorious path terminates (chap. 12:2).

From chapter 12:3 he enters more closely into the trials found in the path of faith, and gives the most solemn warning with regard to the danger of those who draw back, and the most precious encouragements to those who persevere in it, setting forth the relationship into which we are brought by grace: and finally in chapter 13 he exhorts the faithful Hebrews on several points of detail, and in particular on that of unreservedly taking the christian position under the cross, laying stress on the fact that Christians alone had the true worship of God, and that they who chose to persevere in Judaism had no right to take part in it. In a word, he would have them to separate themselves definitely from a Judaism which was already judged, and to lay hold of the heavenly calling, bearing the cross here below. It was now a heavenly calling, and the path a path of faith.

Such is the summary of our epistle. We return now to the study of its chapters in detail.

**CHAPTER 1.** We have said that in chapter 1 we find the glory of the Person of the Messiah, the Son of God, by whom God has spoken to the people. When I say "to the people," it is evident that we understand the epistle to be addressed to the believing remnant, partakers, it is said, of the heavenly calling, but considered as alone holding the true place of the people.

It is a distinction given to the remnant, in view of the position which the Messiah took in connection with His people, to whom in the first instance He came. The tried and despised remnant, viewed as alone really having their place, are encouraged, and their faith is sustained by the true glory of their Messiah, hidden from their natural eyes, and the object of faith only.

“God” (says the inspired writer, placing himself among the believers of the beloved nation), “has spoken to us in the person of his Son.” Psalm 2 should have led the Jews to expect the Son, and they ought to have formed a high idea of His glory from Isaiah 9, and other scriptures, which in fact were applied to the Messiah by their teachers, as the rabbinical writings still prove. But that He should be in heaven, and not have raised His people to the possession of earthly glory — this did not suit the carnal state of their hearts.

Now it is heavenly glory, this true position of the Messiah and His people, in connection with His divine right to their attention and to the worship of the angels themselves, which is so admirably presented here, where the Spirit of God brings out, in so infinitely precious a manner, the divine glory of Christ, for the purpose of exhorting His people to belief in a heavenly position; at the same time setting forth in what follows His perfect sympathy with us, as Man, in order to maintain their communion with heaven in spite of the difficulties of their path on earth.

Thus, although the assembly is not found in the epistle to the Hebrews, save in an allusion to all comprised in the millennial glory in chapter 12, the Savior of the assembly is there presented in His Person, His work, and His priesthood, most richly to our hearts and to our spiritual intelligence; and the heavenly calling is in itself very particularly developed.

It is also most interesting to see the way in which the work of our Savior, accomplished for us, forms a part of the manifestation of His divine glory.

“God has spoken in the Son,” says the inspired author of our epistle. He is then this Son. First He is declared Heir of all things. It is He who is to possess gloriously as Son everything that exists. Such are the decrees of God. Moreover it is by Him that God created the worlds.\* All the vast system of this universe, those unknown worlds that trace their paths in the vast regions of space in divine order to manifest the glory of a

Creator-God, are the work of His hand who has spoken to us, of the divine Christ.

[\* A particular interpretation has, by some, been given to the word translated “worlds”; but it is certain that the word is used by the LB (that is, in the Hellenistic or scriptural Greek) for the physical worlds.]

In Him has shone forth the glory of God: He is the perfect impress of His being. We see God in Him, in all that He said, in all that He did, in His Person. Moreover by the power of His word He upholds all that exists. He is then the Creator. God is revealed in His Person. He sustains all things by His word, which has thus a divine power. But this is not all (for we are still speaking of the Christ); there is another part of His glory, divine indeed, yet manifested in human nature. He who was all this which we have just seen, when He had by Himself (accomplishing His own glory,\* and for His glory) wrought the purification of our sins, seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here is in full the personal glory of Christ. He is in fact the Creator, the revelation of God, the upholder of all things by His word, He is the Redeemer. He has by Himself purged our sins; has seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is the Messiah who is all this. He is the Creator-God, but He is a Messiah who has taken His place in the heavens at the right hand of Majesty, having accomplished the purification of our sins. We perceive how this exhibition of the glory of Christ, the Messiah, whether personal or that of position, would bring whoever believed in it out of Judaism, while linking itself with the Jewish promises and hopes. He is God, He has come down from heaven, He has gone up thither again.

[\* The Greek verb has here a peculiar form, which gives it a reflective sense, causing the thing done to return into the doer, throwing back the glory of the thing done upon the one who did it.]

Now those who attached themselves to Him found themselves, in another respect also, above the Jewish system. That system was ordained in connection with angels; but Christ has taken a position much higher than that of angels, because He has for His own proper inheritance a name (that is, a revelation of what He is) which is much more excellent than that of angels. Upon this the author of this epistle quotes several passages from the Old Testament which speak of the Messiah, in order to show that which He is in contrast with the nature and the relative position of angels.

The significance of these passages to a converted Jew is evident, and we readily perceive the adaptation of the argument to such, for the Jewish economy was under the administration of angels, according to their own belief — a belief fully grounded on the word.\* And, at the same time, it was their own scriptures which proved that the Messiah was to have a position much more excellent and exalted than that of angels, according to the rights that belonged to Him by virtue of His nature, and according to the counsels and the revelation of God: so that they who united themselves to Him were brought into connection with that which entirely eclipsed the law and all that related to it, and to the Jewish economy which could not be separated from it, and whose glory was angelic in character. The glory of Christianity — and he speaks to those who acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ — was so much above the glory of the law, that the two could not be really united.

[\* See Psalm 68:17, Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19.]

The quotations begin by that from Psalm 2. God, it is written, has never said to any of the angels, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” It is this character of Sonship, proper to the Messiah, which, as a real relationship, distinguishes Him. He was from eternity the Son of the Father; but it is not precisely in this point of view that He is here considered. The name expresses the same relationship, but it is to the Messiah born on earth that this title is here applied. For Psalm 2, as establishing Him as King in Zion, announces the decree which proclaims His title. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” is His relationship in time, with God. It depends, I doubt not, on His glorious nature; but this position for man was acquired by the miraculous birth of Jesus here below, and demonstrated as true and determined in its true import by His resurrection. In Psalm 2 the testimony born to this relationship is in connection with His kingship in Zion, but it declares the personal glories of the King acknowledged of God. By virtue of the rights connected with this title, all kings are summoned to submit themselves to Him. This Psalm then is speaking of the government of the world, when God establishes the Messiah as King of Zion, and not of the gospel. But in the passage quoted (Hebrews 1:5), it is the relationship of glory in which He subsists with God, the foundation of His rights, which is set forth, and not the royal rights themselves.

This is likewise the case in the next quotation: “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.” Here we plainly see that it is the relationship in which He is with God, in which God accepts and owns Him, and not His eternal relationship with the Father: “I will be to him a Father,” etc. Thus it is still the Messiah, the King of Zion, the Son of David, for these words are applied in the first place to Solomon, as the son of David (2 Samuel 7:14 and 1 Chronicles 17:13). In this second passage the application of the expression to the true Son of David is more distinct. A relationship so intimate (expressed, one may say, with so much affection) was not the portion of angels. The Son of God, acknowledged to be so by God Himself — this is the portion of the Messiah in connection with God. The Messiah then is the Son of God in an altogether peculiar way, which could not be applied to angels.

But still more: when God introduces the Firstborn into the world, all the angels are called to worship Him. God presents Him to the world; but the highest of created beings must then cast themselves at His feet. The angels of God Himself — the creatures that are nearest to Him — must do homage to the Firstborn. This last expression also is remarkable. The Firstborn is the Heir, the beginning of the manifestation of the glory and power of God. It is in this sense that the word is used. It is said of the Son of David, “I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa. 89:27), Thus the Messiah is introduced into the world as holding this place with regard to God Himself. He is the Firstborn — the immediate expression of the rights and the glory of God. He has universal pre-eminence.

Such is, so to speak, the positional glory of the Messiah. Not only Head of the people on earth, as Son of David, nor even only the acknowledged Son of God on the earth, according to Psalm 2, but the universal Firstborn; so that the chief and most exalted of creatures, those nearest to God, the angels of God, the instruments of His power and government, must do homage to the Son in this His position.

Yet this is far from being all; and this homage itself would be out of place if His glory were not proper to Himself and personal, if it were not connected with His nature. Nevertheless that which we have before us in this chapter is still the Messiah as owned of God. God tells us what He is.

Of the angels He says, “He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” He does not make His Son anything: He recognises that which He is, saying, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” The Messiah may have an earthly throne (which also is not taken from Him, but which ceases by His taking possession of an eternal throne), but He has a throne which is for ever and ever.

The sceptre of His throne, as Messiah, is a sceptre of righteousness. Also He has, when here below, personally loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. These companions are the believing remnant of Israel, whom He has made by grace His fellows, although (perfectly well-pleasing to God by His love of righteousness — and that, at all costs) He is exalted above them all. This is a remarkable passage, because, while on the one hand the divinity of the Lord is fully established as well as His eternal throne, on the other hand the passage comes down to His character as the faithful man on earth, where He made pious men the little remnant of Israel who waited for redemption, His companions; at the same time it gives Him (and it could not be otherwise) a place above them.

The text then returns to the glory given Him as Man, having the pre-eminence here as in all things.

I have already remarked elsewhere that while, as we read in Zechariah, Jehovah recognises as His fellow the humbled Man, against whom His sword awakes to smite; here, where the divinity of Jesus is set forth, the same Jehovah owns the poor remnant of believers as the fellows of the divine Savior. Marvellous links between God and His people!

Already then in these remarkable testimonies He has the eternal throne and the sceptre of righteousness: He is recognised as God although a Man, and glorified above all others as the reward of righteousness.

But the declaration of His divinity, the divinity of the Messiah, must be more precise. And the testimony is of the greatest beauty. The Psalm that contains it is one of the most complete expressions we find in scripture of the sense which Jesus had of His humiliation on earth, of His dependence on Jehovah, and that, having been raised up as Messiah from among men, He was cast down and His days shortened. If Zion were re-built (and the

Psalm speaks prophetically of the time when it shall take place), where would He be, Messiah as He was, if, weakened and humbled, He was cut off in the midst of His days (as was the case)? In a word, it is the prophetic expression of the Savior's heart in the prospect of that which happened to Him as a Man on the earth, the utterance of His heart to Jehovah, in those days of humiliation, in presence of the renewed affection of the remnant for the dust of Zionan affection which the Lord had produced in their hearts, and which was therefore a token of His goodwill and His purpose to re-establish it. But how could a Savior who was cut off have part in it? (a searching question for a believing Jew, tempted on that side). The words here quoted are the answer to this question. Humbled as He might be, He was the Creator Himself. He was ever the same;\* His years could never fail. It was He who had founded the heavens: He would fold them up as a garment, but He Himself would never change.

[\* The words translated, "Thou art the same," (Atta Hu) are by many learned Hebraists taken — at least Huas a name of God. At any rate, as unchangeably the same, it amounts to it. The not failing years are endless duration when become a man.]

Such then is the testimony rendered to the Messiah by the scriptures of the Jews themselves — the glory of His position above the angels who administered the dispensation of the law; His eternal throne of righteousness; His unchangeable divinity as Creator of all things.

One thing remained to complete this chain of glory — that is, the place occupied at present by Christ, in contrast still with the angels (a place that depends, on the one hand, upon the divine glory of His Person; on the other, upon the accomplishment of His work). And this place is at the right hand of God, who called Him to sit there until He had made His enemies His footstool. Not only in His Person glorious and divine, not only does He hold the first place with regard to all creatures in the universe (we have spoken of this, which will take place when He is introduced into the world), but He has His own place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. To which of the angels has God ever said this? They are servants on God's part to the heirs of salvation.

**CHAPTER 2.** This is the reason why it is so much the more needful to hearken to the word spoken, in order that they should not let it pass away from life and memory.



God had maintained the authority of the word that was communicated by means of angels, punishing disobedience to it, for it was a law. How then shall we escape if we neglect a salvation which the Lord Himself has announced? Thus the service of the Lord among the Jews was a word of salvation, which the apostles confirmed, and which the mighty testimony of the Holy Ghost established.

Such is the exhortation addressed to the believing Jews, founded on the glory of the Messiah, whether with regard to His position or His Person, calling them away from what was Jewish to higher thoughts of Christ.

We have already remarked that the testimony of which this epistle treats, is attributed to the Lord Himself. Therefore we must not expect to find in it the assembly (as such), of which the Lord had only spoken prophetically; but His testimony in relation to Israel, among whom He sojourned on the earth, to whatever extent that testimony reached. That which was spoken by the apostles is only treated here as a confirmation of the Lord's own word, God having added His testimony to it by the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit, who distributed His gifts to each according to His will.

The glory of which we have been speaking is the personal glory of the Messiah, the Son of David; and His glory in the time present, during which God has called Him to sit at His right hand. He is the Son of God, He is even the Creator; but there is also His glory in connection with the world to come, as Son of man. Of this chapter 2 speaks, comparing Him still with the angels; but here to exclude them altogether. In the previous chapter they had their place: the law was given by angels; they are servants, on God's part, of the heirs of salvation. In chapter 2 they have no place, they do not reign; the world to come is not made subject to them — that is, this habitable earth, directed and governed as it will be when God shall have accomplished that which He has spoken of by the prophets.

The order of the world, placed in relationship with Jehovah under the law, or "lying in darkness," has been interrupted by the rejection of the Messiah, who has taken His place at the right hand of God on high, His enemies being not yet given into His hand for judgment, because God is carrying on His work of grace, and gathering out the assembly. But He will

yet establish a new order of things on the earth; this will be “the world to come.” Now that world is not made subject to angels. The testimony given in the Old Testament with regard to this is as follows: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou hast set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” Thus all things without exception (save He who has made them subject to Him), are, according to the purpose of God, put under the feet of man, and in particular of the Son of man.

When studying the Book of Psalms, we saw that which I recall here, namely, that this testimony in Psalm 8 is, with regard to the position and dominion of Christ as man, an advance upon Psalm 2. Psalm 1 sets before us the righteous man, accepted of God, the godly remnant with which Christ connected Himself; Psalm 2, the counsels of God respecting His Messiah, in spite of the efforts made by the kings and governors of the earth. God establishes Him as King in Zion, and summons all the kings to do homage to Him whom He proclaimed to be His Son on the earth. Afterwards we see that being rejected the remnant suffer, and this Psalm 2 is what Peter quotes to prove the rising up of the powers of the earth, Jewish and Gentile, against Messiah (Acts 4:25). But Psalm 8 shows that all this only served to enlarge the sphere of His glory. Christ takes the position of man and the title of Son of man, and enjoys His rights according to the counsels of God; and, made lower than the angels, He is crowned with glory and honor. And not only are the kings of the earth made subject to Him, but all things, without exception, are put under His feet.\* It is this which the apostle quotes here. The Christ had already been rejected, and His being established as King in Zion put off to be accomplished at a later period. He had been exalted to the right hand of God, as we have seen; and the wider title had accrued to Him, although the result was not yet accomplished.

[\* Compare the answer of Christ to Nathanael at the end of John 1; also Matthew 17 and Luke 9, where the disciples are forbidden to announce Him as the Christ, and He declares He is about to suffer as Son of man, but shows them the coming glory.]

To this the epistle here calls our attention. We see not yet the accomplishment of all that this Psalm announces, namely, that all things

should be put under His feet; but a part is already fulfilled, a guarantee to the heart of the fulfillment of the whole. Made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death, He is crowned with glory and honor. He has suffered death, and He is crowned in reward for His work, by which He perfectly glorified God in the place where He had been dishonored, and saved man (those who believe in Him) where man was lost. For He was made lower than the angels, in order that, by the grace of God, He should taste death for all things. It appears to me that the words “for the suffering of death,” and “a little lower than the angels” go together; and “so that by the grace of God” is a general phrase connected with the whole truth stated.

This passage then, which is thus applied to the Lord, presents Him as exalted to heaven when He had undergone the death which gave Him a right to all in a new way while waiting till all is put under His feet. But there is another truth connected with this. He had undertaken the cause of the sons whom God is bringing to glory, and therefore He must enter into the circumstances in which they were found, suffer the consequences thereof, and be treated according to the work He had undertaken. It was a reality; and it was fitting that God should vindicate the rights of His glory, and should maintain it with reference to those who had dishonored Him, and that He should treat the One who had taken their cause in hand, and who stood before Him in their name, as representing them in that respect. God would bring the captain of their salvation to perfection through sufferings. He was to undergo the consequences of the situation into which He had come. His work was to be a reality, according to the measure of the responsibility which He had taken upon Himself, and it involved the glory of God where sin was. He must therefore suffer; He must taste death. It is by the grace of God that He did so — we, because of sin; He, because of grace for sin.

This shows us the Christ standing in the midst of those who are saved, whom God brings to glory, although at their head. It is this which our epistle sets before us — He who sanctifies (the Christ), and they who are sanctified (the remnant set apart for God by the Spirit) are all of one: an expression, the force of which is easily apprehended, but difficult to express, when one abandons the abstract nature of the phrase itself. Observe that it is only of sanctified persons that this is said. Christ and

the sanctified ones are all one company, men together in the same position before God. But the idea goes a little farther.

It is not of one and the same Father; had it been so, it could not have been said, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He could not then do otherwise than call them brethren.

If we say "of the same mass" the expression may be pushed too far, as though He and the others were of the same nature as children of Adam, sinners together. In this case He would have to call every man His brother; whereas it is only the children whom God has given Him, "sanctified" ones, that He so calls. But He and the sanctified ones are all as men in the same nature and position together before God. When I say "the same," it is not in the same state of sin, but the contrary, for they are the Sanctifier and the sanctified, but in the same truth of human position as it is before God as sanctified to Him; the same as far forth as man when He, as the sanctified one, is before God. On this account He is not ashamed to call the sanctified His brethren.

This position is entirely gained by resurrection; for although, in principle, the children were given to Him before, yet He only called them His brethren when He had finished the work which enabled Him to present them with Himself before God. He said indeed "mother, sister, brother"; but He did not use the term "my brethren," as in John 20] until He said to Mary of Magdala, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Also in Psalm 22 it is when He had been heard from the horns of the unicorn, that He declared the name of a Deliverer-God to His brethren, and that He praised God in the midst of the assembly.

