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THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT  
IN  
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

by

Kenneth R. Boyd, B.D.

Princeton Seminary

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### DEDICATION

This thesis is gratefully dedicated  
to Howard Tillman Kuist, who by his  
interest, insight, inspiration, and  
deep Christian devotion, opened to  
me the pages of the Book.

## PREFACE

It would have been impossible to have completed work on this thesis without the help and assistance of a number of people and institutions. Being three thousand miles distant from Princeton Seminary, engaged with pastoral responsibilities in a large city church, access to the library of the Seminary was not possible. I was fortunate, however, to be near to her sister Seminary in San Anselmo, California. A word of appreciation is extended to Mrs. Byers, Librarian, for her consideration and help. Also near by is the fine library of the Pacific School of Religion, in Berkeley, California. The assistance given there was invaluable. An expression of thanks is sincerely given to Mrs. Grover C. Schmidt, faithful member of Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church, who typed the manuscript, and to my wife, for her constant inspiration and encouragement, and who also proof-read the manuscript.

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Chart

Showing the relative amount of space given  
to the Redeeming work of Christ in Hebrews.

1	1:1-2:4		
Made purification of sins	Theme of the Epistle	Sat down...on High	
	1:5-2:4		
2			
	2:5-2:18	The Moral History of the Son	
We behold...	2:5-9	His Relation to the Lot of Man	Taste death for every man
Jesus ...crowned	2:10-18	His Identification with the Need of Man	
Merciful and faithful			Able to succor them that
High Priest			are tempted
3	3:1-4:13		
4			
		Transition	
We have an High Priest	Sympathetic High Priest	Tempted ...as we are	
5	5:1-10	Qualifications for Priesthood	
Though a Son, yet	Office	Became author of	
...learned obedience	Discipline	eternal salvation	
(through suffering)	Calling		
Jesus qualifies after the order of Melchizedek			

6

7

7:1-28

## The Priestly Office of Christ

7:1-10 Explanation of Melchizedek's  
Priesthood as a Picture of the  
Priesthood of Christ

7:11-28 Superiority of Melchizedek  
Priesthood over Levitical  
Priesthood

A Son  
A High Priest

Perfected forever.  
Sat down ...right hand  
of the throne.

8

8:1-10:18

## The Priestly Ministry of Christ

8:1-6 "We have a Minister..."  
The Mediator of a better Covenant

8:7-13 The Two Covenants

9

9:1-14

Eternal Redemption

9:1-14 The Two Ministries

Through Eternal Spirit

9:15-28 The Validity of the New Ministry

10

10:1-18 The Efficacy of the New Ministry

Offered One Sacrifice  
Forever

Sat down ...right hand  
of God



11 11:1-40

12 12:1-29

Jesus endured the Cross Author and Perfector of Faith Sat down...right hand of God

Jesus

Mediator a New Covenant

13 13:1-21

Jesus . . . through His blood . . . suffered

The Covenant Benediction

13:22-25

Amen

## INTRODUCTION

There is a supreme need in this age of the atom for a fuller understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. This is so because there is confusion mingled with ignorance among many church people and professing Christians as to the necessity, the meaning, and the efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ. "The heart of the Gospel is the . . . . sacrifice of Jesus Christ; the interpretation of that sacrifice is the foremost problem of theology."<sup>1</sup> So spoke a leading Christian of a generation ago. The statement still is valid in our day.

The Gospel of Christ is eternal; its eternal truth cries out for understanding and application in an age in which much of the world hangs precariously in the balance between life and death. It is the present writer's firm conviction that the message of redemption and eternal life of the New Testament is tremendously and vitally important and applicable today. The message presented by the great unknown Christian apostle of the first century, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaks piercingly to the human heart today, if his proclamation of redemption is properly understood. "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."<sup>2</sup>

Stated briefly, the purpose of this paper is to attempt to clear away some of the uncertainty and confusion concerning the doctrine of the Atonement by presenting in straightforward terms the redeeming work of

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1. James Campbell, "The Heart of the Gospel", (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), 9.

2. Hebrews 4:7.

Christ found in the masterful, yet often greatly misunderstood Epistle to the Hebrews. It is indeed fitting and proper to open the pages of Scripture to this Epistle, for, as Professor A. B. Bruce expressed it, it is "the first apology for Christianity."<sup>1</sup> It is appropriate that one studies its pages also for the light which it sheds upon the problems of the twentieth century, even as it illumined the way for first century Christians. Dr. Westcott, commenting on the epistle and its pertinence to his own day wrote these words: "The more I study the tendencies of the time in some of the busiest centres of English life, the more deeply I feel that the Spirit of God warns us of our most urgent civil and spiritual dangers through the prophecies of Jeremiah and the Epistle to the Hebrews."<sup>2</sup>

The Atonement is the keystone of the Christian faith. And yet its facets are many. No single theory can cover all the fullness of meaning that is comprehended in this multi-sided reality. The facts involved are too transcendent to be grasped by finite minds or included in any single definition. It is a mystery too profound for any plumb line of human reasoning to sound its depths. Any attempt to interpret its meaning can yield only partial results. The fact of the Atonement is bound to make its appeal to men in different ways. Each thinker will see it from his own particular point of view, and he will see it only in part.

Any view of the Atonement, to be acceptable, should meet certain tests. James Campbell has suggested certain criteria by which the adequacy of any statement of atonement ought to be judged.<sup>3</sup>

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1. A. B. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity, (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1899).

2. B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (2nd edition; London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1892), x.

3. Op. cit., 15.

(1) Does it represent God and man as ethical beings having ethical relations to one another? Or does it remove God from the sphere of personal relations altogether, reducing the Atonement to an abstraction and making of it a transaction felt in heaven, without reference to what it accomplishes in the hearts and lives of men? Does it find verification in Christian experience? (3) Does it put the emphasis upon the side of things on which knowledge and certainty lie? (4) Does it produce satisfactory ethical results?

In attempting to summarize the doctrine of the Atonement in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the present writer is seeking to find a conception of the Atonement which is at once vital, reasonable, and preachable. For after all, if doctrine cannot be communicated to the "man in the pew" in terms and language which he can understand, and if it cannot be presented in language to grip and transform the listener, it is a purely academic thing, and is of little permanent value as far as the individual is concerned. Most of all does the Atonement need to be stated in preachable terms. This we hope to do.

A word concerning the method of procedure. The subject of the Atonement will be approached from three distinct viewpoints. Each will comprise one chapter of the thesis. Chapter one is historical. This will present interpretations of the leading authorities of the last seventy five years of criticism. The chapter will offer the views of the great Christian scholars of modern times, including George Milligan, A. B. Davidson, B. F. Westcott, A. B. Bruce, Alexander Nairne, William F. Du Bose, James Moffatt, E. F. Scott, Joseph F. McFayden, and Vincent Taylor. It is impossible to present a digest of every book written on the Epistle during these years; nor would there be any lasting value in

doing such a thing. This chapter will attempt to convey to the reader the main trends and turns of interpretations, rather than an exhaustive study.

Chapter two will be analytical in its nature. It is the result of the writer's personal study, using the Scriptures as a text. A detailed analysis of the Epistle in regard to the redeeming work of Christ is given. The chapter will include the conclusions of this study in some detail. This section comprises the bulk of the present study. The basis for it is found in a short paper written for Dr. Howard Tillman Kuist in connection with his course in Hebrews, taken at Princeton Theological Seminary during the Winter Term, 1945-46. The title of that paper was "The Redeeming Work of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews."

Chapter three will be comparative in scope. It is important to see the relation of one New Testament writer to another. Especially is this so in connection with the doctrine of the Atonement. The chapter will show how the writer of Hebrews stands in relation to three other New Testament writers, namely, St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. It is not necessary to believe that these men disagree or contradict one another. Each speaks from his own experience. Each is seeking to adequately interpret the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord in understandable terms. Each makes one or more facet of this precious jewel shine.

One more thought. The writer feels a deep sense of inadequacy as he approaches the study of God's redeeming grace. Humbly he acknowledges his need of spiritual eyes to see, a mind to understand, a heart to respond more fully to the thrilling story of salvation.

CHAPTER

ONE

H I S T O R I C A L

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE  
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

The Epistle to the Hebrews:  
The Greek text with notes and  
essays, by B. F. Westcott

The one commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews which stood as a milestone is that by Bishop Westcott. It is difficult to imagine what the loss to Christian scholarship would be had not this distinguished Anglican given to the world his commentaries on various New Testament books. And it is indeed a fortunate thing that he gave much of his time to a concentrated study of our Epistle. Evidence of the spirit in which he did work of this commentary is found in his introduction: "No work in which I have ever been allowed to spend many years of continuous labor had<sup>s</sup> had to me the same intense human interest as the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews."<sup>1</sup>

Westcott writes from this point of view, that every student of the Epistle must feel that it deals in a peculiar degree with the thought and trials of our own time. The situation of Jewish converts on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem was necessarily marked by the sorest distress. They had looked with unhesitating confidence for the redemption of Israel and for the restoration of the Kingdom to the people of God. In proportion as their hope had been bright, their disappointment was overwhelming when these expectations, as they had fashioned them, were finally dispelled. The writer of the Epistle enters with the tenderest sympathy into every cause of the grief and dejection which troubled his countrymen, and transfigures each sorrow into an occasion for a larger hope through a new revelation of the Ascended Lord.<sup>2</sup>

Westcott has done distinct service by including in his commentary notes and essays on various difficulties and problems. He has endeavored to suggest in these notes lines of thought which he found to open light

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1. Op. cit., ix.

2. Ibid., v.



upon problems which people are required to face in modern days. His hope has been to induce his readers to become fellow students. He has aimed at encouraging sustained reflection rather than entering on the field of controversy. Westcott believed that no conclusion is of real value to the student until he has made it his own by serious work; controversy tends no less to narrow one's vision than to give to forms of language or conception that rigidity of outline which is fatal to the presentation of life.

Westcott's commentary stands out because he has laid considerable stress on the details of expression. He has given remarkable light on the Greek text for those students who are not as brilliant as this great Churchman. (And who is there more brilliant?) In his discussion of various passages he does not attempt to summarize the opinions of all modern commentators up to his time. Where he has felt real doubt, he has given the views which seem to claim consideration. In other cases, he has simply stated the conclusions which he has gained. He has quoted frequently from the patristic writings. These notes give a wealth of information. No student can make a study on any New Testament book on which Bishop Westcott has published a work without constant consultation and examination of that volume.

Because of the tremendous help which Westcott gives toward the understanding of difficult passages in the Epistle, especially in his additional notes, it will be profitable to speak concerning several of them here, noting those which especially deal with our chosen subject.

On the significance of Melchizedek, that mysterious King-priest of the Genesis narrative, Westcott speaks at some length.<sup>1</sup> The appearance

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1. Ibid., 201-5.

of Melchizedek in the narrative of the Pentateuch, (Genesis 14:18ff) is of deep interest, both from the position which he occupies in the course of Revelation, and from the manner in which the record of his appearance is treated in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

According to Westcott, Melchizedek appears at a crisis in the religious history of the world as the representative of primitive revelation, or of the primitive relation of God and man still preserved pure in some isolated tribe. The meeting with Abraham is significant in the fact that it marks a new departure, the beginning of a new discipline, in the divine history of mankind starting from a personal call from God. The past and the future meet; the one bearing witness to an original Communion of God and men which had been practically lost, the other pointing forward to a future fellowship to be established permanently.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews interprets the Scriptural picture of Melchizedek, and does not attempt to realize the historical person of Melchizedek. He starts from the phrase in the 110th Psalm, "after the order of Melchizedek," (*κατὰ τὰς ἰν μελχίσεδεκ*), and determines the ideas which such a description was fitted to convey from a study, not of the life of the King-priest, which was unknown, but of the single record of him which had been preserved.

By the choice of the phrase the Psalmist had already broadly distinguished the priesthood of the divine King from the Levitical priesthood. It remained to work out the distinction. Therefore, the writer of the Epistle insists upon the silence of Scripture. He draws lessons from the fact that in the narrative of the Old Testament no mention is made of the parentage or genealogy of Melchizedek or of the

commencement or close of priestly office. He seeks to set vividly before his readers the impression conveyed by the remarkable phenomena of his unique appearance in patriarchal life, and the thoughts which they might suggest.

This kind of treatment leaves the actual human personality and history of Melchizedek quite untouched. The writer does not imply that that was true of him literally as a living man which is suggested in the ideal interpretation of his single appearance in the Bible. He does not answer the question, "Who and what was Melchizedek?", but "What is the characteristic conception which can be gained from Scripture of the priesthood of Melchizedek?"

Westcott distinguishes the treatment of the history of Melchizedek as typical and not allegorical. He explains the difference. Between the type and the anti-type there is a historical, a real, correspondence in the main idea of each event or institution. Between the allegory and the application the correspondence lies in special points arbitrarily taken to represent facts or thoughts of a different kind. The understanding of the type lies in the application of a rule of proportion. The law by which it is regulated lies in the record, which is taken to represent the life. The understanding of the allegory depends on the fancy of the composer. He determines which of many possible applications shall be given to the subject with which he deals.

Westcott further points out one striking omission which the author of the Epistle has left out of his account of Melchizedek. He takes no notice of the gifts of Melchizedek, who "brought forth bread and wine," when he came to meet Abraham. But he presents Melchizedek as priest, not in sacrificing but in blessing, that is, in communicating the fruits

of an efficacious sacrifice already made. He can only bless who is in fellowship with God and speaks as his representative. And it is under this aspect that the writer of the Epistle brings before the reader characteristically the present work of Christ.

One other note of Westcott's is worth mentioning here, because it shows the thoroughness of his study. An additional note on 10:10 gives in outline the effects of Christ's sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> The effect of Christ's sacrifice is presented in different places in the Epistle under various aspects in relation to man's position and needs. Because of sinfulness and sin man is spiritually in bondage, in debt, alienated from God. He requires redemption, forgiveness, atonement, reconciliation. All these blessings Christ has brought to humanity by His Incarnation, His Life, His Passion, His Ascension. By His perfect fulfilment of the destiny of man under the condition of the fall, He has brought again within man's reach the end of his creation.

Westcott discusses the effects of Christ's sacrifice under two general headings: (1) The effects of His sacrifice on the general relation of man to spiritual powers; (2) The effects of that sacrifice on man's personal state. Under the first heading he explains that the might of the devil is brought to nought, (2:14). Christ was made flesh that He might destroy the one who had the power of death. As a conse-

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1. Ibid., 346-8.

quence of this men are delivered from a present tyranny, as well as an obligation contracted in the past, (2:16). And at the same time a propitiation is offered for the sins of the people, so that they may come before God, (2:17,18). These blessings are made permanent because the dominion of sin is set at naught, shown in its essential impotence. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (9:26).

Concerning the effects of Christ's sacrifice upon man's personal state Westcott writes with fine insight. "Man was created to gain the divine likeness: he needs therefore perfect hallowing. He is sin-stained: he needs cleansing. He has powers capable of exercise, cultivation, development: he needs perfecting." <sup>1</sup> Westcott gives helpful knowledge concerning these key words: hallowing, cleansing, perfecting. All of them are intimately tied up with the effect of Christ's sacrificial work upon the soul of man.

It is not necessary to speak further of Westcott's commentary at this place. It will be referred to many times during the course of the paper. His deep insight into the meaning of the New Testament teaching, his scholarly work, comprehensive as well as exhaustive, has made this commentary a land mark in the history of the interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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1. Ibid., 347.

The Epistle to the Hebrews:  
The First Apology for  
Christianity

By Alexander Bruce

A very able work on our chosen Epistle appeared in 1899. This was Alexander Bruce's book, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The First Apology for Christianity. Bruce's purpose is to expound the Epistle in relation to its leading idea, or distinctive conception of the Christian religion. That conception of Christianity is that it is the perfect, and therefore the final religion. It is perfect because it accomplishes the end of religion, and because it does this, it can never be superseded. Nothing better can take its place.

And what is the end of religion? To bring men to God, to establish between men and God a fellowship as complete as if sin never existed. Christianity for the writer of the Epistle is the religion of free,<sup>1</sup> unrestricted access to God. The burden of the Epistle seems to be this: Leviticalism for a time, Christianity for aye. Of everything connected with Christianity, eternity is predicated. The salvation it provides is eternal, its priesthood is forever. The great High Priest of humanity possesses the power of "an endless life,"<sup>2</sup> and by the offering of Himself through the eternal Spirit has obtained eternal redemption for men. Those who believe in Him have the promise of an eternal<sup>3</sup> inheritance. The new covenant is everlasting.

It is difficult to single out any particular portion of Bruce's book which is specially helpful in content. The whole work is competently written and written in such a style which is a pleasure to read.

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1. Bruce, op. cit., 15.

2. Hebrews 7:17.

3. Bruce, op. cit., 17

Several portions might be singled out for notice. Bruce's chapters in which he discusses the more excellent ministry of Christ, and relation of the Old to the New Covenant, and the implications of the New Covenant, are very fine indeed.

Bruce discusses the theological importance of the Epistle in his closing chapter. His conclusions are illuminating and suggestive. It is well to think about them. Especially good are the views which he presents of Christ's sacrificial death. The author of the Epistle is not a man of one idea, the slave of a formula, <sup>in</sup> capable of regarding a great subject from more than a single favorite point of view. He firmly believes in the sacrificial character of Christ's death; it is the cardinal tenet on his theology. But that is not the only aspect under which he views the event. Bruce indicates five phases which the author has adapted to varying connections of thought and argument, <sup>1</sup> his idea of the death of Christ. ) added

(1) Jesus died once, and once only, as it is appointed unto all men once to die. On this view Christ's death is simply an instance of the common lot of men.

(2) Jesus died as a testator who, by a will, bequeaths an inheritance. From this point of view His death might have taken place in any manner, by disease or by accident. All that is necessary is that the testator be, and be known to be, dead, as the condition of the will coming into effect.

(3) The death of Jesus was the culminating point of a varied experience of suffering through which He was qualified for His office as Captain of Salvation. Thus in this case, His death was a discipline,

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1. Ibid., 436-7.

not a sacrifice for others. (2:10)

(4) The death of Jesus, as a sinless Man, broke the connection between sin and death as the penalty and so delivered sinful men from the fear of death as penal. On this view the idea is not that the Sinless One dies instead of the sinful, but that the Sinless One, through sinless dies; nor does any emphasis lie on the manner of His death.

(2:14-15)

(5) The death of Jesus was a priestly act of self-sacrifice whereby "He perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (9:14) It is noticed that these views of Christ's death are mentioned in ascending order, as to importance and implications.

As Bruce sees it, the author's whole theological system springs genetically out of the radical conception of the Christian religion as the religion of free access to God. The death of Christ, though occurring in this visible world on a hill called Calvary, essentially belongs to the heavenlies. As an act of the spirit, it was and is a sacrifice performed in the heavenly sanctuary. As an act of an Eternal Spirit, it has no exclusive connection with a certain point of time in human history. It is eternal, and like Christ Himself, is the same yesterday, today, and forever.



The Theology of the  
Epistle to the Hebrews

By George Milligan

Another prominent and competent English scholar, George Milligan, published an important work on our Epistle at the close of the last century.<sup>1</sup> He has made a lasting contribution to the understanding of the theological message of the Epistle, as well as the practical application to the needs of individuals. Milligan agrees with Westcott, Dods, and others on the traditional view that the people for whom the Epistle is intended are Jewish Christians. He presents the theme of the book as the finality of the Christian religion, as mediated in a Son.<sup>2</sup> This theme Milligan explains and expands. He divides the Epistle into three main sections. (1) The Supreme Excellence of the Son's Person, 1:5-4:16. (2) The Consequent Glory of the Son's High Priesthood, 5:1-10:18. (3) The Appropriation of the Son's High Priestly Work, 10:19-12:29.

