

THE SUPREME GOSPEL

A Study of The Epistle to the Hebrews

BY

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BY
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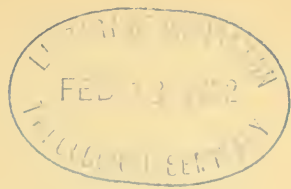
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THE SUPREME GOSPEL

STUDY I

PROLEGOMENA

THE Epistle to the Hebrews has been called "The First Apology of the Christian Church." An apology is a defense or vindication of that for which one contends. The writer is the first Christian Apologist, presenting the claims of the Christian religion to be the complete and final revelation of God. This Epistle preserves for us the first reasoned argument for the truth of the Gospel. It calls itself "the word of exhortation" (13:22). It was written to strengthen wavering Jewish Christians who were in danger of returning to their former faith.

I. The Theme of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 12:1-2

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The theme of the Epistle is the finality of the Christian religion. Christianity is the supreme religion. In the setting of a musical symphony through all the complexity of the music there runs the familiar strain of a constantly recurring theme. The theme dominates the music and binds all the parts into an harmonious unity. It is so with the Epistle to the Hebrews. The language is majestically and grandly eloquent, and the argument flows on with cumulative intensity, but always through the complex and intricate thought there runs the simplicity of the theme. The notes of the theme are struck again and again. The theme is *the supremacy of Jesus Christ*. After the introduction has gathered itself up into a triumphant appeal the author proclaims his message: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (3:1). When the argument draws to its inevitable conclusion there is his fine finish: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever" (13:8). This note dominates the thought of the book. Jesus is supreme. This is the recurring theme in the music. He is appointed

heir of all things, the very effulgence of God's glory (1:3).

Jesus is supreme. All else is secondary. The words "better than," "more excellent," are the key notes in the theme. Jesus is "better than" the angels (1:4) and his is a "more excellent" name (1:4). Jesus brings men to a "better hope" (7:19), even as He is "the surety of a better covenant" (7:22). His is "a ministry the more excellent" (8:6), and He is also the "mediator of a better covenant" (8:6), the offerer of a "better sacrifice" (9:23). In Jesus a "better country" (11:16) is promised, and a "better resurrection" assured (11:35). The Epistle is one of the most eloquent arguments in literature, and the theme of the entire argument is Jesus.

SUGGESTION: Select references from the Epistle that bear upon the theme. Relate the theme to the words of the wonderful hymn attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux (11th century), "Jesus the very thought of Thee."

The theme of the hymn and of the Epistle are the same.

II. The Purpose of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 4:14-16

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,

let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

Why was this Epistle written? We seek the answer from the message which the book contains. The author calls it "the word of exhortation" (13:22).

The people to whom the Epistle was addressed were Hebrew Christians. Christ had been a reality to them. They are addressed as "holy brethren" (3:1). The "good tidings" had been preached to them (4:2). They had been "enlightened" and had "tasted of the heavenly gift," and had been "partakers of the Holy Spirit," and "tasted the good word of God" and "the powers of the age to come" (6:4-5). They are urged to "press on unto perfection" (6:1), and are commended for their work and the love which they showed "toward his name, in that they ministered unto the saints, and still do minister" (6:10). Altogether their record has been commendable.

Danger, however, threatened them. They had endured a great "conflict of sufferings," had endured "reproaches and afflictions," and had taken even "joyfully the spoiling of their possessions" (10:

32-34). But now they were in danger of losing heart, and even in danger of "falling away from the living God" (3:12). The hope of the second coming of Christ in which they trusted was being unduly delayed (10:35-38).

The writer fears they will "drift away" (2:1) and "harden their heart" through "disobedience" (4:7). He urges them not to refuse "God's call" (12:25) lest they should "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (6:6). His admonition frequently reiterated is "hold fast your confidence unto the end."

The reason assigned for this grievous state of affairs is very evident. Their Christian life had suffered arrested development. They had ceased to "grow in grace." They should have become teachers of others but were still in the kindergarten being taught the first principles of the faith (5:12; 6:1). Consequently they had lost interest in religion (2:3; 6:12). They had become suspicious and critical of their leaders (13:17), and a worldly spirit was crowding out the Spirit of Christ (12:16). The danger was imminent and the warnings were opportune.

The situation here described is the commonest of all religious situations. Dr. Andrew Murray is quite within the truth when he says that the condition of these early Christians was very much what

has been the story of almost every church. It is the story of religious awakening, of difficult and dangerous conditions, of temptation and trial, of neglect and indifference, of the world being "too much with us," of having trodden under foot the Son of God, and having "done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (10:29). For such a condition there is only one safeguard, and it is found in the message of this Epistle. "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

SUGGESTION: Tabulate the charges which the author makes. Relate these charges to the words of the ancient Litany: "That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them who fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet; we beseech thee to hear us, good Lord."

III. The Argument of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 13:20-21

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever."

The author is writing to Jewish Christians who are in danger of falling away from the faith of Christ. They are like ships at sea tossed by the storms of persecution and religious doubt, and he bids them lay hold again on Christ as the very anchor of their souls (6:19).

His argument is simplicity itself, and he goes on unhindered to his great conclusion. Cling to Christ, he says. Hold Him fast. He is the final revelation of God's own character, the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance (1:3). All things head up in Christ. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever" (13:8). Cling to Him. The world changes. Philosophies change. Nations come and go. He abides. It is a message for such a time as that through which we ourselves are now living. In Him the things that cannot be shaken remain (12:27). Jesus has opened the way to God. He is the "new and living way" (10:20). The final test of all religion is its ability to bring us into the immediate presence of God. "Jesus," in the words of Dr. Bruce, "obtains for us free, unrestricted, access to God." Wesley's words are interpretive of the author's thought.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find."

Writing to Hebrew Christians versed in the lan-

guage of the Old Testament, the argument is set in the mold of Jewish thought. It will be our purpose to see the reality in the symbolism. Christianity has supplanted Judaism by transforming and completely fulfilling it. Judaism was the shadow; Christianity is the substance. Judaism was temporary; Christianity is the abiding. Judaism was the material; Christianity is the spiritual. Judaism was the dream; Christianity is the reality. Judaism was old and ready to vanish away (8:13); Christianity is a kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:28).

This contrast is reiterated. The law of the Old Testament made nothing perfect (7:19), but Jesus became "the surety of a better covenant" (7:22). Christianity belongs to the age to come (6:5) which has no reference to time but to the eternal realities of the spirit. Religion is interpreted in terms of a covenant relation. A covenant is a bond of fellowship. Judaism is the old covenant or fellowship, but Christ is the "mediator of a better covenant—a better fellowship" (7:22). The old was mediated by angels, but the new by God's own Son (1:2). The old was inaugurated by weak and imperfect men, such as Moses and Joshua, who promised the people rest but could never secure it for them (3:11), but Jesus brings his people into the very presence of God Himself (9:24). The priesthood of the old covenant was a changing, dying

priesthood, but Jesus "because He abideth forever hath his priesthood unchangeable" (7:23-24). He holds authority "after the power of an endless life" (7:16). The tabernacle with its holy place was built by human hands, but "Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (9:24). The ancient sacrifices were of the "blood of bulls and goats" and could never take away sin (10:4), but once at the end of the ages hath Christ been manifest to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Through his sacrifice we, his brethren, may with "boldness enter into the holy place (God's presence) by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way" (10:19-20). The end of true religion is to bring men to God. Because Christ does this, his Gospel is God's final revelation and meets man's last need.

"This hath He done and shall we not adore Him?
This shall He do and can we still despair?
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,
Cast at his feet the burden of our care."

SUGGESTION: Consider carefully what is involved in speaking of Christianity as the *final* religion. If you could truthfully say of Christ, "All I need in

Thee I find," would that prove the finality of the Gospel?

IV. The First Readers of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 10:24-25

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh."

The title of the Epistle in the Authorized Version is "The Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Hebrews." The title in the Revised Version is "To the Hebrews." The Revised Version of course is right. Who, then, were the Hebrews to whom this Epistle was written? The superscription of the Authorized Version is "Written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy." There is no superscription in the Revised Version, and again it is right.

The reference, "They of Italy salute you" (13:24) may mean Italians in Italy, or Italians away from Italy, and so we are left to search for the destination of the Epistle and the condition of the readers from other references.

Where did these Jewish Christians live to whom this important message was sent? The conditions to be fulfilled are found in the Epistle. These Jewish

Christians had not received the Gospel from Christ Himself, but from his immediate disciples (2:4). This one fact would make it impossible for Jerusalem to be the destination of the Epistle, for the Christians of Jerusalem received the Gospel from Christ Himself. They belonged, however, to the first generation of Christians although their first leaders had passed into the great beyond. In chapter 10:32-39, the former condition of the readers is graphically pointed out. They had been happy-hearted Christians until persecution and suffering had worn out their patience and shadowed their faith. They had, however, "not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (12:5). This passage may refer to martyrdom, or be a metaphor, suggesting the last limit of endurance. If it referred to martyrdom then it would be difficult to consider Rome as the destination, for there martyrdom was early experienced and glorified. On the other hand it is difficult to understand why the author should send the salutations of those "of Italy" if the Epistle had no connection with Italy, and if with Italy, then with Rome. The readers are advised to keep up their church worship, not "forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is" (10:25), and the suggestion has been made that this reference is to the habit of forsaking their own church for other churches in the same city. The

reference would then be to a single Jewish Christian congregation in a large city. Rome more than any other city meets the condition. There were Jewish colonies there. Persecution and suffering were common among the Jewish Christians of Rome. The reference to Timothy (13:23) would be understood. Certain it is that the first reference we find to the Epistle is in Rome, and in Rome also we find, as Dr. Davidson has said, "the consistent denial there of its Pauline authorship."

SUGGESTION: Select passages which show clearly that the writer knew intimately the people to whom he was writing and identified himself with them. Note the constant appeal, "Let us fear" (4:1), "Let us give diligence" (4:11), "Let us hold fast" (4:14), "Let us draw near" (4:16), "Let us consider" (10:24). Are we best able to help those with whose situations we are most familiar?

V. The Author and Date of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 4:14-16

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us there-

fore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous. We do not know and probably shall never know who wrote the most eloquent and most fascinating book in the New Testament. The words which Dr. Davidson has used concerning the authorship of the book of Job have been applied to this Epistle. "There are some minds that cannot put up with uncertainty, and are under the necessity of deluding themselves into quietude by fixing on some known name. There are others to whom it is a comfort to think that in this omniscient age a few things still remain mysterious. Uncertainty is to them more suggestive than exact knowledge. No literature has so many great anonymous works as that of Israel. The religious life of this people was at certain periods very intense, and at these periods the spiritual energy of the nation expressed itself almost impersonally, through men who forgot themselves and were speedily forgotten in name by others."

Attempts, however, to discover the authorship have not been wanting. The first evidence we have of the existence of the Epistle is about 95 A.D. in the letter of Clement of Rome to the church in Corinth, but no reference to the author is made. In the

Roman church it was not until the time of Jerome and Augustine (4th century) that the name of Paul was connected with the authorship. In the North African churches, Tertullian, 220 A.D., assigned the authorship of the Epistle to Barnabas. At Alexandria the authorship was early ascribed to Paul with the explanation, however, that some other hand than Paul's gave it to us in its present form. Origen, of the third century, usually ascribes the Epistle to Paul, with the suggestion that the thought is Paul's, but that some other hand put it into its present form. He says, "If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the Apostle, but the phrasing and composition are those of some one who remembered what the teacher had said. If then any church holds this Epistle to be Paul's, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have our predecessors handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the Epistle, in truth, God knows. The account that has reached us is, that some say it was written by Clement who became Bishop of the Romans, while others ascribed it to Luke, the author of the Gospel and Acts."

Why the name of Paul became associated with the Epistle to the Hebrews is difficult to determine. It is probable that the Jewish atmosphere of the Epistle had much to do with it. The translation of the Old Version of 10:34 had doubtless some-

thing to do with it, where, instead of the reading, "Ye had compassion on them that were in bonds," the words read, "Ye had compassion of me in my bonds." The mention of Timothy also at the close of the Epistle would naturally associate the writing with Paul. The reason, however, may have been that in the early history of the canon the book had to come into its place under the cloak of an Apostle, and was early associated with the Epistles of Paul.

But it is generally conceded that the book could not have been written by Paul. Paul always authenticated his Epistles. The book has more sustained eloquence than is characteristic of the writing of Paul. Expressions and points of view are different. It has been pointed out that whereas Paul frequently used the words "Christ Jesus," occurring as it does ninety times in his Epistles, that expression is entirely absent in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Apart from these reasons it would seem as if the reference in 2:3 is conclusive against the suggestion that Paul is the author. Paul did not receive his gospel from man, but from Christ Himself, and the note which Paul was always striking concerning the gospel in its relation to the Gentile world is absent from this Epistle.

In regard to the authorship, Dr. Davidson says, "Conjectures have multiplied, but no new facts have emerged." Luther suggested the name of Apollos

as the author, and many have been drawn to his suggestion. Apollos was eloquent and trained in the thought of the Apostle Paul. In recent years the names of Aquila and Priscilla have been mentioned, as well as Luke, whose language in certain respects reminds one of Hebrews, but the authorship still remains in obscurity, and it may be that it never can be solved.

Concerning the date a few words will suffice. Jerusalem was destroyed A.D. 70. From the wording of 10:1 in which the author speaks of "the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually," it would seem as if those sacrifices were still going on when the author wrote. This would date the Epistle before A.D. 70. In 12:27 we have the suggestive words, "And this word, *Yet once more*, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain." It would seem as if the end of the Jewish economy were imminent. Clement of Rome referred to the Epistle A.D. 90. This is the earliest reference to it which we possess. The Epistle should therefore be dated somewhere between the death of Paul and A.D. 90. It is more frequently dated between the years 62 and 67.

SUGGESTION: Would you consider the question of authorship to be one of importance? Does the fact

that the hymn, "Come, Thou Almighty King" is anonymous, take from it anything of value or power? In what way would the knowledge of the authorship be helpful to us in the study of the Epistle?

VI. The Outline of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 10:35-36

"Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

The Epistle to the Hebrews divides itself naturally into two parts. The second part begins at chapter 10, verse 19. The first part is mainly concerned with doctrine, although after each doctrinal advance there is a short practical exhortation. The second part concerns itself altogether with practical exhortation and warning. The outline suggested for study in this text-book is here given.

Subject: The Supreme Gospel

STUDY I.—The Supreme Gospel—Prolegomena.

PART I: THE ARGUMENT (1:1 to 10:18)

STUDY II.—The Supreme Revelation (1:1 to 2:18).
The First Argument.

STUDY III. The Supreme Redemption (3:1 to 4:13). The Second Argument.

STUDY IV. The Supreme Fellowship (4:14 to 6:20). The Third Argument.

STUDY V. The Supreme Personality (7:1-28). The Third Argument (continued).

STUDY VI. The Supreme Ministry (8:1 to 9:14). The Third Argument (continued).

STUDY VII. The Supreme Sacrifice (9:15 to 10:18). The Third Argument (concluded).

PART II: THE EXHORTATION

(10:19 to 13:25)

STUDY VIII. The Supreme Reality (10:19 to 11:40).

STUDY IX. The Supreme Culture (12:1-29).

STUDY X. The Supreme Challenge (13:1-25).

SUGGESTION: Read the entire Epistle through at one sitting with this outline in mind.

VII. The Supreme Gospel

QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. What is meant by calling the Epistle to the Hebrews, "The First Apology for Christianity"?
2. What is the theme of the Epistle?
3. Is the purpose of the Epistle to prove an argument or to influence conduct?

4. In this Epistle what relation does Christianity bear to Judaism? Does Christianity bear a similar relation to other religions?

5. What were the circumstances and moral conditions of those to whom this Epistle was first sent?

6. Give reasons for holding that the author of the Epistle was not Paul.

7. How do you determine the approximate date of the Epistle?

8. Give in outline the analysis of the Epistle followed in this text-book.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Text: The Revised Version of the Bible. This is essential and by following it many explanations of the Authorized Version are rendered unnecessary. Moffatt's "A New Translation of the New Testament," will be found suggestive and helpful.

Commentaries: A. B. Davidson, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," Scribner (T. & T. Clark), \$1.10.

A. S. Peake, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," The New Century Bible, Henry Frowde, 90 cents.
Hastings Bible Dictionary, article, "Epistle to the Hebrews."

SUGGESTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. The first thing necessary to obtain a grasp of

the Epistle is to become familiar with the Epistle itself. Read it until its words and messages are your own.

2. The wording of many of the truths of the Epistle are in the language of the Old Testament. Words are symbols. Endeavor always to find the reality behind the symbol.

3. Hide away in memory the great central verses of the Epistle. Such memory work will aid both diction and devotion.

4. Lift your thought occasionally from the way in which the Epistle expresses a truth to the way in which Jesus and the Apostles express the same truth.

Prayer

O Lord, Thy word endures amid the changes of time. Its message abides because Christ abides. He is the same yesterday, to-day, yea, He will be the same forever. As a face through a lattice may we see Him who was revealed to these first century Christians, and may He who was their Leader bring us into the abiding fellowship of the Father. Amen.

STUDY II

THE SUPREME REVELATION

1:1—2:18

THE first of three great sections into which the argument of the Epistle is divided covers chapters 1 and 2. The second section, chapter 3 to the 13th verse of chapter 4. The third section, from chapter 4, verse 14, to verse 18 of chapter 10. The first section contrasts and compares Jesus as the only revealer of God, with the revelation given through angels and prophets.

The Epistle starts without introduction and presents Jesus as the supreme revelation of God. He is "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (1:3). The revelation of God, in Him, is final and complete. All previous revelation was piecemeal and fragmentary (1:2). Even the angels were merely servants commissioned by God to mediate his message to man. Christ alone unveils the face of the Father. Compare II Cor. 4:16.

The purpose of this argument, as of all other ar-

guments in the Epistle, is practical. Keeping in mind the mental and spiritual condition of the first readers, we shall be able to understand the urgency of both warning and exhortation. The argument is to the effect that if the revelation of God in Jesus is supreme and final, the result will be disastrous to those who, possessing this final and complete revelation, "drift away" (2:1) from it and fall back upon that which is incomplete, and which finds its very fulfilment in Jesus.

SUGGESTION: Read carefully chapters 1 and 2, and note the important differences between the Revised and the Authorized Versions.

1. The Fact of Revelation (1:1-2)

MEMORY VERSES: 1:1-2

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son."

The first four verses of the Epistle are among the most important in the whole Bible. A proper understanding of these will save Bible students many perplexities. The first three sections of this first study will be given to the interpretation of these significant verses.

The outstanding fact of the Christian religion is stated in the words, "God hath spoken." "There is one striking difference between Christianity and the other religions," says Professor Glover in "The Jesus of History," "in that the others start with the idea that God is known. Christians do not so start." Christianity is a revealed religion. Men have not discovered God. God has disclosed Himself to men.

While it is true that humanity has always been searching after God, it is equally true that God has been searching for man, and the most fundamental fact about the Gospel is that it discloses God. The great Gospel fact is that God is a Seeker. The words of Pascal are far reaching: "Thou wouldst not now be seeking Him if thou hadst not already been found of Him."

No man cometh unto God the Father save through Jesus (John 14:6). The cry of the centuries has ever been, "O that I knew where I might find Him" (Job 23:3), and the accompanying answer has been constantly repeated, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7-9). Across the page of history it is clearly declared that the knowledge of God has come through God's unveiling of Himself; through revelation, not through evolution.

The Epistle to the Hebrews begins by asserting this great fact. "God hath spoken." The author

takes for granted that the revelation of the Old Testament is all of a piece with that of the New Testament. The same God who spoke through the prophets speaks also through the Son. The assertion of the Psalmist, "The God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:7), is true for the children of God, through all the centuries. Perhaps, in the Epistle, this idea accounts for the frequent mention of God as "the living God."

The fact of revelation takes for granted two great ✓ fundamental truths—the personality of God and the ✓ personality of man. If God is a true personality, then He has not only the power but also the desire to reveal Himself. Personality is the pledge of revelation and revelation is the proof of personality. All personality is self-revealing. By action and by word, personality lifts the veil from its own face. On the other hand, revelation involves a power of receptivity on the part of man. It involves the capacity on man's part for fellowship and communion with God, and the reception and comprehension of the revelation. We understand God for the same reason that we understand those who speak our language. We are like Him. We are made in his image, after his likeness. This likeness in life and spirit makes possible the fact of revelation on God's part, and the life of fellowship and prayer on man's part.

“Speak to Him thou for He hears,
 And spirit with Spirit may meet;
 Closer is He than breathing,
 And nearer than hands and feet.”

SUGGESTION: The Epistle frequently refers to Revelation as a “speaking” of God (2:2-3; 3:5; 4:8; 12:25). Thus it comes about that the Revelation of God is called the Word of God (4:12; 6:5; 13:7). What God “speaks” men should “hear” (2:1; 3:7, 16; 4:2,7). Let us make this our prayer, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth” (I Sam. 3:9).

II. The Progress of Revelation (1:1-2)

MEMORY VERSES: 1:1-2

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.”

The Epistle to the Hebrews claims that the revelation of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament are one revelation. The same God who “spoke” in the Old Testament “speaks” also in the New. There is, however, an essential difference between the two revelations. The Old is incomplete

without the New. What is suggested in the Old is fulfilled in the New. God began to speak forth his message in times past, and concluded that message in Christ, the eternal Word, the Word made flesh. Christ is the completion of the revelation of God carried on through the centuries.