He spoke to them of the Father's name while on earth, but the link itself could not be formed; He could not introduce them to the Father, until the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, had died; until then He remained alone, whatever might be the revelations that He made to them; and in fact, He declared the name of His Father to those whom He had given Him. Still He had actually taken the human position, and He Himself was in this relationship with God. He kept them in the Father's name, they were not yet united to Him in this position; but He was as man in the relationship with God in which they also should be, when brought in by redemption

into association with Himself. That which He does in the latter part of the Gospel by John is to place His disciples — in the explanations He gave of the condition in which He left them — in the position which He in fact had held in relationship with His Father on earth, and in testimony to the world, the glory of His Person as representing and revealing His Father being necessarily distinct. And, in seeking to associate with them, He associated them with Himself and Himself with them when He ascended to heaven, although no longer corporeally subject to the trials of their position.\*

[\* This however in relationship with God. They did not represent nor make known the Father as He did. Also, while we are brought into the same glory with Christ and the same relationship with the Father, the personal glory of Christ as Son is always carefully secured. It has been justly remarked to the same purpose by another, that He never says “our” Father with the disciples. He tells them to say “our,” but says “my and your,” and it is much more precious.]

He was not ashamed then to call them brethren, saying, though risen, yea, only when risen, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, I will praise thee in the midst of the assembly.” And speaking of the remnant separated from Israel, He says, “Behold I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs unto the two houses of Israel”; and again, “I will put my trust in him” — another quotation from Isaiah 8. So in the Psalms, especially in Psalm 16, He declares that He does not take His place as God — “my goodness extendeth not to thee,” but that He identifies Himself with the excellent of the earth — that all His delight is in them. This is again the remnant of Israel called by grace.

Christ associates these sanctified men, godly men on earth, with Himself. In the passage quoted it is still His place on earth; His sufferings, His exaltation, future glory, divinity are, as we have seen, added here.

Having taken this place as of, but at the head of, the chosen band — their servant in all things, He must conform Himself to their position. And this He did: the children being partakers of flesh and blood, He took part in the same; and this, in order that by death He might put an end to the dominion of him who had the power of death, and deliver those who, through fear of death, had been subjected all their life to the yoke of bondage.

Here also (the apostle seeking always to display the glorious and efficacious side, even of that which was most humbling, in order to accustom the weak heart of the Jews to that portion of the Gospel) we find that the Lord's work goes far beyond the limits of a presentation of the Messiah to His people. Not only is He glorious in heaven, but He has conquered Satan in the very place where he exercised his sad dominion over man, and where the judgment of God lay heavily upon man.

Moved by a profound love for man, the Son — become the Son of man — enters in heart and in fact into all the need, and submits to all the circumstances, of man in order to deliver him. He takes (for He was not in it before) flesh and blood, in order to die, because man was subjected to death; and (in order to destroy him who exercised his dominion over man through death, and made him tremble all his lifetime in the expectation of that terrible moment, which testified of the judgment of God and the inability of man to escape the consequences of sin) the condition into which disobedience to God had plunged him. For verily the Lord did not undertake the cause of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham, and in order to proclaim the work that was necessary for them, and to represent them efficaciously and really before God, He must needs put Himself into the position and the circumstances in which that seed were found though not the state they were personally in.

It will be remarked here, that it is still a family owned of God, which is before our eyes, as the object of the Savior's affection and care — the children whom God had given Him children of Abraham after the flesh, if in that condition they answered to the designation of "seed of Abraham" (this is the question of John 8:37-39), or his children according to the Spirit, if grace gives it them.

These truths introduce priesthood. As Son of man, He had been made a little less than the angels, and, crowned already with glory and honor, was hereafter to have all things put under His feet. This we do not yet see. But He took this place of humiliation in order to taste death for the whole system that was afar from God, and to gain the full rights of the second Man, by glorifying God there, where the creature had failed through weakness, and where also the enemy, having deceived man by his subtlety, had dominion over him (according to the righteous judgment of God) in

power and malice. At the same time he tasted death for the special purpose of delivering the children whom God would bring to glory, taking their nature and gathering them together as sanctified ones around Himself, He not being ashamed to call them brethren. But it was thus that He was to present them now before God, according to the efficacy of the work which He had accomplished for them; He would become a priest, being able through His life of humiliation and trial here below, to sympathise with His own in all their conflicts and difficulties.

He suffered — never yielded. We do not suffer when we yield to temptation: the flesh takes pleasure in the things by which it is tempted. Jesus suffered, being tempted, and He is able to succor them that are tempted. It is important to observe that the flesh, when acted upon by its desires, does not suffer. Being tempted, it, alas! enjoys. But when, according to the light of the Holy Ghost and the fidelity of obedience, the Spirit resists the attacks of the enemy, whether subtle or persecuting, then one suffers. This the Lord did, and this we have to do. That which needs succor is the new man, the faithful heart, and not the flesh. I need succor against the flesh, and in order to mortify all the members of the old man.

Here the needed help refers to the difficulties of the faithful saint in fulfilling all the will of God. This is where he suffers, this is where the Lord — who has suffered — can succor him. He trod this path, He learnt in it that which can be suffered there from the enemy, and from men. A human heart feels it, and Jesus had a human heart. Besides, the more faithful the heart is, the more full of love to God, and the less it has of that hardness which is the result of intercourse with the world, the more will it suffer. Now there was no hardness in Jesus. His faithfulness and His love were equally perfect. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief and weariness. He suffered being tempted.\*

[\* Four distinct grounds may be noticed in the chapter for the humiliation of Jesus: it became God — there was His glory; the destruction of Satan's power; reconciliation or really propitiation by His death; and capacity for sympathy in priesthood.]

**CHAPTER 3.** Thus the Lord is set before us as the Apostle and High Priest of believers from among the Jews, the true people. I say, “from among the Jews,” not that He is not our Priest, but that here the sacred writer places himself among the believing Jews, saying “our”; and, instead of speaking of

himself as an apostle, he points out Jesus as the Apostle; which He was in Person among the Jews. In principle, it is true of all believers. That which He has said is the Lord's word, and He is able to succor us when we are tempted. We are His house.

For we have here a third character of Christ. He is a "Son over his house." Moses was faithful in all the house of God as a servant, in testimony to the things that were afterwards to be proclaimed. But Christ is over God's house; but it is not as a servant but as a Son. He has built the house. He is God.

Moses identified himself with the house, faithful therein in all things. But Christ is more excellent; even as he who builds the house is more excellent than the house. But He who builds all things is God. And this is what Christ did. For in fact the house (that is, the tabernacle in the wilderness) was a figure of the universe; and Christ passed through the heavens, as the high priest passed into the sanctuary. All was cleansed with blood, even as God will reconcile all things by Christ in the heavens and on the earth. In a certain sense this universe is the house of God. He deigns to inhabit it. Christ created it all. But there is a house which is more properly His own. We are His house, taking it for granted that we persevere to the end.

The Hebrew Christians were in danger — being attracted by their former habits, and by a law and ceremonies which God Himself had established — of forsaking a Christianity, in which Christ was not visible, for things that were visible and palpable. The Christ of Christians, far from being a crown of glory to the people, was only an object of faith, so that, if faith failed, He was deprived of all importance to them. A religion that made itself seen (the "old wine") naturally attracted those that had been accustomed to it.

But in fact Christ was much more excellent than Moses; as he who has built the house had more honor than the house. Now this house was the figure of all things, and He who had built them was God. The passage gives us this view of Christ and of the house, and also says, that we are this house. And Christ is not the servant here; He is the Son over God's house.

We must always remember that which has been already remarked, namely, that in this epistle we have not the assembly as the body of Christ in union with Himself; nor even the Father either, except as a comparison in



chapter 12. It is God, a heavenly Christ (who is the Son of God), and a people, the Messiah being a heavenly Mediator between the people and God. Therefore the proper privileges of the assembly are not found in this epistle — they flow from our union with Christ; and here Christ is a Person apart, who is between us and God, on high while we are here.

There are still a few remarks which we may add here in order to throw light on this point, and to assist the reader in understanding the first two chapters, as well as the principle of the instructions throughout the epistle.

In **CHAPTER 1** Christ accomplishes by Himself as a part of His divine glory the purification of sins, and seats Himself at the right hand of God. This work, observe, is done by Himself. We have nothing to do with it, save to believe in and enjoy it. It is a divine work which this divine Person has accomplished by Himself; so that it has all the absolute perfection, all the force, of a work done by Him, without any mixture of our weakness, of our efforts, or of our experiences. He performed it by Himself, and it is accomplished. Thereupon He takes His seat. He is not placed there — He seats Himself upon the throne on high.

In **CHAPTER 2** we see another point which characterises the epistle — the present state of the glorified Man. He is crowned with glory and honor; but it is with a view to an order of things which is not yet accomplished. It is the Person of the Man Christ which is presented, not the assembly in union with Him, even when He is beheld as glorified in the heavens. This glory is viewed as a partial accomplishment of that which belongs to Him, according to the counsels of God, as the Son of man. Hereafter this glory will be complete in all its parts by the subjugation of all things.

The present glory therefore of Christ makes us look forward to an order of things yet future, which will be full rest, full blessing. In a word, besides the perfection of His work, the epistle sets before us the sequel of that which belongs to the Christ in Person, the Son of man, not the perfection of the assembly in Him. And this embraces the present time, the character of which, to the believer, depends on Christ's being now glorified in heaven while waiting for a future state, in which all things will be subjected to Him.

In this chapter 2 we see also that He is crowned. He is not seen sitting there as in His own original right, though He had that glory before the world was, but, having been made a little less than the angels, God crowns Him. We also plainly see that although the believing Hebrews are especially in view, and even all Christians are classed under the title of Abraham's seed on the earth, yet that Christ is viewed nevertheless as the Son of man, and not as the Son of David; and the question is put, "What is man?" The answer (the precious answer for us) is, Christ glorified, once dead on account of man's condition. In Him we see the mind of God with regard to man.

The fact that Christians themselves are viewed as the seed of Abraham plainly shows the way in which they are considered as forming part of the chain of the heirs of promise on earth (as in Romans 11), and not as the assembly united to Christ as His body in heaven.

The work is perfect; it is the work of God. He has by Himself made purification of sins. The full result of the counsels of God with regard to the Son of man is not yet come. Thus the earthly part can be brought in, as a thing foreseen, as well as the heavenly part, although the persons to whom the epistle is addressed had part in the heavenly glory — participated in the heavenly calling — in connection with the present position of the Son of man.

The remnant of the Jews, as we have said, are considered as continuing the chain of the people blessed on earth, whatever heavenly privileges they may also possess or whatever their especial state may be in connection with the Messiah's exaltation to heaven. We have been grafted into the good olive-tree, so that we share all the advantages here spoken of. Our highest position, and the privileges belonging to it, are not here in view. Accordingly, as writing to Hebrews and as one among them, he addresses them, that is to say, Christians and believing Israelites. This is the force of the word "us" in the epistle; we must bear it in mind, and that the Hebrew believers always form the word "us," of which the writer is also a part.

As I have said, we rightly appropriate it to ourselves in principle; but to have a clear view of his meaning, we must put ourselves at the point of view which the Spirit of God has taken.

No one ought to harden his heart; but this word is especially addressed to Israel, and that until the day when Christ shall appear. In speaking of it, the author returns to the word that had formerly been addressed to Israel; not now in order to warn them of the danger they would incur by neglecting it, but of the consequences of departing from that which they had acknowledged to be true. Israel, when delivered out of Egypt, had provoked God in the wilderness (it was indeed the case also of Christians in this world), because they were not at once, and without difficulty, in Canaan. Those to whom he wrote were in danger of forsaking the living God in the same way; that is, the danger was there before their eyes. They should rather exhort each other, while it was still called today, in order that they might not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. This word “today” is the expression of the patient activity of God’s grace towards Israel even unto the end. The people were unbelieving; they have hardened their hearts; they have done so, and will alas! do so to the end, until judgment come in the Person of the Messiah-Jehovah, whom they have despised. But until then God loves to reiterate, “Today, if ye will hear my voice.” It may be that only a few will hearken; it may be that the nation is judicially hardened, in order to admit the Gentiles; but the word “today” still resounds for every one among them who has ears to hear, until the Lord shall appear in judgment. It is addressed to the people according to the longsuffering of God. For the remnant who had believed it was an especial warning not to walk in the ways of the hardened people who had refused to hearken — not to turn back to them, forsaking their own confidence in the word which had called them, as Israel did in the wilderness.

As long as the “today” of the call of grace should continue, they were to exhort one another, lest unbelief should glide into their hearts through the subtlety of sin. It is thus that the living God is forsaken. We speak thus practically, not with reference to the faithfulness of God, who certainly will not allow any of His own to perish, but with regard to practical danger, and to that which would draw us away — as to our responsibility — from God, and for ever, if God did not intervene, acting in the life which He has given us, and which never perishes.

Sin separates us from God in our thoughts; we have no longer the same sense either of His love, His power, or His interest in us. Confidence is lost. Hope, and the value of unseen things, diminish; while the value of

things that are seen proportionately increases. The conscience is bad; one is not at ease with God. The path is hard and difficult; the will strengthens itself against Him. We no longer live by faith; visible things come in between us and God, and take possession of the heart. Where there is life, God warns by His Spirit (as in this epistle), He chastises and restores. Where it was only an outward influence, a faith devoid of life, and the conscience not reached, it is abandoned.

It is the warning against so doing that arrests the living. The dead — they whose consciences are not engaged, who do not say, “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” — despise the warning and perish. This was the case with Israel in the wilderness, and God swear unto them that they should not enter into His rest (Numbers 14:21-23). And why? They had given up their confidence in Him. Their unbelief — when the beauty and excellence of the land had been reported to them — deprived them of the promised rest.

The position of the believers to whom this epistle is addressed was the same as this, although in connection with better promises. The beauty and excellence of the heavenly Canaan had been proclaimed to them. They had, by the Spirit, seen and tasted its fruits; they were in the wilderness; they had to persevere to maintain their confidence unto the end.

Observe here — for Satan, and our own conscience when it has not been set free, often make use of this epistle — that doubting Christians are not here contemplated, or persons who have not yet gained entire confidence in God: to those who are in this condition its exhortations and warnings have no application. These exhortations are to preserve the Christian in a confidence which he has, and to persevere, not to tranquillise fears and doubts. This use of the epistle to sanction such doubts is but a device of the enemy. Only I would add here that, although the full knowledge of grace (which in such a case the soul has assuredly not yet attained) is the only thing that can deliver and set it free from its fears, yet it is very important in this case practically to maintain a good conscience, in order not to furnish the enemy with a special means of attack.

**CHAPTER 4.** The apostle goes on to apply this part of Israel’s history to those whom he was addressing, laying stress on two points: 1st, That Israel had failed of entering into rest through unbelief; 2nd, That the rest

was yet to come, and that believers (those who were not seeking rest here, but who accepted the wilderness for the time being) should enter into it.

He begins by saying, “Let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any should seem to come short of it,” not attain to it. For we have been the objects of the proclamation of glad tidings, as they were in times past. But the word addressed to them remained fruitless, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it: for we which have believed do enter into rest. The rest itself is yet to come, and it is believers who enter into it. For a rest of God there is, and there are some who enter into it: inasmuch as it is written, “They,” that is, those (pointing out a certain class who are to be excluded) “shall not enter into my rest.”

God had wrought in creation, and then rested from His works when He had finished them. Thus, from the foundation of the world, He has shown that He had a rest, as in the passage already quoted, “If they shall enter into my rest”; but this, showing that the entering in was yet in question, showed that into God’s rest in the first creation man had not entered. Two things then are evident — some were to enter in, and the Israel to whom it was first proposed did not enter in because of their unbelief. Therefore He again fixes a day, saying, in David, long after the entrance into Canaan, “Today — as it is written — today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Here a natural objection occurs to which the passage gives a complete answer, without speaking of the objection itself. The Israelites had indeed fallen in the wilderness, but Joshua had brought the people into Canaan which the unbelievers never reached; the Jews were there, so that they did enter into the rest as to which the others failed. The answer is evident. It was long after this that God said by David, “I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.” If Joshua had given rest to Israel, David could not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. It is yet to come; but it is assured by the word of God — a truth, the bearing of which is immediately seen with regard to the connection of the believing Jews with the nation, in the midst of which they were tempted to seek a rest that, for the moment, faith did not afford them, and being enfeebled saw but dimly before it. To have God’s rest one must persevere in faith. Present apparent rest was not the true rest. God’s

rest was still to be waited for. Faith alone acknowledged this, and sought for none in the wilderness, trusting to the promise. God still said "Today."

The state of the people was worse than the rest that Joshua gave them; which, as their own Psalms prove, was no rest at all.

As to the order of the verses, the exhortation in verse 11 depends on the whole course of what precedes, the argument having been completed by the testimony of David coming after Joshua. After the creation God indeed rested; but He said after that, "If they shall enter into my rest." So that men had not entered into that rest. Joshua entered into the land; but the word by David, coming long after, proves that the rest of God was not yet attained. Nevertheless this same testimony, which forbade the entrance into rest because of unbelief, showed that some are to enter in: otherwise there was no need of declaring the exclusion of others for an especial cause, nor warning men that they might escape what hindered their entering in. No parenthesis is needed.

Now, as long as any one had not ceased from his works, he had not entered into rest; he who has entered into it has ceased from work, even as God ceased from His own works when He entered into His rest. "Let us therefore use diligence" is the exhortation of the faithful witness of God, "that we may enter into that rest" — the rest of God — in order that we may not fall after the same example of unbelief.

We should especially observe here, that it is the rest of God which is spoken of. This enables us to understand the happiness and perfection of the rest. God must rest in that which satisfies His heart. This was the case even in creation — all was very good. And now it must be in a perfect blessing that perfect love can be satisfied with, with regard to us, who will possess a heavenly portion in the blessing which we shall have in His own presence, in perfect holiness and perfect light. Accordingly all the toilsome work of faith, the exercise of faith in the wilderness, the warfare (although there are many joys), the good works practiced there, labor of every kind will cease. It is not only that we shall be delivered from the power of indwelling sin; all the efforts and all the troubles of the new man will cease. We are already set free from the law of sin; then our spiritual exercise for God will cease. We shall rest from our works — not evil ones. We have already rested from our works with regard to justification, and therefore in

that sense we have now rest in our consciences; but that is not the subject here — it is the Christian's rest from all his works. God rested from His works — assuredly good ones — and so shall we also then with Him.

We are now in the wilderness; we also wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. A blessed rest remains for us, in which our hearts will repose in the presence of God, where nothing will trouble the perfection of our rest, where God will rest in the perfection of the blessing He has bestowed on His people.

The great thought of the passage is, that there remains a rest (that is to say, that the believer is not to expect it here) without saying where it is. And it does not speak in detail of the character of the rest, because it leaves the door open to an earthly rest for the earthly people on the ground of the promises, although to christian partakers of the heavenly calling God's rest is evidently a heavenly one.