The aim of the Epistle, according to Milligan, is to bring home to the readers the true meaning and power of Christianity. Only then will they be strengthened to hold firm to the knowledge that they already possess, as well as be urged onward to another and higher stage of progress. It is, accordingly, to this unfolding of the true glory of their new faith in contrast with the old, in which they have been brought up, that the writer sets himself.<sup>3</sup>

The superiority and finality of Christianity is driven home by the use of the covenant idea. The Jewish people, of course, knew the meaning

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1. The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (Edinburgh; T. and T. Clark, 1899).
  2. Ibid., 66; Hab. 1:1-4.
  3. Ibid., 57.

of a covenant, more particularly, the Covenant which God gave to them through Moses. The author presents Christianity as the perfect religion, the religion in which the covenant relationship - communion between God and man, and man and God - is perfectly and finally accomplished. It is in Christianity, adequately understood, that the writer claims that the New Covenant has at length been fulfilled, and its consequent blessing of spiritual obedience, and universal knowledge and<sup>1</sup> the forgiveness of sin completely realized.

In describing the characteristics of the Epistle, Milligan finds that the New Testament facts are taken for granted. They are assumed, not proven. In the author's use of the Old Testament, the whole Jewish economy is treated as symbolic, and it by the contemplation of the "anti-type", alike in its glory, and its failure, that the readers are taught the full meaning of the "type". It ought always to be kept in view that the ultimate aim of the author of the Epistle is not merely to show that Christianity is better than Leviticalism, but that in itself it is the absolute, the perfect religion. Behind the apologetic "better" (Heb. 8:6) we are always<sup>2</sup> led to see the dogmatic "best".

Milligan clarifies the concept of the covenant-idea, stating that the Epistle resolves itself largely into a comparison between two covenants, or a comparison of their respective priesthoods. For the covenant relationship rested on the priesthood as its foundation or basis (7:11), and any change in the priesthood carried with it a corresponding change in the covenant or economy of which it formed

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 38f.

a part (7:12).<sup>1</sup>

The character of the priesthood depended upon the personnel, that is, the "order," of those of whom it was comprised. Thus, it is around the "order" of the High Priest of the Christian confession that the argument turns. His place of ministry, the nature of His offering, and the efficacy resulting from it, all depend on the kind of Priest He is. It is because Christ is High Priest, not after Aaron, but after Melchizedek, that the covenant which He established is final and eternal. The author must first show that both by nature and training Christ is fitted to be High Priest of this order.<sup>2</sup> As we come to the analytical section of this thesis, we will deal specifically with these problems.

Milligan further asserts that the distinctive title of the Epistle is that of "Son".<sup>3</sup> Sonship lies at the basis of the whole of Christ's person and work. The writer of the Epistle associates it with Him in pre-existent, earthly, and exalted states. The "Son" is the connecting link. He is one unchanged Personality.<sup>4</sup> Milligan's book from here takes up the supreme excellence of the Son's person; the glory of the Son's High Priesthood; and the Appropriation of the Son's High Priestly work.

He further shows the relation of the Epistle to other systems of thought. These he divides into three classes, apostolic Christianity,

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1. Ibid., 71.

2. Ibid., 72.

3. See especially 1:2; 3:1-6; 5:8; 7:28.

4. Op. cit., 73.

St. Paul, and Hellenism. Asserting that Hebrews occupies a unique place in New Testament thought, Milligan yet says that one must take into account all three sources to arrive at a proper understanding of the Epistle.<sup>1</sup> The Epistle's relation to Apostolic Christianity is illustrated by the general course of the argument, the use of particular figures, and, more particularly, the correspondence with I Peter, in language and thought.<sup>2</sup> However, certain differences are evident with I Peter, and the writer's general width of view, and want of <sup>R</sup>Sabbatical teaching, show that the relationship ought not be pressed too far. Concerning the Epistle's relation to Paulinism, Milligan sees a possible dependence upon certain Pauline Epistles. He feels that the Epistle is in essential agreement with Paul's doctrinal system. This is accompanied, however, with a marked difference with reference to the Mosaic law, the Atonement of Christ, the manner of its appropriation, and certain other Pauline doctrines.

In concluding his volume, Milligan declares that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews stands by himself. With no one of the existing schools of his time can his presentation in truth be wholly identified; but undoubted dependence upon certain features of the early Apostolic Christianity. He combines a width of view which reminds one constantly of St. Paul, and a mode of expression which betrays a Hellenistic or Alexandrian training. Perhaps in the very eclecticism which thus distinguishes his system, in the fusion in

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1. Ibid., 192

2. Vid. Chapter III, *infra*.

it of what are sometimes regarded as inconsistent, if not actually contradictory elements, one may find one explanation of the hold which this Epistle has always exercised over the Church.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Op. cit., 211.

High Priesthood and Sacrifice

By William P. DuBose

In 1908 appeared the book High Priesthood and Sacrifice, by William P. DuBose.<sup>1</sup> He was at the time Professor of Exegesis in the University of the South. In this work Professor DuBose attempts to interpret the ancient terms of the Hebrew ritual into vital, living truths of the modern world. And he succeeds admirably well. Are the Hebrew phrases and terms of priesthood and sacrifice, and the Greek or Gentile applications of them to the Cross of Christ, waxed old and ready to vanish away? he asks. His reply: Forever no! But if they are not, one must take measures to preserve them, and the only way to preserve them is to make them as living today, as much a part of one's thought and speech and life now, as they were nearly two thousand years ago.<sup>2</sup>

In vivid language, DuBose avers that we must cease to treat the phraseology, the forms, the definitions, and dogmas of Christianity as sacred relics, too sacred to be handled. We must take them out of their napkins, strip them of their cerements, and turn them into current coin. We must let them do business in the life that is living now, and take part in the thought and feeling and activity of the men of the world today.<sup>3</sup> This proposition he seeks to accomplish in his book. He takes these most ancient forms or figures of priesthood, high priesthood, and sacrifice, attempts to vindicate their eternal, unchangeable truth and validity, their right and business to be as

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1. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908.

2. Ibid., 3.

3. Ibid.

necessary a part of modern thought, life and speech as they have been in all times and all places of the world from the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle is a description of how Jesus Christ is author and finisher, cause, process, and conclusion of human redemption and completion. Attention is concentrated upon the act or process by which God and man become one in Jesus Christ. The physical or metaphysical side of the question of a possible or actual becoming one of God and man is left out of the consideration, and attention wholly concentrated upon the process of spiritual and moral unification. This is indicated by the single phrase in which the writer expresses the entire act and function of the Incarnation: "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on High." (1:3) God and man are one in Christ not only as a physical or metaphysical fact, but by the supremest of spiritual and moral acts.<sup>2</sup>

The Lord, in this Epistle and generally in the New Testament, spoken of as the mediator of the new covenant of grace and salvation, and here so vividly contrasted with angels, with Moses, and with the Priests of Levi, is, while distinguished from God, ( ὁ Θεός ) at the same time identified with God both in creation and in redemption in a way which infinitely differentiates Him from all creatures, and justifies the distinct characterizing of Him as God. ( Θεός ) He that built all things, He who is author alike of creation and of the new creation of redemption and completion, of both the world and the Church, is God. At the same time, the Lord is man, and is spoken

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1. Ibid., 4.

2. Ibid., 6.

of wholly in terms of man, in the entire process of His work for men, of His being or becoming human redemption and completion. Salvation is the act of man; and only the more so for being also in him the act of God. Salvation is an act of man, and it is a single and very definite act--the only possible act by which salvation could be wrought or in which salvation could consist.<sup>1</sup>

The death of Jesus Christ was no mere incident or accident of His human career. It was the essential thing in it, as what it means for all of us is the essential thing in human life and destiny. DuBose indicates there is the unanimity with which the writers of the New Testament stand upon the supreme significance and necessity of the death of Jesus Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews fits into this scheme of redemption. There is no Christ for any one of the New Testament writers save the Christ crucified, dead and buried. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only possible seed of the Gospel or the Church. We do not yet see the promise fulfilled, and inheritance attained, the enemies put under foot, all things subjected unto man, humanity sanctified and glorified through purgation from sin and at-one-ment with God. We do not yet see all this realized in ourselves; but we do see it all accomplished and complete in Him who, for or because of His suffering of death was crowned with glory and honour; that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.<sup>2</sup>

DuBose is very helpful and illuminating, casting light on shadowy passages. Let me mention several as examples. In Chapter II, "The Divine Propriety of the Death of Christ," he speaks of the anomaly of

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1. Ibid., 12f.

2. Ibid., 14f.



God's being described as able, or even as enabled, to help us in the task of our salvation (Hebrews 2:17-18). By the fact of His having been as one of us tempted and saved, He is able to help those under temptation and to enable unto salvation those who are undergoing the experience of salvation through suffering or temptation. He points out that in the very tense of the verb, ἱλασκεισθαι, "to make propitiation", there is reference to the inseparable connection of Christ's and our own act of self-reconciliation with God. The use of the present tense, instead of the aorist, expresses the fact that Christ's single, and once for all completed act, of (on the part of humanity) self-reconciliation or at-one-ment with God, is continuously being re-enacted in and by us, as we by His enabling grace and aid are enduring temptation and attaining victory, are dying His death and rising unto His victory. <sup>1</sup>

There is now no longer any possible meaning or end of religion but Incarnation. There is no task or function of Incarnation but human redemption and salvation. There is no salvation but the Cross of Christ, by which alone we are dead to sins, and the world and the flesh of sin, and alive unto holiness and the Father and Spirit of holiness.<sup>2</sup>

The author goes further in this matter with a paragraph which is worth quoting. "Things being as God has made and has revealed them, and as now we know they are, how otherwise than He has done could God have become to us salvation that He is? . . . How otherwise could His love and His grace have entered into us and become our salvation, our

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1. Ibid., 41f.

2. Ibid., 42.

holiness, and righteousness, our eternal life and our divine blessedness? Can we conceive of God's saving us from a distance by a word or act of power? Or what intermediate act or process, shall we say, between that extreme on one side, and, on the other, the extreme of the Incarnation, the divine mystery of His self-identification with us, of His becoming one with us to make us, that is, to enable us to become, one with Himself, to make our minds, our hearts, our wills, our lives, ourselves, His?<sup>1</sup>

In his interpretation of the Epistle, DuBose puts emphasis upon the progressiveness of the argument. He shows how the whole idea of the Atonement expands and gathers strength and power. The climax of the argument is the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. "Just what makes Jesus Christ not merely one of us, but The One, with an infinite difference of degree, is the act and fact of His death, the fact that all that He was not He was not to the limit, to the end, so that we may say that He was absolute of not the natural, but the spiritual man, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, above all absolutely dead to sin, and absolutely alive to God."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., 42.

2. Ibid., 177f.

The Epistle of Priesthood

By Alexander Nairne

One of the most stimulating volumes which has appeared on the Epistle to the Hebrews is that by Alexander Nairne, entitled "The Epistle of Priesthood."<sup>1</sup> It is stimulating because the author does not take the conventional approach. His primary contribution to the understanding of the Epistle is by applying to it what he calls the sacramental principle. The writer of the Epistle proposes to correct the reader's imperfect conception of the person of Christ by the analogy of priesthood. That analogy is part of the sacramental principle which runs through the Epistle. Nairne defines this as "the revelation of the eternal through the visible."<sup>2</sup> The writer says in effect to his friends: "The Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ is a far larger thing than you suppose; think of Him as priest, and I will make you understand what I mean." He shows that this priesthood of the Lord is the consummation of a priesthood which runs through all visible life, and because it is a function of real life has its final effect in the eternal sphere.<sup>3</sup>

Nairne indicates that the sacramental language in the Epistle to the Hebrews culminates in the showing of the death of Christ as the sacrament of His redemption. The sacramental idea is an important part of the author's plan. His language throughout is sacramental, and he passes imperceptibly from a large general feeling of the significance of visible things to a particular suggestion of the meaning of certain selected events and actions. These are arranged in a series where they take hold of one another and deepen one another's seriousness, concentrating attention more and more on a special need, duty, and hope, of the

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1. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1913.

2. Ibid., 36.

readers' own lives, and binding this hope closer and closer with the triumph of their Lord. Then, finally, the Cross is shown to be in a pre-eminent sense sacramental, revealing through its visible heroism the secret of the Saviour's person and work, and affording to His servants a means of partaking in His effort and His strength.<sup>1</sup>

The chief contribution of the writer to theology proper, according to Nairne, is that he gives a first sketch of that sacramental interpretation of the Incarnation which St. John has elaborated in a whole Gospel. We see that the sacrament of the Cross is itself but part of a larger sacrament, the Incarnation. And the Incarnation is the one primary sacrament.<sup>2</sup>

The sacrament of the Incarnation is discussed under two chapter headings. One presents the limitations of manhood; the other perfection through limitation.<sup>3</sup> The use of the word sacrament is in a wide sense. Whenever visible things reach out into the eternal and carry us with them to God, there is a sacrament.<sup>4</sup> Nairne elaborates on this thought at considerable length. He shows that the writer of the Epistle was imminently a sacramentalist. The sacramentalist starts from faith in God, and sees the sacramental quality of creation perfected in the Incarnation. The author of Hebrews received from the church the doctrine of our Lord's Godhead, and interpreted it sacramentally, recognizing the

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1. Ibid., 50-51.

2. Ibid., 51.

3. Cf. Chapters III and IV, pp. 60-134.

4. Ibid., p. 60.

limitations of His manhood. He sets forth the earthly life of Jesus, the days of His flesh, the humiliation, as themselves the sacrament of the divine Christ's redeeming work for men.<sup>1</sup>

The plan is magnificent. He finds a deep spiritual idea of priesthood, of bringing Godward, to be at the heart of all natural life from the beginning of the world, and he marshals his Lord's earthly life on those ascending lines which run up into the will of God. "Though He was a Son yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."<sup>2</sup>

The writer recognizes that the limitations of our Lord were His opportunities. The fact that He was truly man, identified with him in his need, made it possible for Him to be completely sympathetic with human need. The Incarnation was the opportunity for our Lord particularly to win the victory over sin, and so bring the sons of men unto God. In the words of Athanasius: "He became human that we may become divine."<sup>3</sup>

Two excellent chapters deal with the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The first deals with the Priesthood itself; the second with the Sacrifice. Nairne makes a fine contribution to the understanding of the Priesthood of Christ by using the phrase "on the Godward side."<sup>4</sup> The point of the Epistle is to tell how men may find access to God. This phrase "on the Godward side" has been used in two places. The first, "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest 'on the Godward side', to make propitiation for the sins of the people."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., 67.

2. Hebrews 5:8.

3. Nairne, Op. cit., 115.

4. Ibid., 144.

5. Hebrews 2:17.

The second, "For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things 'on the Godward side'." <sup>1</sup> The translation seems to sum up with excellent terseness the whole character of this real Priesthood upon which the Epistle is engaged. Whenever any moving power has been found "on the Godward side" there has that priesthood been operating. The perfection of our Lord's power was just that; it was always and entirely and effectually on the Godward side.

Nairne deals with the problem of the Levitical priesthood and the Priesthood of Melchizedek. For here the main difficulty arises in understanding the Epistle. The Levitical priesthood is set aside. It is a shadow, not a type. It is only the starting point. It is not at first obvious why the priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" should be a truer thing than priesthood after the order of Levi or Aaron. Nairne points out that the author has in his mind a priesthood which is universal, has been in the world from the beginning, possesses an unbroken life of growth running up at last into the perfect achievement of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> In Genesis he found a record of a king-priest not of Israel's race, who was nevertheless recognized by the founder of Israel, and is entitled by the author of Genesis "Priest of God Most High." <sup>3</sup> He blessed Abraham, that is, he stood on his Godward side; through him, on that day in the far-off beginnings of the world's history, Abraham drew near to God. The author has also to show that this ancient, abiding, universal priesthood has never been superseded by the Levitical, but has gone on side by side with it, and at last outstays the aged and worn-out

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1. Hebrews 5:1.

2. Op. cit., 148.

3. Genesis 14:18.

Levitical institution.

All one knows of Melchizedek is as He is Priest. In this light, he stands as a Scriptural picture of the true Priest-King, Jesus, the Son of God. Nairne defines the priesthood of Melchizedek as a "natural priesthood," pointing out that to a sacramentalist what is spiritual is natural, and what is most natural is spiritual.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the Levitical priesthood was a mechanical institution serving a particular purpose of edification for a while, this natural priesthood has been always at work throughout the world and always will be. It is natural and universal, and therefore stands in the line of eternal movement toward God. Our Lord's work was the center of this movement. This natural priesthood in His work and elsewhere too is a true type or sacrament of eternal salvation. If we look at Him on earth we see Him performing the visible sign of this sacrament.<sup>2</sup>

In the chapter on Sacrifice, the author asks the question, what is "atonement" or "propitiation"? He answers by saying that for the writer of our Epistle, atonement is mainly cleansing.<sup>3</sup> And for him, as in Leviticus, this cleansing is effected by blood. "How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."<sup>4</sup>

This whole idea of blood has been attacked again and again. How ought it to be understood? Nairne turns to the Levitical ritual, Lev. 17:11, "for the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is

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1. Op. cit., 152.

2. Ibid., 160f.

3. Ibid., 168f.

4. Hebrews 9:14.

the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." In the Hebrew language there is but one word for "life" and "soul." Life is given by God to cleanse life, soul to cleanse soul. The important thing is not that the Hebrews had strange ideas about blood, derived from barbarous ancestors, perhaps, but that they had such large and daring ideas about life. About life, not so much in merchant's phrases about its value as about its power. To a Christ, sprung from that race, a life offered for love and hope and obedience's sake might well seem powerful for salvation.

Nairne suggests the substitution of "life" for blood in those passages of the Epistle where the word occurs. "Through his own life he entered once for all into the sanctuary, having found eternal redemption" (9:12); "the life of Christ, who through eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, shall cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9:14). And he goes further. In recognizing life as the main principle of sacrificial cleansing, one must not take anything away from the reality of the sacrificial death. The visible act of slaying sheds the blood and so sets it free for ritual sprinkling and offering. The spiritual act of voluntary death sets free true life for its highest service. If one believes in that high service one must also believe in the reality of death. Nairne therefore suggests that it may help to substitute sometimes "life enriched by death," and then restore the word "blood," in order to feel vividly what a terrible thing death is, how mysteriously bound up with pain and that still obscurer trouble sin.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Op. cit., 169-71.



The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its  
Doctrines and Significance.

By Dr. E. F. Scott

Two volumes appeared in the early years of the 1920's by eminent New Testament scholars. Each of them bears fruitful study. The first of these is a commentary upon the Epistle by Dr. E. F. Scott.<sup>1</sup> His work is noteworthy for one thing because he does not agree with many of the traditional views presented by men of another day. He rejects the idea that the Epistle was written to Hebrews, but rather claims it was directed to Gentile Christians. The author contemplates a circle of readers whose faith has been weakened, not so much by positive doubt as by a failure of courage and perserverance. And by the assumption that he writes for "Hebrews" it has generally been inferred he fears relapse to the ancestral mode of worship. Scott asserts that there is nothing to support this view in the Epistle. The danger against which the readers are warned is not that of falling away to another religion, but that of growing slothful and indifferent in the religion which they profess.<sup>2</sup>

Scott takes this thesis: Christianity is set forth in the Epistle as the religion of attainment. It has given us access to a higher world, and has enabled us to apprehend the realities which we have hitherto known only in their earthly copies. This is the thought which pervades the Epistle and gives meaning to much that at first sight may appear arbitrary and obscure. When all allowance is made for the historical conditions under which the writer worked, and which determined the character of his argument, we have to recognize that the ultimate key to his teaching must be sought in the

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1. The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Doctrine and Significance,  
(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922).