This fact of progress involves the inadequacy of the Old Testament revelation. In as far as it has not been completed it is imperfect. Only in Jesus does God perfectly disclose Himself, and only in the New Testament do we find God's last word on religion and morals. We will not expect to find in the Old Testament the full developed doctrines of grace revealed to us in the cross of Christ. What we shall find there will be prophetic and suggestive of better things to come. It is not enough to justify conduct by an appeal to Old Testament ethics. Conduct, individual, social, and national, must be judged in the presence of Jesus.

These truths are finely developed in these first verses of the Epistle. The verses are balanced and suggest far-reaching comparisons. The comparison is fourfold.

1. In times past—in these last days.
2. Unto the fathers—unto us.
3. In the prophets—in a Son.
4. Having spoken by divers portions and in divers manners—hath spoken (once for all).

We shall examine briefly each of these suggestive comparisons.

1. The first comparison relates to the time element. It is important to recognize that centuries have elapsed since God first spoke to man, and in Christ the same God still speaks. The revelation of the Old Testament and that of the New recognize the same fountain head. To the author of the Epistle there are only two time periods, "the time past" and "these days," the past and the present, the old and the new. The one period belongs to the history of the Old Testament, the other to that of the New Testament.

2. The second comparison has to do with the recipients of the revelation. The old was given unto "the fathers," the new, "unto us." The fathers are the Hebrew ancestors, for the Epistle is written to Hebrews. The period represented covers the whole of the Old Testament dispensation, while the period represented by "unto us" relates to the definite historical manifestation of Christ in the days of his flesh.

3. The third comparison is highly important. It is rather a contrast. The revelation in times past was given unto men "through the prophets." The final revelation was given "in a Son," who is the very effulgence of his glory, the express image of his person. It is necessary to understand what the

Bible means by "prophet." A prophet is one who speaks for another. Aaron was Moses' prophet (Ex. 7:1). The prophet in the interpretation of the Old Testament is one who speaks for God. Moses expressed the wish that all the Lord's people were prophets (Num. 11:29). The prophet speaks for God. He is God's mouthpiece, God's spokesman. His mission is to report what he hears. He is a forth-teller. The idea of foretelling is secondary. Indeed, he is a fore-teller because he is a forth-teller. The revelation of the Old Testament was given through prophets who reported what they heard. On the other hand, the revelation of the New Testament came through the Son. "Last of all He sent a Son" (Matt. 21:37). Christ, then, is the last and greatest of the prophets.

4. The fourth comparison deals with the method of revelation. In times past God spoke "by divers portions and in divers manners," or as it has been translated "in various parts and in many forms." The revelation of the Old Testament was piecemeal and fragmentary. While the verse suggests the "rich and varied fulness" of the Old Testament revelation, it also suggests the idea of incompleteness and inadequacy. The revelation in the past was given only in part and in portions and could not therefore be complete. No one prophet completely sets forth the Gospel. The revelation through the

prophets was given in many forms, in parable, in psalm, in vision, in dream, in history, in miracle, in human life. God employed, as it were, many languages in his endeavor to teach Himself. The revelation in Christ, however, was final. Christ, Himself, was the Word made flesh (John 1:14). He that hath seen Christ hath seen God (John 14:9).

The idea of progressive revelation is fundamental to the proper understanding of this Epistle. It is the principle of interpretation which the author applies to the great doctrines of the Gospel. The same principle was set forth by Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, again and again Jesus says, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you," etc. (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43). The Bible contains the story of "God's gradual education of humanity." It contains many syllables which, together, spell out one complete word, Jesus. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

"God, who at sundry times in manners many
 Spake to the fathers and is speaking still,
 Eager to find if ever or if any
 Souls will obey and hearken to his will;

Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
 Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
 Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
 Pleasures and powers that are not and that are."

SUGGESTION: The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God." The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with the word "God." The same God reveals his presence through all the centuries. His story is God's story.

"O God, the Rock of Ages,
 Who evermore hast been,
 What time the tempest rages,
 Our dwelling place serene:
 Before thy first creations,
 O Lord, the same as now,
 To endless generations
 The everlasting Thou!

III. The Perfect Revelation (1:3-14)

MEMORY VERSE: 1:3

"Who, being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The final revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ. Whatever new light breaks forth from the Word of God comes from the light of his face. He is the reality of which all other revelation was but the prophecy. This is the teaching of all Scrip-

ture. It was the teaching of Jesus Himself (John 1:18; 4:26; 6:51; 8:12). It was the heart of the teaching of the Apostles (II Cor. 4:6). It is the consistent theme of the Christian hymnal.

“No mortal can with Him compare,
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train.”

Jesus is God's last and final word to men. The great war has brought the ethics of Jesus out into bold relief. The word “spoken” carries the suggestion of finality. In Jesus, God has spoken, once and for all, as the Greek word signifies. It is evident that this must be so on account of the character of Jesus Himself. He is not a prophet. He is a Son. His message is not by means of human words, but by means of a perfect human life.

The author has shown how He surpasses the Old Testament prophets, and now introduces the comparison with the angels. It is hard for us to realize any difficulty in giving to Jesus a place superior to the angels. We are not greatly interested in angels. With the Hebrew people it was different—altogether different. They not only believed in angels but held the doctrine that the law was mediated to men through angels. The word was spoken by angels (Heb. 2:2). Paul asserts that the law was ordained

through angels (Gal. 3:19), and Stephen spoke of the law which the Jews had not kept as "ordained by angels" (Acts 7:53). The Hebrew literature is full of angels. "No choir of angels sings God's praises twice, for each day God creates new hosts which sing his praises and then vanish into the stream of fire from under the throne of his glory whence they came." In our day it is customary to compare Jesus with Buddha, with Confucius, with Mohammed; to the Hebrews the comparison with angels was doubly important and tenfold more real.

1. In the first place (1:2-4) the author asserts that Jesus has "a more excellent name" than the angels. They are only ministering spirits (1:14). He is the "heir of all things" (1:2). They are the servants. He is the Son. In words of stirring eloquence he outlines the character of the Son. (*a*) He is the supreme Lord, "the heir of all things," for He sits on the throne of the majesty on high. (*b*) He precedes and antedates all angels, for through Him God made the worlds. He is the pre-existent one. (*c*) He is the very effulgence of God's glory, and the very image, the very character, of God's nature. To see Jesus is to see God. (*d*) He is the conquering hero. He holds in his hands the victory. He holds his place because of moral achievement. After he had made purification for sins and gained the victory, He took his place on the throne. He

is not only the revealer, He is the redeemer. This note sounded here will be heard clearer in the next study.

2. In the second place, the author brings evidence to support his claim that Jesus is the perfect revealer of God. He appeals to the Old Testament, the last authority of these first readers. In the passage 1:5-14, there are seven Old Testament references and quotations. The angels are only messengers, servants (1:14). They belong to another order than does Jesus. He belongs to the spiritual order. They belong to the natural. To-day they take the form of wind, and to-morrow the form of a flame of fire (1:7). The angels are worshippers, and the object of their worship is the Son (1:6). He belongs to the moral order and is the Lord, the giver of life (1:8-13). The angels are the Son's servants sent forth to minister to those who shall partake of the salvation which Christ, the Son, has achieved. Salvation then is the end to which the movement of history tends. Revelation is complete when it issues in redemption. Christ is the only revealer, because He is the only redeemer. He alone brings men to God.

If the Gospel cannot meet the needs of men, putting an end to war as it put an end to slavery, then some new Gospel will be born out of the necessity

of the race. But the Gospel meets every need of life and in the end will triumph.

SUGGESTION: The author of Hebrews quotes from at least nine of the Psalms: Psalm 2 (1:5; 5:5); 8 (2:6); 22 (2:11); 40 (10:5); (1:8); 95 (3:7; 4:3, 7); 102 (1:10); 104 (1:7); 110 (1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21).

While asserting the supremacy of the New Testament revelation the author appeals to the Old Testament as also authoritative.

“The New is in the Old contained,
The Old is in the New retained;
The New is in the Old concealed,
The Old is in the New revealed;
The New is in the Old enfolded,
The Old is in the New unfolded.”

—Augustine.

IV. The Neglected Revelation (2:1-4)

MEMORY VERSE: 2:3

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard.”

The argument of the first chapter is suddenly arrested to give place to admonition and warning. It is important to keep in mind that the primary pur-

pose of the author is not controversy but comfort. He calls his letter a "word of exhortation" (13:22). This is his method. Whenever he has proceeded far enough with his argument to gain a hearing he always permits the argument to give place to exhortation. After each presentation of doctrine comes a ringing call to duty. The section, 2:1-4, is the first practical exhortation.

The exhortation is based upon a very simple argument. The law of God, given to the fathers, through angels, was steadfast and every transgression received its just reward (2:2). There was no escape. The "just recompense" never failed. If, then, instead of the word spoken by angels, we have the word of Christ, which offers to men "a great salvation," the word not of prophet or angel, but of God's own Son, not a word of law, but a word of grace, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The author pleads for concentration of heart. He calls for the giving of "earnest heed" lest his readers "drift away" from the saving truth of Christ. If those who disobeyed the incomplete revelation did not escape, how can we escape if we neglect the perfect revelation which comes as the offer of a great redemption!

The greatness of this salvation is set forth in a threefold appeal.

1. It has been spoken by the Lord. Jesus be-

cause of his moral victory and the winning of salvation for men, is called "the Lord." This name is used elsewhere in the Epistle (1:10; 7:14; 13:20).

2. The word spoken has been "confirmed." Those who had taught them the Gospel—their first teachers—had not only been eye-witnesses of his majesty, receiving the truth from the lips of Jesus Himself, but had also borne personal testimony to the power of the Gospel in their own lives. Their first teachers had not only seen Jesus, but had for themselves proved the power of his Gospel. Notice that this statement is evidence against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. Paul claimed to be an eye-witness.

3. The Gospel itself had been confirmed to these Hebrew Christians by signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit (2:4). These signs, wonders, miracles, gifts, sum up the supernatural spiritual manifestations of power which accompanied the Gospel, in the church of the first readers of this Epistle. The exacting conditions of life under which these Hebrew Christians were living, and the imminent danger they were in of drifting away from the truth of the Gospel, made this admonition peculiarly pertinent. The idea of drifting suggests the gradual moving away from the firm anchorage of the faith. The admonition belongs to the Church of all time. It becomes all Christians to beware lest the hardship, the monotony of life,

the hostility of the world, or our own sense of failure, lead us to drift away from the safe anchorage of the great salvation. The same warning has value for us in these days when the faith of many is ready to fail.

SUGGESTION: "To neglect is not to fail to attend when first presented for belief, but to lose interest in and decline from after having first known it" (Davidson). Apply this principle to your own life, and the condition of the Church of to-day.

V. Revelation and Redemption (2:5-9)

MEMORY VERSE: 2:9

"But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man."

The author in 2:3 has spoken of the "great salvation." This salvation in verse 5 is spoken of as "the world to come." This phrase is one of the keys to the interpretation of the Epistle. "The world to come," has no reference in the writer's mind to time. Indeed "the world to come" is already here. It came with the coming of Christ. By the phrase the author means what Jesus meant by "the King-

dom of God." It is the world of righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. It is the realm where God is near and known and where the things of the Spirit are the real things. "The world to come" is the same as salvation. The marginal reading of the Revised Version "the inhabited earth" will rather mislead than help.

In this world to come, this salvation, this Kingdom of God, the angels have no authority. They are merely servants to help bring in this great redemption, but they neither initiate nor participate in the redemption.

Salvation belongs to humanity. "The world to come" is to be inherited by man. This truth is clearly set forth in the Old Testament, and to that authority the author makes his appeal knowing that it is the court of last resort for the Christians to whom he writes. His exposition of the eighth Psalm is one of the finest interpretations of a portion of the Bible we have. For a little while, the Psalm asserts, man has been subordinated to the angels. In reality, however, God has crowned humanity with glory and honor, and put all things, nature and law and angels, under his feet. Man is called to supremacy, and redemption demands lordship over the world. It is a fine tribute to the dignity and destiny of humanity, and to the hope that somehow progress is an assured fact.

This ideal, however, is not yet realized. "We see not yet all things subjected to Him" (2:8). Man is still subject to the powers of this world. He is driven by the forces of nature, and is the subject, and not the lord of creation as he ought to be. Looking upon Millet's painting, "The Man with the Hoe," Edwin Markham gave expression to what we have all thought:

"Is this the thing the Lord God made and gave
 To have dominion over land and sea,
 To trace the stars, to search the heavens for power,
 To feel the passion of eternity?"

Has God's plan then for man's salvation, for his coronation, been frustrated? No. We see Jesus. "We behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels" and when we behold Him, He is "crowned with glory and honor" (2:9). One man at least—Jesus—has attained unto the goal. He has attained to the "world to come" and brought in the great redemption. He is "the highest, holiest manhood." Jesus is the world's liberator. He is the hope of a world at war with itself.

And this is the important thing concerning his attainment—he has attained, not for Himself alone, but for all the race, of which He is a part. By the grace of God He has tasted death for every man. "Jesus does not come out of the race of man, He

came into it" (Davidson). "He is the strong swimmer who carries the rope ashore and so not only secures his own position but makes rescue for all who will follow" (Marcus Dods). His victory is a personal, moral achievement, but it is also "our best race asset."

SUGGESTION: The test of revelation is ethical. Does it issue in redemption? "To know God" in the New Testament is always ethical. Select passages from the New Testament bearing upon this thought, and relate it to the phrase of F. W. Robertson, "Obedience, an organ of knowledge."

VI. The Perfect Salvation (2:10-18)

MEMORY VERSE: 2:10

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Jesus is the great revealer and the great redeemer. He is the "captain of salvation," the leader of all those who come into the knowledge and love of God. He tasted death for every man.

The author in the concluding verses of this first division of his argument (chapters 1 and 2) shows how Jesus attained to his supremacy. It was a

moral victory. "He was made perfect through suffering" (2:10). It is necessary to understand the author's use of the word "perfect," which frequently occurs in the Epistle. To make perfect in the Hebrew sense is to make fit for the end in view. The end in view may, or may not, involve a moral element. When it is said Jesus was made perfect through suffering, it is not to be inferred that before He suffered he was morally imperfect. The expression means that through suffering Jesus was fitted to fill the mission in life which He was seeking. To miss this special meaning of the word perfect is to be drawn into limitless confusion. Because Jesus suffered He thereby became a faithful high priest, a true redeemer, a sympathetic helper for all who like Him are tempted. The temptation spoken of is the temptation that comes because of a life of suffering, of conflict, just such as these Hebrew Christians were experiencing. Through his death Jesus perfected the redemption which God sought to effect for man. The attainment to the position of leadership in the spiritual world involved for Jesus, the Son of God, an ethical struggle with its consequent doubt and temptation.

Jesus, however, is not an isolated sufferer. He trusted in God to the very limit of life and his victory of faith is a racial victory. Jesus belongs to the race. This is the meaning of the great Christian

doctrine of the Incarnation. Jesus mingled his life with the life of the world. He is the Comrade in White who leads on to victory. He also is a sharer in "flesh and blood" (2:14). He took upon Himself the seed of Abraham (2:16). He was of Jewish nationality. He is not ashamed to call the children of men "brethren," for He and they are "all of one" (2:11). He, too, being tempted has lived a life of faith—faith unto the uttermost, and in life's darkest hour upon the cross He confessed to the statement, "I will put my trust in Him" (2:13). What is true of Him may be true of all the race, for through identification with Him, by faith, man may become partaker of the great redemption.

Therefore, Jesus is the author and captain, the leader of salvation (2:10). He not only attains for Himself, but for all who follow Him.

This redemption is spoken of as possessing a threefold significance:

1. He, the redeemer, gives forgiveness. He makes "reconciliation for the sins of the people" (2:17). Before He ascends the throne, He makes "purification of sins" (1:3).

2. He gives freedom. He saves from the fear of death. He tasted death for every man, and took the sting from it. In his death faith triumphed, and faith, not fear, became victorious. The Christian

life, in the words of Donald Hankey, is the fearless life.

3. He gives power. He is able to keep those who are tempted (2:18). This great verse speaks of temptation that comes as a matter of suffering. These Hebrew Christians were ready to fall away from the faith. Their suffering had tempted them to doubt. It is a situation often repeated. Life has been hard and hope has nearly failed. How real this temptation has been in our day! Christ, too, suffered and was tempted through his sufferings. He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet his faith never failed. Even in death He looked up into God's face, and, having been so tempted, he is able to help all who are similarly tempted. He is the great Saviour.

SUGGESTION: The author of this Epistle is not only a great preacher possessing remarkable rhetorical eloquence; he is also a great teacher. He has a true pedagogical instinct. He leads his readers on from point to point. He throws out a suggestion and apparently drops it, but returns shortly to develop it fully. We shall have occasion to notice this method again and again. He suggests the idea of redemption in 1:3, "purged our sins," and before the first chapter is finished he has enlarged upon the great salvation. At the close of the argu-

ment in chapter 2, he drops a word about the high priest (2:17), which later forms the body of the argument of the Epistle and makes the transition to the second division.

VII. The Supreme Revelation—Summary

1. Memorize, so that you will never forget them, the memory verses at the beginning of each section.

2. What is meant by the statement that Christianity is a revealed religion?

3. Explain the quotation from Augustine given in the text, beginning with the words "The New is in the Old contained," etc.

4. How can it be said that Christianity is the final religion?

5. Why does a true and perfect revelation of God issue in redemption?

6. Why is Jesus called the captain, or leader of salvation?

7. Show how the idea of faith which dominates the Epistle comes to the front even in this first study.

8. What position did the angels have in the thought of the Jews of New Testament days? Are these ideas confirmed in the Old Testament?

WORD STUDIES

Try to get in your mind a clear idea of the following terms used in the first two chapters of Hebrews.

Prophets (1:1) Signs, wonders, miracles, gifts (2:4)

Angels (1:4) The world to come (2:5)

Drift (2:1) Death (2:9, 15)

Neglect (2:3) Sanctified (2:11)

Salvation (2:3) The church (2:12)

A Class Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thou hast loved us into life, and thy mercy never fails. Teach us that we would not now be serving Thee if Thou hadst not first served us, and that we would never have found Thee unless Thou hadst first found us. We love because Thou first loved us. Amen.

STUDY III

THE SUPREME REDEMPTION

3:1—4:13

THE second division of the Epistle, which forms the second cycle in the argument for the supremacy of Jesus Christ, occupies the passage covered by the third chapter and the first thirteen verses of chapter 4. The first section was concerned with a comparison between the revelation of God given by prophets and angels, and that given in the life and person of Jesus. The prophets spoke piecemeal messages. Jesus' message was complete and final. The angels administered the revelation as servants, while Jesus was a Son, "the express image" of the Father.

The first section spoke of redemption as well as of revelation. Revelation issues in redemption. To know God is redemption. In the Old Testament, the revelation of God struggled toward redemption. Moses and Joshua were appointed to lead the people out of bondage into the land of promise. Freed by a great emancipation the people of God were led on in the hope of entering into rest—the rest of God. These

hopes, however, were disappointed. The people perished in the wilderness. The record of history is clear regarding their failure and the interpretation of that failure is equally clear that it was on account of a failure of faith. They failed "to enter in because of unbelief" (3:19). God's promise nevertheless abides. Upon this inviolate promise the author bases his second appeal. The rest of God once promised is a reality and not an illusion. It can be secured however only by faith. Where Moses and Joshua failed, Jesus will succeed, for He is a better leader, "the captain of our salvation." God's word of promise will nevertheless test and try us, and when faith ventures all, redemption becomes a reality.

SUGGESTION: Read carefully Hebrews 3:1 to 4:13 in Moffatt's "New Translation of the New Testament" and note important changes.

I. The History of Redemption (3:1-6)

MEMORY VERSE: 3:1

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus."

This section compares Jesus with Moses, the great Hebrew emancipator. The first readers of the Epistle

being Hebrew Christians would unconsciously be thinking of Moses before they had finished reading to the end of the second chapter. In the closing verses of chapter 2, the author had spoken of Jesus as the "leader," the captain or pioneer of salvation (2:10). Moses, too, was a great leader, and captain of a great redemption. Doubtless the author, according to his method, anticipated the thought of his readers for he goes on to speak of Jesus as "a merciful and faithful high priest." This expression would suggest still more clearly the work and mission of Moses who was not only leader but priest to his people. With delicate tact and consummate skill, the author leads up to the implied comparison, saying in simple but direct language that Jesus was faithful, even as Moses was faithful in all God's house. The comparison is complimentary to Moses, and serves as a prelude to the sharp contrast which the author immediately introduces. Moses was faithful in God's house. Jesus, however, was faithful over God's house. Moses was faithful as a servant. Jesus was faithful as a Son. The "house" spoken of is the people of God. God's house is the dwelling place of his Spirit. God's dwelling place is with men (II Cor. 6:16; Acts 17:24; Rev. 21:3). God's people are his temple, his abode (I Cor. 3:16). In the New Testament Christians are called the "household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). God

has been seeking through all the centuries to prepare for himself a dwelling place in the heart of humanity, and the Incarnation is the pledge of the fact that God will indeed dwell with men.

Let us keep in mind that the first readers were Hebrews and to them Moses was supreme. The author feels his way very carefully and gently, and very gradually reveals the true purpose of his comparison. Moses was "faithful." He lingers upon that word. Jesus, too, was "faithful." Yet there is a difference. Moses was faithful as a servant, working out God's will, while Jesus was faithful as a Son, in partnership with God, building with his own hands in the midst of human history a dwelling place for God in the hearts of men.