The apostle then sets before us the instrument which God employs to judge the unbelief and all the workings of the heart which tend, as we have seen, to lead the believer into departure from the position of faith, and to hide God from him by inducing him to satisfy his flesh and to seek for rest in the wilderness.

To the believer who is upright in heart this judgment is of great value, as that which enables him to discern all that has a tendency to hinder his progress or make him slacken his steps. It is the word of God, which — being the revelation of God, the expression of what He is, and of all that surrounds Him, and of what His will is in all the circumstances that surround us — judges everything in the heart which is not of Him. It is more penetrating than a two-edged sword. Living and energetic, it separates all that is most intimately linked together in our hearts and minds. Whenever nature — the "soul" and its feelings — mingles with that which is spiritual, it brings the edge of the sword of the living truth of God between the two, and judges the hidden movements of the heart respecting them. It discerns all the thoughts and intentions of the heart. But it has another character, coming from God (being, as it were, His eye upon the conscience), it brings us into His presence; and all that it forces us to discover, it sets in our conscience before the eye of God Himself. Nothing

is hidden, all is naked and manifested to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.\*

[\* The connection between the word addressed to man and God Himself is very remarkable here.]

Such is the true help, the mighty instrument of God to judge everything in us that would hinder us from pursuing our course through the wilderness with joy, and with a buoyant heart strengthened by faith and confidence in Him. Precious instrument of a faithful God, solemn and serious in its operation; but of priceless and infinite blessing in its effects, in its consequences.

It is an instrument which, in its operations, does not allow “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” liberty to act; which does not permit the heart to deceive itself; but which procures us strength, and places us without any consciousness of evil in the presence of God, to pursue our course with joy and spiritual energy. Here the exhortation, founded on the power of the word, concludes.

But there is another succor, one of a different character, to aid us in our passage through the wilderness; and that is priesthood — a subject which the epistle here begins and carries on through several chapters.

We have a High Priest who has passed through the heavens — as Aaron through the successive parts of the tabernacle — Jesus, the Son of God.

He has, in all things, been tempted like ourselves, sin apart; so that He can sympathise with our infirmities. The word brings to light the intents of the heart, judges the will, and all that has not God for its object and its source. Then, as far as weakness is concerned, we have His sympathy. Christ of course had no evil desires: He was tempted in every way, apart from sin. Sin had no part in it at all. But I do not wish for sympathy with the sin that is in me; I detest it, I wish it to be mortified — judged unsparingly. This the word does. For my weakness and my difficulties I seek sympathy; and I find it in the priesthood of Jesus. It is not necessary, in order to sympathise with me, that a person should feel at the same moment that which I am feeling — rather the contrary. If I am suffering pain, I am not in a condition to think as much of another’s pain. But in



order to sympathise with him I must have a nature capable of appreciating his pain.

Thus it is with Jesus, when exercising His priesthood. He is in every sense beyond the reach of pain and trial, but He is man; and not only has He the human nature which in time suffered grief, but He experienced the trials a saint has to go through more fully than any of ourselves; and His heart, free and full of love, can entirely sympathise with us, according to His experience of ill, and according to the glorious liberty which He now has, to provide and care for it. This encourages us to hold fast our profession in spite of the difficulties that beset our path; for Jesus concerns Himself about them, according to His own knowledge and experience of what they are, and according to the power of His grace.

Therefore, our High Priest being there, we can go with all boldness to the throne of grace, to find mercy and the grace suited to us in all times of need: mercy, because we are weak and wavering; needful grace, because we are engaged in a warfare which God owns.

Observe, it is not that we go to the High Priest. It is often done, and God may have compassion; but it is a proof that we do not fully understand grace. The Priest, the Lord Jesus, occupies Himself about us — sympathises with us, on the one hand; and on the other, we go directly to the throne of grace.

The Spirit does not here speak positively of falls; we find that in 1 John 2. There also it is in connection with communion with His Father, here with access to God. His purpose here is to strengthen us, to encourage us to persevere in the way, conscious of the sympathies which we possess in heaven, and that the throne is always open to us.

**CHAPTER 5.** The epistle then develops the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, comparing it with that of Aaron; but, as we shall see, with a view to bring out the difference rather than the resemblance between them, although there is a general analogy, and the one was a shadow of the other.

This comparison is made in chapter 5:1-10. The line of argument is then interrupted, though the ground of argument is enlarged and developed, till the end of chapter 7, where the comparison with Melchizedec is pursued; and the change of law, consequent on the change of priesthood, is stated,

which introduces the covenants and all that relates to the circumstances of the Jews.

A priest then as taken from among men (he is not here speaking of Christ, but of that with which he compares Him) is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he is able to feel the miseries of others, because he is himself compassed with infirmity, and offers therefore for himself as well as for the people. Moreover no one takes this honor to himself, but receives it, as Aaron did, being called of God. The epistle will speak farther on of the sacrifice — here of the person of the priest, and of the order of the priesthood.

So the Christ glorified not Himself to become a High Priest. The glory of His Person, manifested as man on the earth, and that of His function, are both of them plainly declared of God: the first, when He said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Psa. 2); the second, in these words, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec” (Psa. 110). Such then in both personal and official glory is the High Priest, the expected Messiah, Christ.

But His glory (although it gives Him His place in honor before God, and consequent on redemption, so that He can undertake the people’s cause before God according to His will) does not bring Him near to the miseries of men. It is His history on earth which makes us feel how truly able He is to take part in them. “In the days of his flesh,” that is, here below, He went into all the anguish of death in dependence on God, making His request to Him who was able to save Him from it. For, being here in order to obey and to suffer, He did not save Himself. He submitted to everything, obeyed in everything, and depended on God for everything.

He was heard because of His fear. It was proper that He who took death on Himself, as answering for others, should feel its whole weight upon His soul. He would neither escape the consequences of that which He had undertaken (compare chap. 2), nor fail in the just sense of what it was thus to be under the hand of God in judgment. His fear was His piety, the right estimation of the position in which sinful man was found, and what must come from God because of it. For Him however to suffer the consequences of this position was obedience. And this obedience was to be perfect, and to be tried to the utmost.

He was the Son, the glorious Son of God. But though this was so, He was to learn obedience (and to Him it was a new thing), what it was in the world, by all that He suffered. And, having deserved all glory, He was to take His place as the glorified Man — to be perfected; and in that position to become the cause of eternal salvation (not merely temporal deliverances) to them that obey Him; a salvation which should be connected with the position that He had taken in consequence of His work of obedience, saluted by God as “High Priest after the order of Melchizedec.”

That which follows to the end of chapter 6 is a parenthesis which refers to the condition of those to whom the epistle is addressed. They are blamed for the dullness of their spiritual intelligence, and encouraged at the same time by the promises of God; the whole with reference to their position as Jewish believers. Afterwards the line of instruction with regard to Melchizedec is resumed.

For the time, they ought to have been able to teach: nevertheless they needed that some one should teach them the elements of the oracles of God — requiring milk instead of meat.

We may observe that there is no greater hindrance to progress in spiritual life and intelligence than attachment to an ancient form of religion, which, being traditional and not simply personal faith in the truth, consists always in ordinances, and is consequently carnal and earthly. Without this people may be unbelievers; but under the influence of such a system piety itself — expended in forms — makes a barrier between the soul and the light of God: and these forms which surround, preoccupy, and hold the affections captive, prevent them from enlarging and becoming enlightened by means of divine revelation. Morally (as the apostle here expresses it) the senses are not exercised to discern both good and evil.

But the Holy Ghost will not limit Himself to the narrow circle and the weak and futile sentiments of human tradition, nor even to those truths which, in a state like this, one is able to receive. In such a case Christ has not His true place. And this our epistle here develops.

Milk belongs to babes, solid food to those who are of full age. This infancy was the soul's condition under the ordinances and requirements of the law (compare Galatians 4:1-7). But there was a revelation of the Messiah in

connection with these two states — of infancy and of manhood. And the development of the word of righteousness, of the true practical relationships of the soul to God according to His character and ways, was in proportion to the revelation of Christ, who is the manifestation of that character, and the center of all those ways. Therefore it is that, in chapter 5:12, 13, the epistle speaks of the elements, the beginning, of the oracles of God, and of the word of righteousness; in chapter 6:1, of the word of the beginning, or of the first principles, of Christ.

**CHAPTER 6.** Now the Spirit will not stop at this point with Christians, but will go on to that full revelation of His glory which belongs to them that are of full age and indeed forms us for that state.

We easily perceive that the inspired writer tries to make the Hebrews feel that he was placing them on higher and more excellent ground, by connecting them with a heavenly and invisible Christ; and that Judaism kept them back in the position of children. This moreover characterises the whole epistle.

Nevertheless we shall find two things here: on the one hand, the elements and the character of doctrine that belonged to infancy, to “the beginning of the word of Christ,” in contrast with the strength and heavenly savor that accompanied the christian revelation; and, on the other hand, what the revelation of Christ Himself is in connection with this last spiritual and christian system.

But the epistle distinguishes between this system and the doctrine of the Person of Christ, even looked at as man,\* although the present position of Christ gives its character to the christian system. The distinction is made — not that the condition of souls does not depend on the measure of the revelation of Christ and of the position He has taken, but — because the doctrine of His Person and glory goes much farther than the present state of our relationship with God.

[\* The sonship of Christ however, here below, cannot be separated from His eternal sonship, for this lends its character to the relationship in which He stands as Son on earth in time. The passage in the text refers to verses 5 and 8, compared with 6 and 10 of chapter 5. Compare also the beginning of John 17.]

The things spoken of in chapter 6:1, 2, had their place, because the Messiah was then yet to come: all was in a state of infancy. The things spoken of in verses 4, 5 are the privileges that Christians enjoyed in virtue of the work and the glorification of the Messiah. But they are not in themselves the “perfection” mentioned in verse 1, and which relates rather to the knowledge of the Person of Christ Himself. The privileges in question were the effect of the glorious position of His Person in heaven.

It is important to attend to this, in order to understand these passages. In the infancy spoken of in verses 1, 2, the obscurity of the revelations of the Messiah, announced at most by promises and prophecies, left worshippers under the yoke of ceremonies and figures, although in possession of some fundamental truths. His exaltation made way for the power of the Holy Ghost here below: and on this the responsibility of souls which had tasted it depended.

The doctrine of the Person and the glory of Jesus forms the subject of revelation in the epistle, and was the means of deliverance for the Jews from the whole system which had been such a heavy burden on their hearts; it should prevent their forsaking the state described in verses 4 and 5, in order to return into the weakness and (Christ having come) the carnal state of verses 1 and 2.

The epistle then does not desire to establish again the true but elementary doctrines which belonged to the times when Christ was not manifested, but to go forward to the full revelation of His glory and position according to the counsels of God revealed in the word.

The Holy Ghost would not go back again to these former things, because new things had been brought in connection with the heavenly glory of the Messiah, namely, Christianity characterised by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But if any one who had been brought under that power, who had known it, should afterwards abandon it, he could not be renewed again to repentance. The former things of Judaism must be, and were, left behind by that into which he had entered. Christians could not deal with souls by them; and, as for the new things, he had given them up. All God’s means had been employed for him and had produced nothing.

Such a one — of his own will — crucified for himself the Son of God. Associated with the people who had done so, he had acknowledged the sin which his people had committed, and owned Jesus to be the Messiah. But now he committed the crime,\* knowingly and of his own will.

[\* I do not think “afresh” ought to be inserted: the emphasis is on doing it for himself.]

The judgment, the resurrection of the dead, repentance from dead works, had been taught. Under that order of things the nation had crucified their Messiah. Now power had come; which testified of the glorification of the crucified Messiah, the Son of God, in heaven; and which by miracles destroyed (at least in detail) the power of the enemy who was still reigning over the world. These miracles were a partial anticipation of the full and glorious deliverance which should take place in the world to come, when the triumphant Messiah, the Son of God, should entirely destroy all the power of the enemy. Hence they are called the “powers of the world to come.”

The power of the Holy Ghost, the miracles wrought in the bosom of Christianity, were testimonies that the power which was to accomplish that deliverance — although still hidden in heaven — existed nevertheless in the glorious Person of the Son of God. The power did not yet accomplish the deliverance of this world oppressed by Satan, because another thing was being done meanwhile. The light of God was shining, the good word of grace was being preached, the heavenly gift (a better thing than the deliverance of the world) was being tasted; and the sensible power of the Holy Ghost made itself known, while waiting for the return in glory of the Messiah to bind Satan, and thus accomplish the deliverance of the world under His dominion.

Speaking generally, the power of the Holy Ghost, the consequence of the Messiah’s being glorified above, was exercised on earth as a present manifestation and anticipation of the great deliverance to come. The revelation of grace, the good word of God, was preached; and the Christian lived in the sphere where these things displayed themselves, and was subjected to the influence exercised in it. This made itself to be felt by those who were brought in among Christians. Even where there was no spiritual life, these influences were felt.

But, after having been the subject of this influence of the presence of the Holy Ghost, after having tasted the revelation thus made of the goodness of God, and experienced the proofs of His power, if any one then forsook Christ, there remained no other means for restoring the soul, for leading it to repentance. The heavenly treasures were already expended: he had given them up as worthless; he had rejected the full revelation of grace and power, after having known it. What means could now be used? To return to Judaism, and the first principles of the doctrine of Christ in it, when the truth had been revealed, was impossible: and the new light had been known and rejected. In a case like this there was only the flesh; there was no new life. Thorns and briars were being produced as before. There was no real change in the man's state.

When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks, not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To "taste the good word" is to have understood how precious that word is; and not the having been quickened by its means.\* Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things, and things which accompany salvation, so that all these things could be there and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be; that supposes life.

[\* So in Matthew 13 some with joy receive it, but there was no root.]

The apostle does not however apply what he says to the Hebrew Christians: for, however low their state might be, there had been fruits, proofs of life, which in itself no mere power is; and he continues his discourse by giving them encouragement, and motives for perseverance.

It will be observed, then, that this passage is a comparison between that which was possessed before and after Christ was glorified — the state and privileges of professors, at these two periods, without any question as to personal conversion. When the power of the Holy Ghost was present, and there was the full revelation of grace, if any forsook the assembly, fell away from Christ, and turned back again, there was no means of renewing them to repentance. The inspired writer therefore would not again lay the foundation of former things with regard to Christ — things already grown

old — but would go on, for the profit of those who remained stedfast in the faith.

We may also remark how the epistle, in speaking of christian privileges, does not lose sight of the future earthly state, the glory and the privileges of the millennial world. The miracles are the miracles of the world to come; they belong to that period. The deliverance and the destruction of Satan's power should then be complete; those miracles were deliverances, samples of that power. We saw this point brought into notice (chap. 2:5) at the beginning of the doctrine of the epistle; and in chapter 4 the rest of God left vague in its character, in order to embrace both the heavenly part and the earthly part of our Lord's millennial reign. Here the present power of the Holy Ghost characterises the ways of God, Christianity; but the miracles are a foretaste of the coming age, in which the whole world will be blessed.

In the encouragements that it gives them, the epistle already calls to mind the principles by which the father of the faithful and of the Jewish nation had walked, and the way in which God had strengthened him in his faith. Abraham had to rest on promises, without possessing that which was promised; and this, with regard to rest and glory, was the state in which the Hebrew Christians then were. But at the same time, in order to give full assurance to the heart, God had confirmed His word by an oath, in order that they who build upon this hope of promised glory might have strong and satisfying consolation. And this assurance has received a still greater confirmation. It entered into that within the veil, it found its sanction in the sanctuary itself, whither a forerunner had entered, giving not only a word, an oath, but a personal guarantee for the fulfillment of these promises, and the sanctuary of God as a refuge for the heart; thus giving, for those who had spiritual understanding, a heavenly character to the hope which they cherished; while showing, by the character of Him who had entered into heaven, the certain fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises, in connection with a heavenly Mediator, who, by His position, assured that fulfillment; establishing the earthly blessing upon the firm foundation of heaven itself, and giving at the same time a higher and more excellent character to that blessing by uniting it to heaven, and making it flow from thence.



We have thus the double character of blessing which this book again presents to our mind, in connection with the Person of the Messiah, and the whole linked by faith with Jesus.

Jesus has entered into heaven as a Forerunner. He is there. We belong to that heaven. He is there as High Priest. During the present time therefore His priesthood has a heavenly character; nevertheless He is priest, personally, after the order of Melchizedec. It sets aside then the whole Aaronic order, though the priesthood be exercised now after the analogy of Aaron's, but, by its nature, points out in the future a royalty which is not yet manifested. Now the very fact that this future royalty was connected with the Person of Him who was seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, according to Psalm 110 fixed the attention of the Hebrew Christian, when tempted to turn back, on Him who was in the heavens, and made him understand the priesthood which the Lord is now exercising; it delivered him from Judaism, and strengthened him in the heavenly character of the Christianity which he had embraced.

**CHAPTER 7.** The epistle, returning to the subject of Melchizedec, reviews therefore the dignity of his person and the importance of his priesthood. For on priesthood, as a means of drawing nigh to God, the whole system connected with it depended.

Melchizedec then (a typical and characteristic person, as the use of his name in Psalm 110 proves) was king of Salem, that is king of peace, and, by name, king of righteousness. Righteousness and peace characterise his reign. But above all he was priest of the Most High God. This is the name of God as supreme Governor of all things — Possessor, as is added in Genesis, of heaven and earth. It is thus that Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled earthly potentate, acknowledged Him. It was thus He revealed Himself to Abraham, when Melchizedec blessed the patriarch after he had conquered his enemies. In connection with his walk of faith, the name of God for Abraham was “The Almighty.” Here Abraham, victorious over the kings of the earth, is blessed by Melchizedec, by the king of righteousness, in connection with God as Possessor of heaven and earth, the Most High. This looks onward to the royalty of Christ, a Priest upon His throne, when by the will and the power of God He shall have triumphed over all His enemies — a time not yet arrived — first fulfilled in the millennium, as

it is commonly expressed, though this rather refers to the earthly part. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedec. His royalty was not all, for Psalm 110 is very clear in describing Melchizedec as priest, and as possessing a lasting and uninterrupted priesthood. He had no sacerdotal parentage from whom he derived his priesthood. As a priest, he had neither father nor mother; unlike the sons of Aaron, he had no genealogy (compare Ezra 2:62); he had no limits assigned to the term of his priestly service, as was the case with the sons of Aaron (Numbers 4:3). He was made a priest, like — in his priestly character — to the Son of God; but, as yet, the latter is in heaven.