2. Ibid., 23.

constitution of his own mind. He was one of those thinkers possessed with the sense of a world beyond--a world of true existence of which all visible things are but the signs and reflections. His place, in many respects, is not so much with the Apostles of the faith as with the great idealists; and in the light of this idealism we have to understand his interpretation of the Christian message.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Scott further asserts that the central doctrine of the Epistle is that of the priesthood of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, but the approach to this doctrine is through another. Christianity for the author is the New Covenant whereby God has brought His people into a relation to Himself far closer than was possible before. And Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.<sup>2</sup>

The two covenants are related in the closest manner one to another. For Paul, they were simply two religions, differing in their fundamental principles. Scott repudiates this view in regards to the Epistle to the Hebrews. He states that we obscure the whole tenor of his argument when we regard the author as placing them in direct contrast. He assumes throughout that there is only religion, divinely instituted, which has now attained to its consummation.<sup>3</sup>

Scott takes the following view of the work of Christ as set forth in the Epistle. He feels that that work is emptied in great measure of its real significance. For it has to be equated as far as possible with the ancient ordinances. Since Christ took up and completed the previous covenant, He must be considered as priest, and His work for man's redemption

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1. Ibid., 84.

2. Ibid., 85.

3. Ibid., 92f.

must all be brought under the formal categories of priesthood. It is affirmed that he was the ideal High Priest whose ministry is enacted not on earth, but in a heavenly sanctuary. With all its impressions and its many profound suggestions, the doctrine is lacking in vitality. Scott feels that the whole idea of priesthood is part and parcel of a bygone phase of religion.<sup>1</sup> The present writer hardly agrees that there is no vitality to the doctrine in the Epistle.

This commentary is helpful in many respects. Scott gives a very good picture of the Covenants and the High Priesthood of Christ. To the author of the Epistle covenant means something altogether different from the Law. It consisted not in the ordinances which God had imposed on Israel, but in the relation to Himself of which these ordinances were the pledge and safeguard. His interest is not in the Law itself, but in the object for which it existed. It was designed to secure for Israel the right access to God, and all else is therefore regarded as subordinate to the cultus, and more particularly to the priesthood.<sup>2</sup>

The author's attention is focused on the two priestly acts--the high priest's intercession in the holy place, and that of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. By the comparison of these two acts he seeks to determine the nature of the two covenants. In former time God had made a covenant with Israel, choosing this nation out of all others as His people; but as yet it was only in a qualified sense that he bestowed the privilege. On the one hand, the sacrifice ordained by the ancient system had no intrinsic value, and at best could bring worshippers into a state of ceremonial purity. The sins which kept them from God were not yet removed. On the other

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1. Ibid., 97.

2. Ibid., 99.

hand, the tabernacle in which Israel sought access to God was an earthly and material one--a type and suggestion of God's true dwelling place. The worship rendered in this visible sanctuary could only be provisional, and those who shared in it did not in reality stand before God.

Now, however, there has been instituted a New Covenant, whereby the shadows and anticipations have passed into fulfillment. In the death of Christ, a sacrifice has been offered which secures a real forgiveness of sin, and has thus broken down the barriers that kept men distant from God. Moreover, Christ who was the sacrifice was at the same time the High Priest, belonging to a new and higher order, who ministers in no earthly sanctuary, but in the eternal sanctuary in heaven. Through Him we pass beyond the sphere of visible things and have access to the very presence of God.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Scott shows that in the working out of his analogy the writer of the Epistle lays stress on three features of the Old Testament Ritual--the person of the high priest, the sacrifice he offers, and his entrance into the sanctuary. The manifold details of the Levitical service are allowed to fall out of sight, and one's attention is concentrated on these three outstanding facts. Scott discusses these three features somewhat at length. His remarks concerning the true sacrifice are revealing. Being in His own person the true High Priest, Christ offered the true sacrifice. The Epistle knows nothing of the Pauline interpretation of the Cross as the destruction of the sinful flesh, and the satisfaction rendered to the claim of law. In place of these ideas, derived from Hebrew and Rabbinical speculation, it employs others, based on analogies of ritual. The purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices,

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1. Ibid., 100f.

especially on the Day of Atonement, was to provide a cleansing, a sanctification, in virtue of which the worshipper might come without fear into the presence of God. So for the writer of the Epistle, the death of Christ is the supreme offering, which effects in reality that which the old sacrifices could only effect partially and symbolically.<sup>1</sup> Scott further declares that the attempt to discover some profound spiritual meaning in this doctrine of the death of Christ is useless. The writer simply takes his stand on the belief, which passed into the Mosaic system from primitive religion, that by sacrifice men were brought into right condition for worshipping God. While the writer interprets the death of Christ on the analogy of Jewish sacrifices, he is never tired of insisting that it stands on a higher plane, and has now finally accomplished what the old rites could only prefigure.<sup>2</sup>

Scott also offers what he believes to be limitations of the writer's thoughts. He has failed to understand, asserts Scott, as Paul, the essential newness of Christianity. He has assimilated it to Judaism, even while he aims at proving its superiority. Those "old things which have passed away"--priesthood, sacrifice, ceremonial--are still regarded by him as permanent elements of religion, and he takes for granted that in the work of Christ they have only been perfected.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., 131.

2. Ibid., 133.

3. Ibid., 136ff.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

By Dr. James Moffatt

The second important volume published during the early 1920's was Dr. James Moffatt's critical and exegetical commentary.<sup>1</sup> This distinguished scholar writes from the standpoint that the situation which called forth this remarkable piece of primitive Christian thought had nothing to do with any movement in contemporary Judaism, that the writer of the Epistle knew no Hebrew, and his readers were in no sense Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> They were Gentiles who thought of the Septuagint as their Bible.

The central emphasis is upon the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus in the eternal order of things. This is due in part to his general conception of religion. For him there could be no religion without a priest.<sup>3</sup> The argument of the central part of the writing, chapters 7-10, is that religion is worship and worship implies sacrifice; there is no access for man to God without sacrifice, and no religion without a priest.<sup>4</sup>

In his introduction, Moffatt gives considerable space to a discussion of the religious ideas of the Epistle. He shows how the Platonic philosophy of ideas influences the writer. The earthly and the visible are but a shadow of the Real things, eternal and invisible. "You see in your Bible the elaborate system of ritual which was once recognized for the forgiveness of sins, and access of the people to God. All this was merely provisional and ineffective, a shadow of the Reality which already existed in the mind of God, and which is ours in the sacrifice of Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

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1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924 (The International Critical Commentary series).

2. Ibid., ix.

3. Ibid., xxv.

4. Ibid., xliv.

5. Ibid., xxxii.

The new and final order has dawned ever since the sacrifice of Jesus was made, and the position of believers is guaranteed. The entrance of Jesus has made a fresh, living way for Christian believers, which is here and now open. "For all time He is able to save those who approach God through Him, as He is always living to intercede on their behalf." (7:25). Christians enjoy the final status of relationship to God in their world of spirit and reality, in virtue of the final sacrifice offered by Jesus the Son.<sup>1</sup>

What was this sacrifice? asks Moffatt. How did the writer understand it? The first thing to be said is that in his interpretation of the sacrifice of Jesus, he takes the piacular view. Moffatt points out what he calls the error of John Calvin and Matthew Arnold on this account. In a quotation from The Institutes, Calvin maintains that as for the priesthood of Christ, the end and use of it is that He may be a Mediator pure from every stain, and by his holiness may render us acceptable to God. But because the righteous curse prevents our access to Him, and God in His character of Judge is offended with us--in order that our Priest may appease the wrath of God, and restore His favor for us, there is a necessity for the intervention of an atonement. Arnold speaks of the notion of appeasement apparently sanctioned by the Epistle to the Hebrews, as never being able to speak truly to the religious sense, or bear fruit for true religion.<sup>2</sup>

Moffatt restates the problem. The function of Christ, according to the author, is not to appease the divine wrath, but to establish once and for all the direct fellowship of God with His people, and a picturesque archaic phrase like that in 12:24 about the ἀφάρτη παρτίσθω cannot be pressed into the doctrine that Jesus by His sacrifice averted or averts

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1. Ibid., xxxiv.

2. Ibid., xxxiv-v.

the just anger of God.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, while the author knows the primitive Christian idea of God's Fatherhood, it is not in such terms that he expresses his own terms of God. What engrossed the writer is the need, not so much of a medium between God and the material universe, as of a medium between His holiness and human sin.<sup>2</sup>

As for the essence and idea of the sacrifice, Moffatt states that while he refers to a number of Old Testament sacrifices by way of illustration, his main analogy comes from the ritual of atonement-day in the Levitical code (Leviticus 16), where it was prescribed that once a year the high priest was to enter the inner shrine by himself, the shrine within which stood the sacred box or ark symbolizing the divine Presence. The elaborate sacrifices of the day are only glanced at by the author. Thus he never alludes to the famous scapegoat, which bore away the sins of the people into the desert. All he mentions is the sacrifice of certain animals, as propitiation for the high priest's own sins and also for those of the nation. Carrying some blood of these animals, the priest was to smear the *ἐλαστήριον* or cover of the ark. This had a two-fold object. (1) Blood was used to reconsecrate the sanctuary (Leviticus 16:16). This was a relic of the idea that the life-bond between the god and his worshippers required to be renewed by sacred blood. The author of the Epistle refers to this practice in 9:23. But his dominant interest is in (2) the action of the high priest as he enters the inner shrine; it is not the reconsecration of the sanctuary with its altar, but the general atonement there made for the sins of the people, which engrosses him. What this rite, as laid down in the Bible, was intended to accomplish was simply, for the author, to renew the life-bond between God and the

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1. Ibid., xxxv.

2. Ibid., xxxvi.



people. This sacrifice offered by the high priest on atonement day was the supreme, piacular action of the Levitical cultus. Once a year it availed to wipe out the guilt of all sins, whatever their nature, ritual or moral, which interrupted the relationship between God and His people.<sup>1</sup>

It was a sacrifice designed for the entire people as the community of God. The blood of the victims was carried into the inner shrine, on behalf of the people outside the sanctuary; this the high priest did for them, as he passed inside the curtain which shrouded the inner shrine. Also, in contrast to the usual custom, the flesh of the victims, instead of any part being eaten as a meal, was carried out and burned up.

In all this the writer finds a richly symbolic meaning. (Chap. 9:1ff). Jesus was both High Priest and victim, as he died and passed inside the heavenly presence of God to establish the life-bond between God and His people. Jesus did not need to sacrifice for Himself. Jesus did not need to sacrifice Himself more than once for the people. Jesus secured forgiveness which the older animal sacrifices never won. And Jesus did not leave His people outside; he opened the way for them to enter God's own presence after Him, and in virtue of His self-sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

Moffatt goes on to discuss the drawbacks involved in the use of this figurative language. One is that it does not allow the author to show how the sacrificial death of Jesus is connected with the inner renewal of the heart and the consequent access of man to God. Another drawback is that the idea of Jesus passing like the high priest at once from the sacrifice into the inner sanctuary prevented Him from making use of the Resurrection. The heavenly sphere of Jesus is so closely linked with His previous existence on earth, under the category of the sacrifice, that

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1. Ibid., xxxvii.

2. Ibid., xxxviii.

the author could not suggest an experience like the Resurrection, which would not have tallied with his idea of continuity.

On the other hand, Moffatt points out, the concentration of interest in the symbol on the sole personality of the priest and of the single sacrifice enabled him to voice what was his predominant belief about Jesus. He is the single, sufficient Mediator between God and man, eternally interceding.<sup>1</sup>

One more word concerning sacrifice. The superior or rather the absolute efficacy of the blood of Christ depends in turn on his absolute significance as the Son of God. It is His person and work which render His self-sacrifice valid and supreme. In the Epistle this is asserted rather than explained. It is asserted on the ground of a presupposition which was assumed as axiomatic, namely, the impossibility of communion with God apart from blood shed in sacrifice. (9:22).

Blood offered in sacrifice does possess a religious efficacy, to expiate, and purify. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. We ask, why? But the ancient world never dreamt of asking why. What puzzles a modern was an axiom to the ancient. The argument of the Epistle is pivoted on this postulate, and no attempt is made to rationalize it.<sup>2</sup>

The Commentary by Dr. Moffatt is extremely suggestive, helpful, and worth while. As we come to the analytical part of this thesis, reference (will be often) made to his interpretations. These pages have presented in essence his approach to the doctrine of Atonement.

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1. Ibid., xxxix.

2. Ibid., xlii.

Through Eternal Spirit  
by  
Joseph F. McFayden

A book which is quite refreshing, concise, and deeply spiritual is that by Joseph F. McFayden, Through Eternal Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This is a volume of studies of Hebrews, James, and First Peter. The author has somewhat to offer toward the understanding of Christ's redeeming work in our Epistle. He declares that the theological part of the Epistle has perennial value. It is the interpretation of an essentially Christian experience. Using the categories of ancient ritual, the writer of the Epistle sets forth what Jesus had been to himself, and to the men who thought with him; especially what Jesus had been to His followers in all ages.

He and they had felt a barrier between themselves and God: that barrier they knew was their own sin. Jesus, one of ourselves, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, had lived a life of such moral perfection, beauty and power, that death, the sphere in which sin reigns, had no jurisdiction over Him. This Jesus, though our brother, is yet God manifest in the flesh. He has ~~torn~~ asunder the veil that hid God from human perception. He is our Captain, going on before, and where He leads He calls us to follow. All who accept His leadership can "draw near unto God." He Himself is the Way, the new and living Way to God.<sup>2</sup>

McFayden goes on to say that whatever we may think of the writer's theory of the Atonement (though, strictly speaking, according to McFayden, he has no theory of the Atonement; for he takes for granted the efficacy of the sacrifice) he gets down to the roots of things when he tells us that we have not that purity without which we cannot see God, and that of ourselves

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1. New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.

2. Op. cit., 33.

we can never win that purity. Through what Jesus has done for us in His life, and especially in His death, we are delivered from fear and from all that shackles us, given a new mastery over ourselves, a new confidence in the presence of God, and a new sense of fellowship with Him.<sup>1</sup>

In this Epistle, as hardly anywhere else in the New Testament, does one feel lifted above one's self, out of the sphere of the sensuous, the petty, the passing, into the realm of the timeless, of the unseen things that abide. The Christian religion is final in this sense, that what Jesus is no other can transcend, what He has done no other can do, and there is no need that it should ever be done again.<sup>2</sup>

The writer answers too the question men often ask: How can a Man, appearing in time, accomplish that which is valid for all time? McFayden wonders if we can ever hope for a more effective answer than Hebrews gives: that which Christ did, He did "in the spirit of the eternal."<sup>3</sup> Jesus came to be and Jesus died; but Christ is timeless, the spirit of Christ is wrought into the very fibre of the world; Christ is the radiance of God's glory, the impress of His substance; in Christ torn on the Cross we see, as nowhere else, the timeless sacrificial love of God for men.<sup>4</sup>

McFayden states that in his study of the sacrificial system the author makes no enquiry such as a modern writer would make into the primitive ideas that underlie the strange supposition that the slaughter of unwilling and inoffensive animals somehow affected man's relation to God. It was enough for him that the sacrificial system was ordained in Scripture. The marvel is that, believing, as his theory of Scripture

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1. Ibid., 33f.

2. Ibid., 34.

3. Hebrews 9:14 (Moffatt).

4. Op. cit., 35.

compelled him to believe, that God was in some way responsible for the institution of animal sacrifice, he yet saw so clearly the ineffectiveness of the system; and that, obliged as he thought he was to interpret the death of Christ through the category of animal sacrifice, he yet reached so lofty and spiritual a conception of the meaning of that death, and in such large measure escaped the degrading theories of the Atonement which in the minds of multitudes have distorted the picture of God, who is the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The chief contribution which McFayden has made, in this writer's opinion, is to clarify the conception which gives him the title of his book, Through Eternal Spirit. The striking phrase, "through eternal spirit" occurs in Hebrews 9:14. Why did the offering of Jesus effect what the offering of animals failed to effect? Because the high priest was Jesus; because the victim was Jesus, the spotless Son of God; because the sacrifice was Jesus, not His blood, but His life, Himself; because the offering was not made to provide the worshippers with a superficial holiness that would give them a spurious standing with the holy God; it was an offering of the Son by the Son, who was the radiance of the Father's glory and the very image of His being so that in all He did He represented the very thought of God.

The author here answers by anticipation a question which has perplexed many a modern mind. How can religion, communion between the soul and its God, depend on an event in time, an event that happened in a small, and, except for the history of religion, unimportant country, over nineteen hundred years ago? Can the spiritual depend upon the temporal this way? The question is even more difficult for us than it was for

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1. Ibid., 119f.

the writer of our Epistle. He believed that the end times had come with the appearance of Jesus; he looked for the immediate return of Christ. But the expected did not happen. The ages have rolled on; we get farther and farther away from the historic Calvary; and outside of the Christian religion, the days of his flesh do not divide the history of mankind into two epochs as they do for the Christian.

The writer of the Epistle gives in germ the only answer we ever can have, the only answer we need. What Jesus did, He did "through eternal spirit." The life of Christ and the death of Christ took place under conditions of time and space; but they take us into the eternal, unseen world where time and space are forgotten. The life of Jesus, and, still more, His death, reveal to us the eternal thought of God toward man, and especially toward the sin that separates man from God. At all costs God will remove the barrier, even at the cost of sharing man's life and bearing the burden of his sin. The feeling, the thought, the purpose, that are eternally in the mind of God, Jesus carried out in the realm of the visible, once for all. "Let us draw near to God" is the text of the author's practical discourse, and "through eternal spirit" is the motto of his argument.<sup>1</sup> One is reminded of Hebrews 7:25, in the translation used by Dr. McFayden, "Since none can displace Him, He is able to save indeed without limit, those who approach God through Him, since He lives forever to intercede for them." Whatever else his intercession for mankind means, it removes all that hinders his approach to God.<sup>2</sup>

Is it strange that the Cross is the center of the Christian faith? Judging from the New Testament records it seems practically certain that, but for the belief that "Jesus died for our sins," our religion would have no

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1. Ibid., 146.

2. Ibid., 127.

history at all. If ever we are tempted to think it a morbid impulse that led the Church to choose and to abide by the Cross as the symbol of what it lives by and what it stands for, we can at least ask ourselves what would have happened if Jesus had chosen to live a few more years and die a natural death. Would His influence have been greater, more inspiring, more healthy, than it is today? McFayden concludes thus: "Let those believe it who can. We cannot know all that was in His mind; but we know that when He saw that the leaders of His people were determined to bring Him to the cross, he chose to let them have their will. In making this choice He believed He was fulfilling the will of God. The history of Christendom from that day has justified His choice." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibid., 149.

The Atonement in New Testament Teaching  
by  
Vincent Taylor

The last volume which will come under consideration in this chapter is one of the most recent, and one of the most competent and scholarly treatments of the doctrine of the Atonement to appear in recent years. The author, Vincent Taylor. The book, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching.<sup>1</sup> Taylor recognizes the necessity for doctrine in these days. We are living at the close of an era during which a failure to recognize the serious character of the problem of sin, and an easy optimism, not to say a feeble sentimentalism, in the presentation of the love of God, have reduced theology and preaching to a seriously low ebb; and unless our apprehension and statement of Christian doctrine can regain life and vigour, the ministry of the Church, so vitally needed by the world today, (according to Taylor) is likely to remain in eclipse for at least a generation.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor presents the essential teaching in regard to the Atonement as found in the Synoptics, the primitive preaching of the church, the Epistles, the Apocalypse. A considerable amount of space is given to the Epistle to The Hebrews. Taylor declares that 'it is evident that the teaching of the Epistle is based on a conscious selection of important elements in the primitive Christian belief. No attempt is made in it to deal fully with all that was believed and taught in the Churches of the first century of Christianity.

No references to peace with God, justification, reconciliation, eternal life, or living unto righteousness are to be found in the Epistle. The writer devotes his attention to one cycle of ideas, the vicarious,

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1. London: The Epworth Press, 1940.