This temple, this house, this dwelling place of God in the hearts of men was not established or perfected until Jesus came into human life with his great revelation and his supreme redemption. Moses was faithful, and with him God spoke "face to face" (Num. 12:8). He revealed the will of God in the words of the law and caught a glimpse of heavenly things (Ex. 25:40). Jesus, however, opened heaven and brought all men face to face with God. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

With this comparison in his mind the author begins the second part of his argument. Let us con-

sider Jesus (3:1). He is the apostle and high priest of our confession. He is both prophet and priest. He is both Moses and Aaron in his ministry of bringing God to men, and men to God. He is both the revealer of God, and the redeemer of men, and we who are called, as were also the children of Israel, with a calling born not of earthly hopes but of heavenly realities, must lay to heart the claim of Christ upon our consciences. Let us consider Him! We are his people, his house. He is the master and maker of men. Let us "hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (3:6). In the words of Andrew Murray: "He must be master in his own house. Not only an honored guest while thou hast the keys and the care." Christ in us is, after all, our hope.

"He came sweet influence to impart,
A gracious, willing guest,
While He can find one humble heart
Wherein to rest."

SUGGESTION: Think through the words, the "heavenly calling" (3:1). Heaven is the real (9:23). The things we see are copies. In heaven is the *true* tabernacle (8:2), the *true* country (11:10), the things unshakable (12:27-28). Christ has revealed this world of reality to us, for to it He, Himself,

belongs, out of it He came, and to it He has returned. Jesus is reality.

II. The Failure of Faith (3:7-19)

MEMORY VERSE: 3:12

“Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God.”

After argument comes exhortation. In the first division of the argument the warning concerning “drifting” and “neglecting the great salvation” (2:1-3) immediately followed upon the argument that the revelation set forth in Jesus Christ was superior to that mediated by prophets or angels. The author’s purpose throughout the Epistle is practical. He argues in order to influence life. As soon then as he has silenced the claims of Moses by the assertion of the supremacy of Jesus, he forthwith leaves off argument and begins to exhort and warn. The warning is contained in the words, “Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God” (3:12).

The outstanding fact of Hebrew history is that the redemption promised by and through Moses and Joshua was a failure. The Promised Land, instead

of being a land of rest, was a land of sorrow and struggle. The Old Testament narratives as well as the Hebrew Psalms are eloquent upon this point. The author sets before our eyes the failure of the Hebrew redemption, by a marvelous series of questions, possessing cumulative force, which follow his statement that the Hebrew redemption ended in failure (3:16-19). The downfall of Israel was gradual but it was complete. There are three questions with answers.

1. Who were they who, when they heard, did provoke? Was it not all?

2. With whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned?

3. To whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest? Was it not to them that were disobedient?

The author not only emphasizes the completeness of the failure but traces the failure to its source. The redemption, the rest promised was neither inadequate nor illusory. The failure was not because of the promise but because of failure to possess the promise. There was failure because faith failed. The people hardened their hearts (3:8). They tempted God for forty years (3:9). They were ignorant (3:10). They had an evil unbelieving heart (3:10). Sin deceived them (3:13). They provoked God (3:16). In a word, "they could not

enter in because of unbelief" (3:19). Faithlessness closed the door of redemption on the children of Israel.

To us, in these later days, a new redemption is offered. Let us take heed "lest haply" we, too, fail. God is a living God. He does not dwell in a "worn out and dead tradition." He lives in human hearts and human lives, and his word liveth and abideth forever.

"All things living He doth feed;
His full hand supplies their need:
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

God is life, and through the ages one increasing purpose runs. His promises are eternal. Men and nations may prove unworthy of them, but He abideth faithful. "He cannot deny Himself" (II Tim. 2:13). It therefore becomes all those who have been made "partakers of Christ" (3:14) to hold fast the confidence of their faith unto the end. "To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." The warning is taken from their own Scriptures, from the 95th Psalm. "While God's great to-day in which there is still opportunity to hear his voice, may still be called to-day, and not a yesterday which can never again be a to-day" (Peake). The understanding of the author's emphasis upon faith is one

of the avenues of approach to a true interpretation of the Epistle. He returns again and again to the place of faith in the life of the Christian until finally he breaks out into the wonderful description of faith in the eleventh chapter.

SUGGESTION: In true religion there is not only the divine initiative, there is also the human response. Mark well the positive expressions "hold fast" (3:6, 14), "hear his voice" (3:7, 15), "take heed" (3:12). God places the priceless possession within our keeping. It is only by patience and unflinching confidence in God's unflinching promise that we are able to retain possession of our inheritance.

III. The Perfected Redemption (4:1-5)

MEMORY VERSE: 4:3

"For we who have believed do enter into that rest."

We must not be misled by the words and symbolism of the Hebrew religion. It is our task to work through Old Testament words and symbols to the Christian reality of which they are prophetic.

The author identifies redemption with a beautiful Old Testament word, rich in meaning and suggestive of rich reality. He speaks of rest, the rest of God, as being the end of all religion and the fruit

of a true redemption. He lays hold upon the promise of God that he will give his people rest. It is part of the argument concerning the leadership of Moses which was interrupted to make a place for the practical exhortation of the last section.

Rest is the final test of all religion. True religion is just heart rest. The heart that is satisfied, truly satisfied, has been redeemed and has found God. Jesus came to reveal God to men and to bring men to God. In bringing men to God, He brings them into rest. That is why the great invitation stands in the very heart of the Gospel, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Thou O God," says Augustine, "hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." Redemption is the promised rest of God.

For all who will lay hold of it by faith there is a quiet heart, a repose of soul, a rest of God. This is a fundamental truth. It is the hope of all religion, and the promised gift of Christ. In support of the argument, the Epistle to the Hebrews as usual appeals to the Old Testament. In the Psalm which was quoted in the third chapter, a rest is spoken of as "my rest," that is "God's rest." Even in the earliest record of Scripture we read that God "rested" (Gen. 2:2). These references are sufficient to

show that in the very nature and heart of God rest that is rest indeed may be found.

Concerning this rest of God, this promised redemption, two conclusions are brought forth by the author.

1. The first fact set forth is that the people of God, in times past, missed the promised rest. God promised them rest unto their souls. The Land of Promise was a symbol to them of life's complete redemption. The conquest of the land was a moral and spiritual victory. To them the gospel was also preached (4:2). They, too, heard the good news of rest found only in fellowship with God. But they failed of the promise. They failed because their faith failed. The promise was of no use to them because it was not mixed with faith (4:2). Without faith even the Land of Promise was only common clay.

2. The second fact set forth is that God's promise cannot fail forever. That promise speaks of a reality. If the Hebrew people did not enter into the possession of it, then, like the hidden treasure, it still awaits discovery. "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (4:9). This is the rest not of Canaan, but the rest of Christ. "The promise is his revelation through the Son, and the new times belong to the Christian age, and the rest is the Christian salvation." The redemption is

perfected in Jesus Christ, and in Him the rest of God is realized. Behind all the promises, and the alluring hopes of life, lies the ever-availing condition, "we which have believed do enter into rest" (4:3). Faith is the open door to the Paradise of God. "Faith is the victory."

SUGGESTION: "The heavenly world projects itself into the present life like headlands of a new world into the ocean" (Davidson). Apply this truth, which has many illustrations in this Epistle, to the teaching about the rest of God as set forth in these two sentences: "We which have believed do enter into rest" (4:3), and "There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God" (4:9).

IV. The Venture of Faith (4:6-11)

MEMORY VERSE: 4:11

"Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience."

In the last section, the author has said very emphatically that unbelief, the failure of faith, was the reason why the people of God in Old Testament times did not realize the promised rest of God. There is also, however, another reason in his mind. Following his pedagogical method, he does not boldly announce it, he merely suggests and hints at it. The

fact of history was plain to all who cared to read, that not only was there a failure of faith, there was also a failure of leadership. · Moses died beyond the borders of the Promised Land, and even Joshua who led the people into the land failed to give them rest (4:8 R. V.). As late in the record of history as the time of David, to whom the authorship of the 95th Psalm, already quoted, is ascribed, there was still held out to the people the hope of the unfulfilled promise. Even in his day, centuries after the entrance and settlement of Canaan, David said, "To-day if ye will hear his voice" (4:7). To the people of David's day the hope of the promise was still set forth and was not appropriated even then. It was this promise of "a sabbath rest" which played like a gleam of golden light upon the horizon of Hebrew history, which Jesus, the true leader, came to realize for men. He is the pioneer, the captain, the leader, who not only enters Himself, but brings all his followers with Him. Bound to Him by a stronger bond than any alpine rope, bound by life, by love, by blood, because He lives and rests, we, too, live and rest. He is able to save unto the uttermost. The words of Stier quoted by Dr. Davidson are very suggestive.

"When looking deep into eternity we become blinded by the overpowering glory, and return to the thought that such sabbath rest is not to be conceived

as without work and activity, we are so far right, for God's rest is at the same time an eternal life of infinite activity; but we must be on our guard that we in our weakness do not mix up what is earthly with the heavenly, or open up, even in the city of God itself, a new long-extended street-view of 'eternal perfectionating.' Rather must we strive with all the power of our spirit to realize the feeling of the true rest, the perfected contentment and satisfaction, which in God has attained to all, and which has to reach nothing more in eternity."

Calling Christians by the familiar Old Testament phrase "the people of God" (4:9), the author challenges them to the great venture of faith. Where the people of God in times past failed, let the present people of God succeed. His appeal throbs with the passion of deep and interested earnestness. "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (4:11). A second time the note is sounded, "Faith is the victory."

SUGGESTION: It is interesting to compare this terrible arraignment of the children of Israel for their failure of faith with the glorious roll-call of the heroes of faith as given in the eleventh chapter. Are we justified in saying that every true believer entered into the rest of God?

V. Redemption and Judgment (4:12-13)

MEMORY VERSE: 4:12

“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

God’s word to the world is a message of redemption. Over the altar in St. Paul’s cathedral are the words, “God so chose out the world to love it.” His message to men is, “To-day if ye will hear his voice.” This is the recurring refrain of the passage we have studied, and it is the refrain of the entire Old Testament revelation. “Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.” (Ezek. 18:31-32). In this connection read the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Hosea. The message of the Bible is found in the words of Faber’s hymn:

“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There’s a kindness in his justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Saviour,
There is healing in his blood."

God's voice, however, speaks also in judgment. His word cannot pass away. His promise cannot fail. The promised rest of God is an abiding reality, and they only fail whose faith fails. His word of promise becomes a word of judgment. No one can escape. It becomes "to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life" (II Cor. 2:16). His word of promise cleaves and divides and tests the souls of men. "There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (4:13). Men may sit in judgment upon the word and message of God, but in the end they are judged by that word. Let us keep in mind that when the author so speaks, he has before him the inviolate promise of the eternal God, which speaks of redemption, of salvation, of rest, to the sons of men.

The description of this living and abiding revelation of God is very interesting. God's message to men, his redeeming love, his wonderful salvation, his promised rest, are all bound up in the thought expressed concerning this "living and abiding word."

1. It is living. Since God is the Living God, His word is a word of life. It never dies. Time cannot rob it of its power. War cannot silence it. His words are living seeds. His promises enshrine the hopes of the world. His salvation holds the desire of all nations. (See I Peter 1:23.)

2. It is active. God's words are deeds. He speaks and it is done. Creation follows upon his word. At his voice the blind see, the deaf hear, the dead are raised. The kingdom of God is like leaven. It permeates and transforms.

3. It is sharp. "Sharper than any two-edged sword." (Compare Rev. 1:16, Eph. 6:17.) It cuts down clean into the very secrets of the heart. It lays open the hopes and fears of humanity. The Gospel is a mirror in which men see their deepest thoughts revealed.

4. It is piercing. It divides. It has the power of judgment. It separates. It sets one on the right hand and the other on the left. It makes a moral cleavage right down through the social order. It divides nations according to moral ideals.

"Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt him nor deny:
Yea with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

5. It is discerning. The thoughts and motives

of men's hearts are laid bare before its searching light. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." There is comfort as well as fear in the knowledge of the discerning God. It comforts us to remember that He knoweth our hearts, and understandeth our best endeavors. God knows what we "aspired to be." On the other hand, "the evil heart of unbelief" cannot escape his searching judgment. "Our God is a consuming fire" (12:29).

With this warning the argument of the second division of the Epistle is brought to a close. Jesus is not only the revealer of God, but the redeemer of men. Where Moses and Joshua failed, Jesus succeeds. He, and He only, brings his people into the abiding rest of God. This is the supreme redemption. Heaven and earth may pass away but God's word can never pass away.

"Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds
sang west,
And I said in underbreath—all our life is mixed
with death,
And who knoweth which is best?"

"Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds
sang west,
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around
our incompleteness—
Round our restlessness, his rest."
—*Mrs. Browning.*

SUGGESTION: Note carefully the expression "the eyes of Him" (4:13). Compare the expression with other Scripture references, *i. e.*, Rev. 1:14, Mark 6:10, Luke 22:61. Read Mrs. Browning's Sonnets, "The Look," and "The Meaning of the Look." Make Psalm 139:23 your prayer.

VI. The Supreme Redemption—Summary

1. Memorize so as never to forget the memory verses given in the chapter.
2. Give in a few words the theme of this study.
3. Compare the theme of this chapter with that of the second chapter.
4. What is meant by "God's house"? What is the relation of Jesus to this house?
5. What place does faith hold in this Epistle? In this study?
6. What are the fruits of unbelief?
7. Explain the term "the rest of God." How is it related to redemption?
8. Give a definition of religion in terms of "the rest of God."
9. Why did Moses and Joshua fail to lead the people into rest?
10. How is God's word related to revelation, redemption, judgment?

WORD STUDIES

Revelation, Redemption, Prophet, Priest, Rest,
The Word of God.

Prayer

Thou O Lord hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee. Grant unto us such an increase of faith that we may turn to Him, the great redeemer of men, and find rest unto our souls. Amen.

STUDY IV

THE SUPREME FELLOWSHIP

4:14—6:20

WITH this chapter we begin the study of the third great division of the argument of the Epistle. It occupies the entire section from the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter to the eighteenth verse of chapter 10, thus covering almost one-half of the entire Epistle. The whole passage deals with the priesthood of Jesus. The first argument was analyzed in the second chapter of this text-book and deals with the revelation of God in Jesus, in contrast with the revelation of God given through prophets and angels. The second argument, dealt with in the third chapter of our study, treats of the redemption obtained by Jesus in contrast with the failure of Moses and Joshua, who endeavored to lead the people into the promised rest of God.

This great section presents Jesus to us as the supreme priest, who in contrast to the ineffectual efforts of Aaron and the Old Testament priests is able to bring men into perfect fellowship with the living God.

It is necessary again to call attention to the fact that in our study we must get behind the symbol to the reality. Now a priest is a symbol. It is necessary therefore to be clear in our minds as to the true meaning and mission of the priesthood.

A priest brings men to God. If it is the function of a prophet to reveal God to men, it is the function of a priest to bring men to God. This entire passage (4:14—10:18) will make this interpretation abundantly plain. What the priests of old tried to do, and failed in trying, all this Jesus accomplished. He, and He only, has brought men to God. The word on a true priest's lips is "fellowship." It is his office to bring men into fellowship with God. This idea opens the way to the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all Christians. It was this doctrine that gave strength and vigor to the religion of the Puritans.

"It never frightened a Puritan when you bade him stand still and listen to the voice of God. His closet and his church were full of the reverberations of the awful, gracious, beautiful voice for which he listened. He made little, too little, of sacraments and priests, because God was so intensely real to him. What should he do with lenses who stood thus full in the torrent of the sunshine?" (*Phillips Brooks*).

This division of the Epistle (4:14—10:18) will be studied in four separate chapters as follows:

1. The Supreme Fellowship (4:14—6:20).
2. The Supreme Personality (7:1-28).
3. The Supreme Ministry (8:1—9:14).
4. The Supreme Sacrifice (9:15—10:18).

SUGGESTION. Get clearly in mind the true function of the priesthood of Jesus. As a true prophet Jesus reveals God to men. As a true priest He brings men to God. Study carefully 2:10; 7:19-25. Compare Charles Wesley's beautiful hymn:

"I know that my redeemer lives
And ever prays for me."

1. The Fact of Fellowship (4:14—16)

MEMORY VERSE: 4:16

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

Jesus is a high priest. He is the high priest. He, and He only, is the great high priest. He, and He only, brings men into fellowship with God.

True to his art as a teacher, the author of the Epistle introduced the thought of the priesthood of

Jesus before he was ready to discuss it; "a merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17), "high priest of our confession" (3:1). He drops the suggestion and then passes on with his argument. The suggestion, however, is made of purpose, and now, when he is ready, he begins with the complete exposition of what he has suggested. The early readers of the Epistle were well versed in the idea of the priesthood, but the author's desire is to convince them that Jesus is the true priest, and that all past and present priests of the altar failed to do what he succeeded in doing.

Let us begin here. A priest is one who brings men to God. He represents men before God. He brings them into the presence of God, opening up the way of access to the Father. A prophet is one who speaks for God, "revealing to us by his word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation." The priest "appears in the presence of God for us" (9:24).

'No temple made with hands,
His place of service is;
In heaven itself He stands,
A heavenly priesthood his;
In Him the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled and now withdrawn."

Jesus is the true priest. He is able to bring men into abiding fellowship with God. This is the last and final test of all religion, and the Epistle

to the Hebrews has succeeded if it shows that the way to God stands open for all the children of men. Jesus has passed "through the heavens" into the very presence of God (4:14-16). He saves "unto the uttermost" (7:25). This great argument dealing with the priesthood of Jesus, is central not only in the thought of this Epistle, but in the thought of Christianity.

The opening verses (4:14-16) of the argument are among the most beautiful in the New Testament. Linger a moment on the name, Jesus, the Son of God. The name, Jesus, calls to mind his humble birth, and his true humanity, while "the Son of God" links his human history to his kinship with God, and his divine destiny. He, the all-divine, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Dr. Davidson's words give the true interpretation.

"He was child, boy, man; son, servant, friend, master; poor, though possessing all riches; the idol of the people, and the aversion of the privileged; familiar with the saddest sides of life, and having access to behold the easiest; with meek, most earnest souls hanging on his words at one moment, and having charges of blasphemy flung at Him the next; exciting wherever He came, speculation, wonder, love, and furious dislike; cast into the midst of human life, and realizing the principles that make up its moral meaning with a consciousness clearer

than if they had been material things about Him; playing the first part among minor actors in the drama of which his country with its social and religious hopes was the stage, and the solitary part in that drama of which the meaning cannot be expressed, whose stage was heaven and earth."

Jesus is unlike the ordinary priest, however, in that He Himself was sinless. He was tempted yet He never fell. With Him temptation returned to virtue. Unlike the priests of the Old Testament He had no need to offer sacrifice for Himself (7:26-27). When He offered Himself as the true sacrifice, his offering was without blemish, perfect and pure (9:14).

This sinlessness, which at first would suggest separation from all humanity, is the pledge of our fellowship. He has gone into the presence of God "for us." He is at God's right hand. He is on the throne of power, and that throne is a throne of grace. It is a throne of loving favor, of eternal selfgiving on the part of God. Before Him we stand and say:

"False and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace."

Therefore let us draw near. Our great high priest has led the way. Let us come gladly. His name and his nature are love. Let us hold fast. He is

enthroned in power, and holds in his pierced hands the strength we require "in time of need."

SUGGESTIONS Gather up the oft repeated appeal, "Let us." Compare 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6. Note the author's tact in identifying himself with his hearers, "Let us."

II. The Author of Fellowship (5:1-10)

MEMORY VERSE: 5:9

"And having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation."

Two qualifications were necessary for the priest of the Old Testament.

1. In the first place a true priest must possess *sympathy*. He must have a talent for fellow-feeling. He must have compassion on "the ignorant and on them who are out of the way" (5:2). He must be near to men. He must have other ideals than those of the priest in Browning's poem.

"The parish priest of austerity,
Climbed up in the high church steeple
To be nearer God,
So that he might hand his word down to the
people;

And in sermon script he daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven;
And he dropped it down
On the people's heads two times one day in seven.
In his age God said, 'Come down and die';
And he cried out from the steeple,
'Where art Thou, Lord?'
And the Lord replied, 'Down here among thy
people.' "

2. In the second place he must have *authority*. He must not only be in touch with men, but also be in touch with God. He must be "called" of God. He must not be self-appointed. He must not take the honor of the priesthood "unto himself" (5:4). Like Aaron he must go forward in answer to the divine commission. The "called of God" is the name given to all those who have had the pressure of God's hand upon their hearts, urging them out into sacrificial service.

These two qualifications Jesus possessed without measure. It is the possession of these qualifications which distinguishes him. In his person He is supreme. The superiority of his personality makes the office of the priesthood effectual. What sympathy was his! There is an echo of Gethsemane in the wonderful words of the text (5:7-8). The verses are freighted with struggle and sorrow. "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and

supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered," and has been made perfect (5:7-9).

“The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.”

What responsible authority He possessed! The emphasis is upon the word “obey.” He learned obedience. We shall hear more of this great word later. It describes his last and triumphant sacrifice—the surrender of his will to God. How acceptable He was to God! To Him God speaks, “Thou art my Son.” When His last obedience is complete, and his moral triumph achieved, by which He became the author of eternal salvation, God addressed Him, saluted Him, called Him, high priest, forever. He is, however, an unclassified priest, a priest like Melchizedek who came into power without tribal inheritance, without racial rights, out of the “nowhere,” ordained of God, commissioned not according to the Aaronic order, but after the power of an endless life (7:16).

Jesus is the supreme priest who brings men into eternal fellowship with God.