The fact that he received tithes from Abraham, and that he blessed Abraham, showed the high and pre-eminent dignity of this otherwise unknown and mysterious personage. The only thing that is testified of him — without naming father or mother, commencement of life, or death that may have taken place — is that he lived.

The dignity of his person was beyond that of Abraham, the depository of the promises; that of his priesthood was above Aaron's, who in Abraham paid the tithes which Levi himself received from his brethren. The priesthood then is changed, and with it the whole system that depended on it.

**PSALM 110** interrupted by faith in Christ — for the epistle, we need not say, speaks always to Christians — is still the point on which its argument is founded. The first proof then, that the whole was changed, is that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah (a Priest after the order of Melchizedec), did not spring evidently from the sacerdotal tribe, but from another, namely, that of Judah. For that Jesus was the Messiah, they believed. But, according to the Jewish scriptures, the Messiah was such as He is here presented; and in that case the priesthood was changed, and with it the whole system. And this was not only a consequence that must be drawn from the fact that the Messiah was of the tribe of Judah, although a Priest; but it was requisite that another priest than the priest of Aaron's family should arise, and one after the similitude of Melchizedec, who should not be after the law of a commandment which had no more power than the flesh to which it was applied, but who should be according to the power of

a never ending life. The testimony of the psalm to this was positive: “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.”

For there is in fact a disannulling of the commandment that existed previously, because it was unprofitable (for the law brought nothing to perfection); and there is the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God.

Precious difference! A commandment to man, sinful and afar from God, replaced by a hope, a confidence, founded on grace and on divine promise, through which we can come even into God’s presence.

The law, doubtless, was good; but separation still subsisted between man and God. The law made nothing perfect. God was ever perfect, and human perfection was required; all must be according to what divine perfection required of man. But sin was there, and the law was consequently without power (save to condemn); its ceremonies and ordinances were but figures, and a heavy yoke. Even that which temporarily relieved the conscience brought sin to mind and never made the conscience perfect towards God. They were still at a distance from Him. Grace brings the soul to God, who is known in love and in a righteousness which is for us.

The character of the new priesthood bore the stamp, in all its features, of its superiority to that which existed under the order of the law and with which the whole system of the law either stood or fell.

The covenant connected with the new priesthood answered likewise to the superiority of the latter over the former priesthood.

The priesthood of Jesus was established by oath; that of Aaron was not. The priesthood of Aaron passed from one person to another, because death put an end to its exercise by the individuals who were invested with it. But Jesus abides the same for ever; He has a priesthood that is not transmitted to others. Thus He saves completely, and to the end, those that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever lives to intercede for them.

Accordingly “such a high priest became us.” Glorious thought! Called to be in the presence of God, to be in relationship with Him in the heavenly glory, to draw near to Him on high, where nothing that defiles can enter,

we needed a High Priest in the place to which access was given us (as the Jews in the earthly temple), and such a One as the glory and purity of heaven required. What a demonstration that we belong to heaven, and of the exalted nature of our relationship with God! Such a Priest became us: “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, exalted above the heavens — ”for so are we, as to our position, having to do with God there — a Priest who needs not to renew the sacrifices, as though any work to put away sin still remained to be done, or their sins could still be imputed to believers; for then it would be impossible to stay in the heavenly sanctuary. As having once for all completed His work for the putting away of sin, our Priest offered His sacrifice once for all when He offered up Himself.

For the law made high priests who had the infirmities of men, for they were men themselves; the oath of God, which came after the law, establishes the Son, when He is perfected for ever, consecrated in heaven unto God.

We see here that, although there was an analogy and the figures of heavenly things, there is more of contrast than of comparison in this epistle. The legal priests had the same infirmities as other men; Jesus has a glorified priesthood according to the power of an endless life.

The introduction of this new priesthood, exercised in heaven, implies a change in the sacrifices and in the covenant. This the inspired writer develops here, setting forth the value of the sacrifice of Christ, and the long-promised new covenant. The direct connection is with the sacrifices; but he turns aside for a moment to the two covenants, a so wide-embracing and all-weighty consideration for the christian Jew who had been under the first.

**CHAPTER 8** in this respect is simple and clear; the last verses only give room for a few remarks.

The sum of the doctrine we have been considering is, that we have a High Priest who is seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the heavenly sanctuary which is not made with hands. As such, He must have an offering to present there. Jesus, were He on earth, would not be a Priest; there were priests on earth according to the law, in

which all things were but figures of the heavenly things; as Moses was told to make all according to the pattern that was shown him in the mount. But the ministry of Jesus is more excellent, because He is the Mediator of a better covenant, spoken of in Jeremiah 31, which is here quoted; a clear and simple proof that the first covenant was not to continue.

We again find here that particular development of the truth which was called for by the character of the persons to whom this letter was addressed.

The first covenant was made with Israel; the second must be so likewise, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah. The epistle however in this passage only makes use of the fact that there was to be a second covenant, in order to demonstrate that the first was to last no longer. It had grown old, and was to vanish away. He recites the terms of the new covenant. We shall find that he makes use of it afterwards. In that which follows, he contrasts the services that belonged to the first with the perfect work on which Christianity is founded. Thus the extent and the value of the work of Christ are introduced.

Although there is no difficulty here, it is important to have light with regard to these two covenants, because some have very vague ideas on this point, and many souls, putting themselves under covenants — that is, in relationship with God under conditions in which He has not placed them — lose their simplicity, and do not hold fast grace and the fullness of the work of Christ, and the position He has acquired for them in heaven.

A covenant is a principle of relationship with God on the earth — conditions established by God under which man is to live with Him. The word may perhaps be used figuratively, or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel, and so to Abraham (Genesis 15), and like cases; but, strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, in which God has dealt with man on earth, or will — the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel.\*

[\* We have also, at the end of the epistle, the expression “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” “Covenant” he uses, I doubt not (as the word “law” also is used), because it was commonly employed as the condition of relationship with God, and “eternal” is characteristic of the Hebrews. There have been, and will be, covenants in time and for the earth; but we have

eternal conditions of relationship with God, of which the blood of Christ is the expression and security, founded in everlasting grace, and righteousness as well as grace, by that precious blood, in which all the character and all the purpose of God has been made good and glorified, as well as our sins been put away.]

The gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy indeed all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being laid on God's part in the blood of Christ, but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter.

The new covenant will be established formally with Israel in the millennium. Meanwhile the old covenant is judged by the fact that there is a new one.

**CHAPTER 9.** The epistle, recounting some particular circumstances which characterised the first covenant, shows that neither were sins put away, nor was the conscience purged by its means, nor the entrance into the holiest granted to the worshippers. The veil concealed God. The high priest went in once a year to make reconciliation — no one else. The way to God in holiness was barred. Perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, they could not be through the blood of bulls and of goats. These were but provisionary and figurative ordinances, until God took up the real work itself, in order to accomplish it fully and for ever.

But this brings us to the focus of the light which God gives us by the Holy Ghost in this epistle. Before proving by the scriptures of the Old Testament the doctrine that he announced, and the discontinuance of the legal sacrifices — of all sacrifice for sin, the writer, with a heart full of the truth and of the importance of that truth, teaches the value and the extent of the sacrifice of Christ (still in contrast with the former offerings, but a contrast that rests on the intrinsic value of the offering of Christ). These three results are presented: first, the opened way into the sanctuary was manifested; that is, access to God Himself, where He is; second, the purification of the conscience; third, an eternal redemption; I may add the promise of an eternal inheritance.

One feels the immense importance, the inestimable value, of the first. The believer is admitted into God's own presence by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; has constant access to God, immediate access to the place where He is, in

the light. What complete salvation, what blessedness, what security! For how could we have access to God in the light, if everything that would separate us from Him, were not entirely taken away through Him who was once offered to bear the sins of many? But here it is the precious and perfect result, in this respect, which is revealed to us, and formally proved in chapter 10, as a right that we possess, that access to God Himself is entirely and freely open to us. We are not indeed told in this passage that we are seated there, for it is not our union with Christ that is the subject of this epistle, but our access to God in the sanctuary. And it is important to note this last, and it is as precious in its place as the other. We are viewed as on earth, and being on earth we have free and full access to God in the sanctuary. We go in perfect liberty to God, where His holiness dwells, and where nothing that is contrary to Him can be admitted. What happiness! What perfect grace! What a glorious result, supreme and complete! Could anything better be desired, remembering too that it is our dwelling-place? This is our position in the presence of God through the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary.

The second result shows us the personal state we are brought into, in order to the enjoyment of our position; that we may on our part, enter in freely. It is that our Savior has rendered our conscience perfect, so that we can go into the sanctuary without an idea of fear, without one question as to sin arising in our minds. A perfect conscience is not an innocent conscience which, happy in its unconsciousness, does not know evil, and does not know God revealed in holiness. A perfect conscience knows God; it is cleansed, and, having the knowledge of good and evil according to the light of God Himself, it knows that it is purified from all evil according to His purity. Now the blood of bulls and goats, and the washings repeated under the law, could never make the conscience perfect. They could sanctify carnally, so as to enable the worshipper to approach God outwardly, yet only afar off, with the veil still unrent. But a real purification from sin and sins, so that the soul can be in the presence of God Himself in the light without spot, with the consciousness of being so, the offerings under the law could never produce. They were but figures. But, thanks be to God, Christ has accomplished the work; and, present for us now in the heavenly and eternal sanctuary, He is the witness there that our sins are put away; so that all conscience of sin before God is destroyed, because we know

that He who bore our sins is in the presence of God, after having accomplished the work of expiation. Thus we have the consciousness of being in the light without spot. We have the purification not only of sins but of the conscience, so that we can use this access to God in full liberty and joy, presenting ourselves before Him who has so loved us.

The third result, which seals and characterises the two others, is that Christ, having once entered in, abides in heaven. He has gone into the heavenly sanctuary to remain there by virtue of an eternal redemption, of blood that has everlasting validity. The work is completely done, and can never change in value. If our sins are effectually put away, God glorified, and righteousness complete, that which once availed to effect this can never not avail. The blood shed once for all is ever efficacious.

Our High Priest is in the sanctuary, not with the blood of sacrifices, which are but figures of the true. The work has been done which puts sin away. This redemption is neither temporal nor transitory. It is the redemption of the soul, and for eternity, according to the moral efficacy of that which has been done.

Here then are the three aspects of the result of the work of Christ: immediate access to God; a purged conscience; an eternal redemption.

Three points remain to be noticed before entering on the subjects of the covenants, which is here resumed.

First, Christ is a High Priest of good things to come. In saying “things to come,” the starting-point is Israel under the law before the advent of our Lord. Nevertheless, if these good things were now acquired, if it could be said, “we have them,” because Christianity was their fulfillment, it could hardly be still said — when Christianity was established — “good things to come.” They are yet to come. These “good things” consist of all that the Messiah will enjoy when He reigns. This also is the reason that the earthly things have their place. But our present relationship with Him is only and altogether heavenly. He acts as Priest in a tabernacle which is not of this creation: it is heavenly, in the presence of God, not made with hands. Our place is in heaven.

In the second place, “Christ offered himself, by the eternal Spirit,\* without spot, to God.” Here the precious offering up of Christ is viewed



as an act that He performed as man, though in the perfection and value of His Person. He offered Himself to God — but as moved by the power, and according to the perfection of the eternal Spirit. All the motives that governed this action, and the accomplishment of the fact according to those motives, were purely and perfectly those of the Holy Ghost; that is, absolutely divine in their perfection, but of the Holy Ghost acting in a man (a man without sin who, born and living ever by the power of the Holy Ghost, had never known sin; who, being exempt from it by birth, never allowed it to enter into Him); so that it is the Man Christ who offers Himself. This was requisite.

[\* The reader will remark how anxiously, so to speak, the epistle here attaches the epithet “eternal” to everything. It was not a temporary or earthly ground of relationship with God, but an eternal one; so of redemption; so of inheritance. Corresponding to this, as to the work on earth, it is once for all. It is not unimportant to notice this as to the nature of the work. Hence the epithet attached even to the Spirit.]

Thus the offering was in itself perfect and pure, without defilement; and the act of offering was perfect, whether in love or in obedience, or in the desire to glorify God, or to accomplish the purpose of God. Nothing mingled itself with the perfection of His intent in offering Himself.

Moreover, it was not a temporary offering, which applied to one sin with which the conscience was burdened and which went no farther than that one, an offering which could not, by its nature, have the perfection spoken of, because it was not the Person offering up Himself, nor was it absolutely for God, because there was in it neither the perfection of will nor of obedience. But the offering of Christ was one which, being perfect in its moral nature, being in itself perfect in the eyes of God, was necessarily eternal in its value. For this value was as enduring as the nature of God who was glorified in it.

It was made, not of necessity, but of free will, and in obedience. It was made by a Man for the glory of God, but through the eternal Spirit, ever the same in its nature and value.

All being thus perfectly fulfilled for the glory of God, the conscience of every one that comes to Him by this offering is purged; dead works are blotted out and set aside; we stand before God on the ground of that which Christ has done.

And here the third point comes in. Being perfectly cleansed in conscience from all that man in his sinful nature produces, and having to do with God in light and in love, there being no question of conscience with Him, we are in a position to serve the living God. Precious liberty! in which, happy and without question before God according to His nature in light, we can serve Him according to the activity of His nature in love. Judaism knew no more of this than it did of perfection in conscience. Obligation towards God that system indeed maintained; and it offered a certain provision for that which was needed for outward failure. But to have a perfect conscience, and then to serve God in love, according to His will — of this it knew nothing.

This is christian position: the conscience perfect by Christ,\* according to the nature of God Himself; the service of God in liberty, according to His nature of love acting towards others.

[\* For in Christ we are the righteousness of God. His blood cleanses us on God's part. Jesus wrought out the purification of sins by Himself, and glorified God in so doing.]

For the Jewish system, in its utmost advantages, was characterised by the holy place. There were duties and obligations to be fulfilled in order to draw near, sacrifices to cleanse outwardly him who drew near outwardly. Meanwhile God was always concealed. No one entered into "the holy place": it is implied that the "most holy" was inaccessible. No sacrifice had yet been offered which gave free access, and at all times. God was concealed: that He was so characterised the position. They could not stand before Him. Neither did He manifest Himself. They served Him out of His presence without going in.

It is important to notice this truth, that the whole system in its highest and nearest access to God was characterised by the holy place, in order to understand the passage before us.

Now the first tabernacle — Judaism as a system — is identified with the first part of the tabernacle, and that open only to the priestly part of the nation, the second part (that is, the sanctuary) only showing, by the circumstances connected with it, that there was no access to God. When the author of the epistle goes on to the present position of Christ, he leaves the earthly tabernacle — it is heaven itself he then speaks of, a

tabernacle not made with hands, nor of this creation, into which he introduces us.

The first tent or part of the tabernacle gave the character of the relationship of the people with God, and that only by a priesthood. They could not reach God. When we approach God Himself, it is in heaven; and the entire first system disappears. Everything was offered as a figure in the first system, and even as a figure showed that the conscience was not yet set free, nor the presence of God accessible to man. The remembrance of sins was continually renewed (the annual sacrifice was a memorial of sins, and God was not manifested, nor the way to Him opened).

Christ comes, accomplishes the sacrifice, makes the conscience perfect, goes into heaven itself; and we draw nigh to God in the light. To mingle the service of the first tabernacle or holy place with christian service is to deny the latter; for the meaning of the first was that the way to God was not yet open; the meaning of the second, that it is open.

God may have patience with the weakness of man. Till the destruction of Jerusalem He bore with the Jews; but the two systems can never really go on together, namely, a system which said that one cannot draw nigh to God, and another system which gives access to Him.

Christ is come, the High Priest of a new system, of "good things," which, under the old system, were yet "to come"; but He did not enter into the earthly "most holy place," leaving the "holy place" to subsist without a true meaning. He is come by the (not a) more excellent and more perfect tabernacle. I repeat it, for it is essential here: the holy place, or the first tent, is the figure of the relationship of men with God under the first tabernacle (taken as a whole); so that we may say, "the first tabernacle," applying it to the first part of the tabernacle, and pass on to the first tabernacle as a whole, and as a recognised period having the same meaning. This the epistle does here. To come out of this position, we must leave typical things and pass into heaven, the true sanctuary where Christ ever lives, and where no veil bars our entrance.

Now it is not said, that we have "the good things to come." Christ has gone into heaven itself, the High Priest of those good things, securing their possession to them that trust in Him. But we have access to\* God in the

light by virtue of Christ's presence there. That presence is the proof of righteousness fully established; the blood, an evidence that our sins are put away for ever; and our conscience is made perfect. Christ in heaven is the guarantee for the fulfillment of every promise. He has opened an access for us, even now, to God in the light; having cleansed our consciences once for all — for He dwells on high continuously — that we may enter in, and that we may serve God here below.

[\* It is all-important thoroughly to understand, that it is into the presence of God that we enter; and that, at all times, and by virtue of a sacrifice and of blood which never lose their value. The worshipper, under the former tabernacle, did not come into the presence of God; he stayed outside the unrent veil. He sinned — a sacrifice was offered: he sinned again — a sacrifice was offered. Now the veil is rent. We are always in the presence of God without a veil. Happen what may, He always sees us in His presence — according to the efficacy of Christ's perfect sacrifice. We are there now, by virtue of a perfect sacrifice, offered for the putting away of sin, according to the divine glory, and which has perfectly accomplished the purification of sins. I should not be in the presence of God in the sanctuary, if I had not been purified according to the purity of God, and by God. It was this which brought me there. And this sacrifice and this blood can never lose their value. Through them I am therefore perfect for ever in the presence of God; I was brought into it by them.]

All this is already established and secured; but there is more. The new covenant, of which He is Mediator, is founded on His blood.

The way in which the apostle always avoids the direct application of the new covenant is very striking.

The transgressions that were imputed under the first covenant, and which the sacrifices it offered could not expiate, are by the blood of the new covenant entirely blotted out. Thus they which are called — observe the expression (v. 15) can receive the promise of the eternal inheritance; that is to say, the foundation is laid for the accomplishment of the blessings of the covenant. He says, "the eternal inheritance," because, as we have seen, the reconciliation was complete, our sins born and cancelled, and the work by which sin is finally put away out of God's sight accomplished, according to the nature and character of God Himself. This is the main point of all this part of the epistle.

It is because of the necessity there was for this sacrifice — the necessity that sins, and finally sin, should be entirely put away,\* in order to the

enjoyment of the eternal promises (for God could not bless, as an eternal principle and definitively, while sin was before His eyes), that Christ, the Son of God, Man on earth, became the Mediator of the new covenant, in order that by death He might make a way for the permanent enjoyment of that which had been promised. The new covenant, in itself, did not speak of a Mediator. God would write His laws on the hearts of His people, and would remember sins no more.