2. Op. cit., 10.



representative, and sacrificial offering of Christ, and in comparison with this, all else falls into the background.<sup>1</sup>

In relation to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in connection with the total teaching of the New Testament concerning the Atonement, Taylor develops what he calls the "sacrificial theory." The doctrine of the Atonement is an organic whole, one part of which cannot be neglected without serious injury to others, or understood except in relation to the whole.<sup>2</sup> The best category of the inclusive kind, at once ethical and religious, which excludes pretenses to human merit and opens the way for God to man and man to God, is the sacrificial category, provided it is rightly understood, and provided it is freed from all unworthy and pagan associations.<sup>3</sup>

It is well to spend some time with Taylor's theory. He opens new vistas, clarifies perplexities, and competently presents a workable theory of the Atonement for these tense days.

In the Old Testament, Taylor points out, the sacrifice was recognized as a means of expiation, that is, of the covering or annulling of sins, not because God is bribed by gifts, but because the worshipper identifies himself with the purity of his offering, making it the vehicle of his approach to God.<sup>4</sup> He further states that in the study of the New Testament one notes the comparatively small extent to which the meaning of the death of Christ is assimilated to that of the sacrifices of the Levitical cultus. There are suggestive allusions made to the sin offering, to the Passover, and most of all to the covenant sacrifices. But even in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is not claimed outright that His death is to be explained

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1. Ibid., 111.

2. Ibid., 184.

3. Ibid., 185.

4. Ibid.

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preeminently as any one of these sacrifices.

The significant fact in the New Testament is not the confronting of type or anti-type, but rather the use of such expressions as "blood", "covenant", "expiation"; the presence of ideas, the ideas of cleansing, redeeming, sanctifying, offering, eating and drinking, believing; and in close association with this literary usage, the tremendous emphasis upon a deed of Christ which is vicarious and representative, and in which all man's hopes of reconciliation and peace are centered.

The facts brought out by Taylor suggest that the significance of the sacrificial element undeniably present in the New Testament teaching is to be found, not so much in the specific rites of the cultus, as in the underlying ideas of sacrifice, the idea of drawing near of the worshipper to God in humility and contrition, the thought of an offering with which he can identify himself with penitence and faith, the conception of sharing in the cleansing power of life which has been released in death, dedicated and presented to God. One may see how great a part the Epistle to the Hebrews plays in an understanding of the Atonement in these terms.<sup>2</sup>

The Atonement can be elucidated by human analogies, but ultimately it can be compared with nothing else; it is in the last result "sui generis." In accordance with this view it will be best not to use the sacrificial category as a fixed mold within which to present New Testament teaching, but to state broadly the doctrinal implications and to show the vital points in which they are interpreted by sacrificial ideas, since no other ideas can assist us to the same degree.

Taylor suggests two movements of God's grace which are essential to reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> The first is the triumphant disclosure of His redeeming

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1. Ibid., 186.

2. Ibid., 187.

3. Ibid., 194f.

love, so that man is in no doubt as to His willingness to receive the repentant sinner. The second is that the effective expression of this love, without which reconciliation cannot be achieved, will in kind and in degree be all that is demanded by His holiness and love.

The first of these requirements is fulfilled in the glory of the Incarnation, culminating in the Cross, the Resurrection, and Session of the Son on high. The second is met in the representative ministry of Christ, in His obedience, suffering, and sacrifice, in dependence upon which man turns from his evil ways to the joy of fellowship with God.

Taylor reiterates his thesis. The work of Christ is vicarious because it is representative; it is representative because it is sacrificial.<sup>1</sup> The sacrificial category is peculiarly suitable for this doctrine of the Atonement, because in the use of the term "blood" it suggests the thought of life, dedicated, offered, transformed, and open to our spiritual appropriation. The essential character of the sacrifice is this: it is an offering presented by a worshipper. Without an offering and a worshipper the sacrifice does not exist. Even when the offering is as precious as the self-offering of Christ, the relationship of the individual to His ministry is an element of vital importance. The greatness of the opportunity of entering into the meaning of all that Christ has done cannot be exaggerated, and there is no temptation to estimate His service as that of a substitute.<sup>2</sup>

While Taylor delineates this sacrificial category of the Atonement as it pertains to the New Testament as a whole, he gives special emphasis to

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1. Ibid., 198.

2. Ibid., 201f.

our Epistle.

"In a world hag-ridden by suspicion, hatred, and fear, torn by the ravages of war, and mocked by the dreams of peace, how great a mission is open to the individual and to the church by a presentation of the Cross steeped from beginning to end in the idea of sacrifice! As the church of the Lamb, the New Israel must needs consist of 'men of every tribe, and tongue, and nation, and people.' As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, we 'are come in to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel.' This communal emphasis in an Epistle which presents the work of Christ in terms of sacrifice is characteristic. The sacrificial theory of the Atonement meets the deepest spiritual needs of the individual, but always in the closest relation to a conception of reconciliation which stops at nothing short of the ideal of the world in fellowship with God."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibid., 208f.

CHAPTER

TWO

ANALYTICAL

THE REDEEMING WORK OF CHRIST

AS PRESENTED IN

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Doctrine of the Atonement  
in the Epistle.

We turn now to the central study of our present writing, an analysis of the Scripture itself. We will endeavor to keep our main purpose in mind, that is, to discover within the pages of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a doctrine of the Atonement, which is at once, vital, reasonable and preachable.

For a true appreciation it is important to keep steadily before us the Epistle's central conception of Christianity as the perfect and final religion, both perfect and final because it brings men really nigh to God. All religions aim at this, the Levitical included. Nevertheless, it had a veil dividing the tabernacle into two compartments, and a most holy place into which no man might go save the high priest. Christianity is the religion that has really solved the problem. In the language of the Epistle, "it perfects the worshipper as pertaining to the conscience", (9:9), and it really takes away sin, so that believers in Jesus can draw near with true heart and full assurance of faith (10:4). There can never be a reason for superseding such a religion. The person by whom God spoke the last word, is perfect in Himself, and in this functions as Revealer and Redeemer. His sacrifice is perfect, and possesses eternal validity and value.<sup>1</sup> Let us then "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession . . . . even Jesus,"<sup>2</sup> in His redemptive and atoning work.

In point of time, the Epistle is the first systematic sketch of Christian theology.<sup>3</sup> Christology is the doctrinal center of the Epistle.

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1. A. B. Bruce, "The Epistle to the Hebrews", Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. II, p. 329.

2. Hebrews 3:1.

3. H. R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 355.

The picture we find in the Epistle is one of the pre-existent, eternal and exalted Christ. On the other hand, nowhere in the New Testament is the humanity of Christ set forth so movingly. As one commentator has well said, "Not even all the Gospels show us Jesus in the weakness of His flesh side by side with the purity of His Spirit, as He is exhibited here." <sup>1</sup>

It must be borne constantly in mind that the author is speaking in terms of worship and ritual, and he depicts Christianity as not a life, but as a worship. The question the writer is seeking to answer is, how can a man find access to God? What is the answer? Not through anything in man's character, not through any human achievement, but only through something done on our behalf once for all by Jesus. The answer comes down to us in terms of Priesthood, Jesus being our great High Priest. Dr. Moffatt's pertinent phrase bears quoting again here. To the author of our Epistle, "religion is worship, and worship implies sacrifice; there is no access for man to God without sacrifice, and religion without a priest." <sup>2</sup> And again from Dr. Moffatt, "Christians enjoy the final status of relationship to God in the world of spirit and reality, in virtue of the final sacrifice offered by Jesus, His Son." <sup>3</sup>

The aim of the Epistle is to show the superiority of Christ and His work to anything which has gone before. This superiority is shown by a series of contrasts of Christ with the old order. The author's aim is to show also that every name, institution, and privilege which had existed under the old economy survived in the new, but invested with a higher meaning and a greater glory - a meaning and a glory, new indeed in themselves, but yet for the first time fulfilling the great purpose of God,

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1. A. B. Bruce, Op. Cit., 443.

2. Moffatt, Op. Cit., xliv.

3. Ibid., xxxiv.

which, from the beginning, had been dimly shadowed forth. The first was taken away, only that the second might be introduced.<sup>1</sup>

To our author, the ancient ritual belonged to this visible world, which is the world of shadows. Christ belongs to the unseen world, which alone is the world of realities. Thus throughout the entire Epistle there is a continual contrast between the old and the new. The purpose is not to undervalue the old but to show how all the symbols and types of ancient Judaism are fulfilled in Christ, and are thus surpassed as the shadow is surpassed by the substance.<sup>2</sup>

Before we proceed, a word about those to whom the Epistle was written. Of recent years, some scholars have asserted that it was intended for Gentile Christians, not Hebrew Christians.<sup>3</sup> The feeling of the present writer is that it was directed - as the traditional view takes - to Hebrew Christians.<sup>4</sup> The whole argument, both in what it includes and in what it answers, indicates that both the writer and the readers were Jewish converts. Marcus Dods quotes appropriately from Bruce, "If the readers were indeed Gentiles, they were Gentiles so completely disguised in Jewish ideas and wearing a mask with so pronounced Jewish features that their true nationality has been successfully hidden for nineteen centuries."<sup>5</sup>

The conditions and experience of the readers are sketched with considerable definiteness. They were converts of long standing. Their faith had

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1. Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews", Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. IV, (W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Erdman's Publishing Company, n.d.), 238.

2. Chas. Erdman, The Epistle to the Hebrews; an Exposition, (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1934), 16.

3. Scott, Moffatt and others.

4. Westcott, Bruce, Milligan, Dods, and others.

5. Dods, Op. Cit., 231.



been inspired by men who were personally acquainted with the Lord; but since their conversion much time had now elapsed. In earlier days they had patiently endured pain and reproach. They had been exposed to the violence of the mob; they had suffered the loss of property; they had heard the jeers of malignant foes. They also had shown active sympathy for certain of their number who were imprisoned.

Now their early enthusiasm had begun to fail. Their trusted leaders had fallen, perhaps as martyrs. Their spiritual life was stagnant. Oh, they still believed in Christ as the Son of God, and in the authority of the Scriptures. They were still within the Church. But they were comatose, they were making no progress, were neglecting Church attendance, were losing heart, were weary of their conflict against sin, were in danger of losing their faith in God, of turning hopelessly from Christ.

In a very real sense, then, the Epistle speaks to our day with vigour, and with certainty. There are many in this day who face much the same circumstances, spiritually. As in the days of the first Christian Church, many who belong to Christ "ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest they drift away from them."

A summary outline will be helpful. The present paper is not intended to be a commentary on the whole Epistle. Far from that. Its purpose is to discover the redeeming work of Christ as presented in the Epistle. From that standpoint, some passages are more contributive than others. Hence, those sections are concentrated upon, perhaps at the expense of others. The writer will take those passages which deal more particularly with the subject at hand, and will focus the light of research and study on them. Hence some of the great sections of the book are left in the background, for example, 1:5-2:4; 3:1-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:19-12:29, and 13:1-25, except for brief

mention.

Emphasis then will be upon these portions of the Epistle:

- I - 1:1-4            God's Revelation in a Son.
- II - 2:5-18          The Moral History of the Son.
- III - 4:14-5:10      The Qualifications for Priesthood.
- IV - 7:1-28          The Priesthood of Melchizedek -  
                         The Priestly Office of Christ.
- V - 8:1-10:10        The Priestly Ministry of Christ.

The chapter will close with the conclusions drawn from this study, followed by a statement of the present day significance of the Epistle and its teaching of Atonement. Let us then "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

## I

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN A SON

#### 1:1-4.

"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 he also made the worlds; 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; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they." (RV)

These verses, which serve as an introduction to the letter, contain an epitome of the entire letter. The text, if there were one for this thesis, would be 1:3 "[a Son] . . . who when he had made purification of sins sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." This sums up the redemptive work of our Lord in the Epistle.

The sentence, written down with its irreducible core, is this:  
"God. . .hath spoken. . .in a Son . . .who . . . .sat down." It is  
necessary to understand these verses for an adequate grasp of the  
rest of the Epistle. One commentator has expressed it as follows:  
"If we would understand the book as a whole, it is even more necessary  
than in the case of the Fourth Gospel to read it in the light of the  
prologue." <sup>1</sup>

One cannot help being impressed with the profound fact of the ex-  
istence of God being stated in the opening words. There is no attempt  
to argue this truth, just simply and grandly, like Genesis 1:1, and  
John 1:1, "God!" The more one ponders this, the more clearly one will  
see why the writer should omit any reference to his identity. He announces  
his subject and plunges into its heart without any delay. We find in these  
verses, two prominent thoughts, namely: the embodiment of an inspired reve-  
lation; and the evidence of Christ's superiority.

It is interesting and enlightening to put down the contrasts which ap-  
pear in these verses. Let us do this.

CONTRASTS

Unto the fathers	<u>Persons</u>	to us
in old time	<u>Time</u>	at the end of these times
by the prophets	<u>Agent</u>	in a Son
divers portions) divers manners )	<u>Method</u>	the rest of the Epistle

Further breaking down the contrast, we must look at the things which  
are spoken concerning the Son through whom God spoke. This being done, we  
discover the essential being of the Son, i.e., who He is; further we

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1. McFayden, Op. Cit., 37.

discover the moral history of the Son, i.e., what He does. Phrases which describe the Son's essential Being are these: ". . . appointed heir of all things," and "who being the effulgence (brightness) of His glory," and "the very image of His substance."

The moral history of the Son is found in these phrases: "through whom also He made the worlds;" "upholding the universe by the word of his power;" "made purification of sins."

Who is the Son? <sup>1</sup> What is he like? Understanding this is a key to the whole Epistle. God spoke to the fathers by the prophets in a great

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1. There is an excellent note on the Son in A. B. Davidson, Hebrews, (Handbooks for Bible Classes), ed. by Marcus Dods, Alexander Whyte, Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1882), 73-79.

A few general things gathered together from the Epistle regarding the Son:

(1) The name by which the Saviour is most frequently called in the Epistle is the historical name Jesus, 2:9; 3:1; 6:20; 7:22; 10:19; 12:2,24; 13:12.

(2) The Son is spoken of as existing in three estates: (a) His present condition of honor and glory; 2:9; 3:3. (b) His earthly life, or the days of His flesh, 5:7. (c) His state of pre-existence before coming into the world, 1:2,3; 10:5.

(3) Most of what is said of the Son in His pre-existing state is contained in 1:2,3, though some of the things said there are repeated in other passages. The pre-existing state is alluded to very little, and chiefly because it explains the present conditions of exaltation, which was not possible except to a being essentially a Son of God.

(4) In His former state the Son was a supernatural Being, belonging to the sphere of Heaven, the abode of God. The Epistle does not speculate on how it was possible for the pre-existing Son to become man, nor on the effects of this on His previous form of being, nor on the nature of His person in the days of His flesh. The Epistle is mainly interested in insisting on the Son's true humanity.

(5) The Son sat down at the right hand of God. To this place he passed through the heavens, 4:14; He entered within the veil, 6:20; was made higher than the heavens, 7:26; entered into the holy place, 9:12 - into heaven itself before the face of God. There He abides forever, the high-priestly representative of the people, and surely the eternal covenant.

The Sonship of Christ is the fundamental idea of the Epistle. It is this relation to God that enables Him to be the author of salvation to men.

variety of ways, and in certain fullness. But He spoke through them provisionally. There was something better to come. At the end of these days God spoke through a Son. This is His final revelation of Himself. The prophets of old transmitted a word to the people. The Son, through whom God speaks to men, gives a life.

Look at the phrases which describe the Son. There are six of them:

(1) "Whom he appointed heir of all things." This points forward to the sovereignty yet to be exercised by Christ. This is the very goal of all human history. The Son is to be the universal Ruler, and this by virtue of His Sonship. Because He is Son, therefore, He is the Heir. This heirship will not be enjoyed fully until "the Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ."<sup>1</sup> The appointment, however, is made in the eternal purpose of God.

The thought of Sonship passes naturally into that of heirship.<sup>2</sup> The word heir, *κληρονόμος*<sup>5</sup>, marks the original purpose of creation. The dominion originally promised to Adam (Gen. 1:28)<sup>3</sup> was gained by Christ.

(2) Through Whom also He made the worlds." The Heir of all things was also the Creator. By implication, Christ was Heir of all things because He was their Creator. It was fitting that He who had been designated heir of the universe should prove His title to this high dignity by creating it. The term, "worlds", *τῶν αἰώνων*, literally, "the ages", according to Westcott, means the sum of the periods of time, including all that is manifested in and through them.<sup>4</sup>

(3) The Son is further manifested in His divine person and His redeeming work. In relation to the worlds, He is their Heir and Creator.

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1. Revelation 11:15.

2. Westcott, Op. Cit., 7 Cf. Gal. 4:7, Rom. 8:17.

3. Cf. Psalm 8:6; Heb. 2:7.

4. Op. Cit., 8.

In relation to God, he is first "the effulgence of His glory,"

ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης ; and, secondly, "the very image of His substance," *Χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*.

The NOUN, *ἀπαύγασμα*, has two distinct meanings: to flash forth, or radiate; and to flash back, or reflect. In this passage, the sense of reflection is quite possible, but it appears to be less appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the truth suggested by reflection is contained in *Χαρακτήρ*. The Son radiates the glory of God. It has been said that He is related to the Father as the sun's rays are related to the sun. The glory of the Father is the "full manifestation of His attributes according to man's power of apprehending them."<sup>2</sup> The "effulgence of His glory" then, might be expressed as His self-revealed character and being.

(4) *Χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ* This is an interesting phrase. The idea expressed here, is the stamp or impress of a thing. *ὑποστάσεως*, what really exists behind any appearance - here it is His Being. The Son, then, is stamped with God's own character. He is the exact representation of His very Being.

(5) "Upholding all things by the word of His power." The Son is the sustainer of the universe. He who was before all things, who created all things, who is the Goal and Heir of all things, is further declared to be the sustainer of all things. He not merely supports, as one might support a weight, but He carries forward, He guides, He governs, He brings to its right conclusion the whole course of nature and of history.

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1. Ibid., 10.

2. Ibid., 12.

(6) "When He had made purification for sins." I have said that this verse, 1:3, ought to be the text for this thesis. This is the author's first mention of the Son's redemptive work, which is the central theme of the Epistle. He touches it only lightly, since he will speak of it fully in due course. Not only is Christ the Revealer of God, but He is the Redeemer of man. This redemptive work is here defined as "purification of sins", *καθάρτησιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*. For the writer of the Epistle, Atonement primarily means cleansing.<sup>1</sup> This is our first contact with his great theme. To the author, cleansing means access to God. That such access may be enjoyed and lives of holiness may be lived is the continual aim of the Epistle.

The climax is reached. The finished act of purification is followed by exaltation. This is expressed by the phrase, *ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς*. The verb deserves special notice. It does not imply fatigue. It is a ceremonial term. In this Epistle it is always used in connection with Christ's redemptive work. It implies that Christ's work is finished, completed once for all.<sup>2</sup> It denotes a position of honor, and the effect is heightened, in the Greek especially, by the full sounding phrase, "the Majesty on High." Not only is the Son exalted to a place of honor, but also a position of judging. Again, the expression must not suggest locality, but supreme power. It does not denote any particular place in the universe, but indicates that sovereign spiritual influence which Christ exerts as the divine Mediator between God and man.<sup>3</sup> The prologue concludes then with this word, "having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more

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1. Nairne, Op. Cit., 169.

2. Cf. 8:1, 10:12, 12:2. "We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." "He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." "...Jesus...who...hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

3. Erdman, Op. Cit., 28.

excellent name than they.

Considerable space has been given to a study of these opening verses of the Epistle, because they contain the germ of every great teaching of the book. Sonship is a key thought throughout the entire Epistle. The prologue gives the reader an idea of that of which His Sonship consists.

The writer of the Epistle makes us feel as though we are in the presence of the Eternal as we try to comprehend these opening verses. We sense that something of Eternal significance took place when God spoke in His Son, when eternity broke into time, when the invisible became visible - God manifest in the flesh.