SUGGESTION: Relate the words "learned obedience" (5:8) applied to Jesus to the words "them that obey" (5:9). Salvation comes through the surrender of the will to God.

"Our wills are ours we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

III. The Failure of Fellowship (5:14—6:8)

MEMORY VERSE: 6:1

"Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."

It is impossible to classify Jesus. He is greater than the greatest of Old Testament prophets. He is greater than the highest of the angels, greater than Moses, the greatest of men. He is greater than Aaron, the appointed priest of Israel's past. Jesus defies classification. God, Himself, gave him a name, a name "more excellent" than that of any upon earth.

"But Thee, but Thee, O sovereign seer of time,
But Thee, O poets' poet, wisdom's tongue,
But Thee, O man's best man, O love's best love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
Of all men's comrade, servant, king, or priest,—

What if or yet, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good paragon, Thou crystal Christ?"

—*Sidney Lanier.*

In search for some analogy, some illustration, some way to describe Jesus, the author hits upon the character of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-24). We will hear more of Melchizedek later. He is the most mysterious personage in Hebrew history. He was a king and yet a priest. He was superior even to Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, and to him Abraham paid tithes. He appears in sacred history, without tribal descent, apart from the national faith, and yet as a priest of the most High God. He had immediate access to God. Jesus, says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is like Melchizedek. That is the nearest analogy he can find, but as soon as he mentions this fruitful illustration he lifts his pen. Even with such an illustration to light up his argument he despairs. Even the character of Melchizedek is difficult and he is overwhelmed when he thinks of his task, to make the wonder and the mystery of it clear to his readers.

This difficulty is rendered nearly impossible by

the dull brains and the slow hearts of the Hebrews to whom he writes. To make spiritual things clear requires not only simplicity of speech but alertness of mind on the part of those who hear. You cannot make hard things clear to children. They lack experience. These Hebrew Christians were just children. From chapter 5, verse 14, to the end of chapter 6, the author pauses to point out why he finds it hard to explain his meaning. This passage is a sort of lengthened warning set in brackets. It forms an aside. It grows out of the fact that he faces a very difficult situation. How can he make the person of Jesus plain to a people spiritually obtuse? He has said Jesus was like Melchizedek and then he hesitates for by their dulness and lack of spiritual apprehension he is unable to make his meaning clear. Jesus, Himself, faced the same difficulty, and He, too, stood dismayed before the blindness of those who saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him (Luke 24:25, Matt. 16:13, John 8:53).

The charges brought against these first readers are spoken without apology. They had "become dull of hearing" (5:11). When by virtue of their experience as Christians they ought to have been teachers, they had need that they themselves should be taught. They were still among "the rudiments of the first principles" (5:12). They were like children who

had "need of milk" and cannot make use of "solid meat" (5:13). They were "without experience" and had not "exercised" their spiritual faculties (5:14). It is a terribly severe indictment, and yet it is equally true of thousands of present day Christians. A recent thoughtful writer has said: "A great many people need re-conversion at forty, however Christian they have been before."

The author, however, will not fail for want of trying, and boldly sets out to make his argument clear. He proposes to take for granted the "first principles" and to press on to "perfection" (6:1). He will not lay again the "foundation stones." He names the first principles of the faith only to pass them by. These elementary truths are in three groups.

1. Repentance from dead works and faith toward God. While repentance has to do with the past, with the dead and sinful works of the past, a true and living faith speaks of the future, which holds the promise and the power of God.

2. The doctrine of baptism and laying on of hands. Baptism has to do with confession, while the laying on of hands speaks of the endowment of the Holy Spirit for service.

3. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. These doctrines present life's outlook upon

the illimitable future, with its rewards and punishments.

These fundamental truths of the Christian faith the author will take for granted. Indeed they must be taken for granted, for the foundation once laid cannot be twice laid. The first principles once given cannot be given again. The human heart once enlightened cannot experience the same illumination a second time. The warning is urgent, emphatic and unambiguous (6:4-6). Theologians have struggled with the passage, but the words are vitally practical and not theoretical. The phrases of this terrible warning correspond to the phrases of the fundamental truths already mentioned.

1. The phrase "once enlightened" harks back to the words "repentance from dead works and of faith toward God."

2. The words "tasted of the heavenly gift" reach the thought suggested in "baptism and the laying on of hands."

3. The expression "the good words of God and the powers of the age to come" takes us back in thought to the words "resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment."

The impossibility of renewal lies of course in the nature of things. It is founded upon a moral law. The law according to the author has an analogy in nature. The law of spiritual atrophy follows the

law of the harvest (6:7-8). Let us, however, see clearly that the author is speaking of the last sin of life. He is speaking of the sin against the Holy Spirit. He is speaking of apostasy, of "falling away from the living God," of crucifying afresh for themselves the Son of God, and wilfully and intentionally and continuously holding him up as a spectacle for the world's derision.

This must not be forgotten. This is the state of those who hold up to men the crucified Son of God as a false Christ. They are traitors and apostates. Like Benedict Arnold at the close of life they lack "only a friend." The door of fellowship has been forever closed, and by human hands.

SUGGESTION: Read Jesus' parable of "The Sower" (Matt. 13:1-23). This passage in Hebrews is akin to the seed sown on shallow ground. A closer analogy can be found in Jesus' words about "the unpardonable sin" (Matt. 12:31-32). Let our constant prayer be, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins."

IV. The Unfailing Fellowship (6:9-20)

MEMORY VERSES: 6:18-19

"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold

of the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil."

The author's earnestness has carried him to the limit. He no sooner has reached his conclusion than he has an emotional reaction, and it is a reaction towards tenderness. He calls his hearers "be-loved." This is the only occasion where he speaks in such terms of personal affection and confidence. As a keen student of the Epistle puts it, "Alarm at the awful suggestion of his own picture causes a rush of affection into his heart." The apostasy he has suggested is too dreadful to be thought of. It can never be. It is only a supposition. It will never be realized. He is persuaded better things of them, and things which will lead to their ultimate salvation. He bases his hope in them upon two significant facts.

1. *Their Past.* The past history of these Hebrew Christians gives confidence in their continued loyalty. Their past is as a mirror in which their true purpose can be discovered. Their past is filled with a continuous ministry of love. Love always ministers. It is more than a sentiment. It is an energy. Tolstoi's words are revealing: "When one loves a person he will do for that person what that person needs." God loved and gave. This is the assurance that the

love borne for Jesus will continue unto the end, until hope is made full.

This they will do, too, because of their loyalty to past leaders. Perhaps the author has in mind the roll-call of heroes given in chapter 11, or perhaps their former Christian teachers and leaders whose faith and patience are their imperishable inheritance.

2. *Their Hope.* Because the promise of ultimate redemption and union with God is sure, they will continue to hope unto the end. The promise of a perfected fellowship is sure. God gave it. When he gave his promise he confirmed it by a sacred oath. This hope in the abiding word of promise is as an anchor of the soul. This hope has three qualities. (1) It is sure. (2) It is stedfast. (3) It reaches into the real world, the world invisible. Delitzsch has amplified the figure. "The iron anchor of the seaman is cast downwards into the deep of the sea; but the hope-anchor of the Christian is thrown upwards into the deep of heaven, and passing through the super-celestial waters, finds its ground and fast-holding there."

We need not press the figure. The meaning is plain. There are two worlds, the world of faith, the heavenly world, the real world made clear to Christian faith, and the world of time, the world we see and handle and hold. In this world of time, storm-tossed and wind-swept, we are saved by hope.

Though Jesus is unseen yet we know where he is. He is in the heavenly place, in the presence of God. While the priest of old entered into the Holy of Holies, within the veil, where once a year, and only for an hour, he held fellowship with the Ineffable, Jesus has entered within the veil to appear before the very presence of God for us. Jesus is our priest. He has gone within the veil—even into heaven, into the world of reality, and our hope holds to Him. He is the forerunner, and we, too, must follow where He leads. Our hope is fixed on Him, and where He is, in immediate fellowship with God, we too may be. The words of Professor Peake will help make the exposition still more clear.

“We have not only the guarantee of God’s promise and oath, but the entrance of Jesus within the veil. Since He is our leader and we share his destiny, his entrance within the veil is the pledge that we too shall follow Him into the heavenly inheritance. Of no earthly high priest could it be said that he went within the veil as forerunner of the people. He went in alone, and left it to return to them.

But Jesus has entered, not simply as our leader, but as our high priest. It was this which suggested the metaphor of the veil, since the ministry of the high priest reached its climax in his entry within the veil on the Day of Atonement. The thought thus comes to expression that within the veil lie

both the inheritance and the mercy-seat. The mercy-seat was that place on earth where the presence of God was most intensely manifested. The blood of the victim was therefore applied to it by the high priest on the Day of Atonement in order to bring it into most immediate contact with God. The sacrifice symbolized the renewal of the communion of God with Israel, which had been interrupted by sin.

“The great religious idea of the Epistle is that Christianity provides perfect communion with God through the priestly work of Christ in the heavenly Holy of Holies. Now in the double truth that within the veil this work is accomplished and our inheritance is to be found, the deep thought is expressed that our heavenly inheritance is essentially our fellowship with God.

“The religious interest dominates the whole Epistle; its cardinal thought is that unhindered fellowship with God is the highest good; its great argument for the truth of Christianity is that it perfectly solves the hitherto insoluble problem of securing it. Jesus, however, has accomplished this great work because his high priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek.”

With this conclusion the author with consummate literary skill brings his hearers back to the analogy of Melchizedek which they are now prepared to understand.

SUGGESTION: It is of spiritual value to note the fact that the author connects the danger of "falling away," of spiritual apostasy, with the doctrine of Christ's priesthood and the Christian's privilege of fellowship with God in Christ. We fail because we lose touch with God. It is the story of Jesus' parable of the vine. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

V. The Supreme Fellowship—Summary

1. Appropriate to yourself the memory verses.
2. Get clearly in mind the three main cycles of the complete argument of the Epistle.
 - (1) Chapters 1 and 2.
 - (2) Chapters 3 to 4:14.
 - (3) Chapters 4:14 to 10:18.
3. What is a priest?
4. What are the qualifications of a true priest?
5. What is meant by the priesthood of Jesus?
6. Wherein does Jesus differ from an ordinary priest?
7. What has Jesus as a priest accomplished?
8. What is the relation of 5:11—6:20 to the argument contained in 4:14—10:18?

9. Outline what the author calls the "first principles" of Christianity.

10. What is meant by "crucifying afresh the Son of God"?

11. What assurances does the author give that these early Christians will not become apostates?

WORD STUDIES

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Through the heavens (4:14) | Oracles of God (5:12) |
| In all points tempted (4:15) | The word of righteousness (5:13) |
| Throne of grace (4:16) | Repentance (6:6) |
| Gifts and sacrifices (5:1) | Fullness of hope (6:11) |
| From death (see margin R. V.) (5:7) | The promises (6:12) |
| Perfect (5:9) | Two immutable things (6:18) |
| Eternal salvation (5:10) | An anchor of the soul (6:19) |
| Hard of interpretation (5:11) | The veil (6:19) |
| | A forerunner (6:20) |

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank Thee that the veil that hides Thee from the world is done away in Christ. In Him we come to Thee. Keep us in everlasting fellowship with Thee so that we may bring forth much fruit to the praise and glory of thy marvelous grace. Amen.

STUDY V

THE SUPREME PERSONALITY

7:1-28

THIS study is a continuation of the third great division of the Epistle (4:14—10:18), and continues the argument of the last study. In 5:10 the author had suggested the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. He returns now after the digression, studied in the last chapter, to develop his thought more fully.

Jesus is a priest who has entered into the very presence of God for us, and whose priesthood has the stamp of finality, because He does what all priesthood has tried to do, and in trying has failed. He has brought men into real fellowship with God.

In the passage now before us the author discloses the true personality of this great high priest. He is a unique personality. There is no one like Him. An analogy is found in the mysterious personality of Melchizedek. All that we know of Melchizedek is found in Gen. 14:17-24. Certain marks in the character of Melchizedek make possible a suggestive comparison with Christ, which enables

the author to state fully his doctrine of the person of Christ.

The theme of this chapter therefore is not Melchizedek but Christ. We must see through the Hebrew symbol to the Christian reality. The secret of the success of Jesus as a great high priest is his personality. This chapter thus becomes the heart of the argument, the very center of the whole Epistle.

SUGGESTION: "Deep down in the heart of men there is a strong and instinctive demand for a priest, to be daysman and mediator, to lay one hand on man and the other on God, and to go between them both. Wit and sarcasm may launch their epithets on this primordial craving; but they might as well try to extinguish by methods the craving of the body for food, of the understanding for truth, of the heart for love. And no religion is destined to meet the deepest yearnings of the race which does not have glowing at the heart the provision of a priest to stand before the throne of grace."—*F. B. Meyer.*

1. The Prophetic Personality (7:1-10)

MEMORY VERSES: 7:2-3

"To whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all—being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King

of peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God—abideth a priest continually.”

Jesus is the great high priest. He, and He alone, has brought men into immediate fellowship with God. Who then is He? Why has He such unique power? This is the simplest and yet the most searching of all questions. The author, true to his consummate art as a teacher, relates the knowledge he seeks to impart to the knowledge his hearers already possess. “Jesus,” he says, “is like Melchizedek.” Melchizedek was the most fascinating and mysterious character in Hebrew history, and the parallel here drawn is illuminating.

In 7:1–10 the character and personality of Melchizedek is analysed, and he is spoken of as prophetic of one still greater than he. Where Melchizedek is superior to all other Old Testament priests, in all such points he is a symbol of Jesus.

Melchizedek as a priest alone possesses four great and true traits of priesthood:

1. *Royalty.* He is a king. He bows the knee to no one. He is supreme. (a) He is King of righteousness. This is the meaning of the name Melchizedek. Righteousness is his crown, and righteousness his kingdom. (b) He is the King of peace. He is spoken of as King of Salem, probably the ancient

name of Jerusalem, the city of peace. He is King of peace. Note the order, first righteousness, and after that *peace*. There can be no peace in the heart, or in the nation, until righteousness is crowned. He "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20).

2. *Uniqueness*. He stands alone. There is none like him. He is "without father or mother." The Levitical priests depended upon their ancestry and their birth. This man needs the help of no heredity. He is able to do what he does because of who he is.

3. *Timelessness*. He has "neither beginning of days nor end of life." He abides forever. He has no relation to the genealogies of Genesis. Other priests come and go. He abides forever. This is a vital point. His position is final. He is final because he leads into the very presence of God. He sits down at God's right hand. He has no successor. (See 5:10; 6:20; 7:3, 8, 16, 17, 20, 24, 25, 28.)

4. *Supremacy*. He is supreme and superior to all. Even Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, paid homage to him, which act was an acknowledgment of his right as a true priest to receive tithes. Abraham bowed to him and in Abraham the whole Levitical priesthood which descended from him gave unconscious allegiance.

In all this we have a prophecy of Christ. Levitical priests have authority because of their heredity. Mel-

chizedek because of his person. His authority is not designated; it is personal. In all this He prefigures Jesus who came into history, and to his redemptive work, without any legal or hereditary right. His personality is his own apology. He is powerful because He is who He is. He is after "the order of Melchizedek," King of Righteousness, Prince of Peace, the unique revealer of God, eternal, timeless, supreme. He has no antecedent. He has no successor.

SUGGESTION: The "order" of Melchizedek was superior to the "order" of Aaron. The one was an order of life, of personal worth, of moral authority, of merit, the other an order of law, of heredity, of privilege, of authority, based on ritualistic sanction. Relate this principle to the present day supremacy of Jesus.

II. The Power of Personality (7:11-19)

MEMORY VERSE: 7:16

"Who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

The presence of such a priest as Melchizedek in Hebrew history is startling. It requires an explanation. It implies a new order, and the presence of a new order implies the failure of the old.

If the regular order of the Levitical priesthood had succeeded in bringing men to God, the suggestion of a superior order would never have arisen. Nevertheless it did arise and took such hold upon the imagination of the people that as late as the Psalms it is referred to. The old order was an acknowledged failure, and that failure entered into prophecy (Psalm 110:4), and this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the true Melchizedek. *Royalty* was his. He belonged not to the priest tribe of Levi, but to the royal line of Judah. He is that other priest "who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (7:16). Two suggestions are here made:

1. The priests of the Old Testament were made priests. The law was on their side. Jesus on the other hand is a priest because of personal fitness; his qualifications are inherent and personal.

2. The law by which the former priests were qualified was a law of the flesh, the law of heredity, the descent from a particular tribe. It had nothing whatever to do with life and personality and spiritual reality. The power by which Jesus became a priest is the power of an endless, an indissoluble, a timeless life. It has nothing to do with heredity, but everything to do with personal influence and religious reality.

This is the new and revolutionary principle which

the Gospel introduces into life and history. The authority of Jesus is the power of an indestructible and indissoluble life. He is the Prince of Life. He is the eternal Son of the Father. Death has no power over Him. He "ever liveth" (7:24-25). The redemption, the fellowship, He effects, is eternal and abiding, because He changes not.

The passage is rather involved, but the meaning is very simple. The authority and qualification of Jesus are not official, but personal. He breaks through into history without announcement. He is not part of the process of evolution. He is a new order, a new type, and his type is personal. He is the great "son of fact." It is because of what Jesus is, that He is able to do what He does. "Our high priest shall never ascend Mount Hor to be stripped of his robes of office and die. The secrets confided to Him need never be told again to his successor. The tender love which links Him to us shall never be snapped or cut in death. No one else will ever be called in to take his place in the superintendence of our souls."

SUGGESTION: Make a study of the author's way of speaking about Jesus. Note the use of the name "our Lord" (7:14). Elsewhere in the New Testament this expression occurs in I Tim. 1:14; II Tim. 1:8; II Peter 3:15. The name most frequently used is

Jesus (2:9; 3:1; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2, 24; 13:12). The name *Christ* is also frequently used (3:6, 14; 5:5; 6:1; 9:11, 14, 24, 28; 11:26); *Jesus Christ* (10:10; 13:8, 21); *The Lord* (2:3); *Lord Jesus* (13:20); *Son* (1:2; 7:28). Paul's favorite name, *Christ Jesus*, does not occur.

"Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend,
 My prophet, priest, and king,
 My lord, my life, my way, my end,
 Accept the praise I bring."

III. The Unchanging Christ (7:20-25)

MEMORY VERSE: 7:25

"Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

We must endeavor to translate the symbolic into the real. Jesus, the author states, has become the "surety of a better covenant." What does that mean? It means that He is the pledge of a better fellowship, a better faith than that of the Old Testament priests whose duty it was to bring men to God. They failed. They died and passed away and left their unfinished task to others, who likewise failed and transmitted their failure to posterity.

That failure could not endure; otherwise perpetual fellowship with God would have been impossible.

A better covenant is established, founded upon fact, the fact of Christ. He does not fail, neither does He die. He abides. He continues. He is unchangeable. A prophecy of his abiding priesthood was shadowed forth in the priesthood of Melchizedek. The order of the priesthood of Melchizedek rested upon the oath of God, which assured its timelessness, its imperishableness. This changeless priesthood Jesus possesses. He satisfies the abiding need of the human heart for fellowship with God, and our access to God, our prayer life, depends upon Him, the changeless Christ.

We step into the hall of some renowned college and see upon the walls the portraits of the men who generation after generation succeeded each other in office. One after the other has passed away, and so will all who follow. It is like the priesthood of the Old Testament. It is like the order of all history. One comes and another goes, but none abides. They too die and go to their judgment. Jesus, however, has an abiding priesthood. He ever lives. Death has no power over Him. This is the crucial test of all religion, and of the author's argument (7:3, 16, 21, 24, 25, 28). Aaron ascended Mount Hor and put off his priestly robes, but Jesus is the abiding link between the generations that come and go. He is the only enduring ethical reality.

This quality is the basis of his saviourhood. While

others die, He abides. For this reason He is able "to save unto the uttermost."

1. The uttermost may mean to the last limit of defeat. It may mean to the lowest depth of man's deepest need. In this sense let us not be afraid to say "He descended into hell."

2. The uttermost may mean that He is able to lead to the greatest heights. He is the leader. He is the master and maker of men. "He is able to save to the furthest reaches of life and character, and finds no element intractable to his hand. Had it been otherwise He could not have been a priest for ever. His priesthood would have been inadequate, and therefore must have given place to another, unless God were to acquiesce in defeat."

Through Him we draw near to God (7:25) because He abides, and lives to help, to intercede for us. What is involved in the intercession of Christ is impossible for us to conceive. The word in the Greek means "to act on behalf of another." We can rest in this thought: all that we need Jesus will do for us.

SUGGESTION: Compare these words which speak of Christ's intercession for us with the great intercessory prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John where he says "I have prayed for them." Try to make definite in your thought just what the intercession of Jesus means now to you.

IV. The Crystal Christ (7:26-28)

MEMORY VERSE: 7:26

“For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

These closing verses are the true conclusion of this central chapter. They put in concise and beautiful language the argument for the supremacy of Jesus.

Concerning the personality of Jesus three things are emphasized.

1. Jesus is the sinless Saviour. He, and He only, is fitted to be a Saviour, for He, and only He, possesses the character to sustain such an office.