[\* The work in virtue of which all sin is finally put away out of God's sight — abolished — is accomplished, the question of good and evil is come to a final issue on the cross, and God perfectly glorified when sin was before Him; the result will not be finally accomplished till the new heavens and the new earth. But our sins having been born by Christ on the cross, He rises, atonement being made, an eternal testimony that they are gone for ever, and that by faith we are now justified and have peace. We must not confound these two things, our sins being put away, and the perfectly glorifying God in respect of sin, when Christ was made sin, the results of which are not yet accomplished. As regards the sinful nature, it is still in us; but Christ having died, its condemnation took place then, but, that being in death, we reckon ourselves dead to it, and no condemnation for us.]

The covenant is not yet made with Israel and Judah. But meanwhile God has established and revealed the Mediator, who has accomplished the work on which the fulfillment of the promises can be founded in a way that is durable in principle, eternal, because connected with the nature of God Himself. This is done by means of death, the wages of sin, and by which sin is left behind; and expiation for sins being made according to the righteousness of God, an altogether new position is taken outside and beyond sin. The Mediator has paid the ransom. Sin has no more right over us.

Verses 16, 17 are a parenthesis, in which the idea of a "testament" (it is the same word as "covenant" in the Greek, a disposition on the part of one who has the right of disposal) is introduced, to make us understand that death must have taken place before the rights acquired under the testament can be enjoyed.\*

[\* Some think that these two verses are not a parenthesis speaking of a testament, but a continuation of the argument on the covenant, taking the Greek word to mean, not the testator, but the sacrifice, which put a seal, more solemn than an oath, on the obligation of observing the covenant. It is a very delicate Greek question, on which I do not here enter. But I cannot say they have convinced me.]

This necessity of the covenant being founded on the blood of a victim was not forgotten in the case of the first covenant. Everything was sprinkled with blood. Only, in this case, it was the solemn sanction of death attached to the obligation of the covenant. The types always spoke of the necessity of death intervening before men could be in relationship with God. Sin had brought in death and judgment. We must either undergo the judgment ourselves, or see our sins blotted out through it having been undergone by another for us.

Three applications of the blood are presented here. The covenant is founded on the blood. Defilement is washed away by its means. Guilt is removed by the remission obtained through the blood that has been shed.

These are, in fact, the three things necessary. First, the ways of God in bestowing blessing according to His promises are connected with His righteousness, the sins of those blessed being atoned for, the requisite foundation of the covenant, Christ having withal glorified God in respect of sin, when made sin on the cross.

Second, the purification of the sin by which we were defiled (by which all things, that could not be guilty, were nevertheless defiled) is accomplished. Here there were cases in which water was typically used: this is moral and practical cleansing. It flows from death; the water that purifies proceeded from the side of the holy Victim already dead. It is the application of the word — which judges all evil and reveals all good — to the conscience and the heart.

Third, as regards remission. In no case can this be obtained without the shedding of blood. Observe that it does not here say “application.” It is the accomplishment of the work of true propitiation, which is here spoken of. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. All-important truth! For a work of remission, death and blood-shedding must take place.

Two consequences flow from these views of atonement and reconciliation to God.

First, it was necessary that there should be a better sacrifice, a more excellent victim, than those which were offered under the old covenant, because it was the heavenly things themselves, and not their figures, that

were to be purified. For it is into the presence of God in heaven itself that Christ has entered.

Secondly, Christ was not to offer Himself often, as the high priest went in every year with the blood of others. For He offered up Himself. Hence, if all that was available in the sacrifice was not brought to perfection by a single offering once made, He must have suffered often since the foundation of the world.\* This remark leads to the clear and simple declaration of the ways of God on this point — a declaration of priceless value. God allowed ages to pass (the different distinct periods in which man has in divers ways been put to the test, and in which he has had time to show what he is) without yet accomplishing His work of grace. This trial of man has served to show that he is bad in nature and in will. The multiplication of means only made it more evident that he was essentially bad at heart, for he availed himself of none of them to draw near to God. On the contrary, his enmity against God was fully manifested.

[\* And He must have repeatedly suffered, for there must be reality in putting away sin.]

When God had made this plain, before the law, under the law, by promises, by the coming and presence of His Son, then the work of God takes the place, for our salvation and God's glory, of man's responsibility — on the ground of which faith knows man is entirely lost. This explains the expression (v. 26) "in the consummation of the ages."

Now this work is perfect, and perfectly accomplished. Sin had dishonored God, and separated man from Him. All that God had done to give him the means of return only ended in affording him opportunity to fill up the measure of his sin by the rejection of Jesus. But in this the eternal counsels of God were fulfilled, at least the moral basis laid, and that in infinite perfection, for their actual accomplishment in their results. All now in fact, as in purpose always, rested on the second Adam, and on what God had done, not on man's responsibility, while that was fully met for God's glory (compare 2 Timothy 1:9, 10; Titus 1:1, 2). The Christ, whom man rejected, had appeared in order to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Thus it was morally the consummation of the ages.

The result of the work and power of God are not yet manifested. A new creation will develop them. But man, as the child of Adam, has run his

whole career in his relationship with God: he is enmity against God. Christ, fulfilling the will of God, has come in the consummation of ages, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and His work to this end is accomplished. This is the moral power of His act,\* of His sacrifice before God; in result, sin will be entirely blotted out of the heavens and the earth. To faith this result, namely, the putting away of sin, is already realised in the conscience,\*\* because Christ who was made sin for us has died and died to sin, and now is risen and glorified, sin (even as made it for us) left behind.

[\* The more we examine the cross from God's side of it, the more we shall see this: man's enmity against God, and against God come in goodness, was absolutely displayed; Satan's power in evil over man too; man's perfectness in love to the Father and obedience to Him; God's majesty and righteousness against sin, and love to sinners, all He is; all good and evil perfectly brought to an issue, and that in the place of sin, that is, in Christ made sin for us. When sin was as such before His face in the sinless One where it was needed and God perfectly glorified, and indeed the Son of man too, morally the whole thing was settled, and we know it: the actual results are not yet produced.]

[\*\* The judgment, which will fall upon the wicked, is not sin. Much more also is involved in the work and position of Christ, even heavenly glory with God: but it is not our subject here.]

Moreover, this result is announced to the believer — to those who are looking for the Lord's return. Death and judgment are the lot of men as children of Adam. Christ has been offered once to bear the sins of many; and "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," not to judgment.

For them, as to their standing before God, sin is even now put away: as Christ is, so are they; their own sins are all blotted out. Christ appeared the first time in order to be made sin for us, and to bear our sins; they were laid upon Him on the cross. And, with regard to those who wait for Him, those sins are entirely put away. When He returns, Christ has nothing to do with sin, as far as they are concerned. It was fully dealt with at His first coming. He appears the second time to deliver them from all the results of sin, from all bondage. He will appear, not for judgment, but unto salvation. The putting away of sin on their behalf before God has been so complete, the sins of believers so entirely blotted out, that, when He appears the second time, He has, as to them, nothing to do with sin. He appears apart



from sin, not only without sin in His blessed Person — this was the case at His first coming — but (as to those who look for Him) outside all question of sin, for their final deliverance.

“Without sin” is in contrast with “to bear the sins of many.”\* But it will be remarked, that the taking up of the assembly is not mentioned here. It is well to notice the language. The character of His second coming is the subject. He has been manifested once. Now He is seen by those who look for Him. The expression may apply to the deliverance of the Jews who wait for Him in the last days. He will appear for their deliverance. But we expect the Lord for this deliverance, and we shall see Him when He accomplishes it even for us. The apostle does not touch the question of the difference between this and our being caught up, and does not use the word which serves to announce His public manifestation. He will appear to those who expect Him. He is not seen by all the world, nor is it consequently the judgment, although that may follow. The Holy Ghost speaks only of them that look for the Lord. To them He will appear. By them He will be seen, and it will be the time of their deliverance; so that it is true for us, and also applicable to the Jewish remnant in the last days.

[\* It is of moment to see the difference between verses 26 and 28. Sin had to be put away abstractedly out of God’s sight, and hence He had to be perfectly glorified in respect of it, in that place where sin was before Him. Christ was made sin — appeared to abolish it out of God’s sight. Besides this, our sins (guilt) were in question, and Christ bore them in His own body on the tree. The sins are born, and Christ has them no more. They are gone as guilt before God for ever. The work for the abolition of sin in God’s sight is done, and God owns it as done, having glorified Jesus who has glorified Him as to it when made sin. So that for God the thing is settled, and faith recognises this, but the result is not produced. The work is before God in all its value, but the sin still exists in the believer and in the world. Faith owns both, knows that in God’s sight it is done, and rests as God does in it, but the believer knows that sin is still, de facto, there and in him: only he has a title to reckon himself dead to it — that sin in the flesh is condemned, but in the sacrifice for sin, so that there is none for him. The putting away is not accomplished, but what does it is; so that God recognises it, and so does faith, and stands perfectly clear before God as to sin and sins. He that is dead (and we are, as having died with Christ) is justified from sin. Our sins have all been born. The difficulty partly arises from “sin” being used for a particular act, and also abstractedly. In the word “sins” there is no such ambiguity. A sacrifice for sin may apply to a particular fault. Sin entered into the world is another idea. This ambiguity has produced the confusion.]

Thus the christian position, and the hope of the world to come, founded on the blood and on the Mediator of the new covenant, are both given here. The one is the present portion of the believer, the other is secured as the hope of Israel.

How wonderful is the grace which we are now considering!

There are two things that present themselves to us in Christ — the attractions to our heart of His grace and goodness, and His work which brings our souls into the presence of God. It is with the latter that the Holy Ghost here occupies us. There is not only the piety which grace produces; there is the efficacy of the work itself. What is this efficacy? What is the result for us of His work? Access to God in the light without a veil, ourselves entirely clear of all sin before Him, as white as snow in the light which only shows it. Marvellous position for us! We have not to wait for a day of judgment (assuredly coming as it is), nor to seek for means of approach to God. We are in His presence. Christ appears in the presence of God for us; and not only this: He remains there ever; our position therefore never changes. It is true that we are called to walk according to that position. But this does not touch the fact that such is the position. And how came we into it? and in what condition? Our sins entirely put away, perfectly put away, and once for all, and the whole question of sin settled for ever before God, we are there because Christ has finished the work which abolished it, and without it in God's sight. So that there are the two things — this work accomplished, and this position ours in the presence of God.

We see the force of the contrast between this and Judaism. According to the latter, divine service, as we have seen, was performed outside the veil. The worshippers did not reach the presence of God. Thus they had always to begin again. The propitiatory sacrifice was renewed from year to year — a continually repeated testimony that sin still was there. Individually they obtained a temporary pardon for particular acts. It had constantly to be renewed. The conscience was never made perfect, the soul was not in the presence of God, this great question was never settled. (How many souls are even now in this condition!) The entrance of the high priest once a year did but furnish a proof that the way was still barred, that God could not be approached, but that sin was still remembered.

But now the guilt of believers is gone, their sins washed away by a work done once for all; the conscience is made perfect; nor is there any condemnation for them. Sin in the flesh has been condemned in Christ when a sacrifice for sin, and Christ appears ever in the presence of God for us. The High Priest remains there. Thus, instead of having a memorial of sin reiterated from year to year, perfect righteousness subsists ever for us in the presence of God. The position is entirely changed.

The lot of man (for this perfect work takes us out of Judaism) is death and judgment. But now our lot depends on Christ, not on Adam. Christ was offered to bear the sins of many\* the work is complete, the sins blotted out, and to those who look for Him He will appear without having anything to do with sin, that question having been entirely settled at His first coming. In the death of Jesus, God dealt with the sins of those who look for Him; and He will appear, not to judge, but unto salvation — to deliver them finally from the position into which sin had brought them. This will have its application to the Jewish remnant according to the circumstances of their position; but in an absolute way it applies to the Christian, who has heaven for his portion.

[\* The word “many” has a double bearing here, negative and positive. It could not be said “all,” or all would be saved. On the other hand the word many generalises the work, so that it is not the Jews only who are its object.]

The essential point established in the doctrine of the death of Christ is, that He offered Himself once for all. We must bear this in mind, to understand the full import of all that is here said. The tenth chapter is the development and application of this. In it the author recapitulates his doctrine on this point, and applies it to souls, confirming it by scripture, and by considerations which are evident to every enlightened conscience.

1. The law, with its sacrifices, did not make the worshippers perfect; for, if they had been brought to perfection, the sacrifices would not have been offered afresh. If they were offered again, it was because the worshippers were not perfect. On the contrary the repetition of the sacrifice was a memorial of sins; it reminded the people that sin was still there, and that it was still before God. In effect the law, although it was the shadow of things to come, was not their true image. There were sacrifices; but they were repeated, instead of there being one only sacrifice of eternal efficacy. There was a high priest, but he was mortal, and the priesthood

transmissible. He went into the holiest, but only once a year, the veil which concealed God being unrent, and the high priest unable to remain in His presence, the work being not perfect. Thus there were indeed elements which plainly indicated the constituent parts, so to speak, of the priesthood of the good things to come; but the state of the worshippers was in the one case quite the opposite of that which it was in the other. In the first, every act showed that the work of reconciliation was not done; in the second, the position of the high priest and of the worshipper is a testimony that this work has been accomplished, and that the latter are perfected for ever in the presence of God.

In **CHAPTER 10** this principle is applied to the sacrifice. Its repetition proved that sin was there. That the sacrifice of Christ was only offered once, was the demonstration of its eternal efficacy. Had the Jewish sacrifices rendered the worshippers really perfect before God, they would have ceased to be offered. The apostle is speaking (although the principle is general) of the yearly sacrifice on the day of atonement. For if, through the efficacy of the sacrifice, they had been permanently made perfect, they would have had no more conscience of sins, and could not have had the thought of renewing the sacrifice.

Observe, here, that which is very important, that the conscience is cleansed, our sins being expiated, the worshipper drawing nigh by virtue of the sacrifice. The meaning of the Jewish service was that guilt was still there; that of the Christian, that it is gone. As to the former, precious as the type is, the reason is evident: the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. Therefore those sacrifices have been abolished, and a work of another character (although still a sacrifice) has been accomplished — a work which excludes all other, and all the repetition of the same, because it consists of nothing less than the self-devotedness of the Son of God to accomplish the will of God, and the completion of that to which He was devoted: an act impossible to be repeated, for all His will cannot be accomplished twice, and, were it possible, it would be a testimony of the inadequacy of the first, and so of both.

This is what the Son of God says in this most solemn passage (v. 5-9), in which we are admitted to know, according to the grace of God, that which passed between God the Father and Himself, when He undertook the

fulfillment of the will of God — that which He said, and the eternal counsels of God which He carried into execution. He takes the place of submission and of obedience, of performing the will of another. God would no longer accept the sacrifices that were offered under the law (the four classes of which are here pointed out), He had no pleasure in them. In their stead He had prepared a body for His Son; vast and important truth! for the place of man is obedience. Thus, in taking this place, the Son of God put Himself into the position to obey perfectly. In fact He undertakes the duty of fulfilling all the will of God, be it what it May — a will which is ever “good, acceptable, and perfect.”

The psalm says, in the Hebrew, “Thou hast digged\* ears for me,” translated in the Septuagint, “Thou hast prepared me a body”; words which, as they give the true meaning, are used by the Holy Ghost. For “the ear” is always employed as a sign of the reception of commandments, and the principle of obligation to obey, or the disposition to do so. “He hath opened mine ear morning by morning” (Isaiah 50), that is, has made me listen to His will, be obedient to His commands. The ear was bored, or fastened with an awl to the door, in order to express that the Israelite was attached to the house as a slave, to obey, for ever. Now in taking a body, the Lord took the form of a servant (Philippians 2). Ears were digged for Him. That is to say, He placed Himself in a position in which He had to obey all His Master’s will, whatever it might be. But it is the Lord Himself\*\* who speaks in the passage before us: “Thou,” He says, “hast prepared me a body.”

[\* It is not the same word as to “bore,” or thrust through, in Exodus 21 nor as “open” in Isaiah 50. The one (digged) is to prepare for obedience, the other would be to bind to it for ever, and to subject to the obedience when due. Exodus 21 intimates the blessed truth that, when He had fulfilled His personal service on earth, He would not abandon either His assembly or His people. He is ever God, but ever man, the humbled man, the glorified and reigning man, the subject man, In the joy of eternal perfection.]

[\*\* As throughout the epistle, the Messiah is the subject. In the psalm it is the Messiah who speaks, that is, the Anointed here below. He expresses His patience and faithfulness in the position which He had taken, addressing Jehovah as His God; and He tells us that He took this place willingly, according to the eternal counsels respecting His own Person. For the Person is not changed. But He speaks in the psalm according to the position of obedience which He had taken, saying always, I and me, in speaking of what took place before His incarnation.]

Entering more into detail, He specifies burnt offerings and offerings for sin, sacrifices which had less of the character of communion, and thus had a deeper meaning; but God had no pleasure in them. In a word the Jewish service was already declared by the Spirit to be unacceptable to God. It was all to cease, it was fruitless; no offering that formed part of it was acceptable. No; the counsels of God unfold themselves, but first of all in the heart of the Word, the Son of God, who offers Himself to accomplish the will of God. "Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." Nothing can be more solemn than thus to lift the veil from that which takes place in heaven between God and the Word who undertook to do His will. Observe that, before He was in the position of obedience, He offers Himself in order to accomplish the will of God, that is to say, of free love for the glory of God, of free will; as One who had the power, He offers Himself. He undertakes obedience, He undertakes to do whatsoever God wills. This is indeed to sacrifice all His own will, but freely and as the effect of His own purpose, although on the occasion of the will of His Father. He must needs be God in order to do this, and to undertake the fulfillment of all that God could will.

We have here the great mystery of this divine intercourse, which remains ever surrounded with its solemn majesty, although it is communicated to us that we may know it. And we ought to know it; for it is thus that we understand the infinite grace and the glory of this work. Before He became man, in the place where only divinity is known, and its eternal counsels and thoughts are communicated between the divine Persons, the Word — as He has declared it to us, in time, by the prophetic Spirit such being the will of God contained in the book of the eternal counsels, He who was able to do it, offered Himself freely to accomplish that will. Submissive to this counsel already arranged for Him, He yet offers Himself in perfect freedom to fulfill it. But in offering He submits, yet at the same time undertakes to do all that God, as God, willed. But also in undertaking to do the will of God, it was in the way of obedience, of submission, and of devotedness. For I might undertake to do the will of another, as free and competent, because I willed the thing; but if I say "to do thy will," this in itself is absolute and complete submission. And this it is which the Lord, the Word, did. He did it also, declaring that He came in order to do it. He took

a position of obedience by accepting the body prepared for Him. He came to do the will of God.