## II

### THE MORAL HISTORY OF THE SON

2:5-18.

The remaining verses of Chapter one continue to deal with the essential Being of the Son, how that He is far superior to the angels, having inherited a more excellent name than they. This contrast is the first in a series throughout the Epistle. The author begins at the circumference of his argumentative circle, and will draw closer and closer to the heart of things. This we shall see as we progress.

After a brief word of exhortation, 2:1-4, so characteristic of the Epistle, the writer comes back to the main stream of his argument. He has discussed the Son's essential being, first alluded to in 1:2,3. He now takes up the other side of the picture, the moral history of the Son, 2:5-18.

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In these verses, two principal items are discussed, the Son's relation to the lot of man, vvs. 5-9; and His identification to the need of man, vvs. 10-10.<sup>1</sup> In outline we find these facts, first concerning Christ's relation to the lot of man. 2:5-8a, it is man, not the angels, who <sup>is</sup> are destined to rule "the world to come." 2:8b-9, man has not yet won this supremacy, but The Man has. 2:9b, Jesus has assured man's destiny by experiencing death for every man. Then concerning His identification with the need of man, 2:10-13, the Son's personal fitness to suffer. 2:14-18, The Son's actual participation in death for mortal man to become their faithful high priest." "Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."<sup>2</sup> Now, let us look more closely.

1. The Son's relation to the lot of man. The opening verse is tied in with 2:1-4. "For (*γὰρ*) not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak." It is the ground for the exhortation in verses 1-4.<sup>3</sup> It was Hebrew tradition that the Jew <sup>Law</sup> was mediated through angels. But since the world to come is not subject to the angels, it is not to their word that we must give heed. There is a clearer, a final Word, the Living Word, even Jesus, the Son of God. The verse looks forward as well as backward, and introduces a

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1. On this passage, DuBose, Op. Cit., is a great help. Vide Ch. II, "The Divine Propriety of the Death of Christ."

2. 2:17.

3. A. S. Peake, The Century Bible: Hebrews (ed. by W. F. Adeney, Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), 90.

fresh stage in the argument. There is a double contrast latent in it.

(a) It is this world, not the world to come, which is subject to the angels; (b) the world to come is subject, not to angels, but to man.

The former contrast was familiar to Jewish thought, and though not explicitly asserted, is apparently assumed as common ground.<sup>1</sup> The second contrast is developed more fully, in such a way that the author is enabled to turn the edge of objection derived from the humiliation of Jesus.

We have first, then, this teaching, that man is destined to rule. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." This quotation from Psalm 8:4-6 raises some questions. To whom does "man" and "son of man" refer? Jesus or man? Many of the best modern commentators take the former view, that "son of man" refers to Jesus, on the ground that the definite application of the words to Jesus in verse 9 fixes the reference to Him.

With Peake and others, however, it is better to refer the quotation to man. In verses 6-9 man is used three times, each in a different sense. In verse 6, it refers to man in the generic sense, that is, the whole race. This is individualized by the use of son of man in the second part of the Hebrew parallelism. In the light

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1. Ibid., 96.

of the argument it can hardly have any Messianic meaning.

The other use of the word occurs in verse 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." This is the Ideal Man, representing man and achieving his destiny.

(For you see,) while man is destined to rule (2:5-8a), he has not yet won the supremacy (2:8b-9). All things are not yet in subjection to him. But there is One Man who has won the supremacy. That Man is Jesus. He has assured man's destiny. True it is that man's rule has not yet been visibly realized, but it is virtually accomplished. For even though we have our outward life in this world, we do not really belong to it; angels and law, death and the devil, have lost their hold upon us. For since Jesus is our Brother and Captain, what He has won has been won for us as well as for Himself, and therefore His coronation is the pledge of ours.<sup>1</sup>

In these verses, the writer of the Epistle emphasizes the true humanity of the Son. Not only is the Captain of our salvation (2:10) the pre-existent, eternal Son (1:2), but He is the human Jesus, God Incarnate. This is the first place in the Epistle in which this humanity has been emphasized. But in our study we will encounter this teaching again, especially in relation to the suffering of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

It is natural that the name of Jesus should be used here, for it was His human title and reminds one of His humiliation and suffering.

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1. Ibid., 97. Vid. also additional note on 2:8 in Westcott, Op. Cit., 61.

2. Cf. Heb. 5:7-10; 12:2.

The mystery of His suffering and death the writer does not explain. He declares that it was by the grace of God, that the Father allowed His Son to suffer for the redemption of sinful man. <sup>1</sup>

2. The Son's identification with the need of man. 2:10-18.

The verses 10-13 present the Son's personal fitness to suffer.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." According to the passage, this suffering was a divine necessity. It was part of a gracious purpose for the salvation of men. The author has brought his argument to a point where he can safely speak of the sufferings of Jesus. He has expounded the Divine dignity, His exaltation above the angels, His coronation through death, which He had tasted for all mankind. Jesus is brought into connection with inferiority to the angels, with suffering and death, in verse 9. This would be keenly felt by the readers to be a degradation to Him. For them, the Divine was the splendid and mighty, not the sordid life of labor and the infamy of the Cross. With patient tenderness for the intellectual and moral weakness, which he later rebukes, the writer makes it clear to them that he finds in Jesus all those qualities which constitute true greatness for them. But the experiences of Jesus do not diminish His glory, they rather minister to it. So in verse 9 he mentions the suffering and death, emphasizing, first, that they form the path by which Jesus gains His glory, and, secondly, that they are of universal efficacy for mankind; finally that they spring directly out of the grace of God.

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1. A few manuscripts give the reading  $\chi\upsilon\pi\iota\varsigma\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  (apart from God), rather than  $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\tau\alpha\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  (by the grace of God). Vide Westcott, Op. cit., 61ff

The author thus has very skillfully tried to place them at a point of view from which the death of Christ may seem worthier than they had deemed it. Now, in verse 10, he asserts that behind this suffering of Jesus lay the action of God, and that this action was wholly worthy of Him. <sup>1</sup>

The nature of the Son's identification with the need of man is found in these verses. It became God in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain ( ἀρχηγός ) of their salvation perfect ( τελειῶσαι ) through sufferings. These two Greek words occur in other places in the book. "Captain" does not really give the full sense of the word; nor does "author." Westcott points out that the ἀρχηγός himself first takes part in that which he establishes. <sup>2</sup> Thus, "leader" or "pioneer" would fit the context here, as in 12:2. Christ is the Leader of our salvation inasmuch as He travelled by the way which we must follow to come to God.

This Leader of man's salvation is made "perfect through sufferings." To make perfect, τελειόω , and its cognates are characteristic of the Epistle. <sup>3</sup> Here it means to make complete, to bring to a goal, to bring to maturity or perfection. It is the superiority of Christianity that it brings to perfection while the law could make nothing perfect. This perfection is the perfection in leadership, in moral discipline. The idea is very comprehensive and embraces the process and the goal. Whatever contributed to His perfecting as Leader in salvation is included in it. <sup>4</sup> The process involves all that varied

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1. Peake, Op. cit., 103

2. Westcott, Op. Cit., 49.

3. Westcott, Op. Cit., 66ff. An excellent note on the τελειώσις of Christ.

4. Peake, Op. Cit., 105.

human experience which qualified Him to be a leader of His fellows.

The special qualification gained through suffering is sympathy, the fellow-feeling which grows out of identity in experience. He could not be perfect in sympathy unless He endured the sorrows and temptations of man. Later we will find out more concerning the sympathy of Christ (Vid. on 4:14-16). Let it be said now that this sympathy of feeling of the Son is one of the principal elements in the writer's conception of atonement.

Jesus was what He was, not only in virtue of His divine Sonship, but also in virtue of His human brotherhood. "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again, 'Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me.'" (2:11-13)

The writer declares in these verses the condescension, or cheerful humility, of Jesus the Son by putting into His mouth three Old Testament verses in which representative personages call those whom they save by suffering or train as disciples "brothers and children," and confess themselves to be like them dependent upon God. The first quotation, from Psalm 22, especially has Messianic thought to it. The sense of its prophetic and typical character has doubtless been deepened among Christians by Christ's quoting its verses from the Cross. The last two quotations are probably from Isaiah 8:17f. These verses seem to emphasize this thought, that the necessity of putting His trust in God is a proof of Christ's humanity, and therefore of His brotherhood with us. Each time the author of the Epistle uses material from the Old Testament, there is a definite reason and purpose. Each reference adds a stone to the structure of his argument.

To experience this brotherhood with men, it was necessary for Christ to become a man, and to submit to all the weakness and temptations common to the

lot of man, even to death itself. As McFayden has stated, "If Jesus was to do for us all that we need, one particular enemy He had to face was death. The fear of death is universal; courage can rise no higher than to face death fearlessly; self-sacrifice can go no farther than to lay down <sup>1</sup> One's life for one's friends."

The verses which conclude the second chapter, vvs. 14-18, describe the Son's actual participation in death for mortal men, to become their faithful high priest. The Jesus of this section is the Jesus of the Synoptics: the sympathetic, helpful, pitying friend, the never failing

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1. Through Eternal Spirit, 66.

brother. We have to live our lives with bodies of flesh and blood. These, however, are the sources of our temptations, the seat of our sufferings, the seeds of our decay. Since Jesus was our Brother, and was to be our Deliverer, He too wore a human body, with its capacity for temptation and suffering, and its certainty of death.<sup>1</sup> "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."<sup>2</sup> The great problem in human life is the bondage of sin. It shackles and destroys human goodness. Christ has won a victory over sin and death as the Representative Man. By this victory, He has been able to bring to naught (καταργεῖν) this enemy of men and to overcome the fear of death. In this act, He has RENDERED powerless a real potentiality. The devil, for the Christian, is "powerful, but paralyzed." Christians can share in Christ's triumph in their conflict with the defeated foe; and as to death, they can regard it as a "servant in dark livery who ushers them into a larger and better life."<sup>3</sup> There also is something prophetic in the words. They point to that glory which the sons of God shall yet attain when death shall have been destroyed, and they shall have been delivered from the bondage of fear and shall have entered upon their destiny of universal rule.

The climax to the chapter is in the last two verses, 17-18. The author emphasizes the moral obligation resting on the Son to be made fully man, in order that he might adequately represent mankind as its High Priest. The conception of Christ as High Priest is not developed

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1. Ibid., 63.

2. Hebrews 2:14-15.

3. Erdman, Op. Cit., 41.



at this point; it is simply mentioned here and in 3:1, to be taken up again in 4:14.<sup>1</sup> It was absolutely necessary that He must become a man and suffer like men if He was to accomplish His saving work. This work the writer now describes in terms, not of a deliverance, but of a priestly service, "that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Here the very essence of His message is reached, for the whole Epistle is written, as has been said, to set forth the high priesthood of Christ. His office is that of making an atonement. He removes the obstacles that sin has erected, so that it is possible for His people to enjoy free and unrestricted access to God. This He is able to do in view of His experiences of human suffering and trial. These experiences fit Him to be a merciful and faithful high priest "on the Godward side",<sup>2</sup> in all those acts in which He mediates between men and God. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."<sup>3</sup> "Thus the fact that Christ for a time was made a little lower than the angels is no evidence against His being superior to the angels, for by incarnation and suffering and death, He was qualified to render for man a ministry even higher than that assigned to angels. He became able to sympathize and to save, and is destined to be as the Representative of man, the universal Sovereign in the world to come!"<sup>4</sup>

We have thus far, then, seen the Son in His essential being, superior to the angels, and in His moral history relating Himself to the lot of

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1. Additional note on 2:17 in Westcott, Op. Cit., 70-1.

2. Nairne, Op. Cit., 146.

3. Hebrews 2:18.

4. Erdman, Op. Cit., 42.

men, participating in the need of man, being truly Representative of him, and completely sympathetic with him. Let us then move on, and further discover how great a REDEEMER He is.

### III

#### THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRIESTHOOD

4:14-5:10.

It has been said that the author of the Epistle presents his argument, the logic of which, may be represented by an ever tightening circle or spiral. He began in his teaching of the supreme worth of Christ, by showing that He was superior to the angels, by whom the law was spoken to Moses. In Chapters three and four, Christ's superiority to Moses is clearly shown. This section does not have particular bearing to the teaching of the Atonement in the Epistle.

Chapter Four, verses 14-16 serve as a transition from what has gone before, and the author returns to the subject which he left at the conclusion of the second chapter. Then in 5:1-10, he draws closer to the heart of his argument, and compares Jesus with the priesthood of Aaron, showing here, too, His superiority. In these verses, the qualifications for priesthood are discussed. We find that Jesus fulfills these qualifications perfectly by His office, His discipline, His calling. Though He was not a priest, Christ was a Son. He is not after the order of Aaronic priests, but to another order given in the Scriptural picture of Melchizedek.

To go back now to 4:14-16, we find that Jesus is our sympathetic High Priest. The second chapter hinted at this, though its emphasis is perhaps more on the Representative aspect of the Son's ministry. These

verses now return us to a picture of the Saviour who is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses." <sup>1</sup>

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." This is a recapitulation of what he has before mentioned in 1:3,4; 2:9,17,18; 3:1-2. Christ had earlier been designated as High Priest, here the adjective "great", *μεγας*, is added. Probably this is by way of contrast with the Jewish high priest. Christ has not passed beyond any mere material veil into "a holy place made with hands", but He has penetrated to the very throne of God, and occupies a place of supreme power. His greatness is further indicated by His titles, "Jesus, the Son of God." Jesus was His human name, indicating His perfect sympathy with men. The Son of God indicated His divine dignity and His qualification to mediate between God and men.

The human sympathy of this great High Priest is mentioned as a special encouragement to loyalty. It enforces the expression "let us hold fast." This sympathy is expressed positively and negatively. "We have not a high priest which 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."

This is the "locus classicus" of the Christian affirmation of the reality of our Lord's humanity, and yet His sinlessness in it.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The Greek word bears notice. *ἑσυνπαθῆσαι* broken down, *σύν*, with, *πάσχω*, suffer, to suffer with. The

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1. 4:15(R S V).

2. DuBose, Op. Cit., 77.

word expresses not simply the compassion of one who regards suffering from without, but the feeling of one who enters into the suffering, and makes it his own.<sup>1</sup> So Christ can sympathize with our weaknesses, which are for us the occasions of sins, as knowing them, though not with the feeling of the sins themselves.

In this connection, there is a passage in a sermon by F. W. Robertson, "The Sympathy of Christ," which throws light on this portrayal of Christ. I believe Robertson could rightfully speak of this sympathy, because he was called upon to suffer and to sympathize so much.

There is a vague way of speaking of the Atonement which does not realize the tender, affectionate, personal love by which that daily, hourly reconciliation is effected. The sympathy of Christ was not merely love of men in masses: He loved the masses, but He loved them because they were made up of individuals. He "had compassion on the multitudes;" but He also had discriminating, special tenderness for erring Peter and erring Thomas. He felt for the despised and lonely Zacchaeus in his sycamore tree. He compassionated the discomfort of the disciples. He mixed His tears with the stifled sobs by the grave of Lazarus. He called the abashed children to His side. Amongst the numbers, as He walked, He detected the individual touch of faith, "Master, the multitude throng Thee, and sayest Thou 'Who touchest me?'" "Somebody hath touched me." . . . Observe how He is touched by our infirmities! <sup>2</sup>

Jesus can sympathize with the weakness of human flesh because He "hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This verse recalls to mind 2:17, where He is spoken of as being made like unto His brethren. The words here may have two distinct interpretations. They may (1) simply describe the issue of the Lord's temptation, so far as He endured all without the least stain of sin

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1. Westcott, Op. cit., 108.

2. F. W. Robertson, "The Sympathy of Christ", Sermons Preached at Brighton, (New edition, New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.) pg — ?

(c. 7-26); or they may (2) describe a limitation of His temptation. Man's temptation comes in many cases from previous sin. Such temptations had necessarily no place in Christ. He was tempted as we are, sharing our nature, yet with this exception, that there was no sin in Him to become the spring of trial. The first of these thoughts is not excluded from the expression, but the second appears to be the dominant idea. Westcott concludes thus, "we may represent the truth to ourselves best by saying that Christ assumed humanity under the conditions of life belonging to man fallen, though not with sinful promptings from within."<sup>1</sup>

A quotation from an unknown source came to my attention. I cannot pass it by. Speaking of Jesus being tempted like as we are, he explains as follows:" The writer wishes to preclude the common fancy that there was some peculiarity in Jesus which made His temptation different from ours, that He was a mailed champion exposed to toy arrows. On the contrary, He has felt in His own consciousness the difficulty of being righteous in this world; has felt pressing upon Himself the reasons and inducements that invite men to choose sin that they may escape suffering and death; in every part of His human constitution has known the pain and suffering with which alone temptation can be overcome; has been so tempted that had He sinned, He would have had a thousandfold better excuse than ever man had. Even though His divinity may have insured His triumph, His temptation was true and could only be overcome by means that are open to all."

It is because we know our High Priest to be sympathetic and victorious that we can draw near to Him in absolute confidence. His

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1. Op. Cit., 108.

throne is the seat of divine omnipotent power, and it is the source from which boundless grace is bestowed. We draw near to that throne to obtain mercy, for we are conscious of our sin; we draw near to receive grace, for we confess our weakness. Nor shall we ever be disappointed as we put our confident trust in our Sympathetic Saviour, our victorious and ascended High Priest.

Chapter five, verses 1-10, give specifically the qualifications for any high priest. The writer takes up his comparison and contrast once more, and here places Christ in His superiority over Aaron and the Priesthood which he represents. He presents the office of the priest, and two main qualifications for it. The first, the office of the priest. "For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. But no man taketh the honor unto himself, but where he is called of God, even as was Aaron." The purpose of the priest is to stand before God for men. This section follows naturally from that which precedes. The perfect sympathy of our High Priest, 4:15, satisfies one of the conditions which are necessarily attached to the office universally. The writer proceeds to develop the idea of High Priesthood before he applies it to Christ.

Concerning this office of the priest, our consciousness of sin must not prevent us from coming with boldness to the throne of grace, for it is the very office of the High Priest to make atonement for sins. He is appointed of God for this very purpose, and he fulfills his task with

sympathy because he is mindful of his own weakness.

There are two supreme qualifications, then, for a priest, sympathy with men, and appointment by God.<sup>1</sup> The author goes on to say that these qualifications have been perfectly fulfilled by Christ, (*ὁ Χριστός*). The author shows the qualifications by divine appointment by using two Old Testament quotations, and applying them to Christ. "So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;' as he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" <sup>2</sup> These quotations establish the source of the Lord's sovereign dignity as Son, and mark the particular form in which this dignity has been realized. The second reference plays a vital part in the author's argument. He does not elaborate the idea yet, but takes it up again in the seventh chapter, following his word of exhortation. We shall come to this presently.

Christ qualified by divine appointment for priesthood. The author says that there is another order in the Old Testament besides the order of Aaron and Levi; it is the order of Melchizedek. Though He was not a priest, but a Son, Jesus qualifies. He is not after the order of the Aaronic priests, but belongs to another order, given in Scriptural picture of Melchizedek, that towering and mysterious figure who appeared once on the Biblical scene and then vanished.<sup>3</sup>

The next verses show the manner in which our Saviour qualified perfectly for priesthood by His Sympathy with men. These words give

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1. Milligan, Op. Cit., 103.
  2. Psalm 2:7; 110:4.
  3. Genesis 14:17-20.

a glimpse of the true humanity of our Lord:

"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 from death, having been heard for his godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." <sup>1</sup>

We see the Saviour bowed down in agony beneath the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. We behold the bloody sweat, and we hear the cry for deliverance. Yet we also witness a victory. We see Him come forth submissive to the Father's Will, fearlessly facing the Cross.