“The passage is of the nature of a triumphant exclamation, in which epithets are heaped on epithets, describing the lofty moral characteristics and the transcendent sphere of existence of the Melchizedek high priest, and the consequent perfection of his high priestly work. Because the ministry is now alluded to, and attention no longer directed exclusively to his person, the Son is called a high priest. Priest and high priest do not differ in their person, out of which arises the kind of priest they are, but they differ as to their ministry.”—*Davidson*.

a. *He is holy.* This great word discloses his attitude to God. He is God-like. God is in all his

thoughts. God is the beginning and end of all his plans and purposes.

b. He is harmless. No evil thought is born of his imagination. He is sympathetic, compassionate, thinking with the truth, believing all things.

c. He is undefiled. He is the crystal Christ. No taint is upon his soul. He has the purity symbolized in the Levitical law (Lev. 16:4).

d. He is separated from sinners. He cannot be classified with men. He is unique. He is in a class by Himself. Robert Ingersoll, who trailed the glory of our Christianity in the dust, had nothing but eulogy for the character of Him who, for all men, is beyond criticism: "His name shall be called Wonderful: because no man ever dared to point his finger at the character of Christ and find any fault with Him. Every time I see a rock I remember that He is the Rock of Ages. I walk out under the stars, I remember that He is the star of eternal day. When I come into one of God's temples I remember that He is the chief corner stone. When I walk the streets, I remember that He is the way, the truth and the life. When I see the birds, I remember that He said, 'Not one sparrow will fall.' The flowers tell me that He is the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley. Wherever I go and wherever I look, in every land and in every city, the name of Jesus is Wonderful."

e. He is higher than the heavens. In the very

presence of God He has his home. He came forth from God, and has gone back to God and sees God face to face (4:14; 9:24). He carries on his ministry in God's presence. This is why He is able to save unto the uttermost, and in fellowship with Him, we too come before the face of God where He abides.

All human eulogies fade before the simplicity and suggestiveness of these words. Men of every name and language have vied with each other to do Him homage. Carlyle spoke of Him as "our divinest symbol." Jean Paul Richter, when he spoke of Him, exclaimed, "The mightiest among the holy; the holiest among the mighty!" Tennyson sang of Him, "Thou seemest human and divine; the highest, holiest manhood, Thou!" Sidney Lanier called him "the sovereign, the seer, man's best man, men's comrade, king and priest, the crystal Christ." Ernest Renan, who was one of the first and highest of the higher critics, said:

"Jesus was in every respect unique and nothing can be compared with Him. Be the unlooked for phenomena of the future what they may, Jesus will not be surpassed. Noble initiator! Repose now in thy glory. Thy divinity is established, a thousand times more loved since thy death than during the days of thy course here below. Thou shalt become the cornerstone of humanity, insomuch that to tear

thy name from this world would be to shake it from its very foundations. No more shall men distinguish between Thee and God."

Amid the overturning of traditions brought about by the great war one thing above all else stands out in unrivalled supremacy, and that is the abiding reality and sufficiency of the Christ-life, and the Gospel hope.

The one enduring thing, however, which gives Jesus his place on earth, and his throne in heaven, is just this which the author of the Hebrews calls his priesthood. He brings men to God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

2. His person is the Gospel. The person of Jesus is the key to heaven. Said Father Stanton, "You may know all about the dear Saviour and say your creed, without missing a word, and yet never know Him." In three particulars he differs from all other saints, priests and mediators.

a. He is sinless. He need offer no sacrifice for Himself. "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?"

b. He offered only one sacrifice. His sacrifice was once and for all. It was final. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were repeated with heart-breaking monotony. God said he was sick of them (Isa. 1:13-14). Repetition speaks of inadequacy. Jesus offered one sacrifice which opened the way to

God forever. Jesus' offering was "once for all" (9:25, 28; 10:10-18).

c. He offered Himself. Here the author touches upon the vital word in his argument. He suggests here, more than he elaborates. True to his method, he drops the hint and later he will take it up and develop it. His offering is Himself. His offering is not merely physical, but spiritual. It is not merely blood, but life, love, will, self. (See 9:11-14, 23-28; 10:5-14, 19, 20. Compare Eph. 5:2.) He offered his life to God, a perfect human life, an obedient human will, in perfect submission.

3. There is finality with Jesus. The old law made fallible and faulty men priests, but in the new order of ethical and moral values, established by the character and oath of God, the Son, Jesus, is the true priest, the true mediator, the true minister, the true Saviour, for He is perfected. The perfection of Jesus does not refer to his character, for He was always morally perfect, but to his office. He was fitted for his work, and fitted and perfected forever. He has no successor. He is fitted to save not only one generation, but all generations, not only one nation, but all nations. He is able to bring the world to God, the men of every age, and of every nation. Kipling may say:

"O East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."

But in Jesus, "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

SUGGESTION: Select from this Epistle the verses that exalt Jesus. Gather from literature and history choice sentences of a similar character.

V. The Supreme Personality—Summary

1. Carefully memorize the verses given at the beginning of each section.

2. Relate the argument of this study to the argument of the Epistle.

3. Why does the author illustrate the person and work of Jesus by the character of Melchizedek?

4. What resemblance does the author find between Melchizedek and Jesus?

5. What is the relation of the priesthood of Melchizedek to the Levitical Priesthood?

6. What is meant by the "order" of Melchizedek?

7. What is the difference between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of Jesus?

8. How is the person and work of Jesus related to the common order of Old Testament priesthood?

9. Wherein consists the superiority of Jesus?

STUDIES OF WORDS IN CHAPTER 7

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| King of Righteousness (2) | Carnal commandment (16) |
| King of Peace (2) | Endless life (16) |
| Perfect (11) | Uttermost (25) |
| Similitude (15) | Intercession (25) |

Prayer

O Lord, our God, we thank Thee for the revelation of our true selves in Jesus. We are to be like Him. Give us grace to follow Him, and with Him abide in fellowship with Thee, in joy, in peace, and in unceasing service. Amen.

STUDY VI

THE SUPREME MINISTRY

8:1—9:14

THIS study still continues the argument of the third division of the Epistle (4:14—10:18). A priest is one who brings men to God. Jesus is the true priest because He is supreme in his person. He is the Son of God. This personal superiority makes possible a superior service. This is the theme of this study. The thought of the passage is that the ministry of Jesus is a superior ministry. This is the "sum," the "chief point" in the argument, his is a "better" ministry, founded upon a "better" covenant, made sure by "better" promises.

The emphasis in the passage is upon the word "covenant." "A covenant between God and men is a state of relation in which He is their God, and they his people." We must seek to discover the spiritual reality enshrined in this great sacred word "covenant." Those who are bound by a covenant enter into fellowship. All barriers are broken and a true understanding is established. Jesus is the mediator

of this new covenant, this new fellowship, this new reconciliation, this new understanding. He has broken down all barriers and made peace in the blood of his cross.

I. The Excellent Ministry (8:1-6)

MEMORY VERSE: 8:6

“But now hath He obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises.”

This section sums up the argument of the preceding section. Jesus is our great high priest. He alone brings men to God. His ministry has the note of finality. He has sat down on the right hand of God. He has fulfilled all conditions, and the way to God now stands open. Those conditions are two-fold:

a. He has a place and sphere of service. This place is called “the true tabernacle.” It is in the realm of spiritual reality. He ministers not in forms and ceremonies, on the outskirts of the spiritual, but at the very center of power, at God’s right hand. On earth there are priests of form and ritual by the thousands, but in the sphere of the spiritual He alone ministers. His glory is unsharable. He is

the way, the truth and the life. "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He ministers in the "true tabernacle," and at the very heart of humanity.

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are his alone."

b. He has something to offer. It is the author's way merely to hint at what his offering is. There is something appealing in the word "something." Of course we know what it is. The "something" He has to offer is Himself. Every priest has something to offer, a lamb, a goat, a turtle-dove. Jesus, too, being a true priest has something to offer. He offers Himself.

Therefore his ministry is the more excellent. It is complete. It is final. Through Him men have access to God. He is the mediator of a better covenant. The words of Dr. Andrew Murray bring us face to face with the abiding value of this teaching.

"Our great high priest has his sanctuary in the heavens; there He dwells, there we find Him; there He receives us, there He introduces us to meet God; there He proves that He is a priest who abides continually, and who gives those who come to God through Him the power to do it too—to abide con-

tinually in his presence. The nearness to God and fellowship with Him I cannot partake of except through my heart. My heart is my life, is myself; my only blessedness is in the state of the heart. And therefore Jesus as high priest cannot do his priestly work of bringing me near to God except as He dwells in my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. All our thought, and faith, and adoration of Him in heaven bring us back to the riches of the glory of the mystery—Christ in you. He is priest after the power of an endless life, a priest whose presence and power are known and enjoyed in the life of the heart.”

SUGGESTION: The idea of the “covenant” which to the Hebrew mind signified fellowship with God dominates the Epistle. Jesus reveals this covenant, this fellowship (1:1; 2:1; 3:1). He gives it vitality by his sacrifice (9:16; 10:29). “A covenant between God and man is a state of relation in which He is their God, and they his people.” This covenant relation Jesus both reveals and realizes.

II. The Better Covenant (8:7–13)

MEMORY VERSES: 9:11–12

“But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not

of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."

Two covenants are spoken of in the Epistle. The covenant made with Israel, the covenant of the law, the covenant of works, commonly called the first covenant. That covenant was a confessed failure. Men were not brought into fellowship with God because of it.

Later in Hebrew history this failure was acknowledged, and by the time of Jeremiah its failure was very evident. The people of the covenant were in bondage, and the author tells them that the old covenant is ready to disappear, about to expire from age, to die from "senile decay" (8:13).

"When God wipes out it is because He is getting ready to write." When the old covenant is ready to pass away, it is because a new relation is being established. A new covenant, a covenant, a fellowship, founded upon better promises was already promised. This new covenant has three marks:

1. The first covenant was external, the new covenant belongs to the heart. In the first the authority came from without. In the new from within. The one was written on tables of stone, the other upon the heart.

2. The first covenant was confined to Jews, to those who heard the call of God. The new covenant is universal. The witness is within the heart of all men. The author here touches the great missionary appeal of the Gospel, but does not press the application as we should expect Paul to do.

3. The old was a failure because it was incapable of fulfilling its promise. The new is final because it leads up to the forgiveness of sins, and where forgiveness is, there is of necessity reconciliation and redemption.

“With Jeremiah’s doctrine of the New Covenant universalism was born. The State could perish, and sacrifice be brought to an end, but religion had been detached from these accidents, and could therefore survive them. And thus the people of the New Covenant, the Israel of God, is gathered out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Since God has written his law on the heart of each, there is no need for any man to make Him known to his fellow. For all without exception shall receive an intuitive knowledge of Him.”—*Peake*.

SUGGESTION: “No one can read the Epistle without perceiving that the writer belongs to the Pauline school; in other words, that he has more sympathy with the new age, which is coming, than with the old age that is going.” Follow out the suggestion by

collecting the evidence as suggested by these and similar expressions, "the new covenant," "the living God," "better things."

III. The Prophecy of the Old Covenant (9:1-10)

MEMORY VERSE: 9:8

"The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing."

The first commandment had failed. It made provision for certain needs, but they were not the deepest needs of life. It provided for flesh purity, but could not deal with the things of the heart. It made provision for sins of ignorance, but had no message for a guilty conscience. The distinction is put thus by Professor Davidson.

"The condition of the continuance of the covenant was the keeping of the Law. But here a double defect manifested itself in the first covenant. On the one hand, the people abode not in it (8:9), and on the other hand, its institutions could not remove the transgressions done under it (9:15; 10:4). In the new covenant God promises to write his law on the people's hearts (8:10), as on the other hand the death of Christ redeems the transgressions under the

first covenant (9:15), and God remembers them no more (10:17).”

Nevertheless, the old covenant held in its keeping the prophecy of better things to come. Every detail of the ancient system spoke of a spiritual reality. The old was “a shadow of good things to come” (10:1). “The first covenant lay, as a sphere of dim representation, between two regions, filled with realities,—heaven, the region of the true things themselves, on the one side, and the new covenant, realizing the very image of the good things that were to come, on the other.”

The spiritual significance of the furniture of the tabernacle is touched upon by the author. The tabernacle itself is a symbol of the true dwelling place of God (Rev. 21:3, John 14:17). The candlestick speaks of the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9). The table with the shew bread looks forward to the Bread of Life of which if a man eat he will never hunger (John 6:35). The Holy Place which is always open, always ready, ministering continually to the deepest cravings of the human heart, is an attempt to shadow forth the fact that God Himself is the refuge of his people. It is an attempt to answer the cry of the soul, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:2).

Even the Holy Place was not the reality, but only

a shadow, for behind the Holy Place, separated from it by a heavy veil, was the Holy of Holies, the holiest of all, with its altar of incense, where prayer and communion might be perfected. There God's presence could be realized. Here, too, the worshippers met failure. It is the last tragedy of the soul, that pushes out to the last limit of ritual, and yet does not discover reality. The inadequacy of the holiest of all was evident from the fact that it was closed to the people who most needed such soul satisfaction, and was accessible only to the priest, and then, only once every year. In itself it failed to satisfy the needs of the heart, but it was a prophecy of good things to come when the veil would be done away in Christ. If once a year perfect fellowship could be obtained, then in Christ that perfect fellowship can be continuously maintained.

“So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of his Son,
I am as near as He.”

SUGGESTION: Study the New Testament conception of the “tabernacle.” Relate this conception to the great central doctrine of the Incarnation. “They shall call his name Immanuel—God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

IV. Perfecting of the Covenant (9:11-15)

MEMORY VERSE: 9:14

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

The fulfilment of all the past is in Jesus. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). All things head up in Him. He is the priest of good things to come. The minister of the true tabernacle. He is the truth. In Him the “good things” are realized. What are these good things?

1. *The perfect tabernacle.* God was in Christ. The temple of his body was the dwelling place of Deity. And Christ by his Incarnation has mingled for ever his life with the life of humanity, and God’s dwelling place is with men.

2. *The perfect offering.* The sacrifice which Christ offered was Himself. All heathen religions present sacrifices to their deities; in the Gospel, God in Christ, offers his sacrifice to men. He gives not the blood of animals, but Himself.

3. *The final offering.* He entered into the holiest of all once. He comes no more out (10:12). He accomplished and maintains fellowship with God, and obtains for all his people eternal redemption.

The transitory effects of the old system, with its endless repetition, are done away in the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

In a closing sentence the argument is concluded. If the old offerings purged the flesh, they accomplished something. They purified the flesh. Barriers were broken down and formal fellowship restored by means of such ceremonial purification. "How much more"—this is the argument—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (9:14). The old ceremony purified the flesh and gave formal access to men and God. The purification of Christ on the other hand touches the soul, the heart, the conscience, the will.

The reason for the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ is merely hinted at. The author will more fully explain in the next chapter. Meanwhile he says that the offering of Christ was in "the eternal Spirit." It was not an involuntary, compulsory, arbitrary sacrifice. It was offered within the region of the spirit, the mind, the will. We in our day surely know what this means! It was not of physical compulsion, but of ethical and moral constraint. The old sacrifice was by another. His was Himself. The old was of death. His was of life, through the

eternal Spirit. The old was in time and transitory. His was timeless, eternal, after the power of "an endless life." They tell us that Niagara once was dry; that the water of the river dammed back by the ice left the precipice bare. God's love never ceased to flow. His offering of Himself in Christ is an eternal offering. "It became God" (3:10). Calvary reveals the eternal heart of God in time. "Thus the offering of Christ is lifted into the region of eternity, and that in all its extent, whether part of it was accomplished on earth and in time or not. For it is not its local environment but its animating spirit that constitutes it an heavenly offering. But spirit is also the ethically free, and thus his sacrifice is stamped with a voluntary as well as a rational character."

The ethical quality of Christ's sacrifice is here only suggested. It will be more fully interpreted in our next study. The author will now reveal his deepest teaching that the sacrifice of Christ is morally perfect and spiritually efficacious. The ministry of Jesus never fails. It cleanses men's conscience and sets them free "to serve the living God." Cleansing makes men free, and only free men are fit to serve others. There is no finer climax in the Epistle than this verse which after speaking of cleansing goes on to speak of service.

“Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth wouldst teach;
Thy heart must overflow,
If thou another’s heart wouldst reach.”

SUGGESTION: “The object of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” says Coleridge, “was to prove the superiority of the Christian religion; the object of the Epistle to the Romans to prove its necessity.”

V. The Supreme Ministry—Summary

1. Get clearly in mind the memory verses.
2. What is the essential significance of the term “Covenant”?
3. Is there any distinction between the “order” of the priesthood and the “ministry” of the priesthood?
4. Contrast the ministry of Jesus with that of the priest of the Old Testament.
5. What was the historical reason for Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning a new covenant?
6. Outline the difference between the old and the new covenants.
7. What were the permanent and prophetic elements in the new covenant?
8. What is meant by saying that the sacrifice of Christ was ethical?
9. What is meant by the blood of Christ? Why

is it effectual, and why did Old Testament sacrifices fail?

10. How is this study related to the thought of the Epistle?

WORD STUDIES

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Minister (8:2) | A parable (9:9) |
| Tabernacle (8:2) | Time of reformation |
| Somewhat (8:3) | (9:10) |
| Shadow (8:5) | E t e r n a l redemption |
| More excellent (8:6) | (9:12) |
| Finding fault (8:8) | Sanctify (9:13) |
| Waxeth aged (8:13) | Eternal Spirit (9:14) |
| Divine service (9:1) | Dead works (9:14) |
| The second veil (9:3) | The living God (9:14) |
| Errors (9:7) | |

Prayer

God is ever ready, but we are ever unready; God is nigh to us, but we are far from Him; God is within, we are without; God is at home, we are strangers. The prophet says: "God leadeth the righteous by a narrow path into a broad highway, till they come into a wide and open place," that is, unto the true freedom of that spirit which hath become one spirit with God. God help us to follow Him, that He may bring us unto Himself. Amen.

STUDY VII

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

9:15—10:18

THIS section brings to its conclusion the entire argument which occupies the third great division of the Epistle (4:14—10:18). It concludes the thought with which the three preceding studies deal, and it also concludes the doctrinal part of the Epistle.

The last study led up to the sacrifice of Christ. That sacrifice was a moral obligation, and perfected Christ in his priesthood. When the priests of old offered their sacrifice once a year, they entered within the veil into the Holy of Holies. When Jesus offered Himself, He entered into the very presence of God, to appear before the face of God for us.

He is the forerunner, and his presence before the face of God is the pledge of our abiding fellowship with God. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience. His sacrifice is of "richer blood and nobler name" than the ritualistic sacrifices of the Old Testament, for his sacrifice was the offering of his will, his conscience, his self.

The finality of this sacrifice is disclosed in the fact that Christ's cross cleanses the conscience. It issues in forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness there is reconciliation, atonement, fellowship,—and fellowship with God is the goal of the Gospel. "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." When the soul finds rest, it has found God. Jesus brings men to God, and keeps them there.

SUGGESTION: In the light of what the Epistle to the Hebrews says about the ethical and spiritual nature of the cross, compare Jesus' own words to the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:26).

I. The Fact of Sacrifice (9:15-28)

MEMORY VERSES: 9:27-28

"And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation."

Let us keep in mind that the object of the Epistle is a practical one. The argument is not to convince the intellect, but to control the life. While the Epistle is the greatest argument, the finest apology, for the supremacy of Christ, the author is

seeking to lead men to realize their faith in loving sacrifice and service.

As the argument has advanced from stage to stage we have been conscious that the death of Christ was to those first readers more of a hindrance than a help. The cross was still for them a stumbling-block. Patiently but firmly he proceeds to show that Christ's death is the glorious fulfilment of all the ancient Hebrew ritual, satisfying the ceaseless cravings of humanity.

In estimating the argument, where the author reaches great conclusions, it will be helpful to bear in mind the following principles:

1. The blood which makes atonement is the life (Lev. 17:11). Ignatius spoke of "His blood which is eternal love."

2. In order that life may be given to God, it must die. While it lives it belongs, so to speak, to itself.

3. The offering of life, therefore, is the essential thing in all true sacrifices. Life, not death, is the "living sacrifice." Keeping these principles in mind the author here states that Jesus died and that his death was valid and became before God, and for men, the final sacrifice.

1. *Christ's sacrifice was not unrelated in history.* The author states that the sacrifice of Christ is interwoven with the covenant promises of God. Christ's

death relates to those under the first covenant, together with those under the new. To the first readers this argument would make a stronger appeal than to us.

“When Christ comes the accumulated debt must be swept away, that the promise of inheritance may be satisfactorily fulfilled. These sins are cancelled by the death of Christ, for the elaborate sacrificial apparatus of Judaism effected nothing at all beyond ceremonial purification, as the author says with the utmost directness in 10:4. And these sins must be dealt with, otherwise the conscience would not be cleansed; for conscience is not cleansed by drugging it into forgetfulness of its guilt. The sins themselves must be dealt with, and not merely the sinner’s consciousness of them. Thus the death of Christ must have a retrospective action, grappling with sins already committed, as well as imparting power for righteousness in the future.”—*Peake*.

2. *Christ’s sacrifice was not unique.* The sacrifices of the Old Testament were also effective for cleansing. When purified the unclean could mingle again with the worshippers. Jesus, however, by his sacrifice cleansed the conscience. He entered with his life into heaven itself. Through Him forgiveness is realized.

3. *Christ’s sacrifice cannot be repeated.* He remains within the veil in the presence of God. Other

priests stand. He sits. Other priests continue to sacrifice. He is a finished sacrifice.

The author in order to make clearer his interpretation of the cross used two illustrations from common Hebrew usage. His readers would be quick to understand and appreciate his point of view.

1. The illustration of a *will*. He uses the word "testament" in the sense of a legal document, a will (9:16, 17, 18). It is the same word as covenant, and so the meaning is carried over to the author's argument concerning the new covenant. A will is not effective till the one who makes the will has died. So the benefits of the new covenant became effective to his heirs only when Christ the great covenanter, the true testator, died.