That of which we have been speaking is continually manifested in the life of Jesus on earth. God shines through His position in the human body; for He was necessarily God in the act itself of His humiliation; and none but God could have undertaken and been found in it; yet He was always, and entirely and perfectly, obedient and dependent on God. That which revealed itself in His existence on earth was the expression of that which was accomplished in the eternal abode, in His own nature. That is to say (and of this Psalm 40 speaks), that which He declares, and that which He was here below, are the same thing, the one in reality in heaven, the other bodily on earth. That which He was here below was but the expression, the living, real, bodily manifestation of what is contained in those divine communications which have been revealed to us, and which were the reality of the position that He assumed.

And it is very important to see these things in the free offer made by divine competency, and not only in their fulfillment in death. It gives quite a different character to the bodily work here below.

In reality, from chapter 1 of this epistle, the Holy Ghost always presents Christ in this way. But this revelation in the psalm was requisite to explain how He became a servant, what the Messiah really was; and to us it opens an immense view of the ways of God, a view, the depths of which — clearly as it is revealed, and through the very clearness of the revelation — display to us things so divine and glorious that we bow the head and veil our faces, as having had part as it were in such communications, on account of the majesty of the Persons whose acts and whose intimate relationships are revealed. It is not here the glory that dazzles us. But even in this poor world there is nothing to which we are greater strangers than the intimacy of those who are, in their modes of life, much above ourselves. What then, when it is that of God! Blessed be His name! there is grace that brings us into it, and that has drawn nigh to us in our weakness. We are then admitted to know this precious truth, that the Lord Jesus undertook of His own free will the accomplishment of all the will of God, and that He was pleased to take the body prepared for Him in order to accomplish it. The love, the devotedness to the glory of God, and the

way in which He undertook to obey, are fully set forth. And this — the fruit of God's eternal counsels — displaces (by its very nature) every provisional sign: and contains, in itself alone, the condition of all relationship with God, and the means by which He glorifies Himself.\*

[\* Remark, also, here not only the substitution of the reality for the ceremonial figures of the law, but the difference of principle. The law required for righteousness that man should do the will of God, and rightly. That was human righteousness. Here Christ undertakes to do it, and has accomplished it in the offering up of Himself. His so doing the will of God is the basis of our relationship with God, and it is done, and we are accepted. As born of God our delight is to do God's will, but it is in love and newness of nature, not in order to be accepted.]

The Word then assumes a body, in order to offer Himself as a sacrifice. Besides the revelation of this devotedness of the Word to accomplish the will of God, the effect of His sacrifice according to the will of God is also set before us.

He came to do the will of Jehovah. Now faith understands that it is by this will of God (that is, by His will who, according to His eternal wisdom, prepared a body for His Son) that those whom He has called unto Himself for salvation are set apart to God, in other words, are sanctified. It is by the will of God that we are set apart for Him (not by our own will), and that by means of the sacrifice offered to God.

We shall observe that the epistle does not here speak of the communication of life, or of a practical sanctification wrought by the Holy Ghost:\* the subject is the Person of Christ ascended on high, and the efficacy of His work. And this is important with regard to sanctification, because it shows that sanctification is a complete setting apart to God, as belonging to Him at the price of the offering of Jesus, a consecration to Him by means of that offering. God took the unclean Jews from among men and set them apart — consecrated them to Himself; so now the called ones, from that nation; and, thank God ourselves also, by means of the offering of Jesus.

[\* It speaks of this last in the exhortations, chapter 12:14. But in the doctrine of the epistle, "sanctification" is not used in the practical sense of what is wrought in us.]

But there is another element, already pointed out, in this offering, the force of which the epistle here applies to believers, namely, that the offering is



“once for all.” It admits of no repetition. If we enjoy the effect of this offering, our sanctification is eternal in its nature. It does not fail. It is never repeated. We belong to God for ever according to the efficacy of this offering. Thus our sanctification, our being set apart to God, has — with regard to the work that accomplished it — all the stability of the will of God, and all the grace from which it sprang; it has, too, in its nature, the perfection of the work itself, by which it was accomplished, and the duration and the constant force of the efficacy of that work. But the effect of this offering is not limited to this setting apart for God. The point already treated contains our consecration by God Himself through the perfectly efficacious offering of Christ fulfilling His will. And now the position which Christ has taken, in consequence of His offering up of Himself, is employed in order clearly to demonstrate the state it has brought us into before God.

The priests among the Jews — for this contrast is still carried on — stood before the altar continually to repeat the same sacrifices which could never take away sins. But this Man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever\* at the right hand of God. There — having finished for His own all that regards their presentation without spot to God — He awaits the moment when His enemies shall be made His footstool, according to Psalm 110: “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” And the Spirit gives us the important reason so infinitely precious to us: “For he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

[\* The word translated here “for ever” is not the same word that is used for eternally. It has the sense of continuously, without interruption He does not rise up or stand. He is ever seated, His work being finished. He will indeed rise up at the end to come and fetch us, and to judge the world, even as this same passage tells us.]

Here (v. 14) as in verse 12, on which the latter depends, the word “for ever” has the force of permanence — uninterrupted continuity. He is ever seated, we are ever perfected, by virtue of His work and according to the perfect righteousness in which, and conformably to which, He sits at the right hand of God upon His throne, according to that which He is personally there, His acceptance on God’s part being proved by His session at His right hand. And He is there for us.

It is a righteousness suited to the throne of God, yea, the righteousness of the throne. It neither varies nor fails. He is seated there for ever. If then we are sanctified — set apart to God — by this offering according to the will of God Himself, we are also made perfect for God by the same offering, as presented to Him in the Person of Jesus.

We have seen that this position has its origin in the will, the goodwill of God (a will which combines the grace and the purpose of God), and that it has its foundation and present certainty in the accomplishment of the work of Christ, the perfection of which is demonstrated by the session at the right hand of God of Him who accomplished it. But the testimony — for to enjoy this grace we must know it with divine certainty, and the greater it is, the more would our hearts be led to doubt it — the testimony upon which we believe it must be divine. And this it is. The Holy Ghost bears witness to us of it. The will of God is the source of the work; Christ, the Son of God, accomplished it; the Holy Ghost bears witness to us of it. And here the application to the people, called by grace and spared, is in consequence fully set forth, not merely the fulfillment of the work. The Holy Ghost bears us witness. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Blessed position! The certainty that God will never remember our sins and iniquities is founded on the steadfast will of God, on the perfect offering of Christ, now consequently seated at the right hand of God, and on the sure testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is a matter of faith that God will never remember our sins.

We may remark here the way in which the covenant is introduced; for although, as writing to “the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” he says, “a witness to us,” the form of his address is always that of an epistle to the Hebrews (believers, of course, but Hebrews, still bearing the character of God’s people). He does not speak of the covenant in a direct way, as a privilege in which Christians had a direct part. The Holy Ghost, he says, declares, “I will remember no more,” etc. It is this which he quotes. He only alludes to the new covenant, leaving it aside consequently as to all present application. For after having said, “This is the covenant,” etc., the testimony is cited as that of the Holy Ghost, to prove the capital point which he was treating, that is, that God remembers

our sins no more. But he alludes to the covenant (already known to the Jews as declared before of God) which gave the authority of the scriptures to this testimony, that God remembered no more the sins of His people who are sanctified and admitted into His favor, and which, at the same time, presented these two thoughts; first, that this complete pardon did not exist under the first covenant: and, second, that the door is left open for the blessing of the nation when the new covenant shall be formally established.

Another practical consequence is drawn: sins being remitted, there is no more oblation for sin. The one sacrifice having obtained remission, no others can be offered in order to obtain it. Remembrance of this one sacrifice there may indeed be, whatever its character; but a sacrifice to take away the sins which are already taken away, there cannot be. We are therefore in reality on entirely new ground — on that of the fact, that by the sacrifice of Christ our sins are altogether put away, and that for us, who are sanctified and partakers of the heavenly calling, a perfect and everlasting permanent cleansing has been made, remission granted, eternal redemption obtained. So that we are, in the eyes of God, without sin, on the ground of the perfection of the work of Christ, who is seated at His right hand, who has entered into the true holiest, into heaven itself, to sit there because His work is accomplished.

Thus all liberty is ours to enter into the holy place (all boldness) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, that is His flesh, to admit us without spot into the presence of God Himself, who is there revealed. For us the veil is rent, and that which rent the veil in order to admit us has likewise put away the sin which shut us out.

We have also a great High Priest over the house of God, as we have seen, who represents us in the holy place.

On these truths are founded the exhortations that follow. One word before we enter on them, as to the relation that exists between perfect righteousness and the priesthood. There are many souls who use the priesthood as the means of obtaining pardon when they have failed. They go to Christ as a priest, that He may intercede for them and obtain the pardon which they desire, but for which they dare not ask God in a direct way. These souls — sincere as they are — have not liberty to enter into

the holy place. They take refuge with Christ that they may afresh be brought into the presence of God. Their condition practically is that in which a pious Jew stood. They have lost, or rather they have never had by faith, the real consciousness of their position before God in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. I do not speak here of all the privileges of the assembly: we have seen that the epistle does not speak of them. The position it makes for believers is this: those whom it addresses are not viewed as placed in heaven, although partakers of the heavenly calling; but a perfect redemption is accomplished, all guilt entirely put away for the people of God, who remembers their sins no more. The conscience is made perfect — they have no more conscience of sins — by virtue of the work accomplished once for all. There is no more question of sin; that is, of its imputation, of its being upon them before God, between them and God. There cannot be, because of the work accomplished upon the cross. The conscience therefore is perfect; their Representative and High Priest is in heaven, a witness there to the work already accomplished for them.

Thus, although the epistle does not present them as in the holiest, as sitting there — like in the epistle to the Ephesians — they have full liberty, entire boldness, to enter into it. The question of imputation no longer exists. Their sins have been imputed to Christ. But He is now in heaven — a proof that the sins are blotted out for ever. Believers therefore enter with entire liberty into the presence of God Himself, and that always — having no more for ever any conscience of sins.

For what purpose then is priesthood? What is to be done with respect to the sins we commit? They interrupt our communion; but they make no change in our position before God, nor in the testimony rendered by the presence of Christ at the right hand of God. Nor do they raise any question as to imputation. They are sins against that position, or against God, measured by the relationship we are in to God, as in it. For sin is measured by the conscience according to our position. The perpetual presence of Christ at God's right hand has this twofold effect for us: first, perfected for ever we have no more conscience of sins before God, we are accepted; second, as priest He obtains grace to help in time of need, that we may not sin. But the present exercise of priesthood by Christ does not refer to sins: we have through His work no more conscience of sins, are perfected for ever. There is another truth connected with this, found in 1

John 2: we have an Advocate\* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. On this our communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ is founded and secured. Our sins are not imputed, for the propitiation is in all its value before God. But by sin communion is interrupted; our righteousness is not altered — for that is Christ Himself at God’s right hand in virtue of His work; nor is grace changed, and “he is the propitiation for our sins”; but the heart has got away from God, communion is interrupted. But grace acts in virtue of perfect righteousness, and by the advocacy of Christ, on behalf of him who has failed; and his soul is restored to communion. Nor is it that we go to Jesus for this; He goes, even if we sin, to God for us. His presence there is the witness of an unchangeable righteousness which is ours, His intercession maintains us in the path we have to walk in, or as our Advocate He restores the communion which is founded on that righteousness. Our access to God is always open. Sin interrupts our enjoyment of it, the heart is not in communion; the advocacy of Jesus is the means of rousing the conscience by the action of the Spirit and the word, and we return (humbling ourselves) into the presence of God Himself. The priesthood and advocacy of Christ refer to the condition of an imperfect and feeble, or failing, creature upon earth, reconciling it with the perfectness of the place and glory in which divine righteousness sets us. The soul is maintained steadfast or restored.

[\* There is a difference in detail here; but it does not affect my present subject. The High Priest has to do with our access to God; the Advocate with our communion with the Father and His government of us as children. The epistle to the Hebrews treats of the ground of access and shows us to be perfected for ever; and the priestly intercession does not apply to sins in that respect. It brings mercy and grace to help in time of need here, but we are perfected for ever before God. But communion is necessarily interrupted by the least sin or idle thought — yea, really had been, practically if not judicially, before the idle thought was there. Here the advocacy of John comes in: “If any man sin,” and the soul is restored. But there is never imputation to the believer.]

Exhortations follow. Having the right thus to approach God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. This is the only thing that honors the efficacy of Christ’s work, and the love which has thus brought us to enjoy God. In the words that follow, allusion is made to the consecration of the priests — a natural allusion, as drawing near to God in the holiest is the subject. They were sprinkled with blood and washed

with water, and then they drew nigh to serve God. Still, although I doubt not of the allusion to the priests, it is quite natural that baptism should have given rise to it. The anointing is not spoken of here — it is the power or privilege of the moral right to draw nigh.

Again, we may notice that, as to the foundation of the truth, this is the ground on which Israel will stand in the last days. In Christ in heaven will not be their place, nor the possession of the Holy Ghost as uniting the believer to Christ in heaven; but the blessing will be founded on water and on blood. God will remember their sins no more; and they will be washed in the clean water of the word.

The second exhortation is to persevere in the profession of the hope without wavering. He who made the promises is faithful.

Not only should we have this confidence in God for ourselves, but we are also to consider one another for mutual encouragement; and, at the same time, not to fail in the public and common profession of faith, pretending to maintain it, while avoiding the open identification of oneself with the Lord's people in the difficulties connected with the profession of this faith before the world. Besides, this public confession had a fresh motive in that the day drew nigh. We see that it is the judgment which is here presented as the thing looked for — in order that it may act on the conscience, and guard Christians from turning back to the world, and from the influence of the fear of man — rather than the Lord's coming to take up His own people. Verse 26 is connected with the preceding paragraph (23-25) the last words of which suggest the warning of verse 26; which is founded, moreover, on the doctrine of these two chapters (9 and 10), with regard to the sacrifice. He insists on perseverance in a full confession of Christ, for His one sacrifice once offered was the only one. If any who had professed to know its value abandoned it, there was no other sacrifice to which he could have recourse, neither could it be ever repeated. There remained no more sacrifice for sin. All sins were pardoned by the efficacy of this sacrifice: but if, after having known the truth, they were to choose sin instead, there was no other sacrifice by virtue even of the perfection of that of Christ. Nothing but judgment remained. Such a professor, having had the knowledge of the truth and having abandoned it, would assume the character of an adversary.

The case, then, here supposed is the renunciation of the confession of Christ, deliberately preferring — after having known the truth — to walk according to one's own will in sin. This is evident, both from that which precedes and from verse 29.

Thus we have (chaps. 6, 10) the two great privileges of Christianity, what distinguishes it from Judaism, presented in order to warn those who made profession of the former, that the renunciation of the truth, after enjoying these advantages, was fatal; for if these means of salvation were renounced, there was no other. These privileges were the manifested presence and power of the Holy Ghost, and the offering which, by its intrinsic and absolute value, left no place for any other. Both of these possessed a mighty efficacy, which, while it gave divine spring and force, and the manifestation of the presence of God on the one hand, made known on the other hand the eternal redemption and the perfection of the worshipper; leaving no means for repentance, if any one abandoned the manifested and known power of that presence; no place for another sacrifice (which, moreover, would have denied the efficacy of the first), after the perfect work of God in salvation, perfect whether with regard to redemption, or to the presence of God by the Spirit in the midst of His own. Nothing remained but judgment.

They who despised the law of Moses died without mercy. What then would not those deserve at the hand of God, who trod under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant, by which they had been sanctified, as a common thing, and did despite to the Spirit of grace? It was not simple disobedience, however evil that might be; it was contempt of the grace of God, and of that which He had done, in the Person of Jesus, in order to deliver us from the consequences of disobedience. On the one hand, what was there left, if with the knowledge of what it was, they renounced this? On the other hand, how could they escape judgment? for they know a God who had said that vengeance belonged unto Him, and that He would recompense; and, again the Lord would judge His people.

Observe here the way in which sanctification is attributed to the blood; and, also, that professors are treated as belonging to the people. The blood, received by faith, consecrates the soul to God; but it is here viewed also as an outward means for setting apart the people as a people. Every

individual who had owned Jesus to be the Messiah, and the blood to be the seal and foundation of an everlasting covenant available for eternal cleansing and redemption on the part of God, acknowledging himself to be set apart for God, by this means, as one of the people — every such individual would, if he renounced it, renounce it as such: and there was no other way of sanctifying him. The former system had evidently lost its power for him, and the true one he had abandoned. This is the reason why it is said, “having received the knowledge of the truth.”

Nevertheless he hopes better things, for fruit, the sign of life, was there. He reminds them how much they had suffered for the truth, and that they had even received joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had a better and an abiding portion in heaven. They were not to cast away this confidence, the reward of which would be great. For in truth they needed patience, in order that, after having done the will of God, they might receive the effect of the promise. And He who is to come will come soon.

It is to this life of patience and perseverance that the chapter applies. But there is a principle which is the strength of this life, and which characterises it. In the midst of the difficulties of the christian walk, the just shall live by faith; and if anyone draws back, God will have no pleasure in him. “But,” says the author, placing himself as ever in the midst of the believers, “we are not of them who draw back, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul.” Thereupon he describes the action of this faith, encouraging believers by the example of the elders who had acquired their renown by walking according to the same principle as that by which the faithful were now called to walk.

It is not a definition of this principle, that the epistle gives us at the commencement of chapter 11, but a declaration of its powers and action. Faith realizes (gives substance to) that which we hope for, and is a demonstration to the soul of that which we do not see.

There is much more order than is generally thought in the series given here of examples of the action of faith, although this order is not the principal object. I will point out its leading features.



First with regard to creation. Lost in reasonings, and not knowing God, the human mind sought out endless solutions of existence. Those who have read the cosmogonies of the ancients know how many different systems, each more absurd than the other, have been invented for that which the introduction of God, by faith, renders perfectly simple. Modern science, with a less active and more practical mind, stops at second causes; and it is but little occupied with God. Geology has taken the place of the cosmogony of the Hindoos, Egyptians, Orientals and philosophers. To the believer the thought is clear and simple; his mind is assured and intelligent by faith. God, by His word, called all things into existence. The universe is not a producing cause; it is itself a creature acting by a law imposed upon it. It is One having authority who has spoken; His word has divine efficacy. He speaks, and the thing is. We feel that this is worthy of God; for, when once God is brought in, all is simple. Shut Him out, and man is lost in the efforts of his own imagination, which can neither create nor arrive at the knowledge of a Creator, because it only works with the power of a creature. Before, therefore, the details of the present form of creation are entered upon, the word simply says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Whatever may have taken place between that and chaos forms no part of revelation. It is distinct from the special action of the deluge, which is made known to us. The beginning of Genesis does not give a history of the details of creation itself, nor the history of the universe. It gives the fact that in the beginning God created; and afterwards, the things that regard man on the earth. The angels even are not there. Of the stars it is only said, "He made the stars also"; when, we are not told.