"He learned obedience through the things which He suffered. He never had been disobedient; but He discovered by painful experience all that obedience and submission may mean. Even when the bitter cup was offered Him He was able to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." He shrank from the cup with all its bitter ingredients, as He was asked to "taste death for every man." Yet, even though He was the divine Son of God, He submitted to pain and death in accomplishing the will of God. He prayed for deliverance and was heard because of His godly fear, His submissive trust. The answer came, not in the sense that the cup was removed, but, rather, that in drinking that cup, He accomplished the saving purpose of God His Father.

"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience through the things which He suffered." A mark of Sonship is obedience. In the case of Jesus, one would think that this would not be necessary. But this was one of the consequences of His Incarnation, and one of the necessary qualifications for leadership, that He should pass through a human

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1. Hebrews 5:7-10.



discipline in which He could learn a human obedience, an obedience rendered<sup>1</sup> in spite of the most terrible pressure toward disobedience. He was tempted in all points like as we are. Satan did not forsake Him after the experience in the wilderness. The Gospel records states that "when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him for a season." (Luke 4:13) But he was to return. Yet Jesus maintained righteousness no matter how severe the strain. He eminently and supremely qualified to be High Priest for men by His absolute moral perfection and human sympathy. And yet He was more. He was the author, the Leader of eternal salvation. To whom does He bring salvation? To those who obey Him--not those who profess their faith, not those who are orthodox in their beliefs, not those who are enrolled as church members, but to those who consistently, continually, submissively, do the will of Christ, even as He did the will of the Father.

The chapter concludes with a reference again to the other order. Jesus is spoken of as being named of God, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. What this involves is drawn out at length in chapter seven. Before we turn to that, however, a difficult and much debated question may be raised.

When did the High Priesthood of Christ begin? Peake presents a very sane<sup>2</sup> and tenable discussion of the problem. At the outset there seems to be a contradiction of the terms. On the one hand there are several passages which suggest strongly that while on earth Christ was not a High Priest but became one only on His entrance into heaven. "If He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all." (8:4). Also in 7:26-28 the High Priest who befits us is one who has been made higher than the heavens, and He who has been appointed High Priest is a Son, perfected forevermore. The passage just discussed might be interpreted as such. On the other hand, it may be argued that Christ's offering of Himself on the Cross

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1. Peake, op. cit., 136.

2. Ibid., 136ff.

was a high priestly act. This is definitely asserted in 10:10-14. This view that Christ was a high priest at the time of His death is supported also by 7:27 and 9:24-28. Can the two views be reconciled? The important thing to distinguish is the nature of the Melchizedek priesthood. What Christ offers he offers as Melchizedek priest, and its virtue consists largely in that fact. If He offered His body on the cross, He must have been a priest of this order before His death. This suggests the answer to the question, When did He become High Priest? At the close of the Agony, when He had learned his sorest lesson of obedience, and had achieved moral perfection.

Still we need harmony between this conclusion and the statement that if Christ were on earth, He would not be a priest at all. Again, it must be said, that an understanding of the Melchizedek priesthood is necessary. It is eternal, not temporal. The difficulty largely disappears when we rid ourselves of local and spatial modes of thought. The essential characteristic of Christ's Priesthood is that it is heavenly, not earthly. It belongs to the age to come or to the world to come, and not to this age or this world. The distinction between the ages is not radically one of time, not that of worlds, not one of space, but, rather, one of intrinsic character. The death of Christ, while the act of men in time and accomplished on earth, really belonged, in virtue of its intrinsic character, to the heavenly and eternal and not to the earthly or temporal order. Not that He entered the heavenly Holy of holies before His death. Neither on the Levitical Day of Atonement was the victim slain in the sanctuary, but its slaughter was none the less a high priestly act. So Christ as High Priest offered His body on the Cross, and then entered the heavenly Holy of Holies.

IV

THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK  
THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

7:1-28

We come now to discuss the characteristics of this priesthood of Melchizedek, which the author has mentioned, but not yet explained nor interpreted. The author of the Epistle has found in the pages of Scripture a perfect picture of what he means by the Priesthood of Christ. He thus says that Christ is after the order or manner of Melchizedek. He proceeds to elaborate. It is not a comparison between Melchizedek as a person, and Christ, but rather between Christ and the Biblical picture of Melchizedek. He is pictured as a "typical eternity."

The seventh chapter may be divided into two <sup>parts</sup> segments. The first, vvs. 7-10, presents the characteristics of the Melchizedek priesthood. Here one finds its distinction, its greatness, its difference from the Levitical order. The second <sup>part</sup> segment, vvs. 11-28, forcefully tell of the superiority of that Priesthood.

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 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." 7:1-3.

Now the irreducible core of this sentence is this: "This Melchizedek abideth a priest continually." This is perpetual, not in the literal sense, but in the Scriptural representation of this priest. All we know of Melchizedek is as he is priest.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Genesis 14:17-20.

There could be no better type or symbol of the absolute, the everlasting--because divine--High Priesthood and Kingship than this phenomenal figure of Melchizedek. He comes out of the invisible, timeless eternity of the past; he belongs to the timeless assured eternity of the future.

Let us think first of the distinction of this priesthood, which explains the eternal work of redemption of Christ. It is a royal priesthood, for Melchizedek is a King. It is personal, for it is unhereditary. It is not handed down from family to family from one generation to another. And it is perpetual or eternal, that is, in so far as the Scripture picture shows. Melchizedek flashes across the pages of holy writ "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God." Through this discussion one must keep always in mind that Melchizedek is not first in possessing certain characteristics which the High Priest of the New Testament afterward possessed. Christ is first; Melchizedek is compared with Him; not He with Melchizedek.<sup>1</sup>

Also important is this fact. We are not only now entering upon a proof of the superior nature of the priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Aaron. Such superiority is indeed implied in the argument, or rather may be said to be taken advantage of for its purpose. But the real point is, not that the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to that of Aaron, but that in its essential characteristics, it is entirely different.<sup>2</sup>

The Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is royal. In the Scripture picture of him, he is king and priest. The name means King of Righteousness. He was also King of Salem, which means peace.

The priesthood again is personal. Melchizedek appears on the scene

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1. Milligan, op. cit., 115.

2. Milligan, op. cit., 116.

of history, at least in so far as the Scriptural presentation of him, alone. He is priest of God Most High.

Finally, it is eternal. "This Melchizedek abideth a priest continually ( εἰς τὸ συνεχές ). This phrase is classical equivalent for εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα , a phrase which is always to be understood in the light of its context. The phrase marks his priesthood as continued to the end in his person without break. He had no successors, and no provision for a successor to him is recorded in Scripture. He abides, therefore, a priest perpetually, forever, not literally but in the Scriptural portraiture. This is one of the points in which "he was made like unto the Son of God." To be a priest forever is to be freed from all the limitations and weaknesses which beset the ordinary priests of earth.

Notice the distinction of this priesthood in relation to the old Levitical priesthood. Those after the order of Aaron were neither royal, nor personal, nor timeless. Melchizedek therefore stands on an entirely different footing from the Levitical priests.

Now the point of the argument is not to show the difference or the superiority of Melchizedek over Aaron; rather the superiority of Christ. The middle term of comparison is that ancient king-priest of the Genesis account. But the reasoning is plain: The priesthood of Christ is "after the order of Melchizedek," but Melchizedek was superior to Aaron; therefore, Christ is superior to Aaron.

We go on to notice the greatness of Melchizedek. "Now consider how great a man this was." Abraham, the patriarch , gave a tenth out of the chief spoils. It was to the Hebrew mind, a great thing that so distinguished a person as Abraham would give a tithe to another. He was

the father of the faithful. The author builds his argument on a curious reasoning.

"And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: by whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. But without any dispute the less is blessed by the better."

The Jewish priests received tithes from the descendants of Abraham, because, though they were their brethren, they were empowered to do so by the law; but Melchizedek, though he has no priesthood recognized by the law, received tithes from Abraham himself. Further, he gave him his blessing, and the man he blessed held a position of lofty spiritual privilege; he had received the promises. There was no law binding Melchizedek in requiring a tithe; nor was Abraham bound to offer gifts. It was voluntary, it was a spontaneous recognition of the spiritual worth of Melchizedek. The author concludes by stating that beyond dispute, great though Abraham was, Melchizedek was even greater.

There is not only distinction and greatness in the priesthood of Melchizedek, there is also a difference from the Levitical order. This is brought out in verses 8-10. The Levitical priest is mortal; he dies. The other is vital; he lives. In the Aaronic order men who die receive tithes; but there is one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. The Scriptural picture of this Melchizedek is as one who is immortal.

Further, the Levitical priesthood confessed inferiority to Melchizedek, according to the author of our Epistle. For since Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek before Isaac was born, he contained Isaac and his descendants still within him, and they may be said in a manner

to have shared in his act. The author apparently feels that the argument may seem somewhat forced at this point, hence he introduces it with "so to say." But it expresses one form of the deep truth of solidarity, the act of the ancestor commits the descendants.

The author has given a clarification of the Scripture picture of Melchizedek. He now wishes to press on to the heart of his argument. He ends his use of the historical Melchizedek, as much as to say, "You have seen the shadow, now look at the real thing." Look now to the historical Jesus, whom I say is a priest after the manner of this Melchizedek.

The remainder of the seventh chapter is devoted to showing that Christ's priesthood not only is superior to that of Aaron, in the manner of Melchizedek, but that it supersedes the old order. The author comes to grips with the core of the matter. He has been working in from the circumference of his circle of thought. He deals a death blow to the most important thing in Hebrew thinking, the Law. Christ Jesus is not only superior to the angels, to Moses, to Aaron, but also to the Law.

Priesthood was tied up irrevocably with the Law. If the Law failed, the priesthood failed. If the priesthood was not effective, the Law was also inadequate.

"Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests." (7:11-14).

Now if the priesthood of Aaron had accomplished all it promised or prefigured, there would have been no necessity for the coming of a Priest belonging to a different order. The very coming of such a One implies that the former priesthood is done away with and is no longer in effect. In this passage, it is assumed that the object of the Law was to bring or to prepare for bringing the people to "perfection." Divine legislation can have no other end.<sup>1</sup> The priesthood, on which the Law rested, embodied its ruling idea. And conversely, in the Law as a complete system we can see the aim of the priesthood. The priesthood was designed to assist in bringing about this perfection.

If then there had been a bringing to perfection through the Levitical priesthood--if, in other words, there had been a bringing to perfection through the Law--there would have been no need of another priesthood. If, on the other hand, the whole Law failed to accomplish that to which it pointed, then so far also the priesthood failed. Such a failure, not a failure but the fulfillment of the divine purpose, was indicated by the promise of another priesthood in a new line. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."<sup>2</sup>

Now, "perfection" here denotes a right relation to God, or the reconciliation of men to God. This involves the removal of sin, which lies as an obstacle preventing free access to God, and fellowship with Him. Such reconciliation the Levitical priesthood could typify and predict, but could not secure. There was need for a new Law and a new Priesthood. This is fulfilled in Christ.

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1. Westcott, op cit., 182.

2. Psalm 110:4.



It is significant that it is not just another priesthood that comes upon the scene. It is a completely different one. The word <sup>ἐ</sup>τερος appears three times in these verses. It is used in this sense of different. The difference is brought out by the author in his mentioning that Jesus comes from a tribe of Israel about which nothing is spoken in the Law concerning priestly duties. Jesus has arisen from the tribe of Judah.

Further, Jesus has been made a priest, not after the law of a fleshen, <sup>τοῦ</sup>τοῦ κινήτος, commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For it is witnessed of Him, "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." Here a climax is reached. The priesthood of Jesus is not only timeless; it is imperishable. It is essentially indissoluble, <sup>ὡς</sup>ὡς κατὰ λόγον. Other priests were made priests in virtue of a special ordinance: Christ was made priest in virtue of His inherent nature.

The difference between the priesthood of Aaron and the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is strikingly drawn. The former rested on a regulation that men should be appointed priests because they were sons of certain parents. Their appointment, therefore, did not depend upon their spiritual fitness or their personal desire. They served in obedience to a law of mere physical descent, the law of a carnal commandment. Very different was the priesthood of Christ. He served, not because of any external compulsion, but because impelled and enabled by an inner power, the power of a life which death could not dissolve. The author is saying that Jesus possesses a power which

none before or after possesses. The priesthood which He exercises is worthy because it works, it accomplishes its end. "Consequently, He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." <sup>1</sup>

The author of our Epistle, having experienced the power of the eternal High Priest, having felt the change in his own heart and life, sees the utter inadequacy and unprofitableness of the Law.

"For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near unto God." (7:17-19).

The old priesthood failed in its cardinal function. It did not perfect the worshipper; it did not bring men near to God. Indeed, there was ceremony, there was ritual, there was sacrifice. But "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin."<sup>2</sup> The Christian faith offers to men a "better hope," the hope of true fellowship with God. It is better because it is effective.

The priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is superior to the Levitical priesthood because it is different--it is permanent and eternal. It is superior because it is after the power of an indissoluble life. It is superior because it offers a better hope. It is also superior because it is backed by the very oath of God. The old priesthood was not instituted by an oath. The new is. "The Lord swears and will not repent himself, Thou art a priest forever." <sup>3</sup>

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1. 7:25 (RSV).

2. 10:4.

3. Psalm 110:4

This oath indicates a settled determination on the part of God, of which He will not repent. He pledges Himself to fulfillment. A priesthood thus constituted must be forever. It is permanent; the Levitical priesthood is transitory. Jesus is the surety of a better covenant. The idea of two covenants is not developed here. As is his manner, the author drops the word by the way, intending to speak fully of it later.

One other feature of the superiority of the priesthood of Christ. In the Levitical priesthood, because of death, there is of necessity a succession of priests. On the other hand, Jesus abides forever; His priesthood is unchangeable. A marginal reading of this word is inviolable. He is not hindered by death. Therefore he can save to the uttermost! What a great High Priest is ours!

The concluding verses of the chapter, 7:26-8, the author gives a summary of all that he has said as to the priesthood of Christ.

"For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people: For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected forevermore."

We are in the main stream of his argument. In the opening verses the Son made purification of sins and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High (1:3). Further along we read that it "behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (2:17). Again, Jesus, having been made perfect became the author of eternal salvation (5:9). Now in these verses this great high priest has made one sacrifice for the

sins of the people when He offered up Himself. He answered the sin question. Jesus qualifies as man's true and ideal High Priest. He qualifies by the worth of His personality, not the claim of His descent. He qualifies by the greatness of His character, not the weight of His office. He qualifies by the energy of His life, not the validity of the Law.

Before we go on to a study of the next chapters, let us pause and see where we have gone. It is our purpose to discover a doctrine of the Atonement in the Epistle which is at once reasonable, vital and preachable. Have we found anything in line with this purpose? Some highlights should be brought together. There is One who has broken into the stream of history, Jesus, the Son of God. He has perfectly qualified to act as a Mediator between God and men. This because of His essential being, and His moral perfection. The death of this One on the Cross was Representative. The Ideal Man suffered death for every man, and therefore assured man's eternal destiny. Not only is Jesus representative, He is sympathetic. All that men suffer, He suffered. He entered into every experience, that He might be perfectly able to help those whom He died to redeem. Certainly this is good news! But we are not through. Let us move on into the next chapters, approaching the Priestly Ministry of Christ. This is the central doctrinal dissertation of the Epistle.

The Priestly Ministry of Christ

8:1- 10:18

The author of our Epistle is a master of organization and plan. He has marshalled his arguments in a manner which is at once systematic, clear, and arresting. The central doctrinal portion of the Epistle is built on a definite plan, though different from that which has come before. He begins with a summary, followed by a more detailed exposition of the items mentioned in that summary.

Chapter eight, vvs. 1-6 form the introduction to this section, the priestly ministry of the Son. Following the quotation of the promise of a New Covenant from the prophecy of Jeremiah, 8:7-13, the author proceeds to relate the new ministry of Christ to the old ministry of the Levitical priests, 9:1-14. Having done this, he discusses the validity of the new ministry, 9:15-28, and finally the efficacy of the new ministry, 10:1-18. We will study these units one at a time.

1. The Introduction to the Priestly Ministry of the Son.

The writer sums up his treatment thus far, "Now in the things which we are saying, the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." The superior greatness of Christ's priesthood is indicated by the scene in which it is being exercised. Christ is at once a Priest and a King. He now occupies the place of supreme power. He is as much greater than the Levitical priests as the universe is greater than the contracted tent in which those priests were appointed to serve. We are now in the realm of the ideas of Alexandrian Judaism, from which environment our author undoubtedly came. The earthly and material things

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are but copies or shadows of the heavenly or real things. Christ is minister in the heavenly or real sanctuary. The levitical priests are of the earthly or material tabernacle.

Our High Priest does not stand as the Levitical priest stood at his daily task. He has sat down as one whose work is finished, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High as one who is King as well as Priest. Every priest must have a sanctuary. The sanctuary of our High Priest is no earthly, symbolic tabernacle, but the real heavenly tabernacle; not ~~man~~made imitation but the handiwork of God. The author quotes from the Old Testament, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee on the mount."<sup>1</sup>

The things of our daily lives are fleeting, imperfect, unsatisfying; but they are only shadowy copies of the real things which eye has not seen nor ear heard. Our best endeavors in any line are but attempts to recapture the vision that God has tried to give us. On this philosophy all the appurtenances of worship were feeble imitations of the realities in the mind of God, which hitherto have been known only to God, but now are revealed in Christ.

The dwelling place of the divine Presence in the midst of the sinful people; the meeting place of God and man for the taking away of sin,-- what does that mean, but the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, eternal life, all that Jesus Christ stands for at the end of creation and of humanity? He is the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling place of the divine Presence in the midst of sinful people. He is the meeting place, where God takes the sinner into Himself in His grace, and the sinner takes God into Himself through his faith. This is anticipating, but it is well to

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1. Exodus 25:40.

know that the true anti-type or archetype of the tabernacle about which we speak is Jesus Christ. The truth of Christ is the true-ordering and effecting of all eternal divine-human acts, activities and relations. The soul and center of this is the great high priestly act of sacrifice, the taking away of sin on the part of God, the putting off of sin on the part of man.<sup>1</sup>

"He hath obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises." (8:6) The Levitical priesthood has been playing with shadows; God has given to men a New Priest who deals with realities.<sup>2</sup> The covenant of Sinai has broken down; it imposed on us laws which, constituted as we are, we could not keep. God is giving a New Covenant. Jesus is the mediator of this New Covenant. It is more excellent because it is founded upon better promises.

2. The Two Covenants. 8:7-13.

"If that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second." The writer finds the promise of a New Covenant in the prophecy of Jeremiah. In the extended quotation the author is seen stretching out his hands across the ages to a kindred spirit, who had pioneered on the road to the great conception of the individuals unhindered access to God.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days saith the

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1. Du Bose, op. cit., 154.

2. McFayden, op. cit., 128.

Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and on their heart also will I write them: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them; for I will be merciful to their iniquities, And their sins will I remember no more.

The great prophet of the old era wrote these words when his nation was in sad straits. About him was gloom and despair. He himself was in prison. The city was in ashes, the priests were gone, the ark was removed, the nation was plundered. All visible evidence of God's fidelity had vanished. What then is the destiny of an individual when seemingly all hope is gone? A lesser spirit than <sup>J</sup>Jeremiah would have been gone under. But the word of the Lord spoke to him, and he <sup>2</sup>gave to all people the bright hope of a new covenant.