2. The illustration of the judgment (9:27-28). In human history there are two great events, namely, death and the judgment. Judgment is the grand *finale* of death. When the author seeks to work out the analogy he does not, however, refer to the judgment that follows the death of Christ, but to salvation. His death is followed by his appearance a second time "unto salvation." It is a very interesting and suggestive application. He comes not as a judge, but as a saviour. Even as man's death is final and issues in judgment, so Christ's death is final but issues in salvation. "There is a causal con-

nection between death and judgment, and so between Christ's death and salvation."

SUGGESTION: "There is a word here which recurs, like a note on an organ beneath the tumult of majestic sound. Five times, at least, it rolls forth its thunder, pealing through all ages, echoing through all worlds, announcing the finality of an accomplished redemption to the whole universe of God—Once!"
—*F. B. Meyer*. (See also 10:2 and 6:4.)

II. The Failure of Sacrifice (10:1-4)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:4

"For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."

The author does not treat of the philosophy of sacrifice. He does not enter into any question relating to the reasons why sacrifice is offered, nor does he enter into any explanation such as we find in the writings of Paul, why sacrifice atones for sin. He is satisfied to state that sacrifice is a fact in the history of religion. He does not enter into any interpretation of the cross, and sets forth no theory of the atonement, although he lays the basis for such an explanation. His statement is: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission." For him the statement of that fact was sufficient.

And yet the statement of the fact did not satisfy. The sacrifices of the Old Testament had failed. Failure was written across the page of Hebrew religion. Three facts are pointed out:

1. The Old Testament sacrifices did have some value. They served to bring sin to remembrance (10:3). They were a shadow of good things to come. They eased the pain of estrangement and opened the way to penitence, which is always the path to peace.

2. The Old Testament sacrifices, however, were ineffectual. They had no relation to the conscience. They had a relation to legal and ritualistic purity. But they could not lead men to God. The fact of their endless, ceaseless, repetition spoke too loudly of their failure.

3. The Old Testament sacrifices were impossible. The author has been leading up to his climax and we are hardly prepared for this last sledge-hammer blow. "It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (10:4). "The law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh" (10:1). It is a startling statement. The sacrifices of the Old Testament never did, and never could, take away sin. Those sacrifices were formal, arbitrary, and sin is not formal or arbitrary, but an attitude of life,

a condition of the heart. This statement is however the oft-repeated principle laid down by the Hebrew prophets. "And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). "For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering" (Psalm 51:16). "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (Hosea 6:6). "What is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isa. 1:11). (See also Psalm 50:8-10 and Jer. 7:21-23.) In this connection the somewhat forgotten hymn of Isaac Watts is of interest

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain:

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

SUGGESTION: Try and get the author's true idea of the word "perfect." The treatment of the Epistle in Andrew Murray's book, "The Holiest of All," ends in failure because of a wrong interpretation of the word.

"To make perfect does not mean to endow with all excellent qualities, but to bring to the end, that is, the appropriate end of that which corresponds to the idea. Hence it is a relative term, and may be used of bringing to completion within a variety of spheres. There is no fluctuation in the mere meaning of the word, which is, to bring to the appropriate or appointed end; the variety of meaning arises from the fact that ideal finality will vary according to the sphere in regard to which it is spoken of. To perfect, therefore, is to put the people into the true covenant relation of worshippers of the Lord, to bring them into his full fellowship."—*Davidson*.

III. The Moral Sacrifice (10:5-10)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:10

"In which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

The truth already set forth in the last section should be firmly grasped. The blood of the Old Tes-

tament sacrifices never did, and never could, cleanse the heart from sin. This statement is perhaps the most startling and the most fundamental in the whole Epistle.

The author is aware that his statement will be challenged by his readers and so he resorts to his usual method when seeking support for his argument. He makes his appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures. To the Hebrew Christian they were the final authority. He appeals not to such words of the prophets as are given in the last section, but to one of the Psalms. He appeals to Psalm 40:6-8. "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." This familiar passage contains the following truths:

1. God was not satisfied with Old Testament sacrifices. They were not the fruit of his purpose; nor the expression of his will.

2. The will of God concerning sacrifice was to obtain a voluntary, human sacrifice, not a dead sacrifice, but a living sacrifice, not a physical body, but a human will. The passage speaks of "a body" having been prepared—prepared as a vehicle for a perfect human life. This touches the doctrine of the Incarnation, but is not here developed. A second

thought is added in the expression "mine ears hast thou opened" which belongs to the original passage. (See Psalm 40:6-8.) The open ear signifies an attitude of receptivity to the word and will of God.

3. The will of God found its true expression in Christ. He alone among the sons of men could perfectly say, "Lo I come to do thy will." His life was lived, and He died his death in accordance with God's will. He came into life to do that will, and in the doing of God's will, He found victory.

In this final statement there is an approach to an interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ was not merely the offering up of his body, but the surrender of his will, his whole life to God. His sacrifice therefore is voluntary and ethical, and enters into the realm of religious reality.

Behind the sacrifice of Christ there is here also the revelation of the mind and will of the eternal God. The cross expressed his will. The death of Christ was not an accident in the history of redemption. The cross was fixed in the purposes of God. (See 2:10.) In that will we, too, are sanctified (10:10). It is obedience which God requires, and by identification with the will of God, in Christ, we too enter into victory. (See 1 Sam. 15:22, Hosea 6:6.) This was the thought which Paul had in mind in Rom. 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living

sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service." Into this will of God, perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, we too must enter, and there we too are sanctified and saved.

Let us not miss this message of the cross. It is Christ's cross, but we must make it our cross. The cross of Christ is not an isolated fact. He is calling the world to take its place beside him. If we speak of it in terms of any abstract theory which makes Him take our place apart from us taking our place beside Him, we make his cross of none effect. The faith which unites us to Christ can alone justify. This is the union with Christ by virtue of which the great Apostle was able to say: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

It is said that Hiram Powers, the sculptor, who produced the "Liberty" which surmounts the Capitol at Washington, when asked how he could keep so closely in touch with American life, though for years his home had been in Italy, replied, "I have never been out of touch with America. I have eaten and slept in Italy for thirty odd years, but I have never lived anywhere but in the United States."

That is identification by faith and by imagination with the spirit of a great nation. In this same way we enter into union with Christ's life so that the spirit that is in Him may be in us, and the life which we live in the body of this flesh we may live in the faith of the Son of God, so that we can say:

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

By faith we confess not only our sin; we confess to the transforming power of his love; to the spirit of the cross by which He lived his life and died his death; we live our life in Him, and, “if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

This interpretation of the inner meaning of sacrifice is receiving to-day, in the story of the great war, a wonderful confirmation. The true sacrifice is the surrender of self to the highest. The soldier on the battlefield in the hour of his supreme sacrifice holds fellowship with Christ. If he has felt the inspiration which enables him to say, “No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself,” he has taken his place beside Christ and found eternal peace. It is for us to discover in times of peace and days of quiet the same secret of success. To make God's

will our will is to enter into victory, and God's will is to bring in the Kingdom.

SUGGESTION: "The will of God was Jesus' north star." Study the passages in the Gospels which speak of the will of God in the life of Jesus. See especially Matt. 26:39, Luke 9:23, John 7:17, Matt. 6:10, 12:50, Mark 3:35. Compare the truth expressed in these passages with that contained in the verses we have been studying.

IV. The Final Sacrifice (10:11-14)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:14

"For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The author pursues his argument concerning the finality of the sacrifice of Jesus. The old sacrifices were ineffectual and inadequate. This inadequacy was evidenced by two things. (1) The priests of old stood before the altar. They kept their place and their vigil. Jesus on the other hand has sat down. There is nothing more to be done. The victory is complete and He rests from his work. (2) The priests of old offered sacrifices continually. "Every day," says Professor Peake, "they offer sacrifices, which can never cancel sin. Their mighty

labor, like that of Sisyphus, ends always in nothing. The pathetic inefficiency of all this elaborate apparatus, this daily addition of nought to nought, which at the end of the long centuries has mounted up to zero, is all the more striking in the light of Christ's sacrifice, offered once only but effective for ever. He now sits at God's right hand, having achieved an offering acceptable to God, while the Jewish priest still stands to offer those useless sacrifices, sad spectacle of belated incompetence. And the session, glorious though it is, is but the prelude to final triumph over his foes."

This one complete and final offering of Christ has made God and man one. It both sanctifies and perfects (10:14).

In the first place it sanctifies. It purifies. It cleanses the conscience. It brings the sense of forgiveness to men.

In the second place it perfects. The fellowship with God is made complete. The victory over sin is his, and in the confidence of the throne He waits the triumph of his cross. In his *Passiontide* sermons, Canon Liddon gives expression to the author's thought in these words:

"The blood of Christ. It was shed on Calvary eighteen hundred years ago: but it flows on throughout all time. It belongs now, not to the physical but

to the spiritual world. It washes souls, not bodies; it is sprinkled not on altars but on consciences. But, although invisible, it is not for all that the less real and energetic; it is the secret power of all that purifies or that invigorates souls in Christendom."

SUGGESTION: Think over these words of Bishop Westcott: "I cherish the thought of the richness there was in the first days of the church, when even the author of such an Epistle as this should be a forgotten man."

V. The Abiding Sacrifice (10:15-18)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:18

"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

In these verses the author brings the long argument begun with 4:14 to a close. After repeating the promise of the New Covenant as given in Jeremiah, which has already been interpreted, he comes to a sudden and simple conclusion. The new covenant issued in forgiveness. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (10:18). Forgiveness is the last word, for where forgiveness is, there is joy and peace and blessedness.

It is interesting to note that the author believes that with forgiveness there comes restored fellowship

and an abiding mutual communion and confidence between God and man. This is the perfect religion that discovers in God and man the attitude of an abiding and unquestioning trust.

“Thou in one fold the afraid and the forsaken,—
Thou with one shepherding canst soothe and save;
Speak but the word! the Evangel shall awaken
Life in the lost, the hero in the slave.”

In a remarkable study of forgiveness, Dr. George Adam Smith expresses the point of view with which the author concludes the argumentative section of his Epistle.

“Amid the many blessings in which, through the infinite riches of his mercy in Christ, it consists, this stands out, the most wonderful and inspiring essential of all: that God Himself should trust us when we have lost all trust of ourselves: should believe us capable of standing when we have fallen, of overcoming where we have only known defeat; and of again doing the work, in which we have been so lax and unfaithful.

“Look you, there is no other view of forgiveness so lasting or so ethical as this. So ethical: for this makes it no mere absolution, no bare decree of the authority of God—whether direct by the Spirit, or mediated by his priests upon earth; no mere decree of the authority of God, but the constant influence

of his grace and his will upon our hearts. In giving forgiveness God gives Himself."

SUGGESTION: Make a study of how the Bible speaks of God's relation to sin and its forgiveness (10.17). (See Isa. 1:18, Psalms 85:2; 103:12; Isa. 38:17, Micah 7:19, Isa. 44:22.)

VI. The Supreme Sacrifice—Summary

1. Carefully get by heart the memory verses.
2. Relate this study to the thought of the Epistle.
3. What are the essential elements in any true sacrifice?
4. Does the author give any idea as to the reason why sacrifices should be offered? If so, what reasons does he give?
5. What was the value of Old Testament sacrifices?
6. Why were Old Testament sacrifices a failure?
7. Does the Old Testament itself suggest that the Old Testament sacrifices were inadequate?
8. What is the relation of the sacrifice of Christ to the will of God?
9. What bearing has the sacrifice of Christ upon the conception of God's fatherhood?
10. What is the relation of obedience to sacrifice?

11. What is meant by saying that Christ's sacrifice is "once for all"?

12. What fact in experience confirms the finality and completeness of Christ's work?

WORD STUDIES

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Mediator (9:15) | The end of the ages (9:26) |
| Inheritance (9:15) | A second time (9:28) |
| Testament (9:16) | Shadow (10:1) |
| Remission (9:22) | Impossible (10:4) |
| Copies (9:23) | Sanctified (10:10) |

Prayer

O Lord, our God, we meet Thee under the shadow of the cross. There we wait and there we wonder. It is there, too, that we meet with each other. We do not meet with each other in the joy and gladness of life. We only know each other in the darkness, and in the sorrow, and at the cross. We thank Thee that the cross is in the center of the world's history, and that it explains to us something of the meaning of life. There our burdens are laid down. There the long road ends. There our sins are forgiven. There the heavens are opened, and the voice of God speaks.

God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Our faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine:
Now hear us while we pray,
Take all our sins away,
O let us from this day
Be wholly thine.” Amen.

STUDY VIII

THE SUPREME REALITY

10:19—11:40

WE have already noted that the Epistle is divided into two parts. The part ending with 10:18 falls into three main divisions, and is a connected and studied argument dealing with the supremacy of the Christian religion. The second part which begins with 10:19 and continues to the end of the Epistle deals with the practical application of the truth established in the first part.

It would be a mistake to think that the first part is doctrine merely. The whole Epistle is intensely practical, and warning and exhortation abound throughout. The Hebrew Christians to whom this message is addressed were in danger of apostasy. They were tempted to "fall away," to "drift" from the Christian faith, and the author is all anxiety to confirm them in the true faith.

The passage which we now study brings us to the heart of the author's appeal. He has a unique way

of looking at life. It may be he has been influenced by Greek philosophy. At any rate, his philosophy of life is very simple. He believes in two worlds. The world that now is and the "world to come" (2:5). The world that now is, is the worldly life. The "world to come" is the Christian life. "The world to come" is not heaven but the Kingdom of God. He believes in the realization of heavenly conditions in time. This real world, the true life, is called by many names. He has spoken of it as "the rest of God." He calls it "eternal redemption." He calls it the "world to come." The life without Christ is the shadow. Life with Christ is the supreme reality.

This true life is realized by faith. The Hebrew people had failed to realize it because of lack of faith, because of unbelief. This was the author's great appeal in chapters 3 and 4. This appeal runs through the whole Epistle. Faith realizes the unseen and gives substance to the true. This is the theme of this present study, and it leads us into the heart of the practical message of the Epistle.

SUGGESTION: Concerning Bishop Westcott, an intimate friend once said, "He was only strong because he saw and took time to see." What sight is to the body, faith is to the soul. Faith is a sixth sense which enables us to realize the invisible.

I. Reality of the Gospel (10:19-25)

MEMORY VERSES: 10:19-23

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and having our body washed with pure water; let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised.”

In this passage the author sums up the facts of the Christian faith in two words. The first word is “the blood of Christ” (10:19). The second word is “a great priest” (10:21). The first speaks of power. The first promises forgiveness; the second assures fellowship. The first provides an entrance; the second provides an abiding place. The first makes possible the beginning; the second guarantees the continuing unto the end.

Through his death and his entrance into the immediate presence of God, after his ascension to God’s right hand, He has consecrated for us “a new and living way.” It is “new” because it is recent. The old way led into the earthly tabernacle; the new way leads to God. It is “a living way” because

Christ, Himself, the living Lord, is the Way. It is not a way of form, a way of intellectual belief, but a way of life and personal service. It can never grow obsolete for Christ liveth and abideth forever.

The author's appeal is urgent. Since such a way is open, "let us draw near." The way is open not once a year, but always. It is open not for one high priest, but for all the children of men. There is now established a priesthood of believers who have confidence to enter into the Holiest through the blood of Christ.

This "new and living way" is the Gospel, and it is distinguished by three marks.

1. *The Fulness of Faith (10:22)*. Faith gives reality to the promises of God, and to the work of Christ. Faith is the great venture which makes the future present and the unseen real.

2. *The Confession of Hope (10:23)*. Hope is the anchor which holds us in abiding confidence to the security of God's promise. "True religion," says Donald Hankey, in "A Student in Arms," "is betting one's life there is a God."

3. *The Service of Love (10:24)*. Our life will become like Christ's great life, it will "provoke," that is, call forth the best in others, and will link the world in a true brotherhood. True religion is friendly and social. Love seeks companionship and so does the Gospel. One cannot be a Christian by

himself. The Gospel calls for worship and fellowship, and frowns upon "forsaking our own assembling together" (10:25). We note in passing that these are the three Christian graces, Faith, Hope, Love, and the greatest of these is Love.

Behind the Gospel appeal there is a mighty challenge. It is the challenge of "the day" (10:25). The day of judgment is always approaching, and it is given us to turn that day of judgment into a day of salvation. We to-day live in the very presence of the Judgment. It requires faith to see the light in the cloud.

"I cannot see the Christ-child
For the soldiers marching past.
I cannot hear the angels
For the bugle's angry blast;
But I know
The bells are ringing,
And that faith and hope are clinging
To the Day
When love shall crown the world at last.

I cannot see the Christ-child
For the smoke is in my eyes.
I cannot hear the shepherds
For the little children's cries;
But I know
The bells are ringing,
And I think I hear the singing
Of the Day
When peace like morning dawn shall rise.

I cannot see the Christ-child
For the clouds hang dark and low.
I cannot hear the wise men
For the conflict rages so;
But I know
The bells are ringing,
And that Christmas morn is bringing
In the Golden Day
Foretold so long ago."

SUGGESTION: Try to grasp what is meant by the Protestant doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers." In what sense are all Christians called to be priests?

II. The Fate of the Faithless (10:26-31)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:31

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The Epistle is moving forward to its great appeal. The Gospel is a reality, but we must lay hold upon it. Faith is the power that lays hold. The fathers failed because of faithlessness and a worse failure awaits faithlessness now because a greater gift is offered.

The author brings his readers face to face with what awaits the failure of faith. The terror of his words remind us of 6:4-8.

It is necessary to see that he is speaking not of sins in general, but of one sin in particular—the sin of apostasy. He is speaking of “sinning wilfully” and by this he means turning away from God. An apostate is one who renounces the truth. This is the danger concerning which he warns. It is the final rejection of the light. It is what Jesus meant by “the sin against the Holy Spirit” (Mark 3:28–29). The sin of apostasy puts a man outside the covenant and beyond the reach of mercy.

This, however, is no new act of justice. Under the Old Testament dispensation, apostasy was followed by death. Under the new covenant men are still more guilty who turn their backs on God. What is it they do who thus turn away?

1. They tread under foot the Son of God.
2. They count the blood of Christ unholy.
3. They despise the spirit of grace.

While it is true as was pointed out in the former warning (6:4–8) that there is operating ceaselessly a natural law which brings forth the fruit of a hard heart, there is also written into the urgency of the warning the thought of “the retributive righteousness of God.” God is an all-seeing, a living God. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God” (10:31). In Carlyle’s essay on Oliver Cromwell, the great Puritan, he says: “Here also are ejaculations caught up at intervals, undated, in

those final days: 'Lord, Thou knowest if I do desire to live, it is to show forth thy praise, and declare thy works.' Once he was heard saying, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!' This was spoken three times, says Harvey, 'his repetitions usually being very weighty, and with great vehemency of spirit.' Thrice over he said this, looking into the eternal kingdoms, 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!'

The issues of the struggle in Europe have brought us face to face with justice and the impossibility of ignoring the sanctions of conscience.

SUGGESTION: Think through to the truth of the words, "the living God" (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22).

III. The Reward of the Faithful (10:32-39)

MEMORY VERSE: 10:36

"For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

The author, true as usual to his tenderness and his tactfulness, hastens to leave the theme which he so urgently has been presenting. He possesses the art of thinking well of his people. He turns from warning to encouragement. Faith will not fail for faith will yet be crowned. Christ had taught him to rejoice not in righteousness, but to rejoice with

the truth; to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things (I Cor. 13:6-7).

His confidence is based upon two things:

1. *The Record of the Past (10:32)*. Their own past challenges them and at the same time claims them. They have obligations to the past. In days gone they had endured afflictions and reproaches. They had been made a gazing-stock for the world. They had even joyfully accepted spoliation and robbery, and in it all they had had compassion upon their brethren in bonds. Their past was full of victory. They had triumphed because in the great words of the Revised Version, marginal reading, they had for themselves "a better possession." (See Luke 9:25.) This great past must not be lost through present disloyalty. The claim of former success is always a present challenge.

2. *The Challenge of the Future (10:37)*. The early Christians thought that Christ would come within the limit of their lives. The long delay had led to disappointment. Nevertheless the author says, "He that shall come will come" (10:37). The promise is sure. He will not tarry. Be patient, and when God's will is accomplished the promise will be secured (10:36). They must not permit present appearances to give the lie to the truth. They must not allow the things they see to give a denial to the reality they do not see. Now, as always, the right-

eous shall "live by faith" (10:38). It is a reference to the Hebrew prophets and these Hebrew Christians would understand. Only by the exercise of faith is victory achieved. Faith issues in the "saving of the *soul*" (10:39). The word "saving" means in the original "possession" and we are thus back again to the thought of 10:34. After all the greatest victory is the winning of one's self, and the most priceless possession, the possession of one's own soul.

SUGGESTION: Study this great expression, "The just shall live by faith." The original reference is in Hab. 2:3-4. Compare the use the prophet makes of it with the use made of it by Paul, by the author of the Hebrews, and by Martin Luther.

IV. Faith and Reality (11:1-3)

MEMORY VERSE: 1:1

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners."

The last section closed with a striking reference to faith. This is the author's method. He first strikes the keynote which prepares us for what is to follow. It was a fine keynote and the music that follows belong to the world's masterpieces.

While it is true that this great chapter on faith follows naturally from the thought of the last sec-

tion, it is nevertheless related to the thought of the Epistle as a whole. This presentation of faith is pertinent to the author's whole conception.