By faith then we believe that the worlds were created by the word of God.

But sin has come in, and righteousness has to be found for fallen man, in order that he may stand before God. God has given a Lamb for the sacrifice. But here we have set before us, not the gift on God's part, but the soul drawing near to Him by faith.

By faith then Abel offers to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain — a sacrifice which (founded on the revelation already made by God) was offered in the intelligence which a conscience taught of God possessed, with regard to the position in which he who offered was standing. Death

and judgment had come in by sin, to man insupportable, although he must undergo them. He must go therefore to God, confessing this; but he must go with a substitute which grace has given. He must go with blood, the witness at the same time both of the judgment and of the perfect grace of God. Doing this, he was in the truth, and this truth was righteousness and grace. He approaches God and puts the sacrifice between himself and God. He receives the testimony that he is righteous — righteous according to the righteous judgment of God. For the sacrifice was in connection with the righteousness that had condemned man, and owned too the perfect value of that which was done in it. The testimony is to his offering; but Abel is righteous before God. Nothing can be more clear, more precious on this point. It is not only the sacrifice which is accepted, but Abel who comes with the sacrifice. He receives from God this testimony, that he is righteous. Sweet and blessed consolation! But the testimony is made to his gifts, so that he possessed all the certainty of acceptance according to the value of the sacrifice offered. In going to God by the sacrifice of Jesus, not only am I righteous (I receive the testimony that I am righteous), but this testimony is made to my offering; and therefore my righteousness has the value and the perfection of the offering; that is, of Christ offering Himself to God. The fact that we receive testimony on God's part that we are righteous, and at the same time that the testimony is made to the gift which we offer (not to the condition in which we are), is of infinite value to us. We are now before God according to the perfection of Christ's work. We walk with God thus.

By faith, death having been the means of my acceptance before God, all that belongs to the old man is abolished for faith; the power and the rights of death are entirely destroyed — Christ has undergone them. Thus, if it please God, we go to heaven without even passing through death (compare 2 Cor:1-4). God did this for Enoch, for Elijah, as a testimony. Not only are sins put away, and righteousness established by the work of Christ, but the rights and power of him who has the power of death are entirely destroyed. Death may happen to us — we are by nature liable to it; but we possess a life which is outside its jurisdiction. Death, if it come, is but gain to us; and although nothing but the power of God Himself can raise or transform the body, this power has been manifested in Jesus, and has already wrought in us by quickening us (compare Ephesians 1:19); and it

works in us now in the power of deliverance from sin, from the law, and from the flesh. Death, as a power of the enemy, is conquered; it is become a “gain” to faith, instead of being a judgment on nature. Life, the power of God in life, works in holiness and in obedience here below, and declares itself in the resurrection, or in the transformation of the body. It is a witness of power with regard to Christ in Romans 1:4.

But there is another very sweet consideration to be noticed here. Enoch received testimony that he pleased God, before he was translated. This is very important and very precious. If we walk with God, we have the testimony that we please Him; we have the sweetness of communion with God, the testimony of His Spirit, His intercourse with us in the sense of His presence, the consciousness of walking according to His word, which we know to be approved by Him — in a word, a life which, spent with Him and before Him by faith, is spent in the light of His countenance, and in the enjoyment of the communications of His grace and of a sure testimony, coming from Himself, that we are pleasing to Him. A child who walks with a kind father and converses with him, his conscience reproaching him with nothing — does he not enjoy the sense of his parent’s favor?

In figure Enoch here represents the position of the saints who compose the assembly. He is taken up to heaven by virtue of a complete victory over death. By the exercise of sovereign grace he is outside the government and the ordinary deliverance of God. He bears testimony by the Spirit to the judgment of the world, but he does not go through it (Jude 14, 15). A walk like that of Enoch has God for its object; His existence is realised — the great business of life, which in the world is spent as if man did everything — and the fact that He is interested in the walk of men, that He takes account of it, in order to reward those who diligently seek Him.

Noah is found in the scene of the government of this world. He does not warn others of the coming judgments as one who is outside them, although he is a preacher of righteousness. He is warned himself and for himself: he is in the circumstances to which the warning relates. It is the spirit of prophecy. He is moved by fear, and he builds an ark to the saving of his house. He thus condemned the world. Enoch had not to build an ark in order to pass safely through the flood. He was not in it: God translated

him — exceptionally. Noah is preserved (heir of the righteousness which is by faith) for a future world. There is a general principle which accepts the testimony of God respecting the judgment that will fall upon men, and the means provided by God for escaping it: this belongs to every believer.

But there is something more precise. Abel has the testimony that he is righteous; Enoch walks with God, pleases God, and is exempted from the common lot of humanity, proclaiming as from above the fate that awaits men, and the coming of Him who will execute the judgment. He goes forward to the accomplishment of the counsels of God. But neither Abel nor Enoch, thus viewed, condemned the world as that in the midst of which they were journeying, receiving themselves the warning addressed to those who were dwellers therein. This was Noah's case; the prophet, although delivered, is in the midst of the judged people. The assembly is outside them. Noah's ark condemned the world; the testimony of God was enough for faith, and he inherits a world that had been destroyed, and (what belongs to all believers) righteousness by faith, on which the new world too is founded. This is the case of the Jewish remnant in the last days. They pass through the judgments, out of which we, as not belonging to the world, have been taken. Warned themselves of God's way of government in the earth, they will be witnesses to the world of the coming judgments, and will be heirs of the righteousness which is by faith, and witnesses to it in a new world, wherein righteousness will be accomplished in judgment by Him who is come, and whose throne will uphold the world in which Noah himself failed. The words, "heir of the righteousness which is by faith," point out, I think, that this faith which had governed a few was summed up in his person, and that the whole unbelieving world was condemned. The witness of this faith before judgment, Noah passes through it: and when the world is renewed, he is a public witness to the blessing of God that rests on faith, although outwardly all is changed. Thus Enoch represents the saints of the present time; Noah, the Jewish remnant.\*

[\* Indeed all that are spared for the world to come. Their state is expressed in the end of Revelation 7, as that of the Jews in the first verses of chapter 14.]

The Spirit, after establishing the great fundamental principles of faith in action, goes on (v. 8) to produce examples of the divine life in detail, always in connection with Jewish knowledge, with that which the heart of

a Hebrew could not fail to own; and, at the same time, in connection with the object of the epistle and with the wants of Christians among the Hebrews.

In the previous case we have seen a faith which, after owning a Creator-God, recognises the great principles of the relations of man with God, and that onwards to the end upon earth.

In that which follows, we have first the patience of faith when it does not possess, but trusts God and waits, assured of fulfillment. This is from verse 8 to 22. We may subdivide it thus: first, the faith which takes the place of strangership on earth, and maintains it, because something better is desired; and which, in spite of weakness, finds the strength that is requisite in order to the fulfillment of the promises. This is from verses 8 to 16. Its effect is entrance into the joy of a heavenly hope. Strangers in the land of promise, and not enjoying the fulfillment of promises here below, they wait for more excellent things — things which God prepares on high for those who love Him. For such He has prepared a city. In unison with God in His own thoughts, their desires (through grace) answering to the things in which He takes delight, they are the objects of His peculiar regard. He is not ashamed to be called their God. Abraham not only followed God into a land that He showed him, but, a stranger there, and not possessing the land of promise, he is, by the mighty grace of God, exalted to the sphere of His thoughts; and, enjoying communion with God and the communications of His grace, he rests upon God for the time present, accepts his position of strangership on earth, and, as the portion of his faith, waits for the heavenly city of which God is the builder and the founder. There was not, so to speak, an open revelation of what was the subject of this hope, as was the case with that by which Abraham was called of God; but walking closely enough with God to know that which was enjoyed in His presence, and being conscious that he had not received the fulfillment of the promise, he lays hold of the better things, and waits for them, although only seeing them afar off, and remains a stranger upon earth, unmindful of the country whence he came out.

The special application of these first principles of faith to the case of the Hebrew Christians is evident. They are the normal life of faith for all.

The second character of faith presented in this part is entire confidence in the fulfillment of the promises — a confidence maintained in spite of all that might tend to destroy it. This is from verse 17 to 22.

We next find, the second great division, that faith makes its way through all the difficulties that oppose its progress (v. 23-27). And from verse 28 to 31 faith displays itself in a trust that reposes on God with regard to the use of the means which He sets before us, and of which nature cannot avail itself. Finally, there is the energy in general, of which faith is the source, and the sufferings that characterise the walk of faith.

\* This general character belongs to all the examples mentioned, namely, that they who have exercised faith have not received the fulfillment of the promise; the application of which to the state of the Hebrew Christians is evident. Further, these illustrious heroes of faith, however honored they might be among the Jews, did not enjoy the privileges that Christians possessed. God in His counsels had reserved something better for us.

[\* In general we may say that verses 8-22 are faith resting assured on the promise, the patience of faith: verse 23 to the end, faith resting on God for the activities and difficulties faith leads to, the energy of faith.]

Let us notice some details. Abraham's faith shows itself by a thorough trust in God. Called to leave his own people, breaking the ties of nature, he obeys. He knows not whither he is going: enough for him that God would show him the place. God, having brought him thither, gives him nothing. He dwells there content, in perfect reliance on God. He was a gainer by it. He waited for a city that had foundations. He openly confesses that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on earth (Genesis 23:4). Thus, in spirit, he draws nearer to God. Although he possesses nothing, his affections are engaged. He desires a better country, and attaches himself to God more immediately and entirely. He has no desire to return into his own country; he seeks a country. Such is the Christian. In offering up Isaac there was that absolute confidence in God which, at His command, can renounce even God's own promises as possessed after the flesh, sure that God would restore them through the exercise of His power, overcoming death and every obstacle.

It is thus that Christ renounced His rights as Messiah, and went even into death, committing Himself to the will of God and trusting in Him; and received everything in resurrection. And this the Hebrew Christians had to

do, with respect to the Messiah and the promises made to Israel. But, if there is simplicity of faith, for us the Jordan is dry, nor could we indeed have passed it if the Lord had not passed on before.

Observe here that, when trusting in God and giving up all for Him, we always gain, and we learn something more of the ways of His power: for in renouncing according to His will anything already received, we ought to expect from the power of God that He will bestow something else.

Abraham renounces the promise after the flesh. He sees the city which has foundations; he can desire a heavenly country. He gives up Isaac, in whom were the promises: he learns resurrection, for God is infallibly faithful. The promises were in Isaac: therefore God must restore him to Abraham, and by resurrection, if he offered him in sacrifice.

In Isaac faith distinguishes between the portion of God's people according to His election, and that of man having birthrights according to nature. This is the knowledge of the ways of God in blessing, and in judgment.

By faith Jacob, a stranger and feeble, having nothing but the staff with which he had crossed the Jordan, worships God, and announces the double portion of the heir of Israel, of the one whom his brethren rejected — a type of the Lord, the heir of all things. This lays the ground of worship.

By faith Joseph, a stranger, the representative here of Israel far from his own country, reckons on the fulfillment of the earthly promises.\*

[\* Observe that in these cases we find the rights of Christ in resurrection; the judgment of nature, and the blessing of faith, through grace; the inheritance of all things heavenly and earthly by Christ; and Israel's future return to their own land.]

These are the expressions of faith in the faithfulness of God, in the future fulfillment of His promise. In that which follows we have the faith which surmounts every difficulty that arises in the path of the man of God, in the way that God marks out for him as he journeys on towards the enjoyment of the promises.

The faith of the parents of Moses makes them disregard the king's cruel command, and they conceal their infant; whom God, in answer to their faith, preserved by extraordinary means when there was no other way to

save it. Faith does not reason; it acts from its own point of view, and leaves the result to God.

But the means which God used for the preservation of Moses placed him within a little of the highest position in the kingdom. He there came to be possessed of all the acquirements which that period could bestow on a man distinguished alike by his energy and his character. But faith does its work, and inspires divine affections which do not look to surrounding circumstances for a guide of action, even when those circumstances may have owned their origin to the most remarkable providences.

Faith has its own objects, supplied by God Himself, and governs the heart with a view to those objects. It gives us a place and relationships which rule the whole life, and leave no room for other motives and other spheres of affection which would divide the heart; for the motives and affections which govern faith are given by God, and given by Him in order to form and govern the heart.

Verses 24-26 develop this point. It is a very important principle; for we often hear Providence alleged as a reason for not walking by faith. Never was there a more remarkable Providence than that which placed Moses in the court of Pharaoh; and it gained its object. It would not have done so if Moses had not abandoned the position into which that Providence had brought him. But it was faith (that is to say, the divine affections which God had created in his heart), and not Providence as a rule and motive, which produced the effect for which Providence had preserved and prepared him. Providence (thanks be to God!) governs circumstances; faith governs the heart and the conduct.

The reward which God has promised comes in here as an avowed object in the sphere of faith. It is not the motive power; but it sustains and encourages the heart that is acting by faith, in view of the object which God presents to our affections. It thus takes the heart away from the present, from the influence of the things that surround us (whether they are things that attract or that tend to intimidate us), and elevates the heart and character of him who walks by faith, and confirms him in a path of devotedness which will lead him to the end at which he aims.



A motive outside that which is present to us is the secret of stability and of true greatness. We may have an object with regard to which we act; but we need a motive outside that object — a divine motive — to enable us to act in a godly way respecting it.

Faith realizes also (v. 27) the intervention of God without seeing Him; and thus delivers from all fear of the power of man — the enemy of His people. But the thought of God's intervention brings the heart into a greater difficulty than even the fear of man. If His people are to be delivered, God must intervene, and that in judgment. But they, as well as their enemies, are sinners; and the consciousness of sin and of deserving judgment necessarily destroys confidence in Him who is the Judge. Dare they see Him come to manifest His power in judgment (for this it is, in fact, which must take place for the deliverance of His people)? Is God for us — the heart asks — this God who is coming in judgment? But God has provided the means of securing safety in the presence of judgment (v. 28); a means apparently contemptible and useless, yet which in reality is the only one that, by glorifying Him with regard to the evil of which we are guilty, has power to afford shelter from the judgment which He executes.

Faith recognised the testimony of God by trusting to the efficacy of the blood sprinkled on the door, and could, in all security, let God come in judgment — God who, seeing the blood, would pass over His believing people. By faith Moses kept the passover. Observe here that, by the act of putting the blood on the door, the people acknowledged that they were as much the objects of the just judgment of God as the Egyptians. God had given them that which preserved them from it; but it was because they were guilty and deserved it. No one can stand before God.

Verse 29. But the power of God is manifested, and manifested in judgment. Nature, the enemies of God's people, think to pass through this judgment dry-shod, like those who are sheltered by redeeming power from the righteous vengeance of God. But the judgment swallows them up in the very same place in which the people find deliverance — a principle of marvelous import. There, where the judgment of God is, even there is the deliverance. Believers have truly experienced this in Christ. The cross is death and judgment, the two terrible consequences of sin, the lot of sinful man. To us they are the deliverance provided of God. By and in them we

are delivered, and (in Christ) we pass through and are out of their reach. Christ died and is risen; and faith brings us, by means of that which should have been our eternal ruin, into a place where death and judgment are left behind, and where our enemies can no longer reach us. We go through without their touching us. Death and judgment shield us from the enemy. They are our security. But we enter into a new sphere, we live by the effect not only of Christ's death, but of His resurrection.

Those who, in the mere power of nature, think to pass through (they who speak of death and judgment and Christ, taking the christian position, and thinking to pass through, although the power of God in redemption is not with them) are swallowed up.

With respect to the Jews, this event will have an earthly antitype; for in fact the day of God's judgment on earth will be the deliverance of Israel, who will have been brought to repentance.

This deliverance at the Red Sea goes beyond the protection of the blood in Egypt. There God coming in the expression of His holiness, executing judgment upon evil, what they needed was to be sheltered from that judgment — to be protected from the righteous judgment of God Himself. And, by the blood, God, thus coming to execute judgment, was shut out, and the people were placed in safety before the Judge. This judgment had the character of the eternal judgment. And God had the character of a Judge.

At the Red Sea it was not merely deliverance from judgment hanging over them; God was for the people, active in love and in power for them.\* The deliverance was an actual deliverance: they came out of that condition in which they had been enslaved, God's own power bringing them unhurt through that which otherwise must have been their destruction. Thus, in our case, it is Christ's death and resurrection, in which we participate, the redemption which He therein accomplished,\*\* which introduces us into an entirely new condition altogether outside that of nature. We are no longer in the flesh.

[\* Stand still, says Moses, and see the salvation of Jehovah.]

[\*\* Crossing the Jordan represents the believer being set at liberty, and intelligently entering by faith into the heavenlies; it is conscious death and

resurrection with Christ. The Red Sea is the power of redemption by Christ.]

In principle the earthly deliverance of the Jewish nation (the Jewish remnant) will be the same. Founded on the power of the risen Christ, and on the propitiation wrought out by His death, that deliverance will be accomplished by God, who will intervene on behalf of those that turn to Him by faith: at the same time that His adversaries (who are those also of His people) shall be destroyed by the very judgment which is the safeguard of the people whom they have oppressed.

Verse 30. Yet all difficulties were not overcome because redemption was accomplished, deliverance effected. But the God of deliverance was with them; difficulties disappear before Him. That which is a difficulty to man is none to Him. Faith trusts in Him, and uses means which only serve to express that trust. The walls of Jericho fall down at the sound of trumpets made of rams' horns, after Israel had compassed the city seven days, sounding these trumpets seven times.

Rahab, in presence of all the as yet unimpaired strength of the enemies of God and His people, identifies herself with the latter before they had gained one victory, because she felt that God was with them. A stranger to them (as to the flesh), she by faith escaped the judgment which God executed upon her people.