Let us bring the contrasts of the two covenants before us. The Old Covenant was external, it was written on stone; it was ineffective, the people did not abide by it; it brought about only ceremonial cleansing. The new covenant is inward; for it ~~is~~ written on the hearts of men. It is effective, for it brings them into immediate access with God. And it offers not ceremonial cleansing, but inward cleansing, pardon and forgiveness of sins. The Old Covenant could not, "as touching the conscience make the worshipper perfect." (9:9) The New Covenant,

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1. Hebrews 8:8-12; Jer. 31:31ff

2. Vide Davidson, op. cit., 161ff. for an excellent discussion of the meaning of the two covenants. A covenant is properly an agreement between two parties; who bind themselves by certain conditions with the view of attaining some object. A covenant may be between equals, as that between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 21-32), or between parties of whom one is superior to the other, as that between Joshua and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9). The covenant relation between God and man is of the latter kind for God composes the covenant. None the less both parties lay themselves under obligation and contemplate an object by the covenant. A covenant between God and man cannot possibly have any other meaning then that he will be their God and they His people. The Epistle contemplates religion in the relation of God and man under this aspect of a covenant.



however, cleanses the "conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (9:15)

It is the message of our Epistle that Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. It is He who effects the covenant; it is He who makes it valid. For he has obtained a more excellent ministry, a ministry which is in the heavens, a ministry which brings men, dead in sin though they may be, eternal redemption and life.

### 3. The Two Ministries, 9:1-14.

As we approach the comparison of the two ministries, it will help to go by an outline, showing the contrasts between the new and the old under  
<sup>1</sup>  
four different headings.

<u>Old</u>		<u>New</u>
<u>Material</u> , "a sanctuary of this world," (9:1-5).	<u>Scene</u>	<u>Spiritual</u> , "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not with hands," (9:11).
<u>Continuous</u> , "the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle accomplishing its services... once a year in the second, not without blood," (9:6-7).	<u>Offering</u>	<u>Adequate</u> , "once for all, through his own blood," (9:13)
<u>Provisional</u> , "the way into the Holy place is not yet manifest while the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a figure of time present," (9:8-9).	<u>Value</u>	<u>Permanent</u> , "having obtained eternal redemption," (9:12).
<u>Limited</u> , "gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience make the worshipper perfect," (9:9-10).	<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>Effective</u> , "the blood of Christ...cleanses your conscience from dead works to serve the living God," (9:13-14).

Let us look first at the old ministry, vvs. 1-10. There is an elaborate description of the items in the earthly sanctuary that went

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1. Howard T. Kuist, Exegetical Footnotes to the Epistle to the Hebrews, (New York: The Biblical Seminary, n. d.), 12ff.

into the ritual services of the priest. To spend time here explaining the exact purpose of each item is not our plan; nor was it the author's. To him the whole of the ritual was a shadowy and unsatisfactory pantomime<sup>1</sup> of the work that Jesus later was to do effectively and once for all.

The very ritual pictured its own inefficiency. Especially was this true in its exclusion from the Holy of Holies of all but the high priest, who himself could enter only once a year. This was an indication that under the old economy the real purpose of religion, namely, the free access of man to God, was not attained.

In making the comparison the writer, with evident appreciation, dwells upon the dignity and the glory of the ancient ordinances of worship. He describes in detail the tabernacles in the wilderness, the visible<sup>2</sup> earthly sanctuary erected according to divine appointment. The tabernacle was of two parts, or two rooms, the Holy Place, and beyond a separating veil, the inner one, the Holy of Holies.

"Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priests alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people: 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; which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation," (9:6-10)

It is noteworthy how effective is the contrast between the golden splendours of the tabernacle, and yet its spiritual poverty.<sup>3</sup>

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1. McFayden, op. cit., 139

2. Exodus 25: 8,9.

3. Peake, op. cit., 178.

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The Jewish tabernacle was glorious but imperfect. The things being prepared, the priests went in continually into the Holy place. But into the Holy of Holies, they cannot go. This was the place where dwelt the Divine Presence. The inferiority of Judaism as a religion is shown by the fact that its priests can enter the Holy Place only, and therefore never come into immediate contact with God. This is reserved for the high-priest, and he can enter one day only in the year, and then not without blood, which he must offer both for himself and the people.

The writer of the Epistle continues his elaboration by saying that the outer room of the ancient tabernacle was a "figure," or a parable, of the entire Mosaic dispensation in its failure to effect a full and free spiritual approach to God. So all the sacrifices, whatever their nature, offered under the Old Covenant failed in the full accomplishment of their purpose. They could not cleanse the conscience. They could not adequately deal with the problem of sin and forgiveness. They could not give any sense of inward cleansing and spiritual renewal and peace of heart. They were outward and temporary. They were imposed only until a time of reformation. The reformation has come. The New Covenant brought in by Christ Jesus accomplishes what the Old Covenant did not and could not do.

Thus while the ministry of the Old Covenant was material, continuous, provisional and limited, the glorious New Covenant is spiritual, adequate, permanent, and effective. For Christ, having become a high priest of the good things to come...entered once for all into the holy place, and obtained eternal redemption. In the light of the glory of Christ all things fade into insignificance. One senses that here we find the outpouring of

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1. Milligan, op. cit., 137.

a great heart who has known the glad deliverance from sin, and has felt the new power that Christ can give.

"But Christ having become 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." (9:11-12).

These verses put together several of the leading elements in Christ's high priestly work. The scene of it was the immaterial tabernacle, not like the Mosaic made with hands and belonging to this lower creation. He entered, not through the blood of animal victims, but through His own. Nor, like the high priests visit to the Holy of Holies, was his stay in the sanctuary brief, hurried, and every year repeated, but he entered once for all. For what he obtained was real redemption for eternity, and not unreal redemption for a year.

It will be helpful to find the core to these two verses. "Christ.. ..entered in once for all...obtained eternal redemption." The work of the Jewish high priest has been indicated as the climax of the old system, (9:7), and the high priestly work of Christ is now considered in contrast with it. The comparison is instituted in respect of that which was the unique and supreme privilege of the Levitical High priest, the access<sup>1</sup> to God on the Day of Atonement. Thus two main points come into consideration here: the entrance of the High priest into the Divine Presence, and the fact that the entrance was through blood.

Christ entered into the true sanctuary, the actual presence of God, through His own blood, and obtained not a temporary but an eternal deliverance. There is difficulty in interpretation of verse 11. But the

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1. Davidson, op. cit., 196-203, gives an extended note on the Ministry of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Also, Westcott, op. cit., 281-2.

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sense is certainly this, that Christ performed his ministry as priest in the sphere of divine realities, not in the sphere of the symbolic, the temporary, and the earthly.

Verse twelve brings near the climax. Christ obtained eternal redemption, not through the blood of animal victims, but through his own blood. The culmination point in the service of the great Day of Atonement in the Old Covenant was the presentation of the blood as the sacrifice. According to the universal Scriptural idea, blood was re-<sup>1</sup>garded as living. It was not the death of the animal in itself, but the life which had been reached through death that gave value to the animal<sup>2</sup> sacrifice. "The blood made atonement, not by reason of death, "but by<sup>3</sup> reason of the life." In the first chapter we dwelt at some length on<sup>4</sup> the meaning of blood in Scripture. It is not our purpose to repeat what appeared there. Only this summary remark, Let us think of the term "blood" as "life enriched by death."

Christ obtained eternal redemption through his own blood. It was not the blood of goats and calves, but His own life which he offered as the Sacrifice. Thus Jesus is clearly shown to be not only the High priest but also the victim. He offered Himself. This has been touched upon before by the author.

"For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did

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1. Lev. 4:6-7; 16:14-15.

2. Milligan, op. cit., 135.

3. Lev. 17:11.

4. Supra, 38f.

once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected forevermore." (7:26-8)

While the sacrifices of the high priest were inadequate, for they could do nothing to cleanse the heart from sin, the sacrifice of Christ of Himself was adequate. It was the perfect sacrifice; for Christ is perfect, He offered Himself once for all.

What was the value of His sacrifice? In contrast to the provisional nature of the Levitical sacrifice, our author says that the effect of Christ's sacrifice was the obtaining of "eternal redemption." This then is the religion that works. Christianity is the final religion of absolute validity, for it perfectly provides access to God. "Christians enjoy the final status of relationship to God in the world of spirit and reality, in virtue of the final sacrifice offered by Jesus the Son."<sup>1</sup>

Then one asks the question, Is the sacrifice of Christ effective? Again the answer must be in contrast with the Old order.

"For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh; 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?" (9:13-14)

<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Westcott suggests the reasons for the efficacy of Christ's one sacrifice, along four lines of thought. (1) His sacrifice was voluntary, not by constraint as in the case of the animal sacrifices of the Law. He offered Himself. His will was behind His sacrifice. Dr. Kuist is of special help here in expanding the argument of Westcott.<sup>3</sup> While the death of the bull or the goat was its doom, the death of Christ was His opportunity.

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1. Moffatt, op. cit., xxxiv.

2. Westcott, op. cit., 261.

3. Op. cit., 9-10.

(2) His death was also rational, for He offered Himself. He realized what was involved in offering up His own life. This rational element places Christ's sacrifice on a higher level than the animal sacrifices of the old covenant, and consequently, that much more superior. (3) Again, Christ's sacrifice was spontaneous, not in obedience to a direct commandment. He offered Himself. He qualified as an offering because He was without blemish. The old covenant gave only provisional reconciliation, and it was impotent to take away sins. But under no constraint from without, Christ spontaneously gave Himself, and thus fulfilled the will and purpose of God. (4) Christ's sacrifice was moral, an offering of Himself by the action of the highest power in himself, whereby He stood in connection with God, and not a mere mechanical performance of a prescribed rite. The death of Christ cost Him something--indeed everything. To kill a brute animal merely released its blood for ceremonial purposes. Its blood was only as valuable as the price on its head. But there was no moral adequacy behind it. But behind the death of Christ was His Life. The giving of His life was the culmination of a perfect moral history. For he was without blemish.

And finally, His sacrifice was timeless, for it was offered through Eternal Spirit. An act in time has consequences in eternity. Spirit is in its nature eternal, and the sacrifice of as an spiritual transaction has an efficacy and a value for all time, for the time that went before the Christian era, as well as for the time coming after. It is not a mere historical event which had no influence before it took place, and whose influence, after happened, was destined to wane with the lapse of the ages. It is an eternal fact having absolute value with God from everlasting to everlasting.

4. The Validity of the New Ministry. 9:15-28.

The author of our Epistle continues his exposition of the New Ministry, establishing the validity of the New Ministry of Christ.

"For this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." (9:15)

This verse is quite difficult to understand without expansion, and filling in where the author has omitted seemingly necessary information. This may be done in regard to the goal to be realized; the means for achieving the goal; and the provision for failure. Again let us put the contrasts down between the old and the new covenant.

<u>Old Covenant</u>		<u>New Covenant</u>
The inheritance of the land promised to Abraham.	<u>Goal</u>	And eternal inheritance of spiritual life for "they that have been called."
The sacrificial system, in order to keep the relationship with God, removal of transgressions by death of sacrificial victims.	<u>Means</u>	Provided for, in that a death has taken place.
The old, failing to make the conscience of the worshipper perfect, left the old transgressions unredeemed.	<u>Provision for failure</u>	Sins are cancelled since the Mediator obtained eternal redemption.

Two illustrations follow, showing how Christ qualifies as the mediator of the new covenant. One illustration is from secular law, and the other from ritual law. Concerning the first, in secular law, before a testament or will can go into effect, the testator must die. It is to no avail while he is living. The New Covenant then, is valid, for the Mediator, by whom the covenant (or testament), was committed to us, died.

And from the ritual law comes this illustration. Even the first covenant had not been dedicated without blood, (Exodus 24:8). The author leads up to this statement, that without the shedding of blood there is no redemption. This



remission. This has always been held as a valid principle. The Christ qualifies then as mediator of a better covenant, for he shed his own blood, yea, gave His own life.

In the concluding verses of the ninth chapter, the writer clinches his argument as to the validity of the new ministry. Here are the essential characteristics of this ministry, and of this sacrifice. Dr. Kuist, in his restatement of the whole argument from 8:1-10:18, clearly indicates these characteristics. The offering of Christ is valid because it is real; it is in the sphere of spirit and reality. "For Christ entered...into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." (9:24). The offering of Christ is likewise valid because it is single. "...now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (9:26) "...Christ...having been once offered to bear the sins of many." (9:27). The purpose of his manifestation was to put away sin, to abolish it, to put it aside, to destroy it with all its effect. It was thus to remove every barrier and to bring men into the heavenly fellowship with God which the ancient ritual foreshadowed. The climax of the argument as to the validity of the new ministry is that it is final. We need not hope for another. His sacrifice does the job, and it is for ever. "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." (9:27-8) Dr. Peake pointedly remarks that "Christ's death cancelled sin so completely that he can have no further connection with it, but just as life, completed by death, is followed, not by a new term of life, but by judgment, so the life of Christ has fulfilled its purpose so completely

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that nothing remains to be done save to let its issues work themselves<sup>1</sup> out."

5. The Efficacy of the New Ministry, 10:1-18.

In rounding out the complete exposition of the New Ministry and New Covenant, our author speaks finally of its efficacy. He can say nothing good about the law. It was not the real thing. The old system dealt only with types of the true spiritual. It could not, by its repeated offerings secure the complete salvation of those who took part in its rites. "For 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." These sacrifices could not give peace of conscience, or bring the worshippers into an ideal relationship with God.

The old covenant had but a shadow, *σκιά*, of the good things to come, not the substance. *εἰκὼν*, of them. The two terms are fitly chosen to convey an idea of the comparative merits of Leviticalism and Christianity. Bruce significantly points out that a *σκιά* is a rude outline, such as a body casts on a wall in sunshine; a *εἰκὼν* is an exact life-like image. But a shadow is, further, a likeness separate from the body that casts it; whereas the image denoted by *εἰκὼν* is inseparable from the substance, is the form of the substance, and here, without doubt, stands for it. Bruce adds in a note that the Greek patristic commentators understood by *σκιά* the first sketch of a picture before the colors were put in, and by *εἰκὼν* the picture when it was finished.<sup>2</sup> Wescott says the

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1. Peake, op. cit., 194.

2. Bruce, op. cit., 374.

shadow is the dark outlined figure cast by the object-- as in the legend of the origin of the bas-relief--contrasted with the complete representation produced by the help of color and solid mass.<sup>1</sup>

The ritual of <sup>sacrifices</sup> Levitical law were ineffectual in dealing the cardinal problem of sin. There is remembrance year by year. "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (10:4)

The inadequacy of animal sacrifices made necessary a new offering, the self-sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice is effective because it is his own. It was a union of His will with God's will. As is the author's delight, he quotes from the Old Testament, this time the fortieth Psalm to express Christ's own conception of his divine mission. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, <sup>but</sup> a body didst thou prepare for me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure; Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me), "to do thy will, O God." (10:5-7) The author indicates that the Lord came into the world fully conscious that the Levitical offerings were inadequate as a means of atonement. He came to do the will of God, not merely by a life or moral perfection, but by offering Himself as a divine sacrifice for sin. It is thus a personal transaction. Now the Psalmist probably meant that moral obedience is better than material sacrifices. Our author, however, uses the words of the Psalmist to set forth the truth that the self-sacrifice of Christ, in submission to the will of God, is far better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. His conclusion, therefore, is that Christ has superseded the Mosaic system. "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." (10:9) Furthermore, by Christ's sacrifice, we are "sanctified." We are brought into true fellowship with God.

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1. Westcott, op. cit., 306

Sanctification does not have the meaning here which is commonly attached to it in theology. It is primarily a ritual term, in harmony with the rest of the Epistle. In the Jewish ritual sanctification was effected by ritual methods, such as washing, blood-sprinkling, the result of which was that the worshipper was released from his uncleanness and able to enter into the presence of God. The word has a corresponding sense here. By the offering of Christ's body, a sacrifice according to God's will, we have been so sanctified that we are able to enter into fellowship with God. That which hindered communion has been removed. This was not, as in the Jewish ritual, some physical condition, but a guilty conscience. What is needed is the removal of guilt. When a sinner realizes that his sin has been borne by Christ, that the sacrifice which can cleanse from guilt has been offered, he feels that the barrier between himself and God has been broken, and communion with Him has been permanently re-established.

The sacrifice of Christ is final, 10:11-14, and thus the author comes back to the text of his exposition, quoting again the promise of a new covenant from Jeremiah, 10:15-18. When Jesus had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God! We are carried back to the opening phrases of the Epistle. "When He had made purification of sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High," (1:3). The sacrifice is final for sins are forgiven because of it. After quoting again the Jeremaic covenant, which concludes with this promise of forgiveness, our author satisfyingly closes his formal argument, "Now where remission of these (sins) is, there is no more offering for sin." And he leaves it at that. Except for a few verses, the remainder of the Epistle does not touch specifically with Christ's redeeming work as such. He is applying it to life.

## CONCLUSIONS

We come now to sum up the results and findings of our study. We must bring our writer's lines of thought together, and put down those things, which to our mind, are his significant teachings of the atoning work of Christ.

No one can write of Christ's work without a sense of utter inadequacy. For it is with God we have there to do and before God, we are driven to awe and adoration. We worship even where we do not fully understand. But, if Christ's work is God's decisive work for men then we have a message to proclaim, a message of reconciliation. That message is that God took the first step in reconciliation, for in Christ He entered into our human life that He might make real to men His forgiveness, a forgiveness not of indifference but of love - a forgiveness in which sins' gravity is exposed.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents the redeeming work of Christ in terms of ritual and worship, in terms of the "once for all" sacrifice of our Lord. Strictly speaking, there is no one doctrine of atonement in the Epistle. We find the teaching under a number of headings. Putting them together we discover that no matter how eloquent the writer, how deep his conviction, how fervent his devotion, one can never fully comprehend all that God has done for him in Christ Jesus. Nor need that be the case. We walk by faith and not by sight. For "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (11:1) When we have known in our own experience the "power of an indestructible life," (7:17) have known the assurance of cleansing and forgiveness of sins, have seen the effects of prayer through His interceding before the Throne of grace on our

behalf, though unable to understand all things, we still may be certain that there is abiding and eternal worth in Christ's redemptive work.

These then are the conclusions of our study. These are the aspects of the atonement found in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

1. Representative atonement. "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." (2:9) "Christ entered...into heaven, now to appear before the face of God for us." (9:24). In our discussion of the moral history of the Son (2:5-18), we found that the one Ideal Man has assured man's true destiny. Because of the hindrance and curse of sin, man was hopelessly unable to fulfill his appointed destiny. But the Perfect Man, Jesus Himself, entered into human life, tasted death for every man, became the pioneer of his salvation, is now crowned with glory and honour.

Not only do we find Christ's atonement representative in this sense, but also in the fact that He now represents us, "before the face of God." (9:24) It is He who intercedes for us. He makes access to God possible. He is our True representative. As the office of the High Priest was to minister to men "on the Godward side," so our Great High Priest, is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (1:3) where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. (7:25).

2. Sympathetic redemption. "For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities or ["sympathize with our weaknesses" (RSV)], but <sup>one</sup> over <sup>been</sup> that hath in all points heard tempted like as we are yet without sin." (4:15). In no other book of the New Testament is the true humanity of our Lord more emphasized than

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in our Epistle. And because He is "very God of very God" yet at the same time was subject to all the temptations and suffering which are the lot of mankind, He is able to save with sympathy. The Christian doctrine of the Atonement is not one of a God who is not concerned for His people. Nor is it our view that redemption is an impersonal thing, that the great God in the heavens somehow made it possible for deliverance from suffering and weakness of the flesh, without first entering into the true experiences of humanity. No, forever no!

Atonement, or at-one-ment, means the bringing together and the binding together of two parties, man and God, separated by the appalling fact of human sin. In most forms of religion the attempt to achieve this is made from the human side, by prayer and self-torture, or sacrifice. But all experience has shown the futility, or at least the evanescence of an atonement which starts from man's action. A great paraphrase of Hebrews 10:4 runs as follows:

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

One might substitute for "Jewish" any other adjective of religion in the whole range of history, and the words would still be true. There can be no valid or permanent reunion of God and man, separated by human sin, unless and until the initiative is taken from the divine side. God, and God alone, can effectively bridge the gulf cleft by us.