"We have already seen that the writer works with the conception of the two ages. The age to come he represents as in a sense already realized, but in another sense as still lying in the future. In other words, his contrast is between the ideal and the actual. Now it might be pertinently urged that this very fact constituted a serious objection to his argument. If we live in this age why should we accept the religion of the age to come? And has Jesus put us in any better position than those who lived under the Old Covenant? How can we enter into the heavenly sanctuary until the veil be done away for us, as it was for Him?

"The writer surmounts these difficulties by his doctrine of faith. While we are strangers and pilgrims we are not actually inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. But faith has this quality—that it can lift us into fellowship with the Unseen, that it can carry us within the veil. And so, while we are still inhabitants of this world, we may at any moment through faith draw nigh and enter into the world to come. Faith has thus a power of realization, by which the invisible becomes visible and the future becomes present. While hope is the confident anticipation of a future regarded as future, faith ap-

propriates that future as an experience of the present.”—*Peake*.

This, then, is the point of view of the entire Epistle. Faith makes “the world to come” real. Faith makes possible the Christian life. It gives reality to things hoped for. It gives reality to things unseen.

In the first verses of this analysis of faith two principles are set forth.

1. Faith is a subjective impulse. It is an instinct of humanity. The author’s point of view is totally different from that of the Apostle Paul. Paul’s conception of faith touches upon the work of the Spirit of God in the life of man. Faith is a gift of the Spirit of God. The writer to the Hebrews may take all that for granted, but he does not speak of it. He speaks of faith as an instinct of the human heart, as the sixth sense of humanity, as the possession of all the children of men. Men are in the possession of faith, because they are men. In business, as in religion, they live by faith. The author is the forerunner of all the moderns who write and speak about “faith and its psychology.” He takes his place with Bulwer Lytton:

“There is no unbelief;
Whoever plants the seed beneath the sod
And waits to see it push away the clod,
He trusts in God.

Whoever says when clouds are in the sky,
'Be patient, heart, light breaketh by and by,
Trusts the Most High.

Whoever sees 'neath winter's field of snow
The silent harvest of the future grow,
God's power must know.

Whoever lies down on his couch to sleep,
Content to lock each sense in slumber deep,
Knows God will keep.

Whoever says, 'To-morrow,' 'the unknown,'
'The future,' trusts the Power alone
He dares disown."

2. Faith needs objective realization. The difference between religious faith and all other faith is not in the subjective impulse, but in the object which calls forth faith. In religious faith that object is God, Himself, his word, his promises, his inviolate truth. To increase one's faith, one must increase one's knowledge of God. To know God is to have eternal life. This quotation from Dr. Andrew Murray may be of help:

"Just as we have our senses, through which we hold communication with the physical universe, so faith is the spiritual sense or organ through which the soul comes into contact with and is affected by the spiritual world. Just as the sense of seeing or hearing is a dormant power till the objective reality,

the light or the sound, strikes it, so faith in itself is a sense with no power beyond the possibility or capacity of receiving the impression of the eternal. It is as an empty vessel which wants to be filled with its unseen contents. It is only when the eternal realities draw near and exercise their power that faith becomes and is the substance of things hoped for, the foundation which they lay in the soul, the proof or conviction of things unseen, the convincing power with which they give evidence and proof of their own supernatural existence."

Faith realizes the unseen. It makes God real. It brings heaven near. It enables men to walk with the unseen Christ. Is it any wonder that without faith it is impossible to please God?

SUGGESTION: A clearer, truer, view of God, and of his word, will result in increase of faith. When we pray, "Lord, increase our faith," we lay upon ourselves the obligation of Christian service and Bible study and prayer.

V. Faith and History (11:4-38)

MEMORY VERSE: 11:16

"But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city."

Dr. Bruce has suggested that the eleventh chapter of Hebrews was probably a complete document before it was incorporated into the Epistle. He suggests that originally it may have been a sermon, a brief review of Hebrew history. It has been called the Westminster Abbey of the Bible, the Hall of Fame, the Honor Roll of the Hebrew nation.

The review covers the whole range of Jewish history. It begins with the creation story and leads up to the close of the Old Testament revelation. We wonder why certain names like Elijah and Job are omitted, and as if conscious of the fact that he has omitted the names of other heroes of faith, there is added towards the close of the chapter a description that includes all.

It is interesting to note that the enumeration is inclusive and names all types of national character. Dr. F. B. Meyer in commenting upon this fact says:

“In this list are women as well as men. Sarah and Rahab, as well as Abraham and Joshua; the widow of Shunem, and the mighty prophet who brought her son back to life; Moses, the student of Egypt’s wisdom; Gideon, the husbandman; Isaac, the grazier; Jacob, the shrewd cattle breeder; Barak, the soldier; David, the shepherd, and Samuel, the prophet. Their occupations and circumstances varied infinitely; but there was not one of them that did not live under the influence of this master principle.

Whatever may be a man's lawful calling, he may abide therein with God, under the influence of faith. Like the fir or pine, faith flourishes in any soil."

The great theme of this wonderful chapter is to the effect that faith gives reality to the "world to come," to the things of the Spirit.

1. Faith gives reality to the future. Things that are "hoped for" are brought within the grasp of those who reach out hands of faith. Abraham saw on the far horizon the outlines of the City of God, and by faith took up his abode in it. He greeted promises that were to others far off, and in his own day saw Christ (John 8:56). Jacob bestowed upon Isaac his blessing, which had to do with the inheritance of the age to come, and Joseph so realized the future of his nation that he made preparations for his burial in the land of promise.

2. Faith gives reality to the unseen. Faith gives substance, or reality to "things not seen." By faith Enoch walked with God and in time lived the life eternal. By faith Abraham went out from his home "knowing not whither he went." By faith Moses forsook Egypt, and the luxury of Pharaoh's court, because he "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Dr. Joseph Parker once said: "He who walks by sight only walks in a blind alley. He who does not know the freedom and joy of reverent, loving speculation wastes his life in a gloomy cell of the

mouldiest of prisons. Even in matters that are not distinctively religious faith will be found to be the inspiration and strength of the most useful life. It is faith that does the great work of the world. It is faith that sends men in search of unknown coasts. It is faith that re-trims the lamp of inquiry when sight is weary of the flame. It is faith that unfastens the cable and gives men the liberty of the seas. It is faith that inspires the greatest works in civilization. So we cannot get rid of religion unless we first get rid of faith, and when we get rid of faith we give up our birthright and go into slavery for ever."

3. Faith gives reality to character. It is the quality of faith that makes the difference between Cain and Abel. It is faith which creates the true heroes of history. They are the men and women who, not satisfied with things as they are, "desire a better country." They die in the faith of "a better resurrection" and a better world.

"Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they were
souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled the con-
tumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden
beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their
faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's
supreme design."

4. Faith gives reality to the possible. Faith does things. It is the great energy of life. By faith Columbus discovered America. By faith Lincoln freed the slaves. By faith Livingstone redeemed Africa. Faith creates facts. There is nothing in literature so grandly eloquent as the closing verses of this great chapter (11:32-40). Faith performs deeds akin to miracles.

“In his speech at the London banquet to Lloyd Garrison, June 29th, 1867, John Bright told of an article by Harriet Martineau upon ‘The Martyr Age of the United States,’ in which the great names connected with the abolitionist cause were chronicled, and then added: ‘When I read that article and the description of those men and women there given, I was led, I know not how, to think of a very striking passage which I am sure must be familiar to most here, because it is to be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. After the writer of that Epistle has described the great men and fathers of the nation, he says: ‘Time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak . . . and of the prophets . . . who turned to flight the armies of the aliens.’ I ask if this grand passage of the inspired writer may not be applied to that heroic band who have made America the perpetual home of freedom?’ ”

Huxley somewhere says, “Theology claims that the

just shall live by faith: science says the just shall live by verification." Tennyson says,

"We have but faith we cannot know
For knowledge is of things we see."

The author's point of view is different from that of both Huxley and Tennyson. He holds that faith knows, and that faith verifies. His confidence is based upon the word of God. God's promise cannot fail. God's truth cannot lie. God cannot deny Himself. Knowing God, knowing his truth, his eternity, his power, faith holds that the abiding reality is found in Him and in his word of promise. In his very remarkable essay, "The Will to Believe," Professor William James finely expresses the author's point of view.

"Suppose, for example, that I am climbing in the Alps, and have had the ill luck to work myself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Being without similar experience, I have no evidence of my ability to perform it successfully; but hope and confidence in myself make me sure I shall not miss my aim, and nerve my feet to execute what without those subjective emotions would perhaps have been impossible. But suppose that, on the contrary, the emotions of fear and mistrust preponderate; or suppose that, having just read the 'Ethics of Belief,' I feel it would be sinful to act

upon an assumption unverified by previous experience—why, then, I shall hesitate so long that at last, exhausted and trembling, and launching myself in a moment of despair, I miss my foothold and roll into the abyss. In this case (and it is one of an immense class) the part of wisdom clearly is to believe what one desires; for the belief is one of the indispensable preliminary conditions of the realization of its object. There are then cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe, and you shall again be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish.”

When we add to our own desire the word of the eternal God, faith becomes more than a venture, it becomes conviction.

SUGGESTION: Note the various wording of 11:1 in the Authorized Version, the Revised Version, and the Revised Version Margin. Compare with Dr. Moffatt's translation, “Now faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.”

VI. Faith and Religion (11:39–40)

MEMORY VERSES: 11:39–40

“And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God

having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

From this record of history three facts follow:

1. Faith sometimes seems to fail. They lived and died in faith and yet they discovered not the reality in which they trusted. They “received not the promise” (11:39). This fact faces us not only in Hebrew history, but in all history. While it is true that faith is its own reward, we yet face the conclusion that if there is no reality to correspond to the outgoing of faith, then life becomes an illusion. Nevertheless, this is the real heart of heroism, to die, believing, although not having received the promise.

2. Eventually faith always succeeds. If the promise is delayed, it is because some “better thing” is waiting us. “God’s promises,” says F. B. Robertson, “are to the imagination.” The “better things” promised are forgiveness of sins, and true and abiding fellowship with God, surely better far than lands and cities and conquered foes.

3. Faith is mutual. It links men to men, and men to God, and God to men. All humanity is bound together in victory or defeat. Christ has mingled his life with the life of the world, and the perfecting of all waits on the perfecting of each.

This is the gospel of Christian brotherhood. All believers are partners together in the final revelation of a perfected redemption.

SUGGESTION: It has been pointed out that the word "better" occurs thirteen times in this Epistle. Collect these passages and estimate their message.

VII. The Supreme Reality—Summary

1. Carefully get by heart the memory verses.
2. Relate this study to the teaching of the Epistle.
3. What two elements are found in faith?
4. What is the author's conception of faith?
5. Contrast the author's conception of faith with that of Paul.
6. Upon what facts is the Gospel founded?
7. What are the essential graces of the Christian religion?
8. What is meant by the priesthood of believers?
9. What does apostasy mean?
10. What motives to loyalty does the author urge upon his readers?
11. What place does the eleventh chapter of the Epistle hold in the thought of the author?
12. Why does faith sometimes seem to fail?
13. What is the relation of faith to reality?

STUDY OF WORDS IN CHAPTER 10

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| New and living way (20) | Sin wilfully (26) |
| Veil (20) | Despite (29) |
| Provoke (24) | Vengeance (30) |
| Good works (24) | Illumined (32) |
| The day (25) | Gazing-stock (33) |

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, Thou Thyself hast taught us to trust Thee. We would not be seeking Thee if Thou Thyself hadst not already found us. Give us faith to trust Thee in the darkness. Give us faith to trust Thee in the light, for we so often think we can walk alone when the way is not dark. Give us faith not only in God, but also in one another, and may we carry the good news of the gospel of Jesus into other homes and to other hearts. Amen.

STUDY IX

THE SUPREME CULTURE

12:1-29

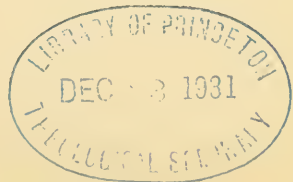
THE goal of the Epistle is Christian character. The author seeks to win men to the Christian life. The aim of the Epistle is practical.

The first readers were ready to let go. They were tired of the struggle and impatient under suffering.

The Epistle is now at the place where words of heartening encouragement can be spoken. The present suffering is not aimless. God is behind the world movements that try men's souls. Have patience and in the end all will be well.

This is not the first time God has shaken the world. He has shaken it before. He will shake it again. This shaking is to the end that the things that cannot be shaken may endure.

Cling, then, says the Epistle, to the enduring things. Be patient and believe that God's word cannot fail and that his will shall endure.



SUGGESTION: Relate the author's thought to these words of Tennyson:

“Cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith;
 She reels not in the storm of warring words,
 She sees the best that glimmers through the worst,
 She feels the sun is hid but for a night,
 She spies the summer through the winter bud,
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
 She hears the lark within the songless egg,
 She finds the fountain where they wailed, ‘Mirage.’
 And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
 And climb the Mount of Blessing; whence, if thou
 Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest beyond
 A hundred ever-rising mountain lines
 And past the range of Night and Shadows—see
 The high heaven dawn of more than mortal day
 Strike on the Mount of Vision!”

I. The Culture of Faith (12:1-3)

MEMORY VERSES: 12:1-2

“Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The example of the past is the encouragement of

the present. As Napoleon pointing to the Pyramids said to his army, "Soldiers, forty centuries look down on you," so the author bids his readers take notice of the "cloud of witnesses" who now, crowned with victory, watch them in the race.

The language suggests the ancient stadium where the Grecian games were held, and the author sees the long line of heroes whose names he has called in the preceding chapter looking down upon the contestants. Tier upon tier of white faces look down upon those who contend for mastery.

In the presence of those who watch, let us run the race so as to win with them the victory. The conditions of victory are as follows:

1. Lay aside every weight. The word refers to anything that hinders in the race, any encumbrance, any habits of life, or social connections, that handicap (I Cor. 9:24-27). "An appetite, though lawful, that tends to gain on one; devotion to some pursuit in danger of absorbing the mind; an affection that threatens to turn away the heart—such things are weights."

2. Lay aside every besetting sin. The Revised Version margin translates this difficult expression "the sin that doth closely cling to us." The word in the Greek means "to cling closely" and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Professor Peake remarks: "There are several possible translations,

such as 'easily avoided,' 'much admired,' or 'popular,' 'close clinging.' While the second of these is suggested by the form of the word, it does not yield a very good sense, and the first gives a meaning quite inapplicable. The last yields an excellent sense in the context. Sin clings about the runner of the heavenly race like a long, close-fitting robe, impeding his every movement or even tripping him up."

The besetting sin, of course, is unbelief. This is the closely clinging sin that trips a man up and writes failure across his life. Unbelief is the crowning sin.

3. Run with patience. In 6:12 the author bids his readers to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." If faith can realize the unseen, then the future is swallowed up in the present reality.

4. Look to Jesus. Amid all the heroes of the past, He is first. He is the great example of a life of faith. He trusted to the last limit of life and in death commended his soul to God. He is the author and finisher, not of our faith, but of his own. Do not fail to see that the little word "our" spoils the whole sense of the passage. Jesus among all the sons of men is the finest example of faith. "He was the first that could be called faithful." None ever realized the unseen as did He. Because by faith He realized the joy that was before Him, He endured

the pain of the cross, and is now enjoying his coronation. This is faith indeed, and it will help and hearten us to keep our eyes ever fixed upon Him.

SUGGESTION: The New Testament speaks of life as a race, as a battle, as a journey. Compare the author's language with that of Paul (I Cor. 4:9; II Cor. 11:24-27; Phil. 3:12-14; I Tim. 6:12).

II. The Culture of Love (12:3-13)

MEMORY VERSE: 12:11

"All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

This section heads up as it were the practical application of the Epistle. The author might have closed here.

The Hebrew Christians to whom the Epistle was addressed were being severely tried and tested in the fire of persecution. They were being tempted because of their sufferings. They were in danger of apostasy, and the author has pled for patience, for faith, for confidence in the supremacy of the Gospel of the cross. Now he brings his creed to bear upon conduct, and applies the great doctrines he has interpreted to the purposes of comfort. He urges pa-

tience and endurance unto the end for the following reasons:

1. The fact of Jesus. He asks them to "consider Him." He brings to their remembrance the sufferings and patience of Christ, and shows them that they have not approached to Him in suffering. He went to the last limit of life, suffering persecution and death but still believing, trusting. All that He endured did not swerve Him from his purpose, neither did it have power to harm Him. The gain-saying of sinners touched Him not for it was "against themselves" that they fought.

2. The fact of God's fatherhood. There is a difference between punishment and chastisement. God is our Father. We are his children. We are "sons." We must not forget this. When affliction comes, it comes from the Father's hand, and for the children's good. In childhood we are blind, but later on we see the value of chastisement. "I don't see why God made me," says one of George Macdonald's characters, and the answer is given, "God hasn't made you yet. He is making you and you don't like it." God is the Father of spirits, and spirit, life, character, is the precious thing in his sight.

3. The fact of comfort. Suffering is the great teacher. Jesus was "perfected through suffering," fitted by sympathy to become the Saviour, the high priest of all humanity. Through suffering, we, too,

are fitted to serve others, by lifting them up and by making straight the path for their feet. It is the argument that Paul uses "that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Cor. 1:4).

SUGGESTION: From this passage obtain a clear conception of the Christian attitude towards suffering, and note the attitudes mentioned in the passage. Some "despise" it (12:5), and some "faint" under it (12:5). Some "endure" it (12:7).

Why is it true that

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown"?

III. The Culture of Service (12:14-17)

MEMORY VERSE: 12:14

"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord."

From the personal the author turns his thought to the community. The church is in danger of collapse because of the wearing away of "inner confidences." Dissensions and differences caused by misunderstandings and rivalries have undermined the witnessing power of the church, and the author pleads for peace and holiness.

It is only by raising the spiritual atmosphere of the church that the danger can be averted. "As when the tide recedes the waters fret and raise angry surf upon the sunken rocks, but when it has advanced in full flow these rocks are submerged and there is deep stillness over them, so in the full tide of consecration unto God all causes of disquietude are swallowed and covered."

Very cautiously the author hints at what seems to be the fact that some individual is the disturber of the peace of the church. Some one who, like Esau, is a "profane" person, who instead of making the unseen world a reality through faith, lives for the things that are seen, and for them only. A "profane" person is one to whom nothing is sacred. He is "a man of a common type of mind devoted to lower and earthly pursuits, without love or appreciation of what is noble and spiritual."

The position of such a man is tragic. Having sold his spiritual birthright he can never get it again. He can never find a place for "repentance." Repentance here does not mean penitence which brings forgiveness. It has here no theological meaning. The author is saying over again what he has so forcibly said before, that apostasy is a hopeless condition. The effect of the past cannot be undone. The past to men like Esau is irreparable. Faith like opportunity says:

“Master of human destinies am I!

Fame, love and fortune on my footsteps wait.
Cities and field I walk; I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote, and passing by
Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late
I knock unbidden once at every gate!
If sleeping, wake; if feasting, rise before
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,
And they who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire, and conquer every foe
Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,
Seek me in vain and uselessly implore.
I answer not, and I return no more!”

SUGGESTION: Compare the word “afterward” of 12:17 with the “afterward” of 12:11.

IV. The Culture of the Cross (12:18-24)

MEMORY VERSES: 12:22-24

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel.”

The Epistle is closing in to its conclusion. It calls

for loyalty. It challenges these Hebrew Christians to stand fast, to be true, to endure. The author has brought before them the true philosophy of suffering, and shown them the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of Christ. He brings them now face to face with their opportunity, their privilege, their responsibility,

In Old Testament times the people of God approached him only through symbols. The symbols were suggestive of majesty and mystery, but they were in the end barriers to God. They came to God through a mountain that burned, and could not be touched, through fire and blackness and darkness where nothing could be seen, through the voice of a trumpet that silenced even heavenly voices. It was a revelation built on awe and wonder and religious fear.

Under the Gospel, the people of God are in touch not with symbols but with reality. They deal not with shadows but with the substance of things spiritual. Instead of a burning mountain they come to the city, the dwelling place of God. They come to the heavenly Jerusalem. In a word they come to God Himself, the judge of all, the last and only reality. They come also to angels and to redeemed men made perfect, and last and best of all, they come to Jesus, whose blood speaks of better things, of mercy and of love, rather than of vengeance and retribu-

tion. "That was the blood of martyrdom; this of sacrifice. That accursed, as it cried from the ground; this only pleads for mercy. That announced wrath; this proclaims reconciling love. That led to punishment which branded the murderer; this issues in salvation. That was unto death; this is unto life."

SUGGESTION: Note the use of the present tense, "Ye are come" in 12:22. Faith makes the future present and even now creates the reality.

V. The Culture of Judgment (12:25-29)

MEMORY VERSES: 12:27-29

"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."

The author is not afraid to make use of the emotion of fear in presenting his appeal. There is a culture in fear as well as in love, and men must face the fire of God as well as the love of God. "Our God is a consuming fire" (12:29). Fire is always associated with judgment. Fire separates the gold from the dross. In the fire the dross is consumed.

In the fire the gold is purified. "The fire of the furnace which is hatred to the dross is love to the gold."

The judgment is ushered in by a voice. Throughout the Epistle that voice is heard speaking (3:7; 4:7; 12:19, 26). It is the voice that speaks in revelation. It is the revelation of God in Christ. He is the word of God. He is the truth, and truth always "shakes the earth." When the voice of God spoke at Sinai the earth shook (12:26). The moral law of Sinai was felt like an electric shock over all the earth. Before that shaking idols fell, falsehoods fell, immorality fell, pagan creeds and heathen shrines fell. Righteousness and truth alone stood the shock. Truth, like the sword of the spirit, divides and separates.