Verse 32. Details are now no longer entered into. Israel (although individuals had still to act by faith), being established in the land of promise, furnished less occasion to develop examples of the principles on which faith acted. The Spirit speaks in a general way of these examples in which faith reappeared under various characters and energy of patience, and sustained souls under all kinds of suffering. Their glory was with God, the world was not worthy of them. Nevertheless they had received nothing of the fulfillment of the promises; they had to live by faith, as well as the Hebrews, to whom the epistle was addressed. The latter, however, had privileges which were in no wise possessed by believers of former days. Neither the one nor the other was brought to perfection, that is, to the heavenly glory, unto which God has called us, and in which they are to participate. Abraham and others waited for this glory; they never possessed it: God would not give it them without us. But He has not

called us by the same revelations only as those which He made to them. For the days of the rejected Messiah He had reserved some better thing. Heavenly things have become things of the present time, things fully revealed and actually possessed in spirit, by the union of the saints with Christ, and present access into the holiest through the blood of Christ.

We have not to do with a promise and a distinct view of a place approached from without, entrance to which was not yet granted, so that relationship with God would not be founded on entrance within the veil — entrance into His own presence. We now go in with boldness. We belong to heaven; our citizenship is there; we are at home there. Heavenly glory is our present portion, Christ having gone in as our Forerunner. We have in heaven a Christ who is man glorified. This Abraham had not. He walked on earth with a heavenly mind, waiting for a city, feeling that nothing else would satisfy the desires which God had awakened in his heart; but he could not be connected with heaven by means of a Christ actually sitting there in glory. This is our present portion. We can even say that we are united to Him there. The Christian's position is quite different from that of Abraham. God had reserved some better thing for us.

The Spirit does not here develop the whole extent of this “better thing,” because the assembly is not His subject. He presents the general thought to the Hebrews to encourage them, that believers of the present day have special privileges, which they enjoy by faith, but which did not belong even to the faith of believers in former days.

We shall be perfected, that is to say, glorified together in resurrection; but there is a special portion which belongs to the saints now, and which did not belong to the patriarchs. The fact that Christ, as man, is in heaven after having accomplished redemption, and that the Holy Ghost, by whom we are united to Christ, is on earth, made this superiority granted to Christians easily understood. Accordingly even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of those who preceded it.

**CHAPTER 12.** The epistle now enters on the practical exhortations that flow from its doctrinal instruction, with reference to the dangers peculiar to the Hebrew Christians — instruction suited throughout to inspire them with courage. Surrounded with a cloud of witnesses like these of chapter 11, who all declared the advantages of a life of faith in promises still

unfulfilled, they ought to feel themselves impelled to follow their steps, running with patience the race set before them, and above all looking away from every difficulty\* to Jesus, who had run the whole career of faith, sustained by the joy that was set before Him, and, having reached the goal, had taken His seat in glory at the right hand of God.

[\* It is not insensibility to them, but, when they are felt to be there, looking from them to Christ. This is the secret of faith. "Be careful for nothing" need not have been said, if nothing had been there calculated to awaken care. Abraham considered not his body now dead.]

This passage presents the Lord, not as He who bestows faith, but as He who has Himself run the whole career of faith. Others had travelled a part of the road, had surmounted some difficulties; the obedience and the perseverance of the Lord had been subjected to every trial of which human nature is susceptible. Men, the adversary, the being forsaken of God, everything was against Him. His disciples flee when He is in danger, His intimate friend betrays Him; He looks for some one to have compassion on Him and finds no one. The fathers (of whom we read in the previous chapter) trusted in God and were delivered, but as for Jesus, He was a worm, and no man; His throat was dry with crying. His love for us, His obedience to His Father, surmounted all. He carries off the victory by submission, and takes His seat in a glory exalted in proportion to the greatness of His abasement and obedience, the only just reward for having perfectly glorified God where He had been dishonored by sin. The joy and the rewards that are set before us are never the motives of the walk of faith — we know this well with regard to Christ, but it is not the less true in our own case — they are the encouragement of those who walk in it.

Jesus, then, who has attained the glory due to Him, becomes an example to us in the sufferings through which He passed in attaining it; therefore we are neither to lose courage nor to grow weary. We have not yet, like Him, lost our lives in order to glorify God and to serve Him. The way in which the apostle engages them to disentangle themselves from every hindrance, whether sin or difficulty, is remarkable; as though they had nothing to do but to cast them off as useless weights. And in fact, when we look at Jesus, nothing is easier; when we are not looking at Him, nothing more impossible.

There are two things to be cast off: every weight, and the sin that would entangle our feet (for he speaks of one who is running in the race). The flesh, the human heart, is occupied with cares and difficulties; and the more we think of them, the more we are burdened by them. It is enticed by the object of its desires, it does not free itself from them. The conflict is with a heart that loves the thing against which we strive; we do not separate ourselves from it in thought. When looking at Jesus, the new man is active; there is a new object, which unburdens and detaches us from every other by means of a new affection which has its place in a new nature: and in Jesus Himself, to whom we look, there is a positive power which sets us free.

It is by casting it all off in an absolute way that the thing is easy — by looking at that which fills the heart with other things, and occupies it in a different sphere, where a new object and a new nature act upon each other; and in that object there is a positive power which absorbs the heart and shuts out all objects that act merely on the old nature. What is felt to be a weight is easily cast off. Everything is judged of by its bearing on the object we aim at. If I run in a race and all my thought is the prize, a bag of gold is readily cast away. It is a weight. But we must look to Jesus. Only in Him can we cast off every hindrance easily and without reservation. We cannot combat sin by the flesh.

But there is another class of trials that come from without: they are not to be cast off, they must be born. Christ, as we have seen, went through them. We have not like Him resisted even to the shedding of our blood rather than fail in faithfulness and obedience. Now God acts in these trials as a father. He chastises us. They come perhaps, as in the case of Job, from the enemy, but the hand and the wisdom of God are in them. He chastises those whom He loves. We must therefore neither despise the chastisement nor be discouraged by it. We must not despise it, for He does not chastise without a motive or a cause (moreover, it is God who does it); nor must we be discouraged, for He does it in love.

If we lose our life for the testimony of the Lord and in resisting sin, the warfare is ended; and this is not chastisement, but the glory of suffering with Christ. Death in this case is the negation of sin. He who has died is free from sin; he who has suffered in the flesh has done with sin. But up to

that point, the flesh in practice (for we have a right to reckon ourselves dead) is not yet destroyed; and God knows how to unite the manifestation of the faithfulness of the new man who suffers for the Lord, with the discipline by which the flesh is mortified. For example, Paul's thorn in the flesh united these two things. It was painful to him in the exercise of his ministry, for it was something that tended to make him contemptible when preaching (and this he endured for the Lord's sake), but at the same time it kept his flesh in check.

Verse 9. Now we are subject to our natural parents, who discipline us after their own will: how much more then to the Father of spirits,\* who makes us partakers of His own holiness! Observe here the grace that is appealed to. We have seen how much the Hebrews needed warning — their tendency was to fail in the career of faith. The means of preventing this is doubtless not to spare warning, but yet to bring the soul fully into connection with grace. This alone can give strength and courage through confidence in God.

[\* "Father of spirits" is simply in contrast with "fathers of our flesh."]

We are not come to Mount Sinai, to the law which makes demands on us, but to Sion, where God manifested His power in re-establishing Israel by His grace in the person of the elect king, when, as to the responsibility of the people, all was entirely lost, all relationship with God impossible on that footing, for the ark was lost; there was no longer a mercy-seat, no longer a throne of God among the people. Ichabod was written on Israel.

Therefore in speaking of holiness he says, God is active in love towards you, even in your very sufferings. It is He who has not only given free access to Himself, by the blood and by the presence of Christ in heaven for us, but who is continually occupied with all the details of your life; whose hand is in all your trials, who thinks unceasingly about you, in order to make you partakers of His holiness. This is not to require holiness on our part — necessary as it must ever be — it is in order to make us partakers of His own holiness. What immense and perfect grace! What a means! It is the means by which to enjoy God Himself perfectly.

Verse 11. God does not expect us to find these exercises of soul pleasant at the moment (they would not produce their effect if they were so): but

afterwards, the will being broken they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The pride of man is brought down when he is obliged to submit to that which is contrary to his will. God also takes a larger (ever precious) place in his thoughts and in his life.

Verse 12. On the principle then of grace, the Hebrews are exhorted to encourage themselves in the path of faith, and to watch against the buddings of sin among them, whether in yielding to the desires of the flesh, or in giving up christian privileges for something of the world. They were to walk so courageously that their evident joy and blessing (which is always a distinct testimony and one that triumphs over the enemy) should make the weak feel that it was their own assured portion also; and thus strength and healing would be administered to them instead of discouragement. The path of godliness as to circumstances was to be made easy, a beaten path to weak and lame souls; and they would feel more than stronger souls the comfort and value of such a path.

Grace, we have already said, is the motive given for this walk; but grace is here presented in a form that requires to be considered a little in detail.

We are not come, it says, to Mount Sinai. There the terrors of the majesty of God kept man at a distance. No one was to approach Him. Even Moses feared and trembled at the presence of Jehovah. This is not where the Christian is brought. But, in contrast with such relationships as these with God, the whole millennial state in all its parts is developed; according however to the way in which these different parts are now known as things hoped for. We belong to it all; but evidently these things are not yet established. Let us name them: Sion; the heavenly Jerusalem; the angels and general assembly; the church of the firstborn, whose names are inscribed in heaven; God the Judge of all; the spirits of the just made perfect; Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and finally, the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Sion we have spoken of as a principle. It is the intervention of sovereign grace (in the king) after the ruin, and in the midst of the ruin, of Israel, re-establishing the people according to the counsels of God in glory, and their relationships with God Himself. It is the rest of God on the earth, the seat of the Messiah's royal power. But, as we know, the extent of the earth is far from being the limits of the Lord's inheritance. Sion on earth is



Jehovah's rest; it is not the city of the living God — the heavenly Jerusalem is that, the heavenly capital, so to speak, of His kingdom, the city that has foundations, whose founder and builder is God Himself.

Having named Sion below, the author turns naturally to Jerusalem above, but this carries him into heaven, and he finds himself with all the people of God, in the midst of a multitude of angels, the great universal assembly\* of the invisible world. There is however one peculiar object on which his eye rests in this marvelous and heavenly scene. It is the assembly of the firstborn whose names are inscribed in heaven. They were not born there, not indigenous like the angels, whom God preserved from falling. They are the objects of the counsels of God. It is not merely that they reach heaven: they are the glorious heirs and firstborn of God, according to His eternal counsels, in accordance with which they are registered in heaven. The assembly composed of the objects of grace, now called in Christ, belongs to heaven by grace. They are not the objects of the promises, who, not having received the fulfillment of the promises on earth, do not fail to enjoy them in heaven. They have the anticipation of no other country or citizenship than heaven. The promises were not addressed to them. They have no place on earth. Heaven is prepared for them by God Himself. Their names are inscribed there by Him. It is the highest place in heaven above the dealings of God in government, promise, and law on the earth. This leads the picture of glory on to God Himself. But (having reached the highest point, that which is most excellent in grace) He is seen under another character, namely, as the Judge of all, as looking down from on high to judge all that is below. This introduces another class of these blessed inhabitants of the heavenly glory: those whom the righteous Judge owned as His before the heavenly assembly was revealed, the spirits of the just arrived at perfection. They had finished their course, they had overcome in conflict, they were waiting only for glory. They had been connected with the dealings of God on the earth, but — faithful before the time for its blessing was come — they had their rest and their portion in heaven.

[\* The word here translated "assembly" was that of all the states of Greece; that of the "firstborn" is the word for the assembly of citizens of any particular state.]

It was the purpose of God nevertheless to bless the earth. He could not do so according to man's responsibility: His people even were but as grass. He would therefore establish a new covenant with Israel, a covenant of pardon, and according to which He would write the law in the hearts of His people. The Mediator of this covenant had already appeared and had done all that was required for its establishment. The saints among the Hebrews were come to the Mediator of the new covenant: blessing was thus prepared for the earth and secured to it.

Finally, the blood of Christ had been shed on earth, as that of Abel by Cain; but, instead of crying from the earth for vengeance, so that Cain became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth (a striking type of the Jew, guilty of the death of Christ), it is grace that speaks; and the shed blood cries to obtain pardon and peace for those who shed it.

It will be observed that, although speaking of the different parts of millennial blessing, with its foundations, all is given according to the present condition of things, before the coming of that time of blessing from God. We are in it as to our relationships; but the spirits of the just men of the Old Testament only are here spoken of, and only the Mediator of this new covenant: the covenant itself is not established. The blood cries, but the answer in earthly blessing has not yet come. This is easily understood. It is exactly according to the existing state of things, and even throws considerable light on the position of the Hebrew Christians and on the doctrine of the epistle. The important thing for them was, that they should not turn away from Him who spoke from heaven. It was with Him they had to do. We have seen them connected with all that went before, with the Lord's testimony on earth; but in fact they had to do at that time with the Lord Himself as speaking from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now, speaking with the authority of grace and from heaven, He announced the dissolution of everything which the flesh could lean upon, or on which the creature could rest its hopes.

All that could be shaken should be dissolved. How much more fatal to turn away from Him that speaketh now, than from the commandments even of Sinai! This shaking of all things (whether here or in the analogous passage in 2 Peter) evidently goes beyond Judaism, but has a peculiar application to it. Judaism was the system and the frame of the relationships of God

with men on earth according to the principle of responsibility on their part. All this was of the first creation, but its springs were poisoned; heaven, the seat of the enemy's power, perverted and corrupted; the heart of man on earth was corrupt and rebellious. God will shake and change all things. The result will be a new creation in which righteousness shall dwell.

Meanwhile the first fruits of this new creation were being formed; and in Christianity God was forming the heavenly part of the kingdom that cannot be moved; and Judaism — the center of the earthly system and of human responsibility — was passing away. The apostle therefore announces the shaking of all things — that everything which exists as the present creation shall be set aside. With regard to the present fact he says only, “we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved”; and calls us to serve God with true piety, because our God is a consuming fire; not — as people say — God out of Christ, but our God. This is His character in holy majesty and in righteous judgment of evil.

**CHAPTER 13.** In this next chapter there is more than one truth important to notice. The exhortations are as simple as they are weighty, and require but few remarks. They rest in the sphere in which the whole of the epistle does: what relates to the Christian's path as walking here, not what flows from union with Christ in heavenly places. Brotherly love, hospitality, care for those in bonds, the strict maintenance of the marriage tie and personal purity, the avoiding of covetousness: such are the subjects of exhortation, all important and connected with the gracious walk of a Christian, but not drawn from the higher and more heavenly sources and principles of the christian life as we see in Ephesians and Colossians. Nor, even though there be more analogy — for the epistle to the Romans rests in general in life in Christ in this world, presenting Christ's resurrection, without going on to His ascension\* are the exhortations such as in this latter epistle. Those which follow connect themselves with the circumstances in which the Hebrews found themselves, and rest on the approaching abolition and judgment of Judaism, from which they had now definitely to separate themselves.

[\* It is only spoken of in chapter 8:34, and an allusion in chapter 10:6.]

In exhorting them (v. 7) to remember those who have guided the flock, he speaks of those already departed in contrast with those still living (v. 17).

The issue of their faith might well encourage others to follow their steps, to walk by those principles of faith which had led them to so noble a result.

Moreover Christ never changed; He was the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Let them abide in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Nothing is a plainer proof that the heart is not practically in possessing of that which gives rest in Christ, that it does not realise what Christ is, than the restless search after something new — "divers and strange doctrines." To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and our privilege. The search after novelties which are foreign to Him, is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But He who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know Him, or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him, and not to feel that He is everything, that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

Now with regard to Judaism, in which the Hebrews were naturally inclined to seek satisfaction for the flesh, the apostle goes farther. They were no longer Jews in the possession of the true worship of God, a privileged worship in which others had no right to participate. The altar of God belonged now to the Christians. Christians only had a right to it. An earthly worship, in which there was no entering within the veil, into God's own presence in the sanctuary, could no longer subsist — a worship that had its worldly glory, that belonged to the elements of this world and had its place there. Now, it is either heaven, or the cross and shame. The great sacrifice for sin has been offered; but by its efficacy, it brings us into the sanctuary, into heaven itself, where the blood has been carried in; and on the other hand it takes us outside the camp, a religious people connected with the world down here, into shame and rejection on earth. This is the portion of Christ. In heaven He is accepted, He has gone in with His own blood — on earth cast out and despised.

A worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on the earth, is the denial of Christianity.

Here we have no continuing city, we seek the one which is to come. By Christ we offer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. By sharing also

our goods with others, by doing good in every way, we offer sacrifices with which God is well pleased (v. 16).

He then exhorts them to obey those who, as responsible to God, watch over souls, and who go before the saints in order to lead them on. It is a proof of that humble spirit of grace which seeks only to please the Lord.

The sense of this responsibility makes Paul ask the saints to pray for him, but with the declaration that he had assuredly a good conscience. We serve God, we act for Him, when He is not obliged to be acting on us. That is to say, the Spirit of God acts by our means when He has not to occupy us with ourselves. When the latter is the case, one could not ask for the prayers of saints as a laborer. While the Spirit is exercising us in our conscience, we cannot call ourselves laborers of God. When the conscience is good, we can ask unreservedly for the prayers of the saints. The apostle so much the more asked for them because he hoped thus the sooner to see them again.

Finally, he invokes blessing upon them, giving God the title he so often ascribes to Him — "the God of peace." In the midst of exercise of heart with regard to the Hebrews, of arguments to preserve their love from growing cold, in the midst of the moral unsteadiness that enfeebled the walk of these Christians, and their trials in the breaking down of what they considered stable and holy, this title has a peculiarly precious character.

The Spirit sets them also in the presence of a risen Christ, of a God who had founded and secured peace by the death of Christ, and had given a proof of it in His resurrection. He had brought Christ again from the dead according to the power of the blood of the everlasting\* covenant. On this blood the believing people might build a hope that nothing could shake. For it was not, as at Sinai, promises founded on the condition of the people's obedience, but on the ransom which had been paid, and the perfect expiation of their disobedience. The blessing was therefore unchangeable, the covenant (as the inheritance and the redemption) was everlasting. He prays that the God who had wrought it, would work in them to grant them full power and energy for the accomplishment of His will, working Himself in them that which was well-pleasing in His sight.

[\* The word “everlasting” is specific, in the epistle to the Hebrews, in contrast with a system which was passing away. It speaks of eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, the eternal Spirit even.]

He urges them to give heed to exhortation; he had only sent them a few words.

He who wrote the letter desires they should know that Timothy had been set at liberty; he himself was so already; he was in Italy; circumstances which tend to confirm the idea that it was Paul who wrote this letter a very interesting point, although in nowise affecting its authority.

It is the Spirit of God who everywhere gives His own authority to the word.