But in Jesus, the writer of an Epistle sees the entry of God into human life, and then the spanning of the rift. To achieve His purpose in all completeness, it is necessary that He should enter into every *aspect* of human experience, and know from the inside, as it were, what our life is like. Thus, He was "made like unto His brethren" (2:17) "suffered being

tempted," (2:18) was in all points tempted like as we are. Jesus our Saviour is sympathetic. He knows our human failings and weaknesses. He knows our struggle against the Enemy - he who has the power of death. With this in mind, He redeemed us, and has cleansed our conscience from dead works to serve the living God, (9:14).

3. Sacrificial atonement. "He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered himself," (7:27).

"...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (9:14)

"...He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," (9:26).

The death of Christ was sacrificial. In days of war we have been made aware of the high cost of sacrifice. We know something of what it means for the blood of one to be shed that freedom might be obtained for another. In our study of the Epistle we find that Jesus made possible eternal fellowship with God through His great sacrifice. The significance of the sacrificial element present in the New Testament teaching is to be found, not so much in the specific rites of the cultus as in the underlying ideas of sacrifice, the idea of drawing near of the worshipper to God in humility and contrition, the thought of an offering with which he can identify himself with penitance and faith, and the conception of sharing in the cleansing power of life which has been released in death, dedicated and presented to God.

Now Christ is our Representative, our sympathetic High Priest. And He is the perfect Sacrifice. By that Sacrifice free access to God has been made possible and available to all who put their trust in Him.

Christ's death is more than an example. His blood shed was His life dedicated, offered, transformed. Don't ever believe that Christ's death



was not costly. Yet it was a voluntary sacrifice. "Jesus...for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of God." (12:2)

4. Eternal atonement. "...he became the author of eternal salvation." (5:9)

"He entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (9:12)

"When he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, he sat down on the right hand of God." (10:12)

"Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an 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 glory forever and ever." (13:20)

From the beginning of the Epistle to the end, there is a feeling that we are dealing with eternal realities. Indeed if the redeeming work of Christ is valid at all, it is valid for all time. It must be the case.

How can religion, communion between the soul and its God depend upon an event in time, an event that happened in a small, comparatively unimportant country over nineteen hundred years ago? Can the spiritual depend upon the temporal in this way? The germ of the answer is found in the author's phrase, "through eternal Spirit." (9:14) The life of Christ and the death of Christ took place under conditions of time and space; but they take us into the eternal, unseen world where time and space are forgotten. The life of Jesus, and still more His death reveal to us the eternal thought of God towards men.

The author of an Epistle has put us in touch with eternal truth and

reality. His emphasis is not only upon the sacrifice of Christ, but His continuous intercession for us. While the sacrifices under the Old Covenant were repeated from time to time, Jesus offered Himself once for all time. There was no further need for sacrifice." For "where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin." (10:18)

5. Effective Atonement. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (10:17) "How much more shall the blood of Christ...cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (9:14)

By saying the Atonement is effective is to say that it works. It accomplishes its purpose. Christianity is the final religion because it deals effectively and directly with the question of sin, that barrier which keeps men from the presence of God. Two aspects of its efficacy need to be pointed out. The first is that the Christian faith, according to our author provides for the forgiveness of sins. The second is that this results in a cleansed conscience. How needful is this teaching today for the souls of men who are weighted down, burdened, shackled by sin, troubled by a conscience that constantly stabs one's consciousness, crying, "Thou art the man!"

6. Moral Atonement. Because the sacrifice of Christ and His redeeming work is effective it is also moral. That is to say, it makes an impact upon the ethical life and conduct of the individual Christian. The doctrinal teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not stand alone. It was written to a certain group of people under trying circumstances. The Epistle is charged with practical exhortations, applications of the atonement to daily experience.

This, then, is the end of it all. If the sacrifice of Christ, when appropriated in faith by the individual, does not make that life different

because of it, we have gotten nowhere. However, it is the firm conviction, voiced from experience, of the writer of our Epistle, that it does make a difference. And saints through all ages since, have rejoiced that they, too, have found life anew.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPARATIVE

THE DOCTRINE COMPARED

WITH OTHER

NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

Our study would not be complete without making reference to the relation of the Epistle to the Hebrews to other New Testament writers, especially regarding Christ's redeeming work. While the Epistle to the Hebrews is unique in many ways in its teaching, one is bound to notice that it has a common message with other Christian writers of the first century of the Church. For these men, whose letters have come down to us as the inspired word of God, did not create the New Testament doctrines which we find revealed in their writings. In varying degrees, each New Testament writer rests upon the common faith of the church.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the doctrine of the Atonement, each treats, not the doctrine as a whole, but particular aspects which arrested attention and called for treatment in relation to practical needs. Doctrine was not written in a vacuum. There were always certain circumstances in the lives of the readers which called forth the presentation of some vital Christian concept, that it might be applied to that particular situation.

Our Epistle bears out this fact so well. The ones to whom the letter was written were spiritually immature; their once fresh enthusiasm had begun to fade; their spiritual life was stagnant. "When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe," (5:12-13). The unknown writer knew their need, and urged them, in the light of what Jesus had done for them by His final sacrifice, to leave the first principles of Christ, and press on toward maturity, (6:1). The First Epistle of Peter is a practical letter, yet full of doctrine, designed to cheer and strengthen its readers in

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1. Taylor, op. cit., 54.

the endurance of persecution, (I Pet. 1:6-7). Peter is seeking the building up of his readers in the Christian life rather than instructing them in Christian doctrine. The dogmatic elements are incidental, and are introduced for a purely practical purpose. The sufferings of Christ are represented as furnishing to Christians an example of the patient endurance of hardships (I Pet. 2:21; 4:1; 13). The letters of St. Paul also were written to meet certain practical difficulties current in the respective churches in which he had major interest. We need only read his Corinthian letters to see the varied nature of the spiritual and practical problems which faced the Christians of his day. And in all his instruction, exhortation, and admonition, doctrine is applied to life.

In the concluding pages of this thesis, we will look for awhile at the writing of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John, not exhaustively--for this has already gone too long--but suggestively. We will attempt to see how the teaching of these men, especially their teaching of the redeeming work of Christ, compares and contrasts with the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are certain great similarities among all the writers, for, as I have said, their teaching was all founded in the common belief of the primitive Apostolic Church. There is essential agreement among them all. But their emphasis is upon different subjects. They each handle their precious treasure with great care. Each makes his jewel shine. All are seeking to reflect the "light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Let us then, be at our task.

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1. II Corinthians 4:6.

The Epistle to the Hebrews and I Peter

There is a great similarity between these two writings. Milligan remarked that the generally Petrine character of the Epistle had often been remarked upon, and that the correspondences between it and I Peter help to illustrate better than anything else its primitive character.<sup>1</sup> When one reads through I Peter after having read our Epistle, one is immediately struck by the similarity of expression. Again and again we find in St. Peter's epistle the germ of our author's thought, or the exact form of its expression. The similarity was even used by a scholar named Welch, in 1898, as ground for proving that Peter wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>2</sup>

In the very language there is a great likeness. These parallels are particularly noticeable in the terms of Christ's atoning work. Let us cite a few examples. (1) Nowhere else in the New Testament do we find in this connection special mention of the Body of Christ.

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me.'" Heb. 10:5.

"By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Heb. 10:10.

"Who his own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." I. Pet. 2:24.

(2) or again, of the "sprinkling of His blood."

"...and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel." Heb. 12:24.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." I Peter 1:2.

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1. Milligan, op. cit., 194.

2. Peake, op. cit., 36.

(3) There is a striking similarity in the mention of Christ's carrying up to the altar His sacrifice for the sins of men.

"...who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself." Heb. 7:27.

"So Christ...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." Heb. 9:28.

"...Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree." I Pet. 2:24.

Both writers present the idea of Christ's suffering being an example in suffering. Patience in suffering is one of the main themes of Peter.

"...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 the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God...For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." Heb. 12:1-3.

"For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, threatened not." I Pet. 2:21-23.

So much for examples of similarity of language. Let us consider the thought of the two Apostles. To Peter Christianity is more particularly the fulfillment of the Old Covenant as announced by prophecy.<sup>1</sup> To the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is rather the fulfillment of the same covenant as shadowed forth in Old Testament priesthood and sacrifice. Indeed, Hebrews is unique in its presentation of priesthood and sacrifice. And though both writers regard Christianity as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, Hebrews sets forth the universality and perfection of that Christian faith with a richness and a fullness which reminds one of St. Paul rather than St. Peter.

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1. Cf I Pet. 2:6ff; also 2:24-25.



Milligan gives a word of caution. While in his main theme, and even in certain particulars in his method of treating it, we may admit a general resemblance between our writer and the first Apostles, (especially Peter), we must be careful not to press the resemblance too far.<sup>1</sup> We must look elsewhere for the source of some of the most striking features of the Epistle. This other source is the Apostle Paul. But before we turn to Paul, let us mention other of Petrine teaching in the light of our study of Hebrews.

First Peter bears throughout an Old Testament impress, just as does the Epistle to the Hebrews. But as said above, the religion of Christ to Peter is the realization of the hope of Israel. The Saviour is the fulfillment of the prophetic visions. This note is somewhat lacking in Hebrews, except for the key passage on the New Covenant, spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.

Both writers recognized the futility of the old system. Peter mentions the "vain manner of life handed down from your father," (1:18). Though nowhere directly stated like that, our author's whole basis is that the Levitical system of old is wholly inadequate. "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (10:4). For both, men are redeemed by the blood of Christ. In contrast to this, Peter <sup>(mentions?)</sup> offers corruptible things, silver or gold. The author of Hebrews contrasts the animal sacrifices of the old order.

The sinlessness of Christ is emphasized by both writers. To both, the sacrifice of Christ was of One without blemish, (Heb. 9:14; I Peter 1:19). Hebrews says that Christ was tempted in all points like as we

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1. Milligan, op. cit., 196.

are, and yet without sin, (4:15). First Peter says that Christ did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, (I. Peter, 2:21-2).

Though there is some reference in Hebrews to the enduring of suffering because Christ suffered, this idea does not predominate. Jesus suffered more as our Representative, (2:9-10), as our Leader. The suffering of Christ is regarded not so much as an example for those who are being persecuted, but rather is it looked at as we have seen, as the moral discipline through which Jesus went to accomplish our salvation.

Peter's doctrine of salvation is expressed in Old Testament terms.<sup>1</sup> It is an "inheritance" (1:4), the fulfillment of a hope which has been divinely discerned and partially expressed by the prophets, (1:10-12). Peter describes, mainly in Old Testament language, the refusal of their birthright, of the Jews. They have rejected the Messiah, the chief cornerstone on which God would build His spiritual temple (2:4-8). It is not descent from Jewish stock, but faithfulness to God which is the condition on which participation in the "elect race," (2:9) is based. There is no respect of persons with God, (1:17). Men of any nation who will heed His word and receive His Son may become part of the elect race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation (2:9).

Though our Epistle is entitled, "To the Hebrews," the thought of it bears no distinction as to who may be children of God. Indeed the old ordinances of the Jewish nation are regarded as passed away. But Christ tasted death for every man. The condition of access to God is drawing

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1. G. B. Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899) 296.

near to God through Christ. He is able to save completely.

One thing which is a strong feature in First Peter, but almost completely absent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is an emphasis upon the Resurrection. It is only mentioned once in Hebrews, and then only at the close of the letter, in the closing benediction (13:20). The author cannot logically fit it into his argument with great emphasis because he is more concerned about Christ's present work for the believer seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He goes from the sacrifice of His death to His exaltation on High.

However, for Peter, the Resurrection of Jesus is the ground of faith and hope. It was the resurrection which had made the readers confident of obtaining the heavenly inheritance to be revealed at the last time (1:3-5). The resurrection was a saving deed in the sense that it furnished a powerful motive to faith. "God raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope might be in God" (1:21).

The resurrection not only assured the disciples of Christ's continued life, but attested His divine mission and directed the thoughts of His followers to the heavenly world to which He now belonged. The resurrection implies the ascension of Christ to the throne of power and glory, (3:22), and is thus a guaranty of the authority and dominion of Christ and of the completion of the work of salvation.

The author of our Epistle touches upon most of these subjects, though from another viewpoint. The Resurrection plays no part in his argument. To him, Christ has the power of an "endless life," (7:17). He constantly speaks of the heavenly world to which the exalted Christ belongs, the sphere in which lies all things real and eternal. The author also speaks

of the authority and dominion of Christ in relation to his sacrifice for sins. This is brought out in the use of the verb, "sat down," (1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2).

## II

### The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Letters of St. Paul

The Epistle to the Hebrews bears many resemblances to the writings of the Apostle Paul, and yet there are very striking differences. Their doctrinal systems are in essential agreement, though hardly expressed in the same terms. The difference in the writings of the two authors is *concentrated in* the molds into which they have been cast.<sup>1</sup>

In both writers, God is represented as the principal end of all things, (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 11:36), and Christ the image of God as the Mediator through whom He created the world (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15-16). In both writings, Christ, as the Deliverer or Saviour, has Himself partaken of flesh and blood, (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:3), and having died once for all unto sin, (Heb. 7:27; Rom. 6:9, 10), has passed through humiliation to glory, (Heb. 2:9; Phil. 2:8-9), and taken His seat at the right hand of God, (Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:20), where in His glorified state He intercedes for His people, (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). Both writers assert that He shall reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet, when He shall reappear for the final salvation of those that look for Him (Heb. 9:26-8; Tit. 2:13), who are in the meantime called upon to show forth the familiar triad of graces, faith, hope and love (Heb. 10:22-5; I Cor. 13:13).

There are some differences. One which is most noticeable is the attitude toward the Mosaic law of the two writers. In both writers the Law is weak, but in Paul it is weak through the flesh; in Hebrews weak

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1. Peake, op. cit., 31.

because it is a mere copy and shadow. The law to Paul is legal and moral; the law to the writer of Hebrews is ritual and sacrificial. Both writers hold that the law has been superceded by the work of Christ. Paul regarded it as the strength of sin for those who were under it and, therefore, its abolition was needed in the interests of morality. Christ by His death and Christians by union with Him had escaped into the freedom of the Spirit, where the law of the Spirit could alone hold sway. Our author taught that the law was done away because the Levitical priesthood was superceded by that of the order of Melchizedek, and also because Christ had done what the Law through long ages had vainly striven to do.

Both writers regarded the work of Christ as effecting atonement. Both regard the Atonement necessary because of the barrier of sin. It is difficult to make citations from Paul's Epistles upon the subject of Christ's sacrifice, because the doctrine of the Atonement forms the warp and woof of all the Apostle's teaching. But let us suggest a few. The Cross was to Him more than a great world tragedy. It was inseparably connected with the salvation of men. He grappled boldly with this problem and sought to prove that the death of Jesus on the Cross was the culmination of His saving work, and the crowning glory of His Messianic vocation. To Him the Cross was the glory of the Christian faith (Gal. 6:14), and the primary means of salvation (I Cor. 1:17, 23, 24), approached in the light of his own experience of the glorified Christ.

For Paul, Christ came into the world to save sinners, (I Tim. 1:15) and to accomplish His mission He died upon the Cross. He was "delivered up for our trespasses," (Rom. 6:25). "He died for our sins," (I Cor. 14:3). By His death we are reconciled to God, (Romans 5:10). The universal sweep of His atoning death is brought out in the statement, "He died for all," (II Cor. 5:15).

The Apostle Paul knows nothing of the distinction which the Epistle to the Hebrews, in common with the Levitical law, draws between wilful sins and sins of ignorance or weakness, but regards all sins equally deserving of death. Consequently, Christ's death is for Paul above all else a vicarious offering, in virtue of which He has borne for humanity the punishment they have merited. On the other hand, in Hebrews the sacrifice of Christ is presented as the one, completed offering of perfect obedience which Christ, passing through death to life, has presented to God, and in which His people along with Him can draw near.

In other words, Paul lays the principal stress on the thought of God's justice, and the justification which Christ has provided for us. The Epistle to the Hebrews stresses the thought of God's holiness, and believers are cleansed, consecrated and perfected in Christ.

In the Hebrew law, there was need of ceremonial cleansing. Water was sometimes necessary. What was always necessary was a sin offering. Paul never speaks of Christ's death as a means of cleansing. For him baptism was our sacramental plunge into mystical union with Christ in His death and resurrection. This mystical union with Christ which is the key to his thinking is totally lacking from the concepts of the writer to the Hebrews. On the other hand, there is much said concerning the sin offering being the means of spiritual and moral cleansing.

"Having made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High." (1:3).

While with Paul the Resurrection is as important in Christ's work as the death, in Hebrews it has no theological importance at all. Nor could it hold any in a system based on the ritual of the Day of Atonement. In such a system, while the death was necessary, the climax of the

which of  
Eph. 5. 25-27  
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redeeming act consisted in Christ's presentation of Himself to God in the heavenly Holy of Holies, a thought which has no parallel in Paul. There is nothing in the writings of Paul resembling the High Priesthood of Christ as found in Hebrews.

The differences in regard to the appropriation of salvation are perhaps more radical than other divergences. With Paul, everything is included in union with the risen Lord, (Col. 3:1) and participation in His experiences. This is the very heart of the Pauline theology. Not a trace of this is found in Hebrews. Christ is our Brother, who owns the ties of kinship, our Captain or Forerunner, who dedicates the way to the Holiest by His blood, by which we follow Him. He is our High Priest who offers Himself to God for us, and cleanses our conscience by the sprinkling of His blood. If in Paul the imitation of the earthly life of Jesus is swallowed up in the thought of union with Christ (I. Cor. 10: 31ff), in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Leader of all the faithful is our pattern in temptation, who endured before us the gainsaying of the wicked, and suffered, as we also must suffer.<sup>1</sup>

### III

#### The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine Writings.

One final word must be said concerning the relation of the Epistle to the writings of John. Here again, we find similarity and wide distinctions. Now the Apostle John was an intuitionist and a mystic. He does not argue; he sees. To prove Christianity true is quite remote from his purpose. He aims rather to set forth its truths in their inherent power and beauty in the hope that others will see and receive

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1. Mackintosh, op. cit., 87.

Him. He assumes that Christianity carries its appeal direct to the heart. What men need is not more light, but an eye. In Christ the Apostle had lost and found his life, and he never tires of dwelling upon His wonder and heavenly glory. The author's mind spiritualizes everything it touches. He sees the matchless Life which he describes, not so much on its outer as on its inner side. His method is to seek the soul of truth in all events whereby God is revealed.

At the outset we see that this man's approach to the verities of the Christian faith is distinct from that of the author of The Epistle to the Hebrews. They are of different temperament, each having insights which the other does not possess.

Salvation, for John, is from sin unto righteousness. Sin is lawlessness, (I. 3:4), a violation of the divine order, and a state of disharmony with it. He also describes it as moral darkness in contrast to light, which is the symbol of goodness, love and life. The sinful man "walks" and "abides in darkness," (I. 1:6). This language is foreign to anything in our Epistle.

For John, Jesus Christ "was manifested to take away the sins" of men, (I. 3:5) and to destroy the works of the devil (I. 3:8). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses similar language. "Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The saving work of Christ is described by John in various terms. Although a process of judgment is inseparable from the Messiah's mission, yet "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world should be saved through Him." (3:17). He saves men by cleansing them from sin. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;



and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

(I. 1:7) The saving significance of Christ's death is certainly implied in the reference to the "blood of Jesus." Here one thinks of the rich meaning which the author of The Epistle to the Hebrews gave to "His blood." Recall that it is life enriched by death.

Christ is called an Advocate with or before the Father (I.2:1). This reminds one of Christ as the Intercessor, as He is so depicted in Hebrews. The Christian may rest assured of the perfect sympathy and help of the sinless Saviour, who, having Himself passed through a career of moral trial, is able to deal gently with the erring, and to plead their cause before God.

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