The voice that spoke at Sinai speaks again in Christ. The truth that He reveals shakes not earth only but also heaven. He is the great awakener, the great antagonist. He is set for the falling and the rising of many (Luke 2:34). Because He is the revealer of truth, of spiritual ideas, and world ideals, He comes not to send peace upon the earth but a sword (Matt. 10:34). With his coming old things are passed away and all things are made new. The shaking of the world, through his Gospel, causes the false things of life to fall so that these things that

cannot be shaken may remain (12:27). The things that cannot be shaken! What are they but the love of God, the kingdom of God, the service of God?

“Once, so the legend goes, along the winding shore of the blue Ægean Sea the mournful cry was heard, ‘Great Pan is dead.’ And the deities of classic Greece departed from their thrones, and the oracles left the temples, and the sprites of mountain and woodland were seen no more for ever. A religion died. And later again, far away in the desolate North, there sounded another yet more bitter cry, ‘Baldur is dead—Baldur the Good, the Beautiful.’ And amid the terrific conflict of the twilight of the gods the old Scandinavian deities perished in their turn, and another religion died. Yes, many religions have died. But Christianity does not die and cannot die.”

The passage recalls the story of Bishop Coxe’s great hymn:

“O where are kings and empires now
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, thy Church is praying yet
A thousand years the same.

We mark her goodly battlements,
And her foundations strong;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.

For not like kingdoms of the world
 Thy holy Church, O God;
 Though earthquake shocks are threaten-
 ing her,
 And tempests are abroad;

Unshaken as eternal hills,
 Immovable she stands,
 A mountain that shall fill the earth,
 A house not made with hands."

What has happened before in history will happen again. Civilizations will pass away. Christ remains and upon Him the new and abiding civilization will be built.

Upon the tree of judgment grow three fruits of the Spirit which make for true Christian culture.

1. Grace. The margin gives us the word "thankfulness," and reminds us that the shaking of judgment is for the establishment of righteousness and peace. Peace in the world and peace in the heart. In his "Grace Abounding" Bunyan reveals what the passage meant to his own heart:

"Being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was, as if there had rushed in at the window, the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I heard a voice speaking, 'Diddst thou ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ?' and withal my whole life of profession past was in a moment opened to me, wherein I was made to see

that designedly I had not; so my heart answered groaningly, 'No.' Then fell with power that word of God upon me, 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh' (Heb. 12:25). This made a strange seizure upon my spirit; it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart, of all those tumultuous thoughts, that did before use, like masterless hellhounds, to roar and bellow and make an hideous noise within me. It showed me also that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me."

2. Service. If the things that are worth while remain unshaken, we may labor with patience. He that sows must reap. It is the conclusion of Paul's great argument concerning death and the assurance of life everlasting. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The great war has sounded the note of service above all other words. It is Christ's message to our age.

3. Reverence. Is it not true that reverence is the missing note in the life of our modern world? How can we awaken a true and abiding spirit of reverence? By an adequate idea of God. "Our God is a consuming fire." To the people of our age the words of long ago are still pertinent. "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

In humility let us make this prayer our prayer:

“O God, who art as fire, be Thou a consuming fire to our inbred sins; burn deeply into our inmost hearts, until all that grieves Thee is compelled to yield to the holy intensity of thy grace, and our whole being, made free from sin, begins to serve Thee in holiness and righteousness, through Jesus Christ, Who came to kindle thy sacred fire on the earth!”

SUGGESTION: Make a thoughtful study of the places of “fear” in the thought of the Epistle. (See 2:15; 4:1; 10:31; 13:6; 10:27.)

VI. The Supreme Culture—Summary

1. Memorize carefully the memory verses.
2. Connect this section with the preceding section and with the entire thought of the Epistle.
3. Why is Jesus called the author and finisher of faith?
4. What is the author’s interpretation of the problem of human suffering?
5. What is the difference between chastisement and punishment?
6. What help to bear suffering does the author give?
7. What is meant by the words “no place of repentance” (12:17)?

8. Show that the comparison between the old and the new is characteristic of the whole Epistle.

9. What is meant by the words, "A kingdom that cannot be moved"?

10. What definitions of "God" are given in the Epistle?

STUDIES OF WORDS IN CHAPTER 12

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Beset (1) | Partakers (10) |
| Author and finisher (2) | Healed (13) |
| Joy set before (2) | Grace of God (15) |
| Against themselves (3) | Profane (16) |
| Forgotten (5) | Repentance (17) |
| Chasteneth (6) | Firstborn (23) |
| A few days (10) | Yet once more (26) |

Prayer

"Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
Dew descending from above,
Breath of life and fire of love;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

All our evil passions kill,
Bend aright our stubborn will,
Though we grieve Thee, patient still;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

Come to aid the souls who yearn
More of truth divine to learn,
And with deeper love to burn;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

Holy, loving, as Thou art,
Come, and live within our heart;
Never more from us depart;
Hear us, Holy Spirit."

STUDY X

THE SUPREME CHALLENGE

13:1-25

THIS study brings us to the conclusion of the Epistle. True to the author's purpose, already abundantly revealed, he concentrates upon religion rather than upon theology. Religion is life. Theology is the interpretation of life.

The chapter gathers up into concise and simple words the author's exhortations looking to the manifestation in humble tasks and common ways of the true spirit of the Christian life and hope. The religion of Jesus, like the life of Jesus, is best revealed in ordinary affairs, in the home, in business, in the daily round of duty.

"The Christian is the workshop of God." In the heart of his children, world conflicts are born and world victories achieved. The whole creation waits for "the manifestation of the sons of God," and the author of the Epistle challenges those who name the sacred name to prove their creed by their conduct, and their love by their life. "The world

is interested in Mr. Gladstone," said Lord Morley, "not so much because of what he did but because of what he was."

SUGGESTION: "The more a man lives in heaven, the better fitted he is to live on earth." Show the true relation of creed and conduct, and show how religious faith is related to social service.

I. The Challenge of Brotherhood (13:1-6)

MEMORY VERSE: 13:1

"Let love of the brethren continue."

"Fear" is not the author's last word. His last word is "love." True to his art as a teacher he knows the value of appreciation and encouragement. "Let brotherly love continue" (13:1). It is enough, he says, to do as you have been doing. He follows his own advice and seeks to "provoke to love and to good works." This art of appreciation he has consistently followed (6:10; 10:24, 34).

Brotherhood is the fruit of the cross of Christ. "See how these Christians love one another," was the comment of the world upon the conduct of the early Christians. They said of Sir Walter Scott that he treated every man like a born brother. That was a fine thing to say. Brotherhood, too, is a fruit

of the sacrifice and sorrow of these days of war. That was the spirit of Jesus. It is the spirit of Christ gained in the atmosphere of the cross. "No man hath seen God at any time. If a man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

1. Brotherliness quickly reveals itself in the grace of hospitality. Hospitality was one of the first and finest of the graces of the early Church. The persecuted and unfortunate members of the "brotherhood" found a welcome wherever the name of Christ was named. The early Christians built their houses "by the side of the road where the race of men go by," and in the bestowment of hospitality they received a heavenly benediction and the fellowship of angels.

2. The spirit of brotherhood expresses itself in sympathy. Everywhere in those days could be found brethren, some "in bonds" and some "evil entreated" (13:3). Above everything else, the Christian is sympathetic. "Why are we not kinder to one another?" asks Henry Drummond, and to his searching question each of us must make answer.

3. Brotherhood reveals itself in home happiness (13:4). True Christianity makes the family the true center of society. Anything that robs marriage of its sanctity, or the home of its sacredness, or

love of its loyalty, is not of the spirit of Christ. Speaking of Luther, Professor Stalker has said: "To the ordinary mind, Luther has a sufficient title to honor in the gift to the world of three blessings—an open Bible, the worship of God in the language of the people, and the Protestant manse with wife and children."

4. Brotherliness manifests itself in Christian contentment. It snubs covetousness and self-aggrandisement and trusts both God and men in all honesty and industry. Brotherhood believes in fatherhood and it belongs to fatherhood to care for the children. "I will in no wise fail thee" (13:5).

"I know not where his islands lift
Their froned palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

These are the jeweled beads in the priceless chain of Christian brotherhood, hospitality, sympathy, home happiness, and contentment.

SUGGESTION: The quotation, "I will in no wise fail thee; neither will I in any wise forsake thee," is found word for word in Philo. Is it found in the Old Testament? (See Deut. 31:6-8; I Chron. 28:20.)

II. The Challenge of Loyalty (13:7-14)

MEMORY VERSE: 13:8

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever.”

The author challenges his readers to be loyal to their past.

In the first place he presents to them the claim of their former teachers. The men who gave them the Gospel, and who had passed to their great reward, and claimed their loyalty. They were men of God and worthy of imitation. They sealed their testimony in life and in death.

In the second place he claims from them loyalty to the *teaching* of their first leaders. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever” (13:8). Jesus is changeless. Time may change. Nations may change. Creeds may change. Christ is the abiding, the changeless one. To be carried away by divers and strange teachings is disloyalty to Him. Edwin Arnold said:

‘Now he is dead; far hence he lies,
In the lone Syrian town;
And on his head with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.’

That is poetry but it is not history and it is not

truth. He is the living Christ. From Arnold turn to Tennyson. You will remember the familiar lines of Tennyson about the Christian nurse, who, in her anxiety to save a little lad's life after the unbelieving surgeon had told her that the lad would need little more of her care, replied that they "should seek the Lord Jesus in prayer." The surgeon turned upon his heel muttering to himself, and she thought she heard him say, "All very well, but the good Lord Jesus has had his day." Then her love began to burn and she cried:

"Had? Has it come? It has only dawned!
 It will come by and by.
 O how could I serve in the wards
 If the hope of the world were a lie?
 How could I bear with the sights
 And the loathsome smells of disease
 But that He said, 'Ye do it to Me,
 When ye do it unto these.' "

There are thousands such who can testify to the present power of a living Christ. For his sake they endure the darkness, bear the drudgery, carry the cross, dwell in exile and loneliness, yes, and suffer the loss of all things. The miracle of yesterday is being wrought at our own door to-day.

The author warns his readers that loyalty to Christ will be costly. He, however, shows from the Old

Testament dispensation that loyalty has always demanded a high price.

The bodies of animals offered as sacrifices for sin were burned "without the camp" (13:11). In like manner Jesus "suffered without the gate" (13:12). If they are to follow Him in all love and loyalty, they will not shrink from "bearing his reproach" and "go forth with him without the camp" (13:13). Those who remain within the ancient city must cling to the past with its imperfect fellowship, and its failure to satisfy the heart. With Christ, "without the camp" we find another city, "an abiding city" (13:14), where fellowship is perfected and the heart is satisfied. In that city of God the true worshipper finds "an altar" (13:10) where he may eat, not the meat which perisheth, but the true bread of God of which when a man eats he never hungers again.

This passage is among the finest in the whole Epistle and is a sort of Christian climax to all the wonderful interpretation of the Old Testament system in the terms of Christianity. Professor Peake has aptly summed up the message in these words:

"That Jesus suffered without the gate was to the author very suggestive. It not only assimilated his sacrifice to that of the Day of Atonement, it was a fit symbol that Jerusalem had thrust him out, by dooming him to the 'reproach' of an outlaw's death,

and a death pronounced accursed in the law (Deut. 21:23). Henceforth he was homeless on earth. But that system which made him an alien can be no home for his followers: they too must break with Judaism, and bear with him the ignominy of the cross. And we may be well content to be outcasts, homeless as they made him, for it is not on earth that we have 'an abiding city.' On earth there can be no such permanent abode for those whose true home is in the unseen, and who know themselves to be pilgrims and strangers. They know, too, that soon heaven and earth will be shaken, and no material city can survive that convulsion of the universe."

SUGGESTION: Try to interpret the words of 13:10, "we have an altar," in terms of the Christian religion.

III. The Challenge of Sacrifice (13:15-16)

MEMORY VERSE: 13:15

"Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name."

The meaning of these verses is very plain. While sacrifice, the never ceasing sacrifice of the Jewish religion, has been done away through the sacrifice of Jesus, yet sacrifice still claims a place in the

Christian faith. The form has vanished forever; the principle remains. What then is meant by the Christian sacrifice?

1. In the first place Christians are called upon to offer the sacrifice of praise continually (13:15). This is a sacrifice, which like the sin offering of the Old Testament, must never cease. It is the sacrifice of gratitude, of thanksgiving, for the gift of his love in Christ. It is the sacrifice which belongs to the Pauline order. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

2. In the second place, the Christian offers on the altar of his love the sacrifice of service. "To do good and to communicate forget not" (13:16). It is sublimely simple.

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind around,
And yet the art of being kind,
Is all this old world needs."

It is a return as it were to the cry of the prophets: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble

unto me; I am weary of hearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:13-18). It is the same thought which Paul brought home to the hearts of his converts. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service" (Rom. 12:1). Christian sacrifice is the surrender of one's will, one's self to God. In one of his early letters Marcus Dods says:

"It is indeed a life of self-denial, this, and I feel as if now for the first time I had even a dim view of what it is to be not one's own, to me a heart-rending lesson, a long and bitter lesson, one I would gladly exchange for fasting, or scourging, or what asceticism you will. Let me keep my own will, let me be my own, aim at my own idea of holiness, aid myself with my own props, and I would do most things.

But this is the hard thing to learn, that in everything, from this moment for ever, I am not only not to get my own will, but I am to desire not to get my own will, to will to be controlled by another wholly and unceasingly. This has to me at times all the pain of dissolution. It is indeed a dying to this world."

"Death ends indeed the cares of life,
 Yet shudders life when death comes near,
 And such the fond heart's death-like strife
 When first the loved one does appear.

For, where true love is wakened, dies
 The tyrant self, that despot dark.
 Rejoice then that in death he lies,
 And breathe morn's free air, with the lark."

What marvelous application do these principles of the cross obtain from the sacrifice of the thousands upon the blood-stained fields of Europe!

These then are the sacrifices which please God—towards God a thankful heart, and towards men a kindly spirit which ministers through personal sympathy and through wealth to the needs of life.

SUGGESTION: Interpret to your own heart the words, "God is well pleased." According to the Epistle, God is pleased with two things: (1) faith (11:5), (2) sacrifice (13:16). Compare with John 8:29, Rom. 15:3, Heb. 13:21.

IV. The Challenge of Obedience (13:17)

MEMORY VERSE: 13:17

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.”

The author had challenged the Hebrew Christians to loyalty to their past leaders; he now claims from them obedience to their present teachers. The author seems to be in absolute accord with their present leaders. If failure should come it would not be because of lack of fidelity on the part of the ministry. The failure would come from the laity. It would not be a failure of the pulpit, but of the pew; a failure not of teaching, but of practice.

What a beautiful outline the author here gives of the work of a true pastor.

1. A true pastor in the church of God is a leader. He must be followed if the goal is to be reached.

2. A true pastor is a shepherd. Like the Bethlehem shepherds, he keeps watch over his sheep by night, as well as by day. He watches in behalf of the souls of men.

3. A true pastor is a servant. He too serves the Lord Jesus Christ. Some day he must give an ac-

count of his stewardship. If success crowned his efforts, joy would be his reward. If he failed, his heart would be bowed in grief.

It is said of Melville, that sometimes in the night, his wife would find him on his knees, even in the coldest night of winter, and when she urged him to return to bed he would say, "I have got fifteen hundred souls in my charge and I fear that it is going ill with some of them." It is of such shepherds the author speaks when he calls Christians to obedience.

SUGGESTION: Note the word "grief." The marginal reading is "groaning." Call to mind the words of the saintly Samuel Rutherford, "Anworth is not a large parish, but it is my parish, and all the people in it have not yet given their hearts to the Lord."

"O if one soul from Anworth,
Meet me at God's right hand;
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land."

V. The Challenge of Prayer (13:18-21)

MEMORY VERSES: 13:20-21

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will,

working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

When argument ceases, prayer begins. When argument fails, prayer succeeds. The author has said all he can say. His last appeal is to the power of prayer.

1. He asks first of all their prayers for him. (*a*) Prayer is a great pacifier. The finest seal of true friendship. Praying even for enemies soon converts them into friends. How can one go on praying for an enemy! Prayer is the secret seal of mutual fellowship. It breaks down suspicion and criticism within its atmosphere. (*b*) Prayer is the great power with God and with men. Prayer does things. Prayer will effect the speedier arrival of the author (13:19). Let us believe and act upon the word that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

2. He, in turn, prays for them. Among all the prayers of the Bible, none is so sweet, so beautiful, so appealing, as this short simple supplication for the people whom he had exhorted, cautioned, warned, and whom he loved (13:20,21). It touched gently and tenderly upon their own great needs and lifted them up into the very presence of God.

Here all dissension and arguments are hushed.

God is "the God of peace." When he comes the storms are quiet.

"Thou shalt know Him when He comes,
 Not by din of drums,
 Not by anything He wears,
 Nor his airs;
 But He shall well known be,
 By the holy harmony,
 Which his coming wakes in thee."

Here all doubt and misgiving disappear. He is "the great shepherd of the sheep," and even as he brought Jesus up from the dead, so he will perfect life. He cannot fail. Where the great shepherd leads, we can safely follow. Even in the valley of the shadow of death we need fear no evil.

Two notes may be added. (1) This is the only reference in the Epistle to the resurrection of Christ. (2) This prayer so mingles the name of "the God of peace" and that of "the great shepherd of the sheep" that it is difficult to say to whom the doxology is addressed. It is the author's unconscious identification of Jesus with God, and the recognition of his Deity.

SUGGESTION: The end of all prayer is to do his will (13:21). The sum of all true prayer is "thy will, not mine, be done." If we understood the won-

derful beauty of God's will for us, we would not hesitate to make this prayer ours.

“God is love; to do his will is to scatter love in handfuls of blessing on a weary world. God is light; to do his will is to tread a path that shines more and more unto the perfect day. God is life; to do his will is to eat of the tree of life, and live forever, and to drink deep draughts of the more abundant life which Jesus gives. God is the God of hope; to do his will is to be full of all joy and peace, and to abound in hope. God is the God of all comfort; to do his will is to be comforted in all our tribulation by the tender love of a mother. God is the God of peace; to do his will is to learn the secret inner calm, which no storm can reach, no tempest ruffle. God is the God of truth; to do his will is to be on the winning side, and to be assured of the time when He will bring out our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noonday.”—*Meyer*.

VI. The Challenge of Friendship (13:22–25)

MEMORY VERSE: 13:25

“Grace be with you all. Amen.”

The Epistle closes with a few friendly words of salutation.

He asks his readers to accept what he has written

as "a word of exhortation." He would not have them think that he had been disputing or even arguing with them. He is acting just as any true friend would act.

He speaks of his letter as short. It is "a letter unto you in few words." In reality it is short. Professor Moulton says it can be read aloud in less than an hour. In view of the seriousness of the situation it is all too short and will be supplemented later by a personal appeal.

He, himself, will soon pay them a visit and bring with him "brother Timothy" who has been given his liberty. We do not know the circumstances of Timothy's imprisonment, but we appreciate the personal friendly touch. Timothy is brother both to him and to them, and is as it were a bond of Christian friendship between them.

To their teachers, and to the brethren, "the saints," he sends cordial love and Christian greeting, and the Christian Italians who are with him unite in salutation of Christian fellowship and prayer. The Epistle closes with the short benediction, "Grace be with you all, Amen." (See Titus 3:15; Col. 4:18; I Tim. 6:21; II Tim. 4:22.) The author leaves them in God's keeping, confident that the gracious God, the ever-giving God, will fulfill in them his blessed purpose.

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
 Grace to cover all my sin;
 Let the healing streams abound;
 Make and keep me pure within.
 Thou of life the fountain art,
 Freely let me take of Thee;
 Spring Thou up within my heart,
 Rise to all eternity.

SUGGESTION: Can you as you close the study of this book assent to the conclusion of Matthew Henry? —"It must be acknowledged that there are many things in this Epistle hard to be understood, but the sweetness we will find therein will make us abundant amends for all the pains we take to understand it. And indeed, if we compare all the Epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews."

VII. The Supreme Challenge—Summary

1. Endeavor to make the memory verses your own for all time.
2. Give in brief review the outline of the entire Epistle.
3. Is this last chapter an anti-climax?
4. What is the attitude of the Epistle towards hospitality, the home, wealth?

5. What is the author's idea as to the true relation of pastor and people?

6. What attitude should Christians observe concerning the past?

7. What is the Christian view of sacrifice?

8. What value is attributed to prayer in the Epistle?

9. What position does the author take concerning the Deity of Christ?

10. Have you come to any definite idea as to the authorship of the Epistle?

11. Is the emphasis of the Epistle upon doctrine or upon deed?

12. Why is the Gospel of Jesus supreme?

STUDIES OF WORDS IN CHAPTER 13

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Brotherly love (1) | Communicate (16) |
| Content (5) | Unprofitable (17) |
| The word of God (7) | An everlasting covenant |
| Conversation (7) | (20) |
| Altar (10) | Exhortation (22) |
| Reproach (13) | Saints (24) |

Prayer

Almighty God, Who hast bestowed thy Word upon us, grant unto us grace rightly to understand it.

Save us from using thy Word deceitfully, from wresting it to serve our own purpose, from being in bondage to the letter whilst we neglect the spirit; and grant that, searching the Scriptures diligently, we may find in them their testimony to Christ, and beholding his glory, reflected in them, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*A Book of Common Order.*